

Version



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

**English Language and Literature ELLB1
B**

(Specification 2725)

**Unit 1: Introduction to Language and Literature
Study**

Report on the Examination

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The oft repeated advice to candidates is to 'read the question carefully'. The response to question 2 illustrated this principle very clearly. Those candidates who demonstrated their literacy skills by noting that the question referred to 'writers and/or speakers' reflecting on 'thought-provoking and/or stimulating travel' generally did well, as they chose texts in which writers (few chose speakers) ruminated on their own travels. Those candidates who just read the part about 'thought-provoking and stimulating' and charged on to assume that it referred to the reader frequently lost marks. As usual, the choice of texts was crucial. There were many in the Anthology that were suitable, perhaps the most obvious being 'Always Our Likely Finale', *Heart of Darkness*, 'So Near and Yet So Far', 'Adlestrop' and *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains* and these did, indeed, prove both popular and profitable for candidates. Many other suitable texts were chosen and examiners are always encouraged to give the benefit of the doubt to candidate choices. However, there were still the less suitable fringe selections including: *Thomas and Friends*, the Metrolink timetable, the Young Persons Railcard and *the 'Airmiles' Letter*, all of which were commented on with unfortunate disregard for the question or with an agility that would have done credit to the most flexibly-limbed of contortionists.

Whilst it is important that candidates are aware of the importance of contexts when writing about a text, it is also important that they ensure that what they write is focused on the question they are supposed to be answering. It was noticeable that a number of candidates seemed to be rehearsing a somewhat formulaic approach to an answer by either pursuing a self-generated check list or by inflexibly following an audience/purpose/genre/context scaffold before engaging with the meat of the question. The meat of this question was, of course the 'thought-provoking' and reflective aspect of the chosen texts. Candidates need to ensure that if they argue that a text is of such a nature, that they do indeed comment on what the thoughts or reflections of the writer actually are rather than merely stating that the text does provoke thought or reflection in the writer.

Question 1 proved to be quite straightforward for most candidates and some brave souls actually confessed to enjoying the texts, particularly the poem by Adrian Mitchell. This confession seemed, as far as jaded examiners could judge, to be genuine! There were hardly any instances of candidates failing to compare the texts and even the weakest usually managed to find something relevant to say. There were many excellent answers to this question. There are, however, a number of signals found in almost any examination series, that more often than not indicate to an examiner that an answer is not going to be of the highest quality, and centres would perhaps do well to issue to their students an 'avoid-at-all-costs' warning about these signals. These include:

- referring to authors by their first name as if they were old and intimate friends of the candidate: *Joseph, Samuel and Charles* may be what their nearest and dearest called *Conrad, Johnson and Dickens*, but that degree of intimacy is not usually assumed to be shared with AS candidates
- assuming that the older the text, the more difficult it is intended to be and that only an educated audience will be able to read it
- assuming that the use of simple sentences always equates with simplicity of thought, and that the use of complex ones with complexity and difficulty
- assuming also that complex sentences can only be understood by an audience well versed in the intricacies of English grammar
- claiming that every use of language that the candidate cannot quite grasp makes a poem flow or that it makes the reader want to 'carry on reading'
- claiming that the reader of every text is a fan of that particular author
- and finally, filling the response with such hoary chestnuts as asyndecity and syndecity and sundry other mis- and over-used technical terms that are not fully understood by the writer.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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