

## Considering Question 7

*Discuss the way in which your understanding of context has influenced your interpretation of the perspectives in at least one text.*

### Interpreting the question

This question requires you to articulate your understanding of the many contextual factors that influence the way you interpret or respond to the perspectives in a text. The inclusion of 'you' and 'your' in this question is an intentional invite to candidates, calling you to formulate a personal and considered response.

'Context' refers to the *environment in which a text is responded to or created*. This can include the broad historical, social and cultural conditions of the era in which a text was created, often referred to as the context of culture. In addition to this, you may also consider the details of a character or author's immediate situation, known as the context of situation. Your discussion of context does not have to be restricted to the factors that inform the production of a text. It is also acceptable to consider the text's context of reception. To do this, you will need to identify the contexts of culture and situation for a specific audience. You could also discuss your personal context and, by doing so, you will acknowledge how the unique factors of your situation profoundly shape your interpretations.

This question requires you to connect your understanding of context to your interpretation of the perspectives offered by a text. It is not enough to simply acknowledge the contextual factors; you must articulate how they shape or influence your understanding. The term 'perspective' refers to the position from which things are viewed, which is shaped by contextual factors. It is really up to you to decide which elements of context you will discuss in relation to your interpretation of the perspectives. Regardless of the approach you take, you must explain how this understanding has directly influenced your interpretation; for instance, perhaps your understanding of context allowed you to empathise with the perspectives of a character, or allowed you to identify with a character who boldly challenges the dominant ideology of their context of situation.

### Advice from teachers

- The use of absolute possessive pronouns – like 'you' and 'your' – in this question indicates a personal response is required. It is acceptable to write with a sense of personal voice as you discuss your unique interpretations of your chosen text.
- You are welcome to consider elements of your personal context in formulating a response to this question. However, there is a possibility that this could become overly simplistic. Try to move beyond elements such as your age and gender if you decide to consider your own context, as a more complex and self-reflective response is needed here.
- Candidates must be mindful of thoroughly addressing perspective as a critical syllabus concept. It is not enough to simply state that your chosen text 'offers perspectives'; you must be specific in clarifying the perspectives as specific viewpoints shaped by contextual factors.

## Question 7: Sample response one

This is a successful response due to the candidate's thoughtful and insightful handling of the key components of the question. They clearly identify the director's perspectives while also acknowledging the contextual factors that shape them. The candidate describes scenes from the film in precise detail, using accurate metalanguage and textual evidence at appropriate points in their body paragraphs. Most importantly, it is pleasing to note the candidate has articulated a clear connection between their own interpretation of the perspectives offered and their nuanced understanding of context with a reflective sense of personal voice.

Famous author Margaret Atwood once wrote that 'context is all' as it enriches the meaning a reader receives from a text. *Children of Men*, directed by Alfonso Cuarón in 2006, is a dystopian film that envisages a future society impaired by ubiquitous anarchy in light of 18 years of global infertility. Set in 2027, the film's protagonist, Theo, agrees to transport a miraculously pregnant woman, Kee, to a sanctuary at sea called 'The Tomorrow.' Cuarón extrapolates many issues that were occurring at the time into his film, including the prominence of terrorist attacks and the ignorance towards the wellbeing of refugees. Through understanding Cuarón's context, I am influenced to be further in favour of his perspectives presented in the film that ongoing violence in society is dangerous and futile, that refugees should be embraced rather than ignored and that the mainstream must attend to important issues instead of being complacent. As a viewer living in a 2017 supposedly egalitarian society where such issues have only become more significant since the film's release, I have been prompted to action in efforts to resolve these worldwide issues.

*Children of Men* presents Cuarón's perspective that terrorist attacks are dangerous and futile. This is showcased through the eight-minute single-shot sequence in the Bexhill refugee camp. The cinema verité stylised sequence presents the uprising of a political group against the totalitarian government through mass murders by gunshot or explosions. The lack of non-diegetic sounds, with the only audio of constant gunshots, explosion sound effects and yelling heard

Beginning this introduction with a relevant quote is an engaging tactic as it demonstrates the candidate's awareness of context as a literary concept.

