



Singapore Examinations and Assessment Board



**CAMBRIDGE**  
International Education

**Singapore–Cambridge General Certificate of Education  
Advanced Level Higher 1 (2026)**

# **Literature in English (Syllabus 8841)**

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## **AIMS**

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Through the study of Literature in English, students will:

1. experience the joy of reading literature
2. appreciate diverse perspectives as well as negotiate the complexities and ambiguities in exploring universal human concerns
3. demonstrate the skills to critically analyse and evaluate literary texts
4. respond to literary texts with an understanding of genre and cultural contexts
5. communicate informed, sensitive and personal responses effectively and persuasively
6. develop a love for reading literature.

## **ASSESSMENT OBJECTIVES**

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Candidates should be able to:

- AO1** make informed personal and critical responses to the texts and account for their responses
- AO2** demonstrate how the literary context of the text informs their understanding of the text
- AO3** critically analyse and evaluate ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings
- AO4** clearly communicate the knowledge, understanding and insights appropriate to literary study.

## SCHEME OF ASSESSMENT

Candidates will offer one compulsory paper (Paper 1).

Candidates will receive the question paper in hard copy. A digital answer booklet will be provided with this question paper. Candidates are required to type their responses in the digital answer booklet.

Candidates will answer three questions in total: one question from each of the three sections. Each question is worth 25 marks.

The table of specification is given below.

### Paper 1 Reading Literature

(3 hours, 75 marks, 100% weighting)

Section	Description	Marks
<b>Section A</b>  <b>Poetry</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Two</b> questions will be set, primarily focusing on response skills (see 'Question Types and Specifications').</li> <li>• Each question will require candidates to respond to an unseen poem.</li> <li>• At least one of the questions will feature a Singaporean poem.</li> <li>• Candidates will answer <b>one</b> of the two questions.</li> </ul>	25 marks
<b>Section B</b>  <b>Prose</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates will study <b>one</b> of the set texts.</li> <li>• <b>Two</b> questions will be set for each text, primarily focusing on response and analysis skills (see 'Question Types and Specifications').</li> <li>• One question will be an essay question and the other will be a passage-based question.</li> <li>• Candidates will answer <b>one</b> question on one text.</li> </ul>	25 marks
<b>Section C</b>  <b>Drama</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Candidates will study <b>one</b> of the set texts.</li> <li>• <b>Two</b> questions will be set for each text, primarily focusing on response and analysis skills (see 'Question Types and Specifications').</li> <li>• One question will be an essay question and the other will be a passage-based question.</li> <li>• Candidates will answer <b>one</b> question on one text.</li> </ul>	25 marks

## DESCRIPTION OF COMPONENTS

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### PAPER 1: READING LITERATURE (3 hours)

Paper 1 is a compulsory paper designed to give students broad exposure to literary study. The texts set will be of recognised literary importance and significance.

#### Section A: Poetry

All unseen poems will be from works written originally in English after 1550. At least one of the questions will feature a Singaporean poem. Knowledge of the literary contexts of the poems or of other works by the named poets is not required in answers for this section.

#### Section B: Prose

In this section, candidates will study **one** of the following prose texts:

Julian Barnes: *Arthur and George*  
 Charlotte Brontë: *Jane Eyre*  
 Charles Dickens: *Hard Times*  
 Tan Twan Eng: *The Garden of Evening Mists*

#### Section C: Drama

In this section, candidates will study **one** of the following drama texts:

Thomas Middleton and William Rowley: *The Changeling*  
 Tom Stoppard: *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*  
 William Shakespeare: *The Winter's Tale*  
 Sean O'Casey: *Juno and the Paycock* and *The Plough and the Stars* (Both plays are to be studied.)

### QUESTION TYPES AND SPECIFICATIONS

The questions in the examination focus on two areas of skill: Response and Analysis.

#### (i) Response

This is the candidate's ability to respond to either an unseen text extract, or a passage from a set text. In doing so, candidates demonstrate the ability to analyse both the formal and stylistic features of the extract (AO1 and AO3). This skill is assessed in Sections A, B and C of the examination paper.

#### (ii) Analysis

This is the candidate's ability to write a critical analysis of the set texts they have studied. In doing so, candidates will demonstrate an ability to make an informed personal and critical response to the text as a whole (AO1, AO2 and AO3). This skill is primarily assessed in Sections B and C of the examination paper.

All of these types of questions will also require the candidate to organise and present information, ideas and arguments clearly and effectively (AO4). The candidate's grammar, punctuation, and spelling will also be taken into account.

