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CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge International AS & A Level

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH **9695/21**

Paper 2 Prose and Unseen **May/June 2026**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 50

Published

This mark scheme contains the instructions and marking guidance that our examiners used to mark candidate responses for this component.

Before they start marking, examiners complete a standardisation process. They review a range of candidate responses and discuss the mark scheme in detail to agree which answers can and cannot be accepted. Examiners award marks where it is clear that candidate responses have met the requirements of the mark scheme. These requirements may vary between different components or different versions of the same component, depending on the exact requirements of the question and the candidate responses seen during the standardisation process.

Sometimes, our mark schemes may allow marks to be awarded to responses which contain elements that are factually incorrect or for content not covered by the syllabus. We do this in response to the demands of a specific question to support candidates and make sure that our assessments are fair. However, these allowances should not be used as a guide for teaching and learning.

We cannot discuss the mark scheme with schools, and we recommend that schools read the mark scheme together with the assessment material and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

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General marking principles

All examiners must apply these marking principles when marking candidate responses.

1	Examiners must award marks for each response in line with: • the specific **content** defined in the mark scheme • the specific **skills** defined in the mark scheme or in the level descriptions • the **standard of response** required as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.
2	Examiners must award **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).
3	Examiners must award marks **positively**. This means that: • marks are not deducted for errors or omissions • marks are awarded for correct/valid answers as defined in the mark scheme and also for **other valid answers** which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme referring to your team leader as appropriate • the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar are judged **only** when the mark scheme indicates that these features are **specifically assessed** in the question. However, the meaning of all responses must be unambiguous.
4	Examiners must **consistently** apply the requirements of the mark scheme and any rules for what to do when candidates have not followed instructions correctly.
5	Examiners must use the **full range of marks** defined in the mark scheme, unless limited by the quality of the candidate responses seen.
6	Examiners must award marks according to the mark scheme and **must not** award marks with grade thresholds or grade descriptions in mind.

English & Media-Specific Marking Principles
(To be read in conjunction with the General Marking Principles (and requiring further guidance on how to place marks within levels))

Components using level descriptions:

- We use level descriptions as a guide to broad understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or typical of, work in a level.
- Level descriptions 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.

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 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.

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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. • 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. • 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.	
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.	
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.	
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.	

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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. • 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. • 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.	
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.	
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.	

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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. • 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. • 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. • 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.	
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.	
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.	
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 some of the effects Desai achieves with the novel's frequent shifts of time.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
1(b)	**Comment closely on ways in which Desai presents the actions of the police in the following passage.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

from *Stories of Ourselves, Volume 1*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
2(a)	**Compare ways in which <u>two</u> stories from the selection present characters' responses to change.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
2(b)	**Comment closely on Maurice Shadbolt's presentation of the arrival of the Maoris in the following passage from *The People Before*.** 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)	**Discuss ways in which Waugh presents divorce laws and the legal system in the novel.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
3(b)	**Comment closely on Waugh's presentation of Brenda's and Tony's experiences in the following passage.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

COLSON WHITEHEAD: *The Underground Railroad*

Question	Answer	Marks
EITHER		
4(a)	**Discuss Whitehead's presentation of Caesar and the role he plays in the novel.** 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 Cora's rescue.** 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. • 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. • 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. • 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.	
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. • 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. • 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. • 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.	

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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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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. • 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 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. • 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.	
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 presentation of Madam Koto, her car, and people's reactions to them in the following passage.** **In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, action and narrative methods.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**
OR		
6	**Comment closely on ways in which the writer presents the speaker's response to animals in the following poem.** **In your answer, consider the writer's choice of language, structure and poetic methods.** Mark according to the levels of response marking criteria.	**25**

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9695/21 Mark Scheme June 2026