Literary Connections coursework support booklet

This booklet brings together materials that have been issued over a number of years in Principal Moderator's Reports and the annual standardisation booklets. These include sample assignment titles, guidance for teachers and advice to candidates. It is hoped that teachers, particularly those new to the course, will find them useful and issue copies of the relevant pages to their students as appropriate.

In addition to these materials, Specification A offers support in a number of other important ways.. Teachers are urged to make the full use of each of these:

- Each centre is allocated to a moderator and a local consortium. The moderator advises on coursework tasks, approves titles, conducts two meetings a year to standardise and assess coursework, and provides guidance on all aspects of the course.
- Consortium meetings also provide an invaluable opportunity to meet and exchange ideas with other teachers of this Specification.
- The annual standardisation booklet, issued in the autumn term, contains examples of candidates' work for discussion, assessment and the establishment of standards. The booklet also outlines the assessment process and provides contact details and other information and news.
- The Chief Examiner's Reports comment on work submitted each January and June.
- AQA's Teacher Support Department organises training meetings each year.
- The AQA website (www.aqa.org.uk) contains specifications, reports, past examination papers, support materials and newsletters as well as updates and details of Teacher Support meetings.

Contents

Specification requirements for Module 5: Literary Connections

The AQA Specification states: 'Centres must choose two texts other than those prescribed for study on any other unit in AS or A2 during the time in which the candidate is taking the whole course, that is, during the candidate's AS and/or A2 year. One text must be prose; both texts must be suitable for A level study, and both texts must have been originally written in English. All texts and all assignments must be agreed by the coursework adviser.'

This means that teachers need to be aware of the set texts lists for all other modules and avoid any works listed there, even when those texts are not being studied in their centre. It is particularly important to be alert to changes in set texts which may rule out works previously used for coursework. Any texts set for the written alternative in this module, LA5W, can be studied for coursework.

Task setting and writing

These points summarise advice in recent Principal Moderator's reports.

Good tasks:

- have been negotiated with students and the moderator well in advance;
- reflect the interests and abilities of the students;
- contain a word such as *compare* or *comparison;*
- pair well-chosen texts;
- select clear, manageable aspects of the texts for comparison;
- direct students to include comparison of form, structure and language;
- avoid vagueness or reference to aspects not covered in this unit (such as 'cultural contexts').

Less successful tasks:

- failed to direct the candidates explicitly to compare the texts;
- were the same for all candidates when they might have performed better on another approach or even on different texts;
- focussed on themes and issues which made it more difficult for candidates to see the texts as literary constructs, for example how far the works were 'provoking and shocking';
- led students to believe that they should mimic someone else's approach, whether from lessons, worksheets or critics.

Successful candidates:

- are clear and cogent in their arguments (AO1);
- have used the opportunity of coursework to redraft and proof-read in the interests of clarity and accuracy (AO1);
- take the trouble to make their work easy to read and without distractions such as cramped type

size or narrow margins (AO1);
- ensure that the full implications are drawn from observations and extracts (AO1);
- establish the terms of their comparisons from the start (AO2ii);
- interweave comparison throughout (AO2ii);
- provide a balanced comparison, giving equal consideration to each text (AO2ii);
- make explicit reference to the authors and to the form each has chosen for their work (AO3);
- compare aspects of form, structure and language (AO3);
- draw attention to the sub-text in each work, using clues such as diction, allusion, etc (AO3) ;
- demonstrate independence of thought and personal engagement with the text (AO4);
- confine quotations to just those few words or phrases needed to make the point;
- include a bibliography;
- keep within sight of the suggested limit of 2,500 words.

