

Good Answers

ATAR Literature 2019

Based on the 2018 ATAR Literature Examination



Compiled by Emily Cunningham, Claire Jones and Veronica Lake

Campion
\$28
5/19

Good Answers

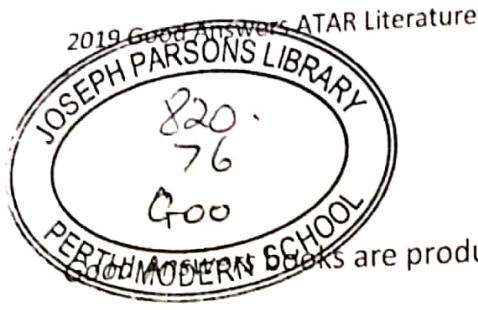
ATAR Literature Units 3 & 4

2019

Compiled by

Emily Cunningham
Claire Jones
Veronica Lake
and
Adam Kealley





Books are produced by the English Teachers Association of Western Australia.

PO Box 8463, Perth Business Centre, WA, 6849

etawa@etawa.org.au

www.etawa.org.au

No part of this book may be reproduced or copied without the permission of the ETAWA.
All rights reserved.

ISBN 978-0-6484871-0-4

Acknowledgements

The English Teachers Association gratefully acknowledges the cooperation of examination candidates who agreed for their responses to appear in this book and the staff of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority whose assistance allows for the publication of this resource for students of ATAR Literature.

Emily Cunningham

Emily is passionate about making the study of English and Literature accessible for all students. She does not think that *formula* is a ‘dirty word’ and believes that all students can succeed when provided with the right scaffolding, resources and encouragement. Emily has been a Literature WACE marker for many years, and is a long-serving member of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority Literature Course Advisory Committee, having served as its Chair for the past two years. She has also presented at the ETAWA State Conference on feedback strategies in the classroom. Emily is currently on parental leave from her position as Head of English at Carmel School.

Claire Jones

Claire qualified as a secondary English and History teacher in 2001. In more recent years, Claire has been teaching in the tertiary sector, specialising in Australian Literature and Global Literatures at The University of Western Australia, as well as Literary and Cultural Studies courses at Curtin University. She has also been a WACE and ATAR examiner of the English and Literature courses and has served as Chief Marker for both of these courses. Claire is also the President of the English Teachers Association of Western Australia, and is the Western Australian delegate to the Australian Association for the Teaching of English National Council.

Veronica Lake

Veronica has been a teacher of Literature and English since the dawn of time. She graduated from UWA with a Bachelor of Arts, Hons and a Diploma of Education last century. She has always cared about the power and beauty of living language and how it is made manifest in both literary texts and the creative work of students. Veronica collates and edits the student poetry journal *Primo Lux*. In 2010 Veronica was awarded a Churchill Fellow for the further study of Shakespeare in England, Ireland and Canada. She has been both an examiner and Chief Marker of the Literature course, has marked Literature papers for over 35 years and served on the Literature Course Advisory Committee. Veronica is also president of the OOTA writers’ group.

Adam Kealley (Editor)

Adam Kealley has been teaching for over twenty years in the state, independent and Catholic systems, and is an experienced WACE marker and past examiner. Adam has written educational resources for a number of publishers, presented professional learning for English teachers at state and national conferences, and conducted WACE revision seminars. He holds a B.Ed., a M.A. in Literature and Writing and is currently on leave from his role as Director of Teaching and Learning at Trinity College, completing a PhD under a collaborative arrangement between Curtin University and the University of Aberdeen.

Foreword

Good Answers guides are produced by the English Teachers Association of Western Australia (ETAWA). ETAWA is the professional association for English teachers in WA and works to help teachers improve their professional skills and knowledge through conferences, seminars and publications, including examination papers and online resources.

2018 was the third year that ATAR Literature was examined in Year 12 and the sample responses in this book have been chosen from candidate responses to the 2018 ATAR Literature WACE examination. The purpose of this collection and accompanying activities is to provide teachers and students with a range of responses which together exemplify ways for students to improve their performance in the WACE examination.

Most scripts reproduced in this publication were written under WACE examination conditions and may contain faults in written language conventions and general argument development that should not feature in responses prepared outside examination conditions. Candidate scripts have been reproduced as accurately as possible. Minor editing of misspellings or grammatical errors may have taken place in the rare instance that a sentence was otherwise unintelligible.

It should be noted that this publication is not designed to be used as a textbook in the traditional sense; rather, it should be read primarily as an examination preparation guide. The Year 12 ATAR Literature syllabus, which directly informs the coursework and assessments in all schools, along with the Examination Brief contained within it, should remain the primary document that students refer to in their preparation for the examination.

The texts referred to throughout this guide for illustrative purposes have been selected on the basis of their diversity or their potential as exemplars. Not all texts referenced, nor candidates' readings of these texts, will be regarded as accessible or appropriate for study within particular classroom contexts or as suitable for some candidates. Every effort has been made to include a broad range of texts, and a broad range of interpretations of such texts. The ETAWA does not endorse the selected candidates' readings of texts as preferable, as their selection has typically been based on the quality of the response rather than the quality of the reading of a text.

The views and opinions expressed in this book are those of ETAWA and not necessarily those of the School Curriculum and Standards Authority.

Contents

Introduction	7
How to study successfully in the ATAR Literature course	8
The content of the ATAR Literature course	11
Managing the discourse of literary study: terminology and metalanguage	15
Understanding the ATAR Literature WACE examination	16
The ATAR Literature WACE exam marking guides	18
Understanding the marking guides	20
Section One specific criteria	21
Section Two specific criteria	22
Tackling the ATAR Literature WACE examination	23
Preparing for the examination	23
Sitting the examination	25
Instructions to candidates	26
Approaching each question	27
Writing a successful response	29
Using textual evidence	32
The structure of your response	35
The tone and style of your response	37
The 2018 examination: Section One – Close Reading	40
General points	40
What are markers looking for?	45
Close reading response framework	46
Considering Question 1	47
Text A – Drama	48
Text B – Poetry	65
Text C – Prose	82
The 2018 examination: Section Two – Extended Response	95
General points	95
What are markers looking for?	98
Considering Question 2	100
Considering Question 3	115
Considering Question 4	131
Considering Question 5	149
Considering Question 6	160
Considering Question 7	173
Genre-specific questions – Questions 8, 9 and 10	183
Considering Question 8	185
Considering Question 9	195
Considering Question 10	208
A Final Word	220

Introduction

Welcome!

Good Answers 2019 contains candidate responses to questions from the 2018 ATAR Literature WACE Examination. It also contains information, explanations, hints, marker commentary, annotations and activities that may assist you in preparing for the examination.

Consistent practise of skills such as close reading, analysing, synthesising, responding and reflecting will aid considerably in developing the quality of your written responses; this guide will help you to actively engage in some of these skills and prompt you to independently work on them during your regular study sessions.

Good Answers provides a wide range of responses to help you recognise that there is no single ‘right’ answer to any question. On the contrary, the variety of responses in this guide makes it clear that markers reward an assortment of styles and approaches to exam questions. While there are undoubtedly certain structures, features and characteristics of responses which markers are looking for, so too do markers reward the individual expression, style, perspective and voice of each student.

The following points, however, are essential criteria for all candidates to consider when answering any question:

- *engage* critically with the question
- *organise* and *sustain* a cohesive and articulate discussion
- *substantiate* your discussion by referring to texts or other examples
- *express* your own ideas clearly.

This book is called *Good Answers*, not *The Best Answers* or *Perfect Answers*; all samples are selected because they serve to illustrate points from which you can learn. It is critical that you carefully read the annotations provided by markers in order to identify aspects that were rewarded as well as flawed areas for which possible improvements have been suggested.

Different teachers and schools will recommend varied ways to prepare for your exams, but the general rule of thumb recommended is that ATAR students devote about 20 hours a week for study, which is in addition to completing required assessments and homework. As a minimum, you should aim to dedicate at least three of these hours to your study for Literature. *Good Answers 2019* is an excellent tool to guide this study and practise.

Give us your feedback!

Help us to improve *Good Answers* by filling in a short survey. Scan the QR code or go to

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LitGoodAnswers>



How to study successfully in the ATAR Literature course

Know the syllabus

The SCSA syllabus documents are the core of every ATAR Literature course. Every school, and every teacher, must teach the content contained within this document. Every examiner must construct their exams around the 'examinable content' in the syllabus – the bullet points that articulate the content of each unit. It is obvious, then, that **each student of Literature must be familiar with this document and its accompanying glossary**. Your teacher should have provided you with the syllabus. If not, ask for a copy, or download it from the SCSA website.

Practise active learning

Be aware of your individual learning style and acknowledge your strengths and weakness when you engage with the subject. When you are in class, reading a text or revising, be mindful of how you are making sense of this subject, and the practices you engage as you study Literature. Here are some useful methods for being 'active' in your learning this year.

Make notes. Take out a pen and paper as soon as you come into class. Don't just copy down what your teacher writes on the board; include points that arise in discussion. Afterwards, revise and reorganise your notes. Consider colour-coding, graphic organisers or a filing system to clearly organise your learning.

Think about what your teacher says. If you don't understand, say so immediately or see your teacher after the lesson. Actively focus on what is being discussed in class and avoid distractions. Turn the words over in your mind. Decide whether you agree or disagree. For example, after each lesson ask yourself: what was the main focus? What parts of the syllabus was the lesson addressing? How did my teacher illustrate the idea?

Ask questions. Your teacher is there – in part – to answer any questions you have, so make the most of this valuable resource. Find the most effective way to do this for you and the class situation. Maybe it is best to put your hand up straight away and ask for help, or perhaps it is easier to walk with your teacher to their next class, or email them when you have had time to consider your question and what you need clarified.

Engage in class discussion. Debate can be an important vehicle for developing ideas or raising further points. This is not about simply disagreeing with your teacher or another speaker in class; it is about challenging, refining, extrapolating and clarifying their comments, as well as advancing your own original thoughts. It is a testing ground for your own thinking.

Revise. Don't file away notes and handouts just to forget about them. Go over them that night. Use a highlighter and make notes on your handouts. Rewrite the notes you took in class. Make study notes where you summarise your learning on each text, using clear headings and subheadings to organise them. Go over them again on a regular basis throughout the year.

Practise active reading

When reading and rereading your texts, do so actively, **annotating your texts thoughtfully**. Keep a highlighter in your hand, a stack of sticky notes by your side and a pen at the ready. Make notes as you read. Ask questions in your head. On the sticky notes, write down questions or points you could ask your teacher to clarify or discuss with you. Simply placing stars, underlining or highlighting large chunks of text doesn't usually work. Often when we return to such vague indicators, we usually forget why we put them there in the first place! Accompany each indicator with concise annotations, leaving clear messages to yourself as to why it is significant.

In Literature, you will need to **read your texts a number of times** over the course of the year. Each time you do so, you will notice something new and interesting. You should certainly re-read your texts as part of the lead-up to the WACE exam. It is obvious when a student knows their texts well; it is also obvious when they do not. Audio books can be useful resources to keep your engagement with the text fresh. They should not replace your initial reading, but can be helpful when you need to remind yourself of sections of a novel and can be listened to as you exercise or travel.

Research your texts

To be able to write about a text with understanding, you need to do more than read the text itself. **Research the context** in which the text was produced, as well as the specific context of the author, poet or playwright. You should **engage with critical readings** on your text – essays and papers that explore various aspects of your text. Such reading can assist in refining your own understandings of the text, and well-chosen quotes from credible critical sources can add considerable weight to your arguments. Be discerning about the readings and reviews that you draw on – check the credentials of those who have written them.

Don't accept everything you read or hear as the truth

The point of studying Literature is to learn how to **construct critical readings of texts**, not to repeat someone else's readings. For nearly every interpretation of a text you find, there will be a very different interpretation available somewhere. So, when reading or listening to someone else's comments on a text, you need to do so critically. Don't be swayed just because the writer uses sophisticated discourse. Look for holes in the argument. Identify if a particular agenda, critical lens or reading practice is colouring the interpretation. Try to think of parts of the text which contradict the interpretation being offered, or of alternative ways a quotation or scene might be interpreted. Keep asking yourself whether the argument is fully supported.

Understand your readings and responses

The study of Literature is also about **understanding the ways we respond to what we read**. Such responses can vary widely, and you may have a variety of responses to the various texts you study. Responses to texts can be intellectual or they can be emotional; you may accept, resist, critique and/or defend the ideas they contain. Irrespective, you must become involved with the texts you study. You must have views, opinions and arguments about them. If you commit yourself to this, not only will you do better in the exam, you'll enjoy your experience of Literature much more.

The Literature course is intended to induct you into **particular ways of interrogating texts**, not simply teach you information about particular texts. It is those ways of interrogating texts that your teachers and the examiners hope will stay with you long after the details of the particular texts you studied in Year 12 have been forgotten. **Always remember, the exam is your chance to demonstrate your understanding of and control over the skills you have gained through your study of Literature. The texts you encounter will provide you with examples and evidence of these skills and concepts.**

Always remember, **there is no one 'correct' reading of any text**. There are only readings that make more sense within a particular framework or that are better argued than others. If you show in the examination that you are aware that your argument is just one of a number of possible arguments and that other interpretations are possible, then you are likely to increase your probability of achieving higher marks. You will only be able to do this, however, if you expose yourself to different readings during your course.

Having said this, it is important to **understand that there are dominant readings of texts**. Understanding the typical interpretation of a text – the one that is accepted by the majority of readers in a particular context – is the basis of understanding where your own reading might sit. Do you subscribe to this dominant reading? Or is your interpretation an alternate reading; one that, while not directly challenging the dominant reading, foregrounds different aspects? Or do you read the text resistantly, exploiting the gaps and silences, exposing the assumptions it makes or resisting the ideologies it promotes? Remember that readings are fluid, changing over time and across contexts. As well as being a unique artistic work, literary texts operate within cultural ideologies, reinforcing, challenging and/or subverting ways of thinking.

Readings can be based on a number of premises: they can be thematic, ideological, contextual, informed by a particular reading practice or even purely aesthetic. **You may develop several readings of a single text**. When answering particular examination questions, however, not all readings will be relevant. Offering too many readings of a text in a single response can also cloud your response. Be discerning when deciding which readings to discuss in your examination.

Undertake wider reading

The most confident Literature students, arguably, are those who have the greatest experience with literature. Don't confine yourself to the texts set by your teacher. **Read other works** as well, by the same authors and from the same contexts, as well as a wider variety. Learn how *literature* functions, not just the specific examples you study in your Literature course.

Read non-fiction and stay on top of current media as well. Learn about the contexts you study – including your own. Many students let themselves down by making sweeping generalisations about their own or other cultures. For example, the oft-stated generalisation in students' essays that we have attained gender equality in 21st century Australia as the basis of their criticism of gender representations in a particular text. Half an hour of research will reveal the fallacious or naïve nature of such a belief.

As stated earlier, **read critical discussions of your set texts.** Engaging with others' interpretations and analyses will expose you to ideas other than those you discuss in class. It will help inform your own understandings and readings. Using quotes from such critical sources to support your own readings can also be a valuable inclusion in your exam responses.

Start your own glossary of terms

Using the correct metalanguage is an essential criterion for success in the Literature course. Just look at the marking keys for the course to see how much your control of language and metalanguage is valued. **Keep a list** in your workbook, file or on your device. Identify key terms from the syllabus and record their definitions. Compose a sentence using them in context. Practise using them in both your verbal discussions and written notes, until you are employing them comfortably and correctly. Add terms that come up in your lessons and your wider reading, and keep lists of synonyms for words that reappear too often in your writing. The point of using appropriate terminology is twofold: it adds greater technicality and nuance to your writing as well as increasing sophistication.

As part of the Literature syllabus document, there is a glossary. This is an appendix to the syllabus and is intended to be a resource for teachers and students. The definitions are a useful starting point for your own glossary, but you should look beyond this list for definitions that you fully understand.

Know your conventions

There is no real excuse for not knowing the range of typical conventions of different genres and forms that you have studied. Similarly, you should know the names of, and be able to recognise, a wide range of language techniques and literary devices. This might mean having a checklist of the main narrative devices, or flash cards that describe the various poetic forms. This type of knowledge is crucial for a strong close reading performance and informs all analytical discussions.

Practise writing

You cannot reasonably expect to do well in your tests and examinations if you do not practise your writing. Writing a successful essay under timed conditions is a skill in itself. Try to **write a practice essay** at least once a fortnight as part of your study. Allow yourself no more than an hour from the time you first read the question, as per the recommendations in the exam.

If you are struggling to find time to do this – although you should make the time! – at the very least, **practise deconstructing questions and writing plans** for how you would approach the question. You might even plan multiple responses to the same question, experimenting with different texts and approaches to see which might be more successful. Often, our first thoughts are not our best, which is why your teachers ask you to slow down, think about the question and plan before committing to writing. Markers see many exam responses where the student suddenly ‘gets’ the question half-way through their response and changes tack, resulting in a disjointed or clumsy essay.

Know the Examination Brief

The syllabus document also includes the *Examination Brief*, a table that defines how the examination must be structured and the concepts that can be examined. It is important to be familiar with the brief – it will help you to be prepared for the examination and you will know what to expect when you open the cover on that day in November.

Work hard!

There is no substitute for this. Literature – like all ATAR courses – is demanding and it will require **regular and effective study** in order for you to maximise your success. This course is often recognised as having one of the strongest cohorts each year, and it has a high mean. This means your competition is going to be tough, so make sure you give yourself every chance to perform well.

The content of the ATAR Literature course

You might have noticed that the ATAR Literature course organises syllabus content into four strands:

- Texts in contexts
- Language and textual analysis
- Creating analytical texts
- Creating imaginative texts.

The first two strands are those that relate to your understandings regarding the texts you study. The other two, obviously, relate to the texts you create: your close readings, essays, creative writing and other texts.

'Texts in contexts' is a content area running through all parts of the course. Essentially, it suggests that texts are not created in a vacuum, but are intrinsically related to the contexts in which they are both produced and received by readers. A good way to get a handle on a text, and thus be prepared for the examination, is to construct a reading in terms of what ideas, events and people it represents in our world. For instance, you might construct a reading of a text in terms of cultural identity and then examine how characterisation, setting, symbolism, narrative structure and so on contribute to this reading.

At heart, the '**Texts in contexts**' strand is concerned with the influence of contexts on the production of texts, the ideological functions of texts and the ways in which texts can be read from different perspectives. Another important point to remember about this strand of the course is that when studying the representation of such things as class, gender, race/ethnicity and cultural identity in a text, you should not assume that the representations are necessarily intentional on the part of the author.

Many candidates write sentences like:

'Through the careful construction of characters, the author comments on the construction of gender in society.'

Be very careful before writing a sentence like this, unless you have clear evidence of an author's intentions. Reading texts in terms of class, gender, race, ethnicity and cultural identity is a *reading strategy*, not an attempt to uncover an author's intentions. What we uncover with this strategy is more likely to be the, possibly unconscious, influence of context on an author.

A more appropriate way of writing the above sentence could be:

'By focusing on the construction of characters, gender can be seen as a social construct rather than a universal constant.'

The '**Language and textual analysis**' strand is concerned with the actual construction of the text; its composition. This strand requires you to critically analyse how the text's ideas are constructed through various features of structure, genre, language and style. Texts, and thus everything contained within them, are products of the writer's craft. Nothing just 'is'; all aspects of a text have been shaped by the writer's selection of conventions, devices and

techniques at their disposal. Even aspects of a text that may seem to be unintentional on the part of the writer are nevertheless communicated through the medium of language – language which the writer has selected. To critically discuss your studied texts, you must be able to analyse how its ideas, representations, values and so on are constructed and conveyed through the various elements of the text's composition.

Analysing a text can be likened to being a car mechanic. Every layperson knows what a car does like, and that it functions to transport people, but a mechanic can explain how the car functions in order to do so, and the role of the various components that make up its structure and mechanics. Similarly, anyone can read a book and tell you what they think it means, but a good literature student should then be able to explain how the various components of the text have been purposefully shaped in order to create those meanings.

Unit 3

Unit 3 focuses on 'the relationship between language, culture and identity'. These three key words – language, culture and identity – appear numerous times throughout the extensive content. This relationship includes how language is used 'to represent ideas, events and people' in ways that support or challenge various ideologies; that is, sets of values, attitudes and beliefs. It notes that such representations, and the ideologies they challenge or support, can vary according to context. Literary texts are a medium through which a nation's identity is developed or called into question. A specific mention is made of representations of Australian culture and identity. As in all Literature units, skills of close textual analysis and composition of texts of various forms and genres is also included.

Unit 4

Unit 4 focuses on developing an understanding of 'the significance of literary study' by developing the skills necessary for 'close critical analysis'. This includes refining the skills of close textual analysis, along with broadening the scope of critical analysis of literary texts through wide reading and 'developing a variety of reading strategies'. Essentially, appreciating the multiplicity of readings possible of literary texts is emphasised. A key word in this unit's dynamic: understanding that expectations of, and responses to, literary texts, their genres and their ideologies will differ across contexts. Developing an aesthetic appreciation of literature also appears in this unit. As in all Literature units, skills of close textual analysis and composition of texts of various forms and genres is also included.

Adapted from Year 12 ATAR Literature, School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2007

Managing the discourse of literary study: terminology and metalanguage

As with all fields of study, in Literature there are particular concepts to be mastered to help you interrogate texts. Notice that the key word is 'concepts', not terms. It is the *concepts*, the ideas, which are important. There are too many of these concepts to be explained in this guide. That said, there are two fundamental sets of literary concepts:

Technical discourse – linguistic and stylistic terminology

One set of concepts is drawn from traditional literary study and has to do with aspects of a text or how language is used in texts. This includes such things as the time and place where a text is situated – for which the word 'setting' is the technical term – and the use of a part of something to stand for the whole, for which the word 'metonymy' is the technical term. These are the terms required for the 'Language and literary analysis' strand of the course content.

It is sometimes easy to get the impression that using big words is the best way to get high marks in literary analysis. What is far more important is using correct technical terminology – or metalanguage – to convey precision and nuance in your writing. These may be seemingly simple terms and phrases, but using them will add clarity to your writing that long-winded and overly complex language can obscure. For example, why say 'praxis' when what you mean is 'practice'? Why say 'textual topography' when what you mean is 'setting'?

It is a good idea to create a thorough glossary of literary terms. Although it is important that you are familiar with the Literature syllabus glossary (as it is these definitions which will inform the writers of your examination), this is not a complete list of literary terms – you will need a more holistic guide. Accumulate a 'favourite terms' word bank as your year progresses. The balance you should look for is using literary terminology which accurately and appropriately illustrates your idea, while displaying economy and fluency of writing.

Theoretical discourse – critical terminology

The other key set of concepts is drawn from cultural studies and relates to the function of literary texts as cultural artefacts and conduits for ideologies. It is where we undertake the examination of representations, the study of concepts such as class, gender, race and ethnicity, as well as national and cultural identity, and the power relationships associated with these – in other words, much of the course content classified under the 'Texts in contexts' strand.

These terms should come up in the discussions you have in the classroom in addition to the critical readings and theoretical textbooks you have been assigned.

Understanding the ATAR Literature WACE exam

The WACE exam is a competition. There are a certain number of places available at universities, but the number of students wanting a place exceeds the number of places available, so there is a competition for those places. This has one important consequence that some students forget: the WACE exam is not based on a pass-fail system. Getting into the course you want is not about reaching a certain predetermined standard; it's about getting higher marks than the other people who want to study the same course. Cut-offs for courses vary between years – not always a lot, but they do. In addition, raw examination scores are statistically manipulated before a final WACE score is arrived at. This means that you can't aim to just fall over a predetermined halfway or pass line. You have to aim to do the very best you can.

There's another reason why you should aim to do the very best you can: self-respect.

There are several important things you should understand about the Literature examination.

Application of knowledge

As it so happens, the majority of Literature candidates know their texts well and the standard of expression, if not structure, is quite high in the Literature exam. This means that 'engagement with the question' is often the most important criterion of all. It is the major area where many students fall down in the ATAR examination.

The reason why focusing on the topic is so important is because the examination is testing your *application of knowledge*, not simple recall. The examination is not just a memory test. While you do have to be able to remember your texts, what the examination is testing is whether you can apply this knowledge to particular aspects of the course. The markers read many well-written essays which show an excellent knowledge of texts, but which have only the most fleeting relationship with the topic of the question.

The following comment from the 2015 Examination Report simply reiterates a comment made by many markers, year after year:

'Most [candidates] made at least some attempt to structure a response to their chosen questions.'

While this statement is framed in the positive, there is a very thinly-veiled criticism here about the extent to which answers addressed the questions. Including 'made at least some attempt' here is not a glowing recommendation of candidates' performance in this aspect of the examination.

To be able to focus on the topic, you need to know your texts well and have a thorough understanding of the course concepts. Most importantly, you need to have practised approaching your texts from different reading positions or through different arguments. You should have considered and debated different interpretations of your texts. If you only know about certain aspects, or have only one interpretation of a text, then you are going to find it

challenging to apply your understanding to an unfamiliar topic or respond effectively to many of the extended response questions.

Sampling

Another important point to understand about the examination is that while it is examining how well you have developed the skills and understandings required by the ATAR Literature course, it cannot possibly examine every aspect of the course in three hours. Like all examinations, the paper at the end of the year will only ask questions about some aspects of the course. It has to use a sampling process. An understanding of narrative structure in prose fiction is an important part of the course, so in some years there has been a question on this. There may or may not be such a question this year. The fact that there has been a question on the same topic for a number of years running does not mean that there is certain to be one again this year. Nor does it mean that there will not be one.

Unfortunately, you are not in a position to know what is going to come up in the 2019 exam. The only way to deal with this is to be as prepared as possible. Ensure that you have an understanding of all aspects of the course. Don't try to play the odds by omitting important parts of the course in the hope that only those you have worked on will come up. Also, don't prepare simply by completing last year's examination; this year's sampling process will be different and will take into consideration the concepts covered – and not covered – in last year's exam, as well as the markers' feedback.

A memory test?

The Literature examination isn't just a memory test, but there is a rote memorising aspect to it. In order to be able to demonstrate confidence with a text, a stronger candidate will consult their memory of quotations and understandings in order to be flexible and fluent in their response. This shouldn't be too difficult if you have worked hard over the course of the year.

But many students mistakenly assume that it is a different kind of memory test. They assume that the exam is a test of their ability to remember an essay they wrote during the year. The reality is that unless the essay produced during the year is relevant to the topics in the exam, you are unlikely to do well if you reproduce it and merely customise it around the question you choose.

You might happen to strike a question that is exactly related to an essay you have written. It happens. Obviously, the way to maximise this occurring is to have practised on a variety of essay topics throughout the course of the year and in the lead-up to the exam.

You should be developing your memory skills and recall ability of references to texts and key course concepts. Having certain things committed to memory can aid your examination performance. Begin committing information to memory as you learn it and revise or refresh your knowledge before the exam. This will allow you to retain more information than if you cram your memory in the days or hours before your examination.

The ATAR Literature WACE exam marking guides

The following guides are used by all WACE markers to assess each script. It is essential that you are familiar with these guides in order to appreciate the allocation of marks against each criterion, and the differentiation between marks within each criterion.

Section One: Response – Close Reading

25 marks (30%)

Description	Marks
Readings of text The response presents:	
a creative, coherent and informed reading/s using appropriate reading strategies and/or reading practices.	7
a perceptive and coherent reading/s using appropriate reading strategies and/or practices.	6
an informed reading using mostly appropriate reading strategies and/or practices.	5
a general reading that makes some use of appropriate reading strategies and/or practices.	4
an inconsistent reading imposing reading strategies and/or practices inappropriately.	3
a vague reading with little use of reading strategies.	2
a limited reading showing little understanding of the text.	1
no evidence of this criterion.	0
Subtotal	7
Close textual analysis The response uses:	
close textual analysis of language, text examples and/or generic conventions and reference to cultural contexts where appropriate throughout the response to develop and support the reading/s.	6
close textual analysis of language, text examples and/or generic conventions and reference to cultural contexts where appropriate throughout most of the response to support the reading/s.	5
some close textual analysis of language, text examples, and/or generic conventions with some reference to cultural contexts where appropriate to largely develop the reading/s.	4
some textual analysis of relevant examples from the text that generally develop the reading/s.	3
little text analysis of examples that do not always develop a reading.	2
limited evidence to support a reading.	1
no evidence of this criterion.	0
Subtotal	6
Linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology The response shows:	
a sophisticated and comprehensive use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology suited to the reading.	6
a comprehensive use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology appropriate to the reading.	5
a consistent use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology mostly related to the reading.	4
some use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology mostly related to the reading.	3
infrequent use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology not always appropriate to the reading.	2
limited and/or inaccurate use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology.	1
no evidence of this criterion.	0
Subtotal	6
Expression of ideas The response expresses ideas:	
in controlled language and style, logical argument and structure.	6
in coherent language and style, argument and structure.	5
in a purposeful and mostly methodical argument.	4
In a largely clear way, but not always coherently structured.	3
in a disjointed style, characterised by unclear language use.	2
that are difficult to follow because of unclear language use and lack of structure.	1
no evidence of this criterion.	0
Subtotal	6
Total	25

Section Two: Extended response**30 + 30 marks (70%)**

Description	Marks
Engagement with the question	
The response demonstrates:	
a sophisticated and critical engagement with all parts of the question.	6
a comprehensive and detailed engagement with all parts of the question.	5
a purposeful engagement with all parts of the question.	4
a general engagement with most parts of the question.	3
a limited or simplistic engagement with the question.	2
little or no engagement with the question.	1
no evidence of this criterion.	0
Subtotal	6
Course concepts	
The response shows:	
a sophisticated understanding and application of course concepts.	6
a well-informed understanding and application of course concepts.	5
a sound understanding and some application of course concepts.	4
a general understanding and application of course concepts.	3
a vague understanding of course concepts.	2
limited understanding of course concepts.	1
no evidence of this criterion.	0
Subtotal	6
Use of evidence	
The response uses:	
pertinent text references and/or generic conventions and reference to cultural contexts where appropriate throughout to develop and support the answer.	6
appropriate text references and/or generic conventions and reference to cultural contexts where appropriate throughout most of the response to support the answer.	5
some appropriate text references, and/or generic conventions with some reference to cultural contexts where appropriate to largely develop the answer.	4
some relevant text references that generally support the answer.	3
few text references that support the answer.	2
limited evidence to support the answer.	1
no evidence of this criterion.	0
Subtotal	6
Linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology	
The response shows:	
a sophisticated and comprehensive use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology suited to the answer.	6
a comprehensive use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology appropriate to the answer.	5
a consistent use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology mostly related to the answer.	4
some use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology mostly related to the answer.	3
infrequent use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology not always appropriate to the answer.	2
limited and/or inaccurate use of linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology.	1
no evidence of this criterion.	0
Subtotal	6
Expression of ideas	
The response expresses ideas:	
in controlled language and style, logical argument and structure.	6
in coherent language and style, argument and structure.	5
in a purposeful and mostly methodical argument.	4
In a largely clear way, but not always coherently structured.	3
in a disjointed style, characterised by unclear language use.	2
that are difficult to follow because of unclear language use and lack of structure.	1
no evidence of this criterion.	0
Subtotal	6
Total	30

Understanding the marking guides

It is important to note that the marking guides altered with the 2018 examination. While it is not uncommon to see slight variations in the marking key, these changes have redefined some criteria for both Section One and Two. The changes also affect the weightings of the criteria.

Firstly, let's examine the two criteria that the marking guides, essentially, have in common: use of evidence, use of literary concepts and literary terms, and expression of ideas.

Linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology

Not surprisingly, you are assessed on the extent to which your response reflects a critical understanding of the concepts within the syllabus, and within the field of literary criticism generally. The texts and questions in the exam have been carefully selected and/or constructed to provide opportunities for these concepts to be discussed. You are also expected to be fluent in the discourse of this subject in order to respond effectively.

Within each of the Literature units, students are required to '*create analytical texts...using appropriate linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology to analyse and evaluate texts*'. Seeing the phrase within the context of this syllabus point reveals that such terminology should be integrated into the discussion as a way of explaining points of analysis or substantiating a comment.

There are no hard and fast divisions between these three categories of terminology.

- **Linguistic terminology** largely refers to language devices – terms used to describe elements of how language is used, such as metaphor and diction.
- **Stylistic terminology** relates to the terms used to describe structural and generic features such as narrative structure, motif and intertextuality, but can also relate to particular uses of language, like alliteration.
- **Critical terminology** describes language used to produce criticism – ways of describing observations or readings a text – as well as language relating to literary theory/ies and broader social and cultural concepts that literature engages with, such as identity and ideology.

In Section One, literary concepts and terms contributes 24%, almost a quarter of the available marks. In Section Two, it determines 20% of the available marks.

Expression of ideas

Your written expression is important. Yes, markers recognise that this is a first draft, but you are expected, after twelve or more years of education, to have a relatively sophisticated control of language. However, this criterion is about more than just spelling and grammar; it is also about the structure and cohesiveness of your response. This is why the processes of planning, proofreading and editing are so important.

In Section One, expression of ideas contributes almost a quarter of the available marks: 24%. In Section Two, it provides 20% of the available marks.

Section One specific criteria

Reading/s of text

This is, by a slight margin, the most significant criterion in Section One. To achieve full marks, you need to offer a '*creative, coherent and informed reading*' of the text. You also need to employ '*appropriate reading strategies and/or practices*'. It is this second aspect that often lets students down. They spend significant time offering their *interpretation* of the text, but not enough *analysis* showing how they derived that interpretation.

Furthermore, the aspect of this criterion of '*using appropriate reading strategies*' does not necessarily call for the application of a particular ideological reading practice, such as a feminist, Marxist or post-colonial lens. In the past, many students have believed that to do so would be offering a more complex reading and therefore gain them more marks. The problem was that this was often at the expense of their technical analysis of the text, which is a clear requirement in the marking guide. Offering a close reading based on an understanding of genre, theme, personal response, context and/or aesthetics is just as valid an approach as applying an eco-critical or psychoanalytic reading practice. In fact, you should only apply such a lens if it clearly enhances the sophistication of the reading you make. More often than not, such an approach is unwarranted or artificial with such a brief extract.

This criterion is worth 28% of the available marks.

Close textual analysis

The syllabus continually highlights the importance of close textual analysis to develop and support interpretations. To 'analyse', one must deconstruct and examine aspects of a text methodically and in detail. This might include rigorous explanation of evidence or the technical elements of a text, such as tone, connotative language, imagery, setting, or point of view. For example, one might analyse how nature imagery contributes to an eco-critical reading of a poem by identifying whether the imagery is created through description or figurative language, what type of sensory image is used and the effect of the image as it relates to the reading. Your analysis should be detailed, meaning you should devote at least two or three sentences to 'unpacking' each example. Avoid using too many quotations in each paragraph; do not let your evidence write the essay for you. It is better to use fewer examples that are well-explained – aim for quality over quantity. Candidates are also encouraged to make reference to context where *appropriate* to support readings. For example, one might consider how a passage engages with contemporary issues or how it might work to naturalise or challenge ideologies operating in the context of production, but only if it will benefit your reading to do so.

In Section One, close textual analysis contributes 24%, almost a quarter of the available marks.

Section Two specific criteria

Engagement with the question

This first criterion, arguably, is the most important. If you fail to adequately address the question or misunderstand the concepts at its core, then the knowledge you demonstrate of your text and the quotes you provide may be less clearly relevant. '*Engagement*' requires you to critically and thoughtfully consider the question and its key concepts before formulating a considered argument in response that synthesises its components.

This criterion is worth a fifth of your marks, as much as textual knowledge: 20%.

Course concepts

This criterion rewards your understanding and application of syllabus concepts as they relate to your chosen text/s. '*Understanding*' refers to your knowledge of the course, and '*application*' references your ability to use your understanding of the course to appropriately support your answer to the question. This section examines a candidate's knowledge of the unit content dot points and key concepts, as defined by your syllabus, such as: ideology, representation, aesthetic considerations and intertextuality. Candidates who utilise literary discourse using such terms appropriately are likely to be rewarded. As all questions are drawn from syllabus content, stronger candidates will be able to identify the specific syllabus points that each question draws on, and use this language in their response.

This criterion is worth a fifth of your marks: 20%.

Use of evidence

It is important to note that this criterion emphasises *use of evidence*, not merely the provision of evidence. You will be assessed on your ability to effectively use your evidence to support or argue. The descriptor at the highest level calls for '*pertinent text references*'. *Pertinent* requires you to select the most strategic quotes, while also being closely analytical in your explanation of your quotes. Note, also, that the descriptors suggest evidence should not just be textual, but also *contextual*. That is, you should also be providing explanations from other sources: your contextual knowledge, critical readings and theoretical sources.

This criterion also contributes 20% of the available marks for this section.

Tackling the ATAR Literature WACE examination

Preparing for the examination

Preparing for the ATAR course examination is something you should do throughout the year, not leave until the last few weeks. The most effective preparation is to work hard in your Literature course. There are a few other things you can do over the course of the year to help you be prepared for the exam:

- Go through past WACE exam papers and sample papers to get a feel for what they are like. **Practise deconstructing and answering questions** from these papers and ask your teacher for feedback.
- **Include timed writing in your study plan.** This might mean writing a timed essay, or part of an essay (plan, introduction, body paragraphs). Writing regularly under timed conditions can help increase proficiency and time management strategies.
- **Practise writing different introductory paragraphs** on the one topic as a way of exploring different approaches to individual questions.
- **Reread your texts.** This might provide you with new insights or remind you of things that you haven't thought of for some time. You might also find that at the completion of a unit, a text that you read at the beginning of the year has relevance or currency in the context of an entire body of work.
- Collate and **revise the advice given to you by your teacher on your assessments.** This will help you to assess whether there are mistakes that you're continually making. Fixing these problems will lead to greater success. Always remember to seek clarification if you are unsure of their criticism or advice.
- **Know the syllabus.** The syllabus is the document to which the examiners must refer when they write the examination. If you know and understand the syllabus content, there can't be any surprises in the examination questions.
- **Prepare a separate set of study notes** where you summarise your key learning on each text. These should be concise, but thorough. Use clear heading and subheadings to organise them. Ensure you include notes on each aspect of your study of the text, such as themes, context, cultural representations etc., but keep each section brief. It should just provide enough key details to remind you of the information in your long-term memory. Use the same format for each text summary to aid in your memory and recall.
- Some students choose to revise only two texts, determined that they will use those to answer the questions in Section Two. This is a dangerous strategy. While your study of each text should have provided you with the syllabus understandings to address a number of questions, banking on which unseen text in Section One you will write on, prior to seeing them, is a gamble. You should, at the very least, **go into the exam having thoroughly revised a minimum of one text from each genre: poetry, prose and drama.**

Some other tips

Exercise and socialise regularly. Having a break from study will encourage you to return feeling refreshed. There is evidence that suggests studying a single subject for hours on end is less effective than frequent bursts of study of 25 minutes to an hour.

Eat properly, drink lots of water when studying and sleep well before an examination. Your physical well-being can impact on your memory recall, your writing speed and your cognitive processing.

Form a study group. You are surrounded by a peer group in your class who equally want to do well in the exam. Form a study group where you share resources and engage in discussions of your texts and the syllabus. Test each other, collaborate on notes, set each other questions and, above all, encourage each other. Sharing the workload, as well as the camaraderie, can make study a bearable and even, dare we say it, enjoyable exercise.

On exam days, don't arrive at the venue and get involved in discussions with other students of what you have – or haven't – prepared. Listen to some music, go for a walk around the venue and be confident with the choices you've made with your study. There is no sense in panicking over what you have studied in comparison to others. Furthermore, you will be engaging in informal or colloquial conversations, which will not set the tone of your analytical voice when entering the examination process.

After an exam, to avoid anxiety about what you might have done better, leave 'revisiting' the questions and your responses. Just because another student approached a question very differently to you does not mean that their response is more correct. There is no positive outcome to spending time ruminating on what you should or could have done.

Sitting the examination

When reading time begins, **read the instructions carefully**. Note the number of questions to be answered and the time distribution for each, checking that this matches your expectations. (This information is located on the inside of the examination paper cover and at the beginning of each section.)

Distribute your time appropriately. The Literature examination requires you to answer three questions in three hours, but they are not worth the same number of marks. Section One is worth 30%. Each Section Two essay is worth 35%. In Section Two, where you will be responding using texts studied in class, there is an expectation that you will write more detailed and considered answers and thus there are more marks allocated.

During reading time, skim the three texts in Section One carefully before making your selection for this section of the examination. Once working time starts, you can re-read your selected text with the ability to annotate it as you do so.

Also during reading time, select which of the Section Two questions you will answer and the order in which you will tackle them. Many people find that beginning with the question with which they feel most confident gets them off to a good start. This way, by the time your working time starts, you have a clear plan for using your three remaining hours.

Choose the right questions. Selecting the questions that you will respond to is an important skill. It requires you to read each of the questions and make a rapid judgement about which are more likely to give you the opportunity to demonstrate your knowledge and skills. Skim-read all of the questions, identifying what they are asking you to do and the syllabus concepts they address. Match this against what you confidently know about the texts you have studied. Not every question will suit every text, which is why there are so many to choose from. Select ones that work for you and your texts.

Another way of approaching question selection is to choose your unseen text first. Having studied your set texts for an extended period of time, you should be able to use any of them to answer the Section Two questions. However, not having seen the Section One texts previously, you may find that there are some which you are not confident about using. If you have already used two genres in Section Two, you might find yourself forced to write on a text you're uncomfortable with to satisfy the requirement to write on three different genres.

Number your answers carefully before you begin writing your response. Start each on a new page in the correct section of the exam booklet.

Allow enough time to proofread your answers. Read through for meaning and clarity first. If you have time, scan through the paper again, checking the words you know you have trouble spelling and making sure you have referenced texts and quotations correctly. If you need to insert additional information into your response, be very clear and make it simple for the marker to see where they should look to find your additions. Furthermore, your exam paper is literally cut up and scanned before it is marked. Any writing that is in the margins is likely to be cut off and therefore not seen by the markers.

Instructions to candidates

Know the 'rules' about selecting texts. At the front of the 2018 Literature exam paper, the following instructions are included. It is useful to familiarise yourself with the particular guidelines of this exam, particularly the penalties for writing on the 'wrong' text. Remember to pay close attention when the 2019 Literature examination cover is released later in the year. These instructions may be altered for the next examination.

1. The rules for the conduct of the Western Australian external examinations are detailed in the *Year 12 Information Handbook 2018*. Sitting this examination implies that you agree to abide by these rules.
2. Write your answers in this Question/Answer booklet preferably using a blue/black pen. Do not use erasable or gel pens.
3. For each answer that you write in Section Two, indicate the question number and the genre that you are using as your primary reference.
4. You must be careful to confine your answers to the specific questions asked and to follow any instructions that are specific to a particular question.
5. The examination requires you to answer three different questions in total, each question making primary reference to a different genre so that you must choose one question to be on poetry, one on prose fiction and one on drama.
6. The texts you choose as primary reference for questions in Section Two must be taken from the prescribed text lists in the Literature syllabus.
7. Supplementary pages for planning/continuing your answers to questions are provided at the end of this Question/Answer booklet. If you use these pages to continue an answer, indicate at the original answer where the answer is continued, i.e. give the page number.
8. The Text booklet is not to be handed in with your Question/Answer booklet.

Penalties

If you do not comply with the requirements of instructions 5 and/or 6 listed above, you will receive a penalty for each, of 15 per cent of the total marks available for the examination.

Adapted from Year 12 ATAR Literature Examination, School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2018

Approaching each question

Deconstructing the question

Before you start planning, there are three steps to deconstructing a question you should follow:

1. **Read the question carefully**, highlighting key words
2. **Think critically about, and preferably annotate, the key words** and the instructions they represent
3. **Choose your most appropriate text** which best exemplifies the concepts and skills demanded by the question.

There are typically four types of key words you should be looking for in each exam question: **command words**, **conceptual words**, **conditional words** and **critical words**.

Command words reveal the type of essay you are required to produce. SCSA publishes a list of these command words and their definitions on the website for each subject. For example, some command words that may appear in Literature exam are:

- **Discuss:** identify issues and provide points for and/or against
 - in Literature, this means you need to explore the different aspects which make up the topic of the question
- **Explain:** relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how
 - in Literature, this is a clear instruction to show how you arrived at your overall thesis – demonstrating the train of thought and analysis that lead you to your conclusion
- **Compare:** show how things are similar and different
 - in Literature, this is an instruction to evaluate the similarities and differences between, say, two texts
- **Consider:** reflect on and make a judgement/evaluation
 - in Literature, this instruction may follow a statement or quotation that you are asked to reflect on, or you may be asked to consider whether something is true of a particular text; either way, think carefully and offer an opinion
- **Argue:** make a case, based on appropriate evidence, for and/or against some given point of view
 - in Literature, this instruction requires a more persuasive response, where you make a case for your particular thesis, supplying evidence
- **Analyse:** identify components and the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications
 - in Literature, this is a clear instruction to offer close textual analysis
- **Evaluate:** to ascertain the value or amount of; appraise carefully
 - in Literature, this is an instruction to judge the quality of something, such as a text, or to evaluate the extent to which you agree with a statement
- **Respond:** provide an answer; reply
 - in Literature, this may follow a statement, such as a quote about the nature of poetry, to which you are asked to respond based on your own experience with Literature.

Conceptual words are words and phrases which connect with the syllabus concepts. Sometimes these will be obvious, such as an instruction to discuss the 'representation of people' in a text. Others may be less so, such as an instruction to show how 'literary texts can offer voices of resistance', which can be seen as a reflection of the cultural identity and ideology aspects of Unit 3. It is important to identify and then really consider such words and phrases in the question, linking them to the syllabus concepts that you are being expected to demonstrate.

Conditional words are words that set the parameters of your response. In Literature, this is typically to discuss the topic in regards to a text you have studied, which is pretty obvious! At other times, you may be asked to discuss a topic with reference to two texts, so pay attention. There are, however, three questions in Section Two that offer very specific parameters: the genre-specific questions. You must meet this condition (to respond using a poetry, prose or drama text, as dictated by the question) in order to be considered to have answered the question accurately. Penalties apply for not meeting this condition.

In addition, there may be other words in the question that are important for you to consider. These may be thought of as **critical words**. For example, consider these two questions:

1. *Literary response is a dynamic process. Explain why interpretations of one specific text may alter over time.*

Here, you have to argue that literary response is not just a process that all readers go through, but a *dynamic* one. You need to consider all of the implications of a word like 'dynamic' and, in your thesis, directly address whether this is an appropriate description for the process of literary response.

2. *Discuss the value of representing controversial aspects of a nation's past in at least one literary text.*

Similarly, here you are asked to discuss not the just the representation of aspects of a nation's past, but specifically *controversial* aspects.

These critical words can be what separate the average student responses from the good ones. Less capable students will just casually drop these words into their conclusions – for example, along the lines of 'and therefore literary criticism is a dynamic process' – without really attending to these words in their argument. Stronger students will explicitly and successfully argue that literary criticism is not just a process, but a dynamic one, arguing its changeability or fluidity.

Remember, too, that these key words may not appear as a single word, but as a phrase that you need to consider in its entirety, such as 'aspects of a nation's past' in the above example.

Writing a successful response

Thinking

Many students feel that any time spent not writing in an exam is wasted time. This is untrue. It is imperative that you spend time considering the question, planning your response and reviewing your work in order to ensure you write the best response you can.

Time spent thinking is not wasted time. You are expected to think critically about the concepts you're presented with and how they apply to a text you have studied. That is what the markers are looking for. Do not automatically accept the premise of a question as true and then show why or how it is true. You may disagree with the statement totally, or just to a certain extent. Furthermore, if after thinking about the statement you decide it is true, that's okay, because you've done some critical thinking first. The answer you will be offering will be characterised by active agreement rather than passive acceptance.

As well as agreeing or disagreeing with a statement in a topic, you might **give qualified support**. Phrases such as 'not necessarily' or 'not entirely' are useful for building answers that show a critical approach to a topic by providing qualified support. Three other useful phrases for developing critical responses are 'yes, but', 'and also' and 'to an extent, both'. These can add value to an answer, showing that your response is well-considered. However, don't use this as an excuse to 'sit on the fence', avoiding taking a stand or hedging your bets because you don't quite know what to think. It is important to have conviction in your argument.

Furthermore, the first thing that pops into your head in a high-pressure situation like an exam is not necessarily going to be the best idea you have. Spending time thinking carefully before you write may lead to a burst of inspiration: an original approach, a better example, a more insightful quote or a more effective point of argument.

Planning

You should **spend at least five minutes planning** each response in the examination. There is no single 'right' way to plan an examination response. Throughout the year, you should develop a planning method that you feel most comfortable with. Some ways of planning that are popular and helpful are structured overviews, mind maps, and bullet points, while some students prefer to simply list key words and references in a logical progression. Whatever form you choose, remember that a plan is a working document that you can amend throughout the writing process as you are reminded of ideas.

The important thing to remember is that **a plan should provide you with ordered prompts about ideas and references that help you to address the question**. You might plan paragraphs and then reorder them as you write your response. You might plan for a quotation in one paragraph, but realise it is better swapped with another as you write your response.

Markers will not award or deduct marks for planning. However, a well-planned response is more likely to address the topic, remain focused and be tightly structured, and will therefore be rewarded more highly than a loose, poorly thought-out response. It's a good idea to write the word 'planning' at the top of the page, or draw a diagonal line through it afterwards.

Topic sentences

One of the best ways to improve your answers is to make sure your paragraphs have good topic sentences. A well-written topic sentence should tell the marker how this particular paragraph will address the question. It is a signpost that reveals the point of argument you are making. The marker should not be left guessing until several sentences later. **A good topic sentence does three things:**

- it introduces a clear point of argument in relation to your thesis
- it demonstrates the nature of the transition from the previous paragraph
- it relates clearly to the question.

Importantly, **topic sentences should be clear, succinct and precise**. The developing or elaborating sentences which follow the topic sentence are your opportunity to add further details. Markers are also under time pressure when they mark exams, so make your argument clear, logical and well-signposted.

Textual cohesion

One way to help the overall cohesiveness of your essay, ensuring each point of argument logically leads on from the previous, is to use transition phrases. **Transition phrases show the nature of the connection to the previous point**. Different phrases signal different types of transitions, as shown in the table below.

