



General Certificate of Education

English Literature 6741

Specification A

LA5W Literary Connections

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - January series

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

LA5W Literary Connections

Senior examining personnel reported that this was a fair but demanding paper and that they had marked some excellent answers to most of the questions which had been attempted. This examination maintained the standards of previous January examination sequences but it was notable, once again, that due to the comparatively small number of candidates, not all questions were attempted in January 2007.

This year very popular options were Option 4: *Perspectives on Nineteenth Century England* and Option 6: *Minds under Stress*. The Principal Examiner saw no answers on Option 2: *Women's Perspectives* or Option 5: *Reflections*. The option reserved for re-sit candidates only on *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* by Jeanette Winterson and *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker, attracted entries from such tiny numbers of candidates to make meaningful analysis impossible within the context of this report.

As in previous years the two most popular options attracted the highest number of band 1 essays with candidates, in general, relying on centre-inspired notes and ignoring or forgetting the comparative nature of the examination. In band 1, unassimilated notes and half-understood technical terms abounded. There were more band 1 answers on Option 4: *Perspectives on Nineteenth Century England* than there were on Option 6: *Minds under Stress* but for both options where weak answers did occur, candidates tended to drift into narrative or unwarranted, unnecessary biographical details about Thomas Hardy and Sylvia Plath. Strangely, such candidates did not feel the need to write about the lives of John Fowles or Ken Kesey except to assert that the former was an "existentialist" and the latter a "drug addict." There were more band 4 answers for Option 6 than for Option 4, due to candidates who answered on *Minds under Stress* being generally more organised and prepared to engage writers' style than candidates who had elected to answer on *Perspectives on Nineteenth Century England*. It was a feature of this year's examination that band 4 answers were written on most of the options on the paper but it must almost be reported that there were many candidates who had been entered for this January sequence who were simply not ready for the demands of the examination. Some of these candidates had very poor formal command of written English and even had difficulty spelling the names of characters in their chosen set texts.

The following list is much the same as in preceding years.

Successful candidates:

- understood the **comparative** nature of Unit 5
- planned carefully and effectively, making good use of their time
- could spell, punctuate and use correct English grammar
- were fully engaged with the language used by the writers of their texts and dealt with a comparison of style as well as including a comparison of themes
- always kept key words in mind
- could use carefully selected and apposite, integrated quotation with skill and were able to demonstrate fine discriminatory abilities
- defined terms before proceeding to construct an argument reliant upon those terms
- considered writers' attitudes so as to be able to offer a coherent, reasoned and informed response
- were fluent and engaged when considering the various contexts of their set texts
- had evidently read and enjoyed the experience of studying their set texts at Advanced Level

Less successful candidates this year did very much the same as their counterparts in examination sequences gone by.

Less successful candidates:

- did not compare and contrast
- asserted
- ignored the specifics of questions by not concentrating on key words and phrases
- as usual, wrote erratically and frequently demonstrated poor formal control of English, especially with regard to spelling, grammar and the punctuation of titles
- did not plan their answers
- did not engage the style of the writers and frequently got bogged down in writing about what they imagined to be the important themes in a text
- wrote irrelevantly
- brought received ideas about texts into the examination room and did not allow the specifics of the question to determine the specifics of the answer
- found it difficult to use relevant quotation, integrated or otherwise
- did not convince the examiner that they understood that characters in fiction are constructs
- generalised

Option 1: History in Literature

Question 1

Successful candidates:

- remembered to compare and contrast subject matter and style
- engaged the language of both extracts by showing an awareness of both writers at work
- used integrated quotation with skill and discrimination
- found useful things to say, for example, about Carey's presentation of a more thoughtful and romantic side to Ned Kelly's character and Farrell's use of humour and metaphor in the episode describing the swarming cockchafers
- were not afraid to investigate the themes of sexual attraction and power in both extracts
- analysed how the writers constructed characters in both texts
- started with the language of the extracts and worked their way out towards the novels' wider themes

Less successful candidates:

- tried to tell the plot of the cited extracts or of the entire novels
- forgot to compare and contrast
- did not plan their work
- ignored the request to write about style
- off-loaded centre-prepared notes and paid no attention to the specifics of the question
- offered accounts of the unfairness of the British Empire

Question 2

There were insufficient answers on Question 2 to make a valid or reliable analysis.

Option 2: Women's Perspectives

Question 3 and Question 4

The Principal Examiner saw no answers on Option 2.

