



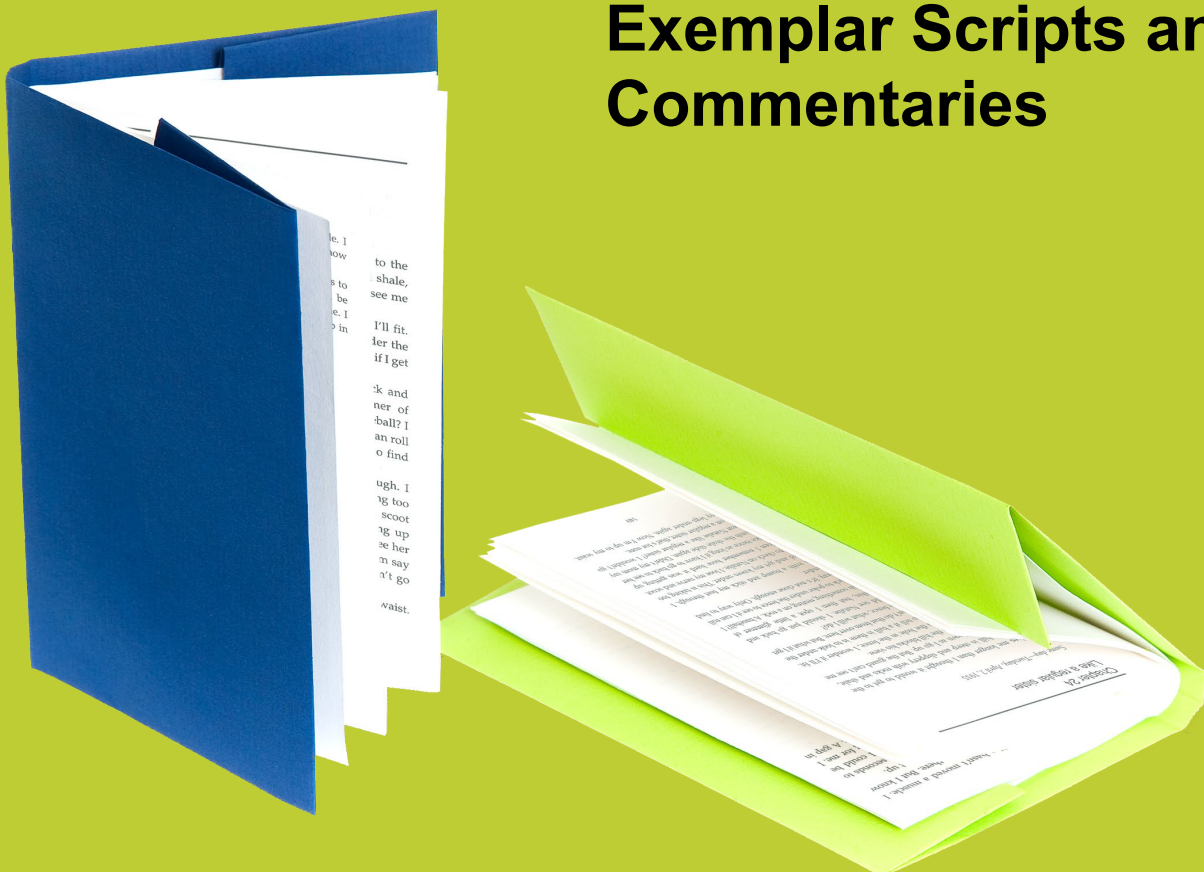
Pearson  
Edexcel

# GCSE (9-1) English Literature

Paper 1: Section B Post-1914 Literature

Text: **Coram Boy**

Exemplar Scripts and  
Commentaries





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This booklet contains three scripts responding to the following question from the Sample Assessment Materials (SAMs).

*Alexander and Thomas drew their swords and stood back to back as they were encircled.*

Explore the significance of courage in *Coram Boy*.

You **must** refer to the context of the novel in your answer.

(Total for Question 27 = 40 marks (includes 8 marks for the range of appropriate vocabulary and sentence structures, and accurate use of spelling and punctuation))

The SAMs can be accessed through the following link:

[https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/English%20Literature/2015/specification-and-sample-assesment/GCSE%20English%20Literature%20SAMs%20Booklet\\_web.pdf](https://qualifications.pearson.com/content/dam/pdf/GCSE/English%20Literature/2015/specification-and-sample-assesment/GCSE%20English%20Literature%20SAMs%20Booklet_web.pdf)



## Script 1

In *Coram Boy* several characters show courage. Meshak shows courage when he does what his dad says. Meshak's dad isn't nice to him and bullies him. He makes Meshak do what he's told. One day they collect some babies and Meshak has to bury them in the woods but one was still alive. Meshak's dad sells children at the docks.

