



GCSE English Literature: Spring Network 2026

Agenda

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In this session we are going to look at:

- AO1 vs AO2
- What is an essay?
- Integrating context
- Revision/advanced ideas



AO1 vs AO2

AO1 versus AO2

AO1	<p>Read, understand and respond to texts</p> <p>Students should be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• maintain a critical style and develop an informed personal response• use textual references, including quotations, to support and illustrate interpretations
AO2	<p>Analyse the language, form and structure used by a writer to create meanings and effects, using relevant subject terminology where appropriate</p>

Analysis of words/phrases

Analysis of techniques

Analysis of form [showing an awareness of performance element, or considering poetic form]

Analysis of structure

Interpretation of themes/characters/settings/events

Using evidence to support points

Critical style

Analysis vs interpretation

Analysis

- Analysis focuses on **what is there and how it works**.
You break something down into parts and examine evidence in a careful, objective way.
- Looks at **structure, language, techniques, context, or facts**.
- Answers questions like: *How is this written? What devices are used?* Stays close to the text or evidence.

Example:

Analysing *Romeo and Juliet* might involve examining Shakespeare's use of language to create images of violence, or his use of structure to show character importance/dominance.

Interpretation

- Interpretation focuses on **what it means**.
You explain the **significance** of what the author has created, often offering a viewpoint that can be debated.
- Explores **themes, messages, or ideas**.
- Answers questions like: *What is Shakespeare saying? Why does this matter?*
- Can vary between readers, as long as it's supported by evidence.

Example:

Interpreting *Romeo and Juliet* might argue that the play criticises reckless youth, condemns social hatred, or shows love as both beautiful and destructive.

Analysis = how it works
Interpretation = what it means

Textual references and quotations

- For all the questions in GCSE English Literature, students are required to use textual references to support the points they are making about the text.
- As both papers are closed book examinations, students will not have the texts with them.
- Where there is an extract, or the poem is provided, students will be expected to use short, relevant quotations from the text.
- For questions where the text is not provided, **students will be rewarded for either relevant textual references, paraphrasing** or short quotations from the text.
- Some students do remember short quotations BUT it is not an expectation.

When should a reference be a quotation?

Quotation needed	Paraphrase as reference
Analysing language [words/phrases]	Analysing form, structure
	Interpreting ideas/themes/settings AO1 – Shakespeare/19th C part b, post 1914.

How long should a quotation be?

No set length, but ask yourself – is more than four words really needed?

AO1 – what is an essay?

An essay is a focused piece of writing that **explores, explains, or argues** a specific topic, presenting **the author's perspective supported by evidence**, typically structured with an **introduction, body paragraphs, and conclusion**.

The term comes from the French "essayer" (to try or attempt), reflecting its goal to **test or explore an idea**. In this sense it fits perfectly with the definition of interpretation – explaining 'the significance of what the author has created, often offering a viewpoint that can be debated'.

Thesis statements

Romantic love is a central and important theme in Romeo and Juliet because:

- it's a catalyst for the play's main events
- it both counteracts and emphasises the tragedy of the deaths/revenge plot
- it adds tension/suspense due to the family feud.

Thesis statements

Explain the importance of wealth	
Explain the significance of romantic love	
Explain the importance of family relationships	

Explore the importance of regret	
Explore the significance of loyalty	
Explain how happiness is important	