The candidate acknowledges elements of the context of production in developing their argument, revealing their detailed understanding of this syllabus concept.

It is pleasing to note the candidate's use of personal voice, directly addressing the question by clarifying how their understanding of context has influenced their interpretation, encouraging them to align their way of thinking with the perspectives of the director.

The candidate begins this paragraph by stating the director's perspective, highlighting their direct attention to the question.

The use of appropriate metalanguage in deconstructing scenes is impressive here.

coupled with the blood spattered, adds to the film's sense of realism. This asserts the harsh reality of war and terrorist attacks. The camera movement to consistently present the background behind Theo conveys the large number of unseen casualties that occur is similar large acts of violence. The murders of these people, where it is difficult to decipher which side of the attack that they are on, reinforces Cuarón's perspective that such acts of war are futile and dangerous to the future of humanity's existence. As I understand that Cuarón made this film in light of the 9/11 and 7/7 terrorist attacks, I am influenced to further support Cuarón's perspective as murderous and destructive events evoked in the film were ever present in society as well. The fact that violence due to differing political views still occurs, such as the Lindt Café siege in 2014 has further shocked me against such events and to adopt Cuarón's perspective in believing that the ongoing violence occurring in our world must be stopped to ensure humanity's future survival.

Cuarón's perspective that more concern must be had of society towards refugees is highlighted in the film. This is presented as Theo, Kee and her midwife, Miriam, are packed with refugees in the recurring motif of a wired bus on their journey to Bexhill refugee camp. A man's sobs can be heard coupled with the desaturated lighting used to establish a bleak and aggrieved tone amongst the refugees, indicative of the misery rejected refugees must feel in our 2017 society. The written codes of 'Homeland Security' on the side of the bus and a banner of 'restricted access' implies the totalitarian regime and ultimate control of the government. The police officers dialogue when apprehending Miriam, 'you fucking people disgust me', emphasises the total disregard that authority figures have toward refugees. A panning shot indicating Miriam is to be hooded and executed indicated the dehumanising of refugees and remaking their identity. Knowledge of Cuarón's context that in his world before the film's release, many refugees were dying in their quest for refuge yet were being ignored by the

The candidate links to the topic of the paragraph here by clarifying the contextual factors that helped to shape the director's perspective while also acknowledging the continual presence of these factors in the context of reception.

The candidate reflects on their own context by providing specific examples of recent terrorist attacks, ensuring they are attentively linking back to the key components of the question.

Each body paragraph sustains a logical approach by focusing on the perspectives of different issues and the contextual factors that shape them.

The candidate continues to describe scenes from the film with clarity and specificity through the use of appropriate metalanguage, such as "desaturated lighting".

Additional analysis about the context of production may be useful here. For example, the imagery in this scene makes direct reference to photos from Abu Ghraib prison.

mainstream shines a light on the importance of caring for their basic human rights. The frightening similarities between the caged refugee bus in the film and the wiring off of refugees in Hungary in 2015 influences me to be in support of Cuarón's perspective to care for the rights of refugees as their treatment has only become more harmful since the film's release. Thus, I am urged to upstand for their rights rather than demoralise them.

The film also presents Cuarón's perspective that the mainstream are complacent in their efforts to resolve important societal issues through Theo's cousin, Nigel. A wide, long-shot showcases Nigel's house as white and pristine, with the Guernica mural in the background. Knowledge of context allows me to understand that this is an anti-war painting by Picasso that highlights the destruction caused by the bombing of Guernica by Nazi Germany. Nigel's sterile and structured setting is contrasted with the disarray and disunity of the outside world and the painting to intimate his lack of action in attending to issues within society, rendering the meaning behind the painting useless. This is further reinforced by Nigel's dialogue that what 'keeps him going' is that he 'tries not to think about' the anarchy occurring outside of his home. Understanding the context of the Guernica painting and that Cuarón purposely built Nigel's house to be a 'green zone' in this anarchy filled world allows me to understand Cuarón's perspective that those not affected by issues in society tend to turn a blind eye rather than attempt to make a positive influence. This is furthered by my knowledge of our 2017 society where this still occurs, as in the face of issues such as poverty and climate change, the privileged within society employ a 'try not to think about it' mentality.

