

Part I

Introduction

Topic 1

Ensuring success in English

Many students find English tricky due to its subjective nature. There is no such thing as a ‘right’ or ‘wrong’ answer in English, leaving a great deal of uncertainty as to what is expected. You will find that sample answers won’t be as much help in English compared to other, more black-and-white subjects like Maths and Science. Likewise, as English is a necessary subject for students to be able to receive their QCE, some of you make have a strong dislike for English. But guess what? This is completely fine! You do not have to like English to do well in the subject! If you tend to be more comfortable in hard maths and science-based subjects, English does not have to be your worst nightmare! Remember English is more of a skills-based subject rather than content-based. For each assessment, there is what we would call a ‘formula’ to guide you in writing your assessments. You will also be given a marking criteria, which should be your bible for English and when writing assessments. Despite genre conventions varying between each assessment, the task is essentially the same.

In every IA, you are assessed on your ability to:

- Either analyse and evaluate the use of aesthetic features and stylistic devices that underpin a text, or use these in your own writing for purposeful effect on the audience.
- Understand the ways cultural assumptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs underpin texts and invite audiences to take up positions. Is the text challenging or reinforcing these?
- Write a clear, valid, and contentious thesis based on the concept/prompt and effectively build coherent and logically structured arguments to support this.
- Make use of specific genre conventions.
- Make use of specific language choices and a range of grammatically accurate structural choices.

If you wish to get a head start on Units 1&2, further information regarding the marking criteria is provided on the QCAA website. I encourage you to look at the syllabus for Units 1&2. This holds not just for English, but for all of your other subjects as well! There are some extremely useful resources provided for your high school studies.

If you have trouble with English due to its unpredictable nature, treat it like you would a mathematical equation! Learn the parts that a thesis is made up of, and how to write an introduction, body arguments, and a conclusion. Have a checklist of all the things you need to include! If you’re analysing a text, it really is no different to analysing a scientific article. You need to be able to dissect the evidence that is relevant from the sea of words that are insignificant. This is all done to understand the overall meaning of the text regarding a particular concept. Instead of numbers and data being analysed, for English it is words. Don’t treat English like your worst enemy. Try to find at least one aspect of the subject you enjoy, and the more practice you do, the easier it will become! I never expected I would actually enjoy Shakespeare, but I did!

If you’re reading this thinking “but English has no relevance to my future career,” think again. No matter if you are wanting to go to university to study mathematics or enter a trade, English certainly has relevance to every career. It fosters critical thinking so one can dissect a greater, hidden meaning from words. You will never look at a television commercial the same. Instead, you may ask yourself what cultural assumptions, values, attitudes, or beliefs are being challenged or reinforced.

Topic 2

Forming a perspective

Understanding the specific QCE marking criteria is essential to success in English. Let's start with the factors that contribute to the perspective or point of view of a text:

- **Cultural assumptions:** these are the ideas, beliefs, or attitudes about things such as gender, religion, ethnicity, youth, age, disability, sexuality, social class, and work that are taken for granted as being part of the fabric of the social practices of a particular culture. Cultural assumptions underpin texts and can be used to position audiences.
- **Attitudes:** this is the way that you think and feel about somebody or something; the way that you behave towards somebody.
- **Values:** these are characteristics, qualities, philosophical, and emotional stances. For example, moral principles or standards that are often shared with others in a cultural group.
- **Beliefs:** the strong feelings that something or somebody exists or is true.

These can all impact the way a reader or viewer is positioned by a text, or how a particular ideology is embedded in a text (e.g. a feminist perspective). By breaking down the idea of a text's perspective (as well as the perspectives of the author and audience), we can begin to understand how language is used to construct these ideas – this will be crucial when we talk about the process of creating and analysing texts later!

2.1 English – a subjective subject

For most students, English is not only compulsory, but also rather difficult because of its subjectivity. As such, it's highly likely that some of the advice in this guide will differ from what you hear elsewhere. If your teacher advocates for a certain approach, it's worth trying things their way for your assessments (as they'll usually be the ones marking your work!) but at the end of next year, *you're* the one sitting your final 3&4 exam, so if you find a different strategy that works better for you, that one will probably serve you better.

"But which strategy is *right!*? How do I know whether I'm on the right track?" The simplest way to think about this is that English is not really a subject with 'right' or 'wrong' answers, but rather with '**safe**' and '**risky**' ones. Writing something 'safe' means that the vast majority of assessors around the state will be able to look at your piece and give it a similar high score. Writing something 'risky,' on the other hand, means that some teachers might be inclined to give you a great mark since you're catering to their preferences, but others would notice certain flaws and drag your score down a bit. That is not to say that 'risky' writing is completely invalid; there are some instances where taking risks in your essays and changing things up can be incredibly beneficial, but for the most part, you always want to be writing **as safely as possible**.

Writing safely – a checklist

- Conventional essay components (i.e. an intro, 3-4 body paragraphs, a conclusion)
- Standard and roughly equal paragraph lengths
- Beginning and ending each paragraph with a clear idea
- Inclusion of quotes to support analysis
- Explanation of evidence that links back to the focus of the paragraph
- Use of varied and well-incorporated examples and quotes
- Cohesion (i.e. things flow nicely) and coherence (i.e. things make sense)
- Correct spelling and grammar, and legible handwriting

Most of the advice in these notes will be applicable to everyone since they are very safe ways to fulfil the criteria. However, your strategies should cater to your own **strengths and weaknesses** as an English student, so try to develop these yourself throughout the year too – especially for your IAs! As Units 1&2 don't directly contribute towards your ATAR, now is the perfect time to experiment with what works for you, whilst honing in on your essay-writing skills that will set you up for success in Units 3&4. Schools have a lot of freedom when it comes to assignment conditions and marking (which is why scaling comes into play to ensure a student who scores an A+ when given a 4 hour open book assessment doesn't have an unfair advantage over someone who's averaging a B+ on 90 minute assessments under exam conditions). Thus, your teacher might tell you that you *have* to write a very detailed essay plan, or that you *have* to structure your essays in a certain way. If that's the case, stick with their recommendations, and then you can find your own preferred approach for the exam later. This ensures you are maximising both your assessment marks and your exam marks!

2.1.1 Knowing weaknesses

Above all else, the first question you should ask yourself if you want to improve is '**what am I doing wrong?**' It could be something huge like 'I don't understand the point of an analytical essay and so I have no idea what makes a piece good or bad' or something small like 'I can't write topic sentences without using evidence and making them really long.' Maybe it's a grammatical or vocabulary issue like 'my sentences don't make sense,' or 'I keep repeating the same words too much.' Either way, **be as specific as possible!** The best way to do this is to ask yourself whether you are having trouble with **what you're required to write**, or **how you're meant to write it**.

PROBLEM #1: 'I don't know what to write!'

SOLUTIONS:

- Go back to the task criteria
- Give yourself a clear purpose (e.g. 'this last sentence has to link the focus of my paragraph to my contention')
- If in doubt, return to the text/article and use that as your starting point

PROBLEM #2: 'I know what to write, but I don't know how to write it!'

SOLUTIONS:

- Focus on clarity rather than sophistication (ideas are more important, so write what makes sense, not what sounds nice!)
- Slot your ideas into a sentence starter like 'In an attempt to portray ___ as ___, the author emphasises...' to get the momentum going

If you're having issues with Problem #1, then you need to improve your **understanding of the task**. Go back to the syllabus, marking criteria, or the chapters in this book that explain the requirements, and try to get a better grasp of the concepts involved. If you're still confused, try talking with a teacher or even a peer who can spell things out clearly. This will also give you the chance to ask questions directly, leading to a much more efficient targeting of weaknesses that simply trawling through an explanation of the whole course in the hopes that the problems will sort themselves out.

Alternatively, if you're dealing with the study of a text, you might be having trouble with what to write because of a **limited knowledge of the text**. If you don't have enough evidence to write on a certain prompt, character, or theme, then you'll have to go back to those areas and **learn or revise the actual content**. This is even true for the analytical essay; if you haven't understood the material or don't know how to structure an essay, then it follows that you'll struggle to write a high-scoring piece without that basic comprehension.

On the other hand, if you know *what* to write, but not *how* to write it, then you're in the Problem #2 category, which typically stems from your **vocabulary and writing abilities**. That feeling of 'writer's block' where you know what you are trying to say but are unable to articulate it properly is a very common issue for students, so it's good to develop skills both for **preventing** this occurring in the first place, and also for **counter-acting** it just in case it happens.

Most of the time, not knowing *how* to write something means that you need to do **smaller practice activities** in order to build yourself up to being able to write a whole essay.

If you don't know how to write an essay...

DON'T: keep trying to write essays

DO:

- draft an essay plan

- write some Topic Sentences

- try writing just one body paragraph

- annotate the text and look for evidence

- do some small bits of analysis (e.g. just take a quote and explain its meaning)

- go back to the prompt or the text and

- brainstorm ideas (e.g. mindmap, dot-points)

Starting on a small scale is the simplest way to aid rapid improvement, so reading through your work either alone or with someone else who knows the course can help locate specific concerns. Perhaps there is a certain phrase or sentence pattern that you're overusing, or maybe your vocabulary gets increasingly repetitious towards the end of every paragraph with the last sentence just rewording the first. Or, maybe there are a couple of words on which you are extremely dependent and have no synonyms for – like overusing the verb 'suggests' when talking about what the author of one of your set texts is trying to accomplish, for example – in which case **consulting a thesaurus** and **developing a word bank** could help expand the vocabulary you have at your disposal, making it easier for you to **write more**, and to **write faster**.

But none of this is possible unless you're prepared to look through your essays **critically** and **evaluate their flaws**. It's easy to disregard a bad essay you've written, and to never revisit it again, but often these are *exactly* the sorts of pieces that you need to go through and **consider where you went wrong**. It will gradually become much easier to precisely identify where your expression is letting you down once you have some samples to work with. Yes, it's good to have some high-quality essays so that you know what scoring well looks like for you too, but you won't be able to clear up your weakest areas if you refuse to acknowledge them. Even work from Year 10 can be useful in identifying your patterns of error. The embarrassment of past mistakes won't prevent you from making those same mistakes again, but **learning from them** gives you a supreme advantage.

2.1.2 Formative and summative study

There are two different ways of approaching essay writing, one of which is much more valuable than the other. The first is to write a **formative essay** – one that **builds upon your skills**, and can be used to **test, consolidate, or fine tune** what and how you're writing. Here, the aim is to **form** an approach which you will later **refine**, but there is no requirement to do so under time constraints. In fact, formative essays often won't look anything like the pieces you compose in assessments or exams. You might write a piece over several days using teachers' and peers' feedback to add or edit sections, or perhaps have lists of vocabulary open next to you in order to force yourself to integrate new words. Of course, this won't happen in assessment tasks, but your experiences writing formative essays can be exponentially more beneficial to **developing your skills** in order to prepare for these assessments.

Summative essays, on the other hand, are ones where you are **testing your knowledge** under **timed conditions**, and only using skills and examples that you're confident with. A proper summative essay would be one written as though it is an end of year exam piece, meaning you'd have roughly two hours to complete an analytical essay based on an unseen prompt. These can be helpful in moderation if you feel the need to assess your knowledge and estimate how you will perform in the exam, but in general, you should be writing a greater amount of **formative essays than summative ones**. Much later in the year, in the weeks before the exam, replicating the exam conditions and taking stock of where you're at is a good idea, but there's no sense forcing yourself to write at that standard before you're ready.

Your final 3&4 exam next year will be the only time you're truly writing summative essays, as even assessments and practice exams should be used to push your boundaries and learn new things. So for most of the year, it's perfectly okay to be writing essays with your notes open, or redrafting essays with help from your teacher. Even if you struggle with timing, there's no reason to stress about it before you've gotten a grasp on the task itself.

FORMATIVE:

- Forming your understanding
- Testing new approaches
- Developing skills without time constraints
- Always useful!

SUMMATIVE:

- Summarising your understanding
- Putting yourself to the test
- Timed/exam conditions
- Only useful when you're confident in your approach

It is easier to go from writing **high-quality essays slowly to writing high-quality ones quickly** than it is to go from writing **mediocre essays quickly to high-quality ones quickly**. Concentrate on **qualitative improvement** as much as possible, and the time it takes you to complete a piece will naturally decrease once you understand how to achieve a high mark. You cannot summarise your learning before you've formed it, so don't be afraid to ease off on the strict conditions while you acquire the skillset to deal with the tasks confidently.

2.2 Resources for improvement

In order to best prepare you for the end of the year as well as all the practice pieces and assessment you'll have in the lead up to it, there are several different things that you should make the most of. This will not only give you the advantage of other people's expertise, but will also ensure you have a support network of people and tools to help you succeed, which can be a great comfort in the more stressful parts of the year. Plus, although it is ultimately down to you to complete the tasks, there are some problems that simply cannot be solved alone, and without getting someone else's input or a second opinion, improvement can become needlessly challenging. In this section, we'll be unpacking the **many different resources** you'll have at your disposal, and **how you can utilise them** to help boost your scores.

2.2.1 Using teachers

Of course, one cannot improve without feedback, and though you may be able to read through your work and locate a few issues that you'd like to fix, getting a **teacher or assessor's perspective is very valuable**. If you're lucky, you'll have a teacher who provides fairly extensive advice on how to fix your mistakes, but most teachers will be marking piles of 40 essays at a time, so feedback is usually pretty sparse. However, if you show you're prepared to organise a time to see them outside of class and talk about your strengths and weaknesses, they'll probably be happier to give you extra help.

When it comes to **interpreting feedback**, it's also worth spending some time with your teacher in order to work out exactly what they want from you. If they've given you some vague recommendations like 'needs more detail' or 'use better evidence,' then perhaps ask them to provide a **sample** of what this might look like, or at least further clarification as to **why this improvement is necessary** and how you can practise skills that will enable you to deal with these issues. Remember, your teachers aren't just available to you for the four or five hours a week when you have English. Most try to be accessible via email, or establish some kind of office hours for your benefit, so don't underestimate them as a source of **advice and support** throughout the year.

2.2.2 Using peers and marking essays

Your classmates can also be useful in your English studies in a variety of ways. Discussing your texts or the different ways you and your peers structure your essays can make for valuable additions to your own understanding. Although you are technically ranked against one another in terms of assessment marks, **mutually beneficial discussion** can make you a **stronger overall cohort**, which puts you all in a *much* better position for the exam than if you were to horde your ideas and never share or articulate them properly. You will gain much more from a group discussion than you will from denying yourself the input of your classmates and friends, and even from a ‘selfish’ perspective, your experience in expressing an opinion about a text is ultimately the same kind of thing the examiners will expect you to be able to do at the end of the year, so the more practice you get in **communicating these core skills**, the better equipped you will be for your assessment tasks.

You may also find it useful to **read or even mark one another’s work**, which will not only allow you to discover new perspectives for a text or essay question that you may not have otherwise considered, but will also help you to **get into the mindset of an assessor** – I can safely say I wouldn’t have done as well in Year 12 if I hadn’t gotten into the habit of doing this regularly, and I’d attribute a fair chunk of my final result to the fact that I’d spent hours going through other students’ work finding strengths and flaws.

For instance, if you read through the first three sentences in a paragraph and you still don’t know what the focus is, then you can explain (either verbally or in a written comment) that the person writing this essay would need a clearer outlining of ideas early on so that the marker doesn’t get lost. You might even pick up on things that your teacher misses, like noticeably repetitious vocabulary, or a problem with their interpretation of the text, though it goes without saying that this feedback has to be delivered effectively and not in a manner that would negatively impact a student’s self-esteem too much. On the other hand, you don’t want to coddle your peers by telling them they’re doing everything right and give them a false sense of confidence.

Instead, you should aim to find **both strengths and weaknesses** in every essay you mark, even if one seems basically perfect to you and another is so flawed that you struggle to find any positives. Destructive feedback like ‘this makes no sense’ or ‘why are you saying this’ or ‘huh???’ doesn’t offer much help, whereas **constructive feedback** like ‘this point could be spelled out a little clearer; I’m not sure how this evidence demonstrates your point’ or ‘this is getting kind of far away from the prompt; maybe add a sentence to emphasise the relevance here’ or even ‘are you sure about this part? I thought that character seemed like they were angry rather than sad?’ is far more useful. Basically, **give the kind of feedback you would want to receive on your own pieces**, and reap the rewards. Likewise, your peers might inform you that your essay has a contradictory contention, or that one paragraph isn’t as well-written as your other ones, in which case their feedback can help you isolate any serious problems from another reader’s perspective. This is an **often underestimated** but **highly valuable** way to improve on many levels, so try to encourage people you know in your year level to trade essays as often as possible.

Another potentially beneficial activity is to share this marking between a group so that instead of simply having a one-to-one trade off, you can pass around work amongst several of your peers. Again, this has a wide array of benefits for your own studies; first and foremost, you’ll be receiving **heaps of advice** to help you refine your essays, and you’ll become more accustomed to the way different people mark you. Some might let little errors slip by whilst focusing more on the overall direction of your essay, and others might pick up on every minor spelling mistake or incorrect word choice.

In doing so, you can essentially **have your essay dissected** in order to identify all of the good components that you'll want to replicate, as well as anything that's negatively impacting your score for you to cut or alter. Likewise, you will be able to **mark many different kinds of essays** and improve your skills as a 'pretend assessor,' which in turn will translate to improving your skills as an essay writer. By observing the way other people mark, you can refine your own ability, and even if you don't have a fully-fledged idea of what a perfect essay looks like, you can build your understanding from the ground up by using other people's essays as points of reference. The **checklists** at the end of the chapters in these notes might also offer you a good baseline to use when evaluating others' performance, and can make it easier to explain to someone **why** a particular aspect of their piece might be letting them down.

But remember: you don't have to give numerical scores if you're not confident in doing so, or if you think doing so would unnecessarily harm someone's self-esteem. In most cases, the **qualitative feedback** you can provide (and hopefully will receive in return) will be much more valuable than simply saying 'I think this is about an 8/10.'

Ideally, you want to latch onto someone, or a group of people, who are at roughly **the same level of ability** that you're at right now. If you've been achieving 8s and 9s all year, then correcting the essays of a student scoring 4s and 5s might not be the most efficacious activity, but it will still help you understand common areas of weakness and how you can avoid them. And even if you tend to be a middle-band scorer averaging around 6/10, you can learn a lot from attempting to find flaws in 10/10 essays too. In the event you genuinely can't find any significant flaws, then just see if you can rationalise and explain everything the piece does right. There is a tendency for students to focus on the **imperfections in their writing**, and all the flaws and confusions that they have throughout the year, which often occurs at the expense of an awareness of strong points. Of course, paying attention to your trouble-spots is important too, but showing an awareness of the kinds of things that go into **making a high-scoring piece so good** can also have carry-over benefits to your own approach. The **more specific** you can be, the better: maybe an essay is using quotes really well, but what is it that makes the quote usage so impressive? Are they particularly well placed? Or is the analysis surrounding each quote very effective? Do the sentences flow well because of the vocabulary choices, or because of the linking done at the start and end of each one? Is the contention good because of its complexity, or because of its simplicity? All of these questions will contribute to your understanding of **what constitutes a high scoring response**, and you will eventually get to a stage where you're able to **pre-emptively correct your own errors**.

However, it is entirely possible that you won't find too many students willing to engage in this with you. The competitive atmosphere that surrounds the QCE years will often obscure people's vision and prevent them from doing things that would benefit them immensely because of some misguided belief that they'll be giving other people an advantage and that doing so would be foolish. Not only is this just **statistically untrue** (since you want your cohort to be performing at their best for the exam), but it's also usually **to the detriment of those kinds of students**. If they are unwilling to share and enhance their ideas with others, or reluctant to help others even if they are gaining something in return, it's best not to push the matter. If you have friends in this position, perhaps try and talk to them about why peer-marking can give both of you an advantage, but you may just have to look elsewhere for assistance.

If you can't find anyone who's willing to participate with you, marking essays can still be a good **independent exercise**. It is much easier to criticise someone else's work than it is to find fault with your own, so obtaining sample pieces from your school or online, regardless of the quality, and assessing them based on your knowledge of the task criteria can lead to a far more comprehensive understanding of what's required of you. It's one thing to know what the criteria means in an abstract sense, but it's another matter entirely to understand **what these concepts look like** when they're put into practice, or what it looks like when students neglect a certain crucial component.

2.2.3 Wider reading

Reading is another great way to improve skills across the board, and can even help target certain IA requirements depending on what you read. Most of your set texts will have a variety of resources available online, from **sample essays** to **authorial and historical background information**, so working through this sort of material, even though it may not be directly accessible, will still aid you in broadening your understanding of the text. Many teachers advocate for **reading newspapers** or online news media in order to expose yourself to persuasive material. Opinion pieces and editorials are usually more useful in this sense than standard current affairs reporting.

If you're looking to improve your expression or vocabulary, then any challenging reading will be beneficial, but ideally, you should try to **read books that are slightly above your level** so that you're learning new things without getting totally lost in verbosity.

Admittedly, reading is a fairly **passive and slow** way of improving your English ability and is most effective if done consistently over a number of years, but it will always have **some positive impact**, no matter how incremental. Exposing yourself to **alternative sentence structures**, **new words**, or **different ways of structuring information** might not be a deliberate goal, but it is often a welcome consequence of reading challenging material, so if you're in need of a fairly easy task to break up the monotony of more demanding homework, wider reading is guaranteed to be a worthwhile way to spend your time.

2.2.4 Self-evaluation

Finally, the process of self-evaluation and **thinking about your progress and abilities** is an oft ignored, but invaluable activity that is the easiest way to answer the question '**how do I study?**' Where most people hit a mental roadblock with English is not with their abilities, but with their **awareness**. If you understand the criteria, and you know what modifications you have to make to your own approach in order to meet these criteria, there's very little to stop you from attaining full marks.

However, it can be tempting to put too much faith in your **quantitative results** and assume that they are completely accurate representations of your ability or potential. Maybe you're only averaging at a C+ for English but believe you're capable of better – ask yourself what your **biggest areas of concern** are or if there's anything that you feel especially unsure about. Contrarily, if you got an A+ for a certain IA, consider how confident you'd feel in replicating that score. Does it seem like it reflects your efforts, or did you just get lucky with the prompts?

Most of these methods so far have consisted of using other people, or other resources that have been provided to you. However, this is all building up to the one key facet to your studies that will be most important if you want to study efficiently over the course of this subject, and that is the question: **what do I need to work on?**

This is probably an activity best left until you have attempted previous ones so that you have some **basis for your judgements about your own capabilities**, and certainly isn't recommended in the very early stages of the year before you've got a grasp on each of the essay types, but you don't necessarily have to rely on other people's advice. Although your teachers and peers can provide excellent opinions from their own perspectives, ultimately, no one can understand your thought processes better than yourself, and **the things that you are truly struggling with may not be immediately apparent** to an outside observer, and perhaps won't even show up in the marking scheme. You might feel like you've been receiving undeservedly high marks all year and that, in reality, you're not entirely sure what you're supposed to be doing and still feel you don't fully understand what you're doing right, let alone how you can improve. Or, you might feel as though you're not achieving the score you're capable of, and yet the problems that your teacher has highlighted don't seem like they're addressing your underlying issues. This is where self-evaluation becomes **highly effective**.

For starters, good self-evaluation is highly dependent on you having a **stable grasp on the criteria**. Never be afraid to go back to basics and revisit the benchmarks that you're expected to meet, because the better sense you have of **what constitutes a good and a flawed piece**, the easier it will be to spot such trends in your own writing. Assuming you've got an accurate idea of what's required of you, there are several strategies that can allow you to take stock of your performance and locate any concerns. The easiest and most holistic way of doing this is to **write an essay whilst keeping track of your approach** and where your mind goes. This can be especially good for evaluating your performance under timed conditions – make some little **annotations down the margins** of your page every time you reach 10 minute intervals. Any time you find yourself pausing for longer than a minute, mark that with a little asterisk, and highlight any areas where you feel like your points aren't clear, or where your expression is a little shaky. By the time you reach the end, you'll have a portrait of what your performance could look like at the end of the year.

