



2014 English as an Additional Language (EAL) GA 3: Examination

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2014 English as an Additional Language (EAL) 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 relate student performance directly to these criteria, and their judgments are assisted by the use of a set of descriptors. Teachers and students should be aware of the assessment criteria, the descriptors and the sample examination paper, which are published on the VCAA website.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

The statistics in this report may be subject to rounding errors resulting in a total less than 100 per cent.

Section A – Text response

| | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|-----------|----------------|
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
| % | 0 | 1 | 2 | 6 | 14 | 22 | 24 | 18 | 10 | 4 | 1 | 5.8 |

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 20 prescribed texts. The descriptors used for assessment relate 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 most popular texts and their mean scores are shown in the table below.

| Text | % of students | Average score |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| <i>Twelve Angry Men</i> | 36 | 5.7 |
| <i>A Christmas Carol</i> | 11 | 5.0 |
| <i>The Thing Around Your Neck</i> | 10 | 5.9 |
| <i>Mabo</i> | 8 | 5.4 |
| <i>In the Country of Men</i> | 6 | 6.5 |

The most successful students demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the topics and texts through an ability to craft meaningful, analytical and relevant discussion in direct response to the chosen topic. Successful students were able to skilfully weave knowledge of the text into the fabric of the analysis. Student writing generally reflected awareness of the construction and interpretation of texts, but the less sophisticated responses focused on the plot. Almost all responses displayed some knowledge of the text and an adequate knowledge of essay structure.

Stronger 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. Weaker responses tended to be more descriptive and dominated by detailed retelling of the content of the text rather than selective use of the text. Students generally showed a good understanding and knowledge of the texts and were familiar with the main ideas raised in the topics. There were few very short or incomprehensible responses. In planning, students need to brainstorm all the key words, paying particular attention to modifying words and comparatives within the topic. 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 in developing a narrative.



As in past years the majority of responses were to a small number of texts. The following five texts were used in 70 percent of the responses: *Twelve Angry Men*, *A Christmas Carol*, *The Thing Around Your Neck*, *Mabo* and *In the Country of Men*.

Students who responded on *Twelve Angry Men* showed a reasonable degree of competency, demonstrating their interest in and good understanding of ideas and concepts raised by the text. In the first topic, ‘self-interest’ – regard for one’s own interest or advantage, especially with disregard of others – allowed students to explore the behaviour of a variety of characters in the text. The more successful responses included discussion of the influence of self-interest on the behaviour of the defence lawyer and the two main witnesses. Some of the better responses drew on detailed knowledge of the minor jurors and used this to challenge the topic. Students who were able to define ‘self-interest’ generally wrote more relevant responses. Weaker responses were limited to a general knowledge of the characters, without directly exploring the influence of self-interest on the behaviour of the characters. Fewer students tackled the second question. ‘Outside the jury room’ was not well understood and was ignored in many responses. Despite this, the topic produced wide discussion, and students demonstrated knowledge of the text and the ideas they had considered in studying it.

Both topics on *A Christmas Carol* allowed for a range of responses. There were some simplistic, short responses that tended to retell the story; however, many responses discussed the questions in relation to the structure of the story and also explored the language. These responses demonstrated an understanding of the emotional qualities of language, such as the humour in the descriptions and the dialogue, exaggeration and pathos. Most responses to the first topic demonstrated an understanding of the idea of ‘lasting consequences’. Both topics dealt with major themes in the text, with a broad range of evidence for students to draw on. This allowed weaker students to follow the chronological structure of the text and still be relevant.

Students produced generally well-organised responses to *Mabo*. Their responses were relevant and they were able to incorporate references to film features. In the first question students understood the idea of pride and could relate this to the film. Some provided specific definitions of their understanding of pride as concepts such as arrogance or self-respect. Students writing on the second question showed that they understood the idea of the land as a character.

Both topics for *In the Country of Men* worked well for a range of students and gave them opportunity to demonstrate their knowledge of the text. Students responded to the first question by drawing on a range of characters and situations. Some responses were about the style and structure of the writing and the ideas in the text. Discussion of how characters were affected by betrayal introduced some complex interpretations and readings of the text.

Students produced interesting and varied responses to the topics on *The Thing Around Your Neck*. There were many characters and events on which students could respond. Both topics were based on major themes that were accessible for EAL students. In the first topic the idea of ‘transformation’ invited students to connect with ideas from a wide variety of stories in interesting ways. Weaker responses tended to retell one story per paragraph.

During their preparation, students need to consider how construction, language and authors’/directors’ other choices add meaning to the text, rather than merely looking at what happened, the themes and the character. The importance of integrating text construction and authorial choices into responses needs to be emphasised, as well as the discussion of characters or themes. Language is the key. Students need to write analytically, not descriptively, and need to develop writing skills that will enable them to incorporate knowledge of the text into their analysis or exposition. Students should be encouraged to explore questions fully by unpacking topics to allow their own ideas to emerge. Thoughtful planning is needed to craft a response that directly addresses the set topic. With collections of stories, students should be encouraged to look for the links and connections between the stories.

