TEACHER GUIDANCE

AQA-style Paper 2 - Beyond the finish

GCSE English Language | 8700/2 · 2026 question approach

Standard time	With approved 25% extra time
1h 45m	**2h 11m 15s**

80 marks | Section A: 40 marks | Section B: 40 marks

Original Exam Stash questions and indicative teacher guidance. This is an independent practice paper, not an AQA or Eduqas publication or endorsement. Open both linked sources before starting. The source texts remain in their original publicly available Eduqas PDFs and are not reproduced here.

Read the source guide on the following page before you start. You need the original Eduqas source file(s) alongside this booklet. Source texts are linked separately and are not reproduced here.

Use the printed reading references specified in each question. The original Eduqas questions, instructions and timings do not apply to this practice paper.

Full-source practice: use the complete Sally Minty-Gravett article and Arthur Payne account identified below, approximately 635 and 528 body words respectively. The question sequence, marks and suggested time follow AQA Paper 2's 2026 approach. The linked texts have no printed line numbers, so our questions use the paragraph guide below. This reference adaptation is deliberate; the questions have not been standardised by an awarding body. Do not convert these practice marks into a GCSE grade using past grade boundaries.

Source guide

Source A: Sally Minty-Gravett and Channel swimming - Lucy Griffiths

Eduqas GCSE English Language Component 2, June 2024, resource material: read the complete newspaper article on PDF pages 2-3. Its body has nine paragraphs. A1-A5 are on PDF page 2; A6-A9 are on PDF page 3. On page 2, A2 is the tall paragraph to the right of the photograph. Read that paragraph before the full-width paragraph beneath the photograph.

Open the original Eduqas source file

A1: The opening news paragraph reports Sally's latest record, her age, the crossing's distance and its duration.

A2: The paragraph beside the photograph describes Sally's lifelong relationship with sea swimming, her childhood experience of pools and the sensations of entering and leaving cold water.

A3: The next full-width paragraph traces her childhood swimming milestones and increasing competitive ambition.

A4: The paragraph about the Windermere race explains her coach's encouragement, training and first Channel crossing.

A5: The final paragraph on PDF page 2 recalls the fog and her feelings when the first crossing ended.

A6: The opening paragraph on PDF page 3 summarises later crossings, a storm, the two-way swim and her MBE.

A7: Sally explains the mental strategies she uses and how she feels while swimming.

A8: The next paragraph describes the planned retirement crossing, the favourable day and the welcome in France.

A9: The closing paragraph considers a possible future crossing, other activities she wants to learn and her willingness to return to swimming.

A twenty-first-century newspaper article by Lucy Griffiths, as selected for Eduqas's June 2024 examination. The booklet does not state its exact first publication date. The article includes events after 2016 and is the modern source in this officially designated nineteenth- and twenty-first-century paper. Source checked 15 November 2026; approximately 635 body words, excluding heading, introductory byline and footers.

Source B: Captain Matthew Webb's Channel crossing - Arthur Payne

Eduqas GCSE English Language Component 2, June 2024, original question booklet: read only the complete Arthur Payne account on PDF page 3. The introductory two-line context is not B1. The four body paragraphs beneath it are B1-B4. Ignore the original questions on PDF pages 2 and 4.

Open the original Eduqas source file

B1: The first body paragraph describes preparations, Webb's departure, his appearance and initial swimming pace.

B2: The next paragraph follows the afternoon and evening, including dolphins, darkness and a sting.

B3: The third paragraph describes the approach to France, fatigue, the turning tide and the loss of hope.

B4: The final paragraph follows the exhausted swimmer towards shore, the crowd's response, his arrival and the assistance he receives.

A nineteenth-century eyewitness account of Webb's 1875 Channel crossing, attributed to Arthur Payne, who was in the support boat. Eduqas supplies the historical context immediately above the extract. Source checked 15 November 2026; approximately 528 body words, excluding the contextual introduction and footer.

Reading instructions

Use 1 hour 45 minutes as the standard practice time. For an approved 25% extra-time arrangement, the calculated total is 2 hours 11 minutes 15 seconds. Your centre confirms the arrangement used by an individual pupil.

Allow about 15 minutes to read the sources. Spend about 45 minutes answering Questions 1-4 and about 45 minutes on Question 5, including planning and checking.