In terms of timing, see if there are any **anomalies** evident in your notes for this essay. Perhaps you were able to get a quick plan, an introduction, and two body paragraphs all done within 50 minutes, but then the third body paragraph took almost 50 minutes on its own, leaving you just 20 minutes for an optional fourth paragraph, a conclusion, and optional editing time. Or maybe it took you 30 minutes to get through the plan and introduction, but after that, the body paragraphs flowed quickly and fluently, suggesting that you find it easier to write once you have a clear sense of your argument. Whatever the case, the more often you **keep track of your writing habits**, the more likely you are to **spot patterns in your approach**, meaning you can then modify your strategies accordingly.

Taking those two hypothetical scenarios, the first would seem to indicate that the student didn't leave enough to discuss for a third paragraph, and perhaps used up all their good discussion points too early, so paying attention to pacing during planning time could help balance this out. It's also possible that the decrease in speed was due to tiredness or a lack of concentration halfway through, meaning that this student would have to adjust to the time constraints well and truly before the exam rolls around. In the second instance, the student spent a bit too long in the planning stages, but was then able to write effectively and efficiently after that point, so setting aside time to devote sufficient thought to the prompt would grant them the chance to develop these ideas and give them a head start on cutting down that initial brainstorming time.

Outside of time constraints, you may also want to start to **question what you find easy and difficult about each essay**, and **why**. No one will be completely and utterly confident in every Topic – there are bound to be a few trouble spots or certain potential exam questions that you would find challenging. For instance, if you're someone who finds it really simple to break apart a prompt and plan out your ideas, but then struggles to actually articulate them in the essay, **why is that the case?** Was your initial unpacking actually beneficial? Are you having trouble with distributing the ideas evenly enough? Or do you feel like your expression is weakening your overall points? Likewise, if you're really good at backing up your discussions with textual evidence, but you can never manage to develop a relevant, sophisticated contention, consider why you're having trouble in this area. Do you understand what ideas the text is communicating? Can you find sufficient connections between the evidence you're bringing up? And is this a problem with all prompts, or just certain types?

The more specific you are with your concerns, the easier they will be to address. In fact, sometimes simply **being mindful** of certain issues is enough for you to be able to **prevent** them and avoid going down that path in the exam. If not, tally up these issues into a collection of **personalised strengths and weaknesses**. This can let you concentrate on building upon these strengths so that you have something to rely upon in the exam, but also grant you time to spend on your weaker areas so that they can hopefully become strengths as well, or at the very least, not detract from all the other things you're doing well in your essays.

Part II

Unit 1: Perspectives and texts

Topic 1

Literary article

1.1 Task criteria

Perhaps the hardest assessment you will complete in Units 1&2 is the literary article. This is due to the difficult genre and formatting requirements that will most likely be new to you. Of course, your teacher will guide you through these steps.

KEY POINT :

Note that the requirements for this task may differ depending on your school's choice, and any following information provided regarding formatting should serve as a guide only.

A good idea before starting this assessment would be to familiarise yourself with the genre by looking up literary articles on the internet; ensure these are academic. If you're lucky, you may even be able to find some on your chosen text(s) as inspiration!

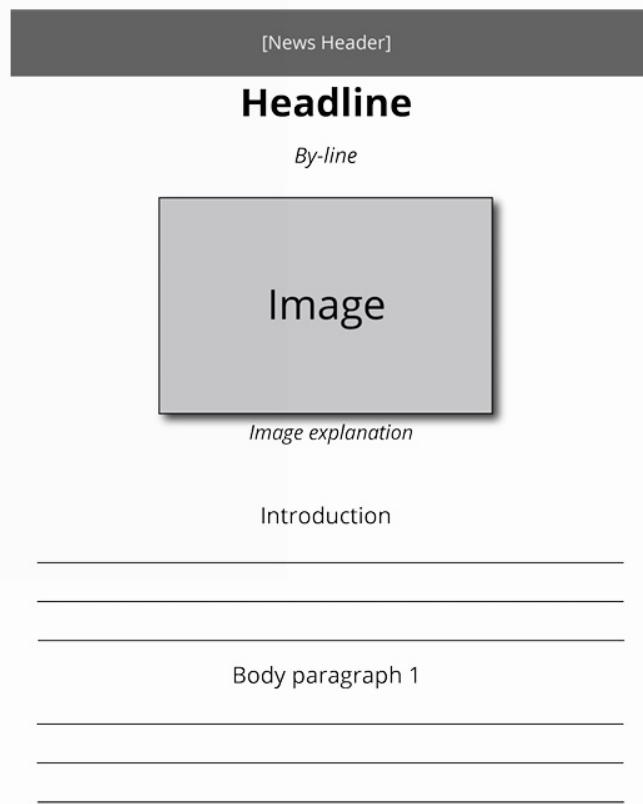
Think of a literary article as something you may read of a news website or blog. It is a **critique** of at least one text that you must **analyse and evaluate in order to communicate a greater message**. In some ways, the task is similar to an analytical essay, except there are different genre conventions, audiences, and more informal, colloquial language is allowed. The purpose of a literary article is not just to inform, but also to entertain. Therefore, your ability to be creative and interest the audience is also marked. Using a play on words is a must for this assessment. Think about criticisms for films that you may have read online or watched on YouTube. These are very similar in nature, except yours must be a literary analysis. That means you must analyse the author's/director's/screenwriter's choice of aesthetic features and stylistic devices (like you would in an analytical essay), and what message this conveys to the audience.

1.2 Genre conventions

Your literary article should consist of (with the advice of your teacher):

- A creative headline
- A by-line
- Images scattered throughout (but only the most relevant) and a small text box explaining the relevance behind them
- An introduction with your thesis statement
- 2–3 main arguments
 - These do not need to be in body paragraphs. You should not have ginormous chunks of text in your literary article. If they run for more than 1/3 of the page, split them up into different sections; however, ensure you make it clear when you move onto the next point.
- A conclusion and call to action
- Hyperlinks and quote boxes (again, only if they are relevant)
- Margins measuring 2.54 cm on both sides and text that wraps around images

Below is an image showing a possible set-up for your article:



How to use quote boxes

You may have one or two long quotes that you wish to include in your literary article to reinforce your arguments. Instead of incorporating these into your sentences (which would take up a lot of space), separate these from text using quote boxes like below. Be sure to attribute it to the character as well.

"Daisy was young, and her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes." — Nick, *The Great Gatsby*

Examples of image descriptions

You may also be required, if you decide to use images (which I highly suggest you do), to include a short one sentence description describing the relevance of the photo. This allows the marker to see that you have purposefully chosen this image to further support your point and haven't just mindlessly chucked it in there.

Examples include:

- Underneath an image of Olive looking at her body in the mirror: "Little Miss Sunshine *unveils the disturbing nature of societal beauty norms.*"
- Underneath an image of Gatsby's dead body: "*Gatsby's materialistic obsession ends with his own demise.*"
- Underneath an image with statistics about the gender pay gap: "*Over the span of 100 years, the ideological construct of success is still corrupted by traditional (but toxic) gender roles.*"

Generally, these are put in small text and are italicised.

Hyperlinks

You may also be given the option to include a hyperlink in your literary article. These are imbedded within a particular part of the text that link to another source (perhaps a news article or even another literary article) that support your argument. These are quick and easy to implement and can help you gain marks!

1.3 Structure of a literary article

1.3.1 Introduction

The introduction to a literary article is very similar to that of an analytical essay; however, you are allowed to be less formal and use colloquialisms (popular expressions of words or slang) to entertain your audience.

Keep the introduction short and simplistic and not overly verbose. Include two short sentences introducing any relevant social context (think – cultural assumptions, beliefs, values, and attitudes). However, make sure it doesn't sound overly formal like an essay – you don't want your article to begin boring, like a historical text. This is where using figurative and creative language will come in handy. Use words that sound cool and fun!

Thesis checklist:



Who is the author?

Include contextual information about the author and the text.



What is your interpretation of the text?

Make sure your thesis is specific, clear, and has a justifiable argument that responds to the question/task.



How will you support this interpretation?

Signpost your ideas/sub-arguments to be underpinned by aesthetic features and stylistic devices. For top marks, make sure you use the name of the author and analytical verbs (e.g. highlights, emphasises, underscores).



Why does the author/text communicate these ideas?

Is there some connection to the context in which the text was written? What cultural assumptions, values, and beliefs is the author challenging or reinforcing?

SAMPLE :

Introduction

The Roaring Twenties; a time of economic prosperity and carefree living. But behind closed doors and the promise of the American Dream lay corruption and its desperate, empty decadence. Although decades apart, Fitzgerald's 1926 novel *The Great Gatsby* and the 2006 film *Little Miss Sunshine* both highlight to audiences that society's construct of success is corrupted by stereotypical gender roles. Although many stories would have us believe that success is obtainable for anyone, both texts effectively reject this idea and convey that people are pressured into pursuing hollow cliches of success at the expense of true fulfilment. Consequently, their individualistic goals of happiness become distorted, and in turn, end up being driven by wealth and reputation. Even in the 21st century, degrading ideologies of the ideal American family are present through both texts, with success being portrayed as the father working for the money, while the woman tends to the house and children. Fitzgerald and screenwriter Arndt aim to convey to audiences that we need to redefine what it means to be successful, disregarding old-fashioned gender roles entirely.

KEY POINT :

Remember that you should be repeatedly referring back to your overarching thesis. Ask yourself the golden question ‘so what?’ What are the real-world implications of the author’s choice? What were their intentions/messages? Why does their intent matter? You should not only be able to reference the historical context of the text, but also its importance in the modern-day world.

1.3.2 Arguments

As you usually do, aim for 2–3 arguments. But remember that this will be split into mini paragraphs in order to fit the genre conventions.

Don't	Do
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Take the most obvious points from discussions in class and string them together in disjointed analysis in hope that it will salvage your grade Identify literary techniques without analysing the effect they have on audiences Start writing your article until you have clearly mapped the flow of your ideas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Show a layered, deep, sophisticated understanding of the ideas that you’re writing about Use synonyms and a variety of analytical and evaluative language Use cohesive devices and punctuation to support your flow of ideas Choose a range of examples from the text(s) to make important points

SAMPLE :**Argument**

Although both texts are 100 years apart, they both demonstrate to the audience that women’s gender roles have not changed. Women’s success is still a measure of their beauty. For instance, Fitzgerald portrays the female characters in *The Great Gatsby* as weak and emotional beings, only useful when they become a commodity. Described as “the golden girl,” Daisy Buchanan is characterised as pretty with a “lovely shaped” face. Despite knowing that her husband has had numerous affairs, she is still married to him. Daisy hopes her daughter will be a “fool,” as “that’s the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool.” From this dialogue, it is clear to readers that women’s success is defined by fitting in with the social norms – that is, marginalised, subservient, and only for show. Daisy knows that beauty will bring her daughter security, hoping that she will be too foolish to question her place in the world. Fitzgerald aims to highlight to the reader that women in the 1920s were all but viewed as commodities by men, who were controlled by wealth and power.

These same damaging attitudes can also be seen in the opening scene of *Little Miss Sunshine*, the first thing audiences see is a young, innocent girl’s eyes, mimicking the reactions of Miss America pageant contestants. This masterful use of a close-up, eye-level shot by the screenwriter emphasises how Olive’s dream and idea of success is to be a beauty queen, sanctioned by society’s dominant belief that beauty is the pinnacle of female achievement and happiness. But it is clear to audiences through indirect characterisation that Olive does not fit in with society’s standards for beauty; she is plump, pale, and wears glasses. However, unlike Daisy Buchanan, she doesn’t let glorified (yet harmful) beauty standards define her success in this world. Olive doesn’t win the beauty pageant. By default, society condemns her as a failure. However, instead she finds fulfilment in the uniting of her family, rejecting the ideology of gender roles entirely. The message in this film then goes against the domineering force of social media, which purports to young girls that to be ‘successful’ they must align with today’s unrelenting and ever-changing beauty standards and instead proposes that young women can find success and happiness despite not achieving social standards of beauty.

Analytical metalanguage

By using the **language of analysis** you are automatically encouraged to analyse the effects of aesthetic features and stylistic devices. Consider using some of the following terminology to aid you.

Language of analysis	Examples
Dominant cultural assumptions and socio-historical context	Reinforces, challenges, privileges
Binary oppositions	Juxtaposes
Authorial intent	Positions
Symbolises	Characterises
Representations	Represents

Ways to introduce quotes

To introduce a quote you can use the following sentence structure and any of the following words that suit the context. “The author...”

Believes	Endorses	Contends	Upholds
Declares	Confirms	Suggests	Reveals
Disputes	Claims	Argues	Acknowledges
Denies	Refutes	Emphasises	Rejects
Compares	Asserts	Cautions	Expresses

Film techniques

If your text is a film, there are extra film techniques that you must analyse. These are essentially camera shots and angles which are purposefully used (either by the screenwriter or director) to portray the characters in a certain light.

Film techniques include:

- Mise-en-scène (stage design and arrangement of actors)
- Close-up shot
- Extreme close-up shot
- Eye-level shot
- Medium shot
- Wide/long shot
- Camera panning
- Low angle
- High angle
- Straight angle
- Birds eye view angle
- Dialogue
- Direct/indirect characterisation
- Clothing/costuming choice
- Lighting

SAMPLE :

Little Miss Sunshine skilfully utilises mise-en-scène by positioning the family together and depicting their physical and emotional closeness through a medium shot with Richard on the periphery. Arndt purposefully uses this to illustrate that Richard is still corrupted by society's pressure to conform and cannot truly prioritise his family's wellbeing and belong to their tight-knit unit. Likewise, Fitzgerald conveys a similar sense of outsider status in his depiction of Gatsby, with Nick's narration idolising the "colossal vitality of his illusion." However, where Richard has the support of his family and learns to define success outside of societal expectations, Gatsby lacks these healthy relationships and is isolated in his fool's paradise, ultimately leading to his death.

1.3.3 Conclusion

The final part of your literary article is not just where you reiterate your thesis and recap your body arguments to reinforce your perspective, you must also make some comment about what should be important for modern-day audiences. Consider why the text is still relevant today. Is there an unintended meaning that can relate to audiences today. Do we need to change our beliefs, values, or attitudes regarding a certain topic?

SAMPLE :
Conclusion

It can be safe to say that while both texts were constructed almost 100 years apart, *The Great Gatsby* and *Little Miss Sunshine* both stress to audiences that the ideology of success is corrupted by traditional gender roles and expectations. The American Dream is a work of fiction, placing pressure on both men and women to conform to societal gender expectations, instead of their own ideas of success. For instance, using dialogue and indirect characterisation, both text depict women as commodities, with success only being a measure of their beauty. Dialogue and symbolism are also employed to convey to audiences of both texts that the stereotype of a successful man is one who flaunts their materialistic possessions. This notion of success as a winner-or-loser mentality corrupts characters as well as society, and though Gatsby could only escape this through death, perhaps the unbridled joy of the Hoover family's carefree dancing at the film's end gives us hope that we can pursue a more fulfilling kind of success.

We need to acknowledge the existence of our own gender biases. Globally, men today should not feel pressured to gain a senseless amount of wealth, materialistic possessions, and shallow friendships, just as women should not be a measure of their beauty. As Jim Carrey said: "I think everybody should get rich and famous and get everything they dreamed, so they can see that's not the answer."

1.4 Marking criteria

Your task sheet will first ask you analyse a specific concept prevalent in the text(s) and how it is represented.

Your article should analyse how cultural assumptions, values, attitudes, and beliefs evident in both texts invite audiences to take up positions on a chosen concept. Your article should also analyse the effects of the specific aesthetic features and stylistic devices that are utilised in both texts and how they convey a perspective on success.

To be successful in this task, you must:

- Analyse a perspective on a concept (stated in the task sheet) by comparing how this concept is represented in both texts.
- Analyse the ways cultural assumptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs are used in both texts to represent this perspective and position audiences.
- Analyse the effects of different aesthetic features and stylistic devices that are utilised in the text(s) to represent this perspective and position audiences.
- Make use of the genre conventions of a literary article.
- Select, organise, and synthesise subject matter from both texts to create a cohesive literary article.
- Make use of specific language choices in a range of grammatically accurate language structures to present a perspective on the concept that you have chosen.

Topic 2

Persuasive speech

2.1 Task criteria

In this assessment, you will be asked to develop and present a five to eight minute persuasive speech on a contentious issue (e.g. social or political). Typically, your teachers will ask you to find an issue that has been debated recently in the media that is also local. This means, that while you can choose an issue that is relevant globally, you must be able to draw it back to Australia. What can the Australian public and government do to help? You must build a valid contention that others might challenge or oppose.

The QCAA syllabus defines being **persuasive** as:

- Capable of changing someone's ideas, opinions, or beliefs
- Appearing worthy of approval or acceptance
- Communicating reasonably or credibly (relating to an argument or statement)

Therefore, to be successful in this task, you must not only challenge and change the audience's ideas, opinions, or beliefs about a particular issue, but also establish credibility within your audience and use logic (i.e. use factual statements) to support your argument.

Furthermore, as stated before, your issue must be **contentious**. That is, it must be able to be argued reasonably by both sides – for and against. Arguing that everyone should have human rights is not a contentious issue, because no one is going to reasonably argue against that. The goal of your speech is to persuade the audience (e.g. a local youth forum) about your perspective on a particular issue.

For instance, an example of your purpose might be 'to rally support for technological innovations as a long-term solution to climate change, rather than only focusing on short-term, band aid fixes.' Then, an example of your audience might be 'peers at the Australian Youth Forum' or 'the local government ministers attending a speaking seminar.' Note that your chosen audience should impact how you tailor your speech – if you're speaking to your peers, then your intent could be to encourage them to pursue careers in fields of scientific innovation, whereas if you're speaking to government representatives, then you might be seeking more federal awareness or funding for scientific development.

KEY POINT :

In this assessment, you will be marked both on the transcript of your speech and your presentation (i.e. delivery). It is not enough to just rely on one or the other, both contribute to your mark evenly!

Usually, this is the assessment that is the most daunting to people due to the presentation aspect. Trust me, it was for me as well! In some cases, depending upon your school's decision, you may have the choice to present your speech in front of an audience or do a video recording. While I encourage you to try and practice your presentation skills in front of a live audience, as this is a valuable skill to be able to master, I understand that it is still quite a difficult to do. If you feel that giving a live presentation will cause too much anxiety and be detrimental to your grade, have a chat with your teacher (if they are not currently providing the option of video recording your presentation). I know firsthand that being anxious can significantly affect the presentation mark of your speech. While it is great to challenge yourself and try to overcome your fears, you should not have to see your grade suffer in the process.

Word count

There is no rough word count you should rely on. The only way to determine the length of your speech is to time yourself delivering it aloud. Ensure that you do not speak in a rushed fashion, your audience will need time to digest the information you are providing to them. Allow for nonverbal persuasive techniques, such as dramatic pauses. Do not make the mistake of trying to word vomit as much as information in the specified time limit, this will decrease the impact of your speech. Regardless, make sure that you do not go below or above the specified timeframe, or you could lose marks.

2.2 Choosing an issue

The great thing about this assignment is that you are usually given the choice of what you wish to talk about. You have total freedom to pick what you want, as long as it fits the task sheet criteria. My word of advice would be to pick a topic that you are already passionate about. Whether this be climate change, animal rights, euthanasia, or immigration laws, pick something that you already care about and have pre-existing knowledge on. You don't want to have to write a speech about a topic you don't really know or care for. Perhaps it's an issue that's affected you personally, or you have a strong opinion about. You want your audience to feel your passion and emotion, which in turn, will persuade them to want to listen to you and adopt your perspective. Remember, at the end of the day, the goal of this assessment is to persuade the audience. This means you have to appeal to their **emotions (pathos)**. If you have no passion for the topic your audience will pick up on this. It will also make you unmotivated to work on this assessment and turn it into a complete bore, when in reality it should be the easiest assessment you complete!

If you're still unsure of where to start just look at the news. Ask yourself:

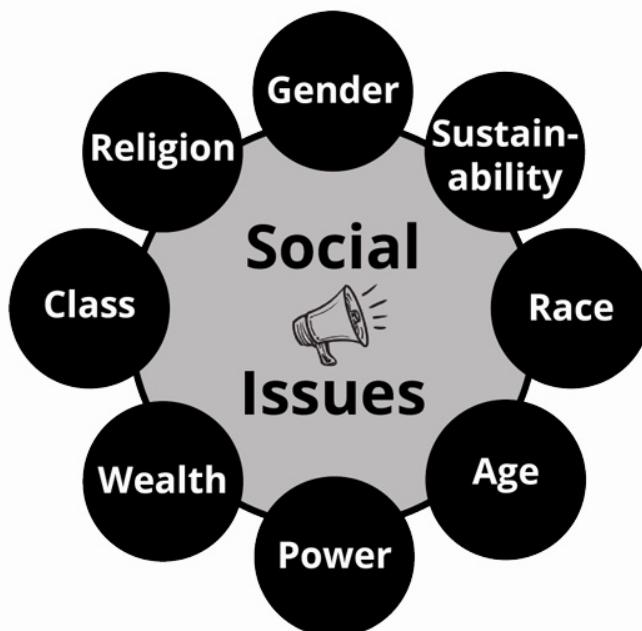
- What issues are trending and regularly being discussed? Look at what people are saying and consider whether you agree or disagree.
- Who has a vested interest in this issue? Who is affected by it, and who is arguing for a specific outcome? Which person or group do you side with?
- Is there anyone who benefits or suffers because of this issue? How might this shift your perspective about the best way to resolve the issue?

It is human nature for us to quickly take a side that we most agree with. Think about which side you believe to be most reasonable and ask yourself why? What are the reasons for this? Look at the facts. This should form the basis of your arguments supporting your contention.

Self-checklist:

- Is this something the Australian government could realistically do something about?
- Is what I am advocating for something that will better our society and create a better future for Australia?
- Have I read up on this issue in a variety of credible sources before developing my contention?
- Am I doing more than just informing the audience of a problem or ranting? Am I actually proposing a solution or advocating for a specific change I want to see happen?
- Have I considered the various values, attitudes, and beliefs of my audience in order to appeal to them, address what they might be thinking, and how I can best compel them to take action?

Types of social issues



KEY POINT :

It is important that your topic is not derogatory, discriminatory, or abusive in any way, even by accident! Ensure that your speech is not discriminating against another group in any way. This is also can be referred to as being ad hominem abusive, where you undermine the oppositions argument by directly attacking their personal qualities. This can also tarnish your credibility as the speaker.

How specific should my issue be?

Your contention (what you are arguing) should be neither too specific nor too broad, as this will lower your mark. For example, a weak contention is that we should stop climate change. This is way too broad and general. Look at a certain part of climate change or one of the factors that are contributing to the issue (e.g. coal mines, nuclear energy, agricultural industry, etc.). You should also aim to make this local, or in other words, relate it back to Australian standards and what our country is currently doing. If possible, try and narrow it down to Queensland:

- Is the issue caused by societal norms or politics?
- Can the government intervene to help improve the situation?
- Is more funding and public awareness required?

However, be wary of making your issue too specific, as otherwise you may have difficulty finding enough relevant and recent information to support your arguments. Remember, your contention needs to be effectively justified with evidence in order to support it. If you only have a small amount of evidence, your speech isn't going to be persuasive.

KEY POINT :

Ensure your issue is **controversial**. That means that there should be multiple points of view, each valid in their own logic. Your job is to persuade the audience that your point of view is the most reasonable.

When selecting an issue don't be afraid to get creative or choose an unusual topic. Challenge the morals of your audience! For instance, your topic might be "should some illicit drugs be legalised in Australia?" If this is your position, then you need to be able to justify how this could actually help reduce substance abuse in Australia. Or you could argue that the current euthanasia laws in Queensland do not assist those who actually need them and the criteria should be expanded upon. Make your topic unique and personal to you!

