



GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2012 English examination consisted of three sections. Section A (Text response) offered students the choice of two topics for each of the 20 texts. Students were required to complete one response. Section B (Writing in Context) required students to compose a piece of writing stemming from a prompt for each of the four Contexts. Section C (Analysis of language use) required students to analyse the ways in which a speech used language and visual features to persuade.

Assessment of each section was based on the relevant criteria, which were applied holistically, using the descriptors of the 'Expected Qualities for the Mark Range'. These can be found on the VCAA website on the English study page.

Each student's examination was assessed by no fewer than six independent markers.

More than 40 000 students sat for the 2012 English examination. Assessors were presented with a range of skills and levels of engagement with the examination. Most students were able to respond to the requirements of the examination and present three completed pieces of writing, suggesting that students have a good understanding of time management under examination conditions.

On the other hand, it should be noted that

- there is still a problem for some students in engaging with the specific topic or prompt. Careful consideration must be given to the implications of a topic or prompt to ensure that the piece of writing is dealing with the specific expectations
- as this is an English examination, strong language skills (including correct spelling and grammar) are expected and necessary for success
- it is recommended that students organise their time so that enough time is left to proofread their work. While handwriting is not assessed, it must be legible
- despite previous advice in past assessment reports, some students seem to depend too much on formulaic responses. The study of English is concerned with developing students' understanding and confidence in responding to the specific topics and prompts that are offered in the examination. Active engagement with texts enables students to develop language awareness, to articulate ideas and to develop communication skills. A personal engagement with the texts and ideas is neither formulaic nor predictable.

Students were generally well prepared for the new format of the answer book. It is important that students complete each section as instructed, including shading the boxes to indicate which text and topic have been selected in Section A and which context has been selected in Section B. This assists with the efficient processing of examination papers in the online marking system.

Teachers should give students the opportunity to become familiar with the format of the English task book and answer book. A sample answer book is available from the VCAA website on the English study page.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

The student responses provided below are presented for illustrative and informative reasons and they may form the basis of profitable discussions. These examples should not be taken as 'the best' that is possible or as 'perfect'; indeed, none is without shortcomings of one sort or another. Readers will obviously be able to make many more observations about the quality of these responses beyond the brief comments offered herein.

Section A – Text response

Most students showed textual knowledge and had an understanding of the key ideas and characters within the texts. The majority of students were able to construct an essay, using conventional standards and responding to the topic.

Students were offered two topics for each text and this gave them the opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge and skills. Few students responded with simplistic plot summaries.

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The types of topics varied, but all offered the opportunity to develop a sustained discussion linked to aspects of key knowledge for Units 3 and 4, Outcome 1. A close interpretation showed that topics such as *The Old Man Who Read Love Stories* (i.), *Things We Didn't See Coming* (ii.) and *Year of Wonders* (ii.) focused, in part, on characters, while *A Farewell to Arms* (i.), *Cat's Eye* (ii.) and *Cosi* (ii.) challenged students to explore major themes.

Topics that called on reader interpretation as a key aspect of the response included *A Christmas Carol* (i.), *Dear America – Letters Home from Vietnam* (ii.) and *Life of Pi* (i.). The ways in which authors express or imply a point of view and values were represented by *Henry IV, Part I* (ii.), *Interpreter of Maladies* (ii.) and *Ransom* (i.).

Topics that focused on the way the author or director uses structures, features and conventions to construct meaning are best exemplified by *A Human Pattern: Selected Poems* (ii.), *On the Waterfront* (i.) and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* (i.). It is worthwhile noting that the focus of any particular topic stems from the stated types suggested here but many also have more than one strand. Students who are able to demonstrate an understanding of how the construction, structures and features of the text operate in adding meaning were rewarded. Students demonstrated their ability to understand, acknowledge and explore the genre of their selected text.

Most of the concerns with students' text responses relate to dealing with the topic. There is a distinct difference between being well prepared and attempting a prepared response. After a detailed study of their text throughout the year, students should be encouraged to have confidence in their own reading and demonstrate a personal understanding of their text, rather than relying exclusively on commercially produced material.

It is important to be aware that there are no 'correct' responses. Each response is assessed on its own merits and the complexity of the texts and the topics allow for a variety of possible approaches. Students should be bold in their assertions about their texts if they have a good working knowledge of their text, its characters and themes, as well as the way in which the author or director has worked to present those ideas. Certainly, students may expect to challenge or qualify aspects of a topic.

The area that requires the most work is the understanding, deconstruction and organisation of responses in relation to the set topics. Students should look critically at the wording of the topic and consider what assumptions are being made within it. It is still a problem that too many students seem to want to respond to their own question rather than grapple with the ideas of the set topic. It is worth reviewing the relevant description from the published 'Expected Qualities – Text Response'. For a score of 9 or 10, a script 'demonstrates an understanding of the implications of the topic, using an appropriate strategy for dealing with it, and exploring its complexity from the basis of the text.'

Students must also ensure that they are exploring all of the elements presented in the topic. Too often a key point is plucked from the topic and an essay produced, omitting a significant idea that has a major bearing on the topic itself. For example, the second topic for *Henry IV, Part I* was: "Shakespeare's *Henry IV, Part I* explores what it means to be an honest and honourable man." Discuss.' Some students who attempted this topic ignored the key idea of honesty and presented a stock response to honour in the play, instead of providing a potentially provocative and interesting discussion on what it means to be an honest man in the play.

Likewise, there were two distinct parts to the topic for *Ransom* (ii.). The first dealt with violence, but the second part ('...the reader is left with a sense of optimism.') offered the potential for thoughtful insights into the novel. All parts of the question needed to be considered and there should have been a natural symmetry between the parts of the topic. The most successful pieces were selective in the use of text in relation to the topic and did not feel the need to show knowledge of the entire text.

