



GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2004 the examination paper consisted of two sections: Section 1 required a response to one text, while Section 2 required the completion of three different tasks in response to given material. As in previous years, a small number of students submitted more than one response for Section 1. The majority of responses were again limited to a few texts, with 44% of all responses being on one text, *Gattaca*. In Section 2, almost all students responded to all three tasks.

Marking policies

Assessment is holistic, using the published criteria. The process requires assessors to relate student performance directly to these criteria. These judgements are assisted by the use of a set of descriptors. Both the criteria and the descriptors are fully explored and directly related to the range of student responses during intensive assessor training before and during the marking process. Teachers and students should be aware of both the assessment criteria and the descriptors. For 2004 these were published on the VCAA website in Supplement 3 of the February VCE Bulletin. This supplement also contains an explanation of the allocation of marks for Parts 1 and 2 of the Writing Task.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Section 1 – Text response

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

Students were required to produce one piece of analytical or expository writing in response to one text. There were two topics for each of the prescribed texts. The layout of the English (ESL) paper remained similar to previous years, and there did not appear to be any misunderstanding about task requirements, even for the many ESL students who are taught in mainstream classes.

Better responses were carefully crafted to respond to the key words in the question and were supported with appropriate use of examples from the text. Most students limited the use of direct quotes to short phrases which were appropriately chosen to support their responses. Students generally displayed very good knowledge of the text even when they had difficulty writing to the requirements of the set question.

The most popular texts and their mean scores were:

Text	% Answered	Mean Score
<i>Gattaca</i>	44.18	5.61
<i>The Wife of Martin Guerre</i>	14.77	5.76
<i>Night</i>	9.04	5.72
<i>Stolen</i>	7.56	5.82
<i>King Oedipus</i>	7.24	5.69

The overall mean score was 5.73

The *Gattaca* questions were broad enough to be accessible to a wide range of students. The first question produced both competent and mediocre responses. Competent answers reflected on Vincent's strengths, his determination and eventual success. Essays which stood out explored the idea that we can support someone who tells lies for a good reason in an unfair society. Mediocre essays seemed to be answering as if the question was 'Vincent is determined to achieve success. Discuss.' rather than 'Vincent's life is based on lies but the audience admires his determination to achieve his goals. Discuss.' They identified Vincent's determination and gave a catalogue of the manifestations of his determination without referring to the admiration of the audience. A number of students limited their interpretation of audience to other characters in the film. Others referred only to the viewing audience. Both interpretations produced good responses. In Question 2, some students had difficulty with the terms 'empowered' and 'enslaved' and were not able to tease out these ideas in any detail.

The first question on *The Wife of Martin Guerre* provided some structure for answers as well as space for exploring issues. Some responses just retold the story of how various parties were made miserable, without focussing on the basis of Bertrande's decision. In the second question, some responses showed a narrow definition of community, even limiting it to Bertrande and Pierre. Interpretations of honesty and happiness and which of the characters valued one or the other were also hazy. Some responses didn't address the comparative aspect of the question.



In the first question on *Night* some students struggled to substantiate their affirmation of the question statement; they did not appear to realise that they could have chosen to disagree or partially agree. The second question had two clear parts which provided the opportunity for detailed exploration of the text. Some students had trouble with 'beliefs' and concentrated too much on religion.

Both questions on *Stolen* were answered well overall, although some students tended to recount rather than discuss. Good responses to the second question gave multiple reasons, but for some it was difficult to connect the two parts of the question. Some responses to the first question were able to look at the ideas overall, but most answered with one paragraph per character.

'To what extent' was not well handled in the first question on *King Oedipus* – most students said that 'it was the gods' or 'he was solely responsible'. There were also some problems with conflicting notions of fate/destiny and responsibility/free will. In the second question, 'than it solves' often wasn't adequately addressed. This question stated an aspect of the text which was basically indisputable and required discussion, not responses that retold the story.

Overall, students demonstrated engagement with the ideas of the texts, good essay structure and obvious confidence in how to approach the task. In some cases there was still an over-reliance on story telling and regurgitating practice writing that had only some relevance to the topic on the paper. Such responses insufficiently analysed the set question or focused on only one aspect of the question. In planning, students need to brainstorm all the key words as well as pay particular attention to modifying words and comparatives within the question. Most students showed good knowledge of the text; selective use of the text is a key discriminator.

Example 1 - *Gattaca*

'Vincent's life is based on lies but the audience admires his determination to achieve his goals.' Discuss.

The following high range response begins with an introduction succinctly crafted to the topic. The second paragraph selectively establishes the extent of Vincent's lies. The response uses the text well to explore how both the viewing audience and other characters in the film respond to the lies. The essay is well structured, fluently uses a range of appropriate vocabulary and shows excellent knowledge of the text.

