**ATAR English: Trial Examination**

**Marker’s Report**

**Section One: Comprehending 30% (30 Marks)**

The focus in this section should be on the candidate’s **comprehension** of the examination texts and **application of analytical skills**. Higher marks should be given to candidates who:

* can respond clearly to the question
* provide insightful comments about texts
* sustain a point of view, and use textual evidence to support a point
* demonstrate the correct use of writing conventions related to the requirement of providing a *succinct* response.

This does not necessarily mean providing quotations, given the word count limitation

**Content**

The key criteria in assessing content are to meet the **targeted requirements of the question.**

Marks are allocated for responses that demonstrate **comprehension and interpretation** and describe how texts use the conventions of genres, whilst showing understanding of linguistic and cultural nuances.

Succinct answers that target the specific question requirements are best placed to be awarded the marks as set out in the marking key. Candidates’ responses are expected to range between approximately 200 and 300 words.

No penalty is imposed on responses that are not confined to the word count requirement. However, it is likely that overly short responses will not cover the requirements of the question, and overly long responses will not demonstrate the skills associated with writing a succinct response that provides with clarity only what is relevant to the question.

**Expression**

While marks may not be specifically allocated to expression in the short answer response, it is more likely the marker will be able to find evidence of the candidate’s comprehension and analytical skills in short, succinct responses organised according to the targeted requirements of the question. As such, the assessment of expression is intrinsic to the assessment of comprehension and analytical skills as set out in the marking keys.

Key elements include:

* the presentation of ideas organised clearly in relation to the targeted requirements of the question
* fluency
* succinctness
* choice of vocabulary that is appropriate to question requirements
* control of the conventions of English, taking into account that examination scripts are essentially a first draft written under time pressure.

**Question 1 (10 Marks)**

1. Discuss how the **construction** of the **setting** **reveals an idea** about the **central character** in Text 1.

**Content**

* This question requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding of ‘setting’. Setting should be understood as the place, immediate location or type of surroundings where something is positioned or where an event takes place.
* Candidates should explain ***how*** setting functions within the text.
* ‘Discuss’ requires candidates to identify and account for the way the character and setting are construction.
* ‘Reveals an idea about the central character’ requires candidates to recognise the way the text creates a figure for a narrative purpose or effect. This could be treated as appeal, positioning the reader to be receptive to ideas or views of the text, creating representations of certain groups, etc.
* Candidates may identify the contextual connotations as being an element of setting, such as understandings of region, small towns, etc. This connection between social and cultural factors of the location would need to be firmly connected to references to characterisation in the text.
* Candidates need to clearly articulate an idea they have interpreted within the text. The syllabus defines ‘idea’ broadly, as ‘understandings, thoughts, notions, opinions, views or beliefs.’
* Candidates who simply identify a large number of conventions with limited analysis will not be rewarded above those candidates who write a detailed analysis of how setting and character relate.

**Expression**

* The extent to which the candidate expresses ideas clearly and concisely is a factor in determining the marks allocated to the response.
* Candidates who use metalanguage to good effect should be rewarded.
* Candidates who integrate examples and/or brief quotes to support their responses should be rewarded.

**Supporting Information**

*How setting is constructed*

In this text setting is created through the use of a range of devices such as:

* point of view/narrative voice
* word choice \*
* figurative language \*
* descriptive passages \*
* tone
* imagery
* symbolism
* syntax \*
* structure.

Any discussion of setting should be connected to the construction of character and an idea within the text.

\* Candidates who identify these language features will need to describe these concepts in more detail, sensory imagery, figurative language (similes, metaphors, personification), syntax, or connotative language.

*Some ideas that may be inferred from setting in Text 1*

* The deadly nature of Australian landscape and weather,
* Australian identity in relation to the beach, and a cultural constant,
* The beach as necessity to keep body and soul together.
* The ferocity of the weather and the stray dog.
* The symbolism of the ‘blue heeler’ as representing the character’s mental breakdown
* The wrecked beach symbolising the character’s breakdown.
* The use of the beach/dog as a narrative feature; the central conflict within the text

**Question 2 (10 Marks)**

**Compare the ways** Text 1 and Text 2 use the **Australian landscape** to **create a response**.

**In their response to Question 2, candidates should:**

* Identify the nature of their response and the Australian landscape
* Explain how these identified elements work to communicate ideas and affect a response.

