TEACHER GUIDANCE

AQA-style Paper 2 - Places to play

GCSE English Language | 8700/2 · 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: This Boy — Alan Johnson (2013)

OCR June 2022 J351/01 Insert, PDF page 5, Text 2, printed lines 1–28. This modern text is Source A in our AQA-style set.

Open the original source booklet

21st-century memoir describing a 1950s childhood. The publication date, rather than the events described, determines the text century. Linked source only; not republished.

Source B: Walks in and around London — Uncle Jonathan (1884)

Same booklet, PDF page 4, Text 1, printed lines 1–30. This older text is Source B in our AQA-style set.

Open the original source booklet

19th-century non-fiction. Both selections are present in the freely accessible OCR PDF checked 15 November 2026.

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 (Alan Johnson), lines 1–9. Select FOUR true statements from A–H. Shade the circle beside each of your four choices.

Correct: A, C, E, G. Award 1 mark for each correct choice, up to 4. Follow current board handling of over-selection; for this practice, ask pupils to select exactly four.

Question 2 | 8 marks | AO1

Use both sources. Summarise the differences in the opportunities children have to enjoy themselves safely. Support your summary with evidence from each source and make inferences from the details you select.

Contrast an organised outdoor refuge with a child’s preference for indoor imagination; acknowledge that both accounts also show difficulties outside the safe spaces. Infer the importance of protection and the limits of that protection.

1–2: simple information; 3–4: some relevant differences and inference; 5–6: clear synthesis of differences; 7–8: perceptive, detailed synthesis supported by both texts. This question assesses understanding and inference, not a list of language devices.

Question 3 | 12 marks | AO2

Read Source A (Johnson), lines 10–20. How does Johnson use language to make the danger in his childhood world vivid? Support your analysis with specific references.

Explore imagery of concealed danger, abrupt violence, the uneasy sporting language around family conflict and the change in how he sees his father. Explain effects in context; naming a metaphor is insufficient.

1–3: simple relevant comment; 4–6: some explained effects; 7–9: clear, developed analysis; 10–12: perceptive, detailed analysis with precise references.

Question 4 | 16 marks | AO3

Compare the writers' attitudes towards the adults who shape children's lives. Explain similarities and differences in their viewpoints and how the writers convey them. Use evidence from both sources.

Consider the older writer's approval of benefactors and appeal to comfortable readers alongside Johnson's more conflicted presentation of adult care, social ambition and violence. Compare perspectives and methods, avoiding a comparison only of the children's circumstances.

1–4: simple comparative points; 5–8: some explained comparison; 9–12: clear, sustained comparison of ideas and methods; 13–16: perceptive, detailed comparison supported by both texts.

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

Section B — allow about 45 minutes. "Every young person should have a safe, welcoming place nearby where they can spend time without having to buy anything." Write an article for a local news website arguing your view. Address the needs of young people and the wider community.

Award AO5 (24 marks) for a convincing article with a clear viewpoint, purposeful organisation, developed arguments, suitable tone and precise vocabulary for a local readership. Credit thoughtful engagement with different community needs.

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