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YEAR 12 *Trial Exam Paper*

2015
ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Written examination

Sample responses

This book presents:

➢ high-level sample responses

➢ mark allocations

➢ tips for achieving top results

SECTION A – Short-answer questions

Text 1

Question 1 (3 marks)

Sample response

This text contains both formal and informal elements. Its function as a literary text means that there are semantic patterns such as simile ('tight as a pinecone' L5) and metaphor ('leaked the infirm and the elderly' L14) which provide evidence of pre-planning and increase the formality of the piece. However, the morphological and lexical choices of the writer generally reduce the formality. Colloquial lexemes such as 'bomb hole' (L1) and 'poppers' (L40) reduce the formality as does the presence of initialisms 'k' (L22) rather than kilometre or 'P-plates' (L9) rather than 'probationary plates'.

Other answers might include:

- Formality is increased by the writer's employment of Standard and highly expressive syntactic structures, such as the simple sentence introduced with a prepositional phrase: 'In the middle of our last summer … Julia and I went out to the bomb hole' (L2–3).
- The use of specialised lexical items such as 'birch trees and liquid ambers' (L4) increases formality.
- The narrator's use the first person singular pronoun 'I' (L3) and plural pronoun 'we' (L10) decreases formality.
- Formality is reduced by the suffixation of mosquitos to 'mozzies' (L37).

Mark allocation: 3 marks

- 1 mark for correctly identifying that the text has both formal and informal elements
- 1 mark for identifying and explaining a feature that contributes to formality
- 1 mark for identifying and explaining a feature that contributes to informality

Question 2 (2 marks)

Sample response

This is a simple sentence in which the main clause ('I rode …') is followed by a prepositional phrase ('through the intermittent shade …'). The structure occurs frequently in the text, supporting its expressive and entertaining function by allowing the writer to place focus on the action of the narrative but then following up with detailed description.

Mark allocation: 2 marks

- 1 mark for correct identification of sentence structure
- 1 mark for explaining how this supports the expressive or entertainment function of the text

Question 3 (2 marks)

Sample response

Cohesion is achieved in this story through the semantic connections between lexemes, such as the synonyms 'bomb hole' (L27) and 'swimming hole' (L27). In addition, front focus is used with a prepositional phrase in the opening of the text to orient the reader in the setting, 'In the middle of our last summer in Bamberg …' (L2), thus supporting the cohesion in the text.

Other answers might include:

- Sequencing of information using end focus (or end weight) to guide the reader into more complex material: 'We loaded everything into her mother's station wagon, including both our bikes, laying the back seat flat.' (L10–11)
- Lexical repetition of 'bomb hole' (L1, L3, L27, L34, L57).
- Anaphoric reference. For example, 'she' (L5) refers back to 'Julia' (L4). The substitution of the pronoun here reduced repetition.
- The use of co-hyponyms 'poppers' (L40) and 'mango juice' (L42) relating to the hypernym of 'drinks' (L39).
- Conjunctions such as 'exams <u>and</u> our results' (L2–3), 'but' (L9), and 'if' (L26).
- Adverbials 'W<u>hen</u> I rang the bell' (L4), 'sweating and breathing deeply' (L31).
- Terms from the semantic field of swimming throughout the text. For example, 'bomb hole' (L3), 'beach towel' (L19), 'swimming hole' (L27), 'swim' (L29), 'swimmers' (L52), 'diving' (L56), 'water' (L57), 'splashed' (L60), 'waded' (L61), 'swam' (L61) and 'duck-dived' (L62). These choices support the connection between sections of the text by repeatedly signalling its topic.

Mark allocation: 2 marks

- 1 mark for each correct identification, example and explanation of cohesion in the text
- To full receive marks, students must identify **two** different cohesive strategies

Tip

- *Remember that cohesion refers to the way the underlying logical connections in the text are made apparent through language choices. A list of required terms for discussing cohesion can be found on pages 22 and 23 of the VCAA English Language Study Design. However, it is important to remind students that they must read the text holistically. They should be encouraged to look beyond the Study Design's list if they find other qualities that contribute to the cohesiveness of the text. While they are not listed in the metalanguage requirements, the Study Design explanations state that 'lexical choice' and 'semantic patterns' play a role in creating textual cohesion. In addition, syntactic patterning was expected by assessors in a discussion of cohesion in Section A of the 2011 examination. Students who draw from these areas and connect their observations to a clear understanding of cohesion should not be penalised.*

Question 4 (4 marks)

Sample response

Craig Billingham uses metaphor when he describes the setting of the bomb hole as a 'factory of noise' (L31). This serves to emphasise the sounds made by the surrounding wildlife, likening them to the intrusive and constant noise of factory machinery. Billingham also uses a simile to describe the bluff as looking 'like an orange Ford with hail damage' (L58). This reinforces the worn, rusted and damaged appearance of the sandstone, giving it the same qualities of disrepair associated with dumped cars.