Option 3: Visions of the Future

Question 5

Successful candidates:

- started with the language of the extracts and worked their way out towards the novels' wider themes
- kept lively and interesting comparisons of the extracts at the heart of their answers
- used integrated quotation with skill and discrimination
- found useful things to say, for example, about the human condition, power, leading and following, violence, fathers and sons, dreams, aggression and deference
- were alive to the innovative style of both extracts and the novels from which the extracts were chosen

Less successful candidates:

- forgot to compare and contrast
- did not plan their work
- ignored the request to write about style
- found the language of both extracts beyond them
- offered character sketches of Riddley and Alex
- tried to tell the stories of *Riddley Walker* and *A Clockwork Orange*

Question 6

There were insufficient answers on Question 6 to make a valid or reliable analysis.

Option 4: Perspectives on Nineteenth Century England

Question 7

Successful candidates:

- responded in an intelligent and astute manner to the extracts and to the wider novels
- kept a comparison of the extracts at the heart of their answer
- wrote intelligently about such things as religious belief, hypocrisy, the importance of the past, sincerity, conversions real and imagined, changes in human nature permanent and temporary

- were clearly aware of the significance of the extracts in terms of the plot, character development and authorial intention in both novels
- started with the language of the extracts and worked their way out towards the novels' wider themes

Less successful candidates

- forgot to compare and contrast the extracts or preferred to compare and contrast the presentation of Sarah and Tess in the novels as a whole
- fell into generalisation, assertion or narrative
- off-loaded centre-prepared notes and paid no attention to the specifics of the question
- offered character sketches of Sarah and Tess
- did not plan their answers
- sometimes spent a lot of time on writing about Hardy's life

Question 8

Successful candidates:

- compared and contrasted the *presentation* of landscape and the natural world throughout their entire answer
- were clearly appreciative of the importance of landscape and the natural world to the writers' authorial intentions
- clearly understood the uses to which both writers had employed pathetic fallacy
- showed a clear appreciation of the writers at work by paying due attention to the facts that Hardy is a genuine Victorian commenting on his own society from within and that Fowles is a modern novelist re-creating a Victorian world for his fiction
- found enough to write about from **both** novels
- clearly understood the nature of the comparative task
- discriminated with style and knowledge

Less successful candidates:

- presented a list of allegedly important landscape backdrops in both novels ranging from the potentially useful and interesting (Stonehenge, the Lyme Undercliff, The Chase, London, Flintcomb-Ash, the Cobb, Talbothays Dairy...) to the incoherent and desperate (the United States, fields, farm equipment, the sea...)
- ignored the instruction to write about the *presentation* of landscape and the natural world
- fell into narrative or generalised
- failed to plan their work carefully
- did not compare and contrast
- wrote at great length about one novel (usually *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*) to the exclusion of the other
- sometimes wrote about Hardy's life or regurgitated second hand opinions about Hardy's Wessex
- were not sure what Fowles was attempting to do in his presentation of landscape and the natural world in *The French Lieutenant's Woman*

Option 5: Reflections

The Principal Examiner saw no answers on Option 5 this January.

Option 6: Minds under Stress

Question 11

Successful candidates:

- kept a comparison of the extracts at the heart of their answer
- responded in a sensitive and astute manner to the extracts and to the wider novels
- started with the language of the extracts and worked their way out towards the novels' wider themes
- understood authorial intent
- found interesting things to say about, for example, the introduction of major detail about McMurphy and Buddy into the novels, authorial voice, mental illness, hypocrisy and trickery, power struggles, self-image, status, ideas about manhood
- planned their work coherently

Less successful candidates

- did not engage style
- wrote about one extract then the other without really engaging a comparative analysis
- did not adequately plan their answers
- got bogged down in unsuccessful attempts to describe subject matter
- could not place the extracts within the novels as a whole, asserted and found it difficult to use text
- offered character sketches of McMurphy and Esther
- could not spell Esther's name correctly

Question 12

Successful candidates

- understood that they had to compare and contrast
- showed a genuine, enthusiastic engagement with both novels that was heartening for examiners
- paid special attention to the *presentation* of wit and humour
- offered an explanation about the uses of wit and humour in **both** novels
- could signpost and organise their way around both texts with skill and purpose, a difficult skill to master with Kesey's novel in particular
- used the informed personal voice with authority
- found interesting and convincing things to say about the uses of wit and humour in novels which deal with mental illness

Less successful candidates:

- found it difficult to steer their way around the novels and so could not present the most helpful evidence
- did not plan their answers

- frequently claimed that Plath's novel contained no uses of wit or humour at all so did not write about *The Bell Jar*
- offered narrative
- ignored the key word *presentation*
- could not make adequate distinctions between the novels
- forgot to compare and contrast
- asserted or generalised
- wanted to write about Sylvia Plath's life and death
- accused Kesey of a misogyny they could not prove or make relevant
- could not spell Esther's name correctly

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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