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VCE English Language Written Examination Sample Answer Guide

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SECTION A – Short-answer questions

Questions 1–5 refer to Text 1

NB: This is a guide only to the scope of the answers students may give to each question. Students' answers will necessarily reflect exam conditions and time limits.

Question 1 — sample answer (3 marks)

Discuss the use of pronouns in this lecture. What effect do they have, and how do they contribute to the social purpose of the text?

Pronouns are used for maximum impact in this lecture, primarily to demonstrate the incontrovertible truth that Indigenous Australians live a very different existence to non-Indigenous Australians. Grant uses the first-person singular pronouns 'I', 'me' and 'my' (lines 2, 3 and 6) to personalise his lecture and share his own experiences, but uses the plural forms 'we' and 'our' (lines 9 and 16) to include himself in the experience and culture of the Indigenous population. The 'we' and 'our' sit in contrast with the 'his', 'their' and 'they' (lines 14, 23 and 24) to refer to those non-Indigenous Australians who dismiss the experiences of Aborigines. The continued repetition of these pronouns throughout the speech (for instance 'their' in lines 23, 26, 27, 34, and 'they' in lines 24, 30, 34, 46, 49) reflect the cyclical and entrenched nature of bigotry in Australia, but Grant stands up to such prejudices by bringing the pronouns back to 'me', 'my', 'we' and 'I' in lines 46-53, finishing with his powerful refute: 'we have not yet had the chance to forget' (line 53).

Question 2 — sample answer (3 marks)

Analyse two different prosodic features and one vocal effect in the section between lines 1 and 32 of the text.

Grant uses prosody to give his lecture impact and interest – there are examples of considered prosodic features such as tempo and volume, but also inadvertent vocal effects such as sniffing. It is obvious that Grant is moved almost to tears by the recent revelations about Aboriginal children in custody and this is reflected in his vocal effects – the numerous sniffs (lines 6, 9, 16, 30, 46) reflect his emotional state as he laments the treatment of not only the Aboriginal children in question, but all Indigenous Australians, including members of his own family.

Grant is an accomplished speaker with a long history in journalism and public speaking, and this lecture is a well-rehearsed, polished performance. There are no non-fluency features in this excerpt – no pause fillers, hesitations or false starts and this is typical for the context; scripted speech has few of the repairs and filled pauses in spontaneous speech. Grant does use pauses deliberately, however, to vary the tempo and give the audience time to consider his words. His long pause on line 5 comes before his repetition of the phrase 'A nostalgia for injustice', giving this phrase greater impact. The pause after 'nostalgia' also gives us cause to consider the meaning of this word. Volume and tempo also play a role in creating dramatic impact – there is a contrast between his louder opening statement, which comes across as strong and defiant (lines 1-2) and his softer 'A nostalgia (..) for injustice' (line 5), which reflects a fragility and raw emotion. Tempo changes are also evident – the first time Grant uses the phrase 'A nostalgia for injustice' (line 4), he slows down considerably to give the audience an opportunity to ponder the significance of this phrase. Similarly, in line 28, he slows down on 'deny us ours' to demonstrate the injustice of the lack of respect for Indigenous traditions and culture. This contrasts with the faster 'to get over it' on line 25, his tempo reflecting the dismissive sentiment behind the words.

Intonation patterns and emphatic stress also play a key role in this lecture in shaping the discourse and enabling the audience to easily digest information. Rising intonation often signifies the continuation of a list (for example,

lines 6-7, lines 26-27, lines 35-38 and lines 40-41) or the intention to reveal something of great significance – this is clearly the case in line 3. Final intonation signifies the end of a syntactic unit, as in line 8 and 18, whereas the questioning intonation in line 32 provokes the audience to consider this question about the validity of the suffering felt by the Jews. Emphatic stress is used to draw attention to key concepts – ‘wounds’ in line 6 is given an emotional intensity by being accentuated in this way. Stress is also used to draw comparisons between two things – for example, the pronoun ‘his’ (line 14) is compared to ‘our’ (line 16), and again ‘their’ (lines 26 and 27) is distinct from ‘ours’ (line 28). Using stress in this way allows Grant to show the polarity of experience between the two groups – Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Elongated vowels also play a role in accentuating certain words – for instance, the verbs ‘choo=se’ (line 9) and ‘reca=lled’ (line 10) are given prominence, in this case demonstrating the absurdity of the notion that Indigenous suffering is imagined.

Question 3 — sample answer (2 marks)

Identify an example of phonological patterning between lines 35 and 45 and explain the effect it has on the text.

NB: For this response, only **ONE** example of phonological patterning is necessary.