Less successful candidates

- made only general comments rather than detailed comparisons;
- took a narrative approach;
- took a literal rather than a literary approach, treating characters as real people;
- were verbose, often quoting at length rather than weaving short, telling extracts into the body of their argument (weakness in AO1);
- paid little or no attention to comparing the ways the texts were written and so could not score highly in AO3;
- were discursive and failed to focus sharply on the task (failure of communication - AO1);
- failed to maintain a balance between the texts and between alternative viewpoints (therefore failing both to structure a clear response and to compare effectively, AO1 and AO2ii);
- failed to check their work for errors and stylistic slips before submission (AO1);
- relied heavily on notes, centre worksheets and other materials rather than attempting to develop their own voices – these candidates could not demonstrate 'independent literary judgements' (AO4).

Examples of successful tasks for Literary Connections coursework

These tasks are a sample of the many successful assignments seen by moderators. They are offered in the hope that they might stimulate centres to develop their own innovative choices and not simply as exemplars to be used without reflection. For this reason texts are not listed on their own; it is essential that the focus of comparison is clear or the student is likely to flounder and fail to address the assessment objectives. Pairing *The Wasteland* and *The Great Gatsby* could be imaginative and stimulating – but the moderator cannot be confident that the work will be appropriate until the task is defined (in this case, comparing the ways the writers use quests might be appropriate for the candidates). For this reason it is important to submit proposals to your moderator as soon as possible. Problems with this unit often begin when students commence work on unauthorised topics or amend their task after it has been approved.

It will help students if during their preparation they think seriously about what it means to compare two texts. Why are they comparing? And why *these* texts – do they 'fit', that is, offer fruitful grounds for comparison? If students struggle to answer these questions at the planning stage they are unlikely to shape a convincing argument in the final version and so should consider whether different choices would be more appropriate. Texts which have a clear contrast in style or period, or both, may offer more fruitful material to explore different literary qualities clearly. Use of a play or poetry, for example, alongside the prose text should produce useful exploration of the differences in genres, though sometimes students ignore this aspect altogether. It is important to add that students using poetry or collections of short stories need guidance on balancing the comparison so that the texts are treated equally and due attention is paid to differences in form and structure as well as content.

Teachers will be aware that the best results come when students are actively engaged with the texts and tasks they have chosen. Comparison of the use of the automobile in *The Great Gatsby* and *Death of Salesman* enthused the student who devised it in conjunction with their teacher but will not be to everyone's taste. Wherever possible we encourage teachers to involve students in selecting texts and negotiating tasks. Teachers are increasingly adopting this strategy, which encourages wide and independent reading by students and will stand them in good stead for both the synoptic paper and higher education. As an illustration of this, the first fifteen titles in this list are from a centre which takes this approach. Other titles demonstrate how when the same texts are studied there is still scope for a wide range of tasks which can be matched to the interests and abilities of the students.

1 A comparison of the presentation of the notions of beauty and identity in Alice Walker's *The Color Purple* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*
2 A comparison of the ways in which Thomas Hardy in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and Peter Carey in *True History of the Kelly Gang* present their protagonists.
3 A comparison of the presentation of the cad in *Decline and Fall* and *The Importance of Being Earnest.*
4 Compare how the authors of *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Vinegar Tom* alert us to the tragic ends

their central female characters will meet.

5 A comparison of the presentation of China in *Wild Swans* by Jung Chang and *Danziger's Travels* by Nick Danziger.

6 A comparison of how the issue of moral responsibility is explored by the authors of *The Great Gatsby* and *Heart of Darkness*.

7 A comparison of the presentation by Austen in *Mansfield Park* and Hardy in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* of virtuous characters as interesting and appealing.

8 Compare the presentation of virtuous women in *Sense and Sensibility* and *The Color Purple*.

9 Compare the ways in which Alice Walker and Toni Morrison present injustice in *The Color Purple* and *The Bluest Eye*.

10 A comparison of the presentation of marriage and married life in *Wuthering Heights* and *Rebecca*.

11 A comparison of the ways in which James Hogg and R L Stevenson present ideas of self and identity in *The Private Memoirs and Confessions of a Justified Sinner* and *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

12 A comparison of the presentation of madness in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*.

13 A comparison of how Brontë and Mantel reveal and challenge the values of their respective societies in their novels *Jane Eyre* and *An Experiment in Love*.

