Grade Descriptions for Cambridge International AS Level Literature in English 9695

What are Grade Descriptions?

Grade descriptions describe the level of performance typically demonstrated by candidates achieving the different grades awarded for a qualification. For Cambridge International AS Levels, they describe performance at three levels – grades 'e', 'c' and 'a'.

Grade descriptions sit alongside other key documents that illustrate examination standards, including:

- the syllabus, which presents what students should be taught over a course of study and explains how this is assessed
- the specimen assessment materials, which exemplify the structure of the assessment and the kinds of tasks that candidates complete
- grade thresholds, which show the total mark required to achieve a grade.

Grade descriptions are produced with a wide range of audiences in mind. For teachers, they support lesson planning and curriculum development, while students may gain useful insights into what is required to achieve a high grade and what candidate performance at lower grades typically looks like. For university admissions staff and employers, and those less familiar with Cambridge, they paint a picture of typical performance at different grades.

Cambridge publishes grade descriptions for a qualification once examinations have taken place for the first time and we review them when a qualification is substantially revised. They are developed by highly experienced examiners who understand performance standards in the subject area and have studied samples of candidate work.

How do I use this resource?

Grade descriptions are presented as a grid, with content areas at the start of each row and the different grades at the top of each column.

The content areas group together various aspects of the syllabus – they reflect topics, assessment objectives, key concepts, syllabus aims and/or components. The way they are organised is specific to each subject.

For each content area there is a descriptor for each grade. Reading across the row from left to right, the descriptors represent increasing levels of performance, with each grade descriptor building on, and including, the last.

Each column represents overall performance at a particular grade. Reading down the column from top to bottom, the descriptors capture the range of knowledge, understanding and skills that a candidate comfortably achieving the grade is likely to demonstrate.

Cambridge produces grade descriptions to support teaching and learning and the interpretation of candidate scores and grades. We do not use them to set grade thresholds. As such, they cannot be used to challenge the grade awarded to any individual candidate.

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Grade Descriptions

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade E	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Knowledge and understanding of literary texts	Students draw on essential knowledge and understanding of the texts they have studied to address a question. They are starting to use references and quotations to support their ideas, though this may be inconsistent.	Students select some relevant knowledge and understanding of literary texts to address a question. They use some appropriate references and quotations to support their ideas.	Students select from thorough knowledge and understanding of literary texts to address a question. They use specific references and quotations confidently to support their ideas.
Appreciation of relevant contexts	Students may demonstrate a little knowledge of wider contexts which may be relevant to a question. They may recognise an episode's place in the wider text, or show awareness of the geographical setting or the time of the text's composition.	Students demonstrate some clear awareness of wider contexts which are relevant to a question. They may appreciate how an episode fits into the wider text, or appreciate the significance of the geographical setting or societal expectations at the time of the text's composition.	Students demonstrate confident awareness of wider contexts which are relevant to a question. They may appreciate how a particular episode contributes to the wider text, or comment on the significance of the geographical setting or societal expectations at the time of the text's composition.
Understanding the style and methods of different literary forms	Students demonstrate essential knowledge of the typical features and methods of poetry, prose and drama texts. For example, they might make references to paragraphs and chapters in prose texts; stanzas and rhyme schemes in poetry; or scenes and dialogue in drama.	Students demonstrate knowledge of some of the typical features and methods of poetry, prose and drama texts. For example, they might make references to the sequencing of paragraphs and chapters in prose texts; the effects of stanza breaks, rhythm and rhyme schemes in poetry; or the sequence of scenes and tone of dialogue in drama.	Students demonstrate confident appreciation of the typical features and methods of poetry, prose and drama texts. For example, they might discuss the shaping of paragraphs and chapters in prose texts; the effects of stanza shape, rhythm and rhyme schemes and their variations in poetry; or scene development and characterisation through dialogue in drama.

Area of knowledge, understanding and skills	Typical performance at grade E	Typical performance at grade C	Typical performance at grade A
Understanding writers' literary choices and their effects, using appropriate literary terminology	Students understand that writers use language and structure to communicate meaning and create effects for the reader or audience. For example, they may recognise writers' use of such features as chapters, stanzas, scenes, simile, metaphor and personification. They demonstrate limited knowledge of literary terminology, or they may use it without understanding.	Students understand ways in which writers use language and structure to communicate meaning and create effects for the reader or audience. For example, they may make some comments on writers' use of such features as chapters, stanzas, scenes, simile, metaphor, personification and other literary features. They demonstrate straightforward knowledge of literary terminology and use it appropriately.	Students analyse ways in which writers use language and structure to communicate meaning and create effects for the reader or audience. For example, they may discuss the effects of writers' use of such features as chapters, stanzas, scenes, and a range of literary features. They demonstrate confident use of literary terminology to develop their arguments with fluency.
Articulating a personal response to texts	Students demonstrate a personal response. Their basic interpretations lack support.	Students demonstrate a clear personal response. They support their interpretations with some references and quotations.	Students demonstrate a confident personal response. They support their interpretations securely with a range of references and quotations.
Developing a structured argument in response to a task	Students present their ideas and arguments in a simple way. They may rely on paraphrase and narrative summary rather than structured argument.	Students present clear ideas and arguments with some progression through paragraphs. They may occasionally use paraphrase and might sometimes lose clarity.	Students present some complex ideas and arguments through sequenced paragraphs. They write with clarity and confidence.