

SECTION C - Analysis of language use

Instructions for Section C

Section C requires students to analyse the ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view.

Section C is worth one-third of the total assessment for the test.

Read the material on the increasing popularity of e-books and then complete the task below.

Write your analysis as a coherently structured piece of prose.

Your response will be assessed according to the criteria set out on page 16 of this book.

Task

How is written and visual language used to persuade readers to share the point of view of Annabel Houghton, Chris Torpin and cartoonist JOB?

Background information

From *The Australian* [6/1] under a heading –

'Paperback may be trumped by popular e-book this year.'

'The days of the paperback are numbered, with industry experts believing 2010 will be the year of the e-book as smaller devices such as tablet computers surge in popularity. With more players entering the market over the next twelve months, the cost of e-books will be lowered ... By the end of the year, an Adelaide e-book company will launch its product costing less than \$500. It will rely on the World Public Library's catalogue of 750,000 titles, and, while this will not include recent works, it will carry classical tales such as *Robinson Crusoe* and *Robin Hood* ...'

While this may be good news for those with poor vision and those with no easy access to traditional sources of reading material, not everybody is enthusiastic about the change. Two contributors to the 'FORUM' pages of a large Melbourne daily newspaper, express contrasting views in their articles. JOB's cartoon also indicates his stance on the issue.

TASK MATERIAL

Chris Torpin was enthusiastic about the development:

A new Fireside romance

I love my Fireside, but when I tell people about it, all I get are question marks.

Fireside is an electronic book about the size and weight of a thin paperback. Its screen is a near-perfect reproduction of type on a page, except I can select larger print if I want to. And if I can't find my glasses, it reads the book to me. When I strike a word I don't know, I simply go to it with a magically appearing cursor and a definition appears.

If I stay off-line, the battery is good for three or four books between charges. Melbourne to London would be a snap. I can go online to buy books, and there are no airtime charges; it's all part of the service. I get sick of telling people how good it is. Traditionalists such as bookworm and sometime Senator, Peter Shroeder, sniff at e-books, but I only had to use mine once to be convinced. And, hey, Fireside-edition books cost about two-thirds the regular price, and download in less than a minute.

The first book I read was *Shadow* by Karin Alvtegen, a sensationally good read by the way, and it took only three pages to get used to things. There are generous buttons on each side to advance the page, a smaller one to go back and a qwerty keyboard to search the book, order new ones or just fool around. The controls become second nature very quickly. Gripes? Book selection can be limited. Michael Connolly's *Dragons* is there, but much of his earlier work is yet to be 'Firesided'. It's the same with Barbara Kingsolver, Henning Mankell et al. I guess this will change with time. That the books are in American English – 'center' rather than 'centre' is something up which we non-Americans must put!

I recommend getting the optional rigid leather case. This makes Fireside just like a book to hold. Handy if your posture varies between semi and totally recumbent as mine mostly does. The best bit is that reading is always to the right of the spine so that you don't have to keep changing position to catch the best of the bedside light.

The Fireside's toughest test was my partner, who greeted it with profound distrust. I downloaded the book she was four chapters into and asked her to try Chapter 5 on the Fireside just for the hell of it. I didn't get my Fireside back until she had finished her book.

Now she is using it for her book club. She's going to have to bite the bullet and get her own, but, in the meantime, we can share books between us without charge. How good is that? I love my Fireside.

Annabel Houghton's view was in stark contrast:

e-Books lack the magic of the real thing

2009 will be recognised as the start of the e-book's gold rush. Online sales giants brag that they sold more e-books last Christmas than those of the physical variety. According to one distributor, its version of the e-book, the dubiously named 'Fireside', had become 'the most gifted item ever in history'. This comment, apart from displaying a disturbing disregard for the English language – 'the most gifted item ever' – caused me to shake my head in dismay, look lovingly at my friends sitting nobly on their shelves, and promise I will not betray them.

The electronic tablet that is 'Fireside' can never compete with their solace, their smell, their texture, the older ones growing creased, discoloured, flecked, as though developing age-spots and lines to match my own. They are indeed the signposts of my life. In my big, heavy Oxford Dictionary of Quotations, there is a dedication on the inside cover, handwritten in blue ink from a former boyfriend. It runs for several deliciously silly paragraphs. Where will these dedications go on 'Fireside'? The nerds and boffins have ensured that annotations can be added to the text – 'just like you might write in the margins of a book', they claim, but in the digital age these notes can be wiped out in an instant — and an electronic note will never be the same as a handwritten homage bursting with as much ardour as if it were written yesterday.

Socially, e-books are found wanting. Conversation is often struck up with strangers because of the book they are reading. That's not possible with 'Fireside': you can't see what people are reading. Perhaps, e-book makers will design a machine with a screen on the back to display the digitised cover art of the book being read. The tech-whizzes have certainly managed to make the bookmark obsolete ('Fireside' remembers for you, and always opens to the last page you read'), showing they don't quite understand the joy of bookmarks, and the sight of all those pages you've visited, and those yet to come, until the momentous last.

They are also limiting. Looking up a word in a dictionary, one may stumble across something entirely different. Similarly, running one's eyes along the shelves in a library, one can encounter books which might never have otherwise been discovered. And what about cost? A standard Fireside costs in the range of \$500, so it is basically elitist. How many families can afford \$500 for each member of the family, plus the cost of the e-book fee? The e-book has some real social and economic problems.

Further, it remains a cold, flat, cumbersome medium compared to the simple sensuous power and astonishing, packaged efficiency of the printed book. It will never replace beautifully made books, or books with lots of pictures, or the latest must-be-seen-with novel, or the read-and-chuck airport thriller.

I look back to my shelves and take them all in, all these books, stacked, slouching, standing, squeezed, waiting for the moment I pick them up again, or read them for the first time. They have weight, sound and appearance. Hold them, flip their pages, bury your nose inside and inhale, deeply! 'Fireside', on the other hand, is uniformly slim, odourless and antiseptic.

As I glance at my books, I can recall in an instant where they have been, what we did, what they meant to me, what they mean to me still. Every one of them has a story beyond the story within. And I do not want it to end.

JOB's cartoon identified his opinion on the issue:



END OF SECTION C