Other answers might include:
*   Billingham uses animation to depict the Moruya Flats in town that 'leaked the infirm and the elderly' (L14). This gives the flats a sense of disrepair or illness – which are qualities themselves associated with aging. Therefore the residents of the flats and the building itself share the same qualities.
*   Billingham uses simile to refer the contact between the birdsong and the highway's drone as being 'like smoke rings up a wall' (L32–33). This creates the image of the bird noise drifting until it hits a force that is more solid than it, thus giving the noise of the highway greater power in the setting.

Mark allocation: 4 marks

This question should be marked holistically using the guide below.

*   4 marks: The response demonstrates a detailed knowledge of the topic and is supported by relevant examples/evidence from the text. Metalanguage is used appropriately and effectively. Features of written discourse are consistently used.
*   2–3 marks: The response demonstrates a sound knowledge of the topic and is supported by some examples/evidence from the text. The metalanguage used is relevant. Features of written discourse are mostly evident.
*   0–1 marks: The response demonstrates a limited knowledge of the topic and contains few examples from the text. The use of metalanguage is limited or absent. Few features of written discourse are evident.

Tip

*   *Read the question carefully and make sure you select figurative language that contributes to the physical setting. For example, 'tight as a pinecone' (L5) is a simile but describes a character.*

Question 5 (4 marks)

Sample response

Craig Billingham establishes a sense of time in the piece through the use of front focus to open the story with a prepositional phrase: 'In the middle of our last summer in Bamberg …' (L2). This immediately places the story in the past. Billingham goes on to use a war metaphor of 'no-man's-land between the exams and our results' (L2–3) to establish that the characters in the story are at a time which belongs to nobody and lacks purpose, transferring to the time period the qualities of unclaimed land in trench warfare. Cultural inference is also required to establish the time of the piece. References to bands such as 'The Church'(L16) and 'Nirvana'(L16) place the text in the 1990s, when these bands were at their peak. This is further reinforced by the reference to 'bass players from Seattle' (L44), where the grunge movement was centred. Inference is also required to interpret that the compound 'mix-tape' (L13) refers to a time period before MP3 players were used for music.

Other answers might include:

- Use of temporal adverbials (for example, 'that morning' L3, 'at the time' L43 or 'six months after' L45–46) to reinforce that the narrator is reflecting on a past experience.
- The use of -ed suffixes to reinforce the location of events in the past tense (for example, 'loaded' L10).
- The use of lexemes associated with heat to place the events in summer (for example, 'sweating' L31, 'a heat that shimmered and stuck to your calves' L36 and 'blistered' L40).

Mark allocation: 4 marks

This question should be marked holistically using the guide below.

- 4 marks: The response demonstrates a detailed knowledge of the topic and is supported by relevant examples/evidence from the text. Metalanguage is used appropriately and effectively. Features of written discourse are consistently used.
- 2–3 marks: The response demonstrates a sound knowledge of the topic and is supported by some examples/evidence from the text. The metalanguage used is relevant. Features of written discourse are mostly evident.
- 0–1 marks: The response demonstrates a limited knowledge of the topic and contains few examples from the text. The use of metalanguage is limited or absent. Few features of written discourse are evident.

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SECTION B – Analytical commentary

Text 2

Question 6 (30 marks)

Sample response

The ABC's *Q&A* program aims to both entertain and inform its audience. In the transcript of *Science: Precious Petals to Passionate Teachers*, it is evident that the program also serves a persuasive social purpose as the expert panellists attempt to influence the values, attitudes and beliefs of both the studio audience and home viewers. The text is reasonably formal, as dictated by the setting in a television studio, the informative function of the text and the position of many speakers as experts in the specialised field of science. However, the speakers vary in their use of a formal register, reflecting both their individual identities and their awareness of both the entertainment function of the discourse and the broader audience for their discussion. While some pre-planning has occurred in the structure and organisation of this discourse, large sections of it are unscripted, thus further decreasing the overall formality through the presence of non-fluency features.

