

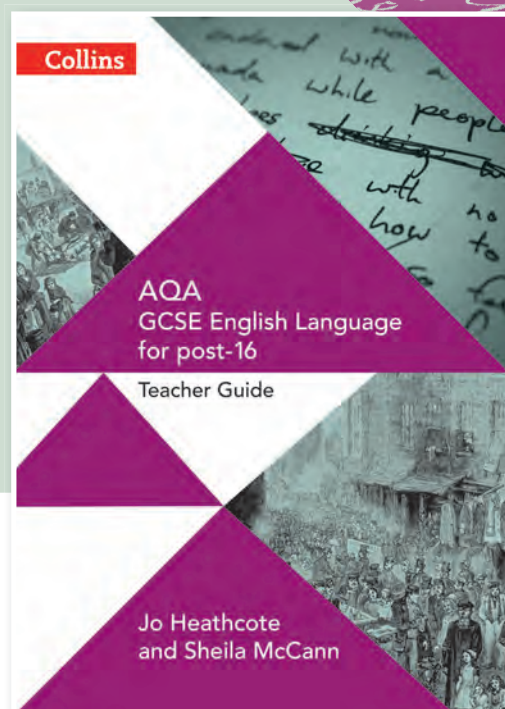
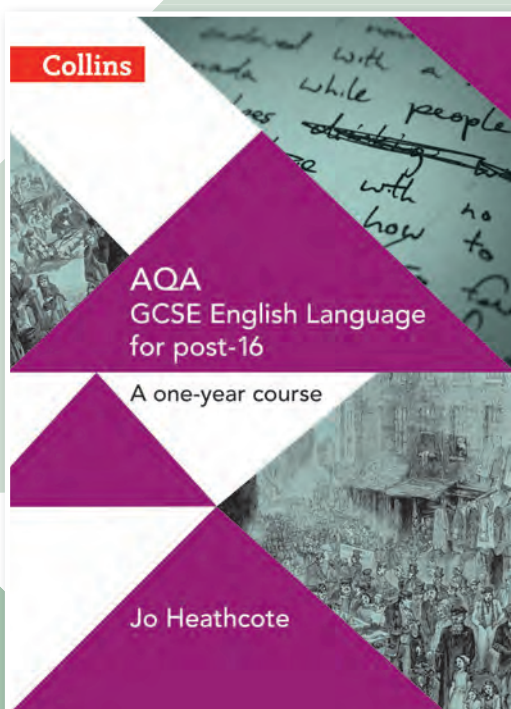
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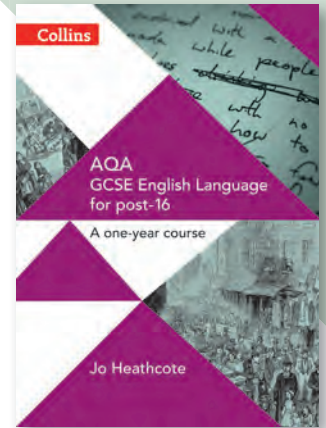
# AQA GCSE English Language for post-16

A one-year course

AUTHOR: JO HEATHCOTE

## STUDENT BOOK

- ◆ **Organised into weeks and structured by exam question**, the Student Book provides complete coverage of Paper 1 and Paper 2 as well as preparation for the Spoken Language endorsement.
- ◆ **Help students to build and then apply the key skills for each question** with a carefully-designed learning sequence, a step-by-step methodology for responding and plenty of opportunities to practise the question in focus.
- ◆ **Show students how to improve their work**, with annotated sample responses to exemplify the Level 3 mark-scheme criteria, and regular self and peer-assessment activities.
- ◆ **Engage 16–19 year old and adult learners** with texts and topics chosen to interest students in post-16 contexts.
- ◆ **Save time searching for texts** with a fantastic selection of fiction and non-fiction extracts from the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first centuries.
- ◆ **Assess progress and build confidence for the summer exam** with half-term progress tests, end-of-term mock exams and two further practice papers for revision. All of these assessments are supported with detailed marking guidance and sample answers in the Teacher Guide.



