



Higher English: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation, Critical Reading and Portfolio–writing

Overview of Understanding Standards resources

This document provides an overview of Understanding Standards resources that are available for Higher English: Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation, Critical Reading and portfolio–writing, which may be useful in supporting marking and moderation.

You can find the resources on the [Higher English Understanding Standards](#) page of our website.

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This edition: March 2025 (version 2.0)

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Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2023)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
1	2	2 out of 4	0 marks for comments on inappropriate selections. 2 marks for two acceptable comments on word choice.
1	3	4 out of 4	2 marks for detailed/insightful comment. 2 marks for two further acceptable comments.
1	4	2 out of 3	0 marks for comment that does not refer to the question. 2 marks for acceptable comments. 0 marks for limited comment.
1	6	3 out of 4	2 marks for detailed/insightful comment on imagery. 2 additional marks could have been awarded for further detailed/insightful comment but the total mark for imagery is 3 so only 1 further mark awarded. A total of 3 out of 4 marks as no comments provided on sentence structure.
1	9	3 out of 5	3 marks for three key areas of agreement. No evidence provided so no further marks.
2	2	1 out of 4	0 marks for three comments which were too limited for Higher level. 1 mark for acceptable comment on word choice.
2	5	2 out of 3	0 marks for two limited comments. 2 marks for two acceptable comments in own words.
2	6	1 out of 4	0 marks for inappropriate selection of word choice examples (question asked for imagery and sentence structure). 1 mark for acceptable comment on imagery.
2	9	4 out of 5	3 marks for three key areas of agreement. 1 mark for appropriate use of supporting evidence in the form of quotations.
3	2	2 out of 4	0 marks for inappropriate selection of list. 2 marks for two acceptable comments on word choice. 0 marks for limited comment on sentence structure.
3	6	2 out of 4	1 mark for acceptable comment on imagery. 0 marks for limited comment on imagery. 1 mark for acceptable comment on sentence structure.
3	7	3 out of 3	3 marks for three acceptable comments in own words.
3	9	4 out of 5	3 marks for three key areas of agreement. One further key area is identified, and one is repeated. No further marks as the maximum of 3 has been awarded for key areas. 1 mark for appropriate selection of evidence, in the form of quotations.

Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2022)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
1	2	4 out of 4	0 marks for comment not linked clearly to the context of the passage. 2 marks for detailed/insightful comment on word choice. 2 further marks for two acceptable comments.
1	4	3 out of 3	3 marks for acceptable comments in own words.
1	9	5 out of 5	3 marks for three key areas of disagreement. One further key area is identified, and one is repeated. No further marks as the maximum of 3 has been awarded for key areas. 2 marks for detailed/insightful use of supporting evidence in the form of quotations and detailed/insightful comments.
2	4	3 out of 3	2 marks for detailed/insightful comment in own words. 1 further mark for acceptable comment in own words.
2	7	3 out of 3	3 marks for acceptable comments in own words.
2	9	5 out of 5	3 marks for three key areas of disagreement. 2 marks for use of detailed/insightful evidence, in the form of quotations and detailed/insightful comments.

Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2021)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
1	5	4 out of 4	1 mark for acceptable comment on imagery. 1 mark for acceptable comment on sentence structure. 2 marks for detailed/insightful comment on imagery.
1	6	2 out of 2	2 marks for detailed/insightful comment on the function of the lines in the development of the writer's argument. Candidate has chosen to answer this question as a 'link' question, which is one valid approach.
1	8	3 out of 3	2 marks for detailed/insightful comment on tone. 1 mark for acceptable comment on tone.

Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2019)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
A	2	2 out of 4	Insufficient analysis of 'list'. Basic comments on word choice.
A	4	2 out of 3	Basic understanding shown. Satisfactory use of own words.
A	6	0 out of 3	Insufficient understanding at Higher level.
A	9	2 out of 5	One area of disagreement identified plus appropriate evidence.
B	1	2 out of 2	Acceptable own words explanations.
B	2	3 out of 4	Three basic points of analysis.
B	5	4 out of 4	Mix of basic and insightful analytical comments.
B	6	3 out of 3	Full marks for three basic points demonstrating understanding.
B	7	4 out of 4	Imagery and sentence structure question. 3 marks for imagery (including one insightful comment), 1 mark for sentence structure.
C	4	1 out of 3	Candidate relies on words from the passage and shows insufficient understanding at Higher level in two of the three bullet points in their answer.
C	6	2 out of 3	Second and third bullet points of candidate's answer essentially repeat first bullet point.
C	9	5 out of 5	Three points of disagreement identified plus detailed/insightful evidence.
D	6	3 out of 3	Detailed and insightful own words explanation.
D	7	4 out of 4	Detailed and insightful analytical comment.
D	9	3 out of 5	Two points of disagreement identified. Appropriate evidence to support these points.

