

GENERAL COMMENTS

The 2011 English examination consisted of three sections. Section A (Text response) offered students the choice of two topics for each of the 20 texts. Students were required to complete one response. Section B (Writing in Context) instructed students to compose a piece of writing stemming from a prompt for each of the four Contexts. Section C of the examination (Analysis of language use) required students to analyse the ways in which language and visual features were used to persuade in a blog.

Assessment of each section was based on the criteria and applied holistically, using the descriptors of the 'Expected Qualities for the Mark Range', which can be found on the VCAA website on the English study page. Each student's examination was assessed by no fewer than six independent markers.

Approximately 40 000 students sat for the 2011 English examination, and assessors were presented with a range of skills and levels of engagement with the examination. Both the quality and quantity of work were generally quite sound and at times impressive. The evident awareness of the value of close textual knowledge and careful management of response structure indicates sound teaching and learning.

Students seemed to have a clear understanding of how to approach the examination, with a large number of completed pieces of writing suggesting that students had good time management. There were few papers where students did not attempt a response, and almost all script books were filled out correctly.

On the other hand, it should be noted that:

- there is a perennial problem of some students not fully engaging with the actual elements of the topics and prompts. Greater care needs to be taken in analysing and recognising the specific expectations of each topic or prompt – often this comes down to a precise understanding of the actual words that comprise the task
- this is an English examination and strong language skills (including correct spelling and grammar) are expected and necessary for success
- it is recommended that students organise their time so that enough time is left to proofread their work. While handwriting is not assessed, it must be legible
- there still seems to be some dependence on formulaic responses. The study of English is concerned with developing students' understanding and confidence in responding to the specific topics and prompts that are offered in the examination. Active engagement with texts enables students to develop language awareness, to articulate ideas and to develop communication skills. Clearly, a personal engagement with the texts and ideas is neither formulaic nor predictable.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

The student responses provided below are presented for illustrative and informative reasons, and they may form the basis of profitable discussions. These examples should not be taken as 'the best' that is possible or as 'perfect'; indeed, none is without shortcomings of one sort or another. Readers will obviously be able to make many more observations about the quality of these responses beyond the brief comments offered herein.

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section A – Text response

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	3	7	14	19	20	17	11	5	3	5.8

The two topics enabled students to address the knowledge and skills as outlined in the study design. The choice of topics enabled students to develop a sustained discussion from the following aspects of key knowledge for Outcome 1 in Units 3 and 4:

- the ideas, characters and themes constructed by the author/director and presented in the selected text
- the way the author/director uses structures, features and conventions to construct meaning
- the ways in which authors/directors express or imply a point of view and values
- the ways in which readers' interpretations of text differ and why.

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In 2011 students' skills and textual knowledge were good. It was evident that most students selected and responded to the specifics of a topic with which they felt they could demonstrate their understanding of the text. Few students gave simple plot summaries. Assessors acknowledged the growing sense of students' ability to understand, acknowledge and explore the genre of their selected text.

Students should be encouraged to have confidence in their own reading and demonstrate a personal understanding of their text rather than relying exclusively on commercially produced material. All texts are complex and offer much opportunity for exploration. There is no expected response to a topic, and the most successful pieces were those that were thoughtful and fresh. Assessors do not have to agree with the interpretation of a topic or text, but students must be able to support their interpretations with insightful evidence from the text. If students have an excellent knowledge of their text and a grasp of the topic, then they should be confident when constructing their essays and presenting their ideas.

Students' understanding, deconstruction and organisation of responses in relation to the set topics are the areas that require the most work. Students should be taught to look critically at the wording of the topic and consider what assumptions are being made within the topic. Too many students want to respond to their own question rather than grapple with the ideas of the set topic. It is worth reviewing the relevant description from the published 'Expected Qualities – Text Response'. For a score of 9 or 10, a script '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'.

Students must ensure that they are exploring all of the elements presented in the topic. Too often students selected a key point from the topic as the main idea for their essay but omitted a significant idea that had a major bearing on the topic itself. For example, the second topic for *A Christmas Carol* was, 'Although Dickens' story is entertaining, even enthralling, it is mainly intended to educate. Discuss'. Some students who attempted this topic ignored the idea offered in the first part of the topic: '... story is entertaining, even enthralling' and focused entirely on the 'mainly intended to educate'. In the second topic for *Things We Didn't See Coming*, some students focused on one of the alternatives but failed to fulfil the expectations of the topic by comparing 'the future of humanity' and 'the fate of the environment'.

The majority of students demonstrated an understanding of how to write a text essay. Clear introductions, appropriate paragraphing and the ability to embed quotations appropriately were a feature of most pieces. The following basic skills must be continually reinforced: building more sophisticated vocabulary, continuing to improve grammar and an increased focus on sentence structure.

The most popular texts and their mean scores, out of a possible 10 marks, were as follows.

Text	% of students	Average mark
<i>On the Waterfront</i>	19.4%	5.8
<i>Cosi</i>	12.7%	5.0
<i>Twelve Angry Men</i>	10.9%	5.7
<i>Year of Wonders</i>	9.5%	5.9
<i>Maestro</i>	8.2%	5.7

The least popular texts for this part included *Great Short Works* (Poe), *Bypass: the story of a road*, *A Human Pattern: Selected Poems* by Judith Wright and *Dreams From My Father*.

The highest mean score for Section A was achieved by students who wrote on *A Human Pattern: Selected Poems*, *Richard III*, *Ransom*, *Selected Poems* (Slessor) and *A Farewell to Arms*.

The following example is an upper-range response.

Bypass: the story of a road (i.)

How is McGirr's own character revealed in his book *Bypass: the story of a road*?

In his meandering tale Bypass: the story of a road, Michael McGirr leads his readers on a journey down 'Australia's main street', the Hume Highway ensuring that the stretch of bitumen is seen in a unique and refreshing way. From his bicycle saddle, McGirr is able to make use of his keen eye for detail as he observes, ponders and enlightens on the intricacies of human behaviour. Not only does his unique and honest narrative detail his journey from Sydney to Melbourne, it also offers an insight into the personal and spiritual journey that McGirr has embarked on. His physical journey is accompanied by anecdotes from his past, historical insights and aspects of his immense knowledge of literature, as well the constant embellishment of self-deprecating humour. From all aspects of the journey that McGirr includes in his memoir, his readers are able to learn more of the man himself. In this way, Bypass: the story of a road proves not only to be a detailed account of a bike ride, but a collection of opportunities to learn about McGirr's own character.

One of the most obvious traits of McGirr's character that is evident in his writing is his ability to observe and notice occurrences that many other would not. Bypass: the story of a road is filled with such observations made along the Hume Highway, ranging from truck drivers in roadhouses to historical bridges and hills. He observes a truck driver, alighting from his cabin to dispose of an apple core, a mundane enough occurrence that McGirr watches closely to comment on the 'graceful' movements of the man that are in sharp contrast to the machine that dwarfs him. Together with Jenny he notices a small boy, who crying as a result of a dog scaring him, is told to stop by his father, 'already putting on a brave face' remarks Jenny. McGirr also observes a father with his child who after retrieving the child's pacifier from the dirt sucks it clean and returns it, claiming 'if it kills you, it will kill me first'. Whilst all of these observations are unremarkable in the normalcy, by including them in his narrative McGirr reveals a great deal about his appreciation for the small things in life. He celebrates the ability to be thankful for what one has, as well as the ability to slow down, 'resist the urgency' of life in order to take note of life's small wonders.

Not only do the anecdotes and observations reveal McGirr's penchant for observing and his appreciation for life in its most natural state; they also reveal McGirr's great skill at listening and engaging with complete strangers. In all of his encounters with the Hume Highway's colourful characters, McGirr shows his talent for getting people to open up to him. He tells of the couple he meets at a rest stop who are embarking on their first holiday since the wife became ill, commenting on 'the private pain they were towing as well'. Along the same lines, McGirr includes a past experience at a swap-meet where he met a lady whose husband had passed away, who referred to him as having gone to the 'great swap-meet in the sky'. These encounters are included with a warmth and honesty that hints at McGirr's caring nature.

