



**General Certificate of Education**

**English Language and Literature  
2721**

*Specification A*

**ELLA3      Comparative Analysis and  
Text Adaptation**

**Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - January series*

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*Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.*

In this the first sitting of unit 3 for this specification, it is pleasing to report that candidates generally coped well with this challenging unit. On the whole, candidates seemed to take heed of the advice to spend about 90 minutes on Question 1 (as it carries a greater proportion of the marks) and seemed to be able to cope quite effectively with the rigours of text adaptation with short supporting commentary, as a separate entity, in the remaining 60 minutes. Centres are reminded that it is good practice for students to spend some time reading and annotating texts before responding to Question 1; similarly, candidates should at least be aware of the content of the pieces selected for Text Adaptation, through familiarisation of the set texts from which the extracts are drawn.

### **Question 1**

Successful candidates:

- planned out their answer at the start of their response
- approached their comparison in a rational manner, often using an anchor text to help root their analysis
- used appropriate terminology, thus making illuminating comparisons
- utilised the three point critical sentence to interconnect their analysis
- found an interesting angle for comparison which led to significant and thoughtful analysis.

Less successful candidates:

- did not plan out their answer in any shape or form
- made general comments without supporting evidence and wrote about rather meaningless comparisons
- made few literary, linguistic or stylistic points of interest, often paraphrasing the texts
- wrote three separate accounts with minimal, and sometimes no, connections being made
- hardly mentioned the very evident attitudes of the speakers, writers or “personas” in the three texts.

In general, candidates responded well to the given link of birds between the three texts, and many used it as the basis for their comparison by examining the way that the various attitudes of the speakers and writers could be contrasted. This led to some excellent responses, involving close linguistic and literary analysis by starting with the emotion and feelings – admiration and exasperation in Text A, arrogance and powers in Text B, misunderstanding and insight in Text C – and using the literary and linguistic features to explore how these feelings were created. A small proportion of candidates examined the cohesion of the texts; when this was done well, there were some excellent comparisons, focusing on comparing the natural adjacency pairs in Text A with the more formalized yet constructed ones in Text C, balanced against the one-sided delivery of Text B, to name but one approach.

As noted above, the anchor method was often successfully used, with many candidates choosing Text B as “bird as first person speaker” to contrast with the ways that the other two extracts are “speakers discussing birds” albeit in very different guises. There was a wealth of stylistic features in Hughes’ text for candidates to analyse, and some probed the godlike attitude of the hawk, contrasting the violence and aggression shown here with that of the avocets and the thrushes in the other texts. Some candidates used other imaginative themes to shape their comparisons, such as the lifestyle of the birds or their habitats, or the ‘survival’ angle explored in each text. Some candidates probed the religious connotations in Text B, comparing them with the more everyday figurative language of Texts A and C. Text C itself posed some problems for candidates and it tended to be underdeveloped or neglected in a substantial number of answers, with many candidates choosing to base their comparison around the more obvious differences of speech and carefully crafted writing of Texts A and B respectively. The mode comparison can be most fruitful and successful candidates examined differences in the speech of Text A with the crafting of Text B and the speech-like aspects of Text C. But, all too often,

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there were banal and meaningless differences shown, often with empty feature-spotting characterising these answers; engaging with textual meaning will always be the better choice here.

A small minority of candidates were distracted by the speech theories of Grice or Leech, Deuchar and Hoogenraad, making rather banal and obvious comments about the texts without really engaging with their meaning. Theory work is not necessary; however, it can be useful in discriminating between the formality of texts and their cohesion and when tackled effectively, there can be very interesting and thoughtful comparisons made; sadly, these were very few and far between. Those candidates who wanted to look at power struggles between the speakers in Text A were numerous and therefore sadly misread the whole of the text, and could offer little in the way of comparison with the other texts whilst following this line of investigation.

Some candidates still spend a page or two initially 'writing themselves into the response' by laboriously commenting on mode, audience and purpose, before launching into a more detailed and ultimately more interesting analysis. Centres are reminded that a paragraph of no more than half a page is needed on these aspects of the texts. Dealing with the meaning of the texts, how that meaning is conveyed and the attitudes of the writers and speakers within the texts should be the major focus of candidates' comparative responses.

### **Questions 2 and 3**

Successful candidates:

- planned out their answer, if only writing down their ideas for purpose, audience and register
- maintained an appropriate register throughout their new text
- used the source material well and did not slavishly stick to the original text's order and structure
- checked their work after it had been written to revise infelicities of expression or technical errors
- wrote about three or four carefully chosen examples in their commentary exploring the effects they intended.

Less successful candidates:

- did not apparently plan out their answer
- used the original source text for their structure, thus limiting their new text's effectiveness
- made poor language and stylistic choices for the new purposes of each text
- made intrusive and very basic errors
- wrote very generally in their commentary, listing the features used but hardly commenting on their effect at all.

Most candidates drew upon whichever of the extracts they chose well, handling the information soundly by blending it into their writing. One of the key skills in this section is to select the appropriate material from the original to suit the new purpose and audience, hence the need for familiarisation with the extract in the first instance. Use of a suitable format did vary however: some candidates made little effort to shape the format, with some candidates choosing a very written mode for both of these essentially orally based tasks. Those who were more focused presented spoken mode accurately and to great effect, especially for the radio introduction. It should be noted, however, that representation of spontaneous speech is not needed here. Similarly, with the radio advert, many candidates hit just the right note, with a consistent, persuasive yet realistic tone. Disappointingly, some able candidates wrote fluent adaptations but personalized them too freely, thereby distancing themselves too far from the given text, and so lost focus on their task. Whilst it is acceptable for a little invention, it should be noted that it is not really necessary; the more invention made, inevitably the less source material is used.

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At the less successful end of the scale, candidates often wrote too much on the adaptation at the expense of shaping their responses; there seemed to be a distinct correlation between lengthy answers and poor technical accuracy. It is also helpful if candidates can make their work readable; to this end, because of the time pressure, a good practice is to double space work so that corrections and changes can be made in a legible manner. The practice of first followed by final neat drafts is to be discouraged.

Many candidates seemed to grasp the purpose of the commentary, restricting themselves to a few well selected stylistic points which were detailed and clearly woven into an appreciation of audience and purpose. Some candidates drifted into an account of the content of their writing and so lost focus on the task. Again some candidates wrote too much instead of planning their points more precisely and cogently. Clearly some candidates tapered off in their response to this section as a result of expending too much time and energy on the other two questions.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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