The majority of students demonstrated an understanding of writing a text essay. Clear introductions, appropriate paragraphing and the ability to embed quotations appropriately were a feature of most pieces. These basic skills must continually be reinforced, including building more sophisticated vocabulary, continuing to improve grammar and more focus on sentence structure.



The most popular texts and their mean scores, out of a possible 10 marks, were as follows.

Text	% of students	Average mark
<i>On the Waterfront</i>	18.9%	5.7
<i>Twelve Angry Men</i>	13.4%	5.6
<i>Cosi</i>	10.6%	5.1
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	10.0%	5.6
<i>Year of Wonders</i>	9.1%	6.0

The least popular texts for this part included *A Human Pattern: Selected Poems*, *Bypass: The Story of a Road*, *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*, *Cat's Eye* and *Dreams from My Father*.

The highest mean score for Section A was achieved by students who wrote on *Henry IV, Part I*. This was followed by *A Human Pattern: Selected Poems*, *Cat's Eye*, *The War Poems* and *Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?*.

The following example is a mid-range response.

A Christmas Carol (i.)

'Despite his mean and miserable ways, we never completely dislike Scrooge.' Discuss.

In A Christmas Carol, Dickens presents us with a character that is portrayed as a stingy, odious old man who is known in the town for his voracity and cold personality. But when visited by four distinct apparitions, his deceased partner Jacob Marley, the ghost of Christmas past, the ghost of Christmas present and the ghost of Christmas yet to come, Scrooge is taken a journey to help redeem himself from the years spent attempting to increase his wealth and neglecting the poor and needy. Although, during his journey fragments of Scrooge's personality arise that portray his good side and decrease the hate that was felt by the audience. It is the likes of Belle, his first and only lover, Fezziwig, this apprentice provider and his nephew Fred that form a sense of like and sympathy for the protagonist of the novel.

As the ghost of Christmas past takes him on a journey, Scrooge is shown visions of the times that portrayed merriment and joy in the cold-hearted mans life, visions that showed his kinder, more joyful personality. As the ghost of Christmas past, a candle-like figure, takes Scrooge to the Christmas spent at his educator in accounting, Mr Fizziwig, the audience is introduced to a side that is the complete opposite of the current form Scrooge posses. Dickens presents us with a young and joyful man who admired his teacher and enjoyed the festive season as everyone in that Christmas vision did. It is this image of Scrooge that shows the audience the change that Scrooge underwent throughout the years and that he is not completely cruel, dull and aggressive as his current state. Dickens compares Scrooge in that scene with his bubbly and enthusiastic boss. Fizziwig and how during that Christmas Scrooge is not the replica of the person he is at the start of his road to redemption.

In conjunction to the same vision, we are also introduced to a loving compassionate and sensitive man during Fezziwig's Christmas party. It is during this vision that Scrooge finds his first and true love, Belle. Belle shows the audience that Scrooge is a loving and caring character and that he is not to be hated entirely. She withdraws out of him the love and compassion that is not viable in the protagonist in his old and cold-hearted form. As shown, the audience is informed of the person Ebenezer Scrooge used to be and how time and greed infected his once loved personality. The vision that followed the one where Belle is first sighted, shows and confirms how Scrooge was a victim of greed and selfishness. Scrooge inherited characteristics from his employer and put those characteristics into practice during his love affair with Belle, but as time progressed, Scrooge was infected by greed and voracity and maintained that personality till the four ghosts came to reform Scrooge.

As the ghost of Christmas past concluded with Scrooge, the ghost of Christmas present resumed the Journey to show Scrooge of visions that are currently occurring. It is this section of the Journey where the audience start to develop sympathy for the protagonist – As the ghost of Christmas present shows Scrooge visions of his nephew's dinner, Scrooge witnesses his nephew and his guests mock him and insult the old man. It is these comments that arises a sense of sympathy from the audience and portrays Scrooge's sympathy during the time. The comments such as 'is it an animal?' and 'does it grunt and growl', is taken by the protagonist deeply and sees this as an insult. This forms sympathy for the main character and portrays an emotional and emphatic side to Ebenezer Scrooge.

Another vision that clears some of the hatred the audience triggered at Scrooge is of himself during his childhood. As the ghost of Christmas past takes him on a journey to his schooling days, the audience is presented with a 'solitary child' seated all alone in a class room. Dickens presents us with this vision to not only show the sorrow Scrooge condemned, but also the link between his childhood state and his current state and how his harsh and lonely childhood might have resulted in his current cruel and lonely form. It is these images of Scrooge that project a less-hated man.

In conclusion, Dickens presents scenes where Scrooge does not poses personality traits such a cruelty, voracity and cold-hearted. Though we are shown images of sorrow, joy, compassion and care which remove some burden of the protagonist. These features pave the path to liking Scrooge.



Assessor comments

- Clear and consistent focus on the topic, although somewhat laboured and in a generalised manner.
- Good textual knowledge, but perhaps without the breadth of the upper-range scripts.
- Workmanlike in its expression and control of language.

The following example is an upper-range response.

***On the Waterfront* (i.)**

How does Kazan create tension and suspense in *On the Waterfront*?

Elia Kazan's 1954 film On the Waterfront depicts a community gripped by chronic corruption, unalloyed brutality and putative injustice. Throughout, the direction of Kazan is central in registering the tension and suspense that is prevalent. He employs a wide range of symbols and motifs to highlight the immense oppression the residents of the dock must endure, and also accentuates the usurious corruption of the mob through his application of setting. Furthermore, Leonard Bernstein's score is also vital for this effect. Kazan's scrupulous direction also creates tension in specific renowned scenes.

