

INTERNATIONAL GCSE

English Language (Specification A) (9-1)

Paper 3 Coursework: Commentary Writing Support

Pearson Edexcel International GCSE in English Language (Specification A) (4EA1)



International GCSE (9-1) English Language A

Paper 3: Coursework

To complete the study of the Poetry and Prose texts and the completed assignment students are expected to write an accompanying commentary.

The purpose of the commentary is to show their broader knowledge and understanding of the selection available for study and to explain their choices in the assignment presented in relation to that understanding.

The commentary is worth 6 marks out of the total of 30 available marks.

It is assessed purely for AO1:

AO1: read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting ideas and perspectives.

In unpacking this it is therefore suggested that the commentary:

- shows evidence of the reading of a number of texts in the anthology, beyond the scope of those referred to in the set assignment.
- shows evidence of their understanding of those texts by referring to key ideas and drawing inferences from them.
- gives reasons for their selected choices for the assignment and why the ideas and perspectives in those choices are valid.

The advisory word count for the commentary is between 200 and 300 words.

The marking grid to be applied to the commentary is as follows:

Level	Mark	AO1 Read and understand a variety of texts, selecting and interpreting information, ideas and perspectives (6 marks)
	0	No rewardable material.
Level 1	1-2	Explanation of the texts is limited.
Level 2	3-4	Explanation of the selection of the texts is appropriate and relevant.
Level 3	5-6	Explanation of the selection of texts is apt and persuasive.

Commentary 1 to accompany Script H on 'Out, Out –' and 'Disabled'

I wrote about 'Out, Out –' and 'Disabled' because they're both about bad things. The soldier has his legs cut off. The boy chops his hand off. People don't care about the bad things. There's other poems and stories about bad things in the anthology. There's racism in 'Still I rise' and in 'Night' the girl even wants to kill her own sister. I don't know why people only write about bad things.

73 words

Examiner Comment:

There is a very simple, very limited comment on the choice made here. There is also a very limited reference to other texts but not in any way connected to the choice made. The commentary is well below the expected word count. 1 mark.

Commentary 2 to accompany Script F on 'Out, Out -' and 'Disabled'

I enjoyed all the texts in Part 2 of the anthology although many of them deal with quite sad subjects. I chose to write about poems because I like the way you get an overview of the whole text on the page. There's so much in the news about war, so I found it interesting to read about how a soldier injured in a war would feel after everything was over. That's why I wrote about 'Disabled'. It seemed logical to put this together with 'Out, Out –' because both characters have lost parts of their bodies in a tragic way. The difference is that in 'Disabled' the soldier has to go on living with his new life but in 'Out, Out –' the boy is dead and will not suffer any more.

133 words

Examiner Comment:

Again, this is quite a simple commentary and is well below the word count. The student has not really said anything at all to show the breadth of their reading from the anthology aside from the texts they have read for the assignment. They can give a reason for their choice and a reason for linking the two texts, albeit in a superficial way, but it is clear this response could have been developed further and improved.

2 marks.

Classroom support for commentary writing

For students aiming for Levels 1 and 2:

Look at the commentary:

- What does it explain?
- Do we get a sense of the student reading and understanding the anthology?
- Do we see valid reasons for the choices made?
- What is missing?
- What could be improved?

To help students working at levels 1 and 2 to develop and improve it may be useful for them to have a set of questions to think about and make notes on before drafting.

For example:

- Which texts have you read in the anthology that have made an impression on you? Why was this?
- What do you think are the main themes or ideas in the anthology?
- What messages or authorial intentions have you taken from the texts you have read? What have you learned or been encouraged to think more deeply about? Can you support your ideas?
- Which texts have you chosen/been given to write about for your assignment?
- Why do you think these have been selected? How do they help to explore the assignment topic?