Answer all five questions. Write in the answer booklet or on separate paper. The original Eduqas questions and its two-hour timing do not apply to this paper.

Source A is the modern article on PDF pages 2-3 of the separate resource booklet. Source B is the nineteenth-century account on PDF page 3 of the original question booklet. These are two different downloads.

For references in our questions, number Source A's nine body paragraphs A1-A9 and Source B's four body paragraphs B1-B4 in their printed reading order. Do not count headings, introductions, bylines, page numbers or copyright footers. Use the descriptive paragraph guide provided with each source.

Using this guidance

This set uses the full modern article and full nineteenth-century account already selected by Eduqas. It is not a shortened-source version. Both source downloads must be available to pupils; Source B is printed in the original question booklet, not in the separate resource booklet.

Before using the paper, check that pupils can locate A1-A9 and B1-B4 using the descriptive guide. These are our paragraph references, not line numbers printed by either board. The contextual introduction to Source B is outside B1.

Questions and indicative content were written independently. Eduqas's original tasks and marking instructions should not be used to mark these AQA-style questions.

Credit alternative interpretations when they answer the question and are supported by the specified source. The guidance gives possibilities, not a compulsory answer list. A few strong, precisely supported observations may be worth more than many undeveloped points.

Read each extended response as a whole, choose the best-fitting band for the assessed skill, then decide the mark within that band. Keep Q2 inference separate from Q3 language analysis and Q4 comparison of perspectives and methods.

Keep student question papers separate from this guidance. Any published classroom version should retain the source credits and links, the paragraph-reference explanation, the independent-resource label and the approved-arrangements wording.

No GCSE grade conversion is supplied. The paper has not undergone AQA standardisation, awarding or accessibility approval; use the marks to identify strengths and next steps in learning.

Question 1 | 4 marks | AO1

Read Source A, paragraphs A1-A2 only. Choose FOUR statements below which are true. Shade the circle beside each of your choices. Choose a maximum of four statements; clearly cancel any choice you change.

Correct selections: A, C, E and G. Award one mark for each correct selection, up to four. No credit for B, D, F or H. Mark the pupil's final, uncancelled choices; the task requires no more than four.

Evidence: A1 establishes a new record and her age; A2 distinguishes a deep commitment from a hobby and states her preference after trying a pool. The false choices contradict the number of crossings, the lack of childhood pools, her enjoyment of cold-water sensations and the stated 21-mile distance.

For classroom self-marking, require the pupil to identify their final four choices before revealing the key. If marking a script completed under formal examination conditions with more than four choices, use the centre's current AQA marking instructions rather than inventing a penalty from this indicative guide.

Question 2 | 8 marks | AO1

Refer to Source A and Source B. Both swimmers receive help or encouragement from other people. What can you infer about the differences between the support the swimmers receive? Support your ideas with evidence from both sources.

This is a synthesis and inference question about support, not a comparison of the writers' language. Bring details from the two sources together to infer differences in the kind, purpose or urgency of the help.

One possible contrast: A4's coach recognises Sally's potential and encourages a future ambition; B4's helpers physically support Webb after he can no longer stand. This can suggest long-term confidence-building compared with immediate assistance prompted by severe exhaustion.

Another possible contrast: A8's welcome and champagne are part of an enjoyable, successfully completed crossing; B4's cheering and song occur while Webb is still struggling towards the shore. This can suggest a celebration of an assured arrival compared with encouragement during a precarious final effort. Credit other accurate, supported distinctions.

Do not infer that Sally had no support boat or that Webb received no encouragement before swimming: the extracts do not establish those absences. Acknowledging a shared feature can help explain a difference, but the response must answer the stated focus.

Indicative bands: 1-2 marks for relevant information with little inference; 3-4 for some supported interpretation of differences; 5-6 for clear inferences that bring both texts together; 7-8 for precise, insightful synthesis of differences, grounded in well-selected details. Award 0 if there is nothing relevant. Judge quality across the response, not a fixed number of points.

Question 3 | 12 marks | AO2

Read Source A, paragraph A2 only, beside the photograph on PDF page 2. How does Griffiths use language to show how intensely Sally experiences sea swimming? Support your response with relevant examples from this paragraph.

Keep the analysis within A2. Explore the contrast between a casual activity and an essential part of Sally's identity, the presentation of an encounter with the natural environment, and the combination of cold conditions with pleasurable bodily sensations.