14 A comparison of the portrayal of the personal development of a young girl in Andrea Ashworth's *Once in a House on Fire* and Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, focusing on Andrea and Marianne.

15 Compare the ways in which Carter and McEwan present dysfunctional families in *The Magic Toyshop* and *The Cement Garden*.

16 Compare the use of reliable and unreliable narrators and their effect on the reader in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Wuthering Heights*.

17 Compare the ways in which the idea of imprisonment is presented in *One Flew over the Cuckoo's Nest* and *Wuthering Heights*.

18 A comparison of the presentation of male characters in *Wuthering Heights* and *The Great Gatsby*.

19 In the light of what Plath says in her essay 'A Comparison' about the writing styles of the poet and the novelist, compare *The Bell Jar* with the *Selected Poems*, and assess her relative effectiveness as novelist and as poet.

20 Compare Plath's presentation of the father figure in *The Bell Jar* and in her poetry.

21 Compare Plath's uses of key motifs and symbols in *The Bell Jar* and *Selected Poems*

22 At the core of Plath's work lies an examination of human identity, and feminine identity in particular. Compare her treatment of this theme in her poetry and prose fiction.

23 Compare how Miller and Fitzgerald present women in *Death of a Salesman* and *The Great Gatsby*, with particular reference to Linda Loman and either Daisy Buchanan or Myrtle Wilson.

24 Compare the story telling techniques of Swift and Dickens and the presentation of story-telling as a theme in *Waterland* and *Great Expectations*.

25 Compare the ways men are represented by female authors in *Jane Eyre* and *Pride and Prejudice*.

26 Compare the methods two female writers, Jane Austen and Edith Wharton, use to create awareness of women's position in society in *Pride and Prejudice* and *The Age of Innocence.* (This task could be used equally well with other works by Edith Wharton – *House of Mirth* or *The Custom of*

the Country would come up with interestingly different points.)

27 Compare how McEwan and Austen use confusion to further self-knowledge in *Atonement* and *Emma*.

28 Compare James' and Rankin's presentation of their detectives – Rebus in *The Hanging Garden* and Adam Dalgleish in *A Certain Justice*.

29 Compare the ways Morrison and Angelou use language in conversation and description to explore the position of black women in their society in *Sula* and *I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings*.

30 Compare how Greene and Conrad use the imagery of colonial Africa to reveal character in *A Burnt Out Case* and *Heart of Darkness*.

31 Compare how Fowles and Brontë use language describing settings and atmosphere to explore the feelings and relationships of their protagonists in *The French Lieutenant's Woman* and *Wuthering Heights*.

32 Compare the ways Brontë and Austen use the Gothic tradition in *Jane Eyre* and *Northanger Abbey*

33 Compare the ways McEwan uses children in *Atonement* and *The Child in Time*.

34 Compare McEwan's and Faulks' narrative approaches and uses of perspective in *Atonement* and *Birdsong*

35 Compare the presentations of duplicity and hypocrisy in *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*.

36 Compare the ways Meera Syal and Hanif Kureishi present the problems of maintaining cultural identity whilst trying to integrate into British society in *Anita and Me* and *The Buddha of Suburbia*.

37 Compare the use and functions of fantasy, dreams and day dreams by McEwan and Atwood in *Atonement* and *Alias Grace*

38 Compare the ways Brontë in *Jane Eyre* and Rhys in *The Wide Sargasso Sea* use fire imagery in their presentations of passion.

39 A comparison of the ways in which motherhood is presented by Sylvia Plath in her poetry and Virginia Woolf in her novel *To The Lighthouse*.

40 A comparison of the ways in which the authors show how Santiago in *The Old Man and the Sea* by Ernest Hemingway and Pi Patel in *The Life of Pi* by Yann Martel cope with adversity.

41 Compare and contrast the ways in which ideas of beauty are portrayed in Oscar Wilde's *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and Alexander Pope's *The Rape of the Lock*.

