Supervised written: Analytical exposition in response to a literary text

This sample is intended to inform the design of assessment instruments in the senior phase of learning. It highlights the qualities of student work and the match to the syllabus standards.

Dimensions assessed

- Understanding and responding to contexts
- Understanding and controlling textual features
- Creating and evaluating meaning

Assessment instrument

The response presented in this sample is in response to an assessment task

| Task | Analyse the representations of power in Macbeth. Evaluate the choices Shakespeare makes to influence his audience to accept particular attitudes and values about power. You will need to use both direct (quotations) and indirect evidence from the play to support your opinions. |
| Genre: Analytical exposition |
| Role: Student essay writer |
| Audience: Teenage readers of a collection of literary essays |
| Purpose: To analyse |
| Length: 600–800 words |

Conditions of completion: conducted under supervised conditions in response to an unseen question
### Instrument-specific standards matrix

Student responses have been matched to instrument-specific criteria and standards; those which best describe the student work in this sample are shown below. For more information about the syllabus dimensions and standards descriptors, see [www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/11703-assessment.html](http://www.qcaa.qld.edu.au/11703-assessment.html).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding and responding to contexts</th>
<th>Standard A</th>
<th>Standard C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student work has the following characteristics:</td>
<td>- exploitation of genre patterns and conventions of an analytical exposition to achieve specific purposes</td>
<td>- use of genre patterns and conventions of an analytical exposition to achieve purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- discerning selection, organisation and synthesis of relevant and substantive subject matter to support opinions</td>
<td>- selection, sequencing and organisation of relevant subject matter to support opinions</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- manipulation and control of roles of the essay writer, and relationship with readers.</td>
<td>- establishment and maintenance of roles of the essay writer, and relationship with readers.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Understanding and controlling textual features</th>
<th>Standard A</th>
<th>Standard C</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student work has the following characteristics:</td>
<td>- a discerning combination of a range of grammatically accurate language structures for specific effects, including clauses and sentences</td>
<td>- use of a range of mostly grammatically accurate language structures to achieve purposes, including clauses and sentences</td>
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<tr>
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<td>- discerning use of mode-appropriate cohesive devices to develop and emphasise ideas and connect parts of the analytical exposition, including paragraphing</td>
<td>- use of mode-appropriate cohesive devices to link ideas and connect parts of the analytical exposition, including paragraphing</td>
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<td></td>
<td>- discerning use of a wide range of apt vocabulary for specific purposes</td>
<td>- use of suitable vocabulary for purposes</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- discerning use of mode-appropriate features to achieve specific effects: - conventional spelling and punctuation.</td>
<td>- suitable use of mode-appropriate features to achieve purposes: - conventional spelling and punctuation.</td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Creating and evaluating meaning</th>
<th>Standard A</th>
<th>Standard C</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The student work has the following characteristics:</td>
<td>- discerning analysis of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin Shakespearean texts and influence audiences</td>
<td>- analysis of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin Shakespearean texts and influence audiences</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- subtle and complex evaluation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in Shakespearean texts</td>
<td>- evaluation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in Shakespearean texts</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- discerning evaluation of aesthetic features and their effects in Shakespearean texts.</td>
<td>- identification and explanation of aesthetic features and their effects in Shakespearean texts.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Student response — Standard A

The annotations show the match to the instrument-specific standards.

Comments

- genre patterns and conventions of an analytical exposition to achieve specific purposes
- discerning selection, organisation and synthesis of relevant and substantive subject matter to support opinions
- discerning analysis of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin Shakespearean texts and influence audiences

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Illegitimate Power ✓
Within "Macbeth"

The iconic tragedy of Macbeth is arguably one of the most recognised works of celebrated playwright William Shakespeare. Though Shakespeare successfully explores a number of key themes within the play, he particularly represents power as a divine right with which one should not tamper lest disaster ensue. Such a representation clearly reflects the socio-cultural views of the Elizabethan era with regard to power and hence in Macbeth, the audience can successfully foresee that Macbeth’s usurping of the Scottish throne will ultimately lead to his destruction. Illegitimate power, such as Macbeth’s, epitomises additional representations of power as being transitory, easily corrupted and ineffective. Therefore, the audience is privy to the fact that since Macbeth has tampered with the divinity of power, his reign is doomed to fall. Macbeth’s initial power comes as a direct result of his disturbance of the natural order.

If one does indeed tamper with the divinity of power, Shakespeare foregrounds the idea that the resulting conflict will only be fleeting. This representation reinforces the limited reading of nature and disorder if one disturbs natural order and pattern of society then an equally disruptive consequence will occur elsewhere within nature.

