



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

**English Literature A**

**LITA2**

**(Specification 2740)**

**Unit 2: Creative Study**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **LITA2: CREATIVE STUDY**

Entries for this examination sequence attracted just over 15,000 candidates across 760 centres.

Certain patterns have established themselves since the specification first began and this year the Principal Moderator wishes to reiterate the significant differences between the work of successful and less successful candidates.

### **Successful candidates**

- Often negotiate with their teachers the titles and tasks they want to explore. A degree of genuine autonomy enables candidates to produce interesting, original work.
- Think about the Assessment Objectives as they plan and write. It is pleasing to read folders in which both the prose and drama tasks have been set with the specific intention of liberating all of the Assessment Objectives covered by LITA2. For the prose task the break-down of Assessment Objectives is dominated by a combination of AO1 (12/30) and AO2 (15/30) leaving AO4 only 3/30. AO3 is not examined on the prose task but becomes the dominant AO for the drama task being worth 15/30. AO1 and AO2, so dominant on the prose task, are only worth 6/30 each on the drama task leaving the remaining 3/30 for AO4. It is a good idea to give candidates a copy of the Assessment Objectives and their relative weightings as soon as they start their coursework.
- Understand the importance of all of the dominant AO3 when answering the drama question. The best questions create opportunities not only for the candidates to compare and contrast but also for them to do so against a backdrop of literary debate.
- Stay within or close to the 2,500 word limit for the whole folder so that they can demonstrate that their work is cogent and coherent.
- Write clear and correct English and take care with proof-reading.
- Ensure that the correct proportion of their drama answer is spent in analysing and responding to their selected Drama text (70%) and that their non-drama text (where a second play is not offered) only occupies 30% of their answer.
- Respond with confidence to the dramatic and theatrical resonances of the plays under analysis.
- Demonstrate the sort of organisational skills which will help prepare them for the demands of the non-coursework examination. Planning remains as important as

ever: writing two assignments in one coursework folder makes it especially important that students plan their work carefully with the Assessment Objectives in clear focus throughout.

- Understand that literature is a construct and that characters are designed to convey themes and ideas to the reader or audience.
- Always remember to write about form, structure and language of their texts.
- Use text selectively and with judgment. The most successful use of quotations is brief but frequent, (“short integrated quotation” or SIQ) enlivened by analytical comments that do not merely paraphrase or present narrative.
- Present folders with care and pride. The font size and spacing selected by a candidate should not be cramped; a sensible 12 point font such as Times New Roman or Arial with 1.5 or double line spacing is easy to read and allows the teacher marking the folder to conduct a written dialogue in the margins of a candidate’s work. More importantly, perhaps, this commentary, once done, allows the moderator to see how a mark was awarded in the centre.
- Understand the importance of signposting their way round their texts. Even simple signposts such as “early”, “middle” and “late” can help a moderator see that the candidate has understood features such as character and plot development. It is even more refreshing when a candidate refers to specific chapters in a novel or acts and scenes in a play.
- Ensure that secondary sources, including internet sites, are acknowledged in their bibliographies.
- Include an accurate word count at the end of each essay in the folder.

### **Less successful candidates**

- Answer on coursework titles not approved by moderators or change a moderator-agreed title to something inappropriate.
- Write predictable answers. Candidates frequently struggle to find anything interesting or original to say in response to a question they have evidently been made to do or which has been given to everyone else in their group. This, of course need not be a problem with the transformational prose option which will always generate a highly individualised response but can certainly be problematic with ‘traditional’ prose tasks and in drama tasks. Less successful students are

often happy to follow a ‘party line’ presumably given by the centre and such candidates, therefore, cannot make a convincing individual response.

- Rehash the same centre-inspired ideas and even the same phrases over and over again. Moderators could not always agree with centres about the merits of such essays which are more correctly categorised as clear, appropriate, well-structured and secure work and whose natural home is band 3. Such work does not enable candidates to achieve to the top of band 4 which in AO1 calls for the demonstration of a “confident, challenging and original personal voice.”
- Forget how the Assessment Objectives are weighted or forget all about a key AO or a part of an AO. The advice here is identical to the advice given in the last four moderator’s reports and will have to be re-iterated until the non-addressing of AOs stops being a problem. Due to the fact that AO3 is the dominant Assessment Objective for the drama task worth 15/30, centres need to ensure that candidates are given opportunities to cover **both** components of the Assessment Objective:

