

External assessment trial — English

Examiner's report

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Introduction

In Semester 1, 2017 the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority (QCAA) trialled external assessment in Year 11 English.

The *External assessment trial — Semester 1, 2017* familiarised schools and students with subject-based external assessments and tested processes for their delivery. The trialled assessment was aligned to the *English Senior Syllabus 2010* and developed in consultation with subject experts from schools and universities. It was administered under secure conditions and marked externally.

A total of 8477 students from 100 participating schools were involved in the English external assessment trial, and 208 teachers participated in the online marking operation.

This report provides information on the English external assessment trial specifications, students' performance characteristics and aggregated results from all participating schools. The assessment was formative and provided an alternative to a task already being undertaken at participating schools.

The QCAA appreciates schools' participation in the external assessment trial. The teachers and students who participated in the trial have made a valuable and significant contribution to Queensland's new system of senior assessment.

To provide feedback on the trial or further advice, please contact Assessment Operations on telephone 1300 381 575 or by email at seaops@qcaa.qld.edu.au.

Claude Jones

Director, Assessment and Reporting Division
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Overall commentary

The English external assessment trial was a QCAA-developed examination conducted under supervised conditions on 30 May 2017.

The assessment was devised from the *English Senior Syllabus 2010*. It required students to write an analytical essay in response to a novel, demonstrating their understanding across the three syllabus dimensions:

- *Understanding and responding to contexts*
- *Understanding and controlling textual features*
- *Evaluating meaning.*

Six texts were selected for the assessment trial following a review of current work programs. Three of these, *Looking for Alibrandi*, *Maestro* and *The Secret River*, were written by Australian authors, while the other three, *Emma*, *The Chosen*, and *The Great Gatsby*, were classic texts by authors from British and American contexts. Students had to respond to one question from two possible options for the text they had studied.

Schools were provided with supplementary materials to support the development of teaching and learning experiences.

The assessment required students to write an analytical essay of approximately 700 words in answer to one of a choice of two questions about the novel they had studied.

Overall, 74% of students participating in the trial achieved a passing grade — 8% of students achieved A standard, 32% achieved B standard, and 34% achieved C standard.

Statistics in this report may have been rounded, resulting in totals not equal to 100%.

Figure 1: Statewide student results

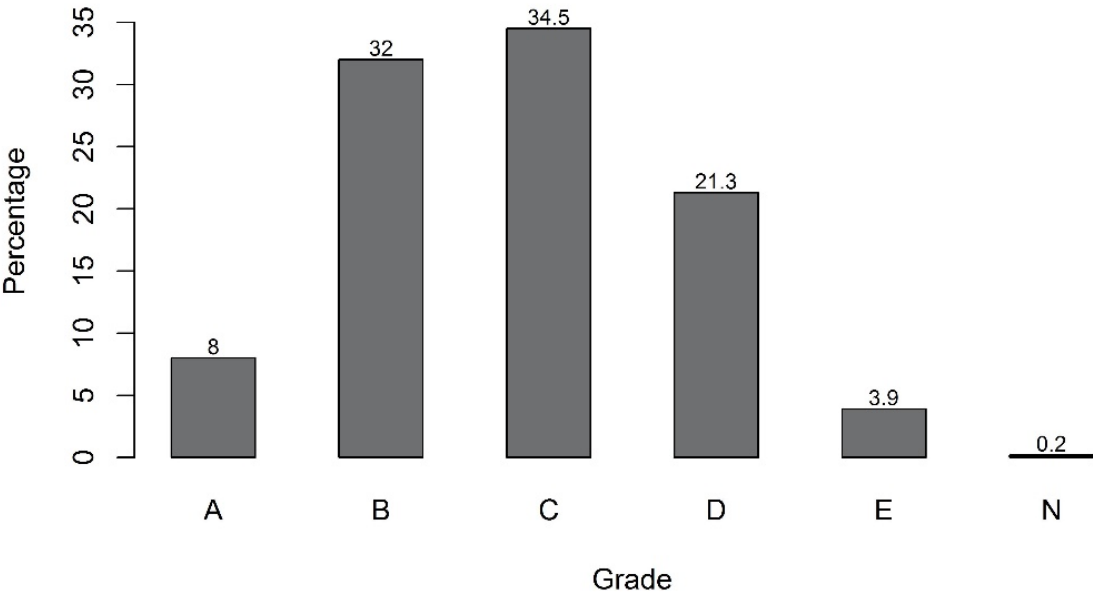


Figure 2 : Statewide student results by gender

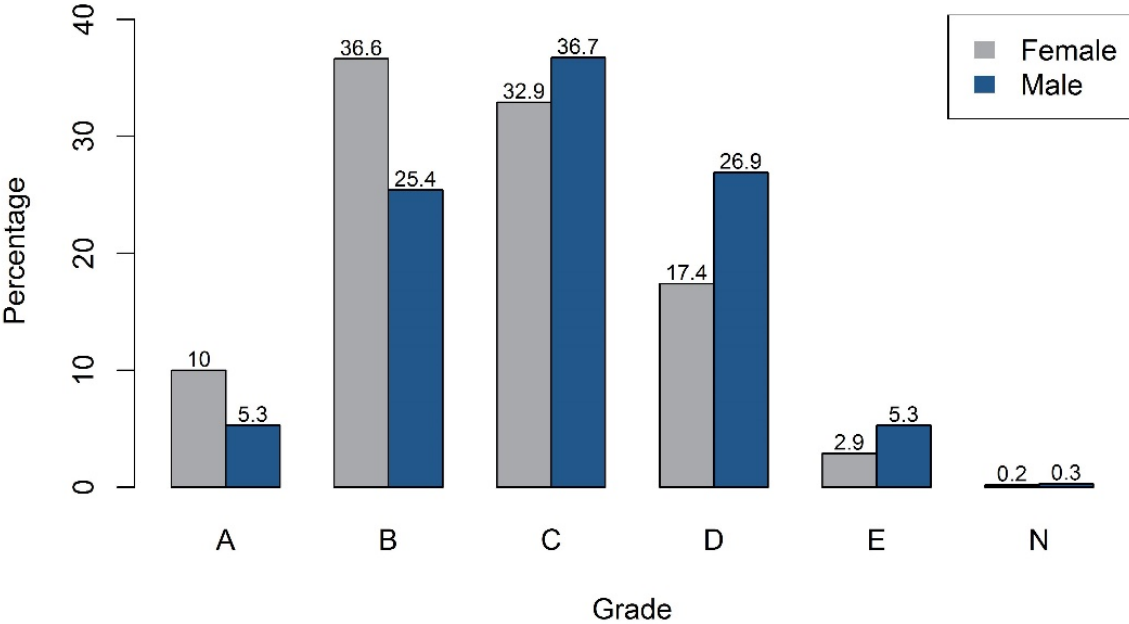


Figure 3 : Statewide student results — *Emma* (348 students)