The structure of the discourse is managed by the program's host, Tony Jones (TJ), ensuring that the text is both coherent and cohesive through the management of the topic and turn taking. The structure of the program has been planned to some degree, and therefore some of TJ's utterances have been scripted. For example, on L21–23 TJ states 'Still on this subject … let's go to another question … from Dewashish um Baniya' (DB). Here TJ indicates that he had prior knowledge of the nature of the question and the audience member who would ask it. The non-fluency feature present (L23 "um") is a result of TJ's difficulty in pronouncing the speaker's name rather than a signal of spontaneity. Through his anaphoric reference on L21 ('this subject') TJ is creating a cohesive tie between DB's question and the previous topic of young people's engagement with science. The presence of this cohesive tie reinforces the underlying logic of the text, and the coherent structuring of information within the discourse. TJ's responsibility to manage the text's coherence is also evident in his spontaneous responses to the comments of his panel. For example, on L76–77 TJ acknowledges a comment made by panellist Peter Doherty (PD) that young people should vote for a change of government, but then uses a topic shift to refocus the discussion: 'And we've got a long time until the next election so maybe it's a good idea to influence ah the current Government'. TJ then manages the turn taking by indicating the panellist he wishes to respond first to this shift: L79 'Ah Ian you've got a plan'. By managing both the turn taking and the topic, TJ is ensuring that the text remains coherent through its logical sequencing and the signalling of changes.

The identities of the panellists as experts in the field of science and their awareness of their audience is clearly established through the linguistic features and strategies they use. The extract opens with Marita Cheng (MC) reflecting on her passion for robotics. She makes reference to 'Google' (L4), 'Steve Jobs' (L5) 'Steve Wozniak' (L5) and 'Apple' (L10) to demonstrate her expertise in digital technology. She is also relying on the audience's ability to infer using their cultural knowledge of technology entrepreneurs and branding, thus creating solidarity with the viewers who share her interests. In contrast, the immunologist Peter Doherty (PD) constructs an identity for himself as both a scientist and an educator by using hyponyms of areas of scientific study: 'physics\ chemistry/ medicine\ biology/' (L42), 'biomedical science' (L37), 'computational areas' (L38) and 'infomatics' (L39). He also uses jargon associated with the field of education, 'Melbourne Model' (L30), to refer to the structure of degrees at the university where he is employed. While his identity as an expert is established through his linguistic choices, PD also demonstrates awareness of his audience, who may not share his expertise. For example, he uses a subordinate clause on L31 to add clarifying

information about what the 'Melbourne Model' (L30) means 'so they can't get into medical school unless they do science first'. PD also uses subordination to first provide an accessible term and then follow up with specialised jargon on L38–39 'computational areas\(.) what we call infomatics'. Through their lexical choices, syntactic structures and reliance on inference the panellists are able to communicate their knowledge as well as involve their audience.

In addition to their technical expertise, the panellists also demonstrate their awareness of the persuasive social purpose of the text through their attempts to create interest in, and policy change for, the sciences within the Australian cultural context. The panellists share a belief in the importance of science, and use different strategies to build solidarity with the audience. MC uses listing to inspire her audience by building up the belief in potential success science can offer: 'the next Google\ (..) the next Apple\ (.) the next, Facebook\ (.) can come from Australia\' (L17–18). MC's use of downward intonation and pauses to create rhythm reinforce the syntactic patterning in this utterance while the modal verb 'can' indicates possibility. MC also uses antithesis on L19 'We have the foundations\ we need the vision\' to create a contrast between the qualities Australian scientists have and what they lack. Australia's Chief Scientist, Ian Chubb (IC) uses listing, reinforced by the alliteration of 'p', to identify the qualities needed to improve the position of science in Australia: 'There's passion/ there's persistence\ and and and- there's there's a real::: sort of need for patience/' (L92–93). He goes on to use a simile to emphasise the urgency of the situation and the need for long-term planning by contrasting the problem with science to a more manageable everyday occurrence: 'this is not like/ (.) you know\ (.) buying a toothbrush when you get there because you forgot to pack one/' (L94–95). It is evident, therefore, that the panellists are able to use semantic, syntactic and phonological patterning to support their persuasive purpose.

