



Trial Examination 2022

VCE English Units 1&2

Written Examination

Suggested Solutions

ARGUMENT AND PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

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

Shipley Grammar School recently refurbished its school hall. In an assembly, the principal, Amanda Thomas, delivered an upbeat speech to encourage students to participate in a competition to rename the hall. This caused controversy with the school's Heritage and Alumni group, resulting in Melissa Baker, the president of the group, publishing an angry open letter in the Heritage and Alumni group's newsletter, arguing that the name of a former college principal should be retained in the hall's title.

Thomas opens her speech by telling the students what a 'great honour' it is to be holding the assembly in the new school hall. She tells the students of the 'power of possibilities' that the space offers and suggests that it 'will showcase an incredible future'. Her tone is positive, and she urges students to appreciate the potential events that will take place in the hall. Her positive tone is further supported by an exclamation mark and use of alliteration as she describes the 'marvellous and memorable moments' that the new hall will bring. At this stage of the speech, the students would be feeling the excitement and enthusiasm of the principal.

Thomas directly congratulates the Year 7 students on their conduct during their first year of secondary school. She acknowledges the 'major change' they have made and expresses pride in how they 'have taken [this] in stride'. The students would feel as though the principal understands their challenges. Thomas then goes on to address the Year 12 students, who will be leaving the school soon. She tells them she has 'valued [their] contribution' and wishes them well in the future as 'strong, educated citizens'. The image that accompanies the speech depicts a person using a laptop and holding a light bulb with sparks emanating from it. This picture supports the principal's assertion that the students are capable of producing new and exciting ideas when engaging with education and technology.

Addressing the entire school, Thomas announces that students are invited to rename the hall through a competition. She talks about the 'expansion of our growth as a school' and encourages the students to consider coming up with a name that is original and 'embodies our progressive way of thinking'. She uses inclusive language here to ensure that all the students feel that they are part of the decision-making process. Using a rhetorical question, she asks, 'What better chance to support our school's emerging values than to name the hall after a modern great?' She gives the students ideas to consider as she closes her speech with an idiom, encouraging the students to 'get [their] thinking caps on!'

Following the assembly, Melissa Baker wrote an open letter addressed to Thomas to explain how 'disappointed' she was to learn of the decision to rename the hall. The use of alliteration in 'heavy heart' emphasises to the principal that she is saddened by the decision and creates a serious mood. Baker goes on to use a personal anecdote to explain that she was a student at the school and graduated in 1994, showing Thomas that she cares about the school and still has a connection to it, which is demonstrated by her role as president of the Heritage and Alumni group.

Baker goes on to inform Thomas of the achievements of Albert Marks in an attempt to highlight how important it is to retain the name of the hall. She states that the 'founders of this school believed in customs and school dignity'. This shows how much Baker values the name. She puts Marks on a pedestal by calling him an 'architect' of many of the school's traditions, like the rowing regatta and the school house system. Baker wants Thomas to see Albert Marks as a great man whose name should not be easily forgotten.

Baker argues that the school is not ready for too much change. She becomes angry when she tells Thomas that removing Albert Marks's name from the school hall is 'all too much too soon' and she should not be making so many changes as a new principal. In a sarcastic tone, she asks the principal, 'What will be next, changing the school blazer?' This shows how outraged she is at the principal's decision. Concluding her letter, Baker calls the renaming of the hall a 'tragedy', implying that she is heartbroken and thinks that the renaming is a disaster. She hopes that Thomas will understand how important it is that Albert Marks's name be preserved, as he is someone 'who gave us so much', and she 'strongly urge[s]' Thomas to reconsider.

Thomas's speech and Baker's letter offer opposing views on the issue of whether the name of the newly refurbished school hall should be changed to something new that reflects the present day. Addressing the students at an assembly, the principal suggests that renaming the hall is an exciting opportunity. In response, Baker's letter, directly addressed to Thomas, argues that Albert Marks was an important figure in the school's history and his name should not be so quickly replaced.

