



2003

English GA 3: Written examination

The examination samples the skills and outcomes in the English Study Design 2000–2003 and does so at a point in time, year's end, when an equitable development and maturity has been possible in all students undertaking the study.

The examination paper consists of two sections. The first, Text, has two distinct parts where one response is required from each part. The second, Writing Task, has two parts, the first concerning language use analysis, and the second, where one piece of writing is required in response to a choice from three different options in form and purpose.

Assessment is based upon criterion referenced indicators and applied holistically. Assessment used in this way balances all qualities for worth and awards scores that reflect the assessors' judgment of the whole answer. The descriptions of this in the *Expected Qualities for the Mark Range* guided the process. These descriptions are based on the criteria and are general indicators of what might reasonably be expected in the mark range. Specificity and fine judgments are then possible when the exact characteristics of responses for any one year are analysed. The Assessment Criteria for the 2003 Examination can be found in Supplement 2 to the February 2003 *VCE Bulletin*.

Student performance for the 2003 examination was satisfactory, with some aspects of the tested work showing significant positive development.

Section 1 – Text

For Part 1, the most popular texts and their mean scores out of a possible 10 marks were as follows:

Text	% of students	Mean Score
<i>Gattaca</i>	26.8	5.71
<i>Night</i>	9.5	5.46
<i>The Divine Wind</i>	6.1	5.42
<i>Oedipus Rex</i>	5.8	6.17
<i>Othello</i>	5.7	6.33

The least popular texts for this Part included *A Choice of Emily Dickinson's Verse*, *I for Isobel*, *Jackson's Track*, *A Lesson Before Dying*, *Things Fall Apart*, *Short Stories (Henry Lawson)* and *No Great Mischief*.

For Part 2, the most popular texts and their mean scores out of a possible 10 marks were as follows:

Text	% of students	Mean Score
<i>Gattaca</i>	10.8	5.63
<i>Night</i>	9.3	5.72
<i>The Divine Wind</i>	7.7	5.6
<i>The Outsider</i>	6.9	6.21
<i>Triage</i>	6.7	6.13

The least popular texts for this Part included *A Choice of Emily Dickinson's Verse*, *I For Isobel*, *The Year of Living Dangerously*, *Dream Stuff* and *The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith*.

Part 1 of the Text section of the paper, sampling the 'sustained interpretive points of view about a text', was (as in previous years) undertaken quite successfully by many students. Most had a reasonable knowledge of the text in question, and constructed an appropriate answer using the basic conventions of essay writing of an analytic sort.

The more successful answers showed that students had carefully planned doing excellent justice to the very high level of complexity of some texts. The few who did the *Oedipus Rex* question are cases in point although this particular quality was evident in respect of most texts – even those ostensibly more open and accessible. These higher-scoring students often challenge the question (was Vincent, in *Gattaca* actually a conformist?). By their nature, question proposals cannot always do justice to the inherent sophistication of a text and some students will see beyond the obvious, the limiting, and take understanding much further. In short, they will see the *whole* question, not just the trigger words, and develop the answer in an holistic, considered and in-depth manner. The best handled genre with understanding and skill. With all texts they showed that they knew what they were working with. Finally, the top answers are increasingly displaying an empathy with text that these reports have encouraged over the years.

Most students arrived well armed with quotations, the more successful using them with great precision; the less successful applying them somewhat randomly in the hope of a fit.

Planning continues to be vital in producing a satisfying and high-scoring answer – even if that plan is in fact investigative and adopts an inductive path.

Many students forming the middle or lower range groups simply ‘let the pen do the walking’, without sustaining a tight argument in their analysis and without an apparent aim of actually convincing the reader of their view. Some students felt that grammatical emphasis and repetition were the best ways to show that they were actually answering the question. Gratuitous praise to the question setters on a question’s focus often hid a less than adequate knowledge and an imminent manipulation of a question to fit. Potted versions of answers from cribs continue to appear, manifesting themselves as an undigested lump in an otherwise marginal response.

Overall, this Part was done quite well (and is becoming increasingly better) under the conditions of an examination. It is very obvious that teachers and students alike have devoted real time and effort to it.

Some of the sorts of practices which will further enhance this development in the classroom are:

- Working with questions, both from past papers and from classroom resources pays off. Looking at the way questions sometimes invite comparisons, for example, ‘Vincent ... achieves most ...’, or ‘Mitsy is the one..’, are well worth probing. Inviting students to try actually devising questions and then proposing answers is also an interesting exercise. This can work well in groups.
- Teaching planning, structure options and varied methods of approach in tackling questions, especially for collections and anthologies, is very important. Tackle matters of judgment in the process of deciding just how many poems or stories or even characters should be used in an answer. Although *all* must be taught, *all* are not necessarily useful or suitable for use in a particular answer
- Encourage the awareness that spelling, punctuation, topic sentences, paragraphing are still essential to successful written communication. Discourage slang as inappropriate – ‘Oedipus’ mum and dad ...’, the ‘could of’, ‘would of’, ‘should of’ nightmare, or worse, perhaps, ‘Dawe’s poems figure to be true because of the real liveness they give out to the reader’.
- Continue to explore genre. For some students a film may as well be a play or a poem.
- Encourage reflection on *why* a text is the way it is. Why did the author choose to do this, or that? What is the result in meaning?
- Help students to contextualise any quotations they may feel to be important. Pose challenging questions regarding the choice of particular quoted material.
- Encourage measured risk taking in group discussion. This can lead both to creativity and confidence in ideas which prove to be sound.
- The core skills involved in VCE English and its examination are somewhat formal but infinitely sound. The work of a Year 12 student, ideally, should be the culmination of a language and ideas learning continuum, not some new set of skills attended to uniquely in VCE.

