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# Year 11 Raising Achievement

## English

# Structure of the GCSEs



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- ✓ 2 separate GCSEs
- ✓ Language has 2 papers
- ✓ Literature has 2 papers

Exam board is AQA for both

# GCSE English Language Paper 1

One extract usually a page long – 20th or 21st century fiction

**1 hour 45 minutes**

**80 marks** - 50% of the qualification

Students answer 4 reading questions before  
completing a creative writing task.

Section A Q1-4 40 marks 1 hour

Section B Q5 40 marks 45 minutes



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Language Paper 1 Practice Paper – The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

Source A

This extract is from *The Grapes of Wrath* by John Steinbeck. Set during the Great Depression, the story follows Tom Joad and his family: farmers who were forced out of their farm in Oklahoma to search for jobs in California. In this extract, a truck driver has stopped in a café. Outside is Tom Joad, who goes to wait by the driver's truck. He is dressed in new clothes and in need of a ride.

1 A HUGE RED TRANSPORT truck stood in front of the little roadside restaurant. The  
vertical exhaust pipe muttered softly, and an almost invisible haze of steel-blue  
smoke hovered over its end. It was a new truck, shining red, and in twelve-inch  
5 letters on its sides — OKLAHOMA CITY TRANSPORT COMPANY. Its double tires  
were new, and a brass padlock stood straight out from the hasp on the big black  
doors. Inside the screened restaurant a radio played, quiet dance music turned low  
the way it is when no one is listening. A small outlet fan turned silently in its circular  
hole over the entrance, and flies buzzed excitedly about the doors and windows,  
10 butting the screens. Inside, one man, the truck driver, sat on a stool and rested his  
elbows on the counter and looked over his coffee at the lean and lonely waitress. He  
talked the smart listless language of the roadies to her. "I seen him about three  
months ago. He had a operation. Cut somepin out. I forget what." And she—"Doesn't  
15 seem no longer than a week I seen him myself. Looked fine then. He's a nice sort of  
a guy when he ain't stinko." Now and then the flies roared softly at the screen door.  
The coffee machine spouted steam, and the waitress, without looking, reached  
behind her and shut it off.

Outside, a man walking along the edge of the highway crossed over and approached  
the truck. He walked slowly to the front of it, put his hand on the shiny fender, and  
20 looked at the No Riders sticker on the windshield. For a moment he was about to  
walk on down the road, but instead he sat on the running board on the side away  
from the restaurant. He was not over thirty. His eyes were very dark brown and there  
was a hint of brown pigment in his eyeballs. His cheek bones were high and wide,  
and strong deep lines cut down his cheeks, in curves beside his mouth. His upper lip  
25 was long, and since his teeth protruded, the lips stretched to cover them, for this  
man kept his lips closed. His hands were hard, with broad fingers and nails as thick  
and ridged as little clam shells. The space between thumb and forefinger and the  
horns of his hands were shiny with callus<sup>1</sup>.

30 The man's clothes were new — all of them, cheap and new. His grey cap was so  
new that the visor was still stiff and the button still on, not shapetess and bulged as it  
would be when it had served for a while all the various purposes of a cap — carrying  
sack, towel, handkerchief. His suit was of cheap grey hardsloth and so new that  
there were creases in the trousers. His blue chambray shirt was stiff and smooth with  
40 filler. The coat was too big, the trousers too short, for he was a tall man. The coat

# GCSE English Language Paper 1



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Section A (40 marks; 1 hour)

- ✓ Q1: Extracting explicit information and ideas (4 marks; 5 minutes)
- ✓ Q2: Language analysis – need to analyse the effects of the writer’s choice of language. Make points and explore them using good quotations and sophisticated use of subject terminology. The language features they pick out could include things like: metaphors, similes, alliteration, onomatopoeia, personification, sentence forms and the use of specific types of words or phrases.(What has the writer included? Why? How does it affect the reader?) (8 marks;10 minutes)
- ✓ Q3: Structure Analysis – How and why does the writer change focus? How does the writer change the atmosphere, perspective, setting etc to create an impact on the reader? (8 marks; 10 minutes)
- ✓ Q4: Personal response to the text, evaluating an opinion given about the text (20 marks; 25 minutes)

You want to spend about 10 minutes reading the extract before you start answering the questions

# GCSE English Language Paper 1



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Section B (40 marks; 45 minutes)

Question 5 gives a choices of 2 writing tasks - most likely a description or a narrative (but it could be two narratives or two description choices)

✓ Need to plan - the plan should include ideas they are going to write about, English language techniques and punctuation types they are going to include

Other tips:

✓ Use all five senses - sensory language

✓ Vary sentence structures

✓ Move from a general detail and zoom right into the object

✓ Start wide descriptively, and slowly move into the scene

✓ Show not Tell

✓ Use carefully chosen verbs – think carefully about the nuance of it, does it fit the emotion?