2.3 Structure of a speech

Every speech can be split up into three distinct parts, the introduction, 2–3 body paragraphs (but aim for three), and a conclusion.

2.3.1 Introduction

The introduction is where you state your contention. This must be clear, valid, and contentious. Ensure you explain the **who, what, how, and why**:

- Who is affected by your issue? And who has the power to change it?
- What is your issue?
- How can the audience help advocate for change? This forms part of your **call to action**.
- Why is it significant (relevance to current day society)?

SAMPLE :

The Federal Government is not acknowledging climate change as the threat it is to the future of our economy and culture. Our government needs to bring back the carbon tax for fossil fuel companies and maintain stricter environmental policies.

Notice how I have suggested possible solutions to the issue. This is your call to action, and a short snapshot of this must be included within your contention. This is because your speech will become weak if you cannot suggest how the issue can be improved. These solutions also need to be realistic and feasible. Later on in your speech you will need to go into more detail about these solutions/alternatives. Ideally, this will be towards the end and in your conclusion so you can end on an inspiring note about the potential for a better future.

Signpost your arguments

Next, you need to establish convincing reasoning for the development of your speech. This can be achieved through signposting or previewing your arguments.

SAMPLE :

Firstly, we need to hold our leaders to account for misinforming us about the realities of climate action – this is deeply immoral and needs to stop immediately. **Secondly**, we have to acknowledge and rectify the risk this inaction poses to Australia's economic stability. And **thirdly**, we have to address how our community has suffered as a result of government negligence and reverse this damage for the sake of future generations.

Establishing credibility

Before presenting your thesis, ensure you establish your **credibility** as a speaker (also referred to as **ethos**). For example:

- As a young Australian and an avid advocate for our environment, I value the future of Australia's prized marine life, and this is why I must address the urgent issue of shark nets.
- As a young Australian, I value the future of our country, and this is why I must address the pressing issue of climate change.

Your credibility as a speaker should also be upheld throughout your speech. It essentially encapsulates why the audience should listen to you. What right do you have to be talking about this issue? Perhaps the issue has affected you or someone close to you firsthand.

Introducing your topic

Before introducing your thesis, be sure to include an exciting hook that really grabs your audience. Consider using emotive imagery, rhetorical questions, or direct addresses to your audience (or why not all three!). Be sure to challenge any relevant cultural assumptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes.

SAMPLE :

What preconceptions do you have when you think of climate change? Do you think of furious protesters who are willing to harass innocent bystanders, outraged vegans who demonise anyone who eats meat, or that it's just part of the natural cycle of life? I too once shared the belief that these radical, extremist views represented the movement until I became more informed.

Starting right off the bat with a question draws your audience right into the depths of the topic and prompts them to think critically. Also pay attention to the use of language that **directly addresses the audience** (e.g. do you think...). This should not just be used in the introduction but also throughout your entire speech. You want to ensure that you hold the attention of your audience as an engaging speaking style with rhetorical devices will have a significant effect on your marks for delivery.

Be careful when using personal pronouns in your speech – it can be useful to employ first person (I, me, in my opinion) when establishing your credibility and relate to the audience, but you mostly need to focus on the issue, not just yourself! Similarly, referring to the audience using exclusive language like 'you' or inclusive language like 'we' is very effective for your call to action. However, you want to unite your audience and persuade them to support your contention, not call them out or attack them for opposing opinions.

KEY POINT :

Imagine yourself as a member of the audience listening to your speech. Would you be persuaded if the speaker started attacking you, or saying things like 'you should be ashamed of yourself for not taking action sooner!' Probably, not, right? So instead, construct your speech to 'win over' your audience and get them onto your side!

Don't be afraid to use humour in your introduction. Your audience will probably already hold a strong opinion about your topic. Think of how you can challenge this already established viewpoint.

SAMPLE :

What do you picture when you think of sharks? Do you imagine a blood-thirsty animal hurtling at you through the water, hell-bent on devouring you with its 300 teeth? Well, I'm sorry to break it to you, but you're more likely to be killed by a cow.

See how this use of imagery draws the audience in, based on what their personal beliefs are surrounding the topic, and then challenges their perspective. But it is not done in a harsh manner that the audience feels personally attacked or mocked. You want to unite your audience, regardless of their beliefs or values. A short statement addressing this below may be helpful.

SAMPLE :

Regardless of whatever stereotypes you might have, it does not diminish the fact that climate change is happening now.

Lastly, at the very end of your introduction, ensure you include one to two sentences stressing the importance of your issue for powerful effect. For example, something along the lines of, "if we do not act now, soon the scales will be tipped against us," would suffice.

SAMPLE :**Introduction**

- **Hook:** Imagine spending the majority of the day held hostage in a metal cage, the sense of freedom quickly disappearing as the all-too-familiar nightmare plays over and over. A sharp stab injects you with fear, terror, and pain. All of this for a cheap bottle of foundation.
- **Direct address to the audience:** Well, guess what? I'm here to expose the ugly blemishes our beauty, fashion, and medical industries are hiding. As members of the Australian Youth Forum, we must stop turning a blind eye to reality. Every second we wait, another innocent life is taken.
- **Contention:** We need to step up and put an end to animal abuse and testing in Australia, as these negligent and vile acts are not only unethical, but unnecessary and are laced with lies, creating danger for both animals and humans. The malicious abuse and subsequent murder of innocent animals must be banned.

Introduction checklist:

- Exciting hook that draws in your audience. Consider using imagery, rhetorical questions, and emotive appeal. Challenge any relevant cultural assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values.
- Establish credibility as a speaker.
- Directly address the audience.
- Have a strong contention (who, what, why, and how). Ensure a call to action is contained within it.
- Signpost your arguments.
- Stress the importance of your issue for your target audience.

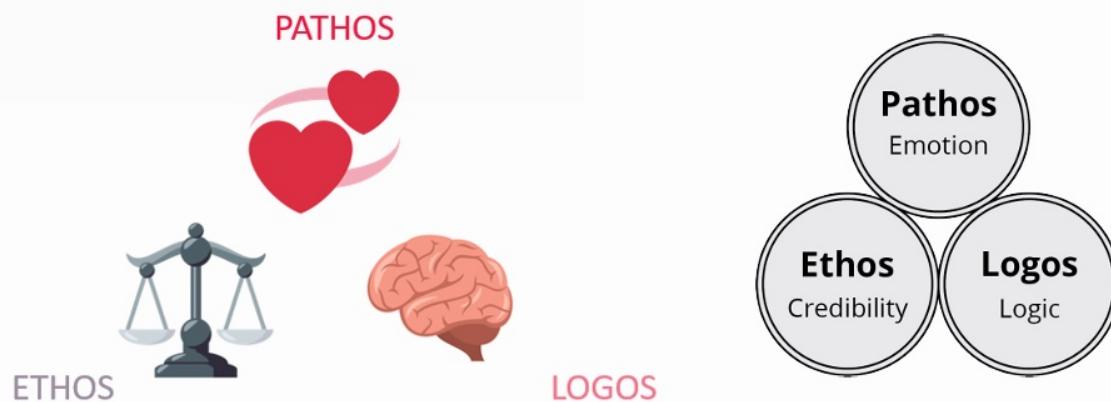
2.4 Body arguments

In your body paragraphs you want to ensure that you are:

- Using a combination of persuasive techniques to develop your perspective and position your audience to accept your perspective.
- Synthesising evidence to support your arguments (i.e. combine different parts or elements – information, ideas, components – into a whole, in order to create a new understanding).
- Using cohesive devices to tie your arguments together, which creates flow from one idea to the next.

It is recommended that you have three main arguments supporting your contention. Throughout your speech, you should be implementing **pathos, ethos, and logos**. A good speech always maintains a **balance** between these three modes of persuasion.

Also ensure you consider the **opposing side's viewpoint** and are able to **refute** this, whether this be in a refutation paragraph, or sprinkled throughout your speech.



Some people make the mistake of thinking that you need to have one paragraph for each mode of persuasion (e.g. one for pathos/emotion and another for logos/facts). This is incorrect. **Every single paragraph should address all three** of these persuasion techniques. Think of it like a scale. If you have too much factual information, your speech can quickly steer away from being persuasive, and instead, become too informative. Do not be a walking Wikipedia. That being said, don't rely too heavily on appealing to the audience's emotions. You do need the facts to support your argument. So balance between these elements is key in the body paragraphs of your speech.

2.4.1 Pathos

Pathos is **appealing to the audience's emotions**. To do this, your first step should be considering which specific emotions you are trying to evoke: anger, sympathy, disgust, outrage, enthusiasm, etc. This will inform what language choices you make. For example, rhetorical questions are a great way to elicit feelings of outrage or injustice.

SAMPLE :

- How can you trust a leader who fabricates a future of fables and fairy tales?
- So why is the planet on fire?
- Do you want this blood on your hands?
- Would you believe me if I told you that they are designed to entrap sharks, which cause suffering for hours, only for them to be shot in the head later?

2.4.2 Ethos

Ethos is **establishing credibility** with the audience. Essentially, it is the reason why the audience should listen to you. Don't worry, you don't have to be an expert on the topic to do this. But establish why you care about this issue and try to relate to the audience. One way to achieve this is to use **direct address**.

SAMPLE :

Members of the Australian Youth Forum, we are the ones that must implement change. We must become the advocates. We must speak for those that don't have a voice.

This also ties into language choices. Be sure to use **high modality language** for a strong effect. For example, "If we overlook this threat, Australia's economic stability will crumble." Don't say "it **could** crumble," this signifies uncertainty and makes your speech less persuasive. Instead, say "it **will** crumble."

Examples of high modality language include words like 'must', 'need', 'have to', or 'absolutely', whereas low modality would be words like 'might', 'could', or 'possibly'.

2.4.3 Logos

Logos is **incorporating logic to support your contention**, or in other words, factual information.

Do not make the mistake of including too many facts thinking that this will improve your argument. Your audience does not want to listen to a mini lecture on the biological adaptive processes of sharks. Keep it short and concise, only include the **most relevant facts** that will support your arguments. This is called having a 'discerning selection of evidence,' a specific marking criterion.

Try and use credibility when discussing factual information and statistics. For example, "According to . . ." or "As advised by . . ." Ensure all sources are credible (Wikipedia is a no go!). Official news websites, government reports, and databases are very reputable. Ensure you reference where appropriate with in-text formatting, though you don't have to read these aloud when delivering your speech.

When you incorporate facts, statistics, and quotes in your speech, make sure you pair this with other persuasive techniques so that you're not just spitting out data at your audience. You still need to present these facts in a persuasive way; for example, using adverbs like 'overwhelming' or 'staggering' to describe statistics (e.g. 'an unbelievable 71% of people support this idea.') You could also use emotional appeals to relate things to your audience (e.g. '1 in 4 people will be negatively impacted by this.') Look around this room: 'how many people here will be affected?').

SAMPLE :

Take the 2020 bushfires for example. I'm sure I don't need to reiterate the devastating losses of Black Summer, but here are the figures. Over 2,500 homes were destroyed, 33 people died nationally, and the recovery cost the government over \$4.4 billion dollars. And this is just one event. Imagine if this happened every summer. Imagine what that would do to our economy. Despite this, why is Morrison's Liberal party choosing to be complacent? According to Morrison, we are a "world leader" in slashing carbon emissions. So why is the planet on fire? Why has Australia warmed more than 1 degree in only 100 years, and is expected to warm as much as 5 degrees? (Climate Reality, 2019) To put this into perspective, the global average temperature has only risen 4–7 degrees in the last 5,000 years!

Consider using informal language so it doesn't sound like a scientific report. For example, "fact check . . ." or "I'm sure I don't need to reiterate x, but here are the figures." Quotes can also be very useful in establishing logos throughout your speech. But make sure they are embedded effectively and do not disrupt the overall flow of your speech.

SAMPLE :

However, the Australian National University estimated that the "scheme had cut carbon emissions by 17 million tonnes in 2013."

2.4.4 Appealing to the audience's values

Throughout your speech, you will want to continually reference Australian values in order to appeal to your audience.

SAMPLE :

Sample 1: Do you want our country to be remembered as one that prioritised making a quick buck over protecting the environment, and sustaining it for future generations? As Dorothea Mackellar beautifully put in 1908, we need to uphold our reputation of being a “sunburnt country.” Does it not say in the Australian anthem that our beauty is “rich and rare,” and our land is “abound in nature’s gifts?” Please reconsider your values and priorities – we need to look through a long-term lens, rather than chasing a short-term dollar. Right now, we are **disconnected from our values** and showing an attitude of indifference to a problem that has already destroyed too many innocent lives.

Sample 2: Are you happy that countless prized Australian animals are paying the cost of our own greedy actions too, such as the koala? Depicted on the 50-cent coin and yet now an endangered species thanks to the bushfires which wiped out one-third of the koala population. This is a moral outrage for all Australians who care about our unique fauna and ecosystem as a whole.

In the above examples, appealing to the audience's values is done by referring to Australian animals that form part of the national identity. People do not want to see unnecessary suffering caused to animals. In saying this, do not turn your speech into a direct attack on your audience, making them feel guilty. You want your audience to take your side, not be pushed away from it. Remember, the key is having the right balance.

2.4.5 Top-level structure

In order to fulfil the criteria for ‘organisation and sequencing of subject matter,’ you should consider the top-level structure of your speech, meaning the order in which you present arguments and ideas. This ensures that your speech is logically organised and flows succinctly. There are four main ways you can do this, though you can also combine a mix of these within body paragraphs as well as across your speech:

- **Compare/contrast**
- **Cause/effect** (explain the case and then the effect this has)
- **Problem/solution** (explain the problem and then propose a solution)
- **List-like** (e.g. local, social, global)

2.4.6 Examples of persuasive techniques

Ensure you include a range of the following in your speech (you will be marked on your use of them):

- Figurative language (metaphors, similes)
- Rhetorical questions
- Direct addresses to the audience (e.g. we, you)
- Expert/informed perspectives (specialised language choices) which also improves your credibility
- Pathos: emotive language and manipulated modality
- Ethos: credibility as a speaker
- Logos: logic, examples, evidence, factual information
- Use of the active voice (the government must take action) instead of passive (action must be taken by the government)
- Call to action (this is a must-have)
- Rebutting the opposing arguments
- Rule of three (e.g. tricolon)
- Punctuation for effect and power pauses

SAMPLE :

If you think that shark nets are the most appropriate solution to keeping our beaches safe, you're wrong. Letting these horrendously cruel nets remain in our waters is not morally acceptable and does not align with our Australian values. Like myself, I bet that most of you spent a big part of your childhood going to the beach. But if the government continues to be set in their ways, the shark population will be destined to become critically endangered. We are not protecting our beaches for future generations to grow up in and experience it the way we did. Why do we feel entitled to remove these intelligent creatures from their home, trap their young, destined to meet an undesirable end? Sharks are vital to maintaining the health of our oceans. Without them, we directly threaten the balance of the underwater ecosystem. Many species would simply not survive. An ecologist at Griffith University has stated that due to declining shark populations, the number of jellyfish have been increasing immensely. What's the problem with this, you may ask? An influx in jellyfish populations causes other sea creatures to compete for food, as well as releasing toxic stingers into the water. This ultimately damages the entire ecosystem and whatever life lies within it, including us. This is no longer about saving the shark populations, but our oceans as a whole. Fortunately, it is not too late. As proposed by Greenpeace, sonar technology, drones, and electromagnetic fields are just some of the possible alternatives that Queensland could implement to deter sharks. Not only have they been proven to be more effective than shark nets, but they are also non-lethal. If we don't act soon, it will be too late!

2.5 Conclusion

The conclusion synthesises the arguments you have delivered to re-establish the relevance and validity of your contention. It is not merely a restatement of your arguments. It is your last chance to persuade the audience of your contention. You should end on a strong note. This is where your **call to action** should be most strongly referred to. Think about what your audience can do to help this issue? This must be feasible and realistic (e.g. online petitions or emailing local MP). It is also individual to your specific topic.

SAMPLE :

Please, don't allow yourself to slip back into complacency with the government's tactics to fight climate change. The planet will not miraculously fix itself. If we overlook this threat, Australia's economic stability will crumble. Our government has chosen to mislead the public about our true emission levels. Our government has chosen to ignore the science about global warming. Lastly, our government has chosen to not protect our culture, our home, and our people. Instead, they are prioritising short-term economic gains over future generations. Instead of sticking our heads in the sand and waiting until change is forced upon us, we should make the most of this opportunity and embrace a smooth transition today. Now, you may be thinking, I'm only a kid, what can I do? Heaps, actually. You can change the attitudes of the government before it's too late! Send off a short email to your local MP or start an online petition, urging them to implement a national climate change policy to safeguard Australia. More government funding needs to be directed towards combating climate change and in switching to a society built off clean, renewable energy. We need to have a carbon tax, where companies pay for their carbon emissions. It is up to all of us to defend whatever future we might have left and protect it for future generations to come.

KEY POINT :

Repetition can be very powerful in a speech. Although, be careful not to overuse it, as it can quickly become tiring to follow and consequently less impactful on your audience. For example:

- **Our government has chosen to** ignore the increasing number of shark attacks in our waters.
- **Our government has chosen to** ignore the countless non-lethal and more science-based alternatives that have been proven to be more effective than these monstrous nets.
- Lastly, **our government has chosen to** not protect our beaches for future generations to come.

The 'rule of threes' is a good one to implement to ensure your repetition is punchy but not overdone.

2.6 Marking criteria

Below is a list of the criteria for this assessment task along with some key things to keep in mind when writing and reviewing your speech.

1.1 Creation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times, and places in a persuasive text.

1.2 Use of the ways cultural assumptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs underpin texts and invite audiences to take up positions

- Are you **challenging** or **reinforcing** cultural assumptions? Is it clear to the audience which ones?

1.3 Use of aesthetic features and stylistic devices to achieve persuasive purposes.

For example, you can use:

- Rhetorical questions to engage the audience and prompt them to think critically
- Semicolons (;) to keep variety in your sentence structure to maintain interest
- Juxtaposition to highlight your point or argument
- Idioms of everyday language (word of expression)
- Manipulation of modality to sound less formal as well as to sound more formal
- Pathos to appeal to the audiences to emotions

2.1 Use of the patterns and conventions of a persuasive text, and of the role of the speaker, signer, or designer, to achieve a particular purpose.

- Ensure you have a strong contention.
- Label three ways in which the speaker establishes credibility (ethos), not just as an expert on the topic, but by establishing themselves as someone the audience wants to listen to.

2.2 Selection and synthesis of subject matter to support perspectives.

- Use facts, examples, and research to support your contention (logos).

2.3 Organisation and sequencing of subject matter to achieve a particular purpose, including use of cohesive devices to emphasise ideas and connect parts of a persuasive text

- The 1st sentence of each paragraph should preview what is to come in that paragraph.
- What top-level structure should be used (e.g. cause and effect or problem and solution).
- Include a call to action (what can your audience do to help?).
- Ensure that your speech has a coherent structure and organisation and the flow of speech is natural (i.e. doesn't sound awkward or like you're reading from a script).

3.1 Language choices for particular purposes.

- Use idioms and everyday or informal language?
- Use specialised language (i.e. language that is specific to the subject being discussed).

3.2 Combination of a range of grammatically accurate or appropriate language structures to achieve particular purposes.

- Use a variety of simple (i.e. short and sweet), compound (i.e. joined by conjunctions like 'and' or 'so'), and complex (i.e. lengthy and embedded clauses) sentences to create variety for your audience.
- Use sentence fragments or interjections (e.g. 'An utter shambles!' or 'All this, for what?') that would usually be ungrammatical in a formal essay but can be appropriate for a speech, depending on the audience.

3.3 Effective use of spoken/signed and nonverbal features (and complementary, if appropriate) to achieve particular purposes.

This can include:

- **Auditory features:** pronunciation, phrasing and pausing, audibility and clarity, volume, pace, silence.
- **Physical features:** facial expressions, gestures, proximity, stance, movement, and eye contact.
- **Graphical features:** still and moving images, design elements, music and sound effects (if appropriate).

2.7 Delivery of your speech

When delivering your speech, you will be marked on all of the auditory and physical features listed above, in particular your phrasing, clarity, pace, and eye contact.

This is why it is vital that you rehearse your speech. Consider recording yourself and playing it back to yourself. You will be more likely to pick up on any grammatical mistakes or if some parts sound unnatural and clunky to the ear. Try to aim for a safe midpoint in duration – if your teacher has given you a window of 5–8 minutes, you want your speech to be around 6–7 minutes instead of 5 minutes and 5 seconds, or 8 minutes and 1 second! In the real thing, if you do have to present in front of a live audience, you might be nervous and speak a little bit faster than intended, or fumble some words and need to restart a sentence. This is totally fine, but you'll want to allow some leeway for your timing so that you don't need to rush.

Firstly, make sure you speak at a reasonable pace: too slow, and your audience will be bored, but too fast, and they'll just be confused. Allow for dramatic pauses and to look up at the audience. **Eye contact is vital.** You do not want to spend 5–8 minutes hiding your face in your palm cards. If you're known to be quite anxious when giving speeches, learn when you will look up at the audience to maintain eye contact for effect. Even if it is brief, something is better than nothing! If you can, try to memorise some parts of your speech where you are directly addressing the audience to maintain eye contact with them without looking at your palm cards. Throw in a couple hand gestures here and there (but don't flap them around constantly, it will be distracting). Even if you don't feel it, try to give the impression that you are confident in your stance and posture. And last of all, don't overthink it! While it may feel like forever when you are standing up there, it is only a brief moment and before you know it you will be finished!

Once you have a first draft written down, read through the speech once or twice while timing yourself. Depending on how strict your teacher is, it's usually better to go a little bit over time than be a little under and seem like you weren't prepared with enough content.

KEY POINT :

Keep in mind that most people tend to speak faster in actual assessment tasks, especially when stressed, so if your school has outlined a 5–8 minute window, for instance, aim to write a speech that's closer to the 7 minute mark than 5.

Once you've sorted out the pace of your speech, you can make use of **persuasive delivery techniques** such as:

- **Body language:** in general you should convey confidence and assertiveness by standing up straight facing forward, but you might vary your body language to achieve certain effects (e.g. adopting a silly posture if mocking someone, or an imploring, pleading position if you're making a highly emotional appeal).
- **Eye contact:** you should make a comfortable amount of eye contact (don't stare!) throughout your speech, and vary this so you're addressing the entire class and not just your teacher. Some moments of your speech may benefit from sustained eye contact (e.g. don't look down at your cue cards when delivering a powerful call to action – memorise these parts and talk directly to the audience).
- **Hand gestures:** punctuate your speech by bringing your hands together to emphasise points, or use your hands to visualise things like 'on the one hand _____, but on the other hand _____'.
- **Facial expressions:** if you want your audience to feel angry, your face and voice should convey anger. If you want them to feel sympathy, you should appear sympathetic too. Like most things in this list, this should be used for specific moments for emphasis rather than something you have to maintain throughout your whole speech.
- **Tone and tonal shifts:** consider which tone would amplify your arguments and aim to include at least one clear tonal shift (e.g. a despairing tone when describing the lack of progress so far to a hopeful tone when outlining your proposed solution).
- **Pauses:** don't underestimate the power of silence! Taking a beat of rest can be incredibly impactful in letting the weight of your words sink in for the audience. This is also a good reminder to be aware of your pacing and avoid rushing your speech.

If you're a big fan of oral presentations, this will probably be a very enjoyable IA for you! But if not, don't worry! All of these techniques are things that you can plan and rehearse beforehand to build up your confidence. English teachers are also very aware that public speaking is one of the most common fears for everyone, especially students, so they aren't going to deduct marks if you seem a bit nervous or shaky at first. If you know you're going to be anxious on the day, you may want to **annotate your cue cards** with reminders like 'slow down here,' 'stand up straight,' or 'tonal shift to optimistic.' These cue cards are for your eyes only, so fill them with as much useful information as you need.

In the end, the oral presentation is a fairly minor part of the 1&2 course, but it appears again in Units 3&4 so take the time to experiment with different speech writing and delivery techniques. Hopefully, some of the lessons you learn in constructing your presentation will then feed back into your understanding of persuasive language and texts as a whole.

