

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH

LOWER SECONDARY TEACHING SYLLABUS 2007



Ministry of Education
SINGAPORE

**CURRICULUM PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT DIVISION
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION
SINGAPORE**

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Year of Implementation: 2007**

SECTION 1: VALUES

The study of English Literature can be an effective means for students to explore moral and social issues.

Moral Issues

- Via the study of literary texts, students explore the human condition and are able to better understand their own existence and values in relation to society;
- Literature addresses a wide range of psychological and sociological issues. At the heart of literary works are issues of conflict and the range of human desires that contribute to such conflict; and
- Such exposure will encourage an understanding of moral and ethical issues, prompting students to foster an awareness of the world they live in.

Social Issues

- The study of English Literature encourages students to explore literary contexts that promote an awareness of social factors that influence people; and
- Literary works provide an effective way for students to comprehend values and the way humanity functions.

SECTION 2: AIMS

The aims of the syllabus apply to all Lower Secondary students.

The aims are to develop students' ability to:

1. Discover the joys of reading Literature and become aware of new ways of perceiving the world around them;
2. Explore the elements of different genres via the study of literary texts and to understand how these function in enabling literary works to achieve their desired ends;
3. Articulate perceptive and logical thinking when discussing and writing about Literature;
4. Select and interpret relevant material judiciously and to express ideas in coherent and clear English;
5. Understand the importance of the contexts in which literary texts are written and understood; and
6. Engage personally with texts, showing a strong intellectual and emotional awareness of themes, characters, settings and contexts.

SECTION 3: PRINCIPLES OF LITERATURE TEACHING

General Principles

3.1 Critical Analysis

The Lower Secondary Literature classroom should be one that encourages and supports engagement with texts and sustained critical analysis. Students should read, reflect on, discuss and respond to literary texts with critical appreciation and personal response. They should also question the assumptions behind what they read, and support their viewpoints with close reference to textual evidence.

3.2 Environment

The Literature classroom should allow students to freely express a diverse range of perspectives and opinions. Students should be provided with opportunities to work both independently and collaboratively. In this way, they will learn how to formulate and refine their personal responses to the texts, how to defend their viewpoints and readings of the texts, as well as how to accept and respond consensually to the informed opinions of others.

3.3 Reading

Literature should promote the love of reading. Exposure to the three main genres is a critical first phase of students' secondary level experience with the subject, and should provide a sound foundation for a possible extension of this subject at higher levels. Through the set texts studied, students should be encouraged to read other texts of similar or contrasting nature, so as to broaden their range of experiences. The teacher's informed recommendation of other reading material is a good springboard to other forms of literature.

3.4 Writing

Writing to articulate a response to a text is an essential part of the subject. Students should be able to construct a coherent and thoughtful argument supported by evidence from the text. Their written work should also reflect engagement with the text and an understanding of how language is used to create literary effects.

3.5 Resources

Literature lessons can tap a variety of different media, such as audio and visual resources, IT, film and the Internet, among others. The teacher could use these resources to make lessons more interesting and stimulating for students. For example, a film version of a novel or short story being

studied in class can make for a discussion of characterization, adaptation, setting, symbols or themes.

3.6 Planning a Course of Study

The minimum number of timetabled curriculum for Literature in English at Lower Secondary level is, in general, 2 periods of about 35 minutes per week. Careful planning of the school's Lower Secondary Literature programme will ensure a balance of text-based and activity-based lessons that will enrich the students' literary experiences.

A Lower Secondary Literature programme could include the following:

- classroom teaching
- access to library and computers for research
- whole class discussions
- one-to-one sessions with teachers
- discussion groups and group work
- rehearsal for speaking tasks
- assessment and follow-up
- structured and meaningful multimedia sessions
- reading circles and book clubs

The principles upon which literature teaching is based will reflect the aims of the syllabus. In summary, schools' Lower Secondary Literature programmes should be informed by the following principles:

3.7 Response to Literature

- 3.7.1 Individual student response must be encouraged and developed;
- 3.7.2 The student's role is an active one, and he/she is expected to participate in creating a response to the text;
- 3.7.3 The teacher's role is to provide students' with the opportunity and support which will enable them to offer their own viewpoints, and to substantiate these with textual evidence;
- 3.7.4 Students must have sufficient time to read, explore, discuss and respond, and there should be opportunities for interaction through consultation and discussion;
- 3.7.5 A positive classroom environment needs to be developed in which literary texts are discussed with interest as well as enjoyed and valued;
- 3.7.6 Students must be given the opportunities to respond to a text through, for example, art, drama, music, choral reading, movement and creative writing; and
- 3.7.7 A response that is coherent and intelligible should not be penalised for linguistic inaccuracy.

