

# The 2020 Examination

## Section Two: Extended Response

### General points

There are two main areas in which you need to demonstrate proficiency in this section of the examination. You must show a thorough understanding of the course concepts through discussions of texts you have studied and you must write a controlled response that effectively engages with the question. Of course, you need to demonstrate your ability to use evidence, syllabus terminology and effective written expression too. Essentially, this section is your opportunity to 'show off' all that you have learned in Literature Units 1–4. The key to doing this is being properly prepared – **know your texts** (their construction, their context, the discourses with which they engage and, most importantly, their connections to syllabus concepts) and **practise your essay writing**.

One important aspect to performing well in this section of the examination is choosing the right questions for you. Here are a few tips to selecting what you will write about:

**Select your questions after considering every question on the paper.** This means you shouldn't have decided before seeing the exam that you will answer, for example, the question on context and the one on reading practices. There is no guarantee such questions will even appear.

**Do not discount texts during your study period.** You should be prepared to write on any question and with any text you have studied from the prescribed reading lists. Studying only part of the course restricts your question choice and ultimately your performance. It is also false logic – you wouldn't go into a Maths exam with the attitude that you simply won't answer questions on probability, or a Human Biology exam having not studied the digestive system.

**Consider the key words and concepts of the question** carefully and make sure you understand them. There is nothing worse in an exam than getting halfway through a response and realising you've been on the wrong path, or worse, getting to the end of the essay only to realise you didn't really answer the question at all. Engaging with these concepts should be fundamental to your response, as it is to the marking of this section, so be familiar with the course concepts and emphasise your understanding throughout your argument.

Try to **avoid simply looking for questions similar to ones you have answered before**, or close to questions for which you've memorised an answer. If you do this, chances are you won't fully address the question on the paper, but the one you prepared instead. This is not to say you can't memorise or prepare ideas or comments about a text, just try to avoid reproducing a whole answer or thesis. These need to be closely connected to the question on the paper if you want to score well. Additionally, markers can very readily tell when an answer is 'rehearsed'. Don't be that student!

As we've previously stated, the ability to **write a clear and well-structured response** is critical to your success in this section of the examination. This is something you should be working toward improving throughout the year. Obviously, the feedback you receive on classwork is

going to be crucial to this improvement, as is practising writing regularly as part of your study plan. You should be writing as often as possible using a Literature style of response. This is different to writing for History or Politics and Law, or any other course style. What they do have in common, however, is the need to present a thesis and to develop it clearly. Planning, thesis construction and signposting through topic sentences are all going to help your marker, or any other reader, to follow your argument. You could have the most insightful ideas but without clarity, they can be lost and will not be rewarded.

### Activity: Getting prepared

#### Match the exam question to the syllabus concept

If you closely read the syllabus document, there should not be anything in the examination that you are unfamiliar with. A valuable exercise is to place last year's examination (available from the SCSA website: [https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0016/540403/2018\\_LIT\\_Written\\_Examination.PDF](https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/0016/540403/2018_LIT_Written_Examination.PDF)) alongside the syllabus document and trace where the questions came from. You will be able to identify close connections and this will help you to prepare for this year's paper.

#### Organising study notes

Remember that the reason you study texts in Literature, aside from the enjoyment of reading and opportunity to engage with ideas, is to address the key concepts of this course. When preparing your study program and assessment schedule, your teachers have thought about the best way to help you understand these key concepts. Therefore, when you study for the examination, you don't want to simply revise the plot, the main themes or ideas, or the importance of character; you want to do this in relation to **key syllabus concepts**.

Here is a suggested guide to organising study notes for the Literature course based around these concepts:

- **contexts** – of the text's production and the writer
- **main ideas** – themes and other ideas explored in the text
- **cultural identities** – consider how the text works to represent, reflect, critique or otherwise comment on its own and other nation's cultures
- **representations** – note the major people, places, events and ideas represented as well as the nature of these representations
- **ideological functions** – the values, attitudes and beliefs operating within the text, and how these work to support or challenge dominant ideologies
- **generic features** – know how every text functions as an example of its form and genre, be aware if it borrows from other genres, and also consider how genre positions readers
- **language and literary devices** – you need to go beyond simply identifying the use of language; note the way it shapes our response or how it fits within a particular style
- **reading practices/strategies** – document the methods of reading each text; make sure you can establish the dominant reading before applying a resistant or alternative reading **critical readings** – record some significant details from your critical reading around the text, including bibliographic details

- **intertextuality** – record the connections that you find interesting and meaningful in your interpretation of the text
- **quotations/references** – you should record references within all of the notes above, as markers will expect you to be able to use quotes to effectively support your ideas
- **personal responses** – record your own emotional and intellectual responses to texts, as well as your aesthetic appreciation; consider how you have been positioned by the text.