Both of the examples mentioned above also show that McGirr is not afraid to discuss life's final destination, death. In many of the experiences he includes in the narrative, perhaps due to his religious background and faith, in that he is not afraid to confront the more delicate aspects of life. After visiting a graveyard in Gunning, McGirr remarks that 'even a long life is short', which would perhaps be a comment fitting the pessimistic views of a 'concave' thinker, if the rest of the narrative were not a celebration of lives lived. He discusses the roadside memorials with reverence, especially that of David, a traffic fatality whose story, all the loss; the pain and the grief, is succinctly concluded with these mournful statement, 'we remember'. He uses the sad moments of reflections on lives cut short to pay due respect to the dead while also promoting his belief that a life should be lived to the full.

The construction of his memoir also reveals aspects of McGirr's character to his readers. His choice of subject matter and the way the book is constructed shows an eclectic side to his personality. He uses Cliff Young, an inspirational figure, to maintain fluidity throughout the narrative as well as bumper stickers to introduce each vignette. These reveal a respect for those with perseverance and an element of a cheeky, whimsical personality that uses humour with relish. The 'note on sauces' at the conclusion of the book and the 'mud map' at the beginning also show the meticulous side of McGirr and the careful planning and time he dedicated to this venture.

Through his journey along that most travelled road, the Hume Highway, McGirr enables his readers to discover elements of his own character in the aspects that he included in his book, Bypass: the story of a road is a narrative rich in ideas, observations and knowledge and it is through McGirr's interactions and anecdotes that the reader learns of his caring, reverent and supportive personality. The structure of book also reveals a meticulous and eclectic side to McGirr's character, proving that the book provides as much insight into the author as the journey he embarked on.

Assessor comments

- Thoughtful, well-developed sense of the topic, aware of its implications in relation to the text.
- Strong student voice with a clear sense of the text.
- Excellent selection from the text to support and develop ideas implied in the topic.
- Assured and very well constructed.

The following example is an upper-range response.

Ransom (ii.)

'Despite his family's fears, Priam brings his son home.' Why is he successful?

Priam brings home his son but also a 'ransomed and restored' self, which is why he is so successful. It is in what one offers when they 'com[e] as [they are]' and the freedom this derives that explains not only Priam's success in retrieving his son's body, but assists every character in finding and retrieving that which they, as men, long for the most. All good things, David Malouf demonstrates, lie in this 'acceptance' and 'going' as one's true self.

Priam's 'family fears' are made manifest in Priam's confrontation with Hecuba. Here it is revealed that Priam 'rattle[s] about like a pea in the golden husk of [his] own dazzling eminence'. In other words, Priam expresses that in his role as king, to appear 'fixed and permanent. Unchangeable therefore unchanged' he is hollow, empty. It is here that Malouf suggests why Priam is successful in his act of ransoming his son. After the sacking of Troy, Priam, a child covered in excrement saw 'that road [that] leads to slavery before him' and in that moment he seemed to have been emptied of himself, 'that life', he tells Hecuba, 'I have lived it only in a ghostly way'. SO what Malouf makes ostensibly clear, is that Priam is lacking something, substance.

Furthermore, when pondering the pointlessness of his rescue, the 'mockery' of being propped up, a doll set up by the gods only to fall, that which made him so successful is attained. Priam comes to the god-given revelation of chance, that which creates an opening and 'the opportunity to act for ourselves and force events into a different course'. It is by being prompted by the impossibility and therefore possibility of achieving something new, of being the hero of the deed that until now had not been attempted' that Priam could be successful. This is because he had something to offer, something subversive and found in the relationship between he and Achilles and indeed all men, the freedom and grace of simply being a man. Priam's actions to offer that 'opening', 'the opportunity to break free from the obligation of being always the hero...to put on the lighter bond of being simply a man', that is what spells his success, 'that is the real gift [he] has to bring him.'

Furthermore, to have a son, to hold a son in your arms, there must be a father, not a king, but a father. In entering 'the prattling world' of men, in re-entering his humanity, Priam becomes the father that Achilles' mistakes for his own, Peleus. It is in identifying the fact that all men, all humans, cry out for the 'father' that Priam was successful. In coming to Achilles as a man, a father, Priam brought with him the treasure Achilles would be moved by, something he was really searching for – love – their embrace was the ultimate transaction.

Malouf clearly suggest that in coming into one's self, Priam and in fact all are successful. Introduced to the reader as a man 'listening for the voice of his mother tasting the sharp salt' of his reality without her on 'his lip', we are shown a man, much like Priam, who is 'half himself'. He is searching for her but she is gone. Instead of becoming wholly himself, Achilles 'centre[s] himself around another' until that person too has left and he finds himself 'out each day to tramp the shore,' the place of two halves, the one he is, the earth, and the one 'that holds nothing and in itself cannot be held' – the sea. It is in defying that he is a man, that he neglects the need, [and] obligation' that when life Priam, he too finds himself 'frees itself and falls away'. Indeed, it is when Achilles feels in himself, as a perfect order of heart, body occasion, when he has found his place in that 'long vista of time' as a wave that will collapse and 'might already be gone', that comes the enactment, 'under the stars and the very breath of gods' of the very that 'gave me life' (Priam) of the true Achilles, the one he has come all this way to find. Achilles is successful, for he has found his 'true' self. In no clearer words does Malouf highlight that this is what we are, in the end, looking for, ourselves.

Success, 'the perfect order', can only come when heart, body, occasion; love, nature and place are realised. This is perfectly depicted when Achilles goes to where Hector is being embalmed, after leaving the embrace of the father (Priam) and the 'perfect unity' found in that bond. Here, Achilles is taken from his sphere of being the hero, like Priam's kingliness was dissolved in Somax's company, in the company of me, when he steps into the sphere of the women. He thinks that this is the first place we come into, and the last place we pass through precisely, 'unheroic thoughts' but the thoughts of mere mortals. When Achilles stops dwelling in that sphere that lies above simply being a man, and puts on the lighter bond, he has success and finds himself. Until a man sees that death that is in him from the very beginning, that he too will one day be, in there, with the women, 'naked as he began...being turned this way then that in the hands of women', that he will die, that is when he is successful. For as Malouf points out, death, that which we have 'from our first breath', that is what it means to be a man and a mortal'.

To further tease out the concepts and what they imply, embedded in this text, the success Priam and Achilles both find, must be seen as that 'final achievement of what they were'. This 'meeting', which only occurred as a result of Priam's search for himself, was the clear 'goal of their lives', it is what they bring back that determines their success, and what they bring to each other, that explains why they serve 'triumph' in the clear and fresh air. Again, Priam went as a man, a father, and his greatest gift was the chance to put on the lighter bond of simply being a man. Much like Somax, after the death of his son, it was his embrace of Beauty, in seeing that nothing good comes from enmity, but only hat 'perfect amity' between two supposed foes, that success is found. For as Somax says to Priam on his pilgrimage down that dusty road to Greece, where his other half left him all those years ago, we are allowed here, all of us and placing his 'palm on his chest, indicated his heart'. For the man who dwelled in the determinism of the gods, much like Achilles and Priam, the gods (Iris) say just live, for Hermes himself, Priam's guide to help him find himself lifted up human nature and labelled himself as a man like the rest of us.' Being a man is a treasure, 'lest the

honour of all men be trampled in the dust'. It is because Priam had discovered this about all men, that he was able to reach Achilles, himself calling out for his 'father', for the love of the father, and his son.

