



General Certificate of Education

English Literature 6741

Specification A

LA5W Literary Connections

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

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LA5W Literary Connections (Written)
General

This proved to be a fair and challenging paper and there was evidence of excellent answers to all of the questions which had been attempted. The two Option 1 texts introduced in 2006, J.G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* and Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*, have become more popular and examiners reported that candidates had written some good answers showing a keen engagement with both novels. The other option which was new for 2006, Option 6: *Minds under Stress* featuring Ken Kesey's *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* and Sylvia Plath's *The Bell Jar* proved, as it did last year, to be very popular and attracted candidates in significant numbers. This year's brand new texts for Option 2: *Women's Perspectives* Ursula le Guin's *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* attracted a very healthy number of candidates, many of whom wrote interesting and thought-provoking essays. The most popular option this year was Option 4: *Perspectives on Nineteenth Century England*. The majority of candidates appeared to have both enjoyed and derived benefit from having studied Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. (As in previous years, the length of the individual components for this examiner's report is based on the relative popularity of the questions.)

Successful candidates:

- kept the question's key words at the heart of a **planned** answer
- understood the **comparative** nature of Unit 5
- made good use of their time
- were fully engaged with the language used by the writers of their texts and the very best candidates started with a comparison of style before moving on to a comparison of themes
- could use carefully selected and apposite, integrated quotation with skill
- were able to move from the literal surface of their texts into an analysis of the more subtle underpinning ideas
- were able to define 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
- read with sensitivity and explored skilfully
- were able to write convincingly about how language shapes meaning
- could spell, punctuate and use correct English grammar
- could signpost their way around texts leaving the examiner in no doubt that they were familiar with whole texts and were aware of the delicate twists and turns within those texts
- were aware of the effects on the reader of a particular text or extract.

Less successful candidates:

- ignored the specifics of questions by not concentrating on key words and phrases
- did not compare and contrast enough to guarantee success
- demonstrated poor formal control of English, especially with spelling
- could not punctuate titles correctly
- in answers to the direct textual comparison questions (1, 3, 5, 7, 9 and 11) frequently offered a résumé of one extract followed by a résumé of the other without offering any sort of meaningful comparison, (though it must be reported that there were fewer answers like this in June 2007 than in previous examination sequences)
- had no idea how to signpost their way around their texts showing little or no understanding of such issues as narrative order, plot development and character development

- 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
- did not plan their answers at all or occasionally “over-planned” by writing notes of such detail that they were longer than the essays which followed them
- could not or did not use quotation, integrated or otherwise or used overlong and unwieldy chunks of quotation which left candidates little space to write their own thoughts or opinions
- generalised and made vague assertions
- wrote imbalanced answers, spending an inappropriately large proportion of time on one text at the expense of the other
- wrote answers that gave the impression that texts had been learned essentially as separate entities with little time being spent on comparison
- ignored or were not aware of literary contexts
- 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
- did not convince the examiner that they understood that characters in fiction are constructs
- knew that they needed to write about language and style but were unable to do so with control, understanding or direction
- off-loaded centre-prepared notes or critics’ opinions
- sadly, some candidates still do not know the difference between *woman* and *women*.

Option 1: History in Literature

Question 1

Successful candidates:

- kept the comparative nature of the task at the heart of their answer
- were able to demonstrate that both extracts explored such themes as friendships, illness, imprisonment, death, sacrifice, loyalty, fidelity, violence, treachery...
- started with an analysis of some of the specifics in the extracts and worked their way out to an exploration of the novels as a whole
- wrote with enthusiasm about writers’ style
- made sense of both extracts within the wider framework of ideas operating within both novels.

Less successful candidates:

- told the story of the extracts and relayed plot and themes
- did not compare and contrast
- wanted to write character sketches, for example of Hopkin the Collector and Hari from *The Siege of Krishnapur* and Fitzpatrick and Ned Kelly in *True History of the Kelly Gang*
- occasionally got side-tracked by one incident in one extract which took up too much time, for example the death of George Foxlett Cutter in *The Siege of Krishnapur* or the alleged wild sexual behaviour of the Australian outbackers in *True History of the Kelly Gang*. Such candidates then struggled to find something comparable to write about in their other novel.

