

AQA Sample Paper: GCSE English Language

Paper 2: Writers' viewpoints and perspectives

Time allowed: 1 hour 45 minutes

- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- The maximum mark for this paper is 80.
- There are 40 marks for Section A and 40 marks for Section B.
- You are reminded of the need for good English and clear presentation in your answers.
- You will be assessed on the quality of your reading in Section A.
- You will be assessed on the quality of your writing in Section B.

You are advised to spend about 15 minutes reading through the **Source** and **all five questions** you have to answer. You should make sure you leave sufficient time to check your answers.

Source A: 20th century nonfiction

Extract taken from Bill Bryson's travel book *Notes from a Small Island*.

1 Blackpool – and I don't care how many times you hear this, it never stops being amazing – attracts
2 more visitors every year than Greece and has more holiday beds than the whole of Portugal. It
3 consumes more chips per capita than anywhere else on the planet. (It gets through forty acres of
4 potatoes a day.) It has the largest concentration of roller-coasters in Europe. It has the continent's
5 second most popular tourist attraction, the forty-two-acre Pleasure Beach, whose 6.5 million
6 annual visitors are exceeded in number only by those going to the Vatican. It has the most famous
7 illuminations. And on Friday and Saturday nights it has more public toilets than anywhere else in
8 Britain; elsewhere they call them doorways.

9 Whatever you may think of the place, it does what it does very well - or if not very well at least
10 very successfully. In the past twenty years, during a period in which the number of Britons taking
11 traditional seaside holidays has declined by a fifth, Blackpool has increased its visitor numbers by
12 7 per cent and built tourism into a £250-million-a-year industry - no small achievement when you
13 consider the British climate, the fact that Blackpool is ugly, dirty and a long way from anywhere,
14 that its sea is an open toilet, and its attractions nearly all cheap, provincial and dire.

15 It was the illuminations that had brought me there. I had been hearing and reading about them
16 for so long that I was genuinely keen to see them. So, after securing a room in a modest
17 guesthouse on a back street, I hastened to the front in a sense of some expectation. Well, all I can
18 say is that Blackpool's illuminations are nothing if not splendid, and they are not splendid. There
19 is, of course, always a danger of disappointment when you finally encounter something you have
20 wanted to see for a long time, but in terms of letdown it would be hard to exceed Blackpool's light
21 show. I thought there would be lasers sweeping the sky, strobe lights tattooing the clouds and
22 other gasp-making dazzlements. Instead there was just a rumbling procession of old trams
23 decorated as rocket ships or Christmas crackers, and several miles of paltry decorations on
24 lampposts. I suppose if you had never seen electricity in action, it would be pretty breathtaking,
25 but I'm not even sure of that. It all just seemed tacky and inadequate on rather a grand scale, like
26 Blackpool itself.

27 What was no less amazing than the meagreness of the illuminations were the crowds of people
28 who had come to witness the spectacle. Traffic along the front was bumper to bumper, with
29 childish faces pressed to the windows of every creeping car, and there were masses of people
30 ambling happily along the spacious promenade. At frequent intervals hawkers sold luminous
31 necklaces and bracelets or other short-lived diversions, and were doing a roaring trade. I read
32 somewhere once that half of all visitors to Blackpool have been there at least ten times. Goodness
33 knows what they find in the place. I walked for a mile or so along the prom, and couldn't
34 understand the appeal of it - and I, as you may have realized by now, am an enthusiast for tat.
35 Perhaps I was just weary after my long journey from Porthmadog, but I couldn't wake up any
36 enthusiasm for it at all. I wandered through brightly lit arcades and peered in bingo halls, but the
37 festive atmosphere that seemed to seize everyone failed to rub off on me. Eventually, feeling very
38 tired and very foreign, I retired to a fish restaurant on a side-street, where I had a plate of
39 haddock, chips and peas, and was looked at like I was some kind of southern pansy when I asked
40 for tartare sauce, and afterwards took yet another early night.

Source B: 19th century literary nonfiction

Extract taken from Charles Dickens' travelogue *Pictures from Italy*.

