



GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2006 the English (ESL) examination paper consisted of two sections: Section 1 required a response to one text, while Section 2 required students to complete three different tasks in response to given material. As in previous years, a small number of students submitted more than one response to Section 1. *Gattaca* was the most popular text again this year, and the five most popular texts produced almost 78 per cent of all responses. There were no responses to four texts and a further nine texts attracted fewer than 10 responses. In Section 2, almost all students responded to all three tasks.

Assessment is holistic; assessors relate the standard of each response directly to the published assessment criteria. Their judgements are assisted by the use of a set of descriptors. Both the criteria and the descriptors are fully explored and directly related to the range of student responses during intensive assessor training before and during the marking process. Teachers and students should be aware of both the assessment criteria and the descriptors, which are published on the VCAA website.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section 1 – Text response

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	0	0	1	6	14	25	25	17	8	4	1	5.7

Students were required to produce one piece of analytical or expository writing in response to one text. There were two topics for each of the prescribed texts. The layout of the English (ESL) paper remained similar to previous years and did not appear to have created any misunderstanding about task requirements, even for the many ESL students who are taught in mainstream classes.

The best responses showed an ability to craft meaningful, analytical and relevant discussions in direct response to the chosen question. While good answers showed detailed textual knowledge, the best ones skilfully wove this knowledge into the fabric of the analysis.

The most popular texts and their mean scores are shown in the table below.

Text	% Answered	Mean Score
<i>Gattaca</i>	36.4%	5.5
<i>The Wife of Martin Guerre</i>	13.5%	6.0
<i>Lantana</i>	10.7%	5.6
<i>I'm not Scared</i>	10.2%	5.4
<i>King Oedipus</i>	6.9%	6.0

The overall mean score was 5.7.

The second *Gattaca* topic was much more popular than the first. The best responses encompassed the whole question; however, a significant number of students either ignored or failed to successfully address the 'than he realises' part of the question. Students may have had difficulty understanding the meaning of the phrase or were relying heavily on prepared essays about Vincent's 'determination' and 'spirit'. Many responses took the approach that it was his spirit and help from others that determined his success, but usually failed to distinguish between the help he was aware of and that which he wasn't. Average responses just listed or discussed the help he received from each of the characters.

Topic 1 on *Gattaca* generally produced more thoughtful analyses than topic 2. Good responses provided different points of view – from valids being cold, to Vincent being cold, to characters changing from cold to warm as the film developed. Different interpretations of 'emotionally cold' were given – some characters were described as 'passionless', others as 'having no emotions' or 'expressing no emotion'. The better answers dealt with a range of characters, while average responses focussed heavily on Vincent. The topic also provided opportunity for students to comment on film techniques.



The first topic on *The Wife of Martin Guerre* was readily accessible and encouraged students to use their knowledge of the text to construct a personal point of view on an issue which is at the heart of the action in the story. It allowed students to discuss a range of aspects of the novel and produced excellent answers that discussed the conscience benefits as opposed to the obvious relationship/happiness losses. Students appeared to find the second topic more difficult and showed little understanding of the term 'moral tale'.

Both questions on *Lantana* provided opportunities for students to discuss the characters' decisions and actions; however, few students adequately addressed the key phrases 'to what extent' and 'easier to ignore'. Some confused 'truth' with 'trust', and the idea of 'loss' and what it meant for different characters was not really explored. In many responses the focus was limited to 'ignoring the truth' and little attention was given to the implications of 'easier' or what dealing with the truth might have involved for the characters.

Strong responses to the first topic for *I'm not Scared* focused on fear as a motivator. Some students allowed the quote to distract them from the main thrust of the question and wrote about what the characters were afraid of. Others focussed on how the things that characters, such as Michele, were afraid of motivated them to behave in certain ways. There were different interpretations of fear, for example 'fear of the future' and 'fear for the ones you love'. Weaker responses to the second topic ignored 'only' and some responded with a focus on 'kidnapping' but overlooked the 'blackmail'.

Students generally demonstrated a good engagement with the ideas of the texts, good essay structure and obvious confidence in how to approach the task. Stronger responses were characterised by appropriate use of embedded quotes and good understanding of the instruction 'discuss'. There were very few short or incomprehensible responses; however, in some cases there was still an over-reliance on story telling and regurgitating a prepared response which had only some relevance to the topic on the paper. Such responses insufficiently analysed the set question or focussed on only one aspect of the question. In their planning, students need to brainstorm all the key words within the question as well as pay particular attention to modifying words and comparatives.

