

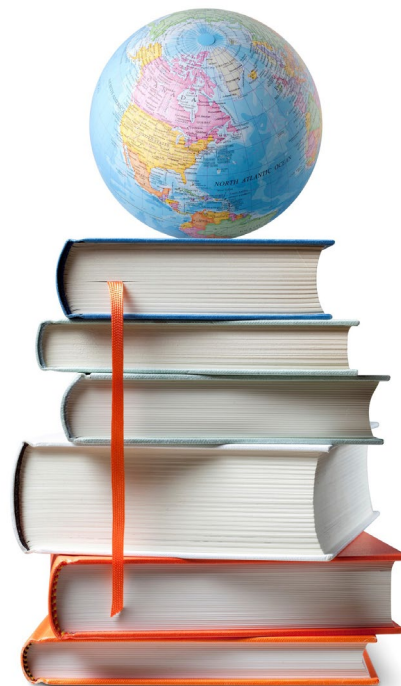


**Cambridge Assessment
International Education**

Learner Guide

Cambridge International AS & A Level Literature in English 9695

For examination from 2021



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Section 1: About this guide

This guide explains what you need to know about your Cambridge International AS & A Level **Literature in English** course and examinations.

This guide will help you to:

- understand what skills you should develop by taking this Cambridge International AS & A Level course
- understand how you will be assessed
- understand what we are looking for in the answers you write
- plan your revision programme
- revise, by providing revision tips and an interactive revision checklist (Section 7).
- Following a Cambridge International AS & A Level programme will help you to develop abilities that universities value highly, including a deep understanding of your subject; higher order thinking skills (analysis, critical thinking, problem solving); presenting ordered and coherent arguments; and independent learning and research.

Studying Cambridge International AS & A Level **Literature in English** will help you to develop a set of transferable skills. These include critical analysis, constructing arguments and presenting knowledge and understanding in a balanced, clear and fluent manner. Learners of Literature in English are well equipped for progression to higher education or directly into employment; finding that the skills they have learned will support them in a wide range of subjects and real-world situations.

Section 2: Syllabus content - what you need to know

This section gives you an outline of the syllabus content for this course. There are four papers, two for AS Level and two for A Level. Your teacher will select set texts for each paper, as listed below, and you will spend time analysing them in detail.

Content section	Assessment component	Topics included
Drama and Poetry	Paper 1	You will study one drama text in Section A and one poetry text in Section B.
Prose and Unseen	Paper 2	You will study one prose text in Section A. For Section B you will practice discussing short passages from a range of texts from different genres (poems or stories or plays).
Shakespeare and Drama	Paper 3	You will study one Shakespeare play and one other play by a different writer.
Poetry and Pre and Post 1900 Prose	Paper 4	You will study one poetry text and one prose text.

Make sure you always check the latest syllabus, which is available from our website <https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/programmes-and-qualifications/cambridge-international-as-and-a-level-english-literature-9695/>. This will also explain the different combinations of components you can take.

Prior knowledge

We recommend that you should have completed the Cambridge IGCSE™ Literature in English, or Cambridge O Level Literature in English.

Key concepts

Key concepts are essential ideas that help you to develop a deep understanding of your subject and make links between different aspects of the course. The key concepts for Cambridge International AS & A Level Literature in English are:

- **Language**

The variety and use of language in literary texts. Identifying literary techniques and explaining how their use contributes to a reader's analysis and understanding of the text.

- **Form**

The ways in which writers use – or depart from – conventions of literary forms of prose, poetry and drama and how those inform meaning and effects.

- **Structure**

The organisation of a text or passage. Structure can relate to the shape and development of a text and how this contributes to the readers' understanding of its meaning and effects.

When used in writing, structure can relate to the construction of a relevant and supported argument appropriate to the question.

- **Genre**

The characteristics of different text types: for example, tragedy, comedy and satire.

- **Context**

The relationship between a text and its historical, social and cultural backgrounds and the ways in which this can illuminate the reading of a text. In response to unseen texts, considering the ways in which a text's meaning is shaped by conventions of form alongside those of language and style.

- **Style**

The ways in which choices regarding form, structure and language interact to create a style in different forms and genres.

- **Interpretation**

At **AS Level**: Evaluating and explaining different ideas within a text.

At **A Level**: Evaluating and explaining different ideas within a text and using different critical readings to explore an understanding of texts and to help support literary arguments.

Section 3: How you will be assessed

Cambridge International AS Level Literature in English makes up the first half of the Cambridge International A Level course in Literature in English and provides a foundation for the study of Literature in English at Cambridge International A Level.

About the examinations

For AS Level you will take Paper 1 and Paper 2.

For the full A Level you will take Paper 1 and Paper 2, as well as Paper 3 and Paper 4.

To get the full A Level you can study the AS Level texts in the first year and the A Level texts in the second year. Alternatively, you could study the texts for all four papers over two years and sit all the exams at the end of the second year.