These could include:

**Text 1:**

* Through **language features** describing setting as:

dangerous, deadly, debris-ridden, fierce, battered, sympathetic, a nature in itself, dull, full of animal life, lively.

**Text 2:**

* Through visual elements such as:

Actors, objects and space within the frame

The construction of symmetry

Rule of thirds

Spatial relationships between objects, set and characters

Inclusions, omissions, foreground. midground, background.

To show the setting as: barren, dangerous, deadly, shock, violence, concerning

**Candidates are required to compare in their response. They can explore similarities and/or differences in the ways the Australian landscape is represented. These might include:**

* The juxtaposition between the roughness of the storm and the barrenness of the desert
* The juxtaposition between the plenty of the sea and the barrenness of the desert
* Both settings represent trauma, mental in Text 1, physical in Text 2
* Both settings represent ‘Australian identity.’

**Expression**

* The extent to which the candidate expresses ideas clearly and concisely is a factor in determining the marks allocated to the response.
* Candidates who use metalanguage to good effect should be rewarded.
* Candidates who integrate examples and/or brief quotes to support their responses should be rewarded.

**Question 3 (10 Marks)**

Explain how your response to Text 3 has been shaped by its language features.

* ‘Explain’ requires candidates to identify and account for the way language features prompts a particular response from the candidate.
* ‘Your response to this text’ requires candidates to clearly articulate a specific response to the language features in the text. This could be feelings, thoughts, attitudes, or analytical understandings. Language features may include descriptive or figurative language devices, rhetorical devices and techniques, discourse, diction, syntax, register, modal language etc.

**Expression**

* The extent to which the candidate expresses ideas clearly and concisely is a factor in determining the marks allocated to the response.
* Candidates who use metalanguage to good effect should be rewarded.
* Candidates who integrate examples and/or brief quotes to support their responses should be rewarded.

**Supporting information**

* Colloquial language to endear to audience
* Rhetorical questions to engage audience
* Hypophora – dialogue with the audience
* Extended metaphor – Melbourne Cup
* Polysyndeton for rhythm
* Inconsequentiality of our lives, existentialism.

**Question 1.**

This question starts with the identification of an idea about the central character. If you did not clearly identify an idea then it was impossible to link this to setting. Many candidates chose obscure ideas that were not supported by the text and therefore their argument was flawed.

**Question 2.**

The problem with responses to this question was that so few candidates actually compared the landscape or identified a response.

**Question 3.**

Many candidates did not state their response or explicitly identify language features.

**General Observations:**

* Learn how to spell the names of authors and texts
* Revise splice commas
* Revise use of apostrophes
* Keep tense consistent
* Set out titles correctly
* Use the metalanguage of the course
* Poor handwriting makes it difficult for the marker to read your responses fluently
* Note: country / countries, society / societies, effect / affect
* Make sure you have a thesis in the essay in the Responding Section

**Section Two: Responding (40 marks)**

By far the most popular questions were Questions 7 and 9. There were a good range of responses for both, which displayed your textual understanding and knowledge. Most candidates wrote about the major text studied, *1984*, with some students taking the ‘road less travelled’ and discussing ‘We Are Here: The Pale Blue Dot,’ ‘The Arrangers of Marriage,’ and *An Inconvenient Truth*. A number of candidates included CLTs in their introductions without referring to them in their body paragraphs, rendering them unnecessary, which needs further refinement. Remember that whatever goes into your introduction needs to be discussed in your body paragraphs. Conversely, putting too much information in your introduction and then not referring to it in your body paragraphs may affect the organisation of your ideas for your essay. A number of candidates discussed ideas and information that should have been put into their body paragraphs in their introduction. Remember that essay writing is an art and that your key purpose is not only to show your depth of knowledge but to express it in a clear and cogent manner through one main, central argument.

Examination:

Attempted by 26 candidates Exam: Minimum: 29.0 Maximum: 80.5 Mean: 57.2

Section Two: Responding Mean: 25.7 (/40) Max: 32 Min: 12

One of the purposes of this section is for candidates to demonstrate their textual knowledge and understanding of metalanguage specific to the form through text/texts studied. It was disappointing to see a lack of specific textual evidence through quotes, retelling of texts, or too many intertextual links in one body paragraph in some answers. Learning how to embed evidence in sentences, and where to place this in paragraphs is crucial.