The introduction to the following high range response on *The Wife of Martin Guerre* sets the context of the discussion and states the point of view the writer intends to defend. The language is fluent and appropriate without panache. There are thoughtful, insightful comments about the text in relation to the question and an acknowledgement of Bertrande's gains even though the writer believes her losses were greater.

The Wife of Martin Guerre
Does Bertrande gain more than she loses by denouncing the impostor?

France in the 16th century is a strictly patriarchal and religious society where women are expected to uphold certain moral and social values. It is evident that Bertrande upholds the values of morality, faith and honesty very highly. Therefore when she comes to the realisation that the man she has been living with for three years is not the man that she married as an eleven year old child, she becomes determined to expose him as an impostor. Even though Bertrande has good intentions she ends up losing more than she gains, as a result of her actions.

Bertrande suffers physically and emotionally throughout her attempts to expose Arnaud du Tilh's true identity. She gradually grows weaker and weaker and this results in her having a miscarriage. Therefore one thing that she loses is her baby.

Furthermore, Bertrande loses the respect from her entire 'mesnie'. 'The household had prospered surprisingly under this new Martin.' 'They were all happy.' Therefore, they did not want anything to change their happiness and prosperity. As a result the entire household rejects Bertrande's accusations. They treat her like an outcast and like a 'mad' woman. Two of Martin's sisters did not hesitate to say that they thought her 'malicious'.

More importantly though, Bertrande loses the respect and admiration of her son Sanxi. Sanxi was the only one who could make Bertrande happy even in her darkest moments. They were entirely devoted to each other. However, after Arnaud's arrest, Sanxi changes the way he views his mother. He seems to be fearful of her and does not approach her.

Furthermore, Bertrande also loses the respect of the curé and the entire community of Artigues. The curé believes Bertrande to be 'mad'. even though he does not state it. Also, during both trials we hear certain comments being made about Bertrande. 'The woman lived with him for three years and now she accuses him?' In the strict patriarchal society in which Bertrande lived it was unlawful and disrespectful for a woman to question the cap d'hostal. As a result people were outraged by her actions.

More importantly, Bertrande loses the two men she loved, Martin and Arnaud. Bertrande's actions lead to Arnaud's death by decapitation. Martin on the other hand shows great depreciation towards Bertrande's accusations and actions, even though through these accusations she was trying to uphold the honour of the name of her true husband. 'Dry your tears Madame. They cannot and ought not move my pity.' He rejects Bertrande after all she has done for him. In the end Bertrande must 'leave the love which had rejected her' and at the same time reject her true love, Arnaud, 'because it was forbidden'.

In the end, Bertrande gains very little. She gains the knowledge that her accusations were true, Arnaud was in fact an impostor. She is able to 'rid herself' of the impostor. She is also able to 'deliver herself' from 'sin'. However, she ends up losing the respect



and admiration of her family and the community of Artigues. She loses the love of both Martin and Arnaud. All these events lead to her tragic downfall. 'When hate and love have together exhausted the soul the body seldom endures for long.' In the end were her actions really worth it?

On this topic some responses argued just as strongly for the opposite conclusion, such as one which began: '*...Although she suffered terribly from the loss of happiness and her position in the system, Bertrande de Rols was victorious at the end of the novel as she had won what she held the most dear.*' The response addressed Bertrande's gains such as freeing herself from sin and preserving her integrity, while also acknowledging that what she lost in exchange for the truth was enormous. It concluded:

On a superficial level, one may argue that Bertrande seemed to have lost much and gained little in her obstinate pursue of the truth. However, as a morally upright, religious woman in her times, it was evident that Bertrande de Rols had chosen, in rejecting Arnaud du Tilh, to preserve the high ideals which she held as the essence of life. Her manifestation of courage, resolution and persistence had gained her triumph of the soul and the status of a heroine from her predicament, and these would certainly outweigh the losses in her life, though enormous as they were.

