First exam in June 2026

GCSE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

Insert

The source that follows is:

Source A: 20th Century prose-fiction

Jamaica Inn by Daphne du Maurier

An extract from the opening of a novel written in 1936

Please turn the page over to see the source

Source A

Although it was written in 1936, this novel is set in the past. In this section a coach and horses, with its passengers, is making its way through Cornwall to Jamaica Inn.

It was a cold grey day in late November. The weather had changed overnight, when a backing wind brought a granite sky and a mizzling rain with it, and although it was now only a little after two o'clock in the afternoon the pallor of a winter evening seemed to have closed upon the hills, cloaking them in mist. It would be dark by four. The air was clammy cold, and for all the tightly closed windows it penetrated the interior of the coach. The leather seats felt damp to the hands, and there must have been a small crack in the roof, because now and again little drips of rain fell softly through, smudging the leather and leaving a dark-blue stain like a splodge of ink.

The wind came in gusts, at times shaking the coach as it travelled round the bend of the road, and in the exposed places on the high ground it blew with such force that the whole body of the coach trembled and swayed, rocking between the high wheels like a drunken man.

The driver, muffled in a greatcoat to his ears, bent almost double in his seat in a faint endeavour to gain shelter from his own shoulders, while the dispirited horses plodded sullenly to his command, too broken by the wind and the rain to feel the whip that now and again cracked above their heads, while it swung between the numb fingers of the driver.

The wheels of the coach creaked and groaned as they sank into the ruts on the road, and sometimes they flung up the soft spattered mud against the windows, where it mingled with the constant driving rain, and whatever view there might have been of the countryside was hopelessly obscured.

The few passengers huddled together for warmth, exclaiming in unison when the coach sank into a heavier rut than usual, and one old fellow, who had kept up a constant complaint ever since he had joined the coach at Truro, rose from his seat in a fury; and, fumbling with the window-sash, let the window down with a crash, bringing a shower of rain upon himself and his fellow-passengers. He thrust his head out and shouted up to the driver, cursing him in a high petulant voice for a rogue and a murderer; that they would all be dead before they reached Bodmin if he persisted in driving at breakneck speed; they had no breath left in their bodies as it was, and he for one would never travel by coach again.

Whether the driver heard him or not was uncertain: it seemed more likely that the stream of reproaches was carried away in the wind, for the old fellow, after waiting a moment, put up the window again, having thoroughly chilled the interior of the coach, and, settling himself once more in his corner, wrapped his blanket about his knees and muttered in his beard.

His nearest neighbour, a jovial, red-faced woman in a blue cloak, sighed heavily, in sympathy, and, with a wink to anyone who might be looking and a jerk of her head towards the old man, she remarked for at least the twentieth time that it was the dirtiest night she ever remembered, and she had known some; that it was proper old weather and no mistaking it for summer this time; and, burrowing into the depths of a large basket, she brought out a great hunk of cake and plunged into it with strong white teeth.

Mary Yellan sat in the opposite corner, where the trickle of rain oozed through the crack in the roof. Sometimes a cold drip of moisture fell upon her shoulder, which she brushed away with impatient fingers.

40 She sat with her chin cupped in her hands, her eyes fixed on the window splashed with mud and rain, hoping with a sort of desperate interest that some ray of light would break the heavy blanket of sky, and but a momentary trace of that lost blue heaven that had mantled Helford yesterday shine for an instant as a forerunner of fortune.

END OF SOURCE

AQA

SPECIMEN MATERIAL 1

First exam in June 2026

Please write clearly in block capitals.

Centre number | | | | | | Candidate number | | | | |

Surname _____

Forename(s) _____

Candidate signature _____

GCSE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
(8700)

Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

Time allowed: 1 hour 45 minutes

Materials

For this paper you must have:

- **Source A** – printed within the question paper.

Instructions

- Answer **all** questions.
- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Fill in the boxes on this page.
- You must answer the questions in the spaces provided.
- Do not write outside the box around each page or on blank pages.
- Do all rough work in this book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.
- You must refer to the insert booklet provided.
- You must **not** use a dictionary.

Information

- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark of this paper is 80.
- There are 40 marks for **Section A** and 40 marks for **Section B**.
- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.
- You will be assessed on the quality of your **reading** in **Section A**.
- You will be assessed on the quality of your **writing** in **Section B**.

Advice

- You are advised to spend about 15 minutes reading through the source and all five questions you have to answer.
- You should make sure you leave sufficient time to check your answers.

Do not write outside the box

Section A: Reading

Answer **all** questions in this section.
You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.

---

0 1 Read again the first part of the source, from **lines 1 to 7**.

Answer **all** parts of this question.

Tick (✓) **one** box for each question.

0 1 . 1 Why had the weather changed?

- It was November ☐
- It was night-time ☐
- Due to the wind ☐

[1 mark]

0 1 . 2 What arrived overnight?

- Clear skies ☐
- Mizzling rain ☐
- Faint sunshine ☐

[1 mark]

Do not write outside the box

0 1 . 3 How is the weather in the afternoon?

Clear skies ☐

Misty and dark ☐

Frosty ☐

[1 mark]

0 1 . 4 How does the rain affect the inside of the coach?

It soaks the seats ☐

It pours in through the window ☐

It leaks in through a crack ☐

[1 mark]

4

0 2 Look in detail at this extract from **lines 8 to 18** of the source:

> The wind came in gusts, at times shaking the coach as it travelled round the bend of the road, and in the exposed places on the high ground it blew with such force that the whole body of the coach trembled and swayed, rocking between the high wheels like a drunken man.
>
> The driver, muffled in a greatcoat to his ears, bent almost double in his seat in a faint attempt to gain shelter from his own shoulders, while the dispirited horses plodded sullenly to his command, too broken by the wind and the rain to feel the whip that now and again cracked above their heads, while it swung between the numb fingers of the driver.
>
> The wheels of the coach creaked and groaned as they sank into the ruts on the road, and sometimes they flung up the soft spattered mud against the windows, where it mingled with the constant driving rain, and whatever view there might have been of the countryside was hopelessly obscured.

How does the writer use language here to describe the effects of the weather?

You could include the writer's choice of:

- words and phrases
- language features and techniques
- sentence forms.

[8 marks]

0 3 You now need to think about the structure of the source as a whole.

This text is from the opening of a novel.

How has the writer structured the text to create sympathy?

You could write about:

- how sympathy has increased or decreased by the end of the source
- how the writer uses structure to create an effect
- the writer's use of any other structural features, such as changes in mood, tone, or perspective.

[8 marks]

0 4 Focus this part of your answer on the second part of the source, **from line 19 to the end**.

In this part of the source, the writer develops the characterisation for all of the characters inside the coach.

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- write about your own impressions of the characters
- comment on the methods the writer uses to develop impressions of the characters
- support your response with references to the text.

[20 marks]

Section B: Writing

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.
Write in full sentences.
You are reminded of the need to plan your answer.
You should leave enough time to check your work at the end.

0 5 You are going to enter a creative writing competition.

Your entry will be judged by a panel of people of your own age.

Either: Write a description of a train journey from your imagination. You may choose to use the picture provided for ideas.

Or: Write the opening part of a story about a place that is severely affected by the weather.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
[40 marks]

END OF QUESTIONS

There are no questions printed on this page

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ANSWER IN THE SPACES PROVIDED

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