

AQA GCSE English Literature

Complete Papers 1 & 2 Walkthrough

Mark scheme breakdowns | Paragraph structures | Quote selection guide

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How to Use This Guide

This walkthrough covers **AQA GCSE English Literature Papers 1 and 2** in full. For each section you will find the Assessment Objectives and their mark weightings, my paragraph structure, and a guide to choosing and learning the right quotes.

Literature rewards preparation more than any other GCSE English paper. The students who perform best are those who have learned a small number of carefully chosen quotes and can deploy them fluently under exam conditions. This guide shows you exactly how to select those quotes and how to build them into high-scoring answers.

The three Assessment Objectives appear in every Literature question. AO1 is your understanding and interpretation. AO2 is your language and technique analysis. AO3 is your contextual knowledge. Every paragraph you write should contain all three.

The golden rule for every paragraph

Every paragraph needs: **2 quotes, 2 techniques, 1 piece of context.** If any of these three are missing, the paragraph is incomplete. Build this as a habit and your mark scheme coverage is automatic.

Exam at a Glance

Paper 1 — Section A	Romeo and Juliet or Macbeth	30	1 question, 1 extract provided
Paper 1 — Section B	A Christmas Carol, Jekyll and Hyde, or Frankenstein	30	1 question, 1 extract provided
Paper 2 — Section A	An Inspector Calls, Lord of the Flies, or Blood Brothers	30	1 question, no extract. Choose theme question.
Paper 2 — Section B	Love and Relationships or Power and Conflict	30	1 poem given, compare to 1 from memory
Paper 2 — Section C	Unseen poetry	32	Q1: 24 marks (one poem), Q2: 8 marks (comparison)

PAPER 1

Section A

30 marks | 1 question | 1 extract provided

AO1	Understanding of the text, quotes and interpretation, answering the question	12 marks
AO2	Analyse language, structure, form and effect on the reader	12 marks
AO3	Context: historical and social issues, information on the writer	6 marks

What to do:

Write **3 to 4 paragraphs** in total.

Paragraph 1 must focus on the extract provided.

Paragraphs 2 onwards draw on the rest of the text.

Each paragraph: **2 quotes, 2 techniques, 1 piece of context.**

Could be a theme or a character question — approach is the same.

My Paragraph Structure — Section A

1 Opening sentence	Answer the question directly and introduce your point.
2 Quote 1	Select a precise, relevant quotation.
3 Understanding	What does the quote say or show? How does it link to the question? (AO1)
4 Technique	Identify the technique used. (AO2)
5 Effect	Explain the effect on the reader. (AO2)
6 Quote 2	Either reinforce the same point or offer a counter point (opposite view).
7 Understanding	What does this quote say or show? How does it link to the question? (AO1)
8 Technique	Identify the technique used. (AO2)
9 Effect	Explain the effect on the reader. (AO2)
10 Context	Link to relevant historical, social, or writer context, then return to the question. (AO3)

Choosing the right quotes to learn

A good quote serves all three AOs at once. Before you learn a quote, ask yourself: does it give me a strong interpretation (AO1), an interesting technique to analyse (AO2), and a link to context (AO3)? If the answer to all three is yes, learn it.

Example quote breakdown (Romeo and Juliet):

Quote	"Star crossed lovers (Prologue)"
AO1	Theme of fate — the stars were believed to have great power to control human destiny.

AO2	Metaphor — presents the love as powerful and pure, but destined to fail.
AO3	Elizabethan audiences believed strongly in astrology and the power of the stars to determine fate.

Section B 30 marks | 1 question | 1 extract provided

AO1	Understanding of the text, quotes and interpretation, answering the question	12 marks
AO2	Analyse language, structure, form and effect on the reader	12 marks
AO3	Context: historical and social issues, information on the writer	6 marks

What to do:

Write **3 to 4 paragraphs** in total.

Paragraph 1 on the extract. **Paragraph 2 onwards** on the wider text.

