

Supporting students in the Literature IA1

Examination — analytical written response

Purpose

Your task is to:

write an **analytical essay**

under **supervised conditions**

in response to a **seen question** that

relates to how your study text addresses **issues** and **ideas** related to **culture** and **identity**

and must allow for **others' interpretations** and/or **responses** to the **literary text**.

General advice

In completing this task, you must:

- **critique** others' interpretations and/or responses to the text
- **sustain** your **analysis** and **synthesis** of ideas to fully answer the question.

Assume that your audience has a deep understanding of the study text. This implies that your analysis should move beyond superficial argument and delve into the complexities of that text.

Key definitions¹

Use these definitions to guide your analysis and planning.

- **Analyse:** examine or consider something to explain and interpret it, for the purpose of finding meaning or relationships and identifying patterns, similarities, and differences
- **Critique:** review (e.g. a theory, practice, performance) in a detailed, analytical, and critical way
- **Interpret:** use knowledge and understanding to recognise trends and draw conclusions from given information; make clear or explicit; draw meaning from information

¹ Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2019, *Literature General Senior Syllabus 2019 v1.4*, QCAA, Brisbane, pp. 48–65, www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/english/literature.

- **Sustained:** carried on continuously, without interruption, or without any diminishing of intensity or extent
- **Synthesise:** combine different parts or elements (e.g., information, ideas, components) into a whole, in order to create new understanding

What is an analytical essay in Literature?

Definition ²	Implications: What you need to do
In Literature, the central purpose of an analytical essay is to inform the reader of an interpretation of a literary text;	Develop your own interpretation based upon the critique provided in the question.
this analysis is written in a formal tone, includes relevant literary terminology and follows appropriate academic conventions;	Be aware of formal writing techniques and conventions, such as the correct incorporation of direct and indirect textual evidence.
the audience of an analytical essay is an educated reader familiar with the literary text being discussed;	Ensure that your analysis is complex rather than superficial.
like any genre, there are many valid ways to respond;	Find your own analytical voice, moving your structure and style beyond the formulaic.
an analytical essay is structured around a thesis, which is a statement of the central argument of an essay;	Ensure that your thesis responds directly to the examination question or task, and is clear and present throughout the entirety of the analysis.
the thesis presents an interpretation of a literary text or texts and is supported by arguments and substantiated by relevant evidence, in the form of discussion, exploration and examination of a literary text.	Ensure that your planning and analysis incorporates more than one argument, each of which is supported by well-chosen evidence.

Key advice: Assessment objectives

Assessment objectives	Implications: What you need to do
1, 2, 9, 10	Write an essay which is clearly analytical , as well as being formal and objective, in terms of structure, style, and language use.
3, 6, 7	Develop your own thesis , arguments, and evidence in response to the critical interpretation featured in the essay question.
4	Ensure that you are analysing the cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs that underpin the literary text.
5	Ensure that you are analysing the effects, on readers, of the aesthetic features and stylistic devices in the literary text.
8	Plan a cohesive response which is derived from a thesis and evolves into a clearly articulated and linked set of arguments with evidence and explanation .

² Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority 2019, *Literature General Senior Syllabus 2019 v1.4*, QCAA, Brisbane, pp. 48, www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/senior/senior-subjects/english/literature.

Key advice: Examination conditions

One weeks' notification and preparation time

Carefully consider your planning process and allow time for:

- fully investigating the requirements of the question
- developing your own thesis in response to the critique referenced in the question
- developing a sequence of arguments (with clear topic sentences) in support of your thesis
- scrutinising the text and isolating direct and indirect evidence which will support your arguments
- considering the relative strengths of your evidence and ensuring that you are providing the best examples available
- drafting explanations which support your arguments and evidence
- drafting an introduction and/or conclusion for your essay response as a way of cementing your organisation and subject matter
- examining the textual features that are present in your analytical writing and ensuring that your work is formal, objective and directed.

Length (800–1000 words)

- Ensure that your planning allows you to write a completed essay within word length conditions.
- Aim to get close to 1000 words as a way of maximising your opportunities for analysis.

Quotations (200 words)

- Isolate and cite 'best example' quotations from the study text that can be used to support your arguments.
- Remember that your 200 words of quotations should come from the text/s studied, including others' responses to the text/s. Prompts for essay structure and/or paragraph content should not be included.