42 A comparison of the presentation and function of houses in *Howard's End* and *The Shipping News* by E Annie Proulx.

43 A comparison of the presentation of Hardy's Alec D'Urberville and Richardson's Robert Lovelace as cads in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Clarissa*.

44 A comparison of the authors' presentation of the mother-child relationships in the novels *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* and *Reading in the Dark*.

45 Compare the presentation of Stevens in *The Remains of the Day* with that of Leo in *The Go-between*.

46 Both Celie in *The Color Purple* and Christopher in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* are initially presented as naïve and child-like. Compare and contrast the development of these two characters and the ways in which the writers present their progression away from naivety.

47 A comparison of the ways in which Winston in *Nineteen-eighty Four* and Gulliver in *Gulliver's*

Travels react to the societies in which they find themselves.

48 A comparison of the writers' uses of the concept of the first wife in *Rebecca* and *Jane Eyre*.

49 Compare and contrast the use of the epistolary form in *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and *The Wrong Boy* by Willy Russell.

50 A comparison of the relationship between language and identity in *Song of Solomon* by Toni Morrison and *Translations* by Brian Friel.

51 George Eliot's *Adam Bede* and Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* are set in the same historical period. Compare their different representations of social class.

52 Compare how Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* (1848) and Charlotte Brontë's *Shirley* (1849) present public and private conflicts.

53 Compare and contrast the representation of the narrative voices in *The Remains of the Day* and *Astonishing Splashes of Colour*.

54 Compare the ways in which Yann Martel and Ian McEwan explore the tensions between fiction and apparent reality in *Life of Pi* and *Atonement*.

55 A comparison of the ways in which the authors use the journeys made by Marlow in *Heart of Darkness* and Huck in *Huckleberry Finn*.

56 Compare the authors' presentation of women in Winterson's *The Passion* and Woolf's *Orlando*.

57 A comparison of the ways the writers present the main characters' experience of religion in *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Oranges are Not the Only Fruit*.

58 Compare the ways the writers use characters' narrative voices to explore loss in *Falling Leaves* by Adeline Yen Mah and *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold.

59 A comparison of the presentation of the self in *The Waves* and *Ulysses*.

60 Compare the writers' presentation of abductors and villains in *The Collector* and *The Lovely Bones*.

61 Compare the presentation of relationships between men and women in *A Streetcar Named Desire* and *Wuthering Heights*.

62 Compare the ways Atwood and Huxley use humour in *Brave New World* and *Oryx and Crake*.

63 A comparison of the presentation of the treatment of women in *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Esther Waters* (George Moore).

64 A comparison of the ways the authors explore the concept of goodness in *How to Be Good* (Nick Hornby) and *The Good Doctor* (Damon Galgut).

65 Compare how Ted Hughes in *Birthday Letters* and Emily Brontë in *Wuthering Heights* express intensity and passion.

66 A comparison of the relationship between language and truth in Brian Friel's *Translations* and Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*.

67 Compare the effect of the narrative perspectives used by Faulks in *Birdsong* and McEwan in *Atonement*.

68 Compare how both Atkinson in *Behind the Scenes at the Museum* and Ishiguro in *The Remains of the Day* create narrators who are on journeys of self-discovery.

69 Compare and contrast the presentation of a puritan society in Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* and Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*.

70 Compare the ways the writers present the vulnerabilities of their central characters in *The Picture of Dorian Gray* and *Heart of Darkness*.

71 Compare the writers' use of narrators in *A Farewell to Arms* and *The Great Gatsby*.
72 Compare the presentation of loneliness in *Birdsong* and *The Great Gatsby*.
73 Comparison and contrast in the ways in which marriage is presented in *Brick Lane* and *Emma*.
74 Compare the ways Atwood and Huxley use humour to present concerns about future civilisations in *Oryx and Crake* and B*rave New World*.
75 A comparison of the ways Welsh in *Trainspotting* and Peter Carey in *The True History of the Kelly Gang* present the lifestyles of socially marginalised groups.
76 Compare the techniques used by Heller and de Bernières to present the characters of Yossarian in *Catch 22* and Carlos in *Captain Corelli's Mandolin*.
77 Compare the ways in which Matthew Neale in *English Passengers* and Patrick Neate in *Twelve Bar Blues* use narrative form to tell stories.