✓ Refer to the consequence of the action, not the action itself...e.g “The curtains billowed wildly in the open window.” INSTEAD OF “It was windy.”

# GCSE English Language Paper 2



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Two extracts, both usually a page long – 20th or 21st century non-fiction and 19th century non-fiction

**1 hour 45 minutes**

**80 marks** - 50% of the qualification

English Language paper 2 explores non-fiction writers' viewpoints and perspectives.

Section A consists of 4 questions, that require analysis of two linked sources across different time periods and genres.

Section B consists of a single big question where the student needs to write their own text for a specified audience, purpose and form. They will need to provide their own perspective on a task related to the theme that was introduced in section A.

Section A Q1-4 40 marks 1 hour

Section B Q5 40 marks 45 minutes

# GCSE English Language Paper 2



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Section A (40 marks;1 hour)

Two extracts on a similar topic/theme.

Questions focus primarily on:

✓ Q1: The focus will be on a small part of source A and the students are asked to select four true statements from a selection of eight (4 marks; 5 minutes)

✓ Q2: Students are asked to write a summary of the differences or similarities between something/ someone in source A and something/ someone in source B. No language analysis. Identify 2-3 differences or similarities (focused on what is in the specific question), summarise each of the differences in turn, with quotations, and explore perceptive inferences from both texts. To get top marks you need to examine what the writers imply about the issue i.e. what does this tell you about the wider circumstances, society, etc. (8 marks;10 minutes)

# GCSE English Language Paper 2



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Section A (40 marks; 1 hour)

Two extracts on a similar topic/theme.

Questions focus primarily on:

- ✓ Q3: Language Analysis - need to analyse the effects of the writer's choice of language. Make around 2-3 points and explore them using good quotations and sophisticated use of subject terminology. The language features they pick out could include things like: metaphors, similes, alliteration, onomatopoeia, personification, sentence forms and the use of specific types of words or phrases. (12 marks; 13 minutes)
- ✓ Q4: The question will always ask the students to "compare how the writers convey their different perspectives/attitudes about..." something specific to the sources. They need to perceptively compare their different perspectives or attitudes, and most importantly, compare the methods the writers use to convey their different perspectives or attitudes. They can analyse any methods, including both language and structure. (16 marks; 18 minutes)

You want to spend about 15 minutes reading the extracts before you start answering the questions



# GCSE English Language Paper 2



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Section B (40 marks; 45 minutes)

Question 5 provides an opportunity to show the examiner how they can write effectively to explain their point of view on a specific issue. There will be a statement on an issue related to those discussed in section A. The task will be to write in a specific form, for a specific audience, to present their point of view on the issue. They might be asked to write a newspaper article, letter or speech, amongst other forms. The marks are allocated specifically, with 24 marks available for content and organisation and 16 marks for technical accuracy (spelling, punctuation and grammar).

Things to remember for this question:

- ✓ match style of writing to the purpose and audience of the task;
- ✓ plan your answer first;
- ✓ leave the full 45 minutes to complete the task fully
- ✓ use ambitious vocabulary, language and structural features to present viewpoint

# So how can I help at home?



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There is no excuse for not revising for the Language exam. Students often say they can't revise for English language but they can.

Literally anything that is aimed at older students or adults, can be a revision resource: Newspapers, random pages of novels, letters etc...

Read the text and pick out 4 pieces of information.

**Or**

Ask yourself, "How has the writer used language/structure to make the reader interested and engaged?"

