

2025 ASSESSMENT REPORT

ENG315117 ENGLISH

General Comments

Students should address all aspects of examination questions rather than focusing only on phrases that seem most familiar or accessible. They do not have to agree with the stem quote; however, they must respond thoughtfully and directly to the question as set. Embedding the key words from the question throughout each paragraph helps to build a strong, cohesive essay. Repeating the question alone does not constitute an answer.

Very few responses across all three sections of the exam included a clear contention in the introduction. Students should clearly articulate their argument at the beginning of their essay, establishing a throughline that guides the response. Texts must be introduced in full in the introduction, as confusion about which texts are being discussed can impact Criterion 4. Students must also ensure they are writing on texts prescribed for the specific module being examined, as inappropriate text selection can inadvertently undermine their responses. Some responses suggested confusion between concepts and texts across modules, reinforcing the importance of familiarity with the examination specifications.

Students should avoid informal or colloquial language, such as “root for” or “movie,” and instead use formal terminology (for example, “film”). They must not use derogatory terms in their own writing. Any slurs or derogatory terms that appear within prescribed texts should only be included in student responses when used as evidence within quotation marks. Students should aim to use appropriate grammar and punctuation in their responses within the constraints of exam conditions. Recurring issues included the use of capital letters for proper nouns, formatting of text titles, possessive apostrophes, and appropriate punctuation surrounding quotations. Students should also underline the title of the text in their responses.

Legible handwriting remains important, particularly under timed conditions, as clarity directly affects a student’s ability to communicate ideas effectively. Teachers and students are reminded that a blank booklet in an exam limits a student to a Preliminary Achievement overall, even if they receive ‘A’ ratings in the other two sections. Students must make a reasonable effort to respond in each booklet and manage their time equally across all three sections of the paper.

Section A – Genre Study

Question 1 – Dystopian Fiction

The question this year directed students to discuss “oppression” and the “resilience of those who rebel”. This positioned students well to discuss key conventions of the genre. There was some difficulty in addressing the “resilience” part of the stem, with some students stating the importance of resilience but not addressing it in their essay in relation to the texts. Others included the word “resilience” but only discussed resistance in a broad sense. Students are reminded that they need to explicitly name the conventions they are discussing.

Most responses were able to explain what the dystopian genre is and its purpose. Responses that returned to this and were able to expand on it were stronger than those that did not. Similarly, students who were able to articulate the actual warnings in the texts they studied, were able to achieve a stronger response. Those who identified the genre as ‘cautionary tales’ but did not explain what, specifically, each text is warning the audience about, struggled to extend their analysis beyond the function of characters as relatable or sympathetic to the audience. Students are encouraged to discuss the relationship between context, warning and the evolution of the genre.

Very successful responses discussed how the context of production shaped the way a composer wrote their respective text to influence the responder to consider how oppression exists in society today or at the time of text creation. Stronger responses identified key ideas that helped them create a relationship between two texts, so they could effectively critique the dystopian genre according to the essay question. Within this critique, stronger responses commented on whether a text conformed to or subverted the conventions of the dystopian genre and why. These responses had a throughline via a key idea/issue/convention that helped them build a clear argument.

A strong evaluation required students to draw upon the codes and highlight key language features that the composer had utilised for effect on the responder. For example, in discussing the convention of setting and totalitarian control; how the composer illustrates the idea of control through a language feature and then compare, contrast, evaluate how the second composer uses a language feature in a similar or different way for effect on the responder. Stronger responses highlighted how two composers established conventions in their texts and utilised a range of codes for effect; discussion was orientated around what the composer sought out to achieve in their work and how they crafted their writing to influence the responder to think, feel and act.

