



2013

English GA 3: Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2013 English examination assessed student achievement in the skills and outcomes indicated in the *VCE English Study Design*.

The examination consisted of three sections. Section A (Text response) offered students the choice of two topics for each of the texts on the text list published by the VCAA. Students were required to complete one response. Section B (Writing in Context) required students to compose a piece of writing stemming from a prompt for each of the four Contexts. Section C (Analysis of language use) required students to analyse the ways in which the writer of a newsletter used language and visual features to present a point of view.

Assessment was based upon criteria, which were applied holistically. The descriptors of the ‘Expected Qualities for the Mark Range’ can be found on the VCAA website by following the link to the exam criteria from the English study page. These descriptors are based on the criteria and are general indicators of what might reasonably be expected for the specified mark ranges in each section of the examination. Finer judgments are then made when the exact characteristics of responses are analysed.

More than 40 000 students sat for the 2013 English examination, and assessors were presented with a range of skills and levels of engagement with the examination. Most students responded to the requirements of the examination and presented three distinct pieces of writing. The quality of work produced under the examination conditions was generally quite sound, and at times, impressive.

Students seemed to have a clear understanding of how to approach the examination. There were very few incomplete pieces of writing, which suggests that students managed their time well. There were few papers where a student did not attempt a response, and students generally filled out the information required in the answer book correctly.

On the other hand, it should be noted that

- there is still a problem for some students in fully engaging with the elements of the topics and prompts. Greater care needs to be taken in analysing and recognising the specific expectations of each topic or prompt – often this comes down to a precise understanding of the words that comprise the task
- as this is an English examination, strong language skills (including correct spelling and grammar) are expected and necessary for success
- it is recommended that students organise their time so that enough time is left to proofread their work. While handwriting is not assessed, it must be legible. While it is accepted that there is obvious pressure in an examination, there were occasions when words or phrases in students’ responses could not be deciphered. Students can only be rewarded for ideas that can be read
- despite repeated advice in previous exam reports, there still seems to be some dependence on formulaic responses. The study of English is concerned with developing students’ understanding of and confidence in responding to the specific topics and prompts that are offered in the examination. As well, active engagement with texts enables students to develop language awareness, to articulate ideas and to develop communication skills. A personal engagement with the texts and ideas is neither formulaic nor predictable.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced in this report have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding errors resulting in a total less than 100%.

The student responses provided below are presented for illustrative and informative reasons, and they may form the basis of profitable discussions. These examples should not be taken as ‘the best’ that is possible or as ‘perfect’; indeed, none is without shortcomings of one sort or another. In the 2013 report, however, they have been selected both as typical of better responses and/or material that may be of some use for improving the knowledge and skills in the English study. Readers will obviously be able to make many more observations about the quality of these responses beyond the brief comments offered in this report.



Section A – Text response

There was a choice of two topics for each text. The topics enabled students to address the knowledge and skills as outlined in the study design. The choice between topics enabled students to develop a sustained discussion on one or more of the following aspects of key knowledge for Units 3 and 4 Outcome 1.

- the ideas, characters and themes constructed by the author/director and presented in the selected text
- the way the author/director uses structures, features and conventions to construct meaning
- the ways in which authors/directors express or imply a point of view and values
- the ways in which readers' interpretations of text differ and why

In 2013 students continued to demonstrate improvement in both their skills and textual knowledge. It was evident that many students selected a topic with which they felt they could demonstrate their understanding of the text with respect to the specifics of the topic, and recently students have avoided simplistic plot summaries. Students' ability to understand, acknowledge and explore the genre of their selected text and to incorporate a sense of that understanding in their response had improved.

Students should be encouraged to have confidence in their own reading and demonstrate a personal understanding of their text, rather than relying exclusively on commercially produced material. All texts are complex works of art with a wealth of opportunity for exploration. There is no 'expected' response to a topic, and the most successful pieces were those that were thoughtful and fresh. The assessor does not have to agree with the interpretation of a topic or text; the students must, however, be able to support their interpretations with insightful evidence from the text. If students have an excellent knowledge of their text and have a grasp of the topic, they should be confident when presenting their ideas and constructing their essays. Many students overused prepared ideas that were forced into a response, with little regard to how it was exploring the topic.

The area that still requires the most work is the understanding, deconstruction and organisation of responses in relation to the set topics. Students should be taught to look critically at the wording of the topic and to consider what assumptions are being made within the topic. It is still a problem that too many students manipulate the topic to suit their desired approach, rather than grapple with the ideas of the topic as it is presented. The wording of a topic is carefully presented and carries implications that can be explored. In most cases every word is placed within a topic for a purpose. It is worth reviewing the relevant description from the published 'Expected Qualities – Text Response'. For a score of 9 or 10, a script 'demonstrates an understanding of the implications of the topic, using an appropriate strategy for dealing with it, and exploring its complexity from the basis of the text.'

Many topics ended with the instruction 'Discuss.' or 'Do you agree?'. The suggestion is that the topic should not necessarily be taken at face value, but should be explored and examined with a degree of profundity.

Students must also ensure that they explore all of the elements presented in the topic. Too often a key point is taken from the topic and an essay produced, omitting a significant idea that has a major bearing on the topic itself.

For example, the first topic for *Year of Wonders* was "'The novel explores how people reveal unexpected qualities under pressure.' Discuss." However, many students discussed the qualities revealed under pressure but not the 'unexpected qualities'.

Così topic ii. was "'In *Così*, the Vietnam War is not the only conflict that affects the characters.' Discuss." Too many students explored the conflicts affecting the characters but not within the framework of the Vietnam War, which was one of the central concerns of the topic.

In *Things We Didn't See Coming*, topic ii. ("'*In Things We Didn't See Coming*, it is companionship that keeps people going.' To what extent do you agree?"), many students discussed companionship (often listing all the times it existed in the text), but often did not address the rest of the question, 'that keeps people going'.

Students should consider the breadth of opportunity to explore an idea from the text. It was surprising to see how limited some responses were in terms of textual use to support students' views. Some referred to one or two scenes or relied on a single part of the text. Students would do well to approach the totality of the text, rather than focusing on the most obvious moments of the narrative.

