



General Certificate of Education

English Literature 5746

Specification B

**LTB1 Introduction to the Study of English
Literature**

Report on the Examination

2007 examination - June series

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Dr Michael Cresswell Director General.

LTB1 Introduction to the Study of English Literature

This summer, examiners again reported seeing performances covering the whole of the mark range and there were a significant number of very high marks. It was pleasing to see several candidates scoring maximum marks; such work was of a very high calibre. Many centres are preparing their candidates well for this examination and many candidates have good knowledge of their set texts. Having sound and detailed knowledge of the texts is of course a major requirement, not least of all because this is an open book examination. There is an expectation that candidates can find their ways around their text easily and refer to specific parts of the text with confidence. Bullet one of all questions tests explicitly the candidates' knowledge of characters, plot threads, characters' attitudes and feelings and other aspects of narrative in relation to a specified section of the text, usually one or two chapters. Bullet three requires candidates to create an argument in relation to the whole novel and to do this candidates need to know where to look in order to find their examples.

While many candidates did know their texts well, it was worrying to find that many candidates did not. This was particularly evident in some part iii) responses to Questions 1a, 2b and 5a when candidates needed to move from a specific part of the text into the whole novel. Many candidates were unable to write about any specific parts of the text in which Mr Collins appears in the Austen question; several only wrote about social class in Chapters 1 and 26 in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* and although candidates did have views on the women in *The Great Gatsby* there was sometimes only scant textual knowledge to support points. When candidates write with specific and detailed textual knowledge in support of their arguments in the third parts of the questions they invariably do well.

In terms of the overall performance of candidates, the first bullet of the questions was generally well answered. Some very focused answers were seen to all questions. Candidates need to be reminded though that there is nothing to be gained from writing more than one page in response to this section and often high marks can be obtained by candidates who write a good deal less than this. Those candidates who produced the most impressive answers therefore wrote concisely, identified clear points and explained and supported them. The first bullet is the most straightforward bullet and all candidates should be able to make some relevant comments. Several of the questions on this summer's paper were on character (for example, 2a, 3a, 3b, 5a and 6a) and candidates ought to have been able to identify character traits if they had been taught to do so. Some candidates, however, still wrote about what the characters do and say rather than identify what is revealed of them. It would certainly help if candidates were encouraged to widen their vocabulary and precisely comment on such character traits as, for example in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, Alec's egotism, his powers of manipulation, his being a sexual predator, his assertiveness, his disrespect, his cruelty and his self consciousness. When centres are teaching for the first bullet they would do well to look at questions across the whole paper to see what specific tasks are being asked. Candidates should also be told that they need to support their comments with brief quotations. Some candidates struggled to write about characters' feelings, the requirement of 1a. When preparing for the exam candidates ought to be able to identify specific feelings rather than simply talking about feelings in general terms. In Chapter 58 of *Pride and Prejudice* there is evidence of Elizabeth's gratitude, her embarrassment, her love, her shame and her happiness, while Darcy shows agitation, love, delight and overwhelming pleasure.

As in previous examinations, bullet two, where candidates are asked to write about narrative method, continued to cause the most difficulty. Some centres are preparing their candidates very thoroughly and candidates are thinking well about the structures of chapters, the subtleties of narrative perspective, voice, chronology, how dialogue is used and other aspects of language used in the prescribed chapters. In general, candidates are performing better in this section