Find out from your teacher which papers you will be taking, and when you will be taking them.

About the papers

Component	Time and marks	Questions	Percentage of qualification
Paper 1: Drama and Poetry	2 hours 50 marks	You will need to answer two compulsory questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One question on your drama text • One on your poetry text. In each case there will be a choice of an essay question or a question based on an extract from your text.	50% of the AS level marks 25% of the A level marks
Paper 2 Prose and Unseen	2 hours 50 marks	You will need to answer two questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One question on your prose text– there will be a choice of an essay question or a question based on an extract from your text. • One question on an unseen passage from a choice of two. 	50% of the AS level marks 25% of the A level marks
Paper 3 Shakespeare and Drama	2 hours 50 marks	You will need to answer two questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one question on your Shakespeare text • one on your other drama text. In each case there will be a choice of an essay question or a question based on an extract from your text.	25% of the A level marks
Poetry and Pre and Post 1900 Prose	2 hours 50 marks	You will need to answer two questions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one question on your poetry text • one on your prose text. In each case there will be a choice of an essay question or a question based on an extract from your text.	25% of the A level marks

This section gives further details about the contents of each paper. The set texts change regularly depending on the year you will be taking the examination but you can ask your teacher to advise you on which text you will be studying for that year.

If you study AS level Literature in English you will study:

- one poetry text
- one prose text
- one drama text
- and one Unseen text .

If you study A Level Literature in English, you will study four more texts. These will be different from your AS Level texts. You will study:

- one poetry text
- one prose text
- one Shakespeare play
- one other play.

For the full A Level you will study seven texts in

It is important to have a personal response to what you read. You need to show that you **know the plot** of each of your texts, but you will also be expected to show the Examiner that you understand **how** each writer has created this response. You need to look at the language, imagery, form and structure that the author uses and how the author expresses the themes and ideas of the text as a whole.

You are **not** allowed to take any books or other materials into the examination room with you. This includes copies of the set texts and dictionaries so it is very important that you are familiar with your text. Option (b) type questions require you to close read a passage from the text, and these will be printed on the paper.

AS Level papers

Paper 1: Drama and Poetry

This paper has two sections: Section A – Drama and Section B – Poetry.

- There will be a choice of two questions for each text: one essay question and one passage-based question.
- You must answer two questions in total: one question on the Drama text and one question on the Poetry text.
- You will be expected to show a good knowledge and understanding of the whole text, not just part of it.

It is important that you show an understanding that the drama texts are plays, not novels, and are meant to be seen, rather than just read. You should discuss the dramatic or theatrical effects that the writer is creating, and the effect that this has on the audience to partially address AO1.

When analysing poetry, you should comment on rhyme, rhythm, stanza forms, line lengths, and of course stylistic devices such as alliteration, assonance, onomatopoeia, similes and metaphors. You must not simply identify these features but you must comment on how and why a poet has used these features, explaining the effect they are creating at each relevant moment in the poem, and their significance to the poem(s) as a whole.

Paper 2 :Prose and Unseen

This paper has two sections: Section A – Prose and Section B – Unseen.

Section A

- There will be a choice of two questions on your Prose text one essay question and one passage-based question.
- You choose ONE question to answer for this text.
- You will be expected to show a good knowledge and understanding of the whole text, not just part of it.

Your prose text may be a novel so it is important that you are familiar with the plot and the characters. However, you also need to understand your text. You need to analyse the purpose and effect of language features, literary devices and narrative structure.

Section B

- You will analyse and discuss a passage from a text you have not read before.
- There will be a choice of two passages which will be printed in the exam paper.
- The texts could be poems or passages from stories or plays.
- It is important to read the passage you choose carefully before you start to write your answer.

It is important that you understand the meaning and plot of the passage. Then you can start to analyse the writer's methods, using all the skills you have learned in studying your set texts. It is important that you discuss the effects of those methods and how they create a response in the reader or the audience.

A level papers

Paper 3: Shakespeare and Drama

This paper has two sections, Section A – Shakespeare and Section B – Other plays

- There will be a choice of two questions for each text: one essay question and one passage-based question.
- You must answer two questions in total: one question on the Shakespeare text and one question on another play.
- You will be expected to show a good knowledge and understanding of the whole text, not just part of it.

When you are writing about Shakespeare's plays, your answers must look for exactly the same kinds of things as you do in other plays. It can be useful to remember that a great deal of Shakespeare's drama is also written in verse, so some of the techniques you could analyse in poetry could also be discussed here.

Paper 4: Poetry and prose: Pre– and Post– 1900

This paper has two sections:

Section A – Pre–1900 Poetry and prose

Section B – Post–1900 Poetry and prose.

- You answer one question from each section.
- You must answer two questions in total: one question on poetry and one question on prose.
- You will be expected to show a good knowledge and understanding of the whole text, not just part of it.