3.8 Development of Skills of Literary Appreciation

- 3.8.1 Critical appreciation and analysis can and must be developed at all levels;
- 3.8.2 Teaching should help students acquire an understanding of form and literary devices as appropriate to their developing abilities; and
- 3.8.3 The terms and concepts used in critical appreciation must be taught as a means to deepen literary experience and not as an end in itself.

3.9 Breadth of Literary Experience

- 3.9.1 Students should be exposed to as wide a range of texts as possible. This would include exposure to:
 - The various literary genres, i.e. prose, poetry and drama
 - A wide range of human concerns
 - Literature from different parts of the world, including Singapore
- 3.9.2 Students should have the opportunity to view and listen to texts being performed.

SECTION 4: AREAS OF STUDY

Areas of study refer to the various elements that make up a literary text. They are applicable to all Lower Secondary candidates.

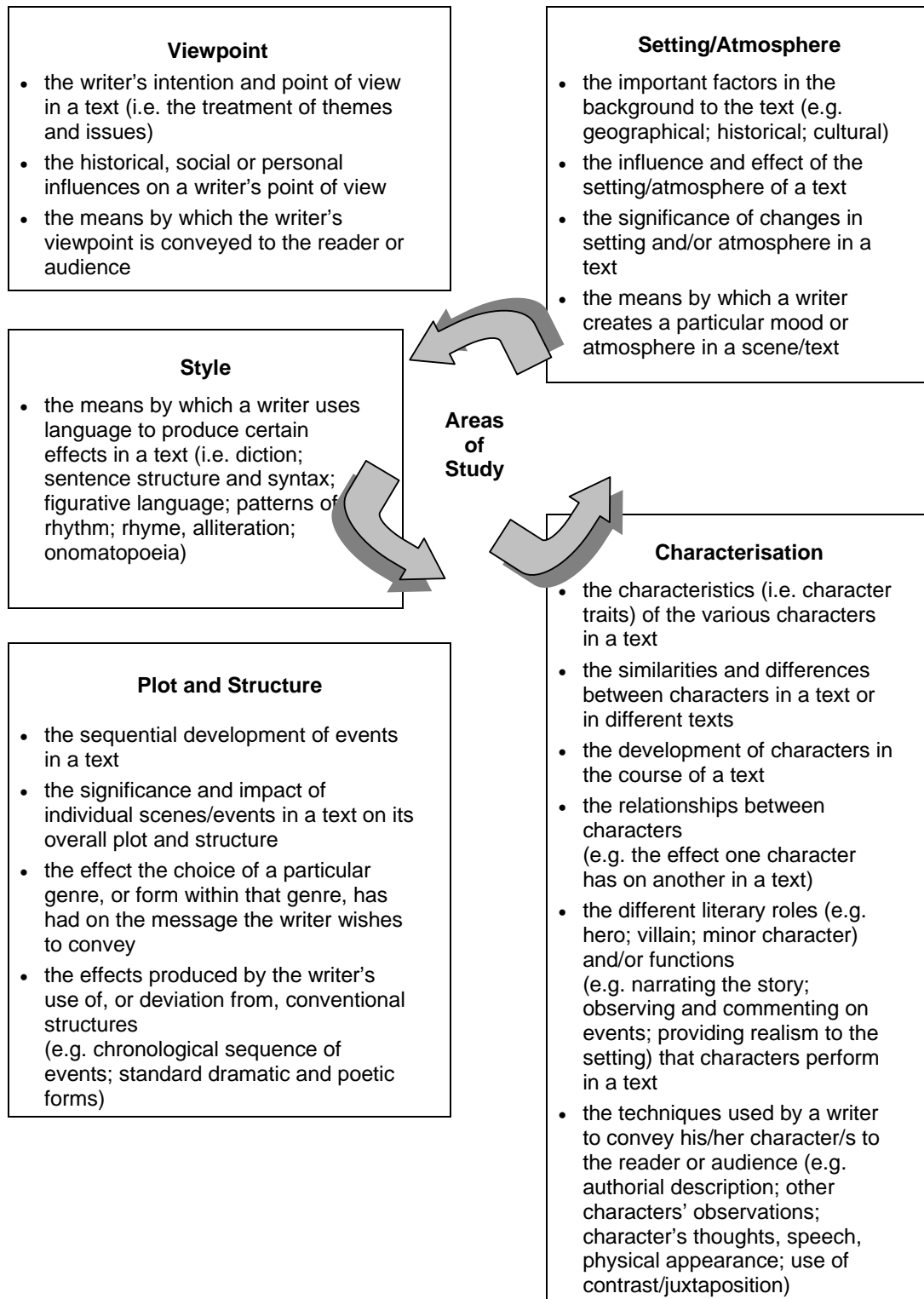
The areas of study and their subsidiary points have been listed in no particular order of difficulty or importance, and there is likely to be a degree of overlap between them. The areas of study should not be taught in isolation, but should lead students to a holistic and meaningful appreciation of the text.

