

How is AO2(i) assessed for A*?

To gain an A* it is not simply a matter of writing more, but of showing evidence of the following Band 4 (A/A*) skills:

Full and detailed evidence of understanding	Writing in detail does not mean that you have to write a lot. It means that you go into detail about the issues addressed in the question. Full means that you show evidence of having read and understood the whole item.
Engagement with the article(s)	This means that you show evidence of having read that item and that you have shown an insightful interest in it. You do not have to agree with the issues, but you do have to show that you have engaged, or mentally wrestled with, the article.
Relevant and appropriate quotations to support detailed understanding	Quotations should be short and relevant and, wherever possible, integrated into your answer.
Perceptive connections between points and texts	It is easy to make simplistic connections, or comparisons based on pictures, colour etc. It is more difficult to compare ideas and what you think the writers' concepts or underlying thoughts or ideas were. Linking conceptualisation with the choices that a writer makes when presenting, structuring and making language choices is an A* skill.

Remember: you have 60 minutes for Section A with roughly 90 seconds for each mark. That means you should be spending about 24 minutes on question 4.



Reading and understanding texts

Whether you are following someone else's argument or constructing your own, the way you need to think is similar.

Reading and understanding a text requires the same skills whatever reading task you are doing, whether it is for controlled conditions assessments or for external assessment. You need to consider:

- What is the main point that the writer is making?
- What are the minor points and how do they connect with the main point?
- Does the writer infer any meaning?

Where is this assessed?

This is only formally assessed under examination conditions in Unit 1 of your English/English Language course, but you also need to show evidence of this skill whenever and wherever you read any text-based part of your English course.

Task A

Read the newspaper article below. What do you learn from Laura Stretton's article about Lebrun's success?

Punk Princess deposed? No way!

Pop Sabine Lebrun: Arcade, Manchester

Canadian pop star Sabine Lebrun made headlines last week for a much-publicised bust-up with her parents and management over the lyrics of one of her songs that allegedly suggested that same-sex relationships were a viable alternative. The song, *Je regrette tous*, was featured in last night's concert and was rapturously chanted by her massive teeny bopper audience who knew all of the words, despite the fact that they have only ever appeared on Lebrun's Facebook page.

This is a brave, or foolhardy move by Lebrun, whose parents are members of a strict religious sect that bans any reference to same-sex relationships and they are rumoured to have publicly disowned her at a televised service last Sunday. Neither parent has been willing to talk to the press about what happened, but there has been no secret about Lebrun's antipathy to her parents' beliefs. She included a song entitled *Je ne crois rien* on her last album and this has become an anthem in her anthemically themed set. This is no place for the faint hearted!

Do you remember when Lebrun used to stomp around the set with her guitar and punch the air? Well, she's changed: now she



stomps around the stage without her guitar and still punches the air. This is no Alanis Morissette, but she sure knows how to woo her audience, the average age of which seemed to be 15. No wonder the red top newspapers are crying 'child protection': this audience is hardly out of nappies!

The negative press reports about her antics and sexual orientation don't seem to bother Sabine as she bounces into her worldwide single success with *Bad attitude*, which certainly caught this music critic napping. I thought it was the worst sort of 'shriek rock', but what do I know?: it got her a Grammy nomination.

In her brisk, but purposeful 60-minute set, she invited Sabine look-alikes onto the stage in their pink tights and crimson dyed hair to strut their stuff in front of this capacity crowd. I was pretty certain that at least two of the invited fans were boys, but hey, Sabine's cool on these things.

Maybe I was wrong about her popularity, but she certainly knows how to play an audience.

Laura Stretton

See more of Sabine Lebrun at Brighton Hippodrome from tonight until Thursday of this week.
Box office open until 7pm.

Task A

Read the extract below. It comes from an interview for a headteacher's post. It is the candidate's response to the question: 'What is your vision for the school?'

Give a talk to the rest of the class explaining the changes you would make to your school if you were the headteacher.

'Change? Who needs it? I have examined this school in detail and my considered opinion is that you do.

Why? I believe that schools are for the students. It is the students who should be at the heart of all of our important decisions. Not only that, they should be involved in making those decisions. It would be my intention, if appointed as headteacher, to consult widely with students about what they consider to be the strengths and weaknesses of the school.

Having been round the school this morning, it is clear that its fabric is in a deteriorating condition. The amount of litter is intolerable and the state of the toilets is a disgrace, bordering on a health hazard. I believe these should be priorities for financial investment. I expect the highest possible standards from our students. How can we expect them to perform highly and respect their environment if we do not give them the best?

The range of subjects we offer our students is too narrow. Lessons should encourage students to participate, to enjoy and to achieve. We need to design an experience that is exciting and relevant for all of our students. I envisage far-reaching reforms for the curriculum. Diplomas would be central to our planning. I want children to want to come to this school so I would offer them exciting events both in and outside school; refreshing approaches to teaching; and, the opportunity to develop to their maximum potential!

**Student response to Task A**

What's it like to play at being God? Some people think that's what headteachers do. They control the lives of hundreds of people. If they get it right, everyone benefits. If they get it wrong...

I don't intend to get it wrong. A headteacher's job is all about making choices. To do that they need information. My choices will be made using the best

possible information — my experience. I know this school in detail. I know the places the bullies haunt like gruesome ghouls. I know how horrible school meals are. I know how uncomfortable the uniform is. I will do a fantastic job because, like every teenager, I know it all!

Doubtless you think you could do just as well. Let's face it, we are all experts on education. We are immersed in it from our early years. That means that you'll be able to appreciate the complexity of the job I'm going to do. Lessons, buildings, uniform... they all need attention. In fact some of them need a magic wand.

