



GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2008 the examination paper consisted of three sections: Section A required a response to one text, Section B required a response to a prompt related to a selected Context and Section C required completion of two different tasks in response to unseen material. In Section A the five most popular texts produced 70% of all responses. There was at least one response to each text, although four texts attracted fewer than ten responses. In Section B all set texts were used in student responses. A higher than usual number of students did not complete all sections of the paper.

Assessment is holistic, using the published assessment criteria. Assessors relate student performance directly to these 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 in 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. The revised descriptors for 2008 reflected the new aspects of the key knowledge and skills related to the outcomes in the *VCE English/English as a Second Language Study Design*.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

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

Section A – Text response

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	2	5	12	21	25	18	9	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 20 prescribed texts. Knowledge of the text, in the new study, includes the ways in which authors use structures, features and conventions to construct meaning and the descriptors include ‘...consideration of its concepts and construction’.

The best responses demonstrated an in-depth understanding of the topics and texts through an ability to craft meaningful, analytical and relevant discussion in direct response to the chosen question. The best responses were able to skilfully weave knowledge of the text into the fabric of the analysis. The character questions elicited strong responses. Questions asking for reader interpretation of the text were less popular than discussion questions. With the exception of film texts, few students demonstrated clear knowledge and understanding of the idea that authors construct texts. Students did not seem to have grappled with the constructed nature of texts. This is not surprising in the first year of the revised English/ESL study, but students and teachers should be aware that these features are a new and significant part of the study design.

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

Text	% of students	Average mark
<i>Look Both Ways</i>	29.3%	5.8
<i>The Kite Runner</i>	17.3%	5.6
<i>Sky Burial</i>	13.2%	5.4
<i>Maestro</i>	7.5%	5.9
<i>Citizen Kane</i>	7.3%	5.4

The overall mean score was 5.7.

Students generally engaged with the texts and used quotes appropriately. They also demonstrated good essay structure through clear introductions and the use of topic sentences in paragraphs. Stronger responses were characterised by a sharp focus on the key words in the topics, selective and considered use of the text, and ideas expressed with strong language skills. There were very few short or incomprehensible responses. In some cases there is still an overreliance on storytelling and regurgitating practice writing, which has only some relevance to the topic on the paper. In planning, students need to brainstorm all the key words as well as pay particular attention to modifying words and comparatives within the question. They also need to be able to explore how texts are constructed and the effects of the writer’s choices in developing a narrative.



Both questions on *Look Both Ways* drew a range of responses, with most demonstrating an understanding of the themes, characters and the technical side of the film. Students could legitimately work through a series of characters which provided structure for the response. In the second question they used film technique comments as well as dialogue to demonstrate how the characters 'learn(ed) to think about their lives in new ways'. Weaknesses in responses to this text included listing every negative thought or thought about death that the characters had, and not referring to setting in the first question.

The best responses to *The Kite Runner* distinguished the differences between secrets and lies and looked at a range of secrets and their effects. However, none made the observation that Baba's lie about Hassan's paternity is the foundational lie/secret in the story which establishes the framework for the other secrets and lies. Weaker responses to this text included lots of retelling of the story and prediction, for example, if Baba had not lied then Amir would not have acted as he did. The topic required students to show 'how destructive secrets can be'; lies needed to be subsumed in this wider discussion. In the second question responses concentrated on redemption but did not grapple with how living in the US fitted into this.

Many responses to *Sky Burial* only discussed the character of Wen, even though both questions required discussion of more than one character. The number of aspects in the second question (women, hostile environments, absence of love) created difficulty, with few responses balancing these elements well. Responses to the first topic tended to focus on one character and those the second topic focussed on the theme of 'love'.

There were strong responses to the character-focussed first question on *Maestro*. Some limited their discussion to Paul and Keller, with a tendency to link Paul to the theme of disappointment and Keller to the theme of loss. Others dealt with a wider range of characters. Some discussed 'broken dreams' rather than disappointments and losses. In the second question some responses discussed only Darwin, with a lot of storytelling of the events that occurred there.

Responses to the first question on *Citizen Kane* focussed on light, shadow and sound but did not connect this to atmosphere and meaning in the film. Responses to the second *Citizen Kane* question put a stronger emphasis on film techniques than the topic required, with more discussion of the quote than of disappointment or consideration of whether Kane's disappointments were connected to his failure to be a great man. The phrase in the question 'to what extent' invited students to consider reasons other than Kane's wealth.

Student Response – Example 1

This insightful response is controlled and well structured. It provides a clear response to a 'do you agree?' question through an exploration of the emotional state of the characters. The film-maker's sense of purpose about the construction of the film is also recognised and the language is appropriate and accurate. The minor lapses in expression are common in ESL student writing.

'In Look Both Ways, the characters learn to think about their lives in new ways'. Do you agree?

In the film Look Both Ways, director Sarah Watt explores the theme that perspective can determine experience in life. By using main characters Nick, Meryl and Andy, she suggests that changing a person's outlook on life can enrich that person and help overcoming problems. Nick learnt that cancer does not necessarily implicate death, Meryl freed herself from her fears by realising risks must be taken. Andy became aware of the value of life and those around him. The film suggests that to find fulfillment in life we must learn to think in new ways, to look at situations from different angles.

