



HOW TO WRITE KILLER TEXT RESPONSE ESSAYS



VCE ENGLISH

VCAA COURSE OUTLINE – UNIT 3 ENGLISH

AREA OF STUDY 1: READING AND CREATING TEXTS

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to produce an analytical interpretation of a selected text, and a creative response to a different selected text.

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key skills

- Explain and analyse – how the features of a range of texts create meaning and how they influence interpretation – the ways readers are invited to respond to texts
- Identify and analyse the explicit and implied ideas and values in texts
- Examine different interpretations of texts and consider how these resonate with or challenge their own interpretations
- Synthesise ideas and interpretations to develop an interpretation of their own
- Apply the conventions of oral presentation in the delivery of spoken texts
- Apply the conventions of discussion
- Use textual evidence appropriately to justify analytical responses
- Plan analytical interpretations of texts
- Develop, test and clarify ideas using discussion and writing
- Plan creative responses to texts by – analysing the text, considering opportunities to explore meaning – selecting key moments, characters, themes worthy of exploration – taking account of the purpose, context, audience in determining the selected content and approach
- Develop and sustain voice and style in creative responses
- Transform and adapt language and literary devices to generate particular responses, with consideration of the original text
- Explain and justify decisions made in the writing process and how these demonstrate understanding of the text
- Draft, review, edit and refine creative and analytical interpretations to texts for expressiveness, accuracy, fluency and coherence, and for stylistic effect
- Apply the conventions of spelling, punctuation and syntax of Standard Australian English accurately and appropriately

Contribution to final assessment

School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3 will contribute 25 per cent to the study score.

English students

Outcomes	Marks allocated*	Assessment tasks
Outcome 1 Produce an analytical interpretation of a selected text, and a creative response to a different selected text.	30	An analytical interpretation of a selected text in written form.
	30	and A creative response to a selected text in written or oral form with a written explanation of decisions made in the writing process and how these demonstrate understanding of the text.
Outcome 2 Analyse and compare the use of argument and persuasive language in texts that present a point of view on an issue currently debated in the media.	40	An analysis and comparison, in written form, of argument and the use of persuasive language in two to three texts that present a point of view on an issue. Texts must include written and visual material and have appeared in the media since 1 September of the previous year.
Total marks	100	

*School-assessed Coursework for Unit 3 contributes 25 per cent.

TASK CONDITIONS

For the achievement of Outcomes 1 and 2:

- The suggested length of written responses is approximately 800–1000 words.
- The suggested length of spoken responses is approximately 4–6 minutes.

<http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/english/EnglishEAL-SD-2016>

VCE ENGLISH
SCHOOL-ASSESSED COURSEWORK
Performance Descriptors

Unit 3 Outcome 1 Part 1 Produce an analytical interpretation of a selected text.	DESCRIPTOR: typical performance in each range				
	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
	Limited understanding of the world of the text with reference to the values it expresses. Limited awareness of how the author has responded to different contexts, audiences and purposes.	Some understanding of the world of the text through an analysis of the values it expresses. Some awareness of how the author has responded to different contexts, audiences and purposes.	Satisfactory understanding of the world of the text through an analysis of the explicit and implied values it expresses, and how the author has responded to different contexts, audiences and purposes.	Thorough understanding of the world of the text through a detailed analysis of the explicit and implied values it expresses, and how the author has responded to different contexts, audiences and purposes.	Sophisticated understanding of the world of the text through an insightful analysis of the explicit and implied values it expresses, and how the author has responded to different contexts, audiences and purposes.
	Limited interpretation of textual meaning that makes little attempt to analyse features of the text. Limited reference to the text.	Some interpretation of textual meaning through a broad analysis of features of the text. Some use of textual evidence to justify the interpretation.	Clear and appropriate interpretation of textual meaning through a close analysis of features of the text. Suitable use of textual evidence to justify the interpretation.	Comprehensive and logical interpretation of textual meaning through a close analysis of features of the text. Careful use of textual evidence to justify the interpretation.	Sustained and insightful interpretation of textual meaning through a complex analysis of features of the text. Considered and accurate use of textual evidence to justify the interpretation.
	Limited use of the features of an analytical interpretation.	Some use of the features of an analytical interpretation including the use of structure, conventions and language, including the use of metalanguage.	Sound control of the features of an analytical interpretation including the appropriate use of structure, conventions and language, including the use of relevant metalanguage.	Careful control of the features of an analytical interpretation including the careful use of structure, conventions and language, including the use of relevant metalanguage.	Skilful control of the features of an analytical interpretation including the highly proficient use of structure, conventions and language, including the use of relevant metalanguage.
	Written language that shows limited control of spelling, punctuation and syntax of standard Australian English.	Mostly clear written language that employs some conventions of spelling, punctuation and syntax of standard Australian English.	Generally fluent and coherent written language that employs the appropriate use of spelling, punctuation and syntax of standard Australian English.	Expressive, fluent and coherent written language that employs the appropriate and accurate use of spelling, punctuation and syntax of Standard Australian English.	Highly expressive, fluent and coherent written language that employs the skilful and accurate use of spelling, punctuation and syntax of Standard Australian English.

