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International Education

# Cambridge International AS & A Level

**LITERATURE IN ENGLISH** **9695/21**

Paper 2 Prose and Unseen **October/November 2025**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

**Published**

This mark scheme is published as an aid to teachers and candidates, to indicate the requirements of the examination. It shows the basis on which Examiners were instructed to award marks. It does not indicate the details of the discussions that took place at an Examiners' meeting before marking began, which would have considered the acceptability of alternative answers.

Mark schemes should be read in conjunction with the question paper and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

Cambridge International will not enter into discussions about these mark schemes.

Cambridge International is publishing the mark schemes for the October/November 2025 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.



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## Generic Marking Principles

These general marking principles must be applied by all examiners when marking candidate answers. They should be applied alongside the specific content of the mark scheme or generic level descriptions for a question. Each question paper and mark scheme will also comply with these marking principles.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 1:

Marks must be awarded in line with:

- the specific content of the mark scheme or the generic level descriptors for the question
- the specific skills defined in the mark scheme or in the generic level descriptors for the question
- the standard of response required by a candidate as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 2:

Marks awarded are always **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 3:

Marks must be awarded **positively**:

- marks are awarded for correct/valid answers, as defined in the mark scheme. However, credit is given for valid answers which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme, referring to your Team Leader as appropriate
- marks are awarded when candidates clearly demonstrate what they know and can do
- marks are not deducted for errors
- marks are not deducted for omissions
- answers should only be judged on the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar when these features are specifically assessed by the question as indicated by the mark scheme. The meaning, however, should be unambiguous.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 4:

Rules must be applied consistently, e.g. in situations where candidates have not followed instructions or in the application of generic level descriptors.

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 5:

Marks should be awarded using the full range of marks defined in the mark scheme for the question (however; the use of the full mark range may be limited according to the quality of the candidate responses seen).

GENERIC MARKING PRINCIPLE 6:

Marks awarded are based solely on the requirements as defined in the mark scheme. Marks should not be awarded with grade thresholds or grade descriptors in mind.

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**English & Media subject specific general marking principles**
**(To be read in conjunction with the Generic Marking Principles (and requiring further guidance on how to place marks within levels))**

**Components using level descriptors:**

- We use level descriptors as a guide to broad understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or typical of, work in a level.
- Level descriptors are a means of general guidance and should not be interpreted as hurdle statements.
- Where indicative content notes are supplied for a question, these are *not* a prescription of required content, and must not be treated as such. Alternative correct points and unexpected answers in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the knowledge and skills demonstrated.
- While we may have legitimate expectations as to the ground most answers may occupy, we must at all times be prepared to meet candidates on their chosen ground, provided it is relevant ground (e.g. clearly related to and derived from a relevant passage/text and meeting the mark scheme requirements for the question).

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## Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

## Annotations

| Annotation | Meaning |
|---|---|
|  | Knowledge |
|  | Understanding |
|  | Personal response |
|  | Communication |
|  | Analysis |
|  | Question |
|  | Context |
|  | Narrative |
|  | Question mark |
|  | Blank Page |
|  | Seen |
|  | Tick |

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**Literature in English specific marking instructions**

Candidates are required to answer two questions in total: **one** question from Section A: Prose and **one** question from Section B: Unseen.

There are two separate levels descriptors tables. Please ensure you use the appropriate marking criteria to mark each candidate response. Table A for Section A: Prose and Table B for Section B: Unseen.

Each answer is marked out of 25.

**Using the mark levels**

Use the generic mark scheme levels to find the mark. Place the answer in a level first. Look for the 'best fit' of the answer into a level. An answer needs to show evidence of most but not necessarily ALL of the qualities described in a level, in order to be placed in that level. Then award a mark for the relative position of the answer within the level.

Candidates may address the question in many different ways. There is no one required answer or approach and do not penalise answers for leaving out a particular focus. Reward what is there, showing what you are rewarding in your comments.

Consider all strands and weigh up the performance as a whole in placing the answer in a level, then show that you have done so in the summative comment.