The film 'Gattaca' illustrates a society where 'the discrimination is down to science'. The criteria of capability is the gene you've got, and that's the only thing that matters. Invalids like Vincent can never have any other job but cleaners or other manual jobs, even if 'you've got the best test scores, you still need the blood to go with it'. Therefore, in order to achieve his dream, Vincent has to lie about his identity. Although it is very unconventional, on his way to success, Vincent has inspired many he comes across, and has won their admirations, as well as the audience's.

From the moment when Vincent says 'I am not Jerome Morrow' in his voiceover, he starts to show us his life based on lies. In order to have the 'right blood' to become a member of Gattaca, he bought the identity of Eugene, and therefore, becomes 'Jerome Morrow'. Every day, the same routine: Eugene prepares the blood and urine samples, as well as body cells. Vincent takes them to work, and has to fiercely scrub his own body to shed as many body cells of his own as possible at home, in hope of shedding less at work. At work, he also has to constantly vacuum his own workplace, before spreading the body matters of Eugene. He also has to use different tricks when faced with unexpected examination, such as during blood test for murder investigation, and random test on the road after the date with Irene. Nor can he reveal his real identity in his relationship with others, not even the closest Irene or his brother Anton. He never tells Irene the truth, at least not until he has been exposed, nor could he face his brother Anton during the murder investigation, at least not until the real murderer has been found. So, as far as his identity at Gattaca is concerned, everything about Vincent is based on a lie.

However, Vincent is not to be blamed, as the purpose of his lying is not to be a member of the elite, but rather the only way to achieve his dream. Buying the identity of Eugene is just one of the reflections of his determination, towards his goal of traveling to Titan. When we think about Vincent, we don't look at him as a fraud, but someone with exceptional determination, who inspires us as well as whom he comes across. Ever since Vincent was young, he dreams of travelling in space. He knows the thick text book by heart, and he even leaves his family, to get rid of the constant negative influence they have on him. Before he leaves, he and Anton has another swimming race. Unlike the previous ones, he beats Anton in that one, and 'that's the moment that makes everything else possible'. For the first time, Vincent feels the triumph of determination.

After being rejected by Gattaca for several times, because of his genes, Vincent takes a audacious step of buying the identity of Jerome, all because of his determination to achieve his dream. During the operation, when asked to have his legs lengthened, although hesitated for a moment, Vincent doesn't recoil, because he knows 'when I finally stand up, I will be 2 inches closer to my dream', which also inspired Jerome, who initially held contempt towards Vincent, but 'never questioned his commitment' again. At this point, we, the audience, are also on the same side as Vincent. We have seen the pain he has gone through, and we wish he could finally achieve his dream.



During the fitness test, Vincent exceeds his potential, with a heart condition like his, just for the purpose of maintain his 'identity' not to be discovered by others, but nearly collapses after that, in the locker room. Without his lenses 'he couldn't see but he crossed anyway', when Irene is waiting for him on the other side of the road, which also makes Irene accept him, as he is, in the end.

Vincent's dream is what drives him to go on, and his determination is what makes him endure the pressure that few humans could handle. He puts himself in constant danger of being exposed, even being mistakenly charged as a murderer, all because that is what it takes to achieve his dream and he is willing to do anything for his dream. Just as he says in the last swimming race with Anton, when asked 'how you've done any of this?' his reply is 'I never save anything for the swim back.' That is an ultimate form of commitment. That is what convinced Jerome, Irene and even Anton in the end, of Vincent's personality, despite of his fake identity. That is also what we, the audience, admires from him the most, his determination and commitment, to achieve his goals.

Example 2 - Night

'In Night, people's beliefs are either strengthened or weakened by the cruel ways people treat each other.'

Discuss.

This response attempts to deal with all aspects of the question, and discusses more than just religious beliefs.

In the beginning, we see the protagonist of 'Night', Elie as an innocent boy who keenly studied his religion and had strong beliefs. Elie even befriended a Jewish holy man (Moche the Beadle) to quench his curiosity and fascination about his faith. However, all the changes after Elie is taken from his home and family to serve in the concentration camps, and to witness horrors in the form of man made cruelty and evil. Elie becomes angry with his God and loses faith. During this time of experiencing cruelty from other human beings and being eradicated, we read about many other Jews in Night who not only lose their faith in God, but their humanity as they begin to savagely turn against each other. Elie loses his faith in God, but after experiencing kindness from others, he retains his morality and gains a new kind of belief, hope.

Near the beginning, we saw Moche the beadle as a man who was both wise and positive because he was experienced in Jewish law and had strong faith in God. However, months after he was deported, he barely escapes death to warn the people of Sighet of the holocaust. No one in Sighet believed Moche who came back as a broken man. People had no longer any respect for Moche because he no longer talked about the wonderful teachings of the Cabbala but talked about death and how babies were thrown into the air and shot. Moche started off as a man of strong belief, however, after witnessing a massacre, he comes home a broken, faithless man who's belief was not only weakened but destroyed.