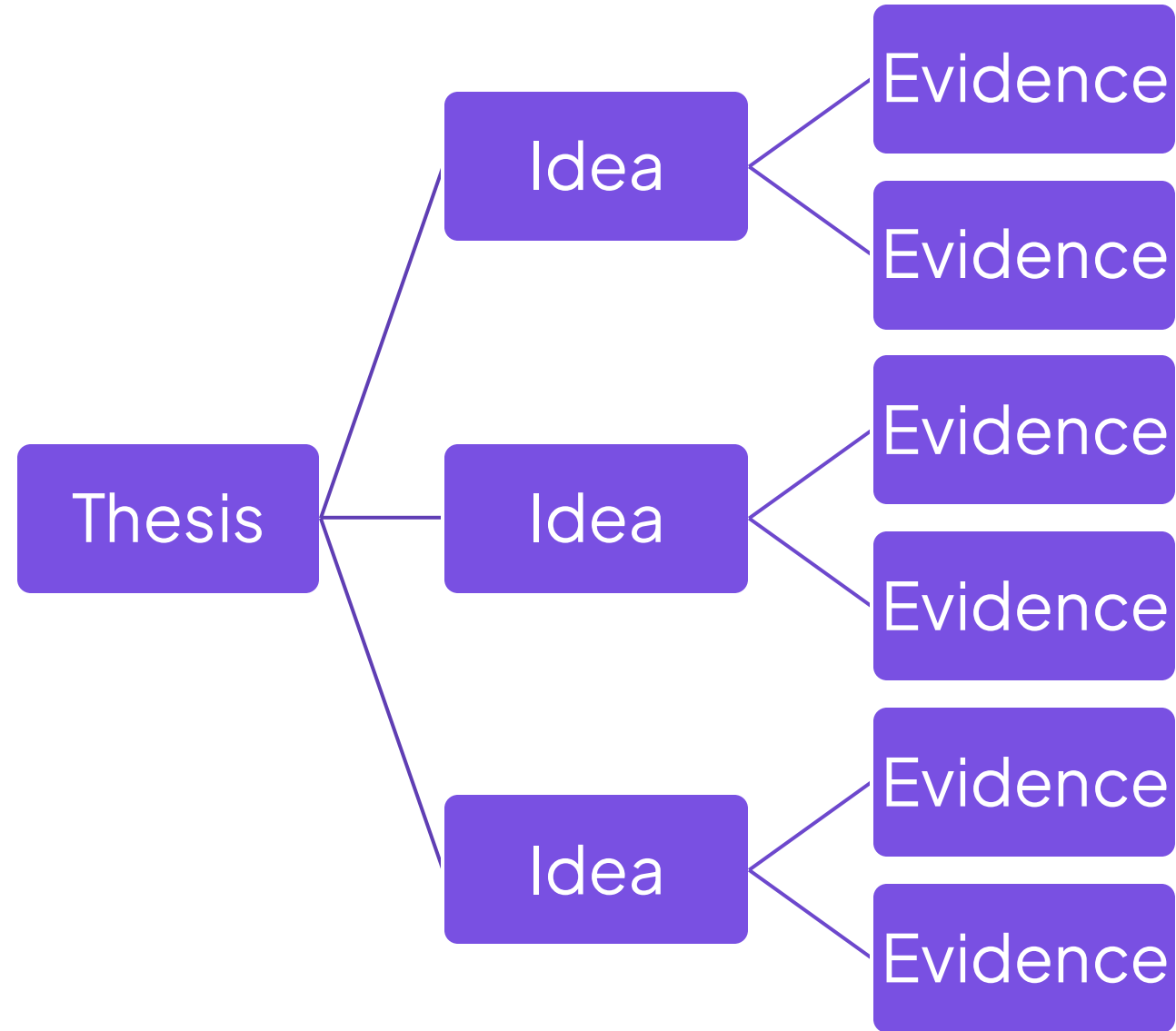
Thesis statements [author's perspective]

Explain the importance of wealth	Wealth is a central theme in AIC because Priestley uses it to highlight the inequality between the social classes.
Explain the significance of romantic love	
Explain the importance of family relationships	