Clearly, the Part 2 Text offers challenges of a different kind and at a more advanced level, since it canvasses responses to conceptual, reflective thought which the texts deal in at their core. The most successful answers were often quite brilliant, glowing with their breadth of understanding and focus. Structure for answers in this Part is critical and top-scoring responses displayed great skill in planning and strategy. They were able to strike a quite seamless balance between the teasing out of ideas in a broader context and the display of a sound knowledge and understanding of text in respect of the proposal offered. They showed excellent language skills, abstract thought and a perceptive overview. Many assessors marvel at the capacity of some of these higher-scoring students to write as they do in the time that they have. It is often quite stunning. The very popular text *Gattaca* elicited some very fine reflective answers in this respect.

For the middle and lower range responses, the central problem concerns structure. This starts with clearly (and habitually) knowing that one needs to make connections between the text and the notions raised by the question. In actual fact, many students may well have been reflecting on or discussing such values and issues as say race as it is handled in *Jackson’s Track*, or the holocaust as it is treated in *Night*. Ironically, with a lack of attention to structure, less successful responses tend to generalise with a complete loss of text and some never really leave the text per se, and so lose the opportunity to use the connections which could easily be made.

Similarly, those answers which deal with the issue proposed only in terms of what happened in the text, without developing a framework which teases out its broader implications. Such answers can easily become lost in a sea of detail at the expense of thought. The ideal end is for students to be absolutely clear on how to frame their answer around the proposal of the question and to support what they say in the explication of this by reference to and analysis of the text.

Notwithstanding the shortcomings noted, many assessors report seeing growth in student skills in this part over the last couple of years. This growth can be nurtured in many ways, including:

- continually invite and encourage students to explore the range of possible ideas and issues raised by text and other activities to enrich this understanding. This can be threaded through much of the work of English classes, especially those of discussion, research tasks, writing, debates and the like
- further, it really means that if we are working with the ‘underlying social and cultural values embodied in a text’, then it involves designed teaching to that end – embedding it in classroom experiences. Time, already short it is true, must be made for this if we are to develop passion and intellectual curiosity; quite obviously, the nurtured growth of these skills of cognition and awareness are connected with the differential growth in students. There is a case for the judicious touching on of these things earlier than Year 12, if appropriate, just as it is appropriate to cyclically return to issues at various points in the year to take account of maturation and continuing reflection
- rote answers will not score as well as those whose material has been through a digestive process. Practice with concept/value/idea/issue *without* the text and encourage research and the gathering of information, doing that too over time so that assimilation is enhanced. Students often think far more deeply than we imagine.

Section 2 – Writing task

The Writing Task scenario and material worked well with students overall; the material and idea was accessible yet quite subtle, in that behind its façade of setting and circumstance there lay notions requiring strong conceptual awareness for its really successful handling.

Part 1

(Average mark 5.4/available marks 10)

The most successful answers for Part 1, and there were many, deliberately set out to demonstrate the skills they had acquired. They were careful and often quite creative in developing an answer structure which allowed them to pinpoint, to compare and then contrast essential language use characteristics of the two pieces. This gave students a cohesive understanding of the language workings under consideration. More successful answers showed that students understood the impact of words, appreciated nuance, showed a sensitivity to subtlety and, most importantly, tone. Their capacity to comment on language use *in context* was also strong. They wrote with an understanding of the radio talkback setting. Lastly, they offered precise support for the assertions and observation they made and yet held a sense of overview and context.

Middle and lower range students often disappointed. Common shortcomings included taking a quite tedious journey through the material looking assiduously for alliteration, emotive words, or the ubiquitous rhetorical question and so on, without any discussion of what was being noted. It is *quantitatively* not especially necessary to tag *every* device of language (or indeed to create some) word by word but it is necessary to be able to distinguish between the limited worth of meticulous but simple description, and purposeful analysis of how language is being worked. Apart from these concerns, which of course include implied solutions, assessors feel that the work being undertaken in the classroom is succeeding.

Further suggestions include:

- provide as many opportunities as possible to examine the ways in which a wide variety of writers and speakers handle language, noting levels of reference and meaning and how possible motives might be manifested in both overt and more subtle ways
- practice imitative writing and speaking in terms of tone, purpose – even to pure language exercises without a topic as such
- encourage the habit of planning and the use of incisive detail as alternatives to mere tagging or labelling
- encourage the capacity to adopt a balanced stance, critical distance, if you like (some found it difficult to avoid personal involvement in this paper’s issue).

Part 2

(5.16/10)

After some despondency in comments in recent Reports, the responses for the Part 2 Task were a significant, though not yet quite sufficient, leap forward in quality. The most successful answers saw the conceptual proposals (‘... breaking the law to help animals ever be justified’ ‘illegal intervention ...ever justified’) underpinning the Tasks and addressed them in ways that were both consummate and lively. They were supremely conscious of form, audience, purpose and voice.

Middle and lower range answers often became embroiled personally, and went beyond or awry from the brief set. Most made a fairly good fist of form and audience. Almost all managed the speech adequately, and most came to grips with the *sort* of letter required although a few retreated to an Editorial for some reason. There was clear evidence of classroom work bearing fruit.

It might be helpful to:

- teach the interaction between the language awareness skills inherent in *both* Parts of the Writing Task – the one analysis, the other of using those understandings in one’s own writing
- continue to work with notion of *voice* in writing
- practise these skills in actual terms such as writing a letter (and sending it), giving a designed speech, submitting a submission
- discourage the overzealous, ranting type of speech for the carefully designed presentation, *without* the sometimes odd stage directions/choreography such as ‘rubs chin pensively’ or ‘move left with wry smile’ which are sometimes seen
- continue to make certain that students understand the presentation and form conventions of *all* forms proposed in the study design.