There are numerous examples of phonological patterning in the list ‘vilify, divide and demonise’ (lines 40-42). Alliteration is used with the repetition of the first consonant in ‘**d**ivide and **d**emonise’ and consonance occurs in the words ‘vilify’ and ‘divide’, as well as assonance in the final syllable of these words: ‘vilify’, ‘divide’. The use of phonological patterning is a common literary stylistic device, helping to create a more memorable and sonorous text. Grant uses it to give prominence to these verbs and it is evidence of a carefully crafted and planned speech, consistent with the formal register of this lecture. Later, the alliteration of ‘**b**eating’ and ‘**b**igotry’ (line 48) gives added impact to the imagery of a pulsating racist undercurrent, as does the end rhyme of ‘civility’ with ‘bigotry’ (lines 47-48). Phonological patterning is commonly used in speech-making, where the sound of the words plays a more crucial role in conveying meaning and substance. This helps make the significant words more memorable – we can't look back on a speech like we can a book so being memorable is important in getting the message across.

Question 4 — sample answer (2 marks)

Comment on the use of one example of figurative language in the lecture and explain its relevance to the register.

NB: For this response only **ONE** example of figurative language is necessary.

Grant's speech is rich in figurative language. Metaphors include ‘these wounds on the body and soul of my mother’ (line 6), referring not only to physical wounds inflicted on the body but the emotional scarring that she has endured; ‘wrap their words in civility’ (line 47) has the implication that these words look civil and pleasant on the outside, but are deceptive in their coating; ‘to mask the beating heart of their bigotry’ (line 48) implies that bigotry is pulsating beneath the surface and is alive and well in certain people. The use of figurative language is consistent with the formal register of this speech – metaphors such as these help to convey visual imagery and can be powerful rhetorical devices. These metaphors enable Grant to persuade his audience of the validity of his assessment of the Indigenous condition.

Question 5 — sample answer (5 marks)

Using metalanguage, analyse the use of syntactic patterning in this lecture. Refer to specific examples and line numbers in your response.

NB: For 5 marks, students would likely need to discuss at least **TWO** different types of syntactic patterning, e.g. listing and antithesis.

Grant uses **listing** as an effective, compact way of highlighting the differences between people – ‘gay, Muslim, Asian, black’ (lines 36-39) – and again to highlight the actions taken by people who subscribe to this notion of difference – ‘to vilify, divide and demonise’ (lines 40-42). He also lists verb phrases to describe those people who ‘value their traditions, exalt their heroes and deny us ours’ (lines 26-28). Listing is a common technique in speeches (particularly lists of three) – it helps to create rhythm and thus makes the elements listed more memorable to the audience.

Grant makes considerable use of **antithesis** (juxtaposing opposing or contrasting ideas) to draw comparisons between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians – ‘someone certain of his place’ (line 14) is in stark contrast with the first people ‘still searching for our place, estranged in the land of their ancestors’ (lines 17-18); the sense of rightful belonging does not hold for Aboriginal Australians, who feel like foreigners in their own country. Similarly, the notion of White Australians ‘being comfortable in their own history’ (lines 22-23) is contrasted with the Aboriginal experience, who are told to ‘forget ours, to get over it’ (lines 24-25). And whilst non-Indigenous Australians ‘value their traditions’ (line 26), they ‘deny us ours’ (line 28). By using this form of syntactic patterning, Grant is able to paint a picture of the two opposing realities, placing them side by side. This gives weight to his argument that he does not have ‘a nostalgia for injustice’ because the Indigenous experience of suffering is only too real. This excerpt finishes with the antithetical ‘We have no nostalgia for injustice because we have not yet had the chance to forget’ (lines 51-53), juxtaposing the contrary notions of remembering (nostalgia) and forgetting – a poignant rebuttal by Grant.

Parallelism of sentence structures (and repeated lexis) brings a rhythmic quality and balance to the speech and is a powerful rhetorical device. Grant’s repetition of syntactic structures enables him to reinforce his point: ‘There are those who would rather...’ (lines 1-2) is syntactically similar to ‘There are those who accuse me...’ (lines 3-4) and lexical repetition of ‘a nostalgia for injustice’ (lines 4, 5, 12, 32, 49 and 52) emphasises Grant’s incredulosity at the notion that he feels such sentiments. Syntactic and lexical parallelism also occurs with the repetition of ‘as if’: ‘as if these wounds...’ (line 6), ‘as if we choose...’ (line 9), ‘as if this injustice...’ (line 10), allowing Grant to build his case. Similarly, syntactic parallelism occurs with the definition of injustice being ‘a thing recalled and not a thing lived’ (lines 10-11), and again later with ‘something to be pondered and not endured’ (line 21). Grant also repeats the clause ‘a charge could be levelled only by someone...’ (lines 13-14) in line 19 with ‘It could be levelled only by someone...’.

The following are **additional linguistic features** which students might pick up on should they use this text for practising an Analytical Commentary:

Functions of the text: to inform the audience of his views on reconciliation and Indigenous rights in Australia; to stimulate the audience to think about the issues concerning race relations in Australia; to raise awareness of the plight of young Indigenous Australians. Not only to inform but to stimulate thought and reflection on the notion of ‘shaping a bigger Australia’.

Social purposes: establishing expertise on the subject of Indigenous Australians; clarifying the situation he and his fellow Indigenous Australians face; challenging the face needs of the audience to take them out of their comfort zone with his emotive speech; to persuade his audience to share his viewpoint.