Part III

Unit 2: Texts and culture

Topic 1

Creative response

1.1 Task criteria

The second last assessment in Year 11 focuses on creative writing. That is, a short story! This is usually considered to be the most fun assessment, as you are not restricted in your imagination and can ultimately choose to write about anything!

In saying this, the difficult part of this assessment is that your creative piece **must be inspired by another text you're studying**. Your teacher may also specify a particular theme that you have to write about, like 'change' or 'relationships', but this will always be quite broad so you should have lots of opportunities to tailor your writing to this.

Depending on your school, they may choose to make the unlucky decision of turning this assessment into an exam instead of an assignment. If this is the case, do not worry! Typically, you will still be told what the key requirements of the task will be at least one week before the exam.

Generally, in the first few weeks of the term, your English teachers will go through and analyse the text and then suggest a specific excerpt (e.g. one chapter, scene, or poem) for you to use as a springboard for your own writing.

However, don't be fooled into thinking that all you need to do is incorporate a theme like 'beauty standards' from the text into your own writing. This isn't sufficient to hit the marking criteria! You also have to address the underlying concepts, identities, times, and places in the text, as well as the cultural assumptions, attitudes, values, and beliefs. The point of using the text as a 'springboard' is so that you can launch your creative writing in response to the key components that underpin the text.

For instance, your creative piece must be challenging or reinforcing a concept that is presented in the prescribed text. Every text either challenges or reinforces a cultural assumption, attitude, value, or belief. For example, a text may challenge the belief that suburban environments are safe. If this is the case, you could write a short story that also challenges this belief from the point of view of someone who has recently moved into a suburban environment. But do not fall into the trap of thinking that your piece has to be an exact replica of a prescribed text. The same concepts must be able to be easily identified by the marker, but the subject matter can be entirely different. This also holds for concepts, identities, times, and places.

To hit the marking criteria, I'd strongly recommend using some of the same aesthetic features as your prescribed text. This could be as simple as incorporating a symbol like a mirror or literary devices like onomatopoeia and foreshadowing that are present in the original. Try to pick out a few key features and consider how these could fit the context of your own writing.

Although, it can be tricky to come up with a great story idea, the hardest part is getting started! The first words you write will certainly not be the best. Every story that a great author writes goes through multiple different drafts. Embrace the process of improving your writing as you go in order to craft the most impressive piece you can!

1.2 Creative writing traps to not fall into!

1.2.1 Trap 1: Your first draft has to be perfect!

Don't try to make your piece perfect on the first time you write it. In fact, this is one of the main reasons for 'writer's block.' Overthinking can sometimes lead to feeling like none of your ideas are good or worthy of being written down. Don't be too critical of your ideas and don't be too hard on yourself. Especially when you are writing the first few opening lines, every idea can feel inadequate, and it soon becomes this brick wall in your mind that you can't climb over!

My advice would be to not over-complicate things. Have an idea in your head, and then put it to words. Create the story structure first, and then come back and fix things up! You can add fancy and complex language later! The process of refining your work is an ongoing process.

1.2.2 Trap 2: Your piece has to be some incredibly complex and imaginative masterpiece

My number one advice for this assessment is don't over-complicate your story! The best creative pieces (and the ones that get the highest marks) tend to be about the most mundane things. Keep it simple. Remember, you typically only have 800 to 1,000 words to play with for this assessment, so you don't have a lot of wiggle room for overly complex plots. A short story should only focus on one event and one point in time (with the exception of flashbacks). It is not what you write about that is important, but **how** you write it (i.e. good structure, use of literary devices, etc.). You could write about an everyday experience as mundane as going to the supermarket and still get high marks.

1.3 Writing creatives in exam conditions

As mentioned before, you will usually see the task sheet one week before the exam. This means the concept or task requirements will be released to you beforehand. You may be wondering how on earth you are expected to write a creative piece in exam conditions. Well truth be told, you aren't. Since the task sheet will be released one week beforehand, you should already have prepared and written a response. In other words, write your entire story before the exam, and memorise it. Then, in the exam there is zero stress! I understand that this seems like a monstrous task to achieve at first, but I assure you, it is possible. I did it myself. Also, as it is your own work, you will likely remember it easier.

Overall advice

- First few weeks of the term/introduction to the prescribed text
 - Keep detailed notes of analysis of the text, including what concepts they are challenging or reinforcing
 - Come up with many different story ideas for the text
 - Once your class has finished going through parts of the text, you should be able to interrelate and connect ideas between them
- Middle of the term
 - Come up with a key idea for your creative piece that relates to the prescribed text on multiple levels
 - Pay attention to whether your teachers spent more time on a particular aspect of the prescribed text, as this is most likely (but not guaranteed) to be what they include on the assessment
- Once the task sheet is released
 - Fine-tune your creative piece and narrow its focus to suit the task requirements
 - Ensure your piece fits the concept and relates to several components of the prescribed text
 - Finally, memorise your piece and practise under exam conditions

How can I memorise my creative piece?

A strategy you also could implement is to **memorise** the **chronological structure** of your story (or whichever genre you choose), meaning the order of events. By memory, you should be able to recall exactly what happens when and in what order. For example, ‘first my character is staring at the mirror, then she applies makeup, after that she heads to the closet.’ While overly simplistic, you should know your story well enough to be able to explain to someone else exactly what happens.

To help with this, I found that splitting my story up into distinct parts and memorising them together was really effective! Attempting to remember lines on their own can be difficult but joining them together with other lines and concepts creates a mental map in your mind of the story. You should be able to link different events together, which also aids memory.

Lastly, another memorisation tactic that I used was to simply try and **read my story aloud**. Every time I messed up a part or could not remember, I would look at my story and repeat the line until I could. While this is definitely an extreme study tactic, it does work. Try it! You don’t have to be standing around your bedroom for an hour talking to yourself like some sort of psychopath. But in the lead up to your exam, when you have a free moment just try and test yourself by seeing if you can recall your story. Recite it in your head. Figure out what parts you know and what you don’t. Soon, you will be able to write a 1,000-word story based on memory! Trust me, you can do it!

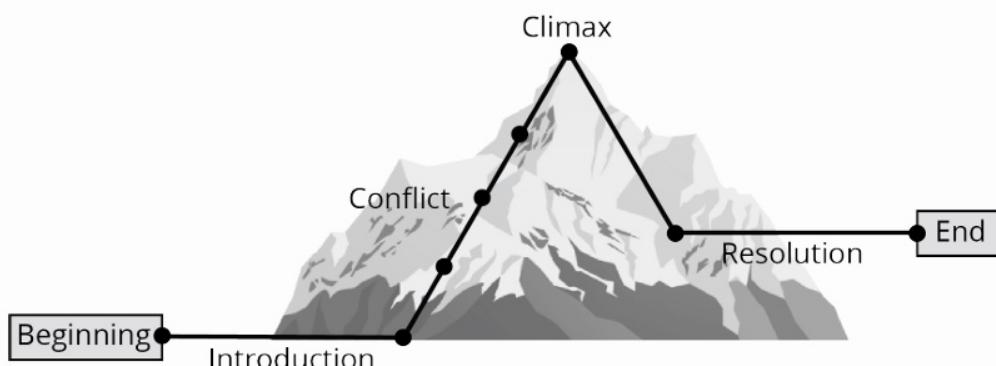
KEY POINT :

Do not try to memorise your story all at once, this will never work! Go line by line. Memorise different parts, particularly the lines that are the most memorable to you. Have your story in front of you and write the first line. Then, without looking at your story, try to remember and write down the line. Once you can do this with ease, move onto the next line. Slowly, it should sink in. Soon, you will be able to write the entire introduction to your story without even looking at it! If you can’t recall a certain part or keep on forgetting it, try to memorise an interesting word or phrase within it. For example, to remember “she snatched up a dazzling, dark crimson box” it may help to memorise the words ‘dazzling’ and ‘dark.’

1.4 Short story structure

Assuming you opt to write a short story, which is the most popular choice for a creative response, the first step to writing a good story is understanding the necessary structure. You have probably been taught this since primary school, but every story requires a:

- **Title:** don’t be afraid to play around with words, or even use a hint of foreshadowing. Sometimes even one-word titles can be powerful.
- **Orientation:** introduce the story by setting the scene in the reader’s head; who are the characters, what is happening, and from whose perspective?
- **Conflict and points of rising tension:** what is the problem? There must always be a problem (otherwise how can your character grow?).
- **Climax:** make sure you have a main point of tension in the story that escalates to a critical point of exciting action or crucial realisation.
- **Resolution:** your story should have plot twists and/or character development; what is the message for readers?



What you might not know is that there **must** be some sort of **change** in your main character by the end of the story. This could be physically or mentally, but some form of character development needs to have occurred. Otherwise, this creates a boring story where you end where you started. The story has no deeper meaning or message to be delivered to audiences.

This change needs to be in **direct relation to the perspective** that you are either reinforcing or challenging presented in the poem. For instance, it could be something simple like your character, who was initially quite vain and self-obsessed, rejecting vanity. Whatever it may be, just ensure a change in your character exists.

This doesn't always have to be through direct characterisation:

"She now hated mirrors."

Indirect characterisation may be more powerful.

"She turned her back to the mirror."

Remember, a short story should only be focused on **one point in time**, namely one event that occurs, with 1–3 characters allowed maximum. It may be the case that you choose to only include the main character's inner dialogue for the entire story. It is easiest to minimise dialogue in short stories, as it contributes little to the development of the story. This where the '**show, don't tell**' rule comes into play.

KEY POINT :

Show, don't tell. Show that the character is frustrated through descriptions of their facial expressions, don't just tell the reader that your character is frustrated. This keeps your story interesting to readers. They should be able to create imagery of the scene in their heads.

SAMPLE :

Don't say: Tina was disgusted.

Say: Tina scrunched her face up in disgust, recoiling like she had eaten something sour, and discarded the beautiful dress on the floor.

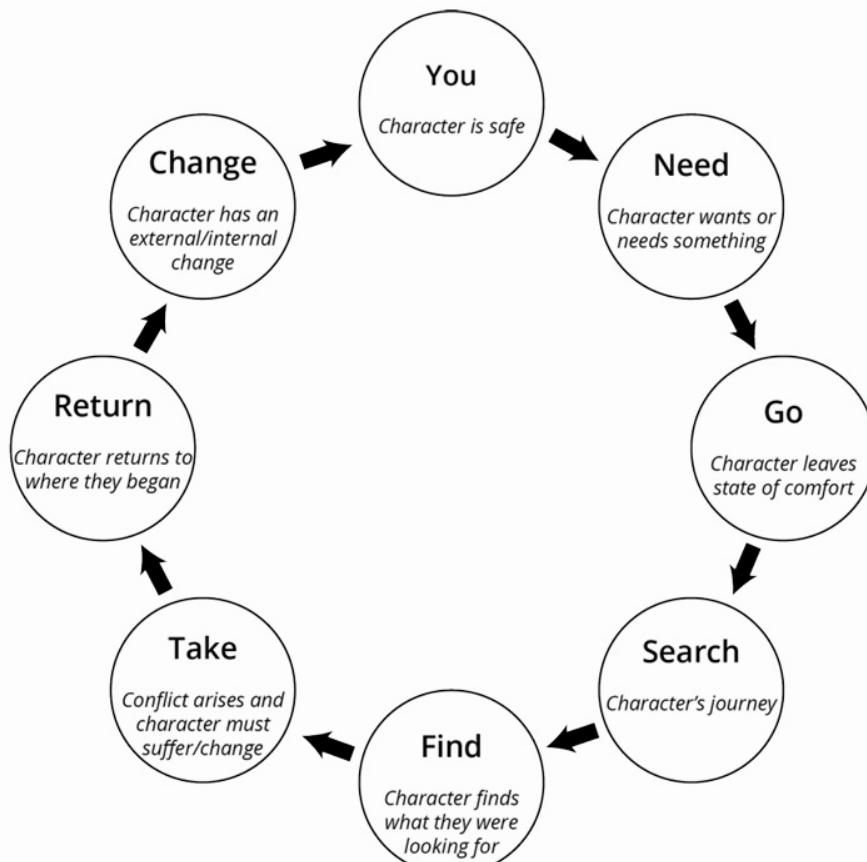
For a short story, due to the limited number of words you have to play with, everything should be absolutely necessary to the story. When writing, ask yourself, 'does this contribute anything to the story?' If the answer is no, then why are you including it? Every word in your story should contribute to your mark. While this sounds a little harsh, you just don't have the words to write long, meaningless descriptions unless they add to your story. There are also probably more meaningful things you could include.

1.4.1 Planning your story

When planning your story, it may be helpful to use what is referred to as a '**4-square short story plan**'.

Orientation	Character and setting
Take your best idea and develop a plan: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Include language features, phrases, key word prompts, etc. What is the inciting incident? 	Describe in detail the character and setting of your story: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remember to consider details that will add to characterisation and the overall tone of your story Description of setting that influences mood Character's inner conflict Character's motivations
Conflict/point(s) of tension	Resolution
Describe in detail the multiple sources of tension in your story: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Character vs. character Character vs. society/nature Character vs. self 	How will I end my story in a way that conveys the message I am aiming for? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the change in my character? How do they develop and grow? What is different in them compared to the start of the story?

Another method you can use to plan your story is the '**Dan Harmon story circle**', a commonly used method for plotting stories. It emphasises how almost all stories follow a cyclical nature, meaning they end where they begin but with an important sense of change, progression, or a lesson learned as a result of a character's experiences. You do not have to use this when planning your story but keep it in mind. It is most useful when trying to figure out what change in your character should occur and what cohesive and logical string of events fit into your plot.



Think of your story like a **journey for your character**. Usually, it will end where it began (e.g. in the same setting), but some aspect of your character will have changed. They have left this state of comfort and safety in search of something. This does not have to be literal, it could also be metaphorical (i.e. belonging, acceptance).

1.5 Orientation

A good orientation should suck the readers into the story, giving just enough detail to draw them in, but leaving enough gaps in their knowledge that they want to find out more. Get straight into the story, there is no need for generic phrases or so-called ‘introductions.’ Jump right into the plot and set the scene.

- What is happening?
- Who is involved?
- Where are the characters?

Be sure to appeal to the audience’s imagination and interest. Use sensory detail (smell, sight, touch, hearing, taste) to achieve this. Sometimes, the story can begin right at the point of conflict, and then progress from there. Alternatively, you can utilise different narrative structures, I will go into more detail on these later on page 38.

SAMPLE :

Orientation sample 1

Sarah crossed the sidewalk, careful not to step on a single crack, and opened the restaurant door only to sigh. A concentric array of black and white tiles spread out before her, creating a chasm between her and the café tables. Her worst nightmare. Carefully, she stepped onto the first black tile, ensuring that her foot was placed in the middle of the square. Her other foot then lifted delicately, and slowly she stepped onto the next black tile. At this frustratingly delayed pace she made her way across the café foyer to the first red leather booth and sat with relief under the window that looked out onto the city street.

This story orientation describes, which is found out later, a woman’s daily experience with obsessive-compulsive disorder. Here is another example:

SAMPLE :

Orientation sample 2

There was a woman trapped in the mirror.

Instead of a young, beautiful model staring back at her, there was a woman with sunken, sombre skin. Patches of purple and blotches of blue painted the underneath of her deep-sunken eyes. It was as if she was Sleeping Beauty and had slept for one hundred years.

Maybe it was a trick of the light. Fluorescent light from the street lamps outside barged in between the cracks of the blinds, illuminating the bathroom with a deceitful glow.

Or maybe it was because of the condensation on the mirror from overzealous showering. Yes, *it must be.*

What makes a great story orientation can be something simple as a day-to-day experience, but with a slight twist that keeps the reader interested.

KEY POINT :

Use *italics* to show the characters internal thoughts if you are writing in third person. In an exam scenario, underline words to indicate this.

1.5.1 Sentence structure

Also pay attention to how in the second example there is purposeful use of new paragraphs embedded within the stories structure. What you don't want to do is make the mistake of having big chunky paragraphs, similar to that of an essay. **Every new idea, thought, or topic should be a new paragraph.** You can also start a new paragraph just for **effect**. If you have five or more sentences in the same paragraph, then you probably need to start a new one (depending on how long each sentence is).

Having too many sentences in one paragraph can easily bore the reader. Deliberately manipulating the story structure through paragraphs shows the marker you have strong understanding of how to manipulate sentence structures to have impact on the reader. For example, you may have paragraphs with only one sentence in them for a powerful effect.

SAMPLE :

What would have once been a lovely, white dress was now yellowing and moth-eaten. It had a foul stench like expired milk. Taking a closer look, the woman's heart sank.

All the dresses were like this.

See how one-line paragraphs can have a powerful effect on the reader? This also assists in achieving one of the marking criteria for your assessment: 'prompt critical and emotional responses.'

Remember, a story is not like an essay. Be creative with the structure! In addition, in the example above I have italicised the word 'all.' This is another thing that can help you gain marks, demonstrating that you can effectively manipulate language conventions for impact. In this case, the italics is added for emphasis and exaggeration.

1.6 Conflict and points of tension

Every story has rising points of tension and a climax, the moment of peak conflict. When choosing this conflict, choose one that matters to your character. Whatever it is, it should challenge your character's cultural assumptions, values, attitudes and beliefs, to the point where they come out of it as a changed individual.

There are three different types of conflict that can occur:

- Character vs. character
- Character vs. society/nature
- Character vs. self

You also want to create tension in your readers and evoke emotional and critical reactions. Have multiple points of tension that lead to the major conflict. You want to give your reader the impression that something is wrong or about to go wrong, creating anticipation for what is to come. But don't make it predictable.

1.7 Resolution

A common misconception regarding stories is that the ending must resolve all conflicts. This is untrue. There are always loose ties to clean up and more that can be explored. You do not have to have a definite ending that resolves everything. In most cases, a good story's resolution will not resolve anything. What is most important is that there is an **observable change in your character**, whether physically or mentally.

The most effective way to achieve this is to have a change in their values, attitudes, and beliefs. The conflict that occurs is of very little importance. What is significant is how your character grows and develops as a result of this character. By the end of the story, it must also be clear to readers what cultural assumptions, values, attitudes, and beliefs you are either challenging or reinforcing based on the chosen text.

Are you reinforcing or challenging:

- Beauty standards
- Gender roles
- Cultural assumptions of beliefs about a certain ethnic group
- A political belief
- Society's ageist attitudes

What is the overarching message that you wish to communicate to readers? Your resolution should show this. Make the ending powerful.

What not to do in your resolution:

- Have your character wake up from a dream because any other ending is too difficult. Your teacher will automatically fail you (trust me, they hate this primary-school tactic).
- Make the ending overly complicated and dramatic. Keep it simplistic, otherwise you will run out of words to have a sound ending. This also draws back to what I mentioned before about keeping your story simple. I know it is very tempting to write about some futuristic, sci-fi world. But you simply do not have the word limit to achieve this effectively. This is because most of it will be used up in attempting to describe some amazing world, and little left to the actual plot.
- Wrap things up by telling the reader what the moral of the story is. Remember: this is something you must show through your use of language, imagery, and aesthetic devices, rather than something you can just tell us at the end.

How to create a good ending:

- Utilise foreshadowing throughout your story to provide the reader with little hints, especially if there is a plot-twist!
- Play around with alternate narrative viewpoints. Perhaps switch the perspective of your story to unearth a different point of view, or highlight how characters view things differently.
- Is your character a reliable narrator? Manipulate this to have an emotional effect on the reader. What is presented to the readers may not be reality. Is the character suffering from any psychological disorder? Is their true identity hidden from the reader until the ending? Perhaps the description of the plot is entirely subjective to your character's biased or limited perspective.

1.8 Narrative structure

Narrative structure is the way events in a story are structured into a beginning, middle, and end. Below I have listed some of these.

Linear structure:

- This is the most common story structure that is used and taught.
- Events in the story happen in chronological order as they unfold, and time is linear. Think of this as the 'once upon a time' story structure, where events are told to the reader as they unfold.
- This is the most simplistic structure, and for this reason, I suggest you not to use this but some of the more complex ones listed below as they will help you gain more marks. But you can still definitely use it if you wish! Just be aware that the marker of your story wants to see you can manipulate complex patterns and conventions of a short story for effect.

Non-linear structure (more complex):

- Story is told out of chronological order; time is disjointed.
- This can be achieved through flashbacks and time skips.
- For instance, the story may begin at the end, and then a flashback may occur to explain the events that unfolded.
- This is very effective story structure. It also helps you in writing a good orientation that hooks the reader (start at the climax/point of tension and rewind the tape).

Below is an example of how you can embed a flashback into your story.

SAMPLE :

She almost felt like hysterically laughing at how life played out. It was only this morning she had been grocery shopping, and now she stood by as her neighbour was lifted into a bag of death.

* * *

Eden hated going to the supermarket.

Inserting three asterisks into the middle of your page signals that a flashback is about to occur. In addition to this, ensure the time-period jump is clear to readers and not confusing.

Circular structure:

- The story ends where it began. Despite this, the character has changed. They are not the same person they were to begin with.
- This is also a very powerful story structure (and not overly complicated to write).
- For example, you could have your character looking in the mirror at the beginning and at the end, but a change in them has occurred. Perhaps the first line of the story and ending line are exactly the same, but the intended meaning is different.

SAMPLE :

First line of story: There was a woman trapped in the mirror.

Last line of story: And with that final thought warming her insides, Tina turned her back to the mirror, leaving the woman trapped inside it behind. Forever.

Parallel (most complex):

- Story follows multiple storylines and characters who are tied together through an event or experience that is thematically similar.
- I would strongly suggest not using this as writing from the perspective of at least two different characters is hard to achieve in a short story. By all means, it is not impossible but extremely hard to do without shallow characterisation or exceeding the word limit.

1.9 Narrative viewpoint

Narrative viewpoint refers to the tense you write in and whose perspective is presented in the story. You can either choose to write your story in first person or third person. Whichever option you choose, ensure that it is consistent throughout your story and you are not changing tenses. This is why it is crucial to proofread your work, as you may make a few unconscious mistakes with your tense, and it can quickly confuse the reader.

KEY POINT :

Keep your tense consistent throughout the entire story. Ensure to proofread for any mistakes.

Writing in first person:

- Uses the words I, we, my, etc.
- The narrator of the story is the main character (typically but not always), it is told from their perspective.
- We see the world solely from the character's point of view. Therefore, what is described to the audience may not be the reality for the character.

Strengths: Easy to show your character's internal motivations, emotions, and thoughts.

Limitations: Sometimes it can limit the information you can write about (i.e. you can only write about things that the character is aware of).

Writing in third person:

- Uses the words he, she, they, it, etc.
- Is narrated by an omniscient (meaning ‘all-knowing’) third party who is observing the events. This usually isn’t a specific person and is instead a less personal means of storytelling.
- Allows the narrator to jump into a character’s mind to explore their perspective (e.g. ‘She was overcome with joy and her knees buckled as she clung to the letter’) whilst also stepping back from that character’s mind and imparting information to readers that the character is unaware of (e.g. ‘Little did she know that these would be the last words her sister ever wrote’).

Strengths: Allows for more freedom on the subject matter you can talk about without the characters having to be consciously aware of it.

Limitations: Writing in third person is considered to be more difficult than first person. However, I disagree. It is probably the case that you are more comfortable writing in first person because this is what you have been taught since primary school. But I found writing in third person is actually easier and allows for more detail in the story.

KEY POINT :

Note that while a second person point of view exists, which uses the pronoun “you” to address the reader, it is very difficult to write a coherent story using this without changing tenses. Feel free to explore this in your own time, but for the sake of this assessment, I would highly suggest not using it.

All in all, it is completely up to you which tense and perspective you write in and what you are most comfortable with. But don’t restrict yourself simply because you are more familiar with one.