Transition type	Examples
Continuation	next, furthermore, additionally, also, not only...but also, first/firstly (secondly, thirdly etc.), in the same fashion, another way in which
Comparison	similarly, likewise, by the same token, comparatively, correspondingly, in comparison, equally, in like manner, identically
Contrast	on the contrary, in contrast, on the other hand, different from, conversely, however, in juxtaposition
Conditionality	therefore, thus, as a result, consequently, despite this, in spite of this, if...then, provided that, because of, seeing/being that, as long as, as a result, accordingly, in light of
Concession	however, although this may be true, even though, be that as it may, albeit, of course...but, yet
Confirmation	in other words, especially, to emphasise, to reiterate, certainly, surely, notably, indeed, significantly, compellingly
Chronology	next, later, firstly (secondly, thirdly etc.), in time, meanwhile, in the first place, formerly, suddenly, by the time, prior to, following, eventually, once, since, after, before, hence, furthermore
Conclusion	therefore, in conclusion, as has been noted/discussed/argued, all things considered, in essence, to summarise, overall, after all

Of course, **the overall determination of textual cohesion is how well your introduction and conclusion reiterate the same thesis or line of argument**. Your introduction sets out what you intend to argue, your conclusion – in part – summarises what you have just argued, so there should be a high degree of correlation!

Length

How much should you write? This is not really a valuable question. No marker will be counting words or pages and allocating you a mark for length. You must write coherently and succinctly, and with adequate explanation and supporting evidence for your ideas.

Past Examination Reports made a specific note that **many candidates wrote long, rambling responses, trying to display everything they knew rather than just what was relevant to the question**. An essay which answers the question explicitly and which displays understanding of relevant course concepts is what is actually required and will be rewarded the most highly. However, writing an essay that only discusses one or two points will not demonstrate your mastery of your texts or the course. There is really no need to ask how much you ought to write. Write what you need to in order to address the question to the best of your *ability*.

Spelling and grammar

Markers understand that your exam responses are essentially a first draft and, as such, minor spelling, punctuation and grammar errors are overlooked. However, as we have discussed earlier, **your written expression contributes significantly to your mark**, particularly in the extent to which it enhances or impedes your argument. It is essential that you spend time proofreading your work after you have written it. Often our brain moves faster than our hands and what you actually wrote down is not quite what was in your head! As you proofread, check that:

- each sentence makes sense
- each sentence logically builds on the previous one
- your spelling is generally correct – particularly syllabus terms, text details and question keywords
- your punctuation is generally correct
- you have stayed focused on the question
- you have included, and explained, sufficient textual evidence
- you have used the most appropriate terminology.

Using textual evidence

Summarising your text

While it can be useful to provide a brief overview of your text to contextualise your response, this should be no more than a sentence or two, at most. After all, you will get few marks for mere plot recall. This is something you can craft and memorise prior to the exam.

For example:

The Handmaid's Tale is a dystopian novel in which a conservative, theocratic republic has been established in the former USA. In a society where fertility is commodified following mass sterility, the protagonist Offred has to adjust to her shocking new life as a reproductive slave for the elite.

Using quotes as evidence

Avoid lengthy descriptions from the text via long quotations or exhaustive paraphrasing of the plotline. References to, and quotations from, the text should only be used to support your analysis and not as extra padding to fill out an answer. Quotes should be succinct and highly selective; don't include entire lengths of textual evidence if you all need is a particular phrase.

For example, many students write passages such as:

Atwood conveys that the abrupt and significant changes in Offred's world have created a crisis of identity. This is shown in the following quote: "I know where I am, and who, and what day it is. These are the tests and I am sane. Sanity is a valuable possession; I hoard it the way people once hoarded money. I save it, so I will have enough, when the time comes."

This is unnecessary, as the following abbreviated version reveals:

Atwood conveys that the abrupt and significant changes in Offred's world have created a crisis of identity, one where sanity has become "a valuable possession." Like "the way people once hoarded money," Offred saves hers so she "will have enough, when the time comes."

This conciseness then provides the time and space for students to develop the quality and depth of their response, digging deeper and providing more detail.

Too often, though, students include quotes as if they are self-evident of the point they are making. This is not acceptable. You know from your own study that there are many ways to interpret even a single sentence of a text. You must explain – using appropriate metalanguage – the significance of the evidence in terms of your argument. You should always reflect on whether you have fully explained the point or evidence presented. That is your job as a student. To leave the marker to assume why the quote you have provided is evidence of your point will get you nowhere and potentially even hinder your response if the marker has a different interpretation.

For example, many students write sentences such as:

This quote shows how women are marginalised within the novel.

Actually, it doesn't. It is your *explanation* of the quote that might show how women are marginalised in the text, but the quote alone will not.

As a general rule, **quotations should be brief**. Use them to support or explain an argument or point. Don't throw them in for the sake of it. Present detailed, specific evidence and fully explain the relevance of this evidence. Do not make the evidence too general or unclear, because you need to demonstrate your knowledge of the text.

A bad habit of many students is to just drop a quote into the middle of a sentence. Whenever you include a quote, your own **grammar needs to be preserved**. Your quote must be integrated in a fashion that results in a grammatically correct and fluent sentence. Sometimes this means you need to manipulate your sentence to integrate the quote correctly.

For example:

Connie feels Mrs Bolton "was thrilled to a weird passion" regarding her education at the hands of Clifford, "a man of the upper classes." Taking the woman under his wing gave Clifford, a member of the gentry, "a sense of power." Observing this, Connie understands "all that made them upper class"; that is, the entitlement and authority, in addition to "the money."

Sometimes, and only if absolutely necessary, you can **use ellipses and square brackets** to manipulate your quotes. An ellipsis reveals that you have omitted some words, whereas square brackets are used to alter a word within a quote, such as to change its tense or substitute a proper noun for a pronoun. You should never change the meaning, however.

For example:

Clifford's education of Connie "roused in her a passion... deeper than any love affair could have done."

Clifford's education "roused in [Connie] a passion and response deeper than any love affair."

Leading in to your quotes: providing context

It is never acceptable to just casually drop in a quote. You need to lead into it, contextualising the situation for your marker. For example, you might want to showcase a quotation from *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey. Lead into the quotation with a short contextual orientation for your marker. Three different approaches are:

1. *When Charlie says to Jasper through his bedroom window, ...*
2. *Notice how Charlie reveals his insecurity when he says to Jasper, ...*
3. *Silvey demonstrates his underlying values when his protagonist says to Jasper...*

Where the quote comes from within the text, or the situation in which it arose, can have a significant impact on the way the reader will interpret it. Not providing this context can lead to markers being uncertain of the logic of your interpretation.

Leading out: analysis

After you have provided your evidence, lead out of it effectively. For example, **explain how this evidence proves this paragraph's point**. To say 'this clearly shows' is to reveal your lack of deconstruction skills. Quotations will never 'clearly show' anything; your job as a Literature student is to show exactly how the quote functions to support the point you are making. This is where your real analysis comes into play, where you showcase your ability to analyse textual evidence. This is a key component of any Literature essay, yet one that is often overlooked by students.

The effective leading-out of a quotation is also an excellent opportunity for you to demonstrate your technical terminology.

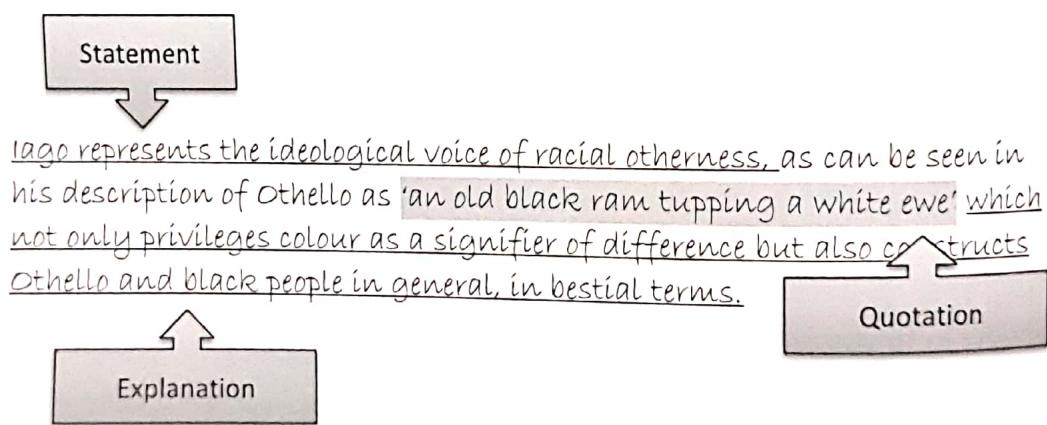
For example, instead of writing:

The dialogue here shows...

You might want to lead out with:

Notice the protagonist's cruel tone and accusative inflection when he says...

A useful technique for managing the use of quotations is S.Q.E., which stands for Statement (which is what you are trying to prove), Quotation, Explanation. You make a statement, use the quotation and then explain the relevance.



The structure of your response

Structuring an argument

Like learning to drive a car, structuring an effective essay requires skill and practise. The more you practise forming ideas around the requirements of assessment questions, the more confidence you will build in constructing good answers.

The introductory paragraph is the most important part of an essay. It is where you offer your **thesis or proposition statement**, which clearly responds to all parts of the question. Without a strong thesis statement, an essay lacks direction. The thesis statement should focus on the wording of the question and must establish your unique argument. It provides a framework for you to build ideas on throughout the entire essay. You need to show that you understand all parts of the question. This may involve defining key terms or clarifying parts of the question. The first paragraph should also identify the specific text/s you will refer to and their author/s.

Your thesis statement need not be limited to only one sentence. It is often more practical and effective to use several sentences, particularly with complex arguments. Another pitfall to avoid is writing 'shopping lists' of the ideas you will cover. Each point you outline in your introduction should be introduced in the order you will address them throughout your essay.

The body of the essay should include a detailed but focused analysis of the question and consistently link your ideas back to the wording of the question and your thesis statement. It is a good idea to use the key words of the question (or their synonyms) a few times throughout your argument in order to keep your writing on track. Lead with clear **topic sentences** or assertions that offer a single clear point that contributes towards the development of your thesis. Your marker will be paying particular attention to this opening statement and its development from the onset of each of your body paragraphs.

In short, each paragraph in the body of your essay needs to be structured like a mini-essay. The topic sentence is a mini-thesis statement. Develop this with one or two elaborating sentences, to provide detail and specificity. After this, you should have one or two points to support the topic sentence, using quotes where appropriate. The final sentence of each paragraph should clinch the point made in your topic sentence and link back to your thesis.

Your **conclusion** should **summarise the main contention of your argument and leave the reader convinced of your original proposal or thesis**. Avoid the inclusion of any new points or textual evidence at this stage and ensure that your conclusion does not contradict your original thesis statement. Think of a lawyer's final statement to a judge in a court of law. They would not dare to add extra or conflicting information in the final analysis of their case.

It should be more than a mere summary, however. A good conclusion leaves the marker with a strong sense that you have critical control of your content. You should make some kind of final comment that articulates the significance of your findings. Your conclusion should not be an afterthought; it should be considered and crafted as carefully as your introduction. Too often, students leave their conclusion until the final moments of the exam, assuming that it is not really important. This leaves markers disappointed and detracts from what may otherwise have been an excellent response.

An alternative structure: thesis, antithesis, synthesis

Another approach to structuring an argument is the '**thesis, antithesis, synthesis**' model. Essentially, this involves spending the bulk of your essay developing your own thesis, as one would normally. Afterwards, typically in your penultimate paragraph, the writer offers an antithesis: an opposing argument, which they then refute. This can be a way of strengthening your own thesis by showing how you have considered, and discarded, alternative viewpoints. The 'synthesis' section is the conclusion, where the various threads of argument are drawn together in concluding statements.

Comparative structures

Some questions may ask you to compare or contrast two texts. This requires a specific, comparative structure. There are three methods for doing so:

Block Method	Alternating Method	Combined Method
For this model, the approach is to write a few paragraphs that focus on your first text and then a few on your second text.	Start with a paragraph on the first text and then a paragraph on the second, repeating this process of alternating.	Accomplished writers can combine their discussion of both texts in each paragraph; beware of the potential to write overly long paragraphs with this method.
Intro	Intro	Intro
Text A – point 1	Text A – point 1	Texts A & B – point 1
Text A – point 2	Text B – point 1	Texts A & B – point 2
Text B – point 1	Text A – point 2	Texts A & B – point 3
Text B – point 2	Text B – point 2	Texts A & B – point 4

The tone and style of your response

Many Literature students' responses are written in a formal and impersonal manner. However, **there is no requirement for students to write in a formal, objective manner.** Indeed, some of the most successful responses are those that are quite personal in their style, revealing a thoughtful and critical engagement with the text. This is not an excuse for avoiding the use of literary discourse however. Even highly personal and engaging responses must demonstrate their familiarity with course concepts and terminology.

Voice

Despite the tendency towards formality and impersonality in many literary essays, they can still be written with vigour and force; in other words, with voice. **Voice is the sense that there is a real person communicating through an answer – a person with opinions, arguments and feelings.**

Here are some examples from previous examination answers:

Newland's attempts to come to terms with his new love for Ellen... is the universal struggle between the need to be accepted by society and the desire to live freely.

Sycorax is a caricature of everything women are punished for; she is old, ugly, and a single mother, but above all, she is powerful, and this makes her a threat to the bloated male ego.

You won't be able to write with vigour and force if you do not have feelings, opinions and arguments about the texts you have studied.

Formality

Formal language can be distinguished from colloquial language, which is the language of everyday speech. **Literary essays tend to use formal language because they are intended for an academic audience and context.** It adds an air of credibility to your writing and satisfies the technical nature of literary study.

Formal language is also more precise and succinct than colloquial language. Language can be incredibly nuanced and in the use of everyday language we often lose those shades of meaning that precise terminology can convey.

In everyday language we might say:

Eva Luna is pushed around a lot and told what to do by members of the small group of people who have all the money and power.

Or:

Shakespeare's love poems are structured using a heartbeat-like rhythm pattern.

We can also say this more formally:

Eva Luna is oppressed by members of the oligarchy.

Or:

Shakespeare's sonnets are structured using iambic pentameter.

The second lot of sentences take less time than the first, allowing you time and space to further develop the ideas, as well as being more precise. For example, the word 'oppressed' captures more of the psychological burden Eva feels and 'oligarchy' captures the entrenched position of those in power and the ongoing nature of their socio-political dominance. In a literary essay, you are trying to convey an argument as clearly and succinctly as possible. Formal language helps you to do this.

This does not mean that colloquial language should be totally banned from literary essays. In any case, the boundaries between formal and colloquial language are not hard and fast, they are always in a state of movement. Sometimes language that might be seen as bordering on the colloquial may be necessary because it captures your meaning more effectively and gives force to your argument.

We can see an example of this in the following extract by Susan Snyder¹, concerning Bianca:

The woman with whom [Cassio] is involved is a strumpet - or is she? Bianco denies it and we have no evidence from the text that she sells her favours as Iago says. The 1623 Folio List of characters which labels her 'a courtesan' is most likely the work of someone in the printing house, the label being derived from the accusations. Perhaps we should separate Shakespeare's characterisation of Bianca from that of these characters. Perhaps what we ought to register is not that Bianca is a slut but that Cassio treats her like a slut.

The use of the term 'slut' here might come as a surprise and be seen by some readers as colloquial. However, Snyder clearly feels it is the most appropriate word to convey her meaning, possibly because it has the effect of conveying Cassio's contemptuous attitude to Bianca in a way which a word like 'promiscuous', which is more formal, would not. Furthermore, in resonating with the everyday language of the world of her readers, the Western world of the nineteen-nineties, it can be read as encouraging readers to think about the way the word 'slut' is used in their world and thus think about the way women are sometimes treated on an everyday basis.

If you are unsure whether an expression in your essays might be too colloquial, ask yourself:

- Is it the most appropriate expression?
- Does it help my argument?
- Can it be more succinctly or precisely expressed?
- How will my readers/markers react?

¹ Snyder, Susan, from 'Othello: A Modern Perspective' in Shakespeare, William, *Othello*, (New Folger Library Edition), Washington Square Press, 1993: 296.

As an aside, you would be surprised how many candidates use swear words or sexual quotations in their analysis as a way of being provocative. Do you think this is an effective way of showing literary voice or is it more an act of immaturity? Remember, you know nothing about your WACE markers and you don't want to risk alienating them through potentially offensive language choices.

Use of the first person

Some students think the first person point of view, using 'I' or 'me', is banned from literary essays. **It is not**. While researching your texts, you will find many essays that make use of the first person. The use of first person depends on a number of things.

First, in many literary essays, what you are trying to do is **put forward a convincing argument about a text and how it can be read**. An argument is less likely to be convincing if it appears to be based on personal responses or feelings, and the overuse of the first person can create this appearance. Your argument should be able to stand on its own feet without relying on personal feelings or circumstances.

Secondly, remember that **the use of the first person is often unnecessary**. This is a complex area, because all arguments are what the candidate thinks or feels. Consider a sentence like:

Sycorax I think Diving for Pearls can be read as a critique of the impact of the forces of economic rationalism on individuals.

The words 'I think' are not needed because it is obvious that this is what the writer thinks – they just said it. In the interests of conciseness, it should be omitted. Similarly, writing in your introduction, '*I am going to discuss this topic in relation to...*' is superfluous. Don't tell your reader what you are going to do: get on and do it.

The third point about using the first person is that **it depends on the question**. There are likely to be some questions in the exam which directly invite personal responses and feelings and, therefore, it would seem logical for you to respond in the first person.

The fourth and final point to make about the use of the first person in literary essays is that **the first person plurals 'we' and 'us' are quite commonly used in literary essays**. Below are some examples, all taken from published essays or books:

- *Marlow prepares us for such a journey in his prologue.*
- *For example, in 'Portrait of a Lady' we are moved from the emotional speech of the lady to the commonplace, as she serves tea.*
- *In her book, it seems as though Mary Shelley has seen into the future and we can only be dismayed by her foresight.*
- *We can see the importance of Heaney's awareness of his Irish heritage in the poem 'Digging'.*

You might find it useful to make use of 'we' and 'us' to make your essays sound less stilted and to encourage reader involvement in your argument.

What if you get a memory block?

Don't dwell on the blocked information. Refer to your plan to help jog your memory. Also, noting down other ideas related to the blocked one may help you to re-establish mental links that help you to retrieve the 'lost' idea. Focusing on it will only block it further and may cause panic if it refuses to return to you. Leave a space and continue. If it really is in your memory, it's likely to return to you in time for you to complete it.

Some other tips

Leave the correction fluid or tape home. It wastes time in an examination. If you make a mistake, just cross it out neatly with one line – there's no need to 'scrub' it out. You won't be penalised and you'll probably pick up marks because of the time saved by not using correction fluid or tape. Too often, students forget to go back and insert words again and this leads to confusion.

If you get part of the way through an answer and think of something you should have said earlier, **put it on another page and indicate with an asterisk or number and a brief note about where it should go.** For example: * see additional material on page 8. However, as mentioned previously, be very clear about where the marker should look by numbering the additions in a corresponding fashion.

Remember: repetition doesn't earn marks. Rewriting the question above your essay or repeating the text title or author's name over and over again is a waste of your time. Similarly, repeating overly similar phrases in your topic and concluding sentences adds little value. Every sentence should contribute something to your argument.

Above all, enjoy yourself! Literature is a fascinating field of study and one which invites passion and 'outside the box' thinking. Every skill you learn in Literature will assist you in responding to the myriad of texts that will bombard your adult life. Every text you engage with in your world will help you evolve into the person you want to be.

Section One: Close Reading

General points

The first section of the Literature examination tests your skills of textual analysis. Being able to analyse examples of poetry, prose and drama is critical to the successful completion of this course, so it is important to consider the close reading skills you will need in this section.

A mistake that many students make when completing this section is that they select the text that best fits with their plans for Section Two of the exam. That often means, for example, that they really want to write on their studied novel and play, so the result is that they will indiscriminately select the poetry text in Section One. This is not a successful approach. You should be equally prepared to write about all of the texts you have studied; while you may have a preference for particular texts, you should enter the exam and make the best choices for the paper in front of you.

Another error that students often make is beginning the close reading section with a plan to create a particular ‘alternative’ reading of the text, such as a gender or Marxist reading. This is problematic, as the text may not lend itself to this particular type of reading and, in trying to force one, you may be missing an opportunity for a successful close reading. Close reading itself is a reading practice – to use this reading strategy well is a complex task. To apply two reading practices in the time allocated for this section is incredibly challenging.

Approaching the text

Below is a series of points that should help you to prepare for a close reading of any text that may appear in an examination paper. Read through all of the texts in the paper and make your choice based on the following considerations:

- What do I think are the main ideas of each text?
- How does each text represent people, places and events?
- What are the main generic and language conventions of each text?
- Can I make any observations about context in these texts?
- Does my context play an important role in my response to any of these texts?
- Can I make any useful or significant connections to other texts?
- Am I resistant to the dominant reading of any of these texts?
- Would it make an interesting or enriching case if I applied a specific reading strategy?

When you have completed this process, consider which text offers the best possibilities for a thoughtful and well-evidenced reading.

Annotate your chosen text, plan what you now wish to say about the text logically and select useful examples. Remember, use of textual evidence accounts for almost a quarter of your marks here. Use evidence extensively. There’s no excuse not to; the text is right there in front of you!

Planning and writing

You must think through how you will organise and write your response. Some students find writing a dot-point plan helpful, others prefer to brainstorm or create a diagram. Some only need to do the thinking and jot down a few reminder words. You must find a method that helps you to organise your points in the best order. Experiment over the year and become familiar with your preferred process – what works best for you. Dedicate about five minutes to planning your response to Section One.

Remember, your reading should have a logical order and this should be indicated through your introduction. This doesn't mean you need to include a sentence that begins: 'In my reading I will discuss...'.

Don't try to include everything you understand or can identify. Focus on creating a well-developed discussion of a few ideas rather than a 'shopping list' of everything you can find. Focus on what makes sense to you in the text. In other words, write about what you understand and don't worry about the things that are not clear or that you don't understand.

What is a reading?

Students often find the instruction to 'present a reading' difficult. This might be because students think it is such a broad instruction – it could be so many different things. This is true; it is extremely broad, but you should try to see this as helpful rather than intimidating.

A 'reading' of a text is simply an explanation of what you understand about a text. Sometimes it is defined as the 'meaning made by the reader'.

A reading might be:

- an explanation of the main themes and ideas that you feel the text communicates and a discussion of the factors that led you to that understanding
- an explanation of the dominant reading of the text – the view that the construction of the text encourages
- a discussion of a resistance that you have to the text's ideas or construction (though be sure to establish the dominant reading as a point of comparison here)
- an experiment with a particular reading practice – that is, a lens that you apply to the text (this is a specific way of looking at the text that focuses on a particular concept or ideological perspective)
- an analysis of the representations within the text; how people, places, events or ideas are constructed within it
- an explanation of the function of the text as a particular example of its genre; how it manipulates the conventions of that genre for particular purposes or effects
- a discussion of how the text operates as a cultural artefact; the ideological functions it holds or what it reveals about the culture in which it was created or received
- an aesthetic reading which evaluates the artistic qualities of the text
- a personal response whereby you critically examine your emotional or intellectual reactions to the text and what informed such response.

What is a *close* reading?

The Literature Examination Brief specifies that in this section of the examination, candidates must perform a **close reading**; we have seen this reflected in the way Question 1 has been phrased since 2016: *Present a close reading one of the three texts.* With such an instruction, you can expect markers to reward the close attention that candidates pay to the text and the analysis of that text based on generic conventions and language use pertaining to the genres of prose, drama and/or poetry.

Close refers to our proximity to the text in terms of analysis, i.e. a close analysis of the text. This detailed and specific reading of the text requires consideration of language or linguistic features and stylistic devices related to form and intertextuality. It may also consider cultural references within the text that provide context to the reading, or the meaning the reader makes.

Close reading is a reading practice that was popular with the critical movement named New Criticism, a movement with origins in America in the 1940s. It called for readers to look to ‘the text itself’ or ‘the words on the page’, rather than explanations provided by critics or other reading methods that relied on information from outside the text. Some prominent figures in defining this method were I.A. Richards, John Crowe Ransom and T.S. Eliot, a poet studied by many ATAR Literature students.

A close reading does not prohibit you from discussing critical approaches to the text, but does require you to connect your reading to text. You should provide evidence of how an ideological position is represented by the text, or how reading with a specific lens provides an insight into specific elements of the text.

A close reading could take one of the approaches outlined above, or be a combination of a number of them. Just always remember, it must relate to ‘the text itself’.

Some general points to consider

An important aspect of presenting a reading is explaining the approach that you are taking. It is a description of a *process*, not a description of the text.

If you are a strong writer, you may be able to spend the bulk of your response articulating one particular reading and then, in your penultimate paragraph, offer an alternative view of the same points. For example, you might critique the power dynamics evident in the text as a function of class structures, but then comment on how, within its historical context, such power dynamics may have been seen as natural. However, such alternate readings are most successful if they relate to your own reading, otherwise your overall response may seem disjointed.

Reserve time to read over your answer and specifically check that your introduction matches where you eventually end up with your reading. Sometimes the focus can shift during the writing process and tweaking the introduction helps to create a cohesive response.

A reading is not:

- a description of what happens in the text
- a discussion of audience engagement or enjoyment
- looking for 'what the author intended'
- a checklist of things you notice as you read through the text.

What if I don't 'get' the text?

Your skills of analysis should be sufficiently developed so that you can interpret almost any literary text with which you are faced. Remember, you don't have to discuss the most significant themes – which is a subjective notion anyway – you just need to articulate one possible reading.

However, if you feel that you are unable to start unpacking the text, it can be worthwhile to consider some common themes of literature:

- representations of particular groups, such as gender, race, ethnicity, age etc.
- social commentary
- interpersonal relationships
- human experiences, emotions or traits
- power relationships
- endeavour or struggle.

Another strategy can be to consider who, what, when, where, why and how:

- **Who** are the people in the text and who might they represent in the real world?
- **What** events are taking place in the text and what might they represent in the real world?
- **Where** and **when** is the text set and what context might this represent in the real world?
- **Why** has the writer represented these aspects in this way and what purpose might this serve in the real world?
- **How** has the writer used language and generic conventions to aid this understanding?

What are markers looking for?

The table below includes some tips for achieving highly in Section One of the exam. Try to incorporate at least some of these suggestions into your study routine.

Criterion and available marks	Helpful tips
<i>Reading/s of text</i> (7 marks available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to connect your understanding of ideas to construction and/or context. • Clearly state what you understand to be the main ideas of the text. • Be consistent with your reading. Don't be hesitant or undermine the points you have made. • Ensure you are explicit about the reading practices you are using. Only use a particular lens if the text calls for it. • Be analytical, not descriptive.
<i>Close textual analysis</i> (6 marks available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make sure you choose relevant and significant examples from the text to analyse. • Select and explain language or generic examples and discuss how they function, as well as the meaning you make from them. • Also consider examples from the text that provide cultural context or contextual connections that add to the meaning you make. • Know how to incorporate quotations into your writing. • Avoid lengthy chunks of quotation. • Always explain quotations – state their significance to your argument. • Understand how to quote both directly and indirectly and offer appropriate technical analysis of your quotes.
<i>Linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology</i> (6 marks available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study the terminology of this subject. • Know how to use the metalanguage of the course, the terms used to identify certain linguistic patterns, stylistic choices or critical practices. • Be familiar with syllabus concepts and how they apply to making a reading. • Avoid using jargon and buzz-words. • Spend time studying the generic features, stylistic choices and forms that differentiate prose, poetry and drama from each other.
<i>Expression of ideas</i> (6 marks available)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to present a 'reading'. • Plan your response. • Ensure your response is focused. • Don't become distracted or stray from your main points. • Reread your work to avoid errors or confusing expression. • Practise writing 'readings' throughout the year. • Don't overcomplicate your writing. Be concise and efficient.

Close reading response framework

Below is one example of what the framework for a response to this section might look like.

Introduction

1. Present an overarching reading of your text in a few sentences.
 - a. What is the text about literally?
 - b. What is your deeper reading (inferential, thematic, ideological, aesthetic, responsive) of the text?
2. Next, present the aspects of this overarching reading that you will address in the body of your response.
3. Refer to the major elements of construction – the generic and language conventions used to communicate the ideas you are focusing on.
4. Don't simply list your ideas, expand them over a few sentences.
5. Consider any background information that you might need to supply the reader with. For example, if you are offering an intertextual or personal context reading.

Body paragraphs

A close reading will usually consist of at least 3–4 body paragraphs, each containing a separate idea. Each paragraph might structurally look something like this:

1. Identify a specific idea or aspect of your overarching reading.
2. Develop this idea over a couple of sentences.
3. Go to the text and find example/s. Use this evidence to support your point.
4. Technically deconstruct your evidence as a way of proving your ability to read closely.
5. Embellish your point by adding greater justification and subsequent depth of analysis.
6. Conclude by linking your idea within your overarching reading.

There are different schools of thought as to the order of paragraphs. Some believe that you should lead with your strongest point to set the tone of your response; others maintain that you should end with your strongest point to leave a powerful impression. Some believe your weakest point should be 'buried' in the middle, whilst others feel it should be last, in case you don't quite finish it. However, there is more at play here than just the psychology of the marker: you should structure your paragraphs in order of *significance*. What is the most important aspect of the text that has a bearing on your reading?

Conclusion

A conclusion assists in the structure of your reading. It reiterates the main elements of your interpretation of the text. In order to avoid being merely a repetition of points you have already made, your conclusion should acknowledge the significance of your reading. For example, you might conclude with a comment to show how the text's representations compare to those of your own context, or you may explain the ongoing significance of the ideas you discussed from a historical text to contemporary audiences, or offer a personal or aesthetic response.

Considering Question 1

Present a close reading of one of the three texts.

Interpreting the question

You can always expect Literature questions to mirror central course skills and concepts. Question 1 invites you to discuss your understanding of such concepts as:

- how texts represent themes, ideas, people, places and events
- the ideological function/s of texts
- the processes of meaning-making, including but not limited to, ideological reading practices
- the use and function of language and generic conventions
- the role of context in shaping meaning – both your own and that of the text.

These are broad and complex categories and to perform detailed analyses of each would be impossible in an exam setting. Given the nature of this kind of assessment, students cannot realistically be expected to give equal emphasis to all of the categories listed above.

It is useful to consult the Year 11 Literature syllabus to prepare for a close reading. Many of the course concepts identified in the Year 11 Units 1 and 2 detail the terminology and concepts required to perform the task. You will have learned these in Year 11 as foundational skills for the course, but it is helpful to remind yourself.

A sensible approach is to respond to the specifics of each text. A guiding principle for your response is to remember that, above all, Section One is about reading closely. This process is about your ability to explain the relationship between formal aspects of literary texts' construction (the 'how') and their meaning (the 'what'). For this reason, language and generic conventions are a good way to ground and focus your reading. After all, it is the way that language is shaped and presented that communicates ideas. If you can explain the way that language works in the text, you will always be able to support your key points.

Advice from teachers

- Avoid writing a series of disconnected paragraphs that merely point out various observations. Your response should offer a cohesive reading of the whole text.
- Too many students fail to address genre in their reading. You have to select a particular genre of text for a reason. If it's a poem – discuss the nature of this poem! Your discussion of the text's ideas should make explicit reference to how they are constructed within this particular genre. We expect to see appropriate metalanguage to help explain the function of form and the use of devices.
- Too many students are writing simply about broad elements such as characterisation, plot and language. This is passable; however, marks would be higher if students dug into the specific techniques within these broad elements, such characters' movements on stage in a drama text, recurring motifs or line structures in a poem, or the interplay of dialogue and narration in a prose text.

Text A – Drama

Jill Shearer – *The Family*

Possible readings

The extract offers an exploration of the dynamics of family in a time of crisis. The roles of parents and siblings and their complex interactions contribute to the drive and conflict of this drama text. What the audience/reader expects of a family from their own experience is an additional component of interpretation that may shape their reading.

One reading might focus on the two sisters, Emma and Sarah, who are constructed as opposites. The fact they are sisters gives them shared background, relationship and family history. The friction of their interaction could be read as sibling rivalry. The text examines how the two siblings react to their father's position now he has been suspended from duty as a policeman. The elder sister, Sarah, enters the scene from outside. This is symbolic of her no longer living in the family home, as opposed to Emma, the younger sister, who is still living there. Sarah is a Police Inspector, involved in the workplace outside the domestic sphere. Emma is a musician – unemployed, involved in the arts and still living at home. Her music is her escape. Their differences are a source of conflict around responsibility towards their father.

Another reading might examine the consequences of Frank's suspension, such as how false accusations can destroy careers, lives and families. The dynamics of family have been upset by the inquiry into police corruption and the impact this has had on their father. Emma has seen this more closely because she lives at home and has witnessed her father withdraw into a world of gangster movies, which generates conflict with her sister, whom she believes should be more understanding and involved in supporting their father. Frank himself has become lost in an imaginary world, represented by the films he watches. Frank has lost his self-respect in the process and also his traditional position as the head of his family. His apathy and depression are evident. He is suspended on stage, as well as being suspended from his job.

The scene can be read as a comment on corruption in society. In the 21st century, investigations into the big banks, politicians, sporting bodies, private and public companies and even Google and Facebook are part of our world. As Sarah says, '*An inquiry like that, some innocent people were bound to be hurt.*' Sarah's role within the police force places her in a particularly conflicted position, as there is the risk that her father's possible corruption could be reflected badly on her. The text sets up future conflict by exploring the concepts of corruption and guilt by association.

The importance of creativity and the arts is a theme suggested by Emma's cello playing and the stage directions. There is a contrast established between creative careers and the public service, and candidates may base a reading on the value of the arts within an Australian context, particularly alongside careers that may be characterised as essential services.

A gendered reading is another avenue of exploration. The roles of males and females is first considered through family, but also through the occupational choices of the characters. As it is the nineties, Sarah's position as a Police Inspector is a positive. She is superior to her father in the workplace hierarchy as he is only a sergeant. The police force has long been viewed as a tough and masculine environment. The text suggests Sarah might have lost something because of this. Her compassion and nurturing side are seen as suppressed or absent by Emma and perhaps the audience too. Alternatively, the text could be read as reflecting shifting attitudes towards women in the workforce, with Frank seen as a 'dinosaur' and Sarah as the future. By contrast, Emma is full of emotion and expresses her feelings openly in her behaviour and through her music. Readers could interpret this as typically female. The value of each role in our culture is open to discussion.

Textual analysis

This part of the play is from the opening scene or exposition. In it, the audience is exposed to the setting, introduced to the characters and suggested conflict, as well as the introduction of narrative and ideas for possible exploration. Sometimes there is 'backstory' or important information relating to characters and their situation. Candidates should consider this text in light of how it functions as an exposition. The title is also a feature worth considering in this light.

We learn about the possible 'corruption' charges made against the father and see its impact made physical by his isolation on stage. Frank '*sits facing the audience, remote control in hand, watching a video.*' While on the stage, he is isolated from the family and not a part of the immediate action. By facing the audience, he looks out through the fourth wall of the dramatic space and is both silent and detached. His isolation within the family circle is important. Think about what fathers are expected to do and how they are expected to behave. Sitting and watching old videos and remaining mute challenges the stereotypical role of the father and breadwinner.

The symbolism of Frank watching old gangster movies is also pertinent. It could be interpreted in several ways, such as representing Frank's desire to be a 'hero' and highlighting his fall from grace. Alternatively, it suggests he holds on to a nostalgic vision of policing that may be out of touch with modern standards of ethics and accountability. It could also be interpreted as representing a fantasy world, in which there are clear cut divisions between heroes and villains. Other interpretations are also possible.

This text contains explicit details of set, costumes, sound and lighting that contribute to audience impressions and support the dialogue. In particular, the use of the '*neon-lit blue circle*' creates a focus for the action. It is both inclusive and exclusive and is reminiscent of the flashing blue lights of a police car. The neon would create light and shadows over faces and objects, making the scene almost surreal. The use of music is also a major influence. The '*old movie music*' works as a backdrop of sound, while Emma's cello on which she practises Bach is foregrounded. The direction, '*Music is used throughout the play to underscore the action*' is important. Music can create mood, highlight emotion, link scenes, connect to a specific character and develop tension.

The costumes and properties associated with these characters are another important part of their construction. Emma is connected to the cello. When she is upset, she 'arranges her music' or 'fiddles with the bow'. Sarah, on the other hand, wears her police uniform even within the domestic setting. Their identity is closely linked to their employment and the costumes and props indicate the differences between the two sisters. The fact that Frank is sitting in his uniform, despite his suspension, yet with no tie, tells us of his lethargy and state of dispiritedness. He can't let go of his role as a Police Officer, which is intrinsic to his identity and self-respect. When Barbara enters, she is carrying a laden shopping bag, indicating her position as the home-maker of the family.

The dialogue between the sisters is telling. Emma is full of resentment and attacks her sister immediately, calling her *Officer* in a derogatory manner. There are silences between the sisters which suggest tension. There is also a lot left unsaid, which creates tension between the two and prepares the audience for the development of possible conflict later in the play. What is known as *subtext* informs their dialogue. Even when Sarah compliments Emma's playing, or explains the situation, Emma remains hostile. Her anger is focused on events concerning her father and Sarah's perceived lack of support for the family during this time: 'EMMA: *It's Dad we're talking about! God, you even talk like a book.*' Sarah's response - 'SARAH: *I talk like a Police Officer*' - sums up their different approach to the situation. Sarah's objectivity makes her appear unfeeling.

Contextual considerations

The contextual information supplied is minimal, as has been the trend of the exam for the past few years. What is here tells us the author is female, a contemporary author and Australian. There is a time reference of 1994 and a place of performance – Brisbane. The stage directions create two possibilities for the performance – either a naturalistic set or the chosen multi-purpose set encircled by a blue neon light. The details of memorabilia confirm that this play is set in a non-digital age, as evidenced by the reference to old newspapers, documents, books and a box of old photographs.

The nineties in Australia, while seen as contemporary, is nonetheless a time before you were likely to be born. Paul Keating was Prime Minister and in Queensland, Joh Bjelke-Peterson was Premier. It pre-dates September 11, terrorism as we know it and the influx of social media and instant communication. The Fitzgerald Inquiry into police corruption in Queensland was resonating through Australian politics and policies. Probably you are not aware of these details, however, the context of 'now' and current police corruption, judgement by media and family dynamics today are all relevant. Your context could therefore be a valid part of your reading.

The intimacy of a family home as the setting creates a microcosm for the exploration of wider issues. Miller's play appears to be a realist play, set in the nineties, even though the production has chosen to include powerful lighting as part of the set. The dialogue is natural between the sisters. Their sentences are direct and credible. Sisters do argue, have opposing views and feel resentment about family situations. As an audience, we can recognise family environs and circumstances and understand the sadness of Frank's position.

techniques at their disposal. Even aspects of a text that may seem to be unintentional on the part of the writer are nevertheless communicated through the medium of language – language which the writer has selected. To critically discuss your studied texts, you must be able to appraise how its ideas, representations, values and so on are constructed and conveyed through the various elements of the text's composition.

Analysing a text can be likened to being a car mechanic. Every layperson knows what a car looks like, and that it functions to transport people, but a mechanic can explain *how* the car functions in order to do so, and the role of the various components that make up its structure and mechanics. Similarly, anyone can read a book and tell you what they think it means, but a good Literature student should then be able to explain *how* the various components of the text have been purposefully shaped in order to create those meanings.

Unit 3

Unit 3 focuses on '*the relationship between language, culture and identity*'. These three key words – language, culture and identity – appear numerous times throughout the examinable content. This relationship includes how language is used '*to represent ideas, events and people*' in ways that support or challenge various ideologies; that is, sets of values, attitudes and beliefs. It notes that such representations, and the ideologies they challenge or support, can vary according to context. Literary texts are a medium through which a nation's identity is developed or called into question. A specific mention is made of representations of Australian culture and identity. As in all Literature units, skills of close textual analysis and composition of texts of various forms and genres is also included.

Unit 4

Unit 4 focuses on developing an understanding of '*the significance of literary study*' by developing the skills necessary for '*close critical analysis*'. This includes refining the skills of close textual analysis, along with broadening the scope of critical analysis of literary texts through wide reading and '*adopting a variety of reading strategies*'. Essentially, appreciating the multiplicity of readings possible of literary texts is emphasised. A key word in this unit is '*dynamic*': understanding that expectations of, and responses to, literary texts, their genres and their ideologies vary considerably across contexts. Developing an aesthetic appreciation of literature also appears in this unit. As in all Literature units, skills of close textual analysis and composition of texts of various forms and genres is also included.

Adapted from Year 12 ATAR Literature, School Curriculum and Standards Authority, 2017

The memorabilia on the set contributes to the context of the play. It contains the past, the idea of police investigations and how they were conducted – it surrounds the seat of the action. These bits and pieces are a record of events. Today they would be filed on a computer or collated in a more orderly fashion. Ringed by the focus of the circle of light, they offer a visual comment on the fact that we are entrapped by the past and can never escape it.

Activity: Preparing for drama – know the discourse

A dramatic text is written so that it can be performed on-stage to a live listening and viewing audience. Therefore, as readers, we must consider how the text will appear in performance.

Convention	Technical terms related to drama conventions			
Costumes	period	contemporary	minimal	realist
Props	symbolic	realistic	objects	set design
Stage directions	on set upstage/downstage	off set	front of stage stage left/right	
Lighting	blackout	fade	spotlight high/low key	colour wash
Sound	music	sound effects (SFX) silence/lack of sound		soundscape
Style (presentational or representational) and form	minimalistic realistic	symbolic	naturalistic abstract	
Movement	energy	gait	expressions	posture proxemics
Dialogue	monologue	soliloquy	accent	inflection diction
Vocal technique	articulation	tone	accent	projection pace

Activity: Preparing for drama – imagine the performance

Now, using the drama extract from the exam, assume how a director might actualise each dramatic convention for this scene. Use the technical terms above to support your analysis.

Convention	Evidence	Translation on stage
Costumes		
Props		
Stage directions		
Lighting		
Setting		
Sound		

Apply to your own text

The only way you can prepare yourself for the unseen dramatic text in Section One is to compare written drama texts with their performances. YouTube is a great resource for watching theatrical performances if you cannot get to the theatre to see a live show.

Create a table like the one above or another graphic organiser that suits you and closely examine your own choice extract. Mine the auditory and visual elements that make extra meaning in the dramatic text you choose.

This might seem like a laborious task. However, it will guarantee that you are ready to look for the aspects of drama that include performance. By practising, you will start to recognise what is valuable in the dramatic form. Not enough Literature students are demonstrating this skill in the exam and yours will shine out among the rest.

Drama: Sample response one

For this response, the strong voice of the candidate and high level of expression and vocabulary are evident. The candidate works the text carefully without retelling the plot. There is controlled and effective use of metalanguage. The candidate has delivered a reading focusing on generic features, while explaining how these contribute to the understanding of both the physical situation and key ideas explored in the text. The candidate has consistently elucidated that this is a drama text under discussion, and has drawn examples from the text to support this concept. The structure of the essay is logical and clear and ends by drawing the discussed elements together in a thoughtful conclusion. Further investigation of costumes and the use of music and their contribution to the construction of characters and underlying themes would have been a valuable extra addition.

The opening of the play The Family is a deeply personal and compelling production that asks the audience to consider the detrimental and utterly alienating effects of the corporate bureaucracy and impersonal management upon individuals. It achieves this primarily through an exploration of the nuanced yet ultimately ruinous effects that the unjust suspension of a police sergeant has upon his family. Complex use of stage direction and set production work to create a cluttered and overwhelming visual space for the audience, communicating the disturbed nature of this disrupted household. The organic yet stilted dialogue between Sarah and Emma conveys the uncertainty that they both feel, and dramatic tension constructed through manipulation of dialogue keeps the audience engaged. Lastly, the utter depravity and injustice of the situation is elucidated through dialogue, juxtaposed with Sarah's nuanced acceptance of the situation which conveys to the audience the inevitability of such corporate bureaucracy.

In the opening of The Family, a cluttered and disturbed stage space works in unison with stage directions to communicate the evident discomfort and malaise that Frank's unfair dismissal has produced within the household. The very second sentence of setting description establishes the scene as "set in the

This opening paragraph attacks the set text with a confident voice, summing up general thematic concerns such as corruption and its impact on family dynamics.

Early reference to dramatic conventions is effective and important when discussing a drama text.

family home"; along with the title, it is evident to the audience that a family unit lies at the conceptual heart of this production. However, the story is set within a "large neon-lit blue circle" which is surrounded by "piles of memorabilia...old newspaper, documents, books, a box of old photographs, police records" and similar items of household debris. There is none of the home comforts or sofas we would all expect to see within a "family home". Moreover, the "neon-lit blue circle" is distinctly artificial and foreign in this setting and only seeks to alienate the audience more. Thus, it is apparent to the viewer from the onset that something is very wrong in this house. The extract continues to detail the stage directions that comprise to the first moments of the performance. Emma is immediately established as a figure of importance through her cello theme that would dominate the auditory atmosphere of the first few minutes. It is important to note that Frank, the disgruntled sergeant, is positioned to face the audience directly. Despite the chaos and alienation cultivated by the set design, this stage direction makes Frank's discomfort and grief apparent and intimately personal for the audience. This, through the creation of a disturbed set and complex but purposeful stage direction, the play efficaciously conveys the uneasy atmosphere within the scene.

The carefully manipulated dialogue between sisters, Sarah and Emma, communicates to the audience the organic nature of their relationship whilst simultaneously developing dramatic tension that ensures the audience remains engrossed within the proceedings. The very first exchange between the sisters elucidates the uneasiness they feel; Sarah tells Emma "the front door was wide open" and a purposeful dramatic caesura is created before Emma replies, "An offence, Officer?!" This cynical, sarcastic reply consequently gives the rest of their dialogue an uneasy undertone. Additionally, the manipulation of dialogue to allow the sister's statements to trail away,

Understanding of the importance of set and lighting and what they contribute is clearly established and well explained. What is expected of 'a family home' could be further developed here.

The sense of unease created by the household paraphernalia has been clearly delineated. Good choice of quotations supports the candidate's discussion.

The music of this opening scene is very important. While the candidate has clearly established Emma's connection with the cello music, they could have gone on to explain how it accentuates the sense of unease throughout the opening sequence.

Here the candidate has made strong links between Frank's positioning on stage with his emotions.

Dialogue is a key element of a drama text. The candidate has cited phrases and silences between the sisters which contribute to the tension, rather than simply repeating what is said.

the implied meaning provided by further notation on the script, gives their exchange an organic and unrehearsed nature. The prosaic diction they use as they address each other further conveys this effect: it is obvious to the audience that this is natural exchange between two sisters that could be seen in any household in the world. However, further construction of dramatic tension valorises that uneasy undertone. Emma says, deliberately, that "She's (Barbara) got a lot on her mind these days" and Sarah immediately deflects the flow of conversation toward Emma's cello. This occurs frequently throughout their dialogue, consequently building a sense of suspension for the audience as they wonder what's "on her mind". Thus, dialogue and dramatic tension further conveys the organic yet unsettled relationship between Sarah and Emma and simultaneously dramatic tension builds suspense for the audience.

ultimately, the injustice of the situation that this family has been forced into is elucidated by Barbara's emotive dialogue and valorised by the absence of Frank from the conversation, despite his prominence on stage. Sarah's neutral and nuanced response to the situation additionally conveys to the audience that this injustice must be accepted. "Over thirty-five years dedicated service and no-one caring", says Barbara, drawing the dramatic tension into a crescendo. "Our name in all that sordidness! Filth!" It is also important to note that "music is used throughout the play to underscore the action": here, it would reach a climax, which further conveys Barbara's grieving response to this act of corporate carelessness and communicates to the audience the injustice of "no-one caring" about Frank's suspension. Crucially, Frank does not speak a word or interact with his family during the opening, despite the fact that he is located in a prominent position in on the stage. The fact that he is also looking directly at the audience serves to make the audience complicit in the family's anger and disappointment. It is as if he has been cut off from

Actual examples from the text support the candidate's interpretation of the sister's relationship. Choosing the right example is important.

The candidate employs effective connecting openings – 'ultimately', and later, 'crucially'. Such vocabulary endorses the strength and confidence of the response. It allows for focus on the climax point of the scene. There is also consistent use of illustrative examples here to support the candidate's conclusions.

This is a pertinent point about the importance of silence on stage. It can make a clear comment about a character. Frank's position on stage and his silence highlights his distress.

his family and due to the purposeful stage construction the audience comes to know his grief. Finally, Sarah takes a neutral stance on the proceedings in the last few lines of dialogue: "An inquiry like that, some innocent people were bound to be hurt," she says, to Emma's indignation. Thus, Sarah's dialogue nearly encapsulates the hopelessness of the situation: the co-operate management of the police service has no time for "innocent people" and individuals, when they are focused on the greater good. But this play communicates the detrimental effects that such bureaucracy has upon a family unit and thus makes a poignant and effective criticism of systems that can bring about injustice such as this.

In conclusion, The Family is an effective and potent production which explores the detrimental effects that corporate, wide-scale management has on individuals. This is achieved through a purposeful manipulation of stage space to instil unease within the audience, in combination with the organic yet tense dialogue of the two siblings. Lastly, the utter injustice of the situation this family must deal with is highlighted by Barbara's emotive dialogue and elucidated by the careful stage positioning and directions of Frank.

Sarah is a representative of the legal system. A comment about her position as a police officer and her objective statement would add further to the candidate's discussion. Links between her uniform (costume) and that of her father could also be developed here as part of a gendered reading.

Ideas about the corporate world versus the family and individual have been stated clearly. This is a key theme explored within the text.

The candidate ends with a confident summation of the concerns of the text, linked to the dramatic conventions that have been employed, confirming this is a reading of a drama text.

Activity: Creating the set

Select the exposition from a play you have studied this year. Read through the stage directions, regarding details of the set and important properties. Draw your own version of the set including all the exits, furniture, visual properties and where possible, lighting.

As you place each part of the set, think about your audience. Where are they sitting? What can they see? What kind of stage is being used? When the set is complete, consider whether there is room for your characters to move on and off stage.

What you have created is a physical representation of a set, which should clearly demonstrate the practicalities of performance. Does it answer what the author wanted to be included and how it would work to create background, build understanding and set a distinct mood or feeling about the play's beginning?

