



General Certificate of Education

**English Language and Literature
2726**

Specification B

ELLB3 Talk in Life and Literature

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - January series

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It has been interesting to see how candidates have adapted this January to the demands of Talk in Life and Literature (Unit 3). Those candidates who were best prepared and wrote structured answers with plenty of textual support were most successful; those who found the demands of the questions taxing or unexpected and wrote generalised or evasive answers did not achieve as well. However, virtually all candidates were able to complete both questions without a problem. The benefit of Question 5 being compulsory meant that more time could be devoted to planning the answer. (Plans should be succinct, however.) In terms of text popularity, *Hamlet* and *A Streetcar Named Desire* were almost equal. A small percentage of centres chose *Translations* and, mysteriously, a single candidate wrote on *The Rivals*.

Questions 1-4

Candidates wrote on the set texts with widely differing degrees of success, depending on how well the candidate knew the play. A wrong context can ruin an answer! Success was also determined by whether candidates understood the steer ('delusion' was surprisingly problematic for some in Question 4); whether they used the steer plus guidelines to structure their answer, and whether they used text support. Some centres (possibly teaching NTB5 in the past) seemed to have encouraged candidates to follow the NTB5 'bullet points' approach. This was fine as far as it went, but led to some candidates ignoring the steer, resulting in text description and feature-spotting. Some candidates wrote elegant *literary* essays (a temptation presented by having a steer), resulting in a complete omission of comments on discourse, and lost opportunities to gain marks.

The text which overall produced the best answers was *A Streetcar Named Desire*. The passage from *Hamlet* proved challenging for those who didn't know Act 1 well enough. The precise reason why Horatio and Marcellus were invited to 'swear' (they had seen the Ghost twice) was not recognised. Some candidates thought that Hamlet was already 'mad' and showing the 'antic disposition'. However, there were some very good answers too, making impressive use of textual detail, both literary and linguistic, to support their argument. *Translations* proved to be a stimulating text for candidates – the best answers were impressive, balancing close textual analysis with a confident grasp of the complex social, political and cultural issues addressed in the play.

Successful candidates:

- Know the set text **thoroughly**/inside out
- Explain the steer **before** starting to analyse the passage
- Don't write a running commentary, but use the **steer** to structure the answer
- Remember to note **dramatic effects**/likely audience reaction
- **Balance** comments on character/theme/imagery with comments on discourse or other linguistic features.

Question 5

The task here is carefully spelled out. Candidates **must** read the question carefully, and **compare exactly** what is specified. Candidates must also make sure that they read the **description** of each text. Time spent re-reading the texts **before** starting to write will prove invaluable.

Successful comparison of Texts A and B depends upon a clear understanding of the difference between spontaneous and crafted talk.

- Spontaneous talk is recorded and transcribed in written form by an *observer*.

- Crafted talk in a literary text has been created and written down by an *author*.
- There is no such thing as a 'spontaneous transcript'!
- Spontaneous speech has no audience but the **speakers** involved. Students and researchers can *comment* on the transcribed speech, but they are not an audience
- Crafted talk between **characters** always has an intended audience. Sometimes there may be a *dual audience* as in Text B (Pamela's parents are the internal audience) whereas the readers of Richardson's novels are the external audience.

The most successful candidates are those who **compare** context, genre, audience and purpose and use these as **structuring** points in their answer, together with any other extra point identified in the question (narrative voice in the January 2010 paper). The comparison of *attitudes and values* is often 'built in' to other aspects of the comparison, or can be compared separately.

In relation to the January 2010 paper, the most successful answers used the comparison of *context purpose, audience, narrative voice* and *attitudes and values* to structure their answer. The least successful wrote a running commentary mentioning these features randomly, or compared superficial features (negative comparison) such as 'Text A has these features: Text B doesn't'. Most candidates noted the difference between 18th century discourse and 20th century speech but few explored or understood it.

Overview

Examiners had the impression that many candidates had been entered by their centres to try out the new paper, or to use it as a mock examination, so it was not surprising that less successful candidates did not know their set texts thoroughly (Questions 1-4) or failed to balance linguistic and literary perspectives on the passages. On Question 5 less successful candidates did not comprehend the differences between spontaneous and crafted speech, or realise that comparisons had to be explained and supported by textual reference. However, all this is remediable. It was encouraging to see that more successful candidates were able to perform very well indeed.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.