A-level
ENGLISH LITERATURE A

Hub school network meeting

Presentation slides

Published: Spring 2020

AQA
Realising potential

A-level English Literature A: Hub school network meeting

Presented by

Spring 2020

Welcome

AQA

This event will be recorded

Exam boards have an Ofqual requirement to record event audio.

Recordings are kept for the lifetime of the specification and not shared as an accompaniment to session resources.

The recording will begin now.

AQA

Overview of the session

Moving from explanation to analysis

- Approaches to developing analysis

- Paper 2: unseen prose

- Paper 1: unseen poetry

AQA

Ways to approach unseen prose analysis

- Writers' methods are the best way in.

- Read with focus of question in mind.

- Remember timing: only 50 minutes.

- Whilst reading, consider methods and concepts of modern/war writing.

- Consider how contexts can be linked to wider concepts as well as general knowledge and understanding of context.

AQA

Approaches to analysis continued

- Make everything relevant to the question set.

- Limit discussion to encourage detail.

- Less is more.

- An alternative introduction might be to place passage in context first then move into AO2 analysis.

AQA

Approaches continued

- Ask students to attempt to find ways in which the writer explores concepts of modern literature or concepts of the literature of war and link to the question set.

- Always foreground the writer as this will help to prevent an explanation of the passage and encourage analysis of methods and effect.

AQA

Activity 1

- Divide into groups of either **War** or **Modern times**.

- Read the extracts in the *Resources* booklet, either:
  - ○ *Twelve Days on the Somme* for **War** (page 8)
  - ○ *Stoner* for **Modern times** (page 12).

- In groups, discuss what approaches you might take to encourage students to move beyond explanation.

- Feed back to the whole group.

AQA

Unseen prose and exam texts

Some things which may be useful to explore

- Voice
- Sequencing (including dialogue and description)
- Focus
- Setting and place
- Objects/physical descriptions
- Imagery/figurative language
- Agency and power
- Liminal spaces
- Narrative arc
- Beginnings and endings

AQA

Unseen prose advice

- Students are advised to resist the urge to start writing too soon. They should be spending at least 10 minutes reading and exploring the text.

- Responses should begin with a concisely articulated overview of what is happening in the extract **in relation to the question focus** (eg Modern times: insecurity, alienation; War: camaraderie, duty). This can only be achieved if they take time to explore the text before starting to write.

AQA

Unseen prose continued

- Encourage students to read the information the exam paper gives them about the extract, eg when it was written, who wrote it, and what the situation is/who the characters are and their relationship to each other.

- A way in is to give an overview of what is happening in the extract in relation to the question focus, then explore **how** the writer achieves this: what methods are particularly **significant** and how they work.

 AQA

Points for students to keep in mind

Sequencing	What order are elements of the extract placed in? Do we have description of setting followed by physical descriptions of character followed by the character's thoughts followed by dialogue, or are things arranged very differently? Is it linear or asynchronous? Does it refer forward or back? What effect do these decisions have?
Voice	From whose perspective is the extract being presented? What is the form of narration? Whose voice do we hear? Whose don't we hear? What effect does this have?
Focus	Where does the writer 'point the lens'? What is described in detail? What do they take time (or words) over? What effect do these decisions have? How are the things they focus on significant?

 AQA

Points for students to keep in mind

Setting and place	What meanings arise out of setting and place? What does it signify? Consider the pathetic fallacy, depictions of status, of restriction or freedom etc. Don't just consider setting and place in isolation, but consider how characters relate to or interact with their environment.
Objects	What might objects signify? Do they have a symbolic function? As with setting and place, don't just look at them in isolation, but consider how characters relate to or interact with them.
Physical description	Consider characters' features, how they move, and their clothing. Clothing often has a symbolic function: it can express personality, status, role, and attitude. Again, consider how characters interact with or relate to that clothing.

AQA

Points for students to keep in mind

Imagery/ figurative language	Don't just look at similes and obvious metaphors: figurative language is more varied than this. Look at verbs, adjectives and adverbs – do they have particular connotations which are significant? Can patterns be spotted, eg a semantic field which may tell us something about how the writer wishes to convey a character?
Agency and power	Agency refers to an individual's ability to take action. Basically, who is active here? Who is passive? Who is doing things; who is having things happen to them? What is the power dynamic? Sometimes characters have agency in one sphere but not in another (eg the public and the domestic).