Each answer is marked out of 25, in accordance with the general marking criteria.

**Assessment objectives**

All assessment objectives are equally weighted, and all are considered in assessing each essay.

Each level in the marking criteria is divided into strands corresponding to the assessment objectives – AO1: Knowledge and understanding (K/U), AO2: Analysis (AN), AO3: Personal response (P), AO4: Communication (C).

| |
|---|
| **AO1 Knowledge and understanding**<br><br>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**<br><br>Analyse ways in which writers' choices of language, form and structure shape meanings and effects. |
| **AO3 Personal response**<br><br>Produce informed independent opinions and interpretations of literary texts. |
| **AO4 Communication**<br><br>Communicate a relevant, structured and supported response appropriate to literary study. |

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**Table A**

**Section A: Prose**

| Level | Level descriptor | Mark |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **Perceptive and assured** | **22–25** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of a detailed, assured knowledge and perceptive understanding; ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with a developed use of references to the text and supporting quotations.<br>• Evidence of a perceptive appreciation of context(s) relevant to the question. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Evidence of a perceptive analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Evidence of an assured appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of personal response to texts will be perceptive and interpretations will be well informed and fully supported with assured use of quotations.<br>• Evidence of a perceptive independence of response which may show originality in the approach to and treatment of questions. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express complex literary ideas and arguments with clarity, fluency and perception.<br>• Answers will be relevant and assured with an accomplished structure shown through logical progression and effectively linked paragraphs. | |
| **5** | **Confident and thorough** | **18–21** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of a thorough knowledge and confident understanding; ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with a secure use of references to the text and supporting quotations.<br>• Evidence of a confident appreciation of context(s) relevant to the question. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Evidence of a thorough analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Evidence of a confident appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of personal response to texts will be confident and interpretations will be informed and supported with secure use of quotations.<br>• Evidence of independence of response which may show originality in the approach to and treatment of questions. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express some complex literary ideas and arguments with clarity, fluency and confidence.<br>• Answers will be relevant and thorough with an appropriate structure which shows a progression of ideas through linked paragraphs. | |

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| Level | Level descriptor | Mark |
|---|---|---|
| **4** | **Sound and competent** | **14–17** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of a sound knowledge and a clear understanding; ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with a competent use of references to the text and supporting quotations.<br>• Evidence of a sound appreciation of context(s) relevant to the question. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Evidence of a competent analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Evidence of a sound appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of personal response to texts will be sound and interpretations may be informed and supported with competent use of quotations.<br>• Evidence of some independence of response and insight in the approach to and treatment of questions. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express literary ideas and arguments with some clarity, fluency and competence.<br>• Answers will be relevant and sound with a structure which shows a progression of ideas through paragraphs which may not always be clearly linked. | |
| **3** | **Straightforward and partial** | **10–13** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of straightforward knowledge and a partial understanding; some ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with some use of references to the text and supporting quotations.<br>• Evidence of some awareness of context(s) relevant to the question. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Evidence of a straightforward analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Evidence of a partial appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of a straightforward personal response to texts; interpretations may be partial and sometimes supported with quotations.<br>• Some evidence of the beginnings of an independent response and approach to and treatment of questions. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express straightforward literary ideas and arguments with occasional reliance on narrative summary or paraphrase; some loss of clarity and fluency.<br>• Answers will be straightforward and mostly relevant with a structure which shows some progression of simple ideas through paragraphs which may not always be linked. | |