Nick's perspective on life underwent several changes throughout the film. Before the film, he used his camera as a barrier between him and the death and suffering in the world. Then he would go 'back to the minibar' to view the images he took on the computer screen, which further alienated him. However, he was forced to change that view when he was diagnosed with cancer, now that death and suffering were personally relevant. Flashbacks are used to show us his father who died of the same disease. Nick assumed his future, like train track, would end there as well. As his fears began to control him, he started 'seeing death everywhere this weekend'. In struggling to find a way out, he tried arming himself with information on his disease, thinking about religion, playing cricket in an effort to maintain normality and pursuing a relationship with Meryl. This relationship aided him in overcoming his fears. He felt guilty about starting a relationship with Meryl however, as he could sense her terror of death and losing a close one to death, such as her late father. He tried to end the relationship by stating his 'position', and aroused Meryl's rage. She berated Nick for his actions and left the scene in anger. Later Nick met Andy by the train track, symbolic of life change. Nick became aware of Andy's relationships and how fortunate he is to have Meryl. Just as a train can change track and destination at the crossroads, so Nick found that he could change his life as well, by changing the way he views his life. Thus Nick learnt to see life and death from different perspectives.



Similarly, Meryl's view on life changed significantly throughout the film. Through her conversation with Nick at her flat, death used to be a concept she 'embraced...wholeheartedly'. The passing away of her late father made her confront her mortality. This fear was further compounded by her witnessing Rob's accident on the way home from her father's funeral. Even though initially she tells Nick that 'it's the natural order of things' to die, it becomes apparent that she feared this natural order and was haunted by the possibility of it occurring to her. After her quarrel with Nick and the subsequent near-accident, Meryl was forced to re-evaluate her perspective. She realised that risks in life must be taken, and that her imaginary fears are preventing her from living life to the full. By changing her way of thinking, Meryl learns to consider death – and life – in a healthier sense, enabling her to reconcile with Nick and enjoy life.

Conversely, Andy's view of death is quite different to that of Nick and Meryl. To him, it is an escape route. Andy was dissatisfied by his job, embittered by his past relationship with ex-wife Cathy and felt threatened by Anna's pregnancy and the prospect of 'paying the bills for the rest of hi life' to another woman. This molded him into a self-interested person, refusing to take responsibility as he believes everyone has an 'agenda'. However, his encounter with Nick at the train track was cathartic in bringing a turnaround of his ideas. When he learnt that Nick has cancer for the first time in the film Andy is observed to be concerned for someone other than himself. He started to value his life more and in the concluding photomontage we see him holding his baby. This suggests that he was able to move on with his life and change his perspective on the past and future.

Director Sarah Watt uses characters in the film *Look Both Ways* to show how perspective can determine experience in life. When they change their view, they are able to resolve differences, overcome the past and accept their future. Nick learnt that he can change the way his life is going. Meryl succeeded in overcoming her fears of death. Andy not only changed his view on the past and future but also learnt to care for others lives – to think about the lives of others in new ways. Thus we are encouraged to see life from different perspectives, to look both ways.

Student Response - Example 2

This mid-range response to *Look Both Ways* is organised, structured and demonstrates satisfactory language control. It displays adequate knowledge of the text and its ideas are well supported and relevant. The response stays on the topic throughout.

'Does the film-maker's use of visual imagery and setting help the viewer to understand the concerns of the characters?'

People's emotion may act as blockers or blinders during periods of stress. We should try to overcome these problem with a positive thinking. In Look Both Ways, the film-maker has used different kinds of imagery to help audiences understanding the feeling inside of the characters. For example, animations is used in the film to show Meryl's character. Nick's whole life had use montage to show his thought about chancer and Anna's action shown her conflict between cigarette and the baby.

Meryl is not coping with each other but she tried to force herself to do so. She felt lonely and helpless as her job is a illustrator which she thought it does not need a partner. She had highly anxiety and negative view to the world especially after she went to her father's funeral. The film maker used animation to show that she always thinking bad luck may happen next. Such as the tram was smashed into the tunnel, train fell down from the track and she was crushed by car. Moreover, she could imagine that falling into a whole with no one going to help her, she was eaten by sharks and floating in the sea. These visual imagery are showing Meryl is very fragile and helpless.

Another character which used montage to show his thinking was very negative either, Nick. He knew he had cancer in the beginning of the film. Montage had used to show his whole life flashing when people is dying. It helps us to understand that Nick was thinking he will die soon as he had cancer. His thoughts were affected by his father who died with cancer. Montage was flashing that his father was not feeling well with those treatments and operations. This made Nick thinking he will die surely just because his father died with cancer, but not going to think positively. Montage also used when Nick saw death signs is everywhere and so he believes people have to die someday and he is another death sign in the earth. All of these significances of montage tell viewers about Nick's concern of death.

For another, conflict is happened in Anna's mind. She was fighting with the cigarettes which it is not good for the baby's health. However, given up the baby is her another idea as she cannot sure whether Andy loves her. The film maker let the actress act she is feeling very confused that keep picking the cigarette and lighter from the drawer and then put them back, again and again. Audiences can understand very clearly that about the conflict inside her mind.

Film maker had used many ways of imagery ad setting to let viewers understand the abstract thinking of the character. It is much easier that audience may have sympathy and increase the level of understanding of the movie.

Some aspects of the revised study design need more emphasis in teaching and learning activities. In preparing students, teachers need to acknowledge the shift in the study design towards the construction and interpretation of texts as these ideas now feature in the assessment criteria. Teachers should ensure students are aware of the different types of



questions that could be asked on the examination and encourage analysis, not re-telling. Re-wording questions to demonstrate understanding of the key words in the topic can assist this.