It is also likely that not all texts will lend themselves to every area of study, e.g. some poems will not be appropriate for a study of characterisation.

Each of the five areas of study provides a framework within which students will be encouraged **to comprehend, interpret and respond to** all types of literary texts.

Please see next page for a diagrammatic representation of the main Areas of Study.

Literature in English Lower Secondary Teaching Syllabus



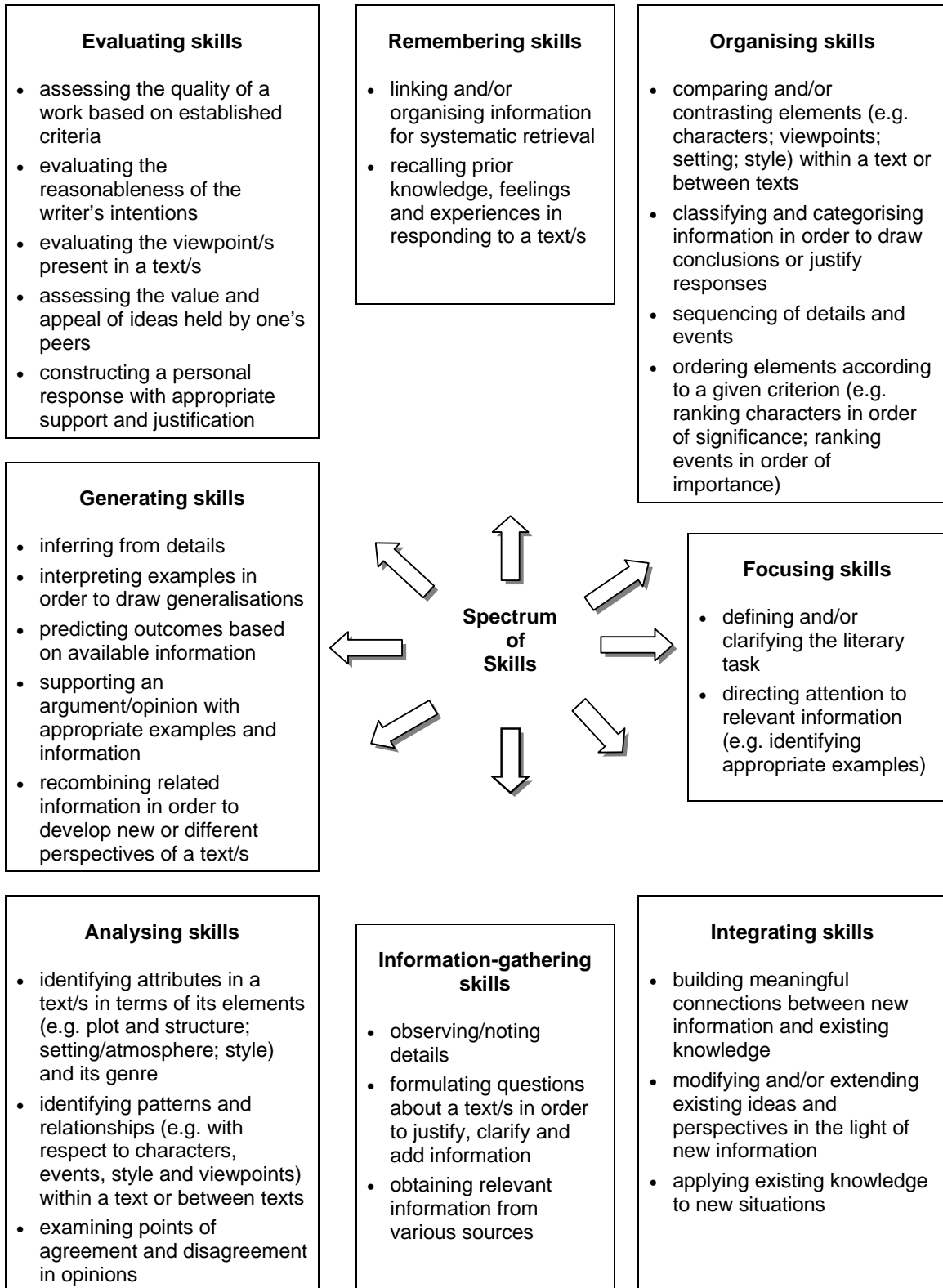
SECTION 5: SPECTRUM OF SKILLS

All Lower Secondary students are to be equipped with the following spectrum of skills in order to read and respond to the various areas of study. For example, the skill of comparison can be applied to comparing characters, situations, genres, effects of style and viewpoints of various writers.

The main skills have been listed with examples given. All the main skills should be introduced and reinforced at every level, but the levels of mastery of these skills will vary according to the ability of the students.

The skills overlap each other, and some skills may lead to the teaching of other skills. The distinction between skills should not be too rigidly followed.

Please see next page for a diagrammatic representation of the Spectrum of Skills.



SECTION 6: SPECIFICATION OF CONTENT

6.1 Genres to be covered

Students should be exposed to all three of the main literary genres: prose, poetry and drama.

By the end of the 2-year Lower Secondary Literature course, students should have studied (and been assessed in their understanding and analysis of) the following:

Prose
One substantial text – a short novel or a collection of short stories – studied in its entirety.
Poetry
A substantial collection of at least ten poems.*
Drama
One substantial play studied in its entirety.
The Unseen
Unseen Prose and Poetry.

*With 10% White Space in the Literature curriculum, schools are at liberty to focus on the teaching of a set prose text, and a set drama text. Poetry can be taught in the Unseen component of the Literature programme, along with the Unseen prose extracts. If this approach is taken, it is recommended that the selection of unseen poems for study should be such that the distinct characteristics of the genre are adequately demonstrated, and that the range of texts is wide enough for the main areas of study to be addressed.

Giving students the opportunity to study texts such as novels, poems and plays in their entirety will allow for a more holistic understanding of literary concepts such as themes, development of plot and characterisation. This will also lead to a fuller understanding of the creative process that underlies all literary texts.

