Supporting students in the English IA1

Extended response — written response for a public audience

Purpose

Your assessment is to write an extended response:

- a media text for a public audience
- which analyses the representation of a concept, identity, time or place in two different texts
- by providing a considered perspective of that chosen representation in the two texts
- and positioning readers to think about texts in particular ways and in relation to one another.

General advice

1. The primary purpose of this assessment is to be analytical.

2. However, ‘engaging public audiences in media texts may involve elements of creative, reflective and persuasive writing’,\(^1\) e.g.

- In an analytical article about the significance of popular culture texts in Australian family life, the writer includes a personal anecdote about their family gathering to watch *The Simpsons*, encouraging audiences to reflect upon their own family’s experiences.

- In an analytical blog about representations of justice, the writer begins with a brief, imagined monologue from a victim of crime, persuading audiences to consider justice from a specific point of view.

Key definitions

Use these definitions to further guide your understanding of the assessment.\(^2\)

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\(^2\) Ibid.
• **Extended response:** an extended response [is planned, drafted and created] over an extended and defined period; while students may undertake some research when writing the extended response, it is **not** the focus of this technique

• **Media texts:** spoken, print, graphic or electronic communications with a public audience; found in newspapers and magazines, and on television, film, radio, computer software and the internet

• **Public audience:** for this assessment, an example is a specific magazine or journal article published in print or online

• **Analyse:** examine or consider something in order to explain and interpret it, for the purpose of finding meaning or relationships and identifying patterns, similarities and differences

• **Representation:** textual constructions that give shape to ways of thinking about or acting in the world

• **Perspective:** a point of view or way of regarding or thinking about situations, facts and texts

• **Positioning:** selectively using detail or argument … carefully shaping focus and emphasis, and … choosing language and other textual features that promote a particular interpretation and reaction

### Key advice: Assessment objectives

Exploring the assessment objectives gives you a checklist for what this task requires and allows you to better understand how your work will be assessed.

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<th>Implications — what you need to do</th>
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<td>1, 2</td>
<td>Develop a structure which is appropriate to the chosen media text and enables you to <strong>position</strong> the public audience for that text.</td>
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| 3                     | Within that structure, plan a response that:  
  • develops your considered **perspective** (or thesis) on the chosen **concept, identity, time or place**  
  • analyses that concept, identity, time or place as it is presented in the two texts studied. |
| 4, 5                  | As you develop your response, ensure that you are analysing:  
  • the ways the texts are underpinned by **cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs**  
  • the effects of **aesthetic features and stylistic devices** in those texts |
| 6, 7                  | Make selective choices (e.g. of information) to **position** your audience to think about texts in particular ways and in relation to one another. |
| 8, 9, 10              | Use a writing **style** (derived from your choices of **syntax** and **vocabulary**) which is appropriate to the chosen media text, and enables you to engage and position the public audience. |
| 11                    | Ensure that written features, such as spelling and punctuation, and complementary features, such as digital elements, are accurate, appropriate to the chosen media text, and used as a way of enhancing the organisation and readership of your response. |
Key advice: Assessment conditions

Exploring the implications of the conditions for this extended response provides a method for approaching this assessment.

Five weeks notification and preparation time

Carefully consider your planning process and allow time for:

- thoroughly analysing both texts, answering questions such as
  - how is the chosen concept, identity, time or place represented? How is this similar or different across the two texts?
  - what ideas underpin this representation?
  - what are the cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and/or beliefs that underpin the two chosen texts, and how are these communicated to the audience through the text’s construction?
- developing a considered and focused perspective or thesis about the chosen representation across the two texts as the basis for your writing.
- developing a bank of information from both texts that could potentially be used to elaborate on and justify your considered perspective/thesis
- examining the organisation, and style of the publication that will feature your completed media text so that you can better develop your writing style for this response
- gathering your ideas and evidence into a coherent plan, ensuring that this plan allows you to successfully address the requirements of the task
- drafting a response, focusing on cementing your subject matter choices within a coherently organised response
- refining your draft, especially in terms of
  - its suitability in style for the audience and purpose of the task
  - your insightful analysis of both texts
- adding in complementary features (e.g. images, graphics) for effect
- editing your response
  - macro editing, or re-examining the ‘big picture’
    - clarity of argument and ‘presence’ of your considered perspective
    - extent to which readers are positioned by your response
    - structure of paragraphs and any other organisational tools
    - placement of analytical evidence, especially from both texts, within the response
    - effectiveness of the introduction (as a ‘way in’) and the conclusion (as a final, emphatic ‘underline’ of the perspective)
  - micro editing, or re-examining the finer details
    - use of a writing style to engage the specific public audience identified in the task
    - grammar, spelling and punctuation
    - use of complementary features, where applicable.
Response length of between 1000–1500 words

Aim to get as close to 1500 words as possible to maximise the development of your ideas.