Kazan employs numerous symbols and motifs to depict the corruption that longshoremen of the 1950's faced. One of the most prominent metaphors is that of the pigeons and hawks. The stevedores are likened to pigeons, who are always at the mercy of their owners. They can only be released at the whim of others as they are always trapped in a cage. The chicken wire fencing of the pigeon coop is a visual representation of the way the workers are entrapped. On the other hand, the mob is likened to hawks, as they 'go down on' the longshoremen at every opportunity. Furthermore, the way Tommy kills all of Terry's pigeons creates tension and suspense as the audience is led to compare Terry's fate to that of his pets. In addition to pigeons, Kazan also utilises the Empire State Building as a symbol. It represents in essence, the American dream, and the way everybody has certain 'inalieable rights'. However, it is fenced off by an imposing iron fence, and covered by thick fog. The iconography and composition of this fence in the Glove Scene infers that wealth, success and freedom are beyond reach for the residents of the dock. Moreover, the iron fence is a visual representation of a border almost, separating the Hoboken Docks from the rest of America. This sentiment is similarly expressed by Jimmy Collins, as he tells Farther Berg 'this ain't part of America'. These symbols of corruption imbue the film with tension, as viewers are left pondering the danger that the workers face, as well as their eventual fate.

Kazan's use of setting is also intended to register the oppression and destruction rife on Hoboken Rocks. The lens of Boris Kaufman's camera distils a skyscape which is menacing, insular, if not claustrophobic. Dark settings emphasise not only the dread and danger the residents face, but also the labyrinthine network of corruption. Indeed, they are widely employed by Kazan. Dark settings such as the dingy alley ways, the curvaceous hold of the ship and even the shape up register the suffocation that longshoremen face on a daily basis. The ill at ease, slouched postures of the workers, in conjunction with the faint outlines of stairways confirm the disquiet in this deep and dark urban underbelly. Even the weather seems to express the stevedores' helplessness. The shrouded light of day is diffused by cloudy skies and thick fog. This highlights the uncertainty in relation to a day's work, and also fear. Clearly Kazan's use of setting emphasises the danger and fear that the longshoremen live under, creating tension amongst the viewers.

Kazan's endeavour to create disquiet and lingering in viewers is also evident in many key scenes. In the 'Confession Scene', he masterfully subsumes the voices of Marlon Brando and Eve Marie Saint in order to intensify the anguish and pain in their expressions. Furthermore, the way Terry is gradually being engulfed by smoke gives the impression that the situation is boiling over. Moreover, tension is intimated in the brotherly tryst between Terry and Charlie, in the back of a taxi. The 'Cab Scene', as the name suggests, takes place in the back of a cab. In his own words, the scene is 'like a pressure cooker'. The tight space, as well as the way the blinds cover the rear window, separating the brothers from the rest of the world achieve this desired effect. In the notorious climax of the film, audiences are gripped by the suspense built into the final shots. A man who is wearing clothes similar to 'the butcher in a camel hair coat' calls the men back to work. His dress identifies him as a member of the ruling class. This poses the question of whether another Friendly may rise – indeed, the 'labour leader's sponsor' Mr Upstairs goes scot-free. The way the longshoremen gather around Terry implies that they are going to continue their struggle. Also, the gigantic doors close on them like a gargantuan capitalist mouth has devoured them. This leads film enthusiasts pondering the true fate of the longshoremen hence waiting in suspense – the final scene consists of both triumphant and melancholy elements. In these scenes, Kazan's methods of creating tension and suspense are varied.

Despite Kazan's clever work, the score written and directed from the film by Leonard Bernstein is also crucial and developing these effects. Throughout the film, there is a litany of examples where the scene complements the disquiet created. In the opening scene, the fight shots of Friendly are met by the sound of a 'dry' saxophone. Audiences recognise that the men who are exiting the clubhouse are no law abiding citizens. This is accompanied by rhythmic crashes of timpani which register the enormity of the situation. Viewers are completely unaware of what is about to occur. In others scenes, such as the shape up, or the mob's invasion of Father Barry's church, mixed percussion and shrill strings are used to create an atmosphere of confusion and desperation. Bernstein's score is perhaps most powerful in creating suspense in the final scene. A tone of indeterminacy is manufactured by an unresolved chord in the strings, once again inferring the struggle is not over, manoeuvring audiences to question the fate of the ragtag workers. In this way, Bernstein's score is also important in creating tension and suspense in the film.



On the Waterfront's various elements have made it a cinematic masterpiece. They are particularly effective in producing an art of tension and suspense. Kazan employs various symbols and motifs, as well as carefully selected settings to register the danger and oppression posed by the corruption of the union. Numerous mise-en-scene are also utilised to create lingering and disquiet. However, just as important to creating sense of excitement and suspense is the work of Leonard Bernstein, the composer of On the Waterfront's score. Perhaps the work of the two men were only so great as a result of the audiological and visual interplay in the film.

Assessor comments

- A superior response that demonstrates control throughout.
- Excellent textual knowledge but selective in responding to the topic.
- Remains focused on the topic and explores its implications.
- Uses expressive language, a broad and precise vocabulary, and is well structured.

Section B – Writing in Context

Students were required to write an extended response for a specified purpose and audience, exploring ideas and using detail from at least one prescribed text. In all cases students had something to say, and it was clear that some very interesting approaches and interpretations to creating and presenting had been studied in classes.

It was clear that most students understood that this section is about good writing. Good writing, however, cannot occur without good ideas, and the texts and supplementary material used by students offered the opportunity to include complex ideas about the Context, the text and the prompt. All four prompts provided students with ideas from which to springboard their thinking about the relevant Context. Students who demonstrated that the basis of their ideas emanated from the prompts were provided with a ready means to develop significant ideas.

The writing itself was varied. Certainly, there was no advantage in taking one approach to writing above others. Each student, with the help of their teacher, should select an approach that allows them to demonstrate their writing skills. While the majority of students took a conventional approach, many students were more creative in their approach and were able to use a polished writing style while exploring thoughtful ideas.

It must be reiterated, however, that students must respond to the ideas in the prompt. They cannot write a prepared response that may have worked in class. The prompt provides a cornerstone for the direction of the piece and ideas related to the prompt must be the focus of the writing.

