GCSE
ENGLISH LANGUAGE
Paper 1 Explorations in creative reading and writing

Marking guidance

Maximum mark: 80

Use best fit to select the band and the mark. Credit valid alternative readings supported by the text.

Question 01 [4 marks]

Read again the first part of the source, from lines 1 to 6. Answer all parts of this question. Choose one answer for each question.

Award one mark for each correct selection: 1: Leafless rose stems; 2: In India; 3: Wintry brown; 4: Clumps of bushes. No mark if more than one answer remains selected for an item.

All four answers are explicit in lines 1-6.

Question 02 [8 marks]

How does the writer use language here to present the overgrown garden?

The repeated movement of the roses across trees and branches gives the garden an extensive, entangled appearance. Verbs such as crept suggest quiet growth rather than deliberate human design.

The curtains, bridges and mantle comparisons transform neglected plants into architecture or clothing. Explore how concealment can seem beautiful and mysterious rather than simply untidy.

The absence of leaves and uncertainty over life or death qualify the earlier praise. Reward precise explanation of how sensory detail and uncertainty coexist. Apply AO2 bands by best fit; credit other supported readings.

Marks	Description
0	Nothing relevant to the question.
1-2	Simple, relevant comment with a reference or example; effects may be asserted rather than explained.
3-4	Some explanation of relevant choices and effects, supported by appropriate examples.
5-6	Clear, developed explanation of how the writing achieves the specified effect, using well-selected references.
7-8	Perceptive, detailed analysis of choices and their effects, supported by precise, judicious references.

Question 03 [8 marks]

You now need to think about the structure of the source as a whole. This extract comes from a novel. How has the writer structured the text to create a sense of Mary becoming attached to the garden?

The opening offers a panoramic description before narrowing to Mary’s whispered speech and the still robin. This makes her entry into the place feel intimate.

The silence is prolonged through pauses, listening and careful movement. Questions about whether the plants are alive interrupt the pleasure and retain uncertainty.

The perspective then shifts towards possession: Mary can return and feels she has found a world of her own. The final paragraph opens upwards to sunlight and follows the active robin, expanding possibility.

The ending imagines future roses rather than proving they will grow. The movement from observed decay to imagined life creates attachment without removing the mystery. Reward structural explanation, not a list of language devices.

Marks	Description
0	Nothing relevant to the question.
1-2	Simple, relevant comment with a reference or example; effects may be asserted rather than explained.
3-4	Some explanation of relevant choices and effects, supported by appropriate examples.
5-6	Clear, developed explanation of how the writing achieves the specified effect, using well-selected references.
7-8	Perceptive, detailed analysis of choices and their effects, supported by precise, judicious references.

Question 04 [20 marks]

For this question focus on the later part of the source, from line 27 to the end. The garden seems neglected and uncertain, but Mary responds to it with a growing sense of hope and belonging. To what extent do you agree and/or disagree with this statement?

A supported response may agree, disagree or qualify the statement. Judge how the writer makes Mary's attachment convincing while showing her limited knowledge.

Soft movement and questions suggest both wonder and caution. The apparently dead branches can sustain a bleak interpretation, but her wish that the garden were alive shows care.

The private world, brighter sky and accompanying robin can suggest welcome and emotional connection. Her lack of loneliness matters even while she seems far from other people.

The conditional ending projects thousands of roses into the future. It supports hope, but its uncertainty prevents a claim that the garden is already flourishing. Apply the AO4 bands by best fit.

Marks	Description
0	Nothing relevant to the question.
1-5	A simple judgement with limited textual support; little explanation of how the writing shapes the response.
6-10	Some supported evaluation, with some explanation of relevant writing choices.
11-15	Clear, sustained evaluation of the statement, with developed explanation of methods and well-selected references.
16-20	Convincing, perceptive evaluation of the statement, with detailed consideration of methods and judicious evidence.

Question 05 [40 marks]

A magazine is inviting entries for a creative writing competition. Write a description of an entrance to a garden. You may use the picture for ideas. OR Write the opening of a story about someone who discovers a place that has been forgotten.

Mark the chosen response independently of Section A. It need not retell the source or use its characters. Treat the two options as equally valid.

AO5 (24 marks): judge the effectiveness of communication for the chosen description or narrative opening; appropriateness and control of tone, viewpoint and vocabulary; development of selected details; and purposeful organisation. Do not require a complete plot for the narrative opening.

AO6 (16 marks): judge sentence control and variety, grammar, punctuation and spelling separately from AO5. Reward accuracy and deliberate variation, not a count of unusual words or techniques.

Use the original practice band summaries below as indicative guidance and moderate against the current official writing criteria. This guide has not been standardised by AQA.

AO5

Marks	Description
0	No relevant response.
1-6	Simple communication with limited development or organisation.
7-12	Some successful communication and development, with some organisation and appropriate choices.
13-18	Clear, effective and developed communication, with controlled organisation and vocabulary.
19-24	Compelling, convincing communication, developed detail and assured, purposeful organisation and language.

AO6

Marks	Description
0	No creditable technical control.
1-4	Limited control of sentences, grammar, spelling and punctuation.
5-8	Some secure control, with some sentence variety; errors remain evident.
9-12	Generally accurate and controlled sentences, grammar, spelling and punctuation, with effective variety.
13-16	Consistently secure, deliberate control of varied sentence structures, grammar, spelling and punctuation.

Frances Hodgson Burnett, The Secret Garden (1911).