Ransom by David Malouf, is all about the greatness of men, not heroes and kings. The ability of Priam, Achilles and all the characters to find themselves in this light, 'under the breath of the gods' and 'in the hands of women' is the reason they achieve the ultimate success, finding who they are and what they are, 'the final achievement of what they were'. In this pilgrimage to self, the 'sun is already up and began to burn off the white crisp ground frost's spring has arrived.

Assessor comments

- A strong understanding of the implications of the topic in relation to the text.
- Very well written, with a particularly strong and relevant vocabulary.
- Excellent use of the text to develop ideas implied in the topic.

The following example is a mid-range response.

Twelve Angry Men (ii.)

Why is it so difficult for the jury in Twelve Angry Men to reach its final verdict?

Twelve Angry Men, a play by Reginald Rose presents the view that prejudice, personal feelings and stubbornness restrict our decisions and the choices that are made. This is because the jury find it difficult to reach a final verdict. Prejudice and personal feelings blind a juror from the truth and being stubborn causes the verdict to be prolonged.

Personal prejudice can influence a jurors decision and this impacts on the case and its final verdict. When a juror is blinded by prejudice they cannot see the facts and truth that are presented in front of them. Prejudice conflicts with opinions and also with other jurors. The 10th Juror is blinded by personal prejudice which is hatred and rebuke for the people of slum background. He agrees with eh 4th juror when he said 'children from slum backgrounds are potential menaces to society'. The 10th juror even said 'They are multiplying five times as fast as we are,' 'wild animals', 'They breed line animals'. This is illustrated by his vexatious behaviour to the topic of 'slum people/background'. His behaviour or prejudice influences on his decisions and his verdict. It also causes disruption to the jury system as he is blinded by rage and prejudice obscuring the truth, causing a biased verdict.

Similar to prejudice, personal feelings can dictate the decisions of a juror and influence the verdict of the case. When a juror becomes too attached or too involved in the case it can cause unnecessary disruptions and corrupted decisions. The 3rd juror became too personally involved and allowed his personal feelings to sway his thoughts. He claimed to be the boys 'executioner' and that 'he's got to burn'. Illustrating that the 3rd juror has related this case to his feelings towards his own son and how he did not punish his son and he will punish this boy on trial in replacement. 'I can feel the knife going in'. Describes to the jurors that he felt so attached to the case that he became deluded causing his decision to become tainted. Being swayed and tainted by personal feelings causes the juror to be blinded and restricted from the facts and truth in front of him. This disrupts the verdict and decisions made.

When jurors are stubborn and cannot accept the facts it delays the final verdict and it makes the case harder to resolve. Stubbornness is very similar to prejudice and personal feelings, it can sway, influence and impact on the decisions that are made.

When the jurors who were blinded by prejudice or feelings are defeated and were able to see the facts in front of them. They refused to accept the facts and remained stubborn by not changing their verdict. Instead they called for a hung jury, because they knew that they could not persuade the other jurors to change their vote. A hung jury would mean a new jury and it meant that the boy would be sent off to die. By being stubborn it causes jurors to rebuke decisions and facts and delay the final verdict.

Being blinded by prejudice, swayed by personal feelings and being stubborn can effect the verdict and increase the difficulty of the case. Those factors restrict and influence decisions made and causes the verdict to be biased and tainted. Thus making it difficult to reach a final verdict.

Assessor comments

- Controlled approach to the topic.
- Mostly vague, but occasionally apt, textual references.
- This is a mid-range response.

Section B – Writing in Context

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	4	9	15	20	20	15	9	4	2	5.5

The task in each Context required students to write an extended response exploring the ideas of the prompt and using detail from at least one prescribed text. In all cases students had something to say in their writing, and it was clear that some very interesting approaches to creating and presenting had been studied in classes.

Student responses in Section B (Writing in Context) took advantage of the range of forms and writing styles. Some were thoughtful and provocative, demonstrating sophisticated insights into the Context through the prompt's focus and the texts studied throughout the year. Most students presented a piece of writing related to their Context, the more successful choosing an approach to writing that suited their individual strengths and that was appropriate to the ideas they wished to convey.

The most successful students wrote with confidence and structured their pieces in a cohesive manner so that the ideas were well developed within the conventions of the writing form they selected. It appears that the expository approach, in its many forms, was still the most popular, although many students attempted an imaginative approach. Few students attempted a persuasive approach but many who did were successful. Students wrote in various forms; for example, opinion articles, speeches, essays, narratives and letters.

While the majority of students had little difficulty in demonstrating how their writing was informed by a prescribed text, there were some who seemed to ignore the instructions from the examination: 'Your writing must draw directly from at least one selected text that you have studied for this Context'. This is a clear instruction that the text drawn from must inform the writing in ways that must be clear to the reader and that the student has used it effectively 'as appropriate to the task'. A small number of students, however, seemed to show little or no connection to the ideas of the text they nominated. Some narratives were not clearly drawing on 'detail and ideas' from the selected text. On the other hand, most students seemed to be aware that Section B was not a text response.

It is important that students understand the ideas and/or arguments arising from the prompt and deal with them accordingly. The examination required students to explore ideas related to 'compromise' and its importance 'when responding to conflict', or to examine the idea of identity ('there is no *me*') in relation to the absence of connection ('without connection to others'). In 'Whose reality?' the focus of the prompt was 'shared experiences' and how that does not mean 'people see things the same way'. 'The imaginative landscape' prompt related to the concept of creating 'places in which we dwell'.

Students must respond to prompts. While a prompt can be seen as a springboard for ideas in relation to the Context, the piece of writing must deal with the ideas the prompt itself offers. The most successful scripts showed insightful grasps of the implications of the prompt. While the majority of students were able to work with the prompt, there were some who seemed to ignore the prompt altogether.

Information on assessing the Context

CONTEXT	%	Mean	Most popular text
Encountering conflict	41.6%	5.4	<i>The Crucible</i>
Identity and belonging	29.1%	5.5	<i>Growing Up Asian in Australia</i>
Whose reality?	18.2%	5.5	<i>A Streetcar Named Desire</i>
The imaginative landscape	10.1%	5.8	<i>Island</i>

Some critical advice for teachers and students

- Students must demonstrate 'a controlled use of language', and this generic skill should be understood and practised.
- Students should take the time to 'unpack' the prompt before they begin writing.
- Formulaic approaches were limiting.
- Memorised responses failed to address the prompt.
- Use texts as vehicles, not as the centre of the task.
- Avoid retelling the plot.

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- Teach/learn a variety of forms of writing.
- Incorporate texts in ways appropriate to the form.
- Practise writing in a range of approaches, styles and forms.
- Ensure there is adequate practice and strategies for exploring the prompt.
- With imaginative writing, ensure that the form and content of the piece is sufficiently sophisticated for exploring the ideas of the context and the prompt.
- Develop writing that is well crafted.
- Teach/learn the use of text(s) to explain complexity, not as simple illustration.
- It may be useful to ask the question, 'What does the text suggest about our Context?'

Sample pieces for each Context appear at the end of this report.

Section C – Analysis of language use

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	3	9	16	22	20	15	8	3	2	5.4

Section C (Analysis of language use) contained a blog that explored the changing nature of tattoos. Most students understood the importance of carefully reading and considering the 'Background information', which gave a clear context. A blog offers an invitation to respond, and the given material included four responses to the initial post. The instructions asked students to 'read all parts of the blog' as offering material that could be analysed. Students were expected to analyse the ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view.

The main piece set up its point of view from the start in the subheading. The writer compared historical meanings of tattoos with a contemporary perspective, lamenting the change from something with power to something merely fashionable. Visual features available for analysis included two photographs, each dealing with an aspect of the power of tattoos, and the blog layout. The comments also offered views from four respondents, each presenting their own point of view and perspective on tattoos.

