



Literature

Written examination – November

Introduction

There are no changes to the format and structure of the Literature examination. As in past years the examination will be designed to assess students' ability to write sustained interpretations of two different kinds of texts. Students will be asked to produce two pieces of writing in response to questions that require critical analysis and interpretation of two texts they have studied.

Teachers should refer to the *VCE Literature Assessment Handbook 2006–2010* for the examination description and the revised examination criteria. Further details regarding past examinations and assessment reports, including sample answers, can also be found on the VCAA website: www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vce/exams/examsassessreports.html

Teachers also need to be aware of the *VCAA Bulletin*, published monthly except January, as it is through the bulletin that schools are notified of important notices, amendments and other current information regarding the study. Copies of current and past *VCAA Bulletins* can also be viewed on the VCAA website.

Specific information

It is important to note that in the examination students must write on two different kinds of texts studied during the year. The kinds of texts are published in the table of contents at the start of the examination book and match the List B text list published annually in the *VCAA Bulletin*. Note that there is no provision for students to write on texts from List A in the end-of-year examination. Students who write on two texts from the same category will receive a score of zero for one of the answers.

In the current examination format students are invited to use one or more of three selected passages as the basis of a discussion about the text. By looking at past examinations it can be seen that there is no set length for the chosen passages from the texts used in the examination, although they are usually of sufficient length for students to engage with them. Extracts from prose texts will be published in the order in which they appear in the original text, although page numbers will not be indicated. In the case of short story collections, the title of the story from which each extract is selected will be provided. In the case of poetry, titles will be provided and wherever possible the entire poem will be printed. However it is important to note that in the case of longer poems extracts from individual poems may be used.

It should also be noted that students are invited to use one or more of the extracts as the basis for their discussion. There are no criteria that indicate a student must refer equally to each extract or that 'bonus marks' will be awarded to students who use all of the extracts. Previous assessment reports that contain sample answers will provide good examples as to how students should use the extracts in their answers. Upper range responses often use references to the passages to show an acute awareness of, for example, how the writer engages the reader of the text or uses language to explore particular ideas, concerns or concepts. Responses that only pay scant notice to the passages or do little more than just paraphrase the extracts will not be awarded high marks.

Prepared answers that do not refer to any of the selected passages or only make passing reference to the passages will score low marks. Summarising the text or supplying irrelevant details regarding the writer's life also characterise lower range responses. Similarly, a slavish line-by-line working through of every aspect of a passage is not expected, whereas a reading and interpretation of the text that grows out of detailed work with the set passage or passages is often central to success. Past assessment reports contain some excellent examples from responses where students demonstrate the ability to move naturally between the given passages in pursuit of a reading of the set text.

Quotations, usually short, whether from the selected passages or from other parts of the text, may be useful if they are relevant to the answer. Again, however, using a quotation that is inappropriate or not relevant would not

be treated favourably in the assessment. The better answers are those that are coherent and expressive and work closely with the set passages to produce plausible, complete and even subtle readings of the original works.

To assist students in acquiring the skills to successfully complete the Literature examination it is important that throughout the year students are provided with opportunities to work closely with the set texts. Students need to be able to read and reflect on the language and structures of particular passages and to be able to make links to the meaning and concerns of the whole work. At the same time students will need to foster the development of an apt and expressive language in response to their reading of the chosen texts, a development which will involve language learning as well as experimentation with, and exploration of, writing styles.