Register: a formal lecture, delivered in front of a live audience in a university setting, recorded and later broadcast on the university’s internet page; uses stylistic features to create a formal text in keeping with Grant’s expertise as a journalist, advocate and author.

Situational context demands a certain level of formality and attention to style, as such lectures are broadcast to a wide audience and recorded for posterity. The audience is presumably made up not only of members of the public but also university staff and students – the educational setting would attract not only those who are university educated but also those who are interested in education and public discourse. It is highly likely that the majority of the audience is not Indigenous, and that therefore Grant has framed his message accordingly.

Cultural context: the lecture takes place after the recent exposé by the ABC program *Four Corners* of the treatment of Indigenous children in detention in the Northern Territory. The program was shocking in its revelations and the PM subsequently launched a Royal Commission to investigate the allegations.

Lexical choice: the use of Standard English is expected in a formal lecture such as this, as is the use of relatively formal language choices. Lexical repetition occurs with the recurring noun phrase ‘a nostalgia for injustice’ (lines 4, 5, 12, 32, 49 and 52); this has the effect of acting as a type of refrain, reminding the audience of the absurdity of this notion, and also contributes to the overall cohesion of the text, bringing this theme back into focus. Much of the lexis concerns references to the past and thus belongs to the semantic field/domain of the past: ‘memory’ (line 8), ‘ancestors’ (line 18), ‘history’ (line 23), ‘traditions’ (line 26), ‘memories’ (line 30). Other lexis revolves around the ‘injustice’ (line 4) suffered by Indigenous Australians: ‘wounds’ (line 6), ‘suffering’ (line 9), ‘brutality’ (line 20), and ‘bigotry’ (line 48).

Examples of the **passive voice** – lines 13-15 ‘Such a charge could be levelled only by someone certain of his place in his country’; lines 19-21 ‘It could be levelled only by someone who sees injustice and brutality as something to be pondered and not endured’; lines 22-24 ‘It is a charge brought by people comfortable in their own history while they tell us to forget ours’. Passive voice is used as a form of parallelism – the repeated syntactic structure builds in intensity, the ‘charge’ foregrounded in each instance.

Cohesion and coherence

Coherence: Inference plays a role in contributing to the coherence of the lecture (see below).

Logical ordering: Grant expands on the accusation levelled at him, that he has ‘a nostalgia for injustice’, by systematically describing his family’s experience, and then the experience of Indigenous Australians overall, ‘our people’, and then goes on to describe the types of people who deny Aborigines their right to feel ‘estranged’ in

their own country – ‘These people who seize on difference...’ (lines 35-45). He finishes with a climactic rebuttal of the accusation in lines 50-53.

Consistency and conventions: Grant adheres to the conventions of public speaking and delivering a lecture – his speech is pre-planned and carefully crafted. Stylistic features such as alliteration, parallelism and metaphors/figurative language are testament to this. Consistency of register also contributes to coherence – the use of Standard English and relatively formal lexemes (e.g. ‘vilify’ (line 40), ‘debases’ (line 34)) is expected in a formal lecture such as this.

Cohesion:

Lexical choice: lexis belonging to the same domain; hyponymy ‘gay, Muslim, Asian, black’ all come under the umbrella term of ‘difference’ (lines 35-39); synonyms or near synonyms ‘injustice and brutality’ (line 20); collocations ‘exalt their heroes’ (line 27).

Deictic references: ‘these things’ (line 2), ‘this injustice’ (line 10) rely on context for meaning – they point to a particular time and place.

Temporal adverbials: ‘while they...’ (line 24), ‘all the while’ (line 43) denote time references.

Role of discourse particles: ‘No’ in line 50 and ‘Well’ in line 46 ‘Well’ is an emphatic discourse particle, intensifying the rebuttal which follows – ‘they don’t define my country’; similarly ‘No’ acts as an intensifier as Grant refutes the notion that Indigenous Australians are merely nostalgic.

The role of **inference** in relation to the cultural context of this speech. The lecture relies on inference for coherence – references to ‘our people’ and ‘the first people’ are relevant to the cultural context and the audience’s shared understanding of Grant’s Indigenous heritage and his identity as an Indigenous Australian. When Grant speaks of the Indigenous people ‘still searching for our place’, the audience would recognise that Indigenous people were only counted as part of the Australian population very recently (in the 1967 referendum) but that there is still no constitutional recognition of Indigenous Australians, and as a result, they are ‘estranged in the land of their ancestors’. Similarly, the reference to the ‘memories of the Jewish people’ presupposes an understanding of the plight of the Jewish during the Holocaust and the audience’s knowledge of world history.

SECTION B – Analytical commentary

Question 6 refers to Text 2

Write an analytical commentary on the language features of Text 2.

In your response, you should comment on the:

- contextual factors affecting/surrounding the text
- social purpose and register of the text
- stylistic and discourse features of the text.

Refer to at least **two** subsystems in your analysis.

The following points are examples of the types of linguistic features needed in an analytical commentary. Students may choose to structure the AC in whichever way they prefer, either by using subsystems or language features to organise their analysis, or by looking at the text holistically. Students must remember the three dot-points in the instructions for the AC and make sure they address all of them, whichever method they use. Students must also make certain that they refer to at least two subsystems in their analysis. An opening paragraph outlining briefly the situational context is useful (students might also refer to the cultural context, social purpose and register), but there is no requirement to write a conclusion as such.

Context, social purpose and register

- **Mode:** written text, newspaper article, planned and edited for publication
- **Medium:** online for *The Guardian* newspaper online edition
- **Semantic field/domain:** music, and also fashion
- **Function:** to entertain readers with amusing anecdotes about her musical awakening
- **Social purposes:** to build rapport with readers; to promote her musical expertise; to create intimacy and solidarity with like-minded people and those who remember the music of the 1990s; to reminisce about music and fashion and about her metamorphosis from country bumpkin to sophisticated university student
- **Register:** predominantly informal, and humorous in tone
- **Cultural context:** written for an Australian audience in mind. The text contains multiple references to Australian places and institutions, as well as cultural norms such as house sharing and house parties. Nonetheless, it has universal appeal as it refers to international music groups and its theme – coming of age through music – is one that is recognisable in many cultures.

Lexical and semantic features

- Much of the lexis relates to the domain of music, so there are proper nouns to refer to people/music groups – ‘Primal Scream’ (line 11), ‘Bobbie Gillespie’ (line 26), ‘Nirvana’ (line 32), ‘Jeff Buckley’ (line 48) – as well as CDs ‘*Screamadelica*’ (line 12), ‘*Smells Like Teen Spirit*’ (line 32) and ‘*Grace*’ (line 48). In addition, there are many references to musical styles/genres: ‘indie, house, acid, gospel, retro and dub’ (line 29), and ‘acid house’ (line 40). Given that one of the social purposes of the article is to reminisce about Myf’s musical awakening in the 1990s, and to remember the musical soundtracks that made an impact on her, it is logical that the lexis pertains to this domain.

- Another dominant semantic field is that of fashion. Most young people consider music and fashion to be important themes, particularly in their university years, and just as we remember music from our youth, so too do we recall changing fashions and how it made us feel at the time. Myf is self-deprecating about her conservative dress sense – ‘sensible chino slacks’, ‘pearl earrings and smart, bobbed haircut’ (lines 4-5) – when she moves from the country to the city. Her dress sense matched her ‘awkward innocence’ (line 4), and we are given detailed descriptions of her clothes – she uses post-modification in the form of adjectival phrases in parentheses ‘(pleated, with an ironed crease down the front, of course)’ (lines 4-5), as well as references to celebrities of note at the time, ‘Jackie McDonald on *Hey Hey it’s Saturday*’ (lines 8-9), to give us a visual image of her conservative dress sense. This is then contrasted with her wardrobe transformation over time: ‘paisley op shop dress’ (line 7), a ‘*Betty Blue*’ hairstyle (line 10), ‘chambray or flannelette shirts and button up fly Levi 501s’ (lines 34-35), a ‘cheesecloth shirt from Ishka and a wooden necklace that smelt of manufactured jasmine’ (lines 46-47). Her wardrobe change mirrors the change in her as she opens herself up to new experiences and freedom away from her small country town and family. Australians who were young adults in the 1990s would recall the fashion trends of the era and would recognise the cultural references, such as the television show *Hey Hey it’s Saturday*, the hippie shop Ishka and the diminutive ‘op shop’, a typical Australian morphological reduction of ‘opportunity shop’. By referring to both clothes and music, Myf gives her article a cultural and historical context, enabling her to build rapport with her audience as they too can reminisce about the era.
- Nostalgia and memory are another domain/semantic field of the text, and various lexemes pertain to this: ‘nostalgia’ (line 44, 52), ‘my past’ (line 44), ‘memories’ (line 46), ‘in those days’ (line 49), ‘remind me’ (line 45, 51), ‘today’ (line 50). These are in keeping with the function and social purpose of the text, which is to reminisce on past experiences and reflect on their impact on shaping her as a person.
- The text is rich in adjectives and adjective phrases, which Myf uses to paint a more accurate visual image of places, people and surrounds, for example: ‘inner-city terrace house’ (line 14), ‘dingy small room’ (line 14), ‘hard-earned cash’ (line 17), ‘renowned record store’ (line 18), ‘endless shelves’ (line 19), ‘the almost pop art cover image’ (lines 24-25), ‘newly discovered radio stations’ (line 27), ‘sneaky party goer’ (line 36), ‘futuristic acid house beats’ (line 40), ‘a new life’ (line 40), ‘far less prim’ (line 40-41), ‘slightly uneasy’ (line 45), ‘a not yet fully formed me’ (line 45), ‘wide eyed, enthusiastic’ (lines 45-46), ‘earnest and maudlin’ (lines 47-48), ‘not fully formed blank canvas’ (line 51), ‘old and young, but mostly alive’ (line 52).
- A number of lexemes are highly informal/colloquial, for example ‘big smoke’ (line 3), ‘ditched’ (line 8), ‘reeked’ (line 29), ‘swanned around’ (line 34), ‘stashed’ (line 36), ‘cool’ (line 41), ‘loaded’ (line 42), and the elision represented in ‘wanna’ (line 42). These help contribute to the impression that Myf doesn’t take herself too seriously; nonetheless, the article is written in Standard English and conforms to written conventions for this memoir-style of article. Myf uses stylistic features such as simile and metaphor – these forms of semantic patterning are a literary device used for the purposes of imagery and lexical richness. When she describes the album cover with the simile ‘It looked like a splattered egg with crazy eyes’ (line 25) the audience can visualise the art by comparing it to an ordinary household food with extraordinary features. The metaphor/idiom ‘I struck gold’ (line 28) has particular resonance in Australia, with its gold-mining heritage, and gives greater impact to the notion of having good fortune. Other metaphors include ‘I was a bundle of awkward innocence’ (line 4), and ‘*Screamadelica* was the musical gateway drug to the new me’ (line 39). These literary techniques are evidence of the planned nature of this writing and its adherence to more stylised writing conventions, despite the informal register.
- First-person pronouns contribute to the informality of the piece and also are typical of memoirs/personal narratives/autobiographical writing. The use of ‘I’ (e.g. lines 3, 4, 11), ‘me’ (e.g. line 12, 39, 45) and ‘my’