Reading for Understanding, Analysis and Evaluation (2017)

Candidate	Question	Mark	Comments
4	2	3 out of 4	Three basic points of analysis.
4	6	2 out of 3	Basic analytical comments (including onomatopoeia).
4	7	2 out of 2	Full marks for 'development of writer's argument' question. Detailed/insightful comment.
4	9	4 out of 5	Three points of agreement correctly identified. 1 mark for appropriate use of supporting evidence.
5	3	2 out of 2	Full understanding shown for 'explain' question.
5	4	2 out of 4	Detailed/insightful analysis of imagery.
5	6	3 out of 3	Mix of basic and detailed/insightful analysis.
5	7	2 out of 2	Detailed/insightful comment on 'development of writer's argument'.
5	8	3 out of 4	Mix of basic and insightful analysis.
5	9	4 out of 5	Three points of 'agreement' correctly identified. 1 mark for appropriate use of supporting evidence.
6	2	4 out of 4	Four basic points of analysis.
6	4	4 out of 4	Mix of basic and detailed/insightful analysis for sentence structure and imagery question.
6	5	4 out of 4	Four basic points of analysis.
6	6	1 out of 3	One basic comment plus limited comments which don't address the question.
6	7	1 out of 2	Basic comment on 'development of writer's argument.'
6	9	4 out of 5	Two points of agreement correctly identified. 2 marks for detailed/insightful use of supporting evidence.

Critical Reading (2024)

Candidate	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Comments
1	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>	14 out of 20	Overall, this piece is firmly placed in the middle of the 15–13 mark range and is awarded 14 marks.
2	<i>Death of a Naturalist</i>	15 out of 20	Overall, this essay is clear. The candidate stays focused on the question and, on occasion, the response approaches being secure in its knowledge, understanding and detailed in analysis. It is placed at the top of the 15–13 mark range.
3	<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>	15 out of 20	Overall, this essay shows clear knowledge and understanding of the novel. Analysis and evaluation is clear, and in places the analysis is more detailed. It is placed at the top of the 15–13 mark range.
4	<i>2001: A Space Odyssey</i>	15 out of 20	This essay demonstrates clear knowledge and understanding. Analysis of filmic techniques is clear, occasionally demonstrating detailed analysis. It is placed at the top of the 15–13 mark range.

Candidate	Scottish text	Scottish text mark	Comments
1	<i>In Mrs Tilscher's Class</i>	Final question 10 out of 10	Commonality deals with a poem in the question paper and one other poem. Detailed comments made relating to the extract and to other poems.
2	<i>Men Should Weep</i>	Final question 7 out of 10	Several comments in 'elsewhere' section do not include a quotation: the references are just as valid.
3	<i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	Final question 6 out of 10	Acceptable comments made for 1 mark. Several comments either lack sufficient analysis or demonstrate misunderstanding of the text.
4	<i>The Slab Boys</i>	Final question 7 out of 10	Commonality identifies rebellion as a central concern that Byrne uses Phil to explore. One comment made in 'elsewhere' section does not include quotation: the reference is just as valid.

Critical Reading (2023)

Candidate	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Comments
1	<i>A View from the Bridge</i>	14 out of 20	Critical essay clear in all aspects. Firmly in the 15–13 mark range.
2	<i>Othello</i>	16 out of 20	Overall, critical essay is secure, with occasional edging towards clear. Placed at lower end of 18–16 mark range.
3	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>	13 out of 20	Overall, critical essay is clear, with some more narrative aspects edging towards adequate. Placed at lower end of 15–13 mark range.
4	<i>Disabled</i>	10 out of 20	Critical essay shows adequate understanding. In places the analysis edges towards limited. Placed at lower end of 12–10 mark range as just fulfilling the criteria for Higher level.

Candidate	Scottish text	Scottish text mark	Comments
1	<i>The Way My Mother Speaks</i>	Final question 6 out of 10	Acceptable comments on 'impact of loss'. Commonality deals with a poem in the question paper and one other poem.
2	<i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	Final question 10 out of 10	Answer includes detailed/insightful comments. Commonality deals with general points.
3	<i>Brooklyn Cop</i>	Final question 6 out of 10	Answer includes detailed/insightful comment. Commonality deals with a poem in the question paper and one other poem: comment comes later in answer.
4	<i>Men Should Weep</i>	Final question 6 out of 10	Acceptable comments on the relationship between Maggie and John. 1 mark for commonality.