Questions in this section required close discussion of studied texts and great control over essay structure and expression. The larger weighting for this section is not a signal for a longer answer. While candidates might chose to allocate a little more time on planning for a section with a larger weighting, the response should be a tightly structured and focused answer to the question. Some candidates felt obliged to write lengthy responses that they were unable to control under examination conditions, and many candidates wrote strong responses for the beginning of their essays, they quickly deteriorated, ultimately harming their mark. The principles of clear and focused essay writing apply to this section.

**Question 4 (40 Mark)** Mean: 22.25 (/40) Max: 24 Min: 20

**Discuss how an understanding of context promotes empathy for individuals or groups represented in at least one text.**

This question asks you to discuss how an understanding (your learned knowledge/knowledge from the text) about a context (historical/cultural/social) promotes (actively works to gain/exploit from the readers) empathy (empathy differs from sympathy in that we are ‘putting ourselves in another’s shoes’) for groups OR individuals represented in at least one text. Some very tenuous links were explored in regards to Winston and the proles in *1984*. A stronger response would have involved a more relevant text, such *The Secret River* or one of the many texts we studied on minority groups.

All candidates did not successfully answer all parts of this question. Many did not discuss how individual/groups are represented in the text, how an understanding of context promotes empathy, or why the author would purposefully create empathy through reader positioning for groups. Some students discussed groups without actually naming which particular groups they were discussing. In referring to your thesis statement at the beginning and ending of a body paragraph, you need to ensure that you are not just restating the question word for word, but are engaging with the question by adding your own argument.

For *1984*, while an understanding of the Second World War is necessary to understand Orwell’s satire/political commentary, the text itself (this includes narrative elements) should be your main reference. Orwell promotes empathy for Smith through the representation of his living conditions (setting), his futile choices that lead to his capture and torture (characterisation), the repression of his individuality in fear of his life (plot), which can then be linked to an understanding of context.

The driver for this question should have been  how groups/individuals are represented (represented infers that they are authorial/social constructions)  link to contextual understanding how and why this representation intentionally promotes empathy from the character or author and its effect of the reader (link to reader positioning).

**Question 7 (40 Marks)** Mean: 22.72 (/40) Max: 32 Min: 15

**Explore the ways in which at least one text challenges or reinforces your perspective on a controversial issue**.

A popular question. A number of candidates in this question referred to the major texts studied, with some sound intertextual links. Most candidates discussed 1984 and totalitarianism. Stronger responses discussed PBD or discussed *1984* and the controversial issues in the text with specific regard to their own personal perspective.This question asks you to discuss how a text challenges or reinforces your perspective (attitudes/values/ideology) on a controversial issue. A *controversial* issue is an issue that many may disagree with, is contentious or widely debated. Candidates should explain why this issue is controversial and how the text represents it – and how it *challenges* or *endorses* their perspective.

Candidates need to demonstrate an understanding of how choices of textual construction affect the representation of, or response to, this issue.

Candidates may engage with a range of decisions made by textual producers, including mode, medium, genre, content, structure, voice, point of view or language, and must relate these decisions to specific issues that occur within the text.

An important discriminator in answering this question was your ability to explain clearly how a particular controversial issue is represented – not just present – in a text, and whether this view is endorsed or challenged by your own perspective. A number of candidates either fell short on discussing why their issue was particularly controversial in each body paragraph, or failed to link the controversial issue to their own perspective in the required depth. In answering this question, a sound and insightful knowledge of your own perspective is required for analysis. Simply stating that “totalitarianism challenges my perspective” does not give your reader any substance; expanding on this and reflecting on your own cultural context and values in your society (Australia, 2018) will enhance the depth of your response.

**Question 8 (40 Marks)** Mean: 23.75 (/40) Max: 29 Min: 13

**Describe how voice is constructed in at least one text to achieve a particular purpose.**

This question requires candidates to demonstrate an understanding of the term ‘voice’. This could be an authorial voice, a narrative voice, single or even multiple characters’ voices within a text.

‘Voice’ is defined in the glossary in two ways:

o Authorial voice: In the literary sense, voice can be used to refer to the nature of the voice projected in a text by an author; the persona, role or character adopted by an author.

o Narrative voice: The ways in which a narrator may be related to the story. For example, the narrator might take the role of first or third person, omniscient or restricted in knowledge of events, reliable or unreliable in interpreting what happens.

