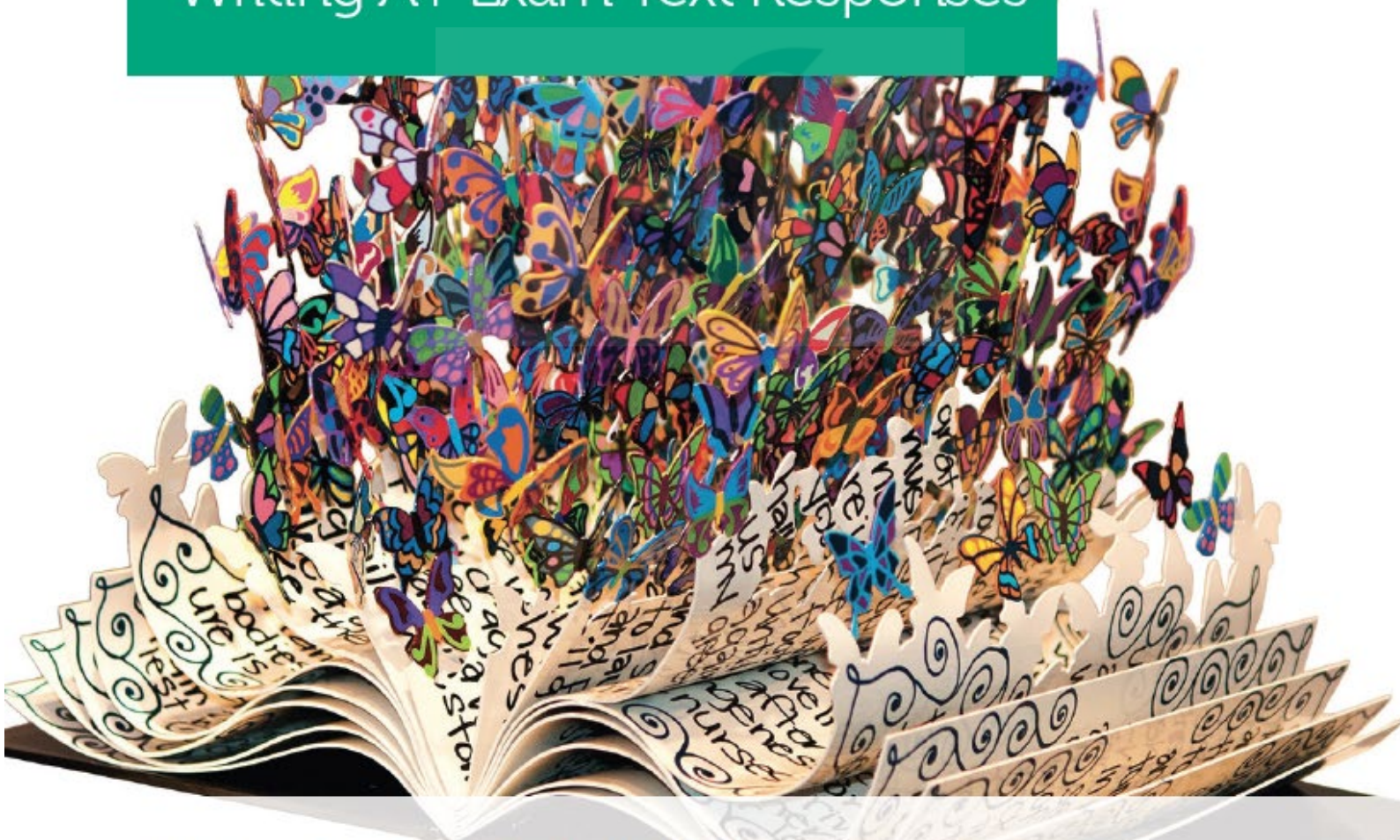


A+

VCE Exam Essentials

Unit 3 & 4 English

Writing A+ Exam Text Responses



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- ✓ Written by Experienced VCAA Examiners
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VCE EXAM ESSENTIALS

Unit 3 & 4 English

Writing A+ Exam Text Responses

Unit 3: Area of Study 1

Reading and Creating Texts

**VCE Accreditation Period
2017 – 2023**



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VCE UNIT 3 & 4 EXAM ESSENTIALS

VCE ACCREDITATION PERIOD: 2017 – 2023

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SECTION 1: ENGLISH COURSE OUTLINE

1.1: STUDY DESIGN: UNIT 3 – AREA OF STUDY 1

READING AND CREATING TEXTS

In this area of study students identify, discuss and analyse how the features of selected texts create meaning and how they influence interpretation. In identifying and analysing explicit and implied ideas and values in texts, students examine the ways in which readers are invited to respond to texts. They develop and justify their own detailed interpretations of texts.

Students prepare sustained analytical interpretations of selected texts, discussing how features of the texts create meaning and using textual evidence to support their responses. They use planning and drafting to test and clarify their ideas and editing to produce clear and coherent expression. They craft their writing for convincing and effective presentation.

