



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **General Studies 2766**

*Specification B*

**GENB4      Change**

# **Report on the Examination**

*2010 examination - June series*

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## **GENB4    Change**

### **General Comments**

Candidates now have two hours in which to complete this paper. It had been hoped that, in the extra fifteen minutes, candidates would not only have more time to read the texts provided, but that they would more confidently give some minutes, before embarking on a response to the two questions to be answered, to considering just how they would go about answering them.

If it takes about five minutes to read the relevant texts, the same amount of time might be afforded to jotting down three or four examples or illustrations, by way of evidence, to support the case to be made. Without such support, a response can be little more than a sustained assertion, or catalogue of assertions. Making a preliminary note of such real-world examples, and then building them into the response, has still more consequence for the marks awarded than a close reading of the texts.

No elaborate plan is called for – just a simple noting of events, names, instances that will lend weight to the response.

### **Question 1**

This was a question about the media and the credit that can be given to the vision of the future presented to us by the media – the press, news agencies, television; it was not a question about the economic woes of the country except insofar as these were the backdrop for the particular vision of three *Observer* journalists represented in Text A. It was not intended (it never is) that the text should supply all the information needed for a well-developed response to the question.

It was understandable, nevertheless, that the economy was what most candidates wrote about at greatest length. This was quite in order as long as the focus was on what the media (and not just these three journalists) tell us about the economic future of the country, and on whether what they tell us is credible. How far we can and should believe what the media tell us hangs upon what we can see about us with our own eyes; what evidence there is of media trustworthiness in other domains; and how far different media tell us different things, in different ways, for different reasons.

There were references to the credibility of what we read in *The Sun*, in comparison with what we read in *The Guardian* and *The Independent*, for example – but there was surprisingly little about visions of the future – economic or otherwise – presented to us in television programmes.

Highest marks went to those candidates who adduced media stories about the likely successes of our sportsmen (and the English football team was on many minds); about the imminent collapse of the coalition government; or (closer to home) about the consequences for young people of pressure on university places, jobs, and affordable houses. Candidates did well to write from a position of informed scepticism.

### **Question 2**

The question was whether we dwell too much on ideas and customs of the past; it was not about the validity or otherwise of commemorating the Bolshevik Revolution or of sampling the life of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century English provincial aristocracy. It is fair to say – in regard to the Section B optional questions – that it almost doesn't matter whether or not candidates read the texts

provided in great detail; they are there to spark ideas and suggest lines of argument only; they are examples of the sort that it is hoped candidates will come up with for themselves.

It was not difficult to do so, after all: there are all sorts of ways in which we celebrate the past, and hold on to the customs, routines, and habits handed down to us. There was discussion of whether, in celebrating, commemorating, and honouring the past we *dwell* on it, in any negative sense of this word – and this was a perfectly legitimate discussion to have. How much is ‘too much’ is obviously a very subjective matter.

It was probably wise, though, to acknowledge that there is a danger that, in remembering events of the past, we make reconciliation more difficult in the present (the Battle of the Boyne comes to mind), and to attempt the ‘balanced’ answer in which credit was given equally to celebrating events of the past (glorious and inglorious), and to living in the present and working for a survivable future.

### **Question 3**

Again, this was not a question either about scientific experiments (and still less was it a question about Wesson Oil), or about Scottish devolution – candidates who wrote about these issues without giving further relevant examples were demonstrating a want of imagination at best; it was a question about the extent to which we are honest about admitting to failure.

Candidates seized the opportunity to bare their consciences in regard to admitting to their friends that they had failed their driving test, or to their parents that they had failed an examination, and this was all highly readable and relevant. It was as well, though, and marks were gained, when candidates could see beyond their own lives to a stage on which Tony Blair admitted, or failed to admit, to failure in the context of the decision to invade Iraq; on which Gordon Brown apologised to a Rochdale pensioner and to the country at large on resignation day; or on which a newspaper held up its hands to its readers for ‘getting it wrong’. Many candidates were able to draw on their recent experience of GENB3 to give credit to Jonathan Ross and Russell Brand for their penitence following a well-publicised telephone call on air.

What was significant for a ‘good’ mark was that candidates were able to pull these examples together and to say something worthwhile about the circumstances in which we are more or less likely to be honest about admitting to failure, and about the consequences of our so doing. The examples and the conclusions based upon them were both equally necessary – mutually validating – if the question was to be answered fully.

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

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