Weaker responses tended to rely heavily on plot recount and simple descriptions of character actions, which limited the depth of analysis. These responses often did not create clear relationships between the two texts and the importance and influence of context in a composer’s work. Weaker students tended to discuss texts separately; students should be aware it’s very difficult to create a comparison when the two texts are not discussed within the one paragraph. While many students demonstrated an understanding of the importance of dystopian conventions, fewer engaged with the relevant codes. A lack of attention to codes often results in writing that slips into narrative retell rather than analytical discussion. In some cases, students appeared uncertain about the distinction between a code and a convention. Although some responses effectively identified film techniques (such as low camera angles), these observations were not always accompanied by an explanation of how such techniques construct meaning or shape audience interpretation.

Some responses lacked connection to context, with many students unable to show their understanding of the genre as a didactic one – for instance, that the dehumanising treatment of “fugees” in *Children of Men* warns audiences about the anti-immigrant and anti-refugee propaganda and rhetoric in use in contemporary western society (particularly the UK, where the film is set), with Theo’s care for Kee providing a contrasting lesson in kindness and compassion, and working together as a community despite differences of race etc. Similarly, while some responses were able to explain text-specific context, e.g. the erosion of women’s rights Atwood was warning about in *The Handmaid’s Tale*, they failed to then make connections between the thematic concerns of their other set texts. Doing so would enable students to demonstrate that texts do not exist in isolation or in the past, that ideas are not stagnant, and that while the genre evolves in line with context its relevance is not limited to a particular era.

Question 2 – Thriller Fiction

Responses to Question 2 were generally strong. Some markers reported stronger overall performance against Criterion 1 than Criterion 4. Students engaged with the stem in a variety of ways, most of them sticking to the idea that protagonists are ‘flawed’ or ‘imperfect’. It was clear, however, that many did not understand the word “tedious”, and so students should be advised to use a dictionary for unfamiliar words. Responses that understood the nuance of the stem and genuinely engaged with the question were sophisticated and impressive.

Stronger responses gave equal weight to both texts and discussed them comparatively within each paragraph. These students were able to give excellent evidence of codes and conventions, cinematic or linguistic features of texts and generally wrote three or more pages. Strong responses considered how characters can evolve over time as the genre evolves, reflecting changing sociocultural context, and then linked this back to the question about audience identification with the ‘flawed’ protagonist. The strongest responses were able to combine thorough knowledge of the texts with an authentic answer to the question.

Weaker responses lacked focus on genre codes and conventions. General narrative conventions were discussed, e.g., disruption of equilibrium and denouement, but not specific genre conventions. Students are encouraged to revise key metalanguage and vocabulary for their genres.

Students should aim to write responses of sufficient length to answer the question and avoid simply restating it. Students are encouraged to move away from pre-prepared responses as authentic engagement with the question is highly valued against Criterion 4. Quotes or key scenes should be embedded in thorough analysis rather than simply inserted in paragraphs. Codes could be analysed in greater depth; accompany references to lighting or a musical score with discussion of intended meaning and audience impact, and the text composers ‘why’.

Some interesting structures were used. Some students are still treating texts separately either within paragraphs or in the entire essay (one paragraph per text). Students are reminded that this is a comparative essay and the strongest responses discuss both texts in each paragraph, focusing on how and why meaning changes rather than plot retell.

Question 3 – Life Writing Fiction

The question asked students to address how life writing texts explore “unapologetic truths about the self in time and history” and was well-received by teachers of the genre. Students demonstrated strong preparation overall. The majority had studied their three chosen texts thoroughly and demonstrated sound knowledge of generic codes and conventions, and an ability to compare how composers used conventions to shape audience response.

Strong responses were distinguished by students who examined how their texts presented (or resisted presenting) unapologetic representations of their subjects and genuinely explored both “truth[s] about the self” and the influence of “history”. Students were rewarded for sustained engagement with the complexity of the question across time, culture, and medium, and integrated analysis of how historical contexts shaped the representation of self in their chosen texts.

Responses that performed well against Criterion 1 were characterised by depth of analysis, moving beyond identification of conventions to detailed examination of how they function to create meaning and affect the audience; also, evaluation of how successfully compositional choices achieved their intended effects on audiences.

