



General Certificate of Education

English Literature 6741 *Specification A*

LA5W Literary Connections

Report on the Examination *2008 examination - June series*

Further copies of this Report are available to download from the AQA Website: www.aqa.org.uk

Copyright © 2008 AQA and its licensors. All rights reserved.

COPYRIGHT

AQA retains the copyright on all its publications. However, registered centres for AQA are permitted to copy material from this booklet for their own internal use, with the following important exception: AQA cannot give permission to centres to photocopy any material that is acknowledged to a third party even for internal use within the centre.

Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

The Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (company number 3644723) and a registered charity (registered charity number 1073334). Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX
Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.

General

Senior examining personnel reported that this was a fair and appropriately demanding paper and that they had marked some excellent answers to all of the questions which had been attempted. The texts on Option 1, J.G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* and Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang*, have become more popular since their inception in 2006 and examiners reported that students had written some excellent answers showing a keen engagement with the language, form and structure, as well as the themes, of 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 to be extremely popular and attracted candidates in significant numbers. Last year's 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 relatively hearty number of candidates, many of whom wrote interesting and thought-provoking essays. Still the most popular option on the examination was Option 4: *Perspectives on Nineteenth Century England*, the candidate numbers for which just exceeded entries for Option 6: *Minds under Stress*. *Perspectives on Nineteenth Century England* appears to have challenged and entertained the majority of students who studied the option. Answers indicated that most candidates had enjoyed and derived benefit from having studied Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Fowles' *The French Lieutenant's Woman*. Option 5: *Quest Literature* featuring *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain and Philip Pullman's *Northern Lights* made its June debut. After having only attracted a handful of candidates in the January sequence of examinations the new option was quite popular and most candidates were able to offer interesting and informed answers on their set texts. However, more than elsewhere on the examination there was a tendency for candidates to relay unhelpful narrative when answering on this option. Once again, Option 3: *Visions of the Future* attracted an average number of candidates and, as in previous years, there was evidence that students responded with enthusiasm and occasional delight to Burgess' *A Clockwork Orange* and Hoban's *Riddley Walker*. Some of the essays written in response to this option were among the most interesting and thought-provoking on the examination and the very best responses demonstrated with intelligence and analytical bravura why these novels have taken on such an iconic status among certain sections of the reading public.

Successful candidates did what good students have been doing for years on LA5W:

- kept the question's keywords at the heart of a **planned** answer
- (as ever) 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
- wrote answers which started with a comparison of language, form and structure before moving on to a comparison of themes
- could use carefully selected and apposite, integrated quotation with skill
- could signpost their way around their set texts with confidence and 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
- could spell, punctuate and use correct English grammar
- 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
- 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
- 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
- **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 answers
- were able to demonstrate that both extracts explored such themes as fear, weapons, heroism, “subtle mechanisms”, battles, belief, bloodshed and death...
- 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’ styles
- 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 Harry, Fleury and the Padre from *The Siege of Krishnapur* and Joe Byrne 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 rantings of the Padre in *The Siege of Krishnapur* or the significance of the

“undertakers” 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 loyalty in both novels
- 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 loyal. Harry Dunstaple 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 “loyal” things done by allegedly “loyal” characters

Option 2: Women’s Perspectives

Question 3

Successful candidates

- placed the extracts within the overarching structure of both novels
- 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
- wrote interestingly about such things as friendships, loneliness, flight, technology, recognition, accommodation, acknowledgement...
- wrote about the extracts before moving on to consider some of the implications of the wider novels
- 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 about such things as global warming, American culture, cloning, dystopian literature, the feminist critique and so on with no attempt to make links between the extracts and their wider set texts
- 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
- often wrote more about *Oryx and Crake* than about *The Left Hand of Darkness* though with little focus on the question
- did not understand genre

Question 4

Successful candidates

- wrote interestingly and with authority about friendship and love
- clearly understood the nature of the comparative task
- did not ignore the key word *presentation* in the question
- found interesting things to say about friendship and love as separate entities as well as interesting things to say about how friendship and love are linked in both novels
- were able to signpost their way around their set texts
- were aware of the writers at work
- engaged the style of the novels
- understood genre and knew that Le Guin's presentation of friendship and love was essentially different to Atwood's

Less successful candidates

- tended to offer character sketches of Genly Ai and Estraven from *The Left Hand of Darkness* and Oryx and sometimes Jimmy but hardly ever Crake from *Oryx and Crake*
- ignored the key word *presentation*
- did not compare and contrast
- wanted to write about the life of Oryx at great length
- wrote lists of characters who were in friendships or in love with other characters
- wrote in a very generalised way often about "society"
- misspelled many of Le Guin's neologisms and some of Atwood's

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: alliances, tales from times past, journeys, sexual violence, winning and losing, leading and following, power, choice ...
- 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.