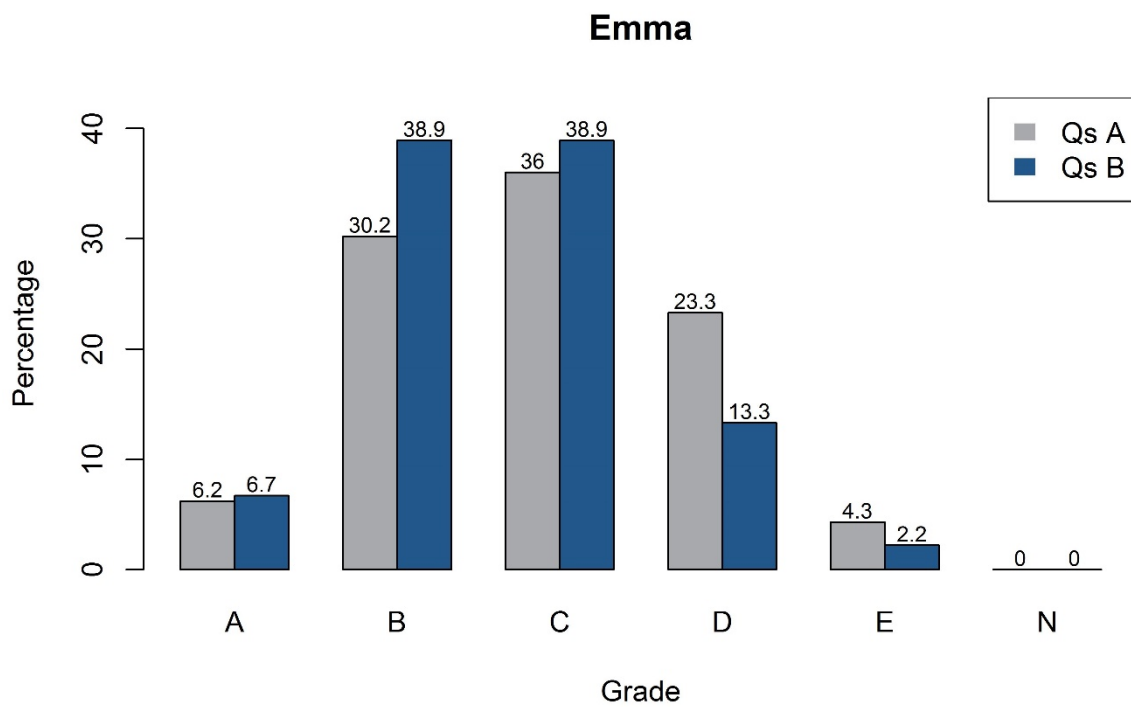


Figure 4 : Statewide student results — *Looking for Alibrandi* (2859 students)

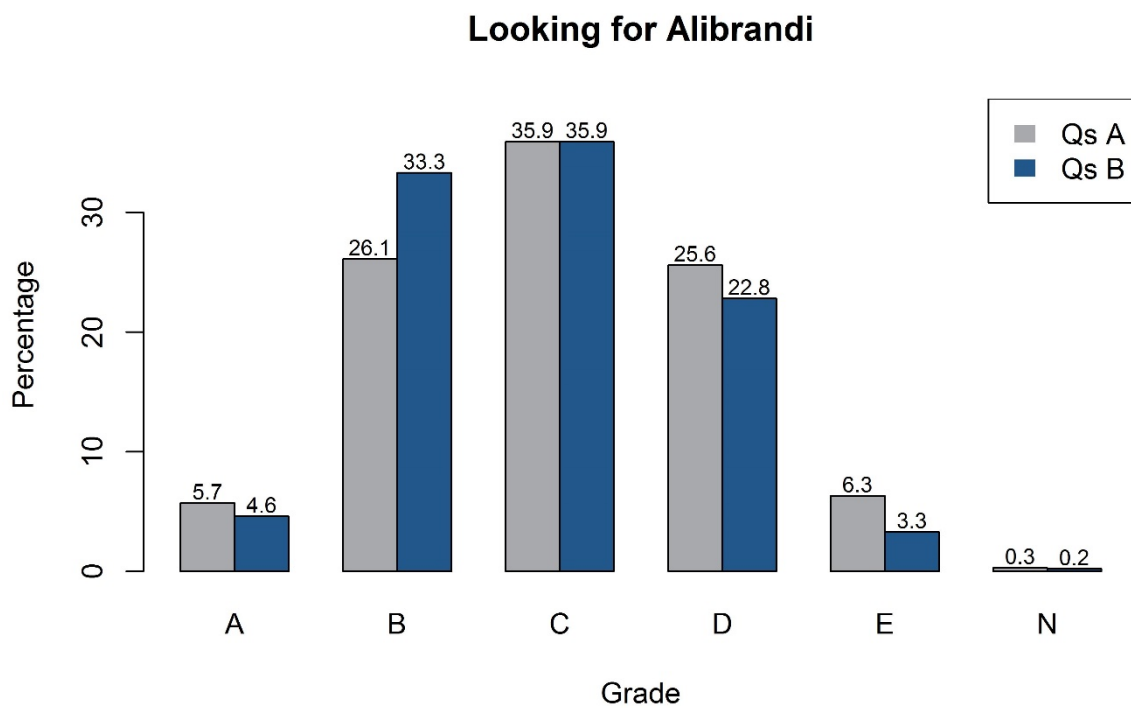


Figure 5 : Statewide student results — *Maestro* (701 students)

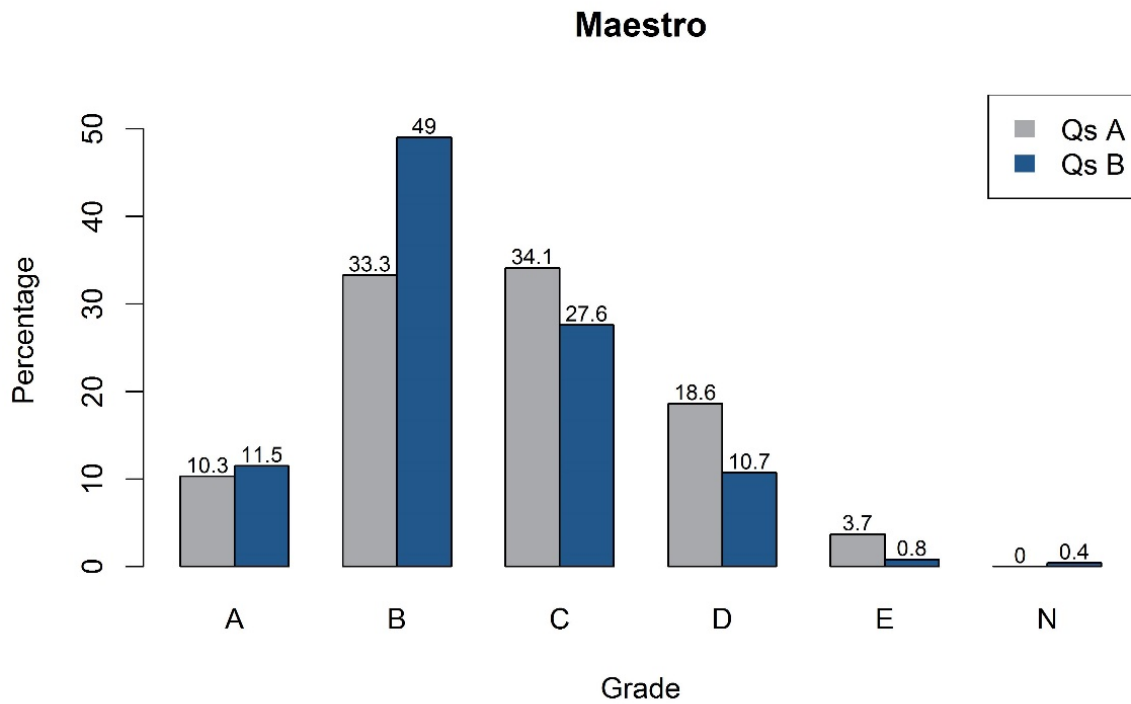


Figure 6 : Statewide student results — *The Chosen* (116 students)