Almost without exception, students demonstrated an understanding of writing a text essay. Clear introductions, appropriate paragraphing and the ability to embed quotations appropriately were features of most pieces. These basic



skills must be continually reinforced, including building more sophisticated vocabulary, continuing to improve grammar and placing more focus on sentence structure. Some continued work on effective quoting may also assist students to select brief, meaningful quotes that add more than retelling the point already made. Long, turgid quoting that wasn't relevant certainly did not add to the success of an essay.

Data on text selection and averages is provided at the end of this report.

The following is an example of an upper-range response.

Wuthering Heights

ii. 'Heathcliff's obsession makes a monster of him.' Discuss.

Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights presents a world of polarizing characters subject to the forces of social class and a passionate love that transcends the world in which they exist. Heathcliff's actions and motivations in the morally ambiguous world constructed by Bronte portrays him not as a monster, but as a Byronic hero whose tyrannical actions are seen as the result of an all-consuming love that has been bastardized by the influence of the social mechanisms of his day. Thus Heathcliff's status as an outsider and his love of Catherine empower him to commit such horrendous actions, though he finally achieves peace in his end. This is indicative of his status of a Byronic hero, a concept that the people of Bronte's day would have known and understood, as his dark, unbridled passion punctuates his every action.

Upon his arrival at the weather-beaten purgatory that is Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff is immediately seen as an outsider. That the name 'Heathcliff' serves as both his Christian and surname divorces him from the typical traditions of the time, whilst the lack of a surname removes the societal power or status that comes with an established name, such as Linton or Earnshaw. Similarly, that his arrival, immediately labelled a 'gypsy brat' and 'villain', also characterized by the destruction of beauty through the fiddle brought back by Mr Earnshaw, serves as a device that foreshadows Heathcliff's dark, malevolent nature. Ironically, it is the subsequent removal from the normalized society that foster the transcendent bond between Heathcliff and the youthful Catherine. The bond they develop is all-conquering, not characterized by lust but the consummation of one whole, evident as Catherine states 'I am Heathcliff.' However, this bond is also a metaphysical one, as Catherine warns that anyone who comes between them shall 'befall the fate of Milo,' demonstrating a fierce, emotive connection characterized by dependence and devotion between the two young deviants.

Catherine's transformation upon returning from Thrushcross Grange is seen as the catalyst for Heathcliff's vengeful temperament. Having departed a 'wicked slip' who was 'never so happy as when we all were scolding her at once', this rebellious nature which bred the bond with Heathcliff was irreparably damaged due to the influence of social class. Transformed by the 'splendid place' that is 'carpeted with crimson,' the allure of wealth, social status and shallow beauty catalysed by the Grange is only further perpetuated by the influence of Frances, who comes from a similar world. This leads to Catherine's assertion that it would 'degrade [her] to marry Heathcliff' despite the love they share. That Catherine states that she loves 'The ground under [Edgar's] feet, and the air above his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says' is further proof of Catherine's disillusionment, as she never directly states she loves Edgar. This is indicative of Bronte's criticism of the influence of social class, her belief that it is a negative influence that promotes a false love powered by shallow values of wealth and status. That these influences are the catalyst for Heathcliff's defection from the Heights is indicative of his motivation, which inevitably becomes his obsession; to seek vengeance on that which took Catherine from him; social class and those who perpetuated its influence.

Heathcliff's transformation upon returning to the wider realm of the Heights and the Grange is a fleeting example of the obsession that powers him. No longer a 'gypsy brat' but a 'tall, athletic, well-formed man,' Heathcliff has, at least on the surface, obtained a similar social standing to those who oppressed him. Similarly, the 'gibberish' with which he previously expressed himself is replaced with a powerful, poetic, latinized lexicon characterized by phrases such as how the world had become a 'dreadful collection of memoranda' about Catherine. However, as Catherine claims that, through death she will become 'incomparably above and beyond you all' is implicit of a force within Catherine, and, subsequently Heathcliff, transcendent of the realm in which she once existed. This is a love of Heathcliff, and without her, it consumes him. Absorbed by a 'monomania on his departed idol' Heathcliff resumes the systematic torture and oppression of those within this reach. Hareton's claim that Heathcliff 'pays dad back what he gives to me' demonstrates that Heathcliff is punishing and degenerating Hindley. Symptomatic of this, Hindley's alcoholism and resultant abuse of Hareton, such that Hareton labels him 'devil daddy' mirrors Hindley's lowering of Heathcliff to servant status and subsequent abuse. Continuing this mirroring, Heathcliff assures that Wuthering Heights becomes to young Cathy what the entrapment of Thrushcross Grange was to Catherine; a literal hell on Earth with no chance of escape. Furthermore, Edgar's disowning of Isabella perpetuates his own internal destruction, yet Isabella's claim that 'I do hate [Heathcliff]' shows Heathcliff's remarkable achievement of destroying these two symbols of social class that alienated him from Catherine. Therefore Heathcliff is seen to have undergone an overwhelming transformation which allows him to exact terrible revenge, all inspired by his love of Catherine.

In the concluding moments of the novel, Heathcliff is seen, not as remorseful, but resigning to a fate that awaits him. The two principle motivations, love and vengeance, begin to shift, as Heathcliff's love consumes his existence. Declaring that 'it is a long fight, I wish it were over' demonstrates Heathcliff's desire to welcome the afterlife. Contrasting typical religious views, as Nelly



criticizes Heathcliff for having 'hardly had a bible in [his] hands since the age of 13' and the resulting declaration that he is 'unfit for heaven' is demonstrative of the wider societal beliefs that would see Heathcliff as a monster and thus condemn him to Hell. However Bronte's morally ambiguous universe presents their love as a force that transcends these boundaries, and therefore Heathcliff is right in asserting 'I have nearly achieved my heaven.' Drifting, willingly into the world of chaos with Catherine, it is here that Bronte simultaneously condemns Calvinistic religious principles and heralds Heathcliff not as any type of monster, but as a Byronic Hero capable of rising above the world that oppressed him.

Therefore, Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights presents a world where the traditional societal conventions condemn Heathcliff and would thus label him a monster. However, in Bronte's perspective, Heathcliff's passionate vengeance is indicative of a love that transcends his plane of existence, and therefore he is in no way a monster.