Drama: Sample response two

This candidate begins their response with an explicit and well-constructed introductory paragraph. In it, they have identified where and when the play's events take place, which is important for structural and technical comment. The metalanguage is fluent and confidently included within the reading. Clear identification and explanation of possible themes is made regarding family and its conflict with duty and career in the context of the nineties, which leads to conflict. Reference to the text and clear analysis of examples drawn from it support the candidate's statements. Further detail regarding dramatic conventions would have strengthened some parts of the discussion. The entirety of the sample text has been carefully examined and a strong reading has been delivered. The summation of the response brings together the candidate's ideas about the exploration of family conflict and the contribution of the set as a frame for such conflict.

The title of a dramatic text is often indicative of the narrative to follow. Indeed, in the opening from Jill Shearer's *The Family* a cast of family members is introduced, representations of the diversity of character and opinion within families are depicted – and, much like the simplicity of the title, hints of conflict strays at the edges, remaining largely a gap in the text. The excerpt can be read not only as an exposition that introduces, the setting and cast of a play, but also as the beginnings of an exploration; one that examines familial relationships, how we are as people respond to hardship, and the broader cultural implications of these patterns in Australian Society. These themes are conveyed through dialogue, proxemics, and other symbolic visual and aural signifiers. It is important to note that these function chiefly as an exposition, the set establishes the play's mood and setting with extended stage direction. Immediately, a sombre and cold mood is established – the "neon lit blue circle" employs colour symbolically associated with sadness and melancholy and presumably casts the stage (and all its occupants) in a similar, eerie glow. Indeed, the suggestion that "most of the story" is set "within" this circle adds further symbolism to the set: the blue light is a pervasive and omnipresent vehicle for a state of depression or sadness, where the characters are entrapped within it –

The candidate has opened their discussion with a series of clear statements that cut straight to the heart of a reading. It sets up possible avenues of conflict and recognises the text is an exposition of the play and therefore what is expected of it.

Linking the overall mood of the opening scenes with the set and lighting demonstrates an awareness of dramatic conventions and how they work to create meaning.

unable to escape its effects. As such, the use of the set in conjunction with lighting, can be seen to introduce the play's mood and atmosphere as one of regret or unhappiness.

The detailed explanation of the lighting and set working in conjunction to create mood works well.

The mood of the settling, then, is tied further to other signifiers on stage- and it is these signifiers that serve to establish a temporal and spatial setting, whilst conveying ideas about the conflict depicted between the play's characters. The circle of light is "ringed by piles of memorabilia", which suggests that the characters within are either entrapped by memories of the past, or, unable to reach them in the darkness from within the confines of the blue circle. As a visual representation on stage, this could likely function to convey both concepts simultaneously. Indeed, the "old newspapers" and "police records" that are alluded to in subsequent dialogue, help to connect the set within the world of Emma, Sarah and Barbara. The cultural and temporal setting of the play, however, is furthered by proofs that act in conjunction with characters themselves.

The candidate's comments about the memorabilia on stage is further demonstration of their understanding of how dramatic conventions support dialogue and action.

Indeed, the specific setting of the opening as within a "family home" in the present is communicated through the interactions between the actors and the inanimate properties. That Frank has a "remote control in hand" situates the set within a domestic setting and this is furthered by Emma, who "practises on her cello, lovingly engrossed." The two characters, both absorbed in their private worlds, create an interplay with the set's documents and memorabilia. Domesticity and relaxation are contrasted with documentation and a sense of memory. In this way it is evident that the introduction of the setting constructs a visual juxtaposition between family normalcy and suburban life, an almost depressing atmosphere, bureaucracy and a motif of the police - all of which create an interplay of tensions that are developed more fully through the characters actions.

The use of the term 'juxtaposition' is effective in that it explains clearly the visual presentation of ideas on stage.

The play's construction of characters occurs simultaneously with an exploration of familial conflicts and communication breakdowns. I have read this exploration as one that represents the differences in ways people, particularly families, respond to pressure and hardship - as well as the way isolation and loneliness can manifest within families. The opening dialogue of the text, for example, is notable in its hostility - Sarah says "the front door was wide open" - the first words of the play, and spoken to Emma, are not a greeting but instead a thinly veiled criticism. This, and the brevity of Emma's reply terse reply ("An offence, Officer?") immediately establish a tension between the two characters. Emma's sarcastic diction throughout the play reinforces sense of detachment; Emma refers to Sarah shortly as "inspector." The delivery of this dialogue, in terms of its time and cadence is likely to be mocking - indeed in performance the text would likely demonstrate a disdain on Emma's behalf towards Sarah's career. The dialogue between them, too, is characterised by short sentences furthering a sense of tension and a breakdown in communication. Sarah says "Don't be absurd. I'm simply saying..." but leaves her sentence unfinished before "she stops and walks away." Here, dialogue works with proxemics to foreground the emotional distance between the two. Not only does Sarah elaborate, and communicate explicitly her message, she also feels uncomfortable and tries to leave the conversation. Similarly terse and stilted conversation characterises the rest of the excerpt, as such, it is evident that the text represents a troubled relationship marred by awkwardness and hostility.

The motif of the police in the text is a pervasive one, and a symbol that works to supplement and develop the representations and explorations of familial breakdown. Notably, Sarah is referred to mockingly by her police titles, Frank is referred to as a police officer (and indeed, wears his uniform on stage) and even Alan, presumed to be Sarah's husband, is a police

The candidate's exploration of dialogue is sensitive. The choice of examples and their explanation marry well and allow the inference drawn from the dialogue to have credibility. The first instance explains how tension is created.

Vocabulary choices and understanding of terms such as 'cadence' work to establish credibility for the candidate. They explain the sense of the dialogue and the breakdown in communication between the sisters.

This reference to 'police' as a motif could be developed to explore gender issues. Sarah is the police representative in the higher position - she is an Inspector. What does this imply with regards to power within the family?

officer. The influence of the police force is closely tied to the ways in which the family members deal with each other, and the difficulty of Frank's suspension from the police force.

The conflict between family members, is interlinked with the spectre of the police. Sarah says "if Alan's not on duty we might be able to [attend Emma's cello performance]." Here, though Alan's career is a gap, it is suggested that his role as a police officer may perpetuate the separation between Emma and Sarah. Similarly this discourse of legal duty is continued when Emma accuses Sarah of acting unfeelingly towards their father: "God, you even talk like a book." Sarah's reply, "I talk like a Police Officer," further cements a career with the police as a dividing motif. His "duty" to the law is one that supersedes familial duties to Emma, one which has split the family. It is possible to read this motif as a symbolic metonymy for careers and professions as a whole. In this light, the influence of the police in the text might be seen as a representation by the way in which careers, and duties to careers, might be at odds with familial relationships and families. The moralistic and legal discourses within the text's dialogue suggests that the stresses on Emma and Sarah and their family, have been exacerbated by the contradictory demands of family and work.

Whilst this exploration might be viewed as a cultural and historical quirk of the 1990s Australia, which was largely concerned with balance between suburban, nuclear families and careers (a preoccupation perhaps evident in the poetry of Bruce Dawe), I have also read the text with a consideration of gender. The text, in fact can be seen to comment on particular demands of women with careers. Barbara says to Sarah "You're married. Two jobs," in doing so, her diction equates marriage as a job. Here, she invokes and represents the additional demand on women - the expectation of their familial duties rarely

Setting up the balance between familial duty and the police force/work and careers as a source of conflict has enabled the candidate to open up a new area of discussion linked to the theme.

Here, the candidate clearly relates their analysis to a reading of the play's themes and ideas.

Linking to other texts is effective if they are relevant. Dawe's poetry does make connections to the themes of work, home and family. A specific title or line from one of his poems would have confirmed the connection.

placed on men. It is then evident that the ideas about the pressures of family breakdown, and duties of the career are further developed through a consideration of women in contemporary Australia, perhaps foreshadowing future exploration in following scenes. Thus, the text can be read as a symbolic exposition of setting, one that intentionally ties familial relationships and ideas about duty or its introduction of the key characters and conflict of the play.

The excerpt is much like its title: it is about family, it is brief and its brevity hints at unseen, wider conflicts and issues inherent to family and relationships.

A gendered reading would have opened this discussion up onto a wider plane. The idea of this kind of reading should have been introduced and developed earlier in the response.

The conclusion is effective in that it returns to the idea of 'family', as examined through dramatic conventions in the exposition of the text. It could, perhaps, be expanded to consider the implications of these 'wider conflicts and issues'.

Activity: Openings and closings

The introductory and concluding paragraphs of your response are vital. They establish your voice and bookend your discussion. Markers are responsive to a confident and individual voice and many questions now invite definite personal input. Your opening provides the initial impact of your interpretation and the stance you mean to adopt. The concluding paragraph should maintain that voice and bring together a final comment on what has come before. This paragraph should not simply relist what has already been said, it should carry an awareness of the prior discussion and connect for one final time to the actual question. The conclusion offers an opportunity to synthesise ideas and concepts, so do some planning and allow time to bring everything together.

Re-read the Drama sample responses and complete the following activity:

- Work with a fellow student, or alone, to look at both the openings and conclusions of the three drama readings.
- Decide which you think works best to address the criteria of the question and what led you to make this decision.
- Select and underline sentences and vocabulary you think are effective.
- Debate these with your partner and see whether or not you change your impression.
- Take ten minutes to think about, and then write, your own opening paragraph.
- Dot point the paragraphs that would make up the body of your essay.
- Read over what you have so far.
- Now write the closing paragraph.
- Share this with your partner and offer some positive criticism to each other.

This activity is good practice leading up to an assessment task or an exam.

Drama: Sample response three

The success of this response is drawn from the confident voice of the candidate and their reading of the text. The candidate has effectively introduced a gendered reading that explores ideas of duty, feminism, changing family dynamics and subsequent conflict. The candidate identifies the realistic style of the play in the opening statement and explores this further in later discussion focusing on set, dialogue and costume. Pertinent examples taken from the text support their discussion. While this response is comparatively short, the elucidation of ideas with clarity and precision creates a cogent and effective response. The candidate's reading is informed and avoids simple retelling of plot. Other elements of staging, such as lighting, could have been included to extend this discussion further.

The excerpt from Jill Shearer's realist play The Family (1994) articulates the trials and tribulations of domestic Australian life within the late twentieth century. Below the veneer of a police-crime drama are the themes of family and loyalty which exude from Shearer's characters in her conflict-riddled piece. As an audience, we are invited to witness how waves of feminism have altered the dynamics within households and the ripple effect that this movement has had on different women within society. Through the dialogue and conflict between Shearer's characters we witness genuine and realistic characters that engross and connect with their audience.

The concept of change and the passing of time exudes through the setting and characters of Shearer's play. Set in a domestic 'family home' the properties of 'memorabilia...old newspapers...a box of old photographs' acts as a framing device to foreground the sense of how not only objects have become outdated but also values and attitudes in contemporary society. The audience is introduced to Frank, the male figure in the excerpt, who is dressed 'in uniform' which connotes his character's role in the text as a representation of the conforming older generations. Following the revolutionary feminist movements, woman came into positions of power, this is shown metaphorically as only the women in the text are given dialogue while Frank remains silent and absent: a

The candidate engages with the text using a fluent and impressive opening that gets straight to the point and retains awareness that this is a performance piece of writing.

Reference to properties as representative of values and attitudes shows good understanding of how these objects work on stage.

The candidate's comments regarding Frank introduce notions related to power. He is linked with the past and his silence indicates his loss of power in the family.

reversal of the traditional gender stereotype in which women are neglected to positions of the cliché 'damsel in distress.' Described as a Police Sergeant, currently suspended from duty Frank's character is instead portrayed as the disempowered character. By presenting the audience with an exhibition of how gender roles have changed through the passing of time, Shearer articulates a drama that not only explores the engrossing story of a police investigation, but also celebrates the success of the feminist revolution.

The ending of this paragraph is a good summation of the ideas explored.

Shearer's play also delves into the backlash of the feminist movement as she explores the concept of family and loyalty. Described as a 'police inspector', Sarah is representative of the working woman, balancing, or attempting to balance, work and family. As Emma points out, 'three months we haven't sighted you' emphasising the strain that a female career life places on the family bond. This is further emphasised through the sardonic way in which her younger sister addresses her as 'officer' and 'inspector' highlighting the distance placed between members of the family unit. Though a success toward gender equality, the audience is invited to witness the toll taken on traditionally appreciated values such as the togetherness of family.

The candidate comes to grip with concepts regarding gender, family and loyalty. The context of today and the difficulty of balancing work and home could have been included to enrich these comments.

The dynamic relationship between the two sisters Sarah and Emma serves to engage the audience with a conflict that is both interesting, but also familiar and 'close to home'. Almost antithetically in tune, Sarah is constructed as the sister who 'even talk(s) like a book.' 'in uniform' she is the straight-laced older sister who represents order, responsibility and duty. She balances the jobs of motherhood and professional work, 'you're married. Two jobs'; while Emma represents passion, freedom, and loyalty. 'Totally, lovingly engrossed in her playing', Emma appeals to the audience as the familiar side of subconsciousness

The candidate has been thorough in focusing on family conflict and gender in their reading of the text. Ideas about police corruption and its impact on the individual could have been developed as part of the divide between family and work.

that lives in each one of us that longs to be passionate and liberated. Emma is blunt and loyal to her family, resulting in a conflict between the two sisters that resonates all too well with a contemporary audience.

The excerpt from Jill Shearer's The Family not only delves into the social turmoil surrounding feminism within her context, but also echoes the reality of domestic life in the late twentieth century. Shearer constructs characters that are genuine and relatable – the makings of a brilliant play.

The candidate has made some thoughtful comments about the links between text and audience.

A succinct conclusion is all that is needed for this section; this candidate, however, could have made it have even more impact by reiterating Shearer's context and being a little more specific about the 'reality of domestic life'.

Activity: Weaving in evidence from the text

The inclusion of supporting material from the text is fundamental to a convincing literary response. It provides the underlying proof or evidence of your understanding. Selecting the right example is therefore paramount. When you give a reading of an unseen text, you have the material in front of you. As you read, start looking for the information that will be the basis of your reading. In a drama text, this information includes stage directions, details about the set, action, costume and properties and, of course, dialogue. Incorporate examples from the entire text, not only dialogue.

- Selected text should not be in large chunks that fill up space on the page.
- The practice of making a statement then stating '*For example*' can be clumsy.
- It is preferable to incorporate small phrases seamlessly into your discussion.

Work through an extract from the play you are studying. Select examples that offer some insight for you, regarding events or concepts and practise inserting these into a meaningful sentence. The more you practise looking for and weaving in evidence, the more your choices will have impact.

Chosen example	Practice sentence
<p>view from the Bridge Opening scene:</p> <p>'This is Red Hook, not Sicily. This is the slum that faces the bay on the seaward side of Brooklyn Bridge.' - Alfieri</p>	<p>As a narrator, Alfieri is able to inform the audience of exact setting details. 'This is Red Hook, not Sicily' reveals to the audience that the play is set in America, where old ideas regarding justice do not apply.</p>

Text B – Poetry

Meg Mooney – ‘My Town’

Possible readings

Many interpretations are possible of this poem, but all must be justified through close textual analysis. It is also important to consider that no one response is expected to cover all of the points outlined here.

This poem explores the internal thoughts of the persona as they walk through their town and are obliged to interact with members of the wider community. These interactions appear to be a strain and the persona’s engagement with the community is impeded by feelings of loss and the experience of grief. We make some assumptions early in the poem that the persona is a woman whose son has been killed or forever changed. As a result, she finds the close and familiar relationships of the town difficult and restrictive, but ultimately realises that the community are in fact supportive and this support is empowering.

The opening of the poem provides details that lead us to assume that the persona is a mother, for example, the mention of a ‘son’ indicates the persona is a parent, and the act of having had ‘leg’s waxed’ – which is conventionally a feminine practice – confers motherhood. While we could read this information differently, the persona’s maternal recognition seems triggered when ‘a child calls [her] name’ and she is no longer able to dismiss the social connections that are part of the main street of the town. The ambiguity of the persona’s gender helps to demonstrate a universality of the experience of grief, particularly that of a grieving parent. It is also possible to interpret the persona as being a member of, or being connected to, the local Indigenous community. Again, this uncertain aspect of the poem speaks to the universality of the situation, and that loss is experienced by all.

The town appears to have complex social and cultural structures. The poem draws attention to the cultural assumptions that are often formed by racial difference and how this causes tension within the community. This problematic Australian representation is not unknown to us as readers and the poem subtly raises the history of conflict and exploitation that is part of Australia’s colonial history, as well as the racial tensions that continue in contemporary Australian life. A post-colonial reading might be offered of this text, highlighting these aspects of the poem and how they are portrayed within the work.

A gendered reading is also a possible reading of this text. Exploring the expectations of how men or women are expected to deal with complex emotional experiences, and the role of the community in supporting those suffering, could lead to a rich and detailed reading of the text. Alternatively, you might consider the poem a work of psychological realism since the poem uses the persona as a character within a narrative, which serves to explore the inner person, their motivations and internal thoughts to assist readers’ engagement with the uniquely personal and internal experience of grief.

Textual analysis

The poem is structured into multiple stanzas, but works as an example of free verse where the stanzas form fragments, thoughts or minute episodes within the wider experience of the whole 'story' of the persona's public journey. Each stanza acts not only as fragment of information, advising us of the persona's context and the main street moment, but is also a sentence and, as such, a fully formed statement. The lack of punctuation and the use of enjambment constricts these thoughts, signalling the discomfort and distress of the persona as they communicate with both the reader and the townsfolk. No periods are used in the poem at all. En-dashes and commas serve as pauses in the story being told, but without any full-stops we understand that resolution or closure eludes the persona as well as the reader. This is particularly powerful in the final line of the poem because it highlights the persona's only figurative expression – 'because inside I was falling'. Leaving 'falling' without a full-stop indicates that this sensation will continue beyond the moment of the poem and while we feel somewhat comforted that the community will be there to 'catch' them, the persona's suffering is not relieved or resolved.

The poem is conversational in style and the language is prosaic, lacking in embellishment. Aside from 'cheap' and 'very', there are no adjectives or adverbs used and the poem is void of figurative language features until the final line, constructing a voice that is without sensation or modulation of emotion or sentiment. As we expect such language use in poems, its absence is arresting and works to highlight the grief and pain of the persona, as well as emphasising a quiet-ness which we know to be artificial in this location. This creates a sense of interiority and exclusion, as if the persona is behind glass, not fully participating in the community that surrounds her.

This conversational style also works to define the location of this persona's experience, constructing a sense of place. Not only do specific words such as 'Aboriginal' and the name 'Tjakamarra' provide a contextual framework of Australia, but the sparse and laconic language is in keeping with the vernacular of the Australian outback and the verb-heavy recount of the persona's actions adhere to the functionality of the traditional, masculine, Australian stereotype. In addition to this, the blending of formal English with colloquial terms such as 'bloke' and Aboriginal English words like 'whitefellas' form not only a naturalised Australian voice, but symbolise the blended nature of the national voice and post-colonial perspective of the text.

Contextual readings

The contextual information provided is limited, but you can draw on contemporary Australian concerns such as the racial divisions within Australia, particularly in central and northern Australia. This could be supported with intertextual connections to works from other Australian writers, or texts that represent similar cultural or racial divisions.

Candidates might also explore the issue of rural mental health concerns and mortality rates.

Personal context may also inform the readings of some candidates, particularly in relation to their conceptualisations of their own town of origin or residence.

Activity: Preparing for poetry

Locate a copy of last year's exam text booklet (available on the SCSA website: <https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/syllabus-and-support-materials/english/literature>), or source the poem from another location.

How prepared are you for an unseen poetry reading?

- Name four structural forms of poetry (i.e. a sonnet has its own structural form, now find another four).
- Identify the most common language devices in this poem by Mooney. Can you find a simile, metaphor, alliteration and enjambment? Circle and name them on the poem in the exam booklet.
- Find the following devices in the poem: visual, auditory and tactile imagery.
- Can you detect rhythm? How would you describe the rhythm of this poem? Firstly, detect the poetic metre, or number of feet, in each line. Is there a common sequence of syllables and stresses? Then, detect any anomalies. For example, are there any lines which stand out due to length or rhythm in this poem?
- Does the tense of this poem give you a clue as to its rhythm and discordance?
- Consider the organisation of the poem into stanzas. Are they regular or formulaic? Does each focus on a different idea, mood, image etc?

Revise your devices

Many students come to the unseen poetry text with a basic and limited toolbox for deconstructing it. Full marks cannot be given if candidates do not demonstrate a sound understanding of poetic conventions and techniques.

Here is a test of your learning. Fill in the blanks of this table and answer the questions:

Broad Convention	Language	Structure	Rhythm	Narrative	Structure	Form
Elements of the convention ↓ Technical analysis of those elements	Figurative Language	Sentences	Meter	Narrative structure	Poetic lines	Lyric
	Alliteration	Fragments	Iambic	Plotline	Couplet	Elegy
	Can you name three types of alliteration? 1. 2. 3.	Can you describe the effect of not using punctuation?	Do you know why Shakespeare chose to use this metre in his sonnets and plays?	Can you identify the impact of the order of events on the reader?	How do rhyme pairs create meaning by linking concepts?	Can you identify some famous examples? 1. 2. 3.

Deconstructing evidence

Using the table below, insert examples of evidence from the poem and then explore this evidence effectively by completing the answers across each row.

Evidence	Poetic technique/s in this evidence	How does the technique used in this evidence create meaning?

Apply to your own text

Now use the table below for a poem you are currently studying. Place the evidence you have identified in the left-hand column and attempt to deconstruct it across each row. If you cannot make the link between your evidence and the way it was created to communicate an idea, you are not yet prepared for the examination.

Evidence	Poetic technique/s in this evidence	How does the technique used in this evidence create meaning?

Poetry: Sample response one

This response is a strong demonstration of thematic analysis that is supported by close reading strategies. The candidate has identified important and powerful moments within the text and explained how, through the use of specific poetic devices, the concept of grief and experiences of loss, are communicated by the poem. The response includes multiple examples from the poem and provides a sophisticated and detailed engagement with this theme because the candidate employs the metalanguage of Literature, specifically poetry. This means that vital time is not dedicated to lengthy descriptions of something that could be explained through the use of specific terminology. One area that could be stronger in this response is the explanation of the effect of devices in illuminating the themes or ideas explained. In addition, the candidate underlined the title of the poem throughout the essay. This has been edited for publication. While this might seem an insignificant oversight, correct referencing is a syllabus concept and doing so correctly demonstrates a particular awareness of the conventions of literary analysis.

Meg Mooney's poem "My Town" uses an open form and generic conventions in order to construct a commentary surrounding the ideas of loss. The 2012 poem centres on an observation of the text's persona as she walks down the street following the death of her son, which both the structure and rhetorical devices contained within the lines of the text are essential in conveying the philosophical ideas that stem from the death of a loved one. Mooney makes use of enjambment with lines flowing into one another and the persona of the poem in addition to both aural and visual imagery as a mechanism through which readers of My Town are positioned to develop an understanding and appreciation surrounding the disjointed feeling of grief.

Much like that of the confessional poets, "My Town's" persona constructs an insight into the thought of the character, which the intimate relationship the reader was to the text enables the ideas surrounding grief to be communicated. As the poem progresses the reader is exposed to seemingly insignificant details such as "I've just waxed my legs" and "I gave him some money a few days ago", however this is entangled with deeper elements such as "having my name shouted somehow helped." This, in turn, works to establish a personal

This introduction establishes the thematic concern of the poem – loss – but also indicates the close reading practices that are going to be employed from the beginning of the answer: form, structural features and imagery.

This final sentence is clearly stating that the poem's construction has guided the reader to a particular understanding. Describing this process is what is required of a 'close reading'. Including this in an introduction helps your markers to recognise this practice.

This reference to 'confessional poets' should indicate a greater understanding and connection to the point being made for it to be meaningful to the discussion.

relationship between the persona and the reader as they are invited to grasp an understanding of the entirety of the persona's psyche and therefore, sympathise with the more emotional and philosophical thoughts of the character, particularly in relation to the loss of her son, detailed in the first stanza. The point of view established by the persona of "My Town" highlights the disjointed thought as they way in which she views life is too distorted. The emotional response that is established by the personal love constructed by the narrator ultimately allow the reader to find a deeper appreciation in the emotional struggles and disjointedness of an individual that stems from grief. Similarly, the enjambed structure of "My Town" and lack of punctuation also highlights the feeling of loss and the subsequent ideas of grief that are being communicated by Mooney. The flowing lines of the text as seen by "then a child yells my name, clear and high/down the street, I turn/see the boy and young couple", embody the sense of loss of direction and disjointedness that comes with grief through the apparent lack of an intentional form and cohesive structure. Mooney's utilization of the text's free verse, creates significant emphasis in the final lines as it reads "because I was falling inside", where the absence of a full stop creates a tone of uncertainty and uncomfortableness that can be associated with the nature of grief. Relying of the notable form which intentionally disregards a lack of punctuation of strict structure, "My Town" works to develop an understanding for the reader in regards to the disjointed and internal struggle that comes from grief.

Furthermore, "My Town" makes sufficient use of aural imagery throughout the text, in which this choice of aesthetics becomes a mechanism through which the reader is shown the true magnitude of loss the persona of the text is experiencing. Throughout multiple stanzas, the text references the calling of the narrator's name, as it is observed "It sounds like my

The candidate could provide a link between this reference and the ideas it reveals. How do 'insignificant details' establish this relationship? Is it about the relatability of the persona, the persona and reader having shared experiences, etc.?

It would be useful to identify the point of view employed as this supports the observations made.

It is best to avoid vague descriptive terms such as 'deeper appreciation'. Instead, outline exactly the more significant, or deeper, qualities that the reader identifies.

Here the candidate really demonstrates all the elements necessary in analysis – how the device is used, what the effect of that device is on the reading experience and what this helps us to understand.

Confused expression hinders the clarity of this topic sentence. Another way to state this point would be: 'My Town' uses repeated instances of auditory imagery to ensure the reader understands the vast impact of loss on the persona. There is actually no discussion of aesthetic here, so best leave it out.

name" "maybe its my name" and "my name shouted down the street," which the repeated notion of name calling is used as a means to highlight the dissociation the character has to reality following her son's death. The aural imagery is interrupted through the lineation of the text as the persona attempts to ignore her surroundings and her own thoughts of the persona. This combination of descriptive language and diction that mirrors stream of consciousness provides insight to the reader of the emotional state of the persona, which in turn, works to convey notions of grief and the disjointed feelings in reaction to the death of a loved one.

In addition, the visual imagery of "My Town", similarly works as a means through which Mooney constructs a representation of the internal struggle of grief. The poem details "the boy and young couple/ my teacher friends from the lawn," and this visual imagery creates a tone of innocence and appearance of happiness in relation to the family's interactions with the persona, but is also a reminder of what has been lost. This is interrupted through Mooney's use of caesura, where the nature of the poem switches to the internal monologue of the character as the text reads "I'm not up to much chat but that's OK/ they just wanted to say hello/ and merry christmas" This juxtaposition in the uplifting and normal tone established through the visual representation of family is in direct contrast to the internal suffering of the persona following the death of her son.

Stemming from Mooney's use of structure, the chronology of the stanzas is an additional means through which Mooney expands on her commentary on loss and the internal struggles of grief. The text opens with "It was that time when I felt/like I was in car smash", creating an emphasis on 'felt' and 'smash' through its lineation, however closes with the lines "like they were letting everyone knows to catch me, because inside I was falling." These two lines

Auditory imagery is a more conventional term for 'aural imagery'.

This is a very strong explanation of the impact of the aural component in a written text.

The candidate could also consider the importance of the aural aspects of community being replicated here.

This is not the only instance of caesura in the poem, it is used throughout the poem for similar effect to the one described here. The candidate should note this, before focusing on this one example for illustration. This is the most abrupt example and also denotes the shortest stanza which focuses our attention on what is lost at this point for the persona.

convey the emotional trauma what was caused as a result of the "son who had really crashed," but rather it is the chronology that ultimately works to convey the ideas of grief Mooney is conveying. The text is encompassed by these cries for help, while the middle stanzas detail the actuality of the persona's life as she walks through her town. The chronology of the stanzas in this way communicate the fact in which the persona's reality is dictated by her state of grief, in which it is here the reader is positioned to grasp a greater appreciation on the disjointing and all-consuming nature of grief.

Leaning on the use of its enjambled lines and disjointed structure, the intimate relationship between that of the persona and the reader in addition to stylistic choices of both visual and aural imagery, Mooney's "My Town" works to construct philosophical ideas on the internal suffering following a loss as well as the disjointed nature of grief. By detailing the aftermath of what was the death of a son, the text highlights the emotional impact through its efficient use of literary devices in order to construct a commentary on the psychological aspects of grief. Therefore, it is the incorporation and manipulation of generic conventions contained within the 2012 poem "My Town", that ultimately forms enables the positioning of readers to understand and appreciate the ideas surrounding loss and grief that are communicated throughout the text.

This detailed analysis of specific word choice is powerful. Explaining the impact of this small detail shows insightful reading skills, as well as the control of the poet.

A summary of this chronology would better support the comment made here.

A good statement of summary.

A very well-constructed summary sentence that pinpoints the thematic concerns and the emotional power of the text.

This conclusion summarises the process of close reading and connects the response back to the requirements of the question.

Activity: Working with imagery

We often learn that imagery is language that creates pictures in our mind. This is certainly true, but we can explore this in more depth and understand that these 'pictures' can be complex and are more than just visual imaginings. Imagery can evoke sensations from all of our senses, and can be descriptive, figurative or thematic in their construction.

If we consider imagery as relating to the senses of seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling and touching, some ways to describe imagery are:

- visual imagery
- auditory imagery
- gustatory imagery
- olfactory imagery
- tactile imagery.

Imagery can also create more complex sensations, such as movement and experiences. This can be described as kinaesthetic imagery and organic or subject imagery. One of the reasons that imagery is such an effective device is that we all (mostly) experience these same sensations. They are universal experiences and help connect the reader to locations, subject matter, experiences or concepts that might be unfamiliar.

The Romantic poets were masters of imagery and below you will find the first stanza from Keats' 'To Autumn' that relies heavily on imagery to create sensation and effect, as well as to communicate sentiments and ideas to the reader. Within the poem below, locate at least three examples of imagery and explain how the examples relate a sensation and connect an idea by completing the table. Often when providing analysis, we miss out the middle columns.

To Autumn

by John Keats

Where are the songs of spring? Ay, where are they?

Think not of them, thou hast thy music too,—

While barred clouds bloom the soft-dying day,

And touch the stubble-plains with rosy hue;

Then in a wailful choir the small gnats mourn

Among the river sallows, borne aloft

Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;

And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly bourn;

Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft

The red-breast whistles from a garden-croft;

And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.

Example	Type of imagery created	Language used (descriptive, figurative, metaphorical, combination)	Sensation evoked	Experience or idea communicated

Poetry: Sample response two

This response is sophisticated in its understanding and explores many concepts in this timed writing environment. Whilst there are areas for improvement, the candidate has done well to produce such an intellectually astute reading of an unseen poem under exam conditions. The structure of this response does not always appear controlled and the candidate might have found that more substantial planning would have helped ensure cohesion within their writing. The strength of this response is in its use of evidence. The candidate makes close and frequent reference to aspects of poetic techniques and forms, thus showing their ability to closely read and analyse various components of the text and connect them to an overall reading.

"Literature doesn't simply describe reality – it adds to it". One does not need to look too hard at Meg Mooney's poem "My Town" (2012) to see the truth in C. S. Lewis' aphorism. This free verse poem gives us an insight into the persona's emotions in a painful period of their life, allowing it to explore ideas of belonging, identity and suffering. Such themes are explored through strategic use of structural and literary devices.

The first person voice of this poem, alongside structure features such as enjambment, gives readers an insight into the loneliness and isolation felt when one is experiencing pain. The opening lines of the poem "it was the time when I felt / like I was in a car smash" use past tense to provide a background for the persona's situation. The familiar tone is used to enable readers to connect with the persona and their emotions. The use of curtly enjambed lines turns this ordinary enough phrase into a metaphor for the persona's sense of brokenness that they are feeling. This sense of isolation they are feeling is resumed in the third stanza when the persona thinks that the calls may be her name but they tell us "I'll just ignore it". As the final line of this stanza and with no punctuation, Mooney wants to emphasise the isolation and loneliness felt by her persona. Furthermore, this sense of hopelessness is summoned by the final line of the poem "because I was falling" symbolising the desolation and depression felt by the persona. Mooney has used the poem's structure as a whole to create an

While this opening might seem impressive and makes an interesting statement about literature, it doesn't add to the introduction of this discussion. Be certain to make references like this relevant.

Try to outline a more specific approach in your introduction in relation to close analysis.

While this explanation of ideas is impressive, the analysis of first person point of view, voice and enjambment merges. It is important to control the analysis and provide clear connections between specific examples and your reading.

It is helpful to build layers of different elements that contribute to a central theme, showing how a variety of devices work in collaboration.

Structurally, this answer could be better controlled. The argument tends to ramble and needs clearer signposts and connecting statements.

atmosphere of falling into depression. The poem's infrequent use of punctuation, being limited only to dashes and commas as well as the continued enjambment makes the poem an extended metaphor representing the loss and despair. Even though the persona isn't the one who has had a car crash, "My Town" calls readers to recognise the depth of sadness that sympathetic pain can bring.

Meg Mooney also presents important ideas about community and belonging in her poem, which appears to be set in a town such as Alice Springs. Outback towns such as these often are often dominated by Indigenous people, and Mooney uses this to reiterate the strong sense of community at the heart of Indigenous culture. This is seen when the person recounts "someone calls out, an Aboriginal bloke / - only whitefellas like quiet streets". The dash used to separate these lines constructs the second line as an explanation for the action. A juxtaposition between European and Indigenous cultures is thus constructed, highlighting the friendliness in this Indigenous community. Not only does Mooney celebrate such connections, but she also uses this idea as a stepping-stone to allow the importance of a simple greeting or salutation. After the persona exchanges a quick hello with her friends, she realises that "having my name shouted down the street / helped somehow, like they were letting everyone know / to catch me because I was falling". The warm sensation of support felt by the persona is transmitted to the reader through the first person point of view which invites us to recognise the beauty of community and a sense of belonging in the community. Additionally the possessive pronoun in the title "My Town" allows us to recognise the identity the persona connects with the town. Mooney invites readers to celebrate the sense of community which is stringently upheld in Indigenous culture, thus calling readers to be inclusive and friendly in their everyday lives.

A great observation of tone and movement in the poem.

More specific examples from the text to support this observation would be helpful.

This discussion of contextual concepts in the poem is effective because it grounds the ideas with clear interpretations from the text, but it might be valuable to elaborate on the historical nature of – and relationships between – these cultures.

Further analysis of how this sensation is constructed, especially the structural feature of the order of the narrative within the poem, would be helpful here.

A powerful comment. It is always useful to consider the title of a text and this point of analysis, being connected to this wider idea from the body of the poem, is well-explained.

However, indigenous culture isn't always celebrated in the everyday life of Australians with many making assumptions about Aboriginal people. "My Town" uses the persona to challenge such expectations. In an explanation to the reader the persona states "if I didn't know them, I might think/ this man and woman were drunk sitting there/ wanting to sell cheap paintings/it's easy to get things wrong in this town". The persona relates to the reader by showing that she too can make incorrect judgements, but she challenges our expectations by illustrating that often people are wrong. Although white Australians are unfortunately prone to judging indigenous people whom we see, "My Town" is constructed with a relatable voice in order to challenge such assumptions.

This poem uses a familial voice alongside structural and language devices to explore important concepts. Not only does Mooney give readers an insight into the complexities of pain, but she also teaches a moral lesson by promoting friendliness to build community, as well as challenging common assumptions made regarding indigenous people. Personally, the poem's first person voice enabled me to connect with the persona in a way which isn't always possible in poetry, enabling me to grow personally from the lessons taught in the poem.

This interpretation of the poem's connection with the wider contextual issue of race within Australia is well-explained. Linking it to the persona's sensitive expression of this controversial concept is very effective.

It would be helpful to highlight the words within this quote that really unlock this idea to the reader.

This conclusion attempts to draw together the various elements of the response, but the lack of structure in parts of the candidate's discussion can be seen here. The conclusion only summarises the later points of the reading.

Activity: Clarifying the difference between style, diction, tone and voice

Style, diction, tone and voice – these are all terms that often get used interchangeably by literature students. There are important distinctions that should be observed, however, as well as critical relationship between them. Unfortunately, the ATAR Literature glossary doesn't provide definitions for some of these terms, but they are all part of literary construction and you need to be able understand – and confidently discuss – them, as students of the course.

Diction: the specific word choices of a writer or speaker. This involves register (formal, informal, colloquial, archaic, etc.), denotation and connotation.

Style: the structures and patterns of language use, including word choice and syntax. We can observe stylistic features (favoured patterns) of certain writers, or indeed schools, genres or periods of writing. (See the Literature glossary for more on style.)

Tone: the feeling or attitude presented towards ideas or individuals. This is different to atmosphere and mood, but not as ideologically framed as perspective. Tone is evident to the audience through the use of diction and style, informing how readers are positioned to respond to the text.

Voice: this is a creation within the text and describes the specific way we are told a story or experience. This might be through a narrator or persona and it describes the individual characteristics and features of the perspective presented. Like tone, this is created through the use of diction and style.

Authorial Voice: this is a contested term that was traditionally considered to be the singular and authoritative voice of the text's creator. While this still has currency in non-fiction texts, we might feel uncomfortable using this term in relation to fictional texts since we acknowledge these are a constructed reality. (See the Literature glossary for more on voice.)

Look closely at the following stanza from 'My Town' by Meg Mooney and complete the gaps in the table below to demonstrate the differences between these concepts.

I've just had my legs waxed
walk out on the main street
turn down towards my car
when someone calls out, an Aboriginal bloke –
only whitefellas like quiet streets –
it sounds like my name, which is short –
shouts often confuse me like this

Example	Device	Effect	Explanation
'bloke', 'whitefella'	Diction - Australian vernacular establishing context and familiarity		
'I've just had my legs waxed / walk out on the main street'	Style (created through word choice and enjambment)		
'I've just had my legs waxed / walk out on the main street / turn down towards my car'	Tone - the word choice, enjambment and repetitive metre communicate a lethargic tone.	This tone helps us to recognise the gravitas of the theme of grief	
	Voice - caesuras and en dashes (features of style)	A distracted and disjointed persona who appears to be unnerved in the setting	

Each example, and device, has its own specific effect, but contributes to a broader reading, or explanation of understanding. So, while diction, style, tone and voice all work together to inform a reading, you must acknowledge their subtle differences in your analysis.

Poetry: Sample response three

It can be difficult to make immediate sense of an unseen text, but this response provides a very thorough discussion of the themes of trauma and grief, and considers the poem's persona as someone affected by such experiences. Occasionally, this candidate finds themselves summarising the 'story' of the persona within the poem, more than presenting a close reading; but overall, this response is insightful, sophisticated and offers some strong poetic analysis. This response takes many of the same examples from the text as Sample Responses One and Two, but explains very different interpretations of that material, demonstrating how multiple interpretations of a text are possible.

The way individuals deal with grief and hardship impacts on their overall quality of life, regardless of whether they are in a position of suffering or ease. The journey of grief for a mother after losing her son is illustrated through Meg Mooney's free verse poem "My Town" (2012), which highlights the stages of dealing with tragedy and concludes that the way to cope is through leaning on other people. Mooney, living in Alice Springs, would likely be aware of the hardship of the rural lifestyle and the struggles faced by the Indigenous communities in Australia in the postcolonial period, and this provides an insightful, wise perspective from which she can comment of grief. As the persona journeys from not comprehending the tragedy, to accepting the tragedy, to initiating her acceptance, the poem becomes a lesson, a model, of how to deal with burdens and thus is more able and encouraged to reach out to others in times of hardship.

A good opening with controlled explanation of the poem's thematic engagement and expression of ideas.

This assumption about Mooney's own context is supported by contextual information from the poem and the themes identified.

This explanation of the text's impact is helpful in the construction of the close reading. Framing this as a close reading in the introduction would signal an understanding of the practices being employed.

Depending on how severe the trauma, and the position of survivors, tragedy and suffering can remain unacknowledged and not properly understood for large amounts of time. "My Town" opens with the persona in a state of denial as she reveals to the audience that "I felt/ like I was in a car smash/ for crashed". The smooth flow of the sentiment, established through enjambment and lack of iambic rhythm, draws the audience into what feels like a conversation with the persona regarding the tragedy.

she has previously experienced. The use of colloquial English and manipulation of the expected word order allows the reader to interpret that the grief still impacts the persona's ability to interpret and understand clearly, as she still faces angst and discomfort regarding the tragedy she has dealt with. The lack of specific detail of the severity of a car crash is perhaps most revealed as the persona labels the experience, and experience that would presumably happen a very limited amount of times, "that time" rather than "the crash" or "my son's death" implying that the persona has not fully comprehended this experience and is not in a position where she has moved on, rather one where she attempts to deal alone with the suffering and pain she is feeling. The opening stanza and thus exposition of this 'story' allows Mooney to communicate how severely grief can influence individuals by characterising her persona continuing to suffer from the pain of the sudden and potentially random death of her son. Through the first introduction with the persona, the audience is presented with the reality of how deeply trauma can influence individuals and how it is very often not dealt with or comprehended.

As trauma becomes part of the more distant past, individuals tend to continue with their ordinary life and the suffering recedes without, necessarily a coping mechanism being in place. As the persona tells the reader that "I've just had my legs waxed." The reader is provided with a visual image of the persona returning to the everyday duties and tasks but is able to presume the tragedy still exists, unprocessed in the back of her mind. The change of tense partnered with the already established first person narrator continues the conversational tone as if the reader is hearing in dialogue directly from the persona what she is doing with her day. This positions the reader to empathise with the persona as she takes on a childish quality in which her lack of acceptance of the trauma characterises her as vulnerable and to be protected. As

These observations, while accurate, should be supported by specific examples.

Good interpretations of the text, but this paragraph involves more retell than analysis. It is important to keep the practices of close reading in mind.

Consider how each of the paragraphs opens with comments about the persona's psychological experience. It would be beneficial to vary this and place more emphasis on the reading constructed in the topic sentences.

This analysis lacks detail. While the candidate identifies the devices and elements employed by the text and explains the understanding that we reach, there is very little explanation of why these elements have this impact.

It is helpful to indicate the types of tense used. The text moves from past to present tense.

It would be helpful to explain how this is a childish quality. This is unclear.

the second stanza continues, the reader becomes more aware of the confusion and vulnerability of the persona as she describes "someone calls out... it sounds like my name, which is short - I shouts often confuse me like this". The series of phrases, improperly strung together is carefully constructed to not merely appear as a poetic manipulation of language but to reflect the confusion, fear and uncertainty lurking in the persona's mind.

This is a different interpretation to the same moment of the poem from the first response to this poem. This shows how differently we can read examples of poetry.

The use of extremely short phrases isolated by caesura demonstrates the persona's short attention span, potentially link to her hyper-vigilance, circling back to the notion that although, on the outside, she has moved along with her life, the reader can infer the vulnerability as a result of the grief the persona has been left with. The precedent of short phrases positioned together to make a confusing stanza is revisited in the third stanza as the reader seems to be following the exact through process of the persona as she thinks "the call continues/ maybe it is my name/ it could be Tjakamarra/ I gave him some money a few days ago/ I'll just ignore it". The repetition in the style of colloquial, realist, non-poetic language engages the reader, further developing the vulnerable, childish mind of the persona as a result of her grief. The surprising presentation of this insight in the genre of poetry positions the reader to further see how far from 'healthy' or 'normal' the persona is and therefore to interpret the severity of grief. Through the entering of the persona's mind through the first person narration, the reader is able to see how, although they are continuing to live, the persona's life is so deeply impacted by the grief. The construction of the persona in the internal stanzas of this poem allows an understanding of grief and the lack of resolution within the individual.

This is a strong topic sentence that balances analysis and understanding.

Rather than describing the persona as 'childish', it might be more accurate to use terms such as stunted or arrested.

This linking sentence is vague; 'allows an understanding of grief' and 'lack of resolution' are generalised phrases that do not effectively clarify the point the candidate is making here.

Grief is a tragic aspect of life that impacts all people. Through the journey of her persona Mooney is able to

portray how grief exists and how it can influence people, and positions her readers to notice that full acceptance and recovery is dependent upon other who are required to support and provide comfort. While much grief in contemporary society is 'swept under the rug' and ignored. Mooney highlights how negatively this impacted her persona, altering her everyday life. As such readers are encouraged to seek help in coping with their grief.

This conclusion summarises the theme of grief very eloquently; however, it should summarise the close reading more completely with more acknowledgement of how the theme is understood.

Activity: #FinishStrong

We all know how exhausted and relieved we can feel as we reach the end of an essay, or perhaps how rushed we might be as the exam clock ticks away. It is really important, though, that you use your conclusion to synthesise your entire discussion and emphasise your main points. While the conclusion above reads as a perfectly acceptable concluding paragraph, it doesn't showcase the whole argument. This leaves the impact of your work on the reader/marker to rely on their memory of your ideas. Punch strong at the end of your essay!

Re-read the essay above and annotate its main points in the margin. When you come to the conclusion, re-write the paragraph to provide a power summary of this extensive argument and the candidate's control of close-reading strategies.

Hint: Know your technical terminology

A strong understanding of language techniques and devices is essential for both Section One and Section Two, but particularly in this Close Reading section, as you are required to deconstruct unseen texts. These features are easy to learn and memorise through study techniques such as flashcards.

Once you have built up your knowledge of a variety of techniques, you can practise identifying and analysing these in close reading texts.

Text C – Prose

A.M. Homes – *This Book Will Save Your Life*

Possible readings

The extract from can be read with a focus on its exploration of ideas related to technology, control, love and loneliness. The unnamed protagonist is a creature of habit who surrounds himself with a 'vacuum of silence' created by a reliance on his headset and device. Though his morning routine appears to give him 'comfort' and a sense of control, an atmosphere of claustrophobia pervades the setting and his loneliness is obvious. In this way, the passage operates to critique our reliance on technology, focalising its function as a crutch to remove us from meaningful human connections. The man's obvious attraction to the female swimmer amplifies this idea and introduces the theme of unrequited love – in this extract he merely observes his surroundings, seemingly unable to engage with them in a meaningful way. Astute candidates will identify that the man is no longer happy with his 'usual routine' and there is a sense that the man's life is about to change. Therefore, the passage appears to privilege the importance of human connection.

The excerpt can also be read generically, with a focus on its function as an exposition and as a possible work of science fiction. Candidates might note the contextual information, which states that the extract is the opening of a novel. As such, it establishes characters, settings, conflicts and themes. The unnamed protagonist functions as an 'everyman', highlighting our overreliance on technology for comfort and the isolation of contemporary society. The setting of Los Angeles is depicted with a focus on wealth: houses on the hill, putting greens, home gyms; yet this is all presented as superficial. There is an incongruence between the man's desires and his reality – he is presented as economically successful, yet is unhappy. There are also markers of the science fiction genre in the passage: the 'mechanical sounds' taking on a life of their own, the 'electronic wave' and the juxtaposition between the man-made and the natural world. Candidates might identify the passage as belonging to the dystopian genre with its familiar notions of control and order, the mastery of nature and dissatisfaction.

An ecocritical reading of the excerpt is also possible. Within the setting there is a privileging of the built environment over the natural world: the lawn that would 'otherwise be nothing' and the houses that 'climb the canyon wall'. There exists a desire to master nature, to exist spatially at the top of hill, which economically equates to wealth and power. Yet the man-made world is presented as artificial and hollow – the man's glass house on the hill has connotations of a prison and the woman swims in 'a pool of unnatural blue'. There is a sense that humans have tainted and disrupted the natural world, with the references to 'smoke signals' and descriptions of pollution.

Candidates may also note the passage's negative commentary of the trappings of wealth. The desire for the accumulation of material possessions, mansions and geographical superiority are presented as fleeting; the excerpt challenges our expectations of wealth – it seems to create a sense of insecurity rather than stability. A Marxist reader might note that the excerpt criticises capitalist and consumerist ideologies associated with the accumulation of wealth, exposing them as repressive.

Textual analysis

There are many significant structural features in this passage. The entire exposition details the man's perspective whilst looking out from his 'glass house', cementing his role as a detached observer, rather than active participant in his own life. Oppositions operate within the passage, such as the man-made and the natural and the contrast between the male and female characters, which centralises notions of disconnection and fragmentation. The excerpt ends with a rhetorical question, denoting the ambiguity of the landscape but also reinforcing the idea that the man's life is about to change.

The third person limited narrative approach creates a sense of intimacy and emotional closeness with the unnamed protagonist and his situation. The narrative voice is direct and tinged with irony; it satirises the affluence of the protagonist and the setting in which he lives.

The physical setting of the man's house is described in terms of the artificial and mechanical, creating an unsettling atmosphere for the protagonist, who is 'caught off guard' by the sounds of the apparatuses and the 'shudders'. The house functions symbolically as a prison. This is juxtaposed to the representation of nature as alluring, mysterious and evocative. This may be used to support a gender reading: the relationship between the natural and the feminine and masculinity as a prison that has resulted in men's detachment and disconnection despite the appearance of supremacy. The suburban, affluent setting suggests a cultural climate where power is associated with the accumulation of wealth. Geographically, a house at the 'top of the hill' signifies supremacy, yet the narrative voice exposes this as a fallacy: '*There is no way to win.*'

The writing style of the passage is precise and economical, imbued with vivid, realistic descriptions and wry humour. The repetition of the words 'usually he' throughout the passage is used in interesting ways such as anadiplosis: repetition in the first part of a clause or sentence of a prominent word from the latter part of the preceding clause or sentence. Syntactic choices such as this reinforce the disruption of the man's usual routine, signalling a change in his outlook. The diction used to describe the male and female characters is significant and dichotomous: she is a 'confidante', 'muse' and 'mermaid' whilst he is anticlimactically likened to a 'captain' and, ultimately, a 'prisoner of his own making' which may be used to support readings centring on his confinement and lack of freedom. Numerous pronouns such as 'above' and 'below' highlight spatial relationships and power dynamics.

Contextual considerations

This passage operates within a contemporary Western capitalist context. Although it is set in America, candidates may notice resonances with their own culture. Candidates may comment on the reference to betting and how this allows us to access ideas about the addictive and harmful nature of gambling and its prevalence in society. The passage is a commentary on the overreliance on technology and students might discuss the rise of social media and the ironic disconnection between people that this can create. Candidates may discuss the setting of Los Angeles, how this iconic city is associated with celebrities and opulence, and how the passage challenges the idyllic portrayal of this lifestyle. The ending of the passage references fire and candidates might make connections to the deadly fires that ravaged California in 2018 to support an ecocritical reading and the futility of attempts to master nature.