The following upper mid-range response to *Gattaca* is relevant to the topic and displays good knowledge of the text and clear meaning. In some parts of the response the evidence that the characters are not 'emotionally cold' is not explicit but implied by the text examples chosen. There is lively discussion but the overall quality of the response is limited by the basic nature of the student's expressive skills.

Gattaca

'In Gattaca the film-maker presents characters who are emotionally cold.' Discuss.

In Andrew Niccol's film Gattaca, it shows us a discriminative world complete with genetic superiority and high expectations, separate people by the name 'valid' and 'invalid'. By the first thought, we were easily think it is an emotionally cold world, especially those characters. However the real relationship between the main character 'Vincent' and those people around him shows us that those kind of thoughts were absolutely wrong. People around Vincent who saved him, helped him, loved him shows the really world of Gattaca fitfuled with emotion.

From a small age, Vincent's life hasn't been easy. He is a god-child with imperfect genes, once he was born, the midwife said he has 99% probability of heart disorder, and only can live 30.2 years. In his childhood, because of insurance won't cover him, the day care centre was refuse to accept him. Untill he was grew up, in the society 'now have discrimination down to a science', a person like Vincent can not even find a job. However, his mother wasn't abandoned him. She told Vincent 'I know you will do something'. From this point shows even in the Gattaca world the family love still existed.

After Vincent left home to find and achieve his goal, the first person important to him and finally having brotherly love with him is Eugene. Eugene is the one provides Vincent everything he needed to be a borrowed ladder. As we first seeing, he is an arrogant valid with the perfect genes. He is not that friendly to Vincent and questioned him a lot because he don't think Vincent as a invalid can be him at all. However, after the leg operation, Eugene knew Vincent's determination, stopping question him and with the time passed, their relationship became more and more intimately. 'I only lent you my body, but you lent me your dream'. Eugene is prode to have such brother at the end of the film, the swimming upsteps show how deeply the brotherly love between them. And the two life time supplies makes people moved to tears. How could us say that the characters in Gattaca are emotionally cold? Not only Eugene, but also Irene has the affection with Vincent. She loved Vincent by the first seeing, helped, protected him many times. For the breif view, Irene is a cool valid with frosty manner. However, after she got touch with Vincent we can start seeing her really heart. Because of the emotion, she protected Vincent when the cheack in the tunnel, as well as the late one when Anton was wondering to find Vincent. She told Vincent 'You don't look well, why don't you go home' and later the kiss with stranger (Eugene). To the woman who can cry for Vincent, can't we say it is a emotionally time in the film?

Furthermore, on the way to Vincent's success, there were two people cannot be forgot. One is director. He is the first person knows Vincent is an invalid in Gattaca. However, he didn't point Vincent out. Also a kind of admire of Vincent 'We need such person like you, bring us to Titan' shows how highly he thought of Vincent. The other emotionally character is Dr Lamar. As the doctor in Gattaca, he know Vincent is an invalid as well. It all caused by the emotion that he protected Vincent. He's son is a valid but doesn't like what the promise. From this point, he'd like to see how far an invalid like Vincent can go. Vincent goes further gave his son more hope. 'My son is a big fan of you' explore that is emotion drives him to protect Vincent more clearly.

Overall, although the characters in Gattaca looks emotionally cold their real personality is more emotionally than in the real world. Their pretend to be frosty manner but the real emotion still be show out. The loves, helps, and protects all shows us that in the Gattaca society people are really emotionally!



Section 2 – Writing task

Students were presented with a number of items related to one topic. They were required to complete three tasks in response to this unseen material:

- a note form summary of a section of the material
- an analysis of language used in another section of the material
- a response to an issue raised by the texts.

Each task was of equal value and three separate scores were given. Clear instructions resulted in very few instances of students completing tasks on the wrong material. The topic provided thought provoking and relevant material, and students expressed a range of ideas in response to the part 3 question.