Texts from various parts of the world, originally written in English, can be set for study. Singaporean/Malaysian Literature will help to provide students with familiar contexts, which will in turn make the subject more accessible.

Excerpts from novels, poems or plays should not be used as substitutes for entire texts. They may, however, be used as unseen exercises to hone students' higher order thinking skills, such as critical analysis.

6.2 Selection of Texts

When selecting texts, the following are possible areas for consideration:

- whether the stories are rich enough to allow for sufficient depth of literary analysis and exploration;
- whether the texts are age-appropriate and accessible where themes or content are concerned;
- if the texts are engaging enough for the target audience; and
- if they are objectionable in any way, due to, for example, coarse language or insensitivity to other races and religions.

The teacher should select a text based on his/her knowledge of the students and their interests and abilities.

6.3 Prose

A prose text chosen for study should be substantial, with its length ranging from 100 to 250 pages. There should be sufficient scope for the areas of study to be covered, and for the building of the necessary skills as listed in the spectrum of skills.

In general, using contemporary texts for study is advantageous, for reasons that include accessibility of language and familiarity of thematic concerns. Classics could also be selected for study if the teacher deems this feasible. Texts with themes that are unfamiliar due to temporal or cultural distance should not be avoided simply for this reason, as multicultural texts offer new perspectives into and windows onto other worlds.

Where short stories are used, the teacher is free to choose a collection united by commonality of theme or genre, or by a single writer. The teacher might also want to expose students to different writing styles by using a range of short stories by different authors.

6.4 Poetry

Exposing students to at least ten substantial poems (ranging from 15 – 35 lines in length) should be a sufficient foundation for teaching the language, structure and elements of poetry. The teacher should consider selecting those that will reward close analysis. As with short stories, the teacher is free to select poems united, perhaps, by commonality of theme, genre or poet, although a wide range of poems by different poets makes for greater exposure to different styles, voice and tone, among other things. Allowing for opportunities to compare and contrast poems and the treatment of themes,

use of language and style would facilitate the building of higher order thinking skills.