Activity: Preparing for prose – know the discourse

When candidates present a close reading of a prose piece, there is often a tendency to retell the plot rather than analyse specific prose elements. A strong reading will focus on both ideas and techniques in every paragraph. It is imperative that you understand how prose passages are constructed, so that your reading contains competent analysis. To achieve this, you need to be familiar with a variety of prose concepts and terminology.

Prose Terminology	Features	Possible Effects
Narrative approach	First person Second person Third person limited Third person omniscient Third person objective Multiple narrators Character viewpoints	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Position readers to support or reject certain beliefs, attitudes and values. Give a voice to particular discourses. Produce irony. Put readers 'at a distance' from characters and events, or establish emotional closeness. Seem objective and authoritative.
Structural elements	Chapter titles The beginning and end of a passage Organisation of time Shifts of setting Oppositions or binaries Archetypes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support particular values and attitudes. Establish conflicts between opposing belief systems or ideologies. Influence the meaning produced. Invite a reader response.
Characters	Naming Interior monologue Choice of verbs for speech Connotative words Descriptions of appearance Actions Selection of detail	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct an imaginary identity. Embody stereotypes. Evoke particular responses. Undermine or empower particular characters and what they represent. Invite sympathy or disdain. Construct oppositions.
Setting	Geographical Physical Temporal Social Cultural Economic Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish time. Function symbolically. Centralise particular ideas. Build atmosphere. Establish a cultural climate. Contribute to ideas.
Stylistic elements	Diction Syntax Sentence organisation Figurative language Rhetorical devices Tone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create irony or ambiguity. Represent particular social groups. Emphasise emotion (or lack thereof). Influence readings. Create imagery. Construct character and shape responses to them.

Activity: Preparing for prose – analysing a prose extract

Locate a copy of last year's text booklet (available on the SCSA website: <https://senior-secondary.scsa.wa.edu.au/syllabus-and-support-materials/english/literature>), or source the prose extract from another location.

Re-read the novel extract and pull out any evidence of prose elements at play. Using the table below, analyse the effect of the devices you find. (You can also recreate this table and practise identifying techniques with other prose passages throughout the year.)

Prose Terminology	Feature/s	Evidence	Analysis
Narrative Approach	Third person limited	'After years of making sure that he is left alone, he is suddenly afraid to be alone, afraid not to hear, not to feel, not to notice.'	The third person limited narration allows readers access to the protagonist's feelings: a desire for connection and emotion. He is characterised as discontent and ill-at-ease with his circumstances. The repetition of 'afraid...not to' creates a sense of urgency and supports the idea that human interactions are necessary for a meaningful existence.
Structural elements			
Characters			
Setting			
Stylistic elements			

Prose: Sample response one

This is a concise and effective reading of the text, which centralises how the urban experience is represented. The candidate demonstrates a sound understanding of prose elements such as setting and narrative point of view; their knowledge of these generic features is refreshing as many candidates tend to solely analyse language. The candidate draws on evidence from across the excerpt and embeds this effectively into their syntax. The topic sentences signpost the reading strategy effectively and the clarity of this response would be appreciated by markers. There is a sense, however, that this response was rushed: the conclusion is only one sentence and the overall expression of the essay would be improved with more careful editing. If you choose to write your close reading last, ensure you leave ample time to analyse and respond to the passage to the best of your ability.

When reading Text C, an extract from the opening of the novel This Book will Save Your Life by A.M. Homes, with a focus on representations, it can be read as exploring ideas about the experiences of living in an urban, metropolitan society and the rather damaging repercussions of these experiences of the individuals within it. In particular, the text's aesthetic features, through the use of highly vivid and immersive sensory imagery as well as the focalisation of the narrative point of view works to represent the urban experience characterised by a sense of stagnation and monotony – an endless, and inescapable life of routine. Reading the text this way also, at times, works to represent this experience as impersonal and mechanistic, with a loss of individual desire and identity. Ultimately, the text works to grapple with the anxieties associated with living in contemporary urban society, revealing its damaging impacts on the individual themselves.

Reading the text with a focus on representation worked to represent the experience of living in an urban metropolitan society as characterised by a sense of monotony and stagnation. The text opens with the lines, "he stands at the glass looking out," beginning with a short description of the setting, which immediately evokes a sense of anticipation and 'waiting.' The opening passage also mostly consists

The expression of the opening sentence is a bit awkward, but the candidate establishes a clear reading strategy, one which centres on textual representation.

The candidate uses the word 'stagnance' several times. The correct form should be stagnation.

This introduction ends with a clear summary of the candidate's reading position. Beginning the final sentence of the introduction with the word 'ultimately' can be a helpful way to synthesise your ideas.

This topic sentence continues to signposts the candidate's chosen reading strategy. The candidate shifts verb tense here – from present to past – which makes the response feel a bit disjointed. It is ideal to maintain present tense throughout the response.

of short, sharp sentences, lightly increasing the reading pace and further accentuating a sense of something 'yet to come.' The narrator then describes how "the city spreads below him, blanketed in foggy slumber...low pressure. The clouds roll over the hills, seeping...sending smoke signals." The setting is described in compounding detail, creating a layered sensory experience for the reader. Immediately, the description of the city scape evokes feelings of fatigue and lethargy, mirroring a sense of anti-progress and dullness. The 'blanket' of fog functions as tactile imagery, enveloping the reading in same lapse of 'slumber.' The bleak imagery constructed is typically of that of the Modernist philosophy, and resonates with works such as the poems of T.S. Eliot. In his poem Preludes, that transforms the banal 'passage ways' of the Boston and London cityscapes, into a series of multi-sensory and immersive images, evoking a similar sense of stagnance and anticipation. The sense of monotony which characterises the urban experience is also explored through perpetual repetition of certain phrases such as "he is at the glass," or "he stands at the glass," "usually he, he usually." These phrases are interspersed throughout the text, catching the reader off guard and creating almost a hypnotic experience. In this way, not only does the text foreground the monotony and routine associate with urban life, by mirroring a similar multisensory experience for the reader, it also reveals how inescapable and trapped individuals feel as a result.

Reading the text with a focus on representations also worked to represent the machine-like aspect and impersonalisation associated with the urban lifestyle. Though the narrative point of view appears to be in third person limited, the narrative is still somewhat focalised through the subjective perspective of the main character. His anonymity as well as the narrator's dull, detached and matter-of-fact tone immediately works to construct a sense of impersonalisation. The focalisation of the narration also enables the reader to

The candidate's analysis of setting – particularly the way it is constructed through sensory imagery – demonstrates a sound understanding of a key prose element. So many candidates neglect to address specific prose features. You are expected to demonstrate an understanding of generic elements in your reading.

The candidate continues to demonstrate a sound understanding of reading strategies, using intertextual links to further develop their reading. The expression here is stilted and better editing would have enhanced this point.

This is an effective synthesis of evidence from across the excerpt. It is integrated effectively into the sentence and enhances this point because the candidate illustrates how multiple examples from the text work to create meaning, rather than one piece of evidence in isolation.

Here, the topic sentence draws the focus back to the reading and makes the answer easy to follow. There is a sense of cohesion across the response.

Similarly to 'stagnance', the term 'impersonalisation' is incorrect. 'Detachment' might be a good substitute here. It is important to work on building your vocabulary so your expression does not compromise the quality of your reading.

see that the narrative descriptions, a mix of short, and long-winding syntax functions almost as a stream-of-consciousness narrative, with each sentence resembling a string of thought. However, these thoughts, with sentences like 'he hears nothing, feels nothing' have a robotic, and empty aesthetic quality, suggesting instead more machine-like and impersonal undertones. As a result of the narrative focalisation the reader is also able to see that the narrator's life is bombarded entirely with such descriptions, arguably preventing his own desires and story from being explored and contributing to a loss of individual identity. The parallelism drawn between the protagonist and machines also aesthetically draws emphasis to an absurd visual image "while the ice tumbles into the freezer, the coffee pot begins to fill with water and air whooshes," the protagonist is stuck in a "vacuum of silence." It can be read almost as the machines and mechanics of the industrial world slowly charging to life, almost draining the human world of it, rendering it mechanistic and dull.

ultimately, the text's overall bleak aesthetic intertwined with sordid and expansive sensory imagery also work to reveal the anxieties that underlay urban, metropolitan life, and its significantly detrimental repercussions on the individuals living in contemporary society.

This is an astute discussion of narrative point of view, which connects the tone of the narrative to the reading.

The candidate continues to demonstrate a sound understanding of the text's aesthetic features and makes sophisticated links between the aesthetic and the intellectual-key syllabus concepts.

The candidate presents an impactful synthesis of their discussion here; however, an expanded conclusion, which also summarises the main points of the response and correctly references the title and form of the text, would be helpful.

Activity: Phrasing a close reading

What is a reading?

A 'reading' is an explanation of your understanding of a text. A simple way to construct a reading is to discuss the ideas embedded in a text and the techniques that reveal these ideas. Less effective approaches include summarising the plot or searching for author intent.

Phrasing your thesis

You may find it helpful to accumulate a bank of 'sentence starters' for phrasing your reading of a text. Some suggestions are provided. Add your own to the list.

- A reader from the context of production who considers...may....
- Readers who foreground...may interpret the text as...
- _____ readers may construe the passage as a comment on...

Prose: Sample response two

This response was chosen for the candidate's ability to construe multiple readings from the extract and explain these with precision and strong analysis. It is certainly much more detailed than most close readings and you would not be expected to write a reading of this length. The candidate's ability to discuss multiple reading strategies, such as contextual, Marxist and ecocritical approaches is impressive. The response consistently demonstrates strong close textual analytical skills; the candidate selects a range of evidence and deconstructs the effect of language techniques in relation to their readings. The candidate demonstrates a strong comprehension of how the passage engages with contemporary issues and considers the impact on modern-day readers. Though the candidate provides excellent analysis of language features, a discussion of the generic features of prose, such as characterisation, setting and point of view, is lacking.

Los Angeles is a city synonymous with wealth, prestige, glamour and ostentation, and is the encapsulation of the elusive 'American Dream.' American author A.M. Homes seeks to expose the fallacies behind the human desire to seek materialistic gratification to condemn the consumerist culture, to warn of the detrimental ramifications of humanity's hedonistic actions, perennially relevant issues explored in his 2006 novel, This Book will Save Your Life. Set in Los Angeles, the novel can be read as a scathing social commentary of humanity's incessant pursuit of fame and fortune, conducting an investigation into the emptiness of the ever elusive desire for more. Through the employment of a myriad of narrative techniques, including alliteration, symbolism, asyndeton and epizeuxis, Homes explores the cracks in the façade of the American dream, condemns consumerism and warns of humanity's need to heal the natural world.

Homes explores the shallowness of the consumerist culture, and the excessiveness of the western world's daily existence through the use of poignant lexical choices, symbolism and punctuation. The primary character of the novel runs daily, a ritualistic activity, which can be read as an attempt to run away from the mundane and banal reality that is his daily existence. While running he is "typing while he trots,

This candidate reads the text as a social commentary and demonstrates a sound understanding of the text's engagement with contemporary issues.

The devices listed here are language features, not narrative techniques. This reading would be enhanced by an analysis of generic devices related to prose fiction, such as characterisation, setting, and/or point of view, and how they are constructed through language.

This topic sentence clearly introduces the issues that the candidate will explore in the paragraph and signposts the textual features that will be analysed.

placing his bets, going long and short, seeing how far up or down he can go." The use of asyndeton gives the text a hurried, stress feel, emulative of the immense stress the character feels as they attempt to survive and keep afloat amidst a world of consumerism. The persona's unhappiness and discomfort with his life is again evident when the author writes: "he hears nothing, feels nothing...he wakes up, puts on his noise cancelling headset." The use of epizeuxis and lexical choice of 'nothing' reflects the emptiness of the character's existence. The fact that he seeks to drown out his senses speaks to his desire to numb himself, and this can arguably be extrapolated to be condemning of the attempt by the western world to placate their emotions through materialistic means. The character has a coffee machine that is "automatic - he doesn't even drink coffee." The use of hyphen creates a fracture, highlighting the paradox and futility of having a coffee machine - a useless object which he runs everyday, with no need to. This coffee machine running every day despite no one drinking it echoes of Ray Bradbury's *There Will Come Soft Rain*, a similarly dystopic text that highlights man's dependence on technology, and warns of the detrimental ramifications of a consumerist culture. A reading of the novel as a scathing social commentary on mankind's dependence on technology and the fallacy of the consumerist culture can be understood through the syntax, symbolism and lexical choices made by Homes.

When read with a Marxist lens, Homes' novel seems to delineate the emptiness of a rigid class structure. The character notes that "above and below, a chain of houses climb the canyon wall: a social chain, an economic chain, a food chain." The use of binary opposites and "above and below" creates a sense of suffocation - the character is surrounded with people attempting to climb the social ladder. The cacophonous alliteration of the 'c' in "chain" and "climb" evokes a hostile, inhospitable emotion in the reader, with the

The candidate demonstrates an impressive knowledge of specific language devices, such as asyndeton and epizeuxis, which makes for a refreshing read.

The candidate has experimented with intertextuality by mentioning another prose text from a similar genre. This demonstrates a sound understanding of the text's dystopic themes.

This linking sentence is repetitive and adds little to the discussion. A better strategy is to synthesise the content of the paragraph, or end with analysis, rather than including a redundant statement.

The candidate continues to show a strong understanding of the passage and the myriad of ways it can be interpreted. This response would be more cohesive if the candidate signposted this alternate reading in the introduction.

harsh 'c' sound reflective of society's ruthless attempts to usurp the above social class' position. The use of analogy, comparing the ascent up the social stratum to the "food chain", exposes humanity to be primal, and animalistic, as predators ready to devour those lower than them in order to maintain their status - and yet at what cost? The persona continues, stating "each person looks down...thinking they have it better, but there is always someone else either pressing up from below or down from above. There is no way to run." The use of bilabial plosive alliteration in 'better' and 'but' creates a sound of futility, of ruthlessness. The long structure of the first sentence starkly juxtaposes against the short, jarring "there is no way to win," highlighting the futility of humanity's attempts to climb the social ladder. Karl Marx's opening lines of his Communist Manifesto is "let the ruling class tremble at a communistic revolution," and indeed, the extract captures the essence of the bourgeois' fears - usurpation of their position. When read with a cultural, Marxist lens, the text exposes the fallacies and emptiness of the class system, a system which facilitates systemic disenfranchisement and provides little contentment, highlighted once more when the author writes "he stands - captain, lord, master, prisoner of his own making." The use of asyndeton again creates a hurried, staccato beat to the sentence, and the lexical choices of the author initially appear paradoxical - how can one simultaneously be a master and a prisoner. Yet, when read with a Marxist lens, one can observe that it is the character's slavery to the class system that makes him both a wealthy master, and a prisoner, for he is trapped in the prison of the social hierarchy.

The use of despondent visual imagery explores the agony of the natural world, suffering at the hands of mankind's relentless exploitation. The novel opens with a description of the city "blanketed in a foggy slumber." The lexical choice of 'fog' instantly connotes images of pollution and the diction choice of 'slumber'

Excellent analysis and deconstruction of language techniques to support the Marxist reading of the extract. The candidate draws on a range of techniques and discusses the effect of the chosen evidence.

This linking sentence is much more effective than that of the previous paragraph. The candidate is able to succinctly synthesise the content of the paragraph and draw conclusions about the evidence utilised.

This paragraph discusses an ecocritical reading of the excerpt. The candidate makes interesting and valid observations, though the response would benefit from a smoother transition between paragraphs.

can be read as mankind's blissful oblivion of the agony of nature. The passage continues, detailing how "clouds roll over the hills, seeping out of cracks and crevices as if the geography itself is sending smoke signals." The description of the clouds as "seeping out of cracks and crevices" seems to imply that the clouds, a synecdoche for nature, is unwanted, and must fight to permeate the city of Los Angeles' atmosphere. The sibilance of 'sending smoke signals' creates a hissing tone, as if nature is attempting to warn humanity of an impending fire. The opening passage links with the final sentence: "brush fire, or simply dawn in Los Angeles?" The rhetorical question resonates with the reader, and highlights the inability of the character to distinguish between natural disasters or merely another day in the city. The inability of the persona to distinguish between the two highlights mankind's oblivion to nature, and their attempts to replace authentic, real nature with synthetic counterparts. This is again evident when the author writes "men are installing a lawn where there would otherwise be nothing." Rather than attempting to recuperate the ground, men are replacing it with a man-made alternative, and making no attempt to heal the barren land, or respect the natural terrain of Los Angeles, a symbol of the oblivion of mankind, and the blissful ignorance that the western world survives in.

The novel also explores another subversion of nature - though the employment of symbolism and lexical choice - the subversion of mankind's innate need for human connection. The primary character watches a woman swim...her suit is a bright red...a rare tropical bird." The almost sacred lexical choice and the alliteration creates a tone of veneration. "He takes rhythm, routine, in the fact that she is awake when he is awake." The fact that he is so enamoured with the woman and that he relishes her company, even if she

This response continues to showcase strong close textual analysis of the language techniques that operate in the passage in order to develop and support their reading. This metalanguage is incorporated in a fluent manner.

The candidate's vocabulary and varied syntax creates a strong sense of personal voice and style, making the response engaging for a marker.

The candidate has discerned yet another reading from the passage. The scope of this response and the range of reading practices is impressive. However, it is not essential to do so; as other responses in Good Answers 2019 demonstrate, a single, well-explained reading can score just as highly. In fact, responses which attempt to offer multiple readings can suffer from a lack of detail to justify each reading, or a lack of cohesion within the response.

is little more than a 'dot', speaks to his isolation. The asyndeton creates a sense of urgency, as if he needs to see her, as if she is his sole human connection in a "vacuum of silence." "She is his confidante, his muse" and is his one human connection. In a world that is attempting to substitute human connection with technological alternates, the novel serves to warn of the emptiness of a life absent and devoid of human connection. The need for human connection is a perennially relevant issue, resonating across time and place, and the novel serves as a vessel, warning contemporary society of the need to establish genuine human connections.

Ultimately, This Book Will Save Your Life explores the fallacy of the American Dream, mankind's exploitation of the natural world, the emptiness of the class hierarchy and the need for human connection. Through the employment of a myriad of narrative conventions, the novel resonates with contemporary readers, with its dystopic world reflecting readers' own reality back at them, imploring readers to establish human connection, to bridge the chasm between the classes, to heed nature's warning and to be present, warning of how a refusal to listen to the message of the book may result in a life devoid of love, laughter and contentment.

The candidate integrates textual evidence seamlessly into their syntax, which continues to elevate the quality of the reading.

The conclusion mirrors several elements of the introduction, creating a sense of cohesion. The response ends in an interesting manner, speculating on the impact of the text for contemporary readers.

Hint: Less is more – the cake metaphor

It can be tempting to 'show off' in this section, offering multiple readings or employing particular ideological reading practices in the belief it will gain higher marks. You do not need to do so! A unified and cohesive response that deals thoughtfully with a single reading, even one focusing on the text's themes and construction, can be just as impressive.

Imagine all the possible readings as a cake – you can't possibly eat it all in one sitting, so don't try. But rather than attempting to cover all your bases and only managing to eat the surface layer of icing (which may look tasty but is ultimately unfulfilling), cut a nice big slice. That is, focus on just *one* way (or, at most, two ways) the text can be read, but dig through all the layers and explain this reading in depth.

Activity: Comparing introductions

The following is the introduction of another examination close reading response. The candidate takes a comparable approach to the passage and both seem to employ a similar 'formula'. Read the alternate introduction and complete the following table. Compare the two, focusing on similarities and differences. Then, evaluate and decide which one you believe is more effective. The two introductions might help you devise your own 'formula' for a close reading introduction.

Prose: Sample response three

Texts have the ability to not only reflect the society and culture in which it was produced, but also to draw attention to significant issues. This extract from *This Book Will Save Your Life* (2006) by American author Homes gives insight into the protagonist's reflection on the extent to which he has achieved his goals of wealth and power as well as how he has lost sight of the daily contentments in life. In this extract, Homes manipulates narrative point of view, figurative language and setting to critique the loneliness and hollowness of western society's pursuit of wealth and power, instead championing the simple appreciation of daily life.

Similarities	Differences

Evaluate: Which introduction do you believe is most effective and why?

Hint: Make a good first impression

A clear and concise introduction can create a strong impression for a marker and ultimately set your argument up for success. With a close reading, half a page is an ideal length. Ensure you signpost your reading strategy. It is also a good idea to introduce the language features and/or generic conventions you will analyse.

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 they engage with 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 list. 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 answer only to realise you didn’t really answer the question. 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 that you should be working to improve 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) alongside the syllabus document and trace where the questions came from. You will be able to see 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 and 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, borrows from other genres, and also consider how genre works to position 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. The moment 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 post-colonial theory and embodies 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 texts have these 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 2018, emphasising the course concepts instead of knowledge about the text in isolation.

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

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.

<p><i>Use of evidence</i> (6 marks available)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know how to incorporate knowledge about your texts into your writing and practise doing so. This is a critical aspect of supporting your argument. • Evidence might support statements about generic construction, contextual importance or more general discussions of themes and ideas. • Always explain a quote – simply including it doesn't contribute to your discussion. • Understand how to quote both directly and indirectly. • Make sure your references are pertinent to the point you are making. • There is no magic number of quotes to memorise. You should know your texts extremely well and if you can't remember a quote, always summarise the reference in the text that you think will support your point. • Be able to draw on the understanding of your texts' cultural contexts. If you reference a genre, school of thought or movement, ensure you have the knowledge to be able to explain its significance to your argument.
<p><i>Linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology</i> (6 marks available)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Study the terminology of this subject and know how to use language specific to Literature. • Be familiar with the syllabus concepts and know how to use central terms in context. • Don't be tempted to overuse buzz-words and jargon. This does not demonstrate a better understanding of the key concepts or literary terms. Use language you understand. • This criterion doesn't just relate to generic and language conventions – you should be able to discuss the context of your texts with appropriate terminology as well. Know the main ideological concepts, spell the names of important figures and places correctly, etc. • Use the key words of the question to guide your discussion. • See the explanation of 'Linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology' earlier in this guide and use the appropriate terminology to support or clarify your discussion.
<p><i>Expression of ideas</i> (6 marks available)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Again, planning will help to express your ideas effectively. • Practise writing essays. This should be a part of your study plan over the course of the year. • Read academic articles and discussions to help improve your vocabulary and style. • Look at sample answers and compare them to your writing. • Ask your teacher if you are unsure about what might be wrong with your writing. • Don't over complicate your expression. Clarity is always best. Jargon does not replace good writing. • Allow time to re-read your response and amend where necessary.

Considering Question 2

Discuss how the manipulation of language in at least one text allows experience to be represented in intense and compressed ways.

Interpreting the question

This question asks candidates to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the way language is employed, shaped or experimented with. Often when presenting literary analysis, the discussion focuses on themes and ideas and how these are represented through language. This question focuses specifically on language use itself, particularly its ability to convey complex, nuanced or layered meanings.

To explore language, candidates should provide analysis of specific examples of discourse, figurative language, language patterns, diction, connotation and denotation, or imagery. Other examples of language use might include syntax and sentence structure, sound devices or dramatic language.

The question asks for a discussion of the '*manipulation*' of language, so this could involve experimental or unexpected uses of language, or discussion of the crafting or stylistic use of language. Candidates should explain these choices as having specific purposes or effects.

In addition to this discussion of language, it is necessary to consider how these choices represent '*experience*'. Experience might be personal or individual, it can be experienced by a collective or be figurative of an imaginary identity. These experiences might be social, cultural or emotional. They might also be physical, intellectual or imaginary. The important thing is that the experience is identified and explained.

The terms '*intense*' and '*compressed*' are provided as qualifying criteria to the experience/s discussed. They are ways of describing and analysing a text's way of representing an experience. Intense may be considered as capturing a heightened emotional experience or personal and emotional conflict. A compressed representation may refer to strategies such as foregrounding experience and allowing a particular experience to be explored within a short timeframe and in a complex way.

Advice from teachers

- Be careful not to rely on discussions of form or genre when considering how experience can be represented in intense and compressed ways. In attempting to discuss language, it can be easy to end up discussing the structures of poetry or the bildungsroman form. This is an understandable misdirection, but it is important to stay focused on language.
- Candidates should ensure they justify why the representation of experience can be considered compressed or intense.

Activity: Breathless beginnings

Below is the opening paragraph of the American classic, *Moby Dick*. The novel, written by Herman Melville in 1851, is a story about a significant experience. While the novel itself can't be described as compressed, this short opening passage begins to communicate the intensity of the Ishmael's experience, as well as the character himself. Read the passage and identify any uses of language that help construct a sense of haste and urgency and an atmosphere of adventure within a compressed extract. Use the examples you find to complete the table below.

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago—never mind how long precisely—having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world. It is a way I have of driving off the spleen, and regulating the circulation. Whenever I find myself growing grim about the mouth; whenever it is a damp, drizzly November in my soul; whenever I find myself involuntarily pausing before coffin warehouses, and bringing up the rear of every funeral I meet; and especially whenever my hypos get such an upper hand of me, that it requires a strong moral principle to prevent me from deliberately stepping into the street, and methodically knocking people's hats off—then, I account it high time to get to sea as soon as I can.

Language	How is a sense of haste/urgency constructed?

Question 2: Sample response one

This candidate writes quite fluently and this is partly due to their level of confidence when discussing the text. They write in a way that is easy and enjoyable to read and they have a good command of poetic devices and language patterns. This confidence is also demonstrated by the textual references that are included and the detailed analysis of the language being employed. The candidate has made good choices in relation to the poems they have selected for the discussion. 'Mid-Term Break' presents the experience of tragedy and loss while 'Digging' presents a metaphorical experience of a son and, in turn, the broader identity of the writer. While these poems are considered part of a collection that is known to be largely autobiographical, this candidate hasn't relied on this form of reading to recall experience. They stay focused on language analysis as the method of communicating experience.

As a reader, we can draw such depth through the experience of others - their emotions, their joys, their struggles. Through these communicated experiences literature can teach us invaluable lessons. Throughout renowned, Nobel-prize-winning poet Seamus Heaney's first collection, *Death of a Naturalist*, published in 1966, he reflects heavily on the experiences of his childhood. Having grown up on his working-class family's farm, Mossbawn, in County Derry, Northern Ireland, Heaney's clever manipulation of poetic devices allows him to reflect upon and relive these experiences. "Mid-term Break" uses such a bleak and emotionless tone to describe the experiences of losing his four-year-old brother, Christopher, in a car accident when Heaney was twelve years old. "Digging" also uses vivid language rich in poetic techniques to relive the experiences growing up in a rural setting and admiring the work of his father and grandfather. Both poems relive Heaney's experiences in such a way that elicits such intense emotion from the reader through his manipulation of poetic techniques.

The title of Heaney's piece is misleading; while you may expect a recount of happy childhood memories, 'Mid-term Break' describes the death of his four-year-old brother, Christopher, in a car accident. What builds such intensity in the poem and elicits such strong emotions of grief and despair is the way

While this response begins with a general statement and contextual information, it also directly targets the question and forms a clear thesis.

A more detailed explanation of Heaney's specific language use and manipulation would be helpful in this introduction.

This is an important choice of poem for this discussion. The poem itself plays with the experience of loss by avoiding a statement of the brother's death. This highlights a key skill in any Literature exam: matching the right text with the right question.

Heaney manipulates the language to create such a bleak and straightforward tone. As the reader, we relive Heaney's experience and emotional anguish. He remains ambiguous, particularly throughout the first two stanzas of the poem, yet creates a dark and looming sense to foreshadow the tragic nature of the poem. He focuses strongly on observed memories, and describes sitting in the school sick-bay 'counting bells knelling classes to a close.' Heaney's diction, specifically the choice of the word "knelling" which is used to describe funeral bells, foreshadows death and tragedy. Furthermore, the alliteration of the 'c' and 'k' sounds combined with the assonance of the 'ell' sound gives a sense of finality, of time slowing down. He reveals that a death has occurred through 'at ten o'clock the ambulance arrived with the corpse, starched and bandaged by the nurses.' However, he still remains ambiguous as to who has passed. Again, Heaney's diction is significant in that the use of 'corpse' seems to dehumanize his brother and his description of the body seems clinical and emotionless. This manipulation of language has such depth in that it reflects a sense of grief, of disbelief, unwillingness to accept that the body is that of Heaney's brother. Through creating such a restrained tone, Heaney elicits such strong emotions from the reader, and immerses them in the intensity of the experience.

Similarly, 'Digging' reflects on childhood experiences; however, Heaney presents the reader with a vivid picture of his life growing up on the family farm, Mossbawn, where his father dug potato mould. Heaney's language immerses the reader deep within his memories. He expresses strong admiration for his father, who he observed hard at work digging throughout much of his childhood. 'A clean rasping sound outside my window when the spade sunk into the gravelly ground: my father, digging.' The onomatopoeia through the alliteration of the 'g' sounds appeals to the reader's senses, immersing them within

Good analysis of connotation and the sounds of language for this specific effect of foreshadowing death.

The candidate explains that the word 'corpse' seems to dehumanise his brother, but it could also relate to the persona distancing themselves from their circumstance.

Again, this is a very effective text choice to explore the representation of experience.

This analysis of the sound devices connected to the actions of the father is a power observation and insight comment.

Heaney's rural past. The syntax empowers his father, his strength, and the strong pride and admiration Heaney feels towards him. 'The cold smell of potato mould, the squelch and slap of soggy peat, the curt cuts of an edge through living roots awaken in my mind.' Here Heaney uses strong sensory language and imagery to relive his childhood experiences. Again the alliteration of 'squelch and slap' creates onomatopoeia, and his description of the 'cold smell' brings another dimension of experience to his poetry. 'Living roots' can also be interpreted metaphorically, reflecting his family roots to the rural, farming life. Heaney represents his childhood experiences in such an intense way through 'Digging', immersing the reader deep within his memories.

Aside from the realism of the Irish rural environment here, the symbolism of the earth and roots is also valuable in terms of representing experience.

The candidate has chosen to alternate their discussion of the two texts. Considering that this is a discussion of the experience/s represented, it might be more effective to follow each poem's analysis through.

Poetic language can be used to evoke sympathy and arouse strong and intense emotions in the reader. 'Mid-term Break', the poem through which Heaney relives the death of his younger brother Christopher, is rich in poetic devices which elicits an intense emotional response from the reader. 'Snowdrops and candles soothed the bedside. I saw him for the first time in six weeks.' Heaney describes seeing Christopher's body for the first time following his death in a car accident. He refers to his brother as if he were still alive, suggesting that he is unable to come to terms with the pain of accepting his death. Snowdrops and candles are paradoxically, both symbolic of life, yet associated with funerals, strengthening the confusion of Heaney's emotions. 'He lay in the four-foot-box as in his cot. No gaudy scars, the bumper knocked him clear.' Yet again, Heaney demonstrates a desire to believe his brother is still alive. He could almost be sleeping, and there are no injuries to disfigure him. The way in which Heaney describes seeing Christopher through such a restrained and controlled tone is what is so effective in evoking sympathy from the reader. For Heaney, who was only fourteen years old, it is easier to be oblivious, to pretend that his brother was only sleeping. The pain of grief

Although a relevant quote, it is not well incorporated into the candidate's discussion. They might also mention that snowdrops and candles are both white, symbolising innocence and purity.

There is a slight diversion here as the candidate moves more to autobiographical information than language, but this is still a useful summary of the experience being represented.

is too great to express in words, and Heaney's bleak tone reflects his desire to believe he is alive. However, it is the final line, in a single stanza, which is so effective in confronting the reader with the heart-wrenching nature of Christopher's death: 'A four-foot-box, a foot for every year.' Heaney is straightforward and blunt in how he shocks the audience with the unfair nature of death. Christopher lived only four years, and now the box he lay in represents the harsh cruelty of life and death. Heaney's manipulation of poetic language throughout 'Mid-term Break' represents the intense and painful experience of his brother's death.

This is an example of powerful imagery that is well-explained.

Both 'Mid-term Break' and 'Digging' offer an intense recount of memories and experiences from Heaney's past. Through his manipulation of language rich in poetic devices, the poems immerse the reader deep within Heaney's childhood experiences.

This conclusion is a disappointing end to this essay. Refer to the activity below for more details.

Activity: Coming to grips with the discourse

The response above is a strong discussion of the required concepts: language use, representation of experience and intense and compressed literary expression. Unfortunately, at the closing of the argument, the candidate doesn't make the most of their final pitch to the marker. Remember, the conclusion is the last thing a marker will read before they decide on the mark you will receive – so make it count. Here the candidate does little more than rephrase the question.

Rewrite this conclusion in the space provided to make the most of the complex and insightful points in the essay.

Question 2: Sample response two

While this is a second response to this question using poetry as the studied text, a very different argument is constructed. Sample Response One looked at 'experience' as an individual occurrence of intense emotions and personal experience. This answer explores a collective representation of Indigenous Australians, with Samuel Wagan Watson's work communicating a cultural and political experience. This response is very well structured and provides precise and insightful analysis to support the complex post-colonial representation explained. This candidate has a highly developed writing style that also supports the collection of ideas contained within the essay.

Samuel Wagan Watson's *Smoke Encrypted Whispers* (2004) is a haunting collection of Australian free verse poems that can be read to explore the effects of past colonial practices on present generational trauma. Musical allusions are also prominently incorporated in these poems and are of particular interest as music is an integral part of Aboriginal Australian culture, especially with its oral traditions of storytelling and song to pass down intergenerational knowledge. However, analysis of manipulation of the motif of music into a distorted tune, alongside the extended metaphor of song for culture and cyclical structures, a selection of "deadman's mouth harp", "midnight's plague" and "floodlight sonatas" can be read to represent how the loss of Indigenous Australian song and language has resulted in the loss of Aboriginal identity, haunting them intensely as a recurring nightmare.

This response immediately frames the candidate's discussion as an exploration of this collective, cultural experience.

Very specific language devices are being targeted in this introduction, with a clear knowledge not only of the poems, but of Wagan Watson's style across his work.

The intensely fracturing experience of the loss of Indigenous Australian identity due to disappearing Aboriginal culture is exposed in "deadman's mouth harp" through the analysis of distorted music. The poem opens with an "unwelcome companion" where oxymoron and uneasy tone constructs a tense, unsettling atmosphere. This is emphasised by a "whistle/like a crystal spear" in which piercing auditory imagery distorts the traditional whistle into a sharply disturbing alarm. Alongside this, the simile also transforms music itself into a threat,

This contextual statement helps to locate Wagan Watson's work and this discussion within a particular theoretical field.

The candidate is able to identify and analyse the language manipulations as well as synthesise the effect of this use on the reader.

alluding to how Indigenous culture is threatened by cultural erosion. The unexpected, frigid tactile imagery of a "spear-like" icicle draws our attention to the metaphor of a whistle as a cold, piercing icicle which even "cuts the stillness into fine pieces". This can also be read as a metaphor for the shattered relations between Indigenous Australians and colonisers. The fractured tactile imagery alongside cacophony could also reflect the persona's fragmented inner state revealing their lonely emptiness due to the loss of their culture. This represents the experience as deeply scarring, as echoed through sibilance. This uneasy atmosphere is sustained by a "tune from the deadman's mouth harp" where the musical allusion to the ominous "mouth-harp", played by a "dead man" could suggest the deathly consequences of colonisation for Indigenous Australians. The haunting auditory imagery of the "mouth-harp" could also suggest a supernatural presence, as captured by "a cry/chilled and evil/it echoes" where echoing auditory imagery may allude to the ongoing intergenerational trauma as a colonial effect. Hence, through analysis of the motif of distorted music, it can be read as an extended metaphor for Indigenous culture, which is revealed as not only forever altered due to colonial oppression, but also represents the Indigenous Australians intensely fracturing experience of losing their culture and identity due to their disappearing song and language.

Through analysis of distorted music and extended metaphor of a plague, "midnight's plague" can be read to represent the detrimental physical and emotional effects experienced by Indigenous Australians due to colonisation as intensely traumatising and overwhelming. The poem opens with a "head full of bad tunes" in which dissonant auditory imagery and idiomatic language constructs an overwhelming "surround sound" atmosphere, which may reflect how colonial oppression is suffocating for Indigenous Australians on a holistic scale. The synecdoche of a

The description of 'fractured tactile imagery' is then echoed in the candidate's description of the 'persona's fragmented inner state'. This control over expression is impressive in an examination situation.

Again, the phrasing of 'haunting auditory imagery' connects with the 'intergenerational trauma' of the Indigenous experience. Not only is this an effective analysis of language use, it is also a powerful description of the experience being represented.

Note the clarity of this topic sentence, identifying a clear manipulation of language and the intensity of experience represented.

This is very effective analysis of the sound devices and auditory imagery of the text, but could also be read as the historical and cultural broadcasting of colonial material and cultural memory.

"head" may not only allude to personal fragmentation, but could also suggest a concentrated aching due to colonial effects, especially when expressed as a "wanting to attack the cerebral cortex / with a pair of scissors." This medical jargon legitimises the painful ailment, whilst juxtaposition between coarse tactile imagery and intricate visual imagery alludes to a ruining of the fragile, endangered Aboriginal Australian culture, crudely "attacked" by colonial powers. These violent verbs also feature in the "cutting] of the black squares/ multiplying, mutilating" where alliteration highlights a visual censorship of what is considered inappropriate, criticising the cover up of violent incarcerations and treatment of Indigenous Australians. The nightmarish "sorry memories/spreading like midnight's plague" likens colonisation to a disease through simile and remorseful tone, suggesting how it cannot be removed or forgotten. Alliteration in the "macabre melodies/ris(ing) to the roof of the skull" emphasises the malevolent visual and tactile imagery, figuratively mirroring the intense, overwhelming atmosphere that haunts the persona. Furthermore, the extended metaphor of how "midnight's plague...takes another victim/mind all infected" highlights the persona's affliction, supported by truncated syntax and enjambment. Hence, "midnight's plague" can be read to expose the fracturing effects of cultural erosions due to colonisation, on Indigenous Australians as not only, physical but also mental and spiritual, representing this overwhelming experience as haunting as if a recurring nightmare.

Through analysis of distortion in the motif of music alongside cyclical structures "floodlight sonatas" can be read to expose the ongoing disintegration of Indigenous Australian culture due to colonisation as an intensely devastating experience for its people. The poem opens with the persona on a drive through the dark who is "unable to stomach the singing of the

While this paragraph is a little unwieldy, it does retain its internal structure and continues to maintain focus on the point being made. Long paragraphs can work, but they can be harder to make cohesive – especially in a first draft situation. As an exercise, re-read this paragraph and identify where it might have been appropriate to split it.

Very powerful expression of this experience and how the poem is able to help others to understand this minority experience.

It could be helpful to explore the idiom 'unable to stomach' in more detail, looking at the colonial connotations in more depth.

"lonely road" in which acidic tactile imagery and idiomatic language alludes to a reality that is difficult to accept. This is emphasised by the alluring personification of the road and sibilance, constructing a mysterious, unsettling atmosphere. The persona's fear intensifies when "[he] sees the faces [he] dare not speak of in focus" alluding to the Aboriginal law which prohibits its people from speaking of the dead. It could also allude to how Indigenous Australians experience a fear of racism when practicing their own culture in their own land, which is disturbing.

The seemingly soothing auditory imagery of a "ritual humming of nursery rhymes" constructs a calmer atmosphere; however, it could also intertextually allude to how European culture has been indoctrinated since childhood, with European nursery rhymes replacing Indigenous song, exposing the imposing of colonial values on innocent Indigenous children. These songs "keep in time with the pounding in [his] chest" where volatile tactile imagery could reflect the persona's intensified fear and apprehension. The adrenaline inducing auditory imagery of "keeping in time" with heartbeats could also allude to a metaphorical, musical metronome, reflecting how Aboriginal Australians must suffer under strict colonial control, otherwise incurring punishment. Alongside this, analysis of structure could reveal alternating couplet of stream of consciousness grows in length every second stanza, which could stylistically reflect an overwhelming of the mind when overthinking of the disastrous colonial past. The cycling between versions of reality could also stylistically reflect a musical "sonata" in which the score is often repeated once more, alluding to the cyclical nature of colonial oppression. Therefore, "floodlight sonatas" can be read to expose the detrimental integration of colonial values on Indigenous culture, disintegrating it and causing the Aboriginal Australian's disconnection from their own

This paragraph covers a lot of examples from the text and features great knowledge of language devices. Note how all comments still build toward the central point; this is not a list of examples, but a complex and detailed analysis.

Here, the candidate is looking to the structural features of expression, as well as the word choice, to create this point of analysis.

This musical form traditionally features a recurring theme or recapitulation. While the discussion should remain focused on language rather than form, it would make for a valuable aside.

culture, representing this experience as resulting in uneasy feelings of hauntedness and spiritual unrest.

This selection of Samuel Wagan Watson's haunting Australian free verse poems are all interconnected through the motif of music and atmosphere of hauntedness. However, through the manipulation of this motif into a distorted form, the poems can be read to represent the Indigenous Australians' experience of losing their own culture and identity as intensely overwhelming and haunting. This enhances my understanding of the oppression experienced by the Indigenous Australians due to colonisation in how it severs their connection to the land, family and spiritual beliefs they hold dear.

It is hardly surprising that this essay is losing some of the control it demonstrated throughout. The essay covers numerous poems and provides a rigorous analysis through the frame of the question.

The response ends with the statement on the collective indigenous identity, but the focus on language is less controlled. Returning to these concepts would strengthen the closing remarks.

Activity: Is less more?

Having a strong literary vocabulary is an incredibly valuable skill. The candidate above is able to write such a complex and controlled discussion of three poems in a short time period because they have a strong knowledge of, and control over, the metalanguage of poetic analysis. So, sometimes we can say less but cover more.

Using the response above, identify ten poetic language devices discussed and use the table below or create your own set of study notes to learn the metalanguage of poetic construction.

Poetic language device	Definition	Effect

Question 2: Sample response three

This candidate constructs their introduction quite differently to the previous candidate. They begin with an overarching comment and then relate this to the specific contextual details of the text they will discuss. They finish their introduction by stating the language devices that represent this specific experience of female subjugation and reproductive exploitation, promising a discussion of intense experience. Unfortunately, this discussion wanders somewhat from the question. While it is a strong discussion of the text and the ideological perspectives it presents, the focus on language is more on effect than use. This response features sophisticated vocabulary and uses discourse effectively and with confidence. With some closer connections of the use of language, the response would be stronger still.

The naturalised patriarchal hegemony prevalent in Margaret Atwood's speculative fiction and cautionary tale, The Handmaid's Tale, constructs women as male possessions and commodities. These values of expediency are inscribed to the handmaids, a special class of fertile women, with an identity that through their ownership by powerful males, have the sole purpose of reproduction in a world under threat from a man-made toxic environment. The religiously inspired totalitarian regime, the Republic of Gilead, subsequently results in their erasure of female identity and subjectivity, consolidated through ritualised dehumanisation they suffer. Atwood utilises motifs, symbols and biblical allusions to signify the importance of language in its ability to be manipulated and enforce a regime through dehumanisation and propaganda to represent the experiences the Handmaids endure in their dysfunctional society.

The paradoxical expectations of the role of women are portrayed through the Madonna/whore dichotomy that informs constructions of female gender identity, within patriarchal discourse, as a demonstration of how power can be used as a tool of oppression by perpetuating an imbalance of power in the way gender roles are defined. The binary constructions of the Madonna/whore dichotomy derives from gender-skewed Judeo-Christian ideology in which Eve, the first woman, was responsible for introducing chaos

A strong and direct opening summarises the perspective of the text.

The candidate could connect this to the 'experience' represented in the text to draw focus on the question.

Here the candidate targets the question and presents a clear thesis, as well as justification for their text choice.

While this metaphor is powerful, this response would benefit from closer analysis of the language of the text. There is much discussion of other textual features and contextual factors.

This point of allusion is a powerful device in the novel, but it is more a structural feature than language device. It does require an analysis of language to unpack the representation of experience, but always be mindful of the actual device operating.

and corruption into the world, denoting that female sexuality is inherently corrupt. This notion has been exploited throughout history, evident in Gilead as the Handmaids' identities are eclipsed by cultural projections of the Madonna/whore dichotomy imposed on them through the reductive metaphor of their role as a, "womb on two legs". Their compliance and submission is perpetuated through Aunt Lydia, an allusion to the ruthless Gestapo functioning as an agent of indoctrination. Through manipulation of biblical quotations and aphorisms, Atwood privileges the notion that language can effectively be used as a tool of oppression and subjugation. Aunt Lydia conveys the Handmaid's purpose as being, 'sacred vessels' and 'holy chalices' to elevate the dehumanisation of able bodied females to a sacred role. The biblical allusions to the Beatitudes, in which she states, "Blessed are the meek," but does not continue the quotation from Matthew 5:5, which goes on to say, "that the meek...shall inherit the earth." Atwood valorises the notion that propaganda works through careful selection, emphasising to omit connotations that satisfy an agenda that perpetuates patriarchal dominance.

The candidate seems to be arguing how language represents the experience, but neglects to consider its compressed or intense nature.

Atwood sustains the notion on the power of language to shape social identity and cultural expression through ritualised dehumanisation. This subjugation through indoctrination is explored through the disturbing Testimony scene, in which Janine, a handmaid, delivers her "Testimony" to the other handmaids and aunts that exploit her confessions, of being gang-raped at 14 and her female self-loathing and shame tied to their sexuality is evident in the interrogation led by Aunt Helena, "but whose fault was it?" In which the Handmaids reply, "Her fault, her fault, her fault!" and "Who led them on? She did, she did, she did!" This construction of female victims as scapegoats perpetuates male infantilisation, hindering their need to mature and

Really, this is a structural plot device. While the testimony relies on language, the candidate should look at the specific language choices in this scene.

take responsibility. The participation of the handmaids demonstrates the level of depth in which these notions are entrenched in the totalitarian regime. Atwood demonstrates how language can be used in corrupt ways by a powerful elite to perpetuate oppressive cultural ideologies, resulting in female subjugation.

The values of pragmatism and expediency diminish the human person's right to dignity and respect. The naming of the Handmaids identifies them as being 'of' a man's, seen in Offred's name as being, 'of' 'fred'. This foregrounds her diminished humanity in which her identity is met with the constant reminder of her denial of autonomy and volition, sustained in her role as a 'womb on two legs'. The object motif is also seen in the reproductive process in which this form of ritualised dehumanisation subjects the able-bodied females to be exploited by their prevalent patriarchal dominative. "My red skirt is hitched...below it the commander is fucking. What he is fucking is the lower part of my body. I do not say making love because this is not what he is doing." This highlights the extent of the objectification of Offred through her own perspective and observation. Atwood's characterisation of Offred's passive and silent nature throughout the ritual communicates her forced obedience, consistent with the role of an object; to be used to perform a function, just like any other commodity.

Throughout Atwood's cautionary tale, The Handmaid's Tale, notions of language in perpetuating a religiously inspired totalitarian regime through the indoctrination of its citizens are privileged through her inclusions of biblical allusions, motifs and symbols. Atwood provides an illustration of the power of language in its manipulation as a tool of oppression and its use to embed naturalised assumptions within a society, ultimately detrimental to personal identity and cultural expression.

It is important to analyse the use of the language here, not simply the role of speaking or telling in the scene. Always keep in mind the intent of the question and spend time thinking and planning before you start writing.

This level of language analysis is more in keeping with the question – it is useful to look to other examples and focus on the experience, rather than issues that it draws attention to.

An important language distinction, but how is the language being used?

This is a sound conclusion of the argument that was presented. But this argument was not solely responding to the question posed. More focus on how language is used rather than the effect of language within the text would target the question.

Activity: Coming to grips with the discourse

The previous two responses demonstrate an outstanding control of structure and expression. Sample Response Two's strength comes from a confident knowledge of literary devices, whereas Sample Response Three effectively uses many examples of discourse. If you consult the Literature glossary from the syllabus, you will find that discourse refers to the language or terminology used in the discussion of a subject or field of study. In Sample Response Three, the candidate uses the discourse of cultural studies which is relevant to discussions of gender, race, class, etc. This is very helpful in establishing a concise and direct discussion as you are able to use one term for a concept that might take a number of sentences to explain. Go through the response above and look for examples of discourse. You may need to look up some meanings. Re-read your own essays and consider which words and phrases could be improved. Think particularly of language linked to ideological perspective. Be careful - misused discourse simply reads as jargon.

Word, phrase or literary term	Definition	How I could use it on my own writing
subjugation	To bring under domination or control	I could use this term in a feminist, Marxist or post-colonial reading. In my last essay, instead of writing 'he used his power over her...' I could have said 'he took the opportunity to subjugate her'.
patriarchal		
hegemony		
totalitarian		
naturalised		

Considering Question 3

How has the work of an Australian writer shaped your understanding of Australian national identity?

Interpreting the question

Candidates need to refer to an Australian author when answering this question. The question invites *more* than just one studied text of a particular author; the phrase 'the work' implies a range of texts. It could include essays, poems, short stories, interviews, or other texts from the same genre. Nonetheless, the studied text should remain the main focus. For example, David Malouf's novels are key texts of the syllabus; however, he also writes poetry, plays and essays. These could provide rich source material in responding to this type of question.

Candidates need to ensure they address the 'how' component of the question. In this case, the 'how' is not really referring to language and generic conventions. It is linking to *your* response and how this has been shaped. This would suggest a requirement to explore the interaction, empathy and impact on you as the reader.

Candidates need to fully engage with the concept of 'Australian national identity'. The question requires a focus on your understanding of three concepts: identity, national and Australian. What contributes to the construction of identity of a country or nation? History, contributing cultures, the present day, what is celebrated, what is concealed and so forth are all important factors.

Candidates should be aware of the elements of identity and how it is constructed within and across texts. Specific sources such as traditions, Aboriginal culture and colonial history, multiculturalism, history, the importance of the bush compared to the city, the ANZAC legend, the rebel and the importance of mateship are all useful. Find some of these elements in your texts and make the connection to the shaping of your understanding.

Candidate awareness and understanding of Australian national identity should evince some kind of change in their private understanding due to the author's work. How did your understanding change? Were you enlightened? Were you shocked? Were you confronted and challenged by what you read?