With regards to Macbeth, the audience can see that...
Comments

discerning analysis of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin Shakespearean texts and influence audiences

a discerning combination of a range of grammatically accurate language structures for specific effects, including clauses and sentences

discerning use of a wide range of apt vocabulary for specific purposes

discerning use of a wide range of apt vocabulary for specific purposes

struck

due to their murder of King Duncan, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth have severely disturbed the natural social hierarchy. Hence, this initial reading position the audience to see that, in keeping with Shakespearean representation, the Macbeths’ power will be short-lived. And what disaster will ensue? You need to link it back to your hypothesis in its entirety. This representation is clearly evidenced through Lady Macbeth, who initially holds significant power over her husband. This control is exemplified in her questioning of his manhood, saying: “When you durst do it, then you were a man. And to be more than what you were you would/Be so much more the man” (1.7.49-51). Similarly, Lady Macbeth acts atypically to the traditional patriarchal society; she taunts and manipulates her husband and fails to acquiesce to his wishes. Shakespeare’s foregrounding of the implied reading of nature and disorder/dispositions the audience to believe that since Lady Macbeth has demonstrated essentially reversed traditional gender roles, her power will only be fleeting. Indeed, this belief is reinforced by Lady Macbeth’s justifying remark, directly parallel to her power: “More honor to be shamed than the singer” (5.7.66). This quote serves to illustrate the point that Lady Macbeth, having interfered with the divinity of power, has effectively caused her own complete destruction. The consequence for Macbeth, on the other hand, is his failure to rule justly as did Duncan, with the
Comments

subtle and complex evaluation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in Shakespearean texts

discerning selection, organisation and synthesis of relevant and substantive subject matter to support opinions

subtle and complex evaluation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in Shakespearean texts

discerning selection, organisation and synthesis of relevant and substantive subject matter to support opinions

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Though the audience may believe that Macbeth recognises his changing characteristics upon remarking, “I am in blood/Stepp'd in so far that should I wake no more…” (3.5.136-137), it soon becomes evident that he continually fails to act for redemption. Indeed conversely, he decides, “So rest upon, pale man…” His wife, his babies, and all unfortunate souls that trace him in his line” (4.2.150-152) for the sole purpose of enticing Maccott to return to Scotland.

Macbeth’s choice to slaughter the Maccott family particularly reinforces the idea of the tragic hero, though forces of nature as elucidated by the invited reading are set to work against him. It is ultimately his decisions that cause his demise. The tragic hero constructed positions the audience to see that Macbeth’s choice to draw Maccott into Scotland in essence caused his own destruction. Quite obviously, though death, the protagonist is robbed of his power once again reinforcing the playwright’s representation of power as relatively transitory. Additionally, Shakespeare has also represented illegitimate power as very easily corrupted.

It is evident that Macbeth becomes corrupted in his hunger for supreme power, implicitly linking to the idea of the tragic hero. Though Macbeth, as the tragic hero, makes choices leading to his destruction, Banquo evidences that it is not, in fact, inherent human nature to succumb to greed. Banquo rationalises...
discerning use of a wide range of apt vocabulary for specific purposes

discerning evaluation of aesthetic features and their effects in Shakespearean texts

Comments

The audience becomes particularly aware of Macbeth's earlier actions, particularly the early stage of Macbeth's original composition of his former companions, which have now been corrupted by the actions of the other characters. This shift in perspective is made clear through the increased focus on Macbeth's earlier actions, particularly the murder of Banquo, which now appears to be part of a larger pattern of corruption. The audience is then able to view Macbeth's actions in a new light, understanding their true nature and the impact they have on the story.
Comments

discerning use of mode-appropriate cohesive devices to develop and emphasise ideas and connect parts of the analytical exposition, including paragraphing

da discerning combination of a range of grammatically accurate language structures for specific effects, including clauses and sentences

discerning selection, organisation and synthesis of relevant and substantive subject matter to support opinion

Macketh implies that he regrets only that his wife did not come at a more appropriate time, since she has no opportunity to suitably grieve. This again affirms the corruption of Macketh’s nature as a result of this illegitimate power. With regards to Shakespeare’s overarching representation of power as a force with which one should not meddle, the audience can thus see that if Macketh’s failure to act accordingly has resulted in his subsequent destruction. Additionally, it is evident that even with the power of a King, Macketh’s reign was relatively ineffective.

Macketh’s rule over Scotland is portrayed as somewhat futile as the playwright fails to discern significant rulings made. The lack of such rulings reinforces the representation of power gained illegitimately as ineffective and with regard to Macketh, his rule’s ineffectiveness is a result of his troubled mind.

Throughout Macketh, the protagonist suffers from various hallucinations. The apparition of Banquo’s ghost at the dinner party, however, is particularly relevant since Macketh reacts with his assembled court present. Fergus, bracing Macketh tells the apparition “Thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy gory locks at me” (3.4.50). Yet his following actions are assumed to have caused the court to question the health of the King. Generally a court with little faith in their ruler is unlikely to offer significant support, and hence it is not surprising that Macketh appears relatively alone at the play’s end.