Each paragraph: **2 quotes, 2 techniques, 1 piece of context.**

My Paragraph Structure — Section B

1 Opening sentence	Answer the question directly and introduce your point.
2 Quote 1	Select a precise, relevant quotation.
3 Understanding	What does the quote say or show? How does it link to the question? (AO1)
4 Technique	Identify the technique used. (AO2)
5 Effect	Explain the effect on the reader. (AO2)
6 Quote 2	Either reinforce the same point or offer a counter point (opposite view).
7 Understanding	What does this quote say or show? How does it link to the question? (AO1)
8 Technique	Identify the technique used. (AO2)
9 Effect	Explain the effect on the reader. (AO2)
10 Context	Link to relevant historical, social, or writer context, then return to the question. (AO3)

Example quote breakdown (A Christmas Carol):

Quote	"Hard and sharp as flint"
AO1	Scrooge is presented as having deeply undesirable qualities — unfriendly and hard to get along with.
AO2	Simile — links Scrooge to a tough, rugged, rigid, and lifeless stone.
AO3	The upper classes were presented as hard and greedy. Dickens argues they need to be more generous to the poor.

PAPER 2

Section A

30 marks | 1 question | no extract

AO1	Understanding of the text, quotes and interpretation, answering the question	12 marks
AO2	Analyse language, structure, form and effect on the reader	12 marks
AO3	Context: historical and social issues, information on the writer	6 marks

What to do:

Choose between a theme question or a character question. **Always choose the theme question.**

No extract is provided — all quotes come from memory.

Write **3 to 4 paragraphs**. Each: **2 quotes, 2 techniques, 1 piece of context**.

My Paragraph Structure — Section A

1 Opening sentence	Answer the question directly and introduce your point.
2 Quote 1	Select a precise, relevant quotation.
3 Understanding	What does the quote say or show? How does it link to the question? (AO1)
4 Technique	Identify the technique used. (AO2)
5 Effect	Explain the effect on the reader. (AO2)
6 Quote 2	Either reinforce the same point or offer a counter point (opposite view).
7 Understanding	What does this quote say or show? How does it link to the question? (AO1)
8 Technique	Identify the technique used. (AO2)
9 Effect	Explain the effect on the reader. (AO2)
10 Context	Link to relevant historical, social, or writer context, then return to the question. (AO3)

Example quote breakdown (An Inspector Calls):

Quote	<i>"It will be taught in fire and blood and anguish (The Inspector)"</i>
AO1	If the Birlings do not learn responsibility, the world will be in serious trouble.
AO2	Syndetic list, metaphor, tricolon — creates a powerful sense of threat and inevitability.
AO3	Priestley is foreshadowing World War One (and Two). He is warning the upper classes that their refusal to take responsibility has consequences for everyone.

Section B

30 marks | 1 poem given, compare to 1 from memory

AO1	Understanding of the text, quotes and interpretation, answering the question, comparison	12 marks
AO2	Analyse language, structure, form and effect on the reader	12 marks
AO3	Context: historical and social issues, information on the writer	6 marks

What to do:

Write **3 paragraphs**: one on language, one on form, one on structure.

Every paragraph must include a quote from **both poems**.

Every paragraph must include a **comparison statement**.

My Paragraph Structure — Section B (all three paragraphs follow this)

1 Opening sentence	Answer the question and introduce your point. State a comparison between the two poems.
2 Quote — Poem 1	Give a relevant quotation from the given poem.
3 Interpretation	What does the quote show or mean to you? (AO1)
4 Technique	Identify the technique used. (AO2)
5 Effect	General and specific effect on the reader. (AO2)
6 Comparison	State a comparison — how does Poem 2 differ from or reinforce this?
7 Quote — Poem 2	Give a relevant quotation from your chosen poem.
8 Interpretation	What does the quote show or mean to you? (AO1)
9 Technique	Identify the technique used. (AO2)
10 Effect	General and specific effect on the reader. (AO2)
11 Compare effects	Directly compare the effects on the reader in both poems.
12 Compare context	Compare the contexts of the two poems. (AO3)
13 Link back	Return to the original comparison from your opening sentence.

