



General Certificate of Education

**English Language and Literature
2721**

Specification A

**ELLA3 Comparative Analysis and
Text Adaptation**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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There were many varied and interesting scripts to see in this first Summer sitting of the Advanced part of this specification. Where candidates had practised their skills at dealing with the unseen comparison and had knowledge of their set texts, they performed well, producing conceptual, detailed answers for Question 1 and excellent adaptations with illuminating commentaries for their set text. However, many examiners did report gross under preparation for the unseen analysis and too many candidates suffered insecurities as to how to deal with textual adaptation.

It was pleasing to note that many candidates heeded the advice in the rubric and spent a proportionate amount of time on each section. This resulted in examiners seeing very few scripts with unbalanced answers. A total of one hour should be enough to answer the questions in Section B.

Section A

Question 1: Analytical comparison

Successful candidates:

- showed evidence of close reading before writing and often planned out their answer
- approached their comparison in a logical way, with many using the anchor method to help navigate their way through the question, with a good proportion of candidates using the integrated approach
- used appropriate and carefully chosen terminology, accordingly making interesting and sometimes enlightening comparisons
- found interesting angles for comparison leading to significant and thoughtful points being made
- utilised the three point critical sentence to help to structure their analysis.

Less successful candidates:

- had not carefully read the three texts and showed little evidence of knowing how to structure an analytical answer
- made empty, hollow and often obvious comparisons that added nothing to their textual interpretation
- made few literary, linguistic or stylistic points of interest, instead opting to paraphrase, or take an overtly narrative view of the texts
- wrote three separate accounts with minimal, and sometimes no, links being made
- hardly mentioned the attitudes and feelings of the speaker or writers in the three texts.

All three texts appeared to be widely accessible to the range of candidates, allowing them to pursue a broad variety of routes for the analysis. It was noticeable that the majority of candidates kept to a minimum very straightforward comments on mode, purpose and audience to begin their response, but there is still a large number who take a couple of pages to write themselves in before becoming more focused and specific in their analysis. Some candidates wasted time writing opening paragraphs re-stating information about the nature of the texts that was given on the question paper, perhaps adding in very basic comments, giving generalised thoughts on possible audiences and purposes and making rather crass and assertive comments before any analysis had begun.

Many candidates showed inventiveness in their selection of comparisons and contrasts, ranging from looking at stylistic features, grammatical points, or syntactical or structural notions, to examining the different types and combinations of relationships through to the more straightforward mode comparison. Some tried to draw comparisons concerning cultural backgrounds or with the links to music, or even notions of fantasy and mystery. Some thoughtful routes followed a studied approach to attitudes and emotional responses, linked to personal

readings. Those who tried to map a route through connected to time-related issues failed to get very far: assessing the modernity or otherwise of the extracts proved very challenging. Some readings tried to force a particular interpretation which their evidence failed to support, and some candidates clearly misread what was going on or even mistook the gender of the speaker or writer.

Overall, many candidates tended to give greater weight to Texts B and C, and were less successful in analysing the speech, other than noting obvious mode points, which could have been applied to any speech text. Candidates appeared to enjoy writing about Texts B and C, both of which provided a mine of stylistic features. Candidates who were less sure footed on their knowledge of terminology floundered here, with many getting confused over the differences between 'high' and 'low' frequency language, between asyndetic and syndetic listing and, in some cases, between nouns and verbs. However, when candidates were sure of their terms, there were many responses which focused on the effects of the use of, amongst other things, narrative viewpoint, sentence structure, adjectival and adverbial use, semantic fields, listing and the use of similes, metaphors and alliteration. These were often identified with perceptive comments comparing their use in the texts and linking them to the attitudes of the speaker and writers towards their parents. Candidates often focused more on identifying features, often providing detailed (and accurate) technical analyses of the texts, sometimes making valid comparative points but with little focus on how it revealed the feelings of the speaker or writers about their parents or, more worryingly, not engaging with the meaning of the quotes they had identified. There was plenty of evidence of candidates using frameworks successfully, although this occasionally became a burden to them as they doggedly moved from one item to another without fully taking into account the modes and contexts of each text. Writing about the graphology – or absence of it - in Text A, for instance, contributed little. Weaker candidates made broad comments about features but without identifying specific examples of them, made broad comparisons between texts or did not compare them at all, and made little or no comment about the feelings of the speaker or writers. Sometimes, candidates simply identified linguistic and literary features in each text, giving uncontextualised examples with isolated vocabulary items being used to make stylistic points. With the absence of context, these comments failed to engage with meaning and frequently ended up being merely simplistic. In some cases, in the weakest answers, this element of the question was often ignored altogether. In extreme cases, candidates wrote about each text individually (sometimes with great perception) but made no attempt to compare at all, thus missing the focus of the question.