Question 2

Successful candidates:

- were confident and assured in their exploration of bravery in both novels and were aware that bravery comes in many forms and guises
- kept comparison central to their answer
- saw characters as constructs designed by Farrell and Carey to relay themes, ideas and philosophy to the reader
- explored the skills of the writers at work
- were confident when exploring the underpinning ideas which had motivated the novelists to write historical fiction.

Less successful candidates:

- wanted to write character studies of characters considered brave. George Fleury in *The Siege of Krishnapur* and Ned Kelly in *True History of the Kelly Gang* featured prominently in such answers
- were generalised and assertive
- wanted to write down everything they could remember about nineteenth century Australia and India
- forgot to compare and contrast
- wrote lists of “brave” events or characters.

Option 2: Women’s Perspectives

This year saw the arrival of *The Left Hand of Darkness* by Ursula le Guin and *Oryx and Crake* by Margaret Atwood. It was heartening to see the large numbers of candidates attracted by these texts.

Question 3

Successful candidates:

- placed the extracts within the overarching structure of both novels and made some valuable observations about how close to the beginnings of both novels the extracts were placed
- kept the comparative nature of the task at the heart of their answer
- engaged the language of both extracts (including the writers’ uses of neologisms so common in science-fiction) and were able to use telling detail which linked both extracts
- understood that both extracts were significant in terms of plot, presentation of character and the introduction of dominant themes into both novels
- wrote interestingly about such things as alienation (and aliens), how civilisations are built and destroyed, friendships, loneliness, treachery, technology, quests and missions, responsibility, power, blame, self-concept...
- made interesting observations about the different cultures and societies presented in the extracts
- wrote about the extracts before moving on to consider some of the implications of the wider novels
- understood that the novels were essentially from the science-fiction genre but that both writers wanted to achieve slightly different things within the overarching genre
- did not ignore the fact that the texts were offered for study under the title *Women’s Perspectives*.

Less successful candidates:

- offloaded partially-understood notes by trying to claim, for example, that the seeds of the loving relationship between Genly Ai and Estraven were obvious even at this early stage of *The Left Hand of Darkness*
- forgot to compare and contrast
- ignored the request to write about style and in doing so demonstrated that they did not understand the narrative structures of the novels in particular *The Left Hand of Darkness*
- ignored the extracts in favour of writing generally or assertively
- were often long-winded and rather formless
- did not understand genre
- wanted to write about global warming, space travel, the pornography industry, cloning, hermaphroditism, dystopian literature or the feminist critique of unfettered technology and so on with no attempt to make links between the extracts and their set texts.

Question 4

Successful candidates:

- understood that Genly Ai and Jimmy were constructs used by the writers to present themes and ideas to their readers
- clearly understood the nature of the comparative task
- spent approximately the same amount of time and effort on writing about the *presentation* of both characters
- found interesting things to say about the narrative voices at work in both novels
- were able to signpost their way around the novels
- were aware of the writers at work
- engaged the style of the novels
- understood genre and found it interesting that female writers had tackled subjects largely considered to be the preserve of male writers.

Less successful candidates:

- offered character sketches of Genly Ai and Jimmy and told the examiner some of the things the characters did in the novels
- ignored the key word *presentation*
- thought that Genly Ai's was the only narrative voice used by le Guin
- did not use textual evidence to prove claims about what Jimmy or Genly Ai may or may not have represented
- did not compare and contrast
- were happier writing about such issues as global warming and cloning than about how the writers presented their characters to the readers
- made silly, wild, exaggerated or unproven claims about the characters for example: Genly Ai uses a colourless form of English because he is writing a report; Jimmy is a worse human being than Crake and that everything about him is indecent, repulsive or unpalatable...
- often did not see the tenderness in le Guin's presentation of Genly Ai or the humour in Atwood's presentation of Jimmy
- wrote in a very generalised way often about "society" or got bogged down in a narrative explanation of the worlds of the Crakers and the Gethenians
- found new and unusual ways of spelling such words as *Gethenians, Estraven, Karhidish, Argaven, Mishnory, Orgota, Edondurath...*

Option 3: Visions of the Future

Question 5

Successful candidates:

- kept comparison at the heart of their response
- placed the extracts within the overarching structure of both novels
- understood authorial intent
- had an analysis of language as a central feature of their answer
- made excellent use of the various links on offer: endings as new starts, ritual, free will, change, control, leadership, growing up, power, crookedness ...
- understood the different narrative techniques of their set texts
- considered the extracts before moving on to explore some of the implications of things already encountered in the wider novels.
- understood that these two episodes are significant as conclusions to the novels and were sometimes not afraid to claim that the conclusions were less than successful or satisfactory.