Another person who shows courage is Alex who helps his friend Thomas. Alex and Thomas sing at the church and some other boys bully Thomas. Alex helps him deal with the bullies. Later, Alex takes Thomas home with him and Thomas meets Alexander's family at the big house.

Toby, who comes from Coram Hospital is a black boy who goes to work as a servant for Mr Goddard. Toby shows courage because he is treated like a slave and gets beaten by Mr Goddard. In those days, young black boys were made to be like pets by rich people and were badly treated. Mr Goddard treats him like a 'stray dog' but Toby can't do anything about it.

**Script 1: 13 marks**

AO1/3 – Level 2 (9 marks)

AO4 – Level 2 (4 marks)

- A structured response showing some understanding of the novel and theme. Three examples of courage are given:
  - Meshak’s courage when doing what his father orders him to do
  - Alexander’s courage in helping his friend, Thomas and
  - Toby’s courage when working as a servant for Mr Goddarn.
- The points are largely narrative, but there is some evidence of a personal response. To raise this into Level 3, more examples and greater development of ideas would have benefitted, such as explaining more about the ways in which Thomas was bullied and what Alexander did to help his friend.
- There is some reference to the text and there is one quotation.
- Contextually, some awareness is demonstrated, although the point is very brief.
- AO4 – The response is structured in paragraphs and there are capital letters, full stops and some commas. There are some spelling errors and the use of apostrophes is inconsistent. The quality of writing maintains the requirements of a mid-Level 2 mark.



## Script 2

Alexander and Thomas show courage in *Coram Boy* when they ‘drew their swords and stood back as they were encircled’. This happens when Mr Philip Gaddarn, who is really Otis Gardiner, catches Arron and Meshak or Mish, and locks them up on the slave ship and Toby, Alexander and Thomas go to their rescue. When Mish thinks Alexander is going to take his ‘angel’ Aaron away from him, Thomas knocks Alexander unconscious and realising who Alexander is, an Ashbrook, Otis is about to kill him with his sword when Thomas throws himself over his friend and is killed. I know this because it says ‘he took the brunt of the murderous thrust’. Otis has Toby, Aaron and Mish locked in the ships hold, but they manage to escape. Aaron shows courage when he leaps overboard and Alexander jumps in after him. At the time, there was the slave trade and some merchants made lots of money by selling orphans.

Earlier in the story, Alexander and Thomas became friends when they were in the choir at Gloucester Cathedral. Alexander was from a rich family, but Thomas was working-class. Alexander shows courage when he helps Thomas stop the bullies from dangling him from a window. This shows how loyal Alexander was to his friend, despite the differences in class. At the time, there was big social divide and it was unusual for the rich and poor to become friends. When Thomas goes to Ashbrook House with Alexander, he cannot relax or be himself. Thomas had won a scholarship to attend the Cathedral school to study music, otherwise he would have become a carpenter, just like his father, and not met Alexander.

I think Alexander is brave to stand up to his farther when he decides to leave home to become a musician. His farther had forbidden it, as it was his duty to learn how to run the estate. Despite this, Alexander becomes successful and later, when the Coram Choir consisting of six boys led by Thomas perform at Ashbrook house, ‘Suddenly there was music again’ and everyone was reminded of Alexander. Lord Ashbrook shows courage when he realises that he misses Alexander and tells Thomas that he wants to ‘reconcile’ with his son.

Both Alexander and Thomas show courage and loyalty to each other because they were good friends.



## Script 2: 23 marks

AO1/3 – Level 3 (17 marks)

AO4 – Level 3 (6 marks)

- This is a relevant personal response with occasional narrative, but focus on the question is maintained. The response focuses just on Alexander and Thomas, but relevant examples include:
  - reference to the given quotation in the question and how this event demonstrates courage
  - how Alexander and Thomas became friends and how Alexander helps his friend deal with the bullies
  - how Alexander shows the courage to pursue his career in music, despite his father's objections and, later, his father's courage in admitting that he wishes to reconcile with his son.
- A sound understanding of courage in the novel is demonstrated and relevant examples support the points made. To raise this into Level 4, more examples from other areas of the novel, and consideration of the courage other characters show, would have further benefitted this response.
- There is some reference to the text and the use of quotations.
- Contextually, sound comment is offered; there is some comment on the relationship between text and context.
- AO4 – The response is structured in paragraphs and there are capital letters, full stops, commas and inverted commas. There are some spelling errors, but the quality of writing maintains the requirements to slip into Level 3.