Through the inclusion of audience questions, a clear hierarchy is established between the audience and the panel. The comparatively short utterances of DB are characterised by uncertainty. His first question (L24–27) contains non-fluency features such as pause fillers ('um' L24) and false starts and repairs ('the sch- the schools and the co- um the Government\' L26). DB also uses discourse particles such as 'I think' (L25) and 'like' (L27) as hedging strategies to diminish the force of his question. DB's lack of expertise is further reinforced by his use of non-standard language, including suffixes ('fundings" L61 rather than 'funding') and pronouns ('us students' L62 instead of 'we students'). In his response to DB's questions, PD attempts to encourage and support, showing his cooperation with DB despite his elevated position. PD's declarative on L32 'That's one way of doing it' elicits encouragement through laughter from DB and the wider audience (L33–34), as well as providing a cohesive link by using the pronoun 'it' to refer back to DB's question about how to get students involved in science. PD also finishes his extended turn (L35–59) to allow DB to participate, signalling this on L59 with 'yep/ sure\'. By responding to DB's follow-up question with the discourse particle 'you know' (L66) PD is again attempting to include DB in the discourse, thus signalling his desire for solidarity and cooperation.

The unscripted nature of most of the discourse, its entertaining function and the speakers' desire to connect with their audience results in some informal features within this discourse. However, as a result of its setting and the expertise of the panel, the *Q&A* extract is predominantly formal, aiding its ability to meet the social purpose of both informing and persuading the audience.

Mark allocation: 30 marks

Tips

- *In this section, students are expected to produce a detailed discourse analysis. However, it is important to avoid a simple labelling exercise where features are identified using metalanguage.*

- *Students must aim to connect the identified features with the social purpose, context and register of the text. It's important that students address the text as a whole, rather than focusing on just one section (for example, only discussing the role of one speaker or group of speakers).*

- *It is also important that students respond thoughtfully to the text in front of them, rather than reading with a checklist of features to discuss. For example, in some texts a discussion of how the writer or speaker achieves coherence and cohesion will be relevant. In other texts there will be other features that should take precedence over such material. In spoken texts, it is expected that students will discuss features specific to that mode, such as prosodic features and other spoken discourse features and strategies.*

- *While there is no specific structure for Section B, students who choose to organise their response according to subsystem can occasionally limit their opportunities for discussion. Nevertheless, the response should be well organised and students should use paragraphing. Subheadings may be appropriate to help organise some responses and will not be penalised if used appropriately.*

- *Students should be aware of a range of possible organisation strategies so that they can be flexible in their approach, responding in the most effective way to the text being examined. No conclusion paragraph is required but students should nevertheless aim to give the piece a sense of completion.*

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SECTION C – Essay

Question 7 (30 marks)

Sample response

This topic requires students to consider the role of written language in contemporary society and make a decision as to whether or not it is still an important means of communication. While passing reference might be made to the historical value of writing, responses should focus on contemporary practice. Students need to take a position about whether or not writing is important, and better responses will acknowledge the significance of cultural and situational contexts in determining the degree to which writing is a valuable mode of language. Some discussion of the spoken mode is expected for purposes of comparison, but this should not distract students from focusing on the topic's central point of exploring the significance or insignificance of writing. Ideally, students will be able to explore the role of writing in private, as well as public, discourse.

The stimulus material may point students towards an exploration of:

- the reliance on punctuation in order to communicate nuances of meaning
- the need for Standard conventions to govern the use and interpretation of graphemes (letters, punctuation marks, emoticons, emojies etc.)
- the ability to edit or craft writing before it is interpreted by an audience
- the role of writing in private discourse and how it can support users by avoiding face threats, but also has the potential to create unintentional face threats if used carelessly
- the diversity of texts and registers available in written mode – from formal legal documents or literary works to informal text messages
- the specific social purposes or functions of writing that cannot be fulfilled by speech
- the influence of technology in changing the way in which we write and the purposes of such writing.

Question 8 (30 marks)

Sample response

This topic requires students to explore <u>social</u> variation in language, rather than geographic or cultural sources of variation. This might include exploration of some, but not necessarily all, of the following sources of variation: age, gender, socioeconomic status (wealth, level of education, occupation, class), aspiration, skills and interests, as well as group membership. Passing reference can be made to geographic (national or regional) variation or cultural varieties (Aboriginal Englishes or migrant ethnolects), but these sources of variation should not be the focus of responses to this topic. Deliberate attention should be given to the construction of identity through language and the responses to these identities. High-scoring responses will acknowledge the complexity of this topic by considering both conscious and subconscious construction of identity. They may also consider identity practices that assert who the user is and compare them to identity practices that seek to assert who the user is not. When considering responses to language variation, students should consider the role of stereotyping and assumption in picking up on the linguistic cues of others.

