



Qualifications and  
Curriculum Authority



Llywodraeth Cynulliad Cymru  
Welsh Assembly Government



*Rewarding Learning*

# Draft GCSE subject criteria for English literature

*For first teaching from September 2010*

---

June 2008

QCA/08/3717

© Crown copyright 2008

© Northern Ireland Council for the Curriculum, Examinations and Assessment 2008

© Qualifications and Curriculum Authority 2008

# Contents

Aims and learning outcomes .....	3
Subject content .....	4
Assessment objectives .....	5
Scheme of assessment .....	5
Grade descriptions.....	6
External/controlled assessment.....	8

## Introduction

1. GCSE subject criteria set out the knowledge, understanding, skills and assessment objectives common to all GCSE specifications in English literature. They provide the framework within which an awarding body creates the detail of the specification.
2. Specifications must also meet the regulators' general requirements, including the common and GCSE criteria as defined in *The statutory regulation of external qualifications* (QCA/04/1293).
3. Subject criteria are intended to:
  - help ensure consistent and comparable standards in the same subject across the awarding bodies
  - ensure that the rigour of GCSE is maintained
  - ensure that specifications build on the knowledge, understanding and skills established by the national curricula for England, Northern Ireland and Wales, and facilitate progression to higher level qualifications in English
  - help higher education institutions, employers and other stakeholders, such as learners and parents/guardians, know what has been studied and assessed.
4. Any GCSE specification that contains significant elements of English literature must be consistent with the relevant parts of these subject criteria.

## Aims and learning outcomes

5. GCSE specifications in English literature should encourage learners to be inspired, moved and changed by following a broad, coherent, satisfying and worthwhile course of study. They should extend learners' interest in, and enjoyment of, reading as they develop an understanding of the ways in which literature is rich and influential. They should prepare learners to make informed decisions about further learning opportunities and career choices.
6. GCSE specifications in English literature must enable learners to:
  - understand that texts from the English, Welsh and Irish literary heritage have been influential and significant over time, and explore their meaning today

- explore how texts from different cultures and traditions may reflect or influence values, assumptions and sense of identity
- connect ideas, themes and issues, drawing on a range of texts
- become enthusiastic and critical readers of stories, poetry, drama and non-fiction texts
- explore their present situation or move beyond it to experience different times, cultures, viewpoints and situations as found in literary texts.

## **Subject content**

7. The content of GCSE specifications in English literature must reflect the learning outcomes.
8. GCSE specifications in English literature must be consistent with the requirements of the programmes of study for English at key stage 4 in England and Wales.
9. Learners must study a minimum of six texts, at least three of which are from the English, Welsh and Irish literary heritage. Texts should include prose, poetry and drama, including Shakespeare in England, and be sufficiently rich and substantial to engage readers intellectually and emotionally.

## **Individual texts in context**

10. GCSE specifications in English literature for this part of the course must require learners to:
  - develop and sustain independent interpretations of whole texts, supporting them with detailed textual references
  - relate texts to their social and historical contexts, and to the literary traditions of which they are a part.

## **Comparative study**

11. GCSE specifications in English literature for this part of the course must require learners to:
  - analyse connections between texts, comparing features and qualities that connect and contrast the presentation of themes, characters and settings, and the impact of style, language and structure.

## Linked texts

12. GCSE specifications in English literature for this part of the course must require learners to:

- develop a study (for example of an author, genre or theme) based on a choice of texts, which might include literary non-fiction, analysing style, theme, language and structure, explaining links between texts and drawing on their own experiences and interests.

## Assessment objectives

13. All specifications in English literature must require candidates to demonstrate their ability to:

Assessment objectives		% weighting
AO1	Respond to texts critically and imaginatively; select and evaluate relevant textual detail to illustrate and support interpretations.	25–35
AO2	Explain how language, structure and form contribute to writers' presentation of ideas, themes and settings.	25–35
AO3	Make comparisons and explain links between texts, evaluating writers' different ways of expressing meaning and achieving effects.	15–25
AO4	Relate texts to their social, cultural and historical contexts; explain how texts have been influential and significant to self and other readers in different contexts and at different times.	15–25

## Scheme of assessment

14. GCSE specifications in English literature must allocate a weighting of 75% to external assessment and a weighting of 25% to controlled assessment in the overall scheme of assessment.

15. The external assessment may include questions on texts that have not previously been seen by candidates. A maximum weighting of 20% may be allocated to questions of this type. The external assessment must assess the components described in paragraphs 10 and 11 above.
16. Question papers in English literature must be targeted at either the foundation or higher tier.
17. Copies of texts may be used in external and controlled assessments. Texts may not be annotated.
18. The controlled assessment must assess the component described in paragraph 12 above.
19. The range of texts studied should include:
  - texts from the literary heritage (45–55% weighting in the overall assessment)
  - texts from different cultures and traditions (15–30% weighting in the overall assessment)
  - texts by contemporary writers (15–30% weighting in the overall assessment).
20. Candidates must be assessed on at least four texts in the external assessment and on at least two texts in the controlled assessment.

## **Grade descriptions**

21. Grade descriptions are provided to give a general indication of the standards of achievement likely to have been shown by candidates awarded particular grades. The descriptions must be interpreted in relation to the content in the specification; they are not designed to define that content.
22. The grade awarded will depend in practice upon the extent to which the candidate has met the assessment objectives overall. Shortcomings in some aspects of candidates' performance in the assessment may be balanced by better performances in others.

Grade	Description
A	<p>Candidates respond enthusiastically and critically to texts, showing imagination and originality in developing alternative approaches and interpretations. They confidently explore and evaluate how language, structure and form contribute to writers' varied ways of presenting ideas, themes and settings, and how they achieve specific effects on readers. Candidates make illuminating connections and comparisons between texts. They identify and comment on the impact of the social, cultural and historical contexts of texts on different readers at different times. They convey ideas persuasively and cogently, supporting them with apt textual references.</p>
C	<p>Candidates understand and demonstrate how writers use ideas, themes and settings in texts to affect the reader. They respond personally to the effects of language, structure and form, referring to textual detail to support their views and reactions. They explain the relevance and impact of connections and comparisons between texts. They show awareness of some of the social, cultural and historical contexts of texts, and how this influences their meanings for contemporary and modern readers. They convey ideas clearly and appropriately.</p>
F	<p>Candidates make involved, personal responses to the effects of language, structure and form in texts, showing some awareness of key ideas, themes or arguments. They support their views by reference to significant features or details. They make straightforward connections and comparisons between texts, and suggest how this contributes to readers' understanding and enjoyment. They are aware that aspects of texts relate to their specific social, cultural and historical contexts, and suggest successfully why this may be significant with reference to some texts.</p>

## External/controlled assessment

23. Regulations now specify the proportions of credit available for GCSE external and controlled assessments. These are:

<b>Content</b>	<b>External assessment weighting</b>	<b>Controlled assessment weighting</b>
Individual texts in context	50%	
Comparative study	25%	
Linked texts		25%