



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 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

Examiners reported that, on the whole, students seemed to know their texts well and to have enjoyed them. Most answers were relevant, although some candidates struggled to get the balance right between the two tasks, sometimes producing one answer that was too short and one that was too long. A few centres had clearly taught one text for the essay, and the other for the creative task. It is debatable whether this is the best approach for candidates as it provided them with limited choice in the exam, and this could also have restricted their opportunities for textual analysis during the course.

'A' Questions

The best responses to the 'A' questions could use framework terminology in an integrated way and demonstrate how the language of the texts helped the writer to communicate meaning. Candidates need to be aware of the importance of relevance and of the skill of using the language analysis to illustrate the argument being made. A number of candidates had difficulty in merging close analysis of selected examples with an overview in answer to the question.

Most candidates were able to produce generally relevant answers, although there were a number of quite brief responses of less than 400 words which limited the scope and depth of ideas in answer to the question. Examiners felt that some centres do not appear to be teaching candidates how to effectively comment on the language of the texts they are studying. It was noted that there was often very limited use of specific literary/linguistic terms and that otherwise able candidates were being held back by their lack of specific detail and depth of analysis. Some weaker answers were those which mechanically identified the word classes, as though spotting the feature would by itself attract marks. A number of centres appear to have taught sentence functions and sometimes these were the only language features which candidates commented on. Inevitably, there is limited mileage in this approach and it tended to produce very superficial analysis. Candidates also need to avoid attributing effects to features greater than the features can bear. For example, it is hard to see how the use of complex sentences can necessarily help the writer to “show the relationships” between characters without a lot more detailed discussion than candidates were able or prepared to give.

Some examiners noted that nearly all candidates from certain centres used the same examples and comments in their answers, regardless of whether or not they were particularly relevant. This suggested that there was a cherry picking of useful passages for analysis in class which candidates were encouraged to use in the exam, come what may. Candidates need to be encouraged to be flexible in their choice of passages to analyse in the exam and to focus on those that are the most appropriate for the question.

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

AO1 (15 marks) – Select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic 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 relevant analysis of literary and linguistic features of the text and the use of literary and linguistic terminology.

The AO2 mark focuses on the candidate's interpretation and ideas in response to 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

There were some very pleasing responses to the 'B' question tasks and many candidates clearly appear to enjoy writing from a character's point of view. The best responses were those which had a real awareness of the character's voice, a sound sense of form and were technically controlled. Weaker responses often revealed some glaring errors in use of language for the character or had a shaky sense of form. Candidates in general need to try to ensure that they understand the requirements of the form demanded by a Section B task (such as journal, third person narrative, playscript etc). There are relatively few used in the examination and a clear understanding of the requirements of each is essential to obtain good marks. Examiners noted how a journal response often included speech pauses, revealing that the candidate was uncertain about spoken and written mode features.

Candidates need to be reminded that a good response is rooted in the text and it is important to show that they have read and understood the text by incorporating key events into the response and demonstrating an accurate knowledge of their chronology. It is equally important to avoid inventing major events, although some minor invention to help contextualise the response is acceptable. Some candidates did not base their response on the specified section of the text. A few candidates resorted to wide-spread lifting from their texts and therefore seriously limited the marks available to them.

Punctuation remains a problem for many candidates, with sentence boundaries frequently missed. Poor punctuation of direct speech was also a problem for many candidates., as were flaws in expression. Many candidates struggled to select the correct preposition or relative pronoun. A frequent error was the use of 'in which' in a variety of inappropriate places.

There are two 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 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. The AO1 mark is solely concerned with the candidate's accuracy in terms 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 writing which was well expressed and technically accurate.

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*.

Things Fall Apart: Chinua Achebe

01

There were relatively few answers to this question. Most picked appropriate episodes, but some candidates tended to focus on rather small incidental examples rather than going for the obvious main scenes like the ogbanje episode or the Chielo episode. Some students tried hard to create an argument about gender roles and the African context here, often with some success, although many candidates seemed to find it difficult to go much beyond the idea that Ezinma was like the son Okonkwo would have wished for. Examiners noted that candidates tended to struggle to say much about language in their answers to this question.

11

This was the more popular of the questions on this text. Examiners noted that there were a number of excellent responses that managed to create a sense of Achebe's formal register and natural imagery, and which provided thoughtful and convincing explorations of the characters and their reactions to Okonkwo's death. Some candidates misjudged the form and wrote a playscript, or wrote a good deal of narrative with little dialogue. A number of candidates seemed unaware of the conventions of paragraphing speech. Some weaker responses tended to sentimentalise Nwoye's and Okonkwo's feelings, for example, 'he loved you deep down, Nwoye, he was always there for you...yes, I loved him deep down despite everything.....' The better responses brought out the differences between Ezinma's views and Nwoye's and included some discussion of Christianity. Weaker responses didn't draw a distinction between them.