Student response – Example 1

The following upper-range response to *Twelve Angry Men* connects self-interest with personal interest and sustains the focus on behaviour that looks after one’s own interests and disregards others. It uses the text well, despite occasional use of inappropriate vocabulary.

‘Self-interest strongly influences the behaviour of many of the characters in the play.’ Discuss.

As humans, it is incredibly hard to keep self-interest and personal issues from influencing our actions. This idea is explored in Reginald Rose’s legalistic play “Twelve Angry Men”, through the display of prejudice and personal bias from several jurors. Coupled with the prevalence of apathy and indifference, Rose warns readers at the potential of personal interest in compromising justice and fairness in a judicial system. It is, however, evident that as the crux of the play unfolds, Jurors 8 and 4 work selflessly in order to have justice prevail, as they reach a fair verdict.



Initially the jury room is dominated by jurors whose beliefs and wicked behaviours are fuelled by personal interest. Juror 10 is painted by Rose as a man consumed by his personal hatred and fear of slum people. He inherently believes that “all kids who crawls outta” slums are “real trash” and is determined to “send (the defendant) off to die” due to his personal prejudice. Fuelled by his bigoted values, Juror 10 is quick to oppress those who challenge his views, such as Juror 9 who he calls an “old son of a bitch.” In a similar vein, Juror 3 is overwhelmed by his personal emotional baggage. Due to the emotional scar that his “rotten kid” leaves him, which is evident in his confession “I can still feel the knife going in,” Juror 3 sees the young defendant as a manifestation of his son, who he wants to punish. As a result, his personal desire to condemn his son forces him to act like a “public avenger” and makes him ignorant to pleas for rational discussions. Moreover, Juror 7 is also motivated by his personal interests as he walks into the jury room. Due to “some baseball tickets burning a hole in his pocket”, Juror 7 is quick to disregard the gravity of the situation as a “goddam waste of time.” He is described as constantly “looking at his watch,” which shows how his desire to be at a baseball match encourages him to ignore his civic duty and hence has no “guts to do what is right.” Hence it is evident that self-interest causes a number of jurors to act in a way that contaminates the notion of fairness and truth.

Unfortunately, the rampant disruption of selfish desires also exist outside the jury room. For instance, the lawyer who defends the young boy is doubted by Juror 8. He expresses his “peculiar feeling” about the lack of “real drive” from the lawyer, as he suggests that he “let too many things go.” Juror 8 speculates that as this is a case “that brings him nothing”, “no glory, no money,” the lawyer was reluctant to “drive home the points” as best he could. This demonstrates that the lawyer has a personal desire for success and wealth, and when it became clear that he was defending “one of” the “born liars”, he refused to put any effort into his duty. Furthermore the witnesses are also heavily influenced by their personal desires. As the play unfolds, Juror 9 raises a doubt which challenges the validity of the witness testimonies. As an old man, Juror 9 claims that he “knows him better” than anyone else, and suggests that the old witness could have lied “under oath” because of his desire “to be quoted” and avoid “receding into the background.” Consequently a number of jurors are drawn to question the testimonies as it becomes clear that even the witnesses cannot escape from the influence of their personal interest. Hence Rose suggests that it is near impossible for an individual to act without selfish motives.

To say, however, that personal interest dominates all human beings, would be a superficial analysis of Rose’s intentions. Through the characterisation of Jurors Eight and Four, Rose shows that some individuals are able to act selflessly, to restore the integrity of the jury system. As a man of intellect - “I’m an architect” - Juror 8 fights against “the ridicule of others” to facilitate a reasoned discussion. He insists that “facts....(may be) wrong” encouraging other jurors to approach the case with skepticism and “reasonable doubt.” The fact that he separates himself from others at the start of the play symbolises his ability to escape the influence of personal interest and catalyse a fair deliberation as an observer. Similarly, Juror 4 is a man of logic, who does not tolerate the blissful display of ignorance from Juror 10. As a stock broker he is driven by his respect for logic, as he encourages others to “stick to the facts” and condemns the arguments that are “far-fetched.” Unlike Juror 3 who threatens Juror 2 to “be quiet”, Juror 4 allows others to speak, such as telling others to “go on”. Moreover, Juror 4 is “seemingly not bothered by the heat,” which is a crucial reminder for readers that he is capable of distancing himself from personal ambitions and conflict to make it a “fair trial” for the defendant. Therefore through Jurors 8 and 4, it is clear that their selfless dedication to a fair deliberation allows the jurors to reach a just verdict.

Regional Rose ultimately demonstrates the unfortunate consequences of the behaviour of those who surrender themselves to the power of their personal interests. Nevertheless, the play ends with an optimistic view of both humanity and the American judicial system that some are able to master the influence of their desires and bring justice to victory.

Student response – Example 2

This mid-range response to *A Christmas Carol* attempts to canvass the ideas in the whole question. It demonstrates adequate control of language, despite a number of errors that frequently occur in EAL writing but which do not inhibit the meaning. It is organised and generally relevant.

‘An important theme in *A Christmas Carol* is that actions have lasting consequences.’ Discuss.

