



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

**English Language and Literature B ELLB1F
(Specification 2725)**

**Unit 1: Introduction to Language and Literature
Study**

Report on the Examination

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Question 1

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Question 2

There was little evidence to suggest that students struggled to find relevant texts, although many struggled to fit their prepared answers to the question, achieving intermittent relevance at best. There were some exceptions, however, to this. *The Importance of Being Earnest* proved difficult for students as they found it problematic to justify bread and butter as luxurious foodstuffs and most failed to look at the setting or the function of Merriman as evidence of a luxurious lifestyle. The title of the Vegetarian Society's piece proved a false friend to many: 'Seven **Simple** Steps'. After identifying this, there was little to be said of relevance to the steer. Nor was it unusual to see Nigella used as an example of 'simple' or 'luxurious', depending, presumably, on the student's gastronomic experience.

Text 2 was a popular choice, but only the very best students did it well. It doesn't lend itself well to the straightforward "here-are-some-features-that-suggest-luxury" approach, because once you've mentioned lexis there's little else to comment on, unless you can develop an answer that links luxurious dining with social pretensions and family tensions, and only the best could do that. Many blended and confused 'father' and 'mother' and did not understand 'autocrat'. Poor UA Fanthorpe stands accused both of elitism and deliberate mystification. Many paired this with *Porterhouse Blue*, a good choice, in that this also deals with the social worm in the apple of luxury, but with much less subtlety. No students have noticed that the swan stuffed with widgeon, according to the Dean, tastes a bit like the Artful Dodger ("gamin flavour"): could this be a profitable, if tenuous, link? The extracts from novels (Trollope, Dickens and Beckett) were popular and fruitful, but the tension and social subtleties of Galsworthy were a bridge too far for many.

Many students are uncomfortable writing about poetry and perceptive comments on poetic form were few and far between. Too many students try to discuss features such as layout on the page, alliteration, enjambment as if there are no actual words, phrases or sentences involved, trying to interpret the feature on its own and making decontextualized, vague and generic comments as a result. A similar thing happens with punctuation, where students don't seem to realise that, as it is not in most texts optional, comments about the numbers of commas or full stops do not effective analysis make. It's a bit like a doctor diagnosing a patient's condition and saying, "You've got spots." Similar comments about the type of font chosen for most prose texts are equally a waste of ink. One candidate spent a whole page describing the layout of a transcript, earning no marks at all.

Finally, a reminder about the importance of the steer in Question 2. It is all too easy for some students to write page after page of comments about texts in a desperate 'all-I-know-or-at-least-all-I-can-remember' approach. This is a less than profitable stratagem. To be able to identify relevant (to the steer) aspects of texts and write about them cogently is a much higher level skill than describing features and content in isolation from their communicative effects.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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