Assessor comments

- Deals with the topic in a controlled and well-developed manner.
- Demonstrates a close and perceptive reading of the text and applies that understanding to the topic.
- Use of the text is broad and extensive, including appropriate and effective use of quotations.
- It could be more selective in drawing from the text to support the topic.
- Fluent and well written, although it is not without faults.

The following is an example of an upper-range response.

A Christmas Carol

ii. "This boy is Ignorance. This girl is Want."

'A Christmas Carol contains lessons not only for Scrooge, but for the society of Dickens's day.' Discuss.

Set against the backdrop of rampant industrialism, Charles Dickens' classic novella, A Christmas Carol endorses the notion that all life is precious and equal. By taking his apparently irredeemable protagonist Ebenezer Scrooge, on a supernatural journey, Dickens intends to convey to the complacent classes of the era the necessity of various traits among society that are vital such as the responsibility to those less fortunate and to employees as well as other necessary lessons such as charity. Dickens also warns the reader of the consequences that will follow if these lessons are not taken in heed.

Through the use of characters such as Tiny Tim and the Cratchit family, Dickens is able to display to Scrooge and his audience the extent of the poverty within society. Dickens foreshadows the penurious family through the Ghost of Christmas Present sprinkling his torch, 'to a poor one most', because 'it needs it most' upon the Cratchit household. Their impoverished circumstances are further displayed by Dickens through their surroundings. For example their inability to boast an array of glass, 'two tumblers and a custard cup without a handle' and other household items. Despite this, the jubilation exhibited by the family act as a stark contrast to their circumstances which acts to teach Scrooge and Dickens' audience of the importance of happiness in life over wealth. Through Tiny Tim, Dickens also intends to critique the ideologies expressed by Bentham and Malthus, popular philosophies of the time, who believed greatest happiness in the greatest number and that famine and poverty acted as a form of natural intervention to prevent over population. Through Scrooge's shame upon heaving his regurgitated words said by the Ghost of Christmas Present in regard to decreasing the 'surplus population' and therefore endorsing the notion that the affable upper classes have a responsibility to those less fortunate, through the 'miser' Scrooge.

Furthermore, Dickens explores the responsibility employers have to their employees through characters such as Bob Cratchit and Old Fezziwig. Upon Scrooge's visit to his previous employer, Fezziwig, Scrooge comes to the realisation that Fezziwig has 'the power to render us happy or sad' in relation to the authority employers have over their employees. Dickens contrasts the happiness and kindness radiated by Fezziwig towards his apprentices, Scrooge and Dick, to Scrooge's cruelty towards his own browbeaten clerk, Bob Cratchit. The effect of Scrooge viewing Fezziwig's Christmas Ball is instantaneous in regard to his own reflection of his treatment of his employee when he says 'I would like to say a word or two to my clerk just now.' Dickens intends for this self-reflection to not only occur within Scrooge, but also within his audience in an attempt to insinuate within the audience the importance of the responsibility employers have to their employees.

Dickens also uses his characters to endorse other lessons that he believed were essential in keeping Christmas 'well'. Scrooge's behaviour in Stave 1 towards the two portly gentlemen and his rudeness displayed towards his 'ruddy' nephew Fred, encapsulates all the attitudes that the misanthropist must reverse in order to be redeemed. Therefore his generous donation to the portly gentlemen in Stave 5 not only act as proof of his redemption, but also conveys Dickens' social message of the necessity of charity towards the less fortunate.

However Dickens does not only endorse the lessons required for Scrooge's redemption in A Christmas Carol, he also expresses a warning to not only Scrooge, but to the 19th century poverty and attempts to shock Scrooge and the reader of the ramifications of their ignorance towards the less fortunate. 'Beware them both, and all of their degree.' These 'wolfish' characters encapsulate the 'doom' which Dickens foreshadows as a result of their neglect, 'unless the writing be erased'. The minor characters in the novella also act as a representation of the already occurring consequences of society's behaviour towards the poor. Mrs Dilber and her accomplice represent the sheer desperation felt by the poor and represent the warp poverty has had on these people.



Their lack of any respect or morals is displayed by their actions of robbing Scrooge's corpse, including his bed curtains, without any show of remorse. Through these characters Dickens conveys to Scrooge and also to the comfortable classes of society the consequences that will occur, and also what have already occurred as a result of their neglect to the poor. Dickens aims to scare his audience and to then endorse the lessons he presents to Scrooge to them, in an attempt to encourage social reform.

Charles Dickens's powerful novella encompasses the lessons required for Scrooge's own redemption as well as attempting to insinuate within the reader a reflection of their own values and behaviours such as their responsibility to the poor and to their employees as well as the acts of charity. Dickens's novella also acts to warn Scrooge and the audience of the ramifications of their actions if social reform does not occur.

Assessor comments

- Articulate and well written.
- Shows a complex treatment of the topic.
- Highly expressive.
- Detailed and thorough, measured in its inclusions.
- Broad use of the text to support the ideas presented.
- Explores the complexities of ideas.
- There is some repetition, but it is still a sound piece of writing.

Section B – Writing in Context

The task in each Context required students to write an extended written response for a specified purpose and audience, exploring ideas and using detail from at least one text selected from the English Text List 2, published in the *VCAA Bulletin VCE, VCAL and VET*. In all cases students had something to say, and it was clear that some very interesting approaches and interpretations to creating and presenting were studied in classes.

Section B elicited a wide range of responses. While an expository approach still seems to be the most popular, there were many students who attempted creative or persuasive approaches. It is important to point out that one particular approach is not necessarily more successful than another. In all cases there were provocative, well-written pieces, and others that were forced and simplistic. Students and teachers should be confident to select the approach to writing that best suits the individual student.

The most successful students demonstrated confidence with their writing, and structured their pieces in a cohesive manner so that the ideas were well developed within the conventions of the writing form selected.

While the majority of students had little difficulty in demonstrating how their piece of writing was also informed by a text from the text list, there were some who seemed to ignore the instructions from page 7 of the examination: 'Your writing must draw directly from **at least one** selected text that you have studied for this Context...'. This is a clear instruction that at least one of the texts studied must inform the writing in a manner that must be clear to the reader, and that the student has used it effectively 'as appropriate to the task'. A small number of students, however, showed little or no connection to the ideas of the text they nominated. Some narratives did not draw clearly on 'detail and ideas' from the selected text. It is important to remind students that they cannot come into the examination and write whatever they wish. They must respond to the prompt and incorporate the ideas of their nominated text into their piece of writing. The onus is on the student to ensure that the connection between the nominated text and the response is evident to the assessor. It need not be explicit, but it must be evident.

