VCE Literature

Advice on the VCE Literature (2023–2027) examination

Section A – Developing interpretations

Overview

This is a new task for 2023. It reflects an emphasis on close reading that underpins the VCE Literature study design and all the outcomes that students will have completed in their studies.

The section is broken down into two extended-answer questions, guiding students towards the most important and relevant aspects of the task and helping them to focus on what is required of them in their responses. The two questions support students by providing opportunities for them to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding of the text.

Question 1

For Question 1, students will be provided with a short passage from all 30 texts set for study. They must select **one** text they wish to respond to, bearing in mind that it mustbe from a **different category** than their selected text for Section B. Students should be very familiar with their selected text.

The passage should be considered the basis for discussion of the wider text. Students must explore the **significance of the passage** in terms of what is in the passage itself **and** in terms of how the passage may link to the wider text.

In their response, students can:

* identify and discuss where the passage is taken from and why it might be considered a key moment
* explore the significance of developments in the text such as plot, characterisation, setting, authorial language and style, point of view and ideas (beyond the concept identified in Question 2)
* include textual evidence judiciously selected from the passage to support the discussion
* include some discussion and textual evidence (where relevant) from other moments in the text to demonstrate their breadth of knowledge and understanding of the text.

This response is worth 6 marks, which is approximately one-third of the marks for Section A. Students should allocate their time and plan the length of their response accordingly.

Question 2

For Question 2, students respond to the same passage as they did in Question 1 but are asked to focus on a **concept represented in the passage**. For the purposes of this examination, the term ‘concept’ refers to a key idea associated with the views and values that are presented in the text. As with Question 1, students should use the passage as a basis for discussion but link their response to the wider text where relevant. They should aim to demonstrate a detailed understanding of the ideas, views and values that arise from the passage in connection with the identified concept, and explore and analyse the ways these can be endorsed, challenged and/or marginalised in the text.

While this response requires a discussion that is largely conceptual, it is still expected that students will work closely with the text and use appropriate textual evidence from the passage and the text as a whole.

This response is worth 14 marks, which is approximately two-thirds of the marks for Section A. Students should allocate their time and plan the length of their response accordingly.

There may be some overlap between a student’s responses to the two questions, but their response to Question 1 should be clearly focused on the **significance** **of the passage** to the wider text and the response to Question 2 should focus on an exploration of a **concept** **represented in the passage**.

Section B – Close analysis

Overview

Section B is a longstanding examination task in VCE Literature.

The task requires students to write one close-analysis essay on their chosen text, based on three set passages. While the passages must be used as the basis for their discussion, students have control over how they choose to engage with this task.

Close analysis

The task provides students with three short passages from all 30 texts set for study. The passages are sequenced in the order in which they appear in the text.

Students select the text they wish to respond to, bearing in mind that their selected text mustbe from a **different category** than their selected text for Section A.

Students use a detailed analysis of **two or more** of the three set passages as the basis for an interpretation and discussion of the **text as a whole.** This interpretation and discussion should be plausible and relevant and demonstrate a complex and nuanced understanding of the text.

The focus of this response is **close analysis;** students should therefore aim to analyse the language and literary features of the text and how these contribute to their interpretation of the text. The interpretation developed by the student will necessarily include ideas evident in the text; it can also incorporate views and values where relevant to the discussion.

Sections A & B – Mark distribution and structure of responses

* The questions and mark distribution provide opportunities for students to scaffold their knowledge and understanding of a text, from an exploration of ‘significance’ and ‘context’ through to ‘analysis’ in Section A, to a more sophisticated, nuanced interpretation and discussion of a text in Section B.
* The mark distribution is a guide for students in terms of response length and breadth.
* The sample answer book also provides guidance on the length of a response; however, students are at liberty to write more than the space in the answer book allows and can ask for additional answer book(s) if required.
* A formal essay structure is **not** required for any of the responses and students may structure their responses as they choose; however, they are expected to provide extended, not short-answer, responses in which they present their ideas logically in developed sentences and connect them cohesively in structured paragraphs.
* The examination specifications clearly emphasise that students are required to write coherent, expressive and fluent responses to each question.

Assessment

Section A of the VCE Literature examination has a different configuration from the internal, school-based assessment mandated in the VCE Literature Study Design.

Internal and external assessment tasks are not intended to mirror one another. This differentiation reflects the different purposes of internal and external assessment at VCE.

Internal assessment

Students in VCE studies complete assessment internally (school-based assessment) and externally (mainly in the form of examinations).

The purpose of internal assessment is to determine students’ level of achievement and create a rank order of students. These are distinct from the decision to award a student an ‘S’ (satisfactory) or an ‘N’ (not satisfactory), which can be awarded using evidence beyond formal assessment. Internal assessment also presents opportunities for teachers to provide students with in-depth feedback, facilitate peer sharing and discussion, and plan for future learning.

Internal assessments are developed by teachers. While the assessment task(s) for each outcome is prescribed in the study design, the content, conditions and – in some cases – the mode of delivery are matters for schools and teachers to decide. Teachers can also decide which assessment tools they will use to assess learning outcomes for each VCE unit.

Teachers are in the best position to measure students’ learning and growth across units. This view is supported by international and national research and was the basis for the decision to produce study designs, rather than syllabuses, for VCE studies.

As internal assessments take place in a teaching and learning cycle and can be broader than examinations, contextualised, and allow for feedback, tasks are often longer and more complex than those in examinations.

External assessment

External assessment – the examination – has a different purpose. Developed by the VCAA, the examination provides a common assessment tool that enables internal assessment scores to be placed on a single common scale and performance across the state to be compared fairly and equitably.

The examination is a point-in-time assessment, designed for a non-contextualised cohort, for [statistical moderation](https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/assessment/vce-assessment/how-vce-assess/how-pages/Pages/StatisticalModeration.aspx) purposes, and provides no feedback.

The VCE Literature examination is designed to allow students to draw on the learning they have completed during their study of Literature, including what they have gained from internal assessment.

The two sections in the examination provide them with different entry points and tasks of different lengths to demonstrate their understanding of the texts they have studied, as well as their key knowledge and key skills.