

H

National Qualifications

2026

English

Critical Reading

Friday, 1 May

Instructions to Candidates

Candidates should enter their surname, forename(s), date of birth, Scottish candidate number and the name and level of the subject at the top of their first answer sheet.

Total marks — 40

[Braille page 2] SECTION 1 — Scottish Text — 20 marks

Read an extract from a Scottish text you have previously studied and attempt the questions.

Note: for Section 1 — Scottish Text, only Part C Poetry, Text 3 is provided in this paper.

Attempt ALL the questions for your text.

SECTION 2 – Critical essay – 20 marks

Attempt ONE question from the following genre – Drama

You must clearly identify the question number you are attempting on your answer sheet.

[Braille page 3] Marks are shown in square brackets at the end of each question or part question.

An ow in the margin indicates a new question.

[Braille page 4] SECTION 1 — SCOTTISH TEXT — 20 marks

Read the text extract carefully and then attempt ALL the questions for your chosen text.

Text 3 — Poetry

Medusa by Carol Ann Duffy

A suspicion, a doubt, a jealousy
grew in my mind,
which turned the hairs on my head to filthy snakes,
as though my thoughts
hissed and spat on my scalp.

[Braille page 5] My bride's breath soured, stank
in the grey bags of my lungs.
I'm foul mouthed now, foul tongued,
yellow fanged.

There are bullet tears in my eyes.
Are you terrified?
Be terrified.
It's you I love,
perfect man, Greek God, my own;

but I know you'll go, betray me, stray
from home.

So better by far for me if you were stone.

[Braille page 6] I glanced at a buzzing bee,
a dull grey pebble fell
to the ground.

I glanced at a singing bird,
a handful of dusty gravel
spattered down.

Questions

ow 37. Refer to lines 1 to 9.

By referring to at least two examples, analyse how the poet's use of language conveys a clear impression of the speaker. [4 marks]

ow 38. Refer to lines 10 to 17.

[Braille page 7] By referring to at least two examples, analyse how the poet's use of language creates a threatening atmosphere. [4 marks]

ow 39. Refer to lines 18 to 23.

Analyse how the poet's use of language conveys the speaker's power. [2 marks]

ow 40. By referring to this extract and to at least one other poem by Duffy, discuss how the poet uses relationships to explore central concerns. [10 marks]

[END OF SECTION 1]

[Braille page 8] SECTION 2 — CRITICAL ESSAY — 20 marks

Attempt ONE question from the following genre — Drama.

PART A — DRAMA

Answers to questions on drama should refer to the text and to such relevant features as characterisation, key scene(s), structure, climax, theme, plot, conflict, setting ...

ow 1. Choose a play in which a central character is presented as emotional or calculating or vulnerable.

By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how the central character **[Braille page 9]** is presented as emotional or calculating or vulnerable and discuss how this contributes to your appreciation of the play as a whole.

ow 2. Choose a play in which there is a scene involving a significant revelation or turning point.

By referring to appropriate techniques, briefly explain the nature of the significant revelation or turning point and discuss how this scene contributes to your appreciation of the play as a whole.

ow 3. Choose a play which explores jealousy or loyalty.

[Braille page 10] By referring to appropriate techniques, explain how this jealousy or loyalty is presented and discuss how this contributes to your appreciation of the play as a whole.

[END OF SECTION 2]

[END OF QUESTION PAPER]