



**General Certificate of Education**

**English Literature 5746**

*Specification B*

**LTB2          Genre Study: Poetry and Drama**

**Report on the Examination**

*2007 examination - June series*

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**LTB2                    Genre Study: Poetry and Drama**

Examiners report seeing performances covering the paper's entire mark-range and choice of texts. Despite the occasional unfinished paper, most candidates seem to allocate their time sensibly between Section A (Poetry) and Section B (Drama), have some detailed knowledge of their texts, and something to say on their chosen questions. As ever, what distinguishes the most successful candidates is their ability to address the key terms of each question, develop a coherent argument and use their knowledge of the texts to provide relevant support for major points in their discussion.

**SECTION A: POETRY**

Examiners remarked that whilst candidates showed a growing aptitude to analyse, or at the least to consider, AO3 issues and often appreciated the effects of literary devices, there is still a common tendency to over-complicate answers to the (a) questions, and a failure to provide supportive quotation for the (c) questions. In the opinion of examiners, the demands of a closed book examination do not appear to be properly addressed in some centres.

Many candidates/centres also seem to assume that (c) questions demand an approach that involves contrast and comparison. This is certainly not the case, as the wording of these questions makes perfectly clear. Such an assumption is particularly damaging when the candidate uses the poem printed on the examination paper for this comparison, thus repeating material from question (b). Credit cannot be given twice for the same points.

Blake and Donne still attract the majority of candidates. However, a substantial number of candidates appeared to be encountering Donne's 'Love's Alchemy' for the first time in the examination and thus had some difficulty in making sense of it under examination conditions. Blake's 'London' produced many full and interesting responses, but also a tendency to explicate 'mind-forged manacles' rather than answer the question in (a). Despite the centrality of this poem to Blake's *Songs*, there were those candidates who clearly had no notion of what the phrase meant.

Elsewhere, there was evidence that candidates need reminding of the importance of reading questions with care. For example, many simply ignored the word 'structure' in Donne (b); and in Milton (c) some did not see 'or' and wrote about both Hell **and** the fallen angels. Keats and Chaucer also attract large numbers of candidates and for both there were some excellent responses. In particular, there were some fine analyses of Keats's use of the Spenserian stanza, though 'rhyming couplets' seems to be a label that some candidates apply to a variety of rhyme schemes.

**SECTION B: DRAMA**

Although Williams and Miller are still the clear favourites with centres, all the other plays/playwrights are well represented, in particular, large and growing numbers for Osborne and Stoppard.

In this section, there is always a clear distinction between those candidates who are sufficiently conversant with the text to provide frequent and relevant support for their argument, and those candidates who, whilst undoubtedly knowing their text well enough to write generally about it, fail to provide substantial textual underpinning. Again, this has to do with adequate preparation for a closed book examination.

In this section, candidates' answers were more assuredly relevant if they had read the questions closely, taking into account their wording. For example: Miller (b) produced many descriptions of 'successful' characters in the play but better candidates used these to examine the 'nature' of the various kinds of success embodied in the characters, as required by the question; in Williams (b) many candidates replaced 'masculinity' in the question with 'homosexuality', restricting their range of reference and thus producing responses more limited than they might otherwise have been.

If candidates identify and focus on relevant contexts in this section and do not introduce contextual material gratuitously into their answers, the chances are that the AO5 element will be successfully incorporated. There were some truly excellent text/context links for Osborne (1950s socio-political), Churchill (1980s socio-political) and Shaffer (socio-political hierarchies in 18<sup>th</sup> century Vienna). However, there are of course contexts other than the socio-political, and Churchill (b) required the candidate to link the play's ending to the context of the play as a whole. Many candidates attempting this did not have a sufficiently detailed knowledge of the play to undertake it successfully. Stoppard (a) required candidates to consider the play within a generic context, but despite the warning that the discussion 'should take into account some of the traditional features of tragedy as a genre' there were many who embarked upon this with little beyond the notion that 'tragedy = death'.

In conclusion, whilst it is a necessary function of these reports to point out how candidate performance might be improved, examiners would also like to take the opportunity to record the great pleasure many of the candidates' scripts give them through their engagement with, enthusiasm for, and obvious love of the texts they have studied – often providing examiners with original perspectives on texts and writers that may sometimes otherwise become over-familiar.

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

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