Students must select the parts of the material that allow them to discuss the ways in which language features position readers. Those students who read the material carefully were able to find numerous and various opportunities for analysing the ways language was used to persuade, and were rewarded accordingly. In stronger responses, strategic selection, together with well-developed précis skills, allowed students to demonstrate their language analysis skills.

Students offered their perspectives on language use in the presented material, and the most successful responses were sophisticated and articulate. There were few examples of simplistic labelling, and it was clear that most students understood the nature of this task.

Some critical advice for teachers and students preparing for the exam.

- Pay careful attention to the 'Background information' to gain a good understanding of the context of the piece presented.
- Practise identifying points of view in media articles.
- Ensure that there is an appropriate balance between summary and analysis.
- Use a wide range of tools that seek to persuade.
- Focus on the language.
- Keep technique identification to a minimum and instead explore how language is being used to persuade.
- Focus on the tone – why it is being used and how it may change throughout a piece.
- Explore how visual features add to the persuasiveness of the written language and how they work together (or contradict).
- Work on incorporating analysis of visual features fluently into the response.
- Respond to the pieces authentically.

The VCAA is unable to publish student responses to Section C of the 2011 English examination. Teachers and students may refer to previous years' Assessment Reports for illustrations of student responses to the task in Section C.

Section B Samples

There are two samples from each of the four Contexts and they show a range of writing styles.

Context 1 – The imaginative landscape

'We create the places in which we dwell.'

Context 1, Sample A

Complex in nature, the human interplay whether physical or imagined, collective or individual, has a great impact on how people form a place in which one dwells. The many landscapes we traverse across our lives are paradoxical in nature as the same setting may illicit very different reactions from people. For some, a place may inspire feelings of security and sanctuary, though for others it may bring about depression and downfall. Such aspects of the imaginative landscape are connected to the human condition by famed African American writer and Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison who stated that 'Home is where the memory of self dwells. Whether those memories spawn or shrivel us determine who we are and what we may become.' Landscapes permit individuals to connect to a sense of unity, validity and with clear communication; functional and stable relationships can continue to engender growth.

Key to these are the rituals and routines attached with tradition that allow one to create a place in which they inhabit. Conversely, a disconnection to a landscape due to conflicting appreciation and outlook on the land can have a detrimental effect upon people causing derision, animosity and a rupture between person and place. This lack of connection brings about isolation between self, society and their associated traditions and history that can cause a hostile environment in which one is dwelling.

The multifaceted landscapes we inhabit and the impact that they have upon the human condition is exemplified by Rachel Perkins' Australian film 'One Night the Moon'.

Individual and societies' connecting to their environment and identities are one of the most vital foundation towards engendering growth, allowing one to create an emotional connection to their landscape. Feeling a sense of belonging endless one to express themselves in a landscape with a sense of purpose enabling aspirations to be met. When environments allow one to feel welcomed and comfortable, it helps individuals and groups to prosper in their imagining landscape that they have formed and connected both physically and emotionally to. Albert the Aboriginal 'black tracker' in Perkins' film 'One Night the Moon' demonstrates a powerful and spiritual connection with the landscape in which he dwells, allowing his sense of identity to thrive. The lyrics of the song 'This Land is My Land' demonstrates Albert's distinct correlation to the landscape as he says 'this land is my rock, water, animal and tree', sustaining his identity. Perkins' musical choice to make Albert sing in a lower register represents Albert's deep grounding that is further emphasised by the ancient sounds of the didgeridoo, allowing him to read the land rather than merely looking at it, permitting him to be comfortable in the place in which he inhabits. Furthermore, Albert quitting the police force is symbolic of his self-assurance, as he knows his true identity in his environment and will not settle for anything less than what he desires.

However such scenery does not seem to fit for all characters. Some may feel at unease if they are disconnected their landscape, resulting to suffering and displacement in particular dwellings. These enduring motives inflame the inhibited growth of an individual, leading to stunted growth, anguish and death. As seen in 'One Night the Moon,' the audience gains a sense of Jim Ryan's lack of identity in the opening scenes of the film when he is presented drunk, distressed a feeling displaced in his environment. Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody's composition choices in the song 'This land is Mine,' stresses Ryan's high register, underscored by frenzied Celtic strings which in this context emphasises both his worried insistence and desperation that he must own the land and be in charge of it, trying to create his own place in an environment that is not his. In addition, the cinematographic technique of the camera evolving around Ryan seems to show the faults in the settlers view of the land as he 'signed on the dotted line' through the process of optical effects post production which drained the images in pink tone, thus giving the landscape a rugged and threatening presence. Perkins attempts to convey a loss of foundation on the part of Ryan's character based on his absence of identity with the land 'working hard just to make it pay' when juxtaposed with Albert's emotional insight of the land 'from generations passed to infinity,' allowing him to connect favourably to the creation of the place in which he lives.

Providing a sense of cohesion and strength, a single person and community are able to develop respect and trust towards each other if they have similar outlooks on the land of which they inherit. This broader perception of each other offers a feel of togetherness and comfort, hence allowing for clear communication and mutual respect to develop offering a sense of grounding for all. Clear interpretation and interaction of the land is not possible unless humans collectively share the same vision and understanding of a particular locale. Albert's ability to collaborate with the land and work on mutual terms with it rather than impose on it, and, his interaction with white people is of significant importance. The mother takes a powerful step within the settler community as she interacts with Albert to locate her lost daughter Emily. The duet which the mother sings with Albert '...business...you and me' represents the functional partnership of the mother and Albert uniting together to locate Emily. Her acknowledgement of Albert's innate superior understanding of the land, shows how when individuals have both minds set on similar outlooks, they can both work together to achieve a common goal; that is to retrieve Emily.

On the contrary, feelings of animosity amongst collective people and individuality can lead to differences between homes, due to how each create and react to a landscape. When a connection with our physical environment is lost, so is an emotional one, creating distinctions between how some perceive environments. Jim Ryan's relationship with his wife slowly severs, as her perseverance in collaborating Jim with Albert 'Please let him help...I think he knows something' was increasingly refused as Jim insisted 'I swear to you, I'm going to find her'. Here Ryan acknowledges but refuses to accept Albert's distinct correlation to the land as it is an uncomfortable admittance of prior ownership. Thus, Ryan's eventual suicide is symbolic of his 'white fella' stoicism that is unable to collaborate with Albert without imposing his ideals on the environment.

Time spent in a single environment often leaves an indelible mark on the frame of mind of both the collective and individual. Built over many years, experiencing historical traditions of both the past and present enables a group to feel comfort in their connection to the landscape, allowing them to form a creation of a place from past customs and traditions. Moreover, carrying the rituals associated with these strong traditions allows for a sense of validity, purpose and strength to develop across between people and communities. Albert who characterises this deep connection, displays his cultural practice through flowing the moonlight to find Emily. Here, his ability to relate and interpret the land shows the historical traditions that Aboriginal Dreamtime stories that have been passed down from generations. The stories are a portrayal of the Aboriginal understanding of the world and its creation, enacted in ceremonies and danced in form and sung in song chants, to bring the dreaming to bear of life today, giving them a sense of grounding in their landscape.

Nonetheless, when we fail to connect to our landscape, it can have a crucial hostile effect on emotions and spiritual understanding of a landscape. Without routines or rituals to feel a physical and psychological land, one's creation of a place may feel separated misguiding from the past, present and future. Imposed Christian and white settler ideals are at odds with the Aboriginal landscape as this is best represented by the presence of Ryan's veranda clad house together with its lace opening to the rugged terrain. This is juxtaposed with the Aboriginals who we see around a campfire out in the elements all night. Thus Perkins is showing those who have an understanding of the land those who are imposing their ideals on it. Also, after Emily goes missing, time-lapse photography portrays the clouds closing in on the horizon. This is symbolic of the white settler who is alone at odds in the terrain as they are not truly viewing and living in it.

