Revision Pack for: AS English Literature

Exam Board: AQA – Specification A  
Link to Specification:  

Past Papers and mark schemes: Through AQA website here

Examination Format:

Paper 1: Love through the Ages: Shakespeare and Poetry

Study of two texts: *Othello* and one AQA anthology of love poetry through the ages (pre-1900)

Assessment

- written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes
- closed book
- 50 marks (25 marks for each question)
50% of AS level

Questions

Section A: Shakespeare. One passage-based question with linked essay (25 marks)

Section B: Poetry. One question on printed poem (25 marks)

Paper 2: Love through the ages: prose – 2 questions

Study of two prose texts. Examination will include an unseen prose extract.

Assessment

- written exam: 1 hour 30 minutes
- open book
- 50 marks (25 marks for each question)
- 50% of AS level

Questions

Section A: Unseen prose. One compulsory question on unseen prose extract (25 marks)

Section B: Comparing prose texts. One comparative question on two prose texts (25 marks)

Assessment Objectives for all questions: (Numbers in brackets are the percentage of points available so AO1 is by far the most important)

AO1: Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression. (28%)

AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts. (24%)
AO3: Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received. (24%)

AO4: Explore connections across literary texts. (12%)

AO5: Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations (12%)

What to Revise

- You need to know the plot, characters and themes of Othello and the prose texts as well as an understanding of the dramatic techniques used by Shakespeare.
- You will need to know 10-15 quotations from Othello and 5-10 from each of the prose texts
- You need to understand the content, themes and poetic techniques of all the poems in the anthology.
- You need to understand the content, themes, plot and characterisation in each of the prose texts.
- You need to practice your writing skills.

How to Revise

- Flash cards are a useful way to revise themes and characters. Try to include quotations.
- Mind map all the main characters and themes
- Choose a poem, theme or character, revise and teach someone else.
- Plan a series of possible essay titles.
- There is no replacement for producing essays and practising your essay writing in this way

Examination Strategies:

- Spend 5 minutes reading, making notes and planning each question.
- You should plan an average of three main points (between two and four)
- You can use PEAZL to structure your main points.
  - Make sure that you start with a topic sentence that clearly introduces the point.
  - Use level two sentences: analyse, don’t describe.
  - Make sure that you include lots of short, embedded quotations and word level analysis. Why is the word included? What is the effect? How does this link to themes, ideas and the questions?
  - Link: end with a sentence that brings all this together and links to the question

Key words with definitions:

**Alliteration**: The repetition of identical consonant sounds, most often the sounds beginning words, in close proximity. Example: pensive poets, nattering nabobs of negativism.

**Anaphora**: Repetition of the same word or phrase at the beginning of a line throughout a work or the section of a work.
Antagonist
A character or force against which another character struggles.

Aside
Words spoken by an actor directly to the audience, which are not "heard" by the other characters on stage during a play. In Shakespeare’s *Othello*, Iago voices his inner thoughts a number of times as "asides" for the play's audience.

Assonance: The repetition of identical vowel sounds in different words in close proximity. Example: deep green sea.

Ballad: A narrative poem composed of quatrains

Blank verse: unrhymed iambic pentameter. Example: Shakespeare's plays

Catastrophe: The action at the end of a tragedy that initiates the denouement or falling action of a play.

Caesura: A short but definite pause used for effect within a line of poetry.

Catharsis: The purging of the feelings of pity and fear that, according to Aristotle, occur in the audience of tragic drama. The audience experiences catharsis at the end of the play, following the catastrophe.

Characterization: The means by which writers present and reveal character. Although techniques of characterization are complex, writers typically reveal characters through their speech, dress, manner, and actions.

Climax: The turning point of the action in the plot of a play or story. The climax represents the point of greatest tension in the work.

Comic relief: The use of a comic scene to interrupt a succession of intensely tragic dramatic moments. The comedy of scenes offering comic relief typically parallels the tragic action that the scenes interrupt.

Consonance: the counterpart of assonance; the partial or total identity of consonants in words whose main vowels differ. Example: shadow meadow; pressed, passed; sipped, supped.

Couplet: two successive rhyming lines. Couplets end the pattern of a Shakespearean sonnet.

Denouement: The resolution of the plot of a literary work. The denouement of *Hamlet* takes place after the catastrophe, with the stage littered with corpses

End-stopped line: A line ending in a full pause, usually indicated with a period or semicolon.