Students are encouraged to move beyond superficial engagement with the stem, such as simply rewriting the question in introductions and conclusions without genuinely engaging with all aspects throughout the essay. Students need to understand what is meant by ‘evaluation’ in the context of subject English – some students confused evaluation with making judgments about which was the ‘better’ life writing text, rather than evaluating the effectiveness of compositional choices made by the composers.

Recommendations for Future Learning

- Ensure students understand the distinctions between key terminology of the unit, such as conventions, codes, and context.
- Students should focus on embedding quotations smoothly.
- Continue encouraging students to use specific, relevant historical and contemporary context to evaluate the nature of the dystopian warning.
- Students could improve comparison with a more consistent use of comparative language (‘whereas’ / ‘similarly’).
- Students should practice reading and re-reading the question to discern exactly what it is asking, key terms and/or unfamiliar words.
- Quotes, key scenes or other textual evidence need to be embedded within thorough analysis and linked to intended meaning or audience impact.
- Markers appreciate responses that respond authentically to the question rather than presenting rehearsed paragraphs.

Section B – Adaptation

Exam markers felt that the stimulus prompt this year was good and offered students clear opportunities to discuss the process of adaptation. The only minor concern raised was the emphasis on *context* in the exam directions, as this concept is not explicitly referenced in Criterion 2. However, “*context*” was also accepted to refer to the transition to new mediums and new audiences.

In general, students made an effort to include the word “context” but misused the term. They were largely unable to make explicit or specific connections to context outside the text, which would have greatly strengthened their evaluation. Few students addressed the change of context as a driver of reinvention. For example, the influence of Hollywood’s expectations for commercially successful films could have been used to explain how adaptations are shaped by new contexts as well as by those of the original text. Integrating such considerations would have significantly strengthened students’ analytical and evaluative responses. Additionally, discussions of major themes in texts such as institutionalisation and greed provide opportunities for candidates to connect to real world context. Although many responses referred to the question in the introduction, this was not always maintained throughout the essay.

Stronger responses concluded their introduction with a clear and explicit contention, articulating both the meaning of the source text and how that meaning had been transformed or reinvented in the adaptation. In contrast, weaker responses tended to merely state that meaning had changed without explaining *how* or *why* this transformation occurred.

Strong responses focused on ideas, themes, and concepts, comparing how these were represented in each text through stylistic, literary, and film techniques. They made effective use of metalanguage specific to adaptation studies – such as medium, genre, hypotext, and hypertext – to support precise, analytical discussion. Terms such as shaping, translating, in accordance with, and socio-cultural context all helped to articulate the process and impact of adaptation on given themes or concepts. These responses demonstrated accuracy with key terminology; however, a notable number of candidates incorrectly used *adaption* instead of *adaptation*. Students are advised to review fundamental metalanguage and ensure accuracy in small but important details, such as release dates, publication years, and textual settings. For instance, responses varied widely in identifying the setting of “So Much Water So Close to Home” with some responses claiming it was set in the 1980s, some in the 1970s and others in 1965 or even 1993.

Strong responses were clearly structured in the body paragraphs, where it was clear throughout which text was being discussed, and included 'signposting' of topic sentences and a clear contention, using words from the question, in the introduction. Candidates should make it clear when they are discussing the hypertext as opposed to the hypotext within their body paragraphs, especially when the character names are the same, to aid clarity. Strong responses also included well-balanced discussion of the two texts and contained textual evidence in the form of quotes, examples of language and film features and analysis of the way these were used by each composer to convey ideas and concepts. The strongest responses were able to contextualise evidence without retelling too much of the plot to summarise ideas and themes.

Weaker responses did not clearly identify ideas, themes and concepts, meaning the response was difficult to assess against Criterion 2. Weaker responses tended to privilege the film text over the hypotext, making for an unbalanced analysis. These responses often focused on describing

surface-level differences between the texts rather than evaluating the significance or effectiveness of the adaptation process. In many cases, textual evidence was either absent or presented without accompanying analysis, limiting the strength of the argument. Some candidates spent too much time contextualising quotes and evidence, meaning the response strayed into a plot retell. Others provided too little context for their evidence, making it unclear where or how the quotation functioned within the text.

