



GENERAL COMMENTS

The English examination assessed student achievement in the skills and outcomes indicated in the English Victorian Certificate of Education Study Design.

The examination consisted of two sections. The first section (Text response) had two parts and students were required to complete one response from each part. The second section (Writing task) also had two parts. The first part concerned the analysis of language use, while in the second part students were required to complete one piece of writing in response to a choice of three different options in form and purpose.

Assessment was based upon criteria and was applied holistically, with students ranked over the full range of available marks. In this way, scores were awarded that reflected the assessors' judgement of the **whole** answer. The descriptions of the 'Expected Qualities for the Mark Range – EXAMINATION' can be found on the VCAA website. These descriptions are based on the criteria and are general indicators of what might reasonably be expected in the mark range. Specificity and fine judgements are then possible when the exact characteristics of responses for any one year are analysed.

Markers reported that, on the whole, students performed well in this examination. The paper seemed to be better handled this year and there were significantly fewer very poor responses, as well as a significantly greater number of excellent responses. It seems clear that most teachers and students have a clear understanding of the Study Design and continue to improve their skills and knowledge.

Nevertheless, some general observations for continued improvement may be helpful.

- Students must answer the actual question posed; this is of critical importance and applies across all parts of the examination. It was disappointing when a clearly very competent student lost focus and was unable to display the incisive relevance which characterised the top answers. The matter of 'prepared answers' versus 'preparing well' is worthy of some classroom reflection. Assessors notice answers that are either learned excerpts from commercial guides or are responses which answer some other question, perhaps one that was set in a previous year. Students should prepare well and develop their own responses, which should, of course, be influenced by their reading and teaching, but which in the end will have a uniqueness and honest authenticity.
- Time management and planning in the examination itself continues to need emphasis. Most students appeared to pay some attention to **planning** their answer, but they should be reminded that a **completed product** is required. Initial plans are for the writer's benefit, not the assessor's. The examination is essentially a first/final draft writing exercise.
- Language standards must be maintained, and teachers should ensure that competent and developed expression skills are constantly cultivated in the classroom. This includes matters such as spelling, sentence structure, paragraphing, topic sentences (especially to assist weaker students), appropriateness of expression, tone, nuance, and a studied awareness of form. Looseness of expression (and ideas) such as 'Bertrande was stoked at Martin's return', 'Jocasta was old enough to be his mother', 'Griet freaked out when she first saw the painting of the crucifixion' and 'Vincent dreamt of going into space 24/7' are not appropriate in an examination situation. Students should be able to discern the differences in form requirements between the spoken vernacular and those appropriate to a more formal writing situation.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Examples of answers

These answers are presented for illustrative and informative reasons, and they may form the basis of profitable discussions. Examples vary in length and although some long responses are included, students may also perform at a very high level with a shorter response. 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. Yet they are typical of the range expected from students who are working under examination conditions to produce a first draft piece of writing. Likewise, readers will obviously be able to make many more observations about the quality of the responses beyond the brief comments the assessment team has offered herein.

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



Section 1 – Text response

For Part 1, the most popular texts and their average marks out of a possible 10 marks were as follows:

Text	% of Students	Average Mark
<i>Gattaca</i>	30.29	5.39
<i>Triage</i>	7.27	6.28
<i>The Wife of Martin Guerre</i>	6.55	5.75
<i>Girl with a Pearl Earring</i>	6.25	6.15

The least popular texts for this part included *The Year of Living Dangerously*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, and *The Age of Innocence*.

For Part 2, the most popular texts and their average marks out of a possible 10 marks were as follows:

Text	% of Students	Average Mark
<i>Gattaca</i>	20.63	5.75
<i>Oedipus Rex</i>	13.74	5.23
<i>Night</i>	8.52	5.44
<i>Stolen</i>	8.38	5.34

The least popular texts for this part included *The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry*, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, *Things Fall Apart* and *The Hunter*.

In both parts, the highest mean score was achieved by students writing on *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*.

Part 1

Part 1 of the 'Text response' section of the paper assessed students' ability to develop a 'sustained interpretive point of view about a text'. The quality of answers overall was particularly good. Assessors commented on students' obvious knowledge of the texts and on most students' familiarity with the analytic form.

The following feedback from assessors offers a number of observations, which pick up comments made in previous Assessment Reports.

- There is no such thing as the 'right' answer. Assessors make judgements about the unique quality of what is written by each student. What is generically expected, however, is that the entire question, and any attached quotation, is dealt with. The content of any quotation should be explored in terms of the question, and those students with real depth of knowledge might examine the context in which the quotation operates. The essential task is to work with the elements of the question as it is posed, and while a student is free to challenge the premise of the question (which may be very productive), actual disregard for the question is not an option.
- Students are not required to restrict their answers for Part 1 questions to a discussion of just character and plot. The *Stolen* question, "'*Stolen* presents fragments of lives. This approach reflects how the characters feel and how they see themselves.' Do you agree?" is a case in point. In this instance, many of the poorer performing students simply looked at how the characters **felt** instead of exploring elements connected with the **structure** of the text as invited in the word 'approach'. The analytic argument that characterises good answers should be constructed, and in most cases, premeditated. Students who provide a simple, surface level agreement with the question's proposal and then provide innumerable examples as ballast do not do the job well.
- Statistics show that all texts elicited at least some outstanding responses. The higher means (shown in the table above) should not form the basis upon which text choice is made in schools. Texts should be chosen after consideration of the student cohort's interests, their particular strengths and the accessibility of the text for the spread of students involved. Teachers may judge that experiential background may, of course, be enhanced by setting texts which challenge or widen horizons.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Night

'No more than Rabbi Eliahou's son had I withstood the test.'
Does Elie judge himself too harshly?

