



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **English Literature 6741** *Specification A*

**LA5C      Literary Connections**

# **Report on the Examination** *2008 examination - January series*

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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As entries this January continue to be in small (1225 candidates compared to 16557 in the summer of 2007), teachers are referred to the summer reports for a comprehensive overview of candidates' performance. In addition, a 15-page support booklet for LA5C was issued to centres in the autumn of 2006, including a long list of examples of coursework tasks and summaries of advice from previous reports for both teachers and candidates. Teachers can obtain copies from the English Subject Office at Guildford on request.

Most of the coursework this January was carefully prepared and accurately assessed. At this stage most centres have the confidence to guide students in exercising choice and addressing the Assessment Objectives. Moderators are naturally delighted to be presented with engaging, well-written work which is accompanied by a helpful commentary, since this makes assessment straightforward. The few problems that were encountered stemmed from a number of causes but were chiefly the result of failure by candidates or their teachers to understand the full significance of the course requirements. These can be categorised by the Assessment Objectives for Unit 5.

The quality of students' expression (AO1) was usually at least adequate and the best candidates wrote with sophistication and maturity. In a few cases, however, centres wanted to give good marks to work that contained serious flaws in organisation and expression; such work, if the student is unable to effect improvements by re-drafting, will at most merit only a Band 2 mark.

AO2ii is the dominant Assessment Objective for this unit and merits careful planning. Most students were able to compare their texts in an integrated way, adopting a thematic approach that addressed both texts in each paragraph. When centres ignore the requirement to seek approval for coursework tasks problems often arise. This is not merely a matter of selecting appropriate texts (most centres are now experienced in guiding students to texts that will both engage and challenge candidates) but also in ensuring that the wording of the task is clear, helpful and explicit. In a few cases, it would seem that essays were submitted by candidates on titles that had not been approved, or that they amended the task after it had been approved. In particular, moderators still came across tasks that did not use the word 'compare' or an equivalent to make the central requirement of the essay explicit. In other cases, the task presented difficulties, especially for less able candidates, by requiring a focus on two aspects of the texts compared, such as both the 'presentation of the central female characters' and 'the theme of rebellion'. This runs the risk of confusing students who could be unsure of how to tackle what seem to be competing requirements. It is also preferable to allow students themselves to come to their own decisions about evaluations of their texts rather than expect them to accept a thesis (for example in the form of a quotation from a critic) from the outset.

Most students demonstrated that they realised the importance of addressing aspects of style and structure. For Band 2 candidates this was often restricted to pointing out details of the ways in which language had been crafted to achieve effects in specific scenes. Able students demonstrated more sophisticated skills by considering in addition broader aspects such as narrative stances. Tasks which invite students to explore such features can help students by making this explicit. Candidates also need to show evidence of informed, independent judgement (AO4). This is best achieved through close involvement with the texts so that they make interesting links between their texts and demonstrate an informed personal response. That in turn reveals the importance of integrated comparison in which students, ideally, make their own connections between texts that they have selected for themselves. It is certainly difficult to demonstrate independence when, as still occasionally happens, all students tackle the same task and follow a similar, directed approach.

There were, as in previous sessions, few problems with centres' assessments. However, in a handful of cases moderators had difficulty confirming a centre's grades when the supporting statement merely made general reference to the band descriptors in the marking grid without providing evidence of these by highlighting and annotating the relevant sections in the body of the work. Sometimes there was a failure to identify significant errors of expression or fact in student's work which was consequently over-rewarded. Annotation of essays is particularly important when more than one teacher is involved in assessment; there were a few centres where internal standardisation had not been properly carried out. Clear and helpful teachers' comments, directly related to the assessment objectives, give moderators confidence that the work is being assessed properly and that students are receiving appropriate advice which will also stand them in good stead in the examination units.

Most work was well-presented, though a few centres still fail to fasten folders properly and many students, apparently proficient in the essentials of word-processing, would still benefit from learning how to number and name all their pages automatically. The computer also makes providing a word count a trivial task – this is helpful not only for the moderator but also a guide to the student in the important skill of writing to an appropriate length.

### **Mark Ranges and Award of Grades**

Grade boundaries and cumulative percentage grades are available on the [Results statistics](#) page of the AQA Website.