The component choice was as follows: Speech (50%), Letter (39%) and Essay (9%).

Examples of answers

These answers are presented for illustrative and informative reasons. They may form the basis of profitable discussions. The most successful of them are not to be taken as ‘the best’ that are possible or that they are ‘perfect’; indeed none is without shortcomings. Yet they are typical of a range where students worked under examination conditions to produce and submit first draft writing. Likewise, readers will obviously be able to make many more observations about their qualities beyond the necessarily brief comments the assessment teams offered herein.

Text 1 – Part 1

The Third Man

26. ‘Harry Lime appears late in the film, yet we feel his presence throughout the film.’

How does the filmmaker achieve this?

Sample 1

Comments

- upper range response
- immediate, assured focus
- introduction proposes intensive confident textual analysis
- explores text as film with detail and incision
- precise, controlled and articulate language facility
- appreciates complexity and structural expertise in text.

Student response (indicates words crossed out in student’s answer)

Although Harry Lime, *The Third Man*’s enigmatic, charismatic villain does not make his appearance in the film until the film is well underway, his presence can be felt in a myriad of ways. Carol Reed has cleverly arranged the film so that Harry’s nihilistic philosophy is manifest in the film techniques, Harry Lime’s cohorts are clearly present – thus insinuating Lime’s presence, and Holly Martins’s arrival in Vienna due to Lime. In fact, it could be argued the film’s entire premise is based on the shadowy but omnipresent Lime.

The canted angles utilised by the film’s director add a sense of moral queasiness and ambiguity of the film. From the opening montage’ the viewer is presented with the voice of an affable racketeer who is, like Lime on the wrong side of the moral divide. The dead body seen floating after the comment “of course, a situation like that does tempt amateurs” ~~The example of~~ illustrates Lime’s amoral, unconcerned philosophy. Lime, on the great wheel with Holly, comments on the people below milling about like flies. ~~The camera~~ longshot of the ‘dots’ below is an example of film technique being used to visually apply Lime’s philosophy. Likewise, Holly Stares down ~~at the~~ from Lime’s window at the small people moving below, and when Lime meets his cohorts on the bridge, the longshot ironically tells the audience that Harry Lime’s philosophy reflects back upon himself and that nobody is spared from his nihilistic ideas. Thus for the most part retrospectively, the canted camera angles and distorted longshots allude to Lime’s omnipresent nature, and hint to the audience that this amoral character ~~will remain apart of the film~~ even from the beginning will ~~continue to create~~ will be present – although for the most part as a topic of discussion – throughout the film.

Lime’s cohorts; the seedy, aristocratic Baron Kurtz, Winkel, the man representing religious hypocrisy, and the threatening Romanian Popescu: are a constant reminder of the presence of the supposedly deceased Harry Lime. Their conversations – ~~such as the one Kurt tells Holly Harry~~ – as the conflicting accounts pertaining to Lime’s accident – ~~always~~ constantly allude to Lime – he is always lurking behind their decadent ways. When Holly visits Winkel’s apartment, the latter denies having company, yet ~~we see the small dog~~ the small dog Kurtz has been carrying appears. This along with the sinister closeup of a knife carving a chicken, as well as the fact that people sitting around the table are never shown, highlights a sense of duplicity. ~~and their~~ This scene alludes to the fact that there are suspicious circumstances relating to Lime’s “death”, and thus, the viewer is made to feel the racketeer’s presence.

The voice-over at the beginning of the film mentions Holly Martins being offered a ~~spurious~~ writing job for Lime's so called medical charity. When Martins arrives, he comments that he is surprised that Lime "(wasn't there) to meet (him)". This opening line of dialogue immediately alludes to the presence of Lime, as does the apartment at which Holly arrives – Lime's. The confusion of identity between Lime and Martins- Martins says "nobody knew Harry like he did... I did" and Anna calls Holly "Harry" – is an important factor in making sure Lime is always present within the film. When Holly sees Lime standing in a doorway, and the former is subsequently almost run over by a passing car – an event that mirrors Lime's "death" – we see how the two characters are intertwined, and thus are able to observe the importance of the constant presence (in some form or other) of Lime.

Finally, Martins "cowboy" search for the truth regarding Lime is perhaps the most obvious technique to imply the presence of Lime; whereas the ~~other~~ techniques discussed earlier allude to his presence, Martins search is the most blatant inclusion of Lime as a character.

With Martins continually discussing the circumstances of Lime's death with Calloway, the porter and Lime's friends, and reminiscing about Lime with the latter's mistress Anna, it is impossible not to recognise the presence of Lime throughout the film – even references to the black market (Anna says "I was going to sell the whiskey", and Kurtz and Popescu offer Martins saccharine and cigarettes – exchanges emblematic of deals) insinuate the presence of Lime.

Thus, Reed achieves insinuating the presence of Lime throughout the film in a myriad of ways: a succession of longshots embracing Lime's nihilistic philosophy; the inclusion of Lime's seedy friends, the ~~ambiguous~~ relationship between Martins and Lime and the confusion of the two; and the obvious inclusion of Lime therefore Lime's presence is pervasive and unavoidable in The Third Man due to these factors.

Night

11. What saves Elie – inner strength or luck?

Sample 2

Comments

- middle range response
- approaches question with simplistic and limiting frame of reference; the total dismissal of the notion of inner strength immediately limits the scope and potential of the answer
- the series of textual examples of luck are scant and lack real exploration and argument
- under development in approach diminishes the complexity of the text
- there is reasonable evidence of organisation for the line taken
- expression is basic but clear and generally accurate.