Elie himself was later exposed to such cruelty when he was first introduced into the concentration camps. Elie witnessed Madame Schacter's vision come true when he saw small babies being discarded into a pit to be incinerated. Elie was shocked at first and thought that he was in a dream. It was when Elie witnessed a small child of a kind Kapo being hanged and ultimately killed that Elie began to question God 'I was the accuser, God the accused'. Elie's God had been 'murdered', and so Elie had lost his faith in God. However Elie still retained his humanity.

Sadly, there were other Jewish prisoner in Night who not only lost their faith in God and their religious beliefs weakened, but they also lost their decency as human being. Some became callous and selfish and caused pain to their closest kin just to survive, such as Rabbi Eliahou's son who felt the need to abandon his own father. Some became twisted and savage, like the young man who killed his own father on the way to another camp just to get himself a whole piece of bread. On the otherhand Elie retained his humanity because though his faith and beliefs were weakened, his belief in hope and faith in himself was strengthened through the kindness of others.

Chlomo Weisel, Elie's father sacrificed his body to feed his son. Even though Elie's father was ill, he denied his illness to keep his son's hopes up. It was this selfless act that contributed to Elie's gain in his new belief of hope and compassion. Another moment in Night was when a French girl helped Elie out at great risk that inspired Elie to believe that there could still be good in a world of cruelty and suffering. It was through the kindness of others such as his father, the French girl, Tibi and Yossi and a kindly Kapo (who encouraged comradeship) that lead Elie to believe that he could still remain as a decent human being despite the atrocities around him.

It was this new belief of self hope that transformed Elie from a dependant yet carefree child, to a responsible man who could take on the role as a parent to enable he and his father to survive. It was this new found belief that gave Elie the strength to support his ill and dependant father for as long as he did. Even at moments when Elie was tempted to abandon his father to remove his burden, he felt shame and remorse. This indicated that by having these emotions of shame and pity, Elie retained his humanity.

In Night, some of the characters lost their faith and humanity and therefore their beliefs severely weakened. Some, such as Tibi and Yossi retained their faith and Zionist dream because it kept them alive. It was also Tibi and Yossi who led Elie by example that faith and goodness can prevail even at times of war.

In Night, some people experienced such cruelty from other people that their beliefs were weakened, and therefore lost their humanity. Some, under the same conditions retained their faith and humanity to retain the will to survive. However in Elie's case, his beliefs in God were weakened and he lost faith, but through the kindness and optimism of others, Elie gained a new belief that was strengthened everytime he experienced a moment of kindness and positivity. It was this new belief that kept Elie alive.



Example 3 – The Wife of Martin Guerre

“...how can I deny the truth?”

‘Although Bertrande has good intentions, her actions bring misery to everyone.’ Discuss.

This example has minor lapses in accuracy in using the text, but is expressive and fluent and extensively explores Bertrande’s motivation and the consequences for herself and others in the text.

When Bertrande comes to the realisation that the man she is living with was not the man that she married that cold winter’s day when she was eleven, she does all that she can to escape this deception. For she could not bring herself to live with the sin of adultery fully knowing ‘that her sin would be.....most black’. Thus she sets out to seek the truth to free herself ‘from a deceit, which was consuming and killing’ her and to restore the honour of the Guerre household. Little did she know that her good intentions would ‘destroy the happiness of her family’ and cause great misery.

With the return of ‘Martin Guerre’, the mesnie prospered greatly for the ‘vigour of the man was contagious’. Bertrande however showed doubts as to whether this man was truly her husband, ‘he seemed like a stranger....then her loved husband, than a man who could be Martin’s ancestor but not young Martin Guerre.’ In time, her doubts began to dissipate as all around her, everyone (including the farm animals) began to acknowledge this man as Martin Guerre therefore Bertrande feels as if she is doing the right thing by accepting him as her long awaited husband.

But with the arrival of her third child within her womb, Bertrande’s suspicions began to arise once more – ‘a little by little the shadow increased in the mind of Bertrande’ – and she could not continue living in blissful ignorance. There were several indications which brought Bertrande to believe that this man was not Martin. For when Martin left her, he had not ‘the gift of tongue’ and his friendliness to Sanxi was unlike that of the old patriarch. The accusations of the soldier of Rockefort – ‘you are nothing but a fraud’ – only served to intensify her suspicions, causing her to suffer from psychosomatic illness ending in her daughter’s death barely an hour after her birth. This in Bertrande’s view absolves the sin from which she was created.

