



Trial Examination 2022

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 2 February, the *Carringvale Gazette* published the article ‘Gateway to the Good Life or Trajectory to Trouble?’ by columnist Maria Lett. Adopting a scornful tone, Lett argues that Zenith Estate, a gated community that is planned for construction in Carringvale, will only cater to snobbery and introduce social division to her local area. Lett’s article prompted an irate reply from former deputy Lord Mayor of Carringvale, Winston Chambers. In his letter to the editor of the *Carringvale Gazette*, Chambers indignantly defends the merits of Zenith Estate and questions Lett’s motives in discrediting it.

Lett opens her article with the statement ‘So, it’s come to this’. The note of exasperation implies the article is the culmination of a long and unproductive process. She proceeds to identify the source of her discontent as Zenith Estate. The term ‘zenith’ connotes something at the very peak of excellence, which is what the advertising material for Zenith Estate appears to promise. However, by enclosing terms such as ‘select residents’ and ‘premium gated community’ in scare quotations, Lett casts an ironic light on the claims made by the developers. Lett goes on to disparage the supposedly ‘prestigious Zenith Estate’. She dismantles the flattering notion that it will attract ‘select residents’ by noting that ‘only the cashed-up need apply’. By using the colloquial term ‘cashed-up’, she implies that these people may have money but no class. Zenith Estate, she maintains, ‘exists solely to shut other people out’. Hence, its exclusivity can only buy a ‘cocooned life’, which will encourage residents to look down on non-residents as ‘riff-raff’. Lett appears to be confident that readers will support her when she poses the rhetorical question ‘Does anyone else find this just a trifle elitist?’ Employing inclusive language, she encourages her readers to stand up for their rights by stating ‘we are entitled to ask whether the costs outweigh the supposed benefits’.

The visual accompanying Lett’s piece depicts a very well-tended and peaceful, but lifeless, enclave. No people are visible, and, despite the air of general prosperity, the presence of security cameras, warning notices and discreet but functional fences remind the reader of prevailing security concerns. If this visual is intended to suggest how Zenith Estate will eventually look, then the development does not appear to be as exciting as it is made out to be.

To provide balance to her article, Lett offers an overview of the reputed benefits of gated communities while also questioning just how tangible those benefits actually are. In addition, she maintains that Carringvale is a ‘relatively quiet suburb’ and people living there are at little risk of ‘exterior violence’. Speaking as a local and appealing to shared community sentiment, Lett asserts that ‘we all know’ there is no need for ‘private fortresses in our midst’. She suggests that it is excessive to even desire such forms of protection. Lett also calls in the expert opinion of sociologist Ben Wong in support of her personal views.

Lett employs words with alarming connotations such as ‘paranoia and incitement to violence’. She aims to disturb readers by asking ‘Is this really what we want for Carringvale?’ Furthermore, she reminds locals of their honourable traditions – traditions in which she shares – stating that ‘We have always been inclusive’. Lett acknowledges that ‘gated communities may constitute some part of the American Dream’, but she questions whether they should ‘become central to the Australian Dream as well’. She is playing on anti-American attitudes to imply that gated communities may represent a move away from local values of inclusivity and diversity and toward American models of competitiveness and individualism.

Recognising that safety is socially desirable, Lett does not attempt to dissuade her readers from seeing value in it. Instead, she argues that gated communities will obstruct the pursuit of safety by breeding ‘social resentment’. It cannot be in the interests of the residents of Carringvale to see their community ‘become weaker’. A gated community that polarises those who are in the gated community and those who are not will, in Lett’s view, be a greater evil than any imaginary threat that it may exist to combat. She contends that there is nothing new or glamorous about Zenith Estate. No one, maintains Lett, will benefit from, or be impressed by, ‘plain old-fashioned snobbery with a new address’.

Lett's analysis of the local situation is controversial enough to invite debate. The former deputy Lord Mayor of Carringvale, Winston Chambers, is likely to be familiar with neighbourhood disputes and interested in promoting the economic good of the area. He is quick to dismiss Lett's views and question her motives. Chambers not only accuses her of having a chip on her shoulder but aims to make such a judgement seem self-evident. He represents her as 'obviously' disgruntled and plainly resentful of those who are 'better off'.

Chambers both affirms his enthusiasm for the proposed development and fends off some of Lett's blunter accusations. 'I, for one, find the lifestyle offered by Zenith estate highly attractive', he remarks, finding it necessary to add 'I am neither elitist nor paranoid'. He speaks with self-assurance and draws on his years of service to the local community to support his assertions. Furthermore, he asserts his right to 'live comfortably' and appreciate the 'the finer things in life' as the natural reward for his 'hard work and good money management'.

It is clear that Chambers is irritated by Lett, whose remarks he finds 'highly offensive'. As a former deputy Lord Mayor, he is a citizen of some note and 'resent[s] the insinuation' that he would not have the best interests of the community at heart. Revealing that Lett has got under his skin, he resorts to a personal attack. He reduces her arguments to a case of 'sour grapes', suggesting she is simply envious of the opportunities available to others.