While most students seemed to understand that Section B is not a text response, there seemed to be more responses this year where there was little distinction between Section A and Section B. A simple text essay does not fulfil the expected qualities of this section. Students are welcome to use material from other sources. Where these are used judiciously and add to the quality of thinking and development, they are used successfully, but when they are gratuitously included, they may get in the way of developing a thoughtful point. It is worth considering whether additional texts add breadth but not depth to a response.

It is also important that students understand the ideas, and/or arguments arising from the prompt, and deal with them accordingly. This year's examination required students to explore ideas related to 'conflict of conscience', or to examine the connection between growth and the capacity to 'accept change'. In 'Whose reality?', the focus of the prompt was 'losing touch' and the dangers associated with it. For 'The imaginative landscape', the prompt opened the concept of 'surroundings' being 'both threatening and comforting'.



Student responses must deal with the prompts. While a prompt can be seen as a springboard for ideas in relation to the Context, the piece of writing must deal with the ideas the prompt itself offers. The most successful scripts show insightful grasps of the implications of the prompt. While the majority of students were able to work with the prompt, there were some who seemed to ignore the prompt altogether.

A sample from each of the four Contexts follows, demonstrating a range of writing styles and approaches. More samples that offer a breadth of possibilities for successful writing can be found in previous years' reports.

Information on assessing the Context

Context	%	Average	Most popular text
Encountering conflict	45.4	5.5	<i>Paradise Road</i>
Exploring issues of identity and belonging	27.1	5.6	<i>Growing up Asian in Australia</i>
Whose reality?	19.7	5.9	<i>Death of a Salesman</i>
The imaginative landscape	7.5	6.0	<i>One Night the Moon</i>

Context 1 – The imaginative landscape

‘Our surroundings can be both threatening and comforting.’

The imaginative landscape is a conceptual construct determined by interpretation and impact. It can therefore, be defined as both our physical environment and our perspectives of the land, making it unique and personal. Influenced by the way in which individuals perceive the land, either connection or disconnection can result. Where our surroundings can be both facilitating and threatening, this dichotomous relationship leads us to perceive the land not necessarily just as it is but as we wish it to be. Thus, those who have a strong identity die to their respect of the land will maintain their place even in difficult times yet those with a tenuous link to the physical space will be threatened by it. The experiences of individuals can define their viewpoint of a landscape. If these experiences are positively the individual will have a bond with the land, yet negative can create division. Culture is what shapes human beings and links them to the landscape as it creates an awareness of how to live in the land, yet a weak understanding of culture means people will be fearful of the land. Rachel Perkins’ ‘One Night the Moon’ encompasses these very elements through the contrasted attitudes and values of a landscape between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians.

Landscapes are not static places, offering the human mind avenues to transform them far beyond what we actually see. This is particularly true of reconciliation. In Australia’s short history, one of both displacement and strength, the relationship between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples have fluctuated greatly. In more recent years, there has been an active desire toward the restoration of friendly relationships as we all come to respect the land and each other, finding comfort in all forms. Paul Keating’s 1992 ‘Redfern Address’ to the nation and all its citizens evoked the message of national wellbeing through reconnection and recognition. This message and its language acknowledged the Australian identity as a collaborative union with the potential for us all to reconsider how we act together and how we live. It is therefore essential we are one in our respect of the land as it has the ability to both threaten and comfort us. In response to this message, Rachel Perkins, director of insightful Australian film ‘One Night the Moon’ and daughter of Charles Perkins, famous aboriginal and reconciliation activist, recognizes the humanist view that our surroundings can not only be welcoming, but can also be rigid in its ability to embrace all individuals. Her use of language and music suggest that although true reconciliation has ‘unfinished business’, it is now a possibility more than ever. Kaarin Fairfax, the actress who played Rose in ‘One Night the Moon’ gave a lecture earlier this year that explored the notion of the ability of the land to be either comforting or to sign unwelcoming. Fairfax made it clear that although the plot and character are important elements, it is the music that is most pivotal in creating an alliance between film and audience. Therefore, the emotions that were provoked through music impacted her in a way she will ‘never forget’ as she too allowed the landscape to comfort her and create within her a lasting impression. Thus, it is pertinent that we respect each other’s perspectives as keepers of the land and each other as determined by our environment welcoming those who respect and threatening those who disrespect.

Our identity is an all-encompassing element of our lives. It determines our sense of belonging to something and will often become a reflection of our environment. Where our character is created by the land, it informs not only what we identify with, but how we act and react. Thus, if we allow the land to form who we are, it will comfort us, yet if we reject the land, it will act as a fearful atmosphere. In writing the script for ‘One Night the Moon’, Perkins actualized her belief that if we are static in our identity, we cannot change or grow. Therefore, Jim believes that because he ‘signed on the dotted line’ that his identity is limited with his ‘ownership’ of the land he works on. To further emphasise his claim on the land and his identity as a farmer, Jim has constructed a fence around his house which he thinks displays his dominance, yet it is as flimsy as his ‘ownership’. Rose his wife, is able to adapt her identity to the changing nature of woman, mother and wife as she waits for Emily to be found. When Rose finally chooses her primary role of mother to be most important, she reaches out to Albert and therefore the land. Musically, this is emphasised through the rhythmic combination of indigenous didgeridoo that accompanies the scene, to reconcile the two



cultures. This is further emphasizes through Albert's identity which is so inherently connected to the land, that when his race is repeatedly challenged, he knows himself well enough to resign from the police force. Rather than remain static in a job which discriminates his true identity, Albert is able to make a difficult choice. Even in the midst of such personal turmoil, Albert is able to connect with Rose, find Emily and allow a sense of comfort to be felt through her character and the land around him.