So what's my motivation for all this? It isn't to play God. It's to make life better for everyone and if I do that I'll benefit as much as anyone else. Unfortunately I'm not Harry Potter. I need you to work with me. Just consider our potential. Some people try to use magic. Together we can be it.

Examiner's comment

The speaker makes a series of points but none of them are expanded fully. The main ideas are cogently expressed, using standard English and a varied vocabulary. The thinking behind the ideas is explained clearly but the candidate has not identified the changes to be made. There are clear attempts to connect with the audience through the use of the opening question and the use of the word 'you'. Rhetorical questions force the audience to consider their own opinions. Irony is used effectively. This would fulfil most of the level A descriptors.

To improve, the candidate needs to use more sophisticated vocabulary and organise the material more inventively.

Assessment for Learning

Read the second paragraph again. Identify opportunities for the student to include more sophisticated vocabulary. Discuss your findings with a partner and rewrite the paragraph.

Task B

Write a response to the question, 'What is your vision for the school?' that will get you at least a grade A.

Remember: there are three parts to this activity: the opening; your ideas and explanations; and the ending. They are all important.

**Assessment for Learning**

Exchange your response with another student and assess whether you think that their response explains what they think and why. Decide whether it would keep the audience's interest. Now write notes on it to try to explain to your partner how they can improve what they have written. they can improve what they have written.

AO3 (iii)

Use a range of sentence structures for clarity, purpose and effect with accurate punctuation and spelling.

Remember: clarity, purposefulness and accuracy are key characteristics of A* writing.

Key words	What the key words mean
sentence structures	Your use of sentence structures is varied, creating impressive effects.
clarity	Your writing is clear.
purpose	This is the reason for which your text is written.
effect	This is the impression you create with what you write.
accurate punctuation	You use a range of punctuation highly purposefully and effectively, which heightens the impact of your writing.
spelling	Your control over irregular spelling is impressive.

Where is AO3 assessed for A*?

This Assessment Objective is assessed just about everywhere you are being assessed for writing. It is the fundamental test of whether you can write well and make clear links between your writing and the intended style, audience and purpose, known as 'SAP'. You will gain your writing marks in Unit 1 and Unit 3, both units have an equal weighting of 20% each, making up a total of 40%.

How is AO3 assessed for A*?

Whenever you are constructing and crafting your writing, you will be assessed on all three components of AO3 at the same time, whether it is for controlled conditions assessments or for external assessment.

In summary, to be an A/A* writer, you need to consider the following eight 'Cs':

- Clarity
- Communication (needs to be exceptionally clear)
- Crafting (writing)
- Coherence
- Continuous prose
- Compelling content
- Convincing texts
- Complexity (of grammatical structures and punctuation).

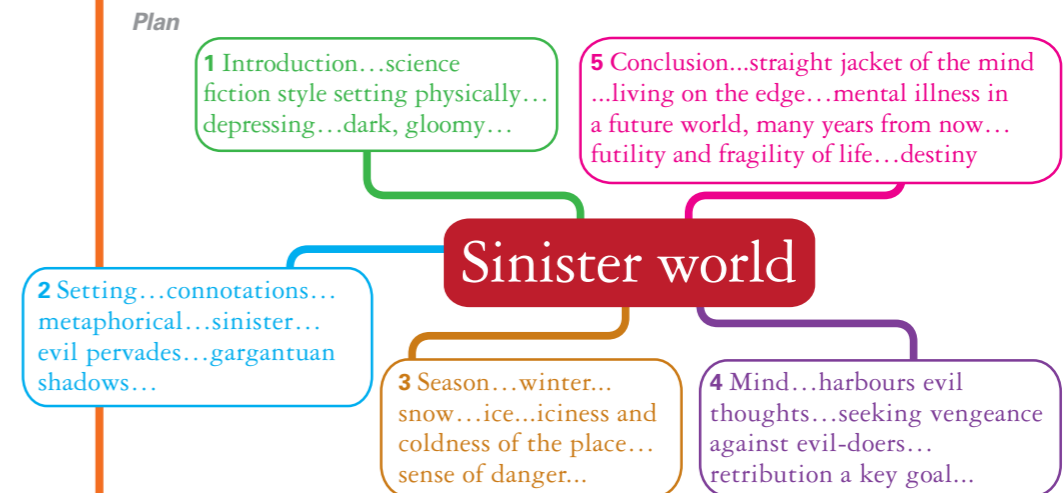
In Task A, we will try to develop the A* skills for each part of Assessment Objective 3.

Task A

Describe a sinister world.

Note: the question does not specify where or what this world is, so it is up to you to interpret this in a sophisticated way to grab the reader's attention. What will make your response stand out and be different?

Planning your response first is always a good idea. This allows you to exercise an ordered thought process, as well as giving you the opportunity to structure your response coherently.

Student responses to Task A

Darkness and gloom began to descend as the twilight curtain slowly fell. The once imperturbable aura which existed many moons ago was now unimaginable. Depression and dejection enveloped every angle, every curve of this ferocious land.

Gargantuan shadows loomed like malnourished predators eager to consume whatever, whosoever, may venture in their sparsely trodden path. Sinister evil pervades this forgotten world. Sinister parasites stood triumphant where once virginal thoughts lay. Life was no longer sacred; peace was no longer a destiny. Sons had slain their mothers; the very sources of their life, lying discarded like abandoned umbilical cords, their purpose fulfilled. Daughters of Eden wept and wailed lamenting the loss of innocence.

