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

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

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

What was no less amazing than the meagreness of the illuminations were the crowds of people who had come to witness the spectacle. Traffic along the front was bumper to bumper, with childish faces pressed to the windows of every creeping car, and there were masses of people ambling happily along the spacious promenade. At frequent intervals hawkers sold luminous necklaces and bracelets or other short-lived diversions, and were doing a roaring trade. I read somewhere once that half of all visitors to Blackpool have been there at least ten times. Goodness knows what they find in the place. I walked for a mile or so along the prom, and couldn’t understand the appeal of it - and I, as you may have realized by now, am an enthusiast for tat. Perhaps I was just weary after my long journey from Porthmadog, but I couldn’t wake up any enthusiasm for it at all. I wandered through brightly lit arcades and peered in bingo halls, but the festive atmosphere that seemed to seize everyone failed to rub off on me. Eventually, feeling very tired and very foreign, I retired to a fish restaurant on a side-street, where I had a plate of haddock, chips and peas, and was looked at like I was some kind of southern pansy when I asked for tartare sauce, and afterwards took yet another early night.
Pleasant Verona! With its beautiful old palaces, and charming country in the distance, seen from
terrace walks, and stately, balustraded galleries*. With its Roman gates, still spanning the fair
street, and casting, on the sunlight of to-day, the shade of fifteen hundred years ago. With its
marble-fitted churches, lofty towers, rich architecture, and quaint old quiet thoroughfares, where
shouts of Montagues and Capulets* once resounded. [...] With its fast-rushing river, picturesque
old bridge, great castle, waving cypresses, and prospect so delightful, and so cheerful! Pleasant
Verona!

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

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

[...]

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