

GCSE English Literature Unit 1

Frequently asked questions

1. General questions about the unit

How long should students spend on each question?

The paper is 1 hour 45 minutes with two sections: Literary Heritage texts and Different Cultures and Traditions texts. Students all work at a different pace, but you may wish to advise them to spend 50-60 minutes on the Literary Heritage four-part question and 45-55 minutes on the Different Cultures and Traditions essay question.

Should students worry about filling out the booklet correctly and can they use extra sheets of paper?

It is important that your students are happy and familiar with the layout and the rubric of the papers before the examination. Please encourage them to make all notes in the answer booklet and avoid attaching extra pages. All of our answer booklets have been made longer so there is more than enough room for students to write their responses.

It is also useful for the examiners if students write in the correct sections and number their answers clearly and correctly.

All the answer booklets are online at www.english10.co.uk.

I know that fixed grade boundaries cannot be given for each paper, but do you have any idea of what percentage is needed to achieve a grade C?

See the table below for the grade boundaries for each unit. These are the raw mark boundaries and are correct for June 2011 ONLY and should NOT be used as a guide to inform future series. Grade boundaries do alter from series to series.

Unit Code	Unit Name	Max mark	Grade Boundary Mark								
			A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	U
5EH01	English/English Language 1	40	36	33	28	23	18	13	9	5	0
5EH2F	English 2	96				65	50	35	20	5	0
5EH2H	English 2	96	82	69	51	33	21	15			0
5EH03	English 3	96	79	71	63	55	42	29	16	3	0
5EN2F	English Language 2	64				41	31	21	11	5	0
5EN2H	English Language 2	64	54	44	32	21	16	13			0
5EN03	English Language 3	96	87	79	68	58	47	36	25	14	0
5ET1F	English Literature 1	80				53	39	25	12	6	0
5ET1H	English Literature 1	80	70	60	47	34	26	22			0
5ET2F	English Literature 2	50				40	30	21	12	3	0
5ET2H	English Literature 2	50	38	31	24	18	12	9			0
5ET03	English Literature 3	50	45	41	34	27	20	14	8	2	0

How much should candidates be writing for each section of the examination?

There is no definitive answer here as some candidates can write very succinctly and others write a lot more. The examination paper is structured so there is ample room for students to answer each question fully and the exemplars on our website should also be a useful guide.

2. Section A: Literary Heritage texts

How long should students spend on each part of the four-part question?

All students work at different paces, but it is important that they leave enough time for part (d) of the question which is worth 12 marks and asks them to find another section outside of the extract. A good guide is to look at the marks and think about allowing approximately a mark a minute for the responses.

How many aspects or elements should students write about for the 'character' question?

The emphasis on all the extract-based parts of the question should be the analysis of the language. Students should use the whole extract when answering each question part and make sure that they use succinct quotations to back up their comments. They should aim for two to three well explained and analysed aspects.

What is the difference between a language response and a literature response?

There should be no difference in the responses commenting on the writer's use of language in the English Language and English Literature questions. There are, of course, different questions requiring different responses in the examinations for the two subjects, but where language analysis is required, the approaches are essentially the same.

In part (d) of the question, the students choose 'one other part of the novel' to write about. How long should this 'other part' be?

Students who have tackled this question well in the past have chosen extracts of varying lengths. However, it is important that the extract focuses on just ONE part of the novel, addresses the question and allows the student to provide good examples of language.

3. Section B: Different Cultures and Traditions texts

Are the types of essay question from which students can choose always the same?

Yes. Students are always given the option of answering either a 'character' question or a 'theme' question. The chosen character and theme does, of course, change every series so the questions is different.

How much do students need to write for Section B?

The exemplar work on the website should provide you with a guide. It is difficult to give a definitive answer. It is perfectly possible to access the top bands with a well argued and succinct answer but students need to ensure that they have addressed the question fully and referred to the context of the novel in their answer. It is important to look at the number of marks allocated for the essay and leave enough time in the examination to tackle this question.

How is context assessed in the question? Do we have to teach the history behind the texts to gain top marks?

We have always advised that the social, cultural and historical context of the novel can and should be taught through the themes and characters of the text. It is good for students to know a bit about the history of the novel and the time it is either representing or was written in, but they do not gain many marks by simply inserting a 'bolt-on' paragraph into the essay which talks about the context of the novel but does not answer the question. The exemplars on our website and the commentaries should give you further guidance on this point.