**1. Explore connections and comparisons between different literary texts...**

**2. ...informed by interpretations of other readers**

Centre commentaries on *prose* assignments continue to alarm moderators when assessors write such observations as, “AO3 comparison. Band 4. Excellent.” or “Clearly aware of other readers’ views.” There was worrying evidence this year that some centres do not understand that AO3 is not examined on the prose assignment and a candidate can score no marks in the prose response by writing to cover AO3. Several centres alluded to AO3 in marginalia or in their summative commentary at the end of a candidate’s work. The most charitable interpretation of misplaced AO3 is for a moderator to count it as AO4 context but since coursework is only worth 3/30 a candidate will not be able to retrieve their examination chances on such a low scoring AO for prose. Even more worryingly for the Principal Moderator was to discover several centres which had included AO3 in prose tasks but had ignored it for drama where it is worth 15/30. To prepare candidates for AOs which aren’t there and then to allow candidates to hand in work which does not cover an AO worth 50% of a question is unfair on the candidate. On the same theme of misplaced AOs some centre commentaries marked up AO4 as a particular strength of the Drama response (not a problem in itself) but neglected to mention AO3ii. This invariably makes a moderator feel uneasy. When centre marks were moderated down it was frequently due to a misapprehension about how the Assessment Objectives worked across both components of the LITA2 folder.

- Write about characters in literature as though they are real, even going so far as sometimes to offer advice about what they should have done in particular circumstances.
- Write about themes at the expense of analysing form, structure and language. It is dispiriting to report that some candidates' work has the look of a history or even a sociology task. This example was not even tied to a specific text: "How does the influence of Religion in Victorian society affect the behaviour of the people of the time?"
- Write about drama as though it is an alternative form of prose and make little or no attempt to explore the significance of stage directions, acting potentials, directorial possibilities or the theatrical experience.
- Entirely ignore the instructions about word length. In June 2011 there were folders which were a great deal longer than the word limit: the Principal Moderator read one folder which was 8,500 words in length and had been awarded 60/60 in the centre! This mark was adjusted down considerably on the grounds that such prolix work was neither "well-organised" nor "coherent" (both band 4 descriptors for AO1) and, besides, over-long work often looks weak and out of focus in comparison to answers which are within word limit tolerances.
- Have poor control over formal English. This year it was fairly common – and consequently depressing – to encounter candidates who had no idea how to punctuate titles, use apostrophes, write grammatical sentences or spell even simple words correctly. One candidate trying to come to terms with the word "bourgeoisie" spelled it "bousargewasey." The centre drew no attention to it.
- Relay the plot and narrative of their chosen texts via the use of "hanging" quotation which does not move into analysis or evaluation of writers' techniques. This unhelpful technique can be described as "narrative with text" and is only marginally better than when candidates relay narrative alone.
- Paraphrase or 'translate' quotations in the belief that the moderator will not be able to understand the quotation without the candidate's help.
- Use bizarre fonts and typeface sizes. The Coursework Guidance booklet gives advice on the presentation of work as well as suggestions on task-setting and question construction and readers of this report who have not yet done so are advised to consult that document (available on the AQA website: [www.aqa.org.uk](http://www.aqa.org.uk))
- Do not signpost and consequently write about novels and plays in such a way as to make the moderator believe that the candidate thinks what is true of a character or plot is always true where ever we are in the text.

- Do not include bibliographies and often make uncritical use of anonymous and potentially error-prone contributor-sourced web-sites. This year several candidates were caught out for malpractice by cutting and pasting material from the internet and passing it off as their own.
- Do not include an accurate word count at the end of each essay in the folder.
- Use unhelpful, vague, colloquial or meaningless phrases like “society frowns upon”, “full on”, “in your face”, “diss”, “silver bullet scenario”, “lifestyle”, “cutting edge”, “big time” and “chav.”

### **Marking and moderation issues**

Most marking in centres was accurate and the centres with the most successful candidates had obviously carried out careful internal moderation. Moderators are always gratified when they can see two or more different sets of handwriting in the marginalia and at the end of an essay, knowing that internal moderation has occurred. Our thanks are extended to those excellent centres. The Principal Moderator recommended adjustments on 9.3% of all LITA2 centres which is a slightly higher ratio than last year. Interestingly most of these adjustments were in centres where more than one teacher marked candidates’ work but where the Principal Moderator could find little or no evidence of internal moderation. The pattern here seems to be that teachers evidently only mark the work of candidates they have taught. As the experience of this year shows such a practice cannot guarantee accuracy or consistency. Occasionally centres will sign the relevant form to say that internal moderation has taken place when there is no evidence of it in the sample. Most centres fully engage the process of marking but some still do not: it is not an uncommon sight for page after page of candidates’ work to have nothing from the teacher written on it other than a cursory tick at the bottom of the page or in the left hand margin, sometimes with a reference to an AO. Model Marked Scripts have been available since the inception of the examination and centres are asked when assessing candidates’ work to utilise the marking conventions and levels of engagement detailed in these Model Marked Scripts. In this examination sequence moderators sometimes had problems confirming a centre’s grades when the supporting statement made general reference to the band descriptors in the marking grid but failed to provide evidence of these by highlighting and annotating the relevant sections in the body of the work. An unwelcome feature of some of this year’s marking has been carried over from the previous two sequences: some centres tried to second-guess or predict what AS grade a candidate might be given. Comments like, “Looks like an A so go to 50” or “scrapes an E” are

