



AQA GCSE English Language Paper 1



MASTER AQA GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE PAPER 1

"Your expert roadmap to take your child from a Grade 4–5 to a Grade 7+ — using the exact strategies my students rely on to leap at least two grades in just 12 weeks."

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS

Peregrine Tutors

www.peregrinetutors.co.uk

Why This Guide Exists

You're watching your child work hard—revising, writing, rewriting—and still getting disappointing results.

Maybe they're stuck at a Grade 4 or 5, and you're starting to worry about their confidence, future options, and how much time is left before the exams.

You've tried revision guides, school feedback, even staying up late helping with past papers—but nothing seems to shift the grade.

You want to help... but you don't know how. You're not alone—and the problem isn't your child. The problem is the way English is taught, marked, and understood. That's where I come in.



Meet Rupert

My name is Rupert Crisswell, and I am a Cambridge-educated English teacher and examiner with over 20 years of experience in some of the top private and state schools in the UK.

I specialise in helping GCSE and A-Level students transform how they write, revise, and perform under pressure. I've worked with hundreds of students who were stuck at Grade 4 or 5 — and helped them reach Grades 7, 8, or even 9.

This guide shares some of the exact methods I use in my programme. If your teen is struggling to gain momentum in English, let's talk about how we can build a plan that works for them.

Is Your Teen Stuck in English — and You're Not Sure Why?

Many students revise for English, but their results don't reflect the effort.

They get stuck at a Grade 4 or 5. They lose confidence. They don't know what the examiner is actually looking for. And as a parent, it's hard to know what to do — especially if they won't ask for help.

That's why I created this guide.

It's designed to help you understand what's really tested in GCSE English Language Paper 1, what strong students do differently, and how to spot where your teen might be going wrong. It's also here to offer you something better: a way forward.

If what you read here sounds familiar, I invite you to book a free strategy call with me. We'll talk honestly about your child's progress — and what's going to shift the dial.

Real Student Success: From Struggling to Strong



Meet Ethan

Meet Ethan— a Year 10 student predicted a Grade 4.

Like many teens, Ethan was working hard but seeing little progress. He was frustrated by confusing mark schemes, vague feedback, and the pressure of mock exams. His parents were worried and unsure how to help.

During our first strategy session, I noticed Ethan had strong ideas but lacked structure, clarity, and exam confidence. Over 12 weeks, I gave Ethan a step-by-step plan using the same tools in this guide: writing frames, model answers, sentence scaffolds, and real-time feedback.

We focused on:

- Structuring Q4 and Q5 responses with precision
- Embedding high-level vocabulary and analytical phrasing
- Building confidence through consistent wins

By the end of the term, Ethan jumped from a low Grade 4 to a secure Grade 8 in his English Language mock—and a Grade 7 in Literature.



You didn't just help Ethan improve his grade- you helped him believe in himself again. ”

-----Sophie

Your child deserves to feel confident in English—and you deserve peace of mind knowing you're doing everything possible to support them.

Could This Be Your Teen?

Tick any that sound familiar:

- ☐ They work hard but their marks are stuck
 - ☐ Their writing lacks structure, or runs over time
 - ☐ They freeze up when trying Q3 or Q5
 - ☐ They find it hard to revise for English — it feels “vague”
 - ☐ Their confidence is fragile, even when they try their best
- If you ticked 2 or more, it's worth booking a free 30-minute strategy session.
 - In that call, we'll go over your child's strengths and gaps — and build a clear, practical plan.



How Paper 1 Works

Paper 1 tests your child's ability to read creatively and write imaginatively. Here's the breakdown:

Q1

Retrieval (4 marks):
Identify 4 facts

Q4

Evaluation (20 marks):
Judge how effective the writer's choices are

Q2

Language Analysis (8 marks):
Explore a short quote

Q5

Creative Writing (40 marks):
Write a short story or description

Q3

Structure (8 marks):
Track shifts in focus or tension

Common Pitfalls:

Q1

Copying from the wrong lines or over-explaining

Q4

Weak judgement language (e.g. 'nice', 'bad') and no analysis

Q2

Spotting techniques but not explaining effects clearly

Q5

No clear structure or plan — or writing that's too short

Q3

Just retelling the story instead of focusing on structure

Each question needs a different mindset and method — and most students only master 2 or 3 without help. Let's explore what success looks like for each one.



