



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)  
January 2011**

**English Literature A**

**LITA2**

**(Specification 2740)**

**Unit 2: Creative Study**

***Report on the Examination***

---

Further copies of this Report on **the Examination** are available from: [aqa.org.uk](http://aqa.org.uk)

Copyright © 2011 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

**Copyright**

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334).  
Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

Entries for this examination were 1,324: down slightly on the 1678 candidates who entered in January 2010. All three options Victorian Literature; World War One Literature and The Struggle for Identity in Modern Literature were represented with more candidates opting to answer on the first two options than on option 3.

Much of the very best work appeared to have been the result of individually negotiated tasks and as with every examination sequence so far a great deal of the less successful work was predictable and formulaic with some centres offering only a couple of questions or sometimes only a single question per option. As ever, candidates frequently struggled to find anything interesting or original to say in response to a question which had evidently been given to everyone else in their group. Transformational writing continues to develop and thrive within the prose option and moderators reported that they saw many fluent and engaging responses. Almost by definition transformational writing will free a candidate from the shackles of a “whole group answer” and perhaps more centres should try it with candidates who may benefit from a more liberating approach to English Literature.

It is pleasing to report that many more centres than in previous examination sequences have responded to the request to get candidates to address all of AO3 in response to the drama task and though there remain a few persistent outposts in which the second part of AO3 is ignored, the message that candidates need to address all of the relevant AO's to maximise their chances of success has largely been heeded. Therefore the most useful drama tasks in the January 2011 examination sequence demonstrated the importance of creating opportunities not only for the candidates to compare and contrast but also for them to do so against a backdrop of literary debate.

Further evidence that previous advice has been heeded is that in this examination sequence a clear majority of candidates ensured that the correct proportion of their drama answer was spent in analysing and responding to their selected drama text (about 70%) and that their non-drama text (where a second play was not offered) only occupied about 30% of their answer. Several problems remain more obstinate and still create difficulties. For instance, not all candidates seemed to want to respond to the dramatic and theatrical resonances of the plays offered for examination. Many candidates still wrote about drama as though it were no different to prose and a significant minority made little or no attempt to explore the significance of stage directions, acting opportunities, direction or the potentials of the play in the theatre. It is hoped that future candidates will acknowledge the importance of genre within English Literature.

That literature is a construct is an idea of which more candidates are clearly becoming aware. Writers make choices about form, structure and language and those candidates who were able to analyse writers' decisions were invariably impressive. As ever, candidates who could use text selectively and with aplomb always performed well. The most successful use of quotations is brief but frequent, (“short integrated quotation” or S.I.Q.) accompanied by analytical comments that do not merely paraphrase or present narrative but explore the form, structure and language used by the writers. Less successful candidates still cling to the belief that they will do well by relaying the plot and narrative of their chosen texts via the use of “hanging” quotation which does not move into analysis or which offers no evaluation of writers' techniques. The least successful candidates still tend to relate details of the narrative or simply tell the stories of their texts without quotation or, when they do utilise quotation, feel the need to paraphrase or ‘translate’ the quotation presumably to help the moderator understand it.

Folder length remains a minor problem here and there. The 2,500 word limit per folder is there for a reason: it allows the best candidates to demonstrate that their work is “well-organised” and “coherent” (both band 4 descriptors for AO1). Over-long work often looked weak and out of focus in comparison to answers which were within word limit tolerances. As

with January and June 2010 those candidates who were awarded maximum marks were within 5% or so of the word limit and demonstrated the sort of organisational skills which will help prepare them for the demands of the non-coursework examination.

Candidates who understood the Assessment Objectives and in particular the relative weighting of the Assessment Objectives invariably performed better than candidates who were vague about what the prose task and the drama task were asking them to do. The relevant detail about the weightings of the Assessment Objectives is laid out in the Specification itself and has been made available in the last two Principal Moderator's Reports. Centres and candidates who still do not fully understand the weightings are referred to those documents.

Most marking in centres was accurate and the best centres had obviously carried out careful internal moderation. Most centres, too, fully engage the process of marking but some still do not: it is disheartening for a moderator to view page after page of candidates' work with nothing from the centre written on it. It is also very easy to disagree with a mark for which there has been no formative rationale and very little in the way of summative commentary. Therefore the most successful and accurate centres utilise the marking conventions and commit themselves to the levels of engagement detailed in the Model Marked Scripts, available in Coursework Standardisation Material booklets. In this examination sequence as in earlier ones moderators sometimes had problems confirming a centre's grades when the supporting statement made general reference to the band descriptors in the marking grid but failed to provide evidence of these by underlining and annotating the relevant sections in the body of the work. In terms of marking, teachers should also ensure that weaknesses in written expression are not ignored. In coursework, it is a reasonable expectation that candidates will take the opportunity to check and redraft their work to a good standard; where this is not the case the weaknesses of AO1 must be reflected in the final mark.