Wanting to do the right thing, Bertrande enlists Uncle Pierre’s help to search for the truth, however elusive it might be. By doing so, she unwittingly causes great misery to the entire household when she sends ‘Martin’ to jail. Many among the mesnie tried persuading her to maintain the status quo. The housekeeper – ‘Madame, I would still have you be deceived. We were all happy then.’ and Martin’s sister ‘It is only the truth for you’ spoke for the mesnie, for they would rather live in a deluded state of happiness rather than see the man that they’ve come to admire so greatly be persecuted, even if he is an imposter.

When the true Martin returns he blames Bertrande entirely for the ‘dishonour which has befallen’ him, without taking into account the suffering which she had gone through to preserve the honour of his name, This shows us that Martin cannot offer her the unconditional love which only Arnaud du Tilh can. Shunned by the one she loves and leaving the man who loves her, Bertrande’s quest for the truth is indeed a bitter pill for all the suffering that she has gone through she is left alone with her ‘bitter, solitary justice’.

Although Bertrande means well as she cannot ‘deny the truth’ and seeks to preserve the honour of her husband and that of his household as is required of her, her actions unwillingly sets of a chain of events which condemns her family and herself to unhappiness. She causes Arnaud to be sentenced to death as mitigating circumstances of his transformation from a rogue to an honest man were not considered, thus having the mesnie face the death of a man they’ve come to love and respect. She also dooms herself to a life of loneliness and rejection all for the sake of a truth.

Students must be familiar with the assessment criteria and know how to develop the skills to meet them. Teachers should explore every avenue to encourage students to become familiar with the text and the major themes and issues. Students may be less inclined to just retell the story if they have developed some ideas about the text. Planning also assists students in staying on the topic and not just retelling the story. Choosing texts that have concrete issues for ESL students to grasp and discuss is an important part of making these skills accessible to all ESL students.

As well as knowledge of the text, students need to understand the requirements of a well-structured essay, in particular how to develop a point of view with one main point in each paragraph, which is directly linked to the topic and supported by text examples. The introduction should address the question, not be a generic summary of the text. Students should learn the basics of analysing the question, focusing on key words and developing an awareness of words which modify and how to use them in planning the response. Students need to ‘unpack’ the prompts and to take into account all parts of the question. ESL students often need assistance in acquiring a range of vocabulary appropriate for discussing the text they have chosen and which they can draw on to write expressively and effectively in examination conditions. Students also need to be taught how to recognise and decode the different types of questions asked on texts, for example, ‘discuss’, ‘do you agree?’, and questions which include ‘why’ or ‘how’. Many students are not clear about the difference between ‘discuss’ and ‘do you agree?’



Section 2 – Writing task

Students were presented with a number of items related to one topic. They were required to complete three tasks in response to this unseen material. The tasks were:

- a note form summary of a section of the material
- an analysis of language used in another section of the material
- a response to the main issue raised by the texts.

Each task was of equal value and three separate scores were given. Clear instructions resulted in virtually no errors in choosing the material for each task. Assessors commented that the ideas and vocabulary were clearly understood. Most students clearly related to the topic.

