



**AQA Certificates
January 2013**

**English Literature
(Specification 8710)**

8710/2H

Paper 2

Report on the Examination

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Certificate in English Literature

Principal Examiner’s Report - 8710/2H - January 2013

There was a very small entry for this series, therefore the comments that follow are based on a small sample of responses.

Responses covered both sections and considered Frankenstein and Jekyll and Hyde in Section A and Lord of the Flies in comparison with the Blake poems and the Prelude in Section B. It was pleasing to see that the poems had been studied and this enabled the candidate in question to make some sensitive comments about language and symbolism. It should be noted, however, that there is no need to refer to all of the poems set for study in the answer, or even to refer to both Blake and Wordsworth: choices should be made from those poems studied to ensure that the response is focused and relevant. Similarly, in writing about a novel careful choices need to be made in terms of which areas to focus on.

One of the challenges of this paper is how to write about two substantial texts in an hour. Any candidate who attempts to cover too much ground is in danger of spreading their discussion too thinly and only dealing with the texts in a superficial way. It is far better to focus on two or three key relevant moments or areas per text with relevant supporting quotation to hit the AO1 higher band descriptors. For example, in discussing the loss of innocence in Lord of the Flies, a detailed discussion of the quotation concerning Ralph weeping for ‘the darkness of man’s heart’ at the end of the novel will produce far more impressive evidence of thought than a whistle-stop tour of the way the plot shows us that the children degenerate as the novel progresses. I am sure that this is clear to teachers but there has been evidence of candidates writing in this way about the texts.

A note on AO3

There is now a separate instruction on the paper to consider links and comparisons between the texts. There will not necessarily be any reference to comparison in the individual questions, simply because this can often make them unwieldy, but given the weighting towards AO3 on the paper and this new, separate statement, candidates should not be in any doubt that their approach should be broadly comparative. I say broadly, because it is not expected that the level of comparison should be hugely detailed when writing about two texts in the same way as when writing about two shorter texts. However, candidates should be approaching the questions in a connected and relevant fashion, and for the higher bands there should certainly be sections of the response which demonstrate a linked approach. It would be very hard to achieve the higher bands for comparison if the texts are dealt with separately. Once again, one developed comparative point supported by textual detail is far better than a number of superficial points of comparison. The purpose of comparison is always to illuminate the discussion of the texts in question by setting them in relief, rather than as an end in itself.

In conclusion, the best answer to a question on this paper would be one which is connected and focused, considering closely some key aspects of the texts in question in relation to the question and affording an appropriate depth of discussion within the constraints of an hour-long examination.