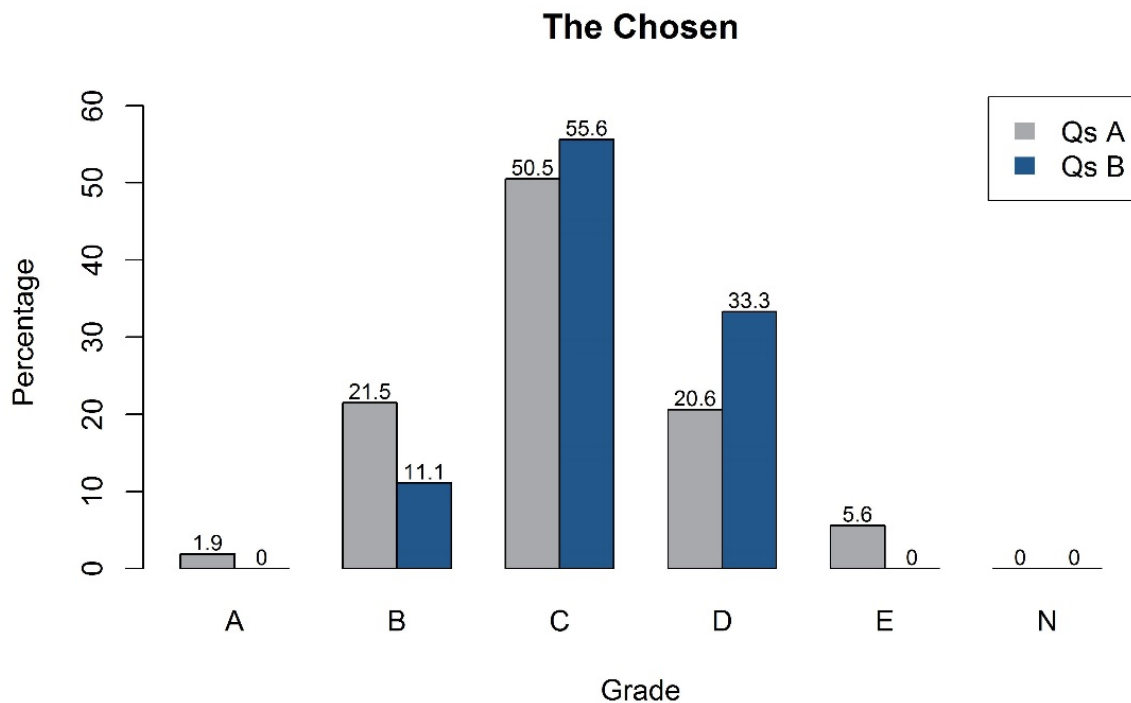


Figure 7 : Statewide student results — *The Great Gatsby* (2910 students)

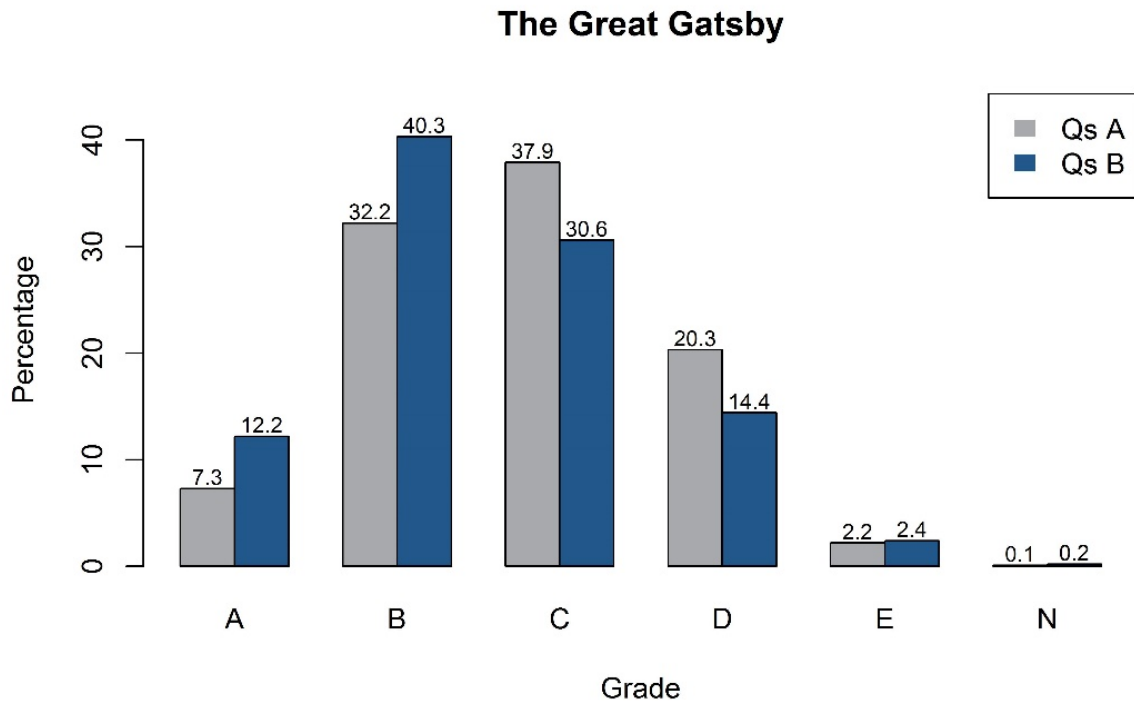
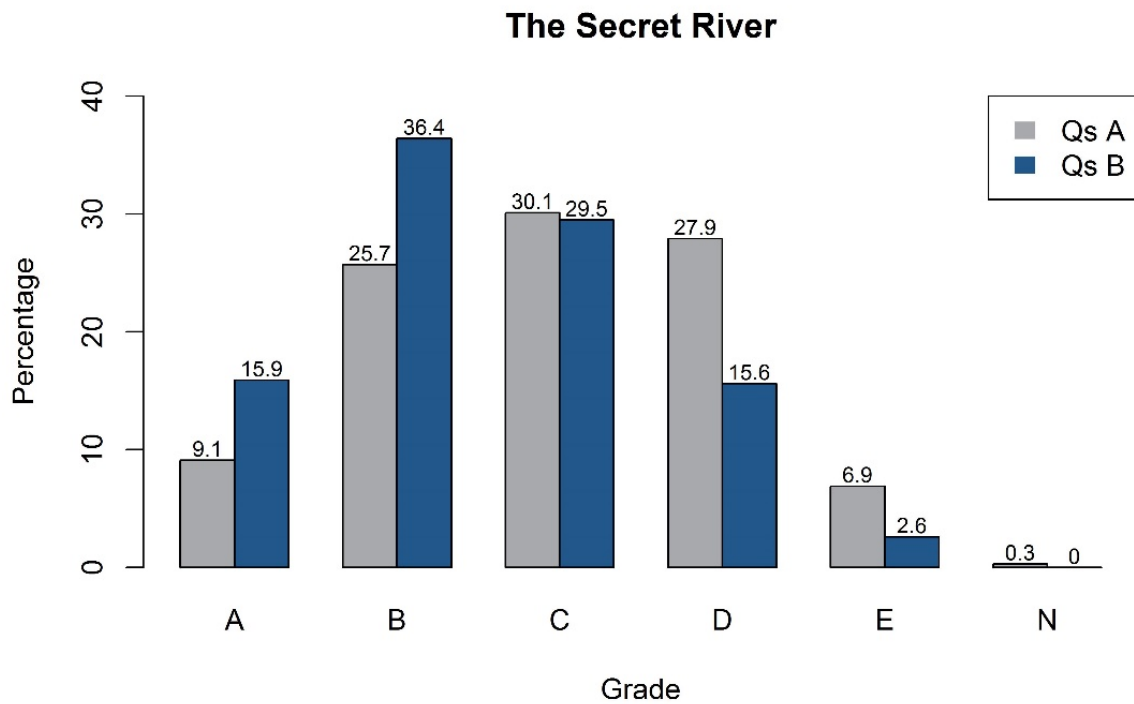


Figure 8 : Statewide student results — *The Secret River* (1541 students)



Sample responses and commentaries

The following section provides commentary on sample responses across the six novels covered in the external assessment trial. The samples provide indicative responses to the questions about each novel. The responses have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or accuracy and are not necessarily exemplary. Every effort was made to mark responses, even where scanned scripts were difficult to read because students used a pencil, wrote in very small script, wrote illegibly or heavily edited their responses.

Sample responses

Students who responded effectively to the assessment were prepared to think flexibly, using their knowledge of the novel and genre to develop their argument. These students recognised, for example, that reader positioning was a crucial component of Question A, and that the shaping of the central character's values was crucial to Question B for each novel.

Responses where students recounted learned information regardless of its relevance to the question were less effective. There were examples of this practice across all novels and questions. In responding to *Looking for Alibrandi*, some students wrote extensively about Josie's parents and grandmother in response to a question about her peers. Some of *The Great Gatsby* responses referred extensively to the impact of the American Dream on a range of characters, making little connection to either of the questions. Students who did not answer the question were unable to achieve the best result because of lack of relevance to the task.