Section B – Writing in Context

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	3	4	10	17	21	20	14	6	2	1	5.1

In this section very few students wrote with the distance of considered ideas but when they did, they demonstrated the potential of this task. The best responses were able to synthesise material by beginning a paragraph with the idea being considered, elaborating on it and then citing examples from their own text/s and other sources. Some of the material used had obviously been taught to many students. Good responses also made sustained reference to philosophical/psychological concepts and theorists, indicating that some teachers had obviously provided good and relevant material from outside the set texts. ESL students with a robust level of knowledge, and who could express their ideas correctly and fluently, were able to produce very sound responses. Where students drew on personal experiences aptly they were able to give their writing an ‘edge’, often providing an insight into their lives as overseas students.

Students were required to write an article for a daily newspaper. This part of the task was largely ignored in many responses although responses which did appear to be in the form of an article were rewarded accordingly. Many students wrote essays rather than articles. The most obvious weakness was a tendency to write another text response, using the prompt as a text response question with little or no reference to ideas outside the selected text. These began with a short introduction then gave a long analysis of the text and a brief reference to the prompt.

Assessment was based on the interrelationship among:

- the quality of ideas, as formed through the Context and text
- understanding of the implications of the prompt
- the quality of writing (effectiveness, structure, language integration and ideas).

Supplementary material needs to be relevant – not all catastrophes or acts of violence are related to conflict, for example, reference to earthquakes in China and donations. Poorer responses included weaknesses also found in other sections of the paper – language mistakes, spelling, informal language such as ‘wanna’, incoherent structure, and with insufficiently or poorly developed ideas. Some imaginative pieces were clever but took too long to make any relevant connection to the prompt.

Over half of the responses were to Context 4, Exploring issues of identity and belonging. *Witness* was the most popular text, used in 59 per cent of responses to this Context, while *Bombshells* was used in 23 per cent of responses. This Context has two strands – identity and belonging – and some responses tried too hard to include both elements. The word ‘define’ in the prompt was not well understood and some students did not look carefully enough at ‘relationships’, resulting in a tendency to discuss how communities shape identity and failing to focus on relationships.

Context 3, Encountering conflict, was chosen by 27 per cent of students. In this Context *The Crucible* was the most popular text, used in 56 per cent of responses, while *The Line* was used in almost 14 per cent of responses. Students obviously struggled with the complexity of ‘extraordinary ways’. Some tried to talk about characters, such as Abigail, behaving in selfish ways. Students had obviously discussed prior to the examination how conflict affects people and wrote about this regardless of the prompt. Many students, however, could provide tangible and explicit examples from the texts to support their discussion.

Context 1, The imaginative landscape, was chosen by 13 per cent of students. *Fly Away Peter* was the most popular text, used in over half these responses. Many students talked about events and experiences but with no strong links to place or how place shaped events and experiences.

Context 2, Whose reality?, was chosen by only 4 per cent of students. *A Streetcar Named Desire* was used in half of these responses. The term ‘reality’ in the prompt posed some difficulties but some appropriate textual support was found in all of the set texts in this Context.

Student Response – Example 1

This outstanding response to Context 1 demonstrates the potential of this task to draw on very different writing skills from those required for Section A. The response clearly indicates that reflection was included in the teaching and learning activities, and it successfully uses the text as part of this reflection. The introduction identifies a relevant



connection between the prompt and the text and extracts a starting position for the writing. There is a seamless linkage of the writer's own story with the text, which is used as a backdrop from which this story is told.

Alistair Macleod's Island, The Boat, weaves a time and tale of the strong connection between the inhabitants of the wharf and the sea, for they are the 'people of the sea'. The narrator speaks of a life tightly encircled by 'the boat' and all that it stood for – fishing, fishermen, earning a living, a culture, life. In the years he grew up as a dark skinned boy on the boat, he grasps the strange sense of connection he had to two very different worlds – one of the boat, the other of books. It is also the very struggle epitomized in his realisation that his 'mother looks upon the sea with love and on him (you) with bitterness because one has been so constant, and the other so untrue'. Similarly, I too can identify with this clashing of two opposing needs and desires as the narrator had.

At the age of seventeen, my family and I packed our bags and plonked ourselves squarely in the middle of a totally different culture and life – Melbourne, Australia. Not only was it hard to understand the strange and foreign accent the people had over here, it was even more difficult making ourselves understood. This new landscape seemed forbidding, I felt as if I was, like the narrator in The Boat, 'not of the sea' or rather, those pale skinned, blue-eyed people were not of my 'sea'. Quick and biased judgement stepped in and I resigned to the fact that like the narrator's mother, they were 'a combination of the lazy, effeminate, dishonest and the unknown'. Hence, I gladly withdrew from any form of social interaction and remained very much wary and apprehensive of my seemingly disturbing surroundings.

Until I noticed the change in my parents for they had heartily welcomed this change in both a physical and emotional sense with open minds and eagerness. They sought out the differences and gems in life that existed between a traditional, Asian culture and that of a democratic and free Australian society. Dad had left behind his successful business of restaurant chains in China and I was already caught by surprise by this bold decision. He had decided to leave behind the wealth and prestige to be greeted only by a life of unemployment and starting over anew. Yet, he was happy. Mum too, left behind the sense of materialistic measure of achievement in life and instead spent her time and energy on her four children. And she too, was happy.