Less successful candidates:

- fell into generalisation and assertion about the genre Visions of the Future
- described what happened in the extracts without comparing and contrasting them
- found quite a lot to say about *A Clockwork Orange* but could not write with sufficient authority or engagement about *Riddley Walker*
- ignored the instruction to write about style
- got confused by or did not understand the significance of the Punch and Pooty show in *Riddley Walker*
- neglected to consider the fact that these extracts are conclusions to the novels.

Question 6

Successful candidates:

- wrote about the *presentation* of friendships and alliances with skill, sophistication and differentiation
- compared and contrasted throughout
- showed a clear appreciation of the writers at work: some of the work here was among the very best on the entire examination
- were able to convey their evident enthusiasm for their set texts
- were confident when exploring the underpinning ideas which had motivated the novelists to write fiction centred around Visions of the Future
- were as comfortable with *Riddley Walker* as they were with *A Clockwork Orange*.

Less successful candidates:

- did not address the keyword *presentation*
- did not compare and contrast
- were unable to write convincingly about style
- found substantially more to say about Burgess than Hoban
- offered lists of friendships and alliances
- did not disentangle the differences between friendships and alliances in both novels.

Option 4: Perspectives on 19th Century England

Question 7

Successful candidates:

- following the advice from previous examiner's reports, paid due attention to the facts that Hardy is a genuine Victorian commenting on his own impressions of nineteenth century England from within and that Fowles is a modern novelist re-creating a Victorian world for his fiction
- 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
- were clearly aware of the significance of the extracts in terms of the plot and character development of both novels
- started with the language of the extracts and worked their way out towards the novels' wider themes
- wrote intelligently about such things as sexual attraction, lies, deceit, pathetic fallacy, hypocrisy, equality, *mastery*, freedom, choice ...as usual with such weighty novels the extracts gave the most able candidates a great deal of raw material with which to work
- were able to detect in Tess' behaviour and Charles' responses to Sarah the seeds of later troubles.

Less successful candidates:

- forgot to compare and contrast the extracts
- fell into generalisation, assertion or narrative
- off-loaded centre-prepared notes and paid no attention to the specifics of the question
- sometimes wanted to write essays about the values and mores, real or supposed, of Victorian England
- criticised Alec's behaviour on the cart-ride or Sarah's artful lies as if these characters in fiction were real people
- did not acknowledge Hardy and Fowles as the architects of meaning in the novels
- were not aware of the nuances of language in both extracts.

Question 8

Successful candidates:

- kept their answer firmly focused around the key word *presentation*
- as with question 7 paid due attention to the facts that Hardy is a genuine Victorian commenting on his own society and that Fowles is a modern novelist re-creating a Victorian world for his fiction
- understood that Tess and Sarah were constructs designed by the writers to convey themes and ideas to the reader
- kept the comparative nature of the question at the heart of their answers
- showed a clear understanding of the writers at work
- discriminated with style and knowledge selecting the most useful quotation as examples of their argument
- could signpost their way around two long novels by showing in detail how both novelists presented the various twists and turns in Tess' and Sarah's lives
- when they tackled existentialism not only understood it but could also relate it directly and with skill and discrimination to the novels
- followed the characters' presentation all the way through the novels
- freed themselves from the shackles of critical orthodoxy and were prepared to make meaning for themselves.

Less successful candidates:

- offered character sketches of Sarah and Tess
- did not see the characters as constructs
- ignored the key word *presentation*
- fell into narrative or generalised
- referred to Angel and Alec in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Charles and Varguennes in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* as "love interests"
- did not compare and contrast
- did not acknowledge or seem to understand that Sarah lies, schemes and manipulates others
- asserted that the role of "Fate" was as important to Fowles as it was to Hardy
- off-loaded Centre-inspired notes or relied heavily on the unassimilated opinions of literary critics
- let the length of the novels overwhelm them
- did not acknowledge that Tess murdered Alec or that Fowles gives Sarah (and therefore the reader) various alternative endings for *The French Lieutenant's Woman*.

