

Cambridge IGCSE™ Literature in English 0475

Paper 4 Unseen Prose – Using candidate responses in the classroom

Writer's techniques: language, structure and form

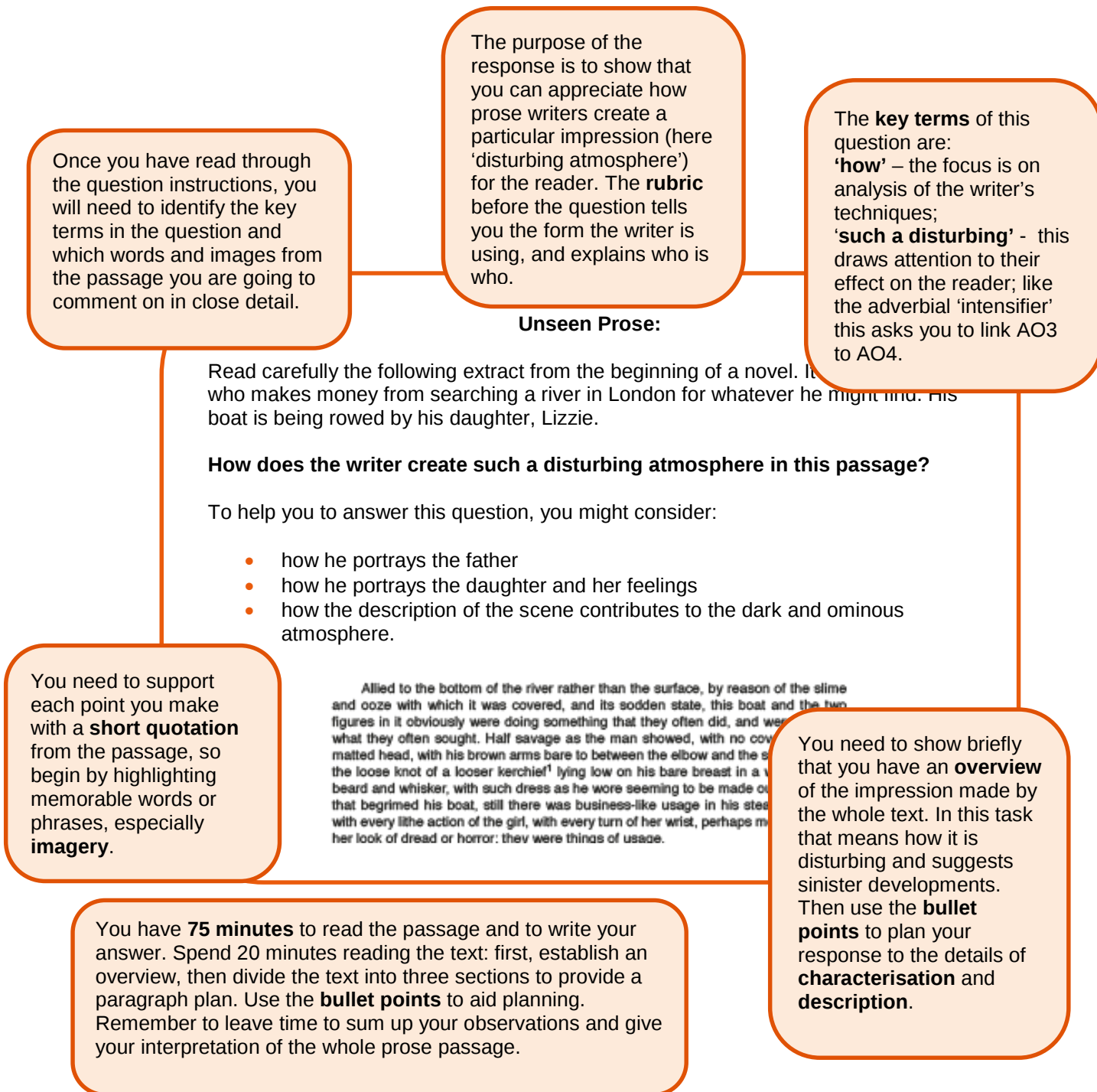
- The purpose of exploring language, structure and form in detail is to deepen our understanding of a writer's purpose and the intended effect on the reader.
- AO3 ('ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effect') is strongly linked to AO2 ('meanings' in context) and AO4 ('informed personal response' to the effects).
- Analysis of the writer's techniques needs to be embedded throughout the response, and especially in the close and detailed reading of particular parts of the text.
- Identify and explore patterns of language or imagery and ways in which they develop later in the passage.
- Link interpretation of details of language to the overall structure of the prose passage.
- Look at how the passage ends. How has the ending been set up by the structure of the writing? Consider the relationship between language and structure and the form of the prose passage.

