



General Certificate of Education

**English Language and Literature
1726**

Specification B

**ELLB1 Introduction to Language and
Literature Study**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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Question 1

This proved to be a productive and fair pairing that gave all candidates from the very strongest to the weakest the opportunity to write as well as they could on the two texts. Very few candidates found the pairing or the task beyond their understanding. It is worth reminding centres that the unseen texts can be of any genre, spoken or written, as long as they are reflective of the theme of the current Anthology. Examiners are bound only by this consideration when choosing the unseen texts, not by what has appeared on previous question papers.

The need to compare the texts is paramount and those candidates who wrote free-standing accounts of each text without attempting any comparison inevitably lost marks. Not all language methods are relevant when comparing particular texts and candidates need to be selective in the methods that they choose to employ. What is useful for one pairing of texts may not be so for another. So, on this paper, it was fruitless to attempt to compare the layout and presentation of the texts as it was irrelevant. Many wasted time, for example, in describing the layout of the transcript and comparing the use of brackets and punctuation.

Some candidates quickly abandoned text B once having observed that it appeared to be in code and hence incomprehensible (to them). Some credit could be given for this observation. Impressively some candidates looked carefully enough to identify exactly what was going on and explored the exchange in detail, finding much evidence for a range of contrasts with text A. A few thought that Roger was one of the participants in the exchanges and some wondered what a taxi was doing on the runway.

Question 2

Again, this proved to be a very fair question that elicited some really good answers that were fully focused on the task and the steer in the question, showing detailed knowledge of appropriately chosen texts. The question was framed broadly enough to allow candidates a wide range of suitable texts to compare, but, inevitably, there were still candidates who chose inappropriately. *Thomas the Tank Engine*, the opening pages of a passport, Mr Dombey's journey and Christian Wolmar's account of the current state of British railways are probably not the texts that would most encourage people to travel. Even Marlow would be unlikely to wish to repeat his journey up the Congo, despite the desperation of some candidates to see *Heart of Darkness* as some sort of travel brochure. There did seem to be some candidates of the 'I-will-use-this-text-whether-relevant-or-not' persuasion. Such candidates often wrote detailed accounts and accurate analyses of these texts but which made absolutely no reference to 'encourage to travel', merely mentioning 'encourage to read on'. Few candidates used the non-persuasive texts well enough to select material that reflected the writer's enthusiasm and hence could have generated relevant responses. It was very evident when candidates had had plenty of practice in comparing relevant texts and understood that the point of comparison is connected to identifying generic and stylistic differences. Perhaps the prize for the most ingenious attempt at comparing unsuitable texts should go to the candidate who claimed that a postcard and *Heart of Darkness* were suitable bed-fellows as 'they have the same audience, as who is to say that the recipient of the postcard has not read *Heart of Darkness*.' Who, indeed?

To end: the oft-repeated reminder to centres and candidates that it is usually unprofitable to fill candidates' heads with technical terms which they do not fully understand and cannot use profitably in the examination. To give candidates the impression that examiners wish to see them using obscure terminology and that such use is likely to gain them an A is not helpful and can prove irritating to examiners who see answer after answer in which candidates purport to see vast significance in the writer's use of zeugma, alliteration, syndetic/asyndetic lists.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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