

VCE English as an Additional Language (EAL) (NHT) examination report

General comments

The 2017 English as an Additional Language (EAL) (NHT) examination paper consisted of three sections: Section A required a response to one text, Section B required a response to a prompt related to a selected Context and Section C required completion of two tasks in response to unseen material.

Assessment was holistic, using the published assessment criteria. Assessors related student performance directly to these criteria, and their judgments were assisted by the use of a set of descriptors. The assessment criteria, the descriptors and the sample examination are available on the VCAA website.

Specific information

Section A – Text response

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 selected texts. The descriptors used for assessment related to knowledge of the text, including consideration of its concepts and construction, the structure and relevance of the response, and writing skills – the control of the conventions of written English.

The majority of responses were on *All About Eve*. Both topics for this text provided opportunities for students to demonstrate their skills. High-scoring responses to the first topic explored the parts of her life that Eve controlled and those where she was not in control. Responses to the second topic demonstrated strong knowledge of the society and times in which the film was set and how these influenced relationships. They also explored some of the differences in the behaviour of men and women in the film.

High-scoring responses were characterised by a sharp focus on the key words in the topics, selective and considered use of the text, and ideas expressed with strong language skills. Responses should show a good understanding and knowledge of the texts and familiarity with the main ideas raised in the topics. In planning, students need to brainstorm all the key words in the topic, paying particular attention to modifying words and comparatives. A well-planned response is less likely to slip into retelling the story or adapting a previously written response to fit the topic. Students need to be able to explore how texts are constructed and the effects of the writer's choices.

During their preparation, students need to consider how construction, language and authors'/directors' choices add meaning to the text, rather than merely looking at what happened, the themes and the characters. It is important to be familiar with the language used for analysis. Analytical writing can include description, such as facts or information, but its focus is on the relationships between pieces of information, and it may include comparing or assessing.

Consequently, students need to develop writing skills that will enable them to incorporate knowledge of the text into their analysis or exposition. Writing that simply describes/tells what a character did rather than exploring why, how and the effect of the behaviour relevant to the set topic is a limited response. Students also need to be familiar with the variety of ways in which topics can be worded and understand the requirements of different task words, such as ‘discuss’, ‘do you agree?’, ‘to what extent’, etc. Thoughtful planning is needed to craft a response that directly addresses the set topic. With collections of stories, students should look for the links and connections between the stories.

Section B – Writing in Context

Students were required to complete an extended written response that was an expository, persuasive or imaginative piece of writing. They were required to base the writing on the ideas in the given prompt and draw directly from the selected text studied in the Context. High-scoring responses reflected development of ideas within the Context and conveyed a strong personal voice. In responding to Context 1 – *Whose Reality?*, there was effective use of *Death of a Salesman* to illustrate the ideas in the prompt.

There was a broad range of writing, including reflective and personal pieces. In general, high-scoring responses drew clearly on key words from the prompts, and included relevant details from the selected text and life experiences. In particular, high-scoring responses focused on the development of ideas more than details of examples.

In this task, connecting life experience with the Context gave an authentic voice to students’ writing.

Section C – Analysis of language use

The task material consisted of two pieces about whether there are too many rules and restrictions regarding access and activities in national parks. The topic, language, length and style of the pieces were appropriate for the tasks, and offered opportunities for students at all levels to demonstrate their skills. Two differing opinions were clearly expressed in the speeches given at a public meeting.

Each of the speeches was accompanied by a visual. One of these was a copy of a public notice at the entrance to a national park. It detailed nine activities that were forbidden in the park. This notice could have been used to demonstrate the speaker’s point that there are too many restrictions and that the restrictions negatively impact on people’s enjoyment of the park. The second visual was of a child in a forest. The child is relaxed and happy, obviously enjoying the open air and bushland. The natural surroundings look very inviting. The speaker used this image to make an emotional plea to listeners to protect the natural world so that children in the future will be able to enjoy it.

Part 1

Students were required to write a note-form summary of both speeches. The note-form responses demonstrated an awareness of the key ideas in the speeches. The central idea was whether there are too many restrictions on activities in national parks. Both speakers provided several reasons for their points of view. The note-form responses should have identified at least two reasons given by each speaker.

The challenge in this task was to design a structure (for the summary) through which processing of the material could be demonstrated. The summary should have shown how the ideas in the pieces related to each other and to the main contention of the material. The highest-scoring pieces

demonstrated processing of the material, gave an overall understanding of the speakers' positions and recorded the ideas appropriately using plain English.

Part 2

In Part 2, students were able to use any of the task material to explain how language and visual features were used in an attempt to persuade. The highest-scoring responses recognised that there are many things that speakers do when they seek to influence a listener. In particular, these responses identified how the speakers will exaggerate and use emotive appeals to get a listener's attention. They also used many short quotations and analysed the impact of the language instead of the argument. Students needed to find connections between the text and the visuals. The expected qualities for scoring clearly indicate that to score six or more marks, responses needed to show some understanding of how visual material is used to persuade in the context presented.

The challenge for students was to be able to use their theoretical knowledge of how writers or speakers use language persuasively to demonstrate accurately how this has been done in the task material provided.

Upper-range responses were well written and demonstrated a strong understanding of the ways in which language and visual features were used through effective analysis of the material. Features of upper-range responses included:

- a clear understanding of the context of the writing and the points of view expressed in the pieces
- focus on analysis of language, not argument
- an exploration of the implications of specific language choices; for example, 'potential criminals', 'polluters', 'aggressive pets', 'precious drinking glasses', 'fragile flowers'
- an ability to use a range of vocabulary
- clear explanations linking visuals to the speaker's words and exploring the intended effect of the visuals.