



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
January 2012**

**English Language and Literature A ELLA1
(Specification 2720)**

Unit 1: Integrated Analysis and Text Production

Report on the Examination

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General

Examiners commented that most candidates showed a secure knowledge of their texts and most answers were focused and relevant, with few rubric infringements. That having been said, there was a wide range of ability shown in the responses, from those receiving full marks for excellent, perceptive and stylish writing, to those whose writing contained significant flaws and who struggled to reach AS level standard. Weaker responses tended to be very brief or have an imbalance in length between their A and B answers. The most popular texts were *The Kite Runner* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*. There were very few candidates who answered questions on *Close Range* and *The Rivals*, and it has not therefore been possible to offer meaningful comments below on these texts.

'A' Questions

Most candidates were able to produce relevant answers. There was the usual tendency for candidates from some centres to not include enough language analysis, which inevitably limited their AO1 marks. However, it was pleasing to see that an increasing number of candidates are attempting to 'write a lot about a little' and to explore meaning. Whilst this is a good development on the whole, it did sometimes lead to very strained and unconvincing analysis, with some candidates trying to make something of the most insignificant language feature. Students are well advised to ensure that their exploration needs to be meaningful and provide some insight into the central concerns of the question. Once again, there were candidates from some centres who had clearly been taught to include theories that are not useful for this question. For example, students from some centres tried to bring in a discussion of feminist or Marxist theory, no matter what the question under discussion. This was invariably a bad idea as it took them away from the central focus of the question and added nothing of value to their answers. Other candidates were clearly told to make use of face theory, Grice's maxims or pragmatics which, again, is not very helpful for this unit. They would have been better off with some more straightforward knowledge of literary techniques, word classes or syntax.

There are two marks awarded for this question on the following assessment objectives:

AO1 (15 marks) – Select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic study, using appropriate terminology and accurate, coherent written expression.
AO2 (15 marks) – Demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in a range of written and spoken texts.

The AO1 mark focuses in particular on the candidate's relevant analysis of literary and linguistic features of the text and the use of literary and linguistic terminology.
The AO2 mark focuses on the candidate's interpretation and ideas in response to the question.

Successful candidates:

- focused on the question
- supported ideas by exploring the language of relevant quotations
- provided a sense of overview
- produced sustained answers
- showed a sound knowledge of literary and linguistic terms
- produced well expressed answers.

Less successful candidates:

- did not adequately address the question
- did not comment on the language or literary techniques of the text
- feature-spotted, with very limited exploration of meaning
- tried to apply theories that were inappropriate
- produced very brief responses with only a few superficially relevant ideas
- produced answers that were poorly expressed
- wasted time writing 'conclusions' that merely summarised the points covered.

B Questions

As in previous series, most candidates seemed to enjoy the B questions and wrote with some enthusiasm. As always, the best candidates used the text well and created a sense of the character's voice. Examiners noted that there seemed to be less lifting this series, even in responses to the older texts. However, writing in the appropriate form caused difficulties for some as did basing their response on the specified section of the text. Candidates are advised to ensure that they are familiar with the differences between first and third person narrative forms and how to represent speech within these narratives. Once again, examiners noted that candidates sometimes used spoken mode features inappropriately within written mode texts. This was especially noticeable in letters and diary extracts, where many candidates used hesitations, repetitions, and phonetic spellings to represent accent. It was disappointing to see that both expression and technical accuracy remained poor in a number of scripts, both on the A and the B questions. Many candidates had problems with sentence boundaries and punctuation in general. Some made very basic spelling errors.

There are two marks awarded for this question on the following assessment objectives:

AO4 (30 marks) – Demonstrate expertise and creativity in using language appropriately for a variety of purposes and audiences, drawing on insights from literary and linguistic studies.

AO1 (15 marks) - Select and apply relevant concepts and approaches from integrated linguistic study, using appropriate terminology and accurate, coherent written expression.