AQA

Points for students to keep in mind

Narrative arc	Are things different at the end of the extract from the beginning, in terms of relationships, dynamics etc. Consider how setting, objects, physical description, clothing etc may convey the narrative arc through how they change, or the characters' interaction with them changes.
Liminal spaces	Literature tends to happen in 'liminal spaces': border-spaces between two things. Consider your unseen extract in this way: is a character in a border-space between two different roles, spheres or states? Between childhood and adulthood; cultures or classes; public and domestic responsibilities; between their own desires and what society/family desires of them; between two roles (eg daughter and wife; businessman and father etc).
Beginnings and endings	The assessment designer will have chosen the extract's parameters carefully. There is likely to be something gained from considering the beginning and the ending of the extract carefully, and perhaps comparing them.

15

AQA

Unseen prose: A note on typicality

- **Typicality** is often addressed by various references to other texts, however the following ideas offer a way of maintaining close reading of the set text rather than an offloading of everything else a student has read.

- Consider the points mentioned in the slides above in terms of typicality.

16

AQA

Typicality continued

- **Content/theme**
  Is the distribution of agency (activity/passivity) typical or atypical of texts and society at this time? Is the exploration of a particular liminal space typical or atypical?

- **Literary methods**
  Is the text typical or atypical? Think about sequencing and voice, for example.

AQA

Typicality continued

- **Approach to the question focus**
  Don't just consider whether the question focus itself is typical or atypical of texts written at that time, but consider the extent to which the author's particular approach to the question focus is typical or atypical. So, for example, go beyond saying that a struggle for identity is typical of texts written at this time: consider whether the particular attitude to a struggle for identity is typical or atypical.

AQA

Typicality continued

- **War paper**
  Similarly, consider whether the use of setting, reference to nature, attitudes to rank and authority are typical of the writing of the period. Consider the concepts that inform war literature and reflect on these in terms of the attitudes presented in the passage set.

- The question of a retrospective view can open up rich areas for discussion.

AQA

Concepts of modern literature

- Powerlessness

- Alienation

- Uncertainty

- Fragmentation

- Lack of resolution

- Isolation

- Struggle for identity

- Fragility of relationships

- Lack of understanding

- Confusion

- Restlessness

AQA

Concepts of war literature

- Duty
- Endurance
- Futility
- Sacrifice
- Hopelessness
- Courage
- Patriotism

- Pacifism
- Authority
- Camaraderie
- Class
- Gender roles
- Home

Activity 2

- In light of these ideas, read the responses to either *Twelve Days on the Somme* for **War** or *Stoner* for **Modern times.**

- **War**: Work through the response and identify the allusions to typicality and context.
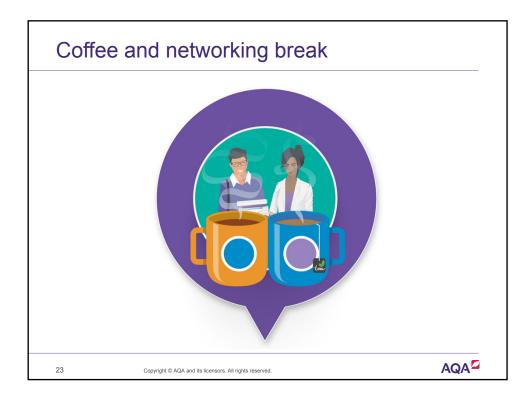 or
  Modern times: Consider how you might use the Band 3 response as a teaching aid to enable students to move towards the Band 5 response.

- Feed back to the whole group.

Coffee and networking break

AQA

Unseen poetry

Think about what makes poetry distinct from prose. According to Coleridge, prose is "words in their best order" and poetry "the **best** words in the best order".

- So, how many of the poem's effects come down to distinctive word choices?

- Does the poet strive for aural effects using consonance, assonance, rhyme, onomatopoeia, etc? What do they add to the poem?

- Is there anything significant about the order of the words?

AQA

Unseen poetry continued

- Poems are often elliptical and this can create ambiguity, even mystery. Are there any such expressions in this poem?

- Poems are often distinctive because of figurative ways of expression – simile, metaphor, symbol, etc. Are there interesting methods of this kind in this poem?

- Does the poem have a clear genre/sub-genre? Is this a typical way of expressing the meanings of the poem?