### Develop flexibility

Rather than identifying individual quotes from a text, you should focus on learning key moments when ideas are revealed. They don't have to be long. Then, learn three to four quotes from that part of the text. Choose moments that are rich in meaning and can be used for a variety of purposes.

For example, a key scene from Tim Winton's novel *Cloudstreet* is when Rose gives birth to Wax Harry in the room of Cloudstreet (the house) that has been a haunted site since the beginning of the novel. The moment, which features all of the Lamb and Pickles family members, unites not only the current inhabitants of the house, but also the tortured figures of the past. This juncture unifies the divided house which we understand to be symbolic of the Australian nation. This climactic moment has an important role within the narrative structure of the family saga and represents an act of resolution to the haunted history of the house and, ultimately, the nation. This scene explores fascinating concepts about identity, context and narrative structure and also engages with postcolonial theory, embodying nationalism as an ideology. There is space to read from alternative positions within this scene, or to explore aesthetic and generic elements of Winton's work. All prescribed Literature texts have such rich and multilayered scenes and they are useful reference points for supporting key observations.

Select a key scene from a poem, play and prose text you have studied and, in the table below, identify three separate purposes for which you could use it as evidence.

| Text   | Scene | Purpose 1 | Purpose 2 | Purpose 3 |
|--------|-------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| Poetry |       |           |           |           |
| Prose  |       |           |           |           |
| Drama  |       |           |           |           |

### Revise your school-based assessments

Generally speaking, your teachers will have given you specific feedback on your work throughout the year. You should have been reflecting on this advice, noting your strengths and weaknesses and focusing your study accordingly. If not, now is the time to do so! Ask your teacher for clarification of their advice if necessary.

## What are markers looking for?

The following table provides some suggestions for achieving high marks in Section Two. Incorporating these tips into your study regime may assist your performance in the Literature examination.

You should note that the marking of this section changed in 2019 emphasising the course concepts instead of knowledge about the text in isolation.

| Criterion and available marks  | Helpful tips  |
|--|---|
| <p><b>Engagement with the question</b></p> <p><b>(6 marks available)</b></p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deconstruct the question and know what you are being asked to do.</li> <li>• Highlight key words and consider the limits of what you will need to discuss.</li> <li>• Practise deconstructing questions.</li> <li>• Practise planning in a way that you find effective.</li> <li>• Practise writing answers and seek feedback about the way you have engaged with the question.</li> <li>• Remember that a great discussion of a text will not score highly if it doesn't address the question.</li> <li>• Try to avoid simplistic responses. Markers will be looking for sophistication of ideas.</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>Course concepts</b></p> <p><b>(6 marks available)</b></p>              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Know the course concepts. The syllabus document clearly says 'this is the examinable content' and lists concepts in the dot points for each Unit.</li> <li>• Be aware of the concepts from Units 1–4. The Literature examination can draw from all four units, and the Year 11 units target many important elements of literary study.</li> <li>• Know your texts. You should have read them a number of times by the examination.</li> <li>• You need to demonstrate your understanding in relation to the course concepts. Don't simply summarise everything you know about a text – use your knowledge appropriately.</li> <li>• Keep study notes about each text in relation to the concepts. Refer to the Activity above for a guide to this.</li> <li>• Read <i>about</i> your texts – locate critical discussions about the text and its reception and understand the significance of the text in both its own and your context.</li> </ul> |

### Hint: Review your work

Look over some of your previous essay assessments or practice essays you have completed as part of your revision. Use the above hints to identify where your strengths lie and how improvements can be made to pick up additional marks.