Recommendations for Future Learning

- Students should ensure themes, ideas, and concepts are a clear focus within body paragraphs.
- Continue developing students' understanding that evaluation involves assessing effectiveness and significance, not making subjective quality judgments.
- Continue encouraging students to use specific, relevant, and accurately recalled textual evidence from both the original and adapted texts.
- Ensure equal discussion of the hypotext and hypertext.

Section C – Close Text Study

Students generally demonstrated strong knowledge of their Close Study texts, including perspectives, themes, contexts, characters, author's intent and stylistic features of the text type. The way 'perspectives' are taught or framed clearly differs across providers. This was reflected in the range of approaches to the exam.

Exam markers felt that this year's exam question was generally fair and provided scope for interpretation relevant to their text and how they have studied it. The Close Text Study placed an emphasis on "meaning", which was interpreted to also include attitudes and values in addition to ideas. While most students attempted to address the prompt, a significant number demonstrated only a partial or unclear understanding of the question's requirements. In particular, the concept of *context* was frequently misunderstood or applied inaccurately.

The nature of the Close Text Study requires a close examination of the prescribed text. Strong responses included close textual analysis of key language and stylistic devices and were able to use this analysis to support their interpretation of the text's meaning. Interpretations that were text-centred rather than personal experience-centred were more sophisticated; especially those that reflected on contemporary social context.

Students studying *The Eye of the Sheep* particularly missed opportunities to deepen their interpretations by making explicit links to 1980s Australian issues and attitudes. Many responses acknowledged difference or neurodivergence as socially unacceptable at the time, but offered little exploration beyond this. More effective responses would have connected these observations to broader contextual themes such as gender roles, industrial working culture, or domestic violence. Similarly, students often explained Gavin's traumatic upbringing as a justification for his behaviour without progressing to a critical evaluation of the societal attitudes that normalised or obscured domestic violence in that era. Integrating students' contemporary perspectives – while remaining text-centred – would have enabled a stronger demonstration of skills against Criterion 3.

The most successful responses offered clear understanding of context (either historical or contemporary) and its impact on perspectives, attitudes, and values. Across texts such as *Jasper*

Jones, The Secret River, and Black Diggers, there were several competent responses that explored topics including racism and reconciliation in Australia. These responses effectively analysed how perspectives are conveyed through language features, symbolism, and thematic concerns.

Strong responses demonstrated a sound understanding of concepts such as the invited reading of a text. Students who justified their interpretation of the text based on the intended reading, or a critique of it, were able to demonstrate a considered evaluation.

Weaker responses presented evidence that was largely explanatory serving as plot retell rather than analysis. Evidence was often presented without explanation, and quotations were not integrated into an argument or used to support claims. Students should always be aware of the important need to incorporate quotes into their analysis or argument. Evidence should not stand alone as proof.

Use of literary lenses is not necessary in the Close Text Study module. While this did not hinder students' results, there were often multiple lenses addressed in each essay. Responses that attempted to incorporate multiple lenses typically sacrificed depth for breadth. Perspectives that are explored or developed, should be the focus of study. Students are encouraged to make use of the metalanguage and vocabulary of textual analysis: 'invited reading', 'representation', and a range of literary devices.

Recommendations for Future Learning

- Help students develop a clear contention, maintaining a clear focus throughout the essay.
- Develop a stronger understanding of context and its relationship to text meaning; encourage connections between historical context and contemporary perspectives.
- Emphasise the importance of critical analysis over explanation; evidence should be integrated and supported by close textual analysis.
- Reinforce the use of meta-language and vocabulary of textual analysis to strengthen academic writing.
- Discourage unnecessary application of multiple literary lenses; instead, focus on perspectives central to the text.
- Continue practicing quote integration and analysis of language features to support interpretation.