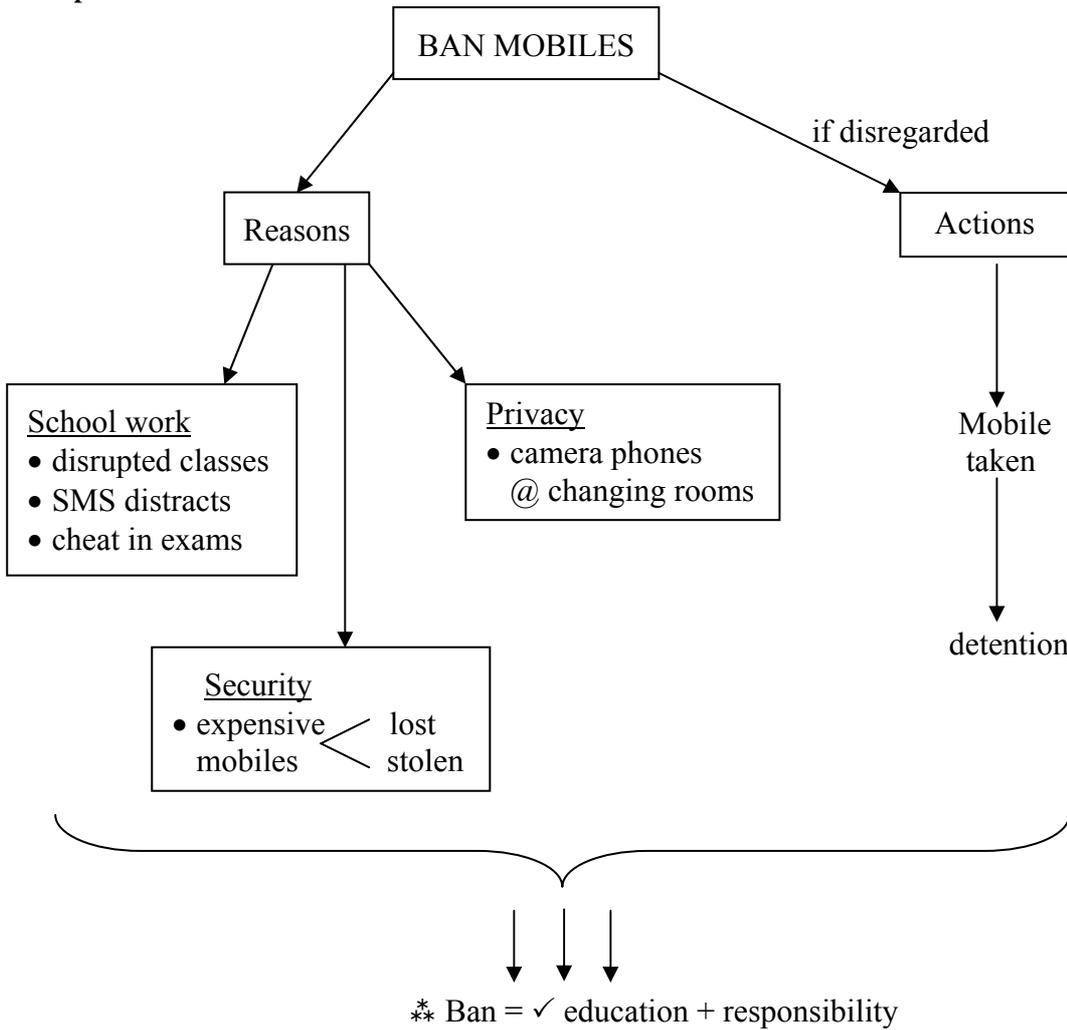
Part 1

In 2004 the quality of the note taking responses was again high. Responses to this task have continued to improve, with more and more students able to achieve what is required. The use of only one text was handled well by students, even though recent past papers used more than one text. The overall quality of the responses showed that students were well prepared. There were several mistakes made by those who didn't understand the task – listing unconnected words (as if one word on its own was note taking), writing in whole sentences, repeating all the information, not using headings – resulting in points in a vacuum. While it is acceptable to use conventional abbreviations, including arrows and dots, this is a language not an art task, so students should be discouraged from using diagrams instead of words. The material produced a wide variety of layouts. Some 'for' and 'against' layouts were forced – introducing material which was not part of the passage. Some responses showed a lack of understanding of the use of single inverted commas in the passage, for example, 'emergencies' and 'lost'. As it takes time and practice to develop note taking skills, students need to be encouraged to use them as a regular part of their work.

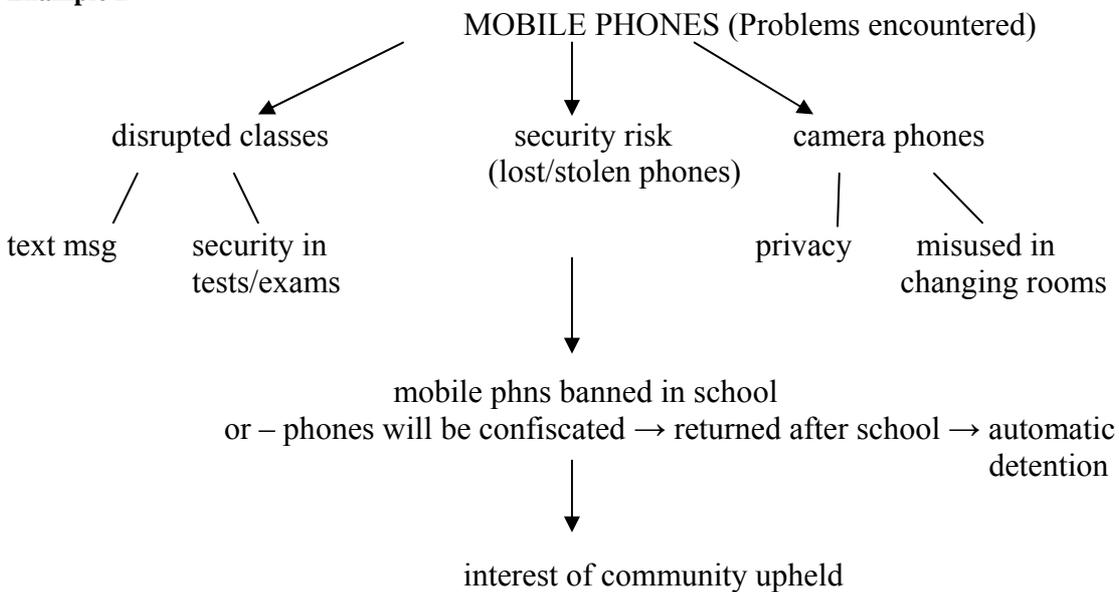
These examples show something of the variety of approaches used by students.