Students present sustained creative responses to selected texts, demonstrating their understanding of the world of the texts and how texts construct meaning. In developing a creative response they explore issues of purpose and audience and make key choices about structure, conventions and language. They develop a credible and effective voice and style and use the chosen features of the selected text, for example characters, narrative or dialogue, to offer an interpretation of the selected text. They produce and share drafts, practising the skills of revision, editing and refining for stylistic and imaginative effect.

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 KNOWLEDGE

- An understanding of the world of a text and the explicit and implied values it expresses.
- The ways authors:
 - create meaning and build the world of the text
 - respond to different contexts, audiences and purposes
- The ways in which readers' interpretations of texts differ and why.
- The features of a range of literary and other written, spoken and multimodal texts.
- The conventions of oral presentations and discussion.
- The features of analytical interpretations of literary and other texts: structure, conventions and language, including relevant metalanguage.
- The features of creative interpretations (written, spoken and multimodal), including structure, conventions and language, and how they create voice and style.
- The conventions of spelling, punctuation and syntax of Standard Australian English.

In short, students must show both how an author creates a text and how a reader interprets that text.

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.
- 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.

1.2: INTERNAL ASSESSMENTS (SACS)

For Unit 3, the Outcome 1 SAC will consist of two written tasks. Your school will decide when and how your SACs will be administered and what notes you will be allowed to have with you at the time of the assessment.

- The first task will be an analytical interpretation of one text, and
- The second task will be a creative response to the other text, which will include a written explanation of your creative decisions.

Together these tasks will comprise 60% of Unit 3 coursework assessment (30% for each task).

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.

<https://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/Documents/vce/english/2016EnglishEALSD.pdf>

PERFORMANCE DESCRIPTORS – INTERNAL ASSESSMENTS

VCE ENGLISH – SCHOOL-ASSESSED COURSEWORK

Performance Descriptors

DESCRIPTOR: Typical Performance in Each Range					
	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Unit 3 Outcome 1 Part 1 Produce an analytical interpretation of a selected text.	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

DESCRIPTOR: Typical Performance in Each Range					
	Very Low	Low	Medium	High	Very High
Unit 3 Outcome 1 Part 2 <i>Produce a creative response to a different selected text.</i>	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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1.3: EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT – END OF YEAR EXAMINATION

The level of achievement for Units 3 and 4 is also assessed by an end-of-year examination, which will contribute **50 per cent** towards the English study score.

The examination will be set by a panel appointed by the VCAA. All the key knowledge and key skills that underpin the outcomes in Units 3 and 4 are examinable.

ENGLISH

Analysing Argument

Mark Weighting: One third of your English exam mark (About 16.7% of the Study Score)

Assessment will be based on an analysis of argument and the use of persuasive language in unseen text/s.

Reading and Comparing Texts

Mark Weighting: One third of your English exam mark (About 16.7% of the Study Score)

Assessment will be based on an analytical response to a pair of selected texts from the English/EAL Text List published by the VCAA for Unit 4 Outcome 1.

Reading and Creating Texts

Mark Weighting: One third of your English exam mark (About 16.7% of the Study Score)

Assessment will be based on an analytical response to one of two texts selected from the English/EAL Text List published annually by the VCAA for Unit 3 Outcome 1.

CONDITIONS

The examination will be completed under the following conditions:

- **Duration:** Three hours.
- **Date:** End-of-year, on a date to be published annually by the VCAA.
- VCAA examination rules will apply. Details of these rules are published annually in the VCE and VCAL Administrative Handbook.
- The examination will be marked by assessors appointed by the VCAA.

FURTHER ADVICE

The VCAA publishes specifications for all VCE examinations on the VCAA website. Examination specifications include details about the sections of the examination, their weighting, the question format/s and any other essential information. The specifications are published in the first year of implementation of the revised Units 3 and 4 sequence together with any sample material.

SECTION A OF THE VCE ENGLISH EXAMINATION

ANALYTICAL INTERPRETATION OF A TEXT

Students will be required to write an analytical interpretation of one of the two texts studied from List 1 of the VCE English and English as an Additional Language (EAL) Text List for the year in question.

There will be two topics for each of the 20 texts in List 1 for Unit 3, Area of study 1. Students will be required to write a response to one topic on one text.

Student responses should be supported by close reference to the text. If the selected text is a collection of poetry or short stories, students may write on several poems or stories, or on at least two in close detail.

Section A will be worth a total of 20 marks, which is one-third of the examination.”

Instructions for Section A

Section A requires students to write an analytical interpretation of a selected text in response to **one** topic (either **i.** or **ii.**) on **one** text.

Your response should be supported by close reference to the selected text.

If your selected text is a collection of poetry or short stories, you may write on several poems or stories, or on **at least two** in close detail.

If you choose to write on a multimodal text in Section A, you must **not** write on a text pair that includes a multimodal text in Section B.

In the answer book, indicate which text you have chosen to write on and whether you have chosen to answer **i.** or **ii.**

Your response will be assessed according to the assessment criteria set out on page 14 of this book.

Section A is worth one-third of the total marks for the examination.

EXAMINATION 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 EACH MARK IN THE EXAM (SECTION A)

The descriptors against which Exam responses are marked are shown below:

Mark(s)	Expected Qualities
9–10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a close and perceptive reading of the text, exploring complexities of its concepts and construction. • 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. • Develops a cogent, controlled and well-substantiated discussion using precise and expressive language.
8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a close reading of the text, exploring its concepts and construction. • Demonstrates an understanding of the implications of the topic, exploring it from the basis of the text. • Develops a detailed, substantiated and coherent discussion using language fluently and confidently.
7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a clear knowledge of the text, including some elements of its concepts and construction. • Understands the topic, developing an appropriate and supported response. • Develops an organised piece of writing using language accurately and appropriately.
6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates an adequate knowledge of the text. • Develops a response to the topic, supported appropriately by elements of the text. • Presents a generally organised piece of writing using language that is mostly accurate and appropriate.
5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates a basic knowledge of the text. • Presents a response that shows an understanding of the topic, referring to appropriate elements of the text. • Presents a piece of writing that communicates adequately, displaying some elements of organisation.

Mark(s)	Expected Qualities
4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates familiarity with the text. • Presents a response that shows some understanding of the topic, using some elements of the text. • Shows adequate expression and language control.
3	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates limited familiarity with the text. • Presents a response that shows limited awareness of the topic, using some elements of the text. • Shows basic expression and language control.
1-2	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demonstrates very limited familiarity with the text. • Presents a response that shows very limited awareness of the topic. • Shows some expression and language control.
0	Shows no knowledge of the text and/or no attempt to engage with the topic and/or only minimal control of language.



1.4: WHAT'S REQUIRED OF YOU

Many of you will have been doing text response essays for years. In English, you have been reading novels, plays, short stories and watching films – then you have been writing an essay that analyses those texts. This is the VCE's Text Response, one out of the three parts of VCE English Coursework. Officially known as **Area of Study 1 Reading and creating texts**, it's the first Area of Study that involves you studying texts. This essay will be worth 30% of Unit 3.

As the name implies, **Text Response** is when you respond to a text. The most popular texts are novels and films; however, plays, poetry and short stories are also common. In Year 12, you are normally asked to write 800-1000 words in your essay response.

To perform well in this Area of Study,
you need to address the following criteria:

1. **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.**

Society, history and culture all shape and influence us in our beliefs and opinions. Authors use much of what they've obtained from the world around them and employ this knowledge to their writing. Understanding their values embodied in texts can help us as readers, identify and appreciate theme and character representations. Think about the author's background, read interviews with the author. What does she believe, what are her values?

2. **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.**

We need to provide our own interpretation of the meaning of the text. First, we need to analyse the 'meaning' of the text and think carefully about how the author created that meaning. Some of the textual features we need to consider are:

- Characters (Protagonist and Antagonist)
- Themes and issues
- Settings and timeframes
- Literary devices
- Dialogue

3. **Skillful control of the features of an analytical interpretation including the highly proficient use of structure, conventions and language, including the use of relevant metalinguage.**

This is how well you put together your essay. It needs to be clearly and logically structured. You need to use language that is appropriate for an analytical essay (for example the author's inclusion of this symbol... the author deliberately uses.... The author includes ideas such as....) You also need to utilise the metalanguage you learn throughout the unit.

4. **Highly expressive, fluent and coherent written language that employs the skilful and accurate use of spelling, punctuation and syntax of Standard Australian English.**

When examiners and teachers read essays, they need your writing to be clear, fluent and, to do exceptionally well, be highly expressive. Your main priority is to be clear. Analytical writing has its own tone and style, so you should start a vocabulary list of words and phrases that will help with the text response task.

SECTION 6: WRITING AN ANALYTICAL TEXT RESPONSE

6.1: TYPES OF ESSAY PROMPTS

There are three different **FORMS** of text response essay prompts as outlined below:

DIRECT QUESTIONS



A seemingly straightforward question, often with an analytical focus, which invites a direct examination of a core element of the text. It is important to isolate the stem of the question (how, what, why, does etc) and respond accordingly.

For example:

- How does *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* explore what it means to live in fear of persecution and oppression?
- How does *Nine Days* explore the relationship between the past and the present?
- In Kate Grenville's *The Lieutenant*, how do Rooke's conversations with Tagaran change his view of the world and his place in it?

PROPOSITIONAL

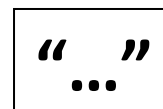


A proposition (statement) about the text followed by a prompt such as "Discuss" or "Do you agree?" or "To what extent do you agree/disagree?". They ask you to consider multiple interpretations of the topic and the text whilst clearly proposing your own interpretation.

