



**AQA Certificates
January 2013**

**English Literature
(Specification 8710)**

8710/1H

Paper 1

Report on the Examination

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Set and published by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance.

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Registered address: AQA, Devas Street, Manchester M15 6EX.

Certificate in English Literature

Principal Examiner’s Report - 8710/1F - January 2013

The entry for this component was very small, so the comments below are based on a very limited number of responses.

Question 1: Unseen Poetry

The poem was accessible to all candidates who took the examination in that they could all identify some of the emotions felt by the narrator upon the birth of her child. Better candidates had read the poem carefully and worked out the complexity of these feelings, planning their response carefully before they started to write. They were able to give a detailed overview of the ideas in the poem rather than just working their way stanza by stanza through the text and finding themselves struggling to explain apparent contradictions in emotions as they came to them.

The question asked about the emotions in the poem and candidates were rewarded for writing about these emotions and the ways they are conveyed; candidates who worked methodically through a list of techniques, looking for language and structural features and then trying to force a link to the ideas in the poem fared less well.

The best candidates did not shy away from the difficulties of the poem but tried to grapple with possible meanings of, for example, ‘I’m no more your mother/Than a cloud that distils a mirror to reflect its own/Slow effacement at the wind’s hand’, coming up with interesting interpretations.

Romeo and Juliet

Once again, this was the most popular text on the paper with question 9 being overwhelmingly the more popular question. Candidates wrote convincingly about the different types of conflict in the play but sometimes failed to say how these are presented. Better candidates wrote about the use of the Prologue to inform the audience about the conflict in the play, the dramatic effectiveness of the fight scenes and the effect on the audience created by the conflict between Capulet and Juliet when Juliet’s father tries to persuade her to marry Paris.

Pride and Prejudice

It was encouraging to see that schools had studied this challenging novel. Most responses were to question 13 where candidates demonstrated a good understanding of the events in the novel and were able to highlight some parts of the text where characters showed ‘pride’ and some where they showed ‘prejudice’. Responses were a little disappointing, however, in that candidates sometimes struggled to write about Austen’s techniques in showing these qualities. Better candidates mentioned appropriate techniques such as irony, the use of dialogue or the use of humour.