



## **General Certificate of Education**

# **English Language and Literature 5726**

## *Specification B*

**NTB1      Introduction to Language and  
Literature Study**

# **Report on the Examination**

*2007 examination - January series*

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

### Question 1

There were many engaged answers to this question and most candidates appeared to have an idea of what Frost's ideas about nature were. As usual, however, there were some layers of misreading of the set poem, 'Nothing Gold Can Stay': it is about autumn, it is about a mother and her child; it is about flowers falling off trees and so on. It often seemed that candidates were determined that Frost had a certain view and were willing to pick on any fragment of evidence, however flimsy, to support what they wanted to say. The main poems that candidates chose to pair with 'Nothing Gold Can Stay' were 'Hyla Brook', 'The Need of Being Versed in Country Things' and 'The Most of It' (usually poorly understood). The unfortunate candidate who chose 'The Oven Bird' but misread the title as 'The Oven Ready Bird' gave her answer a rather unusual, if tasty, slant.

### Question 2

It came as a surprise to examiners that many candidates did not appear to understand what 'tell a story' meant. A similar question on an earlier paper had asked candidates to write about the methods writers use to 'construct a narrative' and this they found very difficult. The simplification of the language for this year's question was intended to make it easier for candidates. However, many candidates were able to write intelligently about the texts and to slant their answer towards the question in a variety of ways, such as writing about character and structure. There were still too many of the 'all-purpose' responses to texts in which candidates trotted out the stock responses without trying to link them to the question asked. In fact, many examiners commented on the fact that some candidates were still answering last summer's question.

There were few texts that were not chosen by candidates and some of the best responses came from what, at first glance, would seem to be difficult or unsuitable texts. For example, those candidates who chose to see U A Fanthorpe writing about the story of London in 'London: Z to A' and were able to sustain this reading convincingly scored very well. Only John Prescott proved to be consistently useless (for this question, at least).

Examiners found the vagueness of some answers difficult to credit. This kind of reading that ignores both context (and sense) finds its nadir in the semantic field method. Here the candidate picks out some words from the text, ignores their context entirely and claims that they show how the text is 'negative' or 'positive' or whatever: '*Dickens uses the words 'smoke', 'machinery', 'piston' and 'elephant' to show a negative view of the town*'. It would be nice to have swathes of candidates who have the confidence to read the words that are in the text!

### Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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