Statistics

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Characteristics of good responses

Criterion 1 — Knowledge and control of texts in their contexts

Success in this criterion is achieved when candidates show an awareness of how meanings in texts are shaped by purpose, cultural context and social situation. Discrimination in the selection of subject matter is the key aspect of this criterion.

Candidates were rewarded for demonstrating their ability to:

- exploit the conventions of genres for particular purposes
- substantiate analysis with well-balanced evidence
- analyse texts, ideas and issues
- respond to the demands placed on them through the roles and relationships adopted when responding to particular questions.

Criterion 2 — Knowledge and control of textual features

Success in this criterion is achieved when candidates show an awareness of appropriateness of textual features for purpose, genre and register.

Candidates were rewarded for demonstrating their ability to:

- logically and cohesively organise and arrange ideas
- control spelling, punctuation and paragraphing
- use clause and sentence structures for effect
- maintain grammatical accuracy
- use a wide range of vocabulary including figurative uses.
Criterion 3 — Knowledge and application of the constructedness of texts

Success in this criterion is achieved when candidates show an awareness of the ways in which texts are selectively constructed and read.

Candidates were rewarded for demonstrating their ability to:

• make choices that invite the reader to take up intended positions
• analyse how readers are invited to take up positions
• evaluate representations
• shape representations
• examine how cultural assumptions, values, beliefs and attitudes underpin texts.

Common weaknesses

Criterion 1 — Knowledge and control of texts in their contexts

Candidates used a wide range of texts to respond to the drama, novel and nonfiction text/s questions this year. Overall, the selected texts allowed candidates to respond to this year’s topics. Most candidates were able to grasp the task requirements of taking on specified roles consistent with the question but some demonstrated flaws, producing writing at odds with the invited reading they had apparently made.

In general, candidates understood that there were particular patterns and conventions required for their chosen genres and were able to use these patterns to some degree. Few responses lacked an understanding of this, but not all responses were able to demonstrate solid control of the generic conventions. Responses which were well short of the required word limit usually lacked sufficient subject matter or were unable to demonstrate control of generic requirements to achieve well in this criterion.

It is crucial that candidates respond to the topic on the examination paper and do not use text prepared in response to a previous paper. Candidates are reminded of the need to provide analysis and evaluation of texts rather than simply providing a synopsis or overview of the text.

Criterion 2 — Knowledge and control of textual features

Most responses were written with few enough errors so that meaning could be determined. Some responses with frequent or serious errors rendered meaning-making very difficult, and did not meet the descriptors for a C standard in this criterion. The children’s adventure stories rarely demonstrated vocabulary above the D standard descriptor of “basic”. Responses which included many run-on sentences or sentence fragments also scored poorly.

Many candidates seemed to have difficulty using language to develop coherent responses, especially when using terms such as “privileging” and “foregrounding”. For example, “the reader is privileged to read the poem” does not reveal an understanding of the terminology. There was a tendency to list quotes and add a comment at the beginning or end. Quotations must be used to
support a point, not to make it. They do not substitute for analysis. Many candidates wrote run-on sentences or fragments and clichés were frequent.

In the responses that showed significant weakness in this criterion, there were usually multiple errors. Candidates are strongly encouraged to plan their responses, paying particular attention to cohesion and the importance of editing their own work.

**Criterion 3 — Knowledge and application of the constructedness of texts**

On the whole, candidates were able to make purposeful choices to invite the reader to take up positions about texts quite effectively. Some responses, even when revealing uneven development and other structural flaws, often showed evidence of deliberate language choices for shaping character representations and to draw on cultural assumptions, values, beliefs and attitudes. The Shakespearean plays seemed to present the largest challenge for candidates in maintaining consistent representations of their selected characters. However, these plays also allowed for some of the better responses to be awarded the higher grades.

Candidates need to demonstrate that they can move beyond explaining the meaning to analysis and evaluation. These higher order skills were lacking in many responses. In many responses, a lack of independent thinking revealed deficiencies in showing that candidates could develop ideas on their own.

**Sample responses**

The following responses were selected from those scripts that met the A or B standard as defined by the assessment criteria. They have been reproduced exactly as written and therefore include any spelling or grammatical errors made by candidates.
Breathe Hughie, breathe. That man can be unbearable sometimes, I have never been so close to walking out, but here I sit in this tatty old lounge chair in this ‘quaint’ little house of ours – I feel trapped! I feel like I have lived a lifetime this past few days, got serious with a girl, lost the girl, got some things off my chest that have been bothering me for years and got that damn article published. What a disaster, to be completely honest, I regret having done that article afterall. I do regret it, but the week we’ve had, surely things are going to change around here, Dad will never see ANZAC Day in the same light again, how can he after everything we have said to each other.

