

**Paper 1 · Section C focus paper · Attachment**

Topic mock · 2026 · Maximum mark: 36 (AS) · 40 (A-level)

Questions 01 to 09 are identical for AS and A-level. Question 10 (the essay) is worth **12 marks at AS** and **16 marks at A-level** — separate level descriptors are provided for each version below. Indicative content is not exhaustive; credit any other valid points. Specialist vocabulary follows AQA's 2025 *Subject specific vocabulary*.

**C Attachment****0 1**AO1 · 1 mark multiple choice

*Which one of the following best describes the critical period in attachment?*

**Answer: B — A specific window in early life during which an attachment must form, or it will be very difficult or impossible to form one later.**

A describes a general influence of relationships, not the critical period; C describes a language-acquisition concept; D is wrong (imprinting is observed in birds, not humans, and not in the first 12 hours).

**0 2**AO1 · 1 mark multiple choice

*Which one of the following best describes insecure-avoidant (Type A) attachment?*

**Answer: C — The infant shows little distress at separation and avoids contact with the caregiver on reunion.**

A = secure (Type B); B = insecure-resistant (Type C); D = disorganised attachment (Type D — Main and Solomon 1986; not part of the AQA 2025 spec).

0 3

AO1 · 1 mark multiple choice

| Which one of the following best describes the internal working model?

**Answer: B — A mental representation of the self, the caregiver and the relationship, used as a template for future relationships.**

A describes operant conditioning of attention-seeking; C describes the evolutionary basis of attachment; D is not a real construct.

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0 4

AO1 · 4 marks short answer

| Outline the learning theory of attachment. Refer to both classical and operant conditioning in your answer.

**Marks for this question: AO1 = 4 marks**

- **1 mark** for identifying learning theory as the behaviourist / Dollard and Miller (1950) "cupboard love" view — attachment is learned through association with food (a primary reinforcer); the infant is born a "blank slate".
  - **1 mark** for accurate outline of **classical conditioning**: food (UCS) → pleasure (UCR). The caregiver (NS) is repeatedly paired with food. Eventually the caregiver (CS) produces pleasure (CR) on her own — the basis of the attachment bond.
  - **1 mark** for accurate outline of **operant conditioning**: the hungry infant cries; the caregiver provides food, reducing hunger (drive reduction = **positive reinforcement** of crying). Food is the **primary reinforcer**; the caregiver becomes a **secondary reinforcer** through association.
  - **1 mark** for additional detail — e.g. reference to drive reduction theory, or that this is the behaviourist alternative to Bowlby's evolutionary account.
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Identify Emma's attachment type. Explain how three features of her behaviour support your answer.

**Marks for this question: AO2 = 4 marks**

- **1 mark** for correctly identifying **secure attachment (Type B)**.
- **3 marks** for explaining three features of Emma's behaviour that match secure attachment (1 mark each — must explicitly link the feature to the stem):
  - **Safe-base behaviour** — Emma uses her mother as a secure base to explore the playroom ("plays happily, occasionally looking back at her mother as she explores").
  - **Moderate separation anxiety** — she becomes "visibly upset and starts to cry" when her mother leaves — but the distress is proportionate, not extreme.
  - **Easily soothed reunion behaviour** — Emma "reaches out", is "quickly comforted" and "resumes playing within a minute". This is the hallmark of secure attachment in Ainsworth's Strange Situation.

*Credit accurate use of Ainsworth's terminology (proximity seeking, safe base, separation anxiety, reunion response). Stranger anxiety is not described in the stem — do not penalise candidates who note its absence.*

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Use Harlow's research to explain why the centre's approach may damage the monkeys' development.

**Marks for this question: AO2 = 4 marks**

- **4 marks** — Clear, coherent explanation engaging effectively with the stem; demonstrates accurate knowledge of Harlow's findings; explicitly links to the wire-cage scenario.
- **3 marks** — Clear engagement but lacking detail.
- **2 marks** — Harlow's research described accurately but limited application.
- **1 mark** — Brief, partial answer.

**Indicative content:**

- **Contact comfort findings:** Harlow's rhesus monkeys overwhelmingly preferred a cloth-covered "mother" to a wire "mother" — even when only the wire mother provided milk. The infants clung to the cloth mother and only visited the wire one to feed. This shows contact comfort, not food, is the basis of attachment.
- **Application:** the wildlife centre is providing the "wire mother" condition — food, warmth and shelter, but no soft material to cling to. Harlow's findings predict the orphaned monkeys will fail to form a secure attachment because there is nothing to provide contact comfort.
- **Long-term consequences:** Harlow's monkeys raised without contact comfort showed lasting developmental problems — aggression, poor social behaviour, inability to mate, neglect of their own offspring — particularly when deprived during the critical period (first 90 days for monkeys).
- **Conclusion:** the director's claim that the monkeys "have everything they need" is wrong — food and warmth are insufficient. The centre should provide soft surrogates (and ideally social contact with other monkeys) to support healthy development.