Very short poems (such as haikus) may not offer sufficient scope for the development of higher order thinking skills. In the early stages, though, such short poems would serve well as a friendly introduction to the genre. Introducing students to poems such as acrostics, concrete poems and limericks would also be a fun way to get them interested in the genre.

6.5 Drama

One substantial play, studied in its entirety, will allow students to be exposed to dramatic conventions and devices such as stagecraft and performance. Making provisions for students to enact certain portions of the play, or even the whole play itself, will enable them to see the print text coming to life, and give them opportunities to explore the physical connections between the two. Students should understand that a play is not just words on paper, but that it has immense performance potential. Bringing students to actual stage performances would also enhance the overall learning experience.

The teacher is free to choose a text for study, ranging from one-act plays to those with action unfolding over several acts, as long as the play offers sufficient material for critical analysis and for learning the conventions and elements of drama.

6.6 Literary terms

Students should be taught how to recognise literary devices, and also how to use basic literary terms, both the general terms and those specific to the genres, in discussion and in writing. Giving them access to this literary language will enable them to express their personal responses cogently and to develop an understanding of the inner workings of the subject.

It should be emphasised, however, that the use of literary terms should be a means to an end, and not an end in itself. Students should use these terms to explain and supplement their personal responses and main arguments; they should not merely identify and list the devices where they occur in the text without indicating an understanding of their effects on the reader.

6.7 Creative Writing

Building in opportunities to write creatively will enhance students' understanding of the processes behind the creation of literary works. Students could, for example, write simple

poems such as acrostic poems or haikus, and learn about diction and control of the number of syllables so as to create literary effects. For example, getting them to write a short story will enhance their understanding of narrative structures, the placement of the climax and resolution, and characterisation, among others.

SECTION 7: ASSESSMENT

7.1 Objectives

At the end of two years, Lower Secondary students should be able to:

1. Demonstrate, through close and personal analysis, knowledge of the literary texts studied;
2. Respond with knowledge and understanding to a variety of literary texts of different forms and contexts;
3. Demonstrate understanding of the ways in which writers' choices of form, structure and language shape meanings;
4. Communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to what is read; and
5. Express responses clearly and coherently, using textual evidence where appropriate.

The assessment objectives are inter-related and it will not normally be either possible or desirable to assess them in isolation.

Assessment and band descriptors are differentiated for Normal and Express students.

7.2 Formal and Informal Assessment

Informal assessment will be ongoing. By the end of Secondary Two, students should have been formally assessed in all of the following areas (as listed in Section 6: Specification of Content):

- A set prose text
- A set drama text
- Set poems*
- Unseen texts (2 genres – prose and poetry)

*With 10% White Space in the Literature curriculum, schools are at liberty to focus on the teaching of a set prose text, and a set drama text. Poetry can be taught in the Unseen component of the Literature programme, along with the Unseen prose extracts. If this approach is taken, it is recommended that the selection of unseen poems for study should be such that the distinct characteristics of the genre are adequately demonstrated, and that the range of texts is wide enough for the main areas of study to be addressed.

Questions on the set texts should assess students on the various areas of study (i.e. characterisation, plot and structure, setting and atmosphere, style and viewpoint).

For each set text, there should be passage-based and essay questions. Teaching students how to answer simple passage-based and essay questions based on the texts they have studied will help to prepare them for the rigours of assessment in Upper Secondary Literature in English.

Questions on the unseen texts should require students to demonstrate understanding of the meaning of the text, and to discuss critically the ways in which the writer has communicated that meaning. The students' understanding of the areas of study should also be assessed.

Schools have the flexibility to decide whether to allow students to take their texts with them into the examination room or not.

7.3 Formative and Summative Assessment

Assessment can be both formative and summative. The teacher can plan for assessment to be carried out in a variety and range of modes. This is to ensure that the students' experience in the Literature classroom is a balanced and enriched that takes into account different learning styles and abilities.

Formative Assessment

Formative assessment is carried out during a programme. It provides the opportunity for immediate evidence of student learning. Its purpose is to improve the quality of student learning and to monitor the progress being made towards achieving learning outcomes. Assessment apparatus such as rubrics and band descriptors can be used for this purpose. For more information on formative assessment, please refer to the Literature in English Syllabus Guidelines for Secondary School (2007).