Example 1

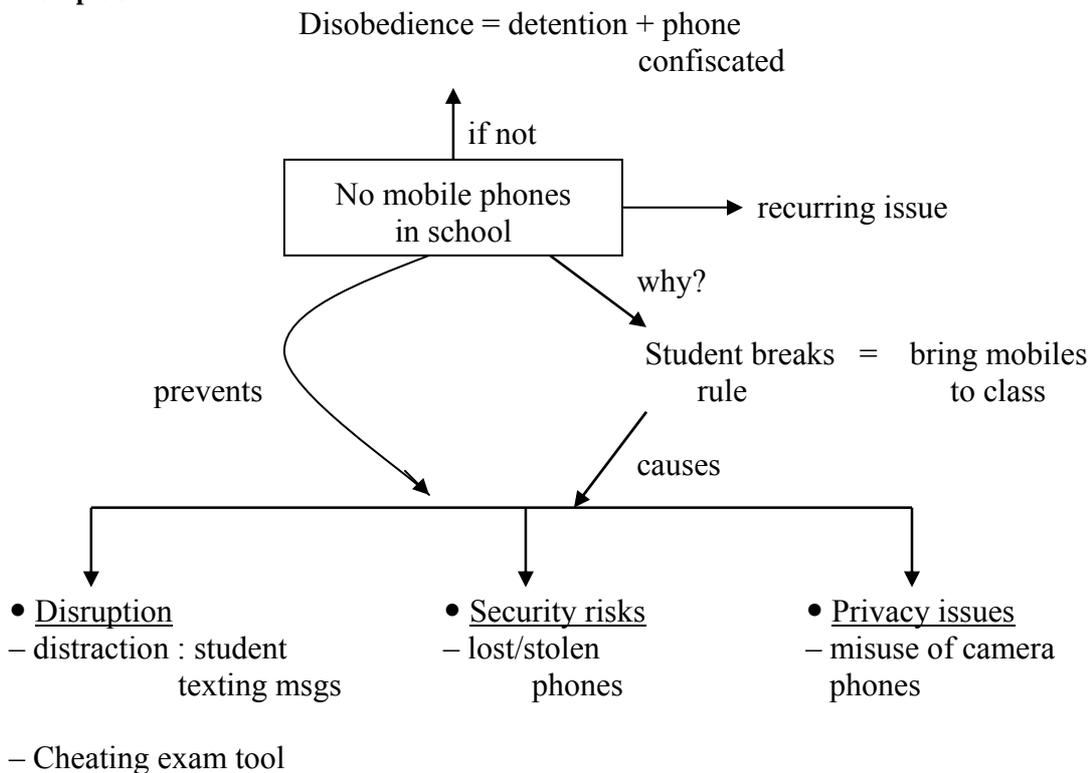


Example 2





Example 3



- ** Ban upholds community values and interests
- ** School = responsible

Part 2

Students showed more knowledge of what to look for in doing this task than in previous years, but were not always able to apply their knowledge in the context. Although the wording of the question was clear, many missed the fact that May Brown's letter was written to the principal, so it was the principal she was trying to persuade to reconsider the ban on mobile phones. Such responses were written as if the reader was other parents or the community. Some responses showed a clear understanding of the task, but by not realising that the principal was the reader they gave inaccurate interpretations of the reader's feelings and ambiguous explanations. Other misunderstandings were the assumption that any use of 'we' included the reader, and the interpretation of 'from your many years of experience' as sarcasm rather than flattery. Students need to practise applying their knowledge of persuasive techniques to a variety of unseen material.

Students were required to select five examples of different types of persuasive language use, and to explain how each example works to persuade the reader. How did this language make the reader feel and why might this persuade the reader to agree with the writer's point of view? Students were not asked to comment on the success or failure of the examples or present an argument for or against the point being made.



Example 1

The explanations focus on the intended effect on the audience and show clear understanding of the speaker's use of persuasive language. Some are wordier than necessary.