## AREAS OF STUDY

The study of Literature in English at H1 level should be seen as a process of critically examining texts. In addition to the study of inherent stylistic features of texts, students should also explore the specific contexts that led to the production of these texts, as well as how readers and audiences relate to the texts. Students should engage with texts at various cognitive and affective levels. There are various approaches in engaging with literary texts, and the teaching and learning of A-Level Literature is grounded in the three areas of study: literary features, text and context, and language use.

### (i) Literary Features

These include:

- The definition of a genre, the individual form of the text and its stylistic features.
- Study of how these features are used by authors, and to what effect, in the various texts, seen and unseen.

### (ii) Text and Context

- An appreciation of how the texts studied relate to the social, cultural and historical contexts in which they were created.
- Exploration of the ideologies, perspectives and assumptions that frame texts.

### (iii) Language Use

- Use of language to communicate ideas in response to literary texts
- Awareness of how writers use language to shape meaning and evoke responses to literary texts.

## SPECTRUM OF SKILLS

Candidates should be equipped with the following skills to:

- make informed personal and critical responses in the study of major, canonical and contemporary writers.
- demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the ways in which the historical and cultural contexts of text and writer inform the meanings in texts.
- analyse and evaluate critically the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings.
- communicate clearly knowledge, understanding, insights and perspectives appropriate to literary study.

Skills	Examples
(i) Make informed personal and critical responses in the study of major, canonical and contemporary writers.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make connections between their own ideas and experiences and those in the text</li> <li>• Reflect critically on the development of their own informed response</li> <li>• Comment on the ways in which both content and form shape the reader's response</li> <li>• Demonstrate knowledge of ways in which a text invites the reader to respond</li> <li>• Hone sensitivity to a variety of texts across genres and periods</li> <li>• Deepen appreciation of texts and broaden understanding of human experience</li> </ul>

Skills	Examples
(ii) Demonstrate a nuanced understanding of the ways in which the historical and cultural contexts of text and writer inform the meanings in texts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reflect a sensitive awareness of social, cultural, historical and literary influences in the creation of texts</li> <li>• Comment on ways in which characters, viewpoints, and situations convey the social conventions, beliefs and attitudes of individuals and groups in a particular society</li> <li>• Identify and interpret the ideas, viewpoints and values expressed in a text</li> </ul>
(iii) Analyse and evaluate critically the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Understand the elements of literary genres</li> <li>• Analyse literary form including structure, setting, character, conflict, plot, methods of characterisation, and themes</li> <li>• Analyse stylistic devices including voice, persona, symbolism, irony, mood and tone</li> <li>• Analyse the use of language including register, diction, tone, imagery, and rhythm</li> <li>• Analyse the effects created by literary techniques</li> <li>• Present a sustained interpretation supported by appropriate and detailed references to texts</li> </ul>
(iv) Communicate clearly knowledge, understanding, insights and perspectives appropriate to literary study.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Produce informed literary essays that convey knowledge, insights and perspectives on texts</li> <li>• Show an ability to use literary terms appropriately</li> <li>• Present a clear and coherent argument in support of their ideas</li> </ul>

## INSTRUCTIONS ON OPEN-BOOK EXAMINATION

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The examinations are open book: candidates will be allowed to bring copies of their set texts into the examination room.

(a) Materials that can be taken into the examination room

Only non-electronic original texts (original published editions) should be taken into the examination venue. Candidates are only allowed to bring one hardcopy of each approved text. No photocopies or texts downloaded from the internet are allowed. No other materials, including critical works or study notes of any kind, should be taken into the examination venue. The use of dictionaries is not permitted.

(b) Underlining and highlighting of texts

Only underlining, highlighting and the use of vertical lines are permitted. Nothing else should be written in the texts except the candidate's name. Separate pieces of paper such as sticky notes and tape flags are not allowed.

(c) Folding and Flagging of Pages

Pages can be flagged with paper clips or by folding the page corners. Page numbers can be highlighted, underlined, or marked out with vertical lines. Any other kind of folding or flagging of pages in texts (for example, use of sticky notes or tape flags) is not permitted.

**APPENDIX A: ASSESSMENT CRITERIA****Band Descriptors for H1 Section A**

The descriptors are intended as a guide to the likely characteristics of work in a particular mark band. It is not expected that all the listed characteristics will be present or that they will exist in equal proportions. It is essential that examiners exercise flexibility in mapping the descriptors to the work they are assessing.