KEY to marking scale based on the Outcome contributing 30 marks.

Very low 1–6	Low 7–12	Medium 13–18	High 19–24	Very high 25–30
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VCE ENGLISH
SCHOOL-ASSESSED COURSEWORK
Performance Descriptors

Unit 3 Outcome 1 Part 2 Produce a creative response to a different selected text.	DESCRIPTOR: typical performance in each range				
	Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
	Limited understanding of the original text through reference to moments, characters and themes from the text.	Some understanding of the original text through reference to moments, characters and themes from the text.	Satisfactory understanding of the original text through considered selection of key moments, characters and themes worthy of exploration.	Thorough understanding of the original text through thoughtful selection of key moments, characters and themes worthy of exploration.	Sophisticated and complex understanding of the original text through insightful selection of key moments, characters and themes worthy of exploration.
	Limited development of style by using language and literary devices, with little consideration of the original text.	Some development of style by using language and literary devices to generate responses, with some consideration of the original text.	Clear development of voice and style by transforming and adapting language and literary devices to generate responses, with appropriate consideration of the original text.	Considered development of voice and style by competently transforming and adapting language and literary devices to generate particular responses, with strong consideration of the original text.	Sustained development of voice and style by skilfully transforming and adapting language and literary devices to generate particular responses, with insightful consideration of the original text.
	Written or oral language that shows limited control of conventions.	Mostly clear written or oral language that employs some conventions to attempt stylistic effect.	Generally fluent and coherent written or oral language that employs the appropriate use of conventions for stylistic effect.	Expressive, fluent and coherent written or oral language that employs the appropriate and accurate use of conventions for stylistic effect.	Highly expressive, fluent and coherent written or oral language that employs the skilful and accurate use of appropriate conventions for stylistic effect.
	Limited justification of decisions related to content and approach made during the creative process with some reference to the original text and purpose, audience and context.	Some justification of decisions related to selected content and approach made during the creative process, demonstrating tenuous connections to the original text and some understanding of purpose, audience and context.	Sound justification of decisions related to selected content and approach made during the creative process, demonstrating solid connections to the original text and understanding of purpose, audience and context.	Thorough justification of decisions related to selected content and approach made during the creative process, demonstrating relevant connections to the original text and clear understanding of purpose, audience and context.	Insightful justification of decisions related to selected content and approach made during the creative process, demonstrating meaningful connections to the original text and complex understanding of purpose, audience and context.

KEY to marking scale based on the Outcome contributing 30 marks

Very low 1–6	Low 7–12	Medium 13–18	High 19–24	Very high 25–30
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VCE EXAMINATION – SECTION A

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

Section A will be assessed against the following criteria:

- knowledge and understanding of the text, and the ideas and issues it explores
- development of a coherent analysis in response to the topic
- use of textual evidence to support the interpretation
- control and effectiveness of language use, as appropriate to the task

EXPECTED QUALITIES FOR THE MARK RANGE – SECTION A

Mark(s)	Expected qualities
9-10	<p>Demonstrates a close and perceptive reading of the text, exploring complexities of its concepts and construction</p> <p>Demonstrates an understanding of the implications of the topic, using an appropriate strategy for dealing with it, and exploring its complexity from the basis of the text</p> <p>Develops a cogent, controlled and well-substantiated discussion using precise and expressive language</p>
8	<p>Demonstrates a close reading of the text, exploring its concepts and construction</p> <p>Demonstrates an understanding of the implications of the topic, exploring it from the basis of the text</p> <p>Develops a detailed, substantiated and coherent discussion using language fluently and confidently</p>
7	<p>Demonstrates a clear knowledge of the text, including some elements of its concepts and construction</p> <p>Understands the topic, developing an appropriate and supported response</p> <p>Develops an organised piece of writing using language accurately and appropriately</p>