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, did not understand or just ignored the significance of the Aunty story in *Riddley Walker*

Question 6

Successful candidates

- wrote about the *presentation* of folly and wisdom with skill, sophistication and differentiation
- compared and contrasted throughout
- showed a clear appreciation of the writers at work, often being able to demonstrate that the novelists were showing that their central characters, though often beset by folly throughout the novels, had arrived at a kind of wisdom by the end of the novels
- 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 events which allegedly demonstrated folly and wisdom or offered character sketches of Alex in *A Clockwork Orange* and/or Riddley in Hoban's novel
- on rare occasions did not know what folly meant

Option 4: Perspectives on 19th 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 answers
- 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 pathetic fallacy, the phrase common to both extracts: "I am not worthy of you", desire and duty, ideas about marriage, sexual attraction, truth and lies, aftermaths and consequences...the very best candidates found a great deal of evidence linking the two extracts and wrote with assurance and engagement
- were able to detect many similarities of expression in the extracts
- found interesting things to say about the presentation of Angel and Charles as well as Tess and Sarah
- 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

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 Victorian England
- criticised or praised Charles' and/or Angel's behaviour as if these characters in fiction were real people
- asserted sociological or historical opinions about "society", mostly Victorian but occasionally modern
- did not acknowledge Hardy and Fowles as the architects of meaning in the novels
- were not aware to the nuances of language in both extracts
- gave biographical accounts of Hardy

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
- often took the time and trouble to disentangle the *presentation of life* in families and the *presentation of behaviour* in families
- 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
- were not in thrall to critical orthodoxies, especially with Hardy and were prepared to make meaning for themselves

Less successful candidates

- ignored the key word *presentation*
- fell into narrative or generalised
- did not compare and contrast
- offered lists of families and family ties, often struggling to place Sarah in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* within a family environment
- off-loaded Centre-inspired notes or relied heavily on the unassimilated opinions of literary critics
- were far more comfortable when writing about Hardy than Fowles
- let the length of the novels overwhelm them

Option 5: Quest Literature

Question 9

Successful candidates

- analysed style with as much rigour as they analysed subject matter
- kept comparison and contrast at the heart of their responses
- began with the detail of the extracts and worked their way out to the wider implications of both novels
- found useful and interesting things to say about narrative voice
- were alive to the rich resonances of language in both texts
- found interesting things to say about childhood, anxiety, conflict, friendship, subterfuge and false names, death and survival...

Less successful candidates

- were heavily reliant on narrative
- wrote about one extract then the other without really engaging a comparative analysis
- got lost in subject matter and failed to engage style
- were not alive to the language of the texts
- got stuck on the idea of "feud" in the extract from *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and struggled to relate it to the extract from *Northern Lights*
- ignored or could not make sense of the re-appearance of Jim in the Twain extract

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 interesting things to write about Huck and Lyra
- were aware of authorial intent and made some meaningful observations about the uses of the first person narrative in *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and the third person narrative in *Northern Lights*
- saw Huck and Lyra as literary constructs designed to convey meaning to the reader
- acknowledged the differences between the presentation of Huck and Lyra as well as their many similarities

Less successful candidates

- did not address the keyword *presentation*
- wrote character sketches of Huck and Lyra
- asserted one of various theories about slavery in the fledgling United States
- often did not get much further than telling the examiner that Huck and Lyra were children with a sense of adventure
- did not compare and contrast
- re-worked narrative
- avoided or could not write about how language shapes meaning

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
- 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, hospitals, mental illness, being hurt, dislocation, mothers and fathers, doctors and nurses...

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 or about Ken Kesey's experiences as a drug-taking Merry Prankster

Question 12

Successful candidates

- understood that they had to construct an argument
- kept the key words at the heart of their answer but paid particular attention to the word "all"
- could signpost and organise their way around both texts with skill and purpose
- made sense of the ideas of intense loathing, distrust, emasculation, tyranny and monsters
- always managed to compare and contrast
- could find examples of men not presented as loathsome in *The Bell Jar* and of women not presented as emasculating monsters in *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*
- found informative and sensitive things to say about narrative voice

Less successful candidates

- did not make sufficient sense of the key words, especially "all"
- did not compare and contrast
- wrote biography (especially of Sylvia Plath) instead of literary criticism
- could not manage to construct an argument
- wrote assertively or offered narrative
- off-loaded Centre-inspired notes or tried to re-tell narrative

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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