Candidates should be able to link at least one other text by the same author to the major text under scrutiny, demonstrating an awareness of the author's concerns and beliefs. Authors such as Randolph Stow, David Malouf and Jack Davis are poets as well. Tim Winton and Patrick White also write plays. Some of them write essays and even blogs. The ideology and concerns of the author regarding Australian national identity will be revisited in these other texts.

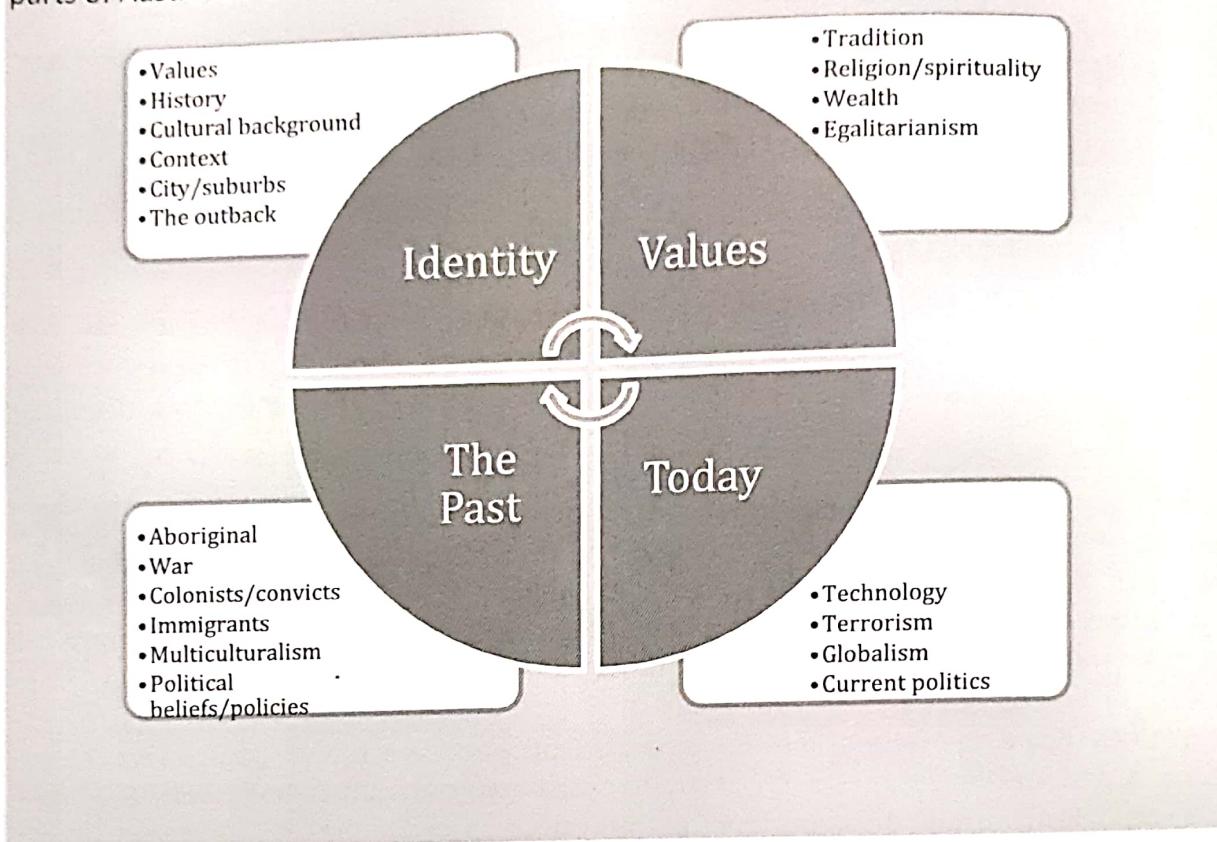
Advice from teachers:

- Candidates should take time to think about supportive textual material and choose it carefully. It all contributes to the strength of the response.
- Candidates need to weave the different texts together to make a structured argument.
- Candidates need to clearly outline their understanding of Australian identity.

Activity: Exploring Australian national identity

Think about what contributes to Australian identity. Where does it come from? What could cause change?

Look at the following diagram and map both your chosen text and supportive text to it. What parts of Australian identity do they explore? How does this connect to your understanding?



Hint: Learn your writers' styles

As you prepare your texts throughout the year, enrich your knowledge of an author by seeking out other material they have written. Look for differences and similarities in the concerns and style found in your major text of study.

Question 3: Sample response one

The candidate addresses the underpinning ideas of the question by choosing to discuss more than one poem by Samuel Wagan Watson. A detailed knowledge and understanding of the chosen texts allows the candidate to attack the question with purpose. The candidate explains clearly their own viewpoint as being challenged and takes a definite stance against multiculturalism, tolerance of our first nation people and acceptance of racial difference. The candidate is careful to incorporate the terminology of the question as they explore their texts. There is a balanced discussion of two poems which allows the candidate to address the 'work' of the author. Strong use of poetic conventions have been closely linked to how the candidate's vision of Australian national identity has changed. The expression of the candidate is sophisticated and fluent and the use of metalanguage is included without overpowering the discussion.

"Australian history...does not read as history, but as the most beautiful lies." -Mark Twain.

When asked to describe Australian national identity, many reference multiculturalism, which suggests an acceptance and celebration of cultural diversity. However, Twain's words and the meaning of Samuel Wagan Watson's poetry has shaped my understanding of Australian national identity by causing me to challenge how I view it. Instead, I have come to view Australian identity and its façade of multiculturalism as hiding the reality of continued suffering felt by Indigenous Australians in post-colonial Australia. With a focus on poetic devices in 'the dingo lounge' and 'we're not truckin' around', readers are confronted with a bitter and defeated voice from an Indigenous perspective, which mourns the loss of Aboriginal culture in the face of exploitation and subsequent marginalisation of Aboriginals and their culture. In this way, I am positioned to change the way I view Australian national identity as forever tainted by the ongoing history of injustices against Aboriginal people rather than characterised by positive multiculturalism and unity.

Through the use of imagery and poetic conventions, the poems explore the destruction and loss of Aboriginal culture. When reading 'we're not truckin'

Beginning a response with a quotation is not always the best way to start. This particular one fits neatly into what is asked and – importantly – the candidate immediately makes the connection between the quote and their chosen text.

The candidate has identified two poems as the poet's work – again addressing the criteria of the question.

The candidate has responded by employing a first person point of view. The question invites this to demonstrate the impact of the literature on an individual, so this response is effective.

The topic sentence of this paragraph should be more explicit. While imagery and poetic conventions are not wrong, they need to be specified – what specific imagery is employed? A particular poetic convention should be identified and linked to destruction and loss of aboriginal culture.

'around' with an understanding of Aboriginal Bora-Rings as sacred ceremonial grounds and Aboriginal song-lines as their traditional and transcendent method of navigation through the land, the "bitumen line" that "drove right through the bora-ring/and knocked our phone off the hook/forever" presents us with a confronting image of western culture desecrating Aboriginal land and heritage. This suggests that the system of roads employed by Western "Invaders" has resulted in the loss of Aboriginal cultural connection with their ancestors and the land. The pause created by the caesura emphasises the word 'forever' and positions me to consider the continual and undying nature of the word. Together with the unsettling feeling created by the fractured rhythm in this stanza, compared to the regular, measured cadence in the beginning, I am positioned to critique these Western methodologies when considering the weight of these realities. Death as a metaphor for the loss of Aboriginal culture persists in 'the dingo lounge' through its sombre undertones and macabre imagery of "forgotten" and "faded". The free-verse structure of the poem constructs this voice as an unfiltered, almost long-awaited emotional outpour. Yet by referencing death, it appears as if the persona is speaking their last words. Readers are discomfited by these themes of death and are positioned to change the way they view Australian national identity after understanding the suffering of Aboriginal people in the face of cultural loss and destruction.

Loss of culture by cultural exploitation is also illustrated through language features in 'the dingo lounge'. Consequently, readers are positioned to commiserate with the Aboriginal people and question previous beliefs of positive Australian national identity. The persona states 'the black man's beliefs/are being swallowed up and regurgitated in foreign lands for a/dollar" and "the dreamtime can be resurrected anytime and found on video store shelves".

In this paragraph, the candidate has begun to work the text and its conventions. By referring to the pause created by the caesura and connecting it with the word 'forever', the candidate is able to link their own response to this word and how they feel about Australian identity and its connections to Aboriginal suffering as part of that identity.

The structure of the response allows reference to such connections throughout. Each time the student analyses a quote, they revisit the question, creating textual cohesion.

The candidate discusses the poems using metalanguage which includes poetic terminology as they discuss the poem. This is important as it validates a clear understanding of the conventions of poetry and how they work, as well as meeting one of the criteria of the marking key.

The jarring sound of "regurgitated" along with the dissonance created by the repeated "b" in "black, belief and being" works to create cacophony and subsequently conveys the discomfort felt by the persona. This feeling of discomfort is also transferred onto us as we are confronted with the visceral image of Aboriginality being reduced to vomit and swill. "Resurrected" indicates a prior death, and by subverting this revered Biblical discourse to describe the Aboriginal dreamtime, which is central in spirituality, as merely "found on video store shelves", it downplays the significance of the dreamtime as a mere tokenistic form of entertainment for an uncaring Western audience. The purposeful separation of the word "dollar", giving it a line of its own, and the perfect rhyme of "time", enhances the deliberate and plastic feel of this commercial process. This evokes in me a sense of anger and frustration that something so substantial such as culture is being reduced to significantly little money, let alone having the audacity to label it with a price tag in the first place. I am positioned to commiserate with the Aboriginal people on their cultural and spiritual loss in the face of cultural exploitation as I gain new understanding of our nation as governed by capitalist values and an eye for commercial gain.

The candidate offers a detailed analysis of the poems, demonstrating excellent textual knowledge through the inclusion of examples. This material is consistently linked to the criteria of the question.

The inclusion of a personal emotional response supports the idea of 'shaping' understanding, as required by the question. It suggests change; the candidate moves from anger to commiseration.

The angry and bitter voice of the persona in 'we're not truckin' around mourns the loss of Aboriginal culture helps confirm my new understanding of the deleterious nature of the colonial ideology and impact on Aboriginal people and culture and subsequent marginalisation as they are left behind in the contemporary push for progress. With new understanding of the deleterious nature of the colonial ideology on Aboriginal people and culture my understanding of Australian national identity has been re-shaped. The euphemistic tone in the title contains deeper aggression and accusation through its play on the words "we're not f*cking around", which draws attention to the anger and bitterness of

Aboriginal people in response to their cultural loss and marginalisation. The western construct of roads is used symbolically in the poem as clear lines of segregation between Western and Aboriginal society, similar to how they divide a street into two sides. The "discarded and shredded" black truck "tyres on the fringes of the road", which refer to Aboriginal people, works to portray Aboriginal marginalisation. The words "discarded" and "shredded" suggest marginalisation and degradation respectively, and illustrates the loss of humanity they feel as they are reduced to destroyed pieces of rubber instead of people.

Furthermore, we learn that they "weren't even lustng after this 18-wheeler lifestyle". The atmosphere of loneliness and isolation of the persona constructed by the poem's desolate and gritty aesthetic positions me to critique the Western form of navigation, representative of Western ideals and methodologies being forced on to the Aboriginal people, as it only benefits Western society and leaves the Aboriginal people behind to move forward into the new millennium, integrate with Western Culture and conform to their ways. As a contemporary Australian reader I am thus positioned to change the way I view Australian identity given the loss of Aboriginal culture and segregation and marginalisation of Aboriginal people our nation has caused. Reading 'the dingo lounge' and 'we're not truckin' around' helps me to understand the struggles faced by Indigenous Australians both past and present. Wagan Watson's poetry has shaped my understanding of Australian national identity by suggesting that it is forever tainted by the ongoing history of injustices against Aboriginal people rather than characterised by positive multiculturalism and unity.

The examination of the second poem continues to support the candidate's earlier comments about Aboriginal culture and how it contributes to Australian identity. Using two poems meets the criterion of 'author's work' which is stated in the question.

A response that included perhaps an interview or essay by the poet may have enhanced the response by providing critical and contextual detail.

The voice of the candidate is vigorous and full of conviction. Their personal statement - 'The atmosphere of loneliness and isolation of the persona...positions me to critique the Western form of navigation representative of Western ideals...' - is confident yet controlled.

In these closing paragraphs, the candidate clearly articulates the idea that their perspective regarding Australian national identity, as seen through the history and legacy of Aboriginal treatment at the hands of Eurocentric culture, has been shaped and changed by the two poems discussed.

Activity: The Australian text

The study of at least one Australian text is mandated in the syllabus as compulsory. Preparing such a text for an exam choice makes good sense. There may be a question that asks you to specifically discuss an Australian text, such as in the 2018 exam. Other questions are also accessible through this text choice. When preparing your material, you should be looking for representations of Australia that are recognisable. These representations include subject matter, methodology and ideology. Build a reference source that recognises these and can be used in your preparation for assessments and the final examination.

The headings below are listed as possible ways into your text. You may add more. Clarify your understanding of the terminology and find examples from your Australian text which validate these ideas and concepts contained therein. Not every text will explore every heading.

Australian identity	Texts and evidence
colonial ideologies	
Current ideologies	
The importance of landscape	
Cultural identity	
Aboriginal acknowledgement	
The rebel	
Mateship	
The position of women	
The ANZAC legend	
Multiculturalism	

Question 3: Sample response two

This candidate has adopted a mature and confident approach to the question. The opening paragraph clearly outlines possible sources that shape Australian national identity and addresses the notion that it is a constantly evolving concept. The candidate did not specifically address the personal shaping of their understanding, as asked by the question, by responding in the first person. Otherwise, the response is beautifully structured and employs elegant and articulate language as it explores the different strands of Australian identity, questioning colonial mythology and masculinity. The candidate has employed strong textual references and anchored their response in deep textual knowledge of more than one short story taken from *The Turning*.

The Australian national identity-like any nation's identity- is one which has been significantly shaped by the stories of our nation's past; from heroic tales of the ANZAC soldiers on the frontlines of Gallipoli, to the bitter Aboriginal narrative which-quite ironically- remains repressed and untold. As such, our national identity is still very much evolving under the hands of contemporary Australian writers such as Tim Winton, who deny the concrete, clear-cut representations belonging to colonial Australian times in favour of fluid, thought-provoking representations of Australian gender roles which may perhaps have more power and relevance to contemporary Australian audiences today. Tim Winton presents a number of critical representations of rural Australian masculinity which for so long has dominated the Australian psyche, exploring the fragilities and limitations of such archetypal roles in our contemporary Australian society. His 2005 work *The Turning* rejects this notion of rural Australian masculinity as powerful and durable, instead constructing the male protagonists' debilitating fixation on one's ephemeral youth as an impediment to individual growth and maturity through progressive characterisation, symbolism and a blending of the Australian vernacular with evocative descriptive language. Perhaps more importantly, it is the seemingly recurring inability of the male characters to atone for the past, and the cyclical nature

Identifying the sources of Australian national identity sets up a strong platform for further discussion.

The candidate has noted that identity is a fluid and evolving concept. They have chosen to focus on masculinity and could have developed ideas about the ANZAC hero or the individuality and strength of the colonial settler as a lead into their main response.

The candidate has elected not to use a first person response, which is important to the criteria of the question which invites 'your understanding'. However, by including 'Australian audiences today', the candidate connects to a collective understanding.

When mentioning the 'vernacular', and 'evocative descriptive language', textual examples would strengthen the reference by supplying clear evidence.

of time which work to undermine the power and relevance of the naturalised value of the stoic Australian male in modern society, and in doing this, Tim Winton denies the colonial aspect of Australia's culture a role in modern definitions of Australian identity.

The progressive characterisation of Max's character in the title story 'The Turning' as vulgar and infantile through crude discourse, a limited lexicon and verbose syntax work to critique the power of dominant masculinity within the evolving post-modernist context within which this text is set. The continual characterisation of Max's character as doing nothing but "eating and farting and sulking" work to disempower Max, and by extension, the rural Australian masculinity which he embodies, as pathetic and useless contrary to archetypal values of the Australian male as being powerful and resourceful. The fact that the words appear as present participles also becomes significant in perpetuating his state of uselessness, and thus undermining his role as the dominant patriarch in the house and public sphere. Words such as "pissed and moaned" later in the text are also key in disempowering him, particularly as the word "moaned" generally connotes sickness and malady, whilst the word "pissed" belongs to the lower registers of language and implicate him as being in a lower strata of class and society. Furthermore, the fact that he "[complained] at having to heat up his own food" and "turned his nose up at [Raelene's] cooking" work to construct him as childlike in his mannerisms; a far cry from the hallowed values of the Australian male as independent and resourceful. This is further reinforced by the repetitive use of 'and's' and simple clauses used when describing him, which lend itself to a verbose, expository syntax which can be likened to the speech of a child. Despite this, however, there are moments of violence in which he "[bullocks Raelene] into the annexe" and "[clouts] her in front of the kids"

Here the candidate has supported their statement with textual reference. By focusing on the crude physicality of 'Max', the candidate has clearly illustrated the notion of challenging the archetype of Australian masculinity.

The detail and evidence explored here could be linked more closely to the criteria of the question by commenting on the 'shaping' of the candidate's understanding of Australian national identity.

Sound textual knowledge is displayed by the candidate; however, they do need to re-connect with what has been asked by the question. How is the nature of Australian identity evolving and how does the collective 'our' respond, thus moulding understanding?

which re-establish his power over Raelene, and emphasis the extent to which such naturalised values of the rural Australian male have become deeply entrenched into our Australian society.

The symbolic nature of water and the vivid descriptive language utilised in 'Aquifer' despite the retrospective narrative point of view construct the workings of childhood and the past as inescapable, and thus an obstacle to individual growth and progress. The recurring motif of time as water which "moves through us, not us through it"; "comes and goes in waves and folds... back in on itself" work to construct the notion of time as a burden which we can never truly be freed from. In particular, the fact that the unnamed protagonist in 'Aquifer' opened the window and "smelt wild lupins and estuary mud and for a time forgot where [he] was" imply that he has often been preoccupied by the story of his childhood, and perhaps spent more of his life reliving past memory than living out his own life and future, much unlike the way we see ourselves as the Australian nation as progressive and forward-moving. The protagonist's vivid descriptive language and immaculate attention to detail throughout the text, despite being simply a recollection of his past, become evident in descriptions such as "black water [bleeding] with a linoleum gleam" and "reeds [brushing] like venetian blinds" amongst the backdrop of "scaly paperbacks", working to reinforce our understanding that the protagonist has given much thought to the story of his past. Furthermore, his need to justify his innocence regarding Alan Mannerling's death without ever making an explicit admission of his guilt may be identified as one of his key character flaws in preventing him from transcending his past. He says, of Alan Mannerling's death, "I never even hated him, though I'd never called anyone shit before", in which the second clause negates the authenticity of the first. Once again the motif of time as water returns to the fore as the protagonist ponders over the fact of "Alan

The candidate has included a second story by Winton, which meets the criterion of 'author's work'.

The expression employed by the candidate is articulate and perceptive. Blending textual material with comment is done smoothly. 'The recurring motif of time as water which 'moves through us, not us through it'; 'comes and goes in waves and folds...back in on itself'" works to construct the notion of time as a burden.

The reference to Australia as 'progressive and forward-moving' is perhaps too broad. A stronger response would connect this progressiveness to a particular aspect of culture, such as working towards a more culturally inclusive national identity, or changing gender roles; either way, it should be connected more specifically to the themes in this story.

Direct reference to Australian national identity, in particular the aspects the candidate seeks to explore, would bring the candidate's deep knowledge and ideas about the text into a tighter, more centred response.

Manning raining silently down upon the lawns of our street", re-emphasising the burden of his childhood as an inescapable part of his life which he may perhaps never be able to move away from, contrary to popular beliefs of Australia as being a progressive nation.

Beyond these critical representations of rural Australian masculinity as toxic and outdated, The Turning also comments on the deterioration of the role of the dominant male patriarch in society through the characterisation of Max in 'The Turning' as ill and declining in health. The continual characterisation of Max's character as "weather beaten" with a "gut" and a "stuffed back" become fundamental in actualising his demise and thus the demise of the role of the dominant male in society, as he is portrayed as being a man past his prime, defeated by the mundane realities of his life and circumstances. Furthermore, the fact that he "still needed [Raelene]" and after all these years 'still had that hungry look' for her to undermine his power as an archetypal male, and instead relegate him to a role of dependence rather than independence. This comes as a stark contrast to our preconceived notions of the male aspect of our Australian cultural identity as heroic and empowered.

Tim Winton belongs to a class of contemporary Australian writers who deny the colonial definitions of Australia's history and identity in defining our contemporary Australian identity. Indeed, such conservative values of dominant masculinity and male dominance and power have perhaps no room in our evolving contemporary society, and as such his work. The Turning works to remind us that these male representations belong in the past and empower modern readership to resist these definitions, move beyond them and create our own.

Here, the candidate has connected with negative ideas about Australian masculinity being trapped by the past and unable to move on in a positive way. This confirms the negative ideas explored earlier.

The candidate refers to the shift between colonial and contemporary Australian masculinity. A literary example of traditional patriarchal masculinity would enhance these comments. Always try to provide evidence for the assertions you make; don't assume your marker has the required contextual knowledge.

Stating a reaction to such a contrast and what has been lost, gained or changed in the process would strengthen this statement.

Reference to the continued evolution of Australian society and the perception of masculinity within it links to the opening paragraph and suggests the transformation and shifting of traditional communal ideas regarding Australian national identity. This brings together the ideas discussed and ends the response with authority.

Activity: The author's context

Understanding the background and context of an author can supply you with a potent frame of reference. Investigating an author's life and times is an important ingredient in discovering how they saw the world and appreciating their choices of genre and style in representing their ideas. An author from the past might reveal to you a new way of looking at something that seems ordinary in the present. The gender or ethnicity of an author might be a contributing factor in their creative output. Their work might marginalise or naturalise treatment of different groups of people.

Your task is to do some research and to use it in a positive way. Besides discovering factual details about a chosen author, look at the times or context in which they wrote or write. What was happening? Could these events have influenced their work? Finally, try to read some other source material actually written by your author. See if there are letters, essays or even blogs (for today's authors) available for you to examine. Their writing, or speaking, in a different genre or medium might reveal new ideas, as well as confirm or enhance what you have discovered while studying the chosen syllabus text. Such exploration will also give you some more intertextual resources upon which to draw, if need be.

Hint: Australia? Or Australias?

When writing about the Australian context, many students generalise the nation as if there is a single Australian experience. While your discussion might require you to focus on one aspect of Australian culture, keep in mind the rich diversity of Australian identities: urban, rural, coastal or outback localities; people of settler, Indigenous, migrant or convict origins; historical versus contemporary events that have shaped the nation. Major turning points such as Federation, WWI, the 1967 referendum on Aboriginal rights, the Wik High Court decision (aka the Mabo decision) and so on irrevocably altered the Australian context. Even within a single group – such as the women of Australia – there is a vast range of identities and experiences. Beware of homogenising all of Australia in supporting an argument; your marker may see it as simplistic or naïve.

Question 3: Sample response three

This candidate has engaged with the darker side of Australian colonial history as a means of shaping Australian identity. The candidate has considered two poems in their answer – examined – Aboriginal treatment at the hands of the colonists, the Aboriginal link with the landscape and the position of women in Australian culture. The inherent violence which is suppressed in the Australian conscience is exposed and its significance in shaping our current society is made clear. The opening paragraph clearly sets out intent and introduces the selection of suitable text choices. The candidate makes strong connections between the past and how it has shaped modern perceptions of Australian identity. The candidate employs relevant textual evidence to support their discussion, as well as logical and fluent language.

The identity of a nation is often explored and shaped by works of literature. Australian poet, Judith Wright, examines Australia's colonial and cultural past in order that her reader's understanding of what it means to be an Australian is shaped by an awareness of our history. Wright's "Nigger's Leap, New England" (1946) reveals the hidden violence of British colonialism on Australian shores and seeks to understand how modern Australian's are implicated in such violence. Similarly, the inherent and inextricable link between indigenous culture and the Australian landscape is portrayed in "Nigger's Leap, New England" (NL,NE) so that the reader may come to appreciate the crucial role of the natural world in not only sustaining our nation but shaping it. Finally, Wright in "The Precipice" draws attention to the cultural suppression of women in Australia, thus promoting self-reflection in the reader to question the ways in which Australian culture facilitates structural violence against women, but more broadly minority groups. As such, Wright's poetry is a fundamental examination of what it means to be an Australian, and shaped the ways in which we view our nation as a whole. "NL,NE" exposed the cultural proclivity of modern Australians to hide the violence of our colonial past, in doing so, helps the reader to understand their own implication in the brutality of our nation's history. Born out of an invasive

The candidate has opened their response with clear statements regarding history and how it has shaped Australian identity.

The candidate has chosen to refer to 'the reader' rather than employ a personal first-person response. Careful reading of the question should recognise the criterion of 'your understanding' as being important. Using 'the reader' has only allowed for a general response to the shaping of understanding.

hegemony, modern Australian culture is built upon a foundation of exploitation that Wright deems inseparable from our lives today. The persona boldly asserts that "we should have known/the night that tidied up the cliffs and hid them/would have the same question on its tongue for us/And there they lie that were ourselves writ strange." Here, the Australian proclivity to ignore our violent past is connoted by "the night that tidied up the cliffs and hid them", exposing not only the lack of acknowledgement over past events, but the integral role of the natural world - revealed via the personification of the landscape. In the same way, the persona includes the reader in his statement "we should have known" making Wright's readers, both past and present, accountable for our nation's history. Unable to separate knowledge from responsibility, Wright goes on to explore the way in which our nation's identity can be and should be shaped by understanding our role in past colonialism. As we, the reader, see the violent antagonism of the invasive, white hegemony with the marginal Aboriginal people, we are compelled to reflect on the treatment of those same people under the same hegemony today, as "there they lie that were ourselves writ strange." In this way, Wright's poem compels the reader to consider the violence of our colonial past, and the ramifications of such brutality in shaping Modern Australia.

A key element of both Australian History and national identity, "NL,NE" focuses on the place of the natural world in Indigenous Australian culture and how this affects our modern identity as Australians. Wright specifically contrasts a litany of absences in this poem to emphasise the inextricable link between the indigenous culture and landscape, as "Never from earth again, the coolamon/ nor the thin, black children dancing like shadows / of saplings in the wind." The drastic violent impact of colonialism is seen to have divorced the Aboriginal people from their land, and thus their identity, as they are seen "never

The language employed by the candidate is confident, eloquent and incorporates metalanguage efficiently. The candidate has included a variety of paragraph and sentence openings, such as 'Born out of an invasive hegemony' and 'The persona boldly asserts that'. By doing so, they have maintained a fresh and positive voice throughout their response.

Beginning a sentence with a phrase that references earlier material adds to the overall cohesiveness of their argument.

Here, the candidate has connected to the idea of history mentioned in the opening paragraph. This type of reference adds a unified structure to the response by tying the explored ideas back to the thesis statement.

Inclusion of words directly from the question such as 'shaping' and 'national identity' work subtly as a reminder of what is being asked, without exactly repeating the question.

again". The symbol of "the coolamon" metaphorically represents the integral relationship between the Indigenous way of life and culture, whilst the imagery of the "dancing" children portrays the crucial role of the land to their identity as a nation by likening them to "saplings in the wind". Here, the natural world is seen to nurture and sustain the people, a synthesis that has been lost in the relationship of exploitation between white Australians and the landscape. As such, Wright is prompting her reader to re-evaluate their perception of the natural world, thus further integrating Indigenous culture into our understanding of Australian identity.

There is excellent supportive textual evidence included in the discussion. 'The symbol of 'the coolamon' metaphorically represents the integral relationship between the Indigenous way of life and culture...' Each example is explained clearly and connected to the concepts of the question.

Although Wright composed "The Precipice" in the wake of second wave feminism, her criticism of the structural violence against Australian women, still resonates with a modern audience. Rather than accept the socially accepted gender roles, Wright challenges female stereotypes, likening the female experience of rebellion against their construction in modern culture to suicide. The woman in "The Precipice" is seen to reach "the edge at last, and no less certain/ she took the children in her arms because she loved them/ And jumped, parting the leaves and the night's certain." Here, the woman's experience of domestic life is seen to drive her to commit the ultimate act of violence against herself and her children, as Wright's hyperbolic allegory seeks to expose how damaging gender and social stereotypes can be to the individual. As such, the modern Australian reader is compelled to consider the ways in which our own culture still facilitates the suppression of women, even when we would identify as a nation of 'equality'. Moreover, the poem evokes empathy for the woman's plight as they see that it was not a lack of love for her children that led to her suicide, but rather the daily subjugation of the woman to conform to a particular stereotype of femininity. The domestic space which she would have occupied is reimagined in the poem as part of the natural world, in order that nature becomes a site of

A smoother connection between Indigenous culture and feminism is needed here. The move to another strand of identity is abrupt and the fluency of the discussion is disrupted.

The inclusion of the historical position of women in Australian national identity is useful, but needs a stronger connection to the 'modern Australian reader', particularly in consideration of the fact that Wright was writing several decades ago. Do these stereotypes still hold true? Are they as strong as they were when Wright composed this poem? It's important to consider the context of your texts, and avoid generalisations.

power for the woman to ameliorate her ills. Thus, Wright questions our understanding of equality for women in Australia, and leads the reader to consider how we should respond to dominant stereotypes of femininity as we seek to become a truly equal nation.

Wright's poetry examines key elements of Australian history and culture in order that the reader's concept of Australian nation identity is shaped by the truth of our past. Drawing on colonial history, indigenous culture and the place of women in society, Wright helps the reader to comprehend what it truly means to be a Modern Australian and the implication this has on our lives.

The closing paragraph draws together elements of the candidate's thesis statement. However, it could be more incisive in affirming the exact implications of transformation or forging of reader understanding regarding modern Australian identity.

Activity: Background viewing

The Literature course is focused on written literary texts and it is from these that you must draw your answers. Nonetheless, there are rich sources of background information available in Australian film texts. These too tap into Australian ideologies and reinforce cultural stereotypes and attitudes. Watching these films in an active way may reveal to you insights about your texts and will certainly offer you enrichment regarding historical context and the concerns of Australian culture.

Some suggested texts:

*Picnic at Hanging Rock, We of the Never Never, Mad Max (the series),
 Breaker Morant, Gallipoli, Priscilla Queen of the Desert,
 The Light House Girl, Strictly Ballroom, Australia, Jasper Jones, The Dressmaker,
 Red Dog, The Rabbit Proof Fence, The Proposition, The Tracker.*

Considering Question 4

Reflect upon the ways your connection to a text has been influenced by aspects of your own identity.

Interpreting the question

The focus here is the way an individual, in this case you as the candidate, makes connections to a text. Think carefully about the word 'connections'. For example, candidates might note that a description of a setting might be moving because of its beautiful language and because they have travelled to that place before, they might be angered at the treatment of women because it challenges their beliefs in equality or they might feel empathy with a character making a difficult decision because they have experienced such a dilemma. Such connections should be clearly explained in your response.

'Your own identity' should be clearly defined. This question requires a deeply personal response. Consider your own identity thoughtfully, drawing on your life experience, cultural identity, place in society, age, gender, ethnicity and so on as a base from which to consider your connections to texts that you have studied.

'Aspects' is an important part of the wording of the question. Candidates may choose one or more contributing factors that make up their identity. Candidates who generalise about their identity as a whole will not be rewarded as highly as those who identify specific elements of that identity. The idea that identity is mutable or constantly changing could also be explored to enrich their answer.

Candidates might address the question demonstrating either a positive or negative connection to a text. Candidates should select a text towards which they have had *strong* personal reactions and be able to explain these.

Candidates should support their discussion with clear knowledge of the text. Direct examples that made an impact or caused a strong reaction should be incorporated into their response, clearly linking such connections with their identity. Incorporation of detailed discussion of the text should substantiate the connection between self and personal response.

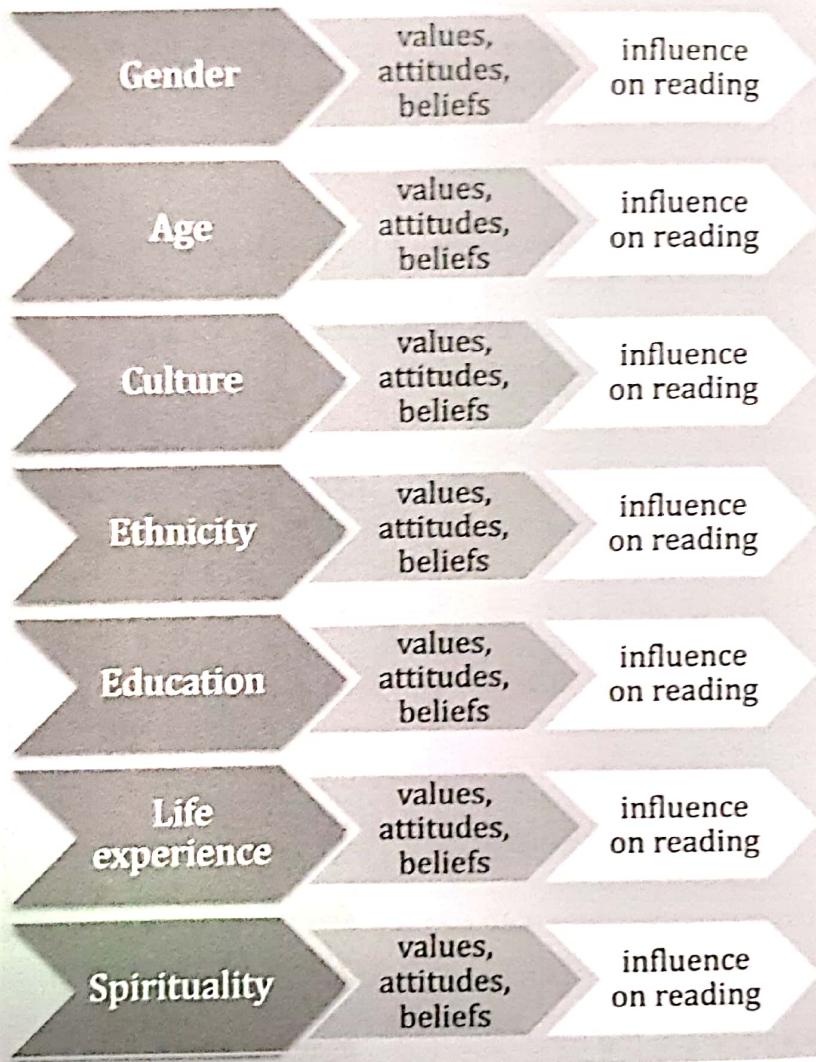
A clear individual voice from the candidate is important. The question invites a definite first person response that demonstrates personal reader engagement with the text.

Advice from teachers:

- Candidates should be able to demonstrate clearly the ways of connecting to a text.
- Explicit examples from the text should illustrate those connections.
- Candidates should understand that a first person response is asked for; they are expected to articulate aspects of their own personal identity.
- Candidates should be careful about relating too much personal, private information.

Activity: Considering your context

The syllabus emphasises the strong connection between readings and responses to texts, and the contexts of particular readers (or groups of readers). You should take the time to reflect on your personal context and the way various aspects of that context impact upon your experiences with texts. At this stage, you should be able to consider the influence of basic elements such as age and gender. Identify how aspects such as cultural background, socioeconomic context, family dynamics, spiritual or religious beliefs and so forth impact upon the beliefs, values and attitudes that contribute to your responses to texts.



Hint: Different responses to different texts

Different texts will highlight different connections to these aspects of context. Sometimes, particular aspects will have little influence on how you respond, while with other texts, your cultural heritage or your gender may have a large impact. Similarly, your context will generate a variety of responses. You may be charmed, shocked, delighted or appalled. You may feel empathy for a character, intrigued by the narrative or moved by the beauty of language and what it is trying to communicate. Whichever text you study, never overlook or discount the influence of your own context. Who you are will contribute to how you respond, unlock meaning and thus create understanding.

Question 4: Sample response one

By stating their identity clearly as a contemporary female with feminist leanings, the candidate has addressed the parameters of the question clearly. The sympathy felt for the witches and Lady Macbeth is clearly delineated through this connection. The candidate has set up a strong premise for discussion. The response goes on to explore power as a feminine tool and the influence the women have over Macbeth's actions. Further connection to the candidate's identity is made through the reference to being a contemporary Australian. The strong personal voice of the candidate and the reiteration of areas of connection and understanding are the strengths of this response. Good textual knowledge illustrates these connections and makes for a convincing discussion. The final paragraph is a strong conclusion, giving shape and purpose to the entire response as it links to the key concept of the question.

Gender roles and its relation to power take on great significance in Shakespeare's Macbeth. As a woman living in contemporary Australia my interpretation and connection to the text is entirely different to how an Elizabethan audience would interpret the play. An important question for us, as observers of the play, is how can a man who knows the values of love, virtue and honesty, who admires his king and fights bravely for him, how can this same man then go on to destroy him in such a treacherous way? My identity as a female contemporary Australian led me to analyse the physical construction of this text via feminist perspective. In this respect, Shakespeare seems to imply that it is the woman's fault who spurred Macbeth to commit the vile act of murder. That Macbeth is essentially a good man led astray. The looming presence of female figures - most notably the witches and Lady Macbeth influence and in a sense control Macbeth's mind. Rather than feel anger and resentment toward the female characters of the play - as a woman would likely have in the Elizabethan era, my connection to the witches and Lady Macbeth is one of pity, and interest. It saddens me not that as a woman these characters must rely on manipulation to make their voice heard - but it also interests me as I gain access to a world which encourages me to reflect on the situation in the present.

The candidate begins strongly, setting out clear definitions and understanding of the key elements of the question.

Use of the first person is important as the question asks for 'your' own identity. The candidate has done this well by including comments about their reaction to the text and how it has made them reflect on the situation of women in today's world.

Early in the play we see Macbeth meeting with the witches. It is the witches who prime the audience for what is to come and sets up the development of Lady Macbeth's character. A woman is going to act on her desires and ambition and the implication is that in order for a woman to act she must transform into something other than woman, something malevolent, a witch for example. The witches have some hold over Macbeth. He becomes their "wayward soul", he meets them - as if by choice, with little knowing that they have been conniving to manipulate him. They plant an idea of ambition - "all hail Macbeth... thou shall be kings thereafter" which is then followed by Lady Macbeth who orders him to commit the violent act of killing King Duncan. In this sense, Lady Macbeth can be seen to be an extension of the play's witches. Perhaps they are even her shadow self - as if woman's power can only come from her darker side. There is no doubt that my identity has shaped my interpretation of this literary text. As a contemporary Australian I live in a society where female power is greatly encouraged and where we are told that if we can embrace our identity "we can do anything". We are told one thing but shown another. Lady Macbeth thinks that she can grasp power if she can "unsex herself". She calls upon spirits allied with the witches to "unsex me" "take my milk for gall". In order for her to become powerful she must resist the confines of femininity - beneath the womanhood imposed by society there have been countless examples by which a woman is still unable to grasp power compared to that of a man. With the emerging '#Me Too' movement it becomes evident that the world still continues to be dominated by men. Only now are women beginning to grasp power. Lady Macbeth is powerful, but only through transformation into a witch-like identity.

Shakespeare's exposition of Lady Macbeth demonstrates the subordinate role of women in Elizabethan society - that is, subordinate to a male. Lady Macbeth is only shown through her interaction

This section could be broken down into smaller paragraphs to separate information, clarify ideas and strengthen structure. When the discussion moves to Lady Macbeth, 'In this sense, Lady Macbeth', a new idea is introduced - thereby offering an opportunity for a new paragraph. Later on, the candidate introduces the '#MeToo' movement - 'With the emerging '#MeToo' it becomes evident'. Here is another opportunity to begin a new paragraph.

By citing the '#MeToo' movement, the candidate has connected with today's world and the position of women with regard to power. This link supports her personal identity by establishing the position of women today and relating it to that of Lady Macbeth.

with Macbeth - she is never portrayed outside the relationship. In this relationship Lady Macbeth has a superior position and takes charge of the direction of affairs - "be, leave the rest to me". She taunts Macbeth into action by questioning and challenging his masculinity. Her argument is that any sign of the "milk of human kindness", will make him more womanly than she. He is called to prove his "valour" lest he "live like a coward in thine own self esteem". She emasculates him into subservience ironically manipulating him into committing the very male act of murder. Macbeth commits the murder in order to live up to Lady Macbeth's twisted definition of masculinity. "I have pluck'd my nipple of those boneless gums and clash'd the brains out". This is an image of the feminine trait maternity supplanted and enabled via the masculinisation of violence. My connection with Lady Macbeth is one of confusion. On the one hand I identify with her desire and quest for authority in a world that offers so little. And yet I understandably condemn her actions, I interpret her as an innocent victim who's only perception of femininity has been altered by her experience in a society where women have been denied all individual rights and freedoms. At times, I feel as though I am living vicariously through her coming caught up in her dilemmas and struggles.

The development of Lady Macbeth's character is a prime example of the gender bias implicit in the horrid fire. Initially she assuredly and brazenly calls forth the "thick of the night" and the "dumbest smoke of hell" but over the course of the play her attitude changes and she proves to be still the weak female. Not only does she falter in the deed but she comes to feel remorse, proving she does not have the ruthless-ness required and feels fear, "hell is murky" and "my hands are of your colour but I shame to wear a heart so white". The blood imagined staining her hands are a symbol of her unreflecting guilt. She is after all a weak and fragile woman. She needs wine to maintain

The candidate has delivered a lot of information here. They need to maintain reference to the question through returning to their thesis throughout the analytical discussion.

This part of the response does make effective reference to the question, justifying what has already been stated - 'On the one hand I identify with her desire' and 'I understandably condemn her actions'. By explicating their complex response to Lady Macbeth, the candidate has drawn together the material presented into a strong conclusion.

The candidate has used examples which track the change of character shown by Lady Macbeth. They respond to these changes with empathy, recognising the fear and guilt felt as a result of Lady Macbeth's actions. The candidate connects with the text 'as a woman who has faced gender discrimination' and who 'feels her defeat'.

her courage saying "that hath made them drunk which made me bold!" Where once she outwitted and bamboozled Macbeth with her words "when you durst do it, then you are a man" appealing to Macbeth's masculine insecurity and spurring him into action, her speech is now feeble, she has disintegrated and ultimately commits suicide. Here, I was inclined to interpret such an act as a prime metaphor of the difficulties women have faced for centuries, though in a much more advanced way in a contemporary society. As a woman who was faced gender discrimination on occasions, I feel her defeat. The implication in Macbeth is that her actions were not fitting of her social role. Perhaps the moral of the story is women should be passive, echoing the Elizabethan view that women are innocent, powerless children.

My identity as a female definitely shaped my interpretation of the play, especially Lady Macbeth's character. Although set and written in a different context to my own, this by no means makes the play less relevant. Instead, I feel it has taken on an alarming new resonance. At its most basic level, it can be read as play that embodies masculine fears of women who threaten to control. With movements such as 'Me Too', this fear is resurfacing. Shakespeare's demonic construction of Lady Macbeth had a profound impact on me, but not in the intended way. I don't view Lady Macbeth as evil - instead I see her as a victimised female caught in a web of patriarchal gender politics.

The candidate explains clearly their interpretation and how it has been influenced. This connects directly with what is required by the question.

The candidate could have articulated more clearly their personal context by detailing their age, education and/or culture. By stating simply that they are female, they make a broad generalisation which does not recognise individual women's experiences.

The reference to the 'Me Too' movement is an excellent link with today's world. It marks an awareness of current patriarchal values that resonate strongly with the culture explored in the play. The conclusion could have built on the similarities to further ratify their connection with the text.

Hint: Understanding contextual shifts

Investigate your texts with an awareness of the values and attitudes of different contexts. These can be referencing time, place, class, gender, culture, education, spirituality, wealth or a combination of some of these. Sometimes the values are clear cut, other times they are deceptive. Seek out the ways a text may appear to be reinforcing ideologies, while subtly critiquing them. Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*, for example, which ultimately reinforces the power structure of nobility over the lower classes, nevertheless features a constant reference to rebellion in the songs the lower classes sing. These songs challenge the accepted hierarchy and suggest Shakespeare's awareness of this cultural shift – even if his work doesn't fully support it.

Activity: Your identity – your values

Identity is one of the basic concepts referenced in the syllabus. You are expected to be aware of elements that go into forming the identity of nations, cultures and individuals. This last identity includes the actual candidate – that is YOU! The three responses chosen as examples for Question 4 all elected to cite feminism as the key to their identity. While there is nothing wrong with this approach, there are other equally valid and rich contributors to personal identity. Some of these have been suggested in an earlier exercise. Consider these as you define who you are.

Once you have investigated the components that make up your identity, chart the values and attitudes that march alongside. For instance, if a personal identity is based on gender, how does that contribute to the way that individual sees and interacts with the world? What values are intrinsic to that perspective? How could they support or challenge dominant ideology? How do they connect to your understanding of your literary texts?

My elements	Dominant values
masculinity	strength, physical dominance, patriarchal society, expectations of behaviour, rewards, punishments, power, violence, virility
middle class	education, wealth, material possessions, upward mobility, ownership, travel, comfortable living, cleanliness, security
Italian ethnicity	honour, family, religion, loyalty, community, diligence, physical warmth and closeness, temperament

Question 4: Sample response two

The candidate has introduced their response with a series of general statements that shadow the question rather than directly engaging with it. The final sentence of the opening paragraph does address the question with conviction and would have been better placed at the opening of the response. The candidate continues with steady connections to this statement of identity and how their reading of the text has thereby been influenced. They maintain this link to the question throughout their discussion, focusing on context and the feminist movements of the past and present. There are some nice references to the contemporary world and clear connections to the candidate as they work through representations of the female characters of the text. Pertinent references from the text confirm the ideas of the candidate and how they have been influenced to be critical of these representations. The response is well-structured and ends with conviction while linking clearly to the question.

Literature is a cultural medium that often reflects the beliefs, attitudes and ideas prevalent within a texts contexts of production, that is, the time and place in which a written work was produced. Literary texts are inherently connected to a reader's context of reception and thus interpretation is dependent on aspects of an audience's identity including their social positions and experience that allows them to respond to texts in particular ways. The acclaimed novel The Great Gatsby was written in 1925 by F. Scott Fitzgerald and is therefore a reflection of the cultural landscape of the 1920s in America. The novel encapsulates the cultural zeitgeist of the post-war era with clear influences from the rising first-wave feminism movement sweeping the nation, with the construction of this concept suggesting a few of the Women's Rights Movement from a male perspective. With consideration of the prominent feminist Simone de Beauvoir's 'Eternal Feminine' theory, the construction of female characters within the novel, specifically Jay Gatsby's love interest, Daisy Buchanan, can be examined to reflect Fitzgerald's fears of the 'New Woman' as characters who embody this archetype are characterised as cruel, corrupt and possessions for men to obtain and thus perpetuates the prominent sexism of the age. Through the application of a Feminist reading practice, I have been able to respond

Knowledge of contextual influences on the text is clearly stated, particularly with reference to feminism: 'The novel encapsulates the cultural zeitgeist of the post-war era with clear influences from the rising first-wave feminism movement'. Reference to their own context follows.

strongly towards the representation of women in the text due to my own identity as a contemporary feminist Australian reader.

While the candidate has made a bold and confident opening, they take some time to arrive at the criteria of their own identity. This should have been implemented earlier.

The Great Gatsby's context of production is starkly different to my contemporary context of reception. Although Australian society within the 21st century remains an inherently patriarchal society, a large emphasis is placed on gender equality between men and women with the fourth wave of feminism emerging in Western society, marked by highly coveted social movements such as the 'Me Too' campaign which advocates against sexual harassment of women in the work place. Due to the cultural context I have matured in, I have been able to accept women's rights as a social right and take my freedom such as the right to vote for granted. This social context juxtaposes that of the 1920's in America when first-wave feminism had begun to emerge. After the cessation of World War One in 1918, women who had entered the work force in the absence of men were reluctant to give up the newfound economic and social freedoms they had been granted. America began developing a new set of progressive ideologies that demanded improvement in the treatment of women which began even more relevant as women gained the right to vote in 1920. The 'flapper' became a symbol of this Cultural Revolution as women began giving up symbolically and physically restrictive corsets demoting the past age in favour of light and free-flowing dresses which are reflected in the novel. Daisy and Jordan are described as wearing 'rippling and fluttering' dresses which appear to 'balloon' them upwards, a metaphor which represents their freedom as they embody the 'New Woman' who is no longer dictated by men. Hairstyles also began to change in reflection of this social change as women began cutting the long hair that had traditionally been a symbol of femininity, as a gesture of their emancipation. This is reflected in the novel as at Gatsby's parties, a great number of women

The candidate's explanation of personal context compared to the context of production works well in addressing the criteria of the question. What they see as normal for women challenges the ideas in Fitzgerald's text.

The historical background details should be pared down here, or related more directly to the reader's interpretation and identity.

Including women's clothing as a strong symbol of freedom within the text is effective. If the candidate had compared it with clothing choices for the women of today, it would be even stronger.

with 'French bobs' one said to be dancing 'individualistically' showing how they had become less confined to rigid expectations for women to be polite and reserved. Behaviours initially only acceptable for men began to be embraced by women, such as drinking and smoking which is shown through the character Daisy who is once described as being 'drunk as a monkey.' This demonstrates a positive social change for women who were able to shed some of the restrictions previously enforced upon them. Women also began to enter the workforce, shown in the character Jordan who had a professional golf career and is said to 'run about the country', unconfined by domestic roles. My identity as a 21st century feminist allows me to embrace the concept of the 'New Woman' as I myself embody it due to the freedoms I am entitled to in contemporary Western society. I am positioned to support the women who embody this archetype as I believe the empowerment of women is an important aspect of society. Due to my stance on embracing the embodiment of the 'New Woman' in the novel which is influenced by my personal context, I am positioned to respond critically to Fitzgerald's negative construction of women who embody this archetype.

The empowered female characters in the novel are represented negatively by Fitzgerald, as they are constructed as cruel and corrupt, reflecting his reluctance to accept the feminist movement. The character Myrtle is an example of the 'New Woman' as she is powerful and dominant in her relationship, with her husband being described as 'his wife's man and not his own' in a role reversal of traditional gender stereotypes. Myrtle is said to walk through him "as if he were a ghost" in a simile that shows her empowerment and dominance over her husband. Through this characterisation, Myrtle subverts the expectations of Simone de Beauvoir's 'Eternal Feminine' archetype which represents a woman as a passive possession of a man. An examination of

Here the candidate gives voice to their personal ideas and influences and how these impact on their connection to the text. Explaining what a '21st century feminist' embodies and the actual freedoms enjoyed by contemporary women would consolidate these ideas.