Writing was assessed on the quality of the students' ideas (in relation to the Context, the nominated text and the prompt), the quality of writing (regardless of the approach students chose to take) and the manner in which the prompt was dealt with.

Authentic pieces of writing are highly regarded and it was good to see many students employ a heading this year. At the same time, however, there is no provision for a reflective commentary in the examination.

While the majority of students had little difficulty in demonstrating how their piece of writing was also informed by a prescribed text, there were some who seemed to ignore the instructions from the examination: 'Your writing must draw directly from at least one selected text that you have studied for this Context...'. This is a clear instruction that the text drawn from must inform the writing in ways that must be clear to the reader, and that the student has used it effectively 'as appropriate to the task'. The texts provide rich resources in respect to the way in which the Context is explored. A small number of students, however, showed little or no connection to the ideas of their nominated text. Some narratives were not drawing clearly on 'detail and ideas' from the selected text. On the other hand, most students seem to be clear that Part B is not a text response. It is the responsibility of the student to demonstrate the connection between the ideas of the nominated text and the piece of writing.



Information on assessing the Context

CONTEXT	%	Mean	Most popular text
Encountering conflict	45%	5.4	<i>The Crucible</i>
Exploring issues of identity and belonging	27.3%	5.5	<i>Growing Up Asian in Australia</i>
Whose reality?	18.2%	5.8	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
The imaginative landscape	9.5%	6.0	<i>Island</i>

Some advice for teachers and students

- Students should be encouraged to be bolder in what they write.
- Formulaic approaches are limiting.
- Avoid prepared or memorised responses.
- Imaginative essays must explore ideas and/or arguments.
- Focus on a suitable choice of genre for individual students.
- Choose a polished and edited style that enables students to display high-quality writing skills. This is quite difficult to achieve with approaches such as a blog, a post on social media or a diary entry.
- Explore big ideas and examine complexities.
- Unpack a given prompt in great depth.
- Have a clear grasp of key terms in the prompt before composing a response.
- Challenge the prompt, don't simply agree with it and show examples.
- Ensure there is adequate practice and strategies for exploring the prompt.
- Responses should have continuity, a core and a sense of progression.
- Create an interesting opening.
- Demonstrate a controlled use of language, and understand and practise this generic skill.
- Teach students to use texts as vehicles, not as the centre of the task, and continue to improve the incorporation of texts in appropriate ways.
- Teach the use of text as explaining complexity, not merely as simple illustration.
- It may be useful to ask the question, 'What does the text suggest about the Context?'
- Teach and practise a variety of approaches to writing.
- Help to develop greater sophistication with creative pieces.
- Develop pieces that are well crafted.
- Discourage 'petty' personal stories that offer little depth to the piece of writing.

A sample from each of the four Contexts follows. It is worth reading all four to gain a sense of the various writing styles across all Contexts.

Context 1 – The imaginative landscape

'The ways in which we understand a landscape and respond to it can change over time.'

Nominated text: *Island*

Firstly, imagine a girl. She lives isolated on an island. Her family have tended the lighthouse for generations. But she hates the landscape and yearns to be free of it. Her imagination is unequal to the confines of the island and it is her entire being that is diametrically in opposition to her surrounding world. Landscape is not static, it is as changing and as varied as humans are. Over time the change of landscape and the change of humans can greatly alter pre-existing relationships with the land. Over time – even uneventful time – the bonds between person and landscape might slowly grow or at least later. Over time experiences both positive and negative occur, tying an individual to a landscape sentimentally. Over time economic and practical compunctions creates a different but drastic change in the relationship with the landscape.

Even a neutral and uneventful space of time spent in a certain environment will slowly join a person to the land. The mind like the skin changes in response to where it is. The skin might darken if exposed to the sun long enough, much like how the mind will later if exposed to a different environment. This isn't as dramatic as the bloody birth of scars, it is a gradual mundane exposure to sun-light to tan, or the gradual exposure of a landscape for the mind to change to suit its surroundings. A process so slow and quotidian as to be indivisible. Over countless years the imagination and mind of the individual becomes accustomed to a certain landscape and a certain surroundings. This is especially true if someone was born and grown on a certain landscape. An individual might spend their entire life desperately seeking to escape from the landscape they see as so oppressive. They might



upon reaching independence at eighteen seek to flee the land that in its ubiquity has become so terrible. But they know deep down that they will probably get drawn straight back to similar environments. A boy fleeing a mining town will struggle to escape from the habits of a mining town and the desire to return to similar environment. Even if seeking a location antithetical to their prior landscape and idealised and utopian big-city (such as Melbourne, New York or Ontario depending on the country) the boy will find himself drawn back to the mines because they know that once you drink deep the underground water you will always be drawn back.

His imagination developed and grew to the dimensions of the mine around him. A cityscape is as alien an environment to him as the light is to the stygian depths of the mine. It doesn't matter where you go, your genesis will still hand over you. As a wise-man once said, 'In our beginnings is our ends.' This can happen to adults too, as time builds bonds that aren't easily shaken, look at the show patriotism of so many expatriots. The ties to a landscape are a natural and inevitable part of living anywhere. If a person moves to a new environment they might be sad and nostalgic for their previous landscape, because it too will have had uneventful time to work its way into the individual's psyche, but over time the person will adjust. Given enough time the previous landscape might grow dim in their memory and the pleasing contours of their new environment will have had enough time to become apparent.