1.9.1 Alternating points of view

Some stories have alternating points of view, meaning the person narrating the story switches between characters. This applies to both first and third person points of view. Implementing this into your story can help the reader see the plot from different perspectives. Perhaps information is not known to one character but is to another. This can also assist in the revealing of plot twists.

SAMPLE :

Or maybe it was because of the condensation on the mirror from overzealous showering.

Yes, it must be.

Staring at her reflection through the thick, fogginess on the mirror, the woman could still make out her sharp cheekbones and plump, pink lips. The woman smiled at her reflection lovingly. Almost entranced.

Tina prized nothing more than her beauty. Friends would come and go, but her beauty always remained. A shield from the outside world. After all, it helped her win first place in not one, but ten beauty pageants. A dazed look crossed her face, and she waved to the imaginary crowd.

*** (*change POV*)

One final shove and the nurses burst through the bathroom door.

The air was hazy and warm. At the basin the elderly woman stood, one lined hand gripped to the sink. The other was waving at the shower, a blissful smile at her lips.

The nurse sighed when she saw the pink lipstick, drawn in a crude etch all the way to the surrounding skin. The old-fashioned dress she wore was worse though. It was four sizes too small and had burst its seams around the woman’s waist.

What a waste of beautiful vintage.

See how you can use alternating points of view to manipulate the readers perspective? Even if you are writing in third person, you can still leave out pieces of information to your readers on purpose. The person narrating the story dictates what the reader sees, and this may be distorted. This is an interesting technique which you can play with in storytelling and will likely help improve your piece.

1.10 Marking criteria

To be successful in this task, you must:

- Select a perspective, relating to the chosen concept (stated on the task sheet), that is represented in your prescribed text
- Develop a creative piece that either challenges or reinforces this perspective by using aesthetic features and stylistic devices to prompt critical and emotional responses in the audience
- Use a combination of identities, times, or places that underpin the prescribed text in your creative piece
- Manipulate cultural assumptions, values, attitudes, and beliefs in order to position the audience
- Make use of the patterns and conventions of your chosen genre, and organise and sequence your ideas to create a cohesive story
- Select and synthesise subject matter that supports your chosen perspective
- Make use of specific language choices to prompt critical and emotional responses for your audience

1.11 Editing and proofreading your creative piece

Once you have completed the first draft of your piece, it's time to start refining! If your teacher is able to provide feedback, give them your draft to look over. Alternatively, you can swap your work with a friend or two to get their input. In particular, ask them about the key themes or message in your piece to make sure it aligns with your intention.

You should also conduct your own edits by going back through your work and checking things like consistency (in tense, perspective, character names) and coherence (does everything make sense and flow nicely?).

Once you've done those simple checks, you can ask yourself the more advanced question: **how can I improve this piece?** Specifically, consider how you could incorporate more connections (or deeper connections) to the prescribed text, or how you could use a wider variety of aesthetic features and stylistic devices to make your piece more interesting.

Below is a list of questions you can ask yourself when you're ready to refine your piece in preparation for your final draft:

- Is the central theme or message clear, compelling, and relevant to the prescribed text? Are there any extra opportunities where I can make this clearer?
- What emotions are being conveyed or evoked by my opening lines? Could I make this more dramatic, exciting, or tense?
- What atmosphere am I aiming for in this piece? Is this atmosphere maintained throughout, and if not, how could I weave this into my writing more consistently?
- Are there any unnecessary sentences or words that could be cut? Are there any words I'm unintentionally overusing that I could swap out for synonyms?
- Is the ending satisfying (or if not, have I deliberately crafted a compellingly unsatisfying ending)?
- Are the descriptions vivid and adhering to the 'show don't tell' rule, making use of sensory language to immerse readers?
- Is my title attention-grabbing and reflective of my authorial intent?

Topic 2

Analytical essay

2.1 Task criteria

The final assessment you will complete for Year 11 is an analytical essay in response to a text. Generally, this assessment will be set under unseen exam conditions. Although, this choice is at the discretion of your school. They may make it under exam conditions, but you could receive the questions a week before. Regardless, the aim of the assessment is to prepare you for the external examination you will sit at the end of Year 12, which is also an analytical essay. If the assessment takes place under exam conditions, you will usually be given 2 hours to complete it. You will also be given 15 minutes perusal time, in which you are allowed to plan your response on scrap paper given but you may not write in the actual response booklet.

The exam will ask you to respond to one of two question prompts based on the chosen text, just like in the Year 12 external exam. So don't worry if you're unsure about one question; you will always be given a choice! Typically, you are not allowed to bring any notes into the exam room, but this all depends on your school's decision.

What type of texts will I be studying?

The type of texts your exam will be focused on could be (but not limited to):

- Play
- Prose (novel, non-fiction, or a collection of short stories)
- Poetry
- Multimodal text (film, television series, or documentary)

What will these texts be about?

The QCAA syllabus specifically states that Unit 2 must focus on Australian texts, including texts by Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander writers. However, your school may use an Australian text for the creative response task instead of the analytical essay, so you may also be given one from another cultural context for this assessment. So ultimately, the assessment will either have an Australian cultural focus or a foreign cultural focus.

For instance, for this assessment my school focused on a text called *The Boat* by Nam Le, a Vietnamese short story about a girl's miraculous survival on a refugee boat. The Vietnam war, racial discrimination, and the mistreatment of asylum seekers in Australia were concepts that underpinned the text.

SAMPLE :

In recent years, humanitarian issues have become increasingly prevalent in the media concerning those who arrive in Australia by boat, otherwise known as refugees. Despite fleeing their home country due to the serious risk of human right violations and persecutions, many are still commonly turned away or placed in detention centres for years before their being granted citizenship. Even if they are allowed to remain in Australia, in many cases refugees still face racial discrimination. Nam Le, author of the renowned 2008 text *The Boat*, is an Australian writer who came to Australia with his parents as a Vietnamese refugee. *The Boat* explores Le's own ethnic story, and his family's escape from war-torn Vietnam. From 1955 until 1975, the Vietnam War resulted in countless innocent civilians fleeing Vietnam to seek safety. Through his effective manipulation of aesthetic features and stylistic devices, Le represents the concept of belonging as the key to survival. This is effectively achieved by the motif of bodies and the symbolism of Truong, which highlights how Mai's survival and sanity is purely dependent on family and the human connection. Le aims to challenge the reader's cultural assumptions of perceiving refugees akin to an alien species, and instead encourages audiences to view them as not so different to themselves. He also aims to highlight the atrocities of war and the devastating impacts on the innocent civilians and the lengths they must suffer for survival.

2.2 Essay structure

If you're not familiar with how to write an analytical essay, or have forgotten, there's no need to stress! Despite English being a more skill-based rather than content-based subject, there is still a 'formula' you can follow for writing essays.

Every essay consists of an **introduction**, two to three (although there is no set amount) **body paragraphs**, and a **conclusion**.

The key part of your essay is your **thesis**, which is your **response to the question** and goes in the introduction. This is what you are trying to support throughout the entire essay.

Your body paragraphs are your arguments that you are using to support your thesis. Therefore, anything you mention must be linked back to your thesis.

KEY POINT :

Always link your arguments back to your thesis. Think, what is the authorial intent, and what cultural assumptions, beliefs, attitudes, and values was the author trying to reinforce or challenge?

Each body paragraph should contain:

- An overview of your argument
- At least 2–3 pieces of evidence in the form of quotes from the text
- A concluding statement linking back to your thesis

There is no recommended amount of quotes you need per body paragraph. You only need enough to properly support your argument. However, I would certainly use more than 2–3 quotes in your analysis in the form of quote fragments. This will be touched on in more detail later on, but essentially, using **short snippets** of quotes is preferred to long quotes from the text. This also means that memorising entire, full-sentence quotes is unnecessary. Just remember the most important parts of the quotes.

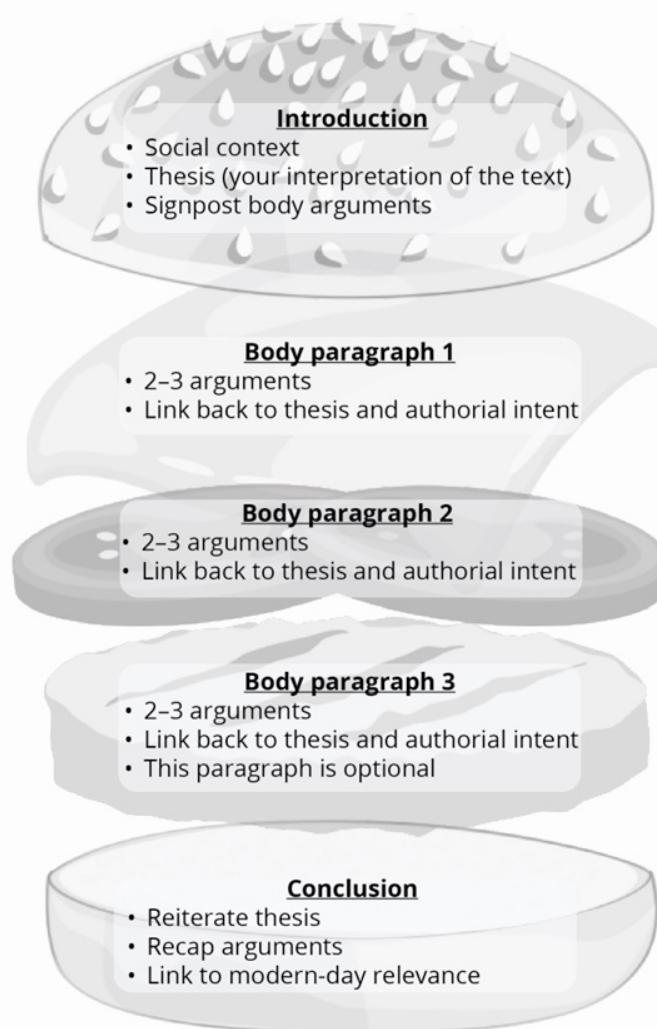
The last part of your essay is the conclusion. Many think that the conclusion is just a restatement of the introduction, but this is incorrect. A conclusion will reiterate your thesis and won't introduce any new ideas in your conclusion, as well as summarise your main body paragraphs. However, what a conclusion does differently to the introduction is that it **brings together all of your arguments** and demonstrates how they support your thesis.

The rest of the essay primarily focuses on each argument individually. In contrast, the conclusion aims to combine them as a whole. In some sense, the conclusion is the last part of your essay where you can gain marks. Does it leave a long-lasting effect on the reader, or is it simply another paper from the pile of essays written on the exact same topic? You want to end on a high note by making a memorable impact on your marker that conveys your strong grasp on the text and the essay criteria.

It is very easy to overlook the conclusion, but having a weak conclusion is a big no-no! This includes running out of time and not even writing one. Ensure you leave at least 15 minutes in the exam for the conclusion (at the bare minimum). The conclusion should contain a final sentence that leaves your reader thinking, "wow, that was a great essay." It should focus on the authorial intent and message that the text delivers to audiences. If possible, you can also relate this message to our society or contemporary issues and what we can gain from understanding these ideas.

2.2.1 Hamburger essay writing structure

Part of essay	What it contains
Introduction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1–2 sentences providing a brief account of any relevant social context (e.g. historical, political, cultural assumptions, beliefs, values, or attitudes of the time) • State your thesis (what is your interpretation of the text, what is the author suggesting, celebrating, or condemning?) • Signpost your arguments (brief overview)
Body paragraphs (usually 2–3)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initial sentence clearly conveying your argument • Provide evidence, analyse the meaning, then link back to authorial intent (cultural assumptions, beliefs, values, and attitudes) • Final sentence linking back to your thesis
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reiterate your thesis • Recap your main body paragraphs • Provide a memorable statement about the importance of the author's message and its link to modern-day society; end your essay on a high note

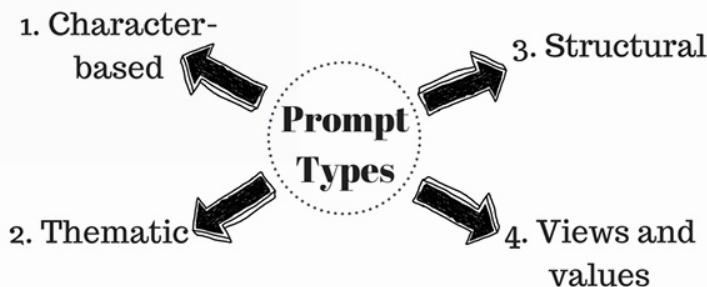


2.3 Approaching the prompt

2.3.1 Types of prompts and styles

Now that we've gone over some strategies for writing analytical essays, we can look ahead to assessment tasks and think about what you need to do to prepare for **essay prompts**. Far from being just a way to test yourself at the end of your studies, you can actually use prompts as a means of **refining your understanding of the text**, and even as a tool to help you better understand the themes and major concerns of the author.

We're going to break down four types of prompts: **character-based, thematic, structural, and views and values** prompts.



Each category will have certain key features that distinguish those prompts from others, but there will also be some overlap between categories, and it is highly likely you will be dealing with many prompts that blur the lines a little. However, keeping these divisions in mind when planning and even while writing can make it easier to ensure what you're writing is relevant and in keeping with the focus of the prompt. Also, as you progress through the year, you'll likely find some types of prompts more accessible than others. This can give you a good basis from which to draw conclusions about **your strengths in your essays**, and as such, you should be catering to these areas in assessment tasks.

Character-based prompts

This category is, unsurprisingly, comprised of topics that centre on the characters or personas in the text – either by isolating specific characters, or by referring to the characters in general. These prompts are by far the easiest to spot because they will always contain either a character's name, or will use the words 'the characters.' This is made even easier by the fact that the list of characters in a text isn't as much of an open category as a list of themes. There are only so many major characters who the assessors could potentially construct prompts around, so it would be fairly simple to just write up a list and then sort the character-based prompts by the characters they refer to.

However, there will also be several prompts that call upon you to **compare and contrast different characters** (as in, 'Adam is a better father figure than Bill in this novel. Do you agree?') Alternatively, some prompts might just refer to **a class or group of characters** like 'the women in the text,' 'the members of the Monroe family,' or 'the adult characters,' which also limits the field of evidence you can draw from. Generally though, the focus of these types of prompts will be very straightforward. The examples below illustrate some of the different forms of character-based prompts you will be exposed to:

SAMPLE :

Examples of character-based prompts:

- The families in the novel struggle with inner conflicts as well as external ones. Do you agree?
- In *Medea*, Jason is a bold and ambitious but ultimately foolish character. Discuss.
- "A snowball in the face is surely the perfect beginning to a lasting friendship." Discuss the depiction of Liesel's friendships in *The Book Thief*.

The first example simply requires you to discuss ‘the families,’ (i.e. **multiple characters**) which will give you a fair amount of freedom for texts with a wide range of individuals, so when attempting to find relevant evidence, you should **let the core of this prompt determine what you discuss**. Structuring your essay by making your way through the characters one at a time would be the most simplistic way to do this, but if you can establish **idea-based connections** between different components of prompts like this, you’ll be in a much better position. For example, you could begin by talking about how the characters’ inner conflicts stem from their external circumstances, and then spend your next paragraph talking about how these inner conflicts in turn exacerbate their situation. Then, your third paragraph could examine the notion of ‘struggling’ and unpack various characters’ attempts to deal with the different conflicts they face. Compare this to **an essay that divides its paragraphs by character and makes no attempt to substantiate a proper contention**, and it’s easy to see why the first approach would be more likely to yield a better result.

The second sample prompt here isolates a specific character (Jason) who should be the **primary focal point** for a high-scoring piece in this instance. It is still advantageous to **use other characters by way of comparison and contrast**, but this should not occur at the expense of analysing the **central component** of this prompt. You’ll also notice that, whilst the idea of foolishness is the main topic of discussion, the prompt has also presented you with the question of Jason’s boldness and ambition, meaning that you would need to explore the connections between these traits. It would not be enough to *just* talk about his foolishness here – you need to address the prompt in its entirety!

Finally, this third example contains **a quote as well as a statement** to unpack, which is a possibility for all four major prompt categories. This will be explored in more detail later, but suffice it to say that these are also viable options for assessment tasks, so a solid grasp on the important quotes in your texts isn’t just important for your evidence usage, but also for your capacity to understand and answer the prompt in full.

In general, character-based prompts are usually seen **in conjunction with a theme** or two, as it is difficult to discuss a character without the end goal of making some connection to the concerns of the text as a whole (e.g. the first prompt links to the theme of conflict, the second to themes of ambition or fallibility, and the third to the theme of betrayal). Thus whilst the inclusion of a specific character or group of characters might restrict the kind of evidence you draw upon, there will usually still be a **more holistic message** that you are expected to address.

Character-based prompts are often favoured for their accessibility, especially by students who struggle with selecting appropriate examples for the broader thematic kinds of prompts. On the other hand, many others find these prompts too narrow in their focus and tend to avoid character-based prompts in favour of other types that allow for more flexible implementation of evidence. And whilst these character types are a good starting point for your studies given how easy they are to understand, you might find it difficult to develop a sophisticated interpretation around which to build your essay. However, if you are able to use the prompt’s simplicity to your advantage and make the necessary connections to bigger ideas, opting for character-based prompts is a good strategy when the focus aligns with an area you find easy to discuss.

In terms of preparing for these prompts, you should endeavour to have a **substantial evidence base for each major character**, as well as several minor ones. It’s going to be pretty tough to write an essay about a character if you don’t have any quotes from or about them. Admittedly some texts will have characters that don’t play a very central role in the action and don’t offer much by way of analysis, but there will always be *something* to say about these characters, no matter how insignificant they seem. Therefore, practising these prompts is an excellent test of how well you know each character, and whether there are any particular areas where you lack sufficient examples. The chances of getting a assessment or exam prompt about a secondary or less important character are quite low, but even if you can manage to wring one or two practice paragraphs out of them, you’ll be providing yourself with ample evidence to use in a prompt with a broader focus.

Thematic prompts

Thematic prompts should also be a very familiar category as these are probably the **most common type** in English studies, so you will have doubtless come across these in previous years, even if you weren't aware of what they were. Essentially these prompts are based on the themes or key ideas in the text – perhaps in relation to a specific character, or to the text as a whole.

SAMPLE :

Examples of thematic prompts:

- Independence and self-worth are inextricably linked in the film. Discuss.
- These short stories show the importance of connections with others. Discuss.
- In this novel, happiness is completely unattainable. Do you agree?

It's also possible to be given **two key thematic concerns within the one prompt**, as is the case in the first example here. Weaker responses will basically just conflate 'independence' and 'self-worth' by treating them as related concepts and won't make any effort to explain the difference between the two, so if you are looking for an easy way to stand out when writing on prompts of this kind, spend some time **unpacking both words** that have been used. If the assessors have chosen two key words, **there is a reason why both are included** as opposed to just one, so you should show an awareness of this in your piece. You can almost do a connotative exercise on the exact wording of the prompt and consider what the **subtle differences** are between 'honour' and 'honesty,' 'intolerance' and 'cruelty,' 'power' and 'control,' or whatever the combination might be. You could even be dealt a prompt containing **multiple key concerns**, in which case you should exercise the same process on a broader scale.

The second example here has just identified a single thematic focus of 'the importance of connections with others' and is one of the most basic styles of prompts you will come across. If you are fairly confident in writing enough both qualitatively and quantitatively on the thematic concern it specifies, then a prompt like this can be an excellent opportunity to showcase the depth and breadth of your knowledge. If, however, the theme in the prompt is not one you are familiar with, or one that you only possess a limited amount of evidence for, then it can be incredibly challenging to write a piece and still attain marks for relevance without needing to go off-topic and draw from other material in the text.

Finally, the third example contains some more covert themes in contrast to the more clearly defined ideas in the first and second cases. We have the key words 'happiness' and 'unattainable,' but this prompt is more than the sum of its parts. Here, you'd also be expected to discuss the forces that prevent the characters from attaining happiness, and the different kinds of obstacles that stand in their way. Furthermore, regardless of whether you consider this to be a character-based question or a thematic one, your response should obviously address both characters, and themes, with stronger essays taking a theme-based approach in their paragraph breakdown.

Themes are also one of the key areas of textual exploration, given how open-ended they can be; a single thematic idea could be presented in countless different ways through use of **synonyms, indirect wording, or even subtle insinuation**. It follows, then, that thematic prompts are a good default option if you are unsure what you need to work on.

Answering a thematic topic will require knowledge on all four levels, so completing these essays can be a good test of your abilities as well as a means of covering enough content. Writing at least one piece on all the major themes is highly recommended, since there will be a lot of **transferability** within each one.

That is not to say that writing about one prompt that contains the word 'self-worth,' for example, would prepare you for all other possible topics related to the idea of self-worth, but it would ensure you at least have experience in using evidence that pertains to that theme, even if you would have to **reframe it to suit a different topic**.

Much like with the character-based prompts, you are free to move outside these boundaries if you believe it would be valuable to the discussion, but you should be careful to **avoid topic dodging** or skirting the issue in favour of a different theme. Similarly, you should attempt to use the **key words** in the prompt **often enough for the assessors to be able to tell you're engaging with the topic**, but not so often as to make it seem as though your vocabulary is insufficient to vary your exploration. Synonyms can be of great use here, but you should still safeguard your marks for relevance by using the key words when needed.

It can also help to apply a similar division to themes as characters with regards to primary and secondary concerns, as there will be several themes or close variants that you will see come up often in practice material, whilst others will only appear once or twice.

Clearly the **primary themes** are going to be your priority, especially prior to assessment, but once you believe you've adequately covered those areas, it's worth moving on to examine some of the less common, but still equally possible options for the exam by looking at some **secondary themes**. These distinctions might be somewhat less clear than the ones between primary and secondary characters, but it is still an expedient way to work out which aspects of the text will require more attention.

Structural prompts

This category is probably the **most difficult** kind you will have to reckon with in QCE. Structural prompts are ones which involve a focus on either the **close features of a text**, like language, metaphor, setting, or a discussion of **how the author creates certain ideas**. As such, these prompts usually, but not always, begin with the word 'how' and will specify which feature or idea (or both) that you are required to discuss. These may seem quite different and challenging initially, but there are plenty of strategies that you can implement which will allow you to address these kinds of prompts just as easily as any other.

SAMPLE :

Examples of structural prompts:

- Discuss the role of language in masking the duplicity of characters in Shakespeare's play.
- How does the poet create a sense of nostalgia and awe in their works?
- How is repetition used in this short story collection?

Broadly speaking, structural prompts can take one of three forms, each of which has been demonstrated above, although it may not yet be obvious what the difference is. In the first example, we have been given both a **structural feature** (i.e. the role of language) and an **overall concept** (i.e. the duplicity of characters). This, therefore, is one of the narrower kinds of prompts that will require you to join the dots between **this feature and the concept it establishes**, with limited room for movement outside those constraints. (Note: structural prompts that are this specific are quite rare!)

Contrarily, if we look at the second example, we'll see that while it **does specify an overall idea** or sense that is created by the text, it **hasn't given you a precise feature to discuss**. It just wants you to explore how a variety of structural features contribute to a specific concept (i.e. nostalgia and awe). This is because the prompt is testing you to see if you can identify the important features yourself, and then link them to the focus it has provided. These are the most common kinds of structural prompts.

Meanwhile, in the third example, **the feature has been given, but the wider idea is left up to your own interpretation**. Thus the format of structural prompts can either specify a certain feature of the text, a certain idea or sense that the author establishes, or both. These types come up occasionally, but the second variation is more common.

Though most students would regard these as the most difficult type of prompts, they can be made much simpler if you're able to **reword** them. For instance, we could alter the second example to read: 'Nostalgia and awe are important parts of this poetry collection. Discuss.' Now it's essentially a thematic prompt, though you'd still have to examine the aforementioned themes on a structural level by calling upon the relevant techniques and evidence.

KEY POINT :

Don't be fooled by **seemingly tricky prompts** like these; more often than not they are just reworded to intimidate you and hide the fact that there is a **fairly simple point underneath**, and that's all you have to address.