The relentless backdrop of 'Night' by Elie Wiesel is the unfathomable brutality perpetuated by the Nazis. The unconscionable horrors might dehumanise the victims, erode their faith in Mankind irrevocable, however, Elie himself never relents to such depravity. Wiesel uses the Nazis cruelty as a backdrop against which he judges his own response, and that of other victims, to the inhumanities surrounding them. Elie remains on moral guard whilst incarcerated in the camp, and is often inclined to judge himself overly harshly. In such conditions the yardstick for human behaviour changes drastically, and what once Elie would have considered



'evil' must now be viewed with an understanding of its context. Throughout the text, Elie is plagued by ambivalence, swinging in wild balance between feelings that can in fact lie side by side, albeit giving rise to much tension. Inevitably, his behaviour undergoes a certain transformation, however, the fact that he is able to maintain any level of human decency, remaining devoted to his father, and even despite his own belief, maintaining a connection with G-d, is remarkable, and to the reader, truly inspiring.

Throughout his incarceration in the death camps of Nazi Europe, Elie clings to his father, unwavering in his devotion to him. The one thought which runs through Elie's mind through all of his experiences was 'not to be separated from my father.' The devotion he displays to him is demonstrated when on the cattle wagon he preserves, and slaps his father out of unconsciousness, saving him from being thrown out with the other dead men. Elie takes the time to teach his father how to march in line, despite being ridiculed, in order so that his father would avoid the relentless whip of Idek, a merciless Kapo. The culmination of his devotion is when he offers his father his coffee, and his rations despite the fact that they were wasted on his poor state of health, he goes to the lengths of pretending to be an invalid so that he would be able to remain at his father's death bed to the last. Elie never treats his father as a burden, and despite the enormous encumbrance it places on him, he remains steadfast in his support and commitment to his father.

Elie's untiring devotion to his father, is punctured by fleeting moments of betrayal and neglect, which Elie honestly accounts, feelings which are always immediately followed by deep remorse and regret. On one occasion, Elie watches silently as his father receive a brutal beating at the hands of a gypsy Kapo, he did not move to intercede on his father's behalf. Immediately, he is overcome by regret, angrily resolving to 'never forgive them for that.' Interestingly, his anger is directed only at his own inaction, rather than towards the Kapo for having inflicted the pain on his father in the first place. It is inspiring, that a man, subjected to such inhumane treatment, can remain on moral guard. Elie judges himself insensitively, forever sorry for having even imagined for a moment that he might wish to lose his father, it was only due to the constant and abrasive torture that he was subjected to that he was reduced to these levels. Whilst he asserts that he had become 'no better than Rabbi Eliyahu's son,' the reality is that Elie never once acts upon his feelings, and it was only in the 'recesses of his consciousness...should he have searched it, that perhaps, he may have found something like 'free at last.' It is undoubtedly only due to his critical nature, in which he judges himself severely, that he even records these feelings. Easily, he could have disregarded these feelings, and not recorded them in his personal memoir, however, it is these moments of character failings, which serve to intensify the significance and importance of his entire novel, for rather than discounting these feelings, he takes them on board, growing and learning from his faults.

Even whilst subjected to the incessant torture of the concentration camp, Elie is able to grow, rather than regress in his moral awareness. We see Elie reflecting over others' responses to the brutality in the camp, and taking it as a moral lesson to himself. When he observes the insensitivity of Rabbi Eliyahu's son, betraying his elderly and desperate father on the death march, he turns to himself, and prays fervently that he would not be able to withstand such a test, and not be reduced to such levels. Elie does not judge the son, nor does he condemn his actions, he only ever judges himself.

Despite being warned 'here everyone must live for themselves, here there are no fathers, no brothers, no friends,' Elie is able to remain sensitive to others, and help his fellow prisoners, even strangers. Far from not withstanding the tests of Nazi concentration camp, Elie rises beyond his starved stomach and thinks not only of himself but those around him as well. Whilst lying beneath a pile of dead and dying bodies, hardly able to breathe himself, Elie calls out to his friend Juliek, and has the moral decency to ask him, 'how are you feeling?' During one death march, when it took all one's mental stamina to overcome the desire to fall into the snow, Elie still manages to offer words of encouragement to those around him, beseeching Zalman to keep on going, 'Try!' He even reaches out to a total stranger, for he realises the onus is on him to wake him, because if he doesn't, no one else will, 'Wake up! You mustn't sleep here.' It is truly incredible, that not only does Elie manage to survive by thinking of himself, but he transcends the brutal depravity of his surroundings, and thinks of others as well.