Option 5: Reflections

Question 9

Successful candidates:

- analysed style with as much rigour as they analysed subject matter
- kept comparison and contrast at the heart of their response
- began with the detail of the extracts and worked their way out to the wider implications of both novels
- had prepared themselves for the examination by analysing Gibbons' style of literary pastiche but were aware of Webb's lyrical gifts too
- found useful and interesting things to say about narrative voice
- were alive to the rich resonances of language in both texts and found interesting things to say about sexual attraction, "bodily love", cads and gentlemen, trickery, longing, passions genuine and pretentious, fulfilment, self-determinism, comedy...

Less successful candidates:

- were heavily reliant on narrative and on explaining the background to the novels
- wrote about one extract then the other without really engaging a comparative analysis
- offered much in the way of biography, especially of Mary Webb
- got lost in subject matter and failed to engage style
- could not contextualise the novels and so were confused by both
- were not alive to the language of the texts
- found it difficult and even a little embarrassing to write about the sexual content in the extracts.

Question 10

Successful candidates:

- were able to compare and contrast with skill and discrimination all the way through their answers
- showed a clear understanding of the writers at work
- kept their answers firmly focused on the key word *presentation*
- selected men in the novels who were interesting enough to write about
- were aware of authorial intent
- understood that the presentation of some men was designed for a different set of literary intentions than the presentation of other men
- wrote some very interesting things about the presentation of such characters as Kester Woodseaves, Beguildy, Old Sarn and Gideon in *Precious Bane* and Adam, Seth, Reuben, Urk, Mybug, the Pioneers-O and Charles Fairford in *Cold Comfort Farm*.

Less successful candidates:

- did not address the key word *presentation*
- as in years gone by, were over-reliant on Centre-inspired notes especially about Mary Webb's life
- presented lists of male characters in both novels
- did not compare and contrast
- re-worked narrative.

Option 6: Minds under Stress

Question 11

Successful Candidates:

- wrote with enthusiasm and understanding about the links between the extracts
- compared and contrasted throughout their answer
- started with the language of the extracts and worked their way out towards the novels' wider themes
- understood authorial intent
- responded in a sensitive and astute manner to the extracts and to the wider novels
- understood authorial intent
- found interesting things to say about, for example, depression, sleeping and waking, identity, ways of seeing, relationships with parents, self concept and self-worth, medication...

Less successful candidates:

- did not engage style
- wrote about one extract then the other without really engaging a comparative analysis
- 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
- wanted to write about Sylvia Plath's life.

Question 12

Successful candidates:

- understood that they had to compare and contrast how Buddy Willard and Harding were *presented* in the novels so kept style as close to the heart of their answer as subject matter
- could signpost and organise their way around both texts with skill and purpose
- found informative and sensitive things to say about narrative voice
- did not confuse Sylvia Plath with Esther Greenwood or Ken Kesey with Chief Bromden
- understood that characters in novels are constructs
- made something of the method adopted by Plath to reveal Buddy in instalments which do not follow a precise chronology
- wrote in an informed and interesting way how the characters were used to present themes and ideas to the reader
- were able to write with confidence about the decline into and the recovery from mental illnesses, real or alleged.

Less successful candidates:

- offered character sketches of both characters
- did not compare and contrast
- wrote biography (especially of Sylvia Plath) instead of literary criticism
- even in a question about Buddy Willard asserted that Esther Greenwood **was** Sylvia Plath and therefore refused to take *The Bell Jar* as fiction
- ignored the style of Plath and Kesey and paid no attention to the fact that Harding and Buddy Willard are literary constructs
- wrote assertively or offered narrative
- made the occasional startling claim: Sylvia Plath was married to T.S. Eliot and had committed suicide twice; Ted Huges (sic) the animal-liberation sex-maniac misogynist had murdered Sylvia Plath with a gas oven and Ken Kesey had been a member of a motorcycle gang before founding The Grateful Dead.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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