Where most people seem to go wrong with structural prompts is in **the formation of arguments**. When the prompt is a question, as is often the case with structural prompts, your contention doesn't have to be a direct answer to the question. Rather, the answer will be expanded upon in your body paragraphs. And your **contention is simply addressing the primary ideas** and what the author is trying to say. For example: '*Repetition in the experiences of the characters creates a sense of continuity and cohesion*' is NOT a valid contention for the third sample prompt **because it's hinging on evidence!** You could certainly use these examples in the body of your essay, but a better overall argument might be: '*The author's use of repetition is designed to reflect the circularity of the natural world, as well as providing his audience with cause for connecting actions with consequences.*' Then, it's up to the rest of the essay to justify this interpretation through its use of evidence.

Views and values prompts

This category is for prompts that are about **either the author's message, or the audience's interpretation**. As such, you are required to take a slightly more general focus when dealing with prompts like these, though you're **still coming in to discuss specific evidence**. The difference is that by the ends of your paragraphs, and certainly by your conclusion, you need to be thinking about **the text as a whole**. This is something you *can* do in other essays to boost your marks, but it's something you *have* to do for a views and values prompt.

SAMPLE :**Examples of views and values prompts:**

- The play suggests that fulfilling one's duties can come at a cost. Discuss.
- We sympathise with the characters in the film because of the hope they represent. Do you agree?
- The novel is ultimately an optimistic story for readers past and present. Do you agree?

Most commonly involving characters and themes, the trick with these prompts is the ability to 'zoom out' and scrutinise an overall sense or meaning. These essays will often need to oscillate between 'zoomed-in' discussions of close textual detail, and the more expansive view of an overall purpose or interpretation. Other than that, your approach won't differ much from a thematic essay, though you may find it trickier to divide your paragraphs.

The first example here is probably the most standard kind in that it's about something that the author does, depicts, or suggests. The second has more to do with where the audience's sympathies lie, which can take you by surprise unless you've practised a few of these kinds of prompts. But even for a topic like this, you're still concentrating mostly on those thematic ideas (i.e. hope and representation) rather than writing whole paragraphs on how the audience *might* be responding. Keep those **views and values statements about audience interpretation for the ends of your paragraphs**. The bulk of your discussion will still be about what happens in the text, and what ideas the text conveys.

Finally, the third prompt centres on the text as a whole, and calls upon you to discuss its and overall message. This is probably as broad as things can get, which may be a huge incentive or a massive hindrance for you, depending on where your strengths lie. Prompts that are this zoomed-out are rare, but still possible, especially for texts of a slightly unconventional form (e.g. graphic novels, non-fiction texts, poetry, etc.). However, whilst some of these prompts have big key words that require explication (i.e. 'duties,' 'hope,' and 'optimistic' respectively,) it is almost impossible to write a good **views and values** essay without **considering implications**. Spend some time throughout the year developing some overarching interpretations, and think about what the author may be trying to say, or who the audience is meant to sympathise with. Some knowledge of the history of the text can be helpful too; either of the time when the book is set, or the time it was written.

2.3.2 Quotes in prompts

As we've seen in a couple of examples so far, prompts can contain quotes that warrant discussion, and though this may seem like an added layer of difficulty, **quotes in prompts are actually there to help you!** Think of it this way: when the examiners offer you a quote, they're giving you **a hint as to what your contention should be.**

SAMPLE :

"And every man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had a kinder word for another on that day than on any day in the year."

In what ways is Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol* about the power of the Christmas spirit?

Atticus says "You never really understand a person until you consider things from his point of view."

How does *To Kill A Mockingbird* convey the importance of empathy?

"I defy you, stars!"

To what extent do the characters of Romeo and Juliet challenge cultural assumptions about fate?

In each of these cases, **the quote is almost answering the question that comes after it.** For the first example, we have a question about 'the power of the Christmas spirit,' and a quote that explains how all of the characters were kinder on Christmas. So, we could reasonably conclude, our answer to the question 'what is the power of the Christmas spirit' would be something along the lines of 'the Christmas spirit elicits greater kindness and compassion from those who experience it.' Obviously that wouldn't be the end of our discussion, and we'd need to explore what 'kindness' looks like in terms of this particular text, but already, we have some idea of the direction our argument will take.

Similarly, the second prompt is about exploring the importance of empathy in the text, and it's accompanied by a quote where Atticus tells Scout that empathy is vital for truly understanding other people. The third prompt also gives us a clear example in the form of Romeo's famous quote defying the stars, which represent fate. Each of these prompts is offering you evidence that it wants you to draw from in order to shape your thesis. This means that you will **need to use this quote in your essay** in order to talk about these ideas. Though it is possible to score highly by only looking at the question or statement components of the prompt, **if you're ignoring the quote, you're ignoring part of the task.**

KEY POINT :

Students frequently forget to include or even mention the quote, so remind yourself that you need to address the prompt in its entirety. I usually advise trying to bring it up in the **first or second body paragraph** as part of your discussion, just so that your assessor can see that you're acknowledging it early on, and they don't have to wait till the end to see that you've incorporated that part of the prompt.

2.3.3 Unpacking and dissecting prompts

One of the most vital skills you can develop to help you in your essay is your ability to **unpack and dissect prompts** to ensure that you are writing one that has a **relevant contention.** Most students will be confident enough in reading through or rewording a prompt, but actually deconstructing it and thinking about how different elements work together to create overall **implications** is a much rarer talent. Luckily, it's the kind of thing that's a little tricky to learn at first, but very easy to master once you've got the hang of it, and since this is *definitely* going to be something you'll need to do in the exam, it's worth putting some time into developing your prompt dissection skills throughout your QCE English studies.

First, though, we need to practise this process without time constraints, otherwise it can get too overwhelming. The idea here is to fully understand the prompt and what it's asking us to discuss **before** actually commencing with the essay, and in test conditions, it's all too easy to rush into writing your intro or first body paragraph.

Let's break this process down into stages so that you can work through the process:

- Understanding the prompt:** before all else, we naturally have to **prioritise understanding the prompt** before picking it apart. Firstly, ask yourself if there are any words or phrases in the prompt that you do not understand. If so, look them up in a dictionary, and try again. If it still isn't making sense to you, then you may need to ask someone (teacher or peer) to explain it for you. Hopefully this won't be a frequent problem, and the more often you do this, the easier it will be for you to make the connections on your own. Even if you do know what the key words mean, though, sometimes it's still worth consulting a dictionary to get a **concise, working definition** for the purposes of your essay. For instance, you might know what the words 'integrity' or 'deliberation' mean, broadly speaking, but if asked to define them, you might struggle to put your thoughts into words. There's no shame in using a dictionary definition to get you started, so don't hesitate to check if you feel doing so would be helpful. Beyond understanding the individual elements of a prompt, you also need to be able to grasp its overall point or message, and this is where concentrating on the **core** of the prompt comes into play.
- Finding the core:** the **core** of the prompt is **the central premise of the prompt**. If I were to ask you '**what is this prompt basically saying?**' your answer to that question should be the prompt's core. Why does this matter? Well, the core of the prompt is one of your biggest priorities because **an essay that doesn't address the core of the prompt is NOT a relevant essay**. You would need to talk about the core and base your contention around it if you wanted to score highly. It's possible that you were doing this already without realising it, but now that you know how vital it is, hopefully you can make a more deliberate effort to do this. If you struggle to find the core, **rewording it** or attempting to **condense it down to several words** can help speed up the process, though this is a natural extension of understanding the prompt in the first place. Then, once you know what the core is, you can begin to unpack its implications.
- Finding the implications:** the implications of a prompt are basically the hidden, between-the-lines suggestions that the prompt is making, and the easiest way to find these is to ask 'if the prompt is true, then what?'

SAMPLE :

Prompt: In the novel, relationships are damaged by secrecy. Discuss.

Implications: that secrecy is bad for relationships, that successful relationships require honesty, that the characters cannot have proper relationships if they are secretive, etc.

Prompt: The film shows how lies are a means of survival. Do you agree?

Implications: that lying is justified/necessary/advantageous, that strictly adhering to honesty and virtue is not practical, that one cannot survive without lying, etc.

In these examples, without even knowing what these texts are about, you can see how we've gotten a few **suggestions** or implied ideas from each prompt. These are our implications, and almost all prompts will contain them (with the **exception of structural prompts**, or a **prompt in the form of a question** like 'In what way is motherhood explored in the text?').

Note that implications are not a closed category of ideas; it's all about **what you think the prompt is implying**, so whilst there are some right answers and some wrong answers, there's **no specific implication that you have to talk about**. This is just a way of teasing out some different ideas from a prompt, and you may even be able to structure your body paragraphs around these implications if you so desire. Some will be narrower than others, so you may need to expand them or group them together, though you're not required to discuss every single implication that you find while planning.

KEY POINT :

Remember: there will always be more in the prompt than you could ever address in a single essay, let alone in a single hour. Don't try to cover everything; try to cover **what's most important**.

2.3.4 Examples of unpacking prompts

SAMPLE :

Prompt: *Macbeth* shows that deception will ultimately lead to downfall. To what extent do you agree with this interpretation?

Introduction

Who: Shakespeare's 1606 play, *Macbeth*, explores the tale of a tragic hero as he strives to achieve his ambitions but ultimately experiences a tragic downfall.

What: Shakespeare illustrates that deception is dangerous and will most certainly lead to one's downfall, particularly when used as a means of achieving one's desires.

How: This iconic play demonstrates this first through the witches' initial tone of deception and moral confusion as they preyed on Macbeth's vulnerability to be deceived. This is then reinforced when Lady Macbeth uses deception as a tool to achieve both her and her husband's desires, whilst he grapples with the moral confusion instigated by the witches. In the end, Macbeth's continued susceptibility to the witches' deceit and his increasing willingness to use deception, solidifies his inevitable downfall.

Why: This representation has been created as a cautionary tale to the Jacobean audience to reinforce the consequences of breaking from the Great Chain of Being.

Body paragraph

While at first Macbeth appears to grapple with this moral confusion, Lady Macbeth is completely willing to use deception as a tool to achieve their desires and she coaches Macbeth to this end. The audience is first exposed to Lady Macbeth's deception when her and her husband meet face-to-face. While Macbeth discusses his plans, Lady Macbeth orders him to "look like th' innocent flower, but be the serpent under't." Shakespeare cleverly employs metaphor to communicate to audiences that Lady Macbeth is exhorting her husband to conceal his murderous intentions with innocent and duplicitous behaviour, similar to a snake lurking beneath a harmless flower, conveying the notion that appearances do not have to match reality. This representation shows Lady Macbeth is challenging the traditional cultural assumptions where the woman is weak and submissive to her husband. A biblical connection is also present due to the "serpent" being a symbol for the devil, as it relates to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden as it uses the flower and snake imagery. Shakespeare is purposefully comparing Macbeth to the devil, reinforcing his masculinity. This also foreshadows his eventual downfall, as the devil, Lucifer, is a fallen angel who suffered his own downfall due his own moral grappling's with abusing power. Lucifer and Macbeth's situation share many similarities as we know that Macbeth will end up exploiting his own power as King and lose himself to his ambition. The extent of Lady Macbeth's deception is furthered as she threatens his masculinity and states that he is "Too full o' th' milk of human kindness." This is extremely significant as "milk" is being effectively used as a metaphor for a mother's breast milk, which in turn is drank by a newborn baby, the incarnation of innocence and purity. She is telling Macbeth to stop being kind and excessively innocent in these times, ultimately questioning his ability to be a 'man' and his power. Lady Macbeth defies the gender roles of the Jacobean era, displaying dominance over her submissive husband. Shakespeare aims to reveal to audiences of the dangerous nature of restrictive gender roles during the Jacobean era and how lies, born from one's insecurities, are a deadly contagion that spread like wildfire between people and cannot be contained, ultimately leading to one's own downfall.

The key message here is that for a ‘to what extent’ question, you do not necessarily need to explicitly refer to whether you agree ‘to a great/little extent,’ but it must be implied and in direct reference (using the same words) from the prompt. In this example, the prompt asked whether you agree with the interpretation that ‘deception will ultimately lead to downfall’ based on the text. In my response, I took up the position that it does, explicitly stating the same words from the prompt saying that it ‘deception is dangerous’ and ‘will most certainly lead to one’s downfall.’

Another type of question prompt that can appear is based on significant events that occur within the text. This may be based on scenes or acts, depending on the type of text.

SAMPLE :

How to respond to a prompt based on an event in the text.

Prompt: What is the significance of Banquo’s ghost at the banquet in Act III, scene 4?

Introduction

The Jacobean era has significant historical importance as it refers to the period when both England and Scotland were ruled under King James I. It was a time of superstitious beliefs and strict social hierarchy. Shakespeare’s famed, but tragic, 1606 play *Macbeth* was written amid this societal turmoil and hence contains many implicit and explicit links to the widespread beliefs of the era. In Act III, scene 4, Macbeth’s hallucinations of Banquo’s ghost at the banquet marks the breaking point of his reign, leading to his eventual downfall as a result of his ambition and thirst for power. Through the purposeful utilisation of symbolism and imagery, Shakespeare highlights to audiences that Macbeth’s hallucination of Banquo’s ghost reveals the lines between the supernatural and reality have become blurred in Macbeth’s mind, and he has finally lost himself to his ambition and guilt. Furthermore, alliteration and juxtaposition are employed to showcase that in contrast to the beginning of the play, Macbeth is now showing vulnerability and fear, leading him to be distrustful of everyone that surrounds him. By portraying Macbeth as a blood-thirsty, paranoia-ridden tyrant, Shakespeare aims to reinforce the Great Chain of Being of the Jacobean era, warning of the dire consequences that follow those who seek power and disrupt the fragile balance of the natural order, ultimately leading to chaos and one’s own destruction.

Body paragraph

Despite elements of the supernatural being present, Banquo’s ghost is solely a manifestation of Macbeth’s guilty conscience. It is during the banquet scene that the scope of what he has done dawns upon Macbeth. He has murdered a righteous king and is hiding behind “borrowed robes,” disrupting the Great Chain of Being; a traitor to his own crown. His mind is “full of scorpions,” with scorpions being a clever symbol for the poison that is ravaging throughout his mind, alluding to his tragic flaw of ambition. Now this ‘poison’ of ambition is inside him, coursing through his veins, he can no longer purge himself of it. For instance, in Act I it was Lady Macbeth who was seeking power, manipulating Macbeth in the process to commit the deed and “Look like th’ innocent flower, But be the serpent under ‘t”. This powerful piece of dialogue portrays Lady Macbeth as deceitful. She is telling Macbeth to hide his fear and emotions, so no one will suspect the heinous crime of regicide he is about to commit. However, in Act III, the roles are reversed and it is Macbeth that is manipulating Lady Macbeth. This clever juxtaposition can be seen when he tells her to conceal her heart’s true intentions and “make our faces wizards to our hearts, Disguising what they are.” Moreover, Macbeth’s mad paranoia could be attributed to the fact that he knows God’s revenge is to come for him. This is achieved through the imagery of “Blood will have blood,” a biblical reference, meaning an eye for an eye; he will reap what he has sown. Overall, Banquo’s ghost marks the beginning of Macbeth’s downfall because he is losing his inner battle with reality and never-ending thirst for power, turning himself into a madman. Shakespeare has constructed him this way to communicate to audiences in the Jacobean era that those who seek power to extreme lengths and disrupt the social hierarchy will only bring about their own demise.

Many students mistake that in these types of prompts you can only focus on the event/scene at hand, but this is incorrect. The purpose behind these prompts is to be able to recognise the importance of a certain event in the text and relate it back to the authorial intent and other concepts. You are not restricted to quotes solely from that part of the text, you can use any piece of evidence from any part of the text. But you must be able to relate it back to the event, and the main idea behind it.

2.4 Structure of an analysis essay

2.4.1 Essay introduction

Developing a thesis

Think of your thesis as the bun of a hamburger. Sure, the burger may have some tasty ingredients, but if the bun holding it together isn't strong enough, it will all fall apart (I know this is a horrible analogy but bear with me). This is the same for an essay. You may have an extremely impressive analysis, but if your thesis isn't strong enough, your mark will suffer.

In your thesis you should refrain from using personal pronouns (I, we, our) and keep the terminology neutral and formal (e.g. say do not instead of don't).

The thesis is essentially your response to the essay prompt and forms the crux of your analysis. It is the meaning you have drawn from the text, and you will spend the essay laying out all the parts that add up to that meaning. Without this meaning or the interpretation that you are trying to prove, you would essentially just be summarising the text. It also provides a roadmap to guide your reader through the essay. At first glimpse, the reader should be able to discern exactly what you are trying to prove, and your main arguments should be clearly outlined.

In the rest of the essay you are just providing evidence to support your thesis. Generally, a thesis is between one or two sentences maximum and must contain the who, when, what, how, and why of the thesis statement.

2.4.2 Who, when, what, how, and why?

You may be familiar with this commonly used thesis writing structure. While sometimes it can differ, using this structure ensures that you have a clear and effective thesis containing all the necessary information. In an exam, it may be helpful to write each distinct part of the thesis on scrap paper separately beforehand to ensure you cover each aspect.

- **Who:** contextualise the author, playwright, or director, state their name (generally only the last name) and the name of the text being analysed.
- **When:** the time the text was written (it is imperative to know this).
- **What:** this is one of the main components of your thesis, it is your response to the essay question. What are you arguing? Ensure that your answer directly relates back to the context of the prompt.
 - For instance, if the prompt is a “to what extent” question, your thesis must contain whether you agree to a great extent or not at all.
- **How:** how did the author achieve this? Your answer to this will include their use of aesthetic features and stylistic devices. Directly state each literary device you will be analysing. Ensure to signpost your arguments. It is best to have three arguments to fully justify your argument (although two may suffice).
- **Why:** this is where you draw in the authorial intent. What was the author's reason for creating the text? What message did they wish to convey to audiences? Relate back to the social or historical context of the time and commonly held beliefs and values. Is there any relevance to audiences today? Usually, it is best to put this as a separate sentence. You also need to reference the cultural assumptions, values, and beliefs that the author is either **challenging** or **reinforcing**.

Pay close attention to the ‘why’ part of your thesis. Is there a larger, broader message that the text seems to be communicating about a particular theme or concept? This can either be a positive, negative, or mixed message. Think about whether anything has changed in regards to societal norms, beliefs, and values since the text was created, or whether there has been any conflict regarding these.

SAMPLE :

Who and when: George Orwell’s *Nineteen Eight-Four* (1984), and Yevgeny Zamyatin’s *We* are dystopian classics that explore how the concept of ‘self’ is manipulated, if not abolished by the ruling party.

What: *1984*, written during the aftermath of World War II, and Zamyatin’s *We*, published shortly after the 1917 Russian Revolution, warn against the destruction of individual liberties resulting from extensive psychological conditions at the hands of tyrannous governments.

How: In both texts, a political oligarchy aims to enforce uniformity among citizens to destroy an individual’s ability to distinguish oneself from others, thereby imposing party doctrines as morally correct and removing any capacity to resist the state. In particular, the excision of the freedom to express emotion, and the severe regulation of behaviour, enforces conformity among party members, rendering them submissive to all facets of party ideology.

Why: With the ever-increasing bombardment of information and an alarming potential for technological surveillance of citizens in today’s society, it is timely for readers to heed the warnings offered by dystopian classics.

While the previous example is of a high-level and shows in-depth analysis, particularly of the authorial intent, some parts are missing.

What is done well:

- Pay close attention to how much context is provided, aim for one to two sentences for this. In saying this, slightly more social context could be provided before delving into the texts.
- Notice how the name of the text is in italics. If your analytical essay assessment is typed, ensure you do this. If it is written, just underline the name of the text or use single quote marks.
- Only the last name of the author is required.
- Challenges the cultural assumptions of the time (i.e. takes up a position in response to the question).
- Signposts the arguments effectively and uses strong authorial intent.

What could be improved upon:

- No reference made to aesthetic features or stylistic devices.
- Generally, the authorial intent also reinforces or challenges the cultural assumptions, beliefs, and/or values of the text. In the ‘why’ part, it is not entirely clear where this is referenced. This marking criteria makes up a large portion of the marks, and therefore you should pay close attention to it.

This just goes to show that you could write an amazing, in-depth thesis, but if it doesn’t hit the marking criteria then you could still lose marks.

2.4.3 Marking criteria

To score highly in the exam, you must be **discerning**. This means that you are selective of things such as the evidence you choose to incorporate into your arguments or the language choices you make. The key here is to be able to pick apart the most relevant and high-quality pieces of evidence from the rest. Don’t just chuck in any old quote that at first glance supports your contention. There will probably be lots of quotes that you can choose from. Your job is to pick the strong from the weak.

This also holds for **language choices**. The marker wants to see that every part of your writing has been carefully thought about and you aren’t just using filler sentences. Using more words doesn’t necessarily mean you have a greater understanding of the text. Sometimes being able to explain a difficult concept in layman’s terms is more impressive.

2.4.4 Length of a thesis

While it is common practice for your teachers to drill into you that a thesis should be no longer than two sentences, I don't necessarily agree with this method. A high-tier thesis can definitely be developed using only two sentences. However, I find this method to be quite unclear and confusing and can sometimes limit the amount of information that you consider including.

The method I preferred to use for the introduction during my English studies followed the sentence structure below:

- Lines 1–2 Include **social context** (political, historical) and cultural assumptions, beliefs, and/or values of the time the text was written. If it is a modern-day text, think about any relevant cultural assumptions, beliefs, and/or values today that the author is either reinforcing or challenging (consider the themes and reoccurring concepts/symbols of the text). Be careful not to be overly verbose; the information you include in the introductory sentences should be relevant to your thesis. For instance, if your thesis is analysing ideological gender roles then do not mention religion in your introductory sentence, regardless if it is relevant to the text. This is called being **discerning** about your word choices and is a specific marking criterion. If your word choices are too broad and not interconnected to one another then you can lose marks.
- Line 3 This (try to make it just one sentence) should contain your **thesis**. This should follow the 'who, when, what, how' method statement earlier. That is, your response to the question. Note that I have left out the 'why' aspect for later on.
- Line 4–6 In two to three sentences you should **signpost each argument**, only giving a brief overview of each. This should directly relate back to your thesis and the reader should understand immediately what your main arguments are. I would split each argument overview into three separate sentences for clarity. This also makes it easier for the marker of your essay to identify where you have signposted. Remember, you want to make the job of the marker easy to receive the most marks possible. If they are having trouble identifying parts of the marking criteria due to obscurity, they will be more likely to mark you down in that criterion.
- Line 7 Finally, the last sentence in your introduction should include the 'why' part of your thesis, or in other words, the **authorial intent**. While it is perfectly fine to include this with the rest of your thesis above, leaving it until last can be more impactful and improve clarity.

Clearly, you can see that it is up to you (unless specifically directed by your teacher) on how you should structure your thesis and the order you include each part.

KEY POINT :

If in doubt, just ensure your introduction contains the 'who, when, what, how, and why' of your response. This way, you can't go wrong or forget to include information.

2.4.5 Argument formation

Memorising quotes

This section applies mostly to those who will have their analytical essay conducted under unseen exam conditions. This is the most commonly used form of examination for this assessment, as it prepares you for the unseen external exam in Year 12.

When thinking about an unseen exam, one of the main questions that could pop into the forefront of your mind may be, “how on earth am I supposed to memorise all of these quotes?” Especially if your text is a play that spans across several acts. Unfortunately, there is no shortcut to memorising them. I wish I could tell you otherwise, but you honestly do need to know the text inside and out. But don’t worry! Alongside, your own private study you will spend hours upon hours in class analysing the text. Unconsciously, you will end up naturally memorising some of the quotes you cover in class without even any mental effort.

KEY POINT :

You don’t know what questions could be on the exam, and therefore, you must have memorised quotes for every scenario possible.

In saying this, memorising quotes from your text is not as difficult as it first may seem (don’t be sceptical, it’s true!). Your text will contain several different themes. For instance, the themes could include appearance versus reality or fate. For each different theme, I suggest creating a quote bank. Take a look at the one below for instance.