For example:

- 'Dr Ibaraki is weak-willed, motivated only by fear and insecurity.' Do you agree?
- 'The women of Annawadi are at once the backbone and the victims of their society.' Do you agree?
- '*All the Light We Cannot See* explores the human capacity to create, preserve and destroy.' Discuss.
- '*The Golden Age* explores Frank's gradual realisation that he can rely only on himself.' Do you agree?

QUOTATION



A topic which is constructed with an embedded key quotation from the specific text. The starting point for thinking ought to be this quotation and what it reveals.

For example:

- “Some things are best left in the past.” To what extent is this view supported by Piper’s *After Darkness*?
- “Always these memories, barely submerged.” Station Eleven demonstrates that nothing is ever completely lost.’ Discuss.

Topics for a text response essay generally fall into three **FOCI**: construction topics, themes and values topics and different interpretations topics. Sometimes, a question will combine elements of all these categories.

CONSTRUCTION TOPICS

This type of question, which has begun to appear more frequently in recent years, is concerned with the **HOW** and **WHY** of the text.

Construction topics ask you to analyse key textual features such as characterisation, structure, language, imagery, symbolism and other literary techniques (the **HOW**) and examines the importance of such textual features in conveying key themes and shaping the development of character.

The **WHY** questions relate to the author’s purpose, views and personal background.

(a) Topics that Focus on Character

Topics generally centre around one or two characters and ask for a discussion of one or all of the following:

- the ways the characters behave
- the ways they interact with others or react to events
- the ways that protagonists and minor characters interact
- the relationships they develop and how they change and grow

When dealing with a single, dominant character, it’s important to:

- Identify stages or turning points in the character’s evolution or transformation.
- Create a list of words and phrases which describe the character.
- Select and memorise appropriate quotes.
- Consider the character’s relationships with other characters.
- Clarify what it is that the character has become by the novel’s end.

Examples:

- “How I hate that man. Dying and leaving me alone to look after everyone.” Jean has no control over her life’. Discuss.
- ‘Family house, family suburb, family man.’
Is this an accurate portrayal of Kip Westaway?
- ‘The characters Cate Kennedy’s *Like a House on Fire* struggle to deal with change.’
Discuss.
- Many of the representations of Chinua Achebe’s *Things Fall Apart* can be seen through the character of Ikemefuna. Discuss.

(b) Topics that Focus on Structure and Key Features

These questions target the way the text is constructed, its narrative, point of view, language and style, structure, the characters, and the conventions of the specific text type (e.g. film, play, poetry). Questions will ask you to explore the way that a key feature of the text contributes to its overall meaning and/or how literary techniques enhances the effect that the author aims to create for the reader.

Examples:

- How does the structure of the text influence the reader’s response to Connie?
- ‘The fragmented nature of the narrative makes it difficult to engage with the characters.’
To what extent do you agree?
- How does Hitchcock create an atmosphere of suspicion in *Rear Window*?
- ‘The use of shifting narrative perspective in *Station Eleven* is crucial to its storytelling effect’. Discuss.

THEMES AND VALUES TOPICS

These questions focus on the following:

- themes within the text.
- how factors shape the meaning of the text.
- the way that the society and setting of the text influences the actions of the characters and the author's views and values.
- features such as characters, setting, structure and imagery, etc. and how they help to convey the overall meaning of the text.

Themes and values topics require an analytical interpretation that 'pulls together' the different elements of the text to present an explanation of what the text means.

Examples:

- “Each of us is thinking about someone we’ll never see again. That’s what war means.” Discuss the representation of war in *Nine Days*.

- “Your body, your choice.”

What do the different experiences of Connie and Charlotte reveal about changing attitudes towards women?

- In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen suggests that family life plays an important role in shaping one’s character. To what extent do you agree?
- ‘The forces that control our lives are as unpredictable in their behaviour as any capering idiot.’ Discuss the role of fate in *The Women of Troy*.

DIFFERENT INTERPRETATIONS TOPICS

These questions require that you present a detailed and justified response to any given topic that shows your awareness of a range of possible interpretations of the text, and that your own interpretation has been developed as a result of careful analysis and close reading. Whether you agree, disagree or partly agree, it’s important that you’re able to develop and justify your interpretation and support it with the appropriate evidence from the text.

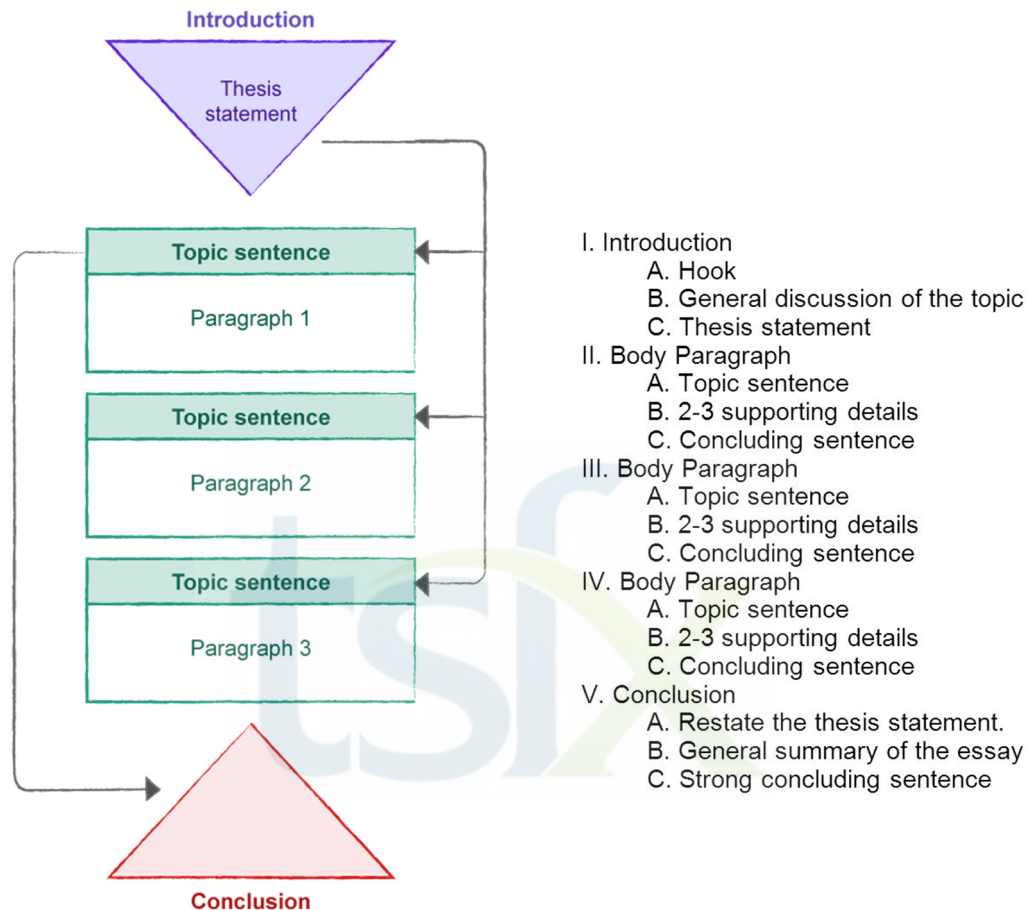
Example:

- *Nine Days* has been described as the ‘emotional postcards of a family’. How accurate is this description?

6.2: THE ANATOMY OF AN ANALYTICAL TEXT RESPONSE ESSAY

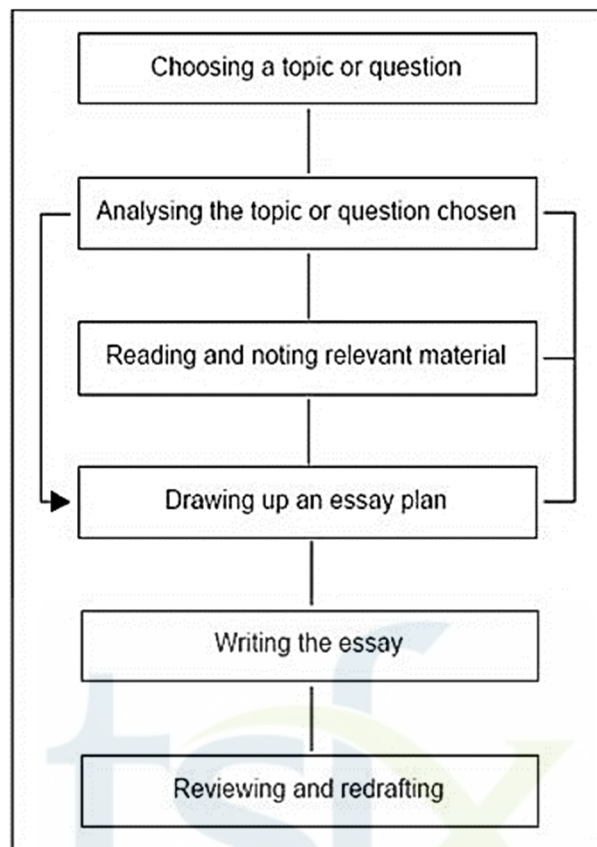
An analytical response is written in a formal and structured manner and should conform to the format of an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion.

ESSAY STRUCTURE:



6.3: PLANNING YOUR ESSAY

Steps in Writing an English Essay



It is important that you spend a significant amount of time going through different essay topics and practising deconstructing them (taking them apart) and planning ideas. This will ensure that by the time you get to the exam, you have exposed yourself to many different topics, and created many plans and combinations of ideas that may help your thinking. You do not have time to go through these steps on paper in the exam, but you should do so in your head during reading time.

