CAMBRIDGE
International Education

Cambridge IGCSE™

WORLD LITERATURE **0408/21**

Paper 2 Unseen **May/June 2026**

MARK SCHEME

Maximum Mark: 30

Published

This mark scheme contains the instructions and marking guidance that our examiners used to mark candidate responses for this component.

Before they start marking, examiners complete a standardisation process. They review a range of candidate responses and discuss the mark scheme in detail to agree which answers can and cannot be accepted. Examiners award marks where it is clear that candidate responses have met the requirements of the mark scheme. These requirements may vary between different components or different versions of the same component, depending on the exact requirements of the question and the candidate responses seen during the standardisation process.

Sometimes, our mark schemes may allow marks to be awarded to responses which contain elements that are factually incorrect or for content not covered by the syllabus. We do this in response to the demands of a specific question to support candidates and make sure that our assessments are fair. However, these allowances should not be used as a guide for teaching and learning.

We cannot discuss the mark scheme with schools, and we recommend that schools read the mark scheme together with the assessment material and the Principal Examiner Report for Teachers.

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General marking principles

All examiners must apply these marking principles when marking candidate responses.

1	Examiners must award marks for each response in line with: • the specific **content** defined in the mark scheme • the specific **skills** defined in the mark scheme or in the level descriptions • the **standard of response** required as exemplified by the standardisation scripts.
2	Examiners must award **whole marks** (not half marks, or other fractions).
3	Examiners must award marks **positively**. This means that: • marks are not deducted for errors or omissions • marks are awarded for correct/valid answers as defined in the mark scheme and also for **other valid answers** which go beyond the scope of the syllabus and mark scheme referring to your team leader as appropriate • the quality of spelling, punctuation and grammar are judged **only** when the mark scheme indicates that these features are **specifically assessed** in the question. However, the meaning of all responses must be unambiguous.
4	Examiners must **consistently** apply the requirements of the mark scheme and any rules for what to do when candidates have not followed instructions correctly.
5	Examiners must use the **full range of marks** defined in the mark scheme, unless limited by the quality of the candidate responses seen.
6	Examiners must award marks according to the mark scheme and **must not** award marks with grade thresholds or grade descriptions in mind.

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English & Media-Specific Marking Principles

(To be read in conjunction with the General Marking Principles (and requiring further guidance on how to place marks within levels))

Components using level descriptions:

- We use level descriptions as a guide to broad understanding of the qualities normally expected of, or typical of, work in a level.
- Level descriptions are a means of general guidance and should not be interpreted as hurdle statements.
- Where indicative content notes are supplied for a question, these are *not* a prescription of required content and must not be treated as such. Alternative correct points and unexpected answers in candidates' scripts must be given marks that fairly reflect the knowledge and skills demonstrated.
- While we may have legitimate expectations as to the ground most answers may occupy, we must at all times be prepared to meet candidates on their chosen ground, provided it is relevant ground (e.g. clearly related to and derived from a relevant passage/text and meeting the mark scheme requirements for the question).

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Annotations guidance for centres

Examiners use a system of annotations as a shorthand for communicating their marking decisions to one another. Examiners are trained during the standardisation process on how and when to use annotations. The purpose of annotations is to inform the standardisation and monitoring processes and guide the supervising examiners when they are checking the work of examiners within their team. The meaning of annotations and how they are used is specific to each component and is understood by all examiners who mark the component.

We publish annotations in our mark schemes to help centres understand the annotations they may see on copies of scripts. Note that there may not be a direct correlation between the number of annotations on a script and the mark awarded. Similarly, the use of an annotation may not be an indication of the quality of the response.

The annotations listed below were available to examiners marking this component in this series.

Annotations

Annotation	Meaning
✓	The tick has two uses: • to indicate that the examiner has seen a blank page • to indicate valid and thoughtful points.
^	Indicates need for development. May be clarified with a brief text annotation.
K U	Indicates that the candidate is demonstrating knowledge or understanding.
P	Indicates that the candidate is demonstrating sustained personal response or interpretation.
Q	Indicates that the candidate has directly addressed the question.
T	Indicates the use of supporting detail from, or close reference to, the text in a response. **Do NOT simply attach to every quotation.**
L	Indicates that the candidate is **commenting upon** use of language and the effect produced. **Do NOT simply attach to every literary term used.**
NAR	Indicates that a candidate's response is overly dependent on narrative or paraphrase.
NUT	Indicates a lack of close reference to the text to support statements or ideas.
SEEN	Can also be used to indicate that the examiner has seen a blank page.
?	Unclear
≈	Unclear meaning/expression or not quite answering question

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Question	Answer	Marks

World Literature specific marking instructions

Candidates are required to answer **two** questions in total. Each answer is marked out of 15.

Using the mark levels

Use the generic mark scheme levels to find the mark. Place the answer in a level first. Look for the 'best fit' of the answer into a level. An answer needs to show evidence of most but not necessarily ALL of the qualities described in a level, in order to be placed in that level. Then award a mark for the relative position of the answer within the level.

Candidates may address the question in many different ways; there is no one required answer or approach. Do not penalise answers for leaving out a particular focus. Reward what is there, showing what you are rewarding in your comments.

Consider all strands and weigh up the performance as a whole in placing the answer in a level, then show that you have done so in the summative comment.

Assessment objectives
All assessment objectives are equally weighted, and all are considered in assessing each response.

AO1	Show detailed knowledge of the content of literary texts in the three main forms (poetry, prose and drama), supported by reference to the text.
AO2	Understand the meanings of literary texts and their contexts, and explore texts beyond surface meanings to show deeper awareness of ideas and attitudes.
AO3	Recognise and appreciate ways in which writers use language, structure and form to create and shape meanings and effects.
AO4	Communicate a sensitive and informed personal response to literary texts.

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Question	Answer	Marks

LEVEL DESCRIPTOR TABLE

Level	Level Descriptors	Marks
5	• Demonstrates knowledge by integrating much well-selected reference to the poem (AO1) • Sustains a critical understanding of the poem (AO2) • Responds sensitively and in detail to the ways the poet achieves effects (AO3) • Sustains a perceptive and evaluative personal response (AO4)	**13–15**
4	• Demonstrates knowledge by using well-selected textual reference (AO1) • Shows a clear understanding of the poem and some of the deeper meanings (AO2) • Makes a developed response to the ways the poet achieves effects (AO3) • Makes a well-developed personal response (AO4)	**10–12**
3	• Demonstrates knowledge by using supporting textual reference (AO1) • Shows overall understanding of the poem (AO2) • Makes some response to the ways the poet uses language, structure and form (AO3) • Makes a reasonably developed personal response (AO4)	**7–9**
2	• Demonstrates knowledge by using some supporting textual reference (AO1) • Shows some understanding of the poem (AO2) • Makes straightforward comments about language, structure and form (AO3) • Begins to develop a personal response (AO4)	**4–6**
1	• Demonstrates knowledge by using a little textual reference (AO1) • Shows a little understanding of the literal meaning of the poem (AO2) • Shows a little awareness of language, structure and form (AO3) • Shows a little evidence of a personal response (AO4)	**1–3**
0	*No answer/Insufficient to meet the criteria for Level 1.*	**0**

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