



Trial Examination 2021

VCE English Units 3&4

Written Examination

Suggested Solutions

ARGUMENT AND PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

The following is an example of an upper mid-range response to Section C that appropriately responds to all the assessment criteria.

On 7 February 2021, the Archerwood Dispute Resolution Centre received a formal complaint from Mrs Patricia Winterson, spokesperson of the Archerwood Residents for Enterprise and Action (AREA). In her letter, Winterson contends in an irritated tone that a neighbour, Mr Frank Maiocchi, has outraged locals with his unsightly sculpture garden. Writing in reply, Maiocchi defensively asserts that his sculpture garden has artistic value and that he is free to do as he wishes with his own property.

From the outset, Winterson establishes that she acts with the full support of AREA. In speaking of a situation that has become ‘increasingly vexatious’ and has proved ‘exhausting’ for herself and others, she makes a plea for sympathy and support. Since the dispute is a matter of ‘the gravest concern’, she implies that it is very serious and merits the immediate attention of the DRC. Winterson also aims to appeal to local knowledge and civic pride. She draws on real-estate jargon when she writes of the sculpture garden detracting from the charm of ‘a very desirable residence’ and ‘bringing down property values’. In referring to ‘the enjoyment that other residents legitimately expect to take in their local surroundings’, Winterson implicitly depicts Maiocchi as existing outside the neighbourhood consensus and the expectations of any ‘reasonable person’. She is keen not to be seen as a nosy or unsatisfactory neighbour. Where Winterson wants to be seen to have been appropriately neighbourly (mentioning, for instance that Maiocchi was ‘welcomed [...] to the neighbourhood’), she represents Maiocchi himself as stubborn, or, as she puts it, downright ‘recalcitrant’. She would like the DRC to regard him as acting unreasonably and refusing friendly overtures. Her use of scare quotations around the words ‘innovative sculpture garden’ and ‘junk and salvage artist’ is designed to belittle the claims of artistic merit that Maiocchi makes and question his status as an artist.

Having done everything she can to brand Maiocchi’s redevelopment of 17 Viewcrest Road a ‘monstrosity’, Winterson goes on to claim that it is a ‘public nuisance’ and could be the cause of legal action. Using inclusive language, she reiterates that ‘ours is a heritage area’ and lets it be understood that it is to no-one’s advantage to see its local character diminished in any way. At this point, Winterson adds weight to her claims by invoking her role as spokesperson (‘AREA is of the view’). She makes a conventional expression of regret, noting that AREA ‘will be obliged to proceed with legal action’ as if this is a regrettable necessity and not a choice. In addition to this, she incorporates a threat aimed, not at the DRC, but at Maiocchi. Legal proceedings, she suggests, may be ‘long and potentially costly’. Implicit in this assertion is the message that Maiocchi would be well-advised to fall into line to avoid trouble and expense. The visual accompanying Winterson’s letter is intended to provide evidence that the ‘so-called “innovative sculptures”’ are a monstrosity. The stack of cars dominates the image and appears run-down and unsightly. It is not difficult to grasp that there could be objections to such a site in a suburban setting, but, on the other hand, it is not out of the question that the sculpture garden could be of artistic interest.

This idea of subjective art appreciation is the basis of Maiocchi’s argument. He firmly states that he is at odds with Winterson and resents the claim that he has been ‘recalcitrant’. If anything, he maintains, he has listened to Winterson not only with patience, but with ‘exemplary patience’. Maiocchi wants to sound like a reasonable man who has given Winterson every chance to have her say. He wants to establish that he and Winterson are on equal footing and that he is entitled to exercise his rights ‘just as Mrs Winterson exercises hers’. He relies on his superior knowledge of art to inform his argument, providing an overview of the junk art movement and its widespread acceptance in the wider world to enhance the credibility of his sculpture garden and make those who would disparage it seem out-of-touch. Although he concedes that he is still working towards a degree of recognition that he has not yet received, Maiocchi also affiliates himself with a ‘growing movement’, which appears to be at the cutting edge of artistic practice. He simultaneously appears modest in acknowledging the limited extent of his achievement thus far, and forward-looking in speaking of the ‘ever-evolving project’ to which he has committed himself. Conversely, in Maiocchi’s account of her, Winterson emerges as a person of limited vision (‘Perhaps Mrs Winterson cannot see it, but junk can be a beautiful thing’). As one who has ‘worked hard to acquire [...] skills’, he is understandably piqued by Winterson’s dismissive and scoffing reference to him as one ‘who styles himself

a “junk and salvage artist”. In an act of verbal retaliation, he rhetorically asks ‘Where is your imagination, Mrs Winterson?’

