



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

**English Language and Literature A ELLA4
(Specification 2720)**

**Unit 4: Comparative Analysis through
Independent Study**

Report on the Examination

Further copies of this Report on the Examination are available from: aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2012 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

Copyright

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to schools/colleges to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the schools/colleges.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

General

The requirements of the coursework task are:

- to establish a clear and interesting thesis in the opening paragraph and sustain a logical investigation of that thesis throughout the essay
- to sustain a balanced comparison of the methods of the two writers and relate that clearly to the theme chosen
- to select and analyse appropriate poems / passages for the task
- to contextualise the material chosen intelligently
- to select from a range of literary and linguistic terms in order to analyse the texts and demonstrate how the writers have created their effects
- to achieve a balanced argument within the word limit of 2,500 words.

Each of these ingredients is important though a weak performance on one or two of them does not prevent a candidate from achieving success overall; only the very best students achieve a synthesis of all six factors.

Centre marking

Moderators were once again complimentary about the standard and range of marking and level of comment by centres. It was very pleasing to see a restrained and sensible approach to awarding marks. In most cases, internal moderation has been carefully carried out. All centres are urged to make sufficient annotations in the body of the essay that combine to justify the final comment and overall mark. The use of 'AO1' and 'AO3' as annotations are not as helpful as referring to specific frameworks by using the annotations provided in the Standardisation handbook. Almost without exception, the very small number of centres whose marking was considered inaccurate had one thing in common – they had failed to attend the Standardisation meeting earlier in the year and made little attempt to maintain contact with their Area Moderator. All centres are reminded that it is essential to take advantage of the support provided by the Area Moderator, AQA officers and the e-AQA website (which provides vital information about all four units).

Administration

Submission of Centre Mark Forms by centres to Area Moderators by May 15th is the first, essential stage of the moderating process regardless of whether the centre has chosen to attend the Consortium meeting or submit moderation materials by post. Any confusion about this process can be laid to rest by consulting the administration information provided to centres. All centres are also urged to keep their Area Moderator informed of any change of e-mail address for contacts.

Titles

These must begin 'Compare the ways in which....' Variations on this formula are not allowed. Some students continued to choose complex titles that they were unable to follow up with a clearly argued essay. Titles should be straight-forward and not excessively philosophical or widely contextual. There is no need to list the poems /passages to be considered at the beginning of the essay; these should be obvious both in the reading of the essay itself and from the accompanying photocopies.

The thesis paragraph

The opening thesis paragraph should be brief and state the line of investigation without giving examples; such textual detail should be saved for the ensuing paragraphs. Reasoned argument should be evident in the main body of the essay. Students would be well-advised in the re-working of their essays after the first draft to inspect their thesis paragraph carefully; often the essay they have written would be better served by a different thesis and, sometimes, a different theme. An inadequate submission invariably has a weak thesis or no recognisable thesis at all.

Making comparisons

A comparative framework is established better by comparing both writers' methods from the outset. The 'anchor text' method in which one writer's work is analysed and then the other's compared in the second half is less effective for this coursework task than a more obvious integration. It is quite permissible to allow two or even three paragraphs to establish an analysis of one poem and its link to the thesis but the reader should be aware at all times of the comparative framework. Similarities between the two chosen writers' methods may be just as relevant as their differences. One very effective approach to comparison is to state an interesting thesis, explore it by comparing one poem /passage from each writer and then go on to consider the wider implication of the thesis in a second poem /passage. The use of discourse markers ('on the other hand', 'by comparison' etc.) can be very effective.

Use of context

It is important to avoid allowing comments on the broader context to intrude on the essentially analytical nature of essays. Students are not well-served by excessive attention to political, historical or biographical influences in their essays although these elements may well provoke interesting classroom discussion.

Choice of poems and passages

Students usually made sensible choices of poems and passages without forcing inappropriate ones to fit a preconceived theme. Teachers should urge students to change their source material if they have chosen wrongly or the poems / passages no longer match the theme chosen.

Quality of coursework essays

Once again, coursework essays showed a clear idea of the task and the majority of students produced thoughtful and logical essays. Proof reading is an essential part of the task and students should be encouraged to give this priority. The coursework task should enable students to display the range of the skills they have accumulated in their study of the other units. The opportunity to improve upon coursework throughout the year means that high standards of performance are expected in coursework. Once again, these standards have largely been met by students.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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

UMS conversion calculator www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion