

UNIT 3 & 4 ENGLISH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|----------------|
| Section 1: VCAA Course Outline | Page 1 |
| Reading and Creating Texts | Page 1 |
| Reading and Comparing Texts | Page 8 |
| Section 2: Close Reading of a Text | Page 15 |
| Things to look for | Page 17 |
| Different Interpretations/Readings of Text | Page 19 |
| Section 3: Text Elements | Page 20 |
| Context | Page 21 |
| Context and Composer | Page 23 |
| Context and Text | Page 24 |
| Context and Audience | Page 24 |
| Purpose | Page 25 |
| Positioning the Reader | Page 25 |
| Themes and Issues | Page 27 |
| Setting | Page 29 |
| Plot | Page 29 |
| Structure | Page 30 |
| Characters | Page 30 |
| Style | Page 30 |
| Language | Page 30 |
| Tone | Page 31 |
| Point of View | Page 31 |
| Section 4: Conventions, Terms and Features | |
| Novels | Page 33 |
| Short Stories | Page 34 |
| Plays | Page 35 |
| Drama | Page 37 |
| Poetry | Page 38 |
| Shakespeare | Page 41 |
| Speeches | Page 43 |
| Film | Page 44 |
| Still Images | Page 48 |
| Section 5: Styles of Questions Used in the VCAA Examination | Page 49 |

| | |
|---|-----------------|
| Section 6: Essay Writing | Page 51 |
| The Purpose of An Essay in English | Page 51 |
| The Purpose of a Comparative Essay | Page 54 |
| How to Write a Comparative Essay | Page 56 |
| The Analytical Response in 5 Steps | Page 58 |
| Step 1: Dissect the Topic | Page 58 |
| Unpacking the Question | Page 58 |
| Terms You Should Know | Page 60 |
| Key Terms to Use in Your Comparative Analysis | Page 62 |
| Step 2: Plan | Page 63 |
| Brainstorm for a Comparative Essay | Page 63 |
| Graphic Organisers for Collecting Notes | Page 65 |
| Step 3: Introductions | Page 70 |
| Step 4: Body Paragraphs | Page 71 |
| Step 5: The Conclusion | Page 76 |
| Integrating Quotations | Page 78 |
| Understanding Different Ways of Writing Sentences | Page 80 |
| Improving Sophistication | Page 82 |
| Character Profiles | Page 84 |
| Vocabulary | Page 88 |
| Sentence Starters and Transitions | Page 88 |
| Similarities | Page 89 |
| Contrasts | Page 89 |
| Hedging Words and Expressions | Page 90 |
| Transitions and Linking Expressions | Page 91 |
| Verbs for Critical Writing | Page 94 |
| Links Between Texts | Page 95 |
| Section 7: Sample Student Work | Page 97 |
| Frankenstein | Page 97 |
| After Darkness | Page 100 |
| Ransom and Invictus | Page 102 |
| Year of Wonders and The Crucible | Page 104 |
| Section 8: A Creative Response to a Selected Text in Written or Oral Form with a Written Explanation | Page 107 |
| Task Conditions | Page 107 |
| Structure | Page 108 |
| Some Ideas About How to Write Your Script | Page 109 |
| A Presentation of Alternate Perspective | Page 114 |
| Written Explanation | Page 117 |
| Sample Student Work | Page 119 |
| The Oral Presentation Option | Page 122 |

SECTION 6: ESSAY WRITING

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.

Let's consider the advice provided by the VCAA Assessor's Report and Chief Assessors
(https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/exams/english/2018/english_examrep18.pdf)

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 PURPOSE OF A COMPARATIVE ESSAY

A comparison essay assignment will usually ask you to **compare and contrast** the elements of texts. You are being asked to demonstrate an understanding of the similarities and differences between two texts.

A **comparison essay** notes either similarities, or similarities and differences.

A **contrast** essay notes only differences.

The comparison or contrast should make a point or serve a purpose. Often such essays do one of the following:

- Clarify something unknown or not well understood
- Lead to a fresh insight or new way of viewing something
- Bring one or both of the subjects into sharper focus
- Show that one subject is better than the other.