In your exam, you may have a modern poet and an older prose writer or a modern prose writer and an older poet. You choose one question to answer for each text, from a choice of two.

General comments relevant for all AS and A Level papers

You will not be expected to have read other works by the same writers, or to have any detailed knowledge of an author's biography. However, you will need to know something about the context of your texts. This should always be relevant to the meaning of the text and the cultural, social, political or religious influences that may have affected a writer and their work.

You will also be expected to show that you understand each text in real detail, so it is important to use relevant quotations and references to the text to support what you say and to prove that you have a real and secure knowledge.

You should try your best to ensure that everything you quote is as close as possible to exactly what the writer actually wrote, but because this examination is not a test of memory, the examiners will not mind a few misquotations – a few incorrect words will not cost you any marks, but completely incorrect quotations will not receive marks.

Section 4: What skills will be assessed?

The examiners take account of the following skills areas (**assessment objectives**) in the examinations:

Assessment objectives

AO1 Knowledge and understanding

Respond with understanding to literary texts in a variety of forms, from different cultures; with an appreciation of relevant contexts that illuminate readings of the texts.

AO2 Analysis

Analyse ways in which writers' choices of language, form and structure shape meanings and effects.

AO3 Personal response

Produce informed independent opinions and interpretations of literary texts.

AO4 Communication

Communicate a relevant, structured and supported response appropriate to literary study.

AO5 Evaluation of opinion

Discuss and evaluate varying opinions and interpretations of literary texts.

Assessment objectives (AO)	What does the AO mean?
AO1 Knowledge and understanding	This AO is about how well you know your text, for example what happens and what the text means. The AO is also about how well you understand the text, such as the themes and concerns of the writer, as well as the context and the genre (poetry, prose or drama).
AO2 Analysis	This AO is about your ability to discuss the details of how the writer has written the text and what the effect on the reader is.
AO3 Personal Response	This AO is about your views and opinions on the text, linked to the specific question you are answering.
AO4 Communication	This AO is about how you write your essays and how well you can support your views by directly referring to and using quotations from the text.
AO5 Evaluation of opinion	This AO is about how well you can discuss other people's and critics views and opinions on the text.

It is important that you know the different weightings (%) of the assessment objectives, as this affects how the examiner will assess your work.

Assessment objective	Weighting at AS Level %	Weighting at A Level %
AO1	25	20
AO2	25	20
AO3	25	20
AO4	25	20
AO5	–	20
Total	100	100

Assessment objectives as a percentage of each component

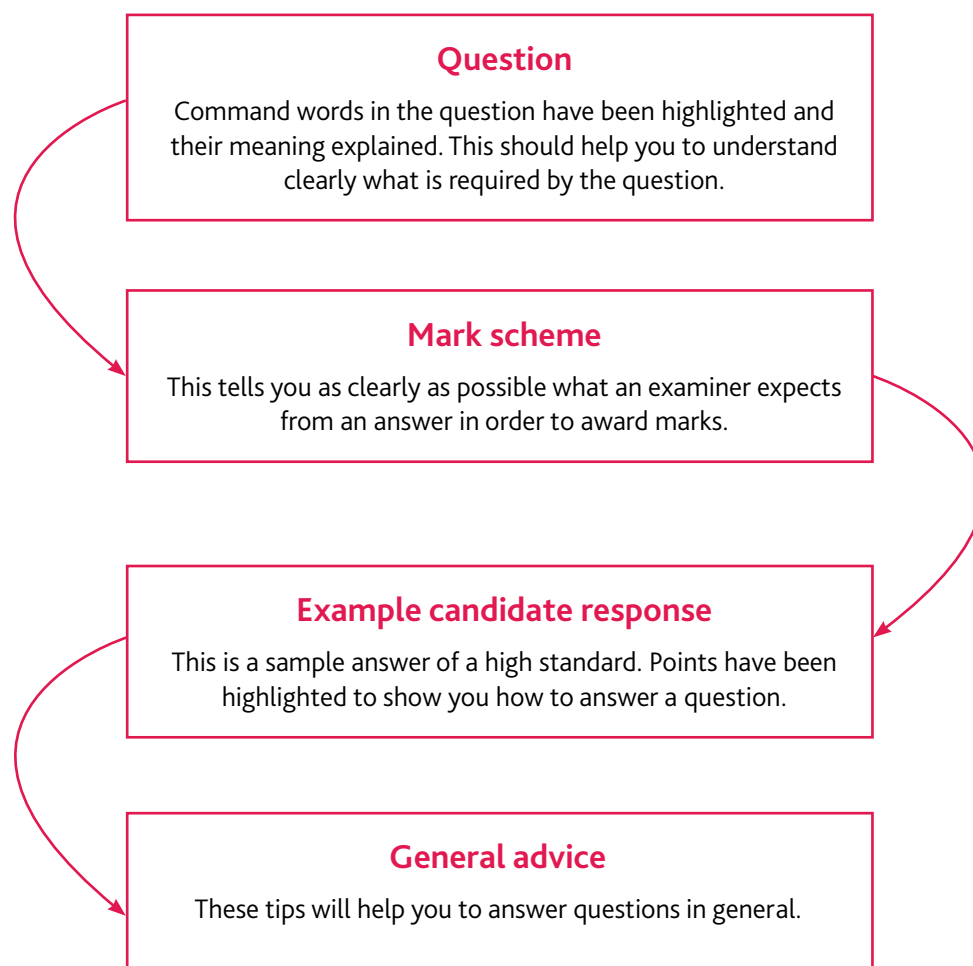
Assessment objective	Weighting in components %			
	Paper 1	Paper 2	Paper 3	Paper 4
AO1	25	25	20	20
AO2	25	25	20	20
AO3	25	25	20	20
AO4	25	25	20	20
AO5	–	–	20	20
Total	100	100	100	100