Student response (indicates words crossed out in student's answer)

What saves a man from suffering, is it the will to go on this represented through inner strength or is it luck. Within the memoir 'Night' by Elie Wiesel . Elie was one of many that had luck on his side, luck being 'Fortune, good or bad' a force that indeed helped him to withstand and remain strong, to survive.

Luck played a strong part in Elies survivel, helping him and saving him. From the dead and the living. It was luck that a young French girls silenced Elie by placing bread in his mouth for if young Elie were to have retaliated his life would come to a short end.

As it was also luck that a gentleman had attached his hand onto young Elie expressing his wisdom upon them 'asking what age would they be and informing them to say different. Elie was requested to he was 16 years of age instead of ~~14~~ 15 and his father was to say 40 instead of 50. By both father and son receiving this luck their lives to were saved.

Elies luck came in many forms and presented itself on many occations throughout his dreadful journey. Elies was requested by his father 'to blend into the background', to make yourself unnoticed' This was to luck for if his father had not said anything, young Elie would have been chosen for labour. The men who were chosen for labour died ~~a quick~~ sooner than others for they became weaker faster. It was also luck that saved Elies life when he needed it the most, it was luck both Chlomo Elies father and Elie became closer to one another for where they once never spoke, ~~became one another helper~~ they came together to help one another from falling behind, helpint to survived and endure what was needed from them. Elie and his father could have given up and turned against one another this shown by the Rabbi's son, who ran ahead for he felt his father would slow him down resulting in loosing his life. Instead it was luck that both father and son relyed on one another so much.

It was shown that luck played a very important role in the survival of Elie and it was Elies life that pervaled due to that. Luck indeed played a significant part even if it did not represent itself as clearly as one would like it to.

Elies life changed because of luck and luck helped him survive Elie because of luck saw himself in a different way not spoiled any more but as a lucky person "from the depths of the mirror, a gorges gaized back at me" ~~his eye as my eyes~~ his eyes stared into mine ones that shall never leave mine."

Text 2 – Part 2

Three samples are offered to show a qualitative continuum from the highest levels to the low middle range.

Gattaca

7. *Gattaca* shows that individuality is more important than conformity. Discuss.

Comments

- very high level response
- frame of reference broad and erudite from the first sentence
- positions the answer with continued references to the intentions of the Director Niccol within the context of the question proposition
- quotations welded in skilfully and incisively
- intensive analysis of the world captured by the film, always within the conceptual frame posed
- character analysis broad yet precise and moves in and out of the conceptual proposal.

Student response (indicates words crossed out in student's answer)

Andrew Niccol's *Gattaca* portrays an overtly discriminatory society in which status and quality of life is determined solely by a DNA profile. However, it is against this oppressive regime that Vincent Freeman shines, as Niccol conveys the importance of maintaining individuality – in those qualities which deem his protagonist unique. Throughout the film Niccol criticises those who conform and hence contribute to this dystopian nightmare, while simultaneously he praises those valids who do rebel in order to emphasise how pivotal it is that the human race does not succumb to lead the existence portrayed by this “not to distant future” society.

From an early point in the film, Niccol depicts the environment of the *Gattaca* corporation. It is a ~~dull~~ sterile, artificial and even dull world where individuals appear identical in every aspect of their being; that is, their facial expressions, their attire and restricted walking action. Here, Niccol emphasises the monotony of this society as he questions the meaning of such a machine-like existence. This is a world where, although racial and sexist discrimination no longer exists, a far worse prejudice has ~~taken~~ replaced these unfair assumptions based “on the colour of your skin”. And, here Niccol suggests that this interchange has come at a costly price. Individuality has been repressed, as in this world, nobody even looks at a “photograph”. And ~~where~~ if in the case that an individual does rebel and “refuse to disclose”, a “legal”-drug test can just as easily determine their “future in the company”. Consequently ~~it can even~~ the discrimination caused by those who conform, in the geneticist who insists “believe me, we have enough imperfection...already” and the kindergarten teacher who symbolically slams the barred-gate in Vincent's face is portrayed to have disastrous consequences, as Niccol suggests that at all costs we must avoid such an oppressive system.

However, amidst this regime it is Vincent Freeman who represents the hard ~~continuous~~ relentless struggle to maintain individuality. As a child, he erases his name from the family's measuring pole, evidently refusing to become a victim of the prejudice which sees his “superior” younger brother being favoured in the background. Then, as an adolescent, he does not allow his “goals to change much in the intervening years” due to the psychologically damaging and pessimistic comments of his father, “the only way you'll ever see the inside of a spaceship is if you were cleaning it”. Instead, it can be considered that he ~~uses~~ utilises these hardships and the belief of others that he cannot achieve his dream, as motivation to do exactly that. Resorting to more “extreme measures”, Niccol demonstrates the qualifier which make Vincent unique, in his infallible determination and dedication, by means of communicating the importance of maintaining those traits not determined by a genetic profile. We witness Vincent's commitment to his dream, as he undergoes intense physical training and a painful leg lengthening operation - after which even the cynical Jerome “does not question his commitment”. Again, in the scene where Vincent bravely crosses the road despite his myopia – Irene's later comment “you couldn't see could you.....you crossed anyway” mirrors the viewer's astonishment that Vincent possesses so much courage. Here, the atmosphere created by Niccol as the music crescendos and the tempo quickens conveys the importance of Vincent overcoming and defeating this challenge. Niccol involves the viewer here with the building of such an intense moment, as in effect he once more conveys the importance of Vincent's natural strengths.