Assessor's commentary

This mid-range response demonstrates some understanding of the persuasive devices and tones of the material and the intended effect of certain devices on the audience. The response has missed identifying the wider audience of Thomas's speech – the teachers, parents, guardians and Heritage and Alumni members that attended the assembly. Similarly, when analysing Baker's letter, the response has not acknowledged the wider audience of the open letter; that is, readers of the Heritage and Alumni group's newsletter. Quotes are generally integrated but, at times, are used to summarise, rather than analyse. Analysis of the visual material and its link to the speech is attempted, but the response misses the wider implication that the visual supports the idea of progress and forward thinking. The language is quite simple and limited, such as the use of verbs when describing what the authors are doing (for example, 'she talks about ...', 'she uses ...' 'she states ...', 'this shows ...'). Overall, this response understands that the competition to rename the hall is controversial but misses the wider argument of tradition versus progress.

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

Following the refurbishment of the school hall, the principal of Shipley Grammar School, Amanda Thomas, announced, with the school council's support, a competition for students to rename the hall. Thomas' enthusiastic speech announcing the competition, delivered to the whole school including teachers, parents, guardians and alumni, reminds the school community of how progressive the school has become and suggests that the renaming of the hall is an exciting opportunity for more progress. In a scathing and, at times, condescending open letter written in response to the speech, Melissa Baker, the president of the school's Heritage and Alumni group, expresses her displeasure at the decision. Baker contends that not only should the hall's current name remain, but that Thomas has been flouting the school's traditions in the name of progress. Published in the Heritage and Alumni group's newsletter, Baker's letter not only targets the principal but aims to garner support for her cause from all readers of the newsletter – fellow members of the group and the wider school community of parents, guardians and teachers.

Thomas opens her speech with confidence, pointing out the new refurbishment and outlining the future possibilities the hall offers. Acknowledging the school's 'proud history', Thomas quickly shifts focus with the conjunction 'yet' to highlight the 'power of possibilities' that the refurbished hall offers. Through the use of the word 'possibilities', with its connotations of excitement and hope for the future, Thomas implies that the new development will bring a richness to the school that it did not previously have. Reminding her audience that the school values 'educational change and innovation', Thomas subtly enforces her agenda of progress and modernisation. Aiming to enthuse the audience, Thomas inclusively tells them that the 'entire school community' will enjoy the benefits of the new hall. She alliteratively describes the 'many marvellous and memorable moments' that will undoubtedly ensue and, by doing this, Thomas coaxes her audience into perceiving the refurbishment and change in general as an important and positive step forward.

Thomas directly addresses the Year 7 and Year 12 students and foregrounds their achievements as being emblematic of the school's culture of excellence and progress. Firstly, she congratulates the Year 7 students for adapting so well during their transition to secondary school, using the opportunity to remind the audience of '[the school's] modern school culture of growth and development'. The audience is encouraged to feel respect for these students, as they have been successful in taking on new challenges. Shifting to the departing Year 12 students, Thomas continues to remind the school that students of the twenty-first century need to be open to 'innovation, diversity and future endeavours'. Her vocabulary is heavily imbued with a modern focus, suggesting that the school and these modern values will ensure the students have a 'bright future', reassuring parents and guardians in the audience that the school's innovative drive benefits their children. The students' 'bright future' is further reinforced by the supporting image. The laptop in the background and the lightbulb in the foreground of the image emphasise the value of technology and development, but the glowing ethereal stars being cast from the lightbulb and the stylised brain suggest that the person in the image – a representation of the students – is creating something new and innovative and that they are holding the future in their hands. The inclusion of this image strengthens Thomas's elevation of new ideas, encouraging the audience to share in her appealing, future-oriented vision for the school.

To conclude her speech, Thomas announces a competition for students to be involved in the renaming of the school hall. By rhetorically asking 'what better chance' they have to support the 'school's emerging values' than by coming up with the name of a 'modern great', she immediately suggests to the students that the name must be contemporary. She challenges them to think of a name that 'embodies our progressive way of thinking' and to 'get [their] thinking caps on', ending her speech in an upbeat manner. Thomas uses the renaming competition as a means to not only engage the students and give them a sense of ownership over the hall, but to also promote school progress.

