

# GCSE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

(8700)

**Marked responses**  
8700-1 Q4 Levels 1-4

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# EXAMPLE RESPONSES



Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the Source from **line 16 to the end**.

A student said 'This part of the story, set during breakfast time, shows that Alex is struggling to cope with his mother's illness.'

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

- consider your own impressions of Alex
- evaluate how the writer shows that Alex is struggling to cope
- support your response with references to the text.

[20 marks]

~~The~~ with this statement I would agree that Alex is struggling to cope as it says that he was angry. The writer says "Alex was angry with his father, his sister, life in general - even with his mother for getting..." This suggests that he can not cope with his mother's illness as he is very angry.

Incomplete quotation

Simple evaluative comment

Misquotation

The writer also says "how enormous her presence

Simple response to the focus of the statement

had been<sup>max</sup> this  
suges t that  
he is missing  
his mother and  
cannot cope very  
well.

**Level 1: 3 marks**

Simple, limited evaluation; simple evaluative comments in response to the focus of the statement; nothing on writer's methods and textual references are either incomplete or incorrect.

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[20 marks]

I fully agree that alex is struggling to cope with his mother's illness.

I think that ~~the~~ <sup>Alex</sup> Alex is a character of passion and hatred, when something ~~is~~ gets him mad he doesn't just blame that one thing, he starts blaming everyone and everything. The writer shows this by the ~~phrase~~ saying "Alex was angry with his father, his sisters, life in general - even his mother for getting sick"

one reason why I think he is struggling to cope is through his ~~way of~~ <sup>speech</sup> on how things are different now that she's ill. The writer includes a list of all

Some evaluative comment

Some appropriate textual reference

Limited understanding of writer's methods – identifies techniques with support, but comment deals with content rather than method

Some response to the focus of the statement

Some evaluative comment

Some appropriate textual references

the things he misses about her, for example it says 'he missed her music, her flowers, the once familiar fragrance of fresh baked cookies. This suggests that from his day to day life all he does is think about her and what he misses about her. This links back to the beginning of line 16 as it's saying how he 'was not in the mood to applaud his partner's efforts' implying that he is falling into a depression state where little things like that ~~are~~ don't seem to matter anymore.

Another piece of evidence is when Nicole asks "When's Mamma going to get better?" Alex's sudden response is "shut up, Nicole" suggesting he refuses to talk about it and as it goes on further to talk about how they think she is

Some evaluative comment

going to die, Alex rushes out of the kitchen without breakfast & suggesting he's lost his appetite from the conversation.

An argument against this would be that if it really was affecting him he would have also been aggressive towards his father, however it says that "his children didn't want to hurt his feelings" therefore

showing that despite the struggling he is trying to cope.

However I can argue that he still isn't coping well as it says "Alex was angry at his father" showing he had zero tolerance at all for the situation he was in at that moment in time, he didn't

want to talk about it and he was in a complete state of denial.

Some response to the focus of the statement although some ambiguity over whether "he" is Alex or his father

Some evaluative comment

Overall I think that Alex isn't coping well with the stress that his mother is as she flips out on his sisters for bringing up the topic.

**Level 2: 9 marks**

Some attempts at evaluation; some response to the focus of the statement with some appropriate textual references. Weakest aspect is writer's methods, which are occasionally identified but never considered.

This response is typical of Level 2. There is some ambiguity, eg "despite the struggling he is trying to cope" probably refers to Alex but because the focus of the selected quotation is Alex's father, there is insufficient clarity to move the response to level 3. Similarly, "where little things like that don't seem to matter any more" lacks context. To what does "that" refer? Precision and contextualisation are needed for level 3.

The response could have been improved by addressing the above points, and also focussing more on the writer's methods.

Focus this part of your answer on the second half of the Source from line 16 to the end.

A student said 'This part of the story, set during breakfast time, shows that Alex is struggling to cope with his mother's illness.'

To what extent do you agree?

In your response, you could:

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- evaluate how the writer shows that Alex is struggling to cope
- support your response with references to the text.

[20 marks]

I agree with this, firstly because ~~Max/Ada~~ the writer shows that Alex's emotions vary on the topic of his mother, yet all show that he is struggling to cope.

"Alex was angry with his father, his sisters, wife in general - even with his mother for getting sick" shows that ~~at~~ Alex's ~~is~~ ~~angry~~ first instinct is to be angry due to the adjective "angry" in the quotation. "even with his mother for getting sick" shows that Alex appears to be struggling to cope with ~~+~~ her illness as he is blaming even his mother, showing that ~~he needs~~ Alex's character is one which needs a constant emotional outlet.

Alex also feels pained later in the text, as he thinks about "how painful her <sup>absence</sup> ~~absence~~ is now". This however, ~~is~~ due to the time being "now", suggests that Alex didn't always feel pained, showing again a sense of emotional instability in Alex's character.