Although Elie believes that he has given up believing in G-d, and has lost his connection with G-d, we see that in reality, throughout his incarceration in the camp, Elie maintains his connection with his Creator, turning to him throughout the camp, never relenting to defeatism or resignation. Contrary to many opinions Elie never denies G-d, rather he rails against 'His silence,' 'His justice,' but never calls into question the actual existence of G-d. Far from it, he goes so far as to hold G-d directly accountable for having allowed his chosen people to be 'tortured, butchered, gassed and burned.' Rather, throughout the text Elie oscillates in indecision between faith and denial, the extent of his dilemma with G-d is conveyed as he expresses, 'in spite of myself I felt a prayer rise up in my heart to the G-d in whom I no longer believed.' He despises G-d's silent and seeming acquiescence to the wholesale slaughter in the camp, appointing G-d as the accuser, and himself the accused, but never once does he deny His eternal existence. The extent of his frustration in G-d is conveyed during the New Year, Rosh Hashanah services, when Elie questions angrily, 'What are you my G-d!' However, such a declaration cannot be construed as a denial of G-d, but rather, the passion of such a statement, is symptomatic of the zeal reverberates throughout the text. Such questions of G-d cannot be considered dissent, and in fact the importance of asking questions especially in regards to faith, in canonized in Jewish philosophy, this was first taught to a young Elie by his teacher Moche the beadle, who was fond of repeating 'Man raises himself to G-d through the questions he asks him.' Clearly, these questions, which Elie seems to believe are almost immoral and illustrate his rejection in G-d, in fact serve to illustrate the intensity of His relationship with his G-d.

Elie remains on moral guard throughout his incarceration in the camp, and judges his responses overly harshly, reproving himself in all areas. His relationship with his father exemplifies the height to which Elie rises, rather than the depths to which he falls during his incarceration in the camp. Far from failing the tests he faces, he manages to rise beyond the incessant pain and torture and even grows in his moral awareness. It is through the accounts of his own acts of goodness, consideration and devotion, that Elie negates his own self-judgement, far from mirroring the depravity of Rabbi Eliyahu's son, Elie shows, that light can penetrate even the darkest of nights.



Assessors' comments:

- the student immediately reveals sophisticated, eloquent and focused language use
- the introduction not only demonstrates a full appreciation of the dimensions of the topic, but also clarifies the stance to be taken and presents a clear contention
- there is adept and astute use of well-integrated textual quotations
- the argument is developed with absolute assurance, intelligent judgments and reasoning and total coherence
- the conclusion logically and clearly connects with the introduction
- this is an exceptionally strong and laudable response in every respect!

The following is an example of a medium-scoring response.

The Wife of Martin Guerre

'...how can I deny the truth?'

Although Bertrande is well-intentioned, her actions bring misery to everyone.

Bertrande has shown in this novel that the importance of truth and honesty is what makes an honourable family.

In the 16th Century in France, a town by the name of Artigues experienced the sinful acts of the 'Guerre family'.

Bertrande entered the family with well-intentioned actions, which were to raise a family into a honest and truthful enviroment.

Even though Bertrande's life was difficult and dissatisfying she spent most of her life preventing lies and betrayel in the family which was her first priority, even if it brought everyone misery.

Once Bertrande discovered and uncovered the disturbing truth about Arnaud Di Tilh she felt every need in her body that she not deny anybody the truth. Even though this lie had brought happiness once again to everyone in the family and wasn't harming anyone, Bertrande still put her own needs for justice before her families happiness.

Her actions brought misery to everyone. Arnaud Di Tilh filled in the shoes of a father, brother and a husband, was never abusive or cruel, infact Arnaud was found to be a kinder than the real Martin. But even though Arnaud brought stability and happiness Bertrande couldn't let this sin continue, even if it meant destorying everyone's happiness. Her feelings towards Arnaud turned into hateried once she was exposed to the truth. As she Quoted: 'He has a good heart, that is all. But what man with a good heart can disgrace an honourable family?' Her strongly built character shows that Arnaud's good heart towards this family all these years couldn't overcome the fact of living with a lie.

Her actions brought misery to her son sanxi who thought once and for all he had become reunighted with his father, also to Martin's sisters who adapted to Arnaud's strong presence within the household and also everyone than associated with Arnaud. But most of all he took over the household which put Bertrande back in her prior position, making her life easier.

Overall the novel has shown that Bertrande's character has well-intentioned actions but doesn't realise that denying everyone the truth could have prevented a lot of greif and kept the Guerre family and Guerre household in a happy environment without having to continuously experience loss and pain. Which would have prevented the misery everyone experienced.

Assessors' comments:

- the student tries to establish a plausible mechanism for dealing with the topic, but fails to really appreciate the dimensions implied in it
- the absence of an effective or apt contention impedes the development of an effective overall case
- the expression is often an impediment to full understanding, allied to problematic fluency
- the student demonstrates a competent grasp of the text, with several quotations used
- the essay tends to focus on textual events, with only a limited capacity to link these to any meaningful argument
- the entire approach is rather mechanical and plodding, which prevents the student, who clearly possesses a degree of textual appreciation, to effectively capitalise on the question.

The following is an example of a low-scoring response.

Gattaca

'It is chance that enables Vincent to achieve his dream.' To what extent do you agree?

Vincent has achieved his dream, whether through chance or mishap or even for the sake of it, Vincent has still successfully achieved his dreams. Thanks to the Gene Broker and the Genesisist Vincent achieved his dream, also through Eugene, these people all help, a mishap, help Vincent. Through chance, Ceser and Irene, helped Vincent achieve his dream.

I believe that chance did help Vincent achieve his dream, but it was not the only thing that helped him. Their was no Genesisist that helped make Vincent what he became, because he was a naturally concepted child he did not have genes on his side. Vincent hasn't been genetically engineered, so he can't just walk straight in and get the job of his dream successfully, without the help of Eugene's blood, DNA and name, that has nothing to do with chance. Eugene was the one that the gene broker picked for Vincent, the gene broker could have picked someone else for Vincent to become, that was chance that Eugene was picked, but whether Eugene was picked or someone else, Vincent still would have found a way to succeed.



Thanks to Ceser owning up to killing the old director, Vincent's chances for being successful increased majorly.

It was through chance that Irene, did not hand Vincent over to the police, and have him thrown into jail for the rest of his life along with Eugene.

Assessors' comments:

- from the outset, the student reveals a lack of capacity to approach the central notion of 'chance', and this prevents any development of a meaningful essay
- there are serious limitations in the expression, and errors abound, further exacerbating the difficulties the student has in approaching the topic effectively
- there is no sense of paragraphing and a limited sense of sentence structure
- the essay closes down the topic instead of opening up its potential
- the student's precarious appreciation of the film is a serious limitation.

Part 2

As has been indicated in previous Assessment Reports, Part 2 of the 'Text response' section offers students the opportunity to work both with the text and with the wider social, political and historical ramifications that may arise out of the text. This is the raw material which will likely have some part in creating students' own views and awareness as they go on in life and assist in formulating their positions in relation to the world of ideas. Thus it works with and canvasses responses to conceptual, reflective thought which the texts deal with in at their core.

Not unexpectedly, the top answers were often breathtakingly insightful and reflective. Each year more students show evidence of coping with the conceptual basis of Part 2, but it is also true to say that many are still locked into the inner world of the text and seem unable to step back and connect it to outside issues – or worse, don't know that they should. In respect of the former possibility, it is likely that maturity and sheer intellectual ability are factors and while these can be nurtured, each individual person has their own developmental pace. For the latter possibility, the classroom holds many of the keys to student success. Much has been said about this in past Assessment Reports and they are worth rereading. Some further points can be made as our experience grows.

- The structure of answers in this part is critical. Students should develop the skills needed to work with the values and ideas proposed by the question in the **context** of that question. A vital part of teaching should be the tossing about of ideas and constructs, the close reflection and analysis of what these mean in text and in life, and the gradual, encouraged cultivation of positions. The ability to connect and support these views in relation to text flows alongside this and, as a consequence, matters such as question analysis and answer structure can become more natural, not mere examination artifices.
- The matter of textual knowledge control is connected with the point above. In a text such as *Night*, for example, the question "'Night shows how beliefs may be either strengthened or shaken by the horrors that human beings can inflict on each other.' Discuss.", could easily lead to the 'horrors' becoming the focus of the response, rather than 'how beliefs may be either strengthened or shaken'. In *Breaker Morant*, that focus is on 'what is just' no matter how much the story compels us. Many assessors commented on how well students who responded on *Stolen* had handled the notion of 'belonging' proposed in the question. The trick is to hold and use that natural closeness and identification one may have with a text and to use that to feed an answer which is structured around a measured, critical distance. In the end, as in Part 1, the argument does need to be constructed.
- The vocabulary connected with Part 2 should have a degree of sophistication. Since students are allowed to bring a dictionary in to the examination, if a student is unsure of a term they should look it up. However, this does not mean that students should slavishly paraphrase from the dictionary, since raw definitions, badly applied, often lead to absolute confusion.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

Gattaca

'Gattaca challenges the wisdom of allowing genetic potential, measured at birth, to decide the future of an individual.' Discuss.

In the world of 'Gattaca', such an austere society was created by the ability for genetic potential to be measured at birth. This predisposition of a person's destiny proved impossible and ultimately harmful as human beings were characterised by their capability to make individual choices regarding their future.

The film 'Gattaca' demonstrated the problems in a designer society. Predisposed destinies meant an 'illegal peek' at a person's future and the opportunity to discriminate: 'we now have discrimination down to a science'. People were placed into classes according to validity and those with an In-Valid status were denied the basic rights of freedom of choice.

Vincent was disadvantaged with an In-Valid identity and at birth his abysmal expiry date meant him unworthy of his father's name. According to his DNA profile, Vincent had no choice to succeed. The belief of such predispositions within the society of 'Gattaca'



meant the Vincent had absolutely no chance of achieving his goal of travelling into space. Even Vincent's family reiterated and constantly reminded him of his inability to succeed: 'Let's be realistic...the only way you would see the inside of a space ship is if you were cleaning it...'. Because of the ability for science to interfere with his future, Vincent's in-valid identity was inescapable: 'my real resume was in my cells'.

In juxtaposition with Vincent's disadvantage was Jerome's gift. 'He had been blessed with all that was required' and carrying the DNA profile of perfection, Jerome's destiny, of which was also predisposed, held great things for him. Despite the intentions of science and the great belief by society that predisposed destinies meant either success or not; 'there is no gene for fate'. Unfortunately, the measurement of genetic potential at Jerome's birth had disadvantaged him with the 'burden of perfection'. 'Jerome was never meant to be one step down on the podium' according to his profile and yet that was where Jerome ended up. The predisposition of a person's destiny had meant for Jerome the inability to accept failure. As a result, Jerome attempted to commit suicide restricting him to a wheelchair for the rest of his purposeless life.

