TEACHER GUIDANCE

AQA-style Paper 1 - The hiding place

GCSE English Language | 8700/1 · 2026 question approach

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

Total: 80 marks. Indicative marking notes.

Original Exam Stash practice, independently written. Not an official paper and not endorsed by AQA, Eduqas or OCR. Read the linked original source booklet alongside these questions. The source text is not reproduced here. Use the printed source line numbers, not the PDF viewer line count.

Shorter-source practice: this uses a shorter reading selection than a full examination would normally use. Question skills, marks and suggested timing follow the named board, but this is not a full specification-equivalent mock. Do not apply past grade boundaries to this practice paper. Suggested timing: about 60 minutes reading/Section A and 45 minutes Section B.

Source booklet - open before starting

Source A: The Thirty-Nine Steps — John Buchan (1915)

OCR November 2017 J351/02 Reading Insert, PDF page 4, Text 1, printed lines 1–30. Ignore Text 2 for this practice paper.

Open the original source booklet

Freely accessible OCR source booklet checked 15 November 2026. The literary work dates from 1915; the OCR adaptation and layout are linked rather than reproduced.

Using this guidance

Indicative guidance is flexible: credit accurate alternative readings supported by the specified source. Do not require the ideas listed here.

For extended reading, select the best-fitting band first, then decide a mark within it. Consider evidence, explanation and precision across the whole response.

These practice materials have not been standardised by an awarding body. Report marks and feedback, not GCSE grades.

Question 1 | 4 marks | AO1

Read Source A, lines 1–10. Answer each of the four questions below. Shade one circle for each question. Each correct answer earns 1 mark.

1(a) B; 1(b) A; 1(c) C; 1(d) B. Award one mark for each correct selection; no mark if more than one answer is selected for an item.

Question 2 | 8 marks | AO2

Focus on lines 17–20. How does Buchan use language to convey the physical difficulty of Hannay's climb? Support your response with short quotations and relevant terminology where helpful.

Analyse specific word choices and their effects on our sense of bodily strain, instability and effort. The forceful physical vocabulary and the contrast between weakness and eventual success are relevant.

1–2: simple relevant comment; 3–4: some explained effects; 5–6: clear, developed explanation; 7–8: perceptive, detailed analysis. Judge the whole response. Do not award marks for terminology alone.

Question 3 | 8 marks | AO2

Think about the whole of Source A. How has Buchan organised the extract to create suspense? You might consider the initial problem, changes in Hannay's position or awareness, the pace, and what is revealed or withheld.

Track the movement from a dangerous building to planning, difficult ascent, temporary rest and renewed danger below. The change from activity to a limited watching position matters. Delayed discovery and the near search of the dovecot sustain uncertainty.

Use the same four 2-mark bands as Question 2, assessing structural explanation rather than isolated word analysis. A supported alternative interpretation can earn full credit.

Question 4 | 20 marks | AO4

Focus on lines 21–30. “Although Hannay has found somewhere to hide, the ending leaves him with very little control over what happens next.” How far do you agree and/or disagree? Evaluate how the writing shapes your judgement. Refer closely to this part of the source.

A valid evaluation weighs physical weakness, restricted movement and dependence on the armed searchers’ choices against Hannay’s useful vantage point and earlier planning. The final withdrawal can suggest relief as well as continuing insecurity.

1–5: simple judgement and references; 6–10: some supported evaluation; 11–15: clear, sustained evaluation of effects; 16–20: convincing, perceptive evaluation with judicious detail. Do not require agreement or a fixed number of points.

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

Section B — allow about 45 minutes. Choose ONE task. EITHER describe an abandoned building immediately after somebody has left it. OR write the opening of a story in which a character must decide whether to stay hidden or reveal themselves. You may invent the place and people. Plan briefly and leave time to check your work.

Award AO5 (24 marks) for an effective, convincing response to the chosen task, controlled viewpoint and tone, purposeful organisation, developed ideas and ambitious vocabulary used appropriately. Strong writing selects detail; it need not contain a complete plot.

Award AO6 (16 marks) independently for controlled sentence structures, accurate punctuation and spelling and secure grammar. Reward accuracy and deliberate variation, not length or a count of techniques.

Use the current official board writing descriptors to moderate marks. These are original indicative notes, not an official mark scheme or a promise of a grade.

Assessment format references

Official AQA assessment guidance