

Exam Guidance

In general:

- Take a couple of black ball point pens, a couple of highlighters and a bottle of water into the exam.
- Don't treat the exam as a whole; break it down into chunks. For Paper 1, just go in thinking about writing a story or description. Concentrate on that for 40-45 minutes, then read for 10 minutes, then answer the questions. For Paper 2, just go in thinking about writing a letter, article or similar. Concentrate on that for 40-45 minutes, then read one text and answer the questions on it. Then read the next text and answer the questions on it. However, this is just a guide – do what works for you (but start with the 40-mark questions for both papers!).
- Read the instructions!
- Watch your timing. Aim to spend approximately the same amount of time answering a question as the marks allocated to it – e.g. 10 mins on an 8-mark question.
- Answer the question!
- Read the text carefully – if you misread it you will not gain marks for an inaccurate answer.
- If you are asked to find an example from lines 1-10 for example, don't go outside that e.g. by quoting something from line 12.
- Make sure you are writing enough. 1 or 2 paragraphs is not enough for questions worth 16 or 20 marks!
- Don't just repeat the question or state the question – this wastes time and doesn't gain you any marks.
- Don't waste time rewriting/repeating the question as this doesn't give you any marks.
- Remember to quote and analyse the words/techniques it contains. Aim for two sentences of explanation per PEEL paragraph.
- Remember to PEEL. Make a point, quote from the text, analyse the language in your choice of quote, then link it back to the question or explain the effect on the reader. An example: The writer begins the text as if he is inviting us into a secret (P). He uses the word "Psst!" (E). This is expressed as if in a whisper, adding to the secrecy, and with an exclamation mark, making it seem even more exciting. (E). Our curiosity is piqued to find out what this secret is (L).
- Watch your handwriting – is it legible?
- Try to be accurate with your spelling.
- Use the spellings given to you e.g. if the word is printed on the paper copy it down, for instance when you are quoting from the text.
- Vary your vocabulary – aim for big words (even if you spell them wrongly!).
- Keep it formal – don't descend to the gutter!
- Don't make personal comments, be objective.
- Be accurate and specific, not general and vague.
- Read your work over and check for accuracy, sense, spelling and punctuation. If it doesn't make sense, change it!

Paper 1 – 80 marks

Aim for at least half marks in order to pass this paper

Question 5

- Worth 40 marks. Spend 45 minutes on this.
- Have 5 stories in your head that you can adapt no matter what comes up in the exam e.g. car accident, broken bone or trip to hospital, something unusual that has happened to you, holiday, test, embarrassing moment, dangerous time, etc. OR use your imagination to come up with a powerful, engaging story.
- Play to your strengths. If you always write about cars and I have given you good marks for this, keep doing it! There is nothing to stop you basically rewriting a story you have written for me in class but tweaking it, so it answers the question.
- Make a 5 paragraph plan: For story: 1) hook - what stands out the most? 2) interesting & descriptive scene setting 3) action 4) fall out/aftermath 5) resolution – bring it to an end. For description pick 5 elements of the picture you can describe and use those as the basis for 5 paragraphs e.g. sky, ground, man in foreground, rocks and sea. Bring the picture to life.
- Write about what you know/be imaginative.
- Use lots of adjectives/think about your choice of vocabulary.
- Exaggerate/stretch the truth if it makes it sound better/more interesting.
- Make it engaging and dramatic.
- You will be marked on content (24 marks) and SPAG (16 marks).

Questions 1-4

- Read for 10 minutes and highlight anything that stands out – words, phrases, punctuation, dialogue, drama, mood, tone, detail, description, etc. Make little notes in the margin if anything strikes you – it will make it easier when you come to write about it.
- Question 1 is worth 4 marks so spend a maximum of 5 minutes on this section but get it right as those few marks can mean the difference between pass and fail. You can literally list four points from the text. Don't overcomplicate it.
- Question 2 is worth 8 points and focuses on language. Spend about 10 minutes on this. You will be given a line reference – don't go outside this! Write 2 PEEL paragraphs. Pick 2 quotes and use these as the basis for 2 PEEL paragraphs. You can write about words and phrases, language features or sentence forms. In other words, words or phrases that stand out; and language devices (similes, personification, metaphors etc).
- Question 3 is worth 8 points and focuses on structure. Spend about 10 minutes on this. Write 3 shorter paragraphs. These should start with: At the beginning our focus is on... The writer then shifts our focus to... At the end... You should also try to name a term for each paragraph e.g. flashbacks, zoom in, shifts in focus, repetition, cycle, foreshadowing, build up of tension. Think about what the writer is doing at these points of the text and why. You still need to quote – pick 3 quotes and use these as the basis for your 3 paragraphs.
- Question 4 is worth 20 marks so spend about 20 minutes on this. Write 3-4 PEEL paragraphs. It will focus on the writer's attempt to create X and how successful this is. Choose 3-4 quotes and use those as a basis for your paragraphs e.g. words/phrases that stand out and why, punctuation, long/short sentences, dialogue, drama, literary devices and their effect, words that can be grouped together (e.g. all focus on blood for example), start, end, tension, positive/negative mood and tone, etc.