It was pleasing to note that few candidates got bogged down in trying to relate what they had before them to theoretical concepts although there was the very occasional reference to Grice or, even less frequently, Labov. Needless to say, such references invariably added nothing to the responses. The discussion of Text A was generally weaker, with many candidates simply identifying features of speech such as pauses and elongations and suggesting that the speaker was nervous/hesitant or immature. In more extreme cases it was alleged that Text A contained no grammar or syntax.

Section B

Question 2: *Cupcakes and Kalashnikovs*

This was the most popular question from the two set texts, and there were many varied approaches taken by candidates to it.

Able candidates confidently selected appropriate material, and wrote in a fluent and consistent style. The best answers also made use of appropriately headed sections, reorganising the order

of the material provided and imposing an appropriate style, with some getting very close to that used by internet providers like 'Wikipedia.'

However, many candidates seemed to ignore any sense of the word limit, and wrote far too much. Some candidates ignored the rubric and wrote, often fluently, about all aspects of *Sex and the City* without referring to the instructions connected to the source. Some ignored the instruction not to quote directly and many failed to provide a heading as requested. Others, having remembered the whole article, introduced additional material beyond what was required in the task; some adopted the wrong style for an encyclopaedia entry and produced informal pieces more suited to a popular magazine containing such features as rhetorical questions, over-colloquial language and personal address.

Some candidates also neglected to check the adaptation for technical accuracy, even to the extent of ensuring the correct spelling of Candace's name(s). Many seemed keen to create fictitious information; Bushnell was given a variety of dates of birth, names of schools attended, and other 'factual' details relating to her life, and many seemed equally keen to invent first names for her parents. None of these added anything to the entries written and centres are reminded of the need for candidates to recast the material provided and only to make additions to their writing for reasons of verisimilitude.

Question 4: A House Somewhere

This was the least popular question from the two set texts, and there were limited approaches taken by candidates to it.

There were a fair number of very astute adaptations, showing flair and imagination in the handling of the source and in the framing of the overall article, many of which were both publishable and very readable. Best answers framed the article well, often within the context of a series of profiles, referring back to previous characters in the series or running trails for next week's profile. There were some very convincing approaches which used the source material in a clear way, weaving the events and the necessary background information effortlessly into a narrative which focused equally on Mr Benny *and* his story.

There were a number of awkward narratives which either ignored the context and audience – Thailand and expatriate readers – or tried too hard and unconvincingly to address a specific local audience. An over-chatty style was generally unsuccessful, as were the attempts to emulate Mr Benny's speech without actually quoting. A few candidates quoted throughout, despite the specific instruction to avoid this.

Some candidates seemed to have little idea of the appropriate format or either included very little sense of context, or wrote more than a page before getting into the actual story; some failed to provide a title. Many were far too long, or used wider material from the whole article; Centres are reminded of the need for candidates to recast the material provided and only to make additions to their writing for reasons of verisimilitude.

Questions 3 and 5: The Commentaries

Overall many commentaries tended to be generalised and descriptive, lacking a clear focus on specific details of language use. Most were able to explain, with varying degrees of success, what they had intended to achieve in their adaptation, but these ideas were often expressed through broad comments. Some candidates listed all the features they had employed in their writing, but failed to back up their comments with any reference to the text. The focus was frequently on content rather than style. Word limits seemed to be ignored by many candidates too; some candidates suffered from the fact that this piece came at the end of the examination,

and even able candidates in some cases tapered off in their response and often lost focus on what was required. Too much time was taken up in writing broadly about audience and purpose, or in commentary on the content of the adaptation and examples being given of changes or adaptations made.

Candidates fared much better when they restricted themselves to specific analysis of stylistic features within their writing, and introduced precise examples with some explanation of the effects of their stylistic choices. The best answers identified examples of language and structure, and wrote clearly about the way these features were used to shape meaning.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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