Part 1

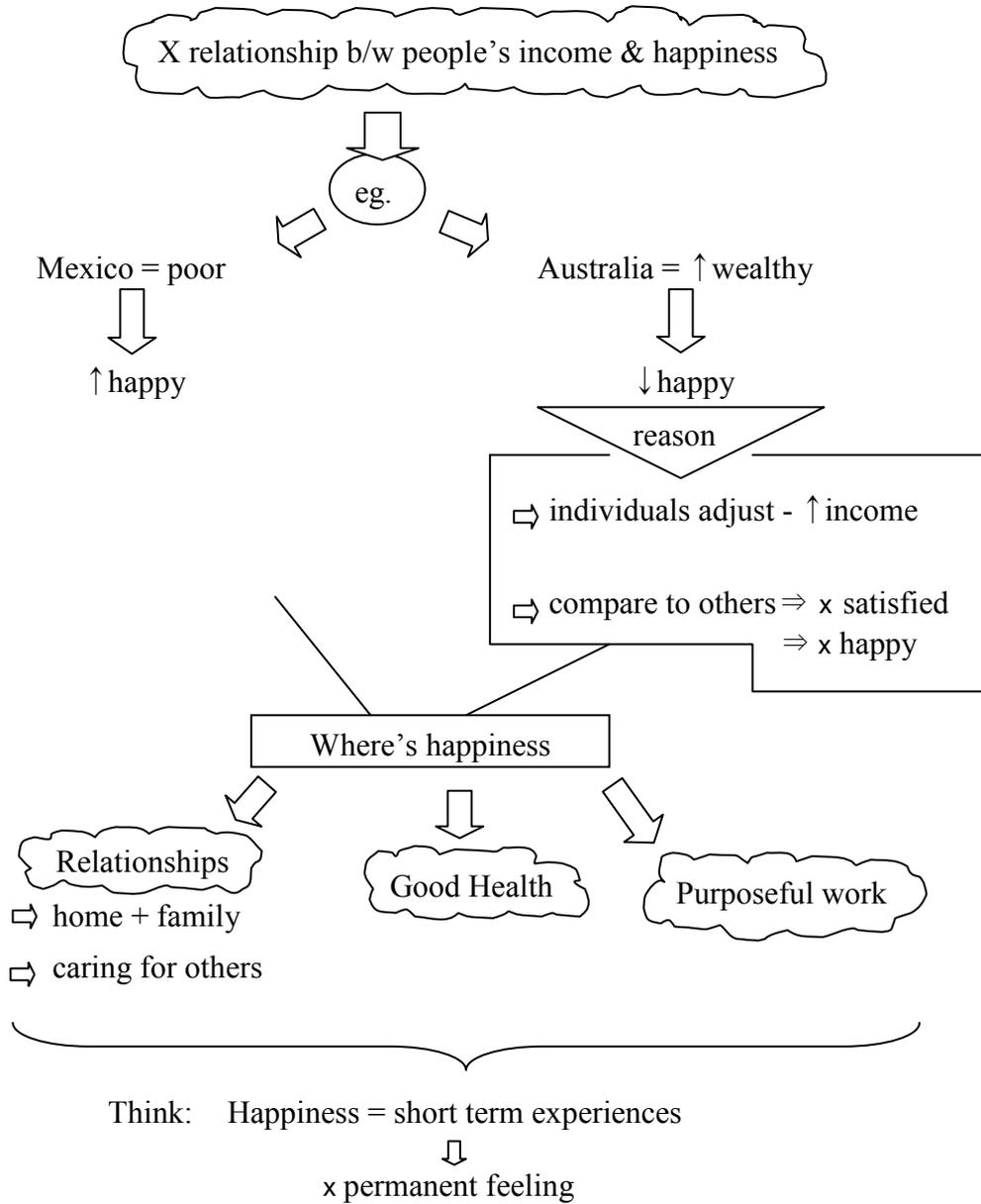
Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	1	3	6	10	15	18	20	16	8	1	6.0

In 2006 the overall quality of the-note taking responses was again high and there were few full sentence or paragraph answers. Most students managed to isolate the key ideas in the text, although some struggled to find an appropriate and clear structure for their summary. A number had difficulty conveying their understanding of the last paragraph of the material. Other expressions which were not always understood were ‘more to’ (leading to headings such as ‘Is there more happiness than money?’) and ‘over time’.

Strong responses showed efficient, clever and logical processing of the main points into clearly labelled categories, showing links between ideas, often using arrows. Weaker responses tried to fit the material to inappropriate formats; for example, ‘yes/no’ or ‘agree/disagree’. This led to inaccuracies such as linking the suggestions about where people find happiness to the people from Mexico. Another weakness was the use of arrows simply to point to another piece of information rather than to link ideas. Some responses relied heavily on the use of symbols, even providing a key to symbols used. Students should be discouraged from doing this. Symbols and abbreviations should be used sparingly and should be limited to those which are generally known and widely accepted, with no key required.