'Gattaca' demonstrated through its characters, that the perfection intended from creating a society with such technological capabilities was impossible. The loop holes to be discovered in such a system were discovered and ultimately the perfect society and construction place of perfect beings became the breeding ground for imperfection. Indeed the original intentions to build a uniformed race of robots with the 'bodies and minds to match' had resulted in a particularly detested society of 'borrowed ladders' and crippled valids representing those with 'not all that was promised'.

Irene's potential had been measured at birth to reveal an 'acceptable likelihood of heart failure'. For people like Irene who relied so wholeheartedly on the accuracy of their profile, achieving any sort of desired success was impossible due to her belief that she could not. However, Vincent was complete opposite. He was prepared to accept the 'one percent chance that there was nothing even wrong with him'. In this way, 'Gattaca' showed that the individual had the power to create their own destiny. Unfortunately for Irene, her personality meant that she had no courage to aim for success: 'they've got you looking so hard for a flaw that eventually that's all you see'. Vincent attempted to prove to Irene that 'it was possible' to achieve desired success regardless of what was predisposed at birth: 'I'm already 10,000 beats overdue'.

That a person's destiny could ever be predicted at birth was demonstrated in the film to be impossible. The building of 'the right kind of people' instead meant a disadvantage to In-Valids and the 'burden of perfection' for Valids. Anton was a constant reminder to Vincent of perfection and Anton was so believing in his own potential: 'I bet I could be one (an astronaut) if I wanted'. Anton has been predisposed as a success and ultimately a Valid. His parents too, were grateful for a son 'worthy of his father's name' and accepted that he would be the success story of their family. However, the mere fact that Anton was beaten by his own In-Valid brother in 'Chicken' and in life in general, demonstrated that the predisposition of destiny had meant two different things to both brothers. To Anton it had meant his definite success and he was alarmed to have failed, where as to Vincent it was the incentive to prove everyone wrong and in doing so, achieve success. The ability for science to gauge genetic potential at birth had meant false impressions for both brothers and ultimately challenged the wisdom of allowing such a procedure to take place.

The technological advances in the world of 'Gattaca' demonstrated the problems associated with predisposed destinies. It was obvious that for a human being to succeed, their individual desires and strength of character were more important than their genetic make-up. The film showed that no DNA structure could ever properly gauge a person's potential to begin with and that in allowing such a procedure to take place only challenged the individual's control over their own life.

Assessors' comments:

- from the outset, the central values and notions raised by the topic are addressed and consistently focused upon
- the student reveals a real capacity to think conceptually, and to move with ease between the inner world of the text and its wider ramifications, as a Part 2 question demands
- the student resists any tendency to look narrowly at this film text within this wide framework, demonstrating a skillful analysis that is supported by apt quotations
- the argument is developed to a logical conclusion with assurance and consistency
- highly expressive and eloquent language is used with facility.

The following is an example of a medium-scoring response.

King Oedipus

'King Oedipus shows how people who are vain enough to think they have the answers to life struggle to understand the role that fate can have.'

In order to properly discuss this statement one must first come to terms with the idea that in this story the fate of Oedipus was locked, nothing anyone could do could change this as the 'Gods' had made this fate in their cruel game and it was impossible to change fate as the gods were omnipotent.

Knowing this the true nature of the statement is easy. People like King Laius and Queen Jocasta who believed they had the answers to the life they were given were sorely wrong as they did not trully understand the unchangeable nature of fate. Likewise with Oedipus, he too could not change his fate.

King Laius and Queen Jocasta were given the prophecy about their new son that he would 'kill his father'. Upon fear that this fate would come true, they sent their son away to die when he was about three days old in a vain attempt to beat their fate.



They thought they had the answer the the life they were given, however it was not to be so. The only way to have the answers to life in this story was to outwit the 'gods' and as already shown this is impossible. By attempting to outwit the 'gods' they infact dishonoured them and turned them even further against themselves.

Oedipus also showed himself to be a believer in the notion that he could defeat his fate.

Oedipus being the son of Laius and Jocasta was cursed to kill his father, however upon visiting the oracle in an attempt to find out some answers to his life, namely who his parents were, he instead was told of his fate to kill his father and marry his mother. In his struggle to understand the fact that his fate was set he ran away from his adopted parents in Corinth (believing they were his real parents) and headed straight towards his fate fulfilling the first part of killing his father on his very way away from the oracle and to Thebes.

King Oedipus, Laius and Jocasta were all examples of people who believed they had the answers yet failed to realise the affect fate could have on them.

All three individuals believed they would be able to outwit the 'Gods' and create their own fate. However as we are all aware in the text 'King Oedipus', their fate was set and nothing they could do would change that as they were subject to the cruel wrath of their Gods. This shows the statement to be true. 'Who was it that brought this about...it was Apollo.'

Assessors' comments:

- initially there is a fumbling and insecure attempt to deal with the topic and the concepts and values embedded in it
- the essay unfortunately becomes essentially an exploration of textual events and plot retelling, with occasional and uneven links to the actual topic
- there is no sustained argument or any real sense of topic resolution
- the student's textual awareness has not been harnessed to answer the real demands of this as a Part 2 topic
- a generally competent level of expression is observable.

The following is an example of a low-scoring response:

Gattaca

'Gattaca challenges the wisdom of allowing genetic potential, measured at birth, to decide the future of an individual.'

