



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

**English Language and Literature      ELLA4  
A**

**(Specification 2720)**

**Unit 4: Comparative Analysis through  
Independent Study**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **General**

The requirements of the coursework task are:

- to establish a clear and interesting thesis in the opening paragraph and 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 though 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**

There was a very small coursework entry for the January series which seemed to be a mixture of resubmissions and first-timers; sometimes just the strongest candidates in a centre. Those resubmitting generally improved on their previous submissions' though not always by very much. Moderators were happy with the standard and range of marking and level of comment by centres. Centres are reminded that first drafts and photocopies of selected extracts should be submitted together with the final essay.

## **Administration**

There were a number of late withdrawals. It is helpful for the Centre Mark Form to be submitted to the moderator noting the withdrawals by the closing date (January 10<sup>th</sup>). It is clear that centres who attend the autumn standardisation meeting complete administration and marking tasks most efficiently. All centres must keep their moderator informed of any change of email address for contacts.

## **Consortium moderation meetings**

There were insufficient entries for these to take place this January.

## **Choice of theme and thesis**

Some candidates still chose complex titles that they were unable to follow up with a clearly argued essay. Titles should be straightforward and not excessively philosophical or widely contextual. The opening thesis paragraph should be brief and should state the line of investigation without elaboration. Complexity of argument is still possible in the main body of the essay. There is no need to list the poems/passages to be considered; these should be obvious both in the reading of the essay itself and from the accompanying photocopies. Candidates would be well-advised in the re-working of their essays following the first draft to inspect their opening paragraph carefully; often the essay that they have written would be better served with a different title and, sometimes, a different theme.

## **Choice of poems and passages**

Candidates usually made sensible choices of poems and passages without forcing inappropriate ones to fit a preconceived theme. Teachers should urge candidates to change their source material if they have chosen wrongly or if the poems/passages no longer match the theme chosen.

## **Choice of texts**

Centres continue to range widely across the prescribed list of texts.

### **Quality of coursework essays**

Once again, centres submitting coursework in January had a clear idea of the task and the majority of candidates produced thoughtful and logical essays. Proof reading is an essential part of the task and candidates should be encouraged to give this priority.

Comparison is a difficult skill and some comparisons in January were thin and forced. A comparative framework is established better by comparing both writers' methods from the outset. The 'anchor text' method, where one writer's work is analysed and then the other's compared in the second half, is less effective for this coursework task than a more obvious integration. It is quite permissible to allow two or even three paragraphs to establish an analysis of one poem and its link to the thesis but the reader should be aware at all times of the comparative framework. Similarities between the two chosen writers' methods may be just as relevant as their differences. As explained in the June 2010 Report on the unit, one very effective approach to comparison 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. Once again, 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.