Section 5: Example candidate response

This section takes you through an example question and candidate response. It will help you to see how to identify the command words within questions and to understand what is required in your response. Understanding the questions will help you to know what you need to do with your knowledge. For example, you might need to discuss something, compare something or explore how the writer presents something.

All information and advice in this section is specific to the example question and response being demonstrated. It should give you an idea of how your responses might be viewed by an examiner but it is not a list of what to do in all questions. In your own examination, you will need to pay careful attention to what each question is asking you to do.

This section is separated as follows:



Question

Command words

Question 1 is set into two parts; you'll need to be able to write in a very different way for each of these two separate tasks.

You must discuss each stylistic tool, **language, tone and dramatic effects**, in order to answer the question fully. You could look at these in turn or discuss them as you go through the passage. For example, in this passage, the imagery and the verse form are particularly noticeable.

You must show your knowledge and understanding of Cleopatra from the rest of the play as well, but be careful, because the main focus of your answer must be **this passage**.

Paying close attention to **language, tone and dramatic effects**, discuss **the following passage** showing what it adds to your understanding of **Shakespeare's presentation of Cleopatra**.

It is important to remember that **Shakespeare's presentation of Cleopatra** focusses on what Shakespeare has chosen to have her say and do, what these things reveal about her state of mind, her character and what the effects of these revelations are on you and an audience.

(From *Antony and Cleopatra* Act 2 Scene 4, lines 23 to 60)

Enter a Messenger

CLEOPATRA

O, from Italy

Ram thou thy fruitful tidings in mine ears,
That long time have been barren.

Messenger

Madam, madam,--

CLEOPATRA

Antonius dead!--If thou say so, villain,
Thou kill'st thy mistress: but well and free,
If thou so yield him, there is gold, and here
My bluest veins to kiss; a hand that kings
Have lipp'd, and trembled kissing.

Messenger

First, madam, he is well.

CLEOPATRA

Why, there's more gold.
But, sirrah, mark, we use
To say the dead are well: bring it to that,
The gold I give thee will I melt and pour
Down thy ill-uttering throat.

Messenger

Good madam, hear me.

CLEOPATRA

Well, go to, I will;
But there's no goodness in thy face: if Antony
Be free and healthful,--why so tart a favour
To trumpet such good tidings? If not well,
Thou shouldst come like a Fury crown'd with snakes,
Not like a formal man.

Messenger

Will't please you hear me?

CLEOPATRA

I have a mind to strike thee ere thou speak'st:
Yet if thou say Antony lives, is well,
Or friends with Caesar, or not captive to him,

I'll set thee in a shower of gold, and hail
Rich pearls upon thee.

Messenger

Madam, he's well.

CLEOPATRA

Well said.

Messenger

And friends with Caesar.

CLEOPATRA

Thou'rt an honest man.

Messenger

Caesar and he are greater friends than ever.

CLEOPATRA

Make thee a fortune from me.

Messenger

But yet, madam,--

CLEOPATRA

I do not like 'But yet,' it does allay
The good precedence; fie upon 'But yet!'
'But yet' is as a gaoler to bring forth
Some monstrous malefactor. Prithee, friend,
Pour out the pack of matter to mine ear,
The good and bad together: he's friends with Caesar:
In state of health thou say'st; and thou say'st free.

Messenger

Free, madam! no; I made no such report:
He's bound unto Octavia.

CLEOPATRA

For what good turn?

Messenger

For the best turn i' the bed.

CLEOPATRA

I am pale, Charmian.

Messenger

Madam, he's married to Octavia.