Memorisation tip 1: Quote banks

Theme: Appearance vs. reality (<i>Macbeth</i>)		
Quote	Techniques/devices	Meaning/analysis
“Out, out, brief candle”	Light imagery	Macbeth now views life as a small, fragile candle that will soon blow out since he has lost the will to live.
“Stars, hide your fires”	Light imagery, pathetic fallacy	Macbeth wishes for darkness to conceal and symbolically reflect the dark moral sin he is about to commit by killing Duncan.
“And yet your beards forbid me to interpret that you are so”	Subversion of gender	The witches cannot be identified as either male or female, making them unnerving and ambiguous as per the cultural assumptions of the time.

This is just a small example of a table you can include in your notes, although you should have many more quotes for each theme! Note how each quote is accompanied by their meaning and the techniques used. This is so much more useful than just writing a bunch of quotes, as you’re actually memorising *how* you might use the quotes in your essays! It also helps ensure that you cover every different aspect of the text.

Although in Year 11 it is unlikely that your teachers will ask you unexpected questions in your exams, it is worthwhile getting in the habit of having even a small amount of knowledge on minor characters and themes. This is because in Year 12 the exams are external and that means they can ask you questions on any aspect of the text! In previous years, unexpected questions on minor characters have been asked that nobody expected to be assessed. These questions can leave you at a major disadvantage if you haven't studied for them, so it's best to be prepared for anything by including those less common themes and characters.

To ensure you study all aspects of the text, I highly suggest that you also create a word bank on **every** character in the text, no matter how minor! And if you do receive a question that raises an eyebrow, don't panic. If there is a question asking about a minor character, it will usually be in relation to their significance in the text or their relationship with a major character. If this is the case, the question is not really wanting you to talk just about that character, but rather the marker wants you to be able to connect the dots and **interrelate** them to other aspects of the text.

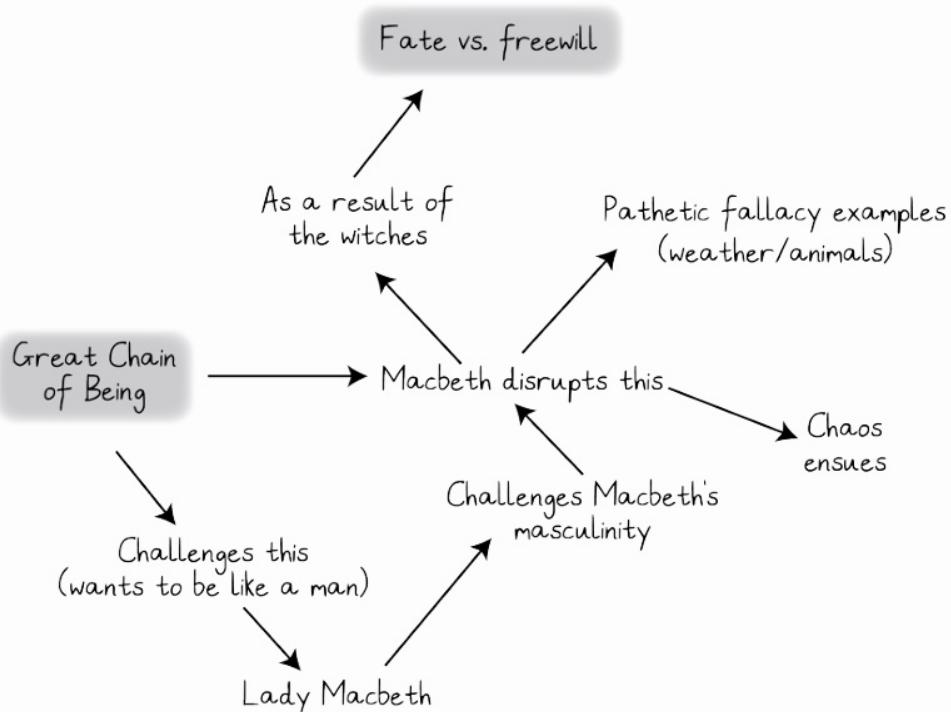
To receive a high mark, you must be able to **interconnect** different ideas together. This includes:

- Being able to compare different characters (similarities and differences, shared flaws, or weaknesses, perhaps one succeeds and the other fails; explain why is this)
- Character development (how are they at the beginning versus end of the text?)
- Combining and analysing quotes from different points in time from the text
- Discussing how aesthetic features and stylistic devices work together (i.e. don't analyse them separately; think about how they combine to create meaning)
- Relationships between different characters
- Character significance in the text
- Significance of different parts/events of the text (e.g. acts, scenes, chapters) and connecting them together

Later in the chapter we will look at this in more detail.

Memorisation tip 2: Mind maps

Another memorisation strategy I highly suggest implementing includes mind maps. This technique will help you in being able to interconnect ideas, characters, and concepts using a visual map.



Memorisation tip 3: The old-fashioned write, re-write, and so on

All in all, it is up to you to figure out which method of revising is most effective for you. Find what works best for you and implement that.

The method that worked best for me when studying for analytical essay exams was to simply write and rewrite. Then, on a blank page I would attempt to try and remember as many quotes as I possibly could. This includes writing down the possible aesthetic feature or stylistic device the quote utilises. If your exam is to be hand-written, this is particularly important. In psychology, we refer to this as context dependent learning. It has been scientifically proved that those who study in conditions that mimic the actual test conditions are able to recall more information.

KEY POINT :

During the perusal time in your exam, I would highly suggest that the first thing you do is write as many quotes as you can recall on the spare paper given to you. This will also assist you in developing your thesis. This is because it is pointless to create a thesis that you cannot support with evidence. Even if you have a great idea in response to the prompt, if you cannot remember enough quotes to support it, then it will receive low marks.

The quotes will also still be fresh in your mind at the start of the beginning. I also recommend, if you have enough self-control, to not even look at the exam questions before writing down the quotes you can remember. This is because it doesn't matter what the questions are, you will still need to be able to recall a large number of quotes (aim for fifteen at the bare minimum). Additionally, looking at the questions will most likely stress you out and you will be more susceptible to forgetting some of the quotes. Do not worry if you cannot recall all of them!

Exam strategy

Just before you walk into the exam, quickly scan through your notes and try to burn as many of the quotes in your mind as possible. Once the perusal time begins in the exam, quickly check the question and focus on relevant quotes! On the scrap paper provided, write as many of the quotes you can recall as possible.

Be aware that a quote can include multiple literary devices at the same time (e.g. imagery, symbol, and motif). It is up to you which one you choose to be the most powerful. However, if it makes sense to analyse it as two or more then, by all means, don't restrict yourself. For instance, a symbol can become a motif.

It is also possible to use one literary device to analyse another. For instance, you can use juxtaposition to analyse characterisation, or there may be a paradox containing alliteration. In fact, the marker will be more impressed if you are able to do this as it creates a deeper analysis.

2.4.6 Using analysis to help remember quotes

Memorising quotes is the easy part. The actual writing? Not so much. Being able to come up with coherent arguments that support your thesis (and even coming up with your thesis in the first place) is extremely time-consuming as it is. I would be more inclined to practise writing mini paragraphs of analysing evidence. Therefore, all the mental work is already done in the exam.

Quote	Analysis
"It is a tale told by an idiot, full of sound and fury, signifying nothing"	This quote declares life to be full of noise and emotional disturbance but devoid of meaning , and is Macbeth's moment of anagnorisis (true nature of his circumstances) when he realises that all his efforts to rule as king and remain in power are futile . He has followed an irresistible ambition but now he finds that it has been a hollow quest . At this point, the intensity of his suffering is becoming unbearable. A victim's ghost is haunting him, his guilt is torturing him, his enemies are closing in on him, his wife has lost her sanity and committed suicide. Macbeth has become a man whose life has ceased to have meaning .
"A little water clears us of the deed"	The archetypal (model/common) pattern of purification by water is prominent in the play. It symbolises the removal of guilt . Later in the play, she repeatedly rubs her hands together, representing her attempts to clear her guilty conscience by removing the "spot" from her hand.

Of course, it is unlikely that you will remember every bit of the analysis, but it definitely helps because memorising the quotes is only the first step. Being able to actually *analyse* them is where most of the marks will go. I know two hours sounds like a huge amount of time, but trust me, it will go by extremely fast. You do not have time in the exam to be leisurely figuring out how to analyse a quote.

Also, notice how I have bolded some of the words in the analysis. These are the key words that, over everything, I want to try and remember. In your own notes, whether digital or on paper, try to highlight or bold the key words that are the most important pertaining to the quote. These key words will also help you remember the quote and how to analyse it. This will also help you if you forget parts of the quote.

For example, imagine you can recall the words "signifying nothing," but you can't remember the rest of the quote or how to analyse it.

Using the strategy stated above, you should be able to associate "signifying nothing" with some of the following words:

- Devoid of meaning
- Moment of anagnorisis
- Futile
- Forgotten
- Irresistible ambition
- Hollow quest
- Ceased to have meaning

From there, you should be able to piece together a well-structured analysis just from remembering those words! Try and make these key words to have text-specific meaning as well (i.e. they are not just commonly used words in English, but more sophisticated and specific).

Do I need to remember page numbers?

Please be aware that, unless specified by your teacher, if your text is a play, novel, or poetry you will not have to remember things such as page numbers. However, I would familiarise yourself with information such as what act and/or scene a quote is said (if a play), or roughly the time stamp (what scene/event) when each quote is said. This will help also help aid your analysis.

Should I analyse quotes in order?

One of the things that can cause you to lose marks is **poorly structured arguments**. For instance, don't include your most complex argument in the first paragraph. Instead, you want to build your arguments, starting with foundational ideas that can be built upon in later paragraphs. For example, you don't want to start with the idea that Macbeth comes to realise ambition and greed are empty and full of suffering in the first paragraph only to later have to explain how and why he has reached this point. This is confusing for the reader and shows your lack of consideration for your arguments. There are, of course, no strict rules here, but make sure if you do take elements from later in the text that you do so purposefully and with enough context for your argument to be logical.

It is perfectly fine for you to be juxtaposing a character using quotes that are said at the beginning and end of the text in body paragraph 1. Just try and avoid having one paragraph that uses quotes that are from the end of the text, and then later having a paragraph with quotes all from the start. If you wish to analyse the start and beginning separately, try to have it in chronological order. You must first establish what occurred in the beginning before talking about the end. Otherwise, the marker will fail to see the significance of your argument if they cannot compare it to anything.

This is where we stress the important of interconnecting all of your ideas. I would warn against separating the text up into different time periods, and instead, attempt to analyse it as a whole. For example, analysing a change in the same character. This would include using quotes from all aspects of the text (not just the beginning) and combining them all into one argument. This allows for more in-depth analysis.

SAMPLE :

Through symbolism and dialogue, Shakespeare communicates to the audience that Macbeth's own ambitions and greed are influenced by society's ideologies of masculinity, the cause of disorder in the play. Macbeth's struggle with society's ideology of what it means to be a man is highlighted when Lady Macbeth questions his masculinity and ability to commit murder because he is "too full of the milk of human kindness." Milk is white, which symbolises purity and innocence. This is yet another example of Lady Macbeth exploiting Macbeth's insecurities, pressuring him to conform to standards of men, where a man's masculinity was determined by their physical strength. We see the full extent of these damaging attitudes just before he decides to kill King Duncan. His ambition, a quality usually attributed to a man, overpowers him in the moment a dagger seemingly appears in front of him. He commands it to "let [him] clutch thee." Typically, "clutch" is seen as a forceful act, and is symbolic of him wanting power and control. Ironically, a King is the physical embodiment of these concepts. It is here where the audience first observes the change in his character, foreshadowing his eventual downfall. He choices to let his ambition prevail, pressured by societal norms, and to shed his "human kindness" like a snakeskin. Instead, his mind becomes "full of scorpions," as Shakespeare intimates to audiences the poisonous effects of pursuing personal ambitions at the expense of others.

2.4.7 Effectively imbedding and analysing quotes

Embedding quotes

One of the major concerns that arises surrounding quotes is how to utilise them effectively. The goal is to seamlessly embed them into your argument, with each sub-argument flowing cohesively onto the next. It should be clear where you have utilised the quote and the author's words, but it should flow smoothly into your writing.

See the following quote deconstruction and integration from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

SAMPLE :

Original quote:

"Stars, hide your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires" – spoken by Macbeth before he commits the act of murder.

Low-level analysis and quote integration:

When Macbeth says, "Stars, hide your fires; Let not light see my black and deep desires," he is pleading for God to not see the evil deed he is about to commit. Macbeth is a weak-hearted character whose ambition is victorious over his kindness.

This is a poorly integrated quote and provides minimal explanation as to how the conclusion that Macbeth is weak-hearted was reached. Notice how the phrasing is awkward and lacks flow. It is recommended to use cohesive ties to connect ideas together, which will be discussed in more detail later in the chapter.

This is also a prime example of a **quote dump**. Do not chuck in a dozen full sentence quotes hoping it will help you gain marks. If anything, it will significantly lower your mark. The markers want to see you have the ability to be discerning, meaning you can pick apart the weak pieces of evidence from the strong to best support your argument. The quote used above should be split up into three different quotes, instead of one long sentence. This demonstrates that you have a strong understanding of how to manipulate quotes and effectively embed them in short snippets at a time.

Another thing which I will go into detail later in this chapter is the lack of mentioning aesthetic features and stylistic devices. The markers are literally looking to give you free marks, but you have to specifically **name** the device or feature. This shows that you can distinguish between each device and feature and identify them in texts. As said before, do not think this means you should try and use every single literary device in your arguments. The key to writing a good essay is **balance**. You should try to only use the best pieces of evidence and the most relevant.

SAMPLE :

High-level analysis and quote integration:

Through the effective use of symbolism, Shakespeare positions the audience to view Macbeth as a weak-hearted man whose hamartia of ambition is victorious over his kindness. Before committing the murder of King Duncan, he pleads for the "Stars [to] hide [their] fires," with the stars being a symbol for God. He wishes for God to not see the evil deed he is about to commit. In the Old Testament, God was violent and would punish those who sinned. Macbeth acknowledges this, hence the reason he is begging for "let not light see my black and deep desires," or in other words, his sin. By begging the night to be too dark for God to see his wrongdoings, it is clear the Macbeth's battle with morality has been lost. Macbeth knows what he is planning to do is wrong, reinforcing the Great Chain of Being. He is disrupting the natural order of society created by God.

Please note that this paragraph is missing one important thing: the concluding sentence linking back to the thesis. Remember, for every argument you must link back to your thesis!

See how this is a more cohesive way of integrating quotes into your writing, and the analysis is more in-depth and explanatory. Short and simple quotes are generally better than long and extensive ones. The marker of your essay does not want a full recap of ten, full-length quotes from your text, they want to see you can pick apart the most important parts and then use that to support your arguments. As a rule of thumb, I wouldn't use quotes longer than six words at one time. For longer quotes, it is better to split them up and analyse them in at least two different sentences.

The analysis is also much more in-depth than in the first example. The main difference between the lower-level example and the high-level one is the different connections between concepts being made. This is where you should include your CA+VABs (cultural assumptions, values, attitudes, and beliefs). This marking criterion is worth a significant portion of your marks and is usually the difference between a mid-tier response and a high-level one.

In the example provided, the Great Chain of Being is a cultural assumption of the time when *Macbeth* was being written and is one of the key underpinning ideas of any play written in the 1600s. It was commonly believed that kings ascended to the throne based on God's will. If your essay prompt surrounds one of the key concepts of the text, make sure to state whether the author reinforces this concept or challenges it. I have also made connections between the Old Testament, which is relevant to the time the text was written as well as the strong religious beliefs present at that time. While this may be a little advanced for Units 1&2, it will show to your teacher that you are past surface level analysis and are able to draw complex links.

You should be incorporating both analytical and evaluative words into your essays. See the table below for more information on the difference between the two. A more in-depth table can be seen at the back of this book.

Analytical verbs	Evaluative words
Reveals	Purposeful
Implies	Compelling
Expose	Skilful
Emphasises	Masterful

There is a specific marking criterion for these. It can be very easy to forget to include evaluate words, such as “the effective use of...” in your essay. While simple and easy to incorporate, this demonstrates to the marker you are not just analysing the text but also the merit and quality of it. I would try and incorporate a large variety of these, as it is easy to get repetitive in essay writing. Especially in an exam, I often found myself at a loss for new and innovative words. One trick I learned is to memorise a **word bank** of all the different phrases and words I could use to keep my writing interesting. Usually, we use positive words to evaluate an author's use of literary devices and techniques. However, if you find that the author's use of these devices to be poor then you could technically say that they have been used in a weak and ineffective manner.

Additionally, notice how in the previous sample I introduced the literary device at the beginning. While you can place it anywhere you like, putting it at the beginning of the paragraph can make it easier for the marker to find. After all, you don't want them to have to hunt through your essay to try and find where you have named the specific literary device.

Another thing to draw your attention to is how the ‘positioning the audience’ has been included. There are many other phrases you can use to say the same thing, but make sure you include something about the impact the author's choice has on the audience. This is otherwise known as the **authorial intent** (the why) and will heavily influence your mark. Even if you have an amazing analysis of a quote, if you can't explain the why component then it defeats the purpose of your entire analysis. Think back to your overarching thesis.

KEY POINT :

- Why has the author decided to represent a character a certain way?
- What were the author's intentions at the time of writing or producing the text?
- What was the author trying to communicate to audience?
- Was there any historical or cultural significance?
- Is there any relevance to our present-day world, why could the meaning of the text be important to audiences today?

The difference between a mid-range and high-level essay is being able to state the relevance of your evidence, the broader message, and link this back to your thesis. This is why it is particularly important to pay attention to the context of the text.

Usually, when your teacher first introduces the text to you, they will go over a brief history of the text and the context, and any issues, beliefs, attitudes, or values that were prevalent at the time. My one piece of advice would be to not ignore this. So, take notes. Being able to incorporate this into your assessment will significantly help you link back the 'why' of your arguments.

Do not take this as an opportunity to spend a large chunk of your word count (as limited as it will be) to talk about the history of the text. The marker is not interested in reading a historical essay, and you will probably lose marks. Keep it concise and brief, only mention the strongest and most important concepts. Do not include information that is not relevant to your essay topic.

KEY POINT :

The golden rule for every argument you make is – asking yourself '**so what?**' Why should the person reading your essay care about how the stars are symbolic to God? Why should they bother reading your essay at all? This is the golden rule for writing anything.

This is also a really effective strategy in expanding upon your arguments and ensuring everything is directly justified by evidence from the text.

Quote punctuation

Knowing how to punctuate a quote correctly can seem simple at first, but you would be surprised at how difficult it can get, especially if you have to do a Shakespearean play (which is more than likely throughout your studies). To embed a quote correctly and cohesively, you may need to adjust some minor words for it to make grammatical sense in the sentence it is contained within. To do this, we use square brackets to indicate where we have changed the minor words of the quote.

SAMPLE :**Incorrectly punctuated and poorly embedded quote:**

Before committing the murder of King Duncan, he pleads for the "Stars, hide your fires", with the stars being a symbol for God.

In the above example, the quote is awkwardly embedded into the sentence and does not make grammatical sense. Another error is in relation to the comma, which should always go **before** the quotation marks. The correct presentation of the quote is shown on the next page.

SAMPLE :**Correctly punctuated quote:**

Before committing the murder of King Duncan, he pleads for the “Stars [to] hide [their] fires,” with the stars being a symbol for God.

Minor adjustments have been made to the quote, as indicated by the square brackets, so the sentence makes grammatical sense. Please be aware that this should only ever be used to make minor adjustments to the quote. If it results in changing the overall meaning or a major component of the quote, then you may lose marks.

Also, notice how the “Stars” is capitalised despite being in the middle of the sentence. If the quote is capitalised in the text, then it should also be **capitalised in your writing** regardless.

Another question that usually arises regarding quote punctuation in exams is whether you have to memorise the quote word-for-word. In short, no you don’t have to have the entire quote ingrained into your memory. However, as stated above, the overall meaning of the quote must be the same. For example, the marker isn’t going to penalise you for saying “the stars” instead of “a star” (unless the difference is crucial to the meaning). This also holds for punctuation in the quote.

SAMPLE :

“Too full o’ th’ milk of human kindness.”

You do not have to memorise every single punctuation mark in a Shakespearean quote, and you are allowed to say ‘of’ instead of o’, and likewise ‘the’ instead of th’.

However, it is advised that you try your hardest to memorise them as best as you can!

Summary:

- Do not quote dump! Learn to effectively embed quotes into your writing without making it sound awkward and clunky. This includes being grammatically correct as well! Short, precise quotes are the best way to achieve this in your writing.
- Markers will not penalise you for quotes not being word-for-word or if the punctuation differs slightly, as long as it does not alter the original meaning of the quote.
- Specifically state the aesthetic feature or stylistic device of the quote you are analysing. The marker is looking for this, so make it easy for them!
- Always link every paragraph back to your overarching thesis.
- Remember the golden rule! For every argument you make, ask yourself ‘so what?’ Link back to the social context of the text and any associated historical significance. What is the message for readers today (the authorial intent)?
- Remember, balance is the key to writing a great essay! Use only the best pieces of evidence, and the most relevant, and be careful not to go on a tangent. Get to the point and keep it short and snappy (but not too short – remember, it is a fine balance).
- Use a word bank for analytical and evaluative terminology to aid your response and enhance your vocabulary.

2.5 Text analysis

2.5.1 Aesthetic features and stylistic devices

Aesthetic features and stylistic devices play a crucial role in analytical essays and mark up a large portion of the allocated marks. Understanding their purpose and effect in writing is imperative and will make the analysis much easier! As per the QCAA syllabus, you must be able to analyse the impact of different literary techniques in texts and their associated purpose. What sort of viewpoint, thought, feeling, or idea does the text invite the audience to take up? How does it influence them? These are all relevant questions you must answer in your response.

KEY POINT :

Your essay must address what position the audience is invited to take up in response to the text. This is part of the ‘why’ component in your thesis. How do they make the reader think or feel? Do they create an emotional response? What specific emotions are being evoked?

Aesthetic features and stylistic devices

Aesthetic features	Purpose
Characterisation	<p>Can be indirect or direct. Direct characterisation occurs when the author explicitly describes the personality of the character (e.g. Bell is clumsy). Whereas indirect characterisation is implicit, and the author shows us (e.g. Bell tripped over the step) rather than tells us their personality and the audience makes inferences.</p> <p>Characterisation is the development of character traits. When analysing this device, it may be helpful to link to juxtaposition between two characters. Or if character development occurs, you could analyse the characterisation of the same character at the beginning of the text. and then juxtapose this to the characterisation of them at the end of the text.</p> <p>Be aware that characterisation on its own generally is not enough to support a strong analysis, therefore it is most effective when used in combination with other literary devices for a stronger impact.</p>
Dialogue	When characters speak to one another and includes direct quotes from the text. While considered to be a simplistic device, the use of dialogue should not be overlooked (yet not overused as well). Incorporating strong pieces of dialogue can make for a strong argument.
Dramatic irony	A form of literary irony where the audience is aware of information that the characters in the text are not. It is used to create suspense and can highlight the ignorance of a character (reality versus perception concept).
Pathetic fallacy	When the weather reflects human emotions or mood. For example, when a play opens there is thunder and lightning, it suggests chaos and misfortune is to come. This can sometimes tie in to foreshadowing.
Alliteration	Identical repetition of the beginning consonant sound in a phrase (e.g. s he s ells s eashells on the s eashore). This creates a rhythmic effect to the text, or can set the tone or mood and place emphasis on this.

