

## AStar Exam: Question 5

**We made it!**

**Question 5 is the final question of the reading part of the exam and so the most important.**

**Again we are going up four marks each question so this is now worth 20 marks so 20% of the exam.**

**Unlike the first four questions of the A Star exam which are based on AQA GCSE paper 2, question five is based on the fourth question in AQA GCSE paper 1.**

**While the question differs from its paper 1 version because it is now based on a non-fiction text (AQA GCSE paper 1 is always fiction), the mark scheme it uses and the way to answer the question is still exactly the same.**

**Therefore, it is absolutely fine to use the GCSE question for practice.**

## AStar Exam: Question 5

- You are given a **statement from a reader** of one of the sources and you need to say **how much you agree or disagree with it**.

The question is deemed  
**subjective...**

...in other words theoretically you could 100% agree or disagree with the statement and still score 20 out of 20.

However, it is very important to note that you are still in the reading part of the exam and **all answers must be backed up by evidence** and rooted in the text.

Often the quotation in the question can be split into two (or more) parts.

Often one part will be clearly true and the other part will be easier to argue from different perspectives. A successful answer will differentiate parts of the statement.

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An **introductory sentence** or two setting up your opinion and a **conclusion sentence summarising** will add to your **clarity** and help you secure a good mark.

As with question four, you will be given **bullet points** which effectively tell you the mark scheme for the question.

Also like question four, the marks are split between what **your opinion** is and what in the **text** leads you there and how the **author** led you to your opinion.

For the latter, again we need to focus on **language/techniques/structure** etc.

You can also call something a key sentence if it is pivotal to your answer.



## Question 5 Common Mistake

A **common mistake** on this question is for students to not focus enough on the how. To quote an old examiner's report for the GCSE:

'All evaluations and interpretations were valid, as long as they were **rooted in the text**. The key skill for Question 4 (question 5 in A Star) is **evaluation**, both of the ideas in the source in relation to the given statement, and also the **methods** used by the writer to **convey** these ideas.

However, the biggest error made by students was that **many of them failed to address methods**; they dealt with the 'what' but not the 'how', which limited how far they could move into a given level.

Students need to understand that it is imperative to evaluate the 'how' as well as the 'what': indeed, those whose responses led with methods, which then naturally and seamlessly became evaluative of ideas, fared well and were able to access the full range of marks.'

## Question5

**You can think of yourself as akin to a courtroom lawyer in this question.**

**Just as the defence and prosecution should have access to the same evidence and will use it to suit their cause, you should **present the evidence in a manner that backs up your opinion** on the student's statement.**

**It is fine to show nuance in your answer and **agree to an extent** but either not 100% agree or to examine other interpretations.**

**You can write in the first person in this question (eg: 'I think...'). However, try to keep this to a minimum because it doesn't sound very sophisticated or formal. Instead, try to write more generally about your opinion, as in the examples we will cover later.**



**25  
minutes**



## Question 5: Example

**5) Focus this part of your answer on source A from line 26**

**A reader said, 'The crowd was putting pressure on George Orwell to shoot the elephant, and he therefore would be justified in doing so.'**

**To what extent do you agree?**

**In your response, you could:**

- consider the reasons the crowd was putting pressure on George**
- evaluate how the writer describes his feelings and whether this makes him seem justified**
- support your response with references to the text**

**20 marks**

**(these 3 bullet points will be almost identical on any exam but make sure you read them. It is very important to make sure you cover them all)**

## Question 5: Source Extract

Focus this part of your answer on **source A from line 26:**

But at that moment I glanced around at the crowd that had followed me. It was an immense crowd, two thousand at the least and growing every minute. I looked at the sea of faces above the garish clothes – faces all happy and excited over this bit of fun, all certain that the elephant was going to be shot. They were watching me as they would watch a conjurer about to perform a trick. And suddenly I realised that I should have to shoot the elephant after all. The people expected it of me and I had got to do it. Here was I, the white man with his gun, seemingly the leading actor of the piece, but in reality I was only a puppet pushed to and fro by the will of those faces behind. To come all that way, rifle in hand, with two thousand people marching at my heels, and then to trail feebly away, having done nothing – no, that was impossible. The crowd would laugh at me.

But I did not want to shoot the elephant. It seemed to me that it would be murder to shoot him. (Somehow it always seems worse to kill a large animal.)

It was perfectly clear to me what I ought to do. I ought to walk up to the elephant and test his behaviour. If he charged I could shoot, if he took no notice of me it would be safe to leave him. But I also knew I was going to do no such thing. If the elephant charged and I missed him, I should have about as much chance as a toad under a steam-roller. The sole thought in my mind was that if anything went wrong those two thousand Burmese people would see me pursued, caught and trampled on. And if that happened it was quite probable that some of them would laugh. That would never do. There was only one alternative.



## Question 5: Breakdown

### AO4

**Evaluate** texts critically and support this with appropriate **textual references**

A reader said, 'The crowd was putting pressure on George Orwell to shoot the elephant, and he therefore would be justified in doing so.'

Notice how the above quote from a reader has two separate parts to it:

**'the crowd was putting pressure on George Orwell to shoot the elephant'**

While theoretically you could **argue against** this statement as all answers are accepted as long as they are rooted in the text, in reality it would be almost **impossible** to do so as the text makes this seem **objectively true**.

**'he therefore would be justified in doing so'**

This is much more **subjective** and the text gives evidence to make a compelling case that he was:

- i) completely justified to do it
- ii) not at all justified.
- iii) not justified but his actions were understandable in the circumstances.