Mark scheme

Assessment Objectives and Mark Scheme Criteria	Explanation
<p>AO1: Ability to respond to texts in the three main forms (Prose, Poetry and Drama) of different types and from different cultures;</p>	<p>Knowledge</p> <p>You need to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Show that you have good knowledge of the text as a whole. • Select relevant quotes and references from the text to support your ideas. • Analyse the contexts of the literary text in a perceptive and sensitive way.
<p>AO2: Understanding of the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape Meanings.</p>	<p>Understanding</p> <p>You need to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain how writers use structure, form and language to shape meanings for the reader or the audience. • Identify and analyse the literary methods, effects and contexts of different pieces of writing, possibly including literary genres and conventions.
<p>AO3: Ability to produce informed independent opinions and judgements on literary texts.</p>	<p>Personal Response</p> <p>You need to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an informed and perceptive personal response to texts. • Support your opinions with quotes from the text. • Be original in your response to questions.
<p>AO4: Ability to communicate clearly the knowledge, understanding and insight appropriate to literary study.</p>	<p>Communication</p> <p>You need to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Express your arguments clearly and fluently. • Structure your answers logically, linking your ideas across paragraphs. • Write in an appropriate and accomplished way.
<p>AO5: Ability to discuss other people's and critics views and opinions on the text.</p>	<p>Opinion</p> <p>You need to be able to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider different viewpoints. • Argue your case persuasively using quotations and references from the text. .

C. Example candidate response

Question 1(a)

The scene depicts Cleopatra finding out about Antony's marriage to Octavia, Caesar's sister through a messenger. Her 'infinite variety' and hyperbolic nature are highlighted here as her mood and tone swing dramatically from violent to slightly calmer, with her language reflecting this, though immediately after this scene she attacks the messenger even more violently. Shakespeare has used vivid language and imagery to portray the full complexity of her character to the audience. ①

Prior to this event, we have seen Cleopatra bored by Egypt's hedonistic lifestyle, because Antony has left her to go to Rome. Shakespeare sets up the audience's anticipation of this scene, because we have just witnessed Antony's marriage, his solemn promises to Octavia and his friend Enobarbus's comment, 'he will to his Egyptian dish again!' As soon as the messenger enters, she is anxious to hear his message: 'O! from Italy.' And we are eager to see how she reacts. The rhetorical 'O!' along with the exclamation mark and shorter line aptly convey her excitement at receiving the messenger. Others watching this might also think she is perhaps positive because the previous messenger who arrived from Rome brought her a pearl, kissed by Antony. Ironically, this messenger does not bear good news. ②

It is Cleopatra who speaks first to the messenger, not letting him utter more than just 'madam, madam –' before interrupting him. Her passionate nature is evident as she tells the messenger in strong language and imagery to 'ram [his] fruitful tidings'. The stressed 'ram' is emphatic and perfectly conveys her passionate mood and excitement. The reference to her 'ears' being 'barren' for a long time suggests the Antony has not sent her any message in a long time, which we know is not true. The image of emptiness is a motif in the play, picked up later by Enobarbus in his suicide speech, and here aptly characterises how Cleopatra feels due to Antony's absence. All of this language could also be interpreted as having a sexual undertone, in keeping with Shakespeare's presentation of Cleopatra and her relationship with Antony generally. ③

① The learner has already shown knowledge and understanding AO1 by quoting the text.

② These first two paragraphs are very well focussed setting out the direction of the essay – very good AO4 communication.

③ Notice the different interpretations mentioned here with some sharp analysis of language, imagery and their effects AO2 and AO5.

By not letting the messenger speak his message, Cleopatra draws her own fearful conclusion conveying her hyperbolic nature. The first thing she fears is that 'Antony's dead!' The short sentence here conveys her genuine fear. She interrupts the messenger and uses violent language before he has even spoken, calling him a 'villain.' A sharp antithesis is established as her mood changes back to hopeful optimism, promising the messenger 'gold' if he tells her Antony is 'well and free.' Ironically, she says that if Antony is proclaimed dead, she will die, the messenger will 'kill her.' When Antony eventually does die, she commits suicide. Her vanity is also evident here as she promises to allow the messenger to 'kiss' '[her] bluest veins' as a reward. She almost slips into reminiscence as she proudly states that 'kings/have lipp'd' her hands, a reference to her past lovers, including Julius Caesar. Some might see this as arrogance but blue is a colour associated with aristocracy and high-rank, and is apt for Cleopatra as she was a descendant of the Ptolemys and royalty is emphasised in the play; even when she is about to kill herself, she says, 'Give me my robe. Put on my crown.'⁴

⁴ Well integrated references to the wider text (AO1) and some different opinions mentioned (AO5)

Cleopatra seems to take control of herself slightly, as she calms down long enough for her to hear the message. In a slightly humorous remark, she reproaches the messenger, saying that if she brought news that Antony is 'not well', he should come 'like a Fury crown'd with snakes.' The mythological reference to Fury refers to a creature in Greek mythology who had snakes as hair, which petrified anyone daring to glance at them. The use of such grandiloquent language is an element of, not just the extract, but the play in general so that critics such as G. Wilson Knight proclaim that the richness of visual imagery in this play far outweighs the human element. However, modern critics like H.A. Mason do not agree with the practicality of such elevated language. As Mr. Mason remarked in 1966, the language is "given over to hyperbole and bombast." I believe the use of grandiose language is an intriguing aspect that helps our understanding of Cleopatra at this point of the play. This also links to her association with snakes as 'the Serpent of the Nile' and the asp that eventually kills her. The effect of such references is to remind us that she is dangerous and cunning as well.⁵

⁵ Very good use of critical arguments (AO5 and AO4), leading back to the learner's own opinion (AO3). Well worth learning this technique!