neither welcome nor useful. Centres' responsibilities are to award a numerical mark attached to a particular band as printed on the mark schemes. It is the job of the AQA Awarding Committee to determine the grades after the examination sequence has ended. In terms of marking, teachers should also ensure that weaknesses in written expression are not ignored. Since this is coursework, it is expected that candidates will take the opportunity to check and redraft their work to a good standard; where this is not the case the weaknesses of AO1 must be reflected in the final mark. Poor formal control of English will have a bigger detrimental impact on the prose task where AO1 is worth 12/30 than the drama task where it is only worth 6/30. Once again, this is due to the relative weighting of the two tasks at LITA2. Finally, some centres seem to be going really well in terms of formative commentaries but then inexplicably award the wrong mark in the summative analysis for example writing such things as "candidate often obscures what she is trying to say" (i.e. acknowledging that the candidate is performing on the band 1 / band 2 borderline) but still awarding a mark of say 24/30 (Band 4) which equates to a candidate whose writing is "very clear and well-organised" with a "thoroughly sound, secure and well-developed argument." The teacher comment, therefore, not only contradicted a centre's own marginalia but also often contradicted the description in the mark scheme. Centres are reminded to take special care when awarding marks in future examination sequences.

### **Commentary on prose assignments**

The transformational prose task continues to be an exciting challenge for students and a very interesting assignment to read for moderators. As in previous examination sequences among the most memorable work submitted were "long views" from characters in fiction whose vantage points were taken from towards the end of a novel. Other memorable efforts included diary entries and letters written in the voice of important characters in candidates' chosen novels. In this way believable and fascinating transformational voices were articulated and maintained for many characters in a wide variety of novels.

In Victorian Literature Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is the most popular choice with Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman* all attracting splendid efforts from a range of candidates. There was some excellent work written in the voices of Jane Eyre, Rochester, Bertha Mason, Blanche Ingram and Miss Temple from *Jane Eyre*. Tess, Angel and Alec in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* were often portrayed very convincingly and the problems reported last year with Tess' yokelese appeared to have all but disappeared. Catherine the elder, Catherine the



younger, Heathcliff and Nellie Dean in Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* all attracted a range of successful and interesting responses. Isabella Linton made a welcome appearance with several candidates this year, usually to good effect. "Infantile", "pampered" and "silly" as she is early in the novel most candidates realised that the best place to use her voice comes immediately after her escape from her "purgatory" at Wuthering Heights and before she gives birth to Linton Heathcliff. *The French Lieutenant's Woman* continues to be fertile ground for transformational prose assignments; Doctor Grogan, Ernestina, Charles, Mrs. Poultney and Sam were all utilised to good effect as they have been in previous examination sequences. The Principal Moderator is gratified to report that candidates this year tended to perform more successfully than candidates in June 2010. It is to be hoped that centres made some use of the suggestions in last year's Moderator's Report to secure these improvements.

Yet again the presentation of Rivers, Prior, Sassoon and Sarah Lumb in Barker's *Regeneration* all attracted high quality responses as did Stephen, Weir, Jack Firebrace, Isabelle, Lisette and Elizabeth in Faulks' *Birdsong*. Miles Malleeson's *Black 'ell* was well-represented too. Once again Sebastian Barry's *A Long Long Way* was a successful World War 1 text. J.L. Carr's *A Month in the Country*, Timothy Findley's *The Wars*, Susan Hill's *Strange Meeting* and Rebecca West's *The Return of the Soldier* yet again all attracted some well-written and thoughtful answers. However the Principal Moderator would like to inject a note of caution here. Transformational tasks are meant to show that a candidate's knowledge of her prompt novel is so thorough that she can recreate a convincing approximation of the style of the original. This extends to plot. So the Principal Moderator was left to question some of the tasks in relation to the characters to which they were attached: would Billy Prior in *Regeneration* keep a diary? Would Sarah Lumb compose a poem? Centres are asked to keep the transformational tasks within the spirit of the prompt novel. When in doubt moderator approval must be sought.

Within *The Struggle for Identity in Modern Literature* the Principal Moderator saw the emergence of Nabokov's *Lolita* as a text capable of generating some excellent work. Other successful and interesting choices included Andrea Levy's *Small Island* and *We Need to Talk about Kevin* by Lionel Shriver. As usual some first class responses were written about Offred, Ofglen, Serena Joy, Moira, The Commander and Nick in Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love* goes from strength to strength both in terms of popularity and the quality of answers it generates. There appeared to be fewer "hit and hope" answers than in previous sequences. The Principal Moderator read far fewer desultory attempts to recreate a believable prose style for such novels as Welsh's *Trainspotting* or even D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* than in previous years because the more successful

candidates have understood the stylistic function of the profanity better than most candidates in previous examination sequences. It is always heart-warming to report on progress.