Para 1 — Language | Para 2 — Form | Para 3 — Structure

Each paragraph focuses on a different element but follows the same structure above. For Para 2 (Form), zoom out to a key idea rather than zooming in on a word. Form techniques include: rhyme, rhythm, iambic pentameter, enjambment, caesura, stanza length, anaphora, and volta (a turning point — a major shift in tone).

PAPER 2 — Section C: Unseen Poetry

Two questions. Question 1 is on one unseen poem. Question 2 is a comparison between that poem and a second unseen poem.

Question 1

AO1 (12 marks) and AO2 (12 marks)

AO1	Quotes, exploratory response to the task and the poem	12 marks
AO2	Language, structure and form, and effect on the reader	12 marks

Write 3 paragraphs: language, form, and structure.

My Paragraph Structure — Q1, Para 1 (Language)

1 Opening sentence	Answer the question and introduce your point.
2 Quote 1	Select a precise, relevant quotation.
3 Interpretation	What does the quote show or mean to you? (AO1)
4 Technique	Identify the technique. (AO2)
5 Effect	General and specific effect on the reader.
6 Zoom in	Zoom in on a key word.
7 Quote 2	Second quotation to develop or counter your point.
8 Interpretation	What does this quote show or mean?
9 Technique	Identify the technique.
10 Effect	General and specific effect on the reader.
11 Zoom in	Zoom in on a key word.
12 Link back	Return to the original point from your opening sentence. Answer the question.

My Paragraph Structure — Q1, Para 2 (Form)

1 Opening sentence	Answer the question and introduce your point about form.
2 Quote 1	Select a relevant quotation.
3 Interpretation	What does it show or mean?
4 Technique	Identify the form technique (rhyme, enjambment, caesura, volta, stanza length, etc.).
5 Effect	General and specific effect on the reader.
6 Zoom out	Zoom out to the key idea or theme this form choice creates.

7 Quote 2	Second quotation.
8 Interpretation	What does it show or mean?
9 Technique	Identify the form technique.
10 Effect	General and specific effect on the reader.
11 Zoom out	Zoom out to the key idea.
12 Link back	Return to the original point. Answer the question.

My Paragraph Structure — Q1, Para 3 (Structure)

1 Opening sentence	Answer the question and introduce your point about structure.
2 Quote 1	Select a relevant quotation.
3 Interpretation	What does it show or mean?
4 Technique	Identify the structural technique.
5 Effect	General and specific effect on the reader.
6 Quote 2	Second quotation.
7 Interpretation	What does it show or mean?
8 Technique	Identify the structural technique.
9 Effect	General and specific effect on the reader.
10 Link back	Return to the original point. Answer the question.

Question 2

AO2 — Compare techniques and effects

Write 3 paragraphs: language, structure, form. Each paragraph compares the two poems.

My Paragraph Structure — Q2 (all three paragraphs follow this)

1 Opening sentence	Answer the question and introduce your point. State a comparison.
2 Quote — Poem 1	Quotation from Poem 1.
3 Technique	Identify the technique.
4 Effect	General and specific effect on the reader.
5 Quote — Poem 2	Quotation from Poem 2.
6 Technique	Identify the technique.
7 Effect	General and specific effect on the reader.
8 Compare effects	Directly compare the effects on the reader in both poems.

Form techniques — quick reference

Rhyme | Rhythm | Iambic pentameter (10 syllables per line) | Enjambment | Caesura | Stanza length | Anaphora | Volta (a turning point — a major shift in tone)

Want to put this into practice?

This guide gives you the framework. Literature is the paper where thorough preparation and the right quotes make the biggest difference. The students I work with learn a small, carefully chosen bank of quotes for each text and practise deploying them until it becomes automatic.

I work with a small number of GCSE English students each year. Every session is built around your specific texts, your weak spots, and your target grade.

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