



**AQA Certificates  
January 2013**

**English Language**

**8705/1H**

**(Specification 8705)**

**Paper 1: Literary Non Fiction and Composition  
(Higher)**

***Report on the Examination***

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## **Report on AQA Level 1/2 Certificate in English Language: Paper 1H 8705/1H January 2013**

The primary aim of this specification is to enable centres to teach students a wide range of skills in reading and writing and to allow them to demonstrate their learning in the exams. For this reason, the number and focus of the questions in Section A is not predictable, nor is the order of the questions in Section B.

The entry for this component in January was relatively low though the few candidates who took the paper appeared to enjoy reading the extract and to find the reading questions and the writing tasks accessible. Almost all candidates completed responses to the required questions, suggesting that the time allowed was adequate and that they had been well prepared for the demands of the paper. There was some evidence of inappropriate entry for the Higher Tier. Centres are reminded that Higher Tier is intended for A\* to C candidates. Where there is any doubt that candidates may not fall into this range, they are undoubtedly best served by being entered for Foundation Tier.

### **Section A**

Candidates are directed to read all questions before starting to answer. This is an important direction as it helps candidates to avoid including unnecessary detail in one answer which is more pertinent to a later question. When preparing for this paper, centres should ensure candidates are aware of the existence and the purpose of this instruction. Whilst candidates will sometimes be directed to particular line numbers, in this paper they were asked to consider the whole passage when answering questions.

#### **Question 1**

Whilst weakest responses offered a few literal details and/or simple comment (e.g. 'they are nomads', 'they are kind') the better responses referred to, and commented on, a range of detail, and the best inferred meaning (e.g. they appear to live in harmony with a hostile environment). Not surprisingly, perhaps, many candidates appeared fascinated by the 'liberal sexual practices' of the Wodaabe people and this was frequently referred to.

#### **Question 2**

At the basic level of response, candidates identified literal detail about the desert with no real differentiation between night and day. More able candidates commented on the effect of the use of language and/or used the detail about the desert at night to make relevant comment citing, for example, the Tuareg rebels as a force of danger. Answers awarded marks in the 5-6 range focused on the writer's choice of words to convey both beauty and danger, with some candidates selecting and commenting appropriately to demonstrate the intentional contrast between the night and the day (e.g. brutally frigid/blisteringly hot).

#### **Question 3**

Whilst a few candidates struggled with the concept of the 'character of the narrator', most were able to comment appropriately and several made valid inferences about her confidence and composure. Some judged her harshly, citing her rashness and failure to plan ahead. Almost always, such comments were supported by relevant reference to the text.

#### **Question 4**

Some candidates seemed unable to grasp the concept of an anthology, even though this was referred to in the introduction to the text. Where this was the case, candidates were still able to gain some marks by linking the content of the account to 'The Kindness of Strangers'. Others were restricted in their achievement by their failure to refer to both the content and stylistic qualities of the passage, as directed to in the question. Several candidates did, however, write enthusiastically and convincingly of the merits of this story in such an anthology, demonstrating a strong focus on subject matter, the craft of the writer, and the effectiveness of the passage.

## **Section B**

Where effective planning had taken place, responses were almost always appropriately structured and detailed. Centres should be aware of the importance of planning and the necessity of teaching techniques for planning which can be applied in an exam situation. Students are not given a guide as to length of writing, the size of handwriting being such a variable factor. However, it is expected that the essay will be suitably developed and structured. Centres should be aware that candidates who offer very brief responses (3 paragraphs or less as a rough guide) are inevitably limiting their potential achievement.

The Mark Scheme is divided into bands with each band containing four bullet points. The first of these is focused on content, the second on structure, the third on sentence structure and variation, and the fourth on technical accuracy. Centres should be aware that each of these four elements is given equal weight in the assessment of writing. It was noted that comma splicing was a frequent and detrimental feature of some candidates' work, whilst the achievement of others was hampered by an inability to use commas accurately within sentences.

### **Question 5**

Several candidates chose this option and had strong views on the subject. Many argued that a language was not necessary for travel in a given country, citing personal experience as evidence for this. Others analysed the statement carefully, first defining the words 'should' and 'travel' before embarking on their argument. The responses were interesting to read demonstrating, as they did, a wide range of views and genuine engagement with the task.

### **Question 6**

Whilst there were, as in the summer, some 'rambling' narratives in which plot, setting and character played little conscious part, many were well structured and coherent. The passage clearly acted as a stimulus for some students, with their meetings taking place in foreign environments and involving an act of kindness.

### **Question 7**

Responses to this question were mixed with some candidates telling a story about a person who had played a significant role in their lives. At times, the description was implicit in the narrative and could be rewarded. Where this was not the case, students were assessed on the skills demonstrated and usually placed towards the bottom of the relevant band. Several candidates did, however, focus on description, often choosing family members. There were effective and touching descriptions, most notably of grandparents, and one memorable description of an older brother who had lost his life fighting abroad.

Whilst few candidates sat this exam, it was pleasing to see that the high-level skills of exploration, inference and deduction were evident in responses to the questions in Section A and, as always, the experience of reading students' writing in Section B was frequently both enlightening and enjoyable.