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CAMBRIDGE OCR

Sample assessment material

A Level

English Literature

Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in English Literature

H472/01

Version 1.0 | April 2026

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Introduction

This sample assessment material (SAM) is an example exam paper published alongside the specification. It's designed to show the style and structure you can expect from our question papers.

As the qualification develops, we may update the question paper template. To make sure you're working with the most up-to-date information, we recommend using the latest set of past papers where possible.

To help you get the most from this SAM, we also provide two supporting resources:

- **Assessment story** – this explains the research behind the qualification and how feedback from teachers, students and schools has shaped our assessment approach.
- **Annotated SAMs** – these guide you through the key features of the assessment and highlight the different types of questions students will encounter in the exam.

Summary of updates

Section	Change	Version	Date
-	Rebrand of sample assessment material.	1.0	April 2026

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Cambridge OCR Level 3 Advanced GCE in English Literature

H472/01 Drama and poetry pre-1900

Sample Question Paper

Date – Morning/Afternoon

Time allowed: 2 hours 30 minutes

You must have:

- The Cambridge OCR 12-page Answer Booklet

INSTRUCTIONS

- Use black ink.
- Write your answer to each question in the Answer Booklet. The question numbers must be clearly shown.
- Fill in the boxes on the front of the Answer Booklet.
- Answer **one** question in Section 1 and **one** in Section 2.
- All questions in Section 1 have two parts, (a) and (b). Answer **both** parts of the question on the text you have studied.
- Answer **one** question on the texts you have studied in Section 2.

INFORMATION

- The total mark for this paper is **60**.
- The marks for each question are shown in brackets **[ ]**.
- This document consists of **20** pages.

ADVICE

- Read each question carefully before you start your answer.

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Section 1 – Shakespeare

King Lear
Hamlet
Othello
Richard III
The Tempest
The Taming of the Shrew

Answer **one** question from this section. You must answer **both** parts (a) **and** (b).
You should spend about **1 hour and 15 minutes** on this section.

1 *King Lear*

Answer **both** parts (a) **and** (b).

(a) Discuss the following passage from Act 4 Scene 1, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects.

[15]

SCENE I. The heath.

Enter EDGAR

EDGAR Yet better thus and known to be contemn'd,
Than still contemn'd and flatter'd. To be worst,
The lowest and most dejected thing of fortune,
Stands still in esperance, lives not in fear.
The lamentable change is from the best;
The worst returns to laughter. Welcome, then,
Thou unsubstantial air that I embrace!
The wretch that thou hast blown unto the worst
Owes nothing to thy blasts.

Enter GLOUCESTER, led by an Old Man

But who comes here?
My father, poorly led? World, world, O world!
But that thy strange mutations make us hate thee,
Life would not yield to age.

OLD MAN O my good lord, I have been your tenant, and your father's tenant, these fourscore years.

GLOUCESTER Away, get thee away; good friend, be gone:
Thy comforts can do me no good at all;
Thee they may hurt.

OLD MAN You cannot see your way.

GLOUCESTER I have no way, and therefore want no eyes;
I stumbled when I saw: full oft 'tis seen
Our means secure us, and our mere defects
Prove our commodities. O dear son Edgar,

The food of thy abused father's wrath!
Might I but live to see thee in my touch,
I'd say I had eyes again!

OLD MAN How now! Who's there?

EDGAR [*Aside*] O gods! Who is't can say 'I am at the worst'?
I am worse than e'er I was.

OLD MAN 'Tis poor mad Tom.

EDGAR [*Aside*] And worse I may be yet: the worst is not
So long as we can say 'This is the worst'.

OLD MAN Fellow, where goest?

GLOUCESTER Is it a beggar-man?

OLD MAN Madman and beggar too.

GLOUCESTER He has some reason, else he could not beg.
I' th' last night's storm I such a fellow saw;
Which made me think a man a worm. My son
Came then into my mind; and yet my mind
Was then scarce friends with him. I have heard more since.
As flies to wanton boys, are we to th' gods –
They kill us for their sport.