Oh fantastic, he has shut up in there. What was he saying? ‘I’m a bloody Australian.’ ‘Good as anyone who gets in that lift I am, bloody Poms, I-ties and Yanks.’ He must have realised what a broken record he can be. I dispise how this article has made me feel, I went about this the wrong way I know but Dad and Mum, they make me feel so ashamed. One thing Uni has taught me and the Europeans, is that ‘people are basically the same, and that is the best thing to ever happen to this country.’ Dad feels like he’s owed something by these ‘New-bloody-Australians,’ but he isn’t, he has to move with the times.

Perhaps it is all those years of being dragged by the hand through all those drunken no-hopers every year that has made me this way – made me write the article with Jan. It’s all out in the open now and things will have to change. I feel elated in a way, after such a dreadful few days and all this fighting I feel closer to the old folks than ever… go figure! I know Mum doesn’t know better, but Wack and Dad have got to see my side on this and treat me like the man I am. Our insecurities are no longer holding us back from the truth. What is it they say, the truth will set you free? I hope they’re right. I don’t regret what I said though, if there’s one thing I hate its ‘waste, waste of lives and waste of men.” That is all I wanted to say, that is disagree with what was done to them, I wish that I had done it differently, that’s all, maybe not published that article, I see how it has affected those ol’ diggers now – God I am a priggish kid!

Well, Dad said it, theres no ditching Uni now. I couldn’t do that to him, after all he sacrificed all he sacrifices now. I can just imagine him sitting in that library studying engineering all those years ago, I bet if he could go to University he would have – God I feel terrible. I have been hanging out with the affluent mob so long that I have neglected to realised how lucky I am and how do I thank him… plaster pictures of drunken men in uniform like him just trying to enjoy ‘the ol’ diggers day’ all over the Uni paper. I want to make him proud of me, I owe him that.

Well, I feel much better now, I feel something I didn’t a few days ago – Hope! Hope for us Cooks and for an open and loving future together. I am a Cook after all and ‘I will never grow up until I learn how not to be ashamed of them.’ The walls have been broken down between us all and there is nowhere but up from here. I had better go and apologise for everything, well not everything – I’m sticking to my guns on the whole ANZAC Day fiasco. Maybe I should think twice next time before I go and do something so outright nasty like publishing that article again though – well you live and you learn. Might even let Mum make me a bloody cuppa tea!
Paper One Part B

Question 2 — Novel: Persuasive/reflective response to literature suitable for a public audience

Topic chosen: 2A

*The Great Gatsby* by F Scott Fitzgerald

It has been some time since I have returned to New York. The west has since become home to me again, though I returned somewhat changed. I sit here and write under the shade of an old tree outside a place that once bustled with music, laughter and a great deal of people of many kind when I decided to take a trip to New York. it seemed natural to return to West Egg – if only out of sentiment. As I gaze at Gatsby’s old home from across the street, I am struck by how empty it is of character and flamboyance for it remains empty – past events seemingly scarring a once stately, real estate reputation.

One visitation I will not be making on this journey is to Daisy. Nor Tom Buchanan, for that matter. Those vastly careless people that smash things up and then leave others to clean up the mess. No, there is little love lost there anymore. Since Gatsby’s death, the east has haunted me somewhat and my eyes cannot overcome the distortion from past events and the view I witnessed into the true nature of some.

I had an unusual relationship with Tom back in those days. My cousin, Daisy, friend Jordan, Tom and myself spent time together on regular occasions. However, I watched their relationship much like a spectator. Tom and his not-so-secret affair with Myrtle. Daisy and her emerging affair with Gatsby. And the gossip I was subjected to – that Daisy and Tom could not stand each other. But what choice did I have in the matter? I was unable to take sides and had been encouraged to reserve judgement on others. After all, Tom was my friend from college and Daisy was family.

The last time I saw Tom, I shook his hand. He felt that his actions were entirely justified. He had told Gatsby’s murderer that Gatsby was the one responsible for his wife’s death in that fateful hit and run car accident. Tom led his suspicion away from himself and retained the secret of his affair with Myrtle right till the end. Myrtle’s husband, still stricken with grief, believed him and that sealed Gatsby’s end on this earth. Tom still believed, or so it appeared, that Gatsby – not his Daisy – was the driver that night.