To deconstruct and plan and essay you can use the following steps:

- Identify the form of the essay prompt (question, propositional or quotation) and its specific focus (characterisation, narrative, structure, themes etc)
- Identify key words (find synonyms) and phrases
- Identify all parts of the topic/prompt.
- Consider the instruction you've been given in the prompt:

Instruction	What to Do
Do you agree?	Consider if you agree or disagree with the prompt, or both.
To what extent do you agree?	Consider how much truth there is to the statement. Do you completely agree? Partially agree? Disagree?
How does...	Consider how the text is constructed to convey the idea/s presented in the prompt.
Discuss	Consider how and why the text explores the presented idea/s in the prompt.

- Consider any assumptions or implications of the essay topic and write these down.

Assumptions:

What is assumed to be true?

Implications:

If it is (or isn't) true, what are the consequences? Why is it true/untrue?

- Form your opinion/point of view.
- Develop your thesis/contention.
- Decide on 3-5 supporting arguments that best support your thesis/contention; they should be strong, relevant and allow for complex and insightful discussion and analysis of the text.

6.4: WRITING AN INTRODUCTION

Introductions are very important. They are like a road map to your essay. A good introduction is both concise and substantial and shows the assessor from the start that you have thought through the topic, and you know where you are heading.

Your introduction should include the following elements:

Opening Sentence

- The opening sentence can be general, there is no necessity to reference the topic directly.
- The opening sentence must reference authorial purpose, not plot or characterisation.
- It also needs to acknowledge socio-cultural context.

Statement of overall thesis statement/contention

- A one-sentence overview of the response to the prompt.
- Should contain an implied definition of the key terms of the topic.
- While you can acknowledge the complexity of a topic, you need a clear and coherent contention (point of view/thesis statement) – never attempt to argue two inconsistent points in the same essay.
- Limit the contention and your discussion throughout the essay to the topics raised in the question; do not raise other ideas.

Outline of key points/supporting arguments

- Flag key ideas/supporting arguments and ensure they clearly relate to your contention.
- Signpost relations between your key ideas – use connecting words like *while, therefore, however, ultimately, etc.* to enhance the fluency of your writing.

Closing Sentence

- Needs to link the preceding discussion closely to the key terms of the question
- Needs to reiterate the focus on authorial intent.

MINIMUM REQUIREMENTS

- Define terms in relation to the text.
- Include the concept statements (or values) that apply to your text(s), rephrased in the terms of the prompt.
- Describe the context and background in relation to the topic.
- Signpost your supporting arguments and explain how these ideas logically fit together.

Also mention (preferably in the first sentence):

- Author's name
- Title of text
- The form, genre e.g. memoir, anthology

Suggestions:

- Use key terms from the topic/prompt including verbs.
- The introduction should be 1 paragraph long.
- Include any relevant background information that the reader may need to know in order to understand your overall purpose.

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 texts that could work universally for different essay questions.
- Discuss something relevant from the opening moments of the text.
- 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 your text in relation to this question? Doing this can help to demonstrate your analytical skills right away.

WRITING A THESIS STATEMENT/CONTENTION

The thesis/contention of a literary work is a short statement that summarises the main point or claim of an essay and directly responds to the prompt. It is developed, supported, and explained in the body by means of examples and evidence.

A thesis statement/contention:

- States a specific topic.
- Makes a claim that others may either agree or disagree with.
- Identifies your position on the topic or question.
- Lists the subpoint (supporting arguments) that will be discussed.
- Limits the scope of what will be discussed.
- Indicates the pattern of organisation of the essay.
- Gives a clear outline of what will follow (how will you answer the question?)
- Is a statement rather than a question.
- Must convey what you'll prove about your opinion of the topic
- Generally appears at the end of the introduction.

Note:

- Your thesis/contention must be concise and answer every component of the question.
- It must introduce an idea that you can regularly raise throughout the essay as a reminder of your position.
- It must define the key terms in the question.
- It needs to outline your argument and then explain the logic of that argument.
- The thesis/contention should be 1 or 2 sentences long.

Example Introduction with thesis statement/contention:

Prompt: *Little Red Riding Hood* is a tale of innocence in the face of evil. Discuss.

Since its inception in the 10th Century, the classic tale of Little Red Riding Hood has served as a vehicle for the transmission of important moral lessons. On the surface, it is a tale of childhood innocence and the dangers that lurk in society. One cannot however, overlook the actions of Little Red Riding Hood, her mother and her grandmother. Arguably, what appears to be naivety on the surface is, in reality, reckless behaviour from three generations of fools. ***Little Red Riding Hood* is therefore more aptly described as a cautionary tale about the costs of irresponsible and risky conduct and the impact of the choices we make.**

	Thesis Statement/Contention
	Subpoints (supporting arguments listed)

DO'S & DON'TS

DON'T ...



- repeat the prompt.
- summarise or rephrase the prompt in your thesis/contention.
- use uncertain terms such as “may” or “could”. Instead, use words like “will”, “does”.
- Have a thesis statement or contention that states two sides of an argument equally.