EDGAR [*Aside]* How should this be?
Bad is the trade that must play fool to sorrow,
Ang'ring itself and others. – Bless thee, master!

GLOUCESTER Is that the naked fellow?

OLD MAN Ay, my lord.

GLOUCESTER Then, prithee, get thee away. If for my sake
Thou wilt o'ertake us hence a mile or twain
I' th' way toward Dover, do it for ancient love;
And bring some covering for this naked soul,
Who I'll entreat to lead me.

OLD MAN Alack, sir, he is mad.

GLOUCESTER 'Tis the times' plague when madmen lead the blind.
Do as I bid thee, or rather do thy pleasure;
Above the rest, be gone.

OLD MAN I'll bring him the best 'parel that I have,
Come on't what will. [*Exit*]

GLOUCESTER Sirrah, naked fellow!

EDGAR Poor Tom's a-cold. [*Aside*] I cannot daub it further.

GLOUCESTER Come hither, fellow.

EDGAR [*Aside*] And yet I must. – Bless thy sweet eyes, they bleed.

GLOUCESTER Know'st thou the way to Dover?

EDGAR Both stile and gate, horse-way and foot-path.

And

(b) 'A play which shows the worst of human experience.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of King Lear.

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

2 ***Hamlet***

Answer **both** parts (a) **and** (b).

(a) Discuss the following passage from Act 3 Scene 4, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects.

[15]

HAMLET Come, come, and sit you down; you shall not budge.
You go not till I set you up a glass
Where you may see the inmost part of you.

QUEEN What wilt thou do? Thou wilt not murder me?
Help, help, ho!

POLONIUS *[Behind]* What ho! Help, help, help!

HAMLET *[Drawing]* How now! a rat? Dead, for a ducat, dead!

Kills Polonius with a pass through the arras.

POLONIUS *[Behind]* O, I am slain!

QUEEN O me, what hast thou done?

HAMLET Nay, I know not. Is it the King?

QUEEN O, what a rash and bloody deed is this!

HAMLET A bloody deed! – Almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother.

QUEEN As kill a king!

HAMLET Ay, lady, it was my word
[Parting the arras] Thou wretched, rash, intruding fool, farewell!
I took thee for thy better. Take thy fortune;
Thou find'st to be too busy is some danger.
Leave wringing of your hands. Peace; sit you down,
And let me wring your heart; for so I shall,
If it be made of penetrable stuff;
If damned custom have not braz'd it so
That it be proof and bulwark against sense.

QUEEN What have I done, that thou dar’st wag thy tongue
In noise so rude against me?

HAMLET Such an act
That blurs the grace and blush of modesty,
Calls virtue hypocrite; takes off the rose
From the fair forehead of an innocent love,
And sets a blister there; makes marriage-vows
As false as dicers' oaths. O, such a deed
As from the body of contraction plucks
The very soul, and sweet religion makes
A rhapsody of words. Heaven's face does glow

O’er this solidity and compound mass
With heated visage, as against the doom –
Is thought-sick at the act.

QUEEN Ay me, what act,
That roars so loud, and thunders in the index?

And

(b) ‘Hamlet is destroyed by his impulsiveness, not his uncertainty.’

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of the character Hamlet.

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

3 ***Othello***

Answer **both** parts (a) **and** (b).

(a) Discuss the following passage from Act 2 Scene 3, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects.

[15]

IAGO What, are you hurt, Lieutenant?

CASSIO Ay, past all surgery.

IAGO Marry, God forbid!

CASSIO Reputation, reputation, reputation! O, I have lost my reputation! I have lost the immortal part of myself, and what remains is bestial. My reputation, Iago, my reputation!

IAGO As I am an honest man, I had thought you had receiv'd some bodily wound; there is more sense in that than in reputation. Reputation is an idle and most false imposition: oft got without merit, and lost without deserving. You have lost no reputation at all, unless you repute yourself such a loser. What, man! there are more ways to recover the General again: you are but now cast in his mood, a punishment more in policy than in malice; even so as one would beat his offenceless dog to affright an imperious lion. Sue to him again, and he's yours.