Persuasive technique	Effect on principal....why.....how it affects principal?
'When we, like many parents.....'	This creates the impression that there are many other parents out there who disagree with the principal's decision to ban phones. It makes the principal feel as though he is against the majority, and has thus aroused anger in many parents. Thus, he would want to be part of the 'big group' and be inclined to change his decision.
'...has a medical condition which makes it <u>important</u> for her to be able to contact us....'	This phrase has the effect of emphasizing the importance the role mobile phones play in the parent's lives. The principal is made to feel fearful that if anything bad were to happen to the writer's daughter, he would be responsible as he was the perpetrator of the ban to mobile phones. Thus, he is made to believe that it is imperative that mobile phones should not be banned as it is quite useful.
'from your many years of experience..... you <u>must</u> know.'	By praising and highlighting the principal's broad knowledge and extensive experience, the writer is appealing to the principal's intelligence. After hearing such praise and good words, the principal would most likely be more open to the parent's suggestion. Also, the word 'must' that follows in the sentence would make the principal feel that if he did not lift the ban, he would be incompetent as he was not doing what he should and 'must' know.
' <u>some</u> students are misusing.....so <u>all</u> students are penalised.'	This creates the impression that the principal's decision was unfair and unjust as <u>only a few</u> students were breaking the rules, but <u>all</u> the students were punished. It appeals to the principal's sense of justice as he is made to feel that his decision had wrongly punished a majority of innocent students for the actions of a few guilty perpetrators. Hence, he would be swayed to reconsider his decision.
'setting the rules that they would then be more likely to keep...'	This creates the effect of the ban being useless and redundant, as seemingly, no one is going to obey the new regulations. It creates the impression that the students would still continue to bring mobile phones leading the principal to reconsider the ban. This is because there would be not point in imposing a ban or rule that no one is ready to follow. Thus, the writer appeals to the principal's sense of logic and will most likely sway the principal to reconsider his decision.

Example 2

I was very upset when I first read of your total ban on students bringing mobile phones to school. I am still really upset.	By commencing the letter with this statement, May Brown uses the repetition of the word 'upset' to strongly emphasise how she feels. She attempts to make the principal feel guilty for making her feel that way because of his decision. In no uncertain terms, she clearly tells the principal that the decision has made her 'upset' and that she does not agree with it. The principal is persuaded to listen to her arguments and find out her reason for being so 'upset'.
....we worry about what time she will be home each day.....as you know, she has a medical condition which makes it important for her to be able to contact us during the day.	The writer appeals to the principal's sense of compassion for her daughter and hopes to evoke sympathy and understanding for her daughter's condition. The principal is expected to empathise with their concern and therefore see reason to allow mobile phones. The writer uses the phrase 'as you know' to stress that the principal is aware of the situation and prevents him from denying knowledge of or shunting the issue aside.
Some students are misusing their phones so all students are to be penalised!	Mrs Brown uses this exclamation to illustrate the absurdity and lack of logic in this reasoning. She ridicules this point of view and also appeals to the principal's sense of justice by clearly pointing out to him that it is unfair to 'penalise' all for the wrongdoing of some students. The principal is swayed to agree with her stance that this is unjust and should not be the case.
.....wouldn't it have been a good idea for students to play a role in setting the rules that they would then be more likely to keep?	This rhetorical question is used to make the principal agree with her logical viewpoint. The principal cannot deny that it is a 'good idea' and that it would benefit the students. Mrs Brown's suggestion forces the principal to think about the wisdom of his actions and compare them against the wisdom of her stance.



Our community as a whole may benefit from this in the long run.	Mrs Brown uses inclusive language to make the principal feel that he is on the same side as her. She uses an appeal to self interest and includes the principal amongst the people that would 'benefit from this'. She makes the principal feel that this is for the common good of the entire community and therefore would be the right course of action to take.
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Part 3

Part 3 asked students to write an article for a student newspaper. The topic produced passionate responses and a range of points of view. However, some contained illogical arguments and over generalisation which detracted from other qualities in the writing. The third page of material was used in many more responses than in previous years. Some responses concentrated too much on the use of mobile phones in general, rather than in the school context, with some of the arguments not related to use at school. A significant number of responses were written as a letter, despite instructions in bold type on the paper to write an article.

Compared with previous years, fewer responses directly copied large portions of the task material. Students must answer this task in their own words, and a topic familiar to their everyday life may be one reason why more students appeared more able to do this. Weaker responses just rehashed the points from the principal's message, while good ones used and synthesised points from all three resources – engaging and effectively rebutting any opposition. In these examples, the arguments presented in the task material were effectively used by students in well-structured writing.

Example 1

Should mobile phones be banned?

The writer's support for the ban is made clear in the introduction.

The recent controversial decision made by Principal John Black to ban mobile phones in the school compound has generated much heated debate. However, instead of responding negatively to this decision so quickly, we must realise that there are many good reasons behind it and that it works for the betterment of us all. The ban on mobile phones should be embraced as it protects our privacy, as well as eliminates all potential distractions from the classroom.

Obviously, many of us have indicated our displeasure at our 'rights' being encroached on by this ban. Nevertheless, what we do not realise is that our very 'rights' and 'liberties' are being stripped away as long as we allow mobile phones in school. Three isolated incidents of camera phones left on in changing rooms have been reported this year alone. What about other unreported cases? The misuse of these technologically advanced communication machines have resulted in a breach of privacy for us all. Surely we would want to see a stop to this injustice to our rights and thus, support this ban?