‘A Christmas Carol,’ a novella written by Charles Dickens in 1840s depicts the experience and transformation of the protagonist Ebenezer Scrooge. Dickens uses Scrooge’s experience to explore that the actions and decisions are always affecting the consequences. Therefore, it is important to understand that not only Scrooge, all the human beings need to realise their futures and fate are always related and connection by there past actions. Furthermore, Dickens also reflects that the whole society has the responsibility to deal with problems. The society can determine whether having lasting result or not.

Scrooge’s experience with the spirits has proved that negative actions have lasting consequences. Dickens first appears this opinion when Scrooge meets his old partner Jacob Marley. When Jacob Marley says ‘I wear the chain I forged in life’ to Scrooge it is easy to find Dickens uses ‘chain’ and ‘forged’ to hint Marley’s life and fate are suffered by his past. Marley’s stingy and cold-heart punish him and torture him even he past away. One’s behaviour can have long term consequence. Dickens wants to use Scrooge to represent people who are stingy and cruel to think about their actions and decisions. Furthermore, when the



Ghost of the Christmas Past shows Scrooge his lonely and bleak past to him, Dickens also mentions that for the society, providing a good living condition and better education to kids are important. A bad childhood can affect a person's entire life. When Scrooge sees his childhood, he feels excited and happy, this action by Scrooge has successfully satirized the dark time during the Industrial Revolution and has demonstrated that Scrooge still values his childhood even it was dark and lonely. Dickens appears that every human is deliberately designed to be kind and happy, but the society can be the external factor which breaks it and change a person. This lasting unfortune changes Scrooge and makes him fall down.

Furthermore, it's obvious to see the opinion when the Christmas of yet to come shows Scrooge his death and future. Again, Dickens explores the bad actions people made in the past will keep punishing them in one day. People's cold-heart and irresponsibility to others will drop them into the trap. They will be treated with cold-heart and cruel too. Negative actions will have negative lasting outcomes.

On the other hand, the positive response to others will have a positive long term outcomes. Although the novel has described a lot of negative side of humanity, a myriad of characters still show their warmth and generous, and their kindness is affecting others. When the Ghost of the Christmas Past brings Scrooge back to Old Fezziwig's Christmas party. Old Fezziwig's kind and happiness have influenced Scrooge's cold heart. This is a turning point that starts making him feel love. Then, Bob's family tells Scrooge that happy and love is not about rich or poor. Dickens uses the positive actions to not only teach Scrooge, but all the readers that a positive heart can support people for a really long time even in the most difficult time. Also, individual's action can affect other people to achieve others' changes.

'A Christmas Carol' is not only a novella which talks about the transformation, or reflects the dark side of the social problems. It's more about that positive actions that humans make will bring the long-term benefits for people themselves. Therefore, the world will be better and brighter. Also, people should always remember no one is borned to be evil because 'God bless everyone!'

Section B – Writing in Context

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 1 | 1 | 3 | 6 | 15 | 24 | 23 | 16 | 9 | 3 | 1 | 5.6 |

Students were required to complete an extended written response that was an expository, persuasive or imaginative piece of writing. They were required to base their writing on the ideas in the prompt and draw directly from the selected text studied in the Context. There was a broad range of writing, including reflective and personal pieces as well as creative pieces. The more successful responses were characterised by original ideas in response to the prompt and an ability to link these ideas to a broad range of texts. Many strong responses were in an expository style, exploring the implications of the prompt through thought-provoking and insightful personal stories, often beginning with an interesting anecdote.

In general, stronger students drew clearly on key words from the prompts, supported by relevant details from the selected text and their own lives. They were also able to draw together ideas from different sources. Weaker students' responses tended to be characterised by a misinterpretation of the key words, or little reference to them. Few pieces resembled a text response (a response that began with the selected text and relied too much on that text, making little or no reference to other ideas). These responses began with a short introduction then gave a long analysis of the text and a brief reference to the prompt. Some were written directly to the text without first presenting the ideas that the text illuminated. Students with adequate, but in no way sophisticated, language skills were able to write relevant responses that drew on the chosen text, personal experience and other material. Weaker responses began with a standard definition of the Context without grappling with the prompt or indicating how the task would be approached. Strong responses showed that students used the nominated text quite well as a source of ideas and examples to support their own line of argument or ideas.

In general, students showed a good understanding of the Contexts. Even those who struggled to write successfully were able to relate to some of the context issues from their own experiences on quite a meaningful level. While some showed a thorough understanding of the implications of the prompts, others did not address the key concepts of the prompts.

The most popular Context was Exploring issues of identity and belonging, and was chosen by 57 per cent of students. The prompt was generally well understood by students. The word 'discovering' opened up the idea that people have to search for who they are and 'challenging' raised the difficulties involved. Some students wrote on change more than challenge, without directly pursuing how change can cause challenges. The prompt enabled students to address both identity and belonging. 'Who we are' was well done, but 'where we belong' less so. Making the connection between the two ideas posed difficulties for some students. Weaker responses focused on the first only and often ignored 'challenging'.



Encountering conflict was chosen by 34 per cent of students. Most wrote well about the harm caused to the ‘powerless’. Fewer were able to explore harm to the ‘powerful’ in any depth. Strong responses canvassed the impact of moral and psychological harm on the powerful. Weaker responses appeared not to understand the idea of ‘harm to the powerful’.