Summative Assessment

Summative assessment is comprehensive and is often used to check the level of students' learning at the end of a course of study. It is based on the cumulative learning experience, and is a check to see if the course has met its goals and objectives.

Students can be assessed based on the following:

- short writing exercises e.g. creative writing and notes
- portfolios
- reviews
- group project work
- oral assessment
- performance
- worksheets
- structured questions
- passage-based questions
- essay questions

Note: The above list is not exhaustive.

7.4 Band Descriptors

Please see Band Descriptors on the following pages. Note that these Band Descriptors are differentiated for Normal and Express students. Teachers are expected to use all the bands in their assessment.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH LOWER SECONDARY TEACHING SYLLABUS

BAND DESCRIPTORS FOR SET TEXT QUESTIONS

NORMAL	DESCRIPTION
21 - 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant and apt selection of textual detail. Answers are generally well focused. • Answers demonstrate understanding of the text's main concerns and some knowledge of how the author conveys these. • Substantiation of response is relevant and developed. • Clear and competent work, generally well supported by textual evidence but laboured arguments may be present. May lapse into narrative occasionally.
18 - 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer is relevant to the main thrust of the question. Appropriate selection of textual detail, though not consistently done. • Answers may reveal some understanding of the more obvious features of the text but fail to note the wider implications. Attempts to analyse and evaluate are often not successfully done. • Demonstrates an attempt to respond to appropriate material in the text. Such a response should be substantiated. • Generally coherent work, with evidence of the development of an argument with tracts of narrative.
15 - 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of textual detail is generally relevant to the question though the link may not be made. • Answers reveal some understanding of the basic features of the text but do not show any attempt at interpretation. • There is evidence of personal engagement but in the form of generalisations. • Largely narrative in approach and sketchy in development, but a sense of a very basic argument can be discerned.
12 - 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peripheral bearing on the question only. Often includes large tracts of information from the text without perceiving their significance. • Shows limited understanding of the text. • Manages to communicate with some difficulty.
0 - 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No bearing on the question whatsoever. Slavish copying of irrelevant material. Answers that are obviously prepared scripts but have little to do with the question belong in this category. • Shows serious flaws in understanding the text. • Answer is marred by incoherence and lacks direction or focus. It may also be extremely brief.

Short work: Can be presented in various forms, e.g. note form or a series of hurriedly sketched-in paragraphs. It is essential that Examiners mark short work strictly on the basis of what is given. The work should not be marked on the grounds of quality elsewhere in the script as this can lead to unfairness.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH LOWER SECONDARY TEACHING SYLLABUS

BAND DESCRIPTORS FOR SET TEXT QUESTIONS

EXPRESS	DESCRIPTION
21 – 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discriminating selection of textual detail with close attention to the terms of the question. Top answers take advantage of the opportunities offered by the question. • Conscientious answers that demonstrate good understanding of the text and question. Better answers reveal some insights into the text's main concerns and the effects achieved by the author. • Response demonstrates a consistent viewpoint with appropriate substantiation. • Clear, organised and coherent work.
18 – 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant and apt selection of textual detail. Answers are generally well focused. • Answers demonstrate understanding of the text's main concerns and some knowledge of how the author conveys these. • Substantiation of response is relevant and developed. • Clear and competent work, generally well supported by textual evidence but laboured arguments may be present. May lapse into narrative occasionally.
15 – 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer is relevant to the main thrust of the question. Appropriate selection of textual detail, though not consistently done. • Answers may reveal some understanding of the more obvious features of the text but fail to note the wider implications. Attempts to analyse and evaluate are often not successfully done. • Demonstrates an attempt to respond to appropriate material in the text. Such a response should be substantiated. • Generally coherent work, with evidence of the development of an argument with tracts of narrative.
12 – 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Selection of textual detail is generally relevant to the question though the link may not be made. • Answers reveal some understanding of the basic features of the text but do not show any attempt at interpretation. • There is evidence of personal engagement but in the form of generalisations. • Largely narrative in approach and sketchy in development, but a sense of a very basic argument can be discerned.
9 – 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peripheral bearing on the question only. Often includes large tracts of information from the text without perceiving their significance. • Shows limited understanding of the text. • Manages to communicate with some difficulty.
0 – 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No bearing on the question whatsoever. Slavish copying of irrelevant material. Answers that are obviously prepared scripts but have little to do with the question belong in this category. • Shows serious flaws in understanding the text. • Answer is marred by incoherence and lacks direction or focus. It may also be extremely brief.