Open access to resources

Research your texts and concepts if you need to, understanding that the focus of the task:

- should be an aspect of the texts that interests you enough to make you delve deeply
- is your perspective on the chosen concept, identity, time or place, derived from your analysis of the two chosen texts.

Writing for a public audience

Writing for a public audience implies the use of a writing style that makes your considered perspective and analysis engaging for the intended audience.

In the excerpts below, taken from a student’s analysis of social constructs of success and happiness in the film Little Miss Sunshine and the play Away, the writer has used a range of techniques to create an engaging, highly readable style.

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<th>Writing for a public audience</th>
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<td><strong>Purposeful introduction</strong></td>
<td>Time to Stop Chasing Rainbows</td>
<td>Complementary feature: The headline, subheading and by-line establish this as a media text. The tone and intent of the article is clearly established.</td>
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<td>The introduction includes a hook — the Schwarzenegger quote — as a lead-in to the establishment of the article’s thesis; that people need to seek happiness over success. A discerning response will offer ‘well-considered and informed perspectives on the ways each text is underpinned by cultural assumptions, attitudes and beliefs, and how these position the audience in relation to the concept’.</td>
<td>News Flash: They’re not getting any closer, [NAME] reports</td>
<td><strong>Point of view:</strong> First person engages the reader by letting them into the mind of the writer.</td>
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<td>Beloved icon Arnold Schwarzenegger once said, ‘If there’s one thing in this world I hate, it’s losers. I despise them.’ Now, I won’t deny it, everyone loves to be a winner. But this confronting belief of his begs the question – what exactly defines somebody as a loser? Is it failing to get that flashy promotion? Not owning the latest iPhone? Running second in a race? In our fast-paced, modern society it’s easy to fall into the trap of chasing rainbows and always needing the ‘next big thing’, but when’s the last time you quit the chase and stopped to smell the roses?</td>
<td><strong>Rhetorical questions:</strong> The writer uses a persuasive technique to focus the argument and engage the audience.</td>
<td></td>
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<td>…</td>
<td><strong>Colloquial language:</strong> Using everyday words and phrases (such as ‘flashy’ and ‘the next big thing’) and relaxed syntax (such as sentence fragments) makes the writer seem down-to-earth and on the same level as the reader.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Common imagery:</strong> The writer’s use of simple metaphors — ‘chasing rainbows’ and ‘smelling the roses’ — has public appeal; they are well-known and easily understood.</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Inclusive language:</strong> Using pronouns such as ‘our’ helps to get the reader onside; this is a shared, public experience.</td>
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Purposeful body
The article examines the representations of the identity of Gwen and interprets these within the scope of the thesis, e.g. the character's competitive behaviours have a negative impact on her family's happiness. A discerning response will offer 'perceptive analysis of the connections between the two texts in their representations of the concept — interpretations that showed a depth of knowledge of each text and its subtleties and complexities'.

Purposeful evidence
The analysis is strengthened using well-chosen direct and indirect evidence from the text. A discerning response will utilise 'purposeful and insightful explanations of the ways specific, relevant aspects of texts — aesthetic features and stylistic devices — prompt particular emotional and critical reactions that shape meaning'.

In Away, similar themes emerge whilst Tom and Meg's parents converse about their holiday plans. Despite Tom's parents speaking modestly, Gwen asserts herself as the wealthier party by bragging about her new caravan (ah, don't we all know a Gwen?). This obligation to show Vic and Harry she is of higher status is expressed to us by her condescending question 'A lean to?', and the textual use of ellipses in 'your… tent' [Act 1, Scene 2]. Gow's deliberate antagonistic characterisations of Gwen throughout the play encourage readers to recognise the harm these competitive behaviours cause to her and her family's happiness, and advocates for viewers to avoid this mentality.

Cohesive devices: The phrase 'similar themes emerge' links the previous information with this new paragraph.

Emotive language: The verb 'bragging' has a negative connotation, provoking an emotional response from readers.

Aside: The bracketed comment acts as a personal aside to the reader, further cementing the 'one-on-one' relationship between the writer and the reader.

More information
If you would like more information, please visit the QCAA website www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/english/english. Alternatively, email the English and Language learning area at english@qcaa.qld.edu.au.

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