Assonance	<p>Identical or similar repetition of a vowel sound in a series of words (e.g. clap your hands and stamp your feet). This creates a rhythmic effect and draws attention to the phrase.</p> <p>In all honesty, I can't remember ever using alliteration or assonance in my responses, but that doesn't mean you shouldn't! There is just usually stronger evidence in the text to analyse, but definitely don't overlook them (or at least be aware of them). They are more frequent in poetry or Shakespearean texts.</p>
Allusion	A figure of speech where a character is compared to a person, place, or event, implying a certain meaning that the audience must connect to. For example, "don't be such an Einstein" (connection = intelligence). This provides the audience with deeper insight into characters' personality traits.
Analogy	Comparing one thing to another (generally unrelated) in order to help the audience understand the idea more simply or in a different light. For example, "she was as silent as a mouse."
Foreshadowing	<p>This is when the author subtly provides hints to events that will occur later in the text. It is a very powerful literary device to analyse. For instance, a character's downfall may be foreshadowed at the beginning of the story and you could analyse how the outcome was inevitable.</p> <p>There is so much analysis you can do with foreshadowing, I would definitely be on the lookout for it in your text!</p>
Hyperbole	A figure of speech containing an over exaggerated statement not meant to be inferred as literal. For example, "I could eat one hundred steaks." This is generally used as comedic relief, but you could relate it back to other literary devices such as characterisation.
Imagery	<p>Figurative language that is used to help immerse the audience into the text by appealing to the five senses (smell, taste, touch, visual, and auditory). If the words can create a picture in your mind and include one of the five senses, then it is imagery.</p> <p>Commonly, a text can create reoccurring themes of certain imagery (interconnected to motif, which will be discussed below), such as blood imagery or water imagery. This can then help you relate back to the themes of the text and any character changes that occur. For instance, a text may contain light, vivid, and bright imagery at the beginning, but this may change to dark and grim towards the end. You could then connect this to characterisation and how a character has changed throughout the text.</p>
Irony	Occurs when what is said and the intended meaning are different (i.e. contradict one another). This links to the thematic idea of the difference between appearance and reality, or there could be a discrepancy between what a character says and does, unbeknownst to them. Alternatively, irony can occur when character's intentions or ambitions may not be consistent with the outcome or ending. It is used purposely by the author to convey a message to the audience, while sometimes confusing as to what the true meaning is, do not overlook it.

Rhetorical question	A question (must contain a question mark) that is asked without the intention of it being answered (i.e. asked for effect). It can be used to emphasise a point, or to prompt the audience to think about a certain idea or conflict. It may indirectly reference one of the overarching themes of the text.
Metaphor	The comparison between two things, where one is said to be the other (e.g. “you are my sunshine”).
Simile	Not to be confused with metaphor, similes are when two things are compared, but must contain the words ‘like’ or ‘as’ (e.g. “she was like a ray of sunshine”).
Motif	<p>A recurring symbol that appears throughout the text. Motifs are interconnected with themes and symbols. Reoccurring symbols may become a motif (specific to the text), and multiple motifs may contribute to the overall themes (more broad and appear outside of the text) contained within the text.</p> <p>For example, a reoccurring snake symbol (snake = motif) within a text may symbolise the obstacles impeding a character’s success and contributes to the overall theme of appearance versus reality.</p> <p>Key: reoccurring symbol = motif, and reoccurring motifs = overarching theme.</p>
Personification	Prescribing human attributes to non-human things (e.g. “the sky cried in agony”).
Symbolism	Utilising a symbol (usually a physical object) to represent a greater and more complex meaning, idea, or quality. For example, the washing of a character’s hands with water after committing an evil deed has a greater meaning. The water could symbolise the purification of a guilty conscience due to religious connections. Holy water is pure and cleanses the soul of sins. When interpreting symbolism, there is not necessarily a right answer as different people can interpret it in different ways. In saying this, do not extend far beyond the intended meaning of the text.
Onomatopoeia	Words that sound like their meaning (e.g. buzz, thud, meow) that can create a sensory experience for readers.
Juxtaposition	Direct comparison between two different things to highlight their differences. Authors may juxtapose characters (e.g. by having lots of scenes or dialogue between them), settings (e.g. creating a contrast between the city and the country), or ideas (e.g. by exploring alternate worldviews of characters). Any time you think an author is deliberately positioning two things together in order to emphasise how different they are, that’s juxtaposition!

2.5.2 Advanced literary techniques

While generally used in Shakespearean texts and plays, you may be able to use some of the below in wide range of texts. You are certainly not expected to know most of these in Units 1&2, but they may help improve the complexity of your analysis (and impress your teacher). Familiarising yourself with some of the literary techniques and their purpose will also be hugely beneficial to Units 3&4.

Literary device	Purpose
Oxymoron	A figure of speech where two contradictory terms or ideas appear together.
Paradox	Occurs when a seemingly contradictory statement may end up being the truth. For example, “Foul is fair and fair is foul” – meaning what seems good is bad, and what seems bad is actually good. This suggests that characters who, on the surface, appear to be good hearted are actually not, and vice-versa.
Fricative alliteration	Repetition of the ‘f’ sound. When people say the ‘f’ sound, they inevitably bare their teeth, which is also an evolutionary behaviour in which people and animals bare their teeth to be threatening. Therefore, this can suggest a character has violent intentions.
Rhyming couplets	Two successive lines in a play or poetry where the last word of each line rhyme with one another.
Trochaic tetrameter	A form of Shakespearean speech in the form of rhymed couplets. Speech is chanted in a sing-song way that sounds a lot like a scary or sinister nursery rhyme, which is a very unnatural way to speak. This can mark them as being something supernatural, strange, dangerous, or otherworldly all by just the stress pattern in which they speak. This follows a rhythm of DUM-da, DUM-da, DUM-da (e.g. "DOuble DOuble, TOIL and TROUBLE!").
Iambic pentameter	This is the form of verse that most Shakespeare plays are written in, following the natural and pleasing rhythm of speech in a pattern of ba-DUM, ba-DUM, ba-DUM (e.g. to THINE own SELF be TRUE). It is often used for noble characters or those of high status.
Prose	This refers to anything that isn’t written in verse (i.e. just normal text with no pattern of stress or rhythm). In Shakespeare, this is mainly used by lower status characters or when characters are losing a sense of themselves.
Epithet	When an adjective or phrase is used in reference to someone, which expresses a quality or attribute regarded as characteristic of that person.
Equivocation	This is a type of informal fallacy. It is not downright lying but speaking in half-truths to conceal the truth. It is a statement that lends itself to multiple interpretations, often with the deliberate intent to deceive.
Soliloquy	When a character speaks alone on stage and reveals their internal or ‘real’ thoughts and intentions, which can often contrast with how they act outwardly to other characters in the play (creating dramatic irony).
Aside	When a character (in a play) stands outside the action on stage and reveals their inner thoughts to the audience. Generally, an aside leads to a soliloquy.

An example of how to analyse one of these techniques (in note form) is demonstrated below:

SAMPLE :

Analyse the paradox of “fair is foul and foul is fair.”

- A paradox occurs when two things contradict one another and should not coexist in nature; they defy logic.
- Through the use of spiritual influence, Shakespeare effectively creates a paradox that mirrors the overarching theme of deceit in the play. Sets the overarching theme of the play which is paradoxical in meaning. The good will be bad and the bad will be good, fate will become ambition and ambition will become fate. The idea of destiny is destroyed by the introduction of freewill, an idea very prevalent back in the Jacobean era (time period of the play).
- Through Shakespeare’s use of this paradox and of the supernatural, he introduces the idea of fate not being real (challenges it). Instead, he views fate as merely a preconceived notion. What we believe to be fate may just be demons playing tricks on us, as Banquo mentions later in the play, “to win us to our harm, the instruments of darkness tell us truths.” This demonstrates that fate and ambition are interchangeable.

2.6 Checklist for analysis essays

- Have I chosen the prompt that offers me the best opportunity to demonstrate my skills?
- Have I explored the key words and concepts in this prompt?
- Have I addressed the core of the prompt and considered its implications?
- Does my essay and the spread of my discussion accurately reflect the focus of this prompt?
- Have I constructed a meaningful and complex thesis that isn’t too definitive in its wording? (i.e. not completely agreeing or completely disagreeing)
- Do I have 3–4 key ideas that are roughly equally weighted?
- Have I outlined my focus clearly and concisely in each topic sentence?
- Have I called upon the relevant moments in the text, including some more secondary or less obvious moments, in order to support my arguments?
- Have I made use of quotes and incorporated textual evidence consistently?
- Is my evidence sufficiently varied, and am I drawing points from multiple characters/scenes/excerpts?
- Have I explained the significance of this evidence in detail?
- Have I made use of some close structural evidence of aesthetic features and stylistic devices?
- Do the ends of my paragraphs adequately summarise my main point and link back to my overall thesis in an effective way?
- Am I usually using the author’s name and a verb to describe what they are doing whenever I am commenting on overall meaning?
- Are the points made at the start and end of each paragraph sufficient in supporting my thesis?
- Does my introduction adequately introduce the ideas I discuss in my piece, and does my conclusion tie things up neatly?
- Have I reread (or skimmed over) my piece and made sure to edit or correct any noticeable errors?

2.7 Marking criteria

I have outlined the general marking criteria for your exam. Your school will also provide you a task sheet with similar criteria. Remember, your essay needs to be in line with the marking criteria. It is perfectly possible to write a fantastic essay, but it can still score lowly if you miss a learning objective!

Familiarise yourself with the marking criteria and use it as a marking guide for writing practice essays. In your own marking criteria, notice the differences between the marking levels, and how the highest marking criteria differs to the others. Teachers tend to mark from the ‘bottom up,’ meaning you must firstly fulfil the below criteria to achieve higher.

Criterion 1: Knowledge application

1.1 Analysis of perspectives and representations:

- Examine relevant perspectives or representations in the text.
 - Provide an authoritative interpretation of these perspectives or representations.

1.2 Analysis of the ways ideas underpin the literary text:

- Examine how the text is underpinned by cultural assumptions, attitudes, values or beliefs.
 - Provides an authoritative interpretation of these cultural assumptions, attitudes, values or beliefs.

1.3 Analysis of the writer’s choice:

- Examine how the writer’s stylistic or aesthetic choices shape the text.
- Provide an authoritative interpretation of these stylistic or aesthetic choices.

Criterion 2: Organisation and development

2.1 Development:

- Provides a discriminating thesis that is to be substantiated.
- Develops arguments to support the thesis across the response.
- Provides clear conclusions based on the arguments.

2.2 Selection and synthesis:

- Provides well-considered selection of evidence from the text.
- Use this explicitly to support arguments.

2.3 Sequencing and organisation:

- Demonstrates logical sequencing of information and ideas in and between paragraphs.

2.3 Cohesion:

- Use cohesive devices to connect, develop, emphasise, and transition between ideas within paragraphs and across the response.

Criterion 3: Textual features

3.1 Language choices:

- Use vocabulary with discrimination to develop ideas.
- Use a register appropriate to the role of the essay with writer with discrimination.

3.2 Grammar and sentence structure:

- Use grammatically accurate sentence structures.

3.3 Punctuation:

- Use punctuation accurately and purposefully.

3.3 Spelling:

- Use simple and complex words that can be understood in context (note: words may be ‘understood in context’ without error-free accuracy).

2.8 Cultural assumptions, values, attitudes, and beliefs (CA + VABs)

The most important part of the marking criteria is implementing cultural assumptions, values, attitudes, and beliefs into your response. Typically, this is also the most difficult criteria for students. Understanding these is vital to the creation of your thesis, as they form the ‘why’ component. That is, the reason for the author’s creation of the text.

In particular, your essay must:

- Examine how the text is underpinned by cultural assumptions, attitudes, values, or beliefs.
- Provide an authoritative interpretation of these cultural assumptions, attitudes, values, or beliefs.

Essentially, you must analyse what ideas the text either reinforces or challenges and then provide what the authorial intent was for this choice. Remember, every representation right down to dialogue is **purposefully implemented** by the author. It is your job to analyse **why**.

SAMPLE :

- **Behaviour:** Macbeth’s choice to pursue power is wrong.
- **Values:** Killing goes against the values of God and the Old Testament. Men should be strong, ambitious, and power-hungry. Women are weak, soft, and kind-hearted.
- **Attitudes:** Kings are decided by God not men. Killing to achieve one’s ambition is wrong.
- **Cultural assumptions:** The Great Chain of Being is how kings are decided, not by man.

Ask yourself does the author reinforce or challenge any of the CA + VABs? If so, explain why? What do you think the purpose of this was? What is their take-home message? You might say, in *Macbeth*, Shakespeare’s ideas go beyond the values of his time, where he purports that ambition influenced by insecurity of masculinity inevitably leads to tragedy and an unfulfilling life.

How does an author use CA + VABs to position the audience?

- Identify any aesthetic features and stylistic devices and explain what effect these have on the audience?
- Link to the authorial intent (consider their message). Every text will either be reinforcing or challenging a certain perspective (there may be many relating to different themes).

How will I know what CA + VABs the text is either reinforcing or challenging?

If you are unsure about what CA + VABs the text contains, ask yourself the following questions:

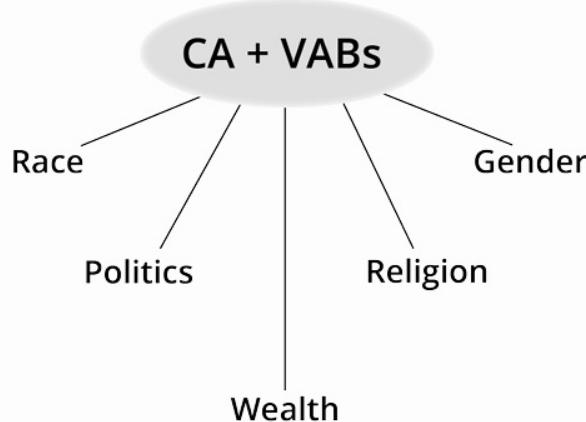
- What themes are contained within the text?
- What are the dominant perspectives in the text? For instance, women being portrayed as docile and fragile beings while men as courageous and powerful reinforces the dominant perspective of masculinity.
- Are there any historical or political events of particular importance? Look at the social context of the text.
- Look at how each character behaves and their differences. Is there a conflict between characters (which is almost always)? If so, this means there was also a conflict of either CA + VABs. Look at how they behave. What values or beliefs is this based on?
- What were the cultural assumptions at the time of writing? If it is a historical text, racial or sex discrimination will almost always be prevalent.

If you are completely lost, one website I always found helpful was *LitCharts*. Nine times out of ten, this website will have your text fully analysed, including themes, concepts, and quotes. I found it to be a great resource for my notes in addition to my teacher's, and I highly suggest you check it out! But be careful not to copy these ideas, and only use it as a guide or inspiration. Your ability to come up with a unique and original response is more impressive than being able to memorise a textbook or commonly used analysis of a quote. Generally, these websites only give you surface-level analysis. This is perfectly fine as a starting point if you are unsure about how to analyse a quote. But do not settle for this surface-level analysis! Look further into the meaning of the quote by looking at themes and concepts. In order to receive high marks for analysis you must go beyond these surface-level ideas and instead **dig a bit deeper** (e.g. find hidden connections).

Examples of CA + VABs:

- Christianity, the divine right of Kings, Great Chain of Being, natural order
- The power of the supernatural
- Gender constructs (masculine = violent, strong, rational vs. feminine = passive, kind, nurturing, weak)
- Hegemonic Christian views of fate, destiny, determinism, etc. vs. humanist views of individualism, free will, agency, etc.

Usually, CA + VABs can be related to one of five topics:



2.9 Language choices

Remember, using bigger words will not always guarantee you a higher mark. Being able to demonstrate that you have a strong understanding of the text and the concepts that underpin it is of higher importance.

Although, you should still try and extend yourself by using more complex word choices as there is a marking criterion for language choices. For this, I would recommend you try and memorise a list of sophisticated terminology related to your text. For instance, see the table below:

Treason	(The crime of) showing no loyalty to your country, especially by helping its enemies or trying to defeat its government
Sacrilegious	Treating something holy or important without respect
Succession/succeed	A process in which someone automatically takes an official position, title, or throne after someone else
Regicide	The act of killing a king
Tyrant	A ruler who has unlimited power over other people and uses it unfairly and cruelly

Equivocation	A way of speaking that is intentionally unclear and is confusing to other people, especially to hide the truth
The Great Chain of Being	A strict hierarchy that includes everything from God and the angels at the top, to humans, animals, plants, rocks, and minerals at the bottom
The divine right of kings	A commonly held belief that kings were placed on the throne by God; thus, attempting to depose or murder the king runs contrary to the will of God
Determinism	The theory that everything that happens must happen as it does and could not have happened any other way (fate)
Humanist idea of freewill	A philosophy that usually rejects supernaturalism or determinism, and stresses an individual's capacity for self-realisation and agency
Hamartia	Tragic flaw: a character fault or mistake that causes someone to fail or be destroyed
Catharsis	A feeling of relief and closure when everything is restored after a strong release of emotions

Similarly, in the lead up to the exam I found it extremely helpful to memorise a table full of interesting words and phrases that could help expand how engaging and literate my response is. Instead of these being concepts (like in the table above), these were just words/phrases that would make my essay more interesting.

Influenced by societal ideologies of masculinity and femininity...	Leading to the cause of disorder in the play...	The deteriorating characterisation of Lady Macbeth reinforces...	Reinforces the view that women are pretty, decorative, and harmless ornaments.
Embodiment	Plague	Preconceived notion	Patriot
Beacon of chaos	Realms of chaos	Weak-minded	Feminine entity
Coercion/compulsion	Blind ambition	Cunningly painting	Assumed fragility
Works in tandem	Tragic hero	Manifestation of guilt	Lies are a deadly contagion that spread like wildfire

KEY POINT :

Don't be afraid to make your essay creative! While it may not necessarily be a 'creative' piece of writing, that doesn't mean you should make your response boring and too literal! Your marker has probably already read a dozen essays on the same topic, the last thing you want to do is bore your reader to death! Still use formal language, but you are allowed to use a play on words to jazz things up a little.

Part IV

Final advice for English

Study advice

If I was to tell you one thing going into the final two years of your high school studies, it would be to stop setting too high expectations for yourself. If you are a high achiever or are aiming for a high ATAR, do not trick yourself into thinking that you need a perfect score, otherwise you will be disappointed no matter what you get. There are so many different ways to achieve entry into the pathway that you desire! You should be proud of whatever result you receive. Drop these harsh expectations that you may place on yourself; it will only lead to unnecessary stress.

Likewise, the ATAR you receive does not reflect how well you have done and what you have achieved. The scaling is very unpredictable and can differ from year to year. This also holds for other subjects. Do not make the mistake of thinking that to achieve a high ATAR you must do high-level Maths and Science. The scaling of a subject can only help you so much; what actually matters is how well you perform in your raw score and if you actually enjoy the subject.

Remember, the score you receive on an assessment is still very subjective. It is someone's opinion of how well you fit the marking criteria. One marker may look at your work and think it's fantastic, and another may only see flaws. Regardless, do not take your mark to heart. You should focus on how well **you think you did** and have improved over your schooling years.

Coping with unseen exam questions

It is understandable that many students do get stressed about unseen exam questions, including myself. However, I assure you it is not as daunting as it seems. In every text, there will be a set number of topics surrounding the content. This could include characters and relationships, specific scenes or events, themes, or contextual real-life events. After analysing the text, you will come to realise that there is a very narrow set of topics the question could be about.

The key here is to simply practise writing responses to different types of prompts. Be sure to cover any relevant themes and concepts that underpin the text. Draw from the main cultural assumptions, beliefs, values, and attitudes that are either being reinforced or challenged. Look at different character relationships and development as the text progresses.

Feedback

As mentioned earlier in this book, many of your assessments in Year 11 will be exactly the same as in Year 12. I would highly suggest you not only save your final assessment for future reference, but also any feedback (both drafts and final) you receive from your teacher.

In addition, be sure to save any helpful material (e.g. PowerPoints) that your teacher provides. This will ensure that when you complete the same type of assessment again in Year 12, you are able to improve on these weak points in your writing.

KEY POINT :

Remember English is more of a skills-based subject rather than content-based. You can only improve on your writing!

How to be discerning in your writing

Remember, to receive high marks in your assessment, you must be **discerning**. This means to be **selective** of your evidence and arguments. Everything you do in your writing, including minor things like punctuation and sentence structure, must be **purposeful**. Only include the best pieces of evidence! This shows the marker that you are able to pick the cream from the crop.

- **Discerning:** discriminating; showing intellectual perception; showing good judgment; making thoughtful and astute choices; selected for value or relevance.

The next marking criterion is to be effective in your selection.

- **Effective:** successful in producing the intended, desired, or expected result; meeting the assigned purpose.

This receives lower marks because, while it may meet the intended purpose, it is not thoughtful. To avoid this criterion, be cautious with every piece of evidence you use. Ask yourself whether this really adds to your argument, or it is simply just more words that do not contribute anything of true significance.

Vocabulary Lists

Effect on responder			
Enhance	Illuminate	Clarify	Portray
Highlight	Alter	Enrich	Engender
Glean	Garner	Adhere	Applicable
Pertinent	Conceive	Envisage	Evoke
Central concerns	Distinctive features	Significant issues	Conventions
Aspiration	Invites reflection	Made evident	Sustain interest
Greatest impact	Generate	Contentious	Disputed
Provocative	Galvanise	Correspondingly	Relative to
Encourages	Promotes	Engages	Achieves
Illustrates	Implies	Depict	Infer
Points of comparison			
Also	Likewise	Equally	Synonymously
Analogously	Akin	Just as	So too
Similarly	Furthermore	Moreover	In the same sense
Points of difference			
Conflictingly	In contrast	Contrastingly	Contrarily
Unlike	Nonetheless	A point of disparity	Conversely
Counter to	Contradictory to	Opposed to	Inversely
Alternatively	However	Although	On the other hand
Despite this	Contending	Dissimilar	Juxtaposed
Incongruously	Yet	Whereas	Meanwhile

Other words for 'shows'			
Expresses	Depicts	Indicates	Presents
Displays	Reflects	Means	Represents
Reveals	Suggests	Conveys	Symbolises
Describes	Demonstrates	Explores	Exhibits
Asserts	Elicits	Elucidates	Exemplifies
Conveys	Denotes	Depicts	Implies
Expose	Portrays	Crystallises	Challenges
Creates	Draws attention to	Constructs	Hints at
Reiterates	Transcends	Permeates	Pervades
Suggests	Highlights	Focuses	Reinforces
Strengthens	Supports	Exemplifies	Transforms
Embodies	Constitutes	Illustrates	Enkindles
Conjures	Repudiates	Construes	Amplifies
Cause and effect			
Accordingly	Consequently	Furthermore	Moreover
Additionally	Whereas	Not only	However
In spite of this	In other respects	Nevertheless	Rather
In addition	For that reason	Thus	As a result
Hence	Therefore	So	Because
Shaped by	Led to	Resulted in	Contributed to
Culminated in	Derived from	For that reason	Constituting
Provokes our understanding of	Challenges our belief that	Resonates with	Prompts us to empathise with
Makes us explicitly aware of	Invites a sense of sympathy for	Foreshadows	Engages the viewer with
Evokes a sense of pathos	Positions the reader to	Illustrates a mood of	Creates a heightened personal response to
Achieves its purpose of	Affects our understanding	Assures us that	Captivates our interest in
Compels us to see that	Urges us to believe	Motivates us to	Highlights the necessity of
Engenders an appreciation of	Sways our opinion of	Generates apprehension towards	Creates anticipation of

Analytical verbs

Infers	Reveals	Conveys	Underlines	Warns
Implies	Connote	Presents	Accentuates	Stresses
Validates	Denotes	Provokes	Reiterates	Spotlights
Establishes	Demonstrates	Creates	Juxtaposes	Exaggerates
Showcases	Insinuates	Proves	Emphasises	Restates
Displays	Evokes	Criticises	Cautions	Promotes
Expose	Symbolises	Alludes to	Undermines	Foreshadows
Uncovers	Confirms	Poses	Indicates	Illustrates

Evaluative language

Striking	Shocking	Clever	Challenging
Powerful	Disturbing	Clearly	Impactful
Thoughtful	Masterful	Compelling	Effective
Valuable	Deliberate	Creatively	Successful
Succinctly	Inspiring	Convincingly	Reinforces
Artful	Profound	Crucial	Harmful