Short work: Can be presented in various forms, e.g. note form or a series of hurriedly sketched-in paragraphs. It is essential that Examiners mark short work strictly on the basis of what is given. The work should not be marked on the grounds of quality elsewhere in the script as this can lead to unfairness.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH LOWER SECONDARY TEACHING SYLLABUS

BAND DESCRIPTORS FOR UNSEEN QUESTIONS

NORMAL	DESCRIPTION
21 - 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent grasp of subject matter. Evidence of analysis and evaluation which is likely to reflect conscientiousness rather than sophistication. Answers will be related to the question but may not address some of the key issues. • Evidence of close reading, though this may not be sustained throughout the answer. The candidate makes a personal response to the text, often providing relevant substantiation. • Answers pursue a thorough, though rather unsophisticated, argument. Work is generally coherent and clear, though it may lack polish and subtlety of expression.
18 - 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows sound basic understanding of the text and of how to respond to it. The question is addressed and there is some evidence of analysis and evaluation, though these may be brief, mechanical or naïve. • Shows some engagement, substantiated with appropriate references to the text. • The candidate communicates clearly and puts forward a coherent argument.
15 - 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some awareness or understanding of the text is demonstrated, largely through paraphrase. However, the candidate has not responded fully to the demands of the question. There may be some misreading, but not enough to undermine significantly the general ideas put forward. • Shows engagement with the text but with inappropriate substantiation. • The candidate is able to communicate fairly coherently. Expression may be hampered by a lack of clarity or accuracy but the meaning is still conveyed.
12 - 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows only superficial understanding of the text. There is little awareness of the demands of the question. Thus, the response is largely irrelevant or confused. • Engagement with the text will be minimal. • Manages to communicate with some difficulty.
0 - 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Struggles unsuccessfully to demonstrate comprehension of the text and the question. • Answer is incoherent, with meaning obscured by poor expression.

Short work: Can be presented in various forms, e.g. note form or a series of hurriedly sketched-in paragraphs. It is essential that Examiners mark short work strictly on the basis of what is given. The work should not be marked on the grounds of quality elsewhere in the script as this can lead to unfairness.

LITERATURE IN ENGLISH LOWER SECONDARY TEACHING SYLLABUS

BAND DESCRIPTORS FOR UNSEEN QUESTIONS

EXPRESS	DESCRIPTION
21 – 25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intelligent grasp of subject matter. Answers demonstrate a freshness of insight. Good analysis and evaluation of content and presentation, and where appropriate, evidence of the ability to critically appreciate the text. Well focused on the question and addresses most of its key issues. • Active and close engagement with the text. Sensitive and informed personal response. • Ideas developed effectively and well supported by textual evidence. Answer reflects a highly coherent argument and clarity of thought and expression.
18 – 20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Competent grasp of subject matter. Evidence of analysis and evaluation which is likely to reflect conscientiousness rather than sophistication. Answers will be related to the question but may not address some of the key issues. • Evidence of close reading, though this may not be sustained throughout the answer. The candidate makes a personal response to the text, often providing relevant substantiation. • Answers pursue a thorough, though rather unsophisticated, argument. Work is generally coherent and clear, though it may lack polish and subtlety of expression.
15 – 17	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows sound basic understanding of the text and of how to respond to it. The question is addressed and there is some evidence of analysis and evaluation, though these may be brief, mechanical or naïve. • Shows some engagement, substantiated with appropriate references to the text. • The candidate communicates clearly and puts forward a coherent argument.
12 – 14	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some awareness or understanding of the text is demonstrated, largely through paraphrase. However, the candidate has not responded fully to the demands of the question. There may be some misreading, but not enough to undermine significantly the general ideas put forward. • Shows engagement with the text but with inappropriate substantiation. • The candidate is able to communicate fairly coherently. Expression may be hampered by a lack of clarity or accuracy but the meaning is still conveyed.
9 – 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shows only superficial understanding of the text. There is little awareness of the demands of the question. Thus, the response is largely irrelevant or confused. • Engagement with the text will be minimal. • Manages to communicate with some difficulty.
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