Analysis of the complete text

The essays that offered the most convincing analysis of the novel's underpinning ideas, attitudes and values were often those that considered the consequences or resolutions to the various problems that the novel explored. Many essays dwelt on opening chapters and made conclusions about ideas, attitudes and values based on the opinions expressed by the protagonists in these chapters, without recognising the evolution of the novel as a complete work. The following examples demonstrate how the resolution of a novel may offer substantive subject matter for interpreting the underpinning ideas, attitudes and beliefs.

- In *Emma*, Emma's marriage to Knightley and the diminution of her friendship with Harriet can be argued to represent the reassertion of the importance of social class distinctions.
- In *Looking for Alibrandi*, Josie's eventual acceptance of her cultural heritage and social status is pivotal to her personal growth and maturation.
- In *Maestro*, Paul's journey of self-discovery culminates in his recognition of the significance of Eduard's influence in his life.
- In *The Chosen*, Danny's admission that he too might raise his child in silence, combined with Reb Saunders's moving explanation of his choice, suggests that the novel is sympathetic to the Reb's concern for the development of the soul.
- In *The Great Gatsby*, Jay Gatsby's demise at the hands of George Wilson arguably represents the decline of 1920s American society, where wealth and luxury were valued over morality.
- In *The Secret River*, Will's uneasiness, despite his wealth, arguably suggests that the history of violence against indigenous people will have ongoing repercussions for the perpetrators.

Commentary by novel

All questions provided opportunities for students to achieve across the standards A–E for dimensions one and two. The objectives assessed for dimension three were related to evaluating meaning — the three objectives for creating meaning were not assessed. The following commentary does not represent preferred ways of answering the questions but provides an overview of the variety of responses that the questions elicited.

Emma

a) In *Emma*, how is the reader positioned to view Emma?

OR

b) In *Emma*, to what extent is the community of Highbury represented as significant in shaping Emma's values?

Responses to Question A frequently commented on reader positioning achieved through the use of free indirect speech, enabling the reader to recognise Emma's self-delusions. This narrative voice was analysed to suggest that the reader knows the character better than she apparently knows herself. Students pointed out that this caused the reader to judge Emma as misguided and often foolish, but that this was balanced by the narration's rationale for Emma's actions — she never intends harm despite her overinflated opinion of her own judgment. Some students wrote about the way Emma is revealed to both herself and the reader through a comedy of manners; the reader is offered partial insights, conveyed through the languages of 'seeming' and cross-glances, with only late revelations that make the meaning of those equivocations apparent. The reader is thus positioned to understand the extent of Emma's folly at the point of the dénouement. Several students focused on how the reader was positioned to see Emma through the lens of class in the novel: Emma's flouting of her obligations to Jane Fairfax and Miss Bates, and her promotion of Harriet Smith, were analysed as disruptive to the social order. In these essays, students concluded that readers are positioned to see Emma as initially irresponsible, with her final marriage to Knightley and the end of her close friendship with Harriet reasserting the rightness of a conservative social hierarchy. Students regularly commented on the motifs of word play, on 'blindness' and perception, and on the narrative voice. Less often, students discussed the progress of the seasons through the novel, and the contrasting scenes of public gatherings followed by private reflections on those gatherings.

Question B frequently elicited analysis of Emma's moral development through the novel. Students were able to successfully demonstrate that many characters acted as foils, offering contrasting choices to Emma as to how she should behave and whose company she should value, for example, Jane Fairfax and Harriet Smith; Frank Churchill and Mr Knightley. The development of Emma's values was shaped, at times, by her discovery of the consequences of making the wrong choices. Some students argued that the Highbury community did not directly shape Emma's values but were overindulgent of her weaknesses. These students demonstrated that Mr Knightley alone was represented as encouraging Emma to reconsider her values. In a similar approach, some students suggested that Emma's selfishness and partiality were values that had been shaped by her community, and that Mr Knightley was the contrasting voice of judgment throughout the novel. Many of these responses commented on Emma's use of the language of her position, and her insistence on the correctness of her opinion.

Students frequently commented on the novel's 'irony', although it was evident that this was only partially understood by many, and was used not only for narrative tone and situational irony but also to describe events such as Emma marrying Knightley. Some students struggled to provide insight into ideas, attitudes and values about social class underpinning the novel as a whole.

Looking for Alibrandi

a) In *Looking for Alibrandi*, how is the reader positioned to view Josie?

OR

b) In *Looking for Alibrandi*, to what extent are Josie's peers represented as significant in shaping her values?

Responses to Question A often analysed the present tense, first-person narration, suggesting that the immediacy of this voice invited readers to empathise with Josie. Many suggested that the access to Josie's self-reflection and remorse mitigated the reader's negative reactions to her actions. Other students, however, contrasted Josie's narrative judgments with the circumstances she narrates and argued that this positioned readers to see her as self-centred or melodramatic. Students who commented on the way the novel was apparently addressed to teenage readers, slipped into the second-person 'you' at times to deliver Josie's revelations; most suggested that this positioned the readers to recognise Josie's growing maturity, although there were students who interpreted this as arrogance. Question A responses also explored the representation of Josie's ethnic and socio-economic identity, demonstrating the tensions and contradictions in the way Josie spoke of her heritage and family. The intermingling of the family history, narrated in dialogue by other characters, was used to demonstrate Josie's gradual interest in and empathy with others and recognition that her judgments should be less absolute.

Responses to Question B frequently argued that Josie's values were initially strongly shaped by her peers but that her self-reflection and interaction with significant adult figures gradually led to her 'emancipation' from excessive concern with her social status. Many identified John's death as the pivotal point of the plot, with Josie re-evaluating her previous perceptions. Students argued that John and Jacob represented oppositional influences on Josie's values, with one representing her immature grasping for social status, and the other offering a more authentic romance. Other essays recognised that her relationship with Jacob was represented as the catalyst forcing Josie to define her values in terms of her respect for her mother's opinions and her regard for her own emotional and sexual needs. Many students recognised that Josie's narration about other characters could be read as revealing her insecurities about her own values. Josie's envy of Poison Ivy was frequently explored in this context.

Some responses to *Looking for Alibrandi* struggled to treat the novel as a literary text; it was evident that strong identification with the subject matter made it challenging for some students to identify elements of textual construction.

Maestro

a) In *Maestro*, how is the reader positioned to view Paul?

OR

b) In *Maestro*, to what extent are the people of Darwin represented as significant in shaping Paul's values?

Responses to Question A showed a variety of approaches. Many students commented on the novel as a bildungsroman, which followed the growth of Paul from being self-centred to becoming a more empathetic man. Others analysed Paul's development from naivety to cynicism. Many students analysed the narrative perspective of Paul as an adult, narrating and critiquing his teenage self. These students usually suggested that the reader is more critical of Paul owing to

the narrator's self-lacerating tones. Others, however, suggested that the narrative perspective promoted understanding.

Some students wrote about the novel's use of Paul's musical career and/or attitude to music as a central motif for revealing him to the reader. Many also suggested that the reader was positioned to view Paul through his changing relationship with Keller. A small number of students drew upon their understanding of the settings of Darwin, Adelaide and Vienna to consider how the audience was positioned to perceive Paul's personality as revealed through or shaped by these places.

Responses to Question B focused on the development of Paul's values in relation to his sexual experiences, commenting on the contrasting characters of Rosie and Megan, and Paul's final commitment to a marriage with Rosie. Question B responses often also suggested that Keller was represented as shaping Paul's values by teaching him the impossibility of perfection and the illusory or deceptive nature of public acclamation. Many commented on the way Paul learnt to value Keller and his contribution to his life, although some were vague about how Keller was significant to this outcome. Discussions of the narrative perspective and dual timeframe were also prominent amongst Question B responses.

The Chosen

a) In *The Chosen*, how is the reader positioned to view Danny?