(e.g. line 6, 13, 27) all throughout make this a highly personal account of her past and her experiences. Whilst the presence of these pronouns might come across as exclusive and distancing, Myf builds rapport with her readership by including inferences they will understand and empathise with. For example, inference is required to understand what Jackie McDonald's hair was like (line 8) – the fact that Myf doesn't elaborate on this shows that she expects people reading this to have lived in the 90s and shared similar experiences and cultural references. Similarly, inference is required to make sense of her references to clothes from the era (e.g. Levi 501s, line 35, chambray shirts, line 34) and iconic bands such as Nirvana (line 32) and Jeff Buckley (line 48).

Morphological features

- The presence of shortenings such as 'uni' (line 8), 'op shop' (line 7) and 'Baz' (line 38) reflect the cultural context as being Australian. These diminutive forms are common in the Australian vernacular and contribute to the informal register, also enabling Myf to connect with her readership and build rapport.
- Conversion of word class is evident in the construction 'I underage drank a beer or four' (line 35-36). Here the adjective 'underage' is being used as an adverb to describe the manner in which she drank the beer. This non-standard construction contributes to the informality and light-hearted nature of the text.

Phonological features

- Phonological patterning in the form of alliteration is also present – 'musical melting pot' (line 28). Alliteration gives emphasis by drawing attention to the repeated first consonants.
- Upper-case (capital) letters are used to mimic emphatic stress or volume in spoken language: 'the one that EVERYONE had' (line 32), and 'I took some things and myself VERY seriously in those days' (lines 48-49). This punctuation reflects some of the prosody in speech and is typically used in online mediums such as texting, instant messaging and social media. Its presence here indicates a desire by Myf to connect with her readers by creating an informal register, thus fulfilling one of her social purposes.

Syntactic features:

- Predominant sentence type is declarative, which is in keeping with the function of the text – to inform the readers about a period in Myf's past, to narrate, to tell an anecdote from her past, to reminisce about the 90s and her musical awakening. The text opens with a declarative sentence typical of writing memoirs: 'I was 17 when I moved from a small country town to the big smoke of Melbourne in the early 1990s.' The sentence contains temporal references (her age, the era), and place references (country, Melbourne) so that the context is established from the outset.
- There are two interrogative sentence types in the piece. The first, 'Perhaps I was attracted to the almost pop art cover image?' (lines 24-25) doesn't fit the conventional syntax of a question (where verb and subject are inverted), but given it is a question she asks herself, rather than of someone else, this seems perfectly reasonable and informal. The second comes at the very end of the piece: 'And that is the point of nostalgia, surely?' (line 52). The interrogative tag, 'surely?' creates a question out of a statement, and invites the reader to agree with her, to share her feelings about nostalgia. This therefore assumes that she has already established some sort of rapport with her readers – by poking fun at herself and relating common universal truths about coming of age, she has created an 'in group' with those who grew up in the 90s as well as those who like to reminisce about the music of their youth.
- **Syntactic patterning:**
Antithesis – allows the writer to draw comparisons by juxtaposing opposites/antonyms, for example 'Familiar yet unfamiliar. It was the future and the past' (lines 29-30), and 'It makes me feel both old and

young’ (lines 51-52). The use of antithesis as a stylistic feature is in keeping with the theme of her piece – her transformation from ingenue to sophisticate, the contrast between the old her and the new. Similarly, these antonyms also reflect the paradox that many things in life can have polarising qualities.

Listing – is used to place collections of related elements together. For instance, Myf describes the clothes she wore on arriving in Melbourne by listing the elements of her wardrobe: ‘in sensible chino slacks (...), pearl earrings and a smart, bobbed haircut’ (lines 4-5). Similarly, she lists the meagre contents of her bedroom: ‘a single bed, a lava lamp and a few sticks of Nag Champa incense...’ (lines 15-16), and the types of music embodied in the *Screamadelica* album: ‘indie, house, acid, gospel, retro and dub...’ (line 29). Listing is an effective way of reducing unnecessary repetition and therefore acts as a cohesive device; it also acts to increase the coherence of the text so that it is more easily understood.