The exchange between Lett and Chambers suggests that social resentment already exists in Carringvale and Zenith Estate may inflame it further.

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

Resistance to change is a phenomenon frequently seen in neighbourhood disputes. On 2 February, the *Carringvale Gazette* published the article ‘Gateway to the Good Life or Trajectory to Trouble?’ by columnist Maria Lett. Taking the moral high ground, Lett argues that Zenith Estate, a gated community that is planned for construction in Carringvale, will only cater to snobbery and introduce social division to the area. Lett’s article prompted an angry riposte from former deputy Lord Mayor of Carringvale, Winston Chambers. Chambers indignantly defends the merits of Zenith Estate and questions Lett’s motives in discrediting it. Although they speak from seemingly irreconcilable positions, it is evident that both Lett and Chambers believe they have special insight into the needs and nature of Carringvale.

Lett opens her article with the statement ‘So, it’s come to this.’ The note of exasperation implies the culmination of a long and unproductive process. She sets before her fellow residents a vision of a truly radical departure from their shared community values: Zenith Estate. The term ‘zenith’ connotes something at the very peak of excellence, which is what the advertising material for Zenith Estate, selectively quoted by Lett, appears to promise. However, by enclosing terms such as ‘select residents’ and ‘premium gated community’ in scare quotations, Lett casts an ironic light on the claims made by the developers. Readers who have been made wary of the inflated language of advertising may, therefore, be primed to approach Zenith Estate with caution.

Lett proceeds to disparage the supposedly ‘prestigious Zenith Estate’ by dismantling the flattering notion that it will attract ‘select residents’ and sardonically remarking that ‘only the cashed-up need apply’. Through employing the colloquial locution ‘cashed-up’, she implies that these people may have little to recommend them other than their wealth. ‘Cashed-up’ often forms a collocation with the dismissive term ‘bogan’. Although Lett does not explicitly use this term, she conjures a picture of a somewhat flashy lifestyle suited to those who may aspire to the outward signs of high social status. To condemn such aspirations, she links them to anti-egalitarian attitudes. Zenith Estate, she maintains, ‘exists solely to shut other people out’. Hence, its vaunted exclusivity can only buy a ‘cocooned life’ that will infantilise residents and encourage them to look down on non-residents as ‘riff-raff’ – a highly dismissive and dehumanising epithet. Through this, Lett seeks to associate support for Zenith Estate with shallow elitism, thereby encouraging her readers to instead value Carringvale’s existing diversity and equality.

Lett acknowledges that Zenith Estate does not lack superficial appeal when she states it is ‘not a bad life, perhaps’. However, Lett is careful to balance such a concession with the weightier claims that gated communities promote snobbery and paranoia. The visual accompanying her piece depicts a very well-tended and peaceful, but remarkably lifeless, enclave. No people are visible and, despite the air of general prosperity, the presence of security cameras, warning notices and discreet but functional fences remind the reader of prevailing security concerns. Thus, Lett’s comments are intended to taint the reader’s perspective of this image, highlighting the sinister, exclusionary and perhaps even dehumanising undertones of Zenith Estate that lurk beneath its clean exterior.

To demonstrate that hers is a well-informed critique, Lett offers an overview of the reputed benefits of gated communities whilst simultaneously questioning their actual benefits. She believes it may be a disproportionate response to build an entire lifestyle around the risk of ‘exterior violence’ in a ‘relatively quiet suburb’ like Carringvale. Appealing to shared community sentiment, Lett asserts that ‘we all know’ there is no need for ‘private fortresses in our midst’. She implies that those who might elect to live in Zenith Estate would retreat into it as they might into a bunker, thus showing themselves to be unnecessarily distrustful of the decent people of Carringvale. Additionally, she supports this sentiment with a quote from sociologist Ben Wong, who notes that it may ‘simply create a vicious cycle fuelled by fear’. By citing an authoritative academic, Lett bolsters the view that gated communities offer a false sense of security. She thereby encourages her audience to want to avoid entering into this ‘vicious cycle’ in the first place.

Nearing the conclusion of her argument, Lett dispenses with any concessions to opposing views and invokes phrases such as ‘Paranoia and incitement to violence’. Her words have alarming connotations of disturbances of the peace. When she couches the situation in terms such as these, there is no possibility of a dissenting answer to the rhetorical question ‘Is this really what we want for Carringvale?’ By stating that ‘We have always been inclusive’, Lett reminds her readers of their honourable traditions of acceptance – traditions in which she shares. Lett acknowledges that ‘gated communities may constitute some part of the American Dream’, but she questions whether they should ‘become central to the Australian Dream as well’. She is playing on anti-American attitudes to imply that gated communities may represent a move away from local values of inclusivity and diversity and toward American models of competitiveness and individualism.