The choice of textual reference is constructive in that it supports the candidate's approach to the question. By citing Myrtle's attitude to her husband 'as if he were a ghost' directly exposes her contempt for his presence in her life. The candidate's textual knowledge is extensive and effective.

Including literary terminology such as simile and metaphor as part of the response is important to meet part of the expectations of the marking key.

Myrtle's death is critical in exploring Fitzgerald's attitudes towards the 'New Woman'. Myrtle's husband finds out about her affair and assaults her, and as she runs from him she is hit by Daisy in Gatsby's car. Her 'tremendous vitality' is emphasised even in her death as her breast is mutilated, torn loose and hanging 'like a flap' from her body. This simile highlights how her sexuality is apparent in the accident and suggests that her hubris was her empowered femininity as her affair ultimately caused her death. This horrific imagery implies Fitzgerald has constructed Myrtle as a cautionary tale about the dangers of women who embrace and flaunt their sexuality will face. Jordan's another character who embodies the 'New Woman' who is constructed negatively as she is represented as corrupt for cheating in her professional golf career, before rumours about this mysteriously 'died away'. This metaphor implies Jordan has abused her privilege of being a woman in a male-dominated sporting world by cheating and using her newfound empowerment to quiet rumours and escape justice. Daisy is another character who wrongly escapes justice for her actions as after Myrtle's death she flees the East coast and leaves her romance with Gatsby unfulfilled. The absence of 'happy endings' for any of the female characters who embody the 'New Woman' suggests that their empowered sexualities have driven them into chaos and destruction and therefore reflect Fitzgerald's opposition to the feminist movement advocating for women to enjoy the freedoms men were entitled to. Analysing this construction of female characters using a critical feminist lens, my own identity as a female reader positions me to respond disdainfully to this representation of women as cruel and corrupt. The concept of women receiving punishment for embracing the newfound freedoms of the 1920's leads me to respond critically to Fitzgerald's characterisation and therefore has cultivated negative feelings from me in response to this aspect of the text.

Again, textual reference is employed to make a powerful point about Myrtle's sexuality, 'her breast is mutilated, torn loose and hanging 'like a flap' from her body'. The candidate refers to such imagery as part of Fitzgerald's character construction of Myrtle being harsh and judgemental.

While textual knowledge is important, the candidate should continue to maintain their personal voice to reconnect with the question.

Here, the candidate has explained the influence of their personal identity as a feminist, with the result that they are critical of Fitzgerald's punishment of his female characters. The question asks for such personal connections.

My identity as a contemporary Australian Feminist has also allowed me to respond with anger towards Fitzgerald's construction of women, specifically the character Daisy as a commodity that can be traded between the hands of men in order to bolster their sense of self-worth. Daisy has been desired by men from a young age as a number of officers are said to 'demand the privilege of monopolising her'. Diction of the word 'demand' implies they believe it is their right to obtain her time and affections, and the action of securing her is treated as a competition in which the winner feels pride in himself due to this. Nick describes how Gatsby was excited that many had already 'loved Daisy' as it 'increased her value' in his eyes. Gatsby perceives Daisy as holding a materialistic value due to the high demand other men place on her company and it can be interpreted that throughout his great obsession with her, he was not in love with Daisy herself but rather with the idea of her. Nick states how Gatsby's love had 'gone beyond her, beyond everything' which further solidifies her representation as a 'trophy wife' in a symbol of all the class and wealth Gatsby has longed for in his youth. Daisy herself as an individual has become obscure and instead become a concept of success men seek to obtain for themselves. Daisy is characterised as an ultimate embodiment of the 'Eternal Feminine' archetype as she remains an unreachable idol for men to strive towards.

In Simone de Beauvoir's novel The Second Sex she explores this idea as she states 'a man attaches himself to a woman - not to enjoy her, but to enjoy himself'. This is true of Daisy's situation as her individuality is destroyed as she is perceived as an object that increases the worth of the man who is able to attain her. This negative representation of women as an idyllic commodity men are able to earn positions me as a feminist reader to be critical of Fitzgerald's construction of female characters. As a feminist, I believe women should be cherished for their individual value rather than one that pertains to materialism. Therefore, this representation has allowed me a deeper

The discussion here is both intelligent and rich in textual detail. The objectification of women and their value for men in the text is defined clearly and the candidate's reaction is one of 'anger'. It extends what has already been set out in this response.

Intertextual referencing extends the concepts regarding feminism and supports the candidate's personal critical interpretation of the text. The quotation from Simone de Beauvoir is yoked to Daisy's situation and how she is perceived and constructed to be a commodity. It is not, however, a novel, and the candidate should recognise this to differentiate de Beauvoir's book from a work of fiction.

connection with the text as I have developed feelings and frustration and pity towards female characters whose individual value is discarded due to my own experience as a feminist with strong values for sexual equality.

As maintained in Reader Response Theory, my own experiences, beliefs and cultural context has shaped my identity and therefore my response to literary texts, I have been able to apply a feminist criticism to The Great Gatsby in order to analyse representations of empowered women as cruel, corrupt and a commodity to be earned by men and have therefore been able to connect with the text through my critical response. This response is inherently linked to my status as a female reader maturing within an age that embraces feminism and equal rights, as my values for these are rooted in my cultural identity.

Stating feeling of 'frustration and pity' toward the female characters of the text is a direct comment on the candidate's interpretation being influenced by their identity.

The conclusion is concise and certain. The candidate speaks with authority as to how they have used their 'status as a female reader maturing in an age that embraces feminism and equal rights' to give a critical reading of the text.

Activity: Adding to your glossary

Presumably, you already have a glossary of literary terminology set up as part of your exam preparation. Use every opportunity to add to it. Words associated with ideas and concepts are useful additions. Once you have a word set down, play with it. Include it in your conversations, write down its definition and make it a part of your writing practice. A word should be utilised at least three times to establish it as a natural part of your vocabulary. Sometimes a simple word can tap into the literary meaning and offer fresh insight.

Words related to identity	Sentence
individuality	A number of distinct behaviours and values that contribute to the individuality of a person.
character traits	
personality	
perspective	
voice	
uniqueness	
distinctiveness	

Question 4: Sample response three

This candidate has opened their response to the question with a clear definition of one aspect of their identity. By using her femininity as the key element of her identity, the candidate goes on to connect this to their context and combines the two in their critical examination of the text. The candidate challenges ideas regarding expectations of what it means to be female in the context of both the play and in today's world. They also connect to the text by challenging the patriarchal system supported therein. The candidate has employed some strong literary terminology in their discussion and demonstrates good textual knowledge. The animated, individual voice employed by the candidate is important when answering this sort of question, which invites a direct personal response.

As a reader, one brings their own identity and experiences when interpreting text, which is often a defining factor in the meaning created. My own identity as a female in contemporary society where ideas pertaining to the feminism movements are emerging and becoming more prominent has shaped the way I have read Hamlet, William Shakespeare's 1603 stage drama. Hamlet follows the vacillations of Hamlet, the protagonist of the play, as he is forced to choose between avenging his dead father and following his own conscience. With a particular focus on the representation of females in the text, my own identity encourages me to challenge the ideas that surrounded women in the context of production, such as the expectations of passivity and subservience, the idealisation of female chastity, and rigid societal expectations of beauty and sexuality. While living in the 21st century, these notions seem outdated, my personal experience foregrounds my connections with this text, with firsthand knowledge that such conditions still exist today.

Hamlet gives a representation of the idealised woman; one who is passive and responsive to the needs of men, and will do everything in her power achieve more in her life. The characterisation of Ophelia as well as Hamlet's highly misogynistic dialogue are reflective of the patriarchal power dynamics that see women, like myself, subjugated. Hamlet's viewpoint in regards of

The candidate opens with an explicit reference to the criteria of the question, citing their gender and context as part of their identity and how that has made them consider the meaning of their chosen text.

The candidate has made a strong opening thesis, linking the ideas inherent in the play to the current conditions and ideas regarding expectations of female behaviour today.

The topic sentence of this paragraph should reference the 'when' of the idealised woman. Is she from Elizabethan times, or does the representation embody modern ideals as well? By making the statement clear, the candidate's continuing comments would be strengthened.

women is demonstrated when he exclaims, "Frailty, thy name is woman!" The metonymical description of 'frailty' to femininity reflects the notion that women were seen as weak and depended upon men for survival. This idea continues to be seen in modern society, in which females are seen as sensitive and supposedly lack the capabilities that men possess. Additionally, Ophelia is characterised as the epitome of a dutiful woman, frequently using phrases such as "I shall obey my lord." Ophelia's use of patriarchal discourse highlights the notion of how women are often unknowingly complicit in their subjugation. In one instance, Ophelia says, "I do not know my Lord, what I should think", to which Polonius responds "Marry, I'll teach you." Ophelia's dialogue here shows how women, being deemed intellectually inferior to men, even relied upon males to determine what to think. Polonius' authoritative response highlights how men have the utmost authority over women, which is something I can connect with on a personal level, living in an inherently patriarchal society where the voice of females is often silenced. Therefore, Hamlet is a text with which I can personally identify, without particularly admiring the role that women are expected to play of passivity and subservience, as I myself have been exposed to the idea that the role of a woman is to please the men around her.

Furthermore, the text idealises female chastity, and reinforces that the purity of women is expected by society. This idea is still prevalent in society today as a means of disempowering women, and I have personally witnessed the sharing of those who do not conform to ideals of morally pure behaviour. Laertes gives various warnings to Ophelia against expressing her sexuality, such as when he tells her, "fear it, Ophelia, the charest maid is prodigal enough if she unmask her beauty to the mood. virtue itself 'scape not calumnious strokes." Laertes's dire warning to Ophelia, particularly with the visual imagery and diction of 'unmasking' her beauty, suggest that

Coupling their identity with that of Ophelia is a clever move. The candidate examines Ophelia's representation as weak because she is female and links it with continued perceptions of women today.

There is deft inclusion of literary terminology such as 'patriarchal discourse' which contributes to the building of an intellectual engagement with the question.

The voice of the candidate is self-assured and comfortable, creating a positive tone to support their response. Stating exactly where 'the idea that the role of women is to please the men around her' comes from would enhance this statement.

women who embrace their sexuality place themselves in danger. The personification of "virtue" reflects the notion that women were expected to protect their virginity at all costs, an idea that exists today which sees virgin women placed on a moral pedestal. Further, Hamlet's dialogue is reflective of this issue, often he states, "be thou as pure as ice, as chaste as snow, thou shall not escape calumny, get thee to a nunnery!" The similes likening purity and chastity to "ice" and "snow" reflect the entrapment and rigidity women face in terms of expressing their sexuality, and how they are expected to completely repress their drives. Hamlet's condescending tone demonstrates how in patriarchal societies, past and present, men have had complete control over women's bodies and how they use them. Therefore, the character of Ophelia, particularly her chastity and the demands from other characters that she remain chaste, is an aspect of Hamlet that connected with my identity as a female, with knowledge of the expectations of purity that have been forced upon myself and other women alike.

The play also offers a portrayal of the double standards afforded to females in terms of the societal expectations placed upon them, particularly in regard to physical beauty and sexuality. When examining the rigidity of the standards with which the female characters in the text were forced to endure, I was able to relate to my personal context and identity which sees women constantly aspire to contradictions standards that are near impossible to achieve one aspect of such double standards that is presented in the text is that of displaying outward attractiveness however, doing so naturally. This idea is foregrounded when Hamlet says to Ophelia, "God has given you one face and you make yourselves another." The metaphor for women applying cosmetics is used in a judgmental tone by Hamlet, which implies criticism of women who use artificial means to attain standards of outward perfection that are impossible to

Specific knowledge of the text is in place to support comments made by the candidate. Including dialogue such as 'Be thou as pure as ice, as chaste as snow, thou shall not escape calumny, get thee to a nunnery!' and then explaining how it works to 'reflect the entrapment and rigidity women face in terms of expressing their sexuality' demonstrates a deft use of evidence.

There is constant cross reference between the candidate's identity and the ideas explored in the text. The final sentence of this paragraph exemplifies their methodology.

The candidate begins each paragraph with a definitive topic sentence that umbrellas the rest of the paragraph and expands on ideas asserted in the opening thesis statement. In this paragraph, the reference to 'double standards' with regard to 'physical beauty and sexuality' is developed, as the candidate relates these standards precisely to their personal context, as well as to Hamlet's opinion of Ophelia.

Suitable selection of textual references works in this response to confirm the candidate's ideas and overall thesis.

achieve. However, not displaying physical beauty often left women marginalised and ridiculed. Being a modern female reader, this has great significance on my own identity, living in a society where women such as myself wear makeup to exhibit the expected levels of female beauty, yet are often condemned for being unnatural and deceitful. A double bind placed on female sexuality is another aspect of the play that links with my own identity. Gertrude is a woman who freely embraces her sexuality and is routinely chastised by Hamlet. In one such example, he says "She married. O, most wicked speed, to post with such dexterity, to incestuous sheets. It is not, nor it cannot come to good." The "sheets" metonymically represent the marriage bed, and paired with Hamlet's condemnatory tone, reflects the dominant ideal that women were to remain pure and repress their sexuality while at the same time fulfil men's desires, which often sexualised women and their bodies, thus placing females in a double bind. The rather tautological statement of "it is, nor it cannot come to good," sheds light on how ingrained this expectation for women to remain virtuous was. This double bind of sexuality enforced upon women still exists today, with women who fully embrace their sexuality demonised, but those who embody 'purity' often disempowered at the hands of men. Thus, the double standard and expectations placed upon women represented in Hamlet allow the text to connect with my own identity having lived the same experiences of oppression and entrapment.

William Shakespeare's stage drama Hamlet, although written over 400 years ago, is a text that I, as a modern female reader, am able to connect with, as the same patriarchal peer dynamics are still in place today. The ideas pertaining to females in the text, such as passivity, chastity and physical beauty, are all expectations that I have felt personally obligated to achieve, and thus link with my identity as a woman. While this paints a bleak view of mankind, with the

Including reference to Gertrude as a secondary female from the text enlarges the candidate's discussion and offers a contrast to Ophelia. One character is experienced with regard to sexuality, the other is innocent. Both are chastised by the males of their family who seek to dominate their behaviour.

The candidate has expressed their ideas, employing sophisticated yet clear language throughout.

Ideas regarding passivity, chastity and physical beauty have been thoroughly examined in the body of this essay. By referring to them in the final paragraph, the candidate draws together each separate concept into a tight conclusive statement.

repression woman faced in the 1600s still in effect, emerging feminist ideology allows readers like myself to critique such notions, and pave the way for change in the future.

The candidate's summation is effective in that it confirms their opening statements and reconnects with the criteria of the question.

Activity: Sharing your knowledge

When you unpack a text or a syllabus concept, sharing your information with others is a useful method of clarifying understanding. Simple paired discussion can be a tool to solidify definitions, open new areas of thought and practise justification of an interpretation. Small groups can work the same way.

Sharing responsibilities makes the weight of expectations regarding the Literature course lighter. Tasks such as tracking a character through a text, discovering contextual information, establishing a narrative sequence, choosing the best quotations and unpacking questions are able to be shared for mutual benefit. Simply talking about your text to a peer can be most productive. By working together, the standard of understanding can be both raised and consolidated. Take the initiative and find a 'buddy' or partner who can reciprocate your input and so benefit you both.

Activity: Do your homework

One of the advantages of studying the types of texts that are included in the Literature course is that they are often the subject of great discussion and critical writing.

In your study groups, find several readings of your text, particularly when it comes to issues such as gender, as Sample Response Three explores. Find out what other critics and essayists have to say.

Have each member of your study group find a different reading of gender (or other aspect) within your text. Summarise the reading and share this summary with your fellow group members.

This will expose you to a diverse range of interpretations, allowing you to come to a more considered understanding. Regarding Shakespeare, for example, there are such a variety of responses to gender representations within his plays. Some herald him as a protofeminist, developing complex and rounded female characters, while others feel he reinforces quite rigid patriarchal beliefs.

Hint: Embrace the Cloud!

There are many online applications that will allow you to easily collaborate with others. Padlet, Office 365, Google Docs and so on are all cloud-based services that will allow you to share resources, create shared dossiers of notes, and comment on each other's work.

Considering Question 5

Explore how the writing of a text can be interpreted as an act of rebellion and/or empowerment.

Interpreting the question

This question asks candidates to reflect on how their texts engage with and comment on context. The most obvious approach would be to focus on the context of production – for example, how *Heart of Darkness* can be read as a rebellion against the imperialist presence in Africa. Candidates may also choose to write about texts whose temporal setting differs from the production context, such as how *No Sugar* functions as a revisionist text in order to empower the Indigenous community.

'The writing of a text' is a key component of this question. This requires explicit discussion of the construction of the chosen work – its generic, structural, stylistic or language features.

Candidates might choose to focus on texts that were controversial at the time of production. Texts by authors who challenge the status quo, such as Charlotte Perkins Gilman in her short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, or post-colonial texts by authors such as the poet Samuel Wagan Watson would also suit the parameters of this question.

The phrase 'can be interpreted' connotes ambiguity and a valid approach would be to formulate a response that draws on reading practices. For instance, candidates may reference the syllabus notion that *interpretations of texts vary over time*, and may discuss how the notion of rebellion or empowerment varies based on the values of the audience. Ideological perspectives such as feminism and Marxism would also be suited to this question.

'Rebellion' and 'empowerment' are key terms here. This question draws on the syllabus point of *how literary texts may be used to 'naturalise' particular ways of thinking, to serve the purposes of powerful groups while marginalising the views of others*. Candidates who read their work as an 'act of rebellion' should clearly outline the powerful group/s and the associated ways of thinking that the text challenges. Discussions of empowerment should centre on specific marginalised individuals/groups whose ways of thinking are focalised.

Advice from teachers

- Candidates should avoid falling into the trap of simply writing about how their text/s challenge or support particular ideologies. Therefore, an understanding and discussion of form and genre is pertinent in formulating a nuanced response.
- This question requires a sound understanding of the techniques and conventions that authors use in their writing. Candidates that show a strong understanding of their text's genre are likely to be rewarded.
- For this question, candidates should use contextual references to support their arguments regarding the text's function as rebellious and/or empowering.

Activity: Reflecting on the function of your texts

An important aspect of any text study is to evaluate how your texts engages with context, whether this be its context of production, or whether a literary work seeks to engage with issues of the past. Your syllabus asks you to *evaluate and reflect on how representations of culture and identity vary among texts*. Therefore, you should consider how your text/s paint a particular nation or culture, and how this would be received by various audiences.

The syllabus also notes: *genres may have social, ideological and aesthetic functions. Writers may blend and borrow conventions from other genres to appeal to particular audiences*. This question draws on several aspects of this point.

Firstly, ‘the writing of a text’ asks you to reflect on the function of its aesthetic features; the second half of the question asks you consider whether your text/s comment on social issues or challenge/support particular ways of thinking. The form your author chooses can either appeal to or alienate particular audiences.

Choose one of your texts and complete a version of the following table. The following sample answer discusses the functions of Aravind Adiga’s novel, *The White Tiger*.

Notes on the possible functions of <i>The White Tiger</i>		
Aesthetic	Social	Ideological
<p>Genre: Epistolary</p> <p>Adiga utilises a traditionally feminine writing form to structure the novel as a series of letters between the low caste Indian protagonist and the Chinese premier. The genre is fitting for the subject matter, as the two countries, like women, have traditionally been marginalised by Western discourse - seen as part of the 'orient' and 'inferior' to Western culture.</p> <p>Adiga also blends and borrows elements from the satirical and picaresque genres to create humour that disarms the audience, creating interest and encouraging them to engage on a deeper intellectual level.</p>	<p>The text provides a scathing critique of a number of social issues pervading contemporary Indian society, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caste discrimination • Corruption • Pollution • Sexism <p>It rebels against the 'status quo' by drawing attention to the inequities that pervade the way of life in India.</p>	<p>The text can be read as supporting and/or challenging various ideologies, depending on the reading practice employed. The text engages with the following ideologies:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hinduism • Classism • Capitalism • Colonial • Socialism <p>The text can be interpreted as empowering the lower caste of India by providing a voice to the marginalised - it draws attention to dominant ideologies which are repressive and advocates for ways of thinking that provide greater equality.</p>

Question 5: Sample response one

The strength of this response is in the candidate's understanding and engagement with the question. They have made good links to the question throughout by signposting the key words in every paragraph. The candidate has clearly focused on textual elements in response to the 'writing of a text' descriptor. Evidence is integrated smoothly and succinctly into the essay. At times, this candidate has tried to cover too much ground and fails to develop all the arguments outlined in their topic sentences. There is also a tendency to leave evidence unexplained; where possible, you should provide clear explanations and avoid leaving it up to markers to infer your intended meaning.

Literary texts are powerful mediums through which a writer can communicate their individual beliefs, opinions and views, particularly in relation to their context. The writing of a text can therefore be interpreted as an act of rebellion on the part of the writer, as they can challenge and criticise the dominant beliefs and ideologies of their context, separating themselves from a society they no longer believe in. Joseph Conrad was a vastly sceptical, proto-modernist writer of the late 19th century who conveyed his disillusionment with British society in his novella Heart of Darkness (1899). The novel is an act of rebellion by Conrad as he explicitly and adroitly opposed the Enlightenment and Eurocentric beliefs and values of his intended British audience, conveying the ideas that British civilisation is just as savage as African society, humanity is flawed and innately evil, and that there can be no certainty in human knowledge or absolute truth.

This opening demonstrates a sound understanding of the concepts in the question. The candidate clearly outlines their approach in a sophisticated manner: they define 'rebellion' as challenging the dominant beliefs and ideologies of the text's production context.

This introduction is succinct and establishes a clear thesis to the question.

Despite Conrad's treatment of the colonial project in Africa being rather paradoxical, with him simultaneously inscribing and condemning British imperialism, it still marks a departure from the literature of the 19th century that romanticised and glorified the imperial mission in Africa, such as King Solomon's Mines. In the novel, Conrad utilises the motif of black and white, or light and dark, to deconstruct the binaries between civilised Europe and

The candidate clearly engages with the 'writing of a text' component of the question by drawing on their intertextual knowledge of the period. This sentence, however, is quite long and convoluted; a simple sentence would add more clarity to the main argument.

the dark African continent. The European cities of London and Belgium are associated with darkness, with a "brooding gloom lying motionless" over the city of London, and the company headquarters being described as "a house in a city of the dead." This links the activities of the white man in the cities to their dark, horrific actions in the African jungle. Conrad illustrates the hypocrisy of the imperial project in Africa through the symbolism of the painting of Lady Liberty in the brickmaker's hut, in which she carries a torch, but is blindfolded. This disturbs the intended audience's belief in the profound role of the British in spreading the 'light of civilisation' by conveying the idea that they are blind to the harsh reality of their actions and its impact on the African natives. The symbolism of the irony in the African jungle also conveys the less than honourable intentions of the colonisers as the irony has become their 'holy grail,' replacing their philanthropic role in Africa, and is associated with death and decay. This is emblemated in the metaphorical description of the "ivory ball" of Kurtz's head when he has died, reflecting his greed and materialistic desires, insinuating that this selfishness preoccupies the thoughts of many of the other colonisers. In Heart of Darkness, Conrad rebels against the dominant Eurocentric view that Britain is the epitome of civilisation and progress by illustrating the hypocrisy of the British colonial project and the wrongdoings of the colonisers through language devices in his writing.

Through the character of Kurtz, Conrad rebels against the dominant belief in the inherent goodness of humanity. Conrad challenges the assumptions and expectations of his intended audience by demonstrating society as only important in the repression of the evil, primal desires of the individual. Through Kurtz's journey into the heart of Africa being symbolic of a journey into the unconscious mind and the underworld, Conrad conveys the idea

The candidate effectively integrates textual evidence into their syntax. The discussion of motifs continues to clearly address the first part of the question.

The candidate references the intended audience and their beliefs, and how the text can be read as a rebellion against these beliefs. This differs from today's reception context, where many now interpret the work as a racist text. Therefore, this candidate demonstrates a sound understanding of the connection between writer, reader, text and context – key syllabus concepts.

This linking sentence effectively synthesises the argument of the paragraph and addresses the key components of the question.

This topic sentence is more succinct and effective. The candidate engages with the question and clearly outlines their argument.

that Kurtz's behaviour and savagery is reflective of the true nature of humanity. Kurtz is constructed as a "king of the devils" and is constantly connected with evil and Hell, particularly through the allusion to Faust and Kurtz similarly selling his soul to the devil; "[the jungle] had taken him...and sealed his soul to its own by the inconceivable ceremonies of some devilish intention." Kurtz is an atavistic representation of humanity, with Conrad forcing his intended audience to reflect back on the initial, primal nature of man. Through Kurtz, Conrad conveys the idea that man is motivated by greed and selfishness, and constantly desires self-gratification, with Kurtz threatening to kill a man unless he gave him ivory "because he could do so and had a fancy for it." Despite Conrad re-affirming the Enlightenment belief in the importance of society, he also subverts this idea by claiming that society is only necessary for the control of the savagery of the individual, as Kurtz's solitude results in "his soul looking within itself...and [going] mad." Conrad's writing of Heart of Darkness acts as rebellion as Conrad shocks his intended audience by asserting the idea that the Enlightenment view of society is delusional and challenging the audience's perceptions of themselves and humanity is morally good.

The writing of Heart of Darkness by Conrad, with its metanarrative and inconclusive structure, also reflects his rebellion from the Enlightenment belief of his intended audience in the infallibility of science and knowledge. Through Marlow's unreliable narration, Conrad reveals the relativity of perception and how the facts and reality can be altered. This reflects the sceptical nature of the text, as Conrad conveys the idea that no truth can be known with absolute certainty. As a proto-modernist text, Conrad confuses his readers with paradoxes, claiming that civilisation can be corrupt, and subverts the Enlightenment narrative with an inconclusive and ambiguous ending. Conrad reveals how society

The candidate's analysis of characterisation is clearly signposted through the use of the term 'constructed'. However, the candidate's discussion of characterisation would be enhanced through an explicit examination of values and attitudes.

The use of the word 'forcing' is problematic because the process of reading and meaning-making is personal and varied; when referring to reader positioning, one should avoid speaking in absolutes.

The candidate continues to integrate evidence effectively into their writing; however, they have a tendency to leave evidence unexplained. This fails to develop the response.

This is a sound topic sentence that addresses all components of the question; however, the paragraph soon strays from this line of argument.

distracts itself from the truth through the characters of the Intended and the Accountant, who project their own version of reality onto events. This can be seen through the irony of the intended claiming she "knew [Kurtz] the best," yet her glorification of his character reflecting how she didn't know him at all. The Accountant, similarly, focuses on perfecting his appearance such that he is compared to a "hairdresser's dummy" despite the disarray and chaos that surrounds him at the outer station. However, it is through Kurtz's final living words that the idea that we can never know the truth with absolute certainty is conveyed, as he whispers, "the horror! The horror!" The ambiguity of his words means that the readers will never know what Kurtz saw when he died, whether it be the depths of Hell or the depths of his soul. Through his construction of Heart of Darkness as an ambiguous text, Conrad challenges the beliefs of his intended audience in the power of knowledge and reason, rebelling against the popular narrative form to provide the readers with a more subjective experience, as Heart of Darkness can have multiple interpretations.

Joseph Conrad's writing of Heart of Darkness (1899) can be interpreted as an act of rebellion against the dominant beliefs, values and assumptions of his context, as he challenges, opposes and criticises these beliefs through the central ideas of the text. Conrad rebelled in his writing by forcing his intended audience to read and interpret something new, as his text anticipated many of the preoccupations of 20th century literature.

This analysis of both the Intended and the Accountant is underdeveloped. It appears the candidate may be trying to cover too much ground in this paragraph.

The candidate continues their sound focus on the 'writing of a text' descriptor; however, this paragraph seems rushed and the candidate has not explored all facets of their argument with clarity.

This conclusion succinctly summarises the main points of the response, drawing the focus back to the question. Another one or two sentences would help clarify some of the ideas here.

Hint: Postcolonialism and Australia

As a formerly colonial society, postcolonialism is a significant preoccupation in Australian writing. It is well-worth being informed on the ways the Australian colonial experience is a unique one, and the way Australian literature has responded to issues of colonialism since the days of European settlement.

Activity: The relationship between writer, reader, text and context

In Sample Response One, the candidate constructs a reading that focalises the beliefs and assumptions of the intended audience, in order to assert that Conrad's text rebels against the ways of thinking in his production context.

Your syllabus highlights *the dynamic relationship between authors, texts, audiences and contexts, including:*

- *the ways in which the expectations and values of audiences shape readings of texts and perceptions of their significance; and how the social, cultural and historical spaces in which texts are produced and read mediate readings*
- *how interpretations of texts vary over time.*

For each of your texts, make notes on the way the writer engages with audience and context. You might like to use the following table as a guide. Use the points from Sample Response One as a guide to get you started.

Text:		
Context of production	Intended audience	Textual examples

Text:		
Context of production	Intended audience	Textual examples

Question 5: Sample response two

This answer responds to all key words of the question; the candidate interprets the text both as an act of rebellion and empowerment. The paragraphs are organised effectively and the candidate consistently engages with the second half of the question throughout the response. Numerous textual examples are used to support the answer. However, this response would benefit from three main refinements. Firstly, the expression of the answer could be more sophisticated. This can be achieved by the use of connective words and phrases to add greater fluency to the writing and more effective integration of textual examples. Secondly, the candidate's response to the 'writing of a text' descriptor is superficial and lacks the thoughtful approach that is provided for the second half of the question. Finally, the response makes vague and sometimes contradictory references to 'the audience', which is problematic with a text like *No Sugar*, as the temporal setting, production and reception context are all different.

Post-colonialism is a movement of rebellion. It employs literature as a medium through which it protests against the colonial version of history, and seeks to shift the dominant paradigm through the eyes of the oppressed. Australian indigenous playwright, Jack Davis, published his confronting yet moving drama No Sugar in 1986 as an act of rebellion on behalf of his ancestors. Set in the Great Depression between 1929 and 1934, the play focuses on the experiences of the Millimuras, an aboriginal family in Western Australia. Through rich language and the use of dramatic devices, Davis protests and rebels against the stereotypes held against Indigenous Australians through history, and exposes the sheer cruelty his people experienced on behalf of British colonisers. Furthermore, he empowers the indigenous community, a rebuttal to the intense cultural hegemony which existed throughout Australia's history.

This is a sophisticated opening statement which locates the text within a literary movement whilst making reference to the key ideas embedded within the question.

The introduction ends with a clear thesis, which is encompassed in two sentences. The candidate has chosen to argue that the text both empowers and rebels. The thesis for rebellion is much stronger, as it outlines key textual features, which the thesis about empowerment fails to do.

As a post-colonialist drama, *No Sugar* seeks to rebel as a protest against the stereotypes held towards Indigenous Australians throughout history. The British stereotyped indigenous people as dirty, lazy and uncivilised; however, through dramatic technique Davis prompts the audience to reflect on how these stereotypes were created. "SERGEANT: I'm afraid soap is no longer included as a ration item...MILLY:

Here, the candidate uses helpful contextual references to elaborate on the main point of the topic sentence; however, they have failed to signpost their argument to the 'writing of a text' descriptor.

what am I gonna wash with?...Whose idea was it to stop the soap? SERGEANT: The idea, as you call it, came from the Aborigine's department in Perth." Here, Davis uses irony to mock the stereotype of Indigenous Australians as uncivilised and dirty. Soap, symbolic of hygiene and cleanliness, is taken away from Milly and her family by the white settlers. This idea is strengthened in "SERGEANT: Your trouble, Milly, is that you got three healthy men bludging off you, too lazy too work...MILLY: Last week, my Joe cut a hundred posts for Old Skinny Martin and you know what he got? A pair of second-hand boots and a piece of stag ram so touch the dawgs couldn't eat it." Davis again uses irony to mock the stereotype of the indigenous community as lazy and uncivilised. Milly and her family's poverty is due to lack of compensation for their work by the Whites; however, the Whites views their need for resources as reflecting laziness. Through this irony, Davis prompts the audience to reflect on how these stereotypes were driven by a self-fulfilling prophecy; the behaviour of the British community forced the Aboriginal people to act in ways reflecting these stereotypes. No Sugar acts as a rebellion against the stereotypes held against Indigenous Australians.

Davis also revels against the sheer mistreatment of the Indigenous community on behalf of his ancestors. He shocks and confronts the audience with the acts of cruelty towards Aboriginal people out of racial hatred. Through the use of dramatic techniques, he rebels against colonialism by shifting the dominant paradigm towards Australia's history. Through props and stage directions, Davis demonstrates the way that Indigenous Australians were dehumanized and treated like animals. "[A sign displayed reading 'Government of Western Australia, Fisheries, Livestock and Aborigines]'." Through this association with wildlife, the audience is confronted by the way that white settlers viewed indigenous people as animals, worthy of mistreatment and control. One of

In this paragraph, the candidate uses long excerpts from the text which stand alone as sentences, and they fail to contextualise the evidence; this approach is stilted. It is ideal to use smaller chunks of evidence that are integrated into your analysis.

The candidate only manages to comment on one language feature in this paragraph – irony – which makes for a repetitive read. There are other language features at play within the evidence, such as connotative language and tone, which could also be discussed.

The linking sentence continues to signpost the second half of the question. The use of a connective word, such as 'therefore' or 'thus' would add a sense of fluency.

The candidate takes some time here to clearly articulate their argument in relation to the question. This paragraph is also quite long, which suggests the need for better planning strategies before writing.

the most shocking displays of cruelty is shown through Mr Neal whipping pregnant Mary for not going to the nurses' quarters, where he was known to demand indigenous women for sexual pleasures. "[BILLY holds her outstretched over a pile of flour bags. NEAL raises the cat-o-nine-tails. Blackout. A scream.]" Stage directions, lighting and sound all demonstrate the disgusting and confronting act of whipping a pregnant woman. Exposing such cruelty on behalf of the white community is an effective rebellion against colonisation and hegemony as it prompts the audience to reflect upon the role of British settlers in Australia's early history. "[JIMMY heaves and clutches at his chest. SAM catches him as he collapses, clutching at the flagpole.]...NEAL [to the whites]: Ah! He's only fainted." Jimmy's death, through stage directions, is highly symbolic of the struggle of the indigenous community against such cruelty. He dies clutching at the flagpole, and the sheer disrespect of the white community is reflected through Neal, addressing only the whites, dismissing Jimmy's death as if it were nothing. As a British Australian young person, No Sugar shocks and confronts me with the cruel, harsh treatment the indigenous community has experienced. It angers me to see such hegemony and racial hatred in the country's past. Through confronting the audience with this mistreatment, Davis rebels against the colonial version of Australia's history.

The candidate's ineffective integration of evidence continues to detract from the quality of their argument. When providing evidence, you need to contextualise quotes and use connective words and phrases in order to achieve greater fluency and clarity.

Here, a personal response is provided which seems out of place in the context of the argument. The candidate also refers to 'the audience' and though they speak in absolute terms, the historical context and associated values of said audience is unclear.

In a way typical of post-colonialism, Davis uses the play to empower the Indigenous community and subvert the norm. No Sugar uses a strong hybridity of language, combining the colonial language, English, with the traditional Indigenous language such as in "Nyoongars corroboreein to a wetjalas brass band." This hybridity is effective in that it disguises deviance as compliance; whilst the Indigenous people appear to be conforming by doing using the colonial language, they are subtly rebelling by combining it with their own language. It also evokes a level of

The candidate clearly signposts the second half of their thesis here – how the text functions as an act of empowerment. This paragraph would benefit from more effective elaboration sentences, as some assertions in the topic sentence remain unclear.

sympathy from the audience: they are submerged within a language they do not understand, much like the indigenous people were upon colonisation. The staging also empowers the indigenous people. The Millimurra family are centre stage, whilst the colonial town, such as offices and buildings, are to either side of the stage. This marginalises the colonial community, subverting the norm. Davis also empowers his people through celebrating the indigenous culture for their loyalty, resilience, resourcefulness and strong sense of family. Gran is often seen using resources from the land when they are deprived by the whites, such as during the birth of Mary and Joe's son. Their pride for their culture is demonstrated by the use of their native language and cultural traditions such as dancing and corroborees. Joe and Mary's love story reflects the strong values of loyalty and trust. The value on family is demonstrated by Joe's return from jail. "JOE: earned a few bob... 'ere Gran, got something for ya... had enough left for a pack." Joe uses all of the money he earned whilst in jail on gifts for his family, which reflects how in the Aboriginal community, the value of family outweighs the values of money. Davis greatly empowers the Indigenous community through the play No Sugar.

No Sugar, as a postcolonial drama, seeks to rebel against the colonial version of Australia's history and empower the indigenous community. Playwright Jack Davis effectively challenges the dominant colonial paradigm through his effective combination of dramatic techniques and devices. This language allows him to subvert and rebut the stereotypes held against his people throughout history, and he exposes the mistreatment the Aboriginal people suffered at the hands of white colonisers. Furthermore, he empowers the indigenous community and subverts the norm.

This valid point about the staging of the text shows a sound understanding of the work as a piece of drama. You should demonstrate an understanding of the generic features of your texts in order to satisfy the marking criteria.

This paragraph continues to provide numerous examples in order to justify the interpretation of the text as an act of empowerment.

This linking sentence is stilted and redundant. It adds little value to the paragraph.

This conclusion provides an effective summary of the answer. The final sentence is quite abrupt however, suggesting the candidate ran out of time.

Considering Question 6

Discuss how the aesthetic qualities of at least one text have been used to support and/or challenge ideologies.

Interpreting the question

This question draws on the interrelationship between the aesthetic and the intellectual, which is a prominent feature of the syllabus. The glossary notes that *many would argue that the aesthetic and the intellectual are inseparable*. The question not only invites candidates to discuss the aesthetic appeal of a literary text, but also how the text functions on an intellectual level through its engagement with ideologies.

The syllabus defines the aesthetic as *a sense of beauty or an appreciation of artistic expression*. In discussing ‘aesthetic qualities’, candidates should reference the aesthetic appeal of generic features. These could include experimental staging in drama, the use of an unreliable narrator in a prose text or sensory imagery in a poem. It is also a valid approach to comment on the author’s use of language for effect.

The key word ‘how’ invites candidates to discuss the *effect* of aesthetic qualities. To address this aspect of the question, candidates might discuss the emotional impact of particular textual elements or their appreciation of an author’s experimentation with generic features, or even how well an author is able to replicate or represent particular facets of the human experience.

Candidates need to show an understanding of the syllabus definition of ideology: *a system of attitudes, values, beliefs and assumptions*. An ideology is more than just an idea – it is a set of ideas belonging to powerful individuals or groups.

The question invites candidates to engage with nuances of meaning. Stronger candidates might recognise that the ‘and/or’ feature of the question draws on the notion that texts can be complex, even contradictory, in their treatment of ideologies.

Advice from teachers

- Candidates need to ensure they explicitly outline the ideologies they are discussing. Valid approaches might include discussing political persuasion, such as Labour or Liberal, or particular religions such as Christianity or Islam, or even philosophies such as existentialism.
- It is imperative to analyse specific textual features and connect these to their role in either supporting or challenging particular ideologies.
- Stronger responses will demonstrate consideration of both language and generic features. This might mean commenting on imagery and figurative language in poetry, as well as metre and rhyme.

Activity: Understanding ideologies

To develop a sophisticated response to this question, candidates need to apply the syllabus definition of ideology to their text/s. Like any literary concept, a nuanced understanding of this theory will lead to a more detailed answer.

To know how your texts engage with ideologies, you must first understand the elements that comprise them. Too often, candidates discuss simplistic ideas rather than complex value systems. Use the table below to deepen your understanding of how your texts engage with ideologies. Some aspects of the ideology of environmentalism have been deconstructed for you as an example.

Ideology:			
Attitudes	Values	Beliefs	Assumptions

Question 6: Sample response one

This response showcases a comprehensive examination of aesthetic features and their effects in relation to the texts discussed. The candidate analyses a range of poetic features and utilises sophisticated literary discourse. The candidate demonstrates a sound understanding of the relationship between the aesthetic and the intellectual and incorporates secondary references to validate their interpretation of these syllabus concepts. The expression is fluent; connective words and phrases are used to good effect and the candidate organises their ideas clearly. This essay is incredibly detailed, yet the central argument in relation to ideology remains underdeveloped at times. Whilst the short paragraphs add clarity, they often inhibit the exploration of the ideas in the topic sentences. This is a strong response to the question, but leaves much for markers to infer.

The aesthetic qualities of a text have often been considered as disparate from the didactic messages or ideologies contained within. Indeed, Louise Rosenblatt famously distinguished between 'aesthetic reading' as an examination of the 'poeticity' of a text, and 'efferent reading' as a search for instructive messages. However, an examination of William Blake's Songs of Innocence and Experience (1794) suggests that the aesthetic qualities of text can, in fact, be conduits for ideas and messages, which both endorse and challenge ideologies or philosophies. Indeed, it is possible to read his poems 'The Divine Image' and 'The Human Abstract' as texts which employ their artistic 'poeticity' to respectively endorse or oppose Blake's distinct Christian cosmology, whilst allowing for nuances in ideological interpretation based on a readers' response to the aesthetic.

It is important to first note that 'The Divine Image' is a Song of Innocence, whilst 'The Human Abstract' is a corollary in the Songs of Experience anthology. The two, then, can be expected to promulgate messages that challenge each other's ideologies, whilst supporting their own. Whilst this is evident, however, it is also possible to view the aesthetic techniques of both poems as endorsements of Blake's philosophies. The influence of aesthetics in support or subversion of a value or belief, then, can be seen as largely dependent on a

The opening statements show an understanding of the key concepts of the question. The candidate states that the aesthetic and the intellectual are 'disparate' and qualifies this with the proceeding reference to Rosenblatt; however, this clashes somewhat with the syllabus, which remarks that the *aesthetic and the intellectual are inseparable*.

The thesis statement engages with all facets of the question and demonstrates a sophisticated understanding of the ambiguity of texts.

This 'split introduction' can be a good way to add key information about texts in relation to the question without writing long and convoluted paragraphs.

reader's personal interpretation.

'The Divine Image' is notable in its use of a lyrical, hymn-like style; indeed, its use of repetition and parallel structure function to create a highly beautiful song and aesthetic that complement its optimistic and hopeful ideology. In the poem, Blake writes that "mercy, pity, peace and love" are four virtues that "is God, our father dear" and, in a subsequent line, "is man, his child and care." The grammatically dubious diction is, in fact, significantly indicative of the uplifting and joyous attitude of the persona: the four virtues are represented as an inseparable whole, which comprise not just the Christian God but also mankind itself. The repetition and parallel structure thus work to convey the essence of the poem's philosophy: that mankind has an innate virtue, spirituality and holiness that connects them intrinsically to God.

The ideology privileged in the poem is one that celebrates the human soul, rejecting the institution of religion and instead favouring individual introspection. The persona proclaims "every man...who prays...prays to the human form divine." It is not just the repetitive structure of the poem that conveys this ideology, however. Indeed, the lyrical and beautiful aesthetic of the poem is central to emphasising the hopeful and celebratory message. The poem uses ballad meter, which alternates iambic tetrameter and trimeter, as well as an ABAB rhyme scheme. The consistent rhythm and song-like musicality works as a conduit for the emotive undertones of the message. Rather than just being a syllogistic essay on the unity between God and man, 'The Divine Image' is a beautiful and heartfelt tribute. It is a hymn to the concept that "love [is] the human form divine," and as such, it is evident that the stylistic poetics and artistry of the poem support and supplement its didactic comments and ideology.

It is further evident that the poem's aesthetic qualities

This topic sentence clearly signposts aesthetic elements. The candidate makes vague reference to an 'optimistic and hopeful ideology', yet fails to qualify exactly what ideology is supported or challenged. This problem persists throughout the essay.

This paragraph is too short to adequately prove the point asserted in the final sentence.

The candidate continues to struggle to articulate a specific ideology. The argument is starting to stray from the 'support and/or challenge' descriptor.

It is refreshing to see a candidate comment on the formal elements of poetry. The analysis of these generic elements helps to develop their argument.

act as emotive vehicles for ideology; the poem's sound devices and its phonaesthemes additionally lend to a celebratory, optimistic mood in line with the persona's attitude. The poem uses consonance through 'm' and 'n' phonaesthemes, employing euphony and pleasant sound symbols to create a calming aesthetic "all must love the human form" is, for example, a line in which harsh consonants are eschewed in favour of more pleasant sounds. Additionally, the social-political aesthetic of the poem is supplemented with the rhetorical use of a tricolon: "all must love the human form/in Heathen, Turk or Jew." The rhetorical, rhythmical structure associates an orderly aesthetic with the idea that true spiritual enlightenment embraces all denominations and beliefs. This, in itself, appeals to my own progressive values and, as such, the poem employs universal, political and rhetorical aesthetics to support its ideology of human equality in spirituality.

There are, however, resistant readings to this text. It could be argued that the blatant 'poeticity' and lyrical aesthetic of 'The Divine Image' are more akin to a nursery rhyme, and that, in this sense, the aesthetics achieve a frivolity and inanity that undermine its own optimistic ideology. However, Blake addresses an opposing ideology in 'The Human Abstract'. Indeed aesthetics - or more specifically, an aesthetic of grim and discursive criticism - are employed in the poem to undermine and critique the normative ideology of 'The Divine Image.'

'The Human Abstract' is marked by imagery and stylistic choices that might be considered deeply unaesthetic. However, it is the confronting and often jarring qualities of the text that achieve its own aesthetic; one that creates Rosenblatt's 'poeticity,' through vivid, visceral imagery and figurative language. In this poem, it is not simply the ideology that contests 'The Divine Image', but the aesthetic qualities as well. The poem, notably, uses a more

The candidate continues to demonstrate a strong understanding of the aesthetic qualities of their text. The argument relating to ideology, however, continues to be vague. This could be remedied through specific reference to an ideology in the topic sentence. In addition, an elaboration sentence that outlines specific beliefs, values, attitudes or assumptions would add clarity to the focus of this paragraph.

This paragraph continues to demonstrate the strength of this essay – succinct quoting and a strong understanding of poetic features in relation to the texts.

In this paragraph, the candidate seamlessly transitions from the discussion of one text to another. The candidate could benefit from outlining the concept of 'normative ideology' more clearly, however.

Here the candidate responds to the 'support and/or challenge' descriptor by comparing both poems. This response is interesting and demonstrates a sound understanding of the process of reading, but it is a convoluted way of answering the question.

discursive style: the second line, "if we did not make somebody poor," jars with the first lines iambic trimeter. However, it is evident that the aesthetic aims of the poem are distinct from its innocent corollary - instead, this hint of free verse structure suggests a contrast to the euphony of rhythm and consistency. Additionally, the poem uses these opening lines to clarify its privileged ideology as a selfish philosophy: "mercy no more could be/if all were as happy as we." Here, it is suggested that the ideas in 'The Divine Image' are fundamentally flawed, and predicated on a grim world of suffering. Indeed, the poem further conveys this ideology, whilst the aesthetic aspects of its rhyme and imagery are used to add depth to the argument - whilst distinguishing it from 'The Divine Image'. Notably, 'The Human Abstract' represents a world where humanity's self-doubt (characterised as humility) has stifled their ability to attain spirituality. Some have argued that the persona's ideology is, in fact, in agreement with 'The Divine Image' - humanity may have divine potential. However, the ideology differs in that the persona places greater value in the harsh realities of a corrupt world. This too is supported by the text's artistic and poetic devices.

The candidate continues to use phrases like 'this ideology' without clearly outlining the system of values, attitudes, beliefs and assumptions to which they are referring.

This point demonstrates an understanding of the notion that texts are ambiguous and are open to multiple interpretations.

The discursive and irregular rhyme used is a significant example of the way in which the poem's grim, even shocking, aesthetic lend a subliminal support to the pessimistic ideology foregrounded in the poem. In place of an expected rhyming couplet, Blake writes "The caterpillar and fly/feed on the mystery." The line creates a harsh representation of priests as insectoid metaphors; they are seen as parasitic aspects of the world living in ignorance. The persona's disdain for the world, including religion, is reflective of their almost fatalistic ideology. 'Mystery' jars as a half-rhyme. It is likely, considering previous uses of the word 'mystery' in Blake's other works, that this is intentional rather than a quirk of the context of production. As such, it is evident that the disruptive

This paragraph showcases the candidate's ability to not only describe and discuss aesthetic features, but also to qualify and outline their effects.

and off-kilter cadence of the poem creates a distinct aesthetic of grim chaos and disregard, which reinforces and reflects the world as viewed through the persona's ideological lens.

Furthermore, 'The Human Abstract' can be seen to use its aesthetic qualities in terms of imagery to add a vivid and visceral nature to the persona's representation of humanity as corrupt, oppressed and oppressive. The poem describes the tree of mystery bearing the "fruit of deceit/ruddy and sweet to eat." The internal rhyme and the vividness of the visual imagery is almost reflective of the lyrical poeticity of *The Divine Image*, however, here the aesthetic aspects of the figurative language achieve an opposite effect. The visceral, gustatory imagery and biblical allusion create an immersive experience that hypostatises 'deceit' and supports an ideology that sees sin, rather than holiness, as prevalent in humanity. It is evident, then, that through allusion and imagery, 'The Human Abstract' employs a tangible aesthetic that reinforces the negative image of humanity its ideological perspective sees as normative.

As such, through the use of lyrical stylistic choices, meter and sound devices, it is evident the 'The Divine Image' uses an aesthetic of beauty and musicality to supplement its optimistic, hopeful values and cosmology. Comparatively, it is the vivid, grim style of 'The Human Abstract' that challenges this ideology in favour of a more critical one. Whilst unpleasant, the visceral and jarring aspects are no doubt an integral part of the text's aesthetics - or poeticity. It is then evident that the poems both reflect the use of aesthetics - in contrasting ways - that supplement a didactic message in emotive, affective ways. It is, after all, the experience and the affective dimensions of the poem that stay with readers' memories, and Blake is evidently well aware of these qualities: the ideologies of his poems are not just supported, but intrinsically tied, to their aesthetic qualities.

The candidate engages with all key words of the question in this paragraph; however, it is short and provides only one piece of textual evidence so the argument lacks development.

This penultimate paragraph is quite brief, which detracts from the quality of the response. It is important to end in an impactful way by supporting your points with ample evidence.