The Australian landscape has been a contested landscape in Australian cinema. There have been a host of films like 'Rabbit Proof Fence' and 'Ten Canoes' that have claimed back or re-imagined the outback from an Aboriginal perspective. Rachel Perkins's film is in the same vein. The film, a collaboration between white and black musicians, writers and film makers act as a microcosm for what is needed in the process of reconciliation. Paul Kelly and Kell Carmody's music, with its use of polyphonic and a mixture of sounds highlights the effectiveness reconciling harmonies which both acknowledge differences and herald in a new form of cultural and political landscape where understanding one's outlook on land are key. Kevin Rudd's 'Sorry Speech' as prime minister underscores this new bond of harmony 'for the past, suffering and hurt of these stolen generations. We are sorry' which typifies the mutual resolve and respect of being 'truly equal partners' within a future Australian landscape where one's creation of a land is not imposed by another, but instead, joined together as one to acknowledge the differences.

Perkins illustrates to the audience that having a sense of place in a landscape is fundamental to our sense of contentment and security; which inextricably bound to form the fabric of one's imaginative landscape. The impact landscapes have on knowledge is substantial, thus, in order to lead a fulfilling life and become a contented individual, it is essential that humans find the landscape that each can relate to and co-exist within a meaningful way.

Assessor comments

- Demonstrates thoughtful understanding of the film and the way in which it relates to the Context.
- Insightful development of the possibilities of the prompt.
- Uses textual detail with assurance
- Clear, controlled expression.
- This is an upper-range response.

Context 1, Sample B

The wind howled around my body, claws digging icy knives into pinpricks of my clothes. My footprints veered behind me, uneven where the wind had blown me off track and I had dragged myself, muscles straining, sinews groaning back to my intended path. The barn loomed ahead, stark against the white swirl of the snow. I heaved the door open, slamming it against the horizontal sleet. The wind continued to shriek, dull, insulated yet relentless.

My horse Scott, stood in one of the stalls, eyeing us with interest. His coat was flecked with grey and my mind immediately flashed back to when he was glossy and fat, as black as the coal mine my father had saved him from. The wind rose in intensity, until the abrupt slam of the door cut it short and my father entered, moving towards the peg where Scott's dusty headstall hung. His movements were irregular, jerky, troubled, so unlike his confident gait I attempted to emulate. The shrieking pitch of the wind rose up once more, berating the inside of the barn in its lustful menace. This time it did not cease. A squat man entered, eyes rolling greedily above a red, blotchy nose and unkempt clothing. I did not like him and neither it seemed, did Scott. His ears were pressed against his head wearily as the squat man circled him, like a carrion bird assessing a carcass.



A flash of coins passed between my father and the men, I wondered briefly what his purpose was. My mind searched for a possibility, but to no avail. My father fastened the halter with trembling hands, as the squat man took the leadrope, wrenching Scott towards the open door. A rusty truck was visible through the slanting snow, its worn grate down, leading to a dark, gloomy hell. My heart stopped as I realised what was happening. Bile rose in my throat, bold pumping in my ears, nails digging painfully into numb palms. Betrayal seeped through my body like poison.

My feet were moving, striving against the gale that sought to trip me, mouth gaped opening an inaudible protest, screaming harshly at the elements. My brother caught me mid leap, clasp his arm around my mouth, stifling my cries as bitter tears streamed down my face, biting into stained skin. I could do nothing, nothing as the squat man tugged on the leadrope. Scotts lead jerking backwards, eyes white and rolling as his hind legs searched for sure footing in the slushy ground. I was immobilised, disbelief coursing through my mind, as my father took Scott from him, his quivering body calming under his hand, his eyes heartbreakingly trusting as he followed my father up the ramp. The door resounded shut with a horrific finality and the truck lurched away, kicking up gravel as it sped around the bend.

I hated them. I hated them all. This was not a house, it was a shell. I wanted to yell at them. Hurt them. Make them bring Scott back. I knew they wouldn't listen. I threw off my brothers now limp grasp, dragging myself over to the chicken shed against its wind piercing embrace. And there they were. Fat and shining and gloating. Crimson combs dangling against their black glossy necks like drops of blood. Anger clouded my mind, coursed through my veins, strengthened my limbs as I grasped the axe I had collected from the outside wood pile. I took the first swing, chopping wildly at our livelihood, my mothers fattened pride.

Their terrified squawks mingled with the swirling, blood spattered feathers, mutilated corpses draining onto the musty straw. I could only see Scotts face. His blind obedience. My blade rested on the last hens neck as the door swung open, my parents faces drained by shock. The chicken gurgled, blood leaking from its oozing gash, its ultimate sacrifice. I looked down into the hens glazed expression. The same loss, tiredness, surrender. Worry etched into papery lines. Blood stained my clothing, clogged my nostrils, ran in rivulets down my hands. The wind died down to an expectant silence.

Assessor comments

- Steeped in Macleod's style.
- Richly crafted writing that responds creatively to the prompt, with its powerful final sentence.
- Very strong ideas and demonstrates high-level conceptualising.
- This is an upper-range response.

Context 2 – Whose reality?

'Shared experience does not mean that people see things the same way.'

Context 2, Sample A

Reality is ultimately subjective in nature. As Robert Drewe states in the novel The Shark Net, 'memory may falter, and portraiture is a highly subjective endeavour but I have tried to tell a truthful story.' For Robert looking back upon a past life with newly gathered experiences, to retell his past with the perspective initially associated with it would have been nigh on impossible. Indeed this subjective nature of reality leads itself into the possibility of multiple realities which can do exist at one time. The Greek philosopher Plato argued that an 'objective view' on reality will continue to evade us as we remain trapped in our own subjectivity. As a result we will never establish one 'truth' as people will continue to hold their own unique perspective of the world and their place in it.

Our morals, our beliefs, experiences and values all help shape the skewed lens through which we see the world. Our world view is the changing intersection of the world and our interaction with it. No two people can live the same life nor share the same experiences and as a result each of us will continue to hold a different perspective of the world and our place in it. Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams' A Streetcar Named Desire lived a life at Belle Reve that shaped her view of the way things 'ought to be'. However this perspective did not fit with the harsh and often brutal nature of life in New Orleans. Stanley destroyed the façade of which Blanche lived by. Blanche was punished for breaking herself free from the commonly accepted view of reality held by those in New Orleans. However, had her version of reality been accepted by somebody such as Mitch her story may have ended quite differently. The example of Blanche serves highlight the existence of multiple realities. The clash of realities between Stanley and Blanche underlies the significance of morals, values, experiences and beliefs in shaping and moulding our perspective of the world.

Memories are unreliable; many fade over time but it is often memories of joy and pain that stick with us over our lifetime. Moments of great success or moments of great personal loss. It is the significance that these moments played in our lives that allow these memories to shape the person that we become. Yet while memories shape us, we too shape our memories. The experiences that we gather over time inevitably alter the original perspective that is originally associated with a memory. Memory is a reflection of our perception. The novel Spies highlights the role in which our everchanging perspective shapes and modifies previous moments in life. For Stephen, as a child the belief that Keith's mother was a german spy was very real and yet looking back with the knowledge that she was not immediately changes Stephen's perspective. At the time the boy's 'mission' was

highly dangerous and secretive but again looking back with new experiences and knowledge it is merely an example of 'boys, being boys'. Blanche's view of the past as well shaped her view of the way things 'ought to be' as did Stanley's rough past forge his violent and aggressive nature. Their reflections on the past led to their clash of realities and Blanche's tragic end. Again, these examples serve to highlight the ultimately subjective nature of reality. This subjective notice allows us to alter our perception of previous events which in turn shape who we are in the present. This too can lead to the existence of multiple realities and will continue to result in human beings having their own unique perspective of what is reality.

