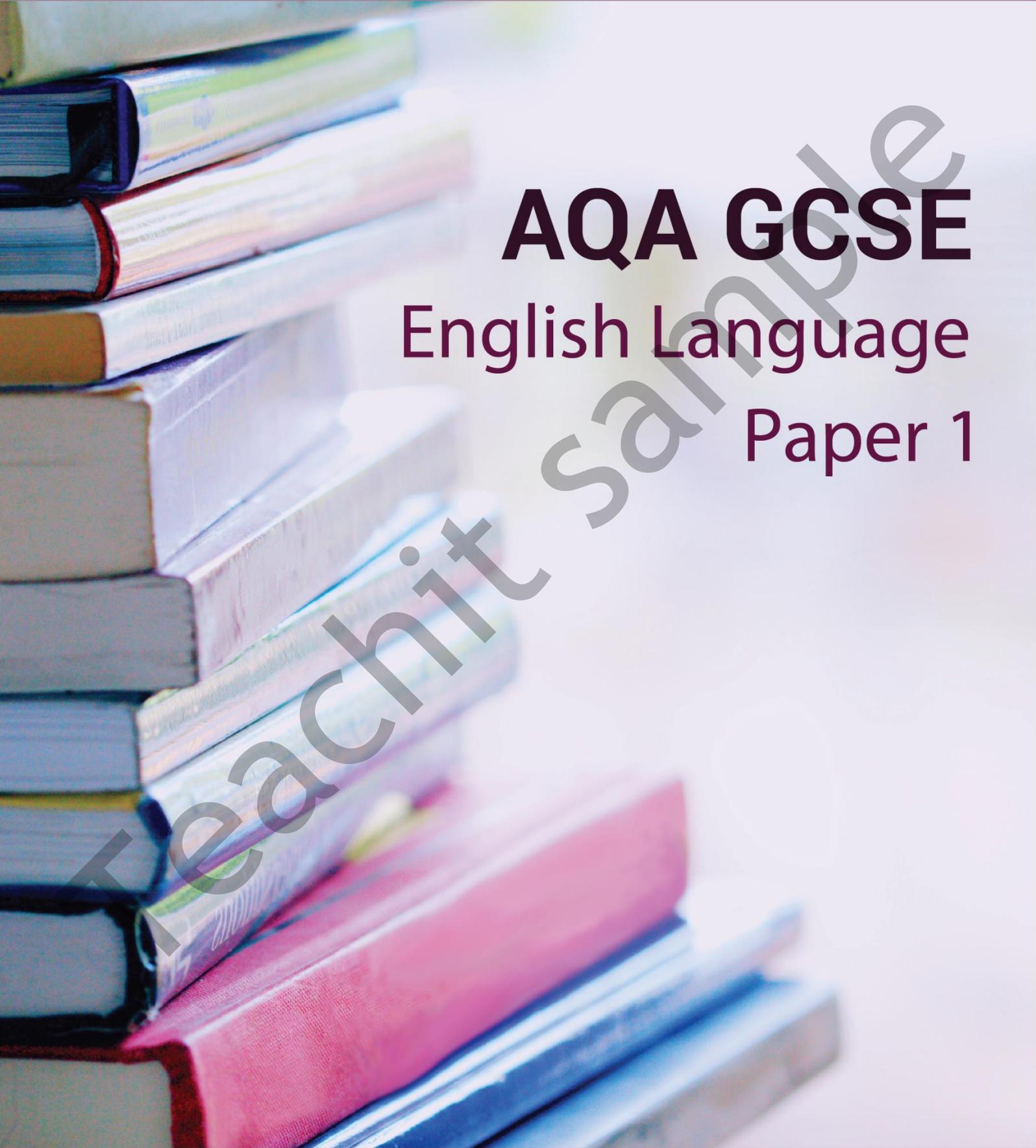


EXAM SKILLS PACK



AQA GCSE
English Language
Paper 1

Contents

Teacher introduction	003
Section A: Reading	005
Practise the exam skills: A01 (first bullet point)	007
Source 1: <i>Jamrach's Menagerie</i> by Carol Birch	
Pre-reading activities	008
Extract	010
Activities	011
Suggested answers.....	017
Practice exam questions	021
Practise the exam skills: A02 (language)	025
Source 2: 'The Singing Lesson' by Katherine Mansfield	
Pre-reading activities	026
Extract	028
Activities	030
Suggested answers.....	042
Practice exam questions	049
Practise the exam skills: A02 (structure)	054
Source 3: <i>The Lodger</i> by Marie Belloc Lowndes	
Pre-reading activities	055
Extract	056
Activities	058
Suggested answers.....	070
Practice exam questions	074
Practise the exam skills: A04	079
Source 4: <i>The Hampdenshire Wonder</i> by J.D. Beresford	
Pre-reading activities	080
Extract	081
Activities	083
Suggested answers.....	095
Practice exam questions	099
Section B: Writing	103
Practise the exam skills: A05	
Activities	105
Suggested answers.....	120
Practise the exam skills: A06	
Activities	121
Suggested answers.....	133
Practice exam questions	137
Acknowledgements	143

Teacher introduction

This GCSE pack is designed to help students prepare and revise for AQA GCSE English Language **Paper 1: Explorations in creative reading and writing**, which assesses students' skills in reading and writing fiction texts.

The pack focuses on the following assessment objectives:

A01	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.
A02	Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
A04	Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.
A05	Communicate clearly, effectively and imaginatively, selecting and adapting tone, style and register for different forms, purposes and audiences. Organise information and ideas, using structural and grammatical features to support coherence and cohesion of texts.
A06	Candidates must use a range of vocabulary and sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect, with accurate spelling and punctuation.

This pack is structured so that the reading section is followed by the writing section.

In the reading section, there are four texts. Each of the texts is accompanied by activities which target a specific skill, and 'answers' where applicable. There is a practice paper with suggested answers for each text.

In the writing section, the two broad key areas of skill are treated in turn, with accompanying 'answers'. There are four sets of practice exam questions which follow these activities, with some suggestions of the content of students' responses.