Tips for learners

- AO3 is not just about language. The rubric before the prose passage also explains the **form** of the writing, whether autobiography, travel writing, short story or part of a novel. Think about our expectations of each kind of writing.
- Consider **structure** at the level of the whole text first. Divide the prose passage into sections. What are the key **developments**, or changes of viewpoint?
- **Characterisation** is part of the text's structure: who do we meet and from whose point of view do we see or hear them?
- **Description** in prose is about more than 'making it real': description can create mood and atmosphere, preparing us for later developments in the story.
- **Detail** is the key to writing about language. Highlight or underline unusual language, imagery, appeals to your senses and tone of voice.
- Consider the **effect** on the reader of each of these details: how do they contribute to the overall structure and the reader's mood?
- These are all things to think about during the 20 minutes of reading and preparation before you start writing.
- This will help you to plan a **detailed and developed** response which responds 'sensitively and in detail to the way the writer achieves her/his effects'.
- You need to be sensitive to the possible effects of the writing **on the reader**. AO3 is linked to AO4.

Examination question

We have annotated the question below with some **guidance** for candidates to help them prepare their answer and encourage them to focus on what the question is asking for. This information is not given to candidates in the examination.



This question is from the Cambridge IGCSE Literature (English) 0486 past paper June 2018 Paper 22 Question 9. For the passage go to School Support Hub www.cambridgeinternational.org/support

Suggested lesson activities

Assessment objectives

AO1: Show detailed knowledge of the content of literary drama texts in the supported by reference to the text

AO2: Understand the meanings of literary texts and their contexts, and explore texts beyond surface meanings to show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes.

AO3: Recognise and appreciate ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effects.

AO4: Communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts.

Learning objectives

- To develop a better understanding of writers' choices about form, structure and language
- To appreciate that these choices need to be made before beginning a piece of writing
- To understand how structure contributes to readers' expectations
- To develop links between language choices and overall tone

Starter:

Learners in pairs discuss what they expect from the first pages of a novel. What kinds of setting and characters interest them, and what form, style or genre do they like? What kind of mystery or detail will hook readers in from the start? Learners each draw a mind map of the opening of the kind of novel they like.

Learners share these ideas with two other pairs or with the whole class. They add to their mind-maps.

Ask learners to consider the passage and what the writer's purpose is. What intended effect did the writer wish to have on the reader?

Development:

Look at the example candidate response and examiner comment three. Think back to the starter activity, how can the response be developed to consider in greater depth the writer's intentions? What is the writer aiming to set up? What might this foreshadow later on?

Main task:

Recap what is meant by 'critical response'.

Discuss, as a class how a critical response would explore connotations and develop deeper insights into the meaning of a text.

Read the example candidate response. Ask learners to use the sections referred to by examiner comments 6, 7, 8, 10, 18 and 20 to explore connotations and offer deeper insights into the text.

Learners can use the candidate response as a starting point or model to develop their own responses to the sections referred to above based on their knowledge and understanding.

Plenary:

Using the sections on tips for learners and how the candidate could have improved, learners should self-assess their responses based on examiner comments 6, 7, 8, 20, 18 and 20. Learners should adapt their responses as necessary to create a top band answer.