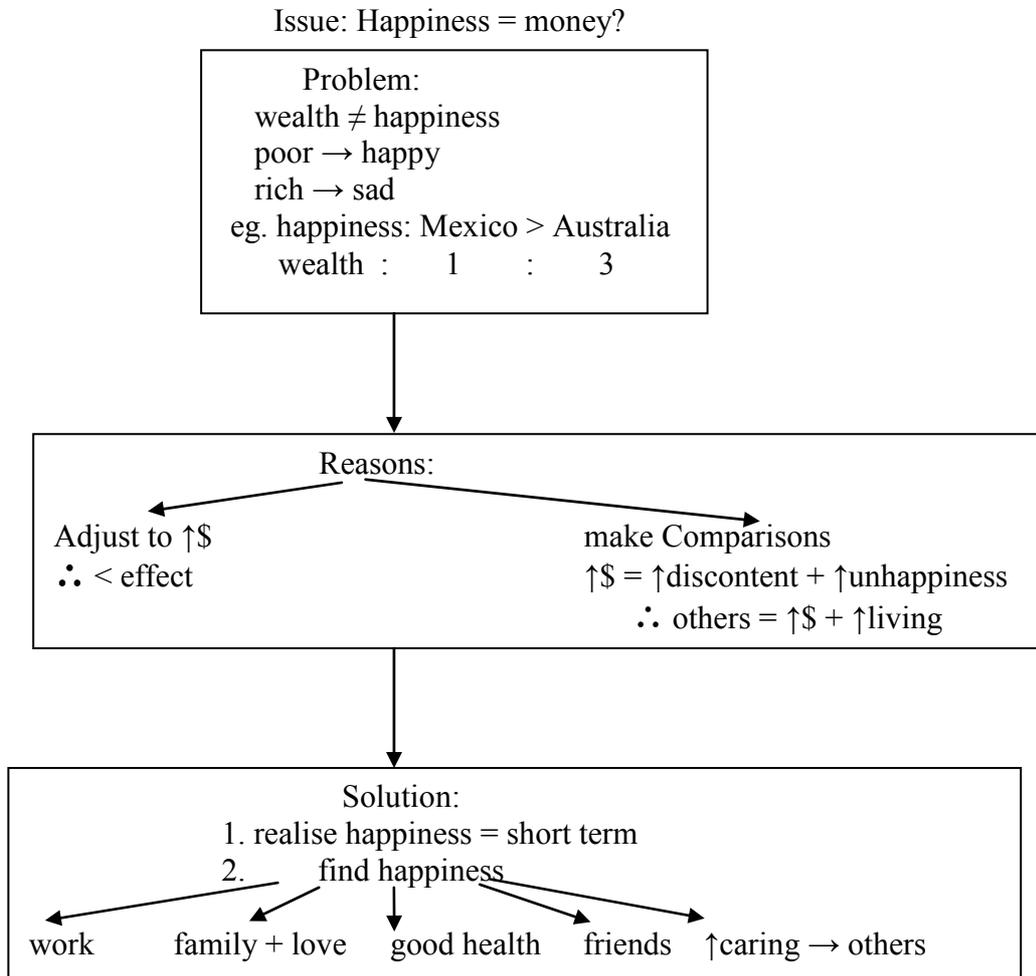


Example 1. This example demonstrates the student's understanding, processing and organisation of the material in a meaningful way.





Example 2. This example demonstrates another layout. It shows excellent processing of the material in a simple and clear presentation, even though it has not linked the reasons for unhappiness among the wealthy to the Australian context only.





Part 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	14	13	13	13	12	10	8	6	5	3	2	3.5

As in previous years, even students who showed knowledge of what to look for were not always able to apply their knowledge to the context of Part 2. Strong responses provided simple explanations and focussed on the reader, in the context of the material. The examples may have been less obvious than in previous years, but students' difficulties appeared to be with explaining the examples rather than with finding them. Some identified the more subtle persuasive features, such as the dollar sign superimposed behind the text.