than they did several years ago. When candidates are not performing well in this section it is often because they avoid the question and write about what happens in the chapter (this is sometimes no more than a repetition of what they have already written in bullet one) or they write general narrative points about the text and do not apply comments to the given chapter. Many answers contained generalisations like: 'Walker uses the epistolary form in this chapter and tells the story through Celie. She uses black American English and non-standard grammar'. Although such comments are relevant they need to be developed with supportive evidence and comment from the prescribed letter or chapter. Several candidates are evidencing their observations of methodology from other sections of the novel suggesting that the answers are prepared and that the material produced could answer any question. Examiners expressed particular concerns with the AO3 responses to *The Great Gatsby* where it seems that centres had often taught AO3 so heavily that all the candidates in the centre were producing the same answers. The best answers are those where there is freshness of approach and real personal engagement with aspects of narrative. Sometimes candidates are writing about what writers **don't** do in the given chapter. This is hardly productive. Good answers in response to AO3 will contain detail from the given chapter, which reflects understanding on how the writer's methods shape meanings. As pointed out in previous reports, it is of no value for candidates to write about punctuation. It seems that more and more candidates are telling examiners about how readers feel because a semicolon or a comma has been used. Many candidates are also writing rather loosely about long and short sentences. Again imprecise comment and broad sweeping generalisations are unlikely to lead to high marks and candidates should certainly be discouraged from writing randomly about long and short sentences.

Some centres are encouraging candidates to combine their responses to bullets i) and ii). While this can work well, it can also lead to limiting answers as candidates write far more about bullet i) than ii) largely because they confine their AO3 comments to the subject matter of bullet i) rather than writing about method in the whole of the chapter. As a general principle, candidates should be writing about two pages on bullet ii).

The third bullet, which invites candidates to engage in debates around texts, is becoming more competently and more confidently answered by those centres and candidates where multiple meanings of texts are fundamental to thinking and teaching. The key to success here is to be aware that texts are open to different interpretations and to be able to argue from a personal perspective. Because candidates are required to range around the text in this answer, sound knowledge is essential. It is expected that candidates refer to three or four specific parts of the text in support of their ideas. Credit is given in this section for the candidates' ability to think and to argue. Candidates who produce weaker responses tend to pick out a word or two from the task and write anything known or vaguely related to those words, sometimes not understanding the words at all. This was particularly evident in responses to Question 4a iii) where many candidates wrote about Celie's and Nettie's use of Standard English but were unable to deal with 'something being lost when the letter writers become more educated'. There were also problems in 1b when candidates struggled with the idea of *Pride and Prejudice's* being a 'deeply passionate novel'. Many candidates simply thought this was an invitation to write about different sorts of marriage and 'passionate' was seldom debated.

On the whole, contextual material was used sparingly by candidates in the third bullet and in many cases it was made relevant to the tasks. However there was still evidence of irrelevant biographical material or quotations from secondary sources including critics. Often these references were lengthy and had presumably been written in their texts (which is illegal) or had been learned (which is a worrying waste of valuable time). When critical opinion was quoted it was very, very rare that it bore any relevance to the tasks.

In terms of AO1, there was some excellent writing, which showed sophistication and precision. Very high marks were given to those candidates who produced penetrating and fluent analyses. Some candidates wrote too much, perhaps in an attempt to impress, but actually producing loose, baggy structures that impeded clear communication of argument and ideas. Possibly connected with this desperation to fill as many pages as possible, proof reading was often poor. It would certainly help candidates in the future if they spent more time thinking about and crafting their responses. Centres could help candidates by doing more work on using critical vocabulary.

The most popular texts were *The Color Purple*, *The Great Gatsby* and *Pride and Prejudice*, but there was evidence that all seven texts were being studied. It was very pleasing to see several responses to *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*; responses to this text were often lively and thorough, suggesting that teachers had taught the text with real enthusiasm. Some of the best answers were seen on the less popular texts, *Waterland* and *The God of Small Things*; this was largely because candidates were focusing more sharply on AO3, perhaps because these texts lend themselves well to discussion about how stories are told. All senior examiners said that they had seen excellent answers to *Waterland* which is pleasing given that it is often perceived as a difficult text.

For those centres needing more help with this unit and particularly teachers new to the specification, previous examination reports should be scrutinised along with previous examination papers.

Overall, there is much good work being done on LTB1 and if centres can urge their candidates to focus more on the tasks in a tight and controlled way then the achievement of candidates should be higher in the future of both this specification and that which will follow.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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