The severe disruptions and distractions that mobile phones have proved to be in class is another good reason to ban mobile phones. Despite already being given the liberty to bring phones to school but not classrooms, students continually break the rules and hide them in their jumpers and shoes to be taken to class. This results in their attention being diverted or divided, and thus their learning time in the classroom is maximised. The secret 'text messaging' between students should be unnecessary as we all see each other in school – during class and recess. Furthermore, when a mobile phone rings in class, it often disrupts the entire class and breaks their concentration, more often than never, the illicit use of a mobile phone in class distracts not only the user but the entire classroom. It goes to show for our less than impressive results many of us have been getting lately.

Lastly, in response to special cases such as that of students with medical conditions and require mobile phones as communication tools with their parents, I am sure a compromise can be reached. Students requiring special considerations should be allowed to take phones to school, provided that it is handed to the school administrators before school and then returned at the end of school. However, these students require a letter written by their parents and doctor confirming a medical condition, in order to prevent students from abusing this system. That way, if an emergency were to occur, the student may inform the administration and be allowed to contact his or her parents. The same rule may be applied for students whose parents worry for their safety after school hours. Hand the phone in, and it will be returned after school, provided they have a letter by their parents.

Conclusively, if we all look at the reasons underlying this ban objectively, I am confident that we will all understand its importance and adhere to it. Remember, the ban is meant to benefit us all, not the teachers or principal himself, but us. By supporting it, we are allowing ourselves to have our rights protected, our education undisrupted and our school lives back on track.



Example 2:

The writer opposes the ban.

Say YES to Mobile Phones.

Currently, our school is contemplating a ban on all mobile phones at school. As a concerned student acting in the interests of all of us, I strongly oppose this ban. Our school has to understand that in this modern age, mobile phones are an essential part of communication. There have been concerns about the misuse of mobile phones in classrooms or examination halls. These concerns, albeit well-meaning are definitely exaggerated and do not substantiate a complete ban on all mobile phones in school. The convenience offered by a mobile phone and the practicality of the situation is by far more the important issue.

Many students in our school take public transport to and from home everyday. As we all know, the bus service that runs outside our school is extremely inconsistent and unreliable. Many a time, we have been stranded by more than half an hour after school because of delays. Having a mobile phone allows us to call our parents and inform them of the situation, allaying their worries that we might be in danger. It also allows us students to inform our parents if we are held up after school because of work or extra-curricular activities. Without a mobile phone to call our parents, they would be unnecessarily worried about our whereabouts. Imagine the convenience that a mobile phone would allow? Only old-fashioned, traditionalist schools would deny us this practical solution to our communication problems, and I am sure that we all agree that our school does not fall into that category.

There have been concerns that mobile phones disrupt classes and allows cheating in exams. There is an easy fix to this problem: students should simply not be allowed to bring them into class. Every student in our school is allocated a locker. Mobile phones could be locked safely away in lockers during the day and only used before and after school. That way, there would be no concerns about their presence in the classrooms or examination halls. If the school deals out severe punishments to those caught using a mobile phone in class or cheating with it, I am sure that this problem would not be a major one. By keeping mobile phones in lockers, security risks are also minimised as there will be minimal instances where phones are stolen or lost.

The fear of young people not having mobile manners or making frequent spelling mistakes because of text messaging does not justify a ban on them at school. After all, the undeniable fact is that we teenagers do call and text-message each other on our mobile phones frequently. Even if we are not allowed to at school, the practice still goes on elsewhere. People are not going to learn mobile manners if mobiles are banned at school, on the contrary, teachers could teach students mobile manners or reprimand us when we are behaving inappropriately. Isn't this a more sensible and logical approach to combating the problem of mobile manners? As for spelling problems. Again, it is simply a matter of convenience to use certain abbreviations to save time. Indeed, students actually learn to be more concise in their language through the use of text messaging!

All rules will only be adhered to by students if they understand them and agree with them. I am sure most students in our school will not agree with the absurdity of a blanket ban on mobile phones. Therefore this will only encourage students to rebel against the rule. A sound education includes the teaching of values such as responsibility and maturity. We will not learn these values if mobile phones are banned from schools instead of us being taught and trusted to use them wisely and with consideration for other people. We should not be made to suffer consequences for the actions of a minority, instead it is this minority that should be penalised themselves.

I am sure most of us have experienced the convenience text-messaging has to offer. It gives us the freedom of flexibility to change arrangements and make plans. Mobile phones are not an evil to be eradicated. They are not a status symbol, merely a tool of convenience. As for the concerns of abuse, isn't it time for the school to trust us to act like mature human beings instead of treating us all as naughty kids in need of harsh discipline? A blanket ban would not allow us to learn to exercise responsibility. Therefore, our school should rise above conformist values, step into the future and say yes to mobile phones.