Parallelism – Myf utilises both lexical and syntactic repetition to reinforce her excitement on her newfound discovery: ‘It was the future and the past. It was loose. It was a revelation.’ (line 30). The repetition of ‘It was...’, culminating on the emphatic ‘a revelation’ enables her to build to a climax so that we too, as readers, can share her enthusiasm.

- Myf uses a variety of sentence structures – simple sentences such as the trio ‘It was the future and the past. It was loose. It was a revelation.’ (line 30) have a dramatic impact in their short and sharp punchiness; compound sentences such as ‘My first house party required a soundtrack, so I took my hard-earned cash...to a record store’ (lines 17-18) link two clauses of equal value; complex sentences allow the main clause to be elaborated on, for example ‘The album was a musical melting pot that combined indie, house, acid, gospel...’ (lines 28-29); and fragments, such as ‘Sorry Baz.’ (line 38) and ‘Still.’ (line 52), somewhat mimic the elliptic nature of spoken language and contribute to the informality of the text, giving light relief in their lack of density. Variety in sentence structures is important in creating a cohesive text, and Myf uses various structures to show syntactic relationships between different elements of clauses.

Discourse strategies

- Coherence and cohesion – In a written text such as this, coherence and cohesion are paramount, as this text is published online in a respected newspaper, *The Guardian*. It is vital that the article makes sense and is logical – in other words, it is coherent. Inference is one element of coherence that is evident in this text – the reader ‘infers’ what is not said, through prior knowledge of culture or through past experience. Myf’s reference to the popular television show *Hey Hey it’s Saturday* (line 9) is one example that requires inference from the reader (see discussion under first-person pronouns). Logical ordering also contributes to the coherence of the text – the narrative begins with Myf’s arrival in Melbourne and then recounts her personal and musical transformation over time, finishing with her reflections in the current day. This is a natural narrative arc in storytelling. Formatting through the use of a title/heading (line 1), author byline (line 2) and distinct paragraphs also makes the article easier to read and understand, and this adheres to the conventions for this particular text type.

Consistency is also achieved through the use of lexis from the same semantic fields, for example fashion and music (see discussion under lexis).

Cohesion is achieved in a variety of ways – once again, the lexis plays an important role in creating connections within the text. Hyponyms related to musical genres (e.g. ‘indie, house, acid, gospel, retro’, line 29) reflect the dominant semantic field/domain of the text; collocations such as ‘leading me astray’ (line 12) and ‘blank canvas’ (line 51) are predictable and therefore easier for the reader to process; antonymy

such as ‘old and young’ (line 52) and ‘small country town’ and ‘big smoke’ (line 3) is employed to provide contrasting ideas that are easy to comprehend, and helps to fulfil the social purpose of recounting a period of change and transformation. Information flow in the form of front focus gives greater emphasis to certain elements of the sentence – for example, ‘Within six months, those conservative threads were cast aside...’ (line 7) gives prominence to the time frame of her transformation. Anaphoric reference reduces unnecessary repetition in the text, substituting referents with pronouns and thus supporting the cohesion of the text – for example, ‘It looked like a splattered egg...’ (line 25) uses the pronoun ‘it’ to refer back to the ‘pop art cover image’ (line 24). Conjunctions and adverbials also contribute to the cohesion of the text by linking words, phrases and clauses together. For example, the conjunction ‘but’ shows the contrastive relationship between the two clauses in the following – ‘I can blame this radical life transformation on many things, but Primal Scream’s record *Screamadelica* had a firm hand in leading me astray.’ (lines 11-12). Adverbials provide extra information about particular elements in relation to time, place or manner – for instance, ‘in the early 1990s’ (lines 3-4) gives information about time; ‘at my first house party’ (line 13) shows where Myf’s innocence was corrupted; and ‘without cringing’ (line 50) indicates the manner in which she can still listen to the music.

SECTION C – Essay

Task

Students are to choose **one** of the three essay topics and write an expository response. They **must** make reference to at least one of the examples of stimulus material for their chosen essay topic. This can be done in a variety of ways – either a direct quote, or a reference to the idea/incident/thought/example presented in the stimulus. It is not necessary (or indeed, advisable) to refer to all the stimulus material presented in the essay topic – the stimulus is there to encourage students to think about the topic and the different ways they might address it. It is not meant to be a suggested structure for their essay. Students are encouraged, instead, to bring their own ideas and examples/references to the essay; it is a requirement that they show an understanding of contemporary linguistic issues and examples from the media. For this reason it is important that students read widely during the year on topics/issues concerning language. Students are also encouraged, where appropriate, to draw on their own personal linguistic experiences and reflections. In addition, students must use metalanguage accurately and refer to **at least two** subsystems in their response. Standard essay-writing conventions apply – an introduction, clear body paragraphs, and a conclusion, as well as coherent, cohesive prose and accurate spelling and punctuation.