Time allows the gradual growth of experiences both positive and negative to tie a person to landscape. Much like the skin, the mind can record damage or small remembrances of past events; this is all tied to experience. As the individual becomes enmeshed with the nicks and cuts (mental and physical) of their landscape, they become almost a cartographical representation of this landscape. The farmer who spends an entire day cutting into the earth to put a fence up, will have small cuts and splinters in their hands, but every time they look out at the fence they'll know they had an effect on this landscape, and as the small cuts heal the memory will remain and possibly even grow fonder. Likewise great trauma can so completely cause the lens through which we see the world to be wrought and redefined that it is only the trauma itself that can be focussed on. Someone who sees a cherished family dog kill its owner could become tragically tied to a landscape as every shadow and every hill becomes the dog's roaming ground. Every shadow in the night part of its domain. Or a farming couple might have a child drown in a mill, and that mill will become unused but untouched a depressing monument to loss. The couple can't remove it, and they can't leave the land because it has become a reminder and a link to their lost son that they can't live without. Over time experiences, build, not necessarily as tragic as death, but small experiences that create so much historical baggage, that severing that link and leaving becomes a huge undertaking.

Time creates economic or practical bonds to the landscape. The more we reside on the land the more entrenched we become in it practically. The more we depend on it to survive. We create bonds of responsibility that require our continued presence. As much as a boy might hate the landscape, the landscape might be important to his family's survival, when his father dies he might have to remain and to care for those left behind. In the interests of emotional stability dependence might become identical to affection, as to survive the individual rationalises their situation until it becomes agreeable or even ideal. A father might hate the landscape and dream of greater things, but in his responsibilities as father he must remain to care for his progeny. But by creating a room in which to experience culture and experience the world he is able to make his stay on the land easier to take. All the same despite his unhappiness he is unable to leave, because of the fundamental truth that over time our dependence whether we like it or not, alters the way we interact with the landscape.

The landscape and the way we interact and understand a landscape may change over time. There is a slow growth in affection that comes with time spent anywhere. There is the creation of a historical connection that comes with experiences shared with a landscape both positive and negative. And the accretion of financial interests and personal responsibilities that come from surviving in any environment. Finally imagine a woman. She lives isolated on an island. Her family have tended the lighthouse for generations. And she loves the landscape and can't imagine a life without it. When she dies she'll have spent the vast majority of her life on the island. The lighthouse will illuminate the boundaries of her imagination and her world.

Assessors comments:

- This is an upper-level script, and is interesting and provocative in relation to Context and prompt.
- There are some thoughtful ideas presented, and we see the student working through the complexity of the context and the prompt. The ideas are more typical of the top-range pieces.
- The ideas tend to be a little rushed and bundled as the student takes on more than can be achieved in this setting. There's an attempt in the lighthouse image to create a sense of unity and cohesion.
- The exploration of ideas and prompt are not fulfilled.
- The writing is uneven, with some apt and focused sections, but the vocabulary is sometimes jarring rather than precise and feels forced.
- While it is acknowledged that the exam is first-draft writing, the best pieces emerge from a clearer basis of contention and purpose.



Context 2 – Whose reality?

‘Our fantasies can be more powerful than our reality.’

Nominated text: *The Lot*

PREPARING FOR THE SHOPOCALYPSE

By Michael Leunig

‘Man can never get enough of what he doesn’t need to make him happy.’ – Eric Hoffer

Spring has finally arrived bringing forth a sense of hope for humanity that seemed somewhat inhibited by the preceding winter months. The land glistens in all its natural glory, but why waste my morning in the sun when I can spend it drowning in the punitive glow of a thousand fluorescent lights? On this particular morning, I find myself casually ducking in and out of stores in Chadstone shopping center ‘Chaddy’ – the holy sanctum of the modern consumer.

The domed glass roof and tacky palm trees only accentuate the vast gap between life and this soul destroying cathedral to emptiness. This shrine to mass-consumption and ‘mass-mindedness’ is the habitation of the modern consumer. ‘Indigenous people have long said that the unique and complex quality of the land significantly forms the authenticity of the culture and people.’ No wonder the gap between authenticity and a synthetic fantasy is becoming increasingly blurred.

Everyone looks anaesthetized. Soccer mums harbouring pram loads of snot-nosed preschoolers whilst sipping skinny lattes. Fat people with an extra large bucket of fried chicken in one hand and a giant pretzel in the other. Consume consume consume... that’s what it’s all about. I enter into a mild daze as I blankly weave my way through the endless rows of pointless speciality stores, observing the boundless supply of new fangled gadgets and gizmos – each one screaming at me to give in to temptation.

‘The rot of conformity sets in’. Cheap clothes, processed food and anything with a remote control is the only way to distract the consumer from the vacancy of his ‘wilting soul’. He can be seen trying on a pair of luxury trousers or handing his credit card to the dreadlocked lady behind the bench with the scented candles. Procurement is his heroin. The effect is not lasting, however, soon the fantasy will wear off and once again, he will find himself on the mad pursuit to attain his next hit.

As I enter one of the saundry kitchen supply shops, I find myself uncontrollably reaching for my back pocket at the sight of that radiant quesadilla maker. After all...I am only human.

Man has become trapped in the fantasy in which the acquisition of pointless material items is the key to a happy life, our so-called happiness measured by the economic indicators of society. ‘We have delayed our souls with all sorts of toxic junk and chaos’ in pursuit of happiness, however, is the consumer genuinely happy when the fantasy wears off and he sits alone on his designer couch in silk pajamas? Just as the great poet-philosopher Lao Tzu claimed that ‘True art does not look like art’, perhaps the same can be said about happiness.

‘The alienation that we feared is the very alienation we end up creating for ourselves and society’. ‘What consumerism destroys it replaces with crude synthetic substitutes for life and personal truth.’

We learn to applaud this fantasy and ‘shun the real thing’. I hope I’m not around when the world wakes up from this ostentatious fantasy to find no authentic happiness in sight. When the ‘mania posing as [happiness]’ wears off, all we left with is that pathetic collection of miniature warships that we got on sale at Big W.

‘It is not unusual these days to hear that the world is coming to an end.’ With the doomsday fast approaching, the Apocalypse a frequent topic of conversation, we may as well spend up and indulge in this fantasy while we still can. Quesadillas anyone?