Children of Men presents many of Cuarón's perspectives about our world. Through extrapolating issues that occurred during his time, his perspectives that ongoing violence must be stopped, more care must be exhibited in

The candidate sustains their personal voice here to explain how they have been encouraged to draw similarities between the context of production and their context of reception while linking this to their interpretation of the filmmaker's perspective.

The candidate comments on elements of the film's context of culture here by describing intertextual references to artwork with historical significance.

The candidate makes an insightful link between the dominant attitudes of contemporary society and the director's perspective here.

The candidate offers a logical summary of their argument here, effectively reminding the marker that their appreciation of the director's context allowed them to be receptive to his perspectives



the treatment of refugees and that society is complacent in attending to important issues are strongly displayed. Knowledge of his context largely influences me to be further in favour of his perspectives, particularly as such issues have only become more significant since the film's release. This knowledge has influenced in me the need to repair our today in order to create a superior and more worthwhile 'Tomorrow'.

while prompting deep reflection about their own context.

### Activity: Articulating perspectives

Re-read the previous response, noting the candidate's explanation of the director's perspectives. In the table below, summarise the perspectives identified, as well as the contextual factors to which the candidate refers.

Text	Perspectives privileged within the text	Contextual factors that shape this perspective
<i>Children of Men</i>		

Continue the process of examining perspectives by completing the table below to closely investigate your studied texts. A sample has been provided for you. You may find it useful to recreate this table for individual texts as you can consider the perspectives of multiple characters and how each one is shaped by unique contextual factors.

Text	Perspectives privileged within the text	Contextual factors that shape the perspectives
<i>Jasper Jones</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the novel is written in first-person point of view from Charlie Bucktin's naïve and childish perspective as he comes to the critical realisation that the adults of Corrigan are untrustworthy, racist and insular</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Charlie's situational context shapes his perspectives as he seems out of place in the mining town of Corrigan; he is smart, eloquent and enjoys reading – traits that place him on the margins of the sport-focused town</li> <li>elements of the context of culture also influence Charlie's perspectives: set in 1960s Australia, the novel reflects the dominant racist ideology of this time period as well as divided attitudes towards both the Vietnam War and changing expectations of women</li> </ul>

Question 7 requires you to articulate 'your understanding' of the relationship between context and perspectives. You can approach this in a variety of ways, including:

- considering how the text's context of culture, as well as the situational context of individual characters, shapes their perspectives
- exploring how the perspectives offered by the creator of a text are shaped by cultural and situational factors
- comparing a text's context of production to specific contexts of reception to determine how perspectives could be interpreted in a variety of ways
- identifying elements of your own context to justify how your unique response to the perspectives in a text is shaped by contextual factors

Generally, students find it difficult to articulate the specific elements of their own context that inform the way they interpret the perspectives in a text. This requires a willingness to deeply reflect on your own values, attitudes and situation. Use the table below to reflect on how elements of your personal context have shaped your interpretation of the perspectives in a text you have studied. A sample has been provided for you.