An 'objective reality' will continue to evade us as human being while we remain trapped in our own subjectivity. This is what is argued by the Greek Philosopher Plato in his 'Allegory of the Cave'. Within the story prisoners are bound by chains on both their arms and legs so that all they see is the wall directly ahead of them. A flame behind provides light allowing the formation of shadows on the wall as people pass through the cave. This is what forms the prisoner's reality, anything else is non-existent. While the prisoners never leave the cave, does this make life outside the cave any less real? Plato argues that we as humans are yet to reach the limits of our understanding as a result of our subjectivity. Who is to say that the universe does not expand forever? From a religious perspective while we cannot physically see our God that does not mean that there is neither a Heaven or a Hell. It is this subjectivity that will forever halt us from obtaining a certain 'truth' or an 'objective reality'. This is what leads to one event being seen as a multitude of ways and for us as human beings to continue to hold our own unique perspective of what is reality.

Reality is ultimately a subjective endeavour. This subjectivity leads itself into the possibility of the existence of multiple realities serve to highlight the fragile and tenuous group that we have as a common reality. We should always question our reality in order to broaden, deepen and better our understanding of the world and our place in it.

Assessor comments

- The opening is somewhat generic but becomes better in the second paragraph and beyond.
- Insufficient development of 'shared experience'.
- Explores ideas about reality.
- Sound use of texts that support and, to some degree, develop ideas of the Context and the prompt.
- This is a mid-range response because it does not deal sufficiently with the prompt.

Context 2, Sample B

Dear Sir,

David Kahane's scathing comments in his article (The Age, 31st October) were, if not a call to arms, certainly a call to pen for me, a longtime lover of the film industry. His suggestion that people who sit in a cinema of a Hollywood blockbuster share the same thought, feelings and emotions thanks to the clever manipulation of Hollywood producers, was, quite frankly, insulting. He reveals the eight ingredients which have been mixed together by Hollywood to provide audiences with a 'shared experience' – one that will be palatable to all. They are: sex, nudity, violence, hope, fear, suspense, laughter and happy endings. He deludes himself into thinking that he has blown the lid off some secret closely-guarded by money-hungry movie moguls. He believes that these movies are manipulating the minds of the audiences around the globe and teaching us to think the same way and share the same values. Well, Kahane, the shared experience of watching a movie does not mean that people see things the same way.

Movies are, for me, something very personal. They provide two hours in which I can escape the realities of my world: the starvation in Africa, the war in Afghanistan, terrorism in Pakistan, the global financial meltdown...I see my world through the eyes of the media and watch as Julia Gillard implements a carbon tax, refugees wait behind bars for a chance of freedom. These are many of the sad realities of life and I forget about them for two blissful hours in the world of Hollywood. It is a fantasy world constructed for me, where the perfect man does exist and good can defeat evil...However, I am not so simple minded that I simply morph into Hollywood's views and values. The minds of an audience do not merge into one. Movies mean something different for everyone.

I grew up with the magic of Hollywood. Movies have always been a part of my life. We were the first home on the street with a colour television and overnight we became the most popular house in the neighbourhood. Their motivations were obvious, to admire the magic of colour and to join us on our great escape into the world of Hollywood. My father loved movies...Gone With the Wind, a story of the sassy Scarlett O'Hara set amongst the backdrop of the Civil War' They Died With Their Boots On, the last adventure of General Armstrong Custer and my childhood favourite, The Wizard of Oz, a movie which saw Dorothy and Toto enter a world 'somewhere over the rainbow'. You see, my father was a child of the Great Depression. He escaped the hard realities of his life – the hunger, the poverty, the suicide – by sitting in a darkened cinema which illuminated hope and happiness. The movies they showed were beacons of hope for a generation darkened by the despair of depression. I can only imagine what Kahane must think of these movies...Hollywood 'trash', unrealistic and romanticised versions of reality. For me, they are a memory of my childhood and a symbol of support and hope.

The power of movies extends beyond the silver-screen and into other art forms. Look at John Keats, for example, a man who could 'fly upon the viewless wings of poetry' and soar into the world of his Fancy. This was necessary for a man whose young life was shrouded by death's threatening promise. Poetry was to Keats what movies were to my father: an escape route. When

you read the glorious language of Keats you too, can fly beyond the realm of reality and into a constructed one. But does this mean that we see the same things? Feel the same way? I highly doubt it. Art is a powerful thing. It was strong enough to lift Keats to a higher world of eternal joy and beauty. It is also very personal and can affect people in an infinite numbers of ways. That's the beauty of the human brain. It is so complex and we each carry a different one' capable of imagining, creating and experiencing different things.

Of course as we get older our brains begin to mature and walls being to form. I am slightly jealous of my five-year-old daughter's amazing ability to dream and to imagine. Christmas morning is one time at my house when reality is dissolved and Santa's illusionary magic infiltrates my home. It is a shared experience for myself, my husband and daughter – we wake up at 7am, open presents eat together and enjoy the magic of Christmas together. However, my daughter sees it in an entirely different way to me and my husband. I protect the secret of Santa ruthlessly just to see her look of charming incredulity at the sight of the half-eaten carrots and empty beer can. Her naivety is so beautiful. She readily accepts the reality the world has created for her as truth. Kahane must, too, believe that audiences of Hollywood blockbusters are like my five-year-old daughter: ignorant, naïve and ready to believe anything. Unfortunately, I am older now and I can draw the lines reality that Hollywood has blurred. How can Kahane suggest that an entire cinema sees the same things? We all watch the movie, yes, but we see it differently. I went to the movies only last week and was sitting in a cinema of young children, probably still believers in Santa Claus, and old people with white hair, the memory of the depression probably still lingering their minds.

Do not generalise a Hollywood audience, Kahane. Movie executives and producers may target audiences but they most certainly hit different spots.

Yours,

John Smith

Assessor comments

- A letter that is an imaginative response to the prompt and the ideas offered by it.
- Authentic voice, used consistently throughout the piece of writing.
- Clever use of *The Player* to explore the ideas of the prompt and the Context.
- This is an upper-range response.

Context 3 – Encountering conflict

'The ability to compromise is important when responding to conflict.'

Context 3, Sample A

When reacting to a conflict, the way an individual overcomes it depends on many different aspects. Many views held by individuals must be flexible while encountering a dispute as if both parties involved have an uncompromising approach, the effects will be exacerbated. An individual themselves must also be flexible when it comes to overcoming a hard time as in order to overcome a conflict something within them will be tested.

*In times of hardship, if an individual is unable to adapt to their new situation, the effects can be devastating. When an individual is forced into a position, in which they are not familiar or comfortable in, often the effects are dire. In Najaf Mazari's memoir *The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif* these dire affects are displayed during his time spent in Woomera camp, a place for asylum seekers without documentation. Najaf experienced detainees performing acts of self harm, such as a man who sewed his lips together. Many of these harmful acts are due to individuals being unable to adapt to their current situation. These individuals are unable to overcome their hardships due to their position. It is in this case the barren location which they are located which prevents the flexible nature of an individual to overcome a problem in a constructive manner.*

When there are two opposed parties collide with an uncompromising forces, the damage can be wide spread. The importance of being flexible is often proven and highlighted when conflict arises. The war between the Taliban and the Mujahadin in Afghanistan in the 1990's caused widespread pain and bloodshed. The reason for the extremity of this conflict was that neither party was going to concede that their beliefs were wrong. It is when an individual or group is so set in their values that they are unable to compromise, when the truly devastating effects of conflict are shown. In Najaf's case, this conflict forced him, and many other Hazaran Afghans, those who are persecuted by the Taliban to risk their lives by entrusting their lives and often their entire wealth in a people smuggler. It is by this compromise that Najaf is able to 'live on the family name' and ensure the safety of his family. It is often the minority during a conflict who need to compromise but that compromise while responding to a hard time may lessen the hardships faced.