Only 6 per cent of responses were to Whose reality? and 3 per cent to The imaginative landscape. Both prompts drew a range of open and creative responses that contained appropriate connections to the texts.

It is recommended that the Section B response be taught as a writing task and not as a text task. Working with the ideas of the prompt and/or stimulus material should be the focus of this piece of writing. The Context is about exploring ideas, and students need lots of classroom practice at teasing out ideas before they tackle the selected text. The text will be a source of ideas to explore later in their study. The reading of texts from the point of view of the ideas rather than the events should be encouraged. In the best pieces of writing the text will not dominate. Models of student writing should be used to explore how connections between texts, the prompt and/or stimulus material and students’ own experiences are made. This task rewards students who read widely, consider ideas carefully and synthesise them. Students need an ‘idea bank’ and an ‘example bank’ from which to draw for this writing. Not every item in the ‘bank’ can be used with a particular prompt or stimulus. Students should be encouraged to keep their own files of material during the year, including keeping reflections in a journal. Teachers could provide students with a number of activities that encourage them to write a variety of pieces in different forms and styles. Choosing to write three short, different pieces for the SAC task is one way of doing this. Imaginative writing where students take on the persona of a character from their chosen text is more appropriate for SAC writing than for the examination, as it can limit the exploration of the prompt and lead to just retelling the story, often poorly. Teachers could also model different ways in which the ideas of the chosen text could be incorporated into a piece of writing.

Student response – Example 1

This upper-range response demonstrates how the Section B task draws on very different writing skills from those required for Section A. It is characterised by consideration of the wider implications of ideas from the Context, draws on a range of resources, includes brief personal anecdotes as well as adequate use of the selected text. It uses the prompt effectively as a springboard for a piece of analytical writing with a distinctive voice and an attempt to engage the reader.

‘Discovering who we are and where we belong can be challenging.’

The common fact of human nature is that everyone is unique. How we behave and react to different situations becomes our identity and often dictates where we belong. However, it is not to say that discovering this identity of ours is easy. In fact, it is often the hardest challenge in our lives.

The rapid development of technology has seen the ‘booming’ of social media. There are now countless ‘apps’ and sites to allow people to connect, regardless of whether you are best friends or strangers. What one might not realise is how powerful these social sites can be. The freedom to, literally, become whoever you want to be allows us to almost take control of our lives. However, in reality, all we are doing is creating a fake sense of security and belonging because eventually ‘Facebook friends’ will have to meet in person and how many ‘likes’ you get on your profile picture won’t mean a thing. In real life we don’t always get to choose who we are influenced by and often our identity is dictated by our lives. Discovering our true self is therefore almost impossible.

Here is a little insight to my own experience. At the age of 14 I migrated to Australia from Malaysia and found myself thrust into a foreign world and foreign culture. I soon realised that what I knew about myself no longer existed because I could not retain my original identity when all I wanted to do was to fit in. For the whole year, I spent my time engaging in conversation about Australian Football teams and saying ‘arvo’ instead of ‘afternoon’. Yet a lingering feeling inside of me resented this new ‘me’, and so I found myself unable to belong in this new country. Eventually I developed a new identity but that took years and the sacrifice of many aspects of my life.

To some extent, I can relate to Sandra Laing’s experience in the film ‘Skin’. Born of white descent yet appeared black, Sandra quickly learnt the importance of identity. The film revolved around Sandra’s journey in discovering herself which saw her being exiled from her family and the loss of a husband. She was stuck between the white and black community of South Africa, but never truly belonged to one. The apartheid only made her decisions even more harder as she juggled between a black and a white identity. The conflict between my identity as a Malaysian and an Australian resembled Sandra’s dilemma, although not as extreme. For me, it was more about preserving aspects of my identity that I have come to like and cherish.

Well then, if the journey to discovering ourselves and where we belong is so painstakingly hard, why even bother? A man named Richard R. Grant once said ‘The value of identity of course is that with it comes purpose.’ This idea is portrayed in Ray Lawler’s ‘Summer of the Seventeenth Doll’. After Roo lost his position of leader of the gang, he found himself lacking purpose and identity and therefore leaving them and going off to waste all his money drinking. My father always sees himself as the sole supporter of our household. Ever since he retired to do old age, however, he found himself roaming aimlessly around the house



every day. Even now, he still finds himself missing his working days. When we become so attached to a certain identity only to lose it suddenly, we find it even harder to discover our true selves and where we may belong.

Our identity is largely affected by our peers and experiences; it is not something we can control. The fact that people around us can so easily derail our knowledge of ourselves is why we often struggle to discover who we really are and hence where we belong.

Student response – Example 2

This upper-range response demonstrates one of the ways students responded to the prompt. There is an attempt to balance the prompt, the text and other ideas. It demonstrates that this is a writing task, not a text task. In places there is a lack of clarity in expression that detracts a little from the overall quality of the piece. The understanding of ‘harm to the powerful’ is not always clear.

‘Conflict causes harm to both the powerful and the powerless.’