This conclusion succinctly summarises a sprawling argument and showcases a strong understanding of the relationship between aesthetic and ideology. The candidate's varied vocabulary and syntax is impressive; the expression of this response is one of its redeeming features.

Activity: Describing the aesthetic

Grappling with the notion of 'aesthetic' is tricky for students and teachers alike. A simple way to approach the concept is to think of each text as a piece of art. How does it make you feel? How well (or poorly) does it represent real life? Is it constructed in an interesting or unusual way?

Aesthetic features are the techniques or conventions that authors employ. In your essays, you must go beyond simply listing features; you need to describe their effects. This is not always easy and requires practice. A helpful strategy is to make a list of ways to describe aesthetic features, and then apply them to your texts, where appropriate.

The following list was taken from the candidate's essay and can provide some sample ways of describing the effect of aesthetic features. You can use it as inspiration for creating your own list. Try to add a few of your own phrases below.

Sample ways to describe the effect of aesthetic features

lyrical, hymn like
pleasant...beautiful

grim
chaos and disregard

visceral
immersive experience
emotive, affective

Hint: Creating complex topic sentences

The semi-colon is an under-appreciated punctuation mark. It can be used to add a dependent clause to your topic sentence, adding additional, specific detail in a way that is still clear and easy for the reader to follow.

Here are two examples:

Shelley's sonnet 'Ozymandias' can be read as an ironic commentary on the folly of hubris; a powerful statement about the insignificance of humans in the grand scheme of time.

Shelley's sonnet 'Ozymandias' can be read as an ironic commentary on the folly of hubris; a theme most powerfully evident in the central conceit of a crumbling statue of a once-great king.

Question 6: Sample response two

This response demonstrates a more simplistic and straightforward approach to the question than Sample Response One. The candidate discusses how the aesthetics of epic theatre challenge capitalist ideology whilst supporting communist ideology. This essay is concise and contextualises textual examples and evidence as needed to orient the reader. The response begins and ends with clear links to the question, but the middle paragraph would benefit from a more effective paragraph structure – some points are undeveloped and the argument in relation to the question is often unclear. The candidate often confuses the concept of character construction for representation, and the response lacks editing in parts – these facets detract from the quality of the response.

The end of the Second World War saw with it the rise of a bi-polar globe; a conflict between the ideologies of the capitalist USA and the Communist USSR. This, however, was not a conflict fought with weaponry, but with political influence; evidenced through Bertold Brecht's seminal work of epic theatre, *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*. In support of the social ideals of his East German home, Brecht pioneered a new form of theatre, which utilised its aesthetic qualities to alienate viewers from the action on stage and focus on the political message of the production. Through this, Brecht ultimately aims to align viewers with the ideals of a communist society, through the depiction of the capitalist and hyperbolically anarchist state of Grusinia.

This introduction is succinct and effective. It signposts a clear argument in relation to the question: the aesthetic qualities of epic theatre work to challenge the ideology of capitalism and support the ideology of communism.

The production of *The Caucasian Chalk Circle*, (hereafter TCCC) uses its structure as a tool to disconnect viewers from what they are seeing, while focusing on the contrast between political systems. This is clearly seen through the play's prologue, set in war-torn Georgia, where two opposing farming groups work together to ultimately rebuild what they've lost, the minimalist costuming and lack of props and objects is indicative of the practicality of a socialist society. Given this, it is clearly a society run by socialist ideals, the dialogue from one of the farmers that "the home of the Soviet people shall also be the home of reason," represents these people as powerful

This topic sentence signposts not only the effect of the aesthetic feature (structure), but also its relationship to meaning.

and unified, despite their large loss of material wealth. This group then decides to put on a theatrical production, from which the viewer now follows, further establishing this alienation effect through the structuring of a play within a play. Here, in feudal Grusinia, there has been an assassination of the governor "moishvilli," and the "sky turns red" in response. Here, though the aesthetic elements of light and colour, both usually achieved through on stage lights and a cyclorama, the fall of this capitalist society's leadership is directly associated with the negative connotations of the red sky. This is directly contrasted with the clear skies of the communist setting of the prologue, with body language and staging of the actors placing them equally in a "circle," the hierachal nature of capitalism is critiqued. Here, Brecht's notion is that in a society of class and inequality, the fall of leadership leads to the decline of that society's structures.

In conjunction with this, practicality associated with the values of motherhood are represented through a juxtaposition between the characters of Natella and Grusha. Natella, being the natural mother of child Michael, is represented as expressing great neglect towards the care of her child. During the chaos that emerges following the assassination of Natella's husband, the governor, her elaborate costuming indicates her values of material possessions. Further, this is sharply contrasted with the child Michael being placed in a box, and actually forgotten by his mother. Insight into their values of commodities is seen through her dialogue - "where is my saffron dress...I saw you touching it." Given the severity of their situation, with her husband being murdered and the aforementioned "red sky," Brecht is using the character of Natella to critique the values of a capitalist structure, that favouring wealth. This is sharply contrasted to the character of Grusha, a servant of the Abishvillies, who finds and decides to look after Michael when his mother forgets him. The

Here, the candidate makes an all-too-common mistake: substituting the word 'representation' for 'construction'. Characters in a text can only be 're-presented' or 'presented again' if they already exist in real life. The candidate is actually discussing the characterisation of this group.

The candidate discusses a range of aesthetic features in this paragraph, exhibiting a sound understanding of the generic features of drama.

The expression of this topic sentence leaves much to be desired; the candidate needs to better signpost their argument in relation to the question here.

Despite some 'clunky' expression at times, the candidate demonstrates a sound understanding of the theory of ideology by discussing the values of capitalism as they apply to the play.

costuming and body language of Grusha, being minimalist and subservient, is directly contrasted to that of Natella, to draw a direct comparison between socialism and capitalism. Further, the baby Michael was usually represented using a small object to further establish the alienation effect and allow the viewer to focus on the message behind the scene. Later, when Grusha leaves the city, not only has the sky returned to a normal lush colour, again representing the prosperity alongside a lack of a class system, but Grusha's line "of every four morsels you shall have three," is a direct comment on the values of motherhood. Through the contrasting aesthetic elements associated with Grusha and Natella, Brecht is suggesting that motherhood is a skill earned through work and sacrifice, and not taken for granted.

These points relating to the 'baby Michael' and the values of motherhood require further development. Unlike the examples in the first half of the paragraph, it is less clear how they relate to the question.

Furthermore, Brecht uses aesthetics of Epic theatre to critique the corruption of justice within a capitalist society. Through the character of Azdak, a representedly "crazy" looking man, he becomes metonymic of capitalist judiciary systems following being appointed judge. The sharp contrast between Azdak's dishevelled appearance and the significance of his position is a clear commentary by Brecht on the nature of justice in capitalist societies. This is reinforced through his line "he must be appointed, or else the law violated," suggesting that those appointed to elite positions, much like the upper class bourgeoisie, not necessarily earning their status. Further, Azdak sitting on the prop of the statute book before every political trial is symbolic of the laws in a capitalist court ultimately irrelevant in a society ruled by money. This is reinforced by him saying "I receive" before every case, openly accepting bribes. This ultimately foregrounds the fundamental flaws in a capitalist system. Further, in the play's production, characters would usually represent their faces and emotions using masks and hand motions, further emphasising this detachment between audience and

Much like the beginning of the paragraph, this linking sentence fails to signpost the candidate's engagement with the question. A clearer connection to ideology and aesthetic appeal is needed.

The topic sentence of this paragraph establishes a stronger argument in relation to the question. A better elaboration sentence, indicating specific elements of epic theatre, would add clarity to the argument.

These are some interesting points, though these sentences exhibit some expression errors. This suggests the candidate was rushing, or failed to read back through their essay. A failure to edit can be detrimental to the clarity of your argument.

play and instead highlights the ideology of socialism Brecht is ultimately supporting.

Through his seminal work of Epic Theatre, Brecht utilises a number of aesthetic qualities to position audience members to view his work as a piece of political messaging. In this, Brecht positions them to subconsciously support the values of communism, and critique that of capitalism without overtly labelling either. As a reader from a largely capitalist context, it intrigues me to understand the perspective of those of different political viewpoints, a notion encouraged by Brecht. In this, he encourages audiences of all contexts to think critically about their ideology and question the prosperity of each of their belief systems.

This linking sentence draws the focus back to the question but could synthesise the content of the paragraph more effectively.

This conclusion provides a brief summary of the argument in relation to the question without being too repetitive. The candidate ends with some reflection, and his approach is generally an effective technique. Regarding this, a better approach would be to focus on the meaning-making process from the sole perspective of a reader, rather than asserting author intent.

Hint: Undertaking an aesthetic reading

An aesthetic reading focuses on the artistic qualities of a text. It is an exploration of what the reader finds most beautiful, artistic, striking or well-crafted within its construction. This makes for a highly subjective reading. However, this does not mean you can write about just any old thing and claim it as your 'aesthetic appreciation'. To truly appreciate a text from an aesthetic perspective, you must be able to recognise and comment on its crafting at a high level, in terms of its use of language and generic conventions, as well as its representation of ideas. In this way, you will be able to communicate *why* you think the text is beautiful or has artistic merit.

It is virtually impossible to undertake an informed aesthetic reading unless you have read widely, and are able to appreciate how the text is crafted in relation to others of its kind.

Activity: Metalanguage – higher order verbs

In your essays, you will spend a lot of time explaining textual evidence and justifying your interpretation of the question. Therefore, you need to approach each analytical assessment 'armed' with an arsenal of varying ways to discuss your texts.

A helpful strategy is to memorise a variety of higher order verbs that you can draw on to explain your ideas. These verbs are 'higher order' in the sense that they move beyond simplistic explanatory words such as 'is' and 'shows'. Of course, not all verbs mean the same thing and you will need to ensure you use the correct word in the correct context.

The following page contains a list of explanatory words used by the candidate in Sample Response Two, as well as some other verbs and corresponding definitions. Add your own to the list and use them where appropriate to enhance your writing.

Higher order verbs used in Sample Response Two

"evidenced"	"pioneered"	"depicts"	"aims"	"supports"			
"represents"	"establishes"	"associates"	"suggests"	"reinforces"			
"highlights"	"encourages"	"emphasises"	"comments"	"indicates"			
Verb							
accentuate		To make more noticeable or prominent.					
adduce		To cite as evidence.					
affirm		To declare one's support for; uphold; defend.					
assert		To state a fact or belief confidently and forcefully.					
centralise		To bring to the forefront.					
characterise		To describe the distinctive features or nature of.					
compound		To add to.					
construe		To interpret in a particular way.					

Considering Question 7

How does reading intertextually allow readers to appreciate particular representations of human imperfection?

Interpreting the question

Reading intertextually does not immediately, or only, refer to the allusions made in a text. This question requires candidates to embrace one of the underlying concepts of the Literature course: the interconnectedness of texts and reading experiences. They should be able to recognise and differentiate between various styles, methodology and the choices made therein, and also note similarities. Furthermore, every text you experience contributes to a body of knowledge, expectations and understandings that you then bring to each new text you read. Intertextuality encompasses these subtle connections between texts as well.

The phrase ‘reading intertextually’ offers candidates a chance to demonstrate their wider reading practice outside studied texts, explaining how a variety of reading experiences have deepened their understanding of representations within those set texts.

Through the word ‘appreciate’, candidates are invited to present their personal viewpoint. They may also present an objective perspective through comparison and analytical discussion. ‘Appreciate’ may be understood as recognition, understanding, empathy, aesthetic appreciation and so on. Students could be critical or supportive of the representations of human imperfection, but there should be clarity about the nature of their appreciation.

Candidates should take some time to really think about ‘human imperfection’ and how this are represented within a text. The phrase suggests faults or weakness, or what is absent. In literary texts, imperfections or flaws in human characters can often be the driving force of the narrative. Their representation can be seen as supporting or normalising a particular doctrine, or as critical of it. A character construct may embody attractive qualities, while flawed by a particular imperfection. The human condition is subject to change through circumstance and experience. It embraces emotions, which include lust, pride, fear, loneliness, jealousy, anger and vulnerability, to name a few. Many human imperfections are controversial and invite considered thought.

Candidates have an opportunity to demonstrate connections between texts through generic elements that have been included or merged within the style of a text. Similarities of discourse, use of symbolism and archetypal characters could be part of candidate discussion. Candidates should remember to retain the chosen primary text as the focus of their response.

Advice from teachers

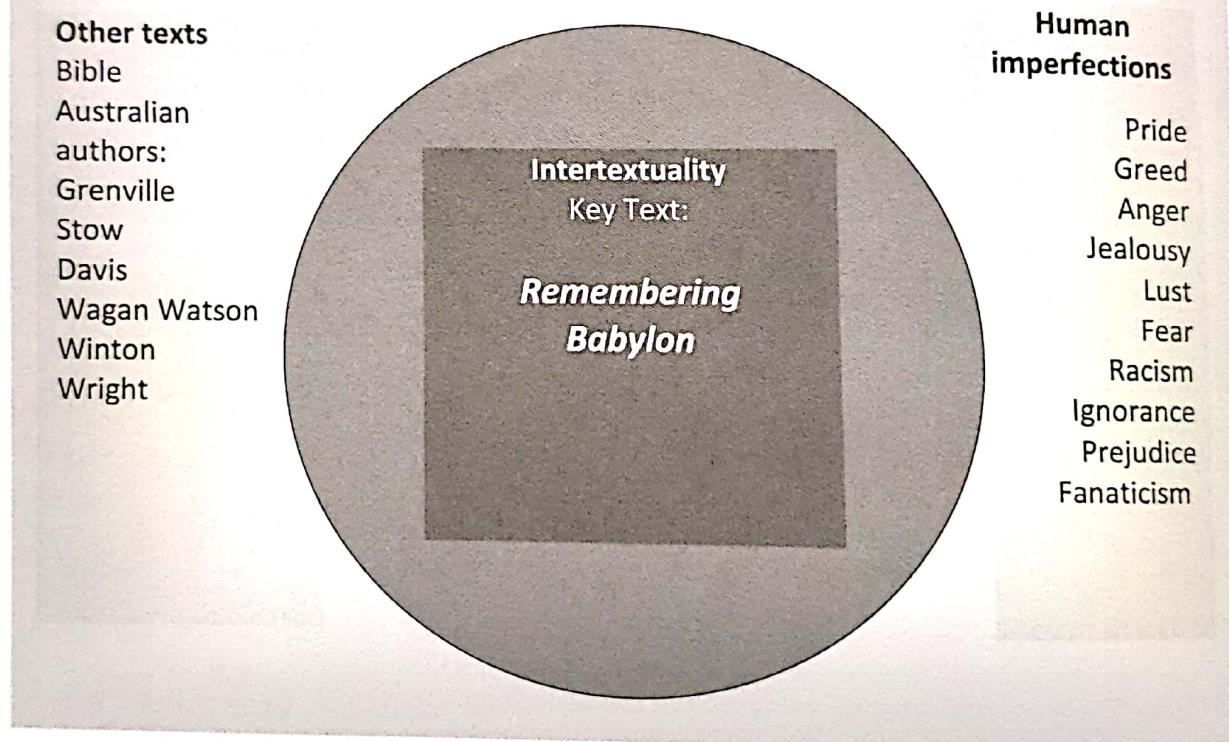
- Candidates should be explicit in their choice of examples across texts; they should explain each representation and how each one endorses or challenges ideas about human imperfections presented in the main text.
- Intertextual links are not confined to other literary texts listed in the course; rich examples of intertextuality can arise from a wide range of source material.

Activity: What defines intertextuality?

Intertextuality refers to the interdependent ways in which texts stand in relation to one another (as well as to the culture at large) to produce meaning. Your wider reading can influence your appreciation through recognition of tropes, phrasing, reference, development of ideas, contrasting of key notes of discourse and familiarity of ideologies.

Use the graphic below to build connections between texts you have read. How do they inform the key text under study? The key element connecting the texts in the graphic is the fact that they are all Australian texts. Each one contributes to Australian ideology. Each one represents a different style of exploring a theme. Each one uses language differently. The selection of human imperfections explored in *Remembering Babylon* will be present in the other texts and their representation will either support or challenge Malouf's version, allowing you to recognise and appreciate it in greater depth.

Recreate the graphic below to explore your own text choice. Match the human imperfections from that text to others you have read. This is a simple way to start linking ideas, methodology and understanding on your own behalf.



Hint: Dig out your Year 11 notes!

You studied a range of literary texts in your Year 11 course. Although it is unlikely you studied them with quite the same depth as your Year 12 texts, they can provide useful intertextual links. After all, they were your introduction to the skills and concepts of the Literature course, and thus influenced the way you have read texts since. Go over your notes from last year or re-read those texts with fresh eyes.

Question 7: Sample response one

The candidate has opened this response with a detailed exposition regarding the ideology of American exceptionalism plus some reference to the question. An explanation of what is meant by human imperfection would have begun the response with more clarity. By the end of the opening paragraph, the candidate has connected strongly with the terminology and ideas of the first part of the question, which creates a platform for further discussion. Using allusions as their primary source of intertextuality, the candidate has touched on many sources mentioned in their key text choice. The candidate needed to explore in more detail what 'human imperfection' actually means. Their answer stayed focused on 'exceptionalism ideology' when there were plenty of other human imperfections to be found. The candidate has sound textual knowledge and uses it to confirm their ideas.

When reading intertextually the reader is able to make connections and strengthen the constructions of representations in the texts they read. The Poisonwood Bible (1998) by Barbara Kingsolver is a novel which deeply interrogates human imperfections. It recounts the experiences of the Price family, who travel to the Congo with the aim of spreading God's word to the people of the village Kilanga. A notable example of imperfection is the tendency to feel a superiority over other cultures, this tendency can best be ascribed to the ideology of American exceptionalism. This is a system of values, attitude and beliefs which often purports that American culture and people have been 'chosen' to educate and impose their culture upon others. This self-inflated attitude is a dangerous and imperfect attitude to hold. Through reading The Poisonwood Bible with a clear focus on the intertextual links made, the reader can gain an appreciation for the detriment of this ideology on the individual, as well as upon other nations. The Poisonwood Bible is littered with Biblical allusions, intertextual references, as well as historical and political allusions. Through reading with close examination of these links the reader is able to appreciate the broad and ongoing detriment of such an imperfect ideology as American exceptionalism.

The character Leah, one of the Price daughters, makes

The candidate opens their response with a clear definition of the impact of intertextual reading, which opens opportunities for further discussion. A similar definition or identification of a number of human imperfections would have enhanced their thesis statement.

By identifying a sense of superiority as an imperfection while being a part of exceptionalism, the candidate has made contact with the demands of the question. Addressing the key terms of a question in the opening thesis statement is important in establishing your understanding of what is being asked and the approach you will take in your response.

frequent Biblical allusions in her 'accounts'. Through examining these the reader can appreciate how Leah comes to break away from the idea that Americans are superior to the Congolese. When she first arrives in Kilanga, Leah fully reflects the ideology of American exceptionalism. She describes the premonition garden she paints with her father as their "first African miracle...an infinite chain of benevolence flowing outward." Here, the diction of 'miracle', 'benevolence', and 'infinite' clearly illustrate Leah believes she is carrying out some divine work. The visual imagery suggested by 'flowing' is a further reference to the spreading gospel through disciples. Thus, Leah illustrates the imperfect idea of equating their presence in the Congo as somewhat divine in nature. However, through examining the shifting tones of her Biblical allusions it can be seen that she breaks away from this idea. Later in the book she describes the Congolese trees as "reaching right down to deliver such exotic prizes straight into our hands" "the diction: "deliver", "exotic", and 'prizes' strongly allude to the garden of Eden. This can be seen that Leah is able to break away from the attitudes of superiority that her father, Nathan, holds onto dearly. He maintains that "American ideals will bring salvation to the Congo." Leah's transformation is encapsulated in her "craving to be touched and held by the one man she knows has forgiven her." She is referring to Anatole here when reading intertextually and the Biblical connotations of "forgiveness" and "one man" are understood. The reader can appreciate the gravity of Leah's feelings as this means she values the love of Anatole over God's. Finally, the last 'Book' is titled "Exodus" in the novel. This is an allusion to the exodus in the Old Testament in which the Israelites are freed to go to their chosen land. Leah's decision in this book is perhaps indicative of her changing view of the Congo as a 'chosen land' rather than herself as part of a 'chosen people'. When examining biblical allusions in this novel, the reader gains an appreciation for the ways that we can break away from deeply flawed human beliefs such as that

By referring to 'allusions' in this topic sentence, the candidate has directly linked to the notion of intertextual reading. This allows for further exploration of the biblical references in the rest of the paragraph and how they represent the character of Leah and her imperfections.

The first of two references to gardens and the Bible, it is well placed for demonstrating change in the character Leah. The imperfection exposed is gullibility, which the candidate could have stated specifically to focus their ideas regarding different human imperfections, rather than repeating 'superiority' as the only one.

You may choose to bolster a previous comment by adding more details from the text. It is always good to have back-up material to hand, especially if it furthers your discussion, rather than simply repeating an already stated idea.

one nation is superior to another.

The ability to undermine imperfect ideologies like American exceptionalism can be fully appreciated through an examination of the links that are made to other texts and games. For instance, frequent reference is made to the children's game 'Mother May I?' This is a game shared between Ruth May (the youngest prince) and her Congolese children. When Ruth May dies, it is described that the children gather round her and chant "mak - den - may I? In a rising plea" This is done whilst they ignore Nathan's attempts to baptise them. The link to the game suggests that ironically Ruth May ultimately has the respect and love from the children through a game about asking permission from a mother, an antithesis to Nathan's teachings of the Father. Thus serving to undermine greater patriarchal systems of power that American impartial power can be seen to represent. For instance, Adam refers to Dwight Eisenhower as having 'a grandfather face'. Without an understanding of the nature of this children's game the greatest significance of its value to the children cannot be fully appreciated. Furthermore, towards the end of the novel Rachel (the eldest) is described as having "pale white eyes around her neck." This is not only a reference to a line in TS Elliot's 'The Wasteland' "(Those were pearls that were his eyes") but the same line also appeared in Shakespeare's The Tempest (1611). This was in reference to Ferdinand's father being possibly dead at the bottom of the sea, as was sung by Ariel. Therefore, this reference could be implying that the paternalistic comforts of imperial America are lying dead on floor of the Atlantic. Intertextual links in The Poisonwood Bible assist in gaining a formal appreciation of the depth and undermining of the American exceptionalism ideology.

Historical allusions are made throughout this text, and a firm appreciation of the cultural links that are

The candidate has utilised various intertextual allusions as part of their discussion. Children's games, poetry and drama are all included in the text and are incorporated as prime examples of intertextuality.

Working with a wider range of human imperfections would have allowed the candidate more scope to develop their argument. Using the allusions to explore power as domination would have provided such an avenue.

While the inclusion of these examples of allusion demonstrates textual knowledge, the candidate could have used them to illustrate a particular human flaw of some kind.

made can assist in an understanding of the global scale detriment of believing one nation is better than another. Ruth May observes that the Belgian doctor had "Blood on his sleeve...someone else's..." This is an allusion to the horrific treatment and the violent past of the Congo under Belgium rule. Furthermore, Orleanna (Nathan's wife) describes Africa as "the barefoot bride of men who took her jewels and promised her the kingdom." This is another reference to the exploitative behaviour of Eurocentric powers in the Congo. However, the observations made by Orleanna of American diplomats such as "George Keunae who allowed that he felt that the interest in moral responsibility for Africa." ultimately illustrate the dangers of a nation believing they have authority or a God given superiority over another nation as it deepens the reader's appreciation for the dismissive Americans' attitudes.

American exceptionalism is a deeply flawed and wholly imperfect ideology which is detrimental to both individuals as well as entire nations. Through reading *The Poisonwood Bible*, with a focus on biblical allusions, intertextual links and historical allusions, the reader gains strong understanding of the detrimental nature of American exceptionalism.

This paragraph is quite brief when compared to the others in this response. It begins with the inclusion of 'Historical allusions' and 'cultural links' but goes on to refer to these in general terms. More detailed explanation is required to confirm the importance of the allusions.

Violence should be addressed as a human imperfection in its own right. The exploitation of others is another. Pairing these closely with the intertextual references would widen the scope of this candidate's argument, rather than confining it to exceptionalism.

In their conclusion, the candidate does not refer to human imperfections. They have shifted their focus away from the question.

Activity: Addressing the heart of the question

Sometimes candidates read a question similar to one they have seen or responded to before. They may use that knowledge to force an answer to fit the current question without carefully assessing the phrasing and choice of words actually in front of them.

Look at Question 7. Highlight what you think are the key words. Brainstorm what each of these words mean. Find as many synonyms, connected words and concepts as you can which open up the question for you. Try not to limit yourself to only one interpretation.

Read through the responses above and see where they have connected to the criteria of the question. Have they addressed all the criteria? If not, what have they missed?

Read through one of your recent essays. Do the same thing. Have you been clear about your definitions? Have you investigated your text in the light of these? Do you stray from the question and bulk up your response with information that is not relevant? Be rigorous in your assessment. The marking key allocates six marks for addressing the question.

Activity: Over-writing your response

Candidates may approach the exam by setting down everything they know about their text in an attempt to demonstrate their knowledge. The exam situation is fraught with tension, time constraints and high expectations. It is worthwhile for a candidate to set aside five minutes to think about their question choice, unpack the question and select the right text to marry with the question they choose. Thinking things through can save loss of focus and logic in a written response.

You do need to:

- know your text well
- understand the terminology of the question
- select the right material from your text as support
- express yourself fluently and in a well-structured essay.

Make a graphic organiser which suits your learning style. Use it to record some of the concepts of the course and match these with text choices and textual references. Remember that some textual references will match more than one concept. These are valuable, so look for them.

Concept	Text choice	Textual evidence
Context and gender	The Tempest	<p>Miranda objectified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'I ratify this my rich gift.' • 'By immortal providence she's mine:' • 'But you, O you, So perfect and so peerless, are created Of every creature's best!'

Question 7: Sample response two

The candidate presents their response with a positive and enthusiastic voice. They begin with a clear reference to their chosen text and the human imperfections of sexual laxity and moral degradation. Allusions are the key intertextual reference utilised by the candidate, rather than their own reading of other texts. The use of literary terminology is strong, as is the contextual referencing as to when the text was written. The language of the candidate is well expressed, displaying a wide vocabulary and confident use of literary terminology. More detailed textual reference would have supported some statements and added conviction. The final paragraph does reference a text of poetry criticism, which offers a comment on the poetry under examination.

There is arguably no writer in Western modernist literary history whose poetics of allusion more clearly delineates the profound experiences of the post – First World War generation than American – British poet Thomas Stearns Eliot. Solidifying his recognition as a master of literary allusion Part III. The Fire Sermon of Eliot's 1922 epic masterpiece 'The Waste Land' manipulates derivatives of religion and classical literature to articulate the ever-mutable fallibilities and imperfections of us humans in stark contrast to the benevolence, purity and righteousness of fiction. Through an understanding of Eliot's intertextual references, we as readers are able to appreciate Eliot's representation of sexuality as an innate human imperfection in its perversion by contemporary society; we see Eliot's riverbank denizens juxtaposed against the idyllic figures within religion and classical literature that we so desperately, and unsuccessfully attempt to emulate.

Eliot turned to religion in his work in a bid to reignite the concept of reconciliation and salvation from our human imperfections, proving his engagement with an option that was not only viable, but morally essential. Eliot presents the audience with an ironical equivalent of the Buddhist 'fire sermon', a religious doctrine that's importance lay in the process of the emptying of personal identity. Appropriately named 'The Fire Sermon', the third part of Eliot's epic poem is

The opening paragraph makes clear reference to the chosen text and addresses the question's criteria with bold sentences. A basis for developing an examination of the text has been clearly established. By isolating a specific imperfection, this candidate embraces the demands of the question.

By exploring the 'representation of sexuality as an innate human imperfection in its perversion by contemporary society', the candidate has established a definite basis for further exploration of this human shortcoming, coupled with an understanding of intertextual references.

bookended by representations of renewal and emptying of sin as is enacted in the syntax and topography of the section's conclusion, first removing the object 'me' and then the subject, 'Lord', to leave only the ground 'burning'. This reference to the Buddhist practice of reconciliation invites his audience to appreciate our imperfections and flaws in order to transcend the moral and emotional malaise of early twentieth century society.

The candidate's enthusiasm leads to the inclusion of some lengthy sentences. Shorter, more direct comments can offer a pithy yet controlled alternative where meaning is clear.

The aftermath of the First World War witnessed millions broken and bereft and from a society traumatised by squandered hope and faith, emerged Eliot's superficial society, barely recognisable beneath a veneer of meaningless, lustful pleasures. Eliot represents his contemporary society as a shamelessly lustful collective, but persists that salvation is a viable possibility. By referring to Saint Augustine's autobiographical work Confessions (400AD), Eliot relays how St Augustine survived the lure of the notorious city of sin. 'To Carthage then I came', after which he invites his contemporary audience to accept modern society's imperfect view of sex as a lustful, trivial entertainment, while acknowledging a need to heal post-war scars with more than a band-aid of meaningless pleasures.

There has been a quick jump here from evidence to a conclusion. The candidate could use the opportunity to elucidate exactly how the evidence has invited this final assumption.

Contextual information supports the candidate's knowledge of the text. As well as this, the intertextual citing is relevant and addresses the question.

Furthering his depiction of modern sexuality as our greatest human vice, the opening of Eliot's poem is laced with lines from Edmund Spenser's Prothalamion (1596) a Tudor song set on the river Thames in a flawless pastoral vision. The imagery of the divine 'sweet Thames' is juxtaposed against Eliot's 'nymphs' who have been 'deserted by their friends the loitering heirs of city directions.' Eliot's sardonic observation of the implicit culture of prostitution within his society's juxtaposed against Spenser's lyrical celebration of the joys of marriage and chastity. His modernist representation of sex as a meaningless act of lust and normalisation of

This candidate's paragraph openings demonstrate variety and sophistication. These create a sense of style and cohesion in their response.

promiscuity blatantly disapproves of his contemporay society, allowing readers of his time to make stark contrast between the shameless lifestyle they lead in contrast to the idyllic beings of classical literature.

Similarly, the reference to Oliver Goldsmith's The Vicar of Wakefield (1766) allows readers to grasp the contrast between the values and attitudes idealised traditionally and, in specific, the degradation of contemporay female sexuality. For the typist in Eliot's text, sex is a matter of boredom, 'indifference' and 'vanity'. The brief piece of sexual 'folly' is normalised and robbed of meaning in a traditional sense. Following the act, the typist 'smooths her hair back with automatic hand', a direct manipulation of Goldsmith's work which allows for the appreciation of how female sexuality has transcended from an ideal of purity and chastity, to a meaningless act to satisfy our innate human sexual drive.

Recognised by critics as 'perhaps the most important poem of the twentieth century' (Koster, 1972), Eliot's epic masterpiece 'The Waste Land' continues to timelessly repudiate society's fallibilities and imperfections. Attributed to his multi- era derivation if intertextual references, Eliot reminds his audience past, present, or future that a life of righteousness and purity has and always will remain the means by which we may transcend the sense of emotional malaise that is endemic to our human society.

The candidate needs to explain just what is being referred to in Goldsmith's work. A line from that original source would consolidate what is being stated here. What is traditional about eighteenth century attitudes towards female sexuality? Are there parallel characters that embody changing ideals?

The conclusion refers to a modern critic – not an allusion in the text. This displays the idea of a wider reading practice that will be rewarded.

Hint: Allusions – going to the original source

When identifying allusions in your text, it is important to go to the source and check the reference. Sometimes the original will have deeper contextual connections than might be immediately apparent. These can extend the connotations arising from your text's inclusion of the allusion. If you can cite the original text, you can add to the depth of your answer and thus increase its value.

Genre-specific questions – Questions 8, 9 and 10

The Literature Examination Design Brief makes it very clear to teachers and students that there must be three questions in Section Two of the examination that are specific to the genres of poetry, prose fiction and drama. In the examinations for the course so far, these questions have been the last three of the section; in 2018 they were Questions 8, 9 and 10. However, this might not always be the case, so always read questions carefully so that you understand the constraints of any question you choose to answer.

These genre-specific questions very directly target the elements of the genre that are unique to that specific form. This means two things: firstly, you need to make sure that answers to these questions refer very closely to the devices and elements of that genre and, secondly, that you employ appropriate terminology to demonstrate proficiency in that genre.

It may seem obvious, but this is a good point at which to remind you that, across your three responses in the examination, you must address all three genres: poetry, prose and drama. If you fail to do so, you will attract a penalty. Similarly, with these genre-specific questions, you must write on the required genre or you will again attract a penalty. In the pressure of an exam it can be easy to overlook this requirement, particularly if you think a specific studied text is perfect for a particular question you find. Always double check before you start writing your response.

To find examinable content in the syllabus that relates specifically to the genres, it is helpful to return to Units 1 and 2 – the Year 11 course. The material in these units is considered assumed knowledge in Year 12 Literature and may be drawn upon by examiners in the construction of questions. In these units we see terms like archetypal figures, narrative devices, sound and visual devices, narration and dramatic devices. You should be prepared for terms such as these to appear in the examination.

Hint: Coming to grips with genre

The activities included in Section One – on Close Reading – will help you to prepare for the genre-specific questions of this section as well.

Activity: Genre-specific concepts

What might be asked of you in these questions? It is reasonable to expect that they will be focused on concepts that set each genre aside from the other. Consider the following ways that the genres differ from each other. With each heading, create a list for poetry, prose fiction and drama and try to note down as many things as possible that set the genres apart.

Unique devices

Poetry, prose fiction and drama texts use some elements that are similar, but there are very clear differences to how each genre is constructed that would be ideal concepts to assess. For example, poetic forms are unique to poetry, stage devices are unique to dramas, and narrative point of view is foundational to any prose fiction text and while it may be employed in a poem or play, it is essential to a novel or short story.

Experience

Consider how the audience experiences each of the forms. The way we experience a poem is very different from the way we experience a stage play. Alternatively, the way we follow the narrative of a play is very different from the way we engage with the long and complex reading of a novel. A novel is an extended exploration; the reader has to follow the journey of the characters for hours at a time while inhabiting the world of the story. This means that the experience of this literary form is very different from poetry or drama.

Language devices

Language is common to all genres: it has to be or the texts wouldn't exist. But there are certain types of language or language uses that we can clearly attribute to certain genres. For example, the sound devices used in poetry are created through particular language structures, and dramatic dialogue is informed by specific indicators which only exist in scripts.

Archetypes

Archetypes are recurring patterns that appear in storytelling. They can be structural repetitions, ways of ordering and telling a story or even recurring character types. As students of Literature, you should be familiar with various archetypal narratives and specifically, archetypal figures. While archetypes appear in poetry and drama at various times, they are particularly important to prose fiction texts.

Blending genres

In your study of Literature, you will encounter times when texts borrow from different genres or genres have become blended at different moments of literary construction. We can, however, acknowledge the blended aspect of a text, and attribute certain devices to particular genres, even when we see them appear elsewhere. An example of this would be dramatic irony. We understand that this is a dramatic device, but we can also recognise that it occurs in written narratives at times through the way narration works.

This list of headings is not definitive – it is possible that questions will appear in examinations that are not acknowledged here. However, this will help you to start thinking about the genres individually and how they are unique in many ways.

Considering Question 8

Consider the way at least one poem has employed poetic conventions to explore an issue of significant cultural change or difference.

Interpreting the question

As this is a genre-specific question, candidates should show an understanding of poetic structure, language and form. The poetic features discussed should directly relate to the exploration of an issue.

The verb ‘explore’ suggests a degree of ambiguity in the relationship between the text and the issue identified. Candidates might discuss texts that serve as social commentaries, such as protest poems. It would also be appropriate to draw on your context to reflect on how the poet challenges your assumptions or values.

The question asks candidates to explore ‘an issue’, which indicates that *one* issue should be discussed. Stronger responses might focus on a broad issue, such as women’s rights, and then deconstruct this in greater detail.

The term ‘significant’ is open to interpretation and candidates should clearly outline the significance of the issue in their introductions. For example, an issue might be considered significant if it impacts a particular social group or if it is a point of contention in a particular society.

This question draws on a specific syllabus dot point: *how literature represents and/or reflects cultural change and difference*. Responses to the descriptor ‘change’ might highlight moments of cultural upheaval or paradigm shifts. Text choices might include works from the 1960s Civil Rights era, or war poetry. ‘Cultural difference’ might be defined in terms of clashes between Indigenous and Western culture, or texts that highlight ways of life that differ from the dominant culture.

Advice from teachers

- When discussing poetic conventions, it is advantageous to extend your commentary beyond language features; more sophisticated responses will deconstruct a broader range of features unique to poetry, such as lineation, metre and sound devices.
- It is important to clearly outline the issue you are discussing and to signpost this throughout your response. An issue might be defined as a problem that affects numerous individuals across a particular society. Therefore, it should also be clear which society you are discussing. Social issues might include things like climate change, gender discrimination or poverty.
- Where possible, candidates should write on more than one poem. This will enable their response to be more detailed and they will be able to demonstrate a stronger understanding of poetic conventions.

Activity: Tracking issues of cultural change and difference

To deepen your understanding of how key syllabus concepts apply to your texts, try making notes on issues of cultural change and difference that have been reflected and/or represented in one or more of your studied works. A sample answer, which comments on the poem 'Tecumseh' by Mary Oliver, has been provided to help you organise your thoughts.

Text: 'Tecumseh' by Mary Oliver	
Issues of cultural change	Issues of cultural difference
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental degradation Assimilation Hegemony 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Environmental justice Discrimination Sacred landscapes
Text:	
Issues of cultural change	Issues of cultural difference
Text:	
Issues of cultural change	Issues of cultural difference
Text:	
Issues of cultural change	Issues of cultural difference

Question 8: Sample response one

This response provides an adequate discussion of cultural change and how this change is revealed through a range of poetic conventions. The candidate quotes succinctly and employs vocabulary that is well-suited to a formal academic essay. This response, however, has some flaws. In terms of the question, the candidate fails to signpost and discuss one specific issue and thus does not engage with this descriptor in a meaningful way. The candidate has only written on one poem; though this is not necessarily wrong, it makes for a brief response. It is easier for markers to reward a longer response that shows a greater breadth of understanding of Heaney's works. If you choose to write on only one poem, it should be a substantial work and you should be able to discuss it in detail.

Ireland of the 1800's was deeply characterised by the harsh limitation and suppression of its women through its promotion of orthodox Catholic doctrine, a response to the British colonial powers of the time. However, despite this previous adherence to devout Catholicism, the turn of the century marked a significant shift in attitudes towards such religious extremism and marginalisation, when such rigid doctrine was rejected in favour of a more empathetic and secular approach. Seamus Heaney's provocative and haunting poetic masterpiece 'Limbo' is a poignant evocation and exploration of such powerful cultural change, reflecting the previously dogmatic attitude of the Church and the cultural shift. Heaney's masterful employment of poetic conventions such as metaphor and biblical allusion weaves a path through the emotional and spiritual ramifications of infanticide upon a mother of an illegitimate child. Hence, the poem acts as an evocation of sympathy for the previously ostracised mother, simultaneously condemning the immorality of the Catholic Church in its subjugation of women, and thus exploring the catalyst for the cultural change and the shifting attitude towards the church.

When read on a primary level, the poem simply acts as a depiction of a horrific act and an evocation of empathy for the mother, identifying this humanising empathy as the catalyst for the monumental shift in religious approach. The most significant employment

The introduction begins with an overview of historical context, which suits the parameters of the question and provides markers with helpful information about the background to the poem.

The candidate establishes their argument in relation to cultural change and poetic conventions. The issue – religious conflict – could be signposted more clearly.

This topic sentence is convoluted and a clearer argument in relation to the question is needed.

of poetic conventions is Heaney's recurring dehumanisation of the infant child as he metaphorically alludes to it as a "small one" that was "netted." Interestingly, his portrayal of the child only serves to exacerbate the emotional strife experienced by readers throughout the text, hence functioning as an effective tool for evoking a sense of sympathy for the child, which echoes the sentiment of the general Irish populace at the time of such cultural change. Simultaneously, Heaney is cautious not to frame the mother in an unsavoury light, juxtaposing "ducking him tenderly" beneath the water as a means of distinguishing clearly the act and the intention of infanticide. Thus, Heaney urges us as readers to extend our sympathy towards the exiled and desperate mother figure, removing her of blame and thus accurately reflecting the rise in empathy towards such wronged women that marked a shift away from orthodox Catholic doctrine. Heaney's skilful yet subtle variation in sentence length throughout the first half of the work allows an exponential rise in the underlying tension that pervades the poem, before reaching a peak and culminating cathartically on the phrase "tearing her open." In turn, this acts as a powerful expression of the 'turning point' of the Irish cultural shift as a result of the overwhelming sorrow and sympathy induced in the population towards women that were forced to such ends.

The poem's condemnation and criticism of the Church, one that echoes the resentment and critique of the Irish populace approaching the cultural shift, is evident when the title itself, 'Limbo', draws upon Catholic doctrine to illustrate a space between heaven and hell, populated by the soul of unbaptised infants. Heaney may also be alluding to Dante's *Inferno*, where 'Limbo' is depicted as the "first circle of hell," characterised by eternal isolation from God. By immediately alluding to such religious imagery, Heaney urges readers to draw a connection between the deeply immoral act of infanticide and the Church itself. The primary

Here, clearer references to context would add clarity to this point. The candidate mentioned the 1800s in the introduction, but failed to establish the date of the poem's publication (1966). The candidate is simply assuming that a reader would have this knowledge. To engage meaningfully with the 'cultural change' descriptor in relation to religion, the candidate needs to outline what the 'monumental shift in religious approach' is.

The candidate's example of the poem's structure is valid, as the marking key rewards textual examples as well as direct quotations.

Similarly to the first paragraph, this topic sentence is too long and therefore ineffective. A simple sentence with clear links to the question would enhance the quality of the response.

The candidate refers to an intertextual reference in their examination of poetic conventions. This evidence could be explained in more detail and its link to the notion of 'cultural change' could be made more explicit.

communicator of the poem's criticism of the dogma of the Church as a factor in the rejection of extreme Catholicism is the frequent employment of Biblical imagery and allusion that is present throughout. Heaney's employment of the metaphor of "fish" and "fishing," one that runs throughout the text is an allusion to the Christian symbol of fishing as salvation through Christ, one that began as Christ instructs his disciples to become "fishes of men." Hence, by claiming that the waters are so briny that "Christ's palms, themselves, unhealed/smart and cannot fish there," Heaney is strongly condemning the Church for its immorality and corruption that have led to such an unholy act, stating that the idea of religious salvation, that is claimed to be offered to all, is no longer a possibility for the perpetrators of such sin. The text further corrupts and perverts traditional Christian and Biblical imagery as a means of echoing the criticisms and condemnation expressed by the Irish people throughout the cultural shift, drawing parallels to a crude imitation of a baptism as "she wades in under the sign of the cross." In addition to this, Heaney's use of Old English alliterative verse in the structure of the poem, characterised by the use of two to three strong accents per line allows the piece to be pervaded by a sparse and sombre tone, reflective of the Church's own detached and indifferent attitude towards the ramifications of its actions. Thus, this acts as a further criticism of the Catholic Church, contributing to the text's portrayal and exploration of the changing attitudes towards Catholicism that signified the Irish cultural shift away from organised religion.

Heaney's skillful and subtle usage of poetic devices in his construction of 'Limbo' allows the work to be a powerful and eerie reflection of the evolution of a society. The text's striking imagery and language function effectively in its social commentary, rendering it an insightful exploration and depiction of the liberation of a previously subjugated community deeply rooted in religious suppression.

The candidate draws on a range of poetic features, including language and form devices, to support their argument. This makes for an effective response because it demonstrates a sound understanding of the poetry genre.

The candidate shows a strong understanding of cultural change but needs to signpost the 'issue' they are discussing, such as rising secularism.

Activity: Analysing imagery

Imagery is a common feature of poetry, and one that students frequently analyse in their examination. It is not a device by itself, however. Instead, it is constructed by either descriptive or figurative language. Imagery also appeals to the senses and thus it can be helpful to identify a specific sense in your analysis. Finally, you should state clearly what image is being constructed.

The following steps for analysing imagery may be helpful:

1. What image is created?

e.g. natural, Biblical, apocalyptic

2. What type of sensory imagery is it?

e.g. visual, olfactory, aural, tactile, gustatory

3. Is it created by description of figurative language?

These steps can be used with any quotation that is a valid example of imagery. Below, this formula is applied to an example from the candidate's essay. You can try applying these steps to an example from your poetry texts to gain a stronger understanding of how imagery works.

Textual example	Image	Sensory appeal	Created by
The most significant employment of poetic conventions is Heaney's recurring dehumanisation of the infant child ...as a "small one" that was "netted."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • catching a fish 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visual 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figurative Language (metaphor)

Question 8: Sample response two

A key strength of this response is the organisation of each paragraph; the candidate clearly signposts the main arguments in relation to the question. The essay is concise and the ideas are easy to follow. The candidate has selected suitable poems, as the 1960s was a period of vast cultural change. Though the essay has clear arguments, the candidate fails to develop many of the key points; more contextual references were needed in this regard. Similarly, the essay would be enhanced by more references to key syllabus concepts, such as ideology, to enhance the arguments about the 1960s context.

The power of literary texts lies in their ability to serve as windows through which we are able to perceive past anxieties. The poems 'Alter Ego' and 'At the Water's Edge' by Australian author Gwen Harwood were written during the 1960s, and therefore emulate the changing views and attitudes of this era. The 1960s are most prominently characterised by pervading uncertainty due to catastrophic world events such as World War II, the Cold War and increasing scientific understanding. As a result, traditional methods of understanding became devalued and society was forced to implement new means of meaning making. The confusion that occurred due to this fact is explored through the specific poetic conventions in Harwood's texts that allow them to explore the uncertainties surrounding individual understanding, religion and identity that was a result of the cultural change within their context. The poems utilise these conventions in order to highlight the confusion of their context that was the result of society having to employ new methods of meaning making.

Both poems explore the uncertainty of the individual that pervaded their context through individual use of persona and cyclical rhetorical question. These conventions emulate the desire of the individual to find understanding in their tumultuous society and the futile nature of this search. The poem 'At the Water's Edge' (hereafter 'ATWE') illustrates this search for truth through the repetition of the rhetorical question "what's truth? Asks the heart." Despite the

This is a strong opening that provides some valuable information about the production context.

These poems are a sound choice for this question, as the 1960s was a time of vast cultural change.

In general, this is a concise introduction that signposts a clear argument in relation to the question, but is let down by the vague nature of the final sentence. It is important to make a strong impression here.

The elaboration sentence expands upon the ideas in the topic sentence to clarify the argument. It is always a good strategy to use at least one more sentence following your topic sentences in order to develop your argument, before examining evidence.

fact that 'the heart' asks the question "and is told," their confusion persists as the poem concludes with them putting forward the question again, "what is truth! cries the heart." The cyclical and repetitive nature of this rhetorical question highlights the uncertainty of the individual in the 1960s because even though their questions may be answered, understanding is still not attained. Furthermore, the fact that "the heart" is constructed as a separate entity allows the representation to gain further complexity, as the question has emotive connotations and therefore cannot be rationally answered through logical means. The demonstration of this confusion of the individual in the 1960s, and the failed search for understanding is continued in the poem 'Alter Ego' (hereafter 'AE') as the search for meaning of the persona bears similar results to that of the heart in 'ATWE'. The use of an extended rhetorical question which culminates in "who goes sleepless and is not spent?" demonstrates the urgency of the persona in attempting to understand their whole identity. Nevertheless, despite the original determination of their search, the tone of the persona shifts to one of acceptance as they realise that their knowledge of their identity can only be achieved after going "along paths of beauty and pain." Harwood's poems, though their poetic conventions, demonstrate the search for understanding in the individual in the 1960s that arose due to the change in meaning making in that context. The texts highlight the uncertainty of their society and the issue of confusion that occurs due to change by exploring how the search for meaning by the individual is futile in nature.

The exploration of the perplexity at the heart of the 1960s society due to changing methods of meaning making is continued through the conceits and distorted biblical imagery in 'ATWE'. A significant point of confusion of this culture was the loss of faith in religious beliefs due to increasing scientific discoveries, and the limited understanding that those scientific discoveries achieved. Harwood emulates the

This paragraph would be more effective with the inclusion of contextual references to help clarify the candidate's points regarding the 'search for understanding...and meaning'. A discussion of particular ideologies or ways of thinking in that time would also satisfy the 'course concepts' aspect of the marking key.

The candidate abbreviates the title of the poems, which is a helpful time-saving device.

These linking sentences effectively synthesise the argument; however, this is the first time the candidate is mentioning 'confusion' as the central issue. This should have been signposted earlier in the paragraph.

The candidate continues to demonstrate consistent engagement with the question. The elaboration sentence helps to augment the argument and differentiate it from the previous paragraph.

confusion of society as both religious methods of understanding were devalued and science only revealed the limitations of humanity in truly understanding the universe by distorting biblical imagery. The majority of the poem consists of indented stanzas voiced by a separate and seemingly God-like entity that serves to answer the heart's question. However, rather than assisting in making meaning or providing comfort that resonates with the function of a Biblical God, the language used by the entity denotes suffering and brutality as they say "you will suffer" and "all of your concerns will be fretted to grains of distress." The distortion of the usual connotations associated with the Bible is continued through the allusion to humanity's creation in Genesis. Whereas the creation of humanity should amplify sensations of hope and optimism, its representation in the poem instead denotes entrapment. The allusion to creation through "you will learn what was breathed into the dust the sixth day when the fowls of the air wheeled over your flightless dominion" enhances a sense of discomfort and enslavement as it suggests that humanity is condemned to being "flightless." The distortion of biblical allusion allows the text to reflect the sense of loss and hopelessness that characterised its context as society no longer understood religion as a means of understanding the world. In this way, the poem employs this poetic convention in order to highlight how the change in religious and scientific thinking in the 1960s left the people of that society feeling helpless and confused.

This statement regarding religious methods and science is quite general. The candidate needs to demonstrate a stronger understanding of the syllabus, specifically how the ideas represented in a text are just one possible way of thinking about the world and may reflect a particular set of values and attitudes.

This paragraph contains a rigorous examination of biblical imagery. The candidate demonstrates a sound understanding of this convention.

This paragraph discusses the central issue of confusion in terms of changes in religious and scientific thinking, whereas the previous paragraph discussed the search for meaning. Reference to specific ideologies and ways of thinking would help develop the arguments.

