AQA GCSE English Language Paper 1

Revision Workbook

VERSION 2 | READ - THINK - EXPLAIN - CRAFT

Fresh fiction, guided practice and a complete practice paper

Name: _____

Original practice material | 8700/1

Your revision route

Learn the method, study the model, practise each skill and then complete the paper. Use the answers and models to improve your work.

Paper 1 at a glance

Question	Skill	Marks
1	Read and understand	4
2	Analyse language	8
3	Analyse structure	8
4	Evaluate a statement	20
5	Creative writing	40

Exam: 1 hour 45 minutes. A useful guide is 15 minutes reading, 45 minutes on Questions 1-4 and 45 minutes on Question 5. Adapt this to your needs.

2026 format: Question 1 has four multiple-choice parts. Question 3 names an effect to consider. Question 4 asks you to evaluate a statement. Question 5 assesses content and organisation (24 marks) and technical accuracy (16 marks).

Check your teacher's latest AQA guidance for any later changes.

Question 1 | Accurate reading

4 marks - Answer four multiple-choice questions, choosing one option for each.

Method: Read the specified lines carefully. Find evidence for each answer; beware of choices that change a small detail or use information outside the lines.

Warm-up source: At six o’clock, Leila reached the station with a green suitcase. The platform was almost empty. A guard in a dark coat checked the clock and waved towards the northern exit.

1. What time did Leila arrive? A Five o’clock B Six o’clock C Seven o’clock

2. What colour was her suitcase? A Green B Blue C Black

3. Who checked the clock? A Leila B A passenger C A guard

4. Which exit did the guard indicate? A Southern B Northern C Eastern

Answers: 1 B, 2 A, 3 C, 4 B.

My target for Question 1: _____

Question 2 | Language analysis

8 marks - Explain how the writer's language creates meaning and effects in the specified lines.

Method: Make a point; select a short quotation; explore a word or image; explain what it suggests and its effect in this moment. Repeat with another relevant example.

Mini-source: Rain stitched silver threads across the window. Beyond the glass, the streetlights trembled in the puddles.

Question: How does the writer use language to describe the rain and the street?

Model: The rain is presented as delicate and continuous through the image "stitched silver threads". The verb "stitched" suggests the drops are joining together like careful needlework, making the rain seem to transform the window into a patterned surface.

Try it: Explain the effect of "trembled" when describing the streetlights.

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Question 3 | Structure

8 marks - Consider the whole source and how its organisation creates the effect named in the question.

Look for: opening focus; shifts in place or attention; changes in pace or mood; a turning point; the ending. Explain why a change matters, not just what happens.

Mini-source: At first, the garden looked peaceful. Mara noticed a swing moving gently in the breeze. Then she saw the gate, hanging open. From the house came a single knock. The swing stopped.

Question: How has the writer structured the text to create tension?

Model: The opening focuses on the garden's peaceful appearance, encouraging the reader to expect an ordinary scene. The shift to the open gate interrupts this calm and suggests that someone may have entered, making the later knock more unsettling.

Try it: Explain how the ending increases tension.

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Question 4 | Evaluation

20 marks - Judge how far you agree with a statement about the specified part of the text.

Method: Give a clear judgement. Select details from across the relevant section. Explain how the writer makes you respond and evaluate how convincing or effective those choices are.

Mini-source: Amir gripped the railing as the bridge swayed. He looked back at the safe path, then down at the river. His knees shook, but he placed one foot in front of the other.

Statement: “Amir is frightened, but the writer also presents him as determined.” How far do you agree?

Model: I agree that Amir is frightened because he “gripped the railing” while the bridge swayed. This physical reaction makes his fear convincing: he is trying to steady himself against a danger he cannot control. However, his decision to keep moving suggests determination, making his courage more impressive because the fear has not disappeared.

Try it: Use “His knees shook” to develop another evaluative point.

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Question 5 | Creative writing

40 marks - Choose the task that helps you write your strongest piece.

Plan for five minutes: Choose one central idea; decide on a setting or character; plan three or four stages; choose an ending. A small, focused event can be effective.

Build atmosphere: select precise sensory details, vary sentence lengths and use paragraphs to guide the reader. Show feelings through action and detail.

Accuracy: check sentence boundaries, tense, punctuation, paragraphing and spellings. Leave time to proofread.

Starter task: Describe a place that looks ordinary but feels unsettling. Write three sentences using sight, sound and a precise verb.

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Challenge: Revise one sentence to create a more controlled effect.

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Practice paper | The signal box

This original fiction extract describes a teenager arriving at a disused railway signal box. Read the whole source before answering the questions.