Text	Perspective offered	Elements of my personal context which shape my interpretation
<b>Mad Men (TV show)</b>  <b>Episode: "Shoot"</b>	<p>Don Draper's perspective is that of a successful patriarchal man in 1960s America. He believes the most important job a woman can have is motherhood and that his wife should not return to modelling, instead remaining in the domestic sphere.</p> <p>This is shaped by the patriarchal ideology of 1960s America as well as Don's own situational context, as it is revealed he is an orphan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• as a young woman raised by my mother in a single-parent household, it is unfamiliar to me to see a wife answer to her husband</li> <li>• my understanding of this text is also shaped by my own experiences of my mother working long hours in high-powered corporate positions without the expectation that she should be at home looking after me; as a child, I was often cared for by babysitters and was expected to find my way home from school once I reached high school</li> <li>• my critical interpretation of Don's perspective is also shaped by my context of culture, as significant developments in the feminist movement have naturalised the idea that women can 'have it all' (meaning: a career and a happy home life)</li> </ul>

### Question 7: Sample response two

This response is successful due to the candidate's ability to identify and discuss how contextual factors work in combination, revealing their sound knowledge of this concept. They discuss how an understanding of the text's context of culture interacts with their own context of reception in a considered and reflective response. Additionally, this response articulates the specific perspectives of each character while justifying how an understanding of their context makes it easier to accept or appreciate their ways of thinking. This response is also logically structured with a broad thesis outlined in the introduction that gains clarity in each body paragraph.

The context of culture, situation and reception of a text plays a vital part in helping its audience make meaning of the perspectives presented in a text. 'The Angry Kettle', a memoir written by Ding Xiao Qi in 1993, illustrates the hardships experienced by a Chinese young woman who has recently migrated to Australia. The narrator is the Chinese young woman and she learns about the Australian way of life through her Australian flat mate, Michael. Due to their differing backgrounds, the narrator's being Maoist China and Michael's being Eurocentric Australia, their two perspectives clash. By understanding the context of culture, as well as the context of reception or my personal culture, I am able to understand the origins of these perspectives and form judgements about them.

The context of culture, in particular the narrator's background which is from Maoist China, has influenced my interpretation of the narrator's perspectives in such a way that I am able to understand her confusion with Michael's materialistic nature. In Maoist China, materialism was criticised and the community's needs are placed above the individual's. Because of this, Michael's emotional attachment to a kettle, is viewed as absurd by the narrator. She admits, 'I'll be damned if I know why he spent three-hundred and ninety-nine dollars and ninety-nine cents on that kettle.' From her perspective, there is no need to spend such a large sum of money on an appliance which only serves to boil water. This is understandable considering the context in which

This is an effective opening because the candidate demonstrates their knowledge of "culture, situation and reception" as terms used to discuss context in the syllabus.

The candidate summarises the plot of the text succinctly, as well as identifying the differing contexts of culture for each character and their similar context of situation.

This thesis is too general and should link to key concepts of the question. Instead of using the phrase "form judgements", the candidate should identify their specific interpretation.

This paragraph directly addresses the question, using personal voice to illustrate their understanding of context and their empathetic reaction to the characters.

The incorporation of textual evidence is fluent and logical here as the candidate uses it to articulate the narrator's perspective on buying expensive items and how this perspective is shaped by contextual factors.

this memoir was written. The Chinese economy was only slowly starting to open up, and before that it was a communist country where everyone was equal and no one could afford such a pricey appliance. The narrator's confusion is further shown when she views the kettle as 'just a plain old kettle', which is in contrary to Michael, who says that 'you can't express the value of something as good as this in monetary terms.' In the narrator's perspective, she can only see the kettle's functionality, and she silently disapproves of Michael's materialistic views of the kettle which are contrary to her own. By understanding the context of culture, which is Maoist China, I interpret the narrator's perspective that the kettle is a mere appliance which is only able to boil water as understandable and I am in agreement with it.