Example candidate response and examiner comments

Example Candidate Response – high	Examiner comments
The author of the novel wishes to make the following extract into a very ominous and disheartening environment. 1 The author does this through the discomfort of the girl 'Lizzie', the disgusting description of the murky waters and the mysterious and shady personality and look of the father. 2 Although, the author manages to turn an expectation of a peaceful travel along a river into a disturbing image through the precise attention to manipulation of the boat and fathers looks, the significance of this part of the novel can clearly be defined because of it. 3 The author seems to portray the father as a very brave and daring man due to the habit of diving the 'upper half' of his body into the filthy water. This create a sense of discomfort for the reader as an image of a polluted 4 river is placed in their heads. This is only amplified by the 'wet and dirty' 5 arms when the man came out of the river and the cringe-worthy moment when he 'spat' on the coin, shows a very gut-twisting image of the dirty coins which have been further contaminated. The description of the man's face as a 'roused bird of prey' shows a very disheartening image and possibility of an untrustworthy person which may be a possible outcome later in the book. The unsettling 6 look of the man and his dressing also attributes the disturbing ethos of this extract. The man has been described as 'savage' looking and wild appearance places 'horror' even in the daughter's mind. 7 The daughter and her feelings are of major significance to the ominous ethos, as her description of the sunlight from the setting sun created a dark atmosphere as the image of the 'muffled human', which formed in addition with the colour being 'diluted blood', shows a very scary image of the discomfort and fear of Lizzie, as she 'shivered' which shows the disturbance the red pigment and the outline of the stain has to her mind. 8 Throughout the journey, the discomforted and unsettled mind of Lizzie greatly impacted the overall dark ethos as her fear and	1 There is a promising focus on the overall effect of the writer's language and the 'disheartening' mood created. (AO4) 2 The bullet points are used for focus on characterisation and description (AO3). The father is rightly seen as 'shady'. 3 There is appreciation of the passage's form, although the fact that this is from the beginning of a novel is ignored. What is the writer aiming to set up? The focus on the father's 'looks' is good. 4 The reader's discomfort (AO3) is linked to the details which describe the dirt and pollution of the river. 5 Quotation is well-integrated (AO2) and the word 'amplified' picks up on repeated patterns in the writing. 6 AO4 is strong here: the man's description is 'disheartening' and 'unsettling' but how does this link with the comparison of him to a scavenging 'bird of prey'? 7 The 'savage' and 'wild' aspects of the man's appearance are rightly quoted, but these words have 'deeper implications' (AO2). Thinking about the connotations of the language will bring out the primal, untamed elements of this language, suggesting human beings reduced to the base instincts of beasts. 8 The candidate rightly highlights the most important detail in the whole passage, the stain in 'muffled human form' and links this to the setting sun. What is suggested about the true identity of this stain?

Example Candidate Response – high

hesitance was transferred to the reader through the vivid communication of her state of mind by the author. **9** From the weird outlines and colours of blood to the 'pale' look on her face, the reader is able to keep up with the flow of disturbance and mysterious ethos. Her unsettled thoughts make understanding and visualising the imagery much clearer and deeper with understanding. **10**

The atmosphere surrounding the murky waters that assist in enhancing the ethos of mystery and ominosity are vividly portrayed. **11** This is seen with the description of the 'filthy' water which can be interpreted as a way of the author communicating that their waters are unclear and dark which is ironic as that is the same as the atmosphere created on the boat. **12** The usage of time magnified the overall effect of the atmosphere tremendously as the 'setting' of the sun shows the arrival of night, which also appears like a 'cloak' of darkness, this can even be compared to the cloak Lizzie wears. **13**

The violent reaction of the boat when the man went halfway in to the water can also be connected to that of Lizzie's mind because she is finding it hard to control her thoughts just like the boat, which is out of control. **14** The repetition of the word 'gaze' in the scene can be interpreted as a cold stare due to the context it is used in. This also shows the unsure nature of Lizzie as she constantly doubts what may happen on the journey through the river, as if she is scared all throughout. **15** The author seemed to introduce the sudden 'jerks' to the boat as a jump scare for Lizzie and the reader as when added to the already dark setting and night time, it makes for an ominous and shady environment. **16**

Concluding, the author wished to make this part of the novel into a very dark and mysterious scene and they succeeded in doing so by the usage of the time and its attribution to the thoughts of Lizzie and the deceptive looks of the father. **17** In addition with the shady atmosphere created by the shrouded descriptions of the

Examiner comments

9 The description is intelligently linked to the characterisation of Lizzie, showing understanding of the writer's craft.

10 The candidate realises that we see things from Lizzie's viewpoint. Is there more to say about how Lizzie's emotions might be colouring the writing?

11 This is excellent general observation about the atmosphere created. 'Ominosity' might also suggest what could happen next.

12 This is a clever link between the atmosphere described and the one the writer wants to create; both are murky and mysterious.

13 This is now linked to descriptive details and especially to the writer's use of imagery (the metaphor of the cloak). There might have been more of this kind of AO3 analysis from the beginning.

14 This develops an interesting idea and needs more support from the text.

15 Short quotations are embedded within the response and linked to techniques and patterns in the writing (AO1 linked to AO3).