*Top-band answers will explicitly cite the contact-comfort finding AND link to the wire-cage detail AND mention long-term developmental risk.*

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0 7

AO1 · 3 marks short answer

*Briefly outline cultural variations in attachment. Refer to van Ijzendoorn and Kroonenberg's (1988) meta-analysis in your answer.*

**Marks for this question: AO1 = 3 marks**

- **1 mark** for a clear procedural outline: meta-analysis of **32 studies** across **8 countries** using the Strange Situation, combined sample **~1,990 infants**.
- **1 mark** for accurate findings:
  - Secure attachment was the **most common type in every country** (50–75%).
  - **Insecure-avoidant** was most common in individualist Western cultures (e.g. Germany ~35%).
  - **Insecure-resistant** was most common in collectivist cultures (Japan ~27%, Israel ~29%).
  - Variation **within** cultures was 1.5× greater than variation **between** cultures.
- **1 mark** for a clear conclusion: secure attachment is a near-universal pattern (supporting Bowlby's evolutionary claim) but the *type of insecure* attachment varies systematically with culturally specific child-rearing practices.

0 8

AO1 · 3 marks short answer

*Outline Bowlby's theory of maternal deprivation. Refer to one possible consequence of maternal deprivation in your answer.*

**Marks for this question: AO1 = 3 marks**

- **2 marks** for a clear, accurate outline: Bowlby's (1951) theory proposes that prolonged or repeated separation from the primary attachment figure during the **critical period** (0–2½ years, with effects extending to ~5 years) causes lasting emotional, social and intellectual harm. Credit reference to the distinction between separation, deprivation and privation.
- **1 mark** for one possible consequence, e.g.:
  - **Affectionless psychopathy** — inability to feel guilt, empathy or strong emotion; associated with delinquency.
  - **Lower IQ / intellectual delay**.
  - A **damaged internal working model** producing difficulties in later relationships.

*Credit reference to Bowlby's **44 Juvenile Thieves study (1944)** — 12 of 14 affectionless-psychopathic thieves had experienced prolonged early separation.*

*Briefly explain how the internal working model influences childhood and adult relationships. Refer to research evidence in your answer.*

**Marks for this question: AO1 = 2 marks, AO3 = 1 mark**

- **2 marks** for the mechanism: the internal working model (IWM) is a mental representation of self, caregiver and relationships built during the first attachment. It acts as a **template** for what relationships should be like and shapes expectations of later friendships, romantic partnerships and the individual's own parenting.
  - **1 mark** for relevant research evidence, e.g.:
    - **Hazan and Shaver (1987) "love quiz"** — adult romantic-attachment styles roughly matched the proportions Ainsworth found in infants (~56% secure, ~25% avoidant, ~19% resistant); secure adults reported happier, longer-lasting relationships.
    - **Bailey et al. (2007)** — the majority of 99 mothers showed the same attachment classification with their own infants as with their own parents (intergenerational transmission of the IWM).
    - **Simpson et al. (2007)** — securely attached infants were more socially competent in childhood, had closer adolescent friendships and were more emotionally expressive as adult romantic partners.
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*Discuss the effects of institutionalisation on attachment and later development. Refer to the case of Ben as part of your discussion.*

**Mark this question against the level descriptors for the qualification the candidate is sitting.**

**If sitting AS — out of 12 marks. AO1 = 4, AO2 = 4, AO3 = 4.**

Level	Marks	Descriptor
4	10–12	Knowledge of the effects of institutionalisation is accurate and generally well detailed. Application to Ben is effective and engages with at least two features of the stem. Discussion is effective with appropriate evaluation. Clear, coherent and focused.
3	7–9	Knowledge evident with some accuracy. Application mostly effective but may engage with only one feature in detail. Discussion mostly effective but limited.
2	4–6	Some accurate knowledge; application limited and partial. Discussion superficial or mainly descriptive.
1	1–3	Knowledge limited; little or no application or discussion.
0	0	No relevant content.

**If sitting A-level — out of 16 marks. AO1 = 6, AO2 = 4, AO3 = 6.**

Level	Marks	Descriptor
4	13–16	Knowledge is accurate and generally well detailed. Application to Ben is effective and well integrated across more than one feature. Discussion is thorough and effective with strong evaluation. Clear, coherent and focused.
3	9–12	Knowledge evident with some accuracy. Application mostly effective. Discussion mostly effective but limited in places.
2	5–8	Some accurate knowledge; application limited and partial. Discussion superficial.
1	1–4	Knowledge limited; little or no application or discussion.
0	0	No relevant content.