As he reaches the end of his letter, Maiocchi is determined to demonstrate that legal threats do not faze him. He adopts legal language to assert that he has ‘infringed no local bylaws’, and expresses his self-assuredness that in any ‘purely aesthetic dispute’, his expertise will prevail. He declares, unsurprisingly, that he is ‘happy to engage in discussions about art with Mrs Winterson and AREA whenever they choose’, further reinforcing he is confident of his authority in this field. He closes by citing a well-known saying, ‘live and let live’, to reinforce that Winterson and AREA have no right to impose their standards on him and are, perhaps, proving themselves rather naïve in making the attempt. In a final flourish, he signs off as ‘Mr Frank Maiocchi, junk and salvage artist, home-owner’ affirming both the title that Winterson has questioned and his rights in relation to his own property. His response indicates that there will be no easy path to mediation between the parties to this dispute.

ASSESSOR’S COMMENTARY

This essay reflects a strong grasp of each author’s arguments and fluently integrates evidence to support this. Although some examples are analysed using metalanguage, there are some missed opportunities to connect these to the broader contention (such as the mention of ‘property values’ or the rhetorical question ‘Where is your imagination, Mrs Winterson?’) that prevent this essay from being a high-scoring response. The thorough understanding of the two points of view and the precise selection of quotes and examples are typical of an upper mid-range response, but a greater emphasis on *how* and *why* this language aids in the authors’ persuasion would elevate this to a high-scoring response.

The following is an example of a high-scoring response to Section C that appropriately responds to all the assessment criteria.

In her letter to the Archerwood Dispute Resolution Centre, AREA spokesperson Mrs Patricia Winterson contends, in a tone of barely-concealed irritation, that a neighbour, Mr Frank Maiocchi, has outraged local sentiment by creating an unsightly sculpture garden that is an incongruous addition to the neighbourhood. Writing in reply, Mr Maiocchi asserts with a mix of defensiveness and pride that his sculpture garden has artistic value and that he is free to do as he wishes with his own property.

From the outset, Winterson establishes her voice as having the weight of the collective neighbourhood's discontent, actively declaring her position as 'spokesperson'. In speaking of a situation that has become 'increasingly vexatious', she draws attention to a problem that is of some duration, as the adverb 'increasingly' underscores that matters are only escalating. The personal impact felt by Winterson is highlighted by a somewhat confidential tone marked by the expression 'quite frankly', and a confession that it has all become 'exhausting' for herself and others. Employing a superlative, she characterises the existing discord as a matter of 'the gravest concern', implying that it merits the immediate attention of the DRC. However, not wanting to lecture them, she asserts that she 'need hardly tell [them]' of the 'natural attractions' of the area, insinuating that those who share this knowledge should also share the view that nothing should be done to disrupt the neighbourhood's character and appeal. Thus, Winterson casts herself as the reasonable party in the dispute who is prioritising the interests of the community and its residents, thereby endeavouring to align herself with the DRC in seeking an outcome in favour of the majority.

Winterson also seeks to call into question Maiocchi's artistic merits and credibility. To some extent, she pre-empts 'live and let live' arguments by stating that Mr Maiocchi has engaged in a form of development that is so conspicuous as to be 'impossible to ignore'. By their very nature, 'eyesore[s]' obtrude themselves on anyone's attention, evoking discomfort and annoyance. Hence, her use of such pejoratives implies that Maiocchi is at fault for inflicting such misery upon his own neighbourhood. By contrast, she portrays herself as being diligently neighbourly in 'welcom[ing]' him to Archerwood and reveals this to be in vain given Maiocchi's 'recalcitrant' attitude, connoting stubbornness and uncooperative behaviour. Moreover, Winterson's use of scare quotations around the words 'innovative sculpture garden' is designed to belittle the claims of artistic merit that Maiocchi makes. She launches an ad hominem attack against him styling himself as a 'junk and salvage artist'. Through her dismissive tone, readers can infer that it is unlikely Winterson would think highly of any 'junk and salvage artist', but a person who merely 'styles himself' as such does not even rise to the credibility of deserving the title in her estimation. Collectively, this language disparages Maiocchi, framing him as disrespectful and antagonistic and forms part of Winterson's efforts to elicit sympathy for her plight.