OR

b) In *The Chosen*, to what extent are the differing Jewish communities represented as significant in shaping Reuven's values?

The Chosen has two protagonists of arguably equal significance; therefore, one question focused on Danny and one on Reuven. Question A, which focused on Danny, was selected by 92% of students. This may have reflected the emphasis of the teaching in schools, or student interest in Danny as the more intriguing character. The following commentary reflects the way students addressed Question A; some comment is also made on the possibilities offered by Question B.

Many students focused on the way the reader is positioned to view Danny through Reuven's narrative voice, suggesting that Danny is presented as an enigma to be revealed as the story progresses. Comment was made on the alienating aspects of Danny's initial representation in the novel in terms of his clothing, language and physical appearance, and also in his behaviour. Reuven's positioning language, such as 'crazy' and 'fanatic', were frequently cited as evidence that Danny is initially represented to the readers as an antagonist. Essays tended to compare this initial positioning to the gradual establishment of sympathy for Danny, through the novel's emphasis on his isolation. The motifs of silence and of being set apart from the crowd at his synagogue were explored in this context. Some students commented on Danny as a representation of the conflict between tradition and modernity within his community, suggesting that the reader is positioned, through David Malter's role as the voice of wisdom, to consider that modernity is preferable. Few commented on the binary representation of the intellect and the soul that Danny's father espouses.

Many responses focused on the initial sections of the novel, particularly the boys' antagonism during the baseball game, and thus missed the opportunity to explore some of the ways readers are positioned to view Danny when the novel progresses to his conflicts with his father, his separation from Reuven, and his intellectual struggles.

Out of the schools who studied *The Chosen*, 8% of students selected Question B. The question provided opportunities to consider how Reuven's intellectual and spiritual development is shaped through his experiences with orthodox and Hasidic Judaism. This question also allowed students to explore the representation of friendship, with both fathers' frequently repeated injunctions

about the importance of listening and hearing shaping Reuven's values, particularly as he comes to understand his importance to Danny. This question would have enabled students to consider the relationship between religious tradition, intellectual inquiry and political conflict as these were represented in Reuven's conflicts with his teachers and his separation from Danny.

The Great Gatsby

a) In *The Great Gatsby*, how is the reader positioned to view Gatsby?

OR

b) In *The Great Gatsby*, to what extent is American society of the 1920s represented as significant in shaping Gatsby's values?

Responses to Question A frequently referred to Gatsby as an enigma, with readers positioned to see his identity as the central mystery of the novel, propelling the narrative through an exploration of the destructiveness of his materialist culture. These essays often analysed the way the novel introduces Gatsby through Nick's elegiac introduction, followed by the speculation of other characters, taking a long time before Gatsby directly enters the action. They also contrasted the purity of Gatsby's dream of immutable love with the sordidness of his actions. Others suggested that readers were positioned to view Gatsby as a tragic hero/victim destroyed either by forces beyond his control or by his own delusions. Some commented on the novel's use of past tense, suggesting that Nick's language foreshadowed Gatsby's fall. Students made liberal use of the motifs of the novel, with reflection on the significance of the green light, the yellow car, the frequent reckless driving, and the relationship between past and present.

Some essays suggested that the reader is positioned to view Gatsby as the personification of the American Dream, pursuing an unattainable and superficial goal, convinced of its merit. These essays frequently explored Gatsby's blindness to the distinctions between old money and new money. Many compared and contrasted him with Tom Buchanan; some suggested that Gatsby was more humane, whereas others suggested that both men treated Daisy as a possession.

Responses to Question B often focused on the way Gatsby's values reflected the delusions of a materialistic society which equated wealth with happiness. Many students established Gatsby's values as superficial, using the uncut state of his books and his relationship with Wolfsheim as evidence that Gatsby valued appearance over substance. These students often read Daisy as a symbol of Gatsby's apparent fixation with wealth and ease. They also often reflected on the corruption of American society evident in the hypocrisy of bootlegging and infidelity. Some used the pathos of Gatsby's funeral to underline the worthlessness of the society Gatsby spent his life trying to enter. Others balanced this negative reading with Nick's narration, arguing that Gatsby's motives remained pure and were less influenced by society. Gatsby's unswerving loyalty to Daisy was seen as evidence of the purity of his values compared to the more expendable morality of lesser characters. Many Question B responses focused on depicting the representation of society, with paragraphs about the Wilsons, Tom, Daisy and Jordan Baker. These essays were effective when connections were made that supported the significance of these characters in shaping Gatsby's values. Generally this was achieved more successfully when the characters were represented as symbols for values or classes, rather than being treated only as individuals.

While essays about the American Dream were popular, a sizeable portion of these students struggled to make their responses relevant to the question. It was evident, in some instances, that students had a weak grasp of the concept of the American Dream and that they might have performed better if they had developed an answer which was a specific, structured response to the question posed, rather than a pre-prepared analysis.

The Secret River

a) In *The Secret River*, how is the reader positioned to view Will?

OR

b) In *The Secret River*, to what extent are the people of the Hawkesbury region represented as significant in shaping Will's values?

Responses to Question A frequently focused on the reader's changing perspective on Will, moving from sympathy through to horror or disgust. Others argued that the novel positioned readers to retain empathy for Will even as he became involved in deliberate cruelty and murder. Question A responses frequently compared and contrasted Will's position of powerlessness and/or landlessness in his early life to his later obsession with power and land. The imagery of the fish in the stone swimming beneath Will's home was frequently commented on, in connection with Will's sense of instability and/or guilt. Others focused on Will's insecurity, as symbolised by his telescope and scanning of the cliffs at the novel's conclusion.

Question B responses frequently focused on the contrasting influences of Will's neighbours on his values, suggesting that the novel offered Will a choice between adopting the values of Smasher Sullivan or Thomas Blackwood. A smaller number focused on the influence of the Aboriginal people of the Hawkesbury, arguing that the novel depicted Will as incapable of comprehending their values. Some of these responses argued that the structure of the novel, with frequent references to Will's past in London, emphasised that his values were shaped elsewhere. Many also commented on the novel's use of imagery that emphasised Will's sense of strangeness and alienation in this environment and the way his values shifted in response to new influences.

Students often struggled to distinguish the noun form 'Aborigine' and the adjectival 'Aboriginal', which impacted on their control of grammatically accurate sentences. Some students avoided or minimised discussion of Will's participation in the massacre, and thus struggled to deal substantively with reader positioning or with Will's values.

Commentary by aspect of the response

The following commentary analyses how students achieved success using the analytical essay genre. Sample extracts from student responses model aspects of appropriate responses to the task.

Establishment

In effective essays, the introduction established a thesis that was a specific, valid contention responsive to all aspects of the chosen question. The contention was based upon how representations underpinned the novel as a whole. Effective essays also established convincing reasoning to allow for development of the response. The most effective reasoning established how or why the thesis could be advanced.

In his 1925 novel *The Great Gatsby*, F. Scott Fitzgerald delivers a punishing commentary on the demise of the human condition in 1920s United States. ^{materialistic} Then society Fitzgerald constructs shapes Gatsby's values to an undeniable extent, leading him to see wealth, class and status as the most fundamental qualities of a person. This ~~notion~~ ^{is privileged in} the novel ~~through~~ ^{importance and role} ~~the characters that~~ of wealth to characters, in ^{both} the upper and lower class of 1920s American society. The ^{ambition for} ~~weight placed on~~ wealth within the society is parasitic and overwhelming, ~~being~~ leading the character of Jay Gatsby to death, in his ^{disillusioned} ~~quest~~ pursuit of wealth.

Specific and valid contention that is responsive to all aspects of Question B. This contention is based on how representations of values underpin the novel as a whole.

Establishment of convincing reasoning for development of the response.

~~Author~~ *Maestro* by Peter Goldsworthy is an brutally honest reflection on a childhood of mistakes, ~~that~~ leading to a life of mere satisfaction, a faded 'quest for perfection.' ~~It~~ ^{Narrated} by Paul as an adult we see every moment of regret displayed, allowing us to judge Paul freely. Paul introduces himself to us as 'irredeemably young', a fifteen year old boy with a ~~big~~ ^{big} ego too large. Through the book we continue to see his maturity and even the facade that Paul has become. We see all the negatives of Paul's journey through mental, physical and sexual growth.