So I begin to ponder and reconsider the possibility of fitting into the new surroundings. If my parents could achieve it at an advanced age of 50 what more does it take for me? Is it possible to even like this place? Here, my eyes were opened and my boundaries no longer limited to the 'very literal ones she scanned' as the slow but sure embrace of a different culture began. There were bound to be disagreements and I was cautious in accepting the differences and changes the Australian culture brought along. However, there were still roots of my heritage firmly ingrained within me and it was what made me proud and unique.

Looking back at the years of change and at the years to come I realised that like the character Angus in The Return, it was indeed 'not that easy to change what is a part of you'. I was still very much aware of the fact of respecting elders, thinking twice before voicing out my opinion and the unspoken guideline of rice for dinner every day. These traditional ways were very much in me as coal-mining was in the landscape of Cape Breton.; 'gashes of coal deeply embedded in their sides'. And I wonder, as time can only tell, would this part of me be consumed by the newness and extraordinary of a new life? Can this remaining bits of my culture be erased? Do I even belong anymore to the past? Or the present?

And I was overwhelmed with sadness as I realised that sooner or later I would need to sacrifice, as Angus did in choosing the landscape of his wife than of his home. Indeed, I would be 'more difficult than you will ever know' and I hope earnestly that such changes as the years go by will not eradicate who I am and my sense of identity in connection to this land I now call my home.

But as I board this plane heading towards the distant but familiar land of China, I am but sure of one thing. For my heart pounds with a mixture of dread and delight, yet I gaze wistfully at the desert plains I have grown to love: I do belong. My life is merely a figurine moulded by the past and smoothened at the edges by present experiences. It does not matter which country I belong to for what matters is that I do have a place, and in having so I am still uniquely me.

Student Response – Example 2

This piece has a strong awareness of the task, despite some limitations in its execution. It consistently links the prompt with the text and the writer's own ideas about them both. It poses open questions to the reader and effectively uses these as a feature of the writing rather than offering solutions to everything.

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'Our relationships with others help us to define who we are'

By: Macy Cheese

Who we are, our identity is constructed and modified throughout our whole lives. It is majorly influenced by the people we surround ourselves with such as our peers and family. Through them we learn about our personal traits, our behaviour, our weaknesses and our strengths.



I look up to my parents; they're my role models and people I have looked up to my entire life. Through their guidance and education I am not a confident adult with a clear view of my future. My parents taught me to be respectful to others, be the best person I can be and never give up on my dreams. What have you learnt from your parents? Watching my parents as I was growing up and even just when I had a conversation with them I could tell that I am a lot like them. They helped me be the person I am today and without them I would have stayed the way I was when I was five years old; selfish, rude and disrespectful. In Literature, the proof of parental/guardian influence is clearly shown in 'The Catcher in the Rye' by J.D. Salinger. Holden Caulfield had a terrible relationship with his parents. After his brother Ali's death they closed up and distanced themselves from him (literally, as they sent him to boarding schools away from New York). Holden couldn't use his parents as role models, and their distancing, especially his mother's, really hurt him and added to his troubled youth and misguidance. It made him feel unworthy and also made him lose his trust for adults, calling most of them 'phonies'.

Our peers and friendship groups reflect our personalities and sometimes even our insecurities. A teenage boy who only socialises with boys shows his insecurities of being around girls. Failed attempts to talk to girls will reveal to a person their shy personality or anxiety issues. The way we act around our friends could also assist us in defining who we are; do you always make jokes? Then you might be the funny person in your friend group. or do you just sit quietly and listen to others talk? Then you might be the quiet, non-attention seeking person which reflects your shy attitude to life. A person who is seeking constant attention could earn that he has self esteem issues such as Holden Caulfield. Holden changed his identity constantly to suit the person he was with in order to please him and be liked by him. An example is that Holden asked two taxi drivers to join him for a drink even though he was underage. Holden had no real friends except his sister Phoebe, Stradlater and Robert Actley who lived with him only used him for their own needs and had no respect for him. This showed to Holden that although his intelligence showed by Stradlater wanting him to do his homework for him, he doesn't want to be used anymore and these boys aren't his real friends.

Our relationships with others help us learn about ourselves but can anyone really define who they are? If yes, would others see them in the same way? No one can truly define themselves as relationships with others are forever changing along with our personality, strengths and weaknesses. I could be copying my parents and not being really me, someone like Holden Caulfield could be someone else every day so lets just say that our relationships with others help us to define who we are but it could be only momentarily.

Student Response – Example 3

This analytical piece has a very strong textual focus, and uses the text well, but also moves beyond the text to some thoughtful observations. It explores the theoretical as well as the practical implications of these ideas for people in general.

*The following article will discuss and explore the concepts of identity and belonging, drawing on the film directed by Peter Weir 'Witness' as well as examples of my own life.
(Name) (VCE student on work experience).*

'Our Relationships with others help us to define who we are'

An individual's identity is inevitably intertwined with the groups to which they belong. A personal identity separate from the wider world is unimaginable. We seek conformity as a form of acceptance and protection. According to Maslow's hierarchy of needs, our desire to belong is an integral part of humanity, as it comes directly after the fulfilment of our physiological and safety needs. The requirement for social interactions is thus deemed a necessity of life. It's only after we successfully gain belonging through social acceptance can we then move up the hierarchy pyramid. Therefore it is through these numerous links that we form with others that we shape our identity. It is through belonging we are able to forge our own sense of who we are. This is clearly demonstrated through the central characters of 'Witness'.