The structure of the pack is designed to be flexible; each unit can be completed in any order and each can be used stand-alone as complete units. It has been designed so that the student can work on the activities and assess their work independently.

The text extracts in the reading section are taken from the following texts and target the reading skills as follows:

	Text	Skill
Source 1	<i>Jamrach's Menagerie</i> by Carol Birch (2011)	AO1: • Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.
Source 2	'The Singing Lesson' by Katherine Mansfield (1920)	AO2: Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
Source 3	<i>The Lodger</i> by Marie Belloc Lowndes (1913)	AO2: Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
Source 4	<i>The Hampdenshire Wonder</i> by J.D. Beresford (1911)	AO4: Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.

The images selected for the practice exam papers in the writing section loosely match the themes of each of the four texts, so these would work well together as practice exam papers for your students.

Our thanks go to our contributor Lyndsey Chand who has written this pack.

Disclaimer: *The suggested approaches and sample questions in this exam skills pack have been written to complement the teaching of the specification. AQA have not endorsed the sample questions or approved the content.*

Section A: Reading

In this part of the paper, you will work through a series of questions based on a given text extract from the 20th or 21st century.

- AQA advise you to spend about 15 minutes reading through the extract and all the questions in this part of the exam.
- AQA advise you to spend about 45 minutes answering the questions in the reading section.
- In this part of the paper you will answer **four** questions.

What are the assessment objectives?

In the reading section of the exam, there are three assessment objectives:

A01 assesses your ability to ‘identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas’.

This sounds scary, but really it is just testing your ability to understand what you are reading.

A02 assesses your ability to ‘explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support [your] views.’

This means that you need to be able to explore how the writer uses words and structure to have an effect on the reader. You also need to be able to use terminology to help you explain your ideas.

A04 assesses whether you can ‘evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.’