**Week 6 . Lesson 1**

### Planning and writing a narrative opening from a picture stimulus

**You are learning to:**

- understand how professional writers create effective openings to novels
- plan and write an examination-style novel opening task
- plan and write an examination-style task inspired by a picture.

Testing: AOS  
For: Paper 1 Question 5

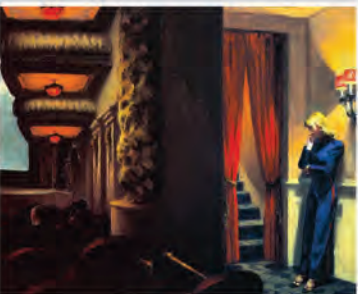
**1 Getting you thinking**

One of the choices you may have in the examination is to write a story based on an image: a picture or a photograph.

A good way to start is to look at the picture like a detective and ask yourself as many questions as you can about what you see.

**a** Look at the painting below and jot down the questions it raises for you as you look at it.

Perhaps your first questions were about the woman in the picture or the place itself.



**2 Explore the skills**

**a** Now look at the possible examination task below.

Write the opening extract of a novel based on the picture above.

Just as in a short story, the *opening* to a novel should set up:

- character
- situation
- location.

It should also raise important questions to keep readers hooked.

**Paper 1 . Question 5**

**b** Look at the questions below, gathered by a group of students. Answer them yourself to form your own interpretation of what's happening in the picture. Record your ideas in a spider diagram or a structured list. This will form an outline plan for the examination task above.

- Who is the woman? What is she wearing? Does she work there or is she just in the fashion of the time? Why is she waiting there?
- What is the building and where is it? Is that a film that's showing? What is the film? How long has it been on? Why is the woman not watching the film? Who else is there?
- What is the light like in this place and the fabrics and furnishings? Is this modern or in the past? When is this?

Once you have gathered your initial thoughts and ideas, you have some choices to make as a writer. One of the most important choices is whether you will choose a **first-person** or a **third-person narrator**. This will decide whether your story is told from the point of view of a character in the story or not.

**c** Read this student's opening to the examination task set earlier using a **third-person narrator**.

*Sandy leaned against the wall and checked her watch. Seven forty-five. The film had started fifteen minutes earlier even though the place was half empty on this rainy November night. A handful of people occupied the plush red velvet seats. A couple on a first date. Two elderly women – regulars every Wednesday – and a few lonely figures. As lonely perhaps as Sandy, leaning against the wall and waiting by the stairs.*

**d** Now rewrite the paragraph above as though you were Sandy. Think about what you can include now that the third-person narrative is left out. You could begin:

*I stepped back, out of the shadows and into the faded golden light...*

**Getting you thinking** – a short starter activity to get students thinking about the topic or skill

**Explore the skills** – introduces the key skills in focus and offers supported activities to develop them

**Key terms** – provides definitions of key literary and linguistic terms

46 Term One: Explorations in creative reading and writing

Planning and writing a narrative opening from a picture stimulus

Samples taken from the AQA GCSE English Language for post-16 Student Book

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**Develop the skills**  
– deepens students' understanding with further opportunities to put ideas into practice

**Week 6 . Lesson 1**

**e** When you have finished, decide which narrative perspective or point of view might be more effective in presenting the character in the picture.

**3 Develop the skills**

In a novel opening, you may not always have a specific event happening, but you could have a glimpse of an interesting person or place.

**a** Read this opening to a novel by Linda Grant called *The Clothes on Their Backs* published in 2008. Investigate the interesting glimpses the writer gives you by answering the questions in the annotations. There are no right or wrong answers.

This morning, for the first time in many years, I passed the shop on Seymour Street. I saw the melancholy sign in the window which announced that it was closing down and through the glass the rails on which the clothes hung, half abandoned, as if the dresses and coats, blouses and sweaters had fled in the night, vanished down the street, flapping their empty arms.