Experiences are essential for humanity as a lack of experience results in ignorance, which in turn causes disconnection from the world around them. Thus, if we do not facilitate our active participation in experiences, we will be threatened by the land. This indicates that the only way in which we can gain knowledge is through our experiences and these experiences allow us to be welcomed by the landscape. 'One Night the Moon' expresses the importance of both positive and negative experiences on lifestyle and wellbeing of humans. Albert is experienced within the landscape, being able to notice small changes in the environment. When tracking Emily, he discovers a fine strand of hair in a tree, literally finding the needle in the outback haystack. As he calmly searches the land he is comfortable in that the 'white man can't understand'. The musical score is soft and melodic to demonstrate his bond with the environment. The experience for the audience, as determined by Perkins' choice of song lyric, is enhanced through music as it provides an effective and simple avenue to achieve greater tolerance. Music allows for the development of expression as it provides a common language, something only Albert truly appreciates. Contrastingly, Jim's ignorance towards the land and the aboriginal community is a primary cause for his tragic downfall and as such, he is threatened by the land. His lack of experiences within the land is highlighted in the lone search for Emily as he falls and stumbles, representing defeat, the land conquers him. Jim fails to grasp the magnitude of the landscape and thus, there is a 'price to pay' as Jim realizes, to the sound of the lonely guitar, that he does not 'know anything anymore'. Jim does not create a comfort within the land as it acts as simply a reflection of his expectations.

The culture of any individual is not only collectively created and shared between groups, but it is also referenced by the social institutions of these people. Culture can therefore be defined as much by the land we inhabit as the rhythm that accompanies it. Rachel Perkins' familial experience with reconciliation and acknowledgement of the journey all Australians must embrace centres around our cultural heritage, or song lines, past and present. This storytelling through music is an inherent part of successful cultures as music aids the land in either welcoming or rejecting us. Though cultures may vary, depending on the type of people involved, there can be a strong connection between cultures. In 'One Night the Moon' when Albert gives Rose Emily's toy, it symbolizes that cultural differences can be overcome through understanding. Contrastingly this notion is encompassed through the musical duet sung by Jim and Albert. Albert sings in a low key, 'This land is me', symbolizing his strong attachment to the land. Alternatively, Jim sings in a high key, 'This land is mine', suggesting that he is distanced, uncomfortable and unfamiliar of his relationship with nature. Culturally, Jim is still attached to his European roots and can therefore not adopt his identity to the Australian landscapes and it threatens him.

The triumphant qualities of human nature through struggle and hardship result in the positive traits of humanity as positive outcomes, creating a strong relationship between both real and conceptual landscapes. Ultimately, it is not only how we behave but it is our unique interpretation of ourselves and our place with the landscapes that determines whether we will reconcile ourselves to succeed or fail.

Assessor comments

- While dealing exclusively with a single text, there is continual extrapolation to broader ideas in relation to both prompt and Context.
- Demonstrates thoughtful understanding of the film and the way in which it relates to the Context.
- Insightful development of the possibilities of the prompt, particularly in its breadth.
- It is a good example of a piece that would have been better had it been more succinct and selective in respect to developing ideas in relation to the prompt.
- Uses textual detail with assurance and relevance.
- Clear, controlled expression.
- This is an upper-range response.

Context 2 – Whose reality?

'Losing touch with reality is often dangerous.'

It is crucial to keep in touch with reality. The risk of falling into dangerous circumstances is heightened when individuals choose to ignore reality, or are not allowed to see the truth, and instead embrace illusion. Arthur Miller's vision of a post war America out of touch with reality due to the influences of the aspirational American Dream displays this through the character of Willy Loman. More recently, the Global Financial Crisis has highlighted how vital it is to remain fixed on reality, while Julian Assange and the Wikileaks movement have given contradictory messages on just how dangerous illusions are.

Willy Loman is a struggling salesman on the verge of retirement, struggling with financial expenses and about to lose his job. The American Dream, which promised so much for Americans in the aftermath of WWII – a luxurious house, a perfect family, an enjoyable job and an endless supply of money – had eluded Willy. Yet he fooled himself into thinking it hadn't. He maintains that he is 'vital in New England' when in fact he is about to lose his job, and acknowledges that 'business is tough, it's murderous, but not for me of course!' This remarkable denial of the truth is particularly dangerous for Willy, as he risks losing the support of



his own family over the mounting saga of illusion. His son Biff labels him a 'phony old fake', implying that Willy is consciously choosing to ignore the actual circumstances of his life in favour of a more comfortable illusion created by the intangible American Dream. Arthur Miller highlights just how dangerous losing touch with reality is through Willy, with the salesman having hallucinations, flashbacks and contradicting himself regularly. He labels Biff a 'lazy bum' before immediately changing his opinion to Biff being a 'hard worker'. The ludicrous nature of such illusion is what Miller seeks to highlight. When a person confuses reality with illusion, the dangerous mix that develops weakens the ability to distinguish what is real and what is not. Willy's wife Linda acts as Miller's mouthpiece in the novel, warning that 'attention must be paid' to those who ignore the fact that the aspirational American Dream is in fact no working as hoped. Losing touch of reality is certainly dangerous – Miller sees it as responsible for creating a consumerist culture living paycheck to paycheck, while the burden of mortgage bring honest working people to their knees. Miller warns that a solution must be found, or that the nation of America will sink into an illusion that will pose a terrible threat in the future.

That threat emerged in the form of the Global Financial Crisis in late 2008, as the American Dream created subprime lending crisis conspired with the burst of the housing price bubble to send America fumbling into recession. For decades, speculators and hedge fund operators had played a dangerous game, trading debts and investing stocks they held in principle. The bankers played with institutions they foolishly thought were 'too big to fail'. How wrong they were. The financial sector lost track of the reality of investment and branched out into dangerous unexplored methods of lending. Meanwhile, Miller's nightmare materialised as the public over-spent and over-borrowed, defaulting on loans and putting the banks to the sword. The people hadn't stayed firmly in reality. The banks had become slack in approving loans. The government didn't have any control. A dangerous game was played and lost; millions found themselves unemployed, clutching at the iPods and Nokias as capitalism itself broke. It was as if a young child had thrown a toy away with anger – the American nation had lost touch with reality, its terrible consequences. Yet the American public did something unthinkable. They didn't act like Willy Loman had, like Arthur Miller pessimistically thought. The people, instead of continuing on, waiting for the American Dream to swoop down, an eagle dressed in an American flag, and save them all, marched on the financial institutions in Wall Street. Thus, the worldwide Occupy movement began. The intentions of those with the idealistic vision of the '99%' taking power back from the elite were good in nature, yet they were unfortunately not realistic. The protestors themselves lost track of reality and thought they could enact lasting change. Squatters and serial protestors don't enact lasting change, as the media coverage depicted the movement. No Lehman Brothers figures were charged with financial crimes. The 1% remained in power. The fallout from the GFC showed that collectively, America had to stick to the true circumstances, the true potential for change, instead of foolishly thinking of few token protests would change history.

