



General Certificate of Education

**English Language and Literature
1726**

Specification B

**ELLB1 Introduction to Language and
Literature Study**

Report on the Examination

2010 examination - June series

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As most candidates, when answering Question 1 this session, began their answers by commenting on the photograph of the couple enjoying a glass of champagne whilst overlooking the Taj Mahal, this report will similarly commence by commenting on candidates' response to layout and presentation in texts. It is undoubtedly true that the layout and presentation of many texts is an integral part of the communication of meaning and that therefore it is an entirely legitimate part of a candidate's response to analyse and comment critically on this aspect of a text. It is important, of course, that a candidate links what is said about layout and presentation to the other methods through which a text communicates meaning. Indeed, there are few candidates who do not at least attempt a holistic view of a text. However, there are still far too many candidates for whom the discussion and analysis of pictures, colour, fonts and various typographical tricks of the trade constitute the main part of their answer. It is acknowledged by examiners that this is probably the easiest aspect of a text for candidates (especially the weaker) to discuss, but centres would be well-advised to remind candidates that over- (or even exclusive) concentration on this one aspect of a text's communicative strategies is not likely to result in their gaining the higher marks. Candidates should remember that this is not a Communication Studies or Media Studies examination, but an English AS level and that examiners expect a well-informed analysis of the structure, discourse and language of a text in addition to its layout and presentation if the candidate is to have access to the higher mark bands. One examiner was moved to comment that she now knows all she needs to know about bold headings, text boxes and coloured fonts to last a lifetime. Those candidates who took refuge when commenting on Text 11 from the *Anthology* (the Booking Conditions for the Arblaster & Clarke Wine Tours Worldwide) in expanding at length on a discussion of the regal nature of the purple band at the top of the page, the logo and the (literally) small print being used to deter or even prevent people from reading the text probably betrayed the fact that they too fell into this category.

Both questions on the ELLB1 examination paper require candidates to compare texts and centres will know that candidates who fail to do this will be penalised. Centres will also know that examiners do not favour one approach to comparison over another. As long as a candidate clearly demonstrates to the examiner that comparison is occurring, then all is well. However, comparisons do need to be systematic to be valid. There are some candidates who liberally sprinkle their answers with comparison markers (*on the other hand, in comparison, whereas*, for instance) but who are not comparing like with like. If features a, b and c are commented on in Text A, then the same features should be commented on in Text B. It is also advisable to compare significant rather than superficial or trivial features of a text. A comparison of register, for example, is likely to yield more marks than a comparison of bullet points.

It would be useful if centres could remind candidates that comparison does not usually involve them in a desperate search for polar opposites. For example, many candidates struggled with formality/informality because they regard them as the aforesaid polar opposites rather than seeing them as points on a continuum. Candidates would do well to realise that whilst some texts are very formal and some very informal, most are somewhere in the middle, balancing formal with informal features. It is the candidate who can explain and illustrate the nuances of the relationship that the writer is trying to establish with the reader rather than seeking an either/or stance that will score high marks.

Time to turn briefly to the question of terminology. Centres who require further illumination on this matter are advised to turn to previous Examiners' Reports for this unit. Suffice it to say at this juncture that, despite what almost every candidate appears to think, most questions are not rhetorical; whether a list is syndetic or asyndetic is hardly ever going to be the most important feature of a text and not every imperative is a mitigated one. Certain terminology, like trouser widths, seems to flap in or out of fashion according to which book has been studied, but some, like the ones mentioned above are, mixing metaphors, hardy perennials. The important message to communicate to candidates is that terminology is only a means to an end and that what will garner them the most marks is an informed and critical comparison between the most significant aspects of their chosen texts.

Choice of texts for Question 2 this session did not prove to be a problem for the vast majority of candidates. Yes, there were the isolated few who thought that Joseph Conrad, Andrew Mayne and Edward Thomas were informative texts, but most candidates chose wisely and well. Short texts such as the postcards do not usually provide all but the ablest candidates with enough 'meat' to get their teeth into, whilst those texts whose primary function was not to inform but to persuade (the Airmiles letter, for example) or entertain (Michael Palin, for example) caused problems for some candidates. The most popular and entirely appropriate pairing of texts were the Lonely Planet Guide to Otranto (Text 4) and the *Country Walking* text on Lancashire and Clitheroe (Text 8) and there were many good answers that used these two texts. It is, however, playing with fire given the age profile of some members of the examining team, to suggest that Text 8 'lists phone numbers as old men and women won't know where to go to find information' or that 'the writer uses high frequency language as it's for old people who need simplicity and a nice view whereas Text 4 has low frequency lexis which will appeal to the young who prefer a challenge'. It was interesting to know that 'Text 8's audience is old people because I don't think that young people would want to travel to Lancashire' opined one candidate from the Home Counties. Dangerous territory to venture into!

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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