Throughout the film, Niccol compares Vincent to his younger “valid” brother Anton in order to emphasise the contrasts between the two individuals. ~~Here, this juxtaposition~~ As a child, Anton is seen to possess much arrogance, stating coldly to Vincent “How many astronauts are there anyway...I bet I could be one, if I wanted” and taunting him with comments such as “come on you coward” during their frequent swimming challenges. Hence Anton can be considered as one who believes that success will be delivered to him solely because he possesses a “far cleaner profile”. Yet, here Niccol reveals Anton's fault in this assumption, as ironically ~~he is~~ in adulthood he is observed working as a “law-enforcement” officer in a position less respected than Vincent who is a highly esteemed “First-class Navigator”. ~~Hence~~ Here, this is perhaps one of the most significant indicators of Niccol's underlying message to hold onto one's individuality, as Vincent is seen to succeed not due to his superior genetics, but to his persistence and dedication.

Furthermore, Niccol praises the numerous individuals, besides Vincent, who act to rebel against the prejudiced society in which they live. Take Irene, who initially appears equally preoccupied with science as other valids as she has Vincent “sequenced”. In this scene, Niccol emphasises the shallow ideals on which this society bases love, as the woman alongside Irene casually remarks “I kissed him five minutes ago...a real

good one” However, following Irene’s discovery of Vincent’s true identity, she is seen to rebel ~~against this~~ also. Returning Vincent’s former gesture “sorry, the mind caught it”, Irene refuses to conform to the conventions of her society and instead outwardly decides to accept Vincent along with his flaws. In essence, Irene chooses to found her relationship upon those elements which Niccol suggests to be rational, in love, respect and mutual understanding. In this way, she too becomes an individual- one who is not afraid to love a “god-child”.

Jerome in *Gattaca* is another prime example developed by Niccol to emphasise the importance of remaining true to your unique qualities. Initially, he is introduced as a cynical, pessimistic alcoholic who wallows in his own self-pity. “Well I certainly don’t” he retorts to Vincent after his asking who lives upstairs. He is selfish, contaminating Vincent’s urine samples with vodka and only obsessed with his own feelings of inadequacy – seen as he says disheartened “Jerome Morrow was never meant to be ~~only~~ one step down on the podium”. At this stage, Jerome is “burdened by perfection”, and his efforts up until now to conform to society’s expectations of him as a “swimming star”. However, Jerome too rebels – gaining hope from his friendship with Vincent and his involvement in assisting him, through individuality, to achieve his dream. In the closing scenes of the film, Jerome is seen as a new man – he has regained his former good-humour and is very optimistic in preparing “enough (samples) to last (Vincent) two lifetimes” despite the “99% probability” that he has a fatal heart defect – Ultimately, his second attempt at suicide is viewed from a positive perspective, as the golden light from the fire engulfing Jerome shines gold onto his medal which he has strung around his neck. Finally, Jerome has won. He has refused to conform to the conventions of his society and has consequently ~~reach arrived at~~ experiences inner peace and acceptance of his flaws as a human being. Niccol’s *Gattaca* demonstrates the achievements of Vincent Freeman, an individual who is both determined and persistent in his endeavours to reach the stars despite the overtly prejudiced views of those around him. Ultimately, it is his success which most effectively conveys Niccol’s message to always maintain those qualities which make you unique – as simultaneously the acts of Irene and Jerome – valids who also act to rebel against the conventions of society in which they live – also act to emphasise the importance of this.

Breaker Morant

3. Breaker Morant demonstrates that, in times of war, the distinction between right and wrong is blurred. Discuss

Comments

- a good response, but not upper range
- pertinent focus on topic established
- strong, relevant argumentative line is presented, which reveals an appreciation of the values raised by the propositional statement but, after the introduction tends to drift back into the text at the expense of the question proposal
- confidently examines the moral dilemma raised by the question, as explored within the film text
- close and precise textual analysis, supported by frequent apt textual reference
- expression clear, articulate and precise but without the propositional intensiveness and conceptual focus shown in the *Gattaca* sample

Student response (indicates words crossed out in student’s answer)

At the end of Bruce Beresford’s film, the plea in this anti-war statement for the end of the crimes and injustice that wars entail is exemplified in the final shooting of the 2 accused Australians, Harry Morant and Peter Handcock. It is through the corrupt court-martial of three Australian men and the unfolding of the events at Fort Edward that led to this trial, that Breaker Morant demonstrates that in times of war, the distinction between right and wrong is blurred. For as Thomas points out in his closing, “war has the ability to change men’s natures.”

In his defense, Morant claims that he was “deeply disturbed by what happened to Captain Hunt” and driven by this state in which “he was like a madman”, Morant seeks to “avenge Captain Hunt” through the shooting of the prisoner, Visser, whom he wholly believes at that time, was responsible for the death of his dear friend. Captain Taylor, a witness for the defense and friends with the three Australians on trial, claims that Lieutenant Morant “shot no Boer prisoners prior to the death of Captain Hunt”. In fact, Morant was even sceptical and opposed to (although not openly) the shooting of Boer prisoners ordered by Hunt. Spurred by his vengeance, Morant reacted to the situation he found himself in, with the shooting of Visser and while the court-martial establishes that Visser did not receive a fair trial, Morant is justified in his claim that “we didn’t carry military manuals with us. We were out in the veldt fighting the Boers the way they fought us”

Yet despite the affect of the ‘abnormal situation’ of having a friend killed or more precisely “mutilated with knives, while he was still alive”, Morant does not stop in his vengeful actions with the shooting of Visser under the guise of acting ‘under orders’ that there were to be no prisoners, Morant orders 6 Boer prisoners coming under a white flag to surrender, to be shot. Through Witton’s accusation that “you never gave a damn about orders, Harry. You’re just doing this to avenge Captain Hunt” it is revealed that Morant has ulterior motives, admitting himself that “it won’t bring him (Hunt) back, but it’s the next best thing”. Having previously refused to shoot prisoners, Morant oversteps his own ~~ideas~~ lines between right and wrong in the ensuing acts.