For as long as humans has existed, conflict has been a part of our everyday lives. It affects all of us although its effects might differ. Conflict can bring great destruction among those who are powerless. Similarly, it can also cause considerable harm to the powerful. However, as the nature of conflict is unpredictable, instead of causing harm and destruction it can act as a catalyst for change in a society of both the powerful and powerless.

Conflict can bring great destruction to those who are powerless. When individuals are deemed ‘powerless’ they usually have no means whatsoever to defend themselves in times of conflict as they have very limited resources. Being ‘powerless’ may also mean that they are victims to the actions of those are more powerful. More powerful individuals may choose to use the powerless for their own personal benefit. In the movie ‘Twelve Years a Slave,’ Solomon is tricked into the slave trade and as a result, he becomes a slave himself. As a slave and a minority, Solomon is defenceless and has no choice but to follow the instructions of his superiors. This experience physically and mentally scars him. From a proud American man, Solomon is degraded down to wanting to take his own life. A similar experience is shown in Bertolt Brecht’s ‘Life of Galileo’. After being shown the ‘instruments of torture’ by the church, Galileo had no choice but to recant his words that he believes in the Copernican theory. At the time he was powerless and was at the mercy of the church. Galileo recanting affected his life in many negative ways. His apprentice, Andrea, had a different impression of him and thought that Galileo was a coward. His actions damaged his pride, which in turn damaged the way others viewed him. Thus showing that conflict can have a very harmful effect on the powerless.

Similarly, conflict can also have very negative impact on the powerful. To be considered ‘powerful’ an individual or group usually possesses a great deal of resources as well as influence on others. Countries and nations fall into this category. As conflict usually ends in destruction and chaos, a conflict among countries can end in the destruction of a country. At the conclusion of World War 1, the countries involved signed a treaty called the Treaty of Versailles. In the treaty, the countries involved came to an agreement that Germany was to blame for sparking the war. Germany was then forced to pay war expenses that reached into the billions. The economy of Germany took a great hit and in a way it was ‘destroyed’. The country lost respect, resources and allies from other countries. Although they were indeed ‘powerful’ they had no control over the consequences of the conflict which led to its downfall. The powerful are just as susceptible to harm as the powerless when conflict is involved.

Although conflict can cause a great deal of damage to both the powerful and the powerless, it can also act as a catalyst for change which brings the two together. Since the powerful and powerless live in different conditions, they usually have different beliefs and values. Their beliefs and values may then oppose each other which prohibits the two from living in harmony. The introduction of a conflict may change their perspectives on their beliefs and values which may lead to a change in their society. Martin Luther King Jr believed that in a time where racism was rampant, the white and coloured community can coexist in peace. To achieve this, he encouraged the coloured community, the powerless, to stand up for their rights by organising boycotts and non-violent protests. Although this often led to a violent backlash from the white community, the powerful, it also created a form of inner conflict in some of them. They did not know whether to help him or to support their own beliefs. Eventually, both communities managed to look past their differences and integrate themselves into each other’s lives. Without the presence of the conflict, their perspectives may have never changed and an unrest may continue to rage on, proving that conflict can also act as a catalyst for change.

The nature of conflict is unpredictable. Therefore it can have various different effects on individuals or groups. Conflict can cause great harm to those who are powerless as they have no means to defend themselves. Similarly, conflict can also damage the economic integrity as they have a lot to lose in times of conflict. However, conflict can also act as a catalyst for change instead of bringing harm which can bring the powerful as well as the powerless together.



Section C – Analysis of language use

Part 1

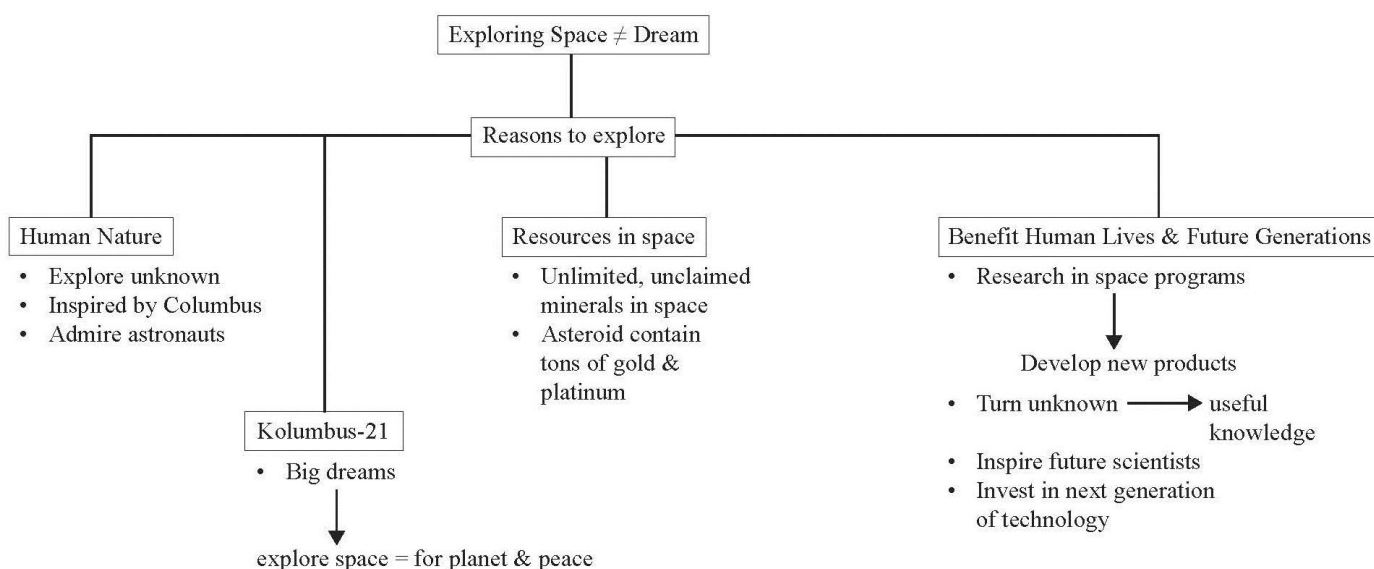
| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 3 | 4 | 7 | 10 | 14 | 19 | 17 | 13 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 5 |

