

GCSE English Language and Literature Revision Guide

Dear Parents,

As we approach the crucial time of GCSE examinations, we understand that both students and parents are eager to support the revision process effectively. To assist you in aiding your child's preparation for the AQA GCSE English Language and Literature exams, we have compiled a comprehensive revision guide. This document outlines key strategies and resources that can significantly contribute to your child's success.

1. Flash Cards:

Encourage your child to create flashcards to memorise key quotes, information on characters, information on themes, and for language, information on each question. These can be utilised for quick revision sessions and are an effective tool for reinforcing memory through repetition.

2. Quote Explosions:

Familiarise your child with essential quotes from literature texts and poems. Create 'quote explosions' where your child dissects the quotes, analysing their meaning, context, and significance. This will not only enhance their understanding but also prepare them for essay writing.

3. Past Papers:

Practice is key to success. Access past AQA GCSE English Language and Literature papers to provide your child with a real sense of exam conditions. Timed practice will help improve time management and build confidence in tackling different question types.

4. Killer Quotes:

Identify 'killer quotes'—quotes that can be applied to various themes and characters. Encourage your child to collect and memorise these quotes, as they can be powerful tools in answering a range of questions.

5. Revision Timetable:

Help your child create a revision timetable that covers all topics and allows for regular breaks. A balanced approach to revision ensures that they cover all aspects of the syllabus and helps prevent burnout.

6. Revision Groups:

Encourage your child to participate in revision groups with classmates. Discussing different perspectives and insights can enhance their understanding of texts and provide valuable revision insights.

7. Online Resources:

Explore online resources such as revision websites, educational videos, and forums where students can share tips and discuss challenges. These platforms can provide additional support and diverse perspectives on exam preparation.

8. Consultation with Teachers:

Remind your child to seek guidance from their English teachers. Teachers can provide valuable insights into exam techniques, clarify doubts, and offer personalized advice based on your child's strengths and weaknesses.

9. Mindfulness and Well-being:

Remind your child to take care of their well-being during this stressful period. Adequate sleep, regular breaks, and healthy habits contribute to better focus and overall performance.

We hope that these strategies and resources contribute to a successful revision period for your child. Remember that the journey to success is a collective effort, and your support plays a crucial role in your child's academic achievements.

Thank you for your ongoing support.

Unlocking Success Through Effective Revision Strategies

Section 1: Memorising Quotes - A Common Concern

Students often feel anxious about memorising quotes for the English literature exams. They recognise that being able to recall quotes from the text is really important. They know that without this knowledge base they won't be able to answer exam questions effectively. They worry that when it matters most, sitting in the exam without their copy of the text as a comfort blanket, they'll forget most of the important lines.

How Many Quotes to Memorise?

For novels, plays, and poetry, you'll need to remember several key quotes for each character, theme, and poem. This might seem daunting initially, but with the right approach, it becomes manageable.

Organising Your Approach

- ✓ Be Organised: Regular, short sessions of retrieval practice are crucial.
- ✓ Start Early: Waiting until the last minute won't be effective.
- ✓ Consistent Practice: Short and regular sessions of retrieval practice are more effective than cramming.

Section 2: Creating a Bank of Flashcards

Step 1: Choosing the Right Quotes

Personal Selection: Choose quotes that resonate with you rather than relying solely on recommended lists.

Step 2: Creating Flashcards

Flashcard Format: Include character or theme on one side and quotes and context on the other.

Include the quote on one side and annotations or analysis on the other.

Include the question on one side and how to answer it on the other.

Regular Practice: Make flashcards part of your daily retrieval practice routine.

Section 3: Exploding Quotes for Deeper Analysis

What Does 'Exploding Quotes' Mean?

Metaphorically: Like an explosion, your annotations will get bigger as you focus on significant parts of the quote.

Purpose: Exploding quotes helps plan your analysis ahead of the exam and ensures deeper understanding.

What to Pick Out?

When exploding your quotes, aim for detailed notes on elements like language features, key words and what they make you think, feel or imagine, structural features, and links to theme/context.

Creating Exploded Quote Flashcards

Building a Bank: Develop a bank of exploded quotes for each character, theme, setting, and dramatic technique.

Daily Retrieval Practice: Incorporate exploded quote flashcards into your daily routine.

Section 4: Identifying 'Killer Quotes'

What Are 'Killer Quotes'?

Memorable and Powerful: Versatile quotes that cover multiple themes and aspects of a text.

Multipurpose: Short, easy to remember, and applicable to various exam questions.

How to Identify Killer Quotes

Re-read the Texts: Look for quotes that grab your attention.