1 Nia reached the old signal box just before dusk.

2 A narrow path led up from the empty station platform.

3 She carried a torch and a folded map in her coat pocket.

4 Her brother had asked her to find the red tin inside.

5 The station clock had stopped at twenty past four.

6 Above the doorway, a cracked sign hung from one chain.

7 Nia pushed the door and stepped into the quiet room.

8 A wooden staircase rose towards the windows.

9 She paused, listening, before she began to climb.

10 The stairs complained under her weight. Dust floated in the thin light,

11 turning slowly as though the air had forgotten how to move.

12 At the top, the windows looked out over tracks swallowed by weeds.

13 Rain pressed against the glass in restless, silver fingers.

14 On a shelf stood a red tin, its lid spotted with rust.

15 Nia crossed the room and lifted it carefully.

16 Inside lay a photograph of two children beside a train.

17 She recognised her brother at once, although he was much younger.

18 The other child had been scratched out of the picture.

19 A sharp click came from downstairs.

20 Nia froze. For a moment she heard only the rain.

21 Then another click, followed by the slow creak of the stairs.

22 She switched off the torch and crouched behind the old control desk.

23 Someone was climbing. Each step brought the sound closer.

24 The footsteps stopped outside the room.

25 ‘Nia?’ a voice called softly.

26 It was her brother. Relief loosened her shoulders - until she saw

27 that his hands were empty and his face had lost its colour.

28 ‘You found it,’ he said. ‘Then we need to leave. Now.’

Practice paper | Reading

Question 1 [4 marks] Read lines 1-9. Choose one answer for each question.

1.1 When does Nia arrive? A Before dusk B At noon C After midnight

1.2 What does she carry? A A lantern and key B A torch and map C A bag and camera

1.3 What has her brother asked her to find? A A photograph B A clock C A red tin

1.4 What is above the doorway? A A broken clock B A cracked sign C A window

Question 2 [8 marks] Look at lines 10-14. How does the writer use language to describe the signal box and its surroundings?

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Question 3 [8 marks] Think about the source as a whole. How has the writer structured the text to create tension? Consider how tension changes, shifts in focus and the ending.

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Practice paper | Evaluation and writing

Question 4 [20 marks] Focus on lines 15-28. A student said: “This part of the source makes Nia’s discovery feel increasingly disturbing, even after her brother arrives.” How far do you agree?

In your response, consider your own impressions, evaluate how the writer creates them and support your views with references to the text.

Question 5 [40 marks] Choose one task:

A. Describe a place that has been left behind.

B. Write a story about an unexpected discovery.

Plan briefly before writing. Continue on separate paper if needed.

Answers and teaching notes

Question 1: 1.1 A; 1.2 B; 1.3 C; 1.4 B. Award one mark for each.

Question 2: Relevant choices include the stairs “complained”, personifying the building; the dust moving as if the air had “forgotten” suggests stillness; rain’s “restless, silver fingers” makes it seem active against the glass. Credit other supported interpretations.

Model Q2 paragraph: The writer personifies the stairs when they “complained” under Nia’s weight. This makes the old building seem to object to her presence, giving the room an uneasy, almost living quality. The sound also makes her movement feel exposed in an otherwise quiet place.

Question 3: The opening establishes a quiet journey and a clear purpose. The focus narrows to the photograph and its scratched-out figure; the clicks and approaching steps then interrupt her discovery. Her brother’s arrival briefly promises relief, but his alarm and final command renew uncertainty.

Model Q3 paragraph: The writer moves from Nia’s discovery of the photograph to the sudden “click” downstairs. This interrupts her attempt to understand who has been removed from the picture and redirects attention towards an immediate possible threat. The later approach up the stairs prolongs the uncertainty before the visitor is revealed.

Evaluation and reflection

Question 4: Reward a supported personal judgement about lines 15-28. Students might discuss the scratched-out figure, the unexplained sound, Nia hiding, the brief relief of recognition and her brother's frightened expression and urgent command. Judgements can differ if supported.

Model Q4 paragraph: I agree that the discovery becomes disturbing because the photograph initially looks like an ordinary family memory, but the second child has been "scratched out". This deliberate damage raises questions about who wanted the child erased and why. The detail is especially unsettling because Nia recognises her brother, making the mystery personal rather than distant.

Question 5: Look for engaging, coherent ideas and purposeful organisation, alongside control of sentence structure, punctuation, spelling and vocabulary. These are informal teaching notes, not an official mark scheme.

My next steps

My strongest question: _____

One skill I want to improve: _____

One action I will take next time: _____

Useful official guidance: AQA GCSE English Language 8700 specification and Paper 1 answers and commentaries for first assessment 2026.

https://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/gcse/english-8700/specification/specification-at-a-glance

https://www.aqa.org.uk/files/2a0165d2-2b01-4d08-8c02-51c5d4ee9926/0a5054aa567b82159c3e8a59c58e78202f6f8760.pdf