The task material consisted of two pieces with different points of view about whether governments should continue to spend money exploring space. In the first piece, the writer of the article was inspired after viewing an exhibition on space exploration. The second was a letter to the editor sent to the newspaper after the article was published. The material was accessible to students and gave them plenty of opportunity to comment on at least some aspects of language use and visuals. The forms, word length and language were all appropriate for the task. It gave plenty of opportunity for students of all levels to demonstrate their skills. A newspaper readership is a very general audience, with some readers likely to be more interested in a particular topic than others. A few responses went beyond the information supplied in the ‘background information’ by speculating to identify a more restricted audience, but this was inappropriate.

Most students followed the instructions in the exam, which required students to write a note-form summary of the article only. Some completed the note-form summary of all the material. The note-form responses mostly demonstrated that the material was accessible through an awareness of the key ideas in the article. The writer’s position was to support space exploration. This was developed through the ideas that the need to explore is in human nature and the possibilities offered by space exploration for discovery, innovation and international cooperation. Some students misunderstood the writer’s main idea and thought the writer’s position was just about dreams. The challenge in this task was to design a structure (for the summary) through which processing of the material could be demonstrated. Responses in the form of ‘yes/no’ or ‘positive/negative’ were less successful. Many students grouped ideas well, but there were still some just listing without processing the information. The strongest pieces demonstrated processing of the material, gave an overall understanding of the writer’s position and recorded the ideas appropriately using plain English.

The following student responses demonstrate an overall understanding of the material, processing of the information and selection of the key ideas presented in a meaningful form. The inclusion of a brief reference to ideas from the visual in Example 2 does not detract from the overall quality of this piece.