Mastering Every Question: Strategies, Mistakes, and Model Answers

Question 1: **Identify and Retrieve**

✓ This question tests your ability to identify four simple facts from a short section of the text.



Strategy:

- Only use the lines mentioned.
- Don't explain or analyse — just retrieve.
- Use short phrases or sentence fragments.



Key Verbs:

- Identify
- List
- Find



Common Mistakes:

- Quoting from the wrong lines
- Writing full sentences or adding explanations
- Including personal opinions



Model Answer (from lines 1–5):

- The girl is alone.
- She is carrying a backpack.
- It is early morning.
- She walks along the beach.



Question 2: Language Analysis

✓ This tests how well you zoom in on words, phrases or language features and explain their effects.



Peregrine Sentence Scaffold:

- The writer uses the word/phrase '___' which suggests..
- The technique '___' helps the reader to feel...
- This shows that...



Language Features:

- Simile, Metaphor, Personification
- Adjectives, Verbs, Alliteration



Common Mistakes:

- Listing techniques without explaining them
- Overquoting or picking long sections
- Saying 'this makes the reader want to read on'



Model Answer:

- The writer describes the sea as 'a silver knife'. The metaphor suggests something sharp and dangerous, creating a sense of tension and danger.



Question 3: Structure

✓ This question looks at how the text is organised – what the writer focuses on and how that changes.



Planning Frame:

- What does the writer focus on at the beginning?
- How does it shift in the middle?
- What is the effect of the ending?



Structure Terms:

- Shift, Contrast, Focus, Perspective, Flashback



Common Mistakes:

- Just retelling the story
- Mentioning language features instead of structure
- Ignoring shifts in setting or time



Model Answer:

- At the beginning, the focus is on the peaceful waves. In the middle, it shifts to the character's fear. By the end, we return to nature, but it now feels threatening. This change builds tension.

Question 4: Evaluation

✓ This question asks for your opinion — but backed up with evidence and explanation.



Sentence Starters:

- I agree with the statement because...
- This is effective as it...
- The reader is made to feel...



Common Mistakes:

- No clear opinion/judgement
- Repeating what happened without evaluation
- Weak adjectives like 'nice', 'cool', 'bad'



Evaluative Language:

- Effective, Powerful, Impactful, Convincing, Dramatic



Model Answer:

- I agree that the setting is powerful. The storm is described as 'violent and endless', which makes the reader feel trapped and overwhelmed. This mirrors the character's emotional state.

Question 5: Creative Writing

✓ This is worth 40 marks. You'll be asked to write a story or description. You must plan your structure.



Peregrine 5-Part Plan:

- Set the mood (e.g. eerie, tense, hopeful)
- Choose a setting
- Introduce a character (optional)
- Build to a turning point
- End with impact or reflection



Style Tips:

- Use sensory imagery: sight, sound, smell, touch, taste
- Start with a sentence fragment or flashback



Common Mistakes:

- No clear structure or ending
- Too much dialogue
- Forgetting to describe or show atmosphere



Model Answer:

- Rain carved paths down the glass. She watched the street vanish behind a mist of grey, her fingers still trembling from what she'd left behind.





Creative Writing Mat

Use this visual planner before writing:

- What is the mood? (e.g. eerie, hopeful, tense)
- Who is the character? (only one!)
- Where are they? What can they see/smell/hear?
- What changes or happens?
- How will it end?

Tips:

- Use a mix of sentence types
- Use vivid verbs and sensory detail
- Avoid too much dialogue
- Paragraph clearly
- Show don't tell

Creative Writing Mat – Page 1:

Plan Like a Pro



Use this page to plan your writing using the Peregrine 5-Part Structure:

SETTING

Where does it take place?
What can you see, hear, smell, feel?

MOOD

What atmosphere are you trying to create? (e.g. tense, peaceful, eerie)

CHARACTER

Who is your main character?
Focus on one.

SHIFT

What changes partway through? (e.g. a discovery, a threat, a memory)

ENDING

What feeling do you want to leave the reader with?