The last thing I recall saying to Gatsby was that the others were a rotten crowd and that he was worth the whole lot put together. I am glad I had said this as it was, after all, the only compliment I ever gave him. Tom spoke knowingly of a book he had read once and had become passionate for its message. He attested that the white race must not be overcome and that equal rights, essentially, was sending civilisation to pieces. I did not enter into this discussion at the time as I knew that if Tom believed something, he was immensely stubborn to consider alternative views. Though, at the time, I’m not sure I held strong views on many matters. However, after the events of last year, I have seen a darker side to others that has challenged my belief to reserve judgement on others. Whilst my relationship now with Tom may have all but ended, I have taken with me more life lessons than I began with when I arrived at West Egg that Summer.
Good evening, fellow bookworms. Welcome to meeting tonight. I am pleased to speak to you about a book I have read and found to be a wonderful insight into Australia’s past history that I would, otherwise, not have known. My Place by Sally Morgan is a biographical account of Morgan’s upbringing in Australia between the nineteen-fifties up to the nineteen-eighties. It is an honest and raw telling of Morgan’s struggle with racism, self-acceptance and the oppression experienced by her family.

Born in 1951, Morgan was raised in Perth, Western Australia. Her childhood is a mix of close family bonds and a poor background with the troubles of an alcoholic father. Though Morgan, in her childhood, does not consider herself any different to her peers, she is unflinchingly accepting of her family’s idiosyncrasies and way of life. She is proud and comforted by her relationship with her siblings and bewildered by comments from school friends insinuating odd behaviour when accused of ‘sticking together like glue’. Though her grandmother is a puzzle to her, it is some time before she questions her heritage, in response to an accumulation of curious queries from friends.

“Tell them you’re Indian”, was her mother’s advice. When the truth of her Aboriginal heritage is finally revealed, Morgan admits that she “had never thought of herself as black before.” It is this honesty and innocence towards racism that sets up the anticipation to read on for the rest of Morgan’s story.

Over time, painful truths are revealed and Morgan learns that the secrecy surrounding her family’s past was in response to the shame felt by her mother and grandmother put upon them by society. Societal opinions that “Aboriginal music was heathen music” and sick or dying Aboriginals were disregarded by white doctors because “they’re only natives” did little to stem the shame Morgan’s family was encouraged to feel.

My Place is lended further credibility by the inclusion of three additional mini biographies that appear after Morgan’s. Her mother Gladys, uncle Arthur, and grandmother Daisy, recall their lives that substantiate the frustration from injustices and desire to unearth the truth that Morgan feels. After initial reservations at telling her story of slavery and oppression at Corunna Downs station, Daisy eventually relents. Yet, despite her original fears of stirring up the past, she insists that Morgan recounts all the stories told in her book with complete honesty.

“You can’t put no lies in a book”, Daisy warns.

Reading My Place is written in a way that almost transports the reader to feel as though they were listening in on the interviews Morgan did with her family. Utilising colloquial language, spoken authentic words and some humour, it is easy to feel a warmth and great respect for the privilege of such an insight into a family’s painful past vivid recounts of physical abuse at the hands of “white folk” by Arthur, neglect of Gladys as a child in a mission orphanage after being stolen from her mother and Daisy’s oppression as an unpaid and equally abused slave, is heart wrenching.

It is clear that despite alternative accounts (notably included in My Place) Morgan’s family by their Corrunna Downs employer, the Drake-Brockman family, that never has there been a braver
attempt to inform Australians of a blemished and shameful truth of our nation’s past attitudes and unfair treatment of Aboriginal rights. Racism continues to exist today and though steps have been taken to mend past wrongs, My Place is an excellent opportunity for readers to gain a more informed perspective and unpolitical account of the truth.

Paper Two Part A

Question 1 — Imaginative and reflective writing

Topic chosen: 1A

The Unexpected

The three soldiers crouched in the tiny recess behind the tapestry trying not to empty their stomachs onto each others feet. The chilling screams of their fallen comrade had finally stopped, but what was left in their place was the wet slurping and crunches as the huge Stilkerrin feasted on the poor boy body. He had been too slow in reaching the agreed meeting place, and the others too slow to save him. Within moments the beetle-like Stilkerrin had leapt around the corner and was upon the soldier, and in a bid to save what was left of the doomed expedition the others had crowded into the alcove. Now they were only too well aware of the horrifying fate they had narrowly missed.