The context of culture, 1993 Australia which had only recently adopted a more open immigration policy 30 years after the notorious white Australia policy, is key in my understanding of Michael's Eurocentric perspective. Michael is 'very eager to correct [the narrator's] English mistakes', which in his perspective, is a form of kindness or friendliness to a newcomer of his country who is trying to adapt to the Australian way of life. From the narrator's perspective, this act of interrupting her speech to correct her 'grammar', 'pronunciation' or 'to praise [her] command of the language' soon becomes counterproductive as she becomes fearful to speak in front of him. In Michael's perspective, he is only trying to teach her the Aussie way of life by improving her proficiency in English. I believe his perspective is influenced by the majority view in society back in the 1990's that migrants should abandon or suppress their cultural identity and assimilate, hence he did not find his actions harmful or offensive. This dominant view in society also explains his outburst at the narrator in the climax of the memoir, in which he says to her 'if you don't like sandwiches then you shouldn't have come to Australia.' His close-minded perspective that migrants must assimilate is partly forgiven due to the lack of migrants

The candidate identifies historical, social and cultural factors of the text's context, further demonstrating their detailed understanding of this concept.

The comparison of the perspectives of each character is excellent here, as it demonstrates how perspectives are influenced by contextual factors.

The candidate sustains their personal response here, acknowledging how an understanding of the character's context of culture allows them to agree with their perspective that the kettle is a "mere appliance".

This paragraph begins with a logical return to the question by focusing on the social and cultural aspects of context, which give rise to a clash of perspectives in the text.

The candidate's understanding of perspectives as a syllabus concept is outstanding, as they identify the specific viewpoints of each character as well as explaining the contextual factors that form them.

Here, the candidate uses personal voice to justify their reaction to each character, pointing out that an understanding of culture makes it easier to appreciate or excuse their perspectives.

in Australia at that time as well as the white Australia policy which encourages Eurocentric views amongst Australian society. Even though Michael's perspective lacks cultural awareness as well as consideration towards people of other ethnicities, I can interpret that this has been influenced by Australia's previously closed borders and the detrimental, racist views held by the majority as a result of this.

The context of reception, or my personal context, has resulted in a deeper understanding of both perspectives presented in 'The Angry Kettle'. I am a Malaysian-Chinese who migrated to Australia five years ago, hence I am well aware of both Michael and the narrator's perspective. From the narrator's perspective, Michael's constant interruption of her speech resulted in her becoming 'afraid to speak'. I empathise with her perspective because I have experienced first-hand how interruptions and corrections can make non-English speakers lose confidence in themselves. I also am supportive of her continued resistance towards the pressure to abandon her cultural identity. She 'tried to speak as fast as a machine gun' to stop Michael from interrupting her, and 'tried to find a way to escape' from Michael who was treating her as inferior. In this way, I believe she sets an example to other migrants and reminds them that they shouldn't forget who they are and where they come from. However, I am also able to understand Michael's perspective. As an Australian myself, I am proud of our nation's willingness to try and accommodate the needs of migrants and make them feel welcome, to the best of our ability. Racism is still present within our society but it has certainly been reduced since the time of 'The Angry Kettle'. Through my personal context or context of reception, I am able to gain a deeper understanding of the perspectives in 'The Angry Kettle'.

My understanding of contextual factors such as the views of Maoist China, the white Australia policy as well as my own personal context has allowed me to engage with 'The Angry Kettle' in a much more meaningful

The candidate's attention to elements of the context of culture is impressive. They explain how their awareness of cultural factors, such as the White Australia Policy, helps them to understand the perspectives of each character.

This paragraph adopts a valuable self-reflective quality as the candidate points out how they are uniquely positioned to understand both perspectives constructed by the text due to elements of their own context of situation.

The candidate offers a thoughtful conclusion by summarising how their understanding of contextual factors allows them to interpret



way. These contexts help to justify why certain perspectives are held by groups of people. Whether it be an immigration policy, a communist government or my own personal circumstance, contexts are extremely important in helping the audience to understand why certain perspectives exist.

and appreciate the perspectives of each character.

#### Hint: Know yourself (almost) as well as you know your texts

A quick review of the 2017 paper should draw your attention to a critical point: two of the six questions in this section specifically invited a personal response. It is expected that you will be able to justify your unique responses to texts as well as how contextual factors shape your interpretations. To do this well, you must have a strong sense of who you are and why you respond to a text in a particular way. Practise writing about your values and attitudes in relation to the texts you study and remember that it's acceptable to write with a personal and reflective voice; for some questions, it's crucial.