Sentence Starters to Try:

- The air was thick with...
- He had never seen anything like it before...
- It should have been quiet...
- Somewhere in the distance, something moved...

Creative Writing Mat –

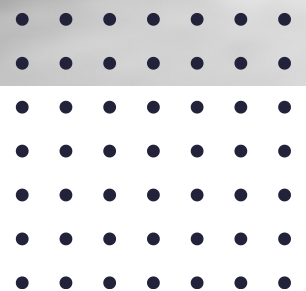
Page 2: Annotated Model Paragraph

Model Paragraph:

Rain carved paths down the glass. She watched the street vanish behind a mist of grey, her fingers still trembling from what she'd left behind.

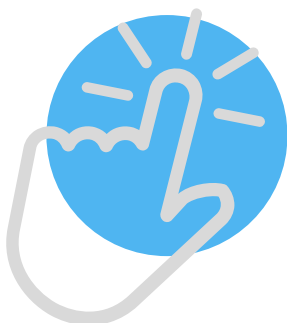
- **Sensory Detail:**
'Rain carved paths' appeals to sight and movement
- **Mood:**
The greyness suggests melancholy or foreboding.
- **Internal Response:**
'Trembling fingers' shows the character's emotion without telling it directly.

Use one vivid paragraph like this to set the tone of your piece.



Useful Links: Practice Papers

Practise these skills using real exam papers:



- **AQA Paper 1 Past Papers:**
<https://www.aqa.org.uk/find-pastpapers>
- **Examiner Reports:**
<https://filestore.aqa.org.uk/samplepapers-and-mark-schemes/>

These are free and will help you understand how real students are assessed.

Worried your teen isn't making the progress they could?

If you've found this guide helpful but still have questions about your child's confidence, writing, or English progress — let's talk.

At Peregrine Tutors, we offer expert, caring support for GCSE students aiming to build clarity, confidence, and stronger grades.

- ✓ Is your child struggling with writing structure or timing?
- ✓ Are they stuck at a Grade 4 or 5 and unsure how to move up?
- ✓ Do they need clearer, more strategic revision?

[Book a free 30 minute call](#)



In this short conversation, we'll:

- ✓ Discuss your child's current challenges
- ✓ Identify where they need targeted support
- ✓ Map out their next steps — whether with us or on your own

Your child deserves to feel confident in English — and you deserve peace of mind knowing you're doing everything possible to support them. And I only offer a small number of free 30-minute calls each month to ensure personalised attention.

I only offer a small number of free 30-minute calls each month to ensure personalised attention.

book a free strategy call now.

There's no obligation — just expert advice and a supportive plan.

What Parents and Students Say

Rupert has helped me so much with my GCSE OCR English literature and language. I would highly recommend him to anyone trying to improve their work!

_____ **Talita**

Rupert really helped me gain confidence in my English skills... he pushes you to really develop your points.

_____ **Adenike**

Rupert has managed to connect well with my son and he was very positive about the impact tutoring is having.

_____ **Anna**

Since starting lessons with Rupert, her grades have greatly improved.

_____ **Tetiana**

We are doing two lessons a week... it's really helping to make things clearer.

_____ **Asiyah**

Rupert has really helped with my OCR English A level – would recommend him to anyone!

_____ **Sophie**

My son says he has a teaching style which allows him to learn through support, direction and collaboration.

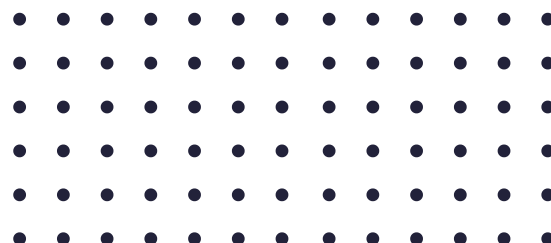
_____ **Julie**

Rupert is supportive and encourages her to polish up the finer details in her work.

_____ **Nahida**

The Zoom sessions helped me get to know my tutors and meet other students... I always felt encouraged to submit work.

_____ **Isabella**





Visit www.peregrinetutors.co.uk and book a call