



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

**English Language and Literature B ELLB4
(Specification 2725)**

Unit 4: Text Transformation

Report on the Examination

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ELLB4 is now well-established and seems to pose few problems for candidates and centres. The majority of centres are succeeding in encouraging candidates to submit folders which contain appropriate tasks based on authors from the approved lists, with many that are a delight to read and which provide evidence of a maturity and creativity in response. It would be true to say that not all is rosy in the garden, as there are still some centres (both established and new) who continue to infringe rubric requirements including word counts, spring-boarding, lack of genre change, two texts from the same column of approved authors and unbalanced joint transformations: these problems do require attention from centres where moderators have drawn attention to them.

The two transformations and two commentaries model is still the overwhelmingly popular option and would appear to be the most profitable choice for the full range of candidates. There can, however, be some problems when the option of a joint transformation is chosen by less able candidates, such as significantly unequal treatment of the source texts or where one text has been successfully used whilst the big idea or themes of the other have only limited interplay. That being said, there is no doubt that in the hands of an able candidate, the joint transformation can be the one that provides an immensely enjoyable and rewarding read for a moderator.

Clearly the requirement that candidates produce a transformation in a new genre or sub-genre means that genre and style models are likely to form an important part of preparation for this unit. However, a problem that appears to be on the increase is the obsession with style models, and one result is that candidates are complicating things for themselves by adding an 'extra' layer to their transformations by trying to 'write in the style of x or y'. This can cause difficulties in that some genre changes can be seen as rather dubious as candidates write in the style of another author who is possibly not in a different sub-genre. However, the greatest negative impact of this approach is on the commentary, where discussion and analysis of the source texts and transformations are compromised by inappropriate focus on the style model. As a further point on commentaries, it was noticed that there are some centres who have a tendency to over-reward those candidates who fail to include any language analysis in their commentaries.

Centres will be well aware that the essence of a text transformation is the interplay between the source text and the transformation. A lack of interplay will result in low marks. There can be a difficulty in this respect where candidates had selected short poems and chosen to 'develop the theme' or 'create a backstory'. Whilst this should (and indeed has on occasions) produce some excellent opportunities for transformation, many candidates tended to write far too general a creative response which was not rooted in the identified source poem. On these occasions, without the commentary, it would not have been possible to identify the poem being transformed. A lack of interplay has also been noticed as a result of a fairly new phenomenon which one moderator named the 'uber-transformation'. Here candidates (often those placed in the higher mark bands), in their attempt to demonstrate originality and new insight, have transformed the source text so much that it is virtually impossible to spot where the transformation started life.

Lest the overall tone of the preceding remarks cast a pall of negativity over this whole report, let the final words be ones of positivity, repeating what was noted in the opening paragraph; that the majority of candidates, of whatever ability, do produce work which fulfils all of the unit's requirements and that most of the work remains a great pleasure to read.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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