AQA

ASSESSMENT and
QUALIFICATIONS
ALLIANCE

General Certificate of Education

English Language and Literature 1726

Specification B

ELLB1   **Introduction to Language and Literature Study**

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - January series

As this was the first sitting of the paper, it may be useful to centres for the Examiners' Report to focus on ways that candidates can be encouraged to maximise their performance in each question.

Question 1

In this question candidates were asked to compare unseen extracts from two guidebooks to London: Baedecker's *London and its Environs 1900* and *Time Out London* published in 2007. The extracts were about bus travel.

- The first part of the question asks candidates to compare *how the texts are structured and present their material*. It is not enough for candidates merely to focus on the layout and presentation of the texts, as many weaker answers did. They should first and foremost examine how the ideas and content in each of the texts are structured and organised. Candidates who focused exclusively (or almost exclusively) on font size, emboldening, italicization and so on were unable to access the higher mark bands. Centres should make their candidates aware of this. It will not always be the case that the unseen texts chosen for this question will have any graphological or presentational features for candidates to home in on.

- There is a key word *context* in the second bullet point in the question that candidates must pay attention to. Where they fail to do so they can be led seriously astray. For example, there were a number of candidates who seemed not to appreciate that they were reading a text for visitors to London published in 1900 and that therefore comments on the fact that it was out of date or old-fashioned were futile. Candidates must learn to appreciate the context of production (in this case of 1900 for visitors to London) and not to criticise a text read under different circumstances and not by the original audience.

- A further key element of the second bullet point is *language choices*. Candidates are expected to comment on the way language is being used in the texts to achieve their purposes and any candidates who ignore this requirement will be unable to gain marks in the higher bands. They must also realise that assertion without evidence is unhelpful. It is not enough, for example, to state that language is *formal* or *informal* without providing any corroborative illustration for this. Nor is mere feature-spotting a key to success. Points made must be related to audience, purpose, context and effect.

- Candidates should pay close attention to the texts in front of them and not make assumptions based on what they expect to see rather than what is there. For instance, older texts are not automatically lexically and grammatically complex and modern texts are not automatically simpler, as many candidates seemed to assume. *The only exceptions are Heritage routes 9 and 15, which are operated by the world-famous and much-loved Routemaster buses* is not grammatically or lexically simple, whereas *The chief point in Southwark is the hostelry called the Elephant and Castle* is, though the lexis (*hostelry* for *pub*) may be somewhat formal.

Question 2

In this question candidates were asked to compare two texts from the Anthology that presented the excitement and adventure of travel.

- Despite the desire on the part of examiners to set a question that would allow candidates the widest possible choice of texts from the Anthology, it is not possible to set one that would be appropriate for all texts (unless, of course, the question were simply *Compare two texts from the Anthology*!). Whilst there was plenty of scope for candidates to choose from a suitable range of texts, there are some that cannot really be said to present the excitement and adventure of travel. Candidates who chose *pages from an EC passport, Thomas'*

Railway ABC, Adlestrop and, improbably, *Booking Conditions* had to demonstrate massive ingenuity to make these relevant to the question. Many candidates were desperate to find evidence of excitement and adventure where none existed! That said, there was a great variety of suitable texts chosen, the most popular being: *Postcard 2, Carnet de Voyage, Country Walking, Michael Palin, A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains, National Geographic* and *Heart of Darkness*. The most popular of all was Karen 100's travel blog detailing her holiday to Vietnam. There was a feeling amongst examiners that some candidates had been entered for the examination too early and that they were forced to choose unsuitable texts because these were the only ones they had so far covered.

- It is vital that candidates compare their chosen texts. Free standing treatments of texts significantly limit the credit which examiners can give. There is no preferred model for how candidates organise their comparison, but the most popular method was to deal with the same aspect of both texts before moving on to compare a second and subsequent aspects. Weaker candidates, of course, considered it sufficient to compare the content of the texts and provide summaries thereof.

- The list of bullet points provided in the question is intended to help and guide candidates. It is not intended to be a check list of features of a text to be followed slavishly. Not all texts, of course, offer candidates the opportunity to write about each of the bullets. There are many texts in the Anthology in which neither layout and presentation nor sound patterning have any importance whatsoever. This did not prevent some candidates writing about them! There is no need for a candidate to attempt to cover each bullet point in the answer.

- Quotations and supportive evidence from texts need to be analysed and explained. It is not sufficient merely to cite part of a text and assume that the point the candidate is trying to make will be self-evident to the examiner.

- The mark scheme rewards *consistently accurate use of language and appropriate terminology* and rightly so, as this is an examination in English Language and Literature. It was pleasing to see that many candidates were able to write accurately and to use terminology sensibly. Candidates and their teachers need, however, to be aware that pyrotechnic displays of terminology are no substitute for careful analysis and comment on the effects of particular language choices on the part of a speaker or writer. Such use of terminology can encourage candidates to indulge in pointless feature-spotting which will gain little reward. Many examiners commented on the appearance of the same terminology in many candidates' answers from a large variety of centres, often yoking heterogeneous ideas unconvincingly together. The prime example of this was the excessive use of the term *asyndetic listing* which occurred in countless answers and very rarely in any illuminating manner. Terminology needs to be the servant not the master of a candidate.

- Finally, could all teachers make it their business to drum into candidates that not every question is rhetorical (or even rehetorical!).

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades
Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the **Results statistics** page of the AQA Website.