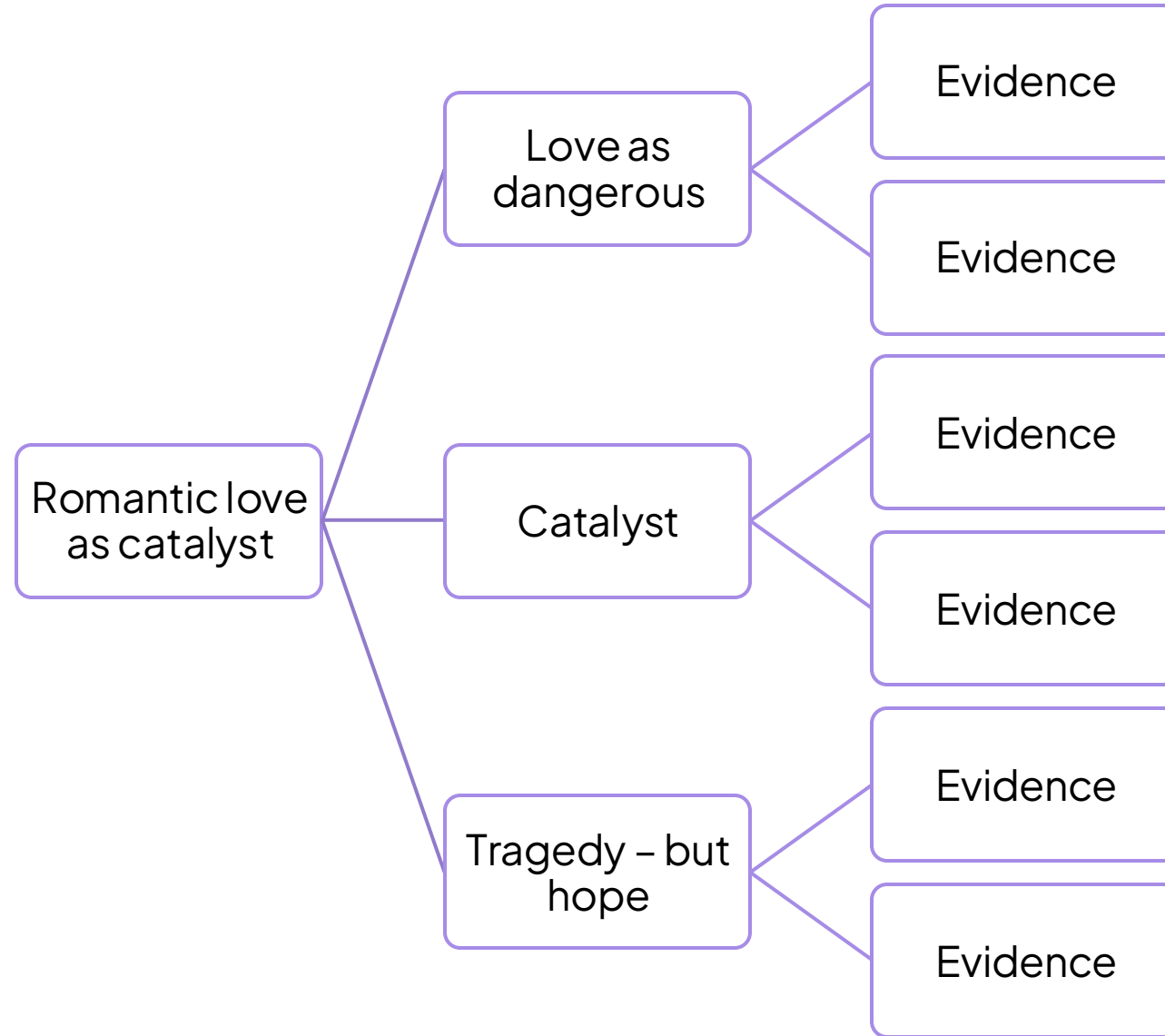
Thesis statement

b) Through the depiction of family, Dickens highlights the importance of familial connections, which in turn allows one to embody the Christmas spirit. He also demonstrates the consequences of those who refuse to do so and their trajectory. Through the transformation of Scrooge, Dickens highlights how family life is the most important aspect in life.

Planning



Planning



Topic sentences, supported by evidence

Romantic love is the main catalyst for the play's tragic events as Romeo and Juliet fall in love and marry despite being from two warring families. Shakespeare may have been warning.....

Thesis
statement

Romantic love is presented as dangerous, and this danger can be seen from the moment that they meet. For instance, Romeo is at the ball without invitation, and his presence tempts Tybalt to violence. Tybalt's aggressive reaction to Romeo heightens the tension of the lover's first meeting, tinging their romantic exchanges with a sense of foreboding. The audience's awareness of Capulet's match-making plans for Juliet adds to the tension...

Topic sentence

Evidence

Context – questions to consider

Is there a relevant contextual point flowing out of my interpretation?