Assessors comments

- This upper-range script captures Leunig’s voice and capacity to step back and reflect on life, including the healthy cynicism that is so much a part of Leunig’s writing.
- Demonstrates an appropriate voice that is sustained and effective.
- Excellent control of language and careful placement of imagery.
- The script shows the ability to internalise the ideas of the text and use them to present a wonderful piece of writing that is at the heart of Section B.
- While the quotations may be overdone and, to an extent, get in the way, this does not detract too much from the way in which the student aptly draws from the text.
- It is powerful and evocative.
- An interesting and thoughtful approach to the prompt.
- Clear development of an authentic piece of writing.



- Nice ending.

Context 3 – Encountering conflict

‘The experience of conflict changes people’s priorities.’

Nominated text: *The Crucible*

Human being will always encounter conflict; it is inevitable because of our complex makeup and conflicting ideas and values. This is not necessarily a bad thing as conflict allows individuals and communities to grow and learn. Arguments and disagreements naturally create opposition in people and as a conflict becomes more complex, it becomes increasingly difficult to be a ‘fence-sitter’. This allows people to begin to regard their own views and values and thus prioritise what is most important to them.

In the 20th century, dichotomies have been created that lead to one group having more power over another group. However, through history we see the individuals who stand up against these more powerful groups as heroic. This can be seen through the youngest Nobel Peace Prize winner, Martin Luther King Jr’s actions to achieve equality for the African-Americans. King was fed up with being treated unfairly because he was black and stood up to protect himself, his family and his people. Such a strong proclamation cost King his life but we still recognise his actions today as a main factor for the equality of African-Americans, and many other races. This shows that King prioritised the welfare of his family and loved ones over himself to achieve equality for them all.

Similarly in Arthur Miller’s ‘The Crucible’, the character John Proctor casts aside ‘[his] good name’ in order to save the community of Salem from the injustice of the witch trials. Proctor believed that the group of girls who were making the accusations were all lying in order to divert the attention from themselves to everyone else. The only way for Proctor to stop the ‘crazy little children’ from ‘jangling the keys to the kingdom’ and show how the law has been corrupted by Danforth was to sacrifice himself. Like King, Proctor proclaimed his beliefs in order to save his family and community and faced the same outcome, death. However this shows the ability of people to make selfless acts in order to expose truth or in hope of a better life for the future. The stage directions in the play which have light flooding the hills after Proctor is hung suggest Salem will be a better place because of his actions.

Lust for power and position can effect individuals decisions during conflict. In 1950’s America, Joe McCarthy lead a modern ‘witch-hunt’ for communists. With the help of the House of Un-American Activities Committee, many people were trialled and accused for being communists. The main aim was to free America of communism but as the trials continued it became increasingly obvious that their motives changed. The idea of protecting the people turned into accusing and punishing innocent people to make it look like they were succeeding at that mission, but really they were doing it to keep the political power.

Similarly in ‘The Crucible’, Judge Danforth listens to the accusations the girls make and convicts many innocent people, sentencing them to hang for practicing witchcraft. Eventually even Danforth begins to question the validity behind some of the accusations but believes he cannot change his tone because it ‘will speak a floundering on [his] part’. So like McCarthy, Danforth keeps the trials going for fear that he might lose his power and bring disrepute to himself and the law. Therefore these people prioritise themselves over the benefit of others for personal gain.

In times of conflict people are given choices to make decisions which can effect many people around them. People can prioritise themselves and thus cast out the wider community for selfish gains, like Danforth or McCarthy. But it is the John Proctors and Kings of society that realise the greater good and who are remembered for the sacrifices they make for their families and for their communities.

Assessors comments

- Competent and reasonably clear idea in relation to the prompt.
- Integration of outside material and textual discussion is controlled and consistent.
- Response to the prompt is evident, although not developed, and is somewhat laboured.
- While there are a few expression issues, it is still a sound piece of writing.
- Lacks the sophistication and development of the upper-range scripts.
- Typical of a mid-range script.



Context 4 – Exploring issues of identity and belonging
‘Each person has different identities for different relationships and situations.’

Nominated text: *Growing Up Asian in Australia*

Chinese Pigs in Blankets

I never liked going to restaurants especially with my Chinese family. It wasn't that I disliked the food, in fact I like the food, there was nothing like a hot pot of steaming tofu or an oily succulent Peking duck. No. The food was really great. What I hated about going to restaurants was my family who made every visit excruciatingly awkward with their insistence on returning to the old country via the local King Wong Palace as though it was Dr Who's tardis. Even though most of them migrated to Australia more than 10 years ago, their aura still turned the room into a market. David Attenborough would have a field day observing my family. Human migratory birds that flock habitually for Yum Cha every Sunday.

I can hear him now. 'This is a typical Chinese family gathering at the local restaurant. In parties like these, the host arrives early, keen to avoid any early awkward arrivals. Here comes the relatives, the children dash in first, excited to see the sea creatures in the fish tanks waiting to be steamed and served up. Polite greetings are uttered in a show of friendship and kinship. It is clear that for this family, the old ways have not be forgotten.'

That's how I feel sometimes, a human migratory bird nesting in the eastern suburbs Melbourne. Whilst my parents made small talk with the relatives about the obligatory subject of musical instrument and whose child played the most, piano and violin being of course mandatory. I would sit marooned with the other children nibbling on our prawn crackers. Sometimes I would catch a snippet of what they were talking about and it is usually about the academic excellence both real and imagined of their child. In China, success equates to good grades and more importantly, the ability of one's parent to take pride in the achievements of their child. As I grew up in Australia and watched my friend's parents exalt in the graduation of their child from TAFE and become plumber kings, I became increasingly torn. Yes, I wanted to please my parents, of course I did, I wasn't completely removed from my Chinese heritage, but I also want to embrace the Australian way and Oprah's mantra 'follow my bliss'. I felt like a Chinese fraud, outwardly representing a fleet of facading academic excellence whilst inside recoiling at my past, present and potential future failures and what this meant for my parents.