Weaknesses included unnecessarily long explanations giving the meaning of the sentence, rather than the intended effect on the reader, as well as generic definitions without any link to the context. There were some 'hit and miss' responses with many explanations just using 'happy' or 'interested'. In constructing these explanations, students need to focus on how the language makes the reader feel and why it might persuade the reader to agree with the writer's point of view. Students are not asked to comment on the likely success of the examples or present an argument for or against the point being made.

Example 1. These explanations focus on the intended effect on the audience and show a clear understanding of the writer's use of persuasive language.

Example	How it persuades readers
'...why not make your money work for you?'	The author poses this rhetorical question to the readers, making them think that it is an easy and common thing to make their money work for them and force them to agree that there is no reason why this wouldn't be the case. Therefore the reader may feel foolish if they do not take the author's advice on investing their money.
'...plenty of websites to give you secure, sound, safe advice...'	The use of alliteration on the syllable 's' for three words emphasise on the meaning of these words 'secure, sound and safe'. This will grab the reader's attention and reassure them so that they feel the advice these websites offer are reliable and trustworthy, and there is no danger in taking them.
'This article...is written especially for you.'	The phrase 'especially for you' personally includes the readers, therefore they may feel privileged to be addressed directly and that they will believe the advice offered in this article is relevant to their individual circumstances as it has been tailored to suit their needs.
'The excitement of investing is always there...it never gets boring.'	The phrases 'excitement' and 'never gets boring' creates an impression of youth and fun which appeals to the reader (mostly young) age group and their interests. They may feel that investing is a fashionable and interesting thing to do and see it in a very positive light.
'You don't have to give up everything.'	The author has played down the situation and the difficulties associated with giving up luxuries to start saving. In reassuring readers that they do not have to give up everything the readers may feel less anxious and dismayed at no being able to buy certain items, and may feel that the advice given in this article is easily do-able. Therefore they are more likely to consider the advice given by the author.



Example 2. This response has chosen five different phrases from the passage. There is a clear understanding of the requirements of the task and, even though the responses vary in quality, they retain a focus on the reader.

Example	How it persuades readers
‘Think of all the things that make you happy’	The word ‘you’ is aimed to invite readers to feel that his article is tailored to their specific needs. Young people may feel interested in this topic, as it is directly related to them.
‘...give you secure, sound, safe advice’	The words ‘secure’, ‘sound’ and ‘safe’ all carry positive word connotation. The writer intends to portray financial service websites as risk free sites. Such depiction may influence readers to feel confident in visiting websites and investing money, as the writer tries to win trust from the readers.
‘Heard of compound interest? Heard of stocks and shares?’	The writer poses two questions in an attempt to encourage the readers to read further in order to discover what these items are. By reading the phrase ‘heard of’ the writer emphasises the limitless opportunities that exist in investment. Therefore the readers are likely to feel curious and excited at the introduction of new investment opportunities.
‘...based on the advice of <i>Starting Out</i> ’s experienced experts, you need not worry any more.’	By stating that the financial advisers in <i>Starting Out</i> are ‘experienced experts’, the writer intends to add credibility to his magazine. Readers may feel safe in trusting the opinions of those who are immensely experienced in the finance sector.
‘Your mobile phone? iPod? Faster internet connection?’	The listing of the items that most appeal to young people is a direct attempt to invite them to think about investment opportunities. As most young people do have or desire to have these trendy items they are likely to feel connected with the writer. They may feel involved and want to take the financial adviser’s advice, as they may believe he knows exactly what they want.

Part 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	4	10	18	24	19	12	5	2	1	5.1

For Part 3, students had to write an essay for a state-wide competition. A few incorrectly wrote letters or speeches instead. Students must read the question carefully and not approach the task with a pre-conceived idea about what type of writing will be expected. The topic engaged students and more of them drew on the third page of material than in previous years, some of whom wove this resource material into the essay to good effect. Poor understanding of the material led to some intriguing responses, such as expressions of shock that 30 per cent of income is wasted on the house when it could be spent on enjoying oneself. As in previous years, some responses directly copied large portions of the task material while others ignored the materials. Wholesale adoption of the ‘money is evil, poverty is ennobling’ approach gave a facile and simplistic quality to some responses.