Due to the decrease of traditional means of understanding in the 1960s due to catastrophic world events, individuals of the society were required to implement new means of defining their identity. This concept is explored through the conceits in AE that demonstrate the perplexity of individuals in the 1960s often having to face this concept as identity is revealed to be an elusive abstract. The difficulty and

The candidate continues to construct clear arguments. Similarly to the previous paragraph, more contextual references are needed to adequately develop the candidate's contentions.

apprehension when having to define identity is revealed through the conceits used to describe the persona's alter ego. The idea of whole identity is likened to abstract and elusive concepts, as it can only be "seen save as light's sidelong shift," and is "nameless" and "indifferent." This portrayal reveals the whole identity of the persona to be something other than human, and therefore something that cannot be easily defined. The elusive nature of identity is continued through the conceit of time, as it exists in "time without extent" and is described by the persona as knowing "all I am, was and will be," beyond time's desolating drift." The idea that the persona's whole identity does not function within the normal realm of time increases the complexity of its nature and highlights how within the 1960s context identity could not be easily captured or defined. Overall, the poem AE employs the conceits of light and time in order to highlight the elusive nature of identity within the 1960s and the inability for it to be clearly re-defined by the individual.

The era of the 1960s was characterised by the pervading confusion that existed due to a decrease in traditional methods of understanding and this zeitgeist is explored through the poetic techniques in Harwood's poems. The two poems highlight the renewed methods of making meaning within their contexts and the pervading perplexity that occurred as the limitations of each of these methods was thus revealed. Through their use of rhetorical questions, Biblical allusions and conceit, the poems highlight the confusion that occurred as a result of the cultural change within their context. Ultimately, the poems, through their conventions, provide insight into the chaos at the heart of their context, and the helplessness of the individual when experiencing significant cultural change.

Throughout this paragraph, and this essay as a whole, the candidate tends to generalise about the '1960s' as a context. A more precise approach would be to outline the Western, post-war, post-modern nature of the ideological concerns they are addressing.

This essay is consistent in its discussion of 'altered methods of meaning making' within this context; however, the conclusion would be a great place to clarify exactly why these methods were altered at this particular point in time.

This conclusion clearly summarises the main points of the response. The final sentence ends with a strong synthesis in relation to the question. It would be helpful for the candidate to mention their texts again, rather than simply refer to 'the poems'.

Considering Question 9

Discuss how narrative techniques have created a sense of place in at least one prose fiction text.

Interpreting the question

This is a question that every student of the Literature course should be able to answer effectively. Understanding narrative techniques is a fundamental aspect of not only this course, but of literary studies generally. We begin understanding narratives as a very young child and begin analysing their construction early in our education. This question relies on that understanding, along with a more nuanced, but not unfamiliar concept: place.

Narrative techniques are the foundation of any story; they are the elements that we need to tell the tale. They include the narrative point of view employed, as well as characters, plot structures, metonyms, motifs, setting (both temporal and physical) and genre, as well as voice, tone, language and discourse.

The question asks '**how** narrative techniques have **created** a sense of place' which should guide candidates to provide an analytical discussion featuring detailed references from the text to show the effect of the techniques on the reader's understanding of, and response to, place.

'Sense of place' is a phrase that is used very regularly, but rarely explained in detail. It incorporates the image and feeling conjured by a location for both characters and/or readers. The place can be a built or natural environment, and it can also incorporate a spiritual component, as the spirit of place is often described as *genius loci*.

Advice from teachers

- Candidates must do more than simply describe the construction of setting within their text, although this is a good place to start. A 'sense' of place should encompass the affective – that is, the emotional connections, moods and feelings connoted by the construction of setting.
- Candidates should explore how multiple narrative techniques work in conjunction with each other to construct the sense of place.
- Places can be quite specific, but a successful response could address place in a broader sense, such as 'Australia'.
- Stronger candidates may differentiate between the sense of a place held by the characters and that held by the reader.

Activity: Genius loci

Genius loci is a Latin term meaning the spirit of a place. Within literature, this is a concept that gained strong popularity in the writing of the Romantic period and also within the Gothic traditions that emerged at that time. Literary constructions, particularly of nature, attempted to capture the sublime characteristics of the natural world, as well as the unlocatable aspects of the human consciousness. This tradition continues in literature today and we can track its appearances in works by local writers such as Kim Scott and Tim Winton that is sometimes described as eco-spiritualism. In the passage below, taken from Mary Shelley's 1818 novel, *Frankenstein*, we read of Frankenstein's journey through the Alps as he attempts to make sense of his emotional state following a traumatic experience.

I performed the first part of my journey on horseback. I afterwards hired a mule, as the more sure-footed and least liable to receive injury on these rugged roads. The weather was fine: it was about the middle of the month of August, nearly two months after the death of Justine; that miserable epoch from which I dated all my woe. The weight upon my spirit was sensibly lightened as I plunged yet deeper in the ravine of Arve. The immense mountains and precipices that overhung me on every side – the sound of the river raging among the rocks, and the dashing of the waterfalls around, spoke of a power mighty as Omnipotence – and I ceased to fear, or to bend before any being less almighty than that which had created and ruled the elements, here displayed in their most terrific guise. Still, as I ascended higher, the valley assumed a more magnificent and astonishing character. Ruined castles hanging on the precipices of piny mountains; the impetuous Arve, and cottages every here and there peeping forth from among the trees, formed a scene of singular beauty. But it was augmented and rendered sublime by the mighty Alps, whose white and shining pyramids and domes towered above all, as belonging to another earth, the habitations of another race of beings.

I passed the bridge of Pelissier, where the ravine, which the river forms, opened before me, and I began to ascend the mountain that overhangs it. Soon after, I entered the valley of Chamounix. This valley is more wonderful and sublime, but not so beautiful and picturesque as that of Servox, through which I had just passed. The high and snowy mountains were its immediate boundaries; but I saw no more ruined castles and fertile fields. Immense glaciers approached the road; I heard the rumbling thunder of the falling avalanche, and marked the smoke of its passage. Mont Blanc, the supreme and magnificent Mont Blanc, raised itself from the surrounding aiguilles, and its tremendous dome overlooked the valley.

A tingling long-lost sense of pleasure often came across me during this journey. Some turn in the road, some new object suddenly perceived and recognized, reminded me of days gone by, and were associated with the light-hearted gaiety of boyhood. The very winds whispered in soothing accents, and maternal nature bade me weep no more. Then again the kindly influence ceased to act – I found myself fettered again to grief, and indulging in all the misery of reflection. Then I spurred on my animal, striving so to forget the world, my fears, and, more than all, myself – or, in a more desperate fashion, I alighted and threw myself on the grass, weighed down by horror and despair.

At length I arrived at the village of Chamounix. Exhaustion succeeded to the extreme fatigue both of body and of mind which I had endured. For a short space of time I remained at the window, watching the pallid lightnings that played above Mont Blanc, and listening to the

rushing of the Arve, which pursued its noisy way beneath. The same lulling sounds acted as a lullaby to my too keen sensations: when I placed my head upon my pillow, sleep crept over me; I felt it as it came and blest the giver of oblivion.

This passage is from Vol 2, Ch 1 (or Chapter 9 in some editions) and is a small part of much larger passage that demonstrates this concept. Consider how the environment is not only described in term of the sublime, but is inextricably linked to the characters thoughts, emotions and consciousness. After reading and annotating the passage above, complete the following table.

Technique	How is it employed?	Reference	Detailed analysis of technique	How is the technique creating a sense of place?	What themes or ideas does this sense communicate?
Setting					
Character development					
Plot points (what preceded this, where does it attempt to go, why?)					

Finally, construct three paragraphs describing the way that techniques have created a sense of place in this passage.

Question 9: Sample response one

This response is a strong discussion of Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* and it establishes an argument about the inner and external worlds of the central character, Offred. The argument is well-structured and clearly explains the contrasting atmospheres of Offred's own rich and complex internal space and the oppressive and authoritarian external world of Gilead. While this argument addresses the question, the discussion would be stronger still if the candidate had explored in more depth the way these worlds are described through imagery and symbolism. The candidate does argue the importance of character, narration and language, but the argument is more about these techniques as structural features of the text, rather than a close analysis of the detailed features and atmosphere of these two places, and how the contrasting feelings of each draw our attention to the injustice of Offred's reality.

One of the universal themes of human narratives is the quest for identity, a sense of who one is and one's worth. At the same time personal identity requires a sense of where and how one fits into the wider context of the world. Margaret Atwood's 1985 work of speculative fiction *The Handmaid's Tale* (THT) explores this notion through the narrative techniques of point of view, character construction and manipulation of language. The novel's narrator – Offred – tells us of a place in which a woman's role – indeed her whole identity – is reduced to the potential to procreate and fulfil biological destinies. Although Offred can internally escape the rigid confines of Gilead society, she cannot escape the role she is forced to play. Her internal and external worlds and sense of place are at odds. Offred's only means of resistance is to sustain her inner life – her internal place – however we cannot help but wonder whether this is doomed to fail as the regime's influence pervades her narrative. Atwood thus relies on narrative techniques to construct the brutal and rigid patriarchal regime of Gilead, and more importantly to distinguish the differing places of Offred's internal and external experiences.

Offred's interrogation of the authoritative discourse of Gilead thwarts the confines of accepted meaning as the regime seeks to impose and allow her to provide an

This is a wonderful opening, explaining why a sense of place is important to the telling of stories within human behaviour.

The candidate uses a simple but sound structural framework for their essay, listing the narrative features to be discussed later.

Already the interplay between narrative techniques and sense of place are being established. This opposition – the inner and external worlds – sets up an interesting exploration of the text and concepts of the question.

perspective to the reality of Gilead society, thus providing us with a different perception of place. Her external self is very constricted and drained of emotion - which is emblematic of the oppressive place of Gilead - however, her inner life has energy and lyricism. These register her as entirely different perception of her life and her world from the one imposed by Gilead. In the society of Gilead the male dominated discourse validates the political subversion of individual identity. Here, Atwood creates a place in which women are reduced to being a subordinate to that of the male. Denied all individual rights Offred she is known merely by the patronymic of 'Offred' - derived of the name of her current commander. Stripping the Handmaids of their real name works to take away their individuality and at the same time underlined the notion that Gilead is a place where women are "property" of their commander - non-entities dominated in a nexus of male dominated political and social order. As Offred recounts "we are for breeding purposes only - that's all - sacred vessels, ambulatory chalices." Offred's internal narration creates a sense of place in which Offred's innate personality supplants the persuasive force of the patriarchy. The reappropriation of the regimes language is crucial to the preservation of her identity, her inferior place and oasis.

In the society of Gilead, biblical references pervade every level of discourse. Words serve as the main instrument of ideological control. Aunt Lydia's slogan 'Gilead is within you' is a blasphemous parody of Christ's words "the kingdom of God is in you". It shows the way Gilead seeks to internalise its principles - maintain the rigid patriarchal order - into everyone's lives. Offred is all to be aware if the regimes subversion of sacred texts and her and her own account of the place of Gilead resists this subversion of meaning and exposed its dogmatic simplicity. In order to evolve a different sense of place - a different world - Offred plays with words to

It is important to set up clear and precise topic sentences, introducing points that establish context and the text's world so that the argument is focused. These points are a little confused.

It would be useful to provide a specific example of how these inner and outer worlds are established, and what these two depictions make us feel about that world.

Discourse is an important marker of the external world of Offred, but what 'sense' do we have of this place through the language used to describe this social structure.

Again, a simple statement of what sense this internal narration communicates would complete what is a strong explanation.

This topic sentence needs to be more closely focused on the question.

sensitise to the reader to avoid falling into the linguistic traps that the political rhetoric of Gilead specialises in. She thinks of the word chair and reflects on how it could refer to 'mode of execution' or 'leader of a meeting'. Working across language borders she shows how it has an entirely different meaning in French where it translates to flesh. There, Atwood is using point of view to urge the reader to distinguish the differing places - the one Gilead seeks to impose and the one Offred needs to sustain.

Offred's narrative discourse on her body attempts to resist the place of Gilead. Atwood configures a 'feminine language' to construct another place which resists the patriarchy's political subversion of her identity. Offred's primal tale is focused on her body, chronicalling her physical emotions, desires and sensations. During 'Birth Day' the collective force of female bodies overwhelms the authoritarian place of Gilead, the contained reason of the narrative. Offred's internal world spills out into the rigid place of Gilead as she responds to the collective force of female bodies congregated in the birthing room. "It's coming it's coming, we can feel it like a bugle, like a call to arms, like a wall falling, like a heavy stone pulled down inside us, we think we will burst, we grip each other's hand's - we are no longer single". Although the situation is engineered by aunts, the handmaids are overtaken by a power higher than the place of Gilead - they become a collective body, controlled by their wombs. Offred becomes immersed in the birth, "the birth envelops us like a membrane", and the handmaids lose themselves to another metaphysical place as they respond to the birth. Offred's speaks through her body in an unconscious process calling forth distorted natural images such as a "cloud congealed around a control object" to describe the alienating process of her monthly cycle and the way in which the place of Gilead has begun to invade into Offred's internal sphere. Nonetheless, in her superficial conformity to authority - and her

This is a well-constructed analysis of Offred's internal voice and the way language provides a place for intellectual freedom.

Again, this topic sentence does not clearly establish a 'sense' of Gilead as a place.

This is a very powerful moment in the text with important connotations to place and power. It is well-explained and establishes important ideas about the external world Offred inhabits.

Simply slipping in quotes without incorporating them into the syntax of your sentence is not acceptable.

There is an internal conflict here for Offred as well, which would make an interesting counterpoint, adding to the argument about these places and their separation or convergence.

acknowledgement of it - Offred shows that she has another story to tell that resists Gilead's patriarchal regime. Yes, she is adapting to her environment, but through her narrative point of view - the readers learn that she is doing it in her own terms.

Atwood subtly and skilfully changes Offred's language and by extension her sense of self to reflect her absorption of the regime's language and thus her acceptance of the place of Gilead. As Offred allows herself to focus more on her womb, her initial resistance to the regime begin to fade. Procreation not only fills the empty space within but provides her with a new socially imposter identity in this new place of Gilead. Gradually she assimilated into the Waterford household - she describes the home of Serena Jay and Fred Waterford as "ours" and eventually her skin becomes "ours" as the commander surveys her putting on her lotion during one of their nocturnal trysts. Here Offred's changing perspectives, internal narrative voice, demonstrate her acceptance of the regime's subversion of her identity. She is no longer an individual. Rather she is a pawn being operated by the patriarchal figures of Gilead. Her internal place has collided with the regime of Gilead. Such manipulation of narrative elements is a demonstration of Gilead's power - which extends into every way of thinking - taking apparent resistance and neutralising it into support for the system. The powerful place of Gilead has prevailed.

Margaret Atwood embraces the narrative techniques of point of view, characterisation and language to create a powerful and paralysing sense of place which will go to all efforts to subvert individuality and empower patriarchal to demonstrate the contrasting internal place of Offred. In a sense, the place of Gilead becomes an amalgamation of the two. Our understanding of the place of Gilead is demonstrated through the juxtaposition of the external and internal description of Offred.

This is a well-controlled discussion. The candidate is demonstrating mastery over their discussion of the text and addressing the demands of the question.

This description of the convergence of Offred's two worlds is very insightful and demonstrates great control over the text, but it would be useful to connect back to the sense of place that the question relates to. It is possible to lose sight of this slight difference when composing such a complex discussion.

It would be useful to refer to the sense of this place, rather than just its prevalence. What do readers feel about this, especially as we feel the loss of Offred's perspective on this too?

Again, a description of the reader's response to this place would be useful in conclusion.

This final sentence is awkward; is the reader's understanding demonstrated through something the author has done? A poor conclusion suggests time management may have been an issue for this candidate.

Activity: 'People grow out of where they are born and live'

The British crime writer, Ann Cleaves, recently said of contemporary writing that '[p]eople make a mistake when they separate setting from plot and character...people grow out of where they are born and live'. Not only does this quote explain how we understand place as readers and writers, but it shows that narrative techniques are connected; they rely on each other for the story to work. The response above provides a solid explanation of this concept, describing the sinister, bodily world of Gilead and the internal space of liberty.

Read the following passage from Emily Bronte's 1847 novel, *Wuthering Heights*. The passage establishes a sense of place through the development of setting, character, narrative point of view, tone and discourse. Highlight the use of these five techniques in different colours and then write a paragraph explaining the sense of place – the feeling about this environment – which is communicated by the passage.

Wuthering Heights is the name of Mr. Heathcliff's dwelling. 'Wuthering' being a significant provincial adjective, descriptive of the atmospheric tumult to which its station is exposed in stormy weather. Pure, bracing ventilation they must have up there at all times, indeed: one may guess the power of the north wind blowing over the edge, by the excessive slant of a few stunted firs at the end of the house; and by a range of gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun. Happily, the architect had foresight to build it strong: the narrow windows are deeply set in the wall, and the corners defended with large jutting stones.

Before passing the threshold, I paused to admire a quantity of grotesque carving lavished over the front, and especially about the principal door; above which, among a wilderness of crumbling griffins and shameless little boys, I detected the date '1500', and the name 'Hareton Earnshaw'. I would have made a few comments, and requested a short history of the place from the surly owner; but his attitude at the door appeared to demand my speedy entrance, or complete departure, and I had no desire to aggravate his impatience previous to inspecting the penetralium.

One step brought us into the family sitting-room, without any introductory lobby or passage: they call it here 'the house' pre-eminently. It includes kitchen and parlour, generally; but I believe at Wuthering Heights the kitchen is forced to retreat altogether into another quarter: at least I distinguished a chatter of tongues, and a clatter of culinary utensils, deep within; and I observed no signs of roasting, boiling, or baking, about the huge fireplace; nor any glitter of copper saucepans and tin cullenders on the walls. One end, indeed, reflected splendidly both light and heat from ranks of immense pewter dishes, interspersed with silver jugs and tankards, towering row after row, on a vast oak dresser, to the very roof. The latter had never been under-drawn: its entire anatomy lay bare to an inquiring eye, except where a frame of wood laden with oatcakes and clusters of legs of beef, mutton, and ham, concealed it. Above the chimney were sundry villainous old guns, and a couple of horse-pistols: and, by way of ornament, three gaudily-painted canisters disposed along its ledge. The floor was of smooth, white stone; the chairs, high-backed, primitive structures, painted green: one or two heavy black ones lurking in the shade. In an arch under the dresser reposed a huge, liver-coloured bitch pointer, surrounded by a swarm of squealing puppies; and other dogs haunted other recesses.

Question 9: Sample response two

As so few students responded to this question, this response was created under similar examination conditions as an example for this publication. It is an extract from a discussion of David Malouf's 1993 novel, *Remembering Babylon*. The response begins by framing the discussion within a national literature and a central trope being a sense of place. The response unfolds to explain the way Malouf's novel, similar to other Australian novels of this time, works to demonstrate a strong connection between characters and remote Australian landscapes. The response also provides close analysis of how particular patterns of imagery inform the relationship between the characters and place, as well as the readers and this sense of Australia. Beginning and ending with this wider frame of Malouf's work as an example of national literature is very effective at engaging the reader, answering the question and showing insightful understanding of both the text and the Literature course. It is probably longer than typically expected in an examination, but it provides a useful example of an outstanding response.

Australian literature is often grounded in a strong sense of place or belonging. Characters are linked to "their country" and their construction, subsequent development and integration into the narrative will habitually incorporate place as a definitive factor. Author David Malouf has adopted a polyphonic chorus of character voices as fundamental to his narrative to present to the reader a series of interpretations of the Australian outback in his novel *Remembering Babylon*. There are characters who see and embrace the land and characters who remain blind and reject what is offered. Besides these voices, Malouf has incorporated both beautiful and powerful imagery to create an idea of the Australian outback in Queensland that is sensuous and evocative of country in rich, precise detail.

This opening of the essay frames the discussion within a wider consideration of Australian literature which shows sophistication as well as knowledge of the subject.

The essay looks at characterisation and imagery as narrative techniques. Limiting the discussion allows for a focused argument and is a great choice for this novel.

This paragraph provides a helpful summary of the text's construction and sets up a structure for the analysis to come.

Malouf adopts a third person, or omniscient point of view, as the narrative voice of the novel. He uses this objectivity to allow for the exploration of place from the various voices of the white settlers of Bowen. Each chapter contains a definite focus on one of the many characters. Thus we, as readers, see the positive construction of place through the eyes of Lachlan Beattie, Janet and Jock McIvor, Reverend Fraser as well as Gemmy, who represents the aboriginal or native

It could be useful to phrase these many perspectives and then narrow the focus onto those that will be explored.

viewpoint, as well as the darker resistant settler's view of place that relies on fences, mapping and control of the land.

Through the character construct of Gemmy Fairleigh, a foundling adopted by the aboriginal people, Malouf presents a perspective of Australia as a place of great natural beauty. When Gemmy first enters the text he is described as a "fragment of ti-tree swamp that had detached itself from the band of grey that made up the far side of the swamp". He is a part of the landscape. To enter the white community he has to break free from that landscape and cross the boundary fence. The children see him as something not human, something that flickers like a flame or a "wounded waterbird, a brolga". He comes from "a world over there" from beyond their experience and because they have no knowledge of this landscape they describe it as "absolute dark". In his opening chapter, Malouf juxtaposes the white children's perception with the natural reality of the landscape.

The discovery of Gemmy by the aboriginal people after he has fallen overboard from a ship is conveyed through figurative language that creates a mystical representation of Gemmy's arrival, like a rebirth into a new life. "Lying half in salt and the warm wash of it, half in air that blistered. Eyelids so puffed with light that no more light struck through them, and what did blinded him... All over him a flaking, and the flakes tiny creatures, clawed and with mouths, all light, that crawled into the cracks that had been opened in him seeking bone." Nature has totally claimed Gemmy, peeling away his past life and recreating him as a creature emerging from some other world. Images of flame and light celebrate his purification, "All that remains in his skull, behind the blind eyes, is sky, and that too burns, shakes out flame" and "tiny crabs heaved and glittered", 'their faces were touched by flame' while he lay in "broken light".

It could help to establish what meaning this connection to the landscape and the separation from it confers.

This detailed analysis of the imagery used to construct this scene of Gemmy's rebirth is powerful in constructing an argument about the sense of place. This sense is otherworldly, mystical in some way. This is an example of genius loci, as explained earlier in this guide.

The decontextualised insertion of this long quote is not particularly helpful. The candidate would have been better off incorporating shorter, targeted fragments of this quote into the syntax of their own sentences.

Ending a paragraph with a series of quotes like this is not good practice; this is an analytical essay and deconstruction – or at least, a clear discussion – thus, textual evidence is expected.

The same thing happens to Janet McIvor when she is covered over by a swarm of native bees. Janet surrenders herself to the experience, she is crusted over and emerges her skin clear and unharmed, "the only light came from inside her, inside the skin they made of living particles, little flames." The land has claimed her. For both these characters, the sense of belonging and the way they see the place around them is new and positive. They discard European perspectives and see things differently. Malouf has 'zoomed' in on each character's experience as part of the narrative, but has not done this in a sequential way. The connection between the two events is made through the fire imagery and the impact on each individual. Both experience a catharsis which brings them closer to understanding the value of place and their existence in it. They are the new ideal of a true Australian.

It could be useful to connect this sense of place to a post-colonial perspective, where white settlers are not imposing themselves on the landscape but are being inhabited by their new environment, becoming part of the land.

Contrasting with their vision is the European idea that land can be subdued and possessed. Jim Sweetman puts fences around his property and like other settlers, alters the very face of the landscape by felling trees and planting European crops. He cannot deal with the reversal of seasons, the extreme heat and the strange insects and creatures that belong here. The connection to what was at home, or in Europe, is exemplified by Lachlan Beattie, a child newly come to Australia. When he plays his childish games he grounds them in images from Europe. There is snow crusting the ground and he is hunting wolves. He breathes in cold air that burns his nostrils. All this is alien to the actual landscape around him. As an adult, Lachlan's first job is that of a surveyor. He maps the land, marking down its features and claiming it in a European way. His uncle, Jock McIvor begins as a European farmer but his interaction with Gemmy changes him, "wading through waist high grass, he was surprised to see all the tips beaded with light green, as if some new growth had come into the world that till now he had never seen or heard of." His awareness and appreciation of the place in front of him

Here the candidate is arguing that this contrasting idea of place is helpful to our understanding of the text. This comparative component of the essay demonstrates how to incorporate comparison to strengthen an argument.

is sharpened. 'The new light brought to the scene, was a lightness in him - like a form of knowledge...' Again the imagery is focused on shifting light and connects strongly to ideas of enlightenment.

The minority group of settlers connect place to be respected, appreciated and joined to the Aboriginal perspective, rather than a space to be controlled or dominated. They allow the landscape or nature to permeate their senses which changes the way they interact with their surroundings. Because Malouf does not narrate the story in a sequential manner, the repetition of these experiences builds the concept of place in a series of moments important to individuals rather than community. For example, George Abbot, the school master, feels the first stirrings of change when "the thrumming of his blood was curiously at one, with the shimmering, out there, of the landscape and the shrilling of the insects that drew you insistently into its own." Eventually George responds to the place by recognising its beauty.

Eventually Gemmy Fairleigh leaves the settlement to return to the aboriginal way of life. With him he takes the written record of his life as noted down by George Abbot. He recognises that the "seasons here were fire and ash. That one life was burned up, hollowed out with flame to crack the seeds of new life." Malouf taps into the imagery of fire and rebirth as part of the story, creating a majesty of place that is spiritual and life affirming. As Gemmy walks back into the landscape, he feels himself crumbling because he cannot find a way in. When rain comes, the written words on paper are drenched and melt away into disconnected pieces and he steps into a world he knows and by which he is accepted. He is regarded by Reverend Frazer as "a true child of the place as it will one day be." The narrative supports this idea as hopeful but not necessarily true. Gemmy disappears completely and the end of his story remains untold.

The candidate is still combining analysis of character and imagery to demonstrate the sense of place created by the text, but it would be useful to add a signpost into the essay structure here just to reconfirm focus.

A criticism of Malouf's novel is the limited representation of Indigenous perspective. Given more time, this is a discussion that could be extended.

Again, this idea that a sense of place can have a spiritual or mystical significance is brought forward in the discussion. This is a strong connection with the question in terms of articulating a sense of place.

By allowing the narrative lens to focus on individuals in their struggle to survive in this different and distant land, Malouf has created a powerful sense of place. The Australian landscape emerges in the novel as an entity that embraces or destroys, shaping characters through experience. Supporting this is the constant use of fire and light imagery that offers hope and regeneration, while reminding the reader that the environment should not be degraded, or altered by human interference.

This is a powerful conclusion that continues to use specific details to explain the connections between imagery, character and place. The detail isn't excessive, but it ensures the conclusion adds to the argument, not simply ending the response.

Activity: Conclusions

The conclusion to the response above is a great example of what an exam conclusion should do. Often conclusions are rushed, or they briefly list the main arguments of the essay; this is understandable considering the time restraints of the examination. If we spend some time considering this example, not only does it provide points of summary, but it continues to provide specific details to heighten the discussion. For example, it doesn't just conclude with the point that imagery is being used to depict the Australian landscape, it explains that fire and light imagery offer hope and rejuvenation. It also explains that the sense of place that is established isn't simply the landscape of the Australian nation, but a location of value and mystery.

Locate an essay of yours where you know the conclusion can be improved. Using the response above as a model, try to rewrite your conclusion so that it provides the points of closure necessary for an essay ending, as well as encapsulating the ideas and process of the overall argument.

Hint: the 'So what?' test

The key to a good conclusion is not just to summarise your argument, but to consider its significance. As you write your conclusion, ask yourself 'so what?' Why is what you are arguing important? Why should your marker care about what you have written? It may be that your text makes you reflect on the world and its people in a different way or reveals an insight into human nature. You may see parallels within your own context, or your text may have an important artistic contribution to make. Whatever the reason, care about what you have written and share that engagement with your marker.

Considering Question 10

Show how the interaction of a small group of characters in at least one drama text can be used to draw attention to significant social issues.

Interpreting the question

This question requires an exploration of a very common aspect of a number of styles of theatre: characters as representational figures. Often in literature, we understand characters to be emblematic of certain social, cultural or political groups. But in drama texts we are restricted in the scale of the plot and number of characters by the parameters of a theatrical performance. Therefore, characters on stage are often employed as representations of a wider group. This use of representation can be very obvious, with clear historical contextual connections to make pointed statements about political regimes and historical events, or it can be a subtle construction where the text draws an interpretation of reality and timeless social circumstances.

Candidates are required to show how the interactions between such characters then become emblematic of interactions between wider social groups, reflecting the issues, conflicts or tensions that occupy the social realm.

Explaining the interactions between these characters is therefore a critical component of this question. The interactions could be considered in terms of physical engagements on stage as well as dialogue between characters, or non-verbal interactions through gesture, expression and eye contact. Interactions could also be constructed through the use of dramatic devices such as lighting, sound effects and musical references, costume motifs and colour palettes. Interaction might even be considered in terms of staging, entrances and exits, and how people appear within certain locations/sets.

To address this question fully requires careful consideration of the phrasing '*significant social issues*'. This implies that the discussion should indicate why a social issue is significant, which might be understood as having a wide-scale impact, as causing disruption or important changes, or being recognised as affecting a group in society.

The phrase '*draw attention*' is significant. This asks the candidate to consider what the text or performance is privileging in terms of the audience response. This requires an interrogation of the dominant reading of the text or performance, rather than the readings we might construct or impose upon a text.

Advice from teachers

- Candidates are directed to focus on just a few characters; they should choose which characters operate as the best representatives of social groups.
- A close analysis of one or more key scenes would work well as textual evidence for this question.

Activity: Recognising character interactions

Consider the famous scene where Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time. This takes place in Act 1, Scene 5, just as the narrative complication will arise. The interactions between these characters at a masquerade not only establish intimacies, but political and social divisions too. Read the scene closely and observe the different ways in which Romeo, Juliet, Tybalt, Capulet, the Nurse and Benvolio interact and interpret the significant social issues that the scene draws our attention to. Even in a script where very little direction is documented, we can still read complex interactions which signal significant social issues.

You can find a copy of the scene online quite easily.

Character	List the interactions with others through stage movement/position, dialogue, etc.	What do these interactions indicate about the character? Do they represent a group?	What social issues are made evident?
Capulet	Tybalt: Romeo: Juliet:		
Tybalt			
Romeo			
Juliet			
Nurse			

Question 10: Sample response one

This essay provides a very interesting discussion of Stoppard's play, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. It accurately explains the play as an example of absurdist theatre, where the characters, as well as the entire premise of the play, balance between the fictional, literary situation of the play and the wider exploration of human mortality that speaks to audiences across time and place. The essay locates Rosencrantz (Ros) and Guildenstern (Guil) as representative figures, and their interactions with each other, as well as their wider context, enable an understanding of the social and historical horrors of late modernism, and specifically World War II. The essay explains that this social consideration leads to theoretical renegotiation in the form of post-modern inquiry; a complex thesis indeed. While this essay is applauded for using a specific stage version – the National Theatre's production in 2015 – there are times where explanations of the performance and Stoppard's script are merged, making the argument unclear. There are also a number of theoretical concepts embedded in the discussion that are not explained, and while the candidate might be fully aware of the terms and their meaning within the discussion, this is not apparent in the essay and detracts from its cogency.

Stage dramas have the power to utilise a stage to act as a microcosm for the significant concerns, anxieties and issues of a society. A text that is known to effectively do this is Tom Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966) which expresses Stoppard's post-modernist criticism of the absurd and meaningless nature of society in the wake of the second World War. Through his effective manipulation of the small group of characters in the play, particularly 'Ros' and 'Guil' as borrowed from Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, Stoppard discusses the significance of such meaninglessness in terms of humanity's distance from their surroundings, the lack of unity of time contributing to social fragmentation, and finally, Derrida's notion of "delogocentrism" or the failures of language as a representation of a decline communication. Stoppard's adaptation of *Hamlet* with these absurdist elements, encourages audiences to consider the harsh and diverse effects of war on society.

A crucial aspect of Stoppard's oeuvre is exploring the distance between individuals and their eternal realities to communicate the idea of meaninglessness

This response opens with a strong, immediate connection to the question, establishing a clear thesis that is both interesting and relevant.

The term 'delogocentrism' is not part of literary discourse. Derrida interrogated 'logocentrism' through 'post-structuralism'. This is an easier explanation. When introducing quite specific aspects of literary theory, it is a good idea to clearly define them for your reader. Of course, this does not apply to general literary concepts. But for obscure or complex concepts such as this, you should not assume your marker will have the required understanding.

and objective fragmentation. As this plays consist of only a few characters, one of the major interactions in the play occurs between Ros and Guil and their ambiguous setting. Literally, Stoppard's first comment on the play's setting is "Two Elizabethan's passing time in a place without any visible characters." In the 2015 National Theatre Live production, The Guardian noted that "with its cloud-capped canvases, the setting adds a touch of magritte to the night." The Guardian thus describes Stoppard's obscure setting as a form of surrealism and ambiguity, elevating the social concern of Ros and Civil's inability to "place" themselves in time and space. Stoppard's use of the dramatic convention of breaking the 4th wall when Ros "looks up and bellows at the audience "FIRE...in demonstrating the misuse of free speech" explains a more unique interaction of Ros with the audience themselves. The effect of this is, according to Stoppard himself, to draw audiences into the ambiguous setting and realise their distant connection to reality themselves.

Both this stage interpretation and the review are useful examples of how the play may be performed.

This effect would benefit from a more thorough explanation.

A lot of material is presented in this paragraph, but it is difficult to really locate the point being made. A revised paragraph order would be helpful.

In addition, characteristically of the Theatre if the Absurd, Stoppard's play abandons Aristotle's unity of place to further break down a play's conventional setting through Ros and Guil's constant referral to their surroundings, which are essentially non-existent. When the player interacts with the characters and offers to perform the "rape of the Sabine woman" it reveals how the metatheatrical interaction between the characters serves a further purpose of understanding, according to Barahger "the human impulse to create fiction and revise reality." Thus, by understanding how these characters interact on stage and with the audience, social post-modern concerns on the role of an individual in reality, is discussed.

Furthermore, Stoppard's collapse of what Aristotle traditionally describes as a 'short, internal chronology' or unity of time effectively creates a sense of social fragmentation and disconnect on

It is necessary to explain what is being referenced here as the 'short, internal chronology'.

stage. The symbolic interaction of Ros and Civil's 'coin toss' in the first act, where the outcome is repeatedly and unfailingly heads, has two major effects. Firstly, it highlights the social concern to audiences of the presence of cyclic determinism and therefore the lack of free will. Secondly, the coin toss represents a universe in which the law of probability and time do not operate, which can be contextually tied to the lack of reason in the 2nd World War horrors such as the Holocaust and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Furthermore, Ros's inability to articulate himself and his memories may be reminiscent of social issues such as shell-shock, or post-traumatic stress after war when as performed by Radcliffe, stutters to Guildenstern - That's it — pale sky before dawn — you remember this — this man woke us up." The excessive use of punctuation in Ros's dialogue to Guildenstern reveals the effect of post-war social dysfunction, and in particular, the incoherence acts as Ros's representation of Martin Esslin, founder of the Theatre of the Absurd's notion of 'the lack of relief in an automatic process.' Finally, Stoppard's use of dramatic irony as Ros and Civil "are" dead and indeed, die in Hamlet, collapses to the notion of time further. The stage thus acts as a representation of the past (as they have died already), the present (due to breaking the 4th wall) and the future as Ros and Civil ironically foreshadow their own death. The interaction of both the 3 main characters and the audience themselves highlights social anxieties over free-will individualism, mortality and dysfunction.

Lastly, the exploration of dysfunction as a social issue is crucially heightened by the nature of Stoppard's characters and their interactions. Whilst Ros takes on the personality of a pessimistic nihilist, Guil operates in a manner that could best be described as excessive formalism. The *Guardian* review therefore describes Ros as "lean and anxious and prone to sudden attacks of panic" and Guil's "clean shaven and determined." An example of Ros's nihilism occurs

What is the effect of each of these exemplifications on the audience's understanding?

This paragraph lists many important ideas and links this to the 'significant social issue' of social dysfunction and anxieties related to mortality and powerlessness, but then each point is not fully explained. How do each of these examples lead us to this understanding of society.

This opening sentence is clear argument marker.

While this review is useful, the performance should be related back to the script. These are characteristics of a specific performance, not the play, and is a distraction to the point being made.

when he tells Guil "life in a box would be better than no life at all." To audiences, this epigram is ignorant and indeed nihilistic. Rosencrantz is essentially stating that entrapment is better than death, elevating social concerns over the lack of individualism within a collective. In contrast, Guil takes an entirely different approach in how he chooses to interact with Ros. He states 'And syllogism... that the law of probability will not operate as a factor...' Similar to understand how Guil's constant need to justify everything through scientific and mathematical jargon is not particularly functional or healthy. Therefore, the two's unique interactions with one what Derrida dubs as "delogocentrism" or the failures of language to articulate one's reality. The ultimate indication of dysfunction, however, is signalled to audiences through Ros and Guil's tendency to confuse their own characters and introduce themselves by each other's names. Audiences are thus encouraged to recognise genuine post-modern concerns of absurdism and meaninglessness, as Ros and Civil's dysfunction leads to the audience's own confusion. Park-Finch argues further that Ros and Civil are ultimately "unidentical twins...two sides of the same temperament" From Stoppards absurdist style, Ros and Civil thus represent an entirely collapsed, lost humanity.

This point is supported by an explanation from the text, and the interaction between the characters is the discussion that is required to address the question.

This reference to Derrida is unexplained. The response should explain what 'logocentrism' is and how this is critiqued by the play. This could then relate to Derrida, the theories he formed and Stoppard's involvement with these theories, but needn't, as it is more important to connect to the text under discussion than the theoretical framework it inhabits in the limited writing time.

The play Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead (1967) is known as a landmark in absurdist and post-modern literature. Through Stoppard's effective manipulation of the on-stage interaction between Ros and Guil, the audience and the setting, he highlights the concern over societal decay and dysfunction. Specifically, Stoppard focuses in to disconnect between an individual, time and reality, and finally, the failures of language and communication. Such issues continue to be apparent in the contemporary 21st century, evident of the continuing effects of war on social landscapes.

This is a strong summary of the argument, as well as the role of the characters in presenting the social commentary of the play.

Here, a good reconnection to the thesis and the question is established.

Activity: Using a specific performance as an example of the play

It is crucial that we consider drama texts as not only printed scripts, but as performances on stage. While it is not always possible to see a performance of a play you are studying live, you might be lucky enough for a production to be staged in Perth or to find a filmed stage performance. The response above makes reference to a broadcast of a filmed stage performance. This is becoming a popular form of theatre engagement and many companies such as the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre and The Globe now offer live broadcasts or an online archive of filmed theatrical performances.

If you chose to include references to a performance, make sure you include these references for a specific reason. It might be to demonstrate how a direction within the text is carried out, how staging, costuming or lighting is employed by the director, how acting choices influence our understanding of the play and so on. The response above includes the National Theatre performance in relation to staging and some acting choices, but the importance of these points to the discussion is unclear. This is due to a lack of contextual explanation of the performance and the examples chosen by the candidate.

Here is a list of important details to reference:

- **Company:** National Theatre
- **Director:** David Leveaux
- **Date:** 2015
- **Relevant performances:** Rosencrantz played by Daniel Radcliffe, Guildenstern played by Joshua McGuire
- **Set design:** Anna Fleischle

These details should not be a large focus of the discussion, but they will help locate the references for a reader. For example, instead of writing '[i]n the 2015 National Theatre Live production, The Guardian noted that 'with its cloud-capped canvases, the setting adds a touch of magritte to the night', write '[i]n the 2015 National Theatre Live production, directed by David Leveaux, a review in the The Guardian noted that 'with its cloud-capped canvases, the setting adds a touch of magritte to the night'.

Another example is, instead of writing '[f]urthermore, Ros's inability to articulate himself and his memories may be reminiscent of social issues such as shell-shock, or post-traumatic stress after war when as performed by Radcliffe, stutters to Guildenstern - That's it -- pale sky before dawn -- you remember this -- this man woke us up', write '[f]urthermore, if we take Leveaux's rendering of the play as an example, Ros's inability to articulate himself and his memories may be reminiscent of social issues such as shell-shock, or post-traumatic stress after war Daniel Radcliffe, as Rosencrantz, stutters to Guildenstern - That's it -- pale sky before dawn -- you remember this -- this man woke us up'.

These small additions about the performance assist the reader to understand the points being made about the play.

Practise including live stage or filmed stage version of the plays you have studied by firstly ensuring you have the necessary details of the performance and then preparing statements about the elements of the production.

Company	
Director	
Date	
Relevant performances	
Set design	

After completing the table above, write statements about:

- the director's version of the play and the themes highlighted
- a specific performance aspect included by one of the actors and how it informs your understanding of an idea
- the staging (set design, lighting, costuming) and how it influenced your response to the play.

Hint: Go to the theatre online

You don't have to physically attend a theatre in order to appreciate a stage performance. You can view extracts from performances, and sometimes even whole plays, online. Watching different versions can give you an increased appreciation of the impact of performance on an audience's interpretation and experience of a play.

Question 10: Sample response two

This essay takes a very different approach from the previous response. First, it engages very directly with the social issues that *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* seeks to draw attention to by establishing the context of the play. It then explains that the characters in the text serve a specific function within the play that is representational rather than individual. This clear argument engages directly with the question and while there are moments where the essay lacks focus, the central thesis ensures that the argument is tight and well-explained. A minor criticism of this essay would be the candidate's engagement with the term 'interaction'. While the essay very competently explains the significance of representation through the characters, or the role of the characters, it would be a stronger response if it looked more carefully at both the physical and social interactions of the characters in the play.

Born in the crucible of World War Two, Bertolt Brecht's play *The Caucasian Chalk Circle* (1948), hereafter TCCC, is a play which takes aim at the social issues which enabled such horror and violence to be committed by those in power in the immediate past. Utilizing his own Epic Theatre approach Brecht, positioned audiences to view his theatre critically as social scientists, rather than as theatre-goers out for entertainment. One important technique of Epic Theatre has the use of symbolic characters, characters that represent certain ways of being and acting which are either admirable or to be judged for their moral and ethical failings. To effectively portray his symbolic use of characters small groups were utilized in order to draw audience scrutiny to the few rather than have them cast in the many leading to a lack of focus and analysis which Brecht demanded so the social issues of his day might be examined and in future changed. As a performative text, we are able to examine the stage notes of Brecht himself who actively encouraged small theatre companies to undertake his plays. So not only where there are few central characters, but minor roles were blended into few particular symbolic stereotypes. Often actors were required to wear masques in a very Aristotelian fashion which were blank and expressionless, a definite break from the norm. This blanking of the characters expressions would develop Brecht's famous "Verfremdungseffekt" (alienation)

This contextual framing is important for the argument. It is a little wordy, but it does help to establish the thesis of the candidate's response.

This response is setting out a thesis – Brecht, through his use of Epic Theatre, utilises a small group of emblematic characters to comment on the social context of the post-war world. It is a little repetitive in expression, but a very useful thesis.

Why did Brecht do this? He had a social agenda in doing so.

Verfremdungseffekt is an important device of Brecht's work that demonstrates a narrow use of actors and characters to have a broad, social statement. This is a helpful argument in response to the question, but requires more connection to the candidate's thesis as well as the question.

which distanced and shocked the audience resulting in critical analysis. A core specific devise in TCCC is where repeated similar characters appear, the "drunkard ironshirts" all voting the same, whilst peasants were instructed additionally the same, cowardly and miserly. The court cook "leave the child," urging Grusha to abandon a child, the peasant women likewise "[H]e's not mine" as well as the goat herder who by Brecht's own words is described as "not mean, just poor". By utilizing the ensemble through representational costumes and few identifiers, and then continuing to homogenise their existence, Brecht examines the class structures that have enabled such a system, the poor act cruel because they are poor, the military cruel because no-one will stop them and the ruling class, again homogenised, appear a rough repeated outcome "The governor's head on a lance, the fat prince's head on a lance", to be cruel and vicious. Brecht therefore suggests, by turning the ensemble cast into repetition of a few characters, that the strict class systems of the past have enabled violence and bloodshed and is a social issue that must be cast away with.

It would be helpful to explain what specific comments are made by these various social representations.

This sentence is critical to the thesis and makes a crucial point, but is unclear in its expression due to structure.

Moving into a detailed analysis of a specific character is an excellent opportunity for this candidate to demonstrate that as well as understanding the function of characters as a whole, they also have the analytical capacity to deconstruct specific examples.

Here, useful textual references demonstrate this construction of Grusha.

Whilst use of a small ensemble by reducing the cast to a few metonymic characters draws attention to major issues, the central metonymic development of Grusha Vashnadze as representative of a socialist woman draws attention to social issues of sexism and exploitative social systems. Throughout the play Grusha who the audience is set up to admire and relate to, is continuously mocked and belittled by others including the omniscient singers. When Grusha is at her bravest rescuing Michael, she is admonished by the "singers" as "naïve" as well as remarking "terrible is the temptation to do good" so it becomes evident through Grusha that, despite her actions being just and pure because of her society's hierarchical and competitive systems, she ought to be punished. Further attached to this notion is her interaction with the upper class. When she is cast out for being suspected of



affiliation with the working class as when asked to "show your hands" they are cracked and worn, she is cast out. This is a stark reference to the Bolshevik revolution where members of the upper class were discovered by the tsar's lands this time in reverse. A remark made to Grusha "once they suspect you can wipe your own ass the game is up". Succinctly illustrates to audience the class disparity inherent in the presented social system. Further as a woman, Grusha is consistently persecuted for being without a mother, due to societal prejudice against single mothers. This is made more ironic due to her adoption of the abandoned babe who otherwise would be certainly dead by using Grusha as a symbol for a conscientious moral person and then persecuting her for said character traits, the social issues of damaging class structure and persecution of women are revealed and condemned. As such through use of character attention is brought to Brecht's societal concerns.

In addition to Grusha's role as the conscientious, moral, socialist woman, Azdak "the fool judge" serves just as powerful a role in drawing attention to social issues at play during the early to mid 1900's. Azdak serves to lambast the current power systems whilst also drawing out and examining deeper social issues. During the beginning of his characterisation, as he almost implicates himself committing treason, Azdak's character closely resembles a Shakespearean fool, who's actions are erratic and made with poor judgment; however, this characterization is used to draw attention to the absurd corruption of the Georgian society in which the play is set, a prime example of the critical analysis invoked by alienation from realistic expectation. "He may be an ass, but he must be appointed or else the law is violated", Asdak himself declares before receiving the title of judge highlighting how corrupt the law of society really is, where all that matters is an "ass" is in the right seat. Relating his a modern standards, where we view the law as immutable and sacred, where we take oaths on

This is a clear explanation of Grusha's representation of this social and historical issue. The candidate understands that they need to provide a degree of contextual information to aid their analysis.

It would be useful to look at how the staging of scenes also shows this to us.

Again, the structure of this essay makes the argument clear and the connections to the question obvious.

This explanation of Azdak is very useful in addressing the question. To strengthen the discussion further, close analysis of the physical interactions of these characters would be useful, especially in the scenes of the mock trial.

the stand, the singers deceleration of "will he be a good judge of a bad one" is therefore a complete anathema as we simply cannot contend with the idea that the law which ought to be founded an intrinsic moral virtue could possibly be in the lands of a "bad judge." Yet in another contradiction of our preconceived notions of Azdak he uses wisely the Solomon trial to determine ownership of Michael Abashwilli whereupon Grusha declares, "I was a parent to him, and I go tear him apart" before letting go this sudden wisdom takes aim at the whole justice system that his low class "ass" might make better calls than well-tried judges who are characterized by Azdak to routinely take bribes, "I receive" calls into question the validity of class over those who are fit for positions. Brecht uses Azdak to lampoon the systems of power and the social issues they have created in early-mid 1900's European society, as well as supporting the socialist notion "of what there is shall belong to those whom are good for it".

This focus on the interaction between Azdak, Grusha and Michael is very powerful in understanding the play and is also critical to the argument presented by the candidate.

Through use of a small group of metonymic characters in his Epic Theatre play ICCC, Bertolt Brecht draws attention to social issues, such as class disparity, gender inequality and corrupt power systems as well as promoting his own socialist world view in our modern age of growing class divide, and a rising growth of political corruption and injustice, Brett Kavanaugh's appointment, a pertinent reminder that without attention to society's social issues, they will continue to grow and fester unless, like Brecht through The Caucasian Chalk Circle urges us, we take actions to solve our social issues. Brecht put it best with the quote "Someone who watches representational theatre laughs when the actors laugh and cries when they laugh and laughs when they cry and says this should not be".

This connection to our contemporary context could have been a separate point within the body of the essay, but serves well to summarise political intrigues like those Brecht sought to highlight through character representation. Making such references is a good way to show that you appreciate the way literature – even from the past – can reveal insights into your own world

Activity: Epic Theatre and the social ideas

Various forms of theatre incorporate characters as representations of social groups. Some forms are subtle in this representation; others are more focused in their references. Epic theatre is a style where characters very clearly depict social groups through their naming, their costume, their actions and their interactions with others. Essentially, epic theatre puts social or political messages before the exploration of character, and the internal motivations of the individual are less significant than the broader social picture they help to characterise. Epic theatre does not work to suspend the audience's disbelief and involve them in an imaginary world; instead, it asks the audience to decode the events on stage so as to recognise the historical, social or cultural events being referenced. Through the use of other stylistic features of epic theatre, such as verfremdungseffekt, historicisation and gustus, we are made to feel uncomfortable and alienated by the performance. This places the audience in a position where they are forced to engage, not only with the performance and its social depictions, but with their own responses and feelings to the message being conveyed.

It is not only epic theatre that is able to produce an effect of engagement and social recognition. Various forms of theatre make us reflect on circumstances of culture or history and revise our position.

Make a list of plays that you have read or seen and assess how you are positioned to engage with the text and, ultimately, respond to the drama in front of you. If your list of plays is limited, expand it further with films.

A final word

The activities, hints and sample responses in this book should have provided you with a solid starting point for your own revision. The rest is up to you. There is no substitute for hard work. Like any skill, literary analysis and the construction of thoughtful and well-written responses are skills that you can improve with practise.

Good luck in your Literature studies, and in the WACE examinations come November!

Don't forget to give your feedback on *Good Answers* at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/LitGoodAnswers>



The logo consists of a stylized, flowing yellow 'e' character followed by the word 'ETAWA' in a serif font.