Closer to home, infamous hacker Julian Assange has been living dangerously. Through Wikileaks, which he founded, he publicly aired the dirty laundry hidden within the secret government cables between nations. He founded Wikileaks hoping for transparency, being worried, like Miller was, of a global society losing track of reality with government hiding the truth. Wikileaks was able to move the curtains of illusion of the geopolitical stage, yet Assange himself has fallen into the very part he was attempting to fill in. Stuck in London's Ecuadorian Embassy due to pending extradition for rape charges to Sweden, Assange thought it wise to run for a Senate seat in the Australian Federal Election in September, 2013. He won 1.5% of the vote in Victoria. I suppose that being stuck on the other side of a planet isn't a good way to campaign. That said, Wikileaks, lost touch with reality too; party member quiet due to a lack of transparency. It was all very ironic, and goes to show that however much changes is desired, sticking your head in the sand like Assange did, losing touch with any form of logical through, is not going to win you elections or public support for that matter. Wikileaks is becoming irrelevant, and Assange's poorly constructed solution to the lack of diplomatic cables to air as resulted in a public relations disaster. Wikileaks lived dangerously yet ultimately stepped across the line into a world of illusion they wanted to destroy forever.

It is essential to maintain a firm grasp of reality. The sanity of society rests on the premise that the majority of individuals so. Arthur Miller saw that the American Dream was causing a whole generation to shroud themselves in illusion and risk terrible damage to their personal wellbeing, financial stability and family. The GFC displayed this too. The funeral of capitalism, a system once thought impregnable (at least till China came along) and, like its monstrous financial institutions, 'too big to fail', occurred because bureaucrats, bankers and consumers were foolish enough to lose track of reality with dangerous consequences. Julian Assange's actions suggest that all the good intentions in the world are not enough if you do not practice what you preach. Reality must be kept in a tight grasp – the financial security, the political transparency and health of society depend upon it.

Assessor comments

- A thoughtful, well-developed discussion.
- Uses the prompt as the basis for ideas within the piece.
- The text is used well and is relevant to the ideas.
- Explores ideas about reality in depth.
- Knowledgeable in relation to the issues raised.
- Very well written, although not without errors.
- Assured, cohesively structured piece of work.
- This is an upper-range response.



Context 3 – Encountering conflict

‘Conflict of conscience can be just as difficult as conflict between people.’

Matt felt sick. His stomach churned with the violence of a storm-ridden sea. He could feel bile rising in his throat and his palms were clammy and clenched on his thighs. Yes, his actions had been provocative. He shouldn't have acted so...so...defensively? He was defending himself, and now he was paying for it. In a sense. Sitting in the corridor, waiting to be called in was enough torture in Matt's opinion. He only meant to make a point, to stand up for himself. He could hear the words in his mind now, as if they were coming from his teachers himself, 'pansy,' 'weak...' 'faggot'. That had been the last straw and he had stood up yelled and ended here. Heart thrumming a constant tattoo on his chest. Was he going to be expelled? Suspended for putting that homophobic slimeball in his place? Probably. Oh, he probably was! What will is parents say? Will they have to move? What about all of his friends. Matt's fingernails dug into his thighs. Why did he have to be so stupid? Why couldn't he just let it go over his head like the other times?

Galileo walked through the hall. The men, dark cloaks wrapped around their shoulders, smiled sadistically at him. Instrument after instrument was presented to him, each with a blasé description, each the more bone-chilling. He felt sick. 'Your hands would go here,' they said, 'and this will clamp down on your throat.' Galileo felt his insides shift and turn upside down. His eyes wide and his heart thrumming as he looked at the blood stained wood and the sharp, jagged iron. Death or recant? The shame of denouncing all that is true and factual about science, about his life; or bones being stretched at horrific angles and skin being ripped at the seams. He know what Copernicus did, a braver man than him, although they say he was mad. Was Galileo mad for taking on the Church? Yes he was. He could see his madness reflected right back at him in the devices of torture. 'I don't want to dishonor the truth,' he thought to himself, 'but I don't wish to die like this either.'

Matt had to steel himself. He couldn't take back his actions now. He had to deal with the consequences, be reprimanded, deal with the shame of telling his parents what happened at school today of all days the man behind that door to be feeling unwell, or not actually there. Please be understanding, please don't make me move schools. The doorknob turned and Matt's heart leapt from his ribcage and landed behind his tongue. The old hinges creaked as the heavy oak door moved with a horror-film-like sluggishness.

'Matt, you may come in now.'

Galileo stood, hand pressed to the bible, vile and false words pouring from his mouth. Surely his life was more important? The words were simple, any man could say them, but the gut-wrenching feeling associated with them made Galileo feel like he was trying to speak a language never spoken before. He realized with horror that the recanting was simple, yet he knew now that his life would never be the same. How will he explain to those who believed him who saw that truth, how will he explain the pain inside of him? They couldn't possibly understand the terror that lies in the hall beneath him, the ghastly screams that echoed in the unnatural levers. He was a coward, yes. In his conscience he will forever know that he ran from the truth. That he walked with his chin pressed to his chest, away from the all of torture, into the safe arms of recanting the truth about life itself.

His mind plagued with all the horrific possibilities, sometimes the fear inside your mind is torture enough.

Assessor comments

- The chosen form works well to explore the idea in the prompt.
- A telling link between the prompt and the text.
- The juxtaposition is interesting, although lacks full breadth of insight.
- Simple in some ways but demonstrates parallels.
- It is a readable, interesting approach.
- Expression is strong and appropriate for the approach taken.
- While there are flaws, this is still an upper-range response.

Context 4 – Exploring issues of identity and belonging

‘Sometimes we need to accept change in order to grow.’

An individual identity is what shapes us. It is what makes us unique and separates us from the other seven billion people on this planet. However, sometimes in life we encounter certain life experiences that bring physical or emotional change. They may have negative or positive impacts on our identity but play a significant part in shaping who we are. It is through these changes we experience in life that binds us in growing as an individual and as a person, further developing an identity.