“time for such a word” (5.5.17-18). From this quote, Macketh implies that he regrets only that his wife did not come at a more appropriate time, since she has no opportunity to suitably grieve. This again affirms the corruption of Macketh’s nature as a result of this illegitimate power. With regards to Shakespeare’s overarching representation of power as a force with which one should not meddle, the audience can thus see that if Macketh’s failure to act accordingly has resulted in his subsequent destruction. Additionally, it is evident that even with the power of a King, Macketh’s reign was relatively ineffective.
**Comments**

- discerning use of mode-appropriate cohesive devices to develop and emphasise ideas and connect parts of the analytical exposition, including paragraphing

- discerning analysis of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin Shakespearean texts and influence audiences

- manipulation and control of roles of the essay writer, and relationship with reader

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**Excerpt from student response**

Toward the conclusion of Macbeth, in essence the protagonist seems to be, in essence quite isolated, as he has no allies openly adorning support. Moreover, Macbeth, upon meeting Macduff, however, Macbeth finally seems resigned to his fate, declaring, "Before my body I throw my woeful shield, Lay on Macduff! And damn'd be him that first cries 'Hold, enough.'" (5.8.32-34). This designation final monologue positions the audience to see Macbeth's death as the epitome of ineffectiveness as a ruler, as if his own choices were ultimately the cause for his destruction. In true tragic hero manner, Macbeth (was) killed due to his tragic flaw: a voracious lust for power.

In Macbeth, the playwright's focal representation of power as a divine force, with which one should not tamper is evidenced by additional representations of illegitimate power is being transitory, easily corrupted and ineffective. These representations, though initially intended for the Elizabethan audience, have evidently endured the test of time since they continue to successfully position the audience to view power as Shakespeare intended.

It is thus conclusive that throughout Macbeth, the audience is positioned to consider power as wholly divine, and yet worthless unless gained legitimately.
Student response — Standard C

The annotations show the match to the instrument-specific standards.

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>use of genre patterns and conventions of an analytical exposition to achieve purposes</td>
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<td>use of a range of mostly grammatically accurate language structures to achieve purposes, including clauses and sentences</td>
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<tr>
<td>use of mode-appropriate cohesive devices to link ideas and connect parts of the analytical exposition, including paragraphing</td>
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Macketh's Representations of Power

The tragedy of ‘Macketh’, written be renowned playwright William Shakespeare, follows the rise and fall to power of a brave soldier during the Elizabethan Era. Shakespeare has represented power as a predestined role in the Divine Right of Kings, which is not to be tampered with. This position of kings, which is presented, is a hierarchy and any change to this is shown through the play through Shakespeare's use of the socio-cultural context, his comparison of kings and the representations of an illegitimate source of power. However, it is the socio-cultural context of the play which creates the backbone to this play.

In the play ‘Macketh’, Shakespeare utilises and emphasises the effect that the socio-cultural context has on the power of those during the Elizabethan Era. During this era, most of the world was based around the Great Chain of Being. This was where society followed an undisputed order of power. The top of the order was God, followed by angels, then kings, princes, royals, men, women, and animals. This is represented through the way in which the kings' followers talk to him.

The service and the loyalty I owe in doing it pays itself (Macbeth, I, iv, 22-23). This shows Macbeth’s initial loyalty to the king, hence staying on his side with the Great Chain of Being. Shakespeare has also represented women as superior to women, as was accepted during this time. Firstly, there is very little mention of any women at all in the play apart from Lady Macbeth. Secondly, when Lady Macbeth grasps at some source of power, Shakespeare represents this as unnatural. Evidently, it was this chain which caused the hunger for power to be atop this chain, which lead the three separate kings during this play.
Comments

analysis of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin Shakespearean texts and influence audiences

use of suitable vocabulary for purposes; suitable use of mode-appropriate features to achieve purposes

evaluation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in Shakespearean texts

selection, sequencing and organisation of relevant subject matter to support opinions

use of suitable vocabulary for purposes

Shakespeare has cleverly used a comparison between kings to represent different sources of power. The first king to be portrayed in the play was King Duncan. King Duncan was represented as a kindly loving king who deeply relied on his trust in others as a source of power. "Give me your hand; I conduct to mine host: we love him so highly and shall continue our graces towards him" (King Duncan, III:VII, 30-31). However, it was his trust in others which evidently led to his demise. He was then unrightfully succeeded by Macbeth. Macbeth originally sourced his power from the unnatural witches, but then reverted to fear and a source of power of fear to feed his power. "Go prick thy face, and over-red thy fear, thou silly-souled boy!" (Macbeth, VIII:3, 14-15). However, Macbeth became so overconfident with his power that his followers left him, and he was murdered by the rightful heir to the throne, Duncan's son Malcolm. The play ends with Malcolm's promises of becoming a good, wise, and just king... "by the grace of God, we will perform in measure, time and place..." (Malcolm, V:IX, 89-90). Through Shakespeare's comparison of these three kings, it is clear to the audience that Macbeth's illegitimate sources of power are not accepted.

Shakespeare's representation of Macbeth's illegitimate source of power is clear—that it is unnatural and unwanted. It is clear from the beginning that Macbeth had always wanted the power of the king, which is shown by his reaction to the witches' prophecies that he will become king. "Good sir, why do you start and seem to fear... he seems rap't without" (Banquo, I:III, 49-55). Shakespeare then utilises the supernatural to create an evil and horrific later on in the play. This is at the stage where Macbeth secretly murders Duncan, which upsets the natural order of things and the unnatural things start to happen. PTO.

The universe
Acknowledgments

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