OR:

- am I just adding historical or biographical details?
 - *James I wrote a book about witches...*
 - *Jane Weir is a textual designer, so she uses textual imagery such as ‘...’*
- am I just rehashing stereotypes?
 - *Lady Macbeth’s strong personality goes against the way women were expected to behave in Elizabethan times.*
- am I just mentioning that modern audiences would feel differently?
 - *Modern audiences would be shocked at Capulet’s violent anger towards his daughter...*

Meaningful context & development

Shakespeare may be:

upholding
reflecting
challenging
subverting
insinuating
illuminating
warning
revealing the importance of
celebrating
teaching

This causes her father to threaten to disown her as it was commonplace at the time for women to have arranged marriages to further the status of the family. When Lord Capulet disowns Juliet, the dangers of romantic love are even more apparent, as Juliet is effectively left alone. Shakespeare may be _____ his audience...

Context

Tragedy: The chorus at the beginning, the idea of fate and the internal conflict of the characters are all features of a traditional tragedy.	Italy: The play is set in Verona, in Italy. At the time, Italy was seen as a country which had a lot of warring states and families
Family honour: The reputation of a family was everything and it was not unknown for men to duel each other if their family name was 'dishonoured'.	Courtly love: At the time, poetry and art had a very 'set' idea about love and how to express it.
Role of women and marriage: A lot of young women were used by their families to help strengthen ties with another family. Women were the property of their father, then became the property of their husband when they married. They also married young.	

Interesting contextual questions

- Why are we not told the Birling's Christian names?
- How does Goole's otherworldly nature serve Priestley's didactic aim for collective responsibility?
- To what extent does the play argue that individual conscience is enough to ensure a just society, and when is a collective, societal duty required?
- Eva Smith is a character never seen, but everyone is judged by their interaction with her. What does this structural choice imply about the real, anonymous victims of social injustice in the audience's world?
- Why does Priestley choose a celebratory engagement dinner as the moment to introduce the disruption of the Inspector?
- Why does the play take place across just one evening?

Romeo and Juliet – preparing for part (a) and (b) questions

1 ★ 00:46

Romeo and Juliet – an overview

2 ★ 00:11

Match up the pictures to the characters

3 ★ 00:22

Match up the pictures to the characters

4 ★ 01:43

Romeo and Juliet - Overview

5 ★ 02:42

Part (a) questions – working with extracts

6 ★ 00:21

Characters – add up to three adjectives and explain their relevance. You might want to list the adjectives directly to the character or explain how it links them to a theme.

7 ★ 00:34

Characters – there are some ideas for the first three on the list

8 ★ 00:10

Sample question – part (a)

9 ★ 01:08

3 (b) Explore how Shakespeare presents Juliet in this extract. Give examples from the extract to support your views.

10 ★ 01:34

3 (a) Explore how Shakespeare presents Juliet in this extract. Give examples from the extract to support your views.

Model paragraph activity

Model paragraph activity

Part (b) questions – working with the whole of the play

Themes – fill the white space with links between characters and themes to explain the link.

Revision/advanced ideas

Choosing the right poem

Compare how poets present **power in *Cousin Kate*** and one other poem.

Compare how poets present the **power of memories in *War Photographer*** and one other poem.

Compare how poets present the **importance of place in *The Prelude*** and one other poem.

Compare how poets **present identity in *Half-caste*** and one other poem.

Compare how poets **present the power of nature in *Hurricane Hits England*** and one other poem.

Make links

To My Sister – William Wordsworth
Captain Cook (To My Brother) – Letitia Elizabeth Landon
The Sunday Dip – John Clare
Mild the Mist Upon the Hill – Emily Brontë
Clear and Gentle Stream – Robert Bridges
I Remember, I Remember – Thomas Hood
Island Man – Grace Nichols
Peckham Rye Lane – Amy (A. K.) Blakemore
We Refugees – Benjamin Zephaniah
Us – Zaffar Kunial
In Wales, Wanting to be Italian – Imtiaz Dharker
Kumukanda – Kayo Chingonyi
Jamaican British – Raymond Antrobus
My Mother's Kitchen – Choman Hardi
The Émigrée – Carol Rumens

The Émigrée
My Mother's Kitchen
Jamaican British
Kumukanda
In Wales, Wanting to be Italian
Us
We Refugees
Peckham Rye Lane
Island Man
I Remember, I Remember
Clear and Gentle Stream
Mild Mist upon the Hill
The Sunday Dip
Captain Cook [To My Brother]
To My Sister

