



**General Certificate of Education**

**English Language and Literature  
1726**

*Specification B*

**ELLB2      Themes in Language and  
Literature**

**Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - June series*

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## Principal Moderator's Report

The standard of writing submitted by candidates this summer was, at its best, exceptionally high. The quality of response that merited the highest marks for Part A showed excellent appreciation of the set texts and the ability to write fluently and persuasively about the set theme and the ways in which writers craft their work. Creative writing in Part B was interesting and enriched the reader's view of the original texts. There was strong evidence of lively and provocative writing in many folders. Candidates seemed particularly interested in the psychological states of various characters. There were many effective and genuinely funny extensions to the adventures of Harry Potter and of Alice. The best folders showed a good balance of knowledge and skills. To improve the standard of work overall, teachers should consider spending more time developing candidates' ability to produce accurate and soundly evidenced commentary on changes in language and style over time. Moderators noted that even high performing candidates gave only limited attention to this opportunity to show higher level skills.

Candidates whose work in Part A merited a mark in the middle bands produced carefully prepared submissions that showed good understanding of the chosen pairing. In some instances, analysis was inclined to be pedestrian but showed a good knowledge of literary and linguistic features. Expression was clear, albeit not stylish. A recurring feature of middle band submissions was the over-reliance on long introductory paragraphs which did not contribute directly to the exploration of the chosen extracts. This was a poor use of otherwise accurate and interesting biographical and/or contextual information which is more effective when it is skilfully woven into the response, linking directly to the theme and to the chosen extracts. Work in Part B was often of a good standard and contributed significantly to the overall mark awarded for the two parts of the assignment.

There was, however, a significant tail of very poor work, much of which had been considerably over-rewarded by the centres, particularly in the evaluation of Part B. Some responses meriting marks in the lower bands for both Part A and Part B showed very poor powers of expression. There were weaknesses in structuring the response for Part A and in sustaining a pertinent discussion. Extracts were largely ignored, being used as a starting point, rather than central to the discussion. In many instances, internal assessment did not penalise simplistic reading of the texts, illogical arguments, inaccurate analysis and irrelevance. It is a concern that centres did not acknowledge these weaknesses in their annotation. Creative writing for Part B was often simplistic and dull, adding little to the reader's appreciation of either of the set texts. A common feature of very weak submissions was the failure to link creative writing in Part B with any aspect of the set text. Whilst the majority of candidates managed to incorporate the set theme into their writing, a significant number failed to root the creative response in either of their paired texts, so much so that the original texts were unidentifiable. To meet the subject criteria, candidates must provide satisfactory evidence that they have studied the set books. A number of centres did not seem to appreciate that this requirement applied to Part B. Creative writing which was basically a version of 'writing in the style of, for example, Poe or Chandler' was a common feature of work that showed a fundamental misunderstanding of the rubric for Part B.

*Travels with a Donkey* and *The Lost Continent* have not proved popular choices but candidates who studied these books wrote well on Solitude and the pairing will be retained until the introduction of an entirely new list of paired texts for teaching from September 2012. Other pairings had substantial entries and, though the take up of *Utopia* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was lower than last year, the quality of folders has risen. The theme of Community was well handled and did not appear to present any problems. *Frankenstein* and *In Cold Blood* prove increasingly more popular, presumably taken up by centres switching from other

pairings. The theme of Alienation produced good answers, though a number of candidates limited themselves to a consideration of anything that was sorrowful or distressing, such as bereavement and loss. Perceptive candidates interpreted 'alienation' in a more precise sense, recognising the destructive power of rejection and being rejected, as well as the potentially dangerous consequences of losing empathy with others. The pairing of *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea* produced generally sound work and often excellent responses. It was rare to find a candidate neglecting the theme of Deception. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* was a popular pairing. The best folders were excellent but there was much that was superficial and of poor quality in weaker submissions. A number of centres did not ensure that candidates understood the implications of Eccentricity. The theme was not intended as merely another word for last year's theme - Fantasy. Part A responses on the Poe/Chandler pairing were generally well focused. There was no shortage of material in either text to support a discussion of Villainy. More sophisticated responses considered degrees of villainous behaviour and the factors affecting culpability. Candidates made very good use of the range offered by the set collection of Poe's short stories.

By comparison with last year's entry, it is surprising that there were more submissions which either breached the coursework requirements or which did not reach the standards that might reasonably be expected at AS level. A few centres did not appreciate that the themes for the pairings change every year. There were isolated instances of centres submitting work on a theme which had not been set and a very small number of candidates based some part of their responses on texts which were not on the specification. The coursework task must be based on the chosen extracts from the two paired set texts. In a few rare cases, candidates extended their explorations using evidence from a third text of the same genre. Centres need to make clear to their candidates that there is no credit for consideration of additional texts. While these instances are admittedly very rare, they provide worrying evidence that some centres are uninformed and ill-prepared, despite the considerable support offered by the standardising meetings, the coursework advisers and the subject department.

The centres which best served their candidates' interests were usually those which insisted upon strict adherence to the rubric about selection of extracts, word limits and inclusion of the Evidence of Planning. Annotation identified both strengths and weaknesses and reflected the mark awarded. The process of annotation was clearly part of the assessment process. There was strong evidence of effective internal standardisation.

Where there was inadequate supervision, candidates were allowed to edit extracts in a way which destroyed the original, or to select paragraphs from across the text. Word counts were omitted, rubric infringements were ignored and centres were reluctant to address negative issues in their annotation. Annotation was cursory, identifying assessment objectives but offering no comment as to achievement. Annotation in some instances appeared to have been written retrospectively, having been added after the mark had been awarded. There was emphasis on justifying marks which were clearly not deserved.

Candidates should be aware that careful proof-reading and meticulous attention to spelling and grammar should be regarded as the norm. Typographical errors are not acceptable. Their use of the internet should be carefully monitored. Moderators have been provided with a list of websites that offer ready-made answers to both coursework assignments. When referencing websites on the cover sheet, candidates must cite the links that have been used. Supervising teachers should confirm that there has been no improper use of the ideas or information offered by the site.

Overall, the standard of neatness and clarity, especially the clear word-processing, made the task of moderation much easier. Administration was exemplary in many centres. Occasionally

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candidates were over-zealous in their presentation. Moderators comment that the overuse of plastic pockets hinders their work. Submissions are more accessible when securely stapled or tagged. Drafts must not be included. There were several instances where the final pieces could not be clearly identified without consultation with the centre. Point 12 must be the minimum point size for submissions. In a few instances, candidates chose an unreasonably small point size, perhaps to disguise excessive length. In academic writing, the overuse of boldening, which makes continuous prose particularly hard to read, should be discouraged.

Two previous reports for May 2009 and January 2010 contain clear guidance on aspects of rubric and administration. New centres and those centres requiring further clarification should refer to these reports.

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

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