The AO4 mark assesses the candidate's ability to do the following: show awareness of genre; write in an appropriate style for audience and purpose; create a convincing sense of a character's voice; choose appropriate information from the text in order to complete the task. The AO1 mark is solely concerned with the candidate's accuracy in terms of spelling, punctuation, grammar and expression.

Successful candidates:

- showed a sound sense of form/genre
- created a convincing sense of their character's voice
- revealed sound knowledge of the text
- used significant details from the text
- produced sustained responses
- produced writing that was well expressed and technically accurate.

Less successful candidates:

- showed limited or patchy awareness of form/genre
- used language that was inappropriate for form or character
- showed limited awareness of characters' attitudes
- revealed limited knowledge of the text
- copied extracts from the text
- revealed errors in understanding of the text
- produced very brief responses
- produced writing that contained technical errors and flaws in expression

Things Fall Apart: Chinua Achebe

01

This question was generally well handled, with most focusing on Ikemefuna's role within the novel, and selecting relevant passages to analyse. Better responses included a thorough examination of how Achebe conveys Ikemefuna's effects on Okonkwo and Nwoye. Weaker responses tended to deal more superficially with how he is presented.

11

The quality of responses to this task varied enormously. There were some excellent narratives with well controlled and entirely convincing dialogue. However, some candidates revealed that they were unsure about third person narrative form and wrote playscripts or odd mixtures of narrative and playscript. A few candidates seemed unsure about the context of the novel, and who Mr Smith or the District Commissioner were.

Wuthering Heights: Emily Brontë

02

In general, this question was not well answered, in spite of being fairly straightforward and focused on a central character. Examiners commented that they suspected that a number of candidates did not know the novel well enough as they showed confusion over characters and their relationships to one another. In spite of the clarification in the rubric, a few candidates confused Cathy with her mother. Some also focused more on making a comparison between the two than on the presentation of Cathy herself. Choosing appropriate extracts to analyse also proved to be a problem for some, who tended to focus on one episode and provided very little or no overview. The best responses looked at Cathy in relation to her father, Linton and Hareton, as well as comparing her to her mother.

12

This was quite a popular question and led to a range of responses. The best chose a measured but firm tone and included precise conditions, backed up by clear reasons for the restrictions. Weaker responses struggled to adopt an appropriate register and were full of invective that would have been unhelpful in this context. There were some very brief letters which did not develop ideas and some where Edgar gave permission for Cathy to go to Wuthering Heights, when he expressly does not do this in the novel.

The Kite Runner: Khaled Hosseini

03

There were many sound responses to this question. Most candidates showed a secure knowledge of the text. Examiners noted that, although grasp of terminology was often not a strong point for a number of candidates, they were able to provide good examples and make clear comments about how Sohrab's distress was conveyed.

13

This task was generally well handled and there were many enjoyable, reflective and sensitive responses. Achieving a sense of autobiographical form was a little difficult for some, where there was a tendency for answers to read more like diaries and, as a result, material wasn't always well contextualised. The best answers achieved a good sense of a more mature Sohrab's voice and a reflective tone. Poorer responses tended to provide rather generalised reflections without much basis in the text. Some candidates wrote about the period before Sohrab left for America, and therefore failed to address the task. A few candidates inappropriately invented details of Sohrab's life in America, including his experiences of school and his job history. Candidates need to be advised to keep their responses rooted in the text.

Property: Valerie Martin

04

There were a number of very sound answers to this question. The focused nature of the question enabled many candidates to comment on Martin's language and techniques and most responses were relevant. Weaker answers tended to list moments which were dramatic and chaotic, with no real sense of argument and some wanted to focus more on the relationship between Manon & Mr Gaudet rather than on drama and chaos. However, the best responses developed a clear line of argument and fully explored a range of language features.