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| Level | Level descriptor | Mark |
|---|---|---|
| **2** | **Basic and limited** | **6–9** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of basic knowledge and a limited understanding; basic ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with limited use of references to the text and supporting quotations.<br>• Evidence of a limited awareness of context(s) relevant to the question. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Evidence of a basic analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Evidence of a limited appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of a limited personal response to texts; interpretations may be basic and rarely supported with quotations.<br>• Limited evidence of any independent response and the approach to and treatment of questions will be basic. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express basic ideas and arguments with some reliance on narrative summary or paraphrase; there may be some loss of clarity and fluency.<br>• Answers will be basic, mostly relevant with some repetition and a limited structure; paragraphs may not always be clearly linked. | |
| **1** | **Generalised and restricted** | **1–5** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of a restricted, generalised knowledge of the text which may be narrative-based.<br>• Evidence of a restricted ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with little or no reference to the text.<br>• Little or no awareness of context(s) relevant to the question. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Little or no evidence of analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Little or no appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of a restricted personal response to texts; interpretations may be generalised and rarely supported with quotations.<br>• Little or no evidence of any independent response and the approach to and treatment of questions will be insecure. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express ideas generally with some attempt at narrative summary or paraphrase; clarity and fluency will be restricted.<br>• Answers will be generalised with little to no relevance or structure; asserting simple points rather than building lines of argument. | |
| **0** | | |
| | • Work shows no relevant ideas or evidence in response to the question. | **0** |

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**Section A: Prose**

Candidates answer **one** question from Section A.

KIRAN DESAI: *The Inheritance of Loss*

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|---|---|---|
| **EITHER** | | |
| 1(a) | **Discuss Desai's presentation of Jemubhai and his role in the novel.**<br><br>Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria. | **25** |
| **OR** | | |
| 1(b) | **Comment closely on Desai's presentation of Biju's experience in the following passage.**<br><br>Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria. | **25** |

*Stories of Ourselves, Volume 1*

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|---|---|---|
| **EITHER** | | |
| 2(a) | **Discuss ways in which the writers of <u>two</u> stories present life in rural areas.**<br><br>Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria. | **25** |
| **OR** | | |
| 2(b) | **Comment closely on the following passage from *The Yellow Wallpaper*, considering Charlotte Perkins Gilman's presentation of the narrator's attitude to her husband, John.**<br><br>Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria. | **25** |

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EVELYN WAUGH: A Handful of Dust

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|---|---|---|
| **EITHER** | | |
| 3(a) | **'In *A Handful of Dust*, Waugh turns dreadful situations into social comedy.'**<br><br>**How far and in what ways do you agree with this view of the novel?**<br><br>Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria. | **25** |
| **OR** | | |
| 3(b) | **Comment closely on Waugh's presentation of the bedrooms of Hetton in the following passage.**<br><br>Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria. | **25** |

COLSON WHITEHEAD: *The Underground Railroad*

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|---|---|---|
| **EITHER** | | |
| 4(a) | **Discuss the presentation and importance of North Carolina in the novel.**<br><br>Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria. | **25** |
| **OR** | | |
| 4(b) | **Comment closely on the following passage, considering ways in which Whitehead presents Caesar and Cora escaping in Fletcher's cart.**<br><br>Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria. | **25** |

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**Table B**

**Section B: Unseen**

| Level | Level descriptor | Mark |
|---|---|---|
| **6** | **Perceptive and assured** | **22–25** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of a detailed, assured knowledge and perceptive understanding; ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with a developed use of references to the text and supporting quotations.<br>• There will be an assured awareness of the text type (poetry, prose or drama) which helps to perceptively inform an understanding of the text throughout the response. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Evidence of a perceptive analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Evidence of assured appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of personal response to texts will be perceptive and interpretations will be well informed and fully supported with assured use of quotations.<br>• Evidence of a perceptive independence of response which may show originality in the approach to and treatment of questions. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express complex literary ideas and arguments with clarity, fluency and perception.<br>• Answers will be relevant and assured with an accomplished structure shown through logical progression and effectively linked paragraphs. | |

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| Level | Level descriptor | Mark |
|---|---|---|
| **5** | **Confident and thorough** | **18–21** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of a thorough knowledge and confident understanding; ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with a secure use of references to the text and supporting quotations.<br>• There will be a confident awareness of the text type (poetry, prose or drama) which helps to securely inform an understanding of the text throughout the response. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Evidence of a thorough analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Confident appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of personal response to texts will be confident and interpretations will be informed and supported with secure use of quotations.<br>• Evidence of independence of response which may show originality in the approach to and treatment of questions. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express some complex literary ideas and arguments with clarity, fluency and confidence.<br>• Answers will be relevant and thorough with an appropriate structure which shows a progression of ideas through linked paragraphs. | |

