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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **9695/42**

Paper 4 Pre- and Post-1900 Poetry and Prose **February/March 2026**

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 February/March 2026 series for most Cambridge IGCSE, Cambridge International A and AS Level components, and some Cambridge O Level components.

This document consists of **15** printed pages.

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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
	Evaluation of Opinions
	Analysis
	Question
	Context
	Narrative
	Question mark
	Seen
	Tick

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Literature in English specific marking instructions

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), AO5: Evaluation of opinions (O).

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 opinions The ability to discuss and evaluate varying opinions and interpretations of literary works.

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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. • Evidence of a perceptive appreciation of context(s) relevant to the question. • In answers to the (b) questions there will be perceptive and assured connections between the passage and the wider text. • Answers will sustain an appropriate balance in relating part of a text to its whole and vice versa in an assured argument.	
AO2 (AN)	• Evidence of a perceptive analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects. • 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. • 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. • Answers will be relevant and assured with an accomplished structure shown through logical progression and effectively linked paragraphs.	
AO5 (O)	• Perceptively considers and evaluates varying opinions and interpretations which work to support an assured argument consistently relevant to the question, with support from the text.	
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. • Evidence of a confident appreciation of context(s) relevant to the question. • In answers to the (b) questions there will be confident and detailed connections between the passage and the wider text. • Answers will develop an appropriate balance in relating part of a text to its whole in a confident argument.	
AO2 (AN)	• Evidence of a thorough analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects. • Evidence of a confident appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions.	

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Level	Level descriptor	Mark
AO3 (P)	• Evidence of personal response to texts will be confident and interpretations will be informed and supported with secure use of quotations. • 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. • Answers will be relevant and thorough with an appropriate structure which shows a progression of ideas through linked paragraphs.	
AO5 (O)	• Thoroughly considers and evaluates varying opinions and interpretations which work to support a confident argument relevant to the question, with support from the text.	
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. • Evidence of a sound appreciation of context(s) relevant to the question. • In answers to the (b) questions there will be sound and competent connections between the passage and the wider text. • Answers will competently balance an approach to both the passage and its relation to the whole text in a sound argument.	
AO2 (AN)	• Evidence of a competent analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects. • 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. • 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. • Answers will be relevant and sound with a structure which shows a progression of ideas through paragraphs which may not always be clearly linked.	
AO5 (O)	• Competently considers and attempts to evaluate varying opinions and interpretations which work to support a sound argument to the question, with support from the text.	

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Level	Level descriptor	Mark
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. • Evidence of some awareness of context(s) relevant to the question. • In answers to the (b) questions there will be straightforward and partial connections between the passage and the wider text. • Answers may be partial and lack a balanced approach with an over-concentration on the given extracts or conversely generalised, with insufficient appreciation of the passages in a straightforward argument.	
AO2 (AN)	• Evidence of a straightforward analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects. • 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. • 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. • 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.	
AO5 (O)	• Straightforwardly considers some other opinions and may make some attempts to evaluate interpretations trying to build an argument, which may be partial, with some support from the text.	
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. • Evidence of a limited awareness of context(s) relevant to the question. • In answers to the (b) questions there may be basic and limited connections between the passage and the wider text. • Answers will be limited in their ability to balance part of the text with the whole and may be sketchy, overlong and undiscriminating giving a basic argument.	
AO2 (AN)	• Evidence of a basic analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects. • Evidence of a limited appreciation of literary methods such as language, form and structure and literary genres and conventions.	

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Level	Level descriptor	Mark
AO3 (P)	• Evidence of a limited personal response to texts; interpretations may be basic and rarely supported with quotations. • 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. • Answers will be basic, mostly relevant with some repetition and a limited structure; paragraphs may not always be clearly linked.	
AO5 (O)	• May mention some other opinions, perhaps those expressed in the question and may make some basic attempt to support an argument with limited support from the text.	
1	**Generalised and restricted**	**1–5**
AO1 (K/U)	• Evidence of a restricted, generalised knowledge of the text which may be narrative-based. • Evidence of a restricted ability to select and use relevant knowledge to address the question with little or no reference to the text. • Little or no awareness of context(s) relevant to the question. • In answers to the (b) questions there may be restricted connections between the passage and the wider text, giving a generalised argument.	
AO2 (AN)	• Little or no evidence of analysis of ways in which writers' choices shape meaning and create effects. • 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. • 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. • Answers will be generalised with little to no relevance or structure; asserting simple points rather than building lines of argument.	
AO5 (O)	• May make restricted mention of other opinions, with little relevance to the argument and with little or no support from the text.	
0		
	• Work shows no relevant ideas or evidence in response to the question.	**0**