Furthermore, Winterson suggests that AREA 'will be obliged to proceed to legal action', as if this is a regrettable necessity and a matter of obligation rather than choice. Her use of the plural to incorporate the concerned residents of AREA and the members of the DRC in 'ours is a heritage area' insinuates that their interests are aligned and it is to no-one's advantage to see Archerwood's local character diminished. In addition, she extends her target audience to include Maiocchi in her subtle threat that legal proceedings may be 'long and potentially costly'. Implicit in this assertion is the message that Maiocchi would be well-advised to accede to AREA's demands to avoid trouble and expense. Meanwhile, the foundation of Maiocchi's argument is not cohesive neighbourhood aesthetics, but rather the merits of artistic expression. After some polite preliminaries, he states unequivocally that he is at odds with Winterson and resents the claim that he has been 'recalcitrant'. If anything, he maintains, he has listened to the representations of Mrs Winterson not only with patience, but with 'exemplary patience', and his sly reference to her views that she 'feels so very free to express' alludes to an unbecoming sense of entitlement in Winterson that interferes with his egalitarian rights as a citizen. Equity and fair play lie at the heart of the claim that he should be able to exercise his rights 'just as Mrs Winterson exercises hers'.

Maiocchi proceeds to adopt the posture of one who has superior knowledge of the art world and expresses a desire to instruct his less well-informed peers. He provides an overview of the junk art movement's burgeoning popularity and acceptance to enhance the credibility of his own project and make those who would disparage it seem parochial and out-of-touch. Although he concedes that he is still working

towards a degree of recognition that he has not yet received, Maiocchi also affiliates himself with a ‘growing movement’, simultaneously appearing modest in acknowledging the limited extent of his achievement thus far, and forward-looking in speaking of the ‘ever-evolving project’ to which he has committed himself. Hence, he paints Winterson as a person of limited vision who ‘perhaps [...] cannot see’ the beauty of his craft. Thus, Maiocchi claims that it is he (and not the supporters of AREA who supposedly enshrine the qualities given by their acronym) who is ‘showing enterprise and action’ and hence deserves the DRC’s support. In stark contrast to Maiocchi’s elevation of his art form, Winterson seeks to persuade her audience that the ‘so-called “innovative sculptures”’ are ‘monstrosities’ by appending a photograph. This visual depicts a stack of dilapidated old cars that dominate the visual field, almost towering over the viewer in a precarious, if not outright menacing, way. This supports Winterson’s undermining of Maiocchi’s art as ‘nothing more than a public nuisance’, which she intimates is compromising the reputation and happiness of Archerwood.

In an act of retaliation, Maiocchi rhetorically and somewhat witheringly asks ‘Where is your imagination, Mrs Winterson?’ Here, the fact that he ceases to address the DRC and instead directly confronts Winterson suggests a degree of personal antagonism that he previously worked to conceal. He positions Winterson’s lack of imagination as antithetical to his art, proudly stating that he ‘celebrate[s] what she condemns’. Moreover, it is his view that it is he, rather than the long-established residents of Archerwood, who is progressive and ‘in tune’ with the contemporary world of enterprise. His insistence that he can ‘make beauty out of what others discard’ may well be an implicit critique of his neighbours who are more closely identified with the outdated and ‘wasteful ways of the consumer world’. He also levels further criticism against the ‘boringly predictable lawns and flower beds’ of his neighbours suggesting that this is a ‘bland look’, thereby recontextualising Winterson’s talk of assimilation and integration as something mediocre and vapid. He closes by citing a well-known axiom ‘live and let live’ to reinforce that Winterson and AREA have no right to impose their standards on him and are, perhaps, proving themselves rather naïve in making the attempt. In a final flourish, he signs off as ‘Mr Frank Maiocchi, junk and salvage artist, home-owner’ affirming both the title that Winterson has questioned and his rights in relation to his own property. His response indicates that there will be no easy path to mediation between the parties to this dispute.

ASSESSOR’S COMMENTARY

This high-scoring essay closely examines both argument and language, skilfully explaining how points of view are constructed, using written and visual evidence. The analysis draws from the scope of material presented whilst also pausing for more detailed dissection of connotations and word choice at opportune moments. Most importantly, the analysis frequently revisits the authors’ contentions and explicitly links what these authors do with how they persuade their target audience. The essay smoothly transitions between examples and authors without needless comparison, maintaining a focus on why certain language supports a persuasive intent, and its consistent use of metalanguage amplifies the efficient and effective analysis.