All their own work? Avoiding the pitfalls of plagiarism in coursework

Plagiarism is not new – no doubt Gutenberg was blamed at the time for making it easier for lazy Fifteenth Century students to borrow the work of scholars in distant cities and pass it off as their own. However widespread access to the Internet has made it much easier for today's students to copy and paste someone else's work without it even passing through the brain. Whilst plagiarism is not a major issue for this Specification, there have been instances where moderators have had to refer work back to centres or on to AQA because of doubts about the authenticity of the work. The consequences of unauthorised copying are, of course, potentially very serious for the candidate. To avoid this, and to help students make productive use of the work of other readers, this section offers a few pointers. Teachers are invited to bear them in mind when they advise students as they plan and write their coursework.

All readers can benefit from the views of others – even if they don't agree. The work of teachers, critics, fellow-students and others can shed new light on texts and stimulate fresh approaches of our own. Assessment Objective 4 makes it clear that students are expected at A Level to be 'informed by different interpretations of literary texts by other readers', although the reference to 'other readers' is omitted for the AS Shakespeare coursework. However, AO4 also requires them to 'articulate independent opinions and judgements', not simply to repeat what someone else has written. Students who rely on study guides, essays from the Internet – or even teachers' notes – will not become independent readers. They are unlikely to demonstrate the insight and originality that will gain them high grades in coursework units and they may struggle to cope with the demands to debate contradictory opinions in Units 4 and 6, for example. Examination answers that rely heavily on critics, notes and prepared answers also fail to score high marks – it is worth pointing this out to students.

So much for the reasons why students should be discouraged from over-reliance on the work of others. How can they be guided in practice – and how can those tempted to take short cuts be discouraged?

- Devise the right kinds of coursework tasks. This booklet and the Principal Moderators' Reports offer considerable advice on task-setting. Carefully worded and specific tasks limit the opportunities to use the kind of generalised critical readings that students are sometimes tempted to rely on.
- Refer to the assessment objectives to help focus the writing. For Unit 5, for example, carefully chosen comparative tasks will ensure that students are reading two texts side-by-side in ways that they will be unlikely to find in critical texts or on web sites. Avoid using quotations from critics in titles – this only tempts students to do the same in their responses.
- Emphasise that students need to know the text thoroughly for themselves before they seek out critics. They need to be able to test out other readings against the text itself. Candidates regularly gain top grades in LA2C and LA5C without making any reference to critics.
- Show students how to make good use of critical readings and how to seek alternatives. You

might like to use an activity such as the 'critical position cards' in *Text, Reader, Critic* by Jane Ogborn, Lucy Webster and Barbara Bleiman (English and Media Centre) for a simple introduction to the many ways in which texts can be interpreted – and to dispel the idea that there is one right way to read a text.

- Make students aware that not all readings are of equal validity or relevance – explain how to be discriminating in their uses of the Internet in particular. Some sites offer poor quality student essays that no self-respecting AS or A Level candidate should bother to read, others are highly academic or deal with, for example, contextual aspects that are not relevant to Units 2 and 5.
- Explain how to use the views of others in essays – by clear acknowledgement, brief quotation (if any) and clear demonstration from the text itself (the text for study, not the critic's text) how far this view can be sustained. There is nothing wrong with students agreeing with A C Bradley or Elaine Showalter (or any other reader) about an aspect of a text provided that they are explicit about the source of the view and support it by close reference to the text. They should also show an awareness of alternative readings (which can simply be an explanation of other ways in which the text could be interpreted).
- Avoid unsupported assertions – this is a Band 1 characteristic, whether the views are the student's own or a critic's.
- Ensure that any additional reading, even if not cited in the essay, is acknowledged in the bibliography that should be included with all coursework.