Specific and valid contention that is responsive to all aspects of Question A.

It was typical of less effective, but still relevant, essays to be non-specific in establishing a thesis, unaware of the way representations underpinned the novel as a whole, and/or providing lists of examples to be used in the essay rather than offering reasoning.

Development

Effective essays were ones where students developed the thesis, expanding and causing ideas to become more complex as the essay progressed. The most successful synthesised the developing ideas to produce a compelling argument or interpretation responsive to the question. These essays used substantive evidence from the novel to support and justify contentions. This evidence was interpreted in terms of its significance to the response and the novel.

The following example shows development through the opening sections of three body paragraphs from the same essay. Note that although these paragraphs are organised in terms of the beginning, middle and end of the novel, it is the development of the ideas that is more significant.

In the beginning of the novel, Marchetta uses Setting (both geographical and socio-economic) to ~~illustrate~~ illustrate Josie's established set of values based on the way she feels positioned among her peers. As she ~~starts~~ vents about the

In the first paragraph, the student introduces the character as having established values.

Throughout the middle of the novel, Josephine's established values surrounding her ethnic identity are challenged by the words and actions of other characters. This is ^{only possible through} a Marchetta's skilful use of indirect characterization, which tells the ~~audience~~ ^{readers} something more about Josephine ~~which~~ she couldn't tell them herself. While the beginning of the novel indicates Josie's

In the second paragraph, the student develops the argument, showing that the established values are challenged.

By the end of the novel, the bildungsroman ^{here of the narrative} ~~ending~~ ^{of the novel} implies that Josephine must come out of the trials and conflicts of her senior year with a new perspective and a more mature ~~attitude and way~~ ^{of thinking} set of values. Marchetta indicates this maturation of Josie by changing the narrative voice from the beginning of the novel. While ^{earlier} ~~only~~ Josephine uses short

In the third paragraph, the argument develops to suggest the character is now more mature.

Less effective but valid responses showed reiteration of the thesis in each paragraph, often with a range of character- or event-focused examples. At times these responses supported contentions unevenly, for example, responses to Question B gave evidence showing the nature of the relationship between two characters, but did not provide evidence of how this shaped the protagonist's values. Essays that were not responsive to the question were unable to achieve highly in development.

Analysis and evaluation

Many students found analysing and evaluating particularly challenging. Effective essays were based on the idea that the novel is constructed through the use of textual and aesthetic features and is underpinned by ideas, attitudes and values. Essays that performed well for *Analysis and evaluation* integrated substantial analysis of specific ways the novel is underpinned by particular ideas, attitudes and/or values. In the case of Question A, this was often achieved by a focus on attitudes promoted, critiqued or examined through the construction of the protagonist. For Question B, this was more frequently demonstrated through considering the way the representation of influencing groups was constructed as shaping the protagonist's values.

Effective essays also evaluated or analysed the effect of specific textual or aesthetic features in creating representations of concepts, identities, times and places. The integrated discussion of textual features, and the effects of these features, was well handled.

From early in the novel, established as
~~Quite clearly~~ Jay Gatsby is a man who values wealth above all else. ~~This is~~ He represents the New money class, those of recently acquired and self made wealth. He flaunts this, perhaps vulgarly, in various forms of excess, namely; his roaring summer night parties, his brist yellow Rolls Royce and his sprawling mansion. As the novel progresses, readers begin to see a sort of romantic humanity in Gatsby, one that leads a man to recreate himself in money all for the woman he loves. In the case of Gatsby, this woman is Daisy Buchanan. As a reader it is difficult to understand how anyone could feel anything but contempt for Daisy, however it becomes clear when Gatsby describes the "mesmerizing charm" in her voice as "full of money." Immediately readers see Gatsby's 'romantic' quest for true love as nothing more than a ~~shallow~~ shallow pursuit for wealth and status. What Gatsby himself can not comprehend is that he is not in love with Daisy the person, but rather the idea of her and what

Analysis of the effect of specific textual or aesthetic features in creating representations of Jay Gatsby.

Analysis of specific ways the novel is underpinned by particular ideas, attitudes and values, demonstrated through considering the representation of Jay Gatsby and his relationship with Daisy.

She represents - Old money, the upper class and status, or more simply, his green light. Again this notion of Daisy as an object of monetary value is seen when Nick Narrates, "It excited Gatsby that Daisy had been loved by many men before... It only increased her value in his eyes." ~~If there was~~ Readers ^{Progressively} ~~again~~ let go of whatever interpretation of romance they had seen in Gatsby, as Fitzgerald reveals that ~~Gatsby~~, like so

Do not write outside this box.

many other characters in the novel, values wealth and status, ~~more than he~~ ^{more than he} even values ~~love~~ ^{love, true} happiness or moral principles.

Evaluation of the textual and aesthetic features in creating representations of Jay Gatsby.

Evaluation of specific ways the novel is underpinned by particular values.

Less effective essays treated the characters as real people. The questions were designed to prompt students to recognise the constructed nature of the novel, explicitly including the concepts of reader positioning and representations and the title of the novel in each question. However, this understanding was absent from all but the introductory paragraphs of some less effective essays. In these instances, students principally offered recount of events and descriptions of characters, rather than recognising aspects of textual construction such as characterisation, narrative perspective, structure, tone, motifs and other elements.

Conclusion

The most effective conclusions synthesised the argument or interpretation to re-establish the relevance of the response to the question, and significance of the response. Significance could be demonstrated in terms of the connection to the focal representation in the novel and to the construction of underpinning representations. Effective conclusions also reaffirmed how representations were constructed by the text, in keeping with the focus of both Questions A and B.

The novel 'The Secret River' by Kate Grenville is one that does not shy away from the true horrors of the massacre of the First Australians. Through the eyes of protagonist William Thornhill, ~~read~~ readers see the plight of the Indigenous and the internal conflict settlers faced. Grenville positions readers to view Thornhill as ambitious, ~~conflicted~~ ^{flawed} and conflicted, concerned only with his 100 acres, his power over others and his status in society. ~~The other positions readers to see~~ This construction of ~~Thornhill~~ ^{Thornhill} allows a window ~~into~~ ^{into} the colonial history of Australia as well as ~~the~~ ^{the} highlighting the conflict between the Indigenous and the settlers, and the conflict of the mind.

How representations were constructed by the text.

Synthesis of argument to re-establish the relevance of the response to Question A.

Significance of argument to the contention established in the thesis is reaffirmed.

^{1920s} The American society constructed by Fitzgerald is in no way a prosperous one. If ambition for wealth and social status was ever seen as a wholesome pursuit, the novel shatters the conception. ~~As readers see the transformation of Gatsby's dream from one of true love and happiness to one of~~ As the novel progresses, readers see the transformation of Gatsby's dream from a hope of true love and happiness to one of wealth and status.

How representations were constructed by the text.

Synthesis of argument to re-establish the relevance of the response to Question B.

In this way, money is the foul dust that floats in the wake of Gatsby's dream, corrupting it so much so that his values are distorted. This, in essence, is a ~~reflection~~ comment on the American society of the 1920s. How is any person to achieve their dreams, when surrounded by a society that deems wealth as synonymous with worth. ~~Money is seen as all-consuming in Fitzgerald's narrative~~ Although Gatsby's values are corrupted by society in the novel,

Fitzgerald delivers a beacon of hope following the novel's disappointing end. He tells, "Tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further, and one fine morning." He highlights the ability of Americans to one day achieve their goals, perhaps in some organic future where personal values are not obstructed by the empty pursuit of wealth.

Significance of argument to the contention established in the thesis is reaffirmed.

Lower marks were awarded where responses concluded by listing the key points rather than synthesising in response to the question and argument/interpretation. Students also achieved lower marks where the conclusion was relevant to the response without necessarily being relevant to the question.