Paper 2 – 80 marks

Aim for at least half marks in order to pass this paper

Question 5

- Worth 40 marks. Spend 45 minutes on this.
- Make a plan before you start of what will go in each of your paragraphs.
- Use persuasive techniques such as emotive language, rule of 3, lists, rhetorical questions, etc.
- You will be marked on content (24 marks) and SPAG (16 marks).
- There are several possible tasks that could come up, but the most common are letter or article. Speech is a close second. The others are unlikely to come up but are covered below.
- Write a letter:
 - Dear Sir or Madam if you don't know who you are writing to, ending with Yours faithfully
 - Dear Mr Smith (or whoever) if you know who you are writing to, ending with Yours sincerely
 - 5 paragraphs – choose 5 things to write about and make it obvious what your viewpoint is from the start – don't sit on the fence
 - Finish with what you expect to happen (if appropriate) e.g. if you are writing a letter of complaint
 - In a rare case, you may be asked to write an informal letter. The same rules apply as above but start Dear Fred and end Yours Bob, for example
- Write a review:
 - 5 paragraphs on something that stands out, plot, characters, criticism, rating, etc
- Write an article:
 - 5 paragraphs developing your idea/thoughts/concept. Make it interesting. Consider adding an anecdote, quotes, statistics, etc. Engage with and interest your reader from the opening sentence
- Write a speech:
 - Remember this is meant to be read aloud
 - Use personal pronouns and reach out to your audience e.g. I am here today to.... or Don't you think we should be...
 - Engage with and interest your reader from the opening sentence
 - Make it obvious what your viewpoint is from the start – don't sit on the fence. You could give some room to the other side e.g. I know some people will think X but I would counter that with Y
 - 5 paragraphs developing your idea/thoughts/concept. Make it interesting. Consider adding an anecdote, quotes, statistics, etc
- Write a report:
 - Use the format 1) Title – what is the report about? 2. Overview – what will you cover, what research methods did you use and why have you done this? 3) 4-5 findings 4) 4-5 recommendations 4) Conclusion.
- Write a leaflet:
 - Think of this as advertising something – how can you make it appealing?
 - Divide into 5 sections or 'chunks' using paragraphs, bullet points, etc
 - Add contact/other information at the end
- Write a diary extract or a blog:
 - This will be quite personal but should still be formal
 - Reach out to your reader/followers
 - 5 paragraphs on your ideas

Questions 1-4

- Read for 10 minutes and highlight anything that stands out – words, phrases, punctuation, dialogue, drama, mood, tone, detail, description, statistics, etc. Because there are two texts you may choose to read one text and answer Q3, then read the other text and answer the rest of the questions. Or you may choose to read both and then tackle the questions.
- Question 1 is worth 4 marks so spend no more than 5 minutes on it but get it right as those few marks can mean the difference between pass or fail. It is a multiple-choice question/tick box exercise.
- Question 2 is a summary question. It's worth 8 marks so spend about 10 minutes on this. Aim for 2 paragraphs. Summarise text A then state what you can infer from this. Then summarise text B and state what you can infer from this. Do this twice.
- Question 3 is worth 12 points and focuses on language. Spend about 12-15 minutes on this. You will be given a line reference – don't go outside this! Write 3 PEEL paragraphs. Pick 3 quotes and use these as the basis for 3 PEEL paragraphs. You can write about words and phrases, language features or sentence forms. In other words, words or phrases that stand out, language devices (similes, personification, metaphors etc) and their effect, or long/short sentences and their effect.
- Question 4 is worth 16 points so spend about 20 minutes on this. It will ask you to compare and contrast the two texts. This question is about ideas and perspectives. Aim for 4 chunky PEEL paragraphs. You need to demonstrate an understanding of ideas and attitudes in both texts, comparing those ideas and attitudes. You need to compare the methods used to show these attitudes and why they are used. Choose 4 subjects to write about from differences in perspective, differences in opinion, use of language devices, narratives/treatment of subject, use of humour, how they start, how they end, positive/negative mood and tone, use of statistics, use of other viewpoints, structural devices etc

Finally...

- Read your work over and check it makes sense, any spelling errors, whether you can add anything, etc