16 Details are linked to the reader's responses and to the words of the question.

17 The candidate successfully reviews observations about overall atmosphere and details of the writing, including comments on the characters and how they are portrayed.

Example Candidate Response – high	Examiner comments
<i>water and the creative and disturbing look of the stains, this extract was cloaked by the intended dark meaning behind it. 18</i> <i>Not to mention the gross and disgusting imagery used to describe the water and the actions of the man. 19 All this in unity creates a very disturbing scene in the reader's mind. 20 / 21</i>	18 The dark nature of the descriptions is linked to a more symbolic darker meaning: the candidate does not define that 'intended dark meaning' but a link to the 'rotten stain' might have developed this idea further. 19 Some of the details of the man's behaviour, especially his attitude to money, might have been looked at more closely. The effect on the reader is understood. 20 The final comment captures the overall effect on the reader but might have been linked to the form of the writing. As the beginning of a novel, what kind of story does it suggest to you? 21 The overall level of achievement here is high: there is understanding which goes beyond the literal meaning, exploring deeper implications and supported by much well-selected reference. The response is well-developed but more sensitive attention to details of the writer's effects might also have let to a more perceptive personal response, based on critical understanding of the writer's purpose in setting such a dark scene as the opening of his novel. The response gets better and better, and would have been even stronger with more planning.

How the candidate could improve their answer

- The response shows critical understanding and some sensitivity to details and their effect; the candidate uses the bullet points effectively to give shape to their writing and there is a conclusion with attention to the 'murky atmosphere' and sense of mystery created by the writer's language.
- This is a good answer, and what is required for a higher mark is greater appreciation of the writer's purpose in setting the scene in this way at the beginning of his novel.
- Some strong responses notice the Gothic element to the descriptions, while others note how the darkness of the river is in contrast to the wealthy city ('the kindling lights of London Bridge') which surrounds it.
- Strong answers pick up the hint in the bullet points that the atmosphere is not only dark but also ominous: in other words, it is an omen of bad things to come.
- The 'slime and ooze', the 'half savage' man and the way he appears to make his business out of the river ('It was money') indicate the predatory nature of the way he scavenges from the dead bodies in the river, and the passage ends with a comparison of the man to 'a roused bird of prey' which reveals his macabre profession, feeding himself from carrion. The candidate is right to find this disturbing, and to be disgusted by his gesture of spitting on the coin, but could do more to anticipate what is suggested here about money, and what people will do to get it. The novel itself is about corruption at the heart of the big city.
- The key moments that need more attention are the 'rotten stain' ironically highlighted by the only shaft of light in the passage, and the girl's shiver followed by the moment she pulls the hood over her head. She is clearly disturbed by something in the boat, and guilty about something. These details need a more developed response.
- The father's 'business-like activity' should be sharply contrasted with the girl's 'shudder', pale face and silence. His boat seems 'allied to the bottom of the river', which is a comment on his filthy trade, but also a comment on what poverty has done to him.
- Alongside comment on details of characterisation and setting, there is an opportunity to interpret this descriptive opening in more symbolic terms, and to see how the writer is setting up mysteries which later chapters of the novel will explore more deeply. Description offers a commentary on the darker side of city life, and the marginalised, while suggestion that money is at the heart of their corruption.
- Good answers should explore why the writer wants to tell us this story.

Common mistakes

- Candidates tend to write more effectively about the father than the daughter. Many feel that he was the more important character, and that his daughter was afraid of him.
- Sentence structure as well as language should receive attention, as it heightens tension through short sentences at key moments.
- Many candidates think that the 'rotten stain' was in the water rather than the bottom of the boat.
- Not many candidates realise that the father robs dead bodies for their money and that while dead bodies excite him, they disturb the daughter.
- Some candidates speculate about the kind of story the writer wants to introduce: this works well if supported by textual evidence and comment on language.

Useful resources

- You can find the **syllabus** and the most recent **past papers** at the Cambridge International public website www.cambridgeinternational.org/programmes-and-qualifications/english-literature-0475/
- A list of **endorsed textbooks** and digital resources can be found in the [Resource centre](#)
- The [School Support Hub](#) provides you with a wide range of practical resources, detailed guidance and innovative training and professional development so that you can give your learners the best possible preparation for Cambridge IGCSE.
- Look out for the [Introduction to Learner Guides](#) and [Learner Revision Guide](#) video

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