



**General Certificate of Education**

**English Literature**  
*Specification B*

**LITB3      Texts and Genres**

**Report on the Examination**  
*2010 examination – January series*

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## General

Overall examiners felt that the first session for this unit was very successful. Work was submitted covering the full range of marks, including several scripts which gained full marks. There were, however, a number of rather uneven scripts where candidates scored much better on Section A than Section B or vice versa.

By far the most popular topic was *Elements of the Gothic* but examiners were impressed by the grasp of the topic which many candidates seemed to have. It was pleasing to note that, on the whole, candidates worked outwards from the texts and questions to the genre and did not come to the questions with a pre-prepared generic checklist which they then proceeded to work through regardless of the task. The advice given at teacher training meetings seems to have been heeded. Generally speaking, simply noting an issue is a “typical feature of the gothic/pastoral” is not fruitful on its own unless interesting critical conclusions may be drawn from it.

There were some scripts, however, where candidates seemed to feel obliged to start their answers with a general summary of their chosen genre, relating its history and connected texts. Very rarely did this approach add anything of significance to the response and it did not tend to be very relevant to the question. Candidates are advised to engage with the task and text set in their initial paragraph and not to waste time on irrelevant material.

The mantra for the whole of this specification, including Unit 3 is: answer the question. The greatest fault throughout the paper was a failure to do just this. The question on *The Pardoner's Tale*, for example, was on the significance of the role of the Old Man and so essays on the Pardoner himself, unrelated to this character could not be highly rewarded. Candidates should also be aware that they will get very little credit for subverting the questions to enable them to write about whatever they wish. Questions such as 19 which asks to what extent gothic literature is characterised by a fascination with death cannot be subverted by simply saying no and then writing about whatever topic the candidate chooses. The central issue in the question must be *substantially* addressed in the answer before considering other issues in order to show “to what extent”. Such questions are NOT an open invitation to write what you like. It is an unfortunate fact that some candidates did not score as highly as they should have done simply because they did not answer the question.

It is also perhaps worth noting that many candidates who scored highly did not only have sharp question focus in their answers but also unpicked the terms of the question in a subtle way. Equally, some candidates could have improved their scores if they had paid more detailed attention to the different terms of the question and addressed them all. For example, in question 16 on *Brideshead Revisited*, some answers addressed the idea of a “lament” very effectively but overlooked the idea of the way of life being “traditional”.

Examiners were pleased to note the spread of texts chosen across the whole paper. Inevitably, *Macbeth* proved very popular as did *The Bloody Chamber* both of which proved engaging for the candidates. *Frankenstein*, *Dracula* and *Wuthering Heights* were also popular and produced good answers. In *Elements of the Pastoral*, *Tess of the D'urbervilles* proved popular and there were some very good answers on *As You Like It* and *Brideshead Revisited*.

In the Section B answers it was encouraging to see how many candidates succeeded in referring substantially to at least three texts, and, in some instances, four. It is worth noting, however, that the better answers tended to deal with one text at a time and then move on to the next, making connections through the topic. Answers where candidates moved frantically from

one text to another and then back again tended to result in critically sterile comparisons with candidates obviously finding this approach more problematic when it came to making *substantial* reference.

All assessment objectives are tested in both questions. It is therefore obvious that answers which are well-written, using critical terminology fluently will be well-rewarded. Examiners were frequently impressed by candidates' ability to use close textual analysis to support their arguments in this closed book examination. Subtle analysis will be rewarded under AO2. Some candidates could have explored alternative readings in more depth and detail although personal response was rarely lacking. It is difficult not to address AO4 in the light of the fact that this is a paper which focuses on genre! Needless to say contextual issues were usually clearly addressed.

Finally reference must be made to rubric infringements. There were one or two scripts where no 1300-1800 text had been covered but these were few and far between. Candidates must remember that inclusion of a text written between 1300 and 1800 is a requirement of the paper. The more frequent rubric infringement was only addressing two texts in Section B. On some occasions this was because of a short answer where the candidate had run out of time or simply not bothered to refer substantially to the third text. However, there were some problematic cases where there seemed to be some misconception about what constituted a "text". This arose mainly with the pastoral poetry from the anthology. The anthology contains two "texts" for this unit: *Pastoral Poetry 1300-1800* and *Pastoral Poetry after 1945*. Candidates may study one of these selections and write about them as one "text". Alternatively they may study and write about both selections as two "texts". Therefore, in writing about *The Deserted Village* and *Tintern Abbey* for example, in the Section B answer means that candidates have only written about one "text" as they are both from the same selection. Such an answer should go on to refer to two other "texts", not one, in order not to incur a rubric infringement. Equally, a script referring to *Tintern Abbey*, *Fern Hill* and one other text, for example, would not be a rubric infringement as these two poems come from the two different selections.

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

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