Wuthering Heights: Emily Brontë

02

There were some sound answers to this question, although there were also many that were surprisingly limited, given that the question was very straightforward and focused on a major character. Some candidates discussed the contrast with Heathcliff but were led into a greater

focus on Heathcliff than Edgar. There was a general lack of subtlety in candidates' estimation of Edgar, with him often being dismissed as simply weak. Many responses focused on earlier sections of the novel and paid little or no attention to how Edgar is presented later in his relationship with his daughter and in how Nelly reports his death.

12

This was a very popular question. Most candidates managed the first person perspective successfully, although there was often a limited sense of narrative form. This was not helped by most candidates' choice of using the present tense, which tended to detract from a sense of narrative distance. Quite a few began their response with 'Dear Diary'. Better responses included reference to Isabella's attitude to Catherine's continuing relationship with Heathcliff as well as some reference to her meetings with Heathcliff and Edgar's reactions. Weak answers simply focused on Isabella's feelings and included little more than repeated declarations of love for Heathcliff.

The Kite Runner: Khaled Hosseini

03

There were some good answers to this question with most candidates showing a sound knowledge of the text. Sections of the novel were generally well chosen although weaker responses didn't always focus on particular episodes to discuss or focused on early scenes only, which limited a sense of overview in answer to the question. There was a generally sound awareness of narrative voice and of patterns within the novel. Most were able to comment on examples from the text with some engagement with meaning. Some were able to comment on symbolism and language choices more precisely. Most had clear ideas about the relationship.

13

This task was handled well by many candidates. The best answers achieved a good sense of Hassan's voice with a judicious use of Afghan words to add authenticity. Most handled the first person narrative well, although occasionally some used an inappropriate diary form. Many expressed Hassan's confusion well and some gave some convincing reflections on the reasons, although a surprising number of candidates failed to mention the false accusation or even the rape, which were both essential components of the response. Weaker responses tended to be vague and to make little reference to incidents in the text. Occasionally, outrage and jealousy were inappropriately attributed to Hassan. Nearly all included 'for you a thousand times over' somewhere in the response.

Property: Valerie Martin

04

Better answers to this question focused on point of view and used their chosen sections of the novel to illuminate use of the first person perspective. Some candidates struggled to keep a relevant focus and drifted into general comments. Weaker language analysis tended to focus on obvious points about the use of first person pronouns showing this was Manon's opinion. There were many assertions made about the first person narrative always providing 'an unreliable narrator', but the evidence was hard to come by and many candidates failed to make the connection, their examples often proving the opposite. This underlines the need for candidates to think about what they are saying rather than repeat formulae. Some candidates tended to accept Manon's view of events at face value rather too easily.

14

There were some excellent responses to this task which were believable extensions to the story, with well controlled dialogue and a real sense of Manon's and Sarah's voices. Most produced a first person narrative, although there were a few inappropriate playscripts. Weaker responses often focused more on past events before the escape and on the present, particularly concerning Walter. Some included unlikely 'happy endings', with Manon and Sarah reconciled. Some candidates struggled to achieve a sense of Sarah's voice, either by making her too eloquent or by overly exaggerating her dialect.

Close Range: Annie Proulx

05

There were very few answers on this text and all appeared to have chosen the 'A' question. Most of the candidates who responded to this question showed a reasonable understanding of the text but many limited their response to the question of the portrayal of Diamond Phelps rather than the harshness of life. Better responses spoke of this portrayal as representing the harshness of life. Only a few made any mention of other aspects, although some looked at the harsh conditions imposed by nature. Weaker responses tended towards a narrative/descriptive approach with scant comment on language or narrative viewpoint.

15

No answers were reported on this question.

The History Boys: Alan Bennett

06

This was the least popular of the questions on this text. There were some sound responses but, in general, this question was not well answered. Some candidates appear to have difficulty in properly appreciating the issues Bennett is raising and tend to respond very simplistically. Some responses were not very well focused on the question of 'attitudes to education'. Nearly all chose to discuss the lesson in French and most brought out the contrast with Irwin's style but not always with much mention of the boys' attitudes towards these different approaches. Some showed awareness of dramatic techniques but others made no mention of these. Weaker answers all too often selected a scene and then worked through it chronologically, apparently listing any feature which they could identify and then attempting to suggest that in some way it was relevant. Better candidates framed their answers in terms of the educational themes of the play, and showed how particular characters and scenes were linked with those themes.

16

Most handled the journal form well and conveyed Posner's voice effectively. Many students made very effective use of the 'I'm small, I'm Jewish, I'm homosexual, I'm from Sheffield' line, and were suitably obsessed with Dakin. Some struggled to pinpoint the timing of the diary – was Hector alive or dead by then? Had Posner been offered a place or not? A few got the time frame wrong and wrote from the point of view of Posner after university. Surprisingly, few mentioned the death of Hector, especially as the journal was written at the end of the final term.