Every group has their own set of principles and boundaries – to belong we must not only share those same values that also accept and comply by those distinctive set of rules. Therefore our sense of self is often restricted by our relationships with other people. There are countless benefits that belonging to groups such as the close-know Pennsylvania Amish portrayed in 'Witness'. However, does belonging come at no compromise? Known only so well by Rachel, the ordering strictly governs every individual who choose to be part of the Amish community; and those who do not abide by those rules run the risk of being 'shunned'. Eli warns Rachel of such possibilities when she behaves 'inappropriately' with John Book. He reminds Rachel that if her behaviour offends the church elders, all the communal support and benefits that she gets for being part of their society can be withdrawn in a second. Sometimes in order to belong, our freedom has to be sacrificed, or we might face the danger of forfeiting our privileges associated with belonging. This is definitely a case where our relationship with others shape our identity, in the way that Rachel was bound by her Amish community and their values.

John Book's identity as a police officer is established by his belonging to the Philadelphia police force. However due to the corruption that is evident, Book has to remold his identity as his moral ethics does not see him wanting to continue belonging to that group. Therefore this illustrates how the relationships we form only to some extent determine who we are, and it's not absolute. When he takes refuge inside the enclosed Amish village his identity as a police officer further diminished as he surrenders his gun for his acceptance in the Lapp household. To promote a further sense of belonging he choose to swap his western clothing for garments that comply with the Amish code of 'plainness'. This shows Book's



desire to fit into the Amish population and not to be viewed as clearly an outsider. The brief relationship he forms in the Amish world does not completely redefine him, but helped the development of his personal qualities as an individual.

However, in the sense that Book and Rachel has to suppress their obvious mutual attractions for each others highlights how much the relationships we form define us. It became obvious that both characters cannot imagine living in the other's world and fully give up their individual identities formed as a result of living in their separate communities. Their roles and places in society inevitably force Book and Rachel to part and resume life in separate directions. The inability of them to stay together can only be said as a consequence of the relationships they had formed, and how much that had defined them. This is also true in many real life situations, where lovers were forbid to see each other merely for being from two different or clashing ethic backgrounds.

It's unquestionable how the relationships we form with others shape our identities, this is no exception for me. Family is the most fundamental groups to which we belong, and being born into a traditional Chinese family no doubtly formed my sense of self. Ever since a young age, being pushed to achieve academic success has largely shaped my good study habbits and strong determination to achieve my personal best. To a great extent my parents helped to determine who I am.

Humans are innately social creatures that crave interactions with each other, and seek social acceptance to promote our shared sense of belonging. The relationships we form in our lives are prominent in that help to define who we are. A personal identity independent from the idea world is unimaginable, hence the 'no man is an island' notion. But we need to obtain an appropriate balance between our need to conform and the need to maintain our unique individuality – to not become merely a sheep in the pack. Our social connections no doubtly help us determine our identities.

Student Response – Example 4

In this piece, the focus is kept on exploring the prompt; additional material is used and there is an awareness of a reader. It is an analytical piece, with an introduction that explores the prompt followed by paragraphs that link an aspect of the prompt with relevant material from both the selected text and other sources. It explores a broad definition of 'conflict' to include inner conflict, not only obvious physical conflict such as war. The brief conclusion offers a challenge to the reader.

Encountering Conflict, using The Line

Prompt: In times of conflict ordinary people can behave in extraordinary ways.

Conflict permeates every aspect of our lives; it is inevitable and inescapable. A world without conflict would be flat and sterile. It is how we choose to conduct ourselves in these times of conflict that define who we are and how we are viewed in society. There are some who, driven by fear, conduct themselves in a dishonourable manner during conflict but there are some who are able to rise above and behave in extraordinary ways in times of conflict. This is evident in history and is much explored in literature and written accounts. In Arch and Martin Flanagan's 'The Line', some of the prisoners of war are able to behave in remarkable ways when encountering conflict, in the form of war.

In times of war and great suffering, some ordinary individuals find strength in themselves to do great things to overcome this conflict. They become the pillar of strength, 'a symbol of hope' for others around them. Edward 'Weary' Dunlop is portrayed in 'The Line' as a man of 'inexhaustible kindness'. He is described by his fellow comrades as 'a huge man, with a soft voice, resolute and fearless'. He haggles with the 'dangerously volatile and unpredictable Japs' for the sanity of his men while disregarding his own safety. He is an honourable man who could not stand by and watch as injustice and cruelty took place. There are some ordinary individuals who risk or sacrifice their own lives for others. Their moral compass prevents them from conforming to cruelty out of fear. During the Holocaust in World War 11, the Nazis systematically sentenced thousands of Jews to death in gas chambers under the direction of Adolf Hitler. However, Miep Gies, a German woman sheltered Anne Frank and her family, a crime punishable by death, from the Nazis because it was the right thing to do. How many of us would do the same?