The following notes are not meant to be prescriptive – there are various ways of responding to essay topics. These are merely *some* of the ideas and examples which may arise in the discussion of these topics.

Question 7 (30 marks)

‘Language is a powerful tool for hurting, disempowering and offending others.’

To what extent is this true in the Australian context? Refer to at least two subsystems in your response.

Ideas and examples to consider:

1. Language has the capacity to wound and offend, either inadvertently or deliberately. Our language choices say a lot about our respect (or lack of) for others and our inbuilt prejudices and biases.
2. Racial slurs/racist language is one mechanism for offending and hurting others. There have been numerous examples on the football field this year of spectators or players using racist slurs to put certain AFL players down.
3. Calling someone a ‘retard’ or ‘psycho’ is offensive and insensitive to those who suffer from disabilities or mental health issues, as well as to the person on the receiving end of such language.
4. Everyday language can be hurtful and insensitive to particular groups of people. For instance, calling dole recipients ‘dole bludgers’ casts a negative light on people who are unemployed, when in fact many of them are desperate to find work. The Brotherhood of St Laurence has launched a campaign with the byline ‘Job Hunter #NotDoleBludger’ in order to make the community more aware of this.
5. Language is often encoded with gendered bias. There have been some moves to remove such gendered bias, particularly from the LGBTIQ community, in relation to pronoun use. English does not have a gender-neutral pronoun (unlike other languages, such as Swedish, which has specifically adopted a gender-neutral pronoun for people who do not identify either as male or female), and this makes it difficult for those people who do not wish to be referred to as ‘he’ or ‘she’. Most forms require people to stipulate their gender as either male or female – this is insensitive and hurtful to a number of people in our community.

6. Gender bias goes further than a lack of gender-neutral pronouns – much of our language is ‘man made’ (according to feminist Dale Spender) and reinforces a male world view. Political correctness attempts to redress this by removing male references to job descriptions (for example, preferring ‘police officer’ to ‘policeman’, or ‘actor’ to ‘actress’), but many biases are so entrenched in our language that they are difficult to eliminate – a great number of people automatically think of ‘CEOs’ or ‘surgeons’ as being male professions, for instance. Neologisms such as ‘SheEO’ and ‘girlboss’ draw attention to this fact, illustrating that language does indeed offend and disempower when gender bias is present. Some people, however, believe that such neologisms merely reinforce gender bias rather than removing it altogether.
7. Sexist language (for example Donald Trump’s various references to women, be they supposedly flattering – telling the French president’s wife she’s in ‘good shape’ – or downright insulting – calling news presenter Megyn Kelly a ‘bimbo’) is another powerful way of causing offence, hurt and disempowerment.
8. Homophobic slurs and casual homophobic language (using the word ‘gay’ in a negative way, for instance) also do damage and cause offence.
9. ‘Fattist’ language or negative language around body types can cause great offence and hurt. Recently, feminist Roxane Gay wrote of her experience of being interviewed by Mia Freedman and the insulting language Freedman used to describe her ‘super-morbidly-obese frame’. Gay found the language ‘cruel and humiliating’ and extremely insensitive.
10. People are more tolerant these days of profanity and swearing, particularly in informal contexts. Swearing can even be seen as a bonding tool within friendship groups, and can foster intimacy rather than offence. Context and intent, however, are important considerations – one needs to be sensitive to how others interpret profanities and swearing and be mindful of their sensibilities.
11. The use of jargon can sometimes disempower others – if you are not part of the ‘in group’ and do not understand the jargon associated with that group, you can feel ostracised or impotent.
12. Not understanding the local ‘lingo’ or vernacular can also be disempowering. Even people whose native language is English or who have a good command of English can find themselves bemused by Australian idioms and slang, and even the accent – the late Steve Irwin’s son Robert, appearing on the US show *Family Feud*, was unable to make the host understand his Australian pronunciation of the word ‘car’. Only when his mother Terri intervened with her American rhotic pronunciation of the ‘r’ was the host able to understand!

Question 8 (30 marks)

‘Our Australian identity is closely tied to our use of English, which is rich, complex and dynamic.’

Discuss, referring to at least two subsystems in your response.

Ideas and examples to consider:

1. The ‘ocker’ stereotype which people associate with Australian identity no longer holds – the number of people speaking with Broad Australian accents has been declining. Similarly, the number of people speaking with Cultivated accents has also shrunk; most Australians speak with a General accent.
2. Class doesn’t necessarily dictate your accent. Examples from the television show ‘Gogglebox’ suggest that while some working class Australians use a Broad accent (Keith and Lee), others use a General accent (the Jackson family).