Even in her slightly calmer mood, her language betrays her passion and love for Antony, fearing for his life. The 'But' used by Cleopatra marks her changing thoughts and fears. Nature imagery is also employed by Cleopatra. She tells the messenger that she should 'strike [him]' before he speaks, 'yet' if he proclaims Antony 'lives, is well/or friends with Caesar' she will 'shower' him with gold and 'hail pearls' on him. Even when referring to natural things, Cleopatra's language is fierce and passionate, conveying how she hopes that no harm has come to Antony. The stressed 'Yet' marks Cleopatra's hopes.

Cleopatra is pleased to hear that Antony is 'well' 'and friends with Caesar'. She finishes off the messenger's lines, a typical technique used by Shakespeare to avoid being confined in mere blank verse, and the iambic pentameter in which the play is written. Here, it conveys her anxiousness but also her dominance. We have seen Antony and Cleopatra finishing off each others' lines throughout the play. It is typical of Cleopatra to get caught on one word. Shakespeare uses this to emphasise her intelligence and her passion. Here, the messenger's 'but yet' is cause for her to become violent again. Her language reflects this: 'Fie upon 'but yet'' calling it 'monstrous malefactor'. The alliteration here and the short, dramatic sentences highlight how she fears the mention of the phrase as it alludes to something negative. ⑥

Cleopatra finally decides she has to listen to the message in its entirety: 'Pour out the pack of matter to mine ear'. The plosive, harsh sounds in the pouring imagery suggest her determination to listen to the messenger. She repeats the messenger's words, perhaps to make sure she has heard correctly. However, she adds that Antony is 'free'. Cleopatra here possibly means he is not captive, but the messenger takes advantage of this in order to tell Cleopatra that '[Antony is] bound unto Octavia'. The messenger's pauses and short sentences have a dramatic effect on Cleopatra who, in disbelief asks the messenger to clarify. The messenger jokingly replies 'For the best turn i' th'bed,' a sexual innuendo which confirms Cleopatra's fears. Cleopatra's remark, 'I am pale, Charmian' is typical of her hyperbolic, melodramatic nature and reminds us of the tactics she used earlier on in the play to get Antony to stay in

⑥ AO2 well evidenced here with developed analysis of form and language, clearly expressed (AO4)

Egypt. The messenger, ignoring this, dramatically confirms 'he's married'. Cleopatra's tone is now less violent. This changes, however later in the scene as she has the messenger beaten, losing her regal status.

This event marks one of Shakespeare's alterations of Plutarch's account, on which the play is based. Plutarch gave a less dramatic portrayal of this event, but Shakespeare, in order to emphasise Cleopatra's 'infinite variety' has added more detail. Shakespeare is preparing the audience in her reactions, here and later when the messenger comes back, for how her passion leads her into the sort of rashness that causes her to flee from the battlefield. ⑦

A lot is learnt about Cleopatra in this episode. Her mood swings highlight her infinite variety while the hyperbolic, violent language and imagery she uses are typical of her character. The tone that prevails throughout most of this scene is violent, with more positive changes as she hopes Antony is well, highlighting her deep love for him.

⑦ Some wider context is used here to develop the point about Shakespeare's methods AO1 and AO2.

General advice

Now you have seen an example of a very good essay at this level and have an idea about the standard and the style you are aiming for, here is some advice on for your own essay writing:

