



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2011**

**English Language and Literature ELLA1
A**

(Specification 2720)

Unit 1: Integrated Analysis and Text Production

Report on the Examination

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General

Most candidates showed a good knowledge of their texts, although there were some very short answers. This could be because some candidates were not quite ready at this stage for the exam. However, the quality of answers ranged from the best that could be achieved under exam conditions to very weak responses that were below the standard needed to reach a pass mark at AS.

A Questions

Most candidates were able to produce relevant answers, although many candidates did not include enough language analysis, which inevitably limited their AO2 marks. While some candidates did not seem to understand the need to use framework terms, candidates from a small number of centres focused too heavily on identifying grammatical features. This often led to a kind of 'advanced feature-spotting' but was not accompanied by close engagement with meaning. Candidates from some centres had apparently been taught to include theories that are not useful for this question. For example, some students tried to make use of face theory, Grice's maxims or pragmatics, and would have been better off with some more straightforward knowledge of literary techniques, word classes and syntax.

The instruction to focus on two or three episodes from the text proved to be helpful to most candidates, who were able to include focused and detailed comments. Some candidates did not make good choices of extracts, which limited their ability to address the question and to provide an overview.

There are two separate marks awarded for this question on the following assessment objectives:

AO1 (15 marks) – Select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic and literary study, using appropriate terminology and accurate, coherent written expression.

AO2 (15 marks) – Demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in a range of written and spoken texts.

The AO1 mark focuses in particular on the candidate's application of relevant literary and linguistic approaches to texts and on the use of literary and linguistic terminology. The AO2 mark focuses on the candidate's analytical skills in the exploration and interpretation of meaning and ideas, according to the focus of the question.

Successful candidates:

- focused on the question
- supported ideas by exploring the language of relevant quotations
- provided a sense of overview
- produced sustained answers
- showed a sound knowledge of literary and linguistic terms
- produced well expressed answers.

Less successful candidates:

- did not adequately address the question
- did not comment on the language or literary techniques of the text
- feature-spotted, with very limited exploration of meaning
- tried to apply theories that were inappropriate
- produced very brief responses with only a few superficially relevant ideas
- produced answers that were poorly expressed
- wasted time writing 'conclusions' that merely summarised the points covered.

B Questions

The majority of candidates had at least adequate knowledge of their texts. Examiners noted how most candidates tackled the tasks with enthusiasm and were well aware of what is required for this question. Better responses included well chosen material from the texts; weaker ones tended to repeat ideas or produce generalised content not closely based on the task and context.

Many candidates struggled with the technical accuracy of their writing. Punctuation remains a real problem for many candidates, with sentence boundaries frequently missed. Examiners noted the use of lower case 'i' for the word 'I'. Flaws in expression were also a problem for a number of students. Common grammatical errors were: lack of subject/verb agreement; choice of wrong preposition; misuse of 'in which'.

Candidates sometimes use spoken mode features inappropriately within written mode texts. This was especially noticeable in letters and diary extracts, where many candidates used the convention for transcribing hesitation in speech, '(...)', which is rarely appropriate in these written mode genres.

It was noted that in responses from one or two centres, candidates appear to have been told to insert quotations from the text in inverted commas. Candidates are advised that they should use their own words in their B question responses and not quote from the text. There may be occasions when the judicious use of a word or phrase from the text may be apt, but this should be kept to a minimum and, when used, should be seamlessly embedded in the response.

There are two separate marks awarded for this question on the following assessment objectives:

AO4 (30 marks) – Demonstrate expertise and creativity in using language appropriately for a variety of purposes and audiences, drawing on insights from literary and linguistic studies.

AO1 (15 marks) - Select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic and linguistic study, using appropriate terminology and accurate, coherent written expression.

The AO4 mark assesses the candidate's ability to do the following: show awareness of genre; write in an appropriate style for audience and purpose; create a convincing sense of a character's voice; choose appropriate information from the text in order to complete the task.

AO1 applies to this question solely in terms of the candidate's accuracy of spelling, punctuation, grammar and expression.

Successful candidates:

- showed a sound sense of form/genre
- created a convincing sense of their character's voice
- revealed sound knowledge of the text
- used significant details from the text
- produced sustained responses
- produced well expressed and technically accurate writing.

Less successful candidates:

- showed limited or patchy awareness of form/genre
- used language that was inappropriate for form or character
- showed limited awareness of characters' attitudes

- revealed limited knowledge of the text
- copied extracts from the text
- revealed errors in understanding of the text
- produced very brief responses
- produced writing that contained technical errors and flaws in expression.

Responses were seen on all of the set texts, although there were very few on *Close Range* and *The Rivals* and these two texts are therefore not covered in the following section.