CASSIO I will rather sue to be despis'd than to deceive so good a commander with so slight, so drunken, and so indiscreet an officer. Drunk! and speak parrot! And squabble, swagger, swear! And discourse fustian with one's own shadow! O thou invisible spirit of wine, if thou hast no name to be known by, let us call thee devil!

IAGO What was he that you followed with your sword? What had he done to you?

CASSIO I know not.

IAGO Is't possible?

CASSIO I remember a mass of things, but nothing distinctly; a quarrel, but nothing wherefore. O God, that men should put an enemy in their mouths to steal away their brains! That we should with joy, pleasance, revel and applause, transform ourselves into beasts!

IAGO Why, but you are now well enough. How came you thus recovered?

CASSIO It hath pleas'd the devil drunkenness to give place to the devil wrath. One unperfectness shows me another, to make me frankly despise myself.

IAGO Come, you are too severe a moraller. As the time, the place, and the condition of this country stands, I could heartily wish this had not so befall'n; but since it is as it is, mend it for your own good.

CASSIO I will ask him for my place again: he shall tell me I am a drunkard. Had I as many mouths as Hydra, such an answer would stop them all. To be now a sensible man, by and by a fool, and presently a beast! O strange! Every inordinate cup is unblest, and the ingredience is a devil.

IAGO Come, come, good wine is a good familiar creature if it be well us'd; exclaim no more against it. And, good Lieutenant, I think you think I love you.

CASSIO I have well approv'd it, sir. I drunk!

IAGO You or any man living may be drunk at a time, man. I'll tell you what you shall do. Our General's wife is now the General – I may say so in this respect, for that he hath devoted and given up himself to the contemplation, mark, and denotement of her parts and graces – confess yourself freely to her; importune her help to put you in your place again:

she is of so free, so kind, so apt, so blessed a disposition, she holds it a vice in her goodness not to do more than she is requested. This broken joint between you and her husband entreat her to splinter; and, my fortunes against any lay worth naming, this crack of your love shall grow stronger than it was before.

CASSIO You advise me well.

IAGO I protest, in the sincerity of love and honest kindness.

CASSIO I think it freely; and betimes in the morning I will beseech the virtuous Desdemona to undertake for me. I am desperate of my fortunes if they check me here.

IAGO You are in the right. Good night, Lieutenant; I must to the watch.

CASSIO Good night, honest Iago.

And

(b) 'In the military setting of *Othello*, reputation is everything.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of *Othello*.

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

4 ***Richard III***

Answer **both** parts (a) **and** (b).

(a) Discuss the following passage from Act 4 Scene 3, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects.

[15]

Enter Tyrrell

TYRRELL The tyrannous and bloody act is done,
The most arch deed of piteous massacre
That ever yet this land was guilty of.
Dighton and Forrest, who I did suborn
To do this piece of ruthful butchery,
Albeit they were flesh'd villains, bloody dogs,
Melted with tenderness and mild compassion,
Wept like two children in their deaths' sad story.
'O', thus' quoth Dighton, 'lay the gentle babes'–
'Thus, thus,' quoth Forrest, 'girdling one another
Within their alabaster innocent arms.
Their lips were four red roses on a stalk,
And in their summer beauty kiss'd each other.
A book of prayers on their pillow lay;
Which once, quoth Forrest, 'almost chang'd my mind;
But O! the devil' – there the villain stopp'd;
When Dighton thus told on: 'We smothered
The most replenished sweet work of nature,
That from the prime creation e'er she framed'.
Hence both are gone with conscience and remorse
They could not speak; and so I left them both,
To bring this tidings to the bloody King.

Enter King Richard

And here he comes. All health, my sovereign lord!

KING RICHARD Kind Tyrrell, am I happy in thy news?