Possible word-level evidence includes the escalating positive adjectives invigorating and exhilarating, the bodily sensation conveyed by tingle and the emphatic closing phrase I live for it. Credit supported interpretations of other word choices or sentence patterns. Explain how these choices communicate intensity; simply identifying a technique does not do so.

The first-person words belong to Sally's quoted speech. Griffiths's journalistic choice is to select and frame that direct speech. Credit answers that recognise either voice accurately; do not require technical discussion of attribution for a high mark.

Indicative bands: 1-3 for basic comments linked to some relevant wording; 4-6 for some explanation of effects; 7-9 for clear, developed analysis using precise examples; 10-12 for insightful analysis of how language builds the intensity of the experience. Award 0 for no relevant material. The photograph itself is not language evidence for this question.

Question 4 | 16 marks | AO3

Refer to the whole of Source A and the whole of Source B. Compare how the writers convey their different attitudes towards the dangers and rewards of Channel swimming. In your answer, you could compare their attitudes, comment on the methods they use to convey those attitudes, and support your response with references to both texts.

Compare the perspectives rather than merely listing what happened to the swimmers. Griffiths gives prominence to fulfilment, identity, achievement across a lifetime and continuing possibilities. Payne admires endurance but repeatedly brings the possibility of failure and physical harm into view. Both accounts value the achievement; a perceptive comparison need not invent a complete opposition.

Source A possibilities: the record is established at the start, so the retrospective interview is not chiefly concerned with whether Sally will succeed. A2 and A7 foreground her own enjoyment and mental strategies. Fog and a storm in A5-A6 acknowledge difficulty within a larger affirmative account. A8-A9 end with welcome, freedom and future interests.

Source B possibilities: the first-person observer tracks time, distances and a falling stroke rate, making physical decline measurable. B2 briefly raises the possibility of abandonment; B3 narrows the apparent chance of success. B4's weakening body and last approach make the eventual arrival costly, while the crowd and patriotic song create a public dimension to the reward.

Reward comparisons of these choices and their effects: retrospective interview versus unfolding eyewitness narrative; selected direct speech versus collective observation; personal satisfaction versus a publicly witnessed feat; an open future versus a climactic rescue and arrival. There is no requirement to give the same method a name in each text.

Indicative bands: 1-4 for simple relevant comparison; 5-8 for some explanation of attitudes and how they are conveyed; 9-12 for a clear, sustained comparison of perspectives with explained methods; 13-16 for an insightful, developed comparison that integrates precise

evidence and the effects of the writers' choices. Award 0 for no relevant response. A response confined to one source cannot demonstrate a developed comparison.

Question 5 | 40 marks | AO5:24 / AO6:16

Section B - allow about 45 minutes, including planning and checking. A local council is discussing how to spend its sports budget. One resident argues: ‘Public money should help more people enjoy everyday sport, rather than pay for a few people to chase sporting records.’ Write a speech for a community meeting in which you argue your view. You may agree, disagree or develop a qualified position. You do not need to refer to either reading source.

Assess the writing as a speech addressing a community audience. Any defensible position is acceptable. Reward developed reasons, purposeful examples, awareness of competing needs and a coherent line of argument. Pupils may consider access, facilities, health, ambition, inspiration, cost or fairness, but none of these topics is compulsory.

AO5, 24 marks: judge communication, audience, purpose, register, development and organisation. Indicative bands: 1-6, a simple or fragmentary position with limited development; 7-12, some shaped argument and awareness of audience but uneven control; 13-18, a clear, developed and persuasive argument with purposeful organisation; 19-24, an assured, engaging argument that develops its ideas convincingly and controls its effects throughout.

AO6, 16 marks: judge sentence control, grammar, punctuation and spelling independently. Indicative bands: 1-4, frequent errors and limited control; 5-8, some accurate sentence patterns and punctuation with variable security; 9-12, generally secure accuracy and a purposeful range of structures; 13-16, sustained technical control, flexible sentence choices and highly secure accuracy. Occasional slips do not automatically rule out the top band.

Award 0 in either assessment objective if there is no relevant evidence for it. Choose a best-fit band, then place the response within that band. Do not award marks by counting rhetorical devices, paragraphs or impressive words. These original notes support classroom moderation; they do not constitute an official or standardised mark scheme.