However, there are still answers which lack sophistication and these can still be as full of unintentionally comic moments as ever. Such work often reveals a lack of research on the part of the candidate (and sometimes of the centre too). Anachronism still tricks many candidates: an essay on *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (published 1890) had Dorian trying to get to Dover from London aboard “The Mallard” train (built in 1938); another candidate writing in the voice of Jane Eyre (novel published 1847) had Jane comment – quite out of character - on “Queen Victoria’s anguish” when Prince Albert died (1861); another candidate writing in the voice of Sassoon in *Regeneration* (set in 1917) had the poet say how much he was looking forward to the resumption of county cricket (perhaps a believable touch: Sassoon loved his cricket) and watching W.G. Grace bat again (certainly not a believable touch: the eminent doctor died in 1915). Research remains a central ingredient of the transformational prose assignment just as it does for the more traditional prose essay and candidates are here, once again, reminded of its central importance. Control of AO4 allows a candidate to demonstrate fluency and panache in AO2. Though AO4 is a comparatively minor Assessment Objective, it can cast a long and ugly shadow into AO2 if the candidate does not research with care and sensitivity. Sometimes transformational essays were erroneous in various assumptions made about the source texts. Almost every candidate in one centre wrote that Serena Joy in *The Handmaid’s Tale* had been a Hollywood film star with a taste for “hot men and cold champagne.”

The majority of candidates opted for a traditional prose essay and a range of enabling tasks were set by centres which were obviously keeping an eye on the Assessment Objectives. As usual the Principal Moderator has made use of the most popular texts for this section of the report. Many of the “old favourite” questions of yesteryear were still as popular as ever and readers can find examples of those in previous Moderator’s Reports. Here is a selection of some of this year’s more interesting and best-answered questions:

- Explore how (Charlotte) Brontë presents ideas about and attitudes to religion in *Jane Eyre* ;
- Analyse (Emily) Brontë’s presentation of passion in *Wuthering Heights*;
- Explore Hardy’s presentation of England in a state of social change in *Tess of the D’Urbervilles*;
- How does Fowles’ presentation of ideas concerning evolution in *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* influence your understanding of the novel?

- Analyse Faulks' presentation of how ideas about and attitudes to the past influences Elizabeth in *Birdsong*;
- Explore Barker's presentation of the mentality of the military in *Regeneration*;
- Explore Barry's presentation of ideas about loyalty/patriotism in *A Long Long Way*
- Analyse Atwood's presentation of neo-conservative ideology in the *Handmaid's Tale*;
- How does McEwan's presentation of ideas concerning the struggle between sciences and the arts influence your understanding of *Enduring Love*?

Errors can occur in traditional tasks too. In one centre almost all candidates answering on *Regeneration* were of the opinion that the word "homosexual" never occurs in the novel and tried to construct entire arguments around this thesis. However the word does appear in the novel in the conversation between Sassoon and Graves in chapter 17.

### **Commentary on drama assignments**

The Principal Moderator noticed in 2009 that there were a number of favourite combinations of texts beginning to emerge. As long as Centres remember to write tasks which will liberate all the available and relevant Assessment Objectives there is no problem in using text combinations with a proven track record. The following short list features favourite text combinations from recent years and successful questions from this year's examination.

- "Carnal embrace is what saves us or condemns us. It cannot do both." Compare and contrast the presentation of sexual relationships in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Arcadia* in the light of this opinion.
- Compare and contrast Wilde's and Brontë's presentation of the female characters in *A Woman of No Importance* and *Jane Eyre* in the light of the opinion that "both writers seek only to sanctify their female characters in order to promote the highly conventional moral that virtue will be rewarded."
- Compare and contrast the presentation of soldiers' lives in *Journey's End* and *Blackadder Goes Forth* in the light of the opinion that "Sherriff's characters are too middle-class for a modern audience to understand or like whereas Curtis' and Elton's characters are too silly to be interesting."
- Compare and contrast the presentation of fantasy in *Top Girls* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* in the light of the opinion that "it is fantasy - and fantasy alone - which destroys the characters' happiness in these two plays."

As in other years, moderators reported that when candidates entered into a spirit of debate with the opinions of other readers, drama essays were successful but when they forget to respond to AO3ii or neglected to write about the dramatic features of their plays they struggled to make a good impression.

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

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

### **Converting marks into UMS marks**

Convert raw marks into marks on the Uniform Mark Scale (UMS) by visiting the link below:

[www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion](http://www.aqa.org.uk/umsconversion).