Murmuring Judges: David Hare

07

There were relatively few answers to this question. There was a tendency for a number of candidates to focus on the criminal justice system as a whole rather than "the prison system". Given that Hare's interweaving of the three strands of the criminal justice system is such a fundamental element of the play, this was a significant flaw.

17

This was the most popular question on this text. There were some thoughtful responses which showed a good grasp of the moral/legal debate at the heart of the text. They were able to convey Lester's voice and attitudes, while Esther was shown as sometimes supporting Sandra and sometimes Barry. Both approaches worked equally well. Good answers were able to fuse the banter and easy relationship between Esther and Lester but focus the conversation on the question in hand. Quite often Lester's role as the experienced and pragmatic desk sergeant was portrayed in a confident manner and always related back to the focus. Stage directions helped to portray Esther's character as did her attitude as 'one of the lads', again her attitude was linked to her thoughts about Barry and Sandra. Some responses concentrated too much on the relationship between the two of them and only mentioned Sandra and Barry in passing. One or two candidates imagined that all of the characters were friendly, so had Sir Peter and Cuddeford reporting their thoughts on the case to Lester. A few misunderstood the characters and what their responses would be, probably because they did not have a clear grasp of the text.

The Rivals: Richard Sheridan

08

Candidates seemed to find this question quite accessible and selected some appropriate sections to discuss. There was a generally quite sound analysis of Sir Anthony's language. There tended to be more focus on his relationship with Jack than on other aspects but most candidates managed to comment on the humour created by Sheridan's portrayal of Sir Anthony.

18

Lydia's diary was handled quite successfully and there were some lively attempts to create a sense of her voice and attitudes. Most reflected on Lydia's feelings for Beverly and talked about his visit. Some overlooked the second part of the question – her attitudes to Mrs Malaprop - but others offered some trenchant opinions about her. Most managed quite a good representation of Eighteenth Century language although, as usual with older texts, there were lapses into modernity.

The Importance of Being Earnest: Oscar Wilde

09

Most responses to this question were relevant and valid points were made about Miss Prism. Some candidates revealed a confusion about class and status and described Miss Prism as 'upper class'. Most identified Miss Prism's role as Cecily's governess and were able to show how Cecily manipulates her. Most responses also discussed her relationship with Chasuble. Surprisingly, quite a few overlooked her importance in the plot. Most had some difficulty

identifying features of her language, and commenting on the humour of the way in which she is presented.

19

This was the more popular question on this text and tended to be handled much better than the A question. Many candidates clearly enjoyed creating Lady Bracknell's voice and there were a number of genuinely witty and amusing responses which revealed her snobbery. Weaker responses resorted to lifting from the text, occasionally a considerable amount. The best candidates adapted material from the text well and found alternatives to the actual words used.

A Streetcar Named Desire: Tennessee Williams

As usual, this was one of the most popular texts, proving accessible to a wide range of abilities.

10

Most found this question accessible and answers were generally quite well focused on the question. However, some of the weaker responses were so concerned with the contrast between Stella and Stanley that these answers drifted more towards comments on him rather than Stella. There was a tendency to present a single view of Stella as caring or maternal or weak. Some saw that she could also be assertive at times. There was some noticeable misinterpretation of the last scene with a surprising number of candidates seeing Stella's actions as pure kindness towards Blanche. Better responses included some accurate and precise comments on Stella's language and on the important connotations of the language of the stage descriptions in presenting her. Weaker responses struggled to make precise points about language but generally showed a better awareness of dramatic techniques.

20

There were some convincing play scripts produced in response to this task, with the best answers offering stage directions which were in keeping with the text. Weaker answers omitted stage direction entirely. Most achieved at least a partial sense of voice, although the representation of colloquialisms was sometimes rather insecure. Some candidates included English phrases that jarred with the deep south setting and made Stanley and Steve sound like Cockneys or Yorkshiremen, depending on the background of the candidate. Stanley quite frequently referred to Steve as his 'mate' and referred to other men as 'blokes'. On one occasion, Steve had to rush home because Eunice had 'got the kettle on'. The attempt to represent the characters' language often caused an increase in technical errors; there were some very strange representations of words with scatterings of extra apostrophes and odd elisions, none of which are to be found in the text. Candidates should be advised to take a close look at the way in which Williams creates a sense of his characters' dialect.

Some candidates spent so long setting the scene, pouring the whiskey/beer etc that they then overlooked the main point of the task, to reveal opinions about Blanche. Many candidates really relied on earlier scenes of the play rather than what Stanley knows about Blanche by Scene 7. A few candidates misread the question and wrote a dialogue between Stanley and Mitch instead of Steve.

The best answers were able to convey Stanley's anger and resentment at Blanche's attitudes and behaviour, as well as some of the information he had found out about her past.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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