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# A-LEVEL

# ENGLISH LITERATURE B

7717/C NEA: Theory and independence  
Report on the Examination

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7717/C  
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## Overview

Among the NEA pieces submitted this year there was much to praise and celebrate and moderators were generally very pleased with the work they sampled from centres. As ever, it was a pleasure to read work from students who, right across the ability range, were making literary discoveries for themselves and writing with real enthusiasm about them. For the most part, there was a clear sense of independence across work sampled and a spirit of genuine exploration and enquiry was evident in many folders.

This report collects together the key findings and comments from moderators about each of the elements of the unit and will be of help to centres moving forward.

## Text Choices

There was generally a good range of texts seen this year, with most centres encouraging students to make individual choices for their prose text. This resulted in a wide range of prose texts being studied and, as last year, there was a fair range of texts in translation, including *War and Peace*, *Madame Bovary* and texts by Japanese writers.

The picture regarding poetry texts was more varied, with many centres choosing to teach the same collection of poetry to all of their students (which is perfectly acceptable within the rules of the unit) and then allowing individuals to select their own choice of poems from that collection and to choose their own task. There were a small number of centres where student work was very similar, as if the content of the NEA piece had been taught in class. This is not what we expect to see in a unit that has 'independence' in its title.

Some moderators reported that the vast majority of the centres they looked at had used either *The World's Wife* by Duffy or poetry by Christina Rossetti, whereas other moderators saw a more varied range of poets. Centres are reminded that if *Goblin Market* is explored in an NEA piece then another poem by Rossetti must also be covered, as to write about *Goblin Market* alone is a rubric infringement.

## Use of the critical anthology

Moderators reported seeing work using all of the different sections of the critical anthology and much of this showed a well processed understanding of those literary critical ideas and often evidenced impressive wider reading.

Where work was less successful, students were often trying to 'find the theory in the text', forcing texts to fit a particular critical reading and using bits of the text as evidence, regardless of whether this was convincing or meaningful. Some moderators also felt that Marxist literary critical ideas were either diluted to the point that anything even vaguely sociological was deemed 'Marxist' or genuine Marxist ideas were misapplied. Centres are reminded that students do need to spend some considerable time exploring and understanding the critical lens they wish to apply to a text.

## Tasks

Most tasks were centred on AO5 (debate, argument and exploration) which is exactly what is required to enable students to achieve against the criteria of the unit. Tasks which asked students

to ‘Describe ...’ or ‘Explain how ... is presented’ did not set up the requirement to develop a line of argument and those responses tended to lack direction and a clear sense of purpose.

Where re-creative responses had been submitted they were often interesting and thought provoking. If a student is submitting a re-creative response, they should be reminded that the base text must be central to the new reading and also to the commentary.

Centres should ensure that all tasks clearly designate a specific critical lens. In some work this summer the chosen critical lens was far from clear and therefore, in a significant number of these essays, there was insufficient focus on AO4.

### **Coverage of the assessment objectives**

Most assessment objectives were addressed fully by students and coverage was woven holistically throughout their work. Setting tasks that did not require students to debate or to answer a genuinely open question did lead to AO5 being weak and, as is mentioned above, not clearly establishing a critical lens through which to explore the text often led to limited coverage of AO4.

For the first time this year, many moderators reported problems with AO1, which were often not acknowledged by the annotations and summative comments on the work and which did not seem to be reflected in the mark awarded. Students are able to draft their NEA pieces and therefore the fluency and accuracy of the writing should be something they spend time getting right. In the most extreme cases the names of the texts and their authors were misspelt, apostrophes seemed to have disappeared and paragraphing was virtually non-existent.

A reminder also that this unit values succinct, focused and tightly structured work, so students should try to stick to the word limits as far as possible. A small number of folders were considerably over the word limit and, as a result, the work became meandering and lacking in focus, which then became self-penalising.

### **Assessment**

Much of the work that was seen this summer had been carefully and accurately assessed and most teachers provided detailed and helpful summative comments that reflected on the strengths and weaknesses of the pieces and justified the mark that had been given. Where explanatory comments were very brief or generic, then it was often more difficult for moderators to support the marks awarded.

Most folders contained clear evidence of internal moderation and most centre marking was holistic, with very few examples of centres giving a numerical score to individual AOs to make up a total. This is all good practice and exactly what we would hope to see.

On a less positive note, virtually all moderators reported a generosity of awarding in bands 4 and 5. While this did not always take the folders out of tolerance, it was a very noticeable trend this summer which, if it continues moving forward, may well lead to more centre marks being adjusted in the future. Centres are urged to consider the requirements of those two bands carefully and to look at nationally published standardising material before assessing future submissions.

### **Administration**

Most folders were clearly and appropriately presented, with Centre Declaration Sheets included. Some folders did not have fully completed Candidate Record Forms however, which in some cases meant there were no student numbers, task details or word counts. Centres are reminded that each NEA folder must have a fully completed Candidate Record Form attached.

Several moderators reported that work was not secured at all and many more commented on how difficult it is to remove work from plastic wallets. Please can each NEA folder be secured by treasury tags or staples and not inserted inside another folder or wallet.

Overall, it was a positive experience reading the work submitted this summer and teachers and students deserve praise for all of their efforts and hard work.

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

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