Quick fire choosing

Power – My Last Duchess

Memories – To My Sister

Childhood – In Wales, Wanting to be Italian

Violence – The Destruction of Sennacherib

Duty – The Charge of the Light Brigade

Home – Presents from My Aunts in Pakistan

Write like a literary critic

WRITE LIKE A GRADE 9 STUDENT				
Analytical verbs		Comparisons and links		The effect is/this makes the <u>moment</u> .
creates evokes illustrates portrays implies highlights presents illuminates	suggests conveys reveals states explores insinuates emphasises stresses	compares reflects mirrors alludes to echoes symbolises		Striking Shocking Disturbing Provocative Haunting
Key subject terminology			Connectives	Structure or tension
word phrase line stanza chapter scene novel play text plot	noun verb adverb pronoun preposition character structure dialogue	image/imagery metaphor simile personification pathetic fallacy symbolism semantic field connotation alliteration sibilance	Therefore Equally <u>Similarly</u> Significantly Moreover Subsequently In addition Consequently Alternatively	However Despite Notably Whereas Builds Develops Strengthens Reinforces Reveals Concludes Establishes Highlights
The writer...	Analytical verb about writer...	Your point...	Quotation...	Analytical verb about quotation...
Blake	portrays	London as a place of misery and despair;	'marks of woe'	conveys this because...

Write like a literary critic

WRITE LIKE A LITERARY CRITIC		
Violence in Romeo and Juliet		Summary
<p>Shakespeare’s plays explore universal themes, but <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> is especially powerful because of its focus on young love, hatred, feuding communities, and tragic, undeserved death. These elements help explain why early audiences responded so strongly to the play’s intense emotions and passions.</p> <p>Although set in Verona, the play reflects the lively, dangerous London Shakespeare knew - overcrowded, noisy, and full of youthful energy. Theatre audiences in the 1590s were largely young, male, and drawn from all social classes, especially at open-air theatres like the Curtain. For these restless spectators, the violent street fights and swordplay between the Capulets and Montagues were a major attraction. Older audience members, meanwhile, would have recognised the familiar image of unruly youth and urban disorder, echoing real riots in London at the time.</p>		
Magpie [what ideas can you steal?]	What vocabulary might be useful?	Which parts of the play could you link to this?
<p>Longer task:</p> <p>Is Romeo and Juliet predominantly about violence? Use evidence from the play in your answer.</p>		Look at the opening of the play - how does this article help to explain why Shakespeare started with this street scene?

Starter revision

Birling		Goole
Mrs Birling		Joe Meggarty
Sheila		Daisy
Eric		Eva
Gerald		Gerald
Eva		Eric
Daisy		Sheila
Joe Meggarty		Mrs Birling
Goole		Birling

Letters on the board

Choose a selection of letters and ask student to find fitting adjectives that describe a particular character. For example, take the letters B, F, I and T for Macbeth: brutal, flawed, insecure and tyrannical.

Similarities and differences

Choose two or more characters and ask students to make a list of all the similarities and differences they can think of within a short period of time.

Five to one

Pick five characters and ask students to choose five adjectives for the first character, four for the second, three for the third, and so on.

Odd one out

Create a list of words and get students to choose the one that is the least connected to the text. For example, take the novel *Jekyll and Hyde* and these five words: respectability, blackmail, crime, tyranny and violence.

Explain why I'm wrong (or right)

Write a contentious statement on the board and get students to find evidence from the text to help explain why it's wrong (or right). For example: Birling's reaction to the Inspector's questions shows that he is remorseful.

Fifty words

Students write a fifty(ish) word summary of a chapter or scene, theme, character or aspect of context, and then feedback.

Pick a word

Pick three adjectives and get students to explain why one of them is more relevant than the other two. For example: ruthless, calculating and domineering to describe Lady Macbeth.

High five

Students write down five really decent points about a particular aspect of a text – could be on a particular character, a theme or context.

Let's get networking!

Helping you to share resources
and support each other.

Put your email address in the group chat and we
will send out an email with them all so you can
continue to support each other.

Summary and support

Summary

In this session we looked at the following :

- AO1 vs AO2
- What is an essay?
- Integrating context
- Revision/advanced ideas

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English
Clare Haviland



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