Following the speech, the Heritage and Alumni group's president, Melissa Baker wrote a letter in response, addressed to Thomas but published in the Heritage and Alumni group's newsletter, arguing that the school's traditions are being eroded and the name of the Albert Marks Memorial Hall should remain. Opening with a 'heavy heart', Baker idiomatically sets a sombre tone in response to the perceived loss of tradition. She implies that she and the Heritage and Alumni group are authorities when it comes to

school values, anecdotally reminding Thomas – as well as the members of the group, teachers, parents and guardians reading the newsletter – that she is a graduate of the school and has ‘maintained [her] dedication and commitment to the school’s traditions’ by being the Heritage and Alumni president since 2014. She shifts to condescension, exhorting ‘Let me remind you’ when translating the school’s Latin motto, ‘school of tradition, pride and virtue’, which are qualities that were not mentioned in Thomas’ speech. She contends that the founders of the school believed in ‘customs and school dignity’ and that this has ‘made [the school] great’, aligning the founders’ values with her own. Her authoritative, condescending tone continues throughout her letter. She aims to speak for the school community and appeal to the wider readership of the newsletter when she explains that they are not ready to give up all their traditions ‘on the whim of a newly appointed principal’. Intending to undermine Thomas and diminish Thomas’s authority in the eyes of the Heritage and Alumni group, teachers, parents and guardians, Baker implies that Thomas’s decisions are not thought out and made on a ‘whim’, connoting impulsivity and a lack of serious thought. Hence, Baker seeks to condemn Thomas for not honouring Shipley Grammar School’s legacy and attempts to instill in her a greater sense of deference for Albert Marks and the school’s traditions more broadly.

Baker furthers this view by claiming that the decision to change the school hall name is an omen of the potential erasure of history and reinforces the importance of school tradition to readers of the newsletter other than Thomas. Listing the ‘valued traditions and customs’ of which Albert Marks was the ‘architect’, Baker emphasises that these were intentional decisions made by the school’s founding members. By explicitly tying Albert Marks as the ‘architect’ to what she presents as cornerstones of the contemporary Shipley experience, including the ‘school house system’ and the ‘award-winning senior symphonic orchestra’, Baker implicitly suggests that these too may be under threat if Marks’s memory is not appropriately honoured. To remind Thomas that the Heritage and Alumni group is not completely unyielding, Baker highlights the group’s reluctant support when Thomas removed Latin from the school’s curriculum, implying this to be a gesture of compromise. Nevertheless, she challenges Thomas’s agenda of change and positions herself as a defender of school values, lamenting it is ‘all too much too soon’. She speaks inclusively on behalf of the school community who is ‘not ready to shed all its traditions’ – although the use of the word ‘all’ may seem an overexaggeration, Baker intimates that this would be an inevitable conclusion of Thomas’s decisions. In a series of rhetorical questions, she argues that renaming the hall would be a great loss, and the first of many should it go ahead. Moreover, the imagery of the school’s ‘traditional foundations ... being slowly diluted’ is intended to evoke fear among the alumni group, teachers, parents and guardians for the fate of a weakened and watered-down school. She concludes emotively and with high modal language, suggesting that renaming the hall would be ‘a tragedy of the greatest proportions’, imploring Thomas to reconsider her decisions in light of Baker’s championing of tradition.

Thomas’s speech targets not only the school students in her care but also the attending parents, guardians and Heritage and Alumni members. She uses the assembly to positively promote a competition to rename the newly refurbished school hall and also advance her desire for school progress and modernisation. In contrast, Baker, seeking to retain the hall’s name, appeals to the Heritage and Alumni newsletter readers and pleads with Thomas, arguing that Thomas’s desire for development is moving too quickly and a more traditional approach should be followed.

Assessor’s commentary

This high-level response comprehensively analyses the written and visual language in the material and seamlessly transitions between the two texts. The introduction considers not only the contentions of each author but also their intended effect on their respective audiences, thus effectively considering how each piece is designed to impact on the target audience. The response tracks the movement and focus of Thomas’s and Baker’s arguments, indicating an understanding of the structure of the arguments. The analysis of the visual material is clearly connected to a suitable argument rather than being analysed separately. Quotes are seamlessly integrated, as is the persuasive metalanguage used to analyse. Discussion of tone is integrated throughout and commentary on the effect of shifts in tone is sustained.