Examiners' approach to the assessment of work should always be positive, based on what the candidate has written and never on what she/he has not written. In other words, work should not be penalised for failure to make points or adopt critical approaches and styles predetermined by examiners. However, where a candidate's execution of his/her chosen approach involves significant errors or omissions, these will be noted and will legitimately influence the mark awarded.

The descriptors do not list every possible literary feature that may be identified by candidates, but candidates will be rewarded for detailed comment on language, form and style such as: structure, genre, diction, syntactical devices, register, imagery, tone, rhythm, rhyme, linguistic patterns and dramatic qualities.

**22–25**

Very good work, showing discrimination and sometimes originality, in making an informed personal and critical response to the poem

Engages with the poem through detailed close analysis

Analyses with skill and discrimination ways in which the writer uses poetic form, structure and language to create the meanings of the poem

Evaluates the effects of the writer's use of form, style and language with a mature judgement and clear focus on the question and key issues

Develops a seamless, coherent response to the question

Uses quotation, paraphrase and critical terminology appositely and economically

Work in this band responds sensitively, perceptively and personally to the poem; it is often subtle, concise and sophisticated, with a style that is fluent and gives economic expression to complex ideas; at the upper end this work may be elegant and allusive

**18–21**

Proficient work, making an informed personal and critical response to the poem

Engages with the poem through close analysis

Analyses with skill ways in which the writer uses poetic form, structure and language to create the meanings of the poem

Evaluates the effects of the writer's use of form and style and language with constant reference to the question

Develops a coherent response to the question

Uses quotation, paraphrase and some critical terminology appositely

Uses a style that is always clear, mostly fluent, capable of giving accurate expression to complex ideas



**14–17**

Competent work, making an informed critical response to the poem with some personal response

Makes a close analysis of the poem, at times simply following line by line

Analyses ways in which the writer uses poetic form, structure and language to create the meanings of the poem

Evaluates the effects of the writer's use of form and style and language

Develops a structured response to the question

Uses quotation, paraphrase and some critical terminology accurately and mostly appositely

Uses an effective style that is able to communicate clearly knowledge and understanding of the poem and the issues raised by poem and question, with only occasional lapses

**10–13**

Satisfactory work, making a response to the poem that shows sound knowledge and some personal response

Analyses the poem in a line-by-line fashion

Makes some analysis of ways in which the writer uses form, style and language to create the meanings of the poem

Responds mainly in terms of narration of the main features of the poems – with some attempt at evaluation of the effects of the writer's use of form, style and language – possibly with some misunderstanding

Responds to the question set most of the time though with some digression; assembles relevant points into a simply structured response

Makes use of quotation and paraphrase and may use some critical terminology, with some misunderstanding

Uses a basic style that is able to communicate knowledge and understanding of the poem and the issues raised by poem and question, with only occasional obscurity

**6–9**

Uneven work, making a response to the poem that shows some understanding

Makes appropriate references to the writer's use of poetic form, structure and language with some analysis of the ways in which they create the meanings of the poem

Makes some attempt at evaluation of the effects of the writer's use of form, style and language – possibly with some misunderstanding

Responds to the question set at first, but tends to digress

Assembles points rather than analyses, tending to list points and make general assertions

Makes some use of paraphrase or quotation; limited reference to critical terminology

Uses a simple style or possibly an over-complex style that succeeds most of the time in communicating knowledge and understanding of the poem

**1–5**

Some attempt to hold to poem and question, showing a simplistic approach to the task

The work is often brief, undeveloped, and exists as a series of points rather than as a line of argument

Expression is simple, technical errors are recurrent, and the work relies on narrative rather than analysis, although description is sometimes valid

**0**

To be awarded only where there is no evidence of any knowledge of, or response to the poem

### Band Descriptors for H1 Sections B and C

The descriptors are intended as a guide to the likely characteristics of work in a particular mark band. It is not expected that all the listed characteristics will be present or that they will exist in equal proportions. It is essential that examiners exercise flexibility in mapping the descriptors to the work they are assessing.

Examiners' approach to the assessment of work should always be positive, based on what the candidate has written and never on what she/he has not written. In other words, work should not be penalised for failure to make points or adopt critical approaches and styles predetermined by examiners. However, where a candidate's execution of his/her chosen approach involves significant errors or omissions, these will be noted and will legitimately influence the mark awarded.

The descriptors do not list every possible literary feature that may be identified by candidates, but candidates will be rewarded for detailed comment on language, form and style such as: structure, genre, diction, syntactical devices, register, imagery, tone, rhythm, rhyme, linguistic patterns and dramatic qualities.