Things Fall Apart: Chinua Achebe

01

This question was generally not well answered. There was a tendency for many candidates to describe aspects of Ibo beliefs, but without any analysis or comment on language. Some confused spiritual beliefs with other aspects of culture. Ways of life often replaced 'spiritual beliefs', although there were some good answers which provided detail and contrasts with the arriving Christians. Better responses noted, for example, the priestess's use of imperative language. Some candidates showed a shaky knowledge of the text and tended only to make reference to the early part of the novel. Some found it difficult to pick out appropriate sections and to focus on the importance of spiritual beliefs. Weaker responses tended towards irrelevance.

11

Responses to this question were generally better than answers to question 01. Many had a grasp of Unoka's character and voice and sympathetically showed his defiance and a stout defence of his values. Better responses conveyed a love of palm wine and music and portrayed this in language using proverbs and dignified expression. Some candidates made sound use of African words, although a few over-used them. Most picked relevant areas of text from which to draw their ideas. Some examiners noted that a small number of candidates wrote dialogues with very few of Unoka's own words within them and a few wrote as Unoka's ghost from beyond the grave, which invariably proved to be unsuccessful. Some weaker responses conveyed a character full of shame and self pity.

Wuthering Heights: Emily Brontë

02

This tended to be the least popular of the *Wuthering Heights* questions. Better responses had a clear sense of Nelly's relationship with Heathcliff and noted that it changed as the novel progresses. However, many candidates who attempted this question failed to deal adequately with the idea of 'relationship' and focused mainly on Nelly's attitude to Heathcliff. Many responses only dealt with Nelly's attitude at the beginning of the novel, and seldom strayed into Volume II. Some answers drifted into irrelevance, often involving Heathcliff's treatment of Isabella, and became quite confused.

12

This was a very popular question and there were many well judged letters that revealed a generally secure sense of Cathy's voice and attitudes, with appropriate material selected. The main weakness for some candidates was the failure to remember how young Catherine was when she was taken in by the Lintons. In these letters, candidates had her romantically linked to Edgar and even contemplating marriage at this early stage in their acquaintance. Conversely, some responses showed Catherine to be desperately unhappy at Thrushcross

Grange and revealing to Nelly her passionate love for Heathcliff. There were a few very brief letters; responses of fewer than 200 words were unlikely to be developed enough to attract reasonable marks. A number of candidates over-used exclamation marks – something that was also prevalent in Stella's letter to Blanche.

***The Kite Runner*: Khaled Hosseini**

03

This proved to be the more popular question on *The Kite Runner*. There were some excellent answers about the function and portrayal of Assef and his significance in the structure of the novel, particularly in terms of Amir's redemption. Many responses were thoughtful and included some detailed analysis of language. Some responses were limited by not looking at the later chapters and thereby limiting a sense of overview of Assef's role. Better responses noted that there were in effect two narrative viewpoints: the viewpoint of the child and that of the adult. These responses also included well chosen episodes, drawn from the earlier and later sections of the novel, and commented on a range of relevant language choices used to portray Assef. Weaker responses failed to make precise comments on language or sometimes contained very list-like, feature-by-feature answers with no real contextualisation or overview of the character.

13

This was the less popular option but was generally quite well answered. Most candidates had a sound sense of Rahim Khan's voice and attitudes and managed to show both Rahim Khan's pleasure at Amir's story and concern about his relationship with his father. Candidates' knowledge of the text was generally good, and their responses mostly revealed that they find the novel both moving and relevant. Most candidates managed the diary style well, although a popular beginning was 'Dear Diary', which detracted somewhat from a more secure sense of voice. A number of responses made good use of Afghan words, although some students over-used these or inappropriately included translations in brackets.

***Property*: Valerie Martin**

04

On the whole, this question was not very well answered, in spite of the fact that Sarah is central to the novel. A number of candidates struggled to maintain focus on how Sarah is portrayed and frequently drifted into commenting more on Manon. Some candidates did not make wise choices of extracts on which to focus, often spending far too long on the episode where Manon breastfeeds from Sarah. Clearly candidates found this section of the novel disturbing, but they struggled to comment on how Sarah is portrayed here. A surprising number of candidates failed to comment on how Sarah is portrayed at the end of the novel. Better responses showed a sound awareness of narrative viewpoint and Manon's biased portrayal of her slave.

14

This was the least popular of the questions on *Property*. There were some sound letters which successfully gave a sense of Aunt Lelia's concerns and focused on relevant sections of the plot. Candidates often showed they understood the attitudes of the slave-owners and were able to express this through Lelia's sympathy for Manon and her outrage at Sarah's actions. Some candidates had not read the question properly and wrote as if Sarah had not yet been returned. Weaker responses tended to write summaries of the novel as if Aunt Lelia needed to explain the whole plot to her friend.

Close Range: Annie Proulx

05

There were very few answers seen on this question.