Compromise can be seen though the acts of an individual. When a mediating force is placed in the midst of a conflict, the response is often a positive one. When common ground is found between those involved in a conflict, it is often much easier to seek a positive resolution. Due to Najaf's firm belief in equality, he is entrusted with the role of being a kitchen hand and group leader in the Woomera Camp. He is able to find common ground between the Pakistani's and the Afghans in the camp by

ensuring both parties have equal rights and food allocation. But while group leader, Najaf has to rely on another person, who he doesn't fully trust, to translate. It is through this compromise that Najaf is shown to be flexible while responding to his problems.

The importance of compromise is shown when an individual who has been sheltered attempts to overcome conflict. When an individual is sheltered, either by media, family or geography, it shows when they face a difficult situation. And it is often when these individuals are taken away from their comfort zone, that they learn to compromise. In a recent SBS documentary 'Go back to where you come from' a group of Australians are sent on the reverse journey of a refugee. Many in this group are either ignorant, uncompromising in their beliefs, or sheltered. It is not until the members of this documentary are exposed to the reality of the situation many of these refugees are in, that they are able to compromise their own beliefs and change. The inability to compromise often leads to conflict remaining unsolved. This is seen on the documentary when two of the members have a verbal disagreement and are unable to find a common resolution. And it is this response to conflict that is ineffective and not beneficial to any party involved. It is when individual's are unable to compromise, that the importance of that trait is highlighted.

When an individual encounters a conflict, often the most important trait that individual must possess to have a beneficial outcome in compromise. It is when those involved do not possess this important trait, that conflict remains unsolved. And when two parties with extreme views both collide with an uncompromising desire, the conflict can be terrible for all surrounding.

Assessor comments

- Springboards meaningfully and significantly from the prompt.
- Uses textual detail with some assurance, supporting reasonably complex ideas.
- Some contextualising.
- Clear, but not exceptional, expression.
- This is a mid-range response.

Context 3, Sample B

When Mikhail Gorbachev met with Ronald Regan, bringing an end to the decades-long 'Cold War', this perhaps can be seen as one of the greatest compromises on the world stage. Gorbachev's policies of Glasnost and Perestroika and the dis-assembling of the Soviet bloc brought about a relatively peaceful resolution to a grand conflict. This makes evident the power of compromise, in its ability to bring about resolution to conflicts even as large as the Cold War. But it may be difficult for individuals, or groups, involved in a conflict to reach compromise, for compromise usually involves giving up something as a concession. Usually this 'something' is quite important – be it a desire to own a land or a political ideology. Furthermore, although compromise may be reached, there may still be ongoing conflict; this makes evident that compromise does not necessarily entail an end to the conflict. However, usually, compromise is the best alternative conducive to the resolution of conflict.

A conflict is sparked by an opposition of opinions, values and what one holds dear. Often, it is difficult for one to let go of these cherished values or ideas, for they are so ingrained in an individual's psyche. This makes compromise, and the resolution that it leads to, difficult, for this usually involves a concession of these values or ideas.

The Secret River by Kate Grenville highlights how the inability to concede one's desires can create, and exacerbate, conflict. William Thornhill, a convict who comes to the penal colony of new South Wales after stealing from the gentry in London, when emancipated, has a 'hunger in his guts' to obtain the plot of land he calls 'Thornhill's Point'. This desire, however, is in opposition to that of his wife, Sal, who yearns to return to England after this 'service to be endured' is completed. It is Sal who concedes five years to Thornhill, who promises they will be 'on the first ship to London' after that time elapses. But Thornhill cannot give up on his land, and eventually a 'body of silence' grows between himself and Sal, as this conflict continues. 'Silence is only argument carried out by other means' Che Guevarra once said, and this is indeed applicable to Sal and Thornhill's situation, for Thornhill's ability to be uncompromising has created this silence that is a representation of the conflict between them. At the end of the novel, we see that the conflict still lingers, with Sal's yearning evident in her attempts to make a garden like England. Thornhill's inability to compromise shows how resolution was not achieved as a result and only highlights its importance.

When compromise is achieved, however, whether conflict resolution occurs completely is questionable. But some aspects of the conflict may be quelled, and this shows that compromise indeed brings out beneficial outcomes, and is important indeed.

Apartheid in South Africa represents a time in which the government virtually sanctioned racial discrimination, and this indeed brought about conflict between the 'Whites', 'Coloured', 'Blacks' and 'Asians' of the nation. Many individuals were displaced from their home to live in autonomous regions where they were segregated from the rest of society, and often certain groups were given poor education, health and other public services. It is only individuals such as Nelson Mandela, who had an ideal which he would die for, an ideal that all individuals in South Africa would 'live in harmony and with equal opportunities', that were able to bring about change and compromise. Mandela's ANC party was able to reach compromises with the then-governing Nationalist Party of de Klerk, and an election, where any individual in South Africa, no matter their skin colour, could vote, occurred. With Mandela winning, he brought about many policies that dis-assembled apartheid and brought about much more equity between the people of the 'Rainbow Nation'. However, in present-day South Africa the shroud of apartheid still hangs over the country, and still brings many individuals of differing races into conflict. The rampant crime in the country is further

testament to this and shows that no matter the compromise, no matter the resolution of some aspects of conflict, conflict still may be apparent. However, with compromise made South Africa can indeed be seen as better than its apartheid days, and indeed compromise was still a crucial part in the betterment of the society.

The ability of compromise to resolve conflict is indeed powerful, but often it is not enough, in a far-reaching, large conflict, if only a small number of individuals compromise with conflict resolution in mind. Much of the time, it is necessary for large groups to reach a compromise in a conflict as a whole, as occurred in South Africa. When this occurs the resolution of the conflict may not occur at all.

The character of Tom Blackwood and Dick Thornhill in Kate Grenville's The Secret River represent how conflict resolution between the convict settlers of New South Wales and the native Aborigines was achievable through compromise. But with only these two individuals doing so, the conflict continued to escalate until it culminated in the massacre at the end of the novel. Tom Blackwood deemed the Aborigines 'peaceful folk' and compromised by learning their customs and language, and even having a child with one of the Aborigine women, causing little conflict between himself and Aborigines to occur, if at all. Dick, as a youth, is also able to appreciate and respect the Aborigines and play with the aboriginal children, even being described by Thornhill as like their 'pale cousin'. Yet these two individuals, the few represented in the novel who are willing to compromise, are eclipsed by the majority of settlers who deem the Aborigines 'black insect(s)' to be '(ex)terminated' and are indeed uncompromising. Despite compromise and acceptance occurring in some individuals, it was necessary for a large majority to compromise if 'what the worst of men do' was to be avoided.

Compromise is indeed important in a conflict for it has the potential to resolve it, if it is undertaken. However, its ability to resolve conflict is detrimental in that it is reliant, in certain conflicts, for compromise to be undertaken en masse. Furthermore, the conflict it attempts to resolve may not be entirely finished. But compromise should be pursued, no matter how hard it is to chase, for it is one of the greatest tools we have in dis-assembling a conflict. And without this tool the machine of conflict may only continue and grow, harming many.

Assessor comments

- Demonstrates complex thinking in relation to prompt and Context.
- Interesting, conceptually sophisticated and moves easily from selected text to other ideas, keeping the prompt clearly in view from beginning to conclusion.
- Knowledge of text enables strategic selection of ideas from it. Articulate, confident, strong, precise vocabulary and clear expression.
- Cohesive, detailed and clear.
- This is an upper-range response.

Context 4 – Exploring issues of identity and belonging

'Without connection to others there is no me.'

Context 4, Sample A

Step right up! Step right up to the modern culture of the 21st century! Life has never been better than ever before, where all of life's luxuries can all be yours for only a middle class wage! Our impossible expectations will certainly coerce you to succumb to our on-size-fits-all for individuality, so you too can belong in our marvellous idealistic society!