TYRRELL If to have done the thing you gave in charge
Beget your happiness, be happy then,
For it is done.

KING RICHARD But didst thou see them dead?

TYRRELL I did, my lord.

KING RICHARD And buried, gentle Tyrrell?

TYRRELL The chaplain of the Tower hath buried them;
But where, to say the truth, I do not know.

KING RICHARD Come to me, Tyrrell, soon at after supper,
When thou shalt tell the process of their death.
Meantime, but think how I may do thee good,
And be inheritor of thy desire.
Farewell till then.

TYRRELL I humbly take my leave.

Exit Tyrrell

KING RICHARD The son of Clarence have I pent up close;
His daughter meanly have I match'd in marriage;
The sons of Edward sleep in Abraham's bosom,
And Anne my wife hath bid the world good night.
Now, for I know the Britaine Richmond aims
At young Elizabeth, my brother's daughter,
And by that knot looks proudly on the crown,
To her I go, a jolly thriving wooer.

And

(b) 'The chief attraction of *Richard III* is the presentation of innocence under threat.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of the play *Richard III.*

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

5 ***The Tempest***

Answer **both** parts (a) **and** (b).

(a) Discuss the following passage from Act 3 Scene 1, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects.

[15]

FERDINAND I am in my condition,
A prince, Miranda; I do think, a king–
I would not so! – and would no more endure
This wooden slavery than to suffer
The flesh-fly blow my mouth. Hear my soul speak:
The very instant that I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service; there resides
To make me slave to it, and for your sake
Am I this patient log-man.

MIRANDA Do you love me?

FERDINAND O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound,
And crown what I profess with kind event
If I speak true! If hollowly, invert
What best is boded me to mischief! – I
Beyond all limit of what else i' th' world,
Do love, prize, honour you.

MIRANDA I am a fool
To weep at what I am glad of.

PROSPERO *[Aside]* Fair encounter
Of two most rare affections! Heavens rain grace
On that which breeds between 'em!

FERDINAND Wherefore weep you?

MIRANDA At mine unworthiness that dare not offer
What I desire to give, and much less take
What I shall die to want. But this is trifling;
And all the more it seeks to hide itself,
The bigger bulk it shows. Hence, bashful cunning!
And prompt me, plain and holy innocence!
I am your wife, if you will marry me;
If not, I'll die your maid. To be your fellow
You may deny me; but I'll be your servant,
Whether you will or no.

FERDINAND My mistress, dearest;
And I thus humble ever.

MIRANDA My husband, then?

FERDINAND Ay, with a heart as willing
As bondage e'er of freedom. Here's my hand.

MIRANDA And mine, with my heart in't; and now farewell
Till half an hour hence.

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FERDINAND A thousand thousand!
Exeunt Ferdinand and Miranda severally

PROSPERO So glad of this as they I cannot be,
Who are surpris'd withal; but my rejoicing
At nothing can be more. I'll to my book,
For yet ere supper time must I perform
Much business appertaining.

Exit

And

(b) 'The lovers are the chief source of hope in *The Tempest*.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of *The Tempest.*

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

The Taming of the Shrew

Answer **both** parts (a) **and** (b).

(a) Discuss the following passage from Act 4 Scene 2, exploring Shakespeare's use of language and its dramatic effects.

[15]

SCENE II. *Padua. Before BAPTISTA'S house.*

Enter TRANIO as Lucentio, and HORTENSIO as Licio.

TRANIO Is't possible, friend Licio, that Mistress Bianca
Doth fancy any other but Lucentio?
I tell you, sir, she bears me fair in hand.
HORTENSIO Sir, to satisfy you in what I have said,
Stand by and mark the manner of his teaching.
[*They stand aside*]

Enter BIANCA and LUCENTIO as Cambio.