Mark(s)	Expected qualities
6	<p>Demonstrates an adequate knowledge of the text</p> <p>Develops a response to the topic, supported appropriately by elements of the text</p> <p>Presents a generally organised piece of writing using language that is mostly accurate and appropriate</p>
5	<p>Demonstrates a basic knowledge of the text</p> <p>Presents a response that shows an understanding of the topic, referring to appropriate elements of the text</p> <p>Presents a piece of writing that communicates adequately, displaying some elements of organisation</p>
4	<p>Demonstrates familiarity with the text</p> <p>Presents a response that shows some understanding of the topic, using some elements of the text</p> <p>Shows adequate expression and language control</p>
3	<p>Demonstrates limited familiarity with the text</p> <p>Presents a response that shows limited awareness of the topic, using some elements of the text</p> <p>Shows basic expression and language control</p>
1-2	<p>Demonstrates very limited familiarity with the text</p> <p>Presents a response that shows very limited awareness of the topic</p> <p>Shows some expression and language control</p>
0	<p>Shows no knowledge of the text and/or no attempt to engage with the topic and/or only minimal control of language</p>

THE PURPOSE OF AN ESSAY IN ENGLISH

A common misconception among VCE students is that the purpose of an essay in English is to *inform*. Students believe that in demonstrating what they know, the examiners or markers will award them a mark that corresponds to the content of the essay. It is from this misconception that many students' difficulties arise. In attempting to inform, students tend to 'dump' information on the page – concepts, quotations, techniques – without structuring the information as an argument. They often reproduce their class notes.

The *true* purpose of an English essay, especially at VCE level, is to persuade.

The point of persuasion is your opinion concerning the essay question. The essay engages with the text(s) and uses evidence (quotations and technical analysis) to support an argument. In the process, it demonstrates a student's understanding of, and personal engagement with, the texts.

In simple terms, this means your essay should:

- Clearly *state* a point of view or concept, refer to parts of the text where this concept is evident.
- Demonstrate the concept operating on a technical level. Your quotations and technical analysis (how the author constructs meaning) are the *evidence* for your argument.
- Construct conclusions based on the evidence.

For example, if a question asks, 'How has your study of Belonging broadened your understanding of yourself and your world?' it would be possible to write down everything you know about Belonging, as arising from your studies. This is the 'inform' approach.

It would be much better, however, to propose a series of concepts concerning Belonging in the texts – key ideas in your studies – and support these with **close technical analysis**, structured in a way that demonstrates 'how' the concepts have broadened your understanding. This is the way to *persuade* your audience that you have indeed developed an understanding of Belonging.

SECTION A – ANALYTICAL INTERPRETATION OF A TEXT

DO

- ✓ dissect and fully analyse their chosen topic, as well as to construct an essay that addresses this consistently
- ✓ demonstrate high-level writing skills
- ✓ show an awareness of the textual form, which recognises its impact on the reader, viewer or audience
- ✓ in the case of multimodal texts reveal an understanding of the diverse ways in which multiple elements convey meaning
- ✓ analyse the ways in which language is used to create impact
- ✓ show a close and perceptive reading and interpretation of the text in relation to the topic.
- ✓ use a clear and definite sense of structure
- ✓ make meaningful conclusions and develop the capacity to explore themes and ideas that emerge in a topic
- ✓ recognise the need to discuss the context of the quote as part of establishing dimensions of the question

DON'T

- ✗ be dismissive of portions of a topic, nor effectively rewrite the topic to suit their own preconceived approach.
- ✗ list examples without analysis
- ✗ Ignore the instruction in the question
- ✗ rote learn an essay
- ✗ ignore the topic chosen, seeking to focus on an idea or issue outside the scope of the topic

DO

- ✓ use textual evidence to support their interpretation.
show an ability to use language in a controlled and effective way to communicate their responses.
- ✓ look at the implications of the ideas raised in the question
- ✓ discuss literary features as they develop meaning
- ✓ write focused introductions
- ✓ comment on the world of the text
- ✓ resist ineptly utilising material outside the two set texts for each pairing
- ✓ address and resolve the selected topic
- ✓ directly address the heart of the topic, with assured comparison at the core of their approach

DON'T

THE ANALYTICAL RESPONSE IN FIVE STEPS

1. Dissect / define topic.
2. Plan = Brainstorm + Order.
3. Draft.
4. Revise & edit.
5. Write.

STEP 1: DISSECT THE TOPIC

- Identify all parts of topic/prompt.
- Identify key words.
- Identify themes addressed in topic/prompt.
- Define any difficult words or terms.
- Form your opinion/point of view. For example: Agree, disagree or partially agree with topic.