You may use the **same evidence but with different explanations to argue different opinions**. Equally you may wish to use **different quotations** depending on your perspective.



## Question 5: Level Descriptors

**Level 4 Perceptive, detailed evaluation**

**16-20 marks**

**Shows **perceptive and detailed** evaluation:**

**Evaluates critically and in detail the effect(s) on the reader**

**Shows perceptive understanding of writer's methods**

**Selects a **judicious range** of textual detail**

**Develops a convincing and critical response to the focus of the statement**

**At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors.**

## Question 5: Level Descriptors

### **Level 3 Clear, relevant evaluation**

**11-15 marks**

**Shows clear and relevant evaluation:**

**Evaluates clearly the effect(s) on the reader**

**Shows clear understanding of writer's methods**

**Selects a range of relevant textual references**

**Makes a clear and relevant response to the focus of the statement**

**At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors At the bottom of the level, a student will have Level 2 and at least one of the skills descriptors.**



## Question 5: Level Descriptors

### Level 2 Some, evaluation

6-10 marks

Shows **some attempts** at evaluation:

**Makes some evaluative comment(s) on effect(s) on the reader**

**Shows some understanding of writer's methods**

**Selects **some appropriate** textual reference(s)**

**Makes some response to the focus of the statement**

**At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors. At the bottom of the level, a student will have Level 1 and at least one of the skills descriptors.**

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Makes some evaluative comment(s) on effect(s) on the reader

Shows some understanding of writer's methods

Selects **some appropriate** textual reference(s)

Makes some response to the focus of the statement

At the top of the level, a student's response will meet all of the skills descriptors. At the bottom of the level, a student will have Level 1 and at least one of the skills descriptors.

### Level 1 Simple, limited comment

1-5 marks

Shows **simple, limited** evaluation



## Question 5: Sample Answers

**Indicative standard responses do not exist for the above question as it is not taken from a real exam.**

**However, below we have two **sample answers**.**

**One shows **how to agree** with the second part of the statement**

**One shows **how to disagree** with it.**

**While these answers are on the shorter side, they cover all sections of the mark scheme:**

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## Question 5: Sample Answers

### a) Argue that George Orwell had pressure but was not justified

*In his text, George Orwell leaves us in little doubt that he is being put under great pressure from the crowd and that succumbing to this pressure is the main reason that he is about to shoot the elephant at the end of the passage. However, just because this pressure was there, does not make Orwell's actions justifiable, even if they can be seen as understandable. The size of the crowd, their expectations and the effect that these have are clear throughout the text. For George looking out at a 'sea of faces', it seems impossible to resist the crowd's tide. Orwell continues to metaphorically show throughout the text, the control that this large crowd had over him; they are the 'puppet' masters, pulling his strings, and as a result he no longer feels like 'the leading actor' in this play. It is immediately after the acknowledgment by George that the crowd is certain that he will kill the elephant that he 'suddenly' decides this is what he will do. The use of the adverb demonstrates how abrupt this change is and it is undoubtedly caused by a fear of the crowd's reaction if he doesn't comply with their wishes.*

*However, just because Orwell succumbed to the pressure of the crowd, this does not make Orwell's actions justified and he himself makes this clear. He is not choosing to shoot the elephant out of a fear for him or the crowd, even if an elephant could crush him like 'a toad under a steam-roller'. He is motivated by a fear of ridicule, that the crowd might 'laugh' at him if something went wrong. The repetition of this fear in the passage leaves the reader in little doubt that this irrational reason is at the forefront of Orwell's mind when he decides there is 'only one alternative.' In fact Orwell himself compares shooting an elephant to 'murder'. The use of this emotive noun makes a direct comparison between the action Orwell is about to commit and the most heinous of crimes. To commit such an act is the opposite of just and therefore, it is hard to make a compelling case that Orwell is justified, even if it is understandable that the crowd's pressure influenced him.*



## Question 5: Sample Answers

### b) Argue that George Orwell had pressure and was justified

*In his text, George Orwell provides vivid detail to show that he is being put under great pressure from the crowd and that succumbing to this pressure is the main reason that he is about to shoot the elephant at the end of the passage. It is clear from the text that this pressure has taken control of George and shooting the elephant is in reality the only choice he has and is therefore justified. The size of the crowd, their expectations and the effect that these have are clear throughout the text. For George looking out at a 'sea of faces', it seems impossible to resist the crowd's tide. Orwell continues to metaphorically illustrate throughout the text, the control that this large crowd has over him; they are the 'puppet' masters pulling his strings and as a result he no longer feels like 'the leading actor' in this play. It is immediately after the acknowledgment by George that the crowd is certain that he will kill the elephant that he 'suddenly' decides this is what he will do. The use of the adverb leaves us with little doubt how abrupt this change is and it is undoubtedly caused by a fear of the crowd's reaction if he doesn't comply with their wishes.*

*With the pressure being so relentless, George paints a detailed picture to his readers of how trapped he is meaning that the action he is about to take is the only option he has. He uses the adjective 'impossible' to show beyond doubt that there is no way for him to leave this scene without shooting the elephant. Furthermore, Orwell metaphorically compares himself to a puppet showing that his strings are being pulled by the crowd. A puppet has no way to control its movement whether it would like to or not; it can only bend to the whims of its master. In the final paragraph, Orwell graphically illustrates what could happen if he doesn't deal with the elephant immediately. He could be like a 'toad under a steam roller'. The use of this simile makes absolutely clear that the crowd is not necessarily pushing him towards a bad decision; if George doesn't shoot the elephant, it is very possible that both he and the crowd are about to face their demise.*