In this “new war for a new century”, while it is morally and legally wrong to shoot civilians, Morant and Handcock see the necessary justification for the shooting of the German missionary, Hesse. For them “It’s the first time the enemy is not in uniform, some are women, some are children and some are even missionaries”. And so in accordance with this perceived necessary, born from the “unorthodox nature of this warfare”, the missionary is shot by Handcock.

Furthermore, Handcock lies in court about the murder of the missionary, producing the fake alibi that he was on “intimate terms with two Boer women” and had gone to visit them when Hesse was shot. Handcock suggests that the act of committing perjury was justified in light of the fact that “our graves were dug on the day they arrested us” in response to the protestations of Witton who says, “But we’ve always told the truth” and “killing a missionary Peter?”

Indeed, the British are “playing the double-headed penny” with the bias of the court-martial clearly established when the court president finds evidence of the defense “completely irrelevant” and dismisses Thomas’ attempts to establish the credibility of the prosecutions witnesses. Witnesses such as Botha and even Colonel Hamilton, blatantly commit perjury on the stand, all because the Lord Kitchener believed “if these 3 Australians have to be sacrificed in order to bring about a peace conference, I think it is a small price to pay” In hopes to deter the Germans who were “looking for an excuse to enter the war”, the British considered justice expedient and were willing to sacrifice 3 Australians ~~for their~~ to achieve their political agendas.

Even in what the British believed to be the “sideshow of the war”- the court-martial, justice was not served and the distinction between right and wrong were not upheld due to the numerous acts of perjury. The line between right and wrong was further blurred with Handcock’s suggestion that since the court-martial was completely bias and that “trial was a bloody sham”, there was sufficient justification for him to also commit perjury – in order to clear himself and Morant and Witton of the charge of killing Hesse. In that act itself, and the killing of the 6 Boer prisoners and Visser, Breaker Morant demonstrates that the line between right and wrong is often blurred due to the motivations behind them. For this anti-war film shows us that war is indeed capable of changing men’s natures, to the extent that justice and human life are seen as expedient.

Gattaca

7. Gattaca shows that individuality is more important than conformity. Discuss.

Comments

- strong middle range response
- attempts to grapple with the question’s proposition but without clarity and precision
- quite reasonable textual knowledge and analysis and some awareness of film
- response displays a plainness of approach, which discloses a lack of depth of understanding, conceptual thought and awareness of the shape such an answer requires
- approach is organised but inherently limited
- whilst literate, only a limited facility with language is shown, with a variable degree of expressiveness
- better facility with textual insight, fuller conceptual thought and reasoning, and more precision in expression needed

Student response (indicates words crossed out in student’s answer)

Andrew Nichol’s “Gattaca” (1997) presents interesting ideas about genetic engineering particularly relating to individuality and conformity. ~~His opinion about the opion presented in Gattaca~~ Both are shown to have positive and negative traits related to them but Gattaca is slightly biased toward indiveduality. ~~The opening scenes show once~~ Near the opening of the movie Vincent (Jerome) is shown to be individual. The audience is not immediately told why he is individual but it is clear he is different to everyone else. Alone the scenes seem to have no bias, but juxtaposed it is clear the bias that Andrew has taken.

The opening scenes shows the conformity that the rest of the world seem to follow. The monotonous image of every person dressed in a black suite seems symbolic of their near perfect genetic code. Every person has the same expression and every person does the same action. This disturbing image does give the audience a negative bias toward conformity. Even the conception of children in “the natural way” is conformed to. Vincent’s parents eventually conform to this method to conceive Anton “a son my father saw worthy of his name”

Individuality is not as obvious in Gattaca as conformity is but is however ~~shown to be~~ presented in a positive way. The swimming contests show individuality as there can only be one winner. The positive slant is that the individual (Vincent) beats all other ~~contest~~ swimmers to emerge as winner over all the conformed people. Even Eugene never won as one of the conformed. But Vincent won as an individual. “Jerome Morrow was never meant to be second”. As an individual Vincent could achieve his goals whereas Eugene or Anton could not.

From a directing level Gattaca is also biased toward individuality. The scenes where Vincent is scrubbing his body the music and lighting is soft. This will ~~make the aud~~ influence the audiences ~~perent~~ perception of the scenes. Scenes where conformity are shown tend to be a bit erie and dark. For example, the ~~musi~~ the scene at the start ~~of the~~ of Gattaca where Gattaca employees are checking in. In this scene there is no music, the

lighting is dark and the only sound heard is a soft eerie “ping” of the DNA processor. This gives a negative bias on the scene and on conformity in general.

In Gattaca both individuality and conformity are presented with scenes supporting both arguments. The bias toward individuality is presented in story, setting, sound track and themes. ~~This slant in all its~~ This slant, though subtle, is clear in the juxtaposition of the different scenes. While overall the movie supports individuality it also seems to present the idea that sometimes individuality is not a positive. For example the final scene ~~was~~ when Vincent leaves on his mission and says “For someone who was never meant for this planet, I’m suddenly having a hard time leaving it”.