- Use plenty of quotations and references to exactly what is written.
- Start to deal with particular examples or moments as soon as you possibly can and try not to waste time by writing vague or unfocussed introductory paragraphs.
- Answer exactly what the question asks you and remain focused on the question throughout your whole response.
- Try to show that you have enjoyed what you have read – the best answers show thorough knowledge of the texts, often accompanied by enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- Write about the language and literary features that the author uses. You should focus on what is said and how it is said rather than writing about the writer's life or issues which are external to the text.
- Analyse the language, form, structure and devices of your text. Do not simply 'tell the story' of your set texts.
- Write in good, clear and accurate English – use technical language when it is helpful to do so, but make sure that this helps you to communicate your ideas.
- Pay close attention to the time you spend on each of your answers and try to spend an equal amount of time on both questions. It is useful to allow yourself about five or ten minutes at the end to check and correct what you have written.
- Don't answer more – or fewer – questions than you should!
- Be brief and clear when expressing your argument. This can be helped by selecting relevant quotations and references to the text which help to focus your points.
- Offer a personal response and tell the examiner what you think about the text and the issues raised in the text. It is important to explore what others think about your texts but don't forget that it is your own response that counts most highly.
- Read the question and select relevant examples for the arguments and opinions you want to use. This is much better than trying to put down everything you can think of.
- Offer thorough and detailed knowledge of your set texts, making sure that you discuss the passage in the context of the text as a whole.
- Use the Cambridge Assessment International Education website to have a look at past papers and the mark schemes for yourself <https://www.cambridgeinternational.org/>. This can help you to know what to expect in the exam.
- Peer or self-assess one of the essays that you have written in class. You could then redraft your work to take into account the changes you need to make in your writing. It can also be useful to see your peers' writing to identify their strengths and areas for development.

Section 6: Revision

This advice will help you revise and prepare for the examinations. It is divided into general advice and specific advice for each of the papers.

Use the tick boxes to keep a record of what you have done, what you plan to do or what you understand.

General advice

Before the examination

Find out when the examinations are and plan your revision so you have enough time for each topic. A revision timetable will help you.

Find out how long each paper is and how many questions you have to answer so that you can plan your time in the exam.

Know the meaning of the command words used in questions and how to apply them to the information given. Highlight the command words in past papers and check what they mean.

Make revision notes and try different styles of notes.

Work for short periods then have a break. Revise small sections of the syllabus at a time.

Make sure you practise lots of past examination questions so that you are familiar with the format of the examination papers. You could time yourself when doing a paper so that you know how quickly you need to work in the real examination.

Look at mark schemes to help you to understand how the marks are awarded for each question.

During the examination

Read the instructions carefully and answer all the questions.

Spend the same amount of time on each question in the exam: each question for both the AS and A level Literature in English papers are marked out of 25.

Think about your strategy for answering the questions in the exam. You do not have to answer the questions in the order they are printed in the answer booklet and you may be able to do a later question more easily then come back to an earlier one for another try.

Answer the question. Do not write everything you know about the text. Only use the material you need to answer the question.

Make sure that you have answered everything that a question asks. Sometimes one sentence asks two things, e.g. 'Discuss the presentation of ... and show what it adds to ...'. It is easy to concentrate on the first request and forget about the second one.

Make sure that you have answered everything that a question asks. Sometimes one sentence asks two things, e.g. 'Write ... and explain ...'. It is easy to concentrate on the first request and forget about the second one.

Advice for Poetry and Prose questions

Know the plot, characters, style and form of your texts thoroughly.

Avoid writing about the biography of a writer. This is not rewarded in the exam.

Focus on the text and its effects.

Make sure that you answer what the question asks you.

Never just tell the story of a novel or a play. The examiner already knows the book and it is very easy to spend time filling in background information without actually analysing a text in literary terms.

Don't use paraphrase in the place of analysis.

Advice for Drama questions

Re-read the general advice about poetry and prose – it applies to this paper as well.

Remember that drama is intended for performance, so do think about how the play will be seen and experienced by an audience.

Focus on the text rather than relying on a television or film adaptation of your play.

Explore how the play is written and the effect it has on the audience rather than just the story or plot.

Discuss the characters as dramatic creations: how has the writer made them convincing, attractive or perhaps unattractive to you?

Advice for Unseen questions (Paper 2 Section B)

Remember that the Unseen question is focussing on skills rather than knowledge.

Analyse and evaluate the effect that different literary devices have on the reader. Do not simply identify the features.

Read all of the printed poems/passages before you decide which ones to write about.

Look at the exact wording of the question – it will always ask for a critical commentary or critical appreciation, but sometimes ask you to focus on some particular aspect as well. This means that you must look at what is said, but more importantly at the language and the techniques used, and at their effects on you as a reader.

Explore how the writer creates his or her effects, but do not just write a list of technical terms.

Ensure that you include a personal response to the work.

Do not waste time writing about background information, biographical material, other works by the writer or other writers.

Discuss form and structure as part of your response. If you are writing about a piece of drama, remember that it is written for the theatre, to be seen and heard and not just for reading.

Don't work through the poem/passage line by line. It can be useful to look at more general themes and methods that are used. It might be useful to start a paragraph with a technical word for example, 'Imagery is important in this poem because...'

Look for similarities of theme and of style, and take each similarity or difference in turn. If asked to compare two or more pieces, try to discuss both equally rather than talking about one and then another.

Support everything you say with quotations from the printed passages. Remember that brief, pertinent quotes are better than longer, less relevant ones.

General advice on essay writing

Answering essay questions in the examination

Focus on what the question asks you to do.

Plan your thoughts and ideas before you start to write.

Make sure that your answer is organised, and really answers what the question asks.