As the stress of these first exchanges were finally behind us, I still couldn't escape the regamorable of my Chinese heritage once we were seated. Strangely, there is only one menu on the table despite the fact there are ten empty stomachs. Everytime we went out, I lived in desperate hopes that for once I'd be able to choose something from the menu but this was no pub where there would be a separate kiddie menu. No, here I'd have to eat whatever the host wanted me to eat and only when my mum gave me the special signal that it was ok for me to eat. I have distinct memories of watching fried pork dumplings shimmering under flickering fluoro lights as they repeatedly passed me going to everyone around the lazy Susan but me. My mouth would water as these Chinese pigs in blankets went inside everyone's mouth and I was left with an empty plate and a few soggy lettuce leaves. I look back now at this culinary angst and marvel at my self control. At that time, I felt stifled, frustratingly held back from a delicious pork snack by the expectations of my parents who would have been mortified even if I attempted to sniff the food before my host did. However, these restaurant lessons of my youth have held me in good stead ever since though; you'll never catch me licking the cake mix off the spoon and that's more than I can say for some of my Australian mates.

My restaurant nightmare didn't end here. All the Chinese relatives are filled with the innate capacity and desire to feed their young with their own chopsticks. Whilst they didn't go as far as to regurgitate the food, they might as well have. I spent most of my Sunday afternoon's popping throat lozenges and gargling saltwater in an attempt to combat that I envisaged from eating the food on my plate. Whilst I have both my arms intact, it was deemed impolite to decline the ever increasing pile. I described this to my friend Danny who always begged me if he can come along to these family gatherings. Danny's weekend was filled with sausages and bread and little in the way of finally and friends. Danny spent alternate weekends with his mum and dad and loved the idea of family gathering with the intensity that I've had. At that time, I would love to switch places with Danny and fill my own plate with my own bread, my own sausage and my own sauce. I know for all my whining, I'm really lucky to have the connection and relationship with my family.

Now, I often think about Danny and David Attenborough and what they would say now. Danny often comes with me together with his own family as we have fallen into the same routine of my Chinese youth. We would make small talk about the academic achievement of our children, though I'm conscience to take pride in my daughter hairdressing certificate IV, knowing that it is her bliss and what she wants. The waiters were puzzled when I asked for an extra menu on the table, I was fulfilling my childhood dream in doing so, it was the only way for me not to shed a tear when my youngest order fried ice cream. Sometimes I feel the urge to place food on my children's plates when they don't have vegies. I know now that my restaurant rebellion has ended.

David Attenborough's voice 'Usually, the traditions for this family has moved on, Yum Cha is no longer just a Chinese Affair but one for the masses. Some habits do die hard though. The children's nose pressed against the fish tank, amazed by the lobsters at every visit whilst the adults made small talk and sipped their tea. It seems like this flock of migratory bird has settled in and assimilated with the local culture and tradition.'



David Z is a short story writer, Chinese Pigs in Blankets is an edited extract from his third installment 'Asian Youth', celebrating his life growing Asian in Australia. Multi-cultural week runs from 1st Nov to 7th Nov.

Assessors comments

- This is an upper mid-range script.
- Shows a strong link to the text and draws clearly from the issues raised by several writers.
- The image of the migratory birds is both amusing and shows an understanding of the text and the context, but the link to the prompt is not clearly made. The use of detail is effective in developing imagery that serves the student's purpose.
- The writer is aware of feeling isolated, of looking on as an outsider, but conforms and comes to adopt the described behaviours and values.
- Expression is occasionally awkward and flawed, but a personal voice emerges that gives an honesty and immediacy to the work.
- An authentic, interesting and entertaining piece of writing.

Section C – Analysis of language use

Section C presented students with a transcript of a speech by a retired teacher-librarian, which opened a forum on reading and literacy-related activities. The speech, entitled 'Reading: the future', explored the changing nature of reading, and the task contained two slides from the presentation. The audience was clearly set out in the 'Background information', which 'included teachers, librarians and senior school students from local schools'.

The instructions called for students to read the material, including the transcript of the slides, and analyse the ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view.

When summing up her main points in the final paragraph, Mrs Elliot sets out her intention that she does not wish to stop the coming of ebooks, but calls on her audience to 'make sure that important things are not entirely swept away'.

The visuals consisted of two slides, each dealing with an aspect of books and ebooks. Students offered a number of interpretations, particularly with the image of a smiling young person holding an ebook while leaning against a stack of books. Some saw this as representative of young people turning their backs on books, while others interpreted it to suggest that books are still the backbone of reading. Naturally, there is no single correct response. Interpretations, however, must be in harmony with the ideas being presented. The second visual was a cartoon that satirically offered the difference between ebooks and hard copy as set out by Elliot in her tenth paragraph.

Careful reading yielded students numerous and various opportunities to demonstrate their skills in analysing the ways language was used to persuade. Given the time constraints of an examination, students were not expected to explore all detailed elements. Students must select the parts of the material that allow them to demonstrate an understanding of the material itself, their understanding of the range of ways in which language positions readers and to demonstrate their analysis skills.

Many students were able to show an understanding of the way in which Elliot set up her argument and the movement that occurred within her speech. Every student offered their perspectives on language use in the presented material and the best responses were sophisticated and articulate. There were few examples of simplistic labelling, and it was clear that students understood of the nature of the task.

Assessors noted a discernible improvement from previous years, especially in regard to moving away from describing techniques. However, some students would still benefit from support to master the skills of exploring language use and its intended impact on the audience, rather than listing and describing.

This is a low-range response where the student is unable to grapple with the way language is used to persuade. It is very brief and is an example of those students who simplistically label.

The speech on the future of books titled 'Reading: The future' by Mrs Elliot tries to persuade the audience that adapting to new technology is ok but not so to go to far.