Critical Reading (2022)

Candidate	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Comments
1	<i>1984</i>	14 out of 20	Critical essay is clear in all aspects. It is placed firmly in the middle of the 15–13 mark range.
2	<i>Smeddum</i>	15 out of 20	Critical essay displays clear knowledge and understanding. In places, analysis is detailed rather than clear. It is placed at the top of the 15–13 mark range.
3	<i>The Catcher in the Rye</i>	16 out of 20	Critical essay displays secure knowledge and understanding. Analysis is at times clear rather than detailed. It is placed at the lower end of the 18–16 mark range.
4	<i>Exposure</i>	17 out of 20	Critical essay is secure and detailed in all aspects. It is placed firmly in the middle of the 18–16 mark range.
5	<i>Dunkirk</i>	13 out of 20	Critical essay displays mostly clear qualities: in places analysis and evaluation edge towards adequate. It is placed at the lower end of the 15–13 mark range.
6	<i>The Godfather</i>	15 out of 20	Critical essay displays clear focus and clear evaluative stance, edging towards secure/detailed at times. It is placed at the top of the 15–13 mark range.

Critical Reading (2021)

Candidate	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Comments
A	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>	9 out of 20	Overall, critical essay displays limited grasp and analysis, though there are some accurate comments. Edging towards adequate but placed at the top of the 9–6 mark range.
B	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>	11 out of 20	Critical essay is adequate in all aspects. It is placed firmly in the middle of the 12–10 mark range.
C	<i>Psycho</i>	15 out of 20	Critical essay displays clear understanding. In places analysis edges towards detailed. It is placed at the top of the 15–13 mark range.

Critical Reading (2019)

Candidate	Scottish text	Scottish text mark	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Total	Comments
1	<i>The Slab Boys</i>	16 out of 20 Final question 6 out of 10	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>	17 out of 20	33 out of 40	Detailed/insightful comment for question 2 of <i>Slab Boys</i> . Critical essay secure in all aspects. Firm example of 18–16 mark range.
2	<i>The Telegram</i>	12 out of 20 Final question 6 out of 10	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	14 out of 20	26 out of 40	Detailed/insightful comments in response to final question of Scottish text. Critical essay clear in all respects.
3	<i>The Cone-Gatherers</i>	18 out of 20 Final question 10 out of 10	<i>O Captain! My Captain!</i>	20 out of 20	38 out of 40	Detailed/insightful comments for questions 30, 31 and 32 of <i>The Cone-Gatherers</i> . Thorough and perceptive critical essay – full marks.
4	<i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	19 out of 20 Final question 10 out of 10	<i>The Crucible</i>	18 out of 20	37 out of 40	Full marks for final question of Scottish text (including one detailed/insightful comment). Detailed analysis of character and structure in critical essay.
5	<i>In Mrs Tilscher's Class</i>	12 out of 20 Final question 6 out of 10	<i>Death of A Salesman</i>	11 out of 20	23 out of 40	Detailed/insightful comment on 'The Way My Mother Speaks' in response to final question, and in question 39. Critical essay is a good example of 12–10 mark range.
6	<i>The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>	13 out of 20 Final question 5 out of 10	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>	15 out of 20	28 out of 40	Four basic points for question 21 of Scottish text. Two examples of detailed/insightful comments in final question. Clear understanding of text and selection of evidence in critical essay.
7	<i>Last Supper</i>	11 out of 20 Final question 4 out of 10	<i>A Hanging</i>	12 out of 20	23 out of 40	Detailed/insightful comments in questions 41 and 42 of Scottish text. Adequate understanding, analysis and evaluation demonstrated in critical essay.
8	<i>Men Should Weep</i>	19 out of 20 Final question 10 out of 10	<i>My Last Duchess</i>	16 out of 20	35 out of 40	Unpicking of marks in lengthy response demonstrated for final question of Scottish text.

Critical Reading (2017)

Candidate	Scottish text	Scottish text mark	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Total	Comments
5	<i>The Cone-Gatherers</i>	19 out of 20 Final question 9 out of 10	<i>The Second Coming</i>	17 out of 20	36 out of 40	Good example of poetry critical essay from 18–16 mark range. Secure in all aspects.
6	<i>Valentine</i>	18 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 10	<i>Lord of the Flies</i>	11 out of 20	29 out of 40	Detailed/insightful comments in question 37 and in final question of Scottish text. Good example of 12–10 mark range for critical essay on <i>Lord of the Flies</i> .
7	<i>Basking Shark</i>	12 out of 20 Final question 4 out of 10	<i>Othello</i>	16 out of 20	28 out of 40	Two detailed/insightful comments in question 47 and one in final question of Scottish text. Reasonably secure essay on <i>Othello</i> .

Critical Reading (Scottish text) (2015)

Candidate	Scottish text	Scottish text mark	Comments
1	<i>War Photographer</i>	17 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 10	Detailed/insightful comments in responses to questions 40 and 41.
2	<i>The Cone-Gatherers</i>	10 out of 20 Final question 6 out of 10	Two detailed/insightful comments in 'elsewhere' section of final question.
3	<i>Men Should Weep</i>	17 out of 20 Final question 8 out of 10	One detailed/insightful comment in both 'extract' and 'elsewhere' sections of final question, and one in question 11.
4	<i>The Slab Boys</i>	14 out of 20 Final question 6 out of 10	Detailed/insightful comment on 'use of humour' for question 3.