In the world of Gattaca in the near distant future the role of god is being manipulated to produce what they believe a valid person with no imperfections. The normal way now is that the parents go to the doctors first and they choose what they want without all the imperfections to produce a healthy and advanced child.

When Vincent was born they new his procise conditions through life and his age of death. His wisdom of genetic potential was slim in society he was scene as an in-valid because of his condition Vincent was brought up with the idea he was nothing didn't belong for him that made him more determined to succed.

For Jerom his genetic potential was to be the best swimmer in the world. He was brought up had it in his mined that he was the best. In a compitition he came second and what he was brought up to think crashed his life which made him to try to kill himself going in front of his car which made him a criपालed.

Vincent's brother Anton was brought to life through genetics and was accepted in life. He was worthy of his fathers name and his parents love for him he had the genetic potential to become what he wanted to be. For example him playing the chicken race by seeing who can swim the furthest without getting scared and turning back.

The genetic potential which decides the future of an individual for Gattaca was challenged and beaten by Vincent by proving all the odds wrong for example him beating his brother in the race which put the idea in his head that 'That's what made every thing else possible that gave him the edge to be what he wanted not what they wanted.

Assessors' comments:

- throughout the response there is only a grappling and minimal attempt to deal with the central notions of the topic
- there is no real sense of the type of conceptual thought required in a Part 2 response
- the level of textual awareness and analysis is extremely limited and facile
- the expression is often awkward, inaccurate and ill-controlled
- the essay is insubstantial and lacking in focus.

Section 2 – Writing task

The 'Writing task' scenario and material certainly seemed to attract students' interest, yet the notions of liberty versus law and public good sometimes faded in the perceived affront to the assumption of the right to possession of a mobile phone. This provides a very clear example of the need to take careful note of the particular task posed, and to address it explicitly. It is only in this way that the writing skills of language construction and keeping to a purpose, which is often



situationally unique, can be developed. There is little to be learned, on the contrary, from formulaic writing, which by its rigidity never addresses the singularity of most writing tasks or experiences.

Part 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	1	4	9	15	20	20	16	9	3	1	5.4

The best answers for Part 1, and as always there were many, deliberately set out to demonstrate the language use analysis skills the students had acquired. These were careful, perceptive answers, well-supported and thorough in their span of focus.

Overall, however, although many students showed evidence of an appropriate awareness of language in action and displayed the vocabulary of language use analysis, the somewhat disappointing features of past years persisted. Too many students still saw the task as one of simply identifying and labelling, or of outlining syllogistic strategy, or even worse, of simply supplying a paraphrased summary.

The words of the question, ‘Analyse the ways in which the language is used to present a point of view in **both** the **principal’s** newsletter **and** the parent’s letter...’, hold the key to the required content and style of the answer. It pays to initially and succinctly identify the context. What is happening here? Who are the audiences? Who are the writers? What are their intentions? How do they work? Students should illustrate this with detail and by close reference to specific examples of the language use, perhaps through a short quotation. What appears to have been the writer’s intention? What is the real impact?

Students should avoid actual argument evaluation and maintain a measured issue/situational disinterest.

The structure of the response needs thought and planning. The fact that there were two pieces did not imply that their integration throughout a response was necessarily appropriate or, indeed, workable. In the hands of some writers, this may simply induce confusion. Each piece always had its own integrity. This was best demonstrated by comparing the differing approaches, attitudes, style, and tones from the two pieces on offer. While students may have chosen to analyse each piece separately, it is important to note that the instructions called for ‘a coherently constructed piece of prose’. Thus, links between the two texts did need to be made. A complete synthesis of the treatment of the two in an answer could have been profitable, even brilliant, but this should have been judged in the context of how effective it made the analysis. For many students, however, the best choice was to deal separately with the pieces and make connections as necessary.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

After a school council meeting in May 2004, Metro High School decided to ban all students from bringing mobile phones to school, under penalty of detention. In response to the Principal of Metro High School’s newsletter message outlining the reasons for the decision, a concerned parent, May Brown, has written to the school in response to, and in opposition of, the Principal’s announcement.

The Principal’s announcement itself, printed below the school’s motto (‘MHS excellence’) is coupled with another sketch of a diploma bearing scholar – an attempt to relate the announcement with the school’s academic standards and integrity is written in a calm and authoritative tone as befitting of a school principal. The proclamation itself, ‘no student will be allowed to bring mobile phone onto school property,’ is bolded, and this coupled with an implication that it was the school council’s decision to ban mobile phones, adds authority and emphasis to the proclamation. The notion is further strengthened by words like ‘natural’ and ‘automatic’ to invoke the sentiment that to challenge the school’s policy would be somehow un-natural.

The Principal further strengthens his case, writing dot points to authoritatively convey the school’s reasoning. The ‘severe disruption’ of classes is noted as conflicting with the school’s academic standards – as set out visually in the school motto. The principal further appeals to parents’ academic ideals by noting security concerns in tests and examinations, which he labels ‘distressing’. The use of quote marks around ‘emergencies’, ‘lost’ and ‘accidentally’ – when obviously these words were being used sarcastically – positions the reader to take the school’s case and not the students’. The Principal labels such individuals’ desires (to use mobiles) as ‘selfish’, clearly emphasising the school’s academic integrity as a focal point, again a reflection of the motto.