LUCENTIO Now, mistress, profit you in what you read?
BIANCA What, master, read you? first resolve me that.
LUCENTIO I read that I profess, 'The Art to Love'.
BIANCA And may you prove, sir, master of your art!
LUCENTIO While you, sweet dear, prove mistress of my heart!
[*They retire*]
HORTENSIO Quick proceeders, marry! Now, tell me, I pray,
You that durst swear that your mistress Bianca
Lov'd none in the world so well as Lucentio.
TRANIO O despiteful love! unconstant womankind!
I tell thee, Licio, this is wonderful.
HORTENSIO Mistake no more; I am not Licio,
Nor a musician as I seem to be;
But one that scorn to live in this disguise
For such a one as leaves a gentleman,
And makes a god of such a cullion.
Know, sir, that I am call'd Hortensio.
TRANIO Signior Hortensio, I have often heard
Of your entire affection to Bianca;
And since mine eyes are witness of her lightness,
I will with you, if you be so contented,
Forswear Bianca and her love for ever.
HORTENSIO See, how they kiss and court! Signior Lucentio,
Here is my hand, and here I firmly vow
Never to woo her more, but do forswear her,

As one unworthy all the former favours
That I have fondly flatter'd her withal.

TRANIO And here I take the like unfeigned oath,
Never to marry with her though she would entreat;
Fie on her! See how beastly she doth court him!

HORTENSIO Would all the world but he had quite forsworn!
For me, that I may surely keep mine oath,
I will be married to a wealthy widow
Ere three days pass, which hath as long lov'd me
As I have loved this proud disdainful haggard.
And so farewell, Signior Lucentio.
Kindness in women, not their beauteous looks,
Shall win my love; and so I take my leave,
In resolution as I swore before.

[*Exit*]

TRANIO Mistress Bianca, bless you with such grace
As 'longeth to a lover's blessed case!
Nay, I have ta'en you napping, gentle love,
And have forsworn you with Hortensio.

BIANCA Tranio, you jest; but have you both forsworn me?

TRANIO Mistress, we have.

LUCENTIO Then we are rid of Licio.

TRANIO I' faith, he'll have a lusty widow now,
That shall be woo'd and wedded in a day.

BIANCA God give him joy!

TRANIO Ay, and he'll tame her.

BIANCA He says so, Tranio.

TRANIO Faith, he is gone unto the taming-school.

BIANCA The taming-school! What, is there such a place?

TRANIO Ay, mistress; and Petruchio is the master,
That teacheth tricks eleven and twenty long,
To tame a shrew and charm her chattering tongue.

And

(b) 'A play in which the characters fool others and fool themselves.'

Using your knowledge of the play as a whole, show how far you agree with this view of *The Taming of the Shrew*.

Remember to support your answer with reference to different interpretations.

[15]

Section 2 – Drama and Poetry pre-1900

Answer **one** question from this section.
You should spend about **1 hour and 15 minutes** on this section.
You should use **one drama text** from the list and **one poetry text** from the list in your answer:

Drama	Poetry
Christopher Marlowe: *Edward II* John Webster: *The Duchess of Malfi* Oliver Goldsmith: *She Stoops to Conquer* Henrik Ibsen: *A Doll's House* Oscar Wilde: *An Ideal Husband*	Geoffrey Chaucer: *The Merchant's Prologue and Tale* John Milton: *Paradise Lost Books 9 & 10* Samuel Taylor Coleridge: *Selected Poems* Alfred, Lord Tennyson: *Maud* Christina Rossetti: *Selected Poems*

6 'Love is invariably possessive.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore love and possession. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

Or

7 'Good writing about sexual relationships is invariably moral.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore the morality of sexual relationships. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

Or

8 'Men may seem to be more powerful than women, but the reality is very different.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore power and gender. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

Or

9 'Forbidden tastes are sweetest.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore the attraction of that which is forbidden. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

Or

10 'Conflict in literature generally arises from misunderstanding.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers make use of misunderstanding. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

Or

11 'Rank and social status are enemies of happiness.'

In the light of this view, consider ways in which writers explore the effects of rank and social status. In your answer, compare one drama text and one poetry text from the above lists.

[30]

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