You evaluate things all the time in real life. When your friend asks if you like their new trainers, you evaluate them and give your opinion. You might even give reasons, like ‘I love the colour’ or ‘They were too expensive.’

What is included in this reading section?

In this section of the pack, there are four text extracts. Each extract is accompanied by a series of activities to practise a specific skill, as well as some pre-reading tasks and extension activities so that you can become skilled at reading and responding to the types of extract you will face in the exam. After each text and its activities, there is a set of practice exam questions.

The texts and associated skills are organised as follows:

	Text	Skill
Source 1	<i>Jamrach's Menagerie</i> by Carol Birch (2011)	AO1: • Identify and interpret explicit and implicit information and ideas.
Source 2	'The Singing Lesson' by Katherine Mansfield (1920)	AO2: Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
Source 3	<i>The Lodger</i> by Marie Belloc Lowndes (1913)	AO2: Explain, comment on and analyse how writers use language and structure to achieve effects and influence readers, using relevant subject terminology to support their views.
Source 4	<i>The Hampdenshire Wonder</i> by J.D. Beresford (1911)	AO4: Evaluate texts critically and support this with appropriate textual references.

Practise the exam skills

Spotlight on A01 (first bullet point)



For question 1, you need to show your ability to retrieve (pick out) information from a text. You don't need to analyse here – just find the information you've been asked for! You will use the extract taken from *Jamrach's Menagerie* in this section. The activities here will help you to develop your comprehension of unseen text extracts.



Top tips

- **Read the question** and the **text** really, really carefully.
- **Highlight** or **underline** key words in the question. It sounds silly, but it can help to focus your mind on the question at a time when you are likely to be a bit panicky.
- Make sure you **select your information** from the correct part of the text (draw a box around it if it helps!).
- **Highlight** all the relevant information in the text as you read. Then check the question and **choose the four points** you want to use as your answer.
- Use **quotations** from the text as your answer (you don't have to do this to get the marks, but it can make it easier).
- It can also help to start each answer with **key words** from the question. For example, if the question is 'List four things about the boy', your answer might look something like this: The boy is 'cold'.
- Try to **keep your time** on this question **short**: it's only worth four marks.
- **Be selective** about the quotations you use. That means no long quotations or (even worse!) the whole of the section you are asked about.
- Make sure you write about the **right part of the text**.
- Focus on **giving information**; there's no need for analysis here.

Before you read the extract

All writers think carefully about the words they choose. The following words have been selected from a fictional extract in which the writer describes a creature.



- Using as many of these words as you can, write a short paragraph describing a creature of your choice. It could be a real or imagined creature.

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- Swap with a partner and look carefully at how they have used the same words.

- Which words have they used to describe the eyes and nose?
- How have they used words linked to colour?
- Which new words have they introduced?
- How does their creature compare/contrast to your own?

3. Here are some words from the extract you will read. Match each word to the correct definition:

Word
mogs
rainbow-hued
scrawny
mythical
utterly
rippling
recall
cobblestones
indifference
godly
downy
moist
bloomed

Definition
flourished or became beautiful
completely
covered with fine, soft hair
rainbow-coloured
pious or devoutly religious
like something out of a myth
remember
small round stones used to cover road surfaces
unattractively thin and bony
slightly wet
lack of interest
cats (especially ones which are not pedigree)
moving in a way that resembles a series of small waves

Now read the extract on the following page, and answer the questions which follow.

Source 1: 21st-century fiction

This extract is taken from a novel written in 2011 by Carol Birch about a boy's relationship with a group of exotic animals in London. In this extract, the boy has his first ever encounter with a tiger.

Jamrach's Menagerie

Of course, I'd seen a cat before. You couldn't sleep for them in Bermondsey, creeping about over the roofs and wailing like devils. They lived in packs, spiky, wild-eyed, stalking the wooden walkways and bridges, fighting with the rats. But this cat ...