Unlike the Principal, Ms Brown writes in a more informal, emotive tone; she does not have the authority of the principal and so must rely on the emotive at times anecdotal tone of her argument.

Ms Brown opens by noting her dissatisfaction at the ban of a technology that ‘has made our lives simpler and safer’, referring to the convenience of mobile phones and their ability to help students and parents communicate. This appeal to convenience and family safety is enhanced by Ms Brown’s labelling of the public transport system as ‘notoriously unreliable’. A further appeal, this time directly to parents’ fears for the safety of their children, is present in Ms Brown’s reference to her daughter’s ‘medical condition’.



Ms Brown then goes on to attack those educational values that were presented by Mr Black in his announcement. Ms Brown appeals to commonsense, pleading that 'it is not good educational practise' to penalise the majority for the actions of a few, citing the need for 'self-discipline' for 'harmony'. The last point is likely to strike a chord with the rational minds of her audience, to focus on self-discipline, a highly-praised attribute, rather than brute discipline to achieve the positive goal of harmony. Ms Brown links this not with the ostensibly advantageous proposal that students should set their own rules, her mentioning of the 'benefit' of 'individual responsibility' is again an appeal to rational logic to go against the Principal's appeals to academic merit.

Ms Brown's understanding last line, where she asks the principal/school council to 'please reconsider' is likely to linger on her readers' minds as a gentle imperative regarding the difficult issue – a direct opposite to the Principal's harsher-toned conclusion.

Assessors' comments:

- the introduction could have alluded to the tonality/positioning of each piece
- this is an extremely lucid, clear and sharp analysis, which reveals a capacity to not only identify the means by which the language intentionally persuades, but also to articulate real and meaningful insights into the impact of such usage
- it seamlessly integrates succinct and apt quotations from the given texts
- the essay utilises a most effective mechanism to move from the analysis of the Principal's piece to Ms Brown's letter.

The following is an example of a medium-scoring response.

In the recent news bulletin written by the principal, he informs them that the bringing of mobile phones to school is not acceptable. In his letter, the principal uses sarcasm when he refers to students who used mobile phones to cheats during exams claiming it was for emergencies. In his letter, the tone of the principal can clearly be seen as anger and disappointment. He is angry at students who cheat during examinations or those students who used their phones with cameras to take pictures of people in the changing rooms. He is disappointed at the fact that students who really need to use mobile phones for emergencies will be neglected. In his letter, the principal proves his point again as he gives examples of what happens to mobile phones that were brought to school. 'Lockers were broken into, some bags were ransacked other were just 'lost'. The principal strongly sends the message that students are too busy text messaging in class to actually pay attention to what is being taught in class. To end his message to the parents, the principal has strongly advocated that if a student is found with a mobile phone in school, he will be sent for detention and his/her phone taken away. In the last paragraph of his letter, the principal uses a rhetorical question by saying how is this going to be a top school if mobile phones, something so minority cause such a controversy. He strongly believes that the values of this educational institution must be upheld.

In return to the principal's letter, a parent of a student wrote that her was very upset when she received the letter. Her letter's tone was certain anger and dismay. It is truly unfair that because of a few students, others are penalised! is what Mrs May Brown wrote. Apparently her daughter really needs the phone for emergencies. She uses a rhetorical question against the principal's letter as she says, 'how is my daughter going to contact me if she isn't feeling well on the way home.' Truly, one can understand how a mother feels about this things. She also uses examples like, when a student breaks the rules, action can be taken but it isn't fair. She also gives the argument that rules like this doesn't educate children which is quite true. She gives examples like people learn through mistakes. But an argument could be said that not all people learn from their mistakes. Another example given by the parent is when she says letting students play a role in settling the rules that they would more likely keep is a good idea. In ending her letter to the principal, she writes that she understands his irritation when students break rules and kindly asked that he reconsiders his decision.

Assessors' comments:

- the student often tends to resort to labelling and identifying strategies, without explaining the intended impact of such persuasive devices and language
- the essay falls repeatedly into mere summary and paraphrasing of what is in the content, rather than analysing **how** the language operates
- only two paragraphs are used, and the student lacks the capacity to organise or shape the analysis
- the traces of analysis are effectively lost within the veritable maze of summary
- this student seems to have a notion of analysis but lacks the means by which to shape and organise this, or to focus on the ideas presented.

The following is an example of a low-scoring response.

They presented their point of use by presenting their work in a mananer so that the reader would understand what the writers have written.

The languages that each of these articles has used would be expressed and written with style and anger which involves skill and determination.

The language that was expressed from mind to paper was extrodinary because each sentence linked up to one another. In both of the principles letters there words that showed us and expressed to us in what type of mood the principal was in.

From what the letters of the principle showed it didn't at all seem that he was in a happy mood.

2004 Assessment Report



To who ever had read the article everyone would say that he was in an angry mood.

For the parent in response to the principles article they weren't very happy because the language that the lady used was also moody talk which was expressed in the words that she had written down in her article.

Which brings me to the end of my analysis. The language which was used to present their point of view was moody and angry language.

Assessors' comments:

- no apparent paragraphing is used, and expressive control and fluency is seriously and significantly lacking
- there is no real attempt to analyse the two pieces, and the student resorts to making vague and meaningless statements about supposed language use.