What if you suspect a student is presenting work that is not his or her own?

- Keep involved during the drafting process. If you find unsuitable material being used you can deal with this at an early stage. If students are encouraged to keep a tight focus on the task there is less scope to use secondary sources written for a different purpose.
- As teacher you will know the student's work in class, for homework and examinations. Students develop their writing skills, of course – often by imitating others. However, a sudden change in style, particularly in the middle of an assignment, is likely to indicate borrowed material. Discuss this with the student; if the work is based on someone else's writing this needs to be made explicit or the section dropped. Students must sign that coursework is their own – and as teacher you need to satisfied that this is the case.
- Keep an eye open for the unscrupulous copying of another student's work. This is fortunately rare but has been seen by moderators. Avoid using the same tasks year after year, which can increase the temptation to recycle past essays.
- If you suspect that work has been borrowed from the Internet, type a few distinctive phrases into a search engine such as Google – if students realise that you (and the moderator) can do this, it should discourage unacknowledged copying.
- You may wish to consult the moderator for advice about this aspect during the course. However your moderator cannot be expected to judge the authenticity of a student's essay – this the responsibility of the centre.

Literary Connections coursework (LA5C): questions for teachers

During the planning and writing stages:

1 Do all tasks contain 'compare' or an equivalent, preferably in the first few words?
2 Do the choices offer the maximum opportunity to all students? In particular, will students be able to demonstrate their own views and opinions (AO4)?
3 Do the tasks make explicit the need to address AO3 by referring to the ways the named writers present the chosen aspect of comparison?
4 Have all the texts and topics been approved by the moderator?
5 Do you anticipate that some titles may need to be changed as students develop their essays? (If so, please remember to submit new titles to your moderator.)
6 Are students fully aware of the assessment criteria, for example in the form of the grid?
7 Have students been given copies of the guidance on planning, writing and presentation at the back of the standardisation booklet?
8 Do any students need particular help with planning essays (rather than content)?
9 Are they aware of the word limit and the importance of writing succinctly? Will you be emphasising the value to the student writer of learning to edit over-long essays?
10 Are students aware of deadlines and of the importance of leaving enough time to discuss drafts with you or colleagues, to thoroughly check work and to present it properly?

At the final stage, prior to the submission of marks and work to the moderator:

1 Have you allowed plenty of time to assemble folders, internally standardise and send them to the moderator in good time (by the end of the spring term if at all possible)?
2 Do all the titles on the work match those submitted to the moderator? (If students have modified the titles this may compromise their marks.)
3 Are you happy that all sources are acknowledged in each essay? Is there a bibliography?
4 Is there a word count at the end? Is it about 2,500 words? If not, why not?
5 Is all work presented in accordance with the guidance provided here and in the standardisation booklet – clearly printed in a standard font at a legible size, adequately spaced, etc, or handwritten neatly on one side of the page only?
6 Are all pages named and numbered (for example by using headers and footers)?
7 Are the files securely fastened by staples or tags (not plastic pockets or paper clips)?
8 Do the annotation and underlining make clear the reasons for the mark awarded by referring to assessment objectives/the marking grid? Is there is a sustained commentary which is intelligible to another assessor?
9 Is the Candidate Record Form completed in full, signed by both student and teacher and with the correct mark? (If the student has not signed, a mark cannot be awarded.)
10 If the mark has been amended as a result of internal moderation, is this clear, and is the mark the same as that recorded on the mark sheet?
11 Has the Centre Declaration Form been signed by the Head of Centre?

