



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2012**

**English Language and Literature B ELLB2  
(Specification 2725)**

**Unit 2: Themes in Language and Literature**

***Report on the Examination***

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Only a handful of centres entered candidates writing on the 2012 themes. In view of the small numbers, there is limited evidence as to how effectively the new themes are working, especially as some of the pairings were not represented in the entry but moderators did not identify any obvious difficulties.

Entries for this session were almost exclusively from candidates who were resubmitting their coursework from last summer. While, as might be expected, there were relatively fewer folders of exceptionally high quality, there were nevertheless many submissions that demonstrated skilful and interesting writing. Generally these candidates were also the most punctilious in meeting rubric requirements about word counts, *Evidence of Planning* and submission of extracts. Candidates understood the importance of developing the coursework responses around the set theme, both for Part A and for Part B. There were far fewer examples of springboarding, i.e. developing creative pieces that do not throw light on, or make use of, the original text. A broad generalisation, however, is that there were far fewer examples of stylish and entertaining writing for the creative piece than would be found in the main entry in the summer. There was heavy reliance on monologues and diaries which did little more than re-tell what is already known, without creating a credible or interesting new angle. Many of these were considerably over-rewarded by the centres. It may be that the more able candidates who are the more confident writers succeed first time round or that improvements to the coursework undertaken after the first submission are concentrated on the investigation rather than on the creative piece.

### **Interpreting the requirements of the coursework**

It is very easy for the moderator to recognise a well structured and carefully worded comparison of two chosen extracts, demonstrating how the set theme is presented. There were many such submissions. Even where candidates were able to achieve only a balance of strengths and weaknesses, there was much good work based around the way that writers use language and narrative technique to convey meaning and engage with the reader. If, on the other hand, candidates do not understand clearly what they have to do, writing for Part A can miss its mark. A significant number of responses fail to engage closely with the language and structure of the chosen extracts or to do so in a way which is little better than feature-spotting. There is no way that supportive annotation from teachers can disguise where the candidate has neglected the focus of the coursework task in favour of broad discussions of the theme across the set texts, supported by excessive background information and assertions about the context of production and reception. There is a place for some background information but not at the expense of the focused comparison which requires close engagement with the crafting of the texts. Cross-references to other parts of the set texts should be directly relevant to the discussion of the chosen extracts and should not unbalance the discussion or be unduly discursive. At its worst, excessive sections of general discussion, paraphrasing of the text and summary of the narrative suggest that candidates have seen the film rather than read the book.

### **Internal assessment of coursework**

Teacher annotation is becoming increasingly more useful to the moderation process. There is much perceptive and detailed commentary and the practice of simply flagging up assessment objectives (AOs) in the margin is now quite rare. There were many centres where internal standardisation had been effective in ensuring that the marking criteria had been appropriately applied. On the other hand, there is a distinct tendency to mark weaker folders more leniently and to push marks to the top of the mark band. Where this affects both pieces, it is inevitable that the folders fall out of tolerance. Feedback Forms to centres stress the importance of using the on-line standardisation material as a benchmark.

## **Administration**

It comes as no surprise that those centres which pay the greatest attention to detail are also the most successful in helping their candidates to produce work of a good quality. While complete indifference to the requirements of administration is very rare, it is noticeable that in January there are a number of centres where the re-submission arrangements, including the marking, are being handled by teachers who are unfamiliar with the coursework unit. Moderators report numerous instances in which centres have failed to submit copies of the candidates' chosen extracts or even a clear reference to the text. A number of centres are not using the latest version of the Candidate Record Form (CRF) which requires candidates to enter the exact word counts for their two pieces. Some word counts recorded on the submissions are ambiguous and occasionally not credible. Moderators check the word counts which must give accurate information as to the length of the piece and the contribution of quotations from the text. A number of centres are allowing their candidates to submit rough notes and rough planning sheets as *Evidence of Planning*. The specification requires a brief prose summary of the candidate's intentions, preferably handwritten. Rough notes aid the writer but do not necessarily inform the reader.

## **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

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

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