Enjambment: A line having no end punctuation but running over to the next line.

Exposition: The first stage of a fictional or dramatic plot, in which necessary background information is provided.

Falling action: In the plot of a story or play, the action following the climax of the work that moves it towards its denouement or resolution. The falling action of *Othello* begins after
Othello realizes that Iago is responsible for plotting against him by spurring him on to murder his wife, Desdemona.

**Figurative language:** A form of language use in which writers and speakers convey something other than the literal meaning of their words.

**Foil:** A character who contrasts and parallels the main character in a play or story. In *Othello*, Emilia and Bianca are foils for Desdemona.

**Foreshadowing:** Hints of what is to come in the action of a play or a story.

**Hyperbole (overstatement)** and **litotes (understatement):** Hyperbole is exaggeration for effect; litotes is understatement for effect, often used for irony.

**Iambic pentameter:** Iamb (iambic): an unstressed stressed foot. The most natural and common kind of meter in English; it elevates speech to poetry.

**Imagery:** refers to images throughout a work or throughout the works of a writer or group of writers.

**Internal rhyme:** An exact rhyme (rather than rhyming vowel sounds, as with assonance) within a line of poetry: "Once upon a midnight *drear*y, while I pondered, weak and *weary*.

**Irony:** A contrast or discrepancy between what is said and what is meant or between what happens and what is expected to happen in life and in literature. In verbal irony, characters say the opposite of what they mean. In irony of circumstance or situation, the opposite of what is expected occurs. In dramatic irony, a character speaks in ignorance of a situation or event known to the audience or to the other characters.

**Metaphor:** A comparison between two unlike things, this describes one thing as if it were something else. Does not use "like" or "as" for the comparison (see **simile**).

**Metaphysical conceit:** An elaborate and extended metaphor or simile that links two apparently unrelated fields or subjects in an unusual and surprising conjunction of ideas. The term is commonly applied to the metaphorical language of a number of early seventeenth-century poets, particularly John Donne. Example: stiff twin compasses/the joining together of lovers like legs of a compass. See "To His Coy Mistress"

**Meter:** The number of feet within a line of traditional verse. Example: iambic pentameter.

**Octave:** The first eight lines of an Italian or Petrarchan sonnet, unified by rhythm, rhyme, and topic.

**Onomatopoeia:** A blending of consonant and vowel sounds designed to imitate or suggest the activity being described. Example: buzz, slurp.

**Paradox:** A rhetorical figure embodying a seeming contradiction that is nonetheless true.

**Pathos:** A quality of a play's action that stimulates the audience to feel pity for a character. Pathos is always an aspect of tragedy, and may be present in comedy as well.

**Personification:** Attributing human characteristics to nonhuman things or abstractions.
**Petrarchan sonnet**: A sonnet (14 lines of rhyming iambic pentameter) that divides into an octave (8) and sestet (6). There is a "volta," or "turning" of the subject matter between the octave and sestet.

**Protagonist**: The main character of a literary work: Othello

**Recognition**: The point at which a character understands his or her situation as it really is. Othello comes to an understanding of his situation in Act V of *Othello*.

**Resolution**: The sorting out or unravelling of a plot at the end of a play, novel, or story.

**Rhyme**: The repetition of identical concluding syllables in different words, most often at the ends of lines. Example: June--moon.

- **Visual rhyme**: Words that seem to rhyme because they are spelled identically but pronounced differently. Example: bear/fear, dough/cough/through/bough
- **Rhyme scheme**: The pattern of rhyme, usually indicated by assigning a letter of the alphabet to each rhyme at the end of a line of poetry.

**Rising action**: A set of conflicts and crises that constitute the part of a play's or story's plot leading up to the climax

**Scan (scansion)**: the process of marking beats in a poem to establish the prevailing metrical pattern.

- **Anapest**: unstressed unstressed stressed. Also called "galloping meter." Example: 'Twas the night before Christmas, and all through the house/ Not a creature was stirring, not even a mouse."
- **Dactyl (dactylic)** stressed unstressed unstressed. This pattern is more common (as dactylic hexameter) in Latin poetry than in English poetry. Example: Grand go the years in the Crescent above them/Worlds scoop their arcs/ and firmaments row (Emily Dickinson)
- **Spondee**: stressed stressed. A two-syllable foot with two stressed accents. The opposite of a pyrrhic foot, this foot is used for effect.
- **Trochee (trochaic)**: stressed unstressed. Example: "Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright"

**Sestet**: A six-line stanza or unit of poetry.

**Shakespearean sonnet**: A fourteen-line poem written in iambic pentameter, composed of three quatrains and a couplet rhyming abab cdcd efef gg.