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Section A: Pre-1900 Poetry and Prose

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

JANE AUSTEN: *Pride and Prejudice*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
1(a)	**What in your view is the significance of the relationship between Jane Bennet and Mr Bingley to the novel's meaning and effects?** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
1(b)	**Paying close attention to Austen's language, tone and narrative methods, analyse the following passage, showing its significance to the novel as a whole.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

GEOFFREY CHAUCER: *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
2(a)	**In what ways and with what effects does Chaucer present ideas about authority and power in *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*?** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
2(b)	**Write a critical appreciation of the following extract from *The Wife of Bath's Prologue and Tale*, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Chaucer's poetic methods and concerns.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

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GEORGE ELIOT: *Middlemarch*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
3(a)	**'*Middlemarch: A Study of Provincial Life*'.** **Discuss some of the ways in which Eliot presents life in a small town.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
3(b)	**Paying close attention to language, tone and narrative methods, analyse the following passage, showing its significance to the novel as a whole.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

THOMAS HARDY: *Jude the Obscure*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
4(a)	**In what ways and with what effects does Hardy present different attitudes to learning and study in the novel?** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
4(b)	**Analyse the effects of the writing in the following passage, considering its significance to the novel as a whole.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

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WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE: selected sonnets

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
5(a)	**Discuss Shakespeare's presentation of mortality in his sonnets. In your answer, you should refer to <u>three</u> sonnets from the selection.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
5(b)	**Analyse the following sonnet, considering it in relation to Shakespeare's poetic methods and concerns here and elsewhere in the selection.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

from WALT WHITMAN: *Leaves of Grass*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
6(a)	**In what ways and with what effects does Whitman explore feelings of loss? You should refer to <u>three</u> poems in your answer.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
6(b)	**Analyse the following poem, showing what it adds to your understanding of Whitman's methods and concerns here and elsewhere in the selection.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

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Section B: Post-1900 Poetry and Prose

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

J M COETZEE: *Waiting for the Barbarians*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
7(a)	**'Tell them the truth. What else is there to tell?'** **With this quotation from the novel in mind, discuss Coetzee's presentation of the truth and its significance in *Waiting for the Barbarians*.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
7(b)	**Paying close attention to language, tone and narrative methods, analyse the following passage, showing its significance to the novel as a whole.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

from LOUISE GLUCK: *The Wild Iris*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
8(a)	**In what ways and with what effects does Glück present the Creator figure's view of humanity in her poems? In your answer, you should refer to <u>three</u> poems from the selection.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
8(b)	**Write a critical appreciation of the following poem, considering ways in which it is characteristic of Glück's poetic methods and concerns.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

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from KATHERINE MANSFIELD: *Selected Stories*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
9(a)	**Discuss some of the effects created by Mansfield's presentation of innocence. You should refer to <u>two</u> stories from the selection in your answer.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
9(b)	**Analyse the following passage, considering ways in which it is characteristic of Mansfield's narrative methods and concerns.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

TONI MORRISON: *Beloved*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
10(a)	**In what ways and with what effects does Morrison make use of different settings in the novel?** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
10(b)	**Analyse the effects of the writing in the following passage, considering Morrison's presentation of Denver here and elsewhere in the novel.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

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from GABRIEL OKARA: *Collected Poems*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
11(a)	**'Okara's poetry explores the loss of human connections in modern life.'** **How far and in what ways do you agree with this comment on Okara's poetry? In your answer, you should refer to <u>three</u> poems from the selection.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
11(b)	**Write a critical analysis of the following poem, considering in what ways it is characteristic of Okara's poetic methods and concerns here and elsewhere in the selection.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

NATASHA TRETHEWEY: *Native Guard*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
12(a)	**Discuss some of the ways Trethewey presents family experiences. In your answer, you should refer to <u>three</u> poems from the collection, which could include individual poems from longer sequences.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
12(b)	**Write a critical appreciation of the following poem, considering ways in which it is characteristic of Trethewey's poetic methods and concerns.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

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