UNPACKING THE QUESTION

When breaking down an essay question such as this, it's important to not only contextualise the quotes and try to work out how their overarching ideas or themes might help you build ideas for this essay. As well as this, it is highly effective to single out the key words – from here, it's useful to generate synonyms, and, more importantly, words or ideas that these key terms remind you of. That is, when you see words such as 'impact' and 'secrets', what *other* big ideas from the two texts immediately spring to mind?

Consider the INSTRUCTION you've been given in the question:

Do you agree?
To what extent do you agree?
Discuss
Is this view endorsed?
How does...

Description is simply telling the reader what the text is about. It is like a recount or plot summary or just describing a section closely.

Interpretation means that you explain words and ideas.

Analysis means that you go outside the text and search for a hidden meaning that links different parts of the text with values and beliefs in society; this shows the real thinking behind the composer's choices of language.

Synthesis is the most difficult thinking as it requires you to start linking ideas from different parts of the text/s and go outside the text/s to find connections.

Before you begin worrying about comparing and contrasting the texts you must **know each text intimately**.

Address **the intentional choices** made by each writer/ film director to convey the essential ideas/ issues/ themes

STEP 2: PLAN

Detailed planning is essential when completing this task. You have the time to structure your planning. By using the guide below, together with your notes you can produce a thorough plan with lots of evidence from the text. This will make it easier to write your essay.

- (a) Brainstorm.
 - (i) Write down topic and underneath separate parts of topic.
 - (ii) Link points in study sheet to identified parts of topic, then add evidence from text
- (b) Organise points into a plan.

STEP 3: INTRODUCTIONS

There is a definite skill to writing the introduction to an English essay, especially under exam conditions. Any such skill can be learned and practiced. The skills you will develop in writing introductions under exam conditions (and essays in general) are in many ways the general principles of writing introductions reduced to their essence. It's important to get them right.

The minimum requirements for an introduction are as follows:

- **A direct response to the question.**
- **The concept statements (or values) that apply to your text(s), rephrased in the terms of the question.**
- **The composer(s) and title(s) of your core text(s).**
- **The composer(s), title(s), text type(s) and year(s) of publication of your related text(s).**
- **The desired 'narrative' point of view implied by the question (First Person versus Third Person).**

Adding Flair to your Introduction:

- Use something interesting in your introduction → a good idea is to embed an all-encompassing symbol, quote, or moment from one of the text that could work universally for different essay questions.
- Discussing something relevant from the opening moments of either text can be a great way to 'hook' your reader.
- Try to add a philosophical edge → you are not *just* writing about characters and events. What are the wider messages that can be taken away from these texts, in relation to this question? Doing this can help to demonstrate your analytical skills right away.

Other Advice:

- Try not to open your introduction with the name of author of either text.
- Use full names to discuss the authors, thereafter you should refer to them by surname to remain formal.
- Try to discuss the texts concurrently.

If you use quotes in your introduction, ensure that they are embedded and used properly → the quote should be doing some of the work for you, and should add something great to your analysis.

STEP 4: BODY PARAGRAPHS

In each body paragraph, you must incorporate all of the key elements of the rubric – text, context, and values/perspectives – as well as analysis of the text to justify your inferences. There is a lot to do.

A couple of notes:

1. Your topic sentence, or positioning statement, should have the following attributes:
 - (a) It must develop your line of argument in some way, and
 - (b) It should be conceptual in scope and approach, rather than analytical.
2. Contextual information should be included throughout your essay, not ‘tacked on’ in a single paragraph at the beginning of the essay. In practice, that means:
 - (a) You should be ‘evaluating’ your contextual information as rigorously as you evaluate your texts – judicious selection of evidence, and an explanation of the significance of it on the composer’s purpose and/or construction of their text.
 - (b) You should have a sentence or two of contextual evaluation in every paragraph. Essentially, it forms part of the analysis that supports your argument.
3. Your analysis of the texts should incorporate evaluation of the composers’ purpose, values, and attitudes.

The box contains a fundamental guide to structuring a paragraph in an English essay. It is the most fundamental structure for a paragraph in an English essay. It contains the essential ingredients of a well-structured, **progressive line of thought and argument**.

You are not obliged to write every paragraph according to its structure, but it is an excellent starting point. Even if you do not choose to use it in your essays, you should use it as a checklist for your arguments. It is also the best way to help you overcome the bewildering, frustrating experience of not knowing how to approach an essay.

Topic sentence(s)

Development / elaboration

Quotation / evidence

Techniques *features and conventions used by the authors of narrative texts to construct meaning in relation to the development of character, ideas and themes*

Transition sentence(s)

TOPIC SENTENCE(S)

It introduces the argument you will be covering in this particular paragraph. Try to be concise, but also try to be as inclusive as you can.

