



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

**English Language and Literature ELLB2
B**

(Specification 2725)

Unit 2: Themes in Language and Literature

Report on the Examination

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This report refers specifically to factors affecting this session's entry. Centres new to the unit should also consult the Principal Moderator's reports for previous moderation sessions which give detailed guidance on interpretation of the rubric and on administration.

An interesting feature of this session's entry is the comparatively greater number of candidates who appear to be submitting for the first time, by comparison with the previous January entry when almost all submissions were re-sits. Candidates who are entering for the first time quite early in their course do not appear to be disadvantaged and there was much good work on the new themes.

As regards the principles of re-submission, some centres appear to be unaware that while there is no requirement for candidates to offer completely new work, there must have been substantial revision of the previous submission. Merely re-entering the same folder is not unacceptable. Centres who have taken this approach have been contacted by AQA. Teachers who sign the cover sheet for re-submitted work should be aware that they are confirming that all appropriate procedures have been followed and that the work is being submitted in accordance with the regulations.

The choice of set pairings continues to be dominated by *Frankenstein & In Cold Blood*, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland & Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* and *Jane Eyre & Wide Sargasso Sea*. There are no indications that candidates had difficulty with the set themes. The new themes seem to be working well and candidates are finding good opportunities for productive writing in all of the pairings.

As regards standards of achievement, the best candidates demonstrated strong writing skills, the ability for focused discussion and a good grasp of the features of crafting that make each book distinct. There were some very wide-ranging discussions which effortlessly covered all of the Assessment Objectives. Comparison of extracts in the better folders is very good. In the middle band folders, comparison deals mostly with event and character. Very weak folders leave comparison as implicit at best and generally rely on alternating paragraphs to convey a sense that there are differences to discuss. It is not just the weaker candidates who find it difficult to be specific about change in language and style over time. This is an area where there is widespread, undue reliance on broad generalisation and sweeping statements. Another issue is the padding out of the word count by inserting paragraphs on background information. Candidates must be made aware that their findings from research should be integrated into the discussion of the chosen extracts.

Candidates' Evidence of Planning continues to be helpful in confirming their writing intentions, particularly as regards Part B, the creative piece. Most centres now seem to have appreciated the importance of the set theme as being central to both Part A and Part B. The misunderstanding by both teachers and candidates with regard to the extent to which the creative piece should illuminate both the set text(s) and the set theme is a matter of serious concern. Candidates who "write in the style of" a particular novelist or who rely only on the set theme as a link to their study of the two set texts will find that their marks have been adjusted because their work does not demonstrate knowledge and skills linked to the study of set texts.

Many centres have exemplary arrangements for internal moderation, using in-house documentation to record the assessment of the different teachers and showing the ways in which a final mark has been decided. While the process itself is seen as evidence of good practice by all moderators, there is often too much emphasis on justifying overgenerous marks rather than arriving at an objective assessment. However sophisticated the process, centres must make use of the Standardising Material to give them a benchmark for both parts of the coursework. The insistence that "this is a top class Band 6 folder" will not make it so, if the standard of writing and the demonstration of knowledge and skills do not match the

Band 6 work in the Standardising Material. Centres have considerable difficulty in identifying work which is good but closer to the Band 5/4 boundary than to the low Band 6 which they award. Similarly, work which is closer to all the descriptors for Band 3 is artificially pushed into Band 4, despite the acknowledgement of limited focus on the theme and other fundamental weaknesses, such as limited attention to AO2. Candidates were awarded marks high in Band 5 when there was little analysis of language and where references to the text were little more than selected quotations supporting a summary or paraphrase of the chosen extract.

The administration for this unit is not complex but it requires supervising teachers to be meticulous in demonstrating that the rubric has been observed. The role of the moderator should be precisely that because the checking of candidates' work should have been done during the internal assessment. In a considerable number of instances, there were no word counts for extracts and pieces, nor were 'START' and 'FINISH' points clearly indicated on photocopies. If the moderator then finds that the work does not relate closely to the chosen extracts, it raises questions as to how thoroughly the internal assessment has been carried out. Centres who ignore these issues are not working within the agreed guidelines.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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