Examination timing (2 hours and 15 minutes)

Consider allocating time to:

- plan your essay, highlighting
 - your thesis
 - arguments in support of your thesis
 - evidence in support of arguments
 - key points of exploration

- edit your response, seeking
 - a clear and present thesis
 - a logical, ordered structure of argument, evidence, and explanation
 - an analytical style
- proofread your response, seeking
 - the elimination of all textual errors
 - evidence that you have constructed a completed essay of between 800–1000 words, understanding that quotations are **included** as part of that word count.

Writing analytically

The excerpt below was written by a student in response to the following question:

Charlie Wesley’s work on *Heart of Darkness* states that, ‘Conrad tries — but ultimately fails — to discuss the injustices of imperialism that are predicated on racial differences’.³ Analyse to what extent this statement can be justified.

Excerpt	Features
<p>Joseph Conrad in his ‘Heart of Darkness’ (1899) offers an interpretation of the manifestations of imperialism present in Europe’s scramble for Africa, specifically the immoral conflicts of colonialism in the Congo during protagonist Marlow’s voyage. Much of the criticisms which surround the novella, according to Charlie Wesley, is focused on subverting the injustices of imperialism faced by natives, based on racial differences. Evidently, the latent fear of native resistance demonstrated the fantasy of stability and superiority endemic to imperialism. However, Conrad frequently exhibits his imperialistic guilt for the atrocities against the Congolese people, through his critique of Kurtz’s actions, depiction of detribalised natives and power in human nature.</p> <p>Moreover, Marlow’s condemnation of Kurtz’s omnipotence indicates that Conrad aimed to reveal the immorality of imperialism to his unknowing European audience. In his essay, Wesley claims that “Marlow seeks out Kurtz because of his ability to wield incredible power over the natives”. While this is never explicitly stated on his arrival to the Congo, he does make some valid observations about Kurtz when he meets his intended, primarily because he had “been told in the all the tones of jealousy and admiration that he had collected more ivory than all the agents together”. Kurtz may be adulated by a 19th century European audience due to his momentous contributions to the company and imperialism, however Conrad communicates his rapacity and elicits a critical response from readers. Thus, this argument is quite valid and endorsed when Marlow documents Kurtz’s motives for keeping severed natives’ heads, showing that he “lacked restraint in the gratifications of his various lusts. Moreover, Wesley critiques Marlow’s supposed reverence for Kurtz’s</p>	<p>Introduction</p> <p>The author and title are indicated in the opening line.</p> <p>The key concept, posed in the question, is referenced early in the paragraph: ‘the manifestations of imperialism’.</p> <p>The critical text upon which the question is based — Wesley’s — is referenced as part of the development of the thesis.</p> <p>The thesis — that Conrad does ‘exhibit his imperialistic guilt’ — is clarified and supported by three arguments [1, 2, 3] in summary.</p> <p>Body section</p> <p>The topic sentence recalls the first supporting argument (see above) and reiterates the thesis, that ‘Conrad aimed to reveal the immorality of imperialism’.</p> <p>The critical text is referenced: Wesley’s claim will now be disproved.</p> <p>Direct evidence — a quote from the novel — is used to support the argument.</p> <p>The writer also includes indirect evidence: summary statements from the action of the novel.</p>

³ Wesley, C 2015, ‘Inscriptions of Resistance in Joseph Conrad’s Heart of Darkness’, *Journal of Modern Literature*, vol. 38 no. 3, pp. 20–37, <https://doi.org/10.2979/jmodelite.38.3.20>.

actions, stating “Marlow interprets Kurtz’s ability to control the native population as something to be admired, striven for, even emulated”. However, Conrad offers a contradicting view through Marlow, imploring readers to castigate Kurtz’s method of appearing to natives “in the nature of a supernatural being ... as of a deity”, regarding it as “ominous”. This is furthered when Conrad highlights the narcissism and irrationality of imperialism, and Kurtz’s materialistic ideology, to his misinformed audience by personifying the dominant African wilderness. Evidently, this can be seen in the quote “my intended, my ivory ... everything belonged to him ... expected to hear the wilderness burst into a prodigious peal of laughter”. Consequentially, through Marlow’s condemnation of Kurtz’s avarice, Conrad highlights the atrocities caused by imperialism and the European racial hierarchy.

As the argument unfolds, the writer uses cohesive ties to fluently link each piece of evidence, and consistently references the authors of both the primary text and the critical text.

Quotes are appropriately integrated as part of a sentence, rather than as a block.

The writer uses an ellipsis (...) to indicate that some words have been taken out of the quote, and is prepared to use single-word quotes as key direct evidence.

The final sentence in the body section recalls the thesis of the essay and demonstrates how the key cited information has supported that thesis.

More information

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



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