**Indicative AO1 content** (applies to both versions):

- **Institutionalisation:** the effects of growing up in an institutional setting (orphanage, residential care) with limited opportunity to form a stable attachment with a primary caregiver. A form of **privation** — complete failure to form an attachment, not just disruption of one.
- **English and Romanian Adoptees (ERA) project — Rutter et al. (2011):** longitudinal study of 165 Romanian orphans adopted into UK families, compared with 52 UK adoptees. Children assessed at ages 4, 6, 11 and 15. Key findings:

- Mean IQ depended on **age at adoption**: ~102 if adopted before 6 months; ~86 between 6 months and 2 years; ~77 after 2 years.
- Children adopted after 6 months showed **disinhibited attachment** — over-friendliness with strangers, attention-seeking from any adult.
- Recovery was substantial but incomplete for late-adopted children, supporting a sensitive (not strict) critical period.
- **Zeanah et al. (2005) — Bucharest Early Intervention Project**: 95 Romanian institutionalised children vs 50 non-institutionalised controls. Only 19% of institutionalised children securely attached vs 74% of controls. 65% showed disorganised attachment.
- **Other typical effects**: deprivation dwarfism (physical underdevelopment), lasting peer-relationship difficulties, mental retardation, problems forming secure adult attachments.

#### Indicative AO2 content — engagement with Ben:

- **Early adoption (8 months)** — Ben was adopted just past the 6-month threshold Rutter identified. Predictions: substantial recovery is possible but not full — some residual deficits remain, exactly as Ben's case shows.
- **Cognitive deficits** — Ben's "below-average cognitive development" at age 11 fits the Rutter ERA finding that children adopted between 6 months and 2 years had mean IQ ~86 (vs ~102 for under-6-month adoptees and ~100 for controls).
- **Disinhibited attachment** — Ben's behaviour of being "unusually willing to approach unfamiliar adults" and "hugging visitors he had only just met" is a classic textbook description of **disinhibited attachment**, a defining outcome of post-6-month institutionalisation in the ERA cohort.
- **Peer relationship difficulties** — Ben's struggle "to form close friendships with the other children" matches the ERA finding that institutionalised children show persistent difficulties forming peer relationships in adolescence.
- **Settling well at home** — the fact that Ben settled in well with his adoptive parents shows recovery is possible with good subsequent care — but the persistent disinhibited attachment and cognitive deficits show recovery is incomplete after late adoption.

#### Indicative AO3 content:

- **Strength — high internal validity of the ERA project**: Rutter's children entered the institutions shortly after birth in good health, isolating the effects of institutionalisation from the trauma / bereavement that confounded earlier orphan studies (e.g. Hodges and Tizard 1989).
- **Strength — longitudinal design**: tracking children to ages 11 and 15 reveals "sleeper" effects and persistent deficits invisible in short-term studies.
- **Strength — real-world applied value**: ERA findings directly informed UK adoption policy (favouring early placement, ideally before 6 months) and improved outcomes for thousands of adopted children. A clear economic and social benefit of psychological research.
- **Limitation — Romanian conditions were exceptionally severe**: extreme neglect, abuse, no stimulation, no consistent caregivers. Findings may not generalise to better-run modern foster systems — limits external validity.

- **Limitation — confounding variables:** even with the ERA design, malnutrition and lack of cognitive stimulation co-occurred with attachment deprivation, making it difficult to attribute deficits specifically to absence of attachment.
- **Limitation — socially sensitive research:** findings can stigmatise late-adopted children and create raised expectations of difficulty among adoptive families. Researchers have a responsibility to present findings probabilistically (some children recover even after late adoption) rather than deterministically.
- **Issues and Debates link — nature/nurture and sensitive period:** ERA findings support a **sensitive period** view (recovery is possible but progressively harder with age) rather than a strict **critical period**. This refines Bowlby's original strong claim of irreversibility.

*Top-band answers will (1) accurately describe disinhibited attachment, cognitive deficits and peer-relationship difficulties as effects of institutionalisation; (2) explicitly link Ben's age at adoption (8 months — just past the 6-month threshold) to Rutter's age-dependent IQ findings; (3) connect Ben's "approaching unfamiliar adults" to disinhibited attachment; and (4) evaluate the ERA evidence using strengths and limitations. A-level top-band additionally requires substantial AO3 with at least two named studies and a clear conclusion (typically supporting a sensitive- rather than critical-period view).*

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END OF MARK SCHEME · Maximum mark: 36 (AS) or 40 (A-level)