Part 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	1	4	9	16	22	21	14	8	3	1	5.3

	% of Students	Average Mark
None	2	
Essay	15	5.5
Letter	65	5.4
Feature Article	18	5.4

The best answers for this task made for fine reading; lively and expansive, they handled the underlying concept, form, audience, purpose and voice with ease.

However, this was not the case for others. Students need to answer the **whole** question. Far too many students ignored the actual wording as it pertained to rules, experience and benefit and focussed on the **example**, that is, mobile phones. In their haste, form was often the casualty and this added to the list of assessment indicators ignored and so led to lower marks. While assessors do not have a rigid template for, say, a feature article, one would hardly expect such an article to begin with 'Dear sir...'

Students have shown a gradual improvement in the handling of this task in the past and hopefully such gains have not been lost.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response.

To the student newspaper,

In response to a most challenging feature article of the latest publication, concerning the nature of school rules such as the banning of mobile phones, I would like to express my view, as a student, regarding this most central issue. To merely state that school rules 'do nothing' to protect students is ridiculous, and I should think that a ban on mobile phones in the school environment is highly appropriate.

School rules, such as ban on phone usage, are essential in protecting the rights and welfare of students. Despite what some students may believe, the primary goal of attending any school is to be taught, and to learn. However, it seems in recent years at this school that the mobile phone, the wonder gadget of this new century, has made its presence all too well known in the wrong places. As a result, I struggle to find anything more distracting than the beeping melodies of a mobile phone in the classroom, let alone during the crucial time of a major test or examination. Text-messages may be the latest craze in this generation of students, but there is only one message that stands true: mobile phones are obtrusive, distracting, and potentially destructive to the learning opportunities of many students. That is why I find it hard to believe that school rules 'do nothing' – without them, any diligent student would find him or herself at war with a cacophony of chatting mouths and beeping buttons.

I am aware that some of the students may need a mobile phone for personal reasons, such as for communication with parents during a medical crisis. Some students. However, surely a ban could still be placed on mobile phones at school, thereby protecting the educational rights of hard-working students, whilst giving special allowance for those who truly need them. Although many students would feel angered at such an unjust travesty, one must be reminded that school is an institution, not a social club for whiling away the hours in idle chit-chat.

2004 Assessment Report



It is at school that students learn. Not only do they learn of the wonders (although some may disagree) of quantum physics and of William Shakespeare, but they learn to obey, and to adhere to rules that are designed to protect. A student must not let his or her own selfish desires stand in the way of those who may be making a genuine effort to achieve their academic dreams. I sincerely hope that this letter may find its way to the minds of students who may be thinking about that next phone call in the classroom – please, leave the phones at home.

Yours sincerely,

Jack Tobias, Green House Prefect Year 12

Assessors' comments:

- the student immediately presents a definite and purposeful contention, as well as assuming the correct voice and stance of a student
- apt and focused persuasive strategies are used
- the views presented command the reader's attention through their logically developed and carefully sequenced approach
- the expression is highly controlled, mature, accurate, sharp and task-focused
- this is a highly effective letter to the editor.

The following is an example of a medium-scoring response.

Do those on the school council know the implications such as ban will have on us 'students' or are they too busy trying to impress the increasingly elitist notion that has swept over our parents. They then have the gall to suggest it is for our own protection! To benefit everyone! Honestly sometimes I feel as though they give us the student, no respect.

As for our 'honourable' Mr Black's 'message from the Principal' it is easy for anyone to find rational, clear responses to his belittling, ill conceived points.

For classes being 'severely disrupted' by 'obsessive text messaging' I have once in my 6 years of schooling at MHS, felt a class was 'severely' interrupted.

His blatant disregard for his students health is a little worrying too. As Mr Black regards our legitimate emergencies with utter contempt. How would he feel if he knew he or his child were unable to contact a parent or a loved one if the situation called for it?

As for the 'thefts' and unsavoury incidents occurring in relation to mobile phones has he no conception of the real world? Where these are realities? Or is his mind buried in that 'little red school book'?

It frustrates me to think that these arguments would likely appeal to our parents sense of 'educational merit' rather than their rational thought.

Especially when sentiments that such within the minds of a one 'Bev' declaring young people communicating is 'annoying' are allowed to be published within our school forum. It would seem reason panders will.

As a 'sensible' person it is my concern that the powers that be have been swept up.

Assessors' comments:

- only a vague and incomplete line of argument is apparent
- no aspects of a feature article are shown, nor is the capacity to adopt a suitable voice evident
- the essay lacks coherence and cohesion, and reads like a series of disparate dot points
- the student has no real sense of the task, or of crafting or shaping a unified and appropriate point of view, yet may have had the capacity to so do with direction or skill-development

The following is an example of a low-scoring response.

In response to the new rules banning mobile phones from schools will help to benefit everyone. Will stand to improve the education and focus of most students. All phones provided one class with enough noise and distraction to students. These distraction have to stop, as it is our education is suffering. Concentrating can be quite difficult if all these unwanted noises keep giving you a headache, prolonging the disturbance that bothers most students.

Don't students want a good future anymore? Have they all found something else that is more important than the lives of all their classmates. I think not.

Assessors' comments:

- there is no sense or awareness of what constitutes a feature article, therefore there is no real capacity to focus on the question as given
- only a vague and unsubstantial viewpoint is presented
- there is no development of a sustained or meaningful argument
- both the extreme brevity and the lack of thought make this an extremely low calibre of response.