Example 1. This high-range response demonstrates the student’s competent language skills (even though there are some characteristic ESL errors) and developed ideas. The essay draws appropriately on a range of the task material.

Can Money Buy Happiness?

The recent introduction of the latest model of iPods has triggered renewed debate on the relationship between money and happiness. Some believe that with considerable wealth, people can improve the quality of their life and with that comes the material possessions which contribute to happiness. Others, however agree that elements such as family, work and love constitute the fundamental foundation of true happiness. Indeed, happiness is an emotion that can only be experienced by those who are blessed with love, and satisfaction with their life irrespective of their wealth.

For most of us, love is something we thrive to give and receive, because it brings us joy and delight. The infamous question is can love be bought from money? If it truly can, then why do developed countries have higher divorce rates than third world countries? The importance of family and loving relationships cannot be undermined in today’s materialistic world. Surely, we all desire to come home to our loved ones who spoil us, treasure us without judging the depth of our wallets. Surely, money can blur one’s vision of love, as greed has a greater influence in today’s society. The true happiness that lies in the comfort of loving relationships cannot be purchased, it can only be created through dedication.

Happiness that exist in purposeful work cannot be bought from money. As one volunteer who worked in a developing country to rebuild it through education and peace-building rightfully exclaims, ‘I’m having the greatest experience of my life doing it.’ Indeed, by accomplishing work that are for the greater good of the community, we can experience a feeling of satisfaction and joy that cannot be bought. Money is not the equivalent to working on projects that benefit those who are less fortunate than ourselves.



There are those who strongly argue that individual wealth is beneficiary for the wider community, because people use their wealth to help others. It is sad to see however, that in our community spending for a week, only 0.25% are donations to charity. Others say, that money can buy power and material possessions. No doubt, money has this ability, but then what? Where does this end? The vast majority of Australians own cars, mobile phones and the latest gadget, but statistics show that we are less happier than those who live in Mexico, who only buys a third of what our wealth permits us to purchase. This clearly indicates that the 16.75% of our income spent on entertainment, alcohol and clothes are not bringing us happiness.

We all thrive to be happy, but it is evident that money is not the way to gain happiness. The joy of living should be sought from love and purposeful work. Money creates an illusion of happiness that has no real substance. As the famous Helen Keller says, 'happiness does not come from focusing on yourself, but through following a worthwhile purpose.' Indeed, real happiness can only be achieved through creating a loving environment, a factor that cannot be bought.

Example 2. This upper mid-range response expresses a clear point of view which is developed around the task material. There is a logical development of ideas even though the conclusions are sometimes simplistic. The piece has a recognisable structure and shows better than average expressive skills.

Nowadays, many people are working really hard to earn a lot of money for their family in the hope of having a happy life. However, the matter of 'money' and 'happiness' has been an intense debate for quite some times. Can money really buy happiness? In my opinion, having an enormous sum of money does not guarantee anyone a happy life as happiness can only come from the loving relationships, with other, from good health and from meaningful work we do. Obviously, those listed cannot be converted into money units, hence having money does not mean being happy.

First of all, the easiest source of happiness that anyone can find is in their home, in the relationship with others. For example, Omar and Hanna is a young couple who lives in a small country town, has no investment portfolio or a successful career but they are still living happily with their part time jobs and their young child. In their view: 'life wasn't meant to be easy, but it doesn't have to be frantic.' said Hanna. They are both happy and satisfied with their simple but quality life. In contrast, who can say that a wealthy family with working parents who neglect their children, only supply them with money when they need is any happier? Therefore, it is evident that money cannot buy you a happy family with a happy life.

In addition, life is happy when it is meaningful. In order to have a meaningful life, people need to do purposeful work and these work has to be done by you, not any money can buy them. When Sam is sharing his experience of working in a developing country, he admits that he has learned so much when helping people than when he just sits in his comfortable office in Melbourne, doing ordinary job. Here we can see that helping people, bringing the best to other people will also brings the best thing to ourselves – which is happiness. Obviously, these work do not come from money.

Many people argue that if we work hard now to save money, it will bring us a better, happier life in the future like in the case of Simon and Sue Dawson's chocolate factory. However, having much money will cause problems such as in Australia. A survey conducted has results that say Australia although richer than Mexico but is not as happy because comparison leads to dissatisfaction. Hence, money does not mean happiness.