Use short quotations and/or references to your text to support what you say, but do not waste time 'translating' or explaining what each quotation actually says.

Keep looking back at the question, to make you sure that your answer stays focused on what it asks.

Answering passage questions in the examination

If you are going to do a passage-based question, you must be confident that you know the passage concerned, and the rest of the novel, in detail. The passage-based question can be demanding because you have to look at aspects of structure, form and language. You are not being asked to remember vaguely what was said in class, you are being asked to consider the passage in detail and how it fits into the rest of the story.

Read the question carefully, and make sure you know what it is asking you to do. Think hard about the key words like 'presentation'. These are there to point you towards discussing the writer's techniques and away from general unsupported points

Read the poem/passage very carefully before you start to write. Make sure that it is one you recognise and understand – do not attempt to do it 'unseen'.

Focus all the time on the passage/poem that is set. Use the passage to help develop your ideas rather than trying to force the passage to fit an idea you have.

Discuss how the writer is creating effects in the poem/passage.

Base your answer on the poem or passage; don't just tell the whole story or try to write about all the poems in your selection.

Answering passage questions in the examination

At A Level remember that there is an extra assessment objective, AO5 which is about the evaluation of other opinions. This means that you have to be prepared to talk about texts as being open to a variety of different interpretations.

You can do this by:

discussing the work of a critic in relation to your text

writing about a director's interpretation of a drama text that you have read

using conditional language and setting up possible interpretations. For example, 'character X might represent the past in the novel, but he could also be a symbol for regret ...'

However: this requirement does not replace the need for you to express a personal response. You should be very careful not to simply present a collection of other people's views, without making it clear what you yourself think.

Revision checklists

The tables below can be used as a revision checklist: **It doesn't contain all the detailed knowledge you need to know, just an overview.** For more detail see the syllabus and talk to your teacher.

The table headings are explained below:

You should be able to	Ways to practise skills	R	A	G	Comments
Here is a list of the skills you need to cover and work on.	Here are some suggestions of how to practise your skills.	<p>You can use the tick boxes to show when you have revised an item and how confident you feel about it.</p> <p>R = RED means you are really unsure and lack confidence; you might want to focus your revision here and possibly talk to your teacher for help</p> <p>A = AMBER means you are reasonably confident but need some extra practice</p> <p>G = GREEN means you are very confident.</p> <p>As your revision progresses, you can concentrate on the RED and AMBER items in order to turn them into GREEN items. You might find it helpful to highlight each topic in red, orange or green to help you prioritise.</p>			<p>You can use the Comments column to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • add more information about the details for each point • add formulae or notes • include a reference to a useful resource • highlight areas of difficulty or things that you need to talk to your teacher about or look up in a textbook.

Revision

You should be able to	Ways to practise skills	R	A	G	Comments
AO2	Select quotes and references from the text to support your points				
AO1	Make clear and relevant points about the text, showing your knowledge of the text as a whole.				
AO2	Comment on the language of the text, analysing the effect of the words used on the reader or the audience.				
AO2	Discuss the form and structure of the text, thinking about how and why these features shape meaning for the reader or audience.				
AO1, AO2	Analyse the context of the text perceptively to show how the writer might have been influenced in their writing.				
AO5	Consider the opinions of others and skilfully weave this into your analysis.				
AO3	Demonstrate an informed, independent opinion about the text studied.				
AO4	Communicate your ideas and arguments appropriately, thinking carefully about how you structure your work.				

Section 7: Useful websites

The websites listed below are useful resources to help you study for your Cambridge International AS & A Level Literature in English.

<https://www.teachitenglish.co.uk/>

This website contains comprehensive and interesting guidance about how best to read and discuss a wide range of texts, both individual and paired. A brief but helpful history of English literature, from Middle English to the late 20th Century, is also included.

<https://www.sparknotes.com/>

This site has basic, but very useful notes on a huge range of commonly studied texts, with chapter synopses, character analyses, themes and motifs, essay ideas, and suggestions for further reading. It is a very useful site indeed.

<https://www.novelguide.com/>

The site contains detailed discussion of a wide range of novels old and new, with relevant background material.

<https://www.shakespearehelp.com/>

A very detailed listing of resource material on Shakespeare, his life, times and plays, particularly useful for advanced learners.

<http://www.englishbiz.co.uk/>

A site geared towards pre-A-Level learners, but it does contain good and practical advice on planning, organising and writing critical and other sorts of essays.

The following sites are designed for more advanced study, but are well worth a look, as their material is full, detailed, and invariably interesting.

<https://www.literaryhistory.com/>

The material here is advanced, but useful and thought-provoking. A wealth of resource material is offered on a huge range of writers, old and modern.

<http://www.victorianweb.org/>

This site contains very detailed and advanced material – mostly resource-based – on writers from the 19th and very early 20th centuries. Well worth a visit if you are studying a text from this period.

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