Changes may come from physical changes, or changes into belonging to different social groups. For the eventful and tragic story of Sandra Laing, it was both the film 'Skin' directed by Anthony Fabian follows the story of Sandra Laing, a South African girl of Afrikan appearance with white parents. Throughout Sandra's life she experiences fundamental shifts of change, from her physical appearance, to her sense of belonging. When we are born into the world, it is our family who is essentially our first social connection. They provide us with the moral values that become imprinted in our nature. Born into a white family in an



apartheid era where it was designed to protect white supremacy and unity, Sandra is taught to hate the colour of her skin from a young age. With her father Abraham's uphill battle against the South African government on the issue of classification of her skin, Sandra's strong identity is formed and shaped as a 'white' one.

However, as we grow older, we move into different phases of life that bring great change, such as the transition into school. As Sandra moves to boarding school at the age of six she is pushed outside her comfort zone. When first questioned about her physical appearance, Sandra bemusedly replies, 'I am not black', As Sandra grows older she realizes that her physical change makes her different, and the target for racism. Her once strong identity of herself and the place where she belonged is slowly dismantled and shattered. However, despite her physical change and the desire to fit into a segmented society, her strong relationship with her mother helps her accept the changes she is faced with and to grow as a person. 'You cannot help what you are born with, but you can help what you become.'

The decisions we make may also often bring positive and negative change, but play a significant part in shaping who we are and where we belong. When Sandra elopes with a man named Petrus Zwane, she comes to accept that she is black and does not belong with her family. Sandra tells her father, 'I am not white.' This has a strong negative impact on her father as the changes to Sandra present a difficult challenge to her father. Appalled and disgusted, Abraham cuts all ties with Sandra and disowns her. After agreeing and believing in apartheid, he lets go of Sandra, only to grow as a person later in life to apologise and talk to his daughter again. As Sandra lives in the outskirts of the black community, the changes in her surroundings help her grow as an individual as she learns to become independent and raise a family, and ultimately grow as an individual.

As we journey through life, there are times where we realize that we do not belong yet we still call the place where we belong 'home' and those who live there 'family'. And when we realize where we should belong, it brings dramatic change and confusion, but also growth. In the book 'Tarzan of the Apes', written by Edgar Rice Burroughs and later Disney animation 'Tarzan' produced by Chris Buch, follows the story of a jungle man living with gorillas. As Tarzan grows as an individual and realizes his physical change and difference to his 'family' he wishes to prove his value and worth to Kuchak, 'I'll be the last ape ever.'

However, when we realize our 'true' place of belonging and our lost history of family it provides a means to grow as a person. When found with human kind for the first time Tarzan becomes unsure, 'I am so confused' and is at a loss for words. When being taught about the rest of the outside world and human civilization it brings great change to Tarzan and leaves him with difficult choices of whether to leave or stay in the jungle with his family. Despite this sudden change of heart or wanting to leave and see the rest of the outside world, Tarzan's identity is further challenged as he will never forget his 'mother', Kala. 'No matter where I go, you will always be my mother.' When questioned on his return to his family, Tarzan simply states, 'I came home.' With dramatic change, we are able to further grow as a person, strengthening our sense of self-understanding and belonging.

In our own lives we encounter great physical and emotional changes when growing up. As society changes, so do the attitudes, values and morals. As we move into a stage of transition from primary school, to high school and a transition from being a child to a teenager, we encounter great change not only physically but mentally. From being ignorant, arrogant and not so wise men, we become wise, mature and knowledgeable, through the changes of school, the changes of friendship groups and even simply, the changes of interest. Changes throughout our life plays a significant part in helping us grow as an individual.

Accepting the changes in life is all a part of growing up and growing as a person. These changes help not only shape our identity but where we belong. At various times in our lives these change but it is through accepting these changes that we are allowed to grow.

Assessor comments

- A clear and well-developed sense of the prompt.
- Use of texts explores the ideas and is used as a platform for offering insights into prompt and Context.
- It lacks the sophistication of the most successful responses, although the ideas are sound.
- Fluent and shows good control of language.
- This is an upper-range response.

Section C – Analysis of language use

Section C offered students a newsletter entitled 'Getting our future back on the rails – slowly' and was designed to persuade local community members to support the Grow Slow Garden Group, who were advocating the use of an area of land for the establishment of a community garden. Most students understood the importance of considering the Background information, which gave the material a clear context.

The instructions called for students to analyse how the writer used written and visual language to attempt to persuade the reader to share his point of view.



The piece set up its broad contention very early and made use of a number of contrasts as one of its primary means of persuasion. For example, the language used to describe the alternative proposals for the land were regarded as ‘fenced and concreted’ or ‘yet another’ car park. This was in contrast to a notion of forward thinking, and forward movement with regard to the proposal for a garden, but at the same time presenting it with a nostalgic, historical perspective.

There were two visuals. The first was from a World War II poster, and most students understood why it was included in the newsletter and analysed it accordingly. The second was a graph and an image of a shopping cart, where the tone of the newsletter had shifted, implying that a community garden would help with food waste and would be environmentally sound. There were distinct links between the written material and the way the reader was being set up to think through the use of the visual.

Careful reading yielded students numerous and various opportunities to demonstrate their skills of analysing the ways language was used to persuade. Given the time constraints of an examination, there is no expectation that all detailed elements can be explored. Students must make decisions about selecting the parts of the material that allow them to demonstrate an understanding of the material as a whole, their understanding of the range of ways in which language positions readers and their skills at analysis. The instructions, however, specifically stated that there was an expectation that students would deal with the visual material.

All students offered their perspectives on the language use in the presented material, and the best responses were sophisticated and articulate. There were few examples of labelling, and it was clear that students understood the nature of this task. This simplistic approach, however, is still present and students must understand that there is little to be gained by simply identifying ‘techniques’.

It was clear that many teachers emphasise tone. While understanding the tone of a piece and the potential for it shifting as a piece unfolds shows insight into the piece, it is still only one small aspect of analysis. Students should be thoughtful about how they describe the tone, and should not simply pluck words from a memorised list.

Descriptions such as ‘appealing to bandwagon jumping’, ‘appeal to parents’ or ‘appeal to authority’ are generalised comments and, without more detailed exploration, add little to a complex understanding of the piece. Likewise, some students spent far too much time on a single point at the expense of offering insights into the breadth of ways the writer used language to persuade.