Recognising that safety is socially desirable, Lett does not attempt to dissuade her readers from seeing value in it. Instead, she argues that gated communities will obstruct the pursuit of safety by breeding ‘social resentment’. She argues that it cannot be in the interests of the residents of Carringvale to see their community ‘become weaker’. If there is any paranoia in their thinking, Lett addresses it by painting a picture of a hostile ‘community divided by zones of conspicuous privilege’, which would be a greater evil than any imaginary threat that Zenith Estate may need to combat. In a final coup de grâce, Lett contends that there is nothing new or glamorous about Zenith Estate. Seeking status via the ‘reward’ of Zenith membership thus emerges as an expression of a discredited and rather passé impulse. No one, maintains Lett, will benefit from, or be impressed by, ‘plain old-fashioned snobbery with a new address’.

In being so biting, Lett’s analysis invites debate. Former deputy Lord Mayor, Winston Chambers, writes, presumably, from a rich knowledge of neighbourhood disputes. He is quick to question Lett’s motives and to launch an ad hominem attack. Employing a cliché that may well work to his advantage in establishing common linguistic ground with his readers, he categorises Lett as ‘obviously’ malcontent and plainly resentful of those who are ‘better off’. This is intended to undermine her professed interest in larger social concerns such as the survival of a ‘diverse, multifaceted community’ and reduce it to something altogether more petty. Whilst seeking to diminish the standing of Lett, Chambers simultaneously aims to cast himself as a man whose capacity to buy into Zenith Estate reflects not unearned privilege but ‘hard work and good money management’. He poses several rhetorical questions, all tending to absolve him of selfishness. It may seem reasonable for a sole individual to want to live ‘in the assurance of some degree of safety’, but Chambers wishes it to be known that his circle of concern rightly extends to his family and the local economy, which deserves a ‘much-needed boost’.

After striking this note of altruism, Chambers introduces a decidedly more personal note into his letter by using the first person singular pronoun ‘I’ five times in short succession. He both affirms his enthusiasm for the proposed development and fends off some of Lett’s blunter accusations. ‘I, for one, find the lifestyle offered by Zenith estate highly attractive’, he remarks, adding ‘I am neither elitist nor paranoid’. Downplaying any imputation of privilege, he asserts his right to ‘live comfortably’ and appreciate the ‘the finer things in life’ without attracting opprobrium. By making such vague, euphemistic references, Chambers – unlike Lett – avoids any reference to cold, hard cash and reduces the risk of alienating less wealthy readers.

In contrast to Lett, Chambers sees the question of Zenith Estate as a highly personal matter with direct application to himself. Both parties declare a commitment to Carringvale and its future, but, in all other respects, they are as thoroughly divided as if the walls of Zenith Estate already stood between them.

ASSESSOR'S COMMENTARY

The upper mid-range response 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 also missed opportunities to connect these to the authors' broader contentions, and there is a tendency to use quotes to summarise arguments rather than as language to be analysed. These omissions prevent the essay from achieving an upper-range mark. The essay also concentrates on relatively obvious persuasive techniques, such as reference to expert opinion and inclusive language, rather than more subtle elements, such as the connotations of 'private fortresses' or the jargon used in the advertising material for Zenith Estate (for example, 'customers' as opposed to residents). The thorough understanding of points of view and the precise selection of quotes and examples are typical of an upper mid-range response. A greater emphasis on how and why this language aids in the authors' attempted persuasion of the target audience would elevate this to a high-scoring response.

The high-scoring response also provides a close examination of both argument and language, but shows greater facility in explaining how each point of view is constructed. The analysis draws from the scope of material presented, but is appropriately selective and does not labour examples. Although the more obvious features of both articles are not overlooked, a greater proportion of time is spent in following up matters requiring some subtlety of analysis. For instance, the essay elaborates on the connotations of 'cashed-up' and 'cocooned life'. Considerable attention is devoted to the social attitudes that inform the stance taken by Lett and Chambers and how this is reflected in key words such as 'elitist' and 'social resentment'.

The high-scoring response displays a greater awareness of tonal shifts than the upper mid-range response and employs accurate metalanguage in discussing them. For example, the high-scoring response notes the change in direction in Chambers' argument from the altruistic to the personal and links this to a more frequent use of the first-person singular pronoun. The high-scoring response also features a greater control of the material and a deeper exploration of implication. This is made possible by a wide-ranging command of vocabulary, which is suited to the task but is not intrusively conspicuous. The high-scoring response often stands back from the stimulus material and presents it in perspective. Most importantly, the analysis frequently revisits both authors' contentions and considers how these continually shape the authors' language choices. The essay shows a pleasing sense of completion and smoothly transitions between examples and authors. It maintains a steady focus on why certain language supports a persuasive intent and its consistent use of metalanguage frames the discussion, which effectively enables efficient, insightful analysis.