5 The sun himself came down and walked on earth.

Just as the birds of Bermondsey were small and brown, and those of my new home were large and rainbow-hued, so it seemed the cats of Ratcliffe Highway must be an altogether superior breed to our scrawny south-of-the-river mogs. This cat was the size of a small horse, solid, massively chested, rippling
10 powerfully about the shoulders. He was gold, and the pattern painted so carefully all over him, so utterly perfect, was the blackest black in the world. His paws were the size of footstools, his chest snow white.

I'd seen him somewhere, his picture in a poster in London Street, over the river. He was jumping through a ring of fire and his mouth was open. A mythical
15 beast.

I have no recall of one foot in front of the other, cobblestones under my feet. He drew me like honey draws a wasp. I had no fear. I came before the godly indifference of his face and looked into his clear yellow eyes. His nose was a slope of downy gold, his nostrils pink and moist as a pup's. He raised his thick,
20 white dotted lips and smiled, and his whiskers bloomed.

I became aware of my heart somewhere too high up, beating as if it was a little fist trying to get out.

Nothing in the world could have prevented me from lifting my hand and stroking the broad warm nap of his nose. Even now I feel how beautiful that
25 touch was. Nothing had ever been so soft and clean. A ripple ran through his right shoulder as he raised his paw - bigger than my head - and lazily knocked me off my feet. It was like being felled by a cushion. I hit the ground but was not much hurt, only winded, and after that it was a dream. There was, I remember, much screaming and shouting, but from a distance, as if I was sinking underwater. The
30 world turned upside down and went by me in a bright stream, the ground moved under me, my hair hung in my eyes. There was a kind of joy in me, I do know that - and nothing that could go by the name of fear, only a wildness. I was in his jaws. His breath burned the back of my neck. My bare toes trailed, hurting distantly. I could see his feet, tawny orange with white toes, pacing the ground
35 away, gentle as feathers.

Activities on *Jamrach's Menagerie*

Of course, I'd seen a cat before. You couldn't sleep for them in Bermondsey, creeping about over the roofs and wailing like devils. They lived in packs, spiky, wild-eyed, stalking the wooden walkways and bridges, fighting with the rats. But this cat ...

The sun himself came down and walked on earth.

4. First, let's practise selecting quotations from a text.

Which word or phrase in the section above makes the cats sound ...

- a. dangerous?
- b. aggressive?
- c. evil or wicked?
- d. noisy?.....
- e. sneaky?

Now read the next part of the text, below:

Just as the birds of Bermondsey were small and brown, and those of my new home were large and rainbow-hued, so it seemed the cats of Ratcliffe Highway must be an altogether superior breed to our scrawny south-of-the-river mogs. This cat was the size of a small horse, solid, massively chested, rippling powerfully about the shoulders. He was gold, and the pattern painted so carefully all over him, so utterly perfect, was the blackest black in the world. His paws were the size of footstools, his chest snow white.

I'd seen him somewhere, his picture in a poster in London Street, over the river. He was jumping through a ring of fire and his mouth was open. A mythical beast.

5. List four things you learn about the tiger in this part of the text:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

6. Read the statements below and decide whether they are true or false. For each one, find and write down a quotation which justifies your decision:

The tiger is similar to the cats in Bermondsey.

True/False because

The tiger is big.

True/False because

The narrator is not impressed by the tiger.

True/False because

The story continues:

I have no recall of one foot in front of the other, cobblestones under my feet. He drew me like honey draws a wasp. I had no fear. I came before the godly indifference of his face and looked into his clear yellow eyes. His nose was a slope of downy gold, his nostrils pink and moist as a pup's. He raised his thick, white dotted lips and smiled, and his whiskers bloomed.

I became aware of my heart somewhere too high up, beating as if it was a little fist trying to get out.

7. What impression of the tiger does the writer create here?

Underline the answer you most agree with:

- The tiger fascinates the boy.
- The tiger is interested in the boy.
- The tiger is powerful.
- The tiger is beautiful.

Now explain your answer, using quotations and terminology to support your ideas.

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