

GCSE English Language: language analysis practice

Practice questions in the style of AQA 8700 Paper 1 (Explorations in Creative Reading and Writing).
Untiered: these questions are taken by all candidates. Use the unseen extracts printed below and answer in the spaces provided. A full mark scheme is on page 2.

- England · Wales
- Untiered · All boards
- AQA 8700 style
- A4 · 2 pages

QUICK GUIDE TO AQA PAPER 1

Section A (reading an unseen 20th/21st-century literary fiction extract): Q1 list 4 things (4 marks), Q2 language analysis (8 marks), Q3 structure analysis (8 marks), Q4 evaluation (20 marks).

Section B: descriptive or narrative writing (40 marks). This sheet practises Q1, Q2 and a language-analysis task. No set texts: every source is unseen.

SOURCE EXTRACT: READ CAREFULLY BEFORE ANSWERING

The wind clawed at the windows, shrieking through every gap. It hurled rain in fistfuls against the glass, then fell silent, as if gathering its strength for a fresh assault.

Q1 ★ · Retrieval (AO1, 4 marks)

The cottage stood at the edge of the moor. Its slate roof sagged in the middle, and ivy had crept across the two front windows, almost sealing them shut. A thin curl of smoke rose from the chimney, the only sign that anyone lived inside. The wooden door, painted a faded green, hung slightly open.

List **four** things from this extract about the cottage.

Q2 ★★ · Language analysis (AO2, 8 marks)

Re-read the storm extract at the top of the page. How does the writer use language to describe the storm? You could include the writer's choice of: words and phrases; language features and techniques; sentence forms.

MARK SCHEME · PAGE 2

MARK SCHEME CONVENTIONS

Levels marking (L1–L4) rewards the quality of analysis, not the answer itself. There is no single 'correct' response. Examiners reward: relevant quotation, named technique with effect, and a developed comment on how the language creates meaning for the reader.

Q1 · Retrieval (4 marks)

Award 1 mark for each correct, explicit point about the cottage drawn from the text (max 4).

Accept paraphrase or quotation. Do NOT award inference or points not in the text.

Creditworthy points (any 4 of these): (1) it stood at the edge of the moor; (2) its slate roof sagged in the middle; (3) ivy had crept across the two front windows; (4) smoke rose from the chimney; (5) the door was painted faded green; (6) the door hung slightly open.

Q2 · Language analysis (AO2, 8 marks, 4 levels)

Level 4 (7–8): perceptive, detailed analysis of language effects; judicious quotations; sophisticated terminology.

Level 3 (5–6): clear, relevant explanation of effects; range of relevant quotations; accurate terminology.

Level 2 (3–4): some understanding; some quotation; some terminology.

Level 1 (1–2): simple awareness; simple reference; little/no terminology.

What to reward: Personification: 'clawed', 'shrieking', 'gathering its strength' present the wind as a living predator. Violent verb choices: 'hurled', 'clawed', 'assault' create menace and aggression. Noun phrase 'in fistfuls' conveys force and quantity. Structural shift 'fell silent' creates tension. Simile 'as if gathering its strength' implies the storm is deliberate and will return, building foreboding.

Model answer (Level 4): "The writer personifies the storm as a predator: the verb 'clawed' and the participle 'shrieking' give the wind animal aggression, making it feel alive and hostile. Violent diction continues with 'hurled rain in fistfuls', where the noun phrase 'in fistfuls' conveys both force and quantity, as if the storm is throwing punches. The structural shift to 'then fell silent' creates an uneasy pause, and the simile 'as if gathering its strength for a fresh assault' personifies the storm as a calculating attacker, building tension by implying worse is to come."

AO6 writing reminder

In the real exam, Section B writing is marked on AO5 (content & organisation, 24 marks) and AO6 (technical accuracy, 16 marks). Aim for: varied sentence lengths for rhythm; a structural device (e.g. zooming in from wide landscape to single character); ambitious vocabulary; accurate punctuation including a range of punctuation marks.