Mrs Elliot uses a range of persuasive techniques like Rhetorical questions which she uses 4. she uses the hip pocket nerve when she is talking about school book updates which will students and parents. The language for the piece is very inclusive and imaginative. Mrs Elliot uses inclusive language for throughout the speech and gives a in depth view into her world. Mrs Elliot who uses generalisation assuming everyone are 'fellow book-lovers'.



The two images she projects onto a screen during her speech feature a boy listening to what seems an e-book while he is ignoring the books stacked behind him. This would support the idea that early adopters like Mrs Elliot and kids would be more encouraged over a good old book.

The second image is a drawing from an artist (J Wheeler) that is a book store but the cashier is saying 'Enjoy your book. You should have that for a good six months before it vanishes'. This insinuates that the book store is actually an online book store and they are talking about the students school book.

The persuasive techniques were very convincing for me and would be for the audience.

Following is an example of a thoughtful, upper-range response that demonstrates clear understanding of the material and the task itself.

The growing prevalence of e-books in today's society has been met with both admiration but also concern. During her presentation at the forum on reading and literacy-related activities ('Reading: the future'), Mrs Elliot attempts to sway the audience into making sure the positive elements of hard copy books are not forgotten and a world where only e-books thrive does not eventuate. In her speech, Mrs Elliot uses her prior position of expertise (retired librarian) in an incredibly personal and direct approach to persuade her audience of teachers, librarians and senior school students to convey to her style of thinking.

The outset is dominated by Mrs Elliot positioning her audience to indeed trust her. Her relation to the audience; 'fellow book-lovers' is used in an attempt to manipulate the audience to engage and listen to what she has to say. The structure of her speech very much depends on this relation being made as the rest of the presentation encapsulates Mrs Elliot's experiences and personal opinions. The sentiment that Mrs Elliot 'like[s] change' is done with the intended purpose of making the audience feel Mrs Elliot is not stuck in the past. The words 'I thought' and 'had to be a good thing' enable Mrs Elliot to discuss the positives of e-books (to display a more rounded argument) whilst at the same time, displaying a hint that there is more to it. Her first slide which accompanied her speech relates to the positive elements of e-books. The photograph of a young boy smiling at the usage of his e-book whilst a mountain of books lay stacked behind him echo the image of 'children setting off without the terrible burden of their great big textbook'. The small backpack compared with the mountain of books acts to attempt to persuade the audience about the improvements that have been made, a weight has been lifted, both metaphorically and literally. After the visual has displayed the positive elements of e-books, Mrs Elliot again forbodes her underlying intention; 'some things about them are great'. The quantifier 'some' perhaps suggests to the audience that although elements are positive, there are also elements that are negative.

The rhetorical question 'so what's to worry about?' signals to the audience a change in direction, from the positives to perhaps a discussion of the concerns. A slightly more philosophical tone is employed by Mrs Elliot soon after with an underlying tone of annoyance. The anecdote of a child on television and Mrs Elliot's admission, 'I thought he was reading, but he wasn't' is done in an attempt to display the dangers of e-books to the audience. The audience is filled with literary advocates so the confession that the boy was not reading but instead 'viewing' may act as a shock factor. The adjective 'disturbing' emulates Mrs Elliot's feelings and acts to instil concern into the audience. Her shocked sentiment continues as she discovered 'e-books might disappear', knowledge aimed to confront the audience to the bleak realities. Her sentiment that 'couldn't sell them [e-books] at the community second hand store' is used in an attempt to relate to the audience's state of community spirit and the impending sense of loss. The second slide cartoon relates to this ideal as it plays on the irony that hardcopy books indeed do not 'vanish' as e-books do. The fact that there are numerous people being part of a community and not isolation which may follow e-books. The up to date haircut of the buyer suggests to the audience that hard copy books are not backward; they still have a use in society.

The tone Mrs Elliot portrays modulates to fear as she dives further into the worries of e-books. The imagery of a 'global cyber disaster' where 'the loss would be unthinkable' is an attempt to display the fragile nature of e-books (links with the cartoon) which may strike fear and uncertainty into the audience member. Her admission that 'time began to fly' attempts to stress the importance and useful nature which hardcopy books still possess. The idea that e-books 'just sit silently' attempts to display the isolation and somewhat selfish nature of 3-books, compared to the hardcopy books which can be left for whoever wants 'to read it'. Mrs Elliot's concluding sentences truly manifest her contention. By stating 'I wouldn't want to stop it', Mrs Elliot is attempting to display to the audience here insight and acceptance of new technologies. Her plea that 'we must do all we can' to ensure 'important thing are not swept away' is aimed to ensure the audience continues with hardcopy books as they have many positives (unabated by e-books).

Retired teacher-librarian Mrs Elliot accepts the impending use of e-books in her speech to the 'Reading: the future' forum but through a personal approach, aims to instil the importance of continuing to produce hardcopy books. This is supported by two slides and the crux of her argument is sure to continue to spark further debate on a topic of e-books versus hardcopy books.

Advice for teachers and students

- Pay careful attention to the 'Background Information' box, which should ensure a good understanding of the context of the piece presented.
- Practise identifying the point(s) of view being presented in the piece.
- Work on analysis throughout the year.

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- Use a wide range of persuasive types.
- Focus on the language.
- Avoid technique identification; instead explore how language is being used to persuade.
- Focus on the tone – why it is being used and how it may change throughout a piece.
- Work on incorporating visuals into the response.
- Respond to the pieces with authenticity.
- Use as much of the provided material as possible. Some students referred to very little material, referencing only two or three examples.
- Analyse visuals instead of simply describing them.
- Ensure that students consider the effect of specific connotative words at key points of an argument, such as ‘wizardry’, ‘revolution’, ‘global cyber disaster’.
- Encourage students to read the piece holistically and analyse its whole intention.