15

There were very few answers seen on this question.

The History Boys: Alan Bennett

06

This is a text which sometimes proves a little too demanding in its concepts for some candidates, and this could be seen in responses to both the A and B questions. Those who wrote about the presentation of Mrs Lintott generally made a fair attempt at the question, although the range of reference was often a limited to her feminism and her use of taboo language. Some had difficulty selecting appropriate episodes and comments on the ones chosen were often rather limited; a few items of language were often picked out but generally lacked range. Better answers explored her role in the play as a whole and the way she speaks to the audience.

16

This was by far the more popular of *The History Boys* questions and there were some convincing responses with a well judged sense of form. However, a number of candidates failed to think about just how much background information about the characters was vital for the reader of an autobiography. Equally problematic was the failure by some candidates to be aware of the sort of content and language that would be appropriate for an autobiography. Gratuitous use of highly offensive taboo language and information that would have been probably quite libelous were examples of the misjudgements made by some candidates.

Murmuring Judges: David Hare

07

There were relatively few responses to this question. However, candidates who wrote on this topic showed a fair understanding of Sandra and her moral dilemma. Episodes were fairly well selected though not many selected passages dealing with other people's views of Sandra.

17

This was the more popular of the *Murmuring Judges* questions. Most candidates grasped the importance of Barry's methods in the capture of the Kilmartin gang, but some muddled Kilmartin with Travis and Fielding, showing a shaky grasp of the details of the text. One of the main flaws in the responses to this question was the tendency for Barry to go on at too great a length about the problems of police work, resulting in a response which was very narrow in focus. However, there were some credible play scripts with use of lighting techniques appropriate to the original staging directions and relatively convincing dialogue. Weaker candidates struggled to create realistic dialogue for the situation.

The Rivals: Richard Sheridan

08

There were very few answers seen on this question.

18

There were very few answers seen on this question.

The Importance of Being Earnest: Oscar Wilde

09

Better responses to this question had a clear sense of Wilde's satirical aims and discussed romantic love within this framework. There was some sound analysis of Jack's more genuine love for Gwendolen and what his hesitant language revealed early on in the play. Better answers provided an overview and commented on the differences between the three pairs of lovers. However, many candidates failed to have a sense of the absurdity of the romances portrayed and struggled to make clear points about language.

19

On the whole, this question was better handled than the Section A question. There were some very convincing diary extracts with a real sense of Gwendolen's voice. Some responses were limited in terms of content, relying on musings about Ernest/Jack's perfections. Inevitably, these became repetitive and lacking in direction.

A Streetcar Named Desire: Tennessee Williams

10

This was possibly the most popular text of all and responses on both questions revealed candidates' enthusiasm for it. Most candidates were able to understand what was meant by stage directions and make some sensible comments, linking them to the overall aims and themes of the play. The best answers chose two or three extracts to explore in depth and commented on language and dramatic techniques in some detail. Weaker responses focused on dramatic techniques but made few direct comments about the language of the stage directions and used hardly any literary or linguistic terms. Some candidates lost sight of the question and drifted into commenting on dialogue and how this is 'dramatic'. Some tended to list relevant points, but didn't quite seem to know where to go with a line of argument.

20

This was the more popular of the *Streetcar* questions. Many candidates clearly showed that they had a sense of Stella's voice and attitudes; however, there was a wide range in the quality of responses. Some ran into problems as soon as they made this letter a reply to a previous letter from Blanche where things had been revealed that Blanche only revealed in Act 1, such as her leave of absence from school. Similarly, some candidates used the letter for Stella to tell Blanche about her pregnancy. Candidates mostly chose to include appropriate content, although a fairly common error was to make Stanley still a member of the armed forces. Some letters were, in view of Blanche's history and instability, simply insensitive: 'Have you gotta fella yet?' - 'How's Belle Reve? Must be quiet now everyone's

died'. Better responses showed a sensitive and caring Stella, aware of the personal and financial problems faced by Blanche and of the tragic death of her husband. Certain appropriate letter conventions are necessary for this task, such as a salutation and subscription. However, addresses and dates are not unnecessary, although, if included, should be accurate. New Orleans found its way into many different states, the date (if there at all) varied from 1941 to 1956, and there was a surprising tendency to insert the name and address of the addressee in an informal letter – often in the wrong place. Whilst there were many creditable efforts to capture Stella's voice, weaker responses often used an overly conversational style and included inappropriate slang or dialect grammar. For example, some candidates frequently used such elisions as 'gonna' or end-clipped words such as 'feelin' ' or 'goin' ', and had Stella regularly using 'ain't'. In an attempt to create a sense of Stella's enthusiasm, a number of candidates over-used exclamations. In some letters, almost every sentence was either an exclamatory or an interrogative.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.