Candidates may explore more than one voice within a text.

Candidates should make reference to various language and/or generic features used in the construction of voice.

A key discriminator for this question was that candidates linked the construction of voice (whether it is authorial or narrative) to an author’s purpose/social purpose. Most students chose *1984*, and there were some students who performed well on the question by linking the construction of voice to Orwell’s political commentary. Other texts analysed were *The Secret River* and ‘The Arrangers of Marriage.’

When discussing voice, you need to be aware that you need to name the type of voice you are discussing (authorial/narrative) as well as how voice is constructed (read: artificially created by an author) through point of view, tone, style, dialogue, language devices, stylistic features and genre, or through the particular perspectives, ideas or concepts represented by a voice or voices in a text to generate a reader response. For example, ‘Through the use of dialogue in the novel, in particular the limited voice of the proles reflected in an Estuary accent compared to the refined Standardised English that Winston uses, as well as the Party controlled Newspeak, Orwell positions readers to view language as the means of social stratification in *1984*.’

A number of candidates made the mistake of not naming the voice they were discussing or linking the voice’s purpose in their topic sentences. There was a tendency in this question for candidates to quickly deteriorate their argument in their body paragraphs. Clearer signposts and organisation in your writing is required for your WACE. Please also ensure that you have specific examples from the text when discussing voice.

**Question 9 (40 Marks)** Mean: 22.94 (/40) Max: 31 Min: 12

**Explain how at least one text conforms to a genre in order to reflect a particular context.**

Another popular question. By far, the most popular response involved the context of the Second World War and *1984* as a dystopian fiction novel. There were some solid answers for this question which addressed all aspects of the question, as well as some sound use of intertextuality. While most candidates showed a solid understanding of pre-Cold War era politics, candidates need to be reminded that this question does not call for a history essay. The key discriminator for this question was candidate’s ability to state dystopian generic conventions, how the text conforms to those conventions (by using examples of previous dystopian texts), and how those conventions are utilised in order to reflect a particular context (in regards to the author’s intentions and reader response).

Many students were able to link *1984’s* context to pre-Cold War era politics; however, many also struggled to go beyond simplified retellings of contextual information with limited textual analysis or reference to narrative elements. As genre can mean both the structure of a text (novel, short story, film) as well as the subject matter (detective fiction, romance), solid links to either structure or subject matter was warranted in responding to this question. A few successful candidates were able to discuss **HOW** the text conformed to the genre through the use of dystopian generic conventions to reflect Orwell’s context and purpose in writing the novel. Some candidates discussed ‘dystopian conventions’ without explaining how the convention is related to the genre. For your WACE, please name and explain generic conventions before moving on.

The driver for this question should have been: Generic convention  how it is a convention of the genre (link to previous texts)  how and why it reflects a particular context (link to author’s purpose and context (i.e. it serves as a warning),

e.g. In the novel, 1984, Orwell conforms to the dystopian convention of setting to warn readers of Post-WW2 England of the growing dangers of communism and totalitarian societies. Dystopian fiction, such as Lang’s *Metropolis* and Ray Bradbury’s ‘The Pedestrian’ usually posit collapsing settings to reflect the decay of their dystopian societies. Throughout 1984, Orwell utilises setting to reveal the extreme disarray and stratification of the dystopian society of 'Oceania' in the novel to warn Post-WW2 readers of the dangers of totalitarian societies, which complement similar settings found in other works of dystopian fiction.

**Composing Section: (30 marks)**

Remember to start the story in the midst of conflict/action. You don’t have enough time to construct a traditional plot outline OCCLR, however you are expected to sustain your narrative to a relevant conclusion.

Candidates who responded to Question 14 focused on constructing mood through generic conventions and stylistic choices. Characters and plot were only introduced after 400+ words. Any clear attempts at constructing a falling action or resolution were rushed and ineffective.

In regards to those candidates who wrote persuasive essays, question 13 was a very popular option. However, not one candidate answered all aspects of the question:

\* Create a persuasive text

\* Use structural and language features

\* Encourage a particular audience to react to a controversial issue

Important structural features were omitted. You must include a sentence in the introduction summarising the key points you will be discussing/engaging with in your response. This was a key opportunity missed as candidates who selected evidence relevant to a specific audience scored higher marks.