#### 22–25

Very good work, showing discrimination and sometimes originality, in making an informed personal and critical response to the text

Analyses with skill and discrimination ways in which the writer uses form, structure and language to create the meanings of the text

Evaluates the effects of the writer's use of form, style and language with a mature judgement and clear focus on the question and key issues

Develops a seamless, coherent argument relevant to the question

Demonstrates sophisticated understanding of the literary context of the text – in terms of period/theme/genre/historical context

Supports with detailed, pertinent reference to the text, using quotation, paraphrase and critical terminology appositely and economically

Work in this band responds sensitively, perceptively and personally to the question set; is often subtle, concise and sophisticated, with a style that is fluent and gives economic expression to complex ideas; at the upper end this work may be elegant and allusive

#### 18–21

Proficient work, making an informed personal and critical response to the text

Analyses with skill ways in which the writer uses form, structure and language to create the meanings of the text

Evaluates the effects of the writer's use of form, style and language with constant reference to the question

Develops a coherent argument relevant to the question

Demonstrates, where relevant, a good understanding of the literary context of the text – in terms of period/theme/genre/historical context

Supports with detailed, pertinent reference to the text, using quotation, paraphrase and some critical terminology appositely

Uses a style that is always clear, mostly fluent; able to give accurate expression to complex ideas

**14–17**

Competent work, making an informed critical response to the text with some personal response

Analyses ways in which the writer uses form, structure and language to create the meanings of the text

Evaluates the effects of the writer's use of form, style and language

Develops a structured response to the question

Demonstrates a sound understanding of the literary context of the text – in terms of period/theme/genre/historical context

Supports with appropriate reference to the text – at times too much or too little, using quotation, paraphrase and some critical terminology accurately and mostly appositely

Uses an effective style that is able to communicate clearly knowledge and understanding of the text and the issues raised by text and question, with only occasional lapses

**10–13**

Satisfactory work, making a response to the text that shows sound knowledge and some personal response

Makes some analysis of ways in which the writer uses form, structure and language to create the meanings of the text

Responds mainly in terms of narration of the main features of the text – with some attempt at evaluation of the effects of the writer's use of form, style and language – possibly with some misunderstanding

Responds to the question set most of the time within a simple structure though with some digression into generality

Demonstrates, at times, some awareness of the literary context of the text – in terms of period/theme/genre/historical context

Supports some points with appropriate reference to the text, using quotation and paraphrase mostly accurately – perhaps uses some critical terminology, with some misunderstanding

Uses a basic style that is able to communicate knowledge and understanding of the text and the issues raised by text and question, with only occasional obscurity

**6–9**

Uneven work, making a response to the text that shows knowledge of the text

Makes appropriate references to the writer's use of form, structure and language with some analysis of the ways in which they create the meanings of the text

Makes some attempt at evaluation of the effects of the writer's use of form, style and language – possibly with some misunderstanding

Responds to the question set at first, but tends to digress and lacks structure

May demonstrate, at times, some awareness of the literary context of the text – in terms of period/theme/genre/historical context, but without understanding of how this relates to the individual text

Supports some points with reference to the text; relies mostly on assertion, with repetition; uses quotation and paraphrase at times, possibly not wholly accurate, at too great a length and without discrimination

Uses a simple style, or possibly an over-complex style that succeeds most of the time in communicating knowledge and understanding of the text

**1–5**

Some attempt to hold to text and question showing a simplistic approach to the task

The work is often brief, undeveloped, and exists as a series of points rather than as a line of argument

Expression is simple, technical errors are recurrent, and the work relies on narrative rather than analysis, although description is sometimes valid

**0**

To be awarded only where there is no evidence of any knowledge of, or response to the text

**APPENDIX B: EDITIONS USED FOR SETTING QUESTIONS**

**Note:** These are not prescribed editions. However, Centres may wish to consult this list before deciding which editions their candidates should purchase.

**Paper 1: Reading Literature**

<b>Author</b>	<b>Title of Book</b>	<b>Publisher</b>
Julian Barnes	<i>Arthur and George</i>	Vintage
Charlotte Brontë	<i>Jane Eyre</i>	Penguin
Charles Dickens	<i>Hard Times</i>	Penguin
Tan Twan Eng	<i>The Garden of Evening Mists</i>	Canongate
Thomas Middleton and William Rowley	<i>The Changeling</i>	OUP
Tom Stoppard	<i>Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead</i>	Faber & Faber
William Shakespeare	<i>The Winter's Tale</i>	Collins (ed. Alexander)
Sean O'Casey	<i>Three Dublin Plays</i>	Faber & Faber