3. Some migrant groups have an accented English, others don't. Often accent is dependent on where children are born and what age they are when they migrate to Australia. We can't make assumptions about how an Australian with ethnic heritage speaks English.
4. Australian accents are changing – young people, for instance, are more likely to pronounce 'celery' as something closer to 'salary'. However, whilst some aspects of Australian accents are evolving, our accent remains distinctly Australian.
5. Our vocabulary is still rich and interesting, despite the loss of archetypal Australian phrases and idioms – we still have an inventiveness and humour in our lexicon and a penchant for abbreviations and diminutives. Social media plays a huge role in the dissemination of Australian slang.
6. Dictionaries such as the Australian National Dictionary show that Australian English is leaning towards the informal. Many new additions to the dictionary reflect the trend towards more informal usage, even in the public domain.
7. Some people bemoan the loss of uniquely Australian phrases and words (for example, 'mate') and criticise the influence of other languages on our own. American English in particular seems to annoy those who wish to retain the purity of the Aussie vernacular. In fact, American influence on Australian English is overstated.
8. People are more open to Aboriginal English due to the popularity of Indigenous television content and more Indigenous Australians appearing in the media. Aboriginal English is an important marker of identity for Indigenous Australians
9. Ethnolects are also an important aspect of Australian English and are strongly linked to identity, enabling speakers to retain links to their ethnic heritage as well as their Australian identity.
10. Much has been said about the validity of making prospective Australian citizens sit a compulsory English test. Critics of the test say that functional English in an Australian context is completely different to the academic English required to score highly on the test.
11. Just as there is no one particular 'Australian English', there is no one particular Australian identity. Our identity is no doubt linked to our use of English, but our use of English is varied – our geographical location, social class, ethnic background, gender, age, interests and occupation all play a role in determining our language use. We can all identify as Australian despite speaking different versions of the language.

Question 9 (30 marks)

'Today, more than ever, context is the all important driver of written and spoken language use, and we need to alter our expectations of standards accordingly.'

Discuss in relation to contemporary Australian society, referring to at least two subsystems in your response.

Ideas and examples to consider:

1. The context is fundamental to determining the type of language we expect from people. Factors to consider include the mode of the communication (written or spoken), the medium used (face to face, email, text message, letter etc.), the text type (advertisement, narrative, interview etc.), the setting, the field or topic in question, the function and social purpose of the interaction, and the relationships between the participants.
2. Cultural context is also an important factor in driving language use – Australian cultural references and social and linguistic norms play a key role in what we expect from our interlocutors.

3. Profanity, for instance, has its place in communication and is entirely appropriate in certain contexts. Some workplaces believe it to foster intimacy, group solidarity and bonding (tradies, for instance) and this is also the case amongst some friendship groups, particularly teenagers. As a stress release, profanity definitely has its place, and also in times of pain – it is even thought that swearing enables us to deal with pain better. However, whilst swearing and profanity are desirable or inoffensive in certain contexts, most of us understand that in other circumstances or contexts it is unacceptable or inappropriate – swearing in front of a colleague in a lunch setting might be fine, but swearing in a board meeting or interview not so.
4. Technology and the changing and fast-evolving means of communicating these days means that we necessarily alter our expectations of language use. Emoji, for instance, fulfil a certain role in our communications with friends and can disambiguate the tone of messages, convey a mood, or reflect playfulness. However, if used in the wrong context they can be viewed negatively – either seen as childish or inappropriate or poor form. When interlocutors know each other well and have low social distance between them, emoji can be entirely satisfying and appropriate tools in communicating.
5. We have so many new forms of communication available to us these days that our expectations of language standards have had to evolve too – many of these forms of communication were not available five, ten or fifteen years ago, and so we must adjust our ‘rules’ around language use accordingly. In some contexts, written language more closely resembles spoken language (such as instant messaging, chat rooms) and in these cases rules around grammar and spelling are much more relaxed – the fast pace of such communication also precludes standard usage.
6. On social media we don’t necessarily have the same expectations of good grammar or standard English; only pedants and punctuation sticklers take glee in finding misplaced commas and apostrophes, and many trolls deride such errors or non-standard spellings. Most of us understand that such platforms demand a less stringent approach to language and reserve our higher standards for occasions where it is truly warranted – for example, in written exams, assignments, documents, job applications and the like. Similarly, we have different expectation of spoken language in more formal contexts – a formal lecture, speech or eulogy will be markedly different from a casual conversation in a social setting.
7. Standard English is still the key to social prestige – the ability to exploit overt language norms is paramount to being considered one of the ‘in group’. The proposed citizenship English test has been touted by the government as necessary for social cohesion and integration, but some see it as discriminatory and unfair, as it favours those with a sound command of English or those whose mother tongue is English.
8. Societal attitudes and individual prejudices can lead to social disadvantage and discrimination; when we criticise someone’s language use, we are in effect criticising them as a person and revealing our social prejudices as much as our linguistic ones.
9. In certain cases, people are ridiculed for their non-standard language use – Donald Trump’s tweet about ‘negative press covfefe’ went viral as people tried to decode it. However, tweeting is one context where non-standard language use (either deliberate or inadvertent) is rife and we shouldn’t necessarily expect the same attention to spelling, punctuation and grammar. But the huge media attention arising from the tweet shows that perhaps people (not unreasonably) do have high expectations of the US President, irrespective of the medium of communication.

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