**Or**

Use a picture as a stimulus for a descriptive or narrative piece lasting 45 mins

# Revision help

The JFK English Google Site has papers for both Paper 1 and 2 available for students to practise their skills on:

Paper 1: <https://sites.google.com/jfk.herts.sch.uk/english/ks4/language-paper-1>

Paper 2: <https://sites.google.com/jfk.herts.sch.uk/english/ks4/language-paper-2>

There are also packs available to target specific issues with individual questions; this includes some videos:

<https://sites.google.com/jfk.herts.sch.uk/english/ks4/revision-resources>

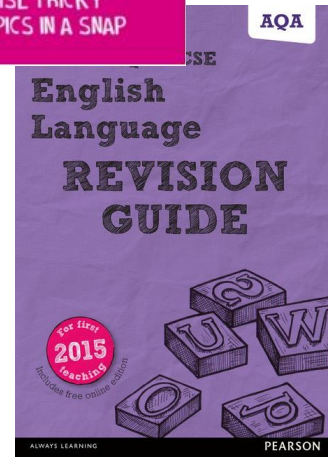
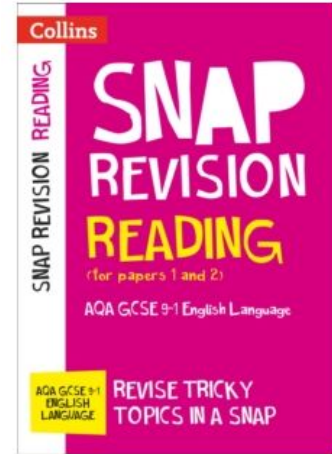
Mr Bruff's YouTube channel has many videos targeting specific questions:

<https://www.youtube.com/@mrbruff/videos>

GCSE English RevisionPod is a podcast with downloadable resources to support with planning responses from past papers - available from AppleMusic and Spotify

SNAP revision guides from Collins Education are cheap and effective.

Pearson's revision guide and workbook for AQA English Language also help to give students specific tasks to complete



# GCSE English Literature Paper 1



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**64 marks; 1 hour 45 minutes; 40% of the qualification**

Section A: Macbeth OR Romeo and Juliet

Compulsory question, using extract and knowledge of play.

34 marks (4 of these are for SPAG)

Section B: A Christmas Carol

Compulsory question using extract and knowledge of novel.

30 marks (SPAG not tested)

# GCSE English Literature Paper 2



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**96 marks; 2 hours 15 minutes (60% of the qualification)**

Section A: An Inspector Calls

One question from choice of 2 (no extract)

34 marks (4 for SPAG)

Section B:

Compare a printed poem with one you remember from your study of Love and Relationships poetry (15 poems)

30 marks (no SPAG)

Section C:

Part 1: unseen poem essay 24 marks

Part 2: unseen poetry comparison 8 marks

# So how can I help at home?



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Encourage re-reading the texts - this could include a filmed version or an audiobook, following the written text along. We would expect students to have read the text at least 3-4 times between first teaching and their final exams.

The Educational Recording Agency ([www.era.org.uk](http://www.era.org.uk)) licenses recordings for educational use. Students can access this using the school log in:

Username: [jbullen@jfk.herts.sch.uk](mailto:jbullen@jfk.herts.sch.uk)

Password: FreeShakespeare

(More have been added, including A Christmas Carol and An Inspector Calls)

Encourage students to produce revision cards for key themes and characters - the following 2 slides suggest how this might look:

Side 1 - key information about the theme, character or method (setting of An Inspector Calls, in this case)

Side 2 - key questions

These can then be used by students themselves, by having the card question-side-up, or you can help by quizzing them.

Producing these as soon after the material is taught to them maximises the learning potential.

# Revision card example - side 1



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## Setting:

1. Sets up expectations - suburban = avoiding the problems

Dining room = wealth, a room simply to eat

Eric set apart = distanced from family

One setting = claustrophobic, entrapping

# Revision card example - side 2



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Setting:

What is the significance of it being set in a suburban house?

What is the significance of setting it in a dining room?

What is the significance of Eric being set apart from the others?

What is the effect of setting it in one single room?



# Revision help

The JFK English Google Site has videos from previous revision classes targeting specific skills (e.g. writing intros and conclusions, moving between extract and the wider text, etc.):

<https://sites.google.com/jfk.herts.sch.uk/english/ks4/revision-resources>

Mr Bruff's YouTube channel has many videos for all the taught texts:

<https://www.youtube.com/@mrbruff/videos>

GCSE English RevisionPod is a podcast with downloadable resources to support with planning essays from past papers - available from AppleMusic and Spotify

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