Some response to the focus of the statement



I also agree because ~~the~~ the text explicitly states that Alex misses his mother, as

Relevant textual reference

"He missed her easy laughter and her affection, even her discipline." The verb "missed" shows that

Clear evaluation

Alex wants his mother well again and cannot cope with her absence. The fact ~~at~~ that Alex is described to miss "even her discipline" shows that even features that he disliked before are now appealing features that he misses, showing that Alex wants nothing more than for things to return to how they were before, as he goes to extremes to miss and feel nostalgic about.

~~I also agree because the writer's semantic field of negativity ~~as~~ that is often used to ~~describe~~ describe Alex is suggested to be a result of his mother's illness. The fact that "Her <sup>convalesces</sup> ~~convalesces~~ ~~over~~ ~~the~~ ~~morning~~ ~~over~~ ~~a~~ ~~week~~ ~~day~~ ~~in~~ ~~which~~ ~~she~~ ~~had~~ been a lot of days since that since his mother got sick" shows that Alex's constant depression and the miserable manner in which she acts is a result of the illness, showing that Alex has an inability to cope with his current situation. ~~However~~~~

The verb "decided" shows that Alex chooses when his days are miserable and terrible, and the fact that he chooses his depressive state also suggests that he is struggling to cope as he feels

unable to be happy due to the state of his mother. It also appears like he is punishing himself for the current situation, and giving himself partial blame, by ~~not~~ not allowing himself happiness. This coincides with his ~~angry~~ anger towards his other family members, as ~~therefore~~ it could be inferred that he also feels anger at himself, again proving that he has an inability to cope with his mother's sickly state.

Clear understanding of writer's method. Not helpfully explained, but if "once" is the negative language, then the explanation that follows, with the words "since" and "no longer" is clear

I also agree because the writer's ~~use of~~ semantic field of negativity is often hinted to be as a result of Alex's mother's illness. "Her convalesces, ~~and~~ ~~an~~ ~~explanation~~ which once were expressions of colour" suggest that since she became ill, Alex's life has grayed as a result. This shows that Alex ~~feels that~~ can no longer experience ~~happy~~ happiness or ~~see~~ excitement, or have a colourful perspective on the world, as things that were once coloured have now become grayed and depressing. This also shows that Alex cannot cope with his mother's illness, as he doesn't appear to allow himself to find joy, instead letting others get on without him, showing that he may also feel angry at himself, coinciding with how he feels towards his father and ~~his~~ sisters. It appears to that Alex blames himself, reinforcing the idea that Alex is emotionally ~~unstable~~ unstable and therefore needs to find an output in

*the form of a ~~mult~~ multitude of different things -  
mainly people.*

**Level 3: 12 marks**

Clear and relevant evaluation; clear understanding of writer's methods - although benefit of doubt given to candidate with "semantic field of negativity" consisting of "once".

This response could have been improved by an evaluation of a wider range of ideas and also a greater focus on writer's methods, especially by considering the effects of more than one example of a semantic field.

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[20 marks]

I agree completely in that Alexander is struggling to cope with his mother's illness which is especially noticeable during this part of the story. This is evident during Alexander's outburst at his sister's predictions about his mother dying where he says "You two are just kids. You don't know what you're talking about!" which shows a sense of denial from Alexander. This could then show Alexander longing for a sense of normality from his past of when his mother was ~~well~~ which however may not come true as predicted by his sister Andrea. It could be said that this inevitability of this prediction is similar to the storm as it is impossible to stop a storm by simply denying its existence as Alexander is trying to do with his mother's illness. Also the storm could also represent the inevitable chaos within the house if his mother dies as there is already a chaotic structure in the Cold household where they "each of them ate whenever and whatever they pleased" and even goes so far as referring to the situation as an "almost like a party".

Relevant textual reference

Clear evaluation

Perceptive evaluation

Perceptive analysis of writer's methods

Judicious textual detail

Convincing response to focus of statement

Also in the last paragraph, Alex reflects on his memories of his mother before the illness which furthermore portrays his sense of longing for his mother back and the lifestyle of order that he was used to.

Judicious use of textual detail

By listing ~~with~~ the aspects of his life before his mother's illness such as "her flowers, the once-familiar fragrance of fresh-baked cookies and the smell of paint" and then going on to describe his mother as "little more than a silent ghost"

Perceptive understanding of writer's methods

creates this sense of change and helps the ~~we~~ reader to imagine the vast impact this illness has had on not only Alexander's mother, but Alexander's whole world as well.

#### Level 4: 18 marks

Perceptive evaluation and convincing response to the focus of the statement; perceptive understanding of writer's methods, with judicious textual detail.

This response demonstrates an intelligent choice of writer's methods on which to focus: the symbolic representation of the storm, and the use of listing and metaphor to convey the contrast in the mother pre/post illness.

The candidate references details earlier in the passage but always in relation to the events in the given lines, which is perfectly acceptable.

The conciseness of the response shows that Level 4 can be achieved if the quality of evaluation and the analysis of writer's methods are sufficiently perceptive.

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