



General Certificate of Education

**English Language and Literature
2721**

Specification A

**ELLA4 Comparative Analysis through
Independent Study**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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Principal Moderator's Report

The requirements of the coursework task are:

- to establish a clear and interesting thesis in the opening paragraph and to sustain a logical investigation of that thesis throughout the essay
- to sustain a balanced comparison of the methods of the two writers and relate that clearly to the theme chosen
- to select and analyse appropriate poems / passages for the task
- to contextualise the material chosen intelligently
- to select from a range of literary and linguistic terms in order to analyse the texts and demonstrate how the writers have created their effects
- to achieve a balanced argument within the word limit of 2,500 words.

Each of these ingredients is important, although a weak performance on one or two of them does not prevent a candidate from achieving success overall; only the very best candidates achieve a synthesis of all six factors.

Centre marking

Although there was a small coursework submission in January, June was the first full coursework entry. Moderators were overwhelmingly in agreement with the marks submitted by centres and a reliable standard of marking was largely supported with intelligent, relevant annotation and thoughtful final comments. These comments, ideally, showed a mixture of language from the appropriate band on the mark grid and a more personal response to the essay concerned. Advice given by teachers on first drafts was helpful and mostly resulted in much-improved final essays. Just occasionally, internal moderation had not been given adequate attention before submission and first drafts were either missing or identical to the final essay.

Administration

Most centres made their submissions without a hitch. This was impressive since this was the first experience of coursework submission for many centres. Centres are reminded to submit both the pink and the yellow copies of the Centre Mark Form to moderators so that the yellow copy can be returned to centres by moderators when they request samples. This should be done by the closing date whether the centre has opted for postal or consortium moderation.

Consortium moderation meetings

Most of the teachers who attended these meetings found them very worthwhile. Many enjoyed the opportunity to share ideas with each other, to see how others had approached the task, and to be reassured that their own judgements had been correct and endorsed by the group. The meetings also allowed for a discussion of the occasional problems that might have arisen in this first attempt at coursework submission. The detailed and helpful comments made by teachers in reading the submissions were much appreciated by all moderators.

Choice of theme and thesis

Successful themes were straightforward: 'love' was a better choice than 'the depressing outcome of failed love affairs'; 'death' was a better theme than 'death as the ultimate loss of consciousness'. Good candidates were able to narrow and refine a simple theme into a more complex and rewarding thesis; weak candidates were unable to sustain focus if the theme was too narrow or too philosophical in sense and their essays lacked shape as a result. 'Relationships' as a theme was too broad, especially for weaker candidates who would have written with greater focus had they been more specific about the relationships – 'family' / 'romantic' / 'young and old' etc. Centres are reminded that they should check proposed titles with their Consortium Adviser if they are in any doubt about their validity. Most centres provided a lively and interesting range of themes. While a single theme for all candidates in a centre is permissible, it rarely stimulates as much independent study.

Choice of poems and passages

Sometimes candidates chose poems / passages which had little relevance to the chosen theme but were determined to make a link between the two. This resulted in very unconvincing arguments. Typically, candidates wrote successfully about two poems from each poet and about one or two passages from other genres. There is no hard and fast rule about what kind of comparison works best and other number combinations also worked well. Skimming across a large number of poems / passages was, however, not a successful tactic. It is necessary to choose specific sections in order to analyse language in detail. Clearly, an extract of eighty lines does not allow close detailed analysis of the entire extract, but choosing that larger section may be helpful in contextualising an argument. It is entirely permissible to analyse the language of a shorter section of the chosen extract or make language points drawn from the full extract and these were approaches used successfully by many candidates.

Choice of texts

A wide range of texts was chosen from the list and all 24 texts were used to some extent. There was no particular combination that stimulated better essays than any other. Those who chose two poetry texts often found it easier to make language comparisons although the mixing of drama / novel / short story with poetry enabled candidates to develop comparisons of context and relationship more fully.

Quality of coursework essays

There was no doubt that virtually all centres had a clear idea of the task and the majority of candidates produced thoughtful and logical essays. Some allowed themselves a biographical preamble to the essay which added little. Any contextual information should have a direct bearing on the argument of the essay. Technical comparison is often difficult to sustain but the better candidates managed to do just that. Weaker candidates tended to set up a thematic comparison, then discuss each poem / passage in isolation, then restate the initial comparison at the end. A fully integrated comparison is almost impossible to achieve and there should be allowance for the development of observations on one poem over a couple of paragraphs before making comparative points on another poem. One very effective approach was to state an interesting thesis, explore it by comparing one poem / passage from each writer and then go on to consider the wider implication of the thesis in a second or even third poem / passage. The coursework task should enable candidates to display the range of the skills they have accumulated in their study of the other units. The opportunity to improve upon coursework throughout the year means that high standards of performance are expected in coursework. These standards have largely been met by candidates.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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