AQA

Unseen poetry continued

- How does the poet use stanza form to communicate meaning? This may involve considering line length, metre and rhyme effects.

- Why has the poet chosen the beginning and ending used? Do they use other structural methods? To what effect?

- What attitudes to love are conveyed here? How?

- How typical of love poetry are these methods?

AQA

Rhetorical devices

- Antithesis
- Parallel phrasing
- Repetition of key ideas/words/phrases
- Triadic construction (patterns of three)
- Exclamatives
- Rhetorical questions
- Sound patterning and phonological features (alliteration, plosives, onomatopoeia)

- Vogue phrases
- Latinate phrases
- Archaisms
- Obsolete grammar
- Biblical references
- Lists
- Build up to a climax
- Emotive language
- Heightened language
- Personal pronouns

Activity 3

- Read the three poems in the *Resources* booklet:
  - Thomas Hardy, 'The Going'
  - Elizabeth Jennings, 'In a Garden'
  - Emily Brontë, 'Remembrance' (pages 17–20).

- In groups, read and discuss first the Band 3 response and then the Band 5 response to Q1 on 'The Going' and 'In a Garden' on page 21 of the *Resources* booklet.

- Feed back ideas to the whole group on how to improve both responses.

Activity 4

- Look at Q2 and Q3 and their responses on pages 22 and 23 of the *Resources* booklet.

- In groups, discuss the strengths and weakness of both responses to each question.

- Feed back to the whole group.

AQA

Final note on modernism and postmodernism

- Modernism and postmodernism describe distinctive approaches that writers have chosen.

- Students need to understand that these terms refer to a stylistic approach, a philosophy or message and not just about the time the text was written.

- Students also need to be aware of the literary nature of postmodernism and the ways in which it plays with:
  - the artificial nature of fiction
  - the 'suspension of disbelief' on which most writers of fiction rely.

AQA

Activity 5

- Read pages 24 and 25 of the *Resources* booklet about modernism and postmodernism.

- In groups, discuss what strategies might be used to ensure students understand these difficult concepts.

- Feed back to the whole group.

- Plenary

 AQA

Resources

Take advantage of our extra resources in the 'Plan', 'Teach' and 'Assess' sections of our website.

Teaching resources

Plan 11	Teach 14	Assess 72
Prepare for your teaching year. Information, support and services to help you deliver the specification.	Teaching resources that you can use to plan your lessons and support your students' learning.	Prepare your students for assessment. Past papers, mark schemes and example answers.
All planning resources ›	**All teaching resources ›**	**All assessment resources ›**

 AQA

Event materials

The electronic materials from this event will be made available to you in the customer portal of our online booking system.

Once we receive notification that you have attended the course, you will be sent a certificate of attendance email. When you receive the email, please log in to your account and the materials will be available on the 'my resources' tab on the welcome screen.

AQA

How did we do?

Please take a moment to complete a brief evaluation form for today's event. Your feedback is very important to us as it helps us improve and plan future training.
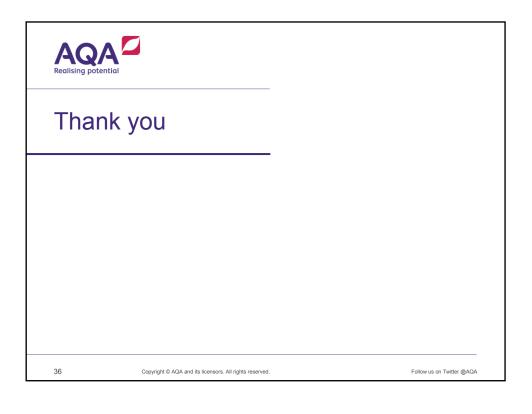
You should have been emailed the evaluation form. Please check your inbox (possibly your junk mail folder). If you haven't received it please give your trainer your name, centre name/number and email address so that we can look into it for you.

Thank you.

AQA

Get in touch

Our friendly team will be happy to support you between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 0161 953 7504
Email: english-gce@aqa.org.uk
Twitter: @AQAEnglish

aqa.org.uk

35   AQA

AQA
Realising potential

Thank you

36   Follow us on Twitter @AQA

Notes

Contact us

Our friendly team will be happy to support you between 8am and 5pm, Monday to Friday.

Tel: 0161 953 7504
Email: english-gce@aqa.org.uk
Twitter: @AQAEnglish

aqa.org.uk