Critical Reading (Critical essay) (2015)

Candidate	Critical essay	Critical essay mark	Comments
1	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>	12 out of 20	Critical essay on borderline of 15–13 and 12–10 mark ranges.
2	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>	20 out of 20	Thorough and perceptive critical essay. Strong focus on the 'American Dream'.
3	<i>A Hanging</i>	17 out of 20	Genuine engagement. Secure focus on demands of question. Comfortably in 18–16 mark range.
4	<i>Death of A Naturalist</i>	14 out of 20	Clear knowledge and understanding shown in response to question on form and structure.
5	<i>Macbeth</i>	10 out of 20	Borderline critical essay. Adequate focus on demands of the question.
6	<i>Shutter Island</i>	16 out of 20	Media essay on film (the focus is on lighting and sound). Secure focus on demands of the question.
7	<i>The Rabbit Catcher</i>	20 out of 20	Thorough and perceptive response on poem by Sylvia Plath.
8	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>	14 out of 20	Question on scene involving moment of conflict. Clear focus on scene 10 from the play.

Portfolio–writing (2023)

Candidate	Title	Broadly creative/ broadly discursive	Mark	Comments
1	Fast fashion	Discursive	12	Clear line of thought and an engaged stance. Some skilful use of linguistic features. It is placed at the top of the 12–10 mark range.
2	The sound of silence	Creative	10	Imaginative piece. Clear grasp of the genre but, at times, edges towards adequate. It is placed at the lower end of the 12–10 mark range.
3	The bungee jump	Creative	9	Personal/reflective piece. Clear sense of involvement. Linguistic features and expression are adequate rather than clear. It is placed at the top of the 9–7 mark range.

Portfolio–writing (2021)

Candidate	Title	Broadly creative/ broadly discursive	Mark	Comments
1	My tennis identity	Creative	8	Personal/reflective piece. Feelings and experiences explored with an adequate sense of reflection and involvement.
2	The Christmas season	Creative	8	Memories explored with adequate reflection.
3	Lesson on guitar, experiences for life	Creative	11	Clear sense of personality comes across in the writing. Good example of 12–10 mark range.
4	Happiness is egg shaped	Creative	10	Example of personal/reflective writing in which there is clear involvement, for the most part. Occasional suggestions of 9–7 mark range but does enough to be placed in 12–10 range.

Portfolio–writing (2019)

Candidate	Title	Broadly creative/ broadly discursive	Mark	Comments
A	How music broadens the mind	Discursive	9	Some evidence of clear engagement with topic but expression and structure are predominately adequate rather than clear.
B	Moorman	Creative	8	Short fiction which is a good example of all aspects of 9–7 mark range.
C	In the jaws of the grand dragon	Creative	13	Sensitive and witty personal/reflective piece. Strong sense of writer’s personality and of the experience described.
D	Why zoos should be endangered	Discursive	11	Good discursive example of 12–10 mark range.
E	Having a bad day	Creative	11	Piece in Scots. Imaginative fiction. Clear structure and expression.
F	I don’t mean to be dramatic but...	Discursive	12	Clear piece of writing (which is confident at times) discussing the place of drama in the Scottish curriculum.
G	Ophelia	Creative	15	Short fiction with detailed characterisation and creative use of structure.
H	Cyberchondria	Discursive	15	A strongly argued, well-informed and confident piece of writing on the subject of online medical information.

Portfolio–writing (2015)

Candidate	Title	Broadly creative/ broadly discursive	Mark	Comments
1	Technology: our servant or master?	Discursive	8	Discursive piece, which is adequate in the following areas: understanding of topic, use of research, structure, and linguistic features.
2	There's no place like home school...	Discursive	11	Discursive writing on subject of home schooling. Good example of 12–10 mark range.
3	Plastic lives	Discursive	13	Discursive writing on issue of plastic bag use. Sustained and committed line of thought.
4	Lost but not forgotten	Creative	12	Short fiction. Clear creative qualities.
5	Scarred	Creative	15	Short fiction – dual narrative. Skilfully handled.
6	Can I be bothered?	Creative	14	Personal reflective piece – strong and confident expression.
7	The Claus of a predator	Discursive	15	Broadly discursive piece written without reference to external sources. Strong attention to purpose and real understanding of audience. Confident use of language, adopts a 'mock gravitas' style.
8	Let me count the ways	Creative	15	Prose monologue in Scots. Strong creative qualities. Skilful command of genre.
9	Porphyria speaks	Creative	15	Poem. Skilful creation of persona. Dramatic monologue, in the style of/and in response to Robert Browning's <i>Porphyria's Lover</i> .