



General Certificate of Education

**English Language and Literature
1726**

Specification B

**ELLB1 Introduction to Language and
Literature Study**

Report on the Examination

2009 examination - June series

This Report on the Examination uses the [new numbering system](#)

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Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.

Question 01

The unseen texts for Question 01 can be of any genre, as long as they each reflect the theme of the Anthology. To have set a poem may have come as a surprise to some, but for many candidates it elicited a full and focused response. Perhaps such candidates were aware that in order to write well about poetry they need to focus on language, form and structure and to use evidence to support their points. Of course, this is true for all texts, not just poetry. It is perhaps worth indicating to candidates that comments purporting to be on a poem's overall structure that refer to details of enjambement, line length and rhythm are missing the point. Much more fruitful would have been comments in this case that referred to the structural repetition of lines 1 ('A mocking mirror', 'the black water turns') and 13 ('A magic mirror', 'the black water tells') and its effects. Some candidates were a little overwhelmed by the poem and resorted to pulling out some features and making generic comments such as *this use of alliteration draws the reader in and grabs their attention* or *the simile is powerful and creates an image in the reader's mind*. Another tendency of weaker candidates was simply to list features, sometimes with quotations, but with little or no attempt to discuss effect at all. Sometimes candidates simply repeated the quotation in their analysis as in, for example *the lovers are compared to bats which makes us think of bats wrapped round each other*. Unfortunately, many candidates saw the poem as an example of archaic lexis, despite the fact that it was written in 1950!

The extract from the resource pack for children proved very accessible for candidates to deal with and even the weakest found something rewarding to say about it. However, it is not enough, as some did, to focus on the visual aspects of the text. It does candidates no favours if they write for an entire side on the significance of the choice of the colour green. There must be some consideration given to the language of the text as well. The best candidates did just this; nor did they neglect to consider the more challenging language of the eye-witness descriptions of the canal basin written in 1858 and 1881 that were found in Source Sheet C. Too many candidates spent their time writing about A and B and ignored (or forgot to turn the page?) C. The new 'alliteration' for this paper now appears to be 'high (and 'low') frequency lexis' together with 'asyndetic' listing and 'syndetic' listing. It is rare to find any candidate using these terms with any meaningfulness and all candidates would be well advised to eschew the parroting of technical terminology in favour of close engagement with the language of a text and a consideration of the effects created.

Question 02

There was a great variety of texts chosen for this question and there were very few completely unsuitable choices. Some did however crop up and candidates either ignored the fact that they were unsuitable and wrote what they would have written on the text come what may or they went into painful contortions to justify their choice. It was difficult for even the most charitable examiner to accept the choice of the opening page of a passport or the entry on *travel* from the *Oxford English Dictionary Online* as suitable choices for answering the question. Nor was *Thomas the Tank Engine*. If candidates convincingly justified their choice of texts, then examiners accepted this choice, despite any initial misgivings. So, for example, the candidate who defined different ways of travel as armchair and actual was able to write successfully about both of the Otranto texts. The most popular and successful choices for this question were, 'Always Our Likely Finale', *Great British Bus Journeys*, *Country Walking* magazine, *National Geographic*, *Heart of Darkness* and *Dombey and Son*. Other slightly less popular choices were *A Lady's Life in the Rocky Mountains*, the Vietnam blog and *Carnet de Voyage*.

'Ways of travelling' in the question was intended to be entirely straightforward but many candidates went into mental contortions trying to make it more complex, creating 'hidden meanings' and 'spiritual', 'personal' or 'metaphorical' journeys in the texts. All questions on this paper 'do what it says on the tin'.

Most successful answers compared texts which had clear differences, since identifying general similarities is often fruitless. It is a real challenge to compare texts from the same genre and whilst there were some excellent comparisons of Conrad and Dickens, for many these (and others) descended into bland feature-spotting. Nor is it enough for candidates to rely on comparisons of content. Often candidates who resorted to this method had not clearly identified for themselves significant differences in genre, or purpose, or audience and so were trapped into description of content. Examiners do look to reward well planned comparisons that demonstrate clear systematic structure. Too often this systematic structure was notable by its absence, and its replacement by answers that bounced from point to point in pinball machine fashion without completing any chain of thought was not satisfactory. It would also be worth pointing out to candidates that the time constraints that they are under in this examination means that there is no room for elegant introductions to their answers and, even more so, no time for or point in the conclusion which merely repeats what the examiner has just read in the body of the answers.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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