



**AQA Certificates
January 2013**

English Language

8705/2H

(Specification 8705)

**Paper 2: Source Based Reading and
Directed/Associated Writing (Higher)**

Report on the Examination

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

The theme of this year's Source Booklet was 'Film' and this proved to be an engaging topic for many students. The questions in Section A appeared to be accessible with students clearly grasping their intent and most generally making a good attempt to answer all of them. The essay questions proved to be highly appropriate with the majority of students writing appropriately for purpose and audience. This is the second year of entry and it was clear that some centres had got to grips with the paper and its purpose, with evidence of some students being very well prepared by their teachers. Centres are reminded that this paper is intended as an alternative to the coursework option and, therefore, demands a significant amount of reading, as well as requiring students to analyse writers' methods and use stimulus material to prompt their own response to writing. It is an exciting but challenging alternative to an exciting but challenging coursework option.

Section A

Question 1 eased students into engaging with the texts and asked them to comment on a blog site's 'Hollywood versus Bollywood' list of features. Most students did very well on this question, clearly recognising explicit and implicit bias in the list. Only some students focused on more obvious facts ('Bollywood produces double') whilst many picked up on more subtle features e.g. the significance of the word 'just' in '*Hollywood actors just have to be able to act.*' Many students gave detailed answers which were anticipated by the mark scheme and were awarded full marks for the question.

Question 2 asked students to look at how language was used to 'sell' the film. Almost all students understood the question and many offered detailed and relevant responses. Some few students focused on use of image instead of language but most referred closely to the text in the sources, most choosing to refer to Hitchcock's words (*'the most terrifying motion picture I have ever made'*) in a highly appropriate manner. A few students found appropriate quotations but struggled to comment on why these were effective, offering only simple statements such as: 'this helps to sell the film.' Quotation was generally well used, although some students did not use it and were usually restricted in achievement as a consequence. There were some delightfully clever answers – several students analysing in detail how humour was used in Source C. The mark scheme for this specification will always allow examiners to recognise and reward original, intelligent, well supported answers.

Question 3 carried 5 marks and was about Brando's criticism of the way Native American Indians have been treated. This was obviously a challenging question; many students did not manage to focus on the treatment of American Indians and focused instead on other features in the text. Some did not focus on the specific details of Brando's speech and made, for example, only one comment on '*When they laid down their arms, we murdered them. We lied to them. We cheated them out of their lands. We starved them into signing treaties which we never kept*' instead of the two or three comments they could have made. Some students, whilst engaging with the Source, used their answer to agree with Brando and add their own examples of injustice entirely failing to address the question. Centres should be aware of the need to focus on the specific demands of questions with students in preparation for the exam. Happily, many students wrote full and detailed answers which were well supported by quotation.

Question 4 was about problems faced by the film industry based on Source F and one other source. All students referred to 2 sources – a marked improvement on last year. Most handled the Guardian article very well, referring in detail to two or three problems identified in the article. A few students, once again, used their answer to make generalised comments about downloading, which were irrelevant to this question. Although many students used their second source well, there was a clear tendency to spend too much time on Source F and not enough on the second. Source E was an obvious choice for the second source and was selected by many students. The best answers had a full range of problems and referred to some complex issues, such as the alienation of actors identified in Source E.

Question 5 seemed to take a few students by surprise and was sometimes dealt with too briefly. It is possible that, as there were only 4 questions in the last paper in this series, some students had anticipated the same number this time. Centres should be aware that there is no set number of questions in Section A. The type and number of questions are determined by the nature of the sources and these will differ for each series. Centres may find it helpful to advise students to read all sources and questions first, before they start writing. Question 5 produced some excellent responses with students commenting on three posters in a detailed and highly incisive manner. There was interesting comment on the use of the background in the 'Resident Evil' poster, with close analysis of images and colour.

Section B

In general students did well in section B. There were very few students writing short answers this year and most wrote carefully thought out essays which attempted to deal with purpose and audience very well. Students are encouraged to use materials from the Source booklet in their responses to the Writing section. Centres should be aware that, depending on the nature of the question, the directive will contain the word 'may', suggesting the use of material is optional, or 'must', making it compulsory. Where the word 'must' is used, the mark scheme content descriptors will include reference to the use of source material. In January both questions contained the word 'may'. Centres should, however, prepare students for the possible use of the term 'must' and its implications for inclusion and synthesis of information from Section A.

Question 6 asked students to write a letter to an editor of a film magazine dealing with the idea that the film industry 'has a duty to represent all people fairly and to avoid stereotyping.' This was by far the most popular choice and was generally handled well. A few students missed their audience, targeting a film director rather than an editor of a film magazine, and used an inappropriately aggressive tone. Others got the purpose and audience exactly right and focused on a wide range of issues, drawing information from the sources to support their case and to increase the appeal of their letter. Most students structured essays logically and used a range of examples. Many students demonstrated effective spelling, punctuation and grammar though there remain notable weaknesses in competent use of commas. Centres are reminded that significant marks can be lost through technical error.

Question 7 was the less popular choice though many who responded to it did well, possibly because they had already got a film in mind – one that they (generally) were passionate about. These students' answers were full of detail and found many aspects to praise. Some students drew on the sources to inform their opinion, for example commenting on the depiction of older women in the film they had chosen. The best reviews were well structured, entertaining and well-informed. As with question 6, there were some students who lost marks though technical weaknesses in spelling, punctuation and grammar:

Conclusion

Though the entry for the January series was small, the responses demonstrated that students can engage with a range of texts, making appropriate selections from them to address specific questions, and respond to linked writing tasks in varied and interesting ways. It is hoped that centres which did not enter students for this series will find the source booklet and the paper helpful in preparing students for June entry, always bearing in mind that there is no set, predictable pattern to the sources or the questions.