Writing task – Part 1

Sample 1

- precise, assured entry
- crisp, detailed and thorough explanation of the precise intended impact of language use on the listening audience
- analysis is extensive, free from needless and inappropriate elements, such as labelling and paraphrasing
- conclusion clearly contrasts the possible relative impact of both pieces, whilst resisting making judgements about the actual views
- strong language control and expressive sophistication

Student response (indicates words crossed out in student’s answer)

On talk back radio on the morning subsequent to the “liberation” of a truck load of chickens, the presenter and the caller advocate two opposing and disparate viewpoints. The presenter contends that not only were the effects of this “liberation” negative but also that the activists have no right to break the law even for the greater good. Conversely, it is the callers contention that the chickens in contention were being abused and that “breaking the law to free those poor creatures was “justified.”

In typical controversialist talkback style, the presenter presents his view in an admonishing, condemnatory, self-righteous and sarcastic tone. He uses words such as “do-gooder,” “clowns” and “idiotic” to denigrate the activists. He continues this throughout, also referring to them as anti-social hippies and bludgers. The use of these offensive words which have connotations of unsavoury, inappropriate behaviour would cast aspersions on the quality of persons who would be involved in such a scheme. Consequentially the audience would feel more compelled to align itself with the presenter rather than the anti-social hippies!

The presenter downplays the significance of the action by his colloquial reference to the animals as “chooks” and “nonsense” and contrasting this with the “poor farmer” who was just “earning his living”! The use of the word “poor” to describe the farmer is designed to elicit sympathy for his plight and would persuade listeners of the undeniable priority of a human’s livelihood over a “chooks” right to freedom.

The presenter’s use of a plethora of rhetorical questions and an example- “How would you feel if someone walked into your house?”- encourages the listener to imagine him/herself in that situation. The decidedly negative stance of the presenter is a potent toll of persuasion and would ensure the listener agrees that the activists were misguided.

The presenter appeals to both the listeners fears and sense of fair play when he asks “people just can’t take the law into their own hands or where would we end up”? This question would evoke feelings of indignation in the listener at the activist’s flagrant violation of the law. Also, by alluding to the unknown, -“Where will we end up”? He suggests that this is the top of the slippery slope and thus listeners would be inclined to agree that this kind of behaviour must be frowned upon in order to prevent further infringements.

Conversely, the callers tone is reasonably knowledgeable and balanced. The fact that she only rang to “correct your ignorant misrepresentations” ~~suggest~~—adumbrates her entirely rational arguments; and this reasonableness teamed with a complete lack of the hyperbole so prevalent in the presenter’s argument would appeal to the objective listener. It’s unbiased, undiluted; straightforward presentation would gain collective support due to the obvious merit, backed up with facts of what she says.

Her position of authority as a “member of Australians for Animal Rights” as well as her obvious knowledge, “cages only 450 square centimetres in size, enhance her credibility. This insight into and knowledge of the issue would ~~gamer~~ provoke collective support from the listeners who would be persuaded based on her obvious knowledge.

The caller uses alliteration in-“life and limb to liberate” and “furred and feathered friends” This alliteration is clever as it portrays the animals as cute and vulnerable and in need of protection. This encourages the listener ~~that~~ therefore, that the activists’ actions were justified. She goes on to make an appeal to civil liberties saying these “oppressed animals” deserve to be free to lead a natural life! This is persuasive, as no listener would feel comfortable in preventing anyone or anything from being afforded the rights he/she receives.

The caller capitalises ~~on~~ this appeal by then condemning the listeners for their selfish “human-centred” view. This trivialises any argument for restricting animal rights and ~~therefore~~ encourages the listener to refrain form selfishness. The desire in the listeners ~~would then~~ not to appear selfish would then prevail and they would be

inclined to dismiss any preconceived selfish notions and believe that animals should be afforded the “same rights” as we are. Her inclusive language is ~~also~~ persuasive as it allows the caller to identify with the listener and thus convince him/her of the credibility of her argument.

Both the presenter and the caller are persuasive but to varying degrees. The fact that talkback radio presenters are renowned for their controversy stirring arguments would ensure listeners would treat his argument with certain skepticism. His sarcastic, condemnatory tone would also serve to further alienate listeners. Conversely, the caller’s reasoned arguments and reasoned, educated tone would convince the listeners of the fact that she is an educated person and not just an “antisocial hippie” and thus her arguments would be eminently persuasive to talkback listeners.

Sample 2

- middle range response
- limited and basic
- typically generalised and imprecise, grapples with the idea of impact
- often resorts to mere labelling
- identifies potentially relevant words and phrases but lacks the means to explain how and why they work
- mediocre expression

Student response (indicates words crossed out in student’s answer)

The Radio Presenter’s comments were made to inform the ~~reader about~~ radio ~~listeners~~ listeners about how activists let chickens out of the ~~chile~~ chicken truck ~~and~~ that was situated in the farmers’ ~~pruper~~ property.

The presenter use a lot of Rhetorical Questions throughout his comments “are these ~~activit~~ activists or clown? ~~Thi~~ The tone in his voice seems he is appalled that people would let chickens run free on the streets. The ~~comm~~ Presenter also using emotional appeals “poor guy’s still in shock” he wants the listener to sympathize with him and ~~fe~~ to feel sorry for the farmer who lost “tens of thousands of dollars” The Presenter ~~is~~ uses ~~generalisation~~ exaggeration ~~chock~~ “chooks are more important than people to them, you see” ~~This was a tone~~ The tone he would of used would have been witty or sarcasm. The last technique the Presenter use was generalisation “they’re full of big ideas” ~~these~~ how does he know that the activists feel like this, he isn’t them. This would make the listeners feel a bit angry that he is making comments like that when he doesn’t even know the truth. The callers contention was to inform that chicken are possibly the most abused animals on the face of the earth treated so badly that if the public knew the details of how they lived and died, few would go on eating them. The caller uses facts “I’m a member of Australians for Animal Rights” this show the listeners that he knows what he is talking about, but the listeners may also think he is bias towards animal rights.