Relationship with the reader

Information for schools and the question book emphasised that the reader was familiar with the text. Students should have recognised that extensive plot recount was inappropriate as reader and writer had a shared knowledge of the novel. It also indicated that the reader would need to be engaged at a level beyond recount. This could be achieved by engaging the reader in evaluative or analytical, aesthetic consideration of the nature, or significance, of the novel or representation. Effective responses maintained a consistent register with a level of authority appropriate to the writer with in-depth knowledge and reader familiar with the novel.

Danny's initial impression that he establishes within the first chapter of "The Chosen" is one of strong character and ferocity. His overwhelming image; wearing traditional Jewish attire and violently batting in a tense game of baseball, naturally inclines readers to feel distanced from his character that cannot ^{easily} ~~be~~ be related to. Instead, ~~the~~ they favour Reuven; the less extreme of the two boys whom ~~he~~ ^{unconsciously favoured} Potok has predisposed ~~to~~ to be ~~the~~ ^{the first of} by making him the narrator. Danny's ~~first~~ ^{traits} traits imparted to a reader is ~~the~~ ^{the} inherent violence that ~~is~~ ^{that are} he expresses in the baseball game in which he injures Reuven.

Engaging the reader in evaluative, aesthetic consideration of the nature of the representation.

and then later when confesses his overwhelming desire to kill Reuven.[^] His physical appearance that is a reflection of his strict religious adherence isolates him from a reader.[^] His ~~lack~~ lack of relatability is further consolidated by his blunt personality that is apparent ~~in his~~ ^{by his} interaction with Reuven at the hospital. Potok positions a reader to view Danny in this way to blatantly contrast between the two protagonists.

This immediately invites readers to consider their opinion of Danny.

that is unable to relate to his culture.

in line he appears to be blatantly honest and abrupt.

Maintenance of a consistent register with a level of authority appropriate to the writer with in-depth knowledge and reader familiar with the novel.

It was appropriate for aspects of plot or character to be recounted when these aspects were being used to make interpretive points, but it was evident that many students lacked awareness of their relationship with the informed reader.

Vocabulary

Effective responses sustained precision by choosing vocabulary for effect. Vocabulary choices contributed to flexibility and specificity in the development of the argument. The most successful essays also used the language of literary analysis purposefully. The language of literary analysis, in this instance, refers not only to the language specific to the syllabus and questions, but also to all language that facilitates analysis, for example: *significance, interpretation, representation, impact, influence, effect, affect, meaning, realisation, argued.*

Less effective responses reiterated vocabulary choices, often choosing generalisations over more specific phrases.

Cohesion

Cohesion assessed the writer's use of techniques to sustain the cohesive development of ideas throughout the essay. These techniques include, but are not limited to: the use and ordering of paragraphs, cohesive ties, contextualising phrases, word associations, pronoun references, nominalisation, sequencing, topic and concluding sentences.

The most successful essays sustained cohesion through flexible control of cohesive techniques contributing to the development of ideas across the response, and within distinct paragraphs. These essays incorporated references to the chosen novel so that the essay continued fluently. It should be noted that although paragraphs were required, no prescribed formula was enforced. It was evident that in some instances students were disrupting the cohesion of their paragraphs by inserting concluding sentences unrelated to the content of the paragraph. The flexible use of cohesive techniques requires that the techniques serve the expression, development and emphasis of ideas.

Firstly, by forming a friendship with an individual of a lower class, Harriet Smith, Emma Woodhouse believes she has gained power and control over the individuals of Highbury. Being a ~~se~~ sophisticated woman in Highbury, who is the mistress of her home, Emma can disregard the 'natural order' formed, by ~~forming~~ ^{creating} connections with individuals such as Harriet Smith. Harriet's aspiration to always impress Emma, has led ~~to~~ ^{Emma} ~~to~~ believe she is powerful, ~~always~~

Cohesive ties, contextualising phrases, topic and concluding sentences have been used to develop ideas within the distinct paragraphs.

in control and always correct. A vivid example of this would be in chapter ~~the~~ ^{Seven} of the novel, where Emma's intention Harriet Smith declines Mr Martin's proposal as she believes Emma is correct in saying he is not her equal.

By doing so, Harriet has allowed Emma to believe she can control any individual's ^{life.} ~~life.~~ Also, by doing as Emma

said so, Harriet has made her believe that she is always

correct. Whilst portraying the ^{now} ~~attitudes~~ ^{values} and beliefs of the main

character are impacted by the ^{of Highbury} surrounding community, Austen has also illustrated the ^{role} ~~impact~~ ^{played} ~~played~~ ^{played} class ~~plays~~ on a friendship. Thus,

Harriet and Emma's friendship has heavily shaped Emma's ^{values} ~~attitudes~~ and beliefs, similar to her connection with Mrs Weston.

References to the novel are incorporated sustaining the fluency of the paragraph.

After losing her mother at a young age, Emma's governess, Mrs Weston, has allowed Emma to live freely. Becoming the mistress of her home, gave Emma a free life in comparison of others in Highbury. ~~her assigned governess became a friend had formed~~

Cohesive ties used to link paragraphs and add to the coherence of the essay.

Sentence structures

Students were required to demonstrate control of accurate sentence structures, including control of grammar. The most effective responses varied structures and lengths to achieve effects, emphasis and clarity. They also used structures to condense information and develop key concepts and ideas, for example, through the use of nominal or adjectival clauses.

Some less successful responses showed a lack of control of accurate grammar, particularly in relation to the control of tenses. Conventionally, an analytical essay in response to literature will refer to the novel in present tense. Many responses were inconsistent, varying between past and present when referring to the novel.

Punctuation

The most effective responses sustained flexible control of punctuation, with minimal errors. In the main, most responses were able to use standard punctuation accurately, such as capital letters, full-stops, commas, quotation marks and apostrophes.

Students should punctuate titles; a range of conventions was accepted. Some students were also unclear on when to punctuate quotations, with examples of paraphrasing being erroneously included in quotation marks. Genre- and task-specific punctuation should be revised with students prior to assessment.

Spelling

Students were required to spell accurately. Homophones were a frequent source of difficulty for students.

Recommendations and guidelines

- *Students would benefit from greater emphasis on and development of the capacity to think flexibly, using their knowledge of the novel and genre to develop answers to questions.*

Further practice of these skills would enhance students' capacity to identify what an unseen analytical essay question is asking; for example, understanding that reader positioning was a crucial component of the construct of Question A in the external assessment, and that the shaping of the central character's values was crucial to Question B.

Students with the skills to interpret and respond to the question were able to construct responses that were relevant to the task. Students who recounted learned information did not properly engage with what they were asked to do.

- *Students would benefit from more practice analysing ideas, attitudes and values that underpin texts.*

The most convincing analysis of underpinning ideas, attitudes and values in the novels considered the consequences or resolutions to the various problems that the novels explored.

Students would benefit from considering the novel as a complete work in their analysis, as the resolution of a novel may offer substantive subject matter for understanding the underpinning ideas, attitudes and beliefs. Dwelling on opening chapters and making conclusions about ideas, attitudes and values based on the opinions expressed by the protagonists in these chapters, can lead to superficial analysis of a chosen novel.

Appendix 1: Instrument-specific standards matrix

These instrument-specific standards identify the objectives assessed in the English external assessment trial.