The stimulus material may point students towards a discussion of:

- the power of accent in establishing identity
- the practice of style-shifting within certain contexts or to fulfil certain goals (such as in-group membership, solidarity etc.)
- the fact that we all have a range of linguistic repertoires available to us, and we choose the one that best suits our purpose
- the way our response to language can reveal more about our own linguistic and social prejudices than it does about actual language use
- the role of contextual factors in influencing language styles/variation/use
- specific sources of variation including gender, age, socioeconomic status, aspiration and in-group membership.

Tips

- *It is important for students to understand that they must select thoughtfully from the stimulus in ways that support the topic. For this question, the stimulus directs students to discuss sources of variation such as gender, age, socioeconomic status, aspiration and in-group membership – some of these connections are explicit and others are more nuanced. Students should attempt to move beyond simply quoting the stimulus and actually engage with the ideas presented.*

- *Students will from time to time encounter stimuli that appear to overlap (as occurred in the 2014 VCAA examination). Students should be encouraged to question how two similar pieces of stimulus challenge or support one another. For example, in this question there are two conflicting prompts regarding 'gender', thus prompting students to take a stance on which viewpoint they see as more valid or useful to their discussion. Stimulus B prompts students to consider the role of context in social variation, while stimulus C prompts students to connect with aspiration and group membership. On a surface level, both deal with gender but the combination of these two items is actually prompting students to synthesise and be selective – important strategies for dealing with this section of the exam!*

Question 9 (30 marks)

Sample response

This topic requires students to explore the functions of formal language as they relate to social hierarchies. Embedded in the discussion should be an exploration of how formal language can establish power and the user's authority. This might relate to establishing their expertise but should also include reference to the way users can create social distance between themselves and their audience, or avoid unpleasant or inconvenient questions or challenges. Both private interactions and public language should be considered. High-scoring responses will acknowledge the truth of the statement but should also acknowledge that misused formal language can actually diminish the power of users by exposing them to criticism in some contexts. The focus of this essay should be on formal language. Discussion of informal features may be warranted if used for comparison, but drifting too far from the central premise should not be rewarded.

The stimulus material may point students towards a discussion of:

- the need for linguistic care to show a command of language and the role of Standard English in achieving this. For example, the removal of superfluous phrases and hedges that diminish the strength of the user's utterance can establish authority by demonstrating an expert's command of language or his or her degree of confidence in making demands, offering compliments or performing other speech acts.
- the habit of those who are in power using language of a formal register, even in contexts where it is not necessary. By using formal language in informal contexts, such users are signalling their authority across a range of settings.
- the way language builds solidarity between experts but creates boundaries between those who are part of the speech community and those who are not. By confusing those 'not in the know', formal language varieties such as jargon grant expert users the power to exclude.
- the role of Plain English in formal contexts, and how this demonstrates confidence in authority that does not need to be linguistically reinforced.
- the way public institutions sometime use doublespeak to make themselves unassailable – to obfuscate the truth and manipulate community attitudes, thus maintaining their power.
- the way formal language can be used to make things sound much more impressive than they are – to increase the value of a task and therefore the person performing it.
- the need to make language choices that are appropriate to the situational context. Therefore, while some have access to linguistic practices that establish power; they may choose other registers that better fit the context.

Mark allocation: 30 marks

Tips for Section C

- *In this section, students have an opportunity to draw from a wide range of linguistic concepts for discussion; however, it is important that students show both a breadth and depth of knowledge of the course.*
- *Generalised discussion is not rewarded. Students should look to support their ideas with specific metalanguage terms and relevant evidence.*
- *It is important that students focus on understanding the nuances of the topic and select and use appropriate linguistic evidence in their analysis. Students should be discouraged from providing pre-prepared responses to broad areas of study (e.g. an 'identity' or a 'public language' essay) rather than dealing in detail with the wording and implications of the specific topic. Such responses are easily detected and not well rewarded.*
- *Students are required to use at least **one** of the provided stimulus quotes to inform their response. It is important to remember that the stimulus must be interpreted with the topic in mind. Students should ask themselves, 'How can this information contribute to my understanding of the key topic ideas?'*
- *While students are welcome to use more than one piece of stimulus if they wish to do so, students who attempt to use all of the stimulus items are at risk of sacrificing depth of discussion and this should be discouraged.*
- *As always, students should look to include recent and relevant examples of language use. While some examples are given in the stimulus quotes, students should also be prepared to use their own original examples to support the discussion.*
- *Creativity in examples is always preferable over reusing unoriginal choices.*
- *Students who demonstrate evidence of wider academic reading, and use this knowledge to formulate an appropriate response to the topic, should be rewarded.*

END OF SAMPLE RESPONSES