14

There were some sound responses to this question, although the task proved to be problematic for a number of candidates. In spite of the instruction to write the conversation within a third person narrative, a number of candidates chose to write playscripts. Examiners also reported that they saw some first person narratives, monologues, dialogues with no narrative detail, and at least one case where indirect speech was used throughout. There was sometimes a lack of reference to the text or misinterpretation of content. Many candidates revealed that they did not know how to accurately layout or punctuate speech. Better responses managed to achieve an appropriate register for Mr Roget and punctuate the conversation with some accuracy.

The History Boys: Alan Bennett

06

Most candidates who answered this question were able to make relevant points about Irwin's relationship with the boys. Better responses chose to focus on making some points about the boys in general and then focus on Dakin and Posner. Most commented on the changing relationship between Irwin and the boys and some on the changes in register as the play progresses. Weaker answers provided very little language analysis or drifted off into character studies of Irwin.

16

This question was generally responded to rather better than the A question and appeared to be more popular. There were some excellent responses that were highly engaging, subtle and humorous. Most handled the journal form quite well, although there were quite a few 'Dear diaries', signed 'Hector'. Better responses stayed on task and did reflect on Irwin and his teaching style. Quite a few, however, were mainly focused on Hector himself and *his* teaching style, resulting in rather thin content. Most attempted to reflect Hector's eccentricity, with varying degrees of success. Most showed a very sound knowledge of the text.

Murmuring Judges: David Hare

07

There were very few answers seen on this question. Where they appeared, the focus on a specific scene seemed to have led to sound comments on details.

17

Those examiners who saw some answers to this question noted that Irina's diary was reasonably well handled, although achieving her voice/register proved to be a challenge.

The Importance of Being Earnest: Oscar Wilde

09

This question was probably the least popular on this text and was generally not answered well. Most candidates could describe the changing tone of the relationship, but few could really analyse how the language worked. Better answers showed some awareness of changes in register, and of social differences and snobbery. Candidates generally found it difficult to discuss Wilde's humorous aims in representing the relationship.

19

This question was generally handled better than the Section A question for this text. Most candidates produced a credible diary form and some achieved a sense of Algernon's voice. Most found some appropriate content to include, such as cucumber sandwiches, Bunbury and interest in Cecily. Weaker responses struggled to write in an appropriate style and contained many flaws in expression as a result. However, the best answers were entirely convincing, humorous and witty.

A Streetcar Named Desire: Tennessee Williams

10

This was a very popular question that was generally handled quite well. Most candidates focused on scenes 3, 6 and 9 and correctly noted the changing nature of the relationship. Better responses gave a more rounded overview and commented on Mitch's behaviour in scene 11. Many candidates made appropriate comments on language and dramatic techniques. Examiners noted that a number of candidates tended to feature spot, especially with regard to sentence functions. There are times when discussing the use of a particular sentence function can be revealing. However, there was quite frequent use of feature spotting along the lines of 'this is a declarative', which did not provide any insight into the relationship between Blanche and Mitch. A few centres had clearly taught candidates to refer to Grice's Maxims, which were sometimes referred to at length. Invariably, this did not provide a helpful approach to answering the question. Candidates are advised that it is much better to spend time exploring the actual language that Williams uses, rather than making reference to theories.

20

This was a very popular question and there were some excellent responses which had a very convincing sense of Stella's voice and feelings at this point in the play. Many responses started with 'Dear Diary' and ended 'Stella x' but otherwise had a good sense of the form. Better responses included detailed material from the text; weaker responses were more general. A major flaw for some candidates was the use of overly colloquial language, non-standard grammar, speech features and elision. Candidates should be encouraged to look closely at the language that Williams has given Stella. There were a number of responses that contained phrases such as: 'she ain't gonna do nothin''. Stella clearly never uses such language in the play and to include it in her diary made these responses quite unconvincing in terms of voice. Selection of relevant content was an issue for some candidates, who included a summary of the story so far, up to scene 5. Better responses focused on scene 5 and Stella's reactions to what happens in it. Most candidates portrayed Stella as caring and concerned; less secure responses portrayed her either as having little patience with Blanche or very optimistically thinking it would all turn out happily in the end and there wasn't much to worry about.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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