

GCSE Survival Guide Through The Mark Scheme

The Purpose of this Survival Guide

This toolkit is designed to help you understand exactly what examiners are looking for in both GCSE English Literature and English Language. It breaks down the assessment objectives (AOs) in clear, simple terms and provides starter sentences and Grade 9 examples to help you structure high-level answers.

English Literature

A01- Answer the Question + Evidence

Focus on answering the question clearly. Support points with short, relevant quotes.

Starter sentences:

- The writer presents this idea through
- A key moment is when
- This is shown in the quote

A02- Effects of Language + Structure

Explain how language and structure create meaning. Say why the writer chose certain words, images or techniques. Describe the impact on the reader.

Starter sentences:

- The writer uses... to create the impression of
- This word suggests
- The structure of this section builds

A03- Context + The Writer's Intentions

Link ideas to the historical, social or cultural background. Show how context helps us understand characters, themes or events. Explain how the writer's intention links to the time the text was written.

Starter sentences:

- At the time the text was written
- This reflects the society's views on
- The writer may have wanted to challenge

Grade 9 Mini Essay

How does Dickens present Scrooge's attitude to the poor at the start of the novel?

A01: Dickens presents Scrooge as a deeply unsympathetic and selfish character who shows no sense of responsibility towards those in need. This is revealed in his dismissive attitude when he declares that the poor should "decrease the surplus population," showing his complete lack of empathy.

A02: The phrase "surplus population" is significant because it reduces human lives to nothing more than numbers or statistics, stripping the poor of their humanity. Dickens deliberately uses cold and clinical language to emphasise how Scrooge views the poor as a problem to be eliminated rather than as people deserving of help or compassion. The harsh, detached tone reflects Scrooge's emotional coldness and reinforces his role as a symbol of greed and cruelty at the start of the novel. The use of economic language also mirrors the attitudes of a society that prioritised wealth over welfare, subtly criticising those who, like Scrooge, dehumanised the vulnerable.

A03: This attitude reflects the views held by many wealthy Victorians, who often blamed the poor for their own suffering and believed that poverty was the result of laziness or moral failure. Dickens may have intended to challenge these harmful beliefs by presenting Scrooge as a warning of what happens when selfishness and greed go unchecked. Through Scrooge's transformation later in the novel, Dickens encourages his readers to show compassion and generosity towards those less fortunate.

English Language

A01- Find + Summarise Ideas Clearly

Identify key facts and ideas. Summarise clearly without adding extra opinions.

Starter sentences:

- The writer describes
- We learn that
- Both sources show

A02- Language + Structure Analysis and Effect on Reader

Explain how language and structure create meaning. Analyse words, phrases or techniques and their impact on the reader.

Starter sentences:

- The writer uses... to create the impression of
- This word suggests
- The structure shifts to... which builds

A03- Comparative Perspective (Paper 2 only!)

Compare the writers' ideas and viewpoints. Explain how they present their perspectives. Focus on how ideas are similar or different.

Starter sentences:

- Both writers explore... but they present it differently
- Source A suggests... whereas Source B presents
- The two sources contrast because

A04- Evaluate Critically

Judge how effectively the writer achieves their purpose. Give your own supported opinion.

Starter sentences:

- The writer successfully creates

- This is effective because
- The reader is left feeling

A05 — Content + Structure in Your Writing

Organise ideas clearly and imaginatively. Engage the reader with thoughtful structure and vocabulary.

Starter tips:

- Plan what you want your reader to think or feel
- Use varied sentence lengths for effect
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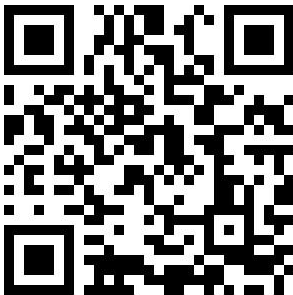
A06 — Technical Accuracy

Use accurate spelling, punctuation and grammar. Vary sentences and use ambitious vocabulary.

Self-check:

- Have I used a range of punctuation
- Have I checked my spelling
- Did I vary my sentence openers

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