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| Level | Level descriptor | Mark |
|---|---|---|
| **4** | **Sound and competent** | **14–17** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of a sound knowledge and a clear understanding; ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with a competent use of references to the text and supporting quotations.<br>• There will be a clear awareness of the text type (poetry, prose or drama) which helps to competently inform an understanding of the text throughout the response. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Evidence of a competent analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Sound appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of personal response to texts will be sound and interpretations may be informed and supported with competent use of quotations.<br>• There may be evidence of some independence of response and insight in the approach to and treatment of questions. | |
| AO4(C) | • Answers will express literary ideas and arguments with some clarity, fluency and competence.<br>• Answers will be relevant and sound with a structure which shows a progression of ideas through paragraphs which may not always be clearly linked. | |
| **3** | **Straightforward and partial** | **10–13** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of straightforward knowledge and a partial understanding; some ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with some use of references to the text and supporting quotations.<br>• Evidence of a straightforward understanding and awareness of the text type (poetry, prose or drama) which may partially inform an understanding of the text throughout the response. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Evidence of a straightforward analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Partial appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of a straightforward personal response to texts; interpretations may be partial and sometimes supported with quotations.<br>• There may be some evidence of the beginnings of an independent response and approach to and treatment of questions. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express straightforward literary ideas and arguments with occasional reliance on narrative summary or paraphrase; some loss of clarity and fluency.<br>• Answers will be straightforward and mostly relevant with a structure which shows some progression of simple ideas through paragraphs which may not always be linked. | |

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| Level | Level descriptor | Mark |
|---|---|---|
| **2** | **Basic and limited** | **6–9** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of basic knowledge and a limited understanding; basic ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with limited use of references to the text and supporting quotations.<br>• Evidence of a basic awareness of the text type (poetry, prose or drama) which may support a limited understanding of the text throughout the response. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Evidence of a basic analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Limited appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of a limited personal response to texts; interpretations may be basic and rarely supported with quotations.<br>• There may be limited evidence of any independent response and the approach to and treatment of questions will be basic. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express basic ideas and arguments with some reliance on narrative summary or paraphrase; there may be some loss of clarity and fluency.<br>• Answers will be basic, mostly relevant with some repetition and a limited structure; paragraphs may not always be clearly linked. | |
| **1** | **Generalised and restricted** | **1–5** |
| AO1 (K/U) | • Evidence of a restricted, generalised knowledge of the text which may be narrative-based.<br>• Evidence of a restricted ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with little or no reference to the text.<br>• Little or no evidence of awareness of the text type (poetry, prose or drama) relevant to the question. | |
| AO2 (AN) | • Little or no evidence of analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects.<br>• Little or no appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions. | |
| AO3 (P) | • Evidence of a restricted personal response to texts; interpretations may be generalised and rarely supported with quotations.<br>• Little or no evidence of any independent response and the approach to and treatment of questions will be insecure. | |
| AO4 (C) | • Answers will express ideas generally with some attempt at narrative summary or paraphrase; clarity and fluency will be restricted.<br>• Answers will be generalised with little to no relevance or structure; asserting simple points rather than building lines of argument. | |
| **0** | | |
| | • Work shows no relevant ideas or evidence in response to the question. | **0** |

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**Section B: Unseen**

Candidates answer **one** question from Section B.

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|---|---|---|
| **EITHER** | | |
| 5 | **Comment closely on the following poem, considering ways in which the poet presents the relationship between the friends.**<br><br>**In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, structure and poetic methods.**<br><br>Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria. | **25** |

| Question | Answer | Marks |
|---|---|---|
| **OR** | | |
| 6 | **Comment closely on the presentation of the discussion between Siward and Malcolm, the king, in the following extract.**<br><br>**In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, dialogue and dramatic methods.**<br><br>Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria. | **25** |

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