The following topic sentence was written by a student in response to the question, 'How has Skrzynecki's poetry broadened your understanding of yourself and your world?'

Skrzynecki's poetry reveals that it is necessary to explore and express our individuality before we can belong in a meaningful way, since it is only with an appreciation of our individual gifts that we can make a meaningful contribution to the wider group.

DEVELOPMENT

This sentence applies the concept to the text under discussion. Alternatively, you might feel the need here to elaborate on your topic sentence, to refer back to a previous paragraph, or develop some new aspect of the question. The simplest function of the sentence, however, is to refer to a significant part of the text where the concept or topic is evident.

To continue the example above:

This apparent paradox is developed in the character of Feliks Skrzynecki, the minutiae of whose character and individuality are extended, and clarified through contrast with the colourless anonymity of the detested bureaucrat.

QUOTATION

This is easy. It should be pretty clear where your text demonstrates the concept or topic to which you're referring. If not, you probably need another concept or topic.

One thing to learn about this part of your paragraph, however, is the importance of **quoting accurately**. If you're quoting two lines of verse or more, you should set it out *exactly* as it is on the page, line breaks and all. If writing *less* than two lines, write out the quotation as a normal sentence, indicating line breaks with a forward slash, maintaining all punctuation.

You also have the opportunity here of demonstrating your proficiency with language, your ability to compose with confidence, your familiarity with the text and your academic objectivity by *incorporating the quotation into the syntax of your sentence*. This just means you should **try to make your sentence 'flow' naturally into the quotation**, if possible.

*The persona tells us of:
The curse that damned
A crew-cut, grey-haired
Department clerk
Who asked me in dancing-bear grunts:
"Did your father ever attempt to learn English?"*

TECHNIQUE AND TECHNICAL ANALYSIS

Your technical analysis is placed at this point of the paragraph, directly after your quotation. You have stated your point of view or argument in your topic sentence, and demonstrated that there is evidence for your assertion by quoting from the text; now you are in a position to analyse the quotation on a technical level and demonstrate that your argument holds true on the most fundamental level of the text, in how the author constructed meaning.

For this reason, it is crucial that in analysing the techniques in your quotation you demonstrate the contribution they make to *the concept in the topic sentence*. This is perhaps the trickiest aspect of technical analysis. It is easy enough to identify a simile, but it is another matter to demonstrate that it creates an effect consistent with your arguments. If you are able to do this, however, **your essay will step into a higher range**.

At this point, try to make your analysis as concise as possible. If you can, refer to more than one technique and its effect. Try to discuss three or four at once, in only one or two sentences. It is in doing this that you will really step into a higher range; you will demonstrate the factor that always distinguishes high scoring responses from the rest.

At the very least, if you analyse techniques in this way, you will avoid the trap of discussing techniques in isolation, as if it were an end in itself. Techniques do NOT drive the essay.

To continue our example from above, then:

The shallow rhetoric of the bureaucrat's question, in conjunction with the accumulation of military epithets, indicates the superficiality of his need for homogeneity, an indictment of the complacency of those who cultivate a homogenised identity. The bestial metaphor that introduces his question suggests he has nothing to contribute to human society – he is merely a performing, trained animal.

TRANSITION SENTENCE(S)

Now that you have demonstrated a concept on a technical level, it is a good idea to return to the essay's thesis, or central argument, at the end of the paragraph.

In a simple essay – 'How have the texts you have encountered in the Area of Study, Belonging, broadened your understanding of yourself and your world?' – it isn't necessary to keep repeating a simple statement – 'This is another way my understanding has been broadened.' Your essay will become repetitive if you do so.

The main thing to realise about this part of the paragraph is that you should draw a conclusion from your evidence and arguments, and **keep your essay on track**. It is important to maintain focus on the question.

Skrzynecki's encounter with bureaucracy becomes a motif in his poetry, a reflection of the understanding that it is an individual's strengths that constitute a meaningful contribution to the group, that define his identity, not the fear of difference evident in the bigoted, cowardly department clerk.

THE FINISHED PARAGRAPH

If we combine each part of the extracts above, we arrive at a well-structured, convincing account of the growth of understanding that has taken place in this student's study of the text.

The essay question again:

'How has Skrzynecki's poetry broadened your understanding of yourself and your world?'

Skrzynecki's poetry reveals that it is necessary to explore and express our individuality before we can belong in a meaningful way, since it is only with an appreciation of our individual gifts that we can make a meaningful contribution to the wider group. This apparent paradox is developed in the character of Feliks Skrzynecki, the minutiae of whose character and individuality are extended, and clarified through contrast with the colourless anonymity of the detested bureaucrat.