	A	B	C	D	E
The student work has the following characteristics:					
Understanding and responding to contexts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exploitation of genre patterns and conventions of an analytical essay to achieve specific purposes • discerning selection, organisation and synthesis of relevant and substantive subject matter to support opinions and perspectives • manipulation and control of role of the essay writer and relationship with readers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • effective control of genre patterns and conventions of an analytical essay to achieve specific purposes • effective selection, organisation and synthesis of relevant subject matter to support opinions and perspectives • establishment and control of role of the essay writer and relationship with readers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of genre patterns and conventions of an analytical essay to achieve purposes • selection, sequencing and organisation of relevant subject matter to support opinions and perspectives • establishment and maintenance of role of the essay writer and relationship with readers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of aspects of genre patterns and conventions of an analytical essay to achieve some purposes • selection and organisation of subject matter to support opinions or perspectives • establishment of role of the essay writer and relationship with readers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • use of aspects of genre patterns and conventions of an analytical essay • selection of some subject matter to state an opinion • use of role of the essay writer

	A	B	C	D	E
The student work has the following characteristics:					
Understanding and controlling textual features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a discerning combination of a range of grammatically accurate language structures for specific effects, including clauses and sentences discerning use of cohesive devices to develop and emphasise ideas and connect parts of the analytical essay, including paragraphing discerning use of a wide range of apt vocabulary for specific purposes discerning use of written features to achieve specific effects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conventional spelling and punctuation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> control of a range of grammatically accurate language structures to achieve effects, including clauses and sentences effective use of cohesive devices to develop and emphasise ideas and connect parts of the analytical essay, including paragraphing effective use of a range of apt vocabulary for specific purposes effective use of written features to achieve effects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conventional spelling and punctuation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> use of a range of mostly grammatically accurate language structures to achieve purposes, including clauses and sentences use of cohesive devices to develop and emphasise ideas and connect parts of the analytical essay, including paragraphing use of suitable vocabulary for purposes suitable use of written features to achieve purposes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conventional spelling and punctuation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> inconsistency in the use of grammar and language structures to meet a purpose use of some cohesive devices to connect parts of the analytical essay, including paragraphing use of vocabulary that varies in suitability for a purpose use of written features that vary in suitability: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conventional spelling and punctuation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> grammar and language structures that impede meaning some connections between parts of the analytical essay use of vocabulary that distracts from purpose written features that distract from meaning: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> conventional spelling and punctuation
Evaluating meaning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> discerning analysis of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin the text and influence audiences subtle and complex evaluation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in the text discerning evaluation of aesthetic features and their effects in the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> effective analysis of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin the text and influence audiences effective evaluation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in the text effective evaluation of aesthetic features and their effects in the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysis of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin the text and influence audiences evaluation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in the text identification and explanation of aesthetic features and their effects in the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identification of ideas, attitudes and values that underpin the text and influence audiences identification of some perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in the text identification of aesthetic features and some effects in the text. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> identification of some ideas, attitudes and values in the text identification of some concepts, identities, times and places in the text identification of some aesthetic features in the text.

Appendix 2: Marking guide

Establishment <i>Evidence from the first ¼ of the essay</i>		Development		Analysis and evaluation		Conclusion <i>Evidence from the final ¼ of the essay</i>	
<p>The first ¼ of the essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes a thesis that is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a specific, valid contention responsive to all aspects of the question based on how representations of identities/ concepts/values underpin the novel as a whole establishes convincing reasoning for development of the essay 	3	<p>The essay sustains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> precise and convincing development of the thesis, with synthesis of ideas, to produce a compelling argument/interpretation responsive to the question use of substantive evidence from the novel which: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> supports and justifies contentions is interpreted in terms of its significance to the novel/response 	4	<p>The essay integrates substantial, valid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysis of specific ways the novel is underpinned by particular ideas/attitudes/values evaluation/analysis of the effect of specific textual/ aesthetic features in creating representations of concepts/identities/times/places in the novel 	4	<p>The final ¼ of the essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> synthesises the argument/interpretation to re-establish relevance, validity and significance reaffirms how representations have been constructed in the text 	3
<p>The first ¼ of the essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes a thesis that is a specific, valid contention responsive to all aspects of the question 	2	<p>The essay sustains:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> logical development of an argument/interpretation responsive to the question use of valid evidence from the novel which supports and justifies contentions 	3	<p>The essay integrates substantial, valid:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> explanation of the ways particular ideas/attitudes/values underpin the novel explanation of how specific textual/ aesthetic features create representations of concepts/identities/times/places in the novel 	3	<p>The final ¼ of the essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> synthesises a relevant, valid argument/interpretation reaffirms how representations have been constructed in the text 	2
<p>The first ¼ of the essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establishes a relevant response 	1	<p>The essay shows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reiteration, or uneven development, of a relevant argument/interpretation use of evidence from the novel which supports contentions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may have one contention broadly/lacking support. no more than one significant inaccuracy about the novel 	2	<p>The essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> includes valid identification of specific ideas/attitudes/values that underpin or are in the novel repeatedly links specific textual/ aesthetic features to representations of concepts/identities/times/places in the novel 	2	<p>The final ¼ of the essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> concludes with summation relevant to the response 	1
		<p>The essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> is relevant to the question (perhaps broadly/unevenly) shows knowledge of the novel <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may have up to two significant inaccuracies/ misinterpretations 	1	<p>The essay:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> identifies that there are ideas/attitudes/values in the novel repeatedly refers to specific features as constructed (e.g. referring to the author, title, characterisation, climax etc.) 			
<p>The response does not satisfy any of the above descriptors</p>	0	<p>The response does not satisfy any of the above descriptors</p>	0	<p>The response does not satisfy any of the above descriptors</p>	0	<p>The response does not satisfy any of the above descriptors</p>	0

Relationship with reader	Vocabulary	Cohesion	Sentence structures	Punctuation	Spelling		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> engages the reader in evaluative/analytical/aesthetic consideration of the nature or significance of the novel throughout the response consistent in register, with a level of authority appropriate to a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> writer with in-depth knowledge reader familiar with the text 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustains precision in vocabulary used for effect: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> with flexibility and specificity in argument/interpretation using language of literary analysis purposefully 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustains cohesion through flexible control of cohesive techniques contributing to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> development and emphasis of ideas across the response development and emphasis of ideas within distinct paragraphs incorporation of references to the chosen novel so that the essay continues fluently 	4 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustains control of accurate sentence structures, including control of grammar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> varying structures and length to achieve effects, emphasis and clarity using structures to condense information and develop key concepts/ideas 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustains flexible control of a range of punctuation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may have up to two errors 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Spells accurately in the main <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may have up to five errors in different words 	1	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistent in register with a level of authority appropriate to a: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> writer with in-depth knowledge reader familiar with the text 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustains meaning and accuracy in vocabulary, with clarity in argument/interpretation 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustains cohesion through techniques contributing to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> development of ideas within distinct paragraphs incorporation of references to the chosen novel to connect to the surrounding text 	3 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustains control of accurate sentence structures, including control of grammar, for clarity 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses standard punctuation (capital letters, full-stops, commas, quotation marks, question marks, apostrophes) accurately in the main <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may have up to five errors 	1	1	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> sustains meaning in vocabulary: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> at times may use broad/ generalised vocabulary may have up to 3 inaccuracies/misuses 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cohesive techniques contribute to linking of ideas within distinct paragraphs <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may be uneven; one paragraph may lack sustained cohesion 	2 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> in the main, uses accurate sentences <ul style="list-style-type: none"> may have up to four errors/ lapses in grammar 				1
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> allows meaning to be discerned (unevenly or broadly) 	1 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> cohesive techniques are used to link or transition between ideas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> uses at least four linking or transitioning phrases/techniques 	1				
The response does not satisfy any of the above descriptors	0 The response does not satisfy any of the above descriptors	0 The response does not satisfy any of the above descriptors	0 The response does not satisfy any of the above descriptors	0 The response does not satisfy any of the above descriptors	0 The response does not satisfy any of the above descriptors	0	

Appendix 3: Assessment glossary

Term	Definition
analyse	to break up a whole into its parts; to examine in detail to determine the nature of; to look more deeply into and to detect the relationships between parts
compare	display recognition of similarities and differences and recognise the significance of these similarities and differences
construct	create or put together by arranging ideas, items, language or textual features
develop	elaborate or expand in detail; cause to become more complex or intricate
establish	to set up; to show to be well founded
item	a question or directive requiring a response on the assessment instrument
justify	give reasons or evidence to support an answer, response or conclusion; show or prove how an argument, statement or conclusion is right or reasonable
support	corroborate; given greater credibility by providing evidence