For example: The following statement is not a thesis statement as it gives equal merit to both sides of the argument without giving a clear opinion of support or disagreement.

There are advantages and disadvantages to wearing a school uniform.

The statement below is a thesis statement. It clearly relays the writer’s opinion regarding school uniforms.

Although there are some disadvantages, wearing school uniforms has many advantages and should not be abolished in schools.

DO ...



- have a statement that is debatable.

For example, the thesis/contention below is not debatable. Everyone knows that pollution is bad and everyone would agree that the government should act on the matter.

Pollution is bad for the environment and the government should do something about it.

A better example is:

At least 25 percent of the federal budget should be spent on limiting pollution.

Some people will agree, some will disagree i.e. the statement is debatable.

- make sure that your thesis/contention is specific and not too broad.

An example of the thesis/contention that is too broad is:

Drug use is detrimental to society.

A more specific example is:

Illegal drug use is detrimental to society because it encourages gang violence.

SAMPLE INTRODUCTIONS

Annotate the following samples and identify the thesis statement or contention, the key terms from the topic and the genre. Identify the sections that differentiated these samples from a “Middle Scoring Response”.

VCAA 2019 – HIGH SCORING RESPONSE

Euripides’ play created during the siege of Melos and performed to Athenian men, establishes that the Gods are the ultimate deciders of fate and thus displeasing them is a dangerous action. He argues that successful and obedient worship is an important factor of a successful life, whereas betraying or insulting the Gods is a devastating action with severe consequences. However, through his play he also contends that people have control of their lives to an extent, regardless of the capricious Gods’ plans.

HIGH SCORING RESPONSE

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.

VCAA 2018 – HIGH SCORING RESPONSE

Cemented in a period transition from neo-classical ideals to a Romantic age of Enlightenment, Mary Shelley’s 1818 gothic horror, Frankenstein embodies the injustice and ingratitude of society to primarily affect the rights of women. Thus Shelley reflects her experience with protofeminism, adopted from her mother, and explores its oppression within a society plagued by prejudice. However, Shelley does present the persecution of Frankenstein by his own ‘hideous progeny’ as a pursuit of justice rather than revenge and suggests the existence of heroic notions in contrast to absolute villainy depicted through injustice. Conversely, the embarkment of Walton on his own pursuit of glory, similar to Frankenstein’s odyssey, elucidates the ability for acts of injustice and gratitude to co-exist. Consequently, whilst Shelley portrays a society plagued by prejudice and thus injustice, she highlights the evidence of pure pursuits of ‘poetic justice’ and thankfulness within individuals detached from society.

Annotate the following sample and identify the thesis statement or contention, the key terms from the topic and the genre. Identify the sections that could be improved to turn the paragraph into an “Upper – Middle Scoring Response”.

VCAA 2018 – LOWER-MIDDLE SCORING RESPONSE

The novel ‘The Golden Age’ by Joan London explores the idea of belonging means everything. In which through the childrens isolation a community is created in order to help each other. Belonging is also explored through places that are represented in the novel such as Hungary, The Golden Age, Elsa’s tower & Franks bay window.

6.5: WRITING BODY PARAGRAPHS

The body is a series of paragraphs that substantiate the thesis statement/contention presented in the introduction. A paragraph is a group of connected sentences that develop a single point, argument, or idea. You should aim to have 3-5 body paragraphs in your essay.

In your body paragraphs, you should have the following elements:

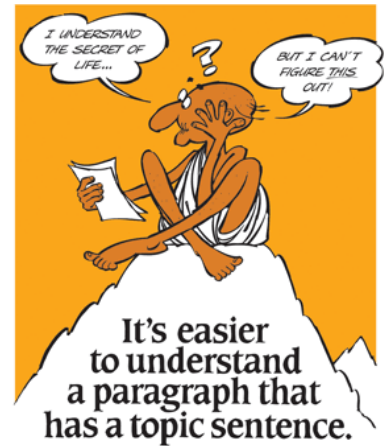
T	Topic sentence <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure relevance to topic – base on the outline of key ideas/supporting arguments in introduction.• Reinforce connections to key words of the question.
E	Elaboration and Discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• This is where you talk through, process, explain and unpack what you are dealing with in your topic sentence. <p>Consider the importance of context, views and values and authorial intent.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The language and construction of the novel is continually explored; correct metalanguage is used.
E	Evidence/ Interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence needs to be focused – brief phrases quoted and integrated into your own writing.• Where possible, aim to draw on evidence from different parts of the novel to demonstrate holistic understanding of the text.• Correct analytic metalanguage is used.
L	Linking Ideas and sentences <p>A good case, argument or discussion is a logical and sequential one in which concepts and language are linked: there should be a logical development of argument.</p>

Each step in the TEEL process is outlined on the following pages.