The curse that damned
A crew-cut, grey-haired
Department clerk
Who asked me in dancing-bear grunts:
"Did your father ever attempt to learn English?"

The shallow rhetoric of the bureaucrat's question, in conjunction with the accumulation of military epithets, indicates the superficiality of his need for homogeneity, an indictment of the complacency of those who cultivate a homogenised identity. The bestial metaphor that introduces his question suggests he has nothing to contribute to human society – he is merely a performing, trained animal. Skrzynecki's encounter with bureaucracy becomes a motif in his poetry, a reflection of the understanding that it is an individual's strengths that constitute a meaningful contribution to the group, that define his identity, not the fear of difference evident in the bigoted, cowardly department clerk.

STEP 5: THE CONCLUSION

This is the easiest part of your essay. In VCE essays, you will find you have little time for an extensive conclusion; it is much better to use your time developing and extending your arguments and technical analysis.

Where time is very limited, simply restate your arguments, incorporating one or two of your main concept statements.

In more complicated essays it often becomes necessary to reach a qualified point of view, considering all the evidence you have presented. This is particularly the case where the question uses qualifying phrases, such as ‘*To what extent* do you agree with this statement?’ and, ‘*Analyse the degree* to which this statement applies to the texts you have studied this year.’ It might also become necessary where your arguments apply to different texts to varying degrees.

Where a qualified response is expected or appropriate, your conclusion should restate, in summary, the opposing arguments, especially in terms of concepts and/or values. It should then proceed to offer a concluding, qualified response to the question.

The Non-Negotiables:

- Bring it back to the essay question → maintain your focus
- Refer to both author
- Lots of comparative language
- Don’t revisit all of the ideas you’ve explored in your body paragraphs and repeat yourself.
- Discuss and compare elements of the end of each text

Adding Flair to your Conclusion:

- Use some new evidence to help you strengthen your analysis.
- Look for interesting elements or quotes from the ending of each text that you can analyse and compare.
- Ask yourself, ‘so what?’ → do not just summarise your earlier points. Ask yourself why this matters, and what wider issues or messages the authors are trying to share with readers in the ends of their texts.

Other Advice:

- Don’t try to discuss every element of the ending in each text → pick the best, most appropriate evidence for your essay question.
- Keep it author-focused, as always.
- Try to discuss the texts concurrently.

If you use quotes in your conclusion, ensure that they are embedded and used properly → the quote should be doing some of the work for you, and should add something great to your analysis. As well as this, the quotes should be from the end sections of the texts → so try not to discuss the endings or use this evidence in earlier parts of your essay.

CONCLUSION EXAMPLES

Topic

Island Alistair MacLeod

To what extent does the setting reflect the turmoil experienced by characters in MacLeod's short stories?

Alistair MacLeod explores how the conflict between traditional and modern cultures experienced by his characters is reflected in the hostile and remote setting of the eastern provinces of Canada. His stories demonstrate his narrators' emotional attachment to the landscape and their past, despite their absences, as Macleod suggests that they can never really leave the island and its people, who left 'footprints on [their] souls.'

Ransom (David Malouf)

"...we should have pity for one another's losses."

'Malouf's novel highlights the ways in which people can be transformed by grief.'

Discuss.

Grief, as a theme in David Malouf's 'Ransom' is heavily explored and so too are the effects and transformations that it has on people. Achilles grief is presented by Malouf as psychologically numbing in such a way that prompts him into a mode of extreme destruction. Priam, the king of an ancient empire, is portrayed by Malouf as devastated by the loss of his son Hector, by the idea of something new snaps him out of his daze as well as excites him into action. Finally, as one of the more earthy and sensible characters in 'Ransom' Somax takes the view that life must go on and so grief does not transform hi as it does to the others, but him memories of his own grief transform Achilles.

INTEGRATING QUOTATIONS

There are different ways of including quotations in paragraphs. The main idea is never to throw these in as separate sentences sitting on their own, left for the reader to guess. They need to be part of the argument. You don't need long quotations especially in an exam situation.

Quotations can be part of the sentence:

He sees the house he is building as a refuge, as his "last chance".

Quotations can be introduced with phrases:

Gaita demonstrates what a strong contrast can emerge from the same view of what Raimond Gaita regards as "noble gums" interpreted by Romulus as "symbols of deprivation and barrenness".

Quotations can be introduced with a semi colon and indented:

Gaita makes clear his purpose when he states:

The philosopher Plato said that those who love and seek wisdom are clinging in recollection to things they once saw.