He is trying to plead and make the listeners aware of what really goes on behind the scenes with the chickens “trapped in cages, 450 square cms in size”, “without proper ventilation”. This is using facts because he would of look into this topic very closely and found out what really goes on. Finally the caller gives his own opinion “breaking the law to free those poor creatures was justifies”. This ~~would~~ could have a negative or positive impact on the listener depends what they are for or against animal rights. The tone the caller talk in sounded sincere, guarded, persuasive and opinionated.

Writing task – Part 2

Option B

Letter to the Editor

Sample 1

- approaches task with convincing voice and awareness of form
- astutely presents a clear and decisive line of argument in the introduction: ‘should not be transgressed for any reason’
- by adopting a persona, the student provides a ready means for engaging directly with the controversy
- draws skilfully on different parts of the given material, moving with assurance between the specific case and the wider moral domain
- the powerful conclusion not only links adeptly with the introduction, but also leaves the reader with strongly persuasive views
- strong language control and precision throughout

Student response (indicates words crossed out in student's answer)

The Editor
The Australian
Canberra,
2000

To the Editor,

I am writing in relation to the recent controversy surrounding the “liberation” of chickens in Melbourne and the wide-reaching moral implications of such action for all of us. I strongly believe that the laws by which we are governed are binding and should not be transgressed for any reason including animal rights. However, I must also acknowledge the fact that the treatment of captive animals, especially chickens, is abhorrent and reprehensible.

As a free-range chicken farmer, I feel well qualified to extol the virtues of a healthy lifestyle for captive animals and the negative consequences of a freedom restricting, imprisoned lifestyle. Undeniably, free-range chickens produce better quality eggs and enjoy a happier lifestyle than their captive counterparts. In my opinion, there should be harsher guidelines governing living conditions for animals bred in captivity. However, to ~~decry~~ condemn chicken producers for their poor treatment of chickens, skirts the issue entirely. What is of pivotal importance is despite the state of animal welfare or living conditions or perceived mistreatment of animals, no one under any circumstances has the right to take the law into their own hands and become vigilantes.

We Australians are lucky. We live in a democratic country, where free speech is encouraged, and where we are governed (for the most part) by rules that ensure our safety as opposed to restricting our freedom. It is these rules that ensure the safety ~~of an~~ and civilisation of our community, and we must rely on them to protect us. If we start to take it upon ourselves to make and break laws at random, we risk destroying the very foundations of our society. The liberation of chickens by a bunch of activists may seem a trifle trivial to some but it is representative of a growing trend of lawlessness. I must reiterate that in order to ensure our continued safety, (and even survival) we must follow all laws.

Having said this, our laws are not perfect. As I attested to earlier, the living conditions of captive animals is predominantly terrible. ~~And must be~~ The Association of Chicken Producers claims that their animals “receive excellent care” and so on, but that is prevaricating and evasive. Most of us can surely agree that these rules must be changed: however ~~breaking and~~ violating them is not the answer. Instead we must lobby parliament, sign petitions and campaign for law reform. This is how change is effected in civilized countries. This is ~~how~~ ~~we~~ the process by which we citizens have the power to bring about change without compromising our legal system, our laws or safety.

Finally, I cannot emphasise enough the need for due process. While I ~~Sympathy~~ sympathise with the activists’ intentions, I must condemn them for the way they brought shame to the cause of animal rights. Instead of risking injury and imprisonment pursuing schemes such as these, we should all divert our energies into trying to effect real change, and ~~in so~~ while doing so, always observing and respecting the laws that have been created for our safety and protection.

Yours sincerely,

Joe Nerkson.

Option A

‘Can breaking the law to help animals ever be justified?’

Sample 2

- response shows little sense of presenting a relevant argument to address the actual topic and task
- typically resorts to wild and uncontrolled rhetoric
- limited sense of what a speech constitutes or awareness of how to connect with the targeted audience
- limited use of given material

Student response (indicates words crossed out in student's answer)

If someone hits you is it alright to break their nose? What would this world turn into if everyone breaks the law because they think it's ~~okay~~ justified? ~~Why have a~~ ~~Why don't we live like a~~ ~~min~~ We are all animals after all. ~~If we all decided animals our pets should live in the house and we should live in the kennel~~ If we break the law for animals than why don't we break the law for our family too? My brother's in jail so I might sneak him out! Or my daughter wants a barbie bus so I'm going to steal one.

If we break the law for animals and get away with it because it is justified; ~~Then we can live the life we have always wanted by breaking the law because it's justified~~ ~~our~~ then imagine what we can do for our family and work. If our neighbours German Shepherd barks all night then I might let it off the chain because it didn't like being restricted! Is this going to help ~~me~~ Sallys baby rabbit that was left to run for its life?

Helping animals is looking after them, ~~and feed~~ feeding them and giving them all the love and attention they deserve. We wouldn't let our cat catch out goldfish and eat it.

~~Because that's just what it wanted! We would feed it the canned food~~ We protect our animals pets that because they give ~~ourselves~~ us, and our familys comfort and fun throughout ~~their~~ our lives. We treat them well too. ~~They live just as~~ They sleep on the end of our beds or snooze in the sun. We provide food for them so they don't have to lift a paw or fin!

We love our animals the way they are so why should we break the law because we don't like someone elses animals?

Let the animals be happy and comforted with people who look after and love them.

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