When encountering conflict, some ordinary people do extraordinary things to help their family, their loved ones and others around them. Motivated by a deep understanding of humanity and love for others, these individuals do the unimaginable. In 'The Line', there are many prisoners of war who, driven by their bond and kinship with one another, give something of themselves for the survival of the masses. The soldier who gave up his boot, a treasured commodity in war, to his fellow brother in arm did so without wanting anything in return. Edward 'Weary' Dunlop was honoured as a hero by those who served with him as he constantly helps his men, who are 'emaciated, bereft of hope', to survive the hardships and sufferings of war. Survivors of war often suffer many psychological and physical consequences from the war. Arch Flanagan tries to protect his children, 'children of the line', from knowing the full extent of the horrors of war. This in itself is an extraordinary act as it is often more difficult than imagined for a person to not let the past consume them and those around them. 'A silent father...overcome his inner drama for the sake of his children.' There are also some people who in facing conflict, behave in extraordinary ways as a means to their own survival.

Some people, when faced with conflict that threatens their survival, do remarkable things to survive. The strength and courage of their actions leave others in awe. Recently in the news, there was a man who was trapped in his kayak and facing a certain death with water rising. To survive, he broke his own leg that was trapped, in order to survive. His courage and strength allowed him



to avoid certain death. When our survival is threatened, one of two things might happen – panic may be seen in and paralyse us with fear or we may do something to ensure survival and as a result, be remembered as the select few ordinary individuals who behaved in extraordinary ways in the face of conflict.

As humans, we will all encounter conflicts in our lives. What defines us is how we choose to act in these times of conflict. Everyone would like to think that when the time comes, their actions would be honourable and heroic. But the truth is, until that time comes, we will never know what we let our actions to be motivated by: fear or courage, strength or weakness.

Working with the ideas of the prompt and/or stimulus material should be the focus of this piece of writing. The selected text is a source of ideas and in the best pieces of writing it will not dominate. Models of student writing should be used to explore examples which demonstrate the connections between texts, the prompt and/or stimulus material and students' own experiences. This task rewards students who read widely, consider ideas carefully and synthesise them. Students need an 'idea bank' and an 'example bank' from which to draw on for this writing. Not every item in the 'bank' can be used with a particular prompt or stimulus. Students should be encouraged to keep their own files of material during the year, including keeping reflections in a journal. Teachers should provide students with a number of activities which encourage them to write a variety of pieces in a variety of forms and styles. Teachers could also model different ways in which the ideas of the chosen text could be incorporated into a piece of writing. As a class, some of the features of the published high-scoring responses, both in this report and on VCAA website curriculum resources, could be examined.

Teachers should be aware that the VCAA has published information about the instructions and task in Section B of the 2009 ESL examination. The task will be to write an extended written response; form will not be specified. Revised exam specifications and sample exam can be downloaded from the VCAA website.

Section C – Analysis of language use (Using language to persuade)

Part 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	4	4	8	11	14	17	15	14	9	3	0	4.9

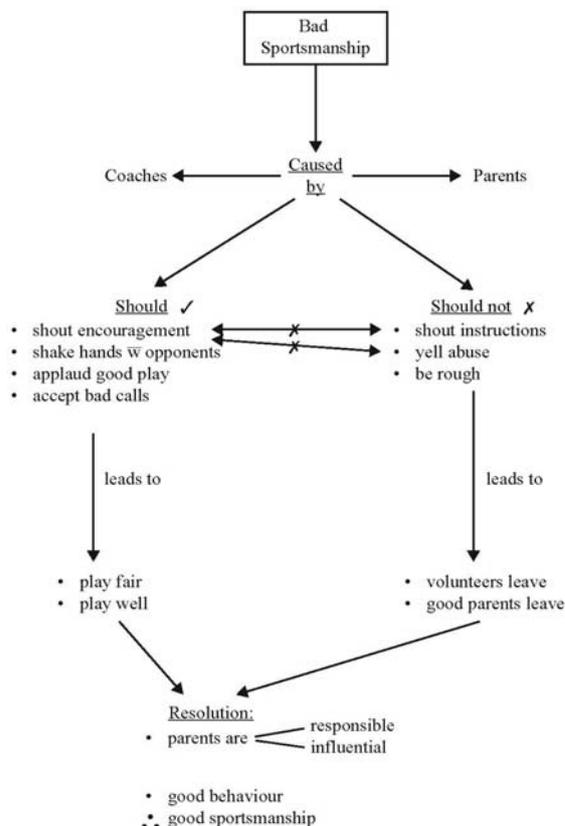
More students than in previous years did not complete this section of the examination paper. The key knowledge and skills required for these tasks, while challenging for second language learners, are a vital part of demonstrating an ability to use English in a first language environment.

The task material about sportsmanship was an authentic text type which was community-based and readily identifiable. It was accessible and engaging with cross-cultural relevance. The material was easy to read and generally well understood. It was pitched at an appropriate level and with enough features for ESL students to identify and write about. However, some students overlooked the equation of a donkey with a stupid person, so this concept may not be culturally understood. Despite this, the use of an embedded, rather than a separate, add-on cartoon, was appropriate.

For some students the use of 'one-sided' material may have made the note-taking task more difficult. The nature of the material produced more linear responses this year. Students are required to identify the main ideas in the material rather than summarise everything. Stronger responses demonstrated this, synthesising material across the whole text. Weaker responses lacked clarity due to repetition and heavy reliance on the headings in the material. Students should be encouraged to process the material using their own headings as appropriate.