Quotations can be included in brackets, directly after their referent:

In his attempt to understand his roots and in particular his mother, Gaita searches through photos ("photographs show her dressed elegantly"), he asks neighbours for their memories ("Mikkelson remembers her as "very intelligent and a 'woman of substance' ") and he interrogates his own experiences ("it took some years for me to understand this aspect of my father").

UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENT WAYS OF WRITING SENTENCES

(Extract from *Cambridge Checkpoints: HSC English* Mel Dixon and Deb Simpson,
Cambridge University Press)

From description to interpretation to analysis to synthesis

Analysis is not the same as description. It requires a much higher level of thinking and shows that you are going beyond the subject matter to draw conclusions about the ideas in texts. A good essay will still use description when necessary, but this will lead to the higher order approaches of interpretation, analysis and synthesis.

- *Description* is simply telling the reader what the text is about. It is like a recount or plot summary or just describing a section closely.
- *Interpretation* means that you explain words and ideas.
- *Analysis* means that you go outside the text and search for a hidden meaning that links different parts of the text with values and beliefs in society; this shows the real thinking behind the composer's choices of language.
- *Synthesis* is the most difficult thinking as it requires you to start linking ideas from different parts of the text/s and go outside the text/s to find connections.

Look at these four ways of discussing 'place' in a text:

Description:

Two of Skrzynecki's poems are called '10 Mary Street' and 'St Patrick's College' and are about his home and school life.

Interpretation:

The titles of Skrzynecki's poems '10 Mary Street' and 'St Patrick's College' show us that the poems are based on real places and are factual.

Analysis:

Place is a significant factor in Skrzynecki's poetry. Even his titles draw our attention to the fact that he sees his life through place, though the simple and factual nature of the titles also suggests that his feelings about place may be ambivalent.

Synthesis:

A constant feature of most of Skrzynecki's poems is the search for belonging and what it means for a migrant who has to renegotiate the relationship between self and place.

Look at the sentences in an essay you have written and see if you describe, interpret or analyse. Try to develop your writing into analysis and synthesis wherever possible.

IMPROVING SOPHISTICATION

NOMINALISATION

If you are often writing too casually, here is one way to change your sentence so that they become more formal. Nominalisation is the act of changing the verb into the subject (into a noun).

When you do this, the sentence is not only longer but is structured in a way that makes you explain rather than just stating.

Examples:

- Immigrant Chronicle **explores** Peter Skrzynecki's life.
- The **exploration** of Peter Skrzynecki's life in Immigrant Chronicle ...

Now that the verb *explore* has become the noun *exploration* and the subject of a sentence, it needs more information to end the sentence.

NOMINALISATION

Nominalising key words (transforming them into a noun) can allow for greater sophistication of language, and encourage more qualifiers and modifications.

Contend	→	Contention
Propose	→	Proposition
Promote	→	Promotion
Indicate	→	Indication
Stimulate	→	Stimulation
Arouse	→	Arousal
Describe	→	Description
Identify	→	Identification
Suggest	→	Suggestion
Encourage	→	Encouragement
Portray	→	Portrayal
Assimilate	→	Assimilation
Oppress	→	Oppression

GERUNDS

Verbs that acts as nouns though an –ing ending: Encourages greater detail and modification.

Position	→	Positioning
Encourage	→	Encouraging
Anger	→	Angering
Insinuate	→	Insinuating
Describe	→	Describing
Profile	→	Profiling
Portray	→	Portraying
Juxtapose	→	Juxtaposing
Describe	→	Describing
Compel	→	Compelling
Build	→	Building
Uses	→	Using
Oppose	→	Opposing

SAMPLE STUDENT WORK

This response has not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

SECTION A – AFTER DARKNESS

Piper's novel, After Darkness explore the notion that war brings out the worst in humanity. Discuss.

Christine Piper explores the life of Tomokazu Ibaraki, highlighting the human side of war and the effects of conflict on other ordinary individuals who are shown to have harrowing tales in her historical fiction, After Darkness. The duality of human nature is exposed by Piper and she shows that the realities of war fuel issues in personal relationships whilst also proving to be a time to challenge perceptions and provide an opportunity for growth. In wartime societies where outsiders are heavily condemned and treated harshly the paranoia of individuals is heightened during the war period as divisive perceptions in the name of patriotism are enacted.