What does this suggest about where the character has been?

Why might this particular shop be important?

What feeling is being established?

There was Eunice, behind the counter, patting her blue-black lacquered hair with silver nails. How old she looked, and how forlorn, her chin sinking for a moment on her chest. [...]

What is assumed by just using a character's first name?

What image does she have and how does this contrast with how she is feeling? Why might she feel like this?

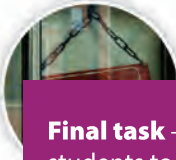
An impulse took me through the door, a strong pang of sympathy. I stepped inside and her perfume filled the room, inimitably Eunice – Revlon's Aquamarine, the scent of eau de nil and gold.

How well must the narrator know the character of Eunice? What might their relationship be?

Linda Grant, from *The Clothes on Their Backs*.

**b** Think about how you could create an interesting focus in your story through adding small details about the character. Make some notes on:

- what the character looks like
- how she is positioned against the wall
- the details on her clothing and shoes
- the shadows and the way the light falls on her.



**Final task** – asks students to draw together and apply their learning, often in response to an exam-style task

**Paper 1 . Question 5**

**c** Write a paragraph in third-person narrative describing what you see. Or you could write from the point of view of someone observing her – as in the Linda Grant extract – perhaps someone watching the film whose attention is caught by the character. You could begin:

*She was leaning against the wall in the golden lamplight, a faint shadow surrounding her ...*

**d** Go on to look more closely by zooming in on the details in the picture you are given.

Use these observations to help you include interesting features in your creative writing. For example:

*Her bluntly cut blonde hair was caught in the yellow light until she almost disappeared into the yellow wallpaper behind.*

Write two more sentences of your own focusing in on:

- her facial expression
- the position of her hand.

**4 Final task**

**a** Using the plan and the ideas you have gathered, write a response to the examination task.

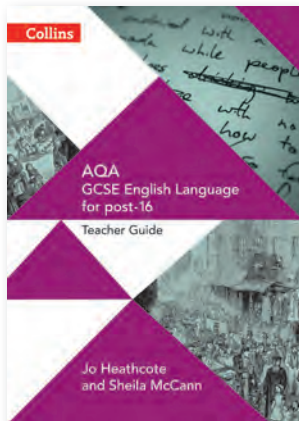
Write the opening extract of a novel based on the picture above.

**Checklist for success**

- Choose a narrative perspective (first or third person) and ensure you stick to it right the way through.
- Aim to include some interesting or unusual glimpses into character and location.
- Zoom in on some smaller details to engage your readers.



**TEACHER GUIDE**



- ◆ **Everything you need to teach:** the Teacher Guide includes medium-term plans to provide an overview of learning, clear and succinct lesson plans, and worksheets to allow students to annotate and explore texts in depth. Readymade PowerPoints support front-of-class teaching while revision PowerPoints summarise how to approach each exam question. With week-by-week resources covering 30 weeks, it is suitable for teachers of all levels of experience, even those new to GCSE teaching.
- ◆ **Assessment-focused:** a wealth of annotated sample answers and marking guidance is provided for each of the assessments in the Student Book to help you mark to standard and show your students how to improve.
- ◆ **Trusted support** from Jo Heathcote and Sheila McCann, two experienced teachers and GCSE English Language assessment experts.

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

**Jo Heathcote** is an experienced English teacher in the post-16 sector. She has extensive experience as a Principal Examiner for GCSE English Language and was involved in the development of the new specification for GCSE English language for a major awarding body.

Jo offers consultancy in the following areas: curriculum planning for Key Stage 4, exam services (mock exam creation, mock exam marketing and post-results strategy) as well as creating bespoke CPD programmes to meet a department's needs. Please visit her website for more details [www.joheathcote.com](http://www.joheathcote.com).



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