Commentary 3 to accompany Script F on 'Out, Out-' and 'Disabled'

After reading Part 2 of the anthology, I was interested in writing about texts that explored tragedy and loss of youth and chose to write about 'Disabled' and 'Out, Out'. In the first, the soldier has lost his legs and youth. In 'Out, out', the boy loses his hand and dies. There is a special sense of tragedy when a young person is physically hurt or dies because of their innocence. Other texts in the anthology also deal with loss and tragedy. In 'Significant Cigarettes', Lev has lost his wife, and his work at the sawmill. Also, by making the long trip to work in London, he is losing his country. He and Lydia are going to become 'outsiders' in London, just as the soldier in 'Disabled' has become an outsider because of his terrible injuries and experiences in the war. Another text that I thought about writing on is 'Night'. In this, the narrator experiences physical and mental losses, like the characters in the two poems. She has parts of her body removed. There is a sense of mystery around the removal of a growth 'the size of a turkey's egg' which is not discussed with the girl. There is a sense of a loss of mental innocence when the girl admits to her father that she is afraid of her desire to strangle her sister. However, the father's calm response to her confession takes us back to the reassuring feeling that our parents can always make everything better.

296 words

Examiner Comment

This student does show they have read a number of texts from the anthology and gives an account of their content. They also present their choice and the connection to be explored clearly, giving a reason for their choice and an interesting inference. They do connect a third text to their poetry choice but do not really explain why one was chosen against another. There could be improvements made in the structure of this commentary to give it more focus to meet the descriptor 'apt and persuasive'. 4 marks.

For students aiming at Level 3 (or above for the assignment):

Look at the commentary:

- Do we get a sense of the student reading and understanding the anthology?
- Do we see valid reasons for the choices made?
- In what ways could this response be made more persuasive?
- What could be improved?

To help students working at this level to develop and improve it may be useful for them to have a checklist to help them gather and organise their ideas more effectively.

For example:

- Does your commentary give an overview of the anthology texts as a whole?
- Does your commentary pinpoint some key ideas or connecting themes?
- Have you demonstrated your understanding of your reading and supported your points?
- Have you made your selection clear?
- Have you discussed and explained your choices in a clear and coherent way?

Some top tips:

Encourage students to use an overview statement to begin their commentary to lead them into showing knowledge of the anthology as a whole.

For example:

I have been reading and studying the texts in the anthology in the context of landscape and place. Many of the stories and poems present a very vivid picture of a particular place, for example

Give students a clear method for writing up AO1 to show knowledge and understanding for example:

Clear statement + supporting quotation + inference

I noticed that many of the women in these stories were unhappy, 'she was every whit as unhappy as any daughter of good family,' suggesting that women of many cultures and different classes were dissatisfied with their lives.

Teach students useful techniques to explain such as:

- ✓ using reasoning
- ✓ personal opinions and feelings
- ✓ making comparisons
- ✓ statement sentences

Help students to use explanation markers such as:

The reason
Consequently
The main factor
I realised that ...

And explanation connectives such as:

if
when ...
so....
because
as a result
which leads to

A model exemplar response

Many of the texts I have been studying deal with topics such as war, freedom, places but I decided to focus my study on hopes and dreams. In many of the texts, I noticed the narrator or voice in the poem had different hopes and dreams. For example, the persona in Maya Angelou's poem talks about how she is 'the dream and the hope of the slave.' suggesting an optimistic ending, whereas in The Necklace, Mathilde's dreams are of being, 'popular, envied and attractive' and her story seems to give a moral message about wanting materialistic things.

For my assignment on hopes and dreams I selected the story of Lev in 'Significant Cigarettes'. This story made an impact on me as I could see how desperate Lev was to have to leave his homeland to reach London. He dreams of being able to provide for his family and hopes that London will be the answer, 'because it was known across the world; the English were lucky.' I also thought there was an interesting contrast with his travel companion who didn't need to leave her homeland but had a different kind of dream and wanted be in a fresh place. I contrasted this

story with the Kate Chopin story 'The Story of the Hour'. I found the twist at the end of this story particularly interesting. The fact the husband was alive, killed the woman and her hopes and dreams. I felt it would be a good idea to explore the hopes of the contemporary male character, Lev, against those of the female character from the past, who was so much more restricted and could only dream of freedom and what she would do. She also was a contrast to the modern female character of Lydia who was pursuing her dream.

300 words