The choices of fearful Governments to protect their status in war is shown by Piper to be the catalyst for acts against humanity which subsequently haunt the lives of those who are complicit in heinous acts. Particularly, Ibaraki's complicit involvement in Unit 731 caused the need for "discretion" being impressed upon him by his superiors, Major Kimura and General Ishii Shiro as he is ordered to "take the secret [of the laboratory] to your grave". His being sworn to secrecy prevented him from discussing his own moral qualms with his wife and his sense of disgust exacerbates his guilt of the crime as he "felt stained by [his] association with the laboratory". Towards the end of the novel, Ibaraki finally realised that "in keeping [his] silence, [he] hadn't exercised the very quality that [made] him human." This prolonged restraint caused Ibaraki to break Kayoko's wish that "husbands and wives should not keep secrets" from each other. However, although Ibaraki "longed to tell her about the nature of [his] work", it was his sense of cowardice and self-centeredness that led him to assert that "she didn't understand the sacrifices [he] made to serve [his] nation" and "the secrets [he] had to keep". Hence, Piper reflects Ibaraki's worst human traits as the external Pacific war incited further disarray into his marriage with Kayoko. Furthermore, war can also inspire fear into those who are afraid of the consequences and humiliation if their actions were to be made public. Like Ibaraki who fears his wife's response in learning the truth about his actions, Major Kimura and General Ishii also continue to exercise discretion towards their newly found biological warfare, not wanting society to view their failure and stop having respect for them. Thus, Piper suggests that fear plays a great role in the decisions in one's life, portrayed as the fear of losing one's reputation in the community.

Furthermore, Piper explores the oppression within a society that is plagued by racism and prejudice, particularly the Loveday Internment camp set up during the war. The author weaves in these broader issues in an attempt to reveal how tensions between Japanese and half-Japanese internees escalated and also the worst side of their humanity. The Australian internment camp population was truly diverse and rife with friction. For instance, Johnny Chang initially seems to be divisive in the camp and asserts his criticism of the elected internee's authority by declaring to all newcomers that "this camp is run like a dictatorship". Like others, Chang is subjected to racism which permeates the camp and marginalises the Japanese internees as "half-castes" and "made [them] do all the shit jobs." Furthermore, he was also despised as a "Chinaman" by the Japanese internees and regarded as 'an embarrassment to our compound' who "thinks he's better than everyone else". Yamada

Denkichi, a full-Japanese elected official also shared this sentiment in which his extreme patriotism revealed his worst nature whilst expressing his nationalistic ideologies of the war. Piper reveals the absolute villainy depicted through injustice in the internment camp through Yamada in which he brutally beats Stanley Suzuki, a half-caste who eventually attempts to commit suicide as almost everyone around him refused to believe him. His suicide attempt underlines the conflicted identity that has been foisted upon him by the nationalists at the internment camp and this constant bullying of the half-caste internees is shown to be the lowest form of nature expressed by the perpetrators.

However, through the courageous actions of different individuals throughout the novel, Piper insinuates that despite the corrosive effects of war, it also proves to be a time to challenge perceptions and provide an opportunity for growth. Chang's active dissident at the internment camp expresses his ability to stand up against the social injustice in an attempt to demonstrate to Ibaraki the class division and the unequal treatment in the camp. However, despite his understanding that "we're outcasts in here", he also attempts to form a baseball tournament alongside the protagonist. Although the internees are a diverse group of men from different backgrounds, separated by language and politics, the only weak thread linking them together is their Japanese ancestry and the baseball tournament. As a result, the tournament became the glue that unites the internees at the camp, symbolising friendship and inclusion. Hence, Chang's decision to support unity reflects his overall transformation and growth in the novel. Furthermore, when Ibaraki is finally convinced of Yamada's brutality against Stan, he decides to spur into action and stand up to protect Stan; "don't hurt him", threatening Yamada that "[he] will tell someone if you do". The courage to stand up against the face of intimidation shows how Ibaraki finally attempts to break through the darkness of the murky depths into the light of the surface as he "felt as if a weight had been lifted, releasing [him] from the past". Ibaraki finally realises the wider implications of his years of silence. His long journey through his memories casts a new light on his past traumatic events and on a letter he received from Sister Bernice years ago, urging him to "share [his] burden". As the internment camp served as an opportunity for both Ibaraki and Chang to reflect upon their mistakes and ultimately grow as individuals, Piper also suggests that their courage and acts of redemption reveal that war also brought out better perceptions in their world around them.

Piper alludes to the idea that individuals cannot discard their past and must acknowledge and learn from them in order to grow as individuals. She also highlights that negative experiences caused by war can indeed bring out the worst in humanity. However, the way in which one conducts themselves suggests that war is not entirely the only factor that affects the nature of humanity rather, through common hardships and struggles, individuals can have the potential to bring about better sides of themselves. Yet, it is also apparent that not all people are affected by war in a positive manner.