T

TOPIC SENTENCES

- Topic sentences act as signposts – clear signals about what you're discussing and how you'll discuss it.
- The topic sentence or positioning statement introduces your paragraph by identifying one of your supporting arguments. Your supporting argument should be conceptual (based on a key idea or theme) and it must clearly relate to your overall thesis statement/contention.
- Try to be concise, but also try to be as inclusive as you can.



Example:

Since its inception in the 10th Century CE, the classic tale of Little Red Riding Hood has served as a vehicle for the transmission of important moral lessons. On the surface, it is a tale of childhood innocence and the dangers that lurk in society. One cannot however, overlook the actions of Little Red Riding Hood, her mother and her grandmother. Arguably, what appears to be naivety on the surface is, in reality, reckless behaviour from three generations of fools. *Little Red Riding Hood* is therefore more aptly described as a cautionary tale about the costs of irresponsible and risky conduct and the impact of the choices we make.

TOPIC SENTENCE 1:

Viewing *Little Red Riding Hood* as a simple fable about the corrupting influence of society on the young is reductive.

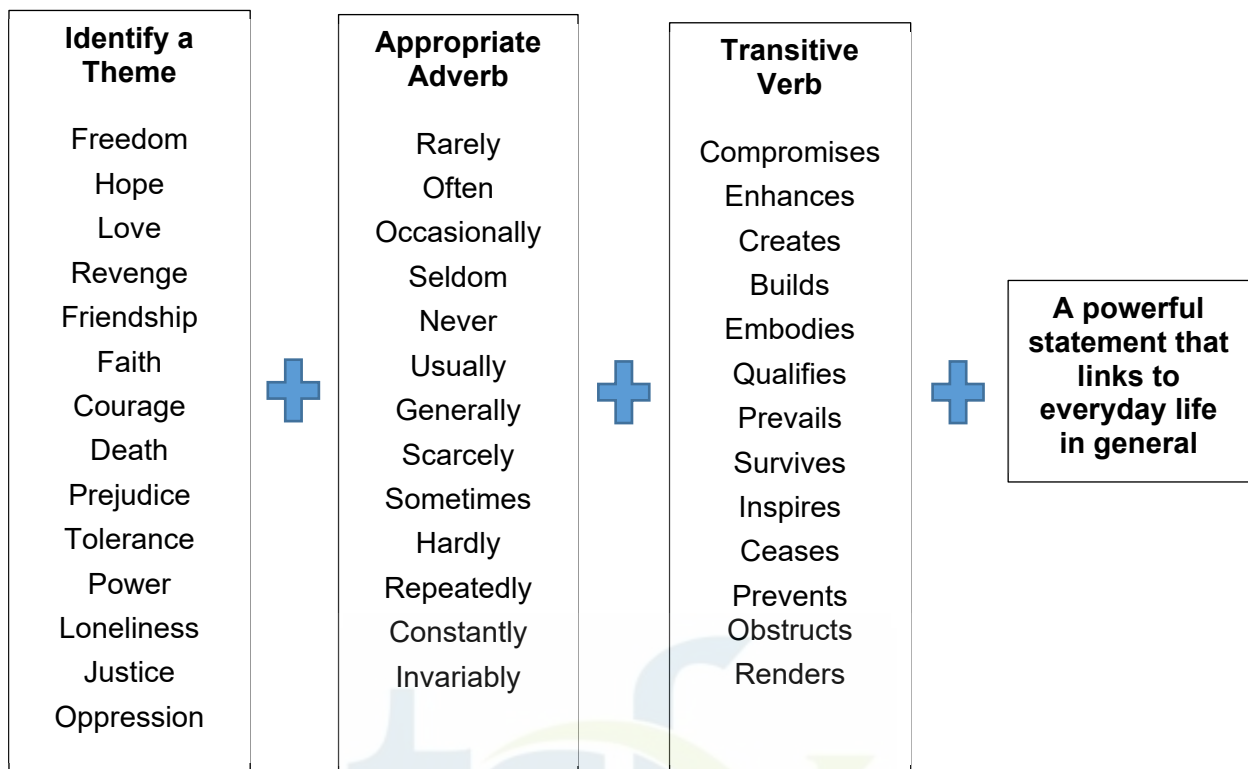
TOPIC SENTENCE 2:

The poor decision making of the grandmother, the mother and Little Red Riding Hood are not the result of innocence or naivety – they highlight a striking lack of judgement

TOPIC SENTENCE 3:

The poor decision making of the grandmother, the mother and Little Red Riding Hood are not the result of innocence or naivety – they highlight a striking lack of judgement and risky behaviour given the known presence of evil in society.

Another useful consideration when focusing on a theme/idea/value in your topic sentence is to consider your use of adverbs and transitive verbs as these act to make your argument more specific and focussed.



Examples:

Justice invariably prevails when ordinary people stand up for what is right.

Power never ceases to tempt those who seek it into compromising their better natures.

Death constantly inspires people to make the most of their lives and live in the present.

Hope generally embodies humans' determination to create a better world.

Prejudice repeatedly obstructs humans' ability to live peacefully with one another.