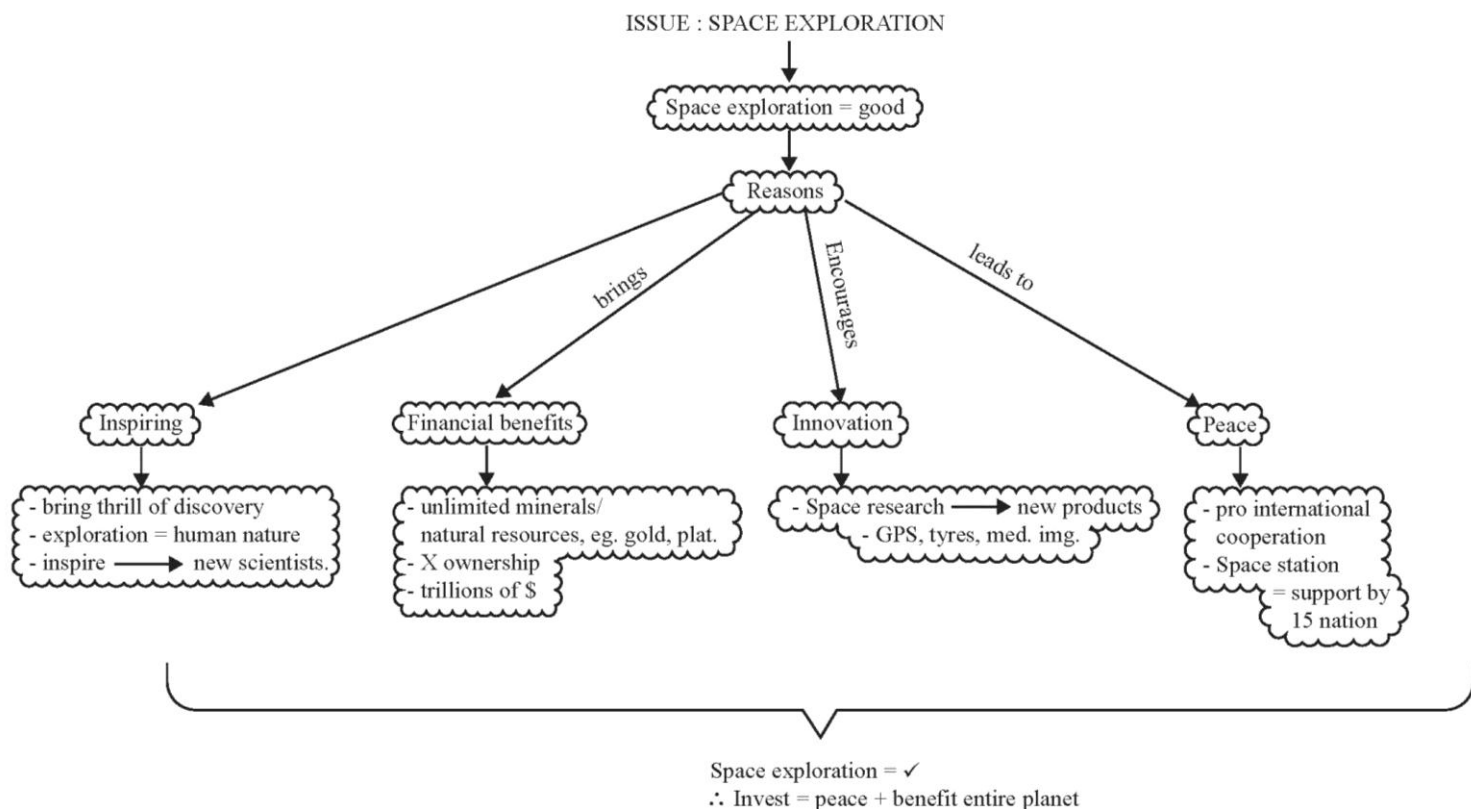
Student response – Example 1



∴ Space exploration = Finding answers to big problems,
eg. protect future of Earth.



Student response – Example 2



Part 1

Part 2

| Marks | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | 8 | 9 | 10 | Average |
|-------|---|---|---|----|----|----|----|----|---|---|----|---------|
| % | 4 | 4 | 8 | 13 | 17 | 20 | 15 | 11 | 6 | 2 | 0 | 4.7 |

In Part 2 students were able to use some or all of the task material to explain how language and visual features were used to attempt to persuade. While some students used three points from the article, many used at least one point from the letter. Only a small number used the letter only. Most students made sense of the material and were able to comment on the persuasive techniques. The letter was seen to be in a much more overtly persuasive style.

There were also responses that simply worked through the piece rather than connecting the analysis to three main points in the task material. Some responses were structured around the techniques rather than the ideas. Many responses demonstrated a good knowledge of persuasive techniques but not an ability to apply this knowledge effectively to the task material. Weaker responses were descriptive rather than analytical. Students needed to use words and phrases that recognise what the author is attempting to achieve, not whether the author achieves this.

The visuals were well understood by most students. The first visual offered some opportunity to make inferences and comment on emotive appeals. Strong responses made some very sophisticated observations about the symbols and meaning in the first visual. Others simply described the ship and struggled to connect it with the print text. Most students were able to make meaningful observations about the second visual – readers see how space research already benefits them in their daily lives and therefore want it to be pursued. Stronger responses were able to explore this appeal in broad terms; weaker ones just described the pictures. Some also commented on the features and significance of the astronaut.



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 high-range responses included:

- a clear understanding of the context and the points of view expressed
- a focus on analysis of language, not argument
- an exploration of the sustained metaphor of dreams connected with pursuing space exploration
- clear explanations linking visuals to the writer's point of view and exploring the intended effect of the visuals.

Mid-range responses showed awareness of the task but some moved between explaining the material and an attempt at analysing it. Limitations in these responses included:

- difficulty describing tone accurately
- limited understanding of the context of the material
- generalised descriptions of persuasive techniques
- reference to visuals not linked to the text.

Student response – Example 1

This upper-range response demonstrates strong understanding of the task and the material. It examines a range of ways in which words and visuals position the audience. It uses precise language fluently and effectively. It is a concise but sophisticated response.

Yvette Yergon's newspaper article 'Exploring our dreams' discusses the potential rewards of space exploration and contends the need to promote it whilst Peter Laikis' letter-to-the editor article opposes Yvette's view.

Yvette believes that space exploration is an inspiring challenge that humanity must embark on. She claims it to be the "biggest thing we can do" to portray the scale of space exploration as being the peak of human achievement as a whole in an effort to unify and inspire the reader to imagine the wonder and thrills of space exploration. Her use of Christopher Columbus as a source of evidence to suggest human feats of the past and her reiteration as space travel being even more extravagant is intended to appeal to the reader's sense of adventure and human pride, that if we can set out to realise the dream of space exploration it will cement the greatness of the human race and our constant drive to "meet the unexpected" essential for progression. The use of the first image of a ship in the sea with the backdrop of a planet is implying that there are greater worlds beyond our planet awaiting exploration and that the next step to surpassing Columbus' achievement is to delve into space exploration. Hence the reader is positioned to see the potential rewards of space exploration.

Furthermore, Yvette asserts that space can yield useful resources for humans. Her evidence of an asteroid containing "trillion dollars" worth of minerals is intended to arouse a sense of greed in the reader to portray the world beyond earth as harbouring riches which could reap massive benefits to human civilisation. The use of the image of a mind map connecting the space suit with everyday items such as GPS and solar cells are attempting to make the reader understand such technologies owe their origin to space research in an attempt to highlight the significance of space research and our continual need to do so in the future if humans are to be rewarded with more technological luxuries like enhanced GPS systems or medical imaging. The image is intended to portray space exploration as not just effecting the world outside earth but can also directly effect and enhance our daily lives. Thus the reader is more likely to see the potential benefits of space exploration and align with Yvette contention.