#### Activity: Identifying the contextual factors which shape perspective

Many students struggle with the concept of perspective. They correctly identify the viewpoint or attitude held by the character or writer but fail to acknowledge the contextual influences which inform that viewpoint. The student in the previous sample nails it, clearly identifying the contexts of both the narrator and Michael and how this shapes their viewpoints regarding Michael's attachment to the kettle.

Complete this table using information from the above essay before constructing a similar table for one of your own texts.

Subject	Context	How this shapes viewpoint
Narrator - Ding Xiao Qi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maoist China</li> <li>• communist country</li> <li>• community above individuality</li> <li>• materialism frowned upon</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the narrator is bewildered by the cost of the kettle as the population of Maoist China were typically poor</li> <li>• she disapproves of Michael, given materialism is frowned upon in communist countries which do not value consumerism</li> <li>• she values functionality and economy, communist values which serve the common good, and believes a cheaper kettle would do the same job</li> </ul>
Michael		

#### Activity: Writing great introductions

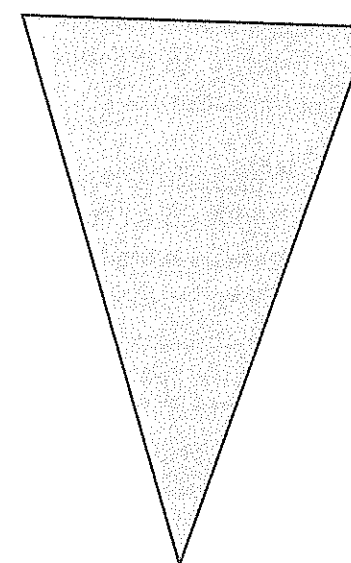
The Responding Section of the exam provides you with an opportunity to showcase your essay-writing skills. It is critically important that you are able to break your chosen question down into its parts to determine what your essay must cover, as well as to formulate a clear argument. A well-structured introduction is where the magic happens!

##### Why do introductions matter?

Think of your introduction as the foundation of your essay. If your introduction is logical, well-worded and focused on the question, it is likely that the rest of your essay will be too. A strong introduction gives its proceeding paragraphs a strong point to link back to and will ensure you remain focused on your thesis (the argument of your essay).

##### How to structure your introduction:

There is no one exact way to structure an introduction that will yield perfect results every time. The structure of an introduction will depend on the unique style of the writer as well as the question being responded to. In a more general sense, introductions often take the shape of an inverted triangle (meaning a progression from broad to specific details):



- One to two sentences to broadly engage with the text and the question. Candidates can approach this in a variety of ways, though using some of the key words from the question is a good place to start.
- One to two sentences to introduce the text formally. As this is the first time you will refer to the text, make sure you include the full title, author's name and any important contextual details (such as the year of production). Include a succinct explanation of the plot of the text, making sure you draw attention to details relevant to your chosen question.
- Two to three sentences to develop your thesis and respond directly to the essay question. This is the most important point of your introduction as it will determine how closely your essay will address the question. Your thesis must clearly outline your argument in response to the question.

The responses to Question 7 on the previous pages are successful, partly due to their engaging introductions. Re-read each introduction and, using different colours, highlight the following components in each one:

- a broad statement that addresses the essential key words and concepts of the question
- a brief summary of each text, including important contextual details
- a thesis that responds directly to the essay question

Next, plan your own response to Question 7 using the texts you prepared in the previous tables. Once you have developed your plan, set a timer for eight minutes. Practise writing an introduction under timed conditions to help you prepare for the conditions of the exam. After eight minutes, reflect on the following questions:

- Were you able to complete the introduction in the time permitted?
- Have you introduced both texts with details that are relevant to the question?
- Have you developed a clear thesis to respond to the essay question?