Review Class Notes: Pay attention to quotes discussed extensively in class.

Scan Through Theme Lists: Identify quotes that fit most themes.

Test Potential Killer Quotes: Evaluate quotes against various themes.

Check Consistency: Ensure killer quotes align with other important quotes.

Section 5: Examples of 'Killer Quotes'

Macbeth - Killer Quotes

'Fair is foul, and foul is fair' (Act 1, Scene 1, line 12)

- Sets up the paradox that runs throughout the play: appearances don't always match with reality.
- Alliteration and reversed structure emphasize moral ambiguity.
- Links to: 'so foul and fair a day I have not seen'

'Full of scorpions is my mind' (Act 3, Scene 2, line 36)

- Exemplifies the central idea of unchecked ambition leading to tragic consequences.
- The metaphor uses animal imagery to symbolizes Macbeth's tortured conscience. He's attacked and stung by constant feelings of guilt
- Links to: 'Be lion-mettled, proud, and take no care'

'Look like the innocent flower/But be the serpent under't' (Act 1, Scene 5, lines 74-75)

- Covers most of the key themes, including violence and loyalty, it portrays Lady Macbeth as an unconventional 11th century wife.
- Depicts Lady Macbeth's manipulation and power imbalance.
- Includes fascinating language such as imperatives, simile and metaphor
- Relates to the medal commissioned by James I to celebrate the discovery of the Gunpowder Plot
- Structurally significant – the manipulation clearly works, as not long after Macbeth says 'False face must hide what the false heart doth know'
- Links to: 'When the battle's won and lost'

A Christmas Carol - killer quotes

'As solitary as an oyster' (Stave 1)

- The simile depicts Scrooge's self-imposed isolation and tough, cold exterior.
- Links to: 'Hard and sharp as flint'; 'as merry as a schoolboy'.

'mankind was my business' (Stave 1)

- Marley's ghost acts here as a mouthpiece for Dickens' beliefs. Kindness and humanity over profit and exploitation.
- Links to: 'decrease the surplus population'.

'fellow-passengers to the grave' (Stave 1)

- Fred's metaphorical comment illustrates that death is inevitable for us all yet makes clear that we still have the opportunity to shape the meaning of our lives.

'I wear the chain I forged in life' (Stave 1)

- The chain is symbolic of Marley's guilt. A burden made from links that accumulated throughout his time on Earth.
- The dynamic verb 'forged' is significant – Marley recognises that he actively created his guilt. This was a choice made of his own free will.
- The links of the chain also symbolise how we are bound together as a society

'The mention of his name cast a dark shadow' (Stave 3)

- Shadows act as a motif throughout the novella:
 - They are associated with ghosts and premonitions – 'Are these the shadows of the things that will be?'
 - London's slums, and the people who live there, are dismal and 'shadowy'.
- Significantly, these shadows lift at the end. See how Scrooge finds himself in the 'cheerful' lighting of the Cratchits' house and the 'golden sunlight' outside.

An Inspector Calls - killer quotes

'We are members of one body' (Act 3)

- An urgent call for socialism. The first-person plural pronoun 'we' emphasises the need for collective responsibility.
- Links to: like bees in a hive - community and all that nonsense'; 'There are millions and millions of John Smiths and Eva Smiths'.

'they will be taught it in fire and blood and anguish' (Act 3)

- Uses dramatic irony to allude to the world wars on the horizon.
- 'Fire' also implies a Hellish outcome for the immoral members of society.
- 'Blood' may also hint at the prospect of a socialist revolution if a capitalist society fails to curb its excesses.
- Links to: 'A chain of events'; 'I can't accept any responsibility'.

'I don't play golf' (Act 1)

- Despite the dry humour, the Inspector's comment reveals his willingness to stand up to his social superiors.
- Distancing him from the corrupt establishment at the top of the police force, it also emphasises his difference from 'normal' police officers.

'impertinent' (Act 2)

- Adjective meaning lacking respect for someone of a higher status.
- Sheila gets Eva fired from Milward's by accusing her of being 'very impertinent'.
- Yet Sheila laughs at her mother's use of the word to describe the inspector, calling it a 'silly word'.
- Mr and Mrs Birling see themselves as socially superior. Even Sheila, who seems in opposition to her parents, sees it as a word that shouldn't be used. In other words, social hierarchy is obvious and doesn't need pointing out.

'I must think' (Act 3)

- Sheila acts as the family's moral compass. As the others try to avoid responsibility, she accepts it.
- Her rejection of Gerald mirrors her independent thought, highlighting gender, as well as social, conflict.
- Links to: 'these girls aren't cheap labour, they're people'; it frightens me, the way you talk'.