**Simile**: A direct comparison between two dissimilar things; uses "like" or "as" to state the terms of the comparison.

**Soliloquy**: A speech in a play that is meant to be heard by the audience but not by other characters on the stage. If there are no other characters present, the soliloquy represents the character thinking aloud.

**Sonnet**: A closed form consisting of fourteen lines of rhyming iambic pentameter.
Shakespearean or English sonnet: 3 quatrains and a couplet, often with three arguments or images in the quatrains being resolved in the couplet. Rhyme scheme: abab cdcd efef gg

Petrarchan or Italian sonnet: 8 lines (the "octave") and 6 lines (the "sestet") of rhyming iambic pentameter, with a turning or "volta" at about the 8th line. Rhyme scheme: abba cdcccd (or cde cde)

**Stanza:** A group of poetic lines corresponding to paragraphs in prose; the meters and rhymes are usually repeating or systematic.

**Tragedy:** A type of drama in which the characters experience reversals of fortune, usually for the worse. In tragedy, catastrophe and suffering await many of the characters, especially the hero.

**Tragic flaw:** A weakness or limitation of character, resulting in the fall of the tragic hero. Othello's jealousy and too trusting nature is one example.

**Tragic hero:** A privileged, exalted character of high repute, who, by virtue of a tragic flaw and fate, suffers a fall from glory into suffering.

**Unities:** The idea that a play should be limited to a specific time, place, and story line. The events of the plot should occur within a twenty-four hour period, should occur within a given geographic locale, and should tell a single story.

**Volta:** The "turning" point of a Petrarchan sonnet, usually occurring between the octave and the sestet.

**Command words with definitions:**

All of the specimen papers published so far have used the phrase, “Examine the view that”. Examine means to investigate closely. By asking you examine a particular view, there is an implication that you should look at both sides of the argument.
Model response with annotations.

‘Undoubtedly brutal, yet oddly sensitive’. By comparing the role and dramatic presentation of Caliban in The Tempest evaluate this view.

(6.4) ‘Undoubtedly brutal, yet oddly sensitive’ can be considered to be an oxymoron. (17.3) ‘Brutality’ evokes ideas of animalistic behaviour whilst ‘sensitivity’ conveys a sense of human feeling. (17.4) This oxymoron captures the essence of Caliban’s contradictory character. (16.4) He can be viewed as both an uncivilised monster and a creature capable of the noblest human qualities. (5.1) Ultimately, Caliban’s cruelty overrides his sensitivity.

(16.1) One of the main means in which Caliban can be considered to be more monster than man is through his attempted rape of Miranda. (18.1) Even though it is possible to contend that Caliban might be felt exploited for his knowledge of the island, he still acts in a disproportionately violent and uncivilised manner. (9.5) This brutal side is shown when Prospero refers to how after letting him sleep in his own cell, Caliban tried to ‘ violate the honour’ of his daughter. (17.4) Caliban’s reported actions suggest he is a brutal figure, who acts upon innate carnal desire rather than human reason. (16.2) Another way that Caliban’s animalistic nature is constructed is through Miranda’s later description of him as a ‘beast I do not care to look at’. (17.4) Miranda’s kind, sympathetic character accentuates Caliban’s brutality, making a dramatic contrast between her innocence and his violent cruelty. (19.1) Caliban’s lack of sexual restraint would have resonated with the Jacobean, in particular, their concerns about the threat of the Irish ‘Salvage man’ corrupting English civilised codes of behaviour. (5.2) Therefore it can be concluded that through the dramatisation of Caliban’s character, Shakespeare is reflecting contemporary anxiety around ideas of civilisation.

(16.2) Another way Caliban’s ‘brutality’ is emphasised over his humanity with the plot to murder Prospero. (18.2) There is an

Helpful websites.

http://www.litcharts.com/lit/othello

http://www.litcharts.com/lit/atonement/part-1-chapter-1

http://www.shakespeare-online.com/playanalysis/othello.html