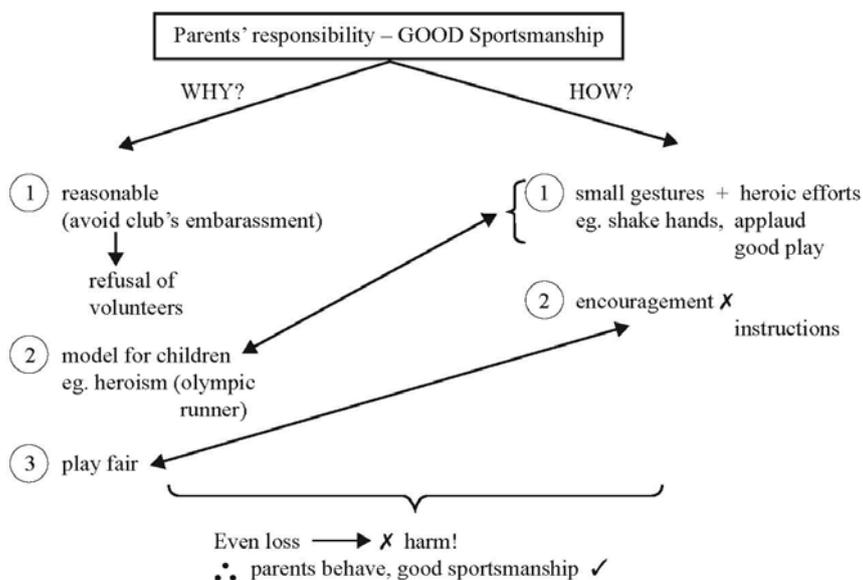
Student Response – Example 1

This response demonstrates an understanding of the material and an ability to select the main ideas and re-present them in meaningful note form.



Student Response – Example 2

This response demonstrates similar skills to Example 1, but uses a very different method of presentation.



Part 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	7	7	10	13	16	17	13	10	6	2	1	4.3

In Part 2, some responses struggled with the distinction between argument analysis and language analysis. Better responses were able to use the main points in the material as a way of structuring the analysis of language, and show



how language is used in argument. Others were more like a response to the English examination requirement; these just worked through the passage without any apparent connection to the main ideas in the material. Most students wrote something of value with some analysis. Weaker responses simply gave a description of what the writer was saying, writing only about 'argument'. A small but significant number of responses indicated a lack of awareness of changes to this part of the examination, for example, by identifying five examples in a chart rather than writing a response in prose.

Student Response – Example 1

This high-range response gives a brief introduction and then analyses the language used to persuade the reader about the effects of bad sportsmanship, the importance of good sportsmanship and the parents' role.

The newsletter 'A word from our coach' written by Sam is aimed to address the issue of bad sportsmanship by some parents and coaches. At the same time, Sam emphasises on the importance of good sportsmanship and parents' role in the issue.

Sam addresses the bad behaviour of parents during sport events and the effect it has on the children. Personal accounts is used to persuade the readers. The eight years old Emily was upset because of her dad's behaviour during the game. The use of personal accounts is designed to capture the reader's attention, so they are likely to read on, as readers are able to make a contrast between Emily's case and their own experience. It also evokes a sense of sympathy for Emily and the readers are forced to agree that bad behaviour from parents can have a big impact on a child's growth. The accompanying cartoon also reinforces the issue emphasised by Sam. The Cartoon shows an angry dad that is drawn as a donkey yelling at his daughter. The umpire and the parents all seem frustrated by the 'man' 's behaviour. The cartoon is able to make a direct link to the personal account as it resembles an angry dad yelling at his daughter (Emily). At the same time, the readers are manipulated to agree that bad parental behaviour can affect everyone, so those who did behave badly are obligated to feel guilty and forced to act responsibly.

The newsletter moves on to emphasise the importance of good sportsmanship. Sam uses a range of samples of good sportsmanship to support his point of view. Common acts by athletes are listed here. Readers are encouraged to agree with Sam since it is common to everyone that good sportsmanship is present in honourable sports events such as the Olympic game. Together with the example of good sportsmanship from a former Olympic game, the readers are struck with the importance of good sportsmanship, only then will parents behave responsibly.

Furthermore, Sam uses a range of persuasive technics to invite the readers to agree with his point of view on what bad sportsmanship will lead to. The use of inclusive language is maximised to a great extent. The writer uses 'we' and 'they' to seperate the good parents from the bad. He hopes that good parents will be encouraged to continue the good behaviour, while the bad parents are obligated to feel guilty about their behaviour. Hopefully, the guilt will lead to an improvement. The cartoon serves it's second purpose to help make the bad parents feel guilty, as readers are able to tell that everyone is upset about 'his' behaviour. Only when ownership of the problem is recognised can there be a solution. Sam wants an improvement in some parents' behaviour.

Therefore, the readers (parents in particular) are obligated to read the newsletter and agree with Sam's point of view. Good behaviours should be recognised and bad behaviours should be omitted. After all, it is for the good of the kids.

Student Response – Example 2

This mid-range response has some language lapses but maintains focus on the task. The analysis is organised around the misbehaving parents, the importance of good sportsmanship and the role and responsibility of parents.

Sam firstly stressed the phenomenon of the misbehaving parents. He draws on a personal experience and describes the story of Emily of 8 years old. The juxtaposition of 'insults from the other team' and 'dad yelled at her' lead the audience to see the children's vulnerable sentiment behind them. Thus make them to realise that children do care about their parents' reproach. Then Sam goes on to criticise badly behave parents, using the term such as 'toxic' and 'poisoning'. This create a negative feeling in the audience about misbehaving parents in sporting clubs. This also lead parents who behave badly to see their error. And create a sense of guilt in them as their behaviour can contaminate and 'poison' the entire club.

