



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2012**

**English Language and Literature A ELLA4  
(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 to 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, once again, a very small coursework entry for the January series. 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. Centres are reminded of the importance of rigorous internal standardisation. There can be a tendency by centres to mark weaker folders especially more leniently. However, where this happens, folders are likely to fall out of tolerance and may then result in the centre being subject to an adjustment. It is crucial that centres use the standardisation material for the unit as a benchmark for the standards to be applied.

### **Administration**

In the event of late withdrawals, it is important that the Centre Mark Form is still 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 should keep their moderator informed of any change of email address for contacts.

### **Titles**

These must begin 'Compare the ways in which...'. Variations on this formula are not permissible. Some candidates continue to choose 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. 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.

### **The thesis paragraph**

The opening thesis paragraph should be brief and state the line of investigation without giving examples; these should be saved for the ensuing paragraphs. Reasoned argument should be evident in the main body of the essay. Candidates would be well-advised in the re-working of their essays after the first draft to inspect their thesis paragraph carefully; often the essay that they have written would be better served with a different thesis and, sometimes, a different theme. A poor essay invariably has a weak thesis or no recognisable thesis at all.

### **Making comparisons**

A comparative framework is established better by comparing both writers' methods from the outset. The 'anchor text' method in which 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. One effective approach to comparison is 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 poem/passage.

### **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 the poems/passages no longer match the theme chosen.

### **Quality of coursework essays**

Once again, the 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. 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.

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