Literary Connections coursework (LA5C): questions for candidates

During the planning and writing stages:

1 Does your task contain 'compare' or an equivalent, preferably in the first few words?
2 Do the choices include at least one topic that engages and interests you? In particular, will you be able to demonstrate your own views and opinions (AO4)?
3 Are you clear how you will write about language, form and structure (AO3) by referring to the ways the writers present the chosen aspect of comparison?
4 Have your texts and topic been approved by the moderator?
5 Are you happy with the task you have chosen? Do you need to discuss it further with your teacher and possibly negotiate changes? (If so, please remember that you must not start work on your new title until the moderator has agreed it.)
6 Are you fully aware of the assessment criteria? Have you studied the marking grid?
7 Have you been given the Board's guidance on planning, writing and presentation of coursework essays? Do you understand the points it makes? Don't be afraid to ask!
8 Do you need help to plan a clear essay? Don't be afraid to ask about this!
9 Are you giving equal treatment to each text in your essay?
10 Are you aware of the word limit and why you should keep to it?
11 Are you aware of the deadlines? Will you have drafts ready to discuss with your teacher in good time so that you can revise your essay before the final date?
12 Have you left enough time to present your work properly and check it thoroughly?

At the final stage, prior to the handing in your coursework:

1 Have you read through the final version of your essay and corrected any errors?
2 Does the title on your final version exactly match the one agreed by the moderator? (If you change the title this could jeopardise you mark.)
3 Have all sources of information and ideas (critics, reviews, etc) been acknowledged in your essay? Have you provided a bibliography?
4 Is there a word count at the end? Is it about 2,500 words? If not, why not?
5 Is your essay presented as advised by the Board – clearly printed in a standard font at a legible size, adequately spaced, etc, or handwritten neatly on one side of the page only?
6 Does every page have the number and your name? (Learn how to use headers and footers if word processing your essay.) Are the pages in the right order?
7 Is the essay securely fastened by staples or tags (not plastic pockets or paper clips)?
8 Is the Candidate Record Form completed in full, signed both by you and your teacher? (If you do not sign the form you cannot be awarded a mark.)
9 Have you handed in your work before the final deadline?

Unit 5 – Literary Connections – advice to students

Planning and writing your Advanced Level coursework

How can you gain a fair reward for all the time and effort you'll put into your coursework? These suggestions are intended to supplement the advice of your teachers. It really is in your best interests to make the most of the opportunities to re-draft your work, so do stick to deadlines and take note of your teachers' comments!

Planning and drafting

Think carefully about the task. Whether you are negotiating your own title or selecting one from a list, it is important that the task has been approved by the moderator. You must not make changes to the title once it has been agreed unless these changes have also been approved. This is designed to protect you from choosing unsuitable texts or working on aspects not directly related to the assessment objectives.

Make sure you completely understand the task before you begin your first draft. Consider these aspects in particular:

- What are the key words in the title? (One of them will be a word such as *compare* or *comparison*.)
- How am I going to address the assessment objectives?
- Have I paid sufficient attention to Assessment Objective 3 (language, form and structure)? This is a very important discriminator. How can I demonstrate my ability to read closely and comment in detail on an extract?

Study the marking grid for the unit, which your teacher will be able to show you (it can be found in the coursework booklet which is published each year). This will show the qualities that the marker and moderator will be looking for in your work.

Assessment Objective 1: Clear communication

- Plan carefully; a coherent structure makes it easy to follow your ideas.
- Consider the readers of your coursework. These will not just include your teacher – your work will almost certainly be read by other teachers in your centre, probably by the moderator and possibly also by others who have never met you.
- Adopt a suitably formal tone; this is an academic essay so although your style can be lively it should not be casual. Avoid slang and abbreviations.
- Make it easy for the readers to follow your ideas – structure your paragraphs clearly and provide links between ideas, for example using connectives such as *furthermore*, *however*, *on the other hand*, *in contrast*.
- Keep the task in mind all the time – refer to your title throughout.
- Be succinct: if you find that the essay is straying significantly outside the word limit, edit it! There are no specific penalties for work that is long or short – but short essays are likely to be

superficial and in danger of being placed in Band 1. Excessively long work can lose focus – and involve you in spending too much time on this part of your course.