1 Pleasant Verona! With its beautiful old palaces, and charming country in the distance, seen from
2 terrace walks, and stately, balustraded galleries*. With its Roman gates, still spanning the fair
3 street, and casting, on the sunlight of to-day, the shade of fifteen hundred years ago. With its
4 marble-fitted churches, lofty towers, rich architecture, and quaint old quiet thoroughfares, where
5 shouts of Montagues and Capulets* once resounded. [...] With its fast-rushing river, picturesque
6 old bridge, great castle, waving cypresses, and prospect so delightful, and so cheerful! Pleasant
7 Verona!

8 In the midst of it, in the Piazza di Bra — a spirit of old time among the familiar realities of the
9 passing hour — is the great Roman Amphitheatre*. So well preserved, and carefully maintained,
10 that every row of seats is there, unbroken. Over certain of the arches, the old Roman numerals
11 may yet be seen; and there are corridors, and staircases, and subterranean* passages for beasts,
12 and winding ways, above ground and below, as when the fierce thousands hurried in and out,
13 intent upon the bloody shows of the arena. Nestling in some of the shadows and hollow places of
14 the walls, now, are smiths with their forges, and a few small dealers of one kind or other; and
15 there are green weeds, and leaves, and grass, upon the parapet. But little else is greatly changed.

16 When I had traversed all about it, with great interest, and had gone up to the topmost round of
17 seats, and turning from the lovely panorama closed in by the distant Alps, looked down into the
18 building, it seemed to lie before me like the inside of a prodigious* hat of plaited straw, with an
19 enormously broad brim and a shallow crown; the plaits being represented by the four-and-forty
20 rows of seats. The comparison is a homely and fantastic one, in sober remembrance and on paper,
21 but it was irresistibly suggested at the moment, nevertheless.

[...]

22 I walked through and through the town all the rest of the day, and could have walked there until
23 now, I think. In one place, there was a very pretty modern theatre, where they had just performed
24 the opera (always popular in Verona) of *Romeo and Juliet*. In another there was a collection,
25 under a colonnade*, of Greek, Roman, and Etruscan remains, presided over by an ancient man
26 who might have been an Etruscan relic himself; for he was not strong enough to open the iron
27 gate, when he had unlocked it, and had neither voice enough to be audible when he described the
28 curiosities, nor sight enough to see them: he was so very old. In another place, there was a gallery
29 of pictures: so abominably bad, that it was quite delightful to see them mouldering away. But
30 anywhere: in the churches, among the palaces, in the streets, on the bridge, or down beside the
31 river: it was always pleasant Verona, and in my remembrance always will be.

*Glossary

balustraded gallery = a type of balcony

Montagues and Capulets = the two families from Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, which is set in Verona

Amphitheatre = an open, circular building with a central space for the presentation of dramatic or sporting events surrounded by tiers of seats for spectators

subterranean = underground

prodigious = impressive, extraordinary

colonnade = a type of walkway with a row of columns supporting a roof

Section A: Reading

Answer **all** questions in this section.

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.

Q1. Read again the first part of **Source A** from **lines 1 to 14**.

Choose **four** statements below which are true.

[4 marks]

- A. More people visit Blackpool than Greece each year.
- B. There are more holiday beds in Blackpool than there are in the whole of Portugal.
- C. Blackpool has the highest rollercoasters in Europe.
- D. More people visit Pleasure Beach than the Vatican.
- E. Pleasure Beach covers over 40 acres.
- F. The number of people going to Blackpool each year has declined by a fifth.
- G. Blackpool's tourism industry has become more successful over the past twenty years.
- H. The attractions in Blackpool are expensive and upmarket.

Q2. You need to refer to **Source A** and **Source B** for this question.

Use details from **both** sources. Write a summary of the differences between Blackpool and Verona.

[8 marks]

Q3. You now need to refer to **lines 8 to 21** in **Source B only**.

How does Dickens use language to describe his impressions of the Roman Amphitheatre?

[12 marks]

Q4. You need to refer to **Source A** and **Source B** for this question.

Compare how the two writers convey their different attitudes to the places they have visited.

In your answer, you could:

- compare their different attitudes
- compare the methods they use to convey their attitudes
- support your ideas with references to both texts

[16 marks]

Section B: Writing

You are advised to spend about 45 minutes on this section.

Write in full sentences.

You are reminded of the need to plan your answer.

You should leave enough time to check your work at the end.

Q5. 'These days, there is no point in travelling to see the world: we can see it all on TV or on the Internet.'

Write an article for a teenage magazine in which you explain your point of view on this statement.

(24 marks for content and organisation
16 marks for technical accuracy)
[40 marks]