



**AQA Certificates  
June 2012**

**English Literature  
(Specification 8710)**

**8710/CP**

**Coursework Project**

***Report on the Examination***

---

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

Copyright © 2012 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

**Copyright**

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered schools/colleges 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 schools/colleges 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.

## Certificate in English Literature

### Principal Moderator's Report - 8710 Coursework - June 2012

The entry for this first series of the new specification was less substantial than the entry for English Language. Entries ranged from some whole year cohorts from both selective and non-selective schools to small entries from PRUs, Sixth Form/FE colleges and single classes from larger schools. Most work appeared, understandably, to be from students submitting at the end of Year 11 but there was some showing of work from Year 10.

The overall impression was of work which showed students' enthusiasm and commitment to tasks and texts. Across the entry, the choice of tasks and texts was comparable in demand to that of the examined option, Paper 2. At all levels of ability there was evidence of conscientious crafting of responses to meet assessment objectives, and, at the top of the mark range, very sophisticated responses which sustained vigorous and individual engagement with the Literature studied. The most able students had evidently been challenged by high expectations, and met the challenge with admirable success.

Moderating most of the work was a pleasure, and a reassuring sign that teachers had effectively applied the letter and the spirit of the specification and managed the process with a high degree of specialist professionalism. There was evidence of effective monitoring of students' work, with annotational evidence of cross-marking and of a dialogue with students based on previous discussion of individual ambition and response in relation to assessment objectives. Assessment annotation, marginal and summative, was in most cases very helpful in guiding Moderators to the centre's thinking in awarding a mark within a Band, and the majority of assessments were easy to confirm because of secure understanding and application of the Band criteria.

Schools made good use of the freedom to devise their own tasks and text pairings. There was a pleasing range of tasks, and sometimes a pleasing range of tasks within a centre, though most opted for a common task for students of all abilities. Comparing the results of different practice, it is worth suggesting that some schools may advantage their students by diversifying tasks to meet the needs of different students, and to offer them some personal choice in texts and tasks. What worked very well in several cases was an approach based on common and collaborative study but with a range of choice in writing an individual response. This was successfully managed in some schools by studying the same texts but with a choice of four or five tasks from which students could choose. In other schools, there was a single common task, but students could choose from a range of texts to develop their own response.

Text choices ranged from relatively familiar texts such as *Romeo and Juliet* and *Macbeth* paired respectively with Love sonnets and *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* but there was enterprising and productive pairing of a less familiar kind, such as *Macbeth* and *Brighton Rock*, *Of Mice and Men* and *Death of a Salesman*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A Kestrel for a Knave*. Teachers appear to have relished the opportunity to develop satisfying and challenging pairings within and across genres, such as the familiar A Level pairing of *Jane Eyre* with *Wide Sargasso Sea*, the very successful pairing of *Educating Rita* and *The History Boys*, or the linkage of *Richard III* with poems from the AQA Anthology or of *Dracula* with selected poems by Armitage and Duffy. Although schools have freedom of choice in their text pairing, there was a strong preference for established texts from the English Literary Heritage. Where students were comparing a number of poems with, for example, a Shakespeare play, it was evident that those who were allowed to make a personal selection from a wider range of texts studied showed more ownership of their selected texts, and represented themselves more individually. It is usually the case that individuality is the result of a guided independence rather than working to a common template of taught response. This specification is particularly suited to independent study and the development of an individual voice and approach, and this first submission provides clear evidence that teachers have valued the scope for approaching texts with applied skills that will serve well as students move towards study at A level and beyond.

Task-setting was generally well-judged to engage the interests of students and direct them towards the assessment objectives, by explicit mention of the authors and use of tags such as "How..." and "present". This seemed in most cases to focus students upon aspects of authorial craft and purpose

(AO2) and steer them away from naïve descriptions of what characters were like. Some of the tasks which elicited well-focused and developed responses were:

Explore the ways Shakespeare uses magic and the supernatural in *Macbeth* and *The Tempest*.

Compare the ways victims and bullies are presented in *Of Mice and Men* and *Lord of the Flies*.

With reference to *Dracula*, *Hitcher*, *Education for Leisure* and *Salome*, compare the way the writers present fear of the unknown.

In what way do *Of Mice and Men* and *Death of a Salesman* show the hopelessness of chasing the American Dream. Are there any rewards?

Write about the ways women are presented in *Macbeth* and *Of Mice and Men*.

Write about the ways in which Pat Barker in *Regeneration* and the writers of your chosen war poems present the suffering associated with war.

Other tasks which engaged, stimulated and focused students on themes and ideas in well-chosen pairings were:

Explore the ways in which George Milton and Willy Loman are responsible for their own failures.

How far does social class impact on the lives of characters in *Blood Brothers* and *Educating Rita*?

Explore the theme of manipulation in *Richard III*, and three poems from: *Horse Whisperer*, *Hawk Roosting*, *Brothers*, *The Farmer's Bride* and *Case History*.

Explore the significance of the 'inner' and 'outer' worlds of the main characters in *Kes* and *To Kill a Mockingbird*.

Compare and contrast the early lives of *Jane Eyre* and *Antoinette Cosway*.

In these tasks, Moderators appreciated the sustained and detailed exploration of themes and ideas but judged that some students would have been more successful in addressing AO2 if they had been more mindful of authorial craft and the genre of the text, particularly when their interest in characters was at the expense of their appreciation of characterisation. It is not intended to drive schools towards a tasking orthodoxy that depends on words such as "How" and "presents", but it is worth considering ways in which focus on craft and genre can be sharpened by, for example, inclusion of the author's names, or a simple bulleted reminder based on assessment objectives. Alternatively, preparation which emphasizes authorial craft may serve just as well, as it did in the case of one of the most successful tasks, albeit one which appeared to require engagement with ideas rather than literary/dramatic qualities:

Mark Twain wrote: "Never let formal education get in the way of your learning." To what extent is this a key message of *The History Boys* and *Educating Rita*?

This was interesting because preparation had evidently embraced social and political dimensions of educational policy and practice in the 1980s, which served to elicit interesting comment on students' own education as a way of fulfilling the more interesting aspects of AO4.

Where Moderators were not able to confirm centre marks, it was usually because of leniency in the interpretation of key words in the evaluative hierarchy of the marking criteria. There was some tendency to apply the term "analysis" to what would be more appropriately termed description, and some tendency to apply the term "sophisticated" to what would be more appropriately termed competent handling of ideas and interpretations. There was also some difficulty in confirming marks where work on poetry was handicapped by an assumption that response to poetry is a matter of identifying and illustrating the 6 (or 8) technical features that have been learned. Fortunately, evidence of this was less than of engagement with relevance, implication, attitudes, feelings and meanings.

It will be clear from the above that Moderators felt this first entry was very successful and a pointer to interesting and exciting future developments in the study of Literature. The most significant cause of this confidence is the evidence that freedom of professional choice and trust in professional expertise results in candidate motivation and challenge, and the development of rigorous, substantial and detailed responses to a range of texts from different genres and historical times, and from students of varying ability. Work submitted for this Certificate appears to have been a testament to the power of Literature, the engagement of students and the resourcefulness of teachers and teaching, either as a final part of the educational process or as an introduction to study at A Level and beyond.