In this fine privileged world of ours, our special offers will always make sure that you are always you, 25 hours, 8 days a week. Just sit back, relax, keep your hands and opinions to yourself, and enjoy the ride guided by our Special Media Guest who will persuade into the most glorious, wonderful, and unsatisfactory lifestyle your also brainwashed peers could ever expect of you.

Why make decisions when we can do them for you! Special offer on sale: only a low, low price of your own existence (including tax GST and stamp duty charges), and you've got yourself a free life! Pay by credit card and receive a pre-packaged individual at no extra cost – or you too can be a stereotype!

Hurry while stock last (sorry, no rain checks). But wait, we can relive you from the drudgery of boring choices by doing that for you, our of our own inaccurate prejudice where generalization leads to simplicity at its finest! Let's not over-complicate things shall we? (that would scare off the customers)

So take your pick from our fine selection of labels and typecasts, that's right, only one will do. Both aren't for sale at once. Our policy is that you remain in ONLY ONE demographic at any given time. Now look here, punk, don't go choosing multiple identities willy-nilly, this world ain't big enough for any in-betweens, no grey areas allowed thank you very much!

Ah, I see you've taken interest to our stock positioned to your left, what's that? You choose the normal one? Excellent choice! That's popular pick these days. Nothing like aligning yourself to the standard set of the norm, which we, the Media of course,

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constructed ourselves for every willing (and unwilling) conformist to follow. Just stop this way to compare yourself to everyone else, and when I mean 'everyone else' I'm talking about the clear-complexion-fair-clean-dhaven-logical-uncrooked-teeth-trendy-slender-reasonable-voiceless-materialistic-and-above-all-obedient First Corinthian consumer that we ever-so effectively portray to represent your entire society.

A prerequisite I recommend is that you have a stable income from your nine-to-five job, so you too can purchase all those high-quality high-priced products that everyone else seems to afford, and yes! They are the basis of social survival in our urban jungle of today's world. So hurry and get all these unnecessary necessities while you can in a feeble attempt to find meaning and fulfilment in your miserable life. That's our plastic promise to you, guaranteed!

Thanks for your patience; your call is important to us. Please hold...

What's that? You find it hard to be like everyone else? Think you're too different perhaps? That's perfectly normal, always remember: You're unique, just like everyone else.

Of course, all this propaganda that set our impossible standards of normalcy couldn't make our unrealistic reality become real without the immense help of technology. Making your SO much easier giving you SO much convenience and creating SO many distractions that ever before. Now the power to interact without interacting has created the divine opportunity for God of Four Edged Screens to proclaim: 'GO FORTH AND DIVIDE!' as preached in the Not-So Good News Revised Standard Edition Vol. 86 Holy Bible Monthly Catalogue.

Thanks to the advances of technology, you too can mindlessly waste time by contacting all those 867 friends you've never met before on that 5G-iphone-ipod-Touch-200terabyte-memory-capacity-wireless-bluetooth smudged touch screen that you've been procrastinating on for the past five hours where you should've done something far more productive such as washing those dishes or studying for that English exam. Nothing like some me time, isn't it? Never before has there been the need to be constantly entertained, so you too can divert your attention from your monotonous life seemingly crowded with a plethora of expectations, distractions and deadlines.

Can't you believe how wonderful the world is that you've come to live in? But wait, there's more!

We can surely make your already fantastic and miserable life even better for you!

Allow me to introduce you to hyper-reality, and realty MUCH better than yours and is all completely unavailable to you (but we make it seem believable anyway) for ONE non-negotiable and non-refundable price that you will be paying for the rest of your inadequate existence, but don't worry! Until you are six feet underground should we exempt you from additional tax charges.

Now just sit back and let us ever-so subtly persuade your buying habits: SALE NOW ON! Buy now, pay forever! One for the price of three! -3000% off! Buy one; get another for exactly the same price! No deposit, no interest, until last year! STOCKTAKE SALE! EVERYTHING MUST GO!! Now with all the unnatural colours and preservatives! Gluten free, sugar free, wheat free, flavour free! 1% fate free! Lose weight! Feel younger (30 is the new 50)! Become healthy with a tan! Now with extra vitamins and minerals for that healthy shine! Satisfaction guaranteed! Dissatisfaction non-refundable!

(terms and conditions apply)

Assessor comments

- An entertaining and provocative response.
- Strong voice consistent throughout the piece of writing.
- Insightful grasp of the implications of the prompt.
- The manner in which various themes are employed from Bruce Dawe's poetry is provocative and interesting.
- Sophisticated dealing with the ideas.
- This is an upper-range script.

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Context 4, Sample B

Thursday, 3rd of November 2011

TO:
Plot 451
Springvale Botanical Cemetary
600 Princes Hwy
Springvale VIC 3411

Dear Grandmother,

This is the apology that you deserved, which I was never able to give to you when you were alive. You used to say 'Bac hanh lay hieu di dau' (The first vice is a lack of filial piety), so I guess if there is a hell then I'm going to burn in it for all eternity. If there isn't a hell, then the regret and shame that bears upon me everyday is sufficient a punishment I think.

I'm sorry for being ashamed of you, for abandoning my culture and foolishly chasing something that was never me. In my defence, I was so lonely. I wanted to belong, needed to belong because somehow I attributed my self worth as being dependent upon other people's perceptions of me. When you look so different and live such a culturally different life you become self-conscious and exposed. You were able to stay strong and continue to be who you always were but I could never find that strength. I thought if I could connect with someone on even a superficial level then I was finding a place, finding my worth, somehow.

Do you remember when I told you I hated wearing ao dai (Vietnamese traditional dress) because it was ugly? That wasn't true. I love wearing ao dai, especially the beautiful silken blue one which you sewed for me. I still remember the dainty chrysanthemums you embroidered and the vivid butterflies which you knew I loved. But I also remember how I ripped it in front of you to prove my hate for ao dai and the look of hurt that cast over your face that never left and etched itself into your features – yes, I remember all that. I hurt you, who loved me unconditionally and whom I was so close to, in favour of a tenuous connection with people who couldn't even accept me as I truly was.

You used to try and teach me Vietnamese, every Saturday you'd explain to me the significance of a proverb or the moral of a folklore. I scoffed at you and complained incessantly but you, in all your patient wisdom, still tolerated my blatant rudeness. I never made an effort to try and communicate with you anymore after I started school, where I could count with one hand the number of students of Asian background. My difference was made painfully aware and to immerse myself in Vietnamese culture was to widen that gap between the others and me. So I took the coward way out and denied my culture which really meant that I was denying you too.

I made your voice nonsensical to me because in my mind, the stronger your presence in my life, the weaker my connection with my peers became.

I didn't realise that my connection with them was as fragile as a thread of silk whilst my bond with you was like the magnetic pull of gravity, always pulling me to my feet and allowing me to stand upright.

I don't forget how even when I distanced myself from you, you still bathed me in love. I remember my sixteenth birthday when you managed to fold a thousand paper cranes in the space of three months so that I could have a wish.

I didn't know how big a part of my life you had become until you went to sleep one day and didn't wake up again. I realise now, dear grandmother, that only by truly connecting to a person who can accept me as I am, can I find out who I am. I have lost a part of myself now that you are gone. I will spend the rest of my life trying to find something reclaimable: a place with you.

I take Vietnamese classes now, did you know? But even then I write this apology in English which you can't read. I wonder if the gap I intentionally created could ever be rectified. But one day, I will try my best to write this apology in Vietnamese. I will try to rediscover me again.

Your regretful grand-daughter,

Assessor comments

- A provocative response full of pathos.
- Thoughtful approach, effectively developing the implications of the prompt.
- Evocative in its simplicity.
- Well controlled, with a satisfying sense of completion.
- This is an upper-range response.