The feasting stopped, and for a few moments the boys could hear the click of the Stilikerrin’s pincers as it sought them out. Lacking any sense of smell, and being almost blind, the creature relied on its heightened hearing to find the rest of its meal. After a few moments and no results, it scuttled on to lair.

With a collective gasp, the boys leapt from thier hidey-hole and, keeping their eyes averted from the gruesome scene on the floor, crept after the monster.

“Out of a group of 40 men, we’re the last three left.” Vince said in a deadpan voice.

“Three boys left to off the King of the Stilkerrin race though – I don’t really like our chances mates.” came Ollies reply.

“I say we go out fighting! Take the brute out with us. Whadda you reckon boys? Boys?” Texas looked in bewilderment at his two companions.

“Honestly Tex, what can three rookie fifteen year olds do. We may as well just hand ourselves over and be done with it.”

“Ever the optimist aren’t we Ollie.”

The silence resumed and the realisation of their predicament became clearer with every step. Soon they had truged the length of the hallway and reached the entrance to the Stilkerrins home.

“Our king used to live here. Now look what’s happened to the joint.” Vince growled.

A gust of rancid air assulted their noses and set their eyes watering. Conjuring up a flame, Texas led the charge into the void. Everywhere was the stink of carrion and rotting vegetation. And then the ominous clicking, followed by a hissing voice,

“So, you have sought me out at last. Come to kill the last of the mighty Stilkerrin.”

Unsettled, but with fierce determination, the boys bit through their fear and stood tall at the foot of the vast nest the beast had created for itself.

“You cannot kill me,” it crooned “You cannot hope to save your people.”
“Yes we can!” roared Ollie as he leapt at the nest throwing flame after flame at it. The others soon followed suit, mildly surprised at how easy it all was. Suddenly a charred body fell from the nest and went still.

“Did we kill it?”

“I dunno, you check.”

“No. you.”

“No way man I’m not going near that thing.”

Before they could decide, a low chuckle reverberated around the room.

“Thank-you for the heat humans.” The Stilkerrin hissed.

“What does he mean? Did the king just let us kill him?” Ollie turned to them.

But they weren’t looking at Ollie. Both looking agape at the nest. The structure had disintegrated in the inferno, but now thousands upon thousands of newborn Stilkerrins were scuttling out of the remains.

“The king was actually a queen?”

That was the last thing anyone said before they were overwhelmed by the Stilkerrin’s.

**Paper Two Part B**

**Question 2 — Media: Analytical/expository response**

The media plays an important role in today’s society – it can create, shape and re-inforce certain stereotypes, as well as constructing particular representations of specific groups of people. One group frequently (mis)represented in the media is the female half of the population. When it comes to portraying women in advertisements, on television, and in magazines, there would seem to be no middle ground. Women are often reduced to a handful of caricatures in the media – the sex-kitten, the stick-thin model, the super-mum, the nasty corporate climber, and the femme fatale to name but a few.

Advertising is possibly the most responsible, and therefore reprehensible when it comes to constructing female representations. The ‘ideal woman’ or the ‘ideal body’ are often as much the fictitious creation of the male mind, as the females, and yet the pursuit of this ideal continues. By creating an ideal that is almost impossible for the majority of women to achieve and maintain – the beauty and weight-loss product industries are the only beneficiaries. Kate Moss is current gracing Brisbane via numerous billboards and posters, looking more like 20 than her actual 37. How can a Bi-Afran BMI (Body Mass Index) and airbrushed perfection be obtainable and sustainable for the “average” female? The ‘Super-Mum’ persona is another often used by advertising agencies to sell their wares. Perfectly coiffed and immaculate ‘mothers’ smile insanely white smiles, while pedalling everything from Handee Ultra absorbant paper towel to Glen 20 spray disinfectants. Are mothers really finding fulfullment and total happiness in cleaning up after their messy families, and masking bad household odours? Does the often male-dominated advertising industry believe that this is really all that is on the ‘average’ mum’s mind? The not-so-subtle implication is there, and such stereotypical and simplistic media representations don’t stop with the advertising sector.

Television programs are also responsible for introducing, ‘normalizing’ and re-inforcing shallow and almost laughable female representations. In some cases – like the situation comedy ‘Everyone Loves Raymond’ – the audience is supposed to laugh. But what are they laughing at? A nasty, sharp tongued mother-in-law, constantly criticizing her daughter in law for her lack of “motherly” skills. In other programs – such as “Sex in the City” glamorous and often amoral
female characters entertain the masses. Reality television has much to answer for in broadcasting and promoting back-stabbing, cattiness and the ‘I'll do whatever it takes to win/be famous/get my man” type of female. The reality is, many young and not-so-young female viewers can be adversely affected when they see themselves failing to live up to the various female representations they aspire to. Depression, weight, obsessions and eating disorders and low self esteem can be the all too real consequences in impressionable viewers’ minds.