Then he highlights the importance of sportsmanship. The example of the 'Olympic runner' and the words 'truly heroic!' appeal to sentimental readers to see the beauty and spirit of sports in its sportsmanship. This will make the audience wanting to lead their children to learn sports and more importantly to learn this inspiring sportsmanship, Then he enlists examples of good sportsmanship, 'shaking hands', 'applauding good play' in an effort to lead the audience to see that sportsmanship can happen all around us and it is not hard to see and to do. Parent audience sees these ways and would influence and inspire them to teach their own children to play sport in this way.

Furthermore, he emphasises the role and responsibility of parents. The words 'ruin your child's like or chances of success' is intended to imply the aggressive parents who only see win and lose from their child. As it is reflected in the cartoon the parent yells and behaves like an animal. Child becomes scared and coach becomes impatient. The old says with its question mark once again creates a sense of alarm and caution in parent audiences. In a sense leading them to see that their behaviour has an



enormous impact on their children. It is their responsibility to behave in a sportsmanlike way so that their children learn from them.

Teachers should explain what this task involves using model answers as a guide. This includes practising note form responses with shorter one-sided pieces. These skills should be connected to other areas of study, for example, using material related to the Context study, and practised from early in the year. Short letters from the media which present only one point of argument using several persuasive strategies are a useful starting point for Part 2.

Encountering Conflict, using *The Line*.

Comments:

In this piece the focus is kept on exploring the prompt; additional material is used and there is an awareness of a reader. It is an analytical piece, with an introduction exploring the prompt followed by paragraphs that link an aspect of the prompt with relevant material from both the selected text and other sources. It explores a broad definition of 'conflict' to include inner conflict, not just obvious physical conflict such as war. The brief conclusion throws out a challenge to the reader.

Prompt:

In times of conflict ordinary people can behave in extraordinary ways.

Sample Student Work:

Conflict permeates every aspect of our lives; it is inevitable and inescapable. A world without conflict would be flat and sterile. It is how we choose to conduct ourselves in these times of conflict that define who we are and how we are viewed in society. There are some who, driven by fear, conduct themselves in a dishonourable manner during conflict but there are some who are able to rise above and behave in extraordinary ways in times of conflict. This is evident in history and is much explored in literature and written accounts. In Arch and Martin Flanagan's 'The Line', some of the prisoners of war are able to behave in remarkable ways when encountering conflict, in the form of war.

In times of war and great suffering, some ordinary individuals find strength in themselves to do great things to overcome this conflict. They become the pillar of strength, 'a symbol of hope' for others around them. Edward 'Weary' Dunlop is portrayed in 'The Line' as a man of 'inexhaustible kindness'. He is described by his fellow comrades as 'a huge man, with a soft voice, resolute and fearless'. He haggles with the 'dangerously volatile and unpredictable Japs' for the sanity of his men while disregarding his own safety. He is an honourable man who could not stand by and watch as injustice and cruelty took place. There are some ordinary individuals who risk or sacrifice their own lives for others. Their moral compass prevents them from conforming to cruelty out of fear. During the Holocaust in World War II, the Nazis systematically sentenced thousands of Jews to death in gas chambers under the direction of Adolf Hitler. However, Miep Gies, a German woman sheltered Anne Frank and her family, a crime punishable by death, from the Nazis because it was the right thing to do. How many of us would do the same?

When encountering conflict, some ordinary people do extraordinary things to help their family, their loved ones and others around them. Motivated by a deep understanding of humanity and love for others, these individuals do the unimaginable. In 'The Line', there are many prisoners of war who, driven by their bond and kinship with one another, give something of themselves for the survival of the masses. The soldier who gave up his boot, a treasured commodity in war, to his fellow brother in arms did so without wanting anything in return. Edward 'Weary' Dunlop was honoured as a hero by those who served with him as he constantly helps his men, who are 'emaciated, bereft of hope', to survive the hardships and sufferings of war. Survivors of war often



suffer many psychological and physical consequences from the war. Arch Flanagan tries to protect his children, 'children of the line', from knowing the full extent of the horrors of war. This in itself is an extraordinary act as it is often more difficult than imagined for a person to not let the past consume them and those around them. 'A silent father.....overcome his inner drama for the sake of his children.' There are also some people who in facing conflict, behave in extraordinary ways as a means to their own survival.

Some people, when faced with conflict that threatens their survival, do remarkable things to survive. The strength and courage of their actions leave others in awe. Recently in the news, there was a man who was trapped in his kayak and facing a certain death with water rising. To survive, he broke his own leg that was trapped, in order to survive. His courage and strength allowed him to avoid certain death. When our survival is threatened, one of two things might happen – panic may be seen in and paralyse us with fear or we may do something to ensure survival and as a result, be remembered as the select few ordinary individuals who behaved in extraordinary ways in the face of conflict.

As humans, we will all encounter conflicts in our lives. What defines us is how we choose to act in these times of conflict. Everyone would like to think that when the time comes, their actions would be honourable and heroic. But the truth is, until that time comes, we will never know what we let our actions to be motivated by: fear or courage, strength or weakness.