The font size and spacing selected by a candidate should allow the teacher marking the folder to conduct a written dialogue in the margins of the work. 12 point font in a sensible style is best for this.

Centres are advised not to make uncritical use of anonymous and potentially error-prone contributor-sourced web-sites. All candidates are reminded that they need to include a bibliography including internet sites and, in particular, an accurate word count at the end of each essay in the folder.

### **Commentary on Prose Assignments**

The transformational prose task continues to present a stimulating and demanding challenge for candidates and an enjoyable reading experience for moderators. Popular tasks still revolve mainly around letters and diary entries written in the voice of important characters in candidates' chosen novels but some candidates have been writing missing sections or alternative conclusions to novels.

Popular "Victorian" texts were Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights*, Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, John Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*, Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

Popular World War One texts were Pat Barker's *Regeneration*, Sebastian Faulks' *Birdsong* and Sebastian Barry's *A Long Long Way*.

Popular texts dealing with The Struggle for Identity in Modern Literature were Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*; Ian McEwan's *Enduring Love*, Jeanette Winterson's *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit* and Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*.

There is very little new to add about transformational writing that has not appeared in previous moderator's reports: successful responses understood the structure of the novel under scrutiny and were fully alive to contexts thus enabling the liberation of AO2; less successful answers sometimes made unintentionally comic anachronisms which often revealed a lack of research and a sort of 'hit and hope' attitude on the part of the candidate (and sometimes of the Centre too). Dickens' Sissy Jupe in *Hard Times* (1854) being aware of Billy Smart's Circus (founded 1946); Sarah Lumb in *Regeneration* (set in 1917) visiting her mother via the Tyne and Wear metro light railway (opened in 1980) and Celie in *The Color Purple* (set in the 1930s) being aware of the young Barack Obama (born 1961) were just some of the most obvious errors. Candidates are reminded once again that research is, if anything, even more vital to the transformational prose assignment than it is to the more traditional prose essay. The best transformational essays demonstrate an appreciation of the Form, Structure and Language of the original text while seamlessly incorporating AO4 contextual detail. The very best examples are a genuine pleasure to read.

For the traditional prose essay a range of enabling tasks were set by centres some of which are offered below:

- analyse Emily Brontë's presentation of love and passion in *Wuthering Heights*;
- explore Hardy's presentation of Victorian attitudes to sex in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*;
- how does Fowles' presentation of ideas concerning lying and deceit in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* influence your understanding of the novel?
- analyse Faulks' presentation of courage in *Birdsong*;
- explore Barker's presentation of the medical profession in *Regeneration*;
- analyse Walker's presentation of religious and spiritual belief in *The Color Purple*;
- how does Atwood's presentation of Moira influence your understanding of the struggle for identity in *The Handmaid's Tale*?

### **Commentary on Drama Assignments**

The most important consideration for centres when preparing candidates for the drama assignment is to remember to set a task that will liberate all of the Assessment Objectives but especially the whole of the dominant AO3 worth 15/30. Following on from last June's report the following list features tasks which elicited successful answers from candidates in January 2011:

- "Women who do not learn to lie and do not hide their intelligence from men are doomed to fail." Compare and contrast the presentation of Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and Thomasina in *Arcadia* in the light of this opinion.
- compare and contrast Wilde's and Hardy's presentation of the relationships between men and women in *A Woman of No Importance* and *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* in the light of the opinion that "all of Wilde's women are cynical manipulators of men whereas all of Hardy's women are the victims of cynical manipulation by men."
- compare and contrast the presentation of Stanhope in *Journey's End* with the presentation of Sassoon in *Regeneration* in the light of the opinion that "both men are flawed as men but in particular are flawed as leaders of men."
- compare and contrast the presentation of sexual desire in Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge* and Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* in the light of the opinion

that “both playwrights demonstrate that sexual desire is at heart inherently destructive and cruel.”

As has been reported in every Moderator’s Report since the inception of this specification when candidates entered into a spirit of debate with the opinions of other readers their work was lively and illuminating and was a pleasure to read; however where there was no engagement with the views of others the work was frequently flat and always self-limiting.

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

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