These female stereotypes are pervasive beyond advertising and television though, sometimes the most damaging representations are featured in magazines ironically aimed at women. “Women’s magazines” or “The glossies” or the “trashy magazines” abound. Research shows that three quarters of the covers of “women’s magazines” feature at least one article on how to change your appearance – either by dieting or cosmetic surgery. Articles on “career women” are often accompanied by visuals of a provocatively dressed business woman, “taking out” a hapless male – all with the flick of a dangerously positioned stiletto heel.

For a woman to be successful, does she have to be nasty? Conversely, the “wholesome” home-maker magazines aimed at the “mums” feature mostly “fluff pieces” on “what’s in for Spring” or “Brighten up your bathroom with Blue!” Surely “Time” and “National Geographic” have many women readers, so where are the articles of that calibre in “women’s magazines”?

The media does play a vital role in informing, entertaining and educating people today. However, when unreal, simplistic and unattainable female representations are constructed and presented to the masses, no one – (least of all women) – benefits. Young girls don’t have realistic role models to follow, and young boys grow up with unrealistic expectations in mind. There is no such thing as an ‘average’ woman, it’s true, but the media’s construction and representation of women would seem to deserve a “below-average” score from the “average” woman today.

**Question 3 — Poetry: Analytical/expository response**

**Topic chosen: 3B**

**The Family Man** by Bruce Dawe  
**Last of his Tribe** by Oodgeroo Noonuccal

Of all the written mediums, poetry is unique in its ability to emotively convey a complete story, sometimes with little more than a line or two. Two poems that effectively privilege loneliness, isolation, and quiet desperation are Bruce Dawe’s “The Family Man”, and Oodgeroo Noonuccal’s “Last of his Tribe”. While “The Family Man” foregrounds suicide, and “Last of his Tribe” foregrounds the plight of an elderly Indigenous man, both use gaps, silences and poetic devices to great effect in achieving their invited readings.

Dawe’s “The Family Man” is a quiet, un-obtrusive person who seems to value his children and his family. He is described as “kindly, no man’s enemy” and with this pithy tribute alone, we can fill in the gaps and gather that he was a good and gentle man. We can only wonder at the silences – what is left unexplained – that all-important question “Why did he suicide?” The silence makes the poem all the more poignant – and allows for the multitude of “what-ifs.” The “rifle’s eye is blank for all time to come” is an excellent and particularly haunting personification, leaving the reader with a stark visual image, as well as the realisation that we cannot truly know what is inside another person. The “rumours (that metaphorically) flower above his absence” are evidence of how isolated and lonely his existence must have been. Despite outward appearances, this gentle man who “had the earmarks of a friend” felt alone amidst a sea of people – family, colleagues and neighbours.

This idea of being ‘alone’ while among many people is also privileged in “The Last of His Tribe” by Oodgeroo Noonuccal. Foregrounded is Willie Mackenzie - an elderly Aboriginal man seeing out the last of his days in the quiet oblivion of a Salvation Army nursing home. The outer sadness of his plight is highlighted in the phrase “Old Pinaroo (leader) lonely and lost” and the repetition of
“all gone, all gone” Aural imagery is used to great effect in the phrases “the soft vowelly tongue” and “singer of ancient tribal songs” – as the reader we can almost hear Mackenzie as he was then, a vibrant young leader of his clan, conversing with ease in his native tongue. As to how Mackenzie came to be in his current state, we as the reader don’t need to be told. We are all familiar with the way modern life in Australia is not compatible with the old tribal ways. Mackenzie has outlived the rest of his tribe, and it is likely that his land is now someone else’s land entirely – he truly is a ‘displaced person in (his) own country.’

Both Bruce Dawe’s “The Family Man” and Oodgeroo Noonuccal’s “Last of his Tribe” are simple yet evocative poems. They are both a fine example of the power of poetry, and highlight that what is left unsaid, or unexplained in poetry is often as moving as that which is spelled out. Through effective use of gaps and silences both poets achieve their invited readings – we are left feeling bereft and wistful for what might have been. Stark and powerful metaphors enhance the tone and emotion of both poems, clearly privileging the sadness, loneliness and quiet suffering that both men had to bear on their own.