Assessment Objective 2: knowledge, understanding and comparison

- ❑ Ensure that the comparison is explicit right from the start. The very best essays compare throughout, moving easily between the two texts.
- ❑ If you find this difficult, it is acceptable to set out the basis for you comparison in your introduction, explore the first text and then develop the comparison as you discuss the second text by making frequent reference to similarities and differences.
- ❑ Ensure your comparison is balanced – give equal consideration to each text.
- ❑ You do not need to tell the story (a Band 1 characteristic) but you do need to make it clear what aspect of, say, Chapter 6 or Scene 5 you consider to be important, so do not simply give a page or line number and expect the reader to look it up – and *never* just give the first and last words of an extract with ellipsis (three dots ...) in between

Assessment Objective 3: how form, structure and language shape meanings

- ❑ Use quotations intelligently; avoid long extracts and paraphrase and do not simply use the text to tell the story. Quotations (not 'quotes', please) need to be explored to show how the author is making language work.
- ❑ Make explicit reference to the authors and to the form each has chosen for their work. What differences, for example, are there between the ways poetry and fiction portray their subject matter? If you are writing about a play, what will be the likely impact on an audience of an event and is there a comparable incident in your other text?
- ❑ Consider the structure of your two works. Does either author play around with the order of events (for example by using flashback)? How do your authors use narrators?
- ❑ Draw attention to the sub-text in each work, using clues such as diction and allusion.

Assessment Objective 4: informed, independent literary judgements

- ❑ You need to 'demonstrate independence of thought', which means making your own way through the texts rather than relying on what critics or the writers of study guides have said (helpful though they may be – but always acknowledge any such material in your essay).
- ❑ The best work will show 'personal engagement with the text' – which means that you are not be afraid to give your own opinions and to point out that there can be several ways of interpreting aspects of the books you have read.

Advice for students on the presentation of coursework

Whether you write or word process your essay, the presentation of the words on the page also affects your reader. Don't skimp on paper when you prepare the final draft – an extra page or two can make a real difference to the appearance of your essay.

- ❑ Avoid a cramped layout: leave generous space around the text and between lines (say 1½ line spacing if you are word processing) – this makes it easier to read and gives room for your teacher's comments.
- ❑ For word processed essays, please use 11 or 12 point (no smaller), in black and a standard font such as Times or Garamond, not a decorative one nor one that tries to imitate handwriting.
- ❑ Set out quotations properly. Extracts of more than a few words should be set out on a separate line, indented from the left-hand margin, and verse should look like it does in your text – that is, with each line aligned to the left, not centred on the page. If possible, learn how to set up a style for quotations.
- ❑ Indicate titles of texts properly (the convention is to use underlining in handwritten work, italics in print).
- ❑ Write or print on one side of the paper only.
- ❑ Number your pages and ensure that they are in the right order before you fasten them together. If you use the word processor's header or footer facility it is a simple matter to ensure that every page is numbered and carries your name.
- ❑ Provide a bibliography, even if you have only used the text or texts named in title. This need not be an elaborate affair but it must indicate all the sources (including Internet sites) you have used in planning and writing your work.
- ❑ References to critics and reference works are not required for these units – but if you do use such sources, including Internet sites or study guides, you must acknowledge them clearly, including attributing quotations.
- ❑ Check your final draft carefully before you hand it in. If you are using a computer, take advantage of the spell check facility but don't rely on it to pick up every error – and read through the printed copy to spot mistakes you may miss on screen.
- ❑ Indicate an approximate word count – your word processor will do this for you and there is no need to count every word even if you write your essay by hand. If your essay is considerably over the word limit, edit it to sharpen the focus.
- ❑ Check that you have completed the cover sheet – don't forget to sign it!
- ❑ Fasten the work securely using treasury tags or a staple in the top left corner. Please do not put your essay into a plastic page or pocket; it is a nuisance for readers to have to remove essays before they can read them and loose pages easily become jumbled or lost.