The following is an example of a thoughtful, upper-range response that shows the student’s clear understanding of the material and the task.

In reference to the recent discussion about the future uses of an unused area of land previously home to a railway line. The Grow Slow Garden Group advocates for the establishment of a community garden, promoting a ‘greener Australia’. In the local newsletter, distributed to households in the surrounding area, the Grow Slow Garden Group strongly contends that a community garden is both innovative, productive and healthy and hence should be favoured over other plans and projects including a skateboard ramp and carpark.

Addressing fellow members of the community, the group appeals to the reader’s sense of unity and patriotism to urge everyone to work together when faced with the issue of the proposed land use. Starting the piece with ‘as just about everyone knows’, the Grow Slow Garden Group uses a very personal and relatable tone to draw their readers to view the proposal as a group and community effort. There is a shift in the tone of the piece as the group encourages their critics who view them as a ‘radical group’ to change their opinions and see them as a sincere, responsible and ‘proud’ environmental group instead, whose only goal is to help the community. The juxtaposition between the words ‘extreme’ as they have been labeled with the powerful use of ‘proud’ positions readers who have objected to their group and their proposal to feel ashamed and more inclined to support their fellow community members as well as the rest of Australia, appealing to the readers’ sense of patriotism. This notion of unity is further enhanced by the reference to the ‘second world war’ in which British citizens had to work together in order to ‘feed their families’. Appealing to the older generation who may have children the image of the war poster arouses the readers’ sense of patriotism as well as strikes their hearts due to the smiling faces of the children in the background. The words ‘for their sake’, encourages parents to protect their children and their futures, showing them that a community garden can both protect their children and be beneficial towards them if they ‘grow [their] own vegetables’. The depiction of the boot and shovel also arouse feelings of hard work and effort, which may make readers feel the need to support and stand up for their community and implement the proposal of the community garden.

Moving away from the notion of parental responsibility, the group argues that there is a ‘crisis’ at hand involving all members of the community, especially taxpayers. The use of the word ‘crisis’ has negative connotations of disaster and chaos, evoking feelings of unease and unrest within readers who may face problems if the issue of the unused area of land remains unresolved. Appealing to families who have to feed their families as well as couple and other tax-paying members of the community, the group highlights the issue of packaged frozen and take away being consumed which costs the state ‘millions’ of dollars. The



consumption of these sorts of foods has led to an overwhelming cost reaching over 350 million dollars as shown in the graph. The easy-to-read visual with the graph that has a scale of 'millions 4' may shock readers who are unaware of the 'hidden price tag', alarming them and dissuading them from eating parched, takeaway foods. The price tag is also shown on an image of a shopping trolley, further dissuading readers. Hence, the 'fresh food' that is 'less likely to be tossed out for grown from community gardens is more sustainable alternative to unhealthy and wasteful foods and readers feel more inclined to support the community garden and their products. As well as this, the council is also urged to establish a garden which will reduce their spending costs.

Using a familiar and warm tone, the adults in the readership are drawn also to the authors' relatable anecdotes which promote health and education for children. The sense of community is once again aroused as the Grow Slow Garden Group positions themselves with their readers using 'most of us' and referring to our loved ones ('our Dad or Grandpa'). These feelings of care and affection that can be seen from putting 'seeds in the earth' position readers to feel that a community garden can provide not only resourcefully but also gives us warm memories of childhood and our families. The notion that the community garden has 'no barriers' elicits a sense of acceptance and unity amongst the community who are then urged to allow their children to do 'physical work in the fresh air' and 'get to know their neighbors'. These actions induce positivity and are both beneficial to the body and mind, hence both parents gain the readership and members of the council are encouraged to accept the discussed proposal of the implementation of a community garden.

Alluding to the readers' sense of community and togetherness, the Grow Slow Garden group is able to draw their readers onside to view the establishment of the garden as beneficial, both now and in the future. References to not only the short term advantages but also the long term, encourages parents, taxpayers, member of council etc in the readership to see the community garden as a positive and 'forward thinking' project, which will be beneficial 'for ourselves, our children and our planet'.

Assessor comments

- A thorough and controlled piece of writing.
- Thoughtful analysis of specific words and phrases and the manner in which they are used in an attempt to persuade.
- There is a suitable balance between the specific analysis and the broader ideas.
- Expression is accurate and fluent.
- Clear understanding of both the task and the piece itself.
- This is an upper-level script.

2013 Examination Report



Table 1 Text selection from Section A of the English examination and average scores for Sections A, B and C

English – Section A text	% of students	% Average score – Section A	% Average score – Section B	% Average score – Section C
<i>On the Waterfront</i>	18	57	55	56
<i>Twelve Angry Men</i>	14	54	53	55
<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	10	56	55	55
<i>Year of Wonders</i>	10	59	58	59
<i>Così</i>	9	47	50	51
<i>Ransom</i>	6	61	60	61
<i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i>	6	56	57	57
<i>Things We Didn't See Coming</i>	4	56	54	56
<i>The War Poems</i>	4	63	59	60
<i>Henry IV, Part I</i>	4	72	69	70
<i>Stasiland</i>	3	60	58	59
<i>Interpreter of Maladies</i>	2	57	55	57
<i>The Old Man Who Read Love Stories</i>	2	56	55	55
<i>Dear America – Letters Home from Vietnam</i>	2	57	54	54
<i>In the Country of Men</i>	1	59	59	58
<i>Will You Please Be Quiet, Please?</i>	1	59	60	57
<i>Wuthering Heights</i>	1	69	67	68
<i>Cat's Eye</i>	1	70	66	66
<i>Brooklyn</i>	1	63	60	63
<i>Selected Poems</i>	1	69	60	61
<i>Bypass: The Story of a Road</i>	<1	60	58	59

Table 1 shows the texts selected by students in the 2013 English examination and the average scores achieved by students for the associated text. The table also shows the scores for Section B and Section C for the same grouping of students.

From this table it can be seen that students achieved the highest scores on average for *Henry IV, Part I*. However, it can also be seen that on average this same set of students achieved well in the other sections of the English examination. Conversely, students who selected *Così* had the lowest average score in Section A, but also had low scores in Sections B and C.