### Script 3

In this essay I am going to write about courage in *Coram Boy*. Courage is shown by Meshak, Alexander and Melissa.

*Coram Boy* was written by Jamila Gavin and it has won many awards. It has been made into a play and is called *Coram Boy* because it has links to Coram Hospital in London, which was an orphanage in the eighteenth century.

The story begins with Meshak travelling with his father, Otis. Meshak is treated badly by his father and is teased by people because of his unusual looks and awkwardness. People call him a 'simpleton – a loon'. Meshak is courageous, as he has no one to talk to about his problems, apart from his dog, Jester. Meshak is afraid of the dark but is courageous when his father will not use the lamps on his cart and so he must be brave and overcome his fears of highwaymen and wild animals. Otis makes Meshak help him collect unwanted babies and young children and take them to be sold to mills or press gangs. At the time of the Industrial Revolution, cotton and woollen mills were being built and child labour was normal and press gangs would take young boys to work on the ships. Meshak is very courageous as he never argues with his father and does as he is told, but he cannot sleep at night as he is tormented by the cries of the children and babies.

Alexander shows courage because he helps his friend, Thomas. Alexander and Thomas are choristers at Gloucester Cathedral and Thomas is bullied by a group of other boys who dangle him by a rope from one of the windows. Alexander, at first, appears to join the bullies, but whispers to his friend to 'Make them laugh ... they'll never trouble you again'. Thomas does this and the bullies stop. Once Thomas has made them laugh by singing and playing spoons, he is not troubled again. Alexander both showed courage through their friendship and trust in each other. Alexander is also courageous because he stands up to his father. He is desperate to be a musician, but his father refuses, insisting that he learns how to run the family estate. Alexander stands up to his father and follows his destiny. This shows how he has the courage to be independent, especially when he leaves home to pursue his dream.

Melissa shows courage when she becomes pregnant with Alexander's baby. At the time, it was frowned upon to have a child if you were not married. Melissa is still very young and has to keep her pregnancy a secret from her family for fear of being thrown out, but is helped by her friend, Isobel: 'there was Isobel to comfort her, give her courage'. When the housekeeper, Mrs Lynch, finds out about it, she organises for Otis to call the next time he is in the area so that he can take Melissa's baby away. When the baby is born, Melissa's mother and Mrs Lynch tell Melissa that her baby is dead before handing it to Otis for him to take it away. Meshak, who has been secretly watching 'his angel', knows the baby is still alive and shows great courage when he takes the baby from his father and runs away to London with it, rather than burying it as his father had ordered. Meshak is also courageous when he washes the blood off the baby and cuts the umbilical cord. He promises to be the baby's 'guardian angel' as he runs away with the baby. Meshak shows courage when he saves Melissa's baby, Aaron, and takes it to Coram Hospital in London. This was a brave thing to do because if his father had found out, he would have been beaten by him.

Courage is seen through the actions of Meshak, Alexander, Melissa throughout the novel.





### Script 3: 29 marks

AO1/3 – Level 4 (22 marks)

AO4 – Level 3 (7 marks)

- This is a developed personal response showing thorough engagement with the question. The response focuses on the courage demonstrated by three main characters:
  - Meshak’s courage when doing what his father orders him to do and for rescuing baby Aaron
  - Alexander’s courage in helping his friend, Thomas, and standing up to his father to pursue a career in music
  - Melissa’s courage during pregnancy and how her friend, Isobel, supports her.
- The points are mostly developed and the response is sustained. A thorough understanding of the novel is demonstrated and supported with some well-chosen references to the text. Some finer details have been included, such as the name of Meshak’s dog and how Melissa’s friend, Isabel, helps her. To raise this into Level 5, more examples from later events in the novel, particularly those in Part 2, could have been considered (such as how Toby, Alexander and Thomas show courage when they try to save Aaron and Meshak and make reference to the given quotation in the question).
- Contextually, there are some sustained and relevant comments to support the points made.
- AO4 – The response is structured in paragraphs and the use of spelling, punctuation and grammar is mostly accurate. Level 3, 7 marks.