The basis of comparison could be:

- The historical and social context
- The themes
- Character traits
- Styles of writing

DO

- ✓ set up a point that explores the topic in a way that demonstrates true comparison is a primary focus of the task
- ✓ be more selective in how you use the text
- ✓ set the scene succinctly
- ✓ make comparisons and contrasts seamlessly between the two texts throughout the essay,
- ✓ have a sense of balanced textual awareness and analytically informed insights throughout the essay
- ✓ if one of the texts in the selected pair is a collection of poetry or short stories, students may refer to several items in the collection, or closely analyse one or two items in the collection, depending on what is being compared.
- ✓ support your arguments with close reference to both texts in the pair, and the ideas and issues they present.

DON'T

- ☒ only focus on one text
- ☒ show little attempt to compare the two texts with detail and insight
- ☒ simply use the words 'conversely' or 'similarly'
- ☒ spend too much time telling the story or setting the scene at the expense of selecting parts of the text that allowed for exploration and comparison in relation to the set topic
- ☒ simply centre comparison on contrasting events and situations
- ☒ recount the plot or describe the scene or situation

DO

- ✓ closely analyse and compare the ways in which key ideas and issues have been presented in both texts
- ✓ focus analysis upon why one author/ film-maker has approached presenting this idea in one way, as juxtaposed to another
- ✓ shed more light on the actual idea /issue focused upon in the topic
- ✓ as opposed to what ideas and issues these reflect, represent, amplify and reveal
- ✓ understand that compare also means contrast
- ✓ understand there are several possible approaches, not one as such
- ✓ perceive one of your paired texts to act as a pivot around which the second text will be juxtaposed
- ✓ write an introduction (and conclusion) that clearly clarifies your understanding of the views or issues raised in the topic, and also establish a comparative approach between the two texts.
- ✓ ensure your links between the texts are continuous
- ✓ be judicious in your use of embedded succinct quotations
- ✓ reveal an awareness of the differences as well as similarities in the messages presented in each text, within the scope of the topic

DON'T

HOW TO WRITE A COMPARATIVE ESSAY

STRUCTURE

When writing a comparative essay, you can write about the pair of texts in one of two ways:

1. **The synthesised approach:**

Write paragraphs which synthesise both prescribed texts. This approach is very effective in showing the conceptual links between the texts, but it is harder to do well and with the necessary clarity. The paragraph should generally begin with one prescribed text and then have a linking sentence that reveals how the concept is similarly or dissimilarly represented in the second.

Here's a sample outline:

- i. Differences and Similarities in Jane and Alice's appearances
- ii. Differences and Similarities in Jane and Alice's backgrounds
- iii. Differences and Similarities in Jane and Alice's interests.

2. **The 'block integration' approach:**

Discuss one prescribed text in one paragraph, followed by discussion of the second text; then follow this pattern throughout your response. You should choose this approach if you are not confident with the synthesised approach, but always try to relate your texts back to your thesis through conceptual and logically ordered topic sentences.

Note:

You must know both texts as extensively as the other. Writing a balanced essay is an essential part of accessing the top mark ranges.

Here's a sample outline:

- i. Jane is distinct because...
- ii. Jane is similar to Alice in these ways
- iii. Alice is distinct because...

STRUCTURING YOUR ESSAY: INTEGRATION

INTEGRATING TEXTS

You can integrate your discussion of the texts in one of two ways:

- **The synthesised approach:**

Write paragraphs which synthesise both prescribed texts. This approach is very effective in showing the conceptual links between the texts, but it is harder to do well and with the necessary clarity. The paragraph should generally begin with the initial text then have a linking sentence that reveals how the concept is similarly or dissimilarly represented.

- **The 'block integration' approach:**

Discuss one prescribed text in one paragraph, followed by the other text; then follow this pattern throughout your response. You should choose this approach if you are not confident with the synthesised approach, but always try to relate your texts back to your thesis through conceptual and logically ordered topic sentences.

You must know both prescribed texts extensively. Students sometimes fail to discuss how the **ideas** in both texts are shown through the techniques. You must do this; do not simply retell the plot of one or other of the texts. Balance is also important; ensure that you do not rely on your analytical knowledge of a single text to 'carry' your essay.

INTEGRATING CONTEXT

It is essential that you discuss contextual influences as purposefully as you do textual detail. You must draw inferences from the texts, their construction, and the values they portray. Do the composers affirm or challenge the forms and values of their day? This evaluation will ensure that you do not simply 'tack on' a few contextual details at the start of the essay, thereafter to be ignored.