Peter Laikis' letter however opposes Yvette's notion by saying space exploration is a misguided idea. Peter declares Yvette's belief of curing "hunger, disease and the environment" as a "false belief" because people are driven by "greed" and not for the "good of the world." Peter's direct accusation to Yvette "Wake up, Yvette" portrays her as a dreamy and misguided individual with a false hope in humanity which Peter attempts to correct by implying the real truth where people's dreams were of "more and more wealth". This portrays humanity in a very negative light and attempts to crush any raised hopes of the audience from Yvette's article by reiterating to the reader that "nothing seems to have changed" and hereby suggest that space exploration is not a good idea. He stresses there are more important challenges such as ensuring our current planet does not become a "lifeless asteroid" to instill a sense of fear in the audience by suggesting the destruction of humanity which will result if we pursue the "false belief" of space exploration. The reader is made to realise there are more pressing matters to resolve before humans pursue the ambitious task of space exploration and is therefore attempting to position the reader to align against Yvette's contention.



Student response – Example 2

This mid-range response demonstrates some understanding of how language and visuals are used to persuade. It is an organised and supported response with overall understanding of the material and general control of language and expression.

The article “Exploring our dreams” by Yvette Yergon present her response towards the exhibition presented by Kolombus-21. She uses enthusiastic and optimistic tone to make the reader feel enthusiastic towards her point of supporting and improving space exploration.

Yergon firstly present her arguments that space exploration is inspiring and a dream come true. She supported her argument through the use of generalisation such as “seems to be in human nature to dream about...” The generalisation of everyone being a human will “dream what’s beyond the world” invokes the reader’s memory of childhood, dreaming about some conceal things that are thought to never be able to come true. This persuade the reader to think that it is now time to support the writer’s point of view. Similarly, Yergon also uses famous figure such as Christopher Columbus as an example to support her argument. This technique allows the reader to feel the validity of her point and therefore agreeing with the writer.

Secondly, Yergon proposes that the are many resources to be discovered in space and by supporting space exploration, people will attain an “unlimited mineral resources.” She supported her argument through the use of evidence such as “an asteroid that contains about 10,000 tons of gold” and “a company tried to claim ownership of an asteroid.” This allows the reader to feel that Yergon’s point of view is objective rather than subjective therefore can be trusted and gaining the support of the reader. Furthermore, the writer also appeal to hip-pocket such as using the value of the asteroid for “about 2 trillion dollars.” This appeal to readers and make the reader happy that if support was given, trillion of dollars could be up for grab making the reader in sharing the same point of view as Yergon.

Lastly, Yergon proposes that space exploration could assist in protecting the “future life on Earth” as well as for a better future. She supported her argument through the use of different images in which an astronaut picture has many lines pointed out to different aspect in life such as solar cells, GPS (Global positioning system) and medical imaging. By having lines of all these technology pointing to the astronaut, it invoke the readers sense of trust and agree to the advice given by Yergon. Similarly, Yergon also appeals to sense of loyalty and patriotism such as “space station supported by 15 nation” and “every government knows” these appeal to the readers sense of patriotism that if other nations are supporting it why shouldn’t our nation also support the view and have the best for our nation. Thus gaining the reader support the Yergon’s point to support space exploration.

Examining and analysing model answers could assist students in understanding the requirements of the tasks in Section C. They should practise note-form responses with shorter one-sided pieces. Students need skills in presenting their notes in a variety of ways. Even if the material can be used for a neat division of points into advantage/disadvantage or yes/no, the notes still need to be framed under the overall contention of the piece. These skills are developed through practice and could be connected to other areas of study; for example, using material related to the Context study and practised from early in the year. EAL students in mainstream classes need specific teaching towards developing these skills. This teaching needs to focus on understanding the material as a whole, as well as how to structure notes. Understanding the material starts with being able to identify the writer’s main contention, then being able to identify how each paragraph contributes to this – looking for the links across the material. Building these skills needs practice throughout the year.

Short letters from the media that present only one point of argument using several persuasive strategies are a useful starting point for Part 2. These can also be used to consider ways in which a variety of visuals are used within written material. Generic explanations of language devices are insufficient. Knowledge of a writer’s possible tactics must be applied directly to the unseen passage. Set language stems will only help if there is understanding of the task material. Students do not need to be able to label persuasive language; they need to write about how it attempts to persuade and to identify subtleties in language choices. Students should focus on specific words and phrases, and fully explore their connotations within the piece.

The background information given on the exam paper provided the context for the task material. It is important to read and understand this information before attempting the task. Using language to persuade has an ‘audience focus’ and the analysis needed to be related to the specified audience. Introductions should be limited to showing an awareness of the audience, the context and the overall contention of the piece. The topic sentence of each following paragraph should identify the point of argument on which the language analysis will focus rather than the technique being used.