

2024 ASSESSMENT REPORT

ENL315114 ENGLISH LITERATURE

General Comments

Please note that while this report is compiled by the Marking Coordinator the insights come from the marking teams for Independent Studies and Written Exam scripts. The purpose of this report is to provide feedback and guidance to teachers as well as students of the English Literature course in 2024 and 2025.

Independent Study

In 2024 the studies submitted for assessment represented a range of texts. The most popular of these were: *Emma*, *The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring*, *A Doll's House*, *Unsheltered*, *The Goldfinch*, *Alien*, *Goodbye to Berlin*, *Boy Swallows Universe*, *The Color Purple*, *Brooklyn*, *Dracula*, *Arrival*, *Othello*, *Muriel's Wedding*, *A Room with a View* and *The King's Speech*.

One of the strengths of English Literature, as the course is currently delivered, is that students have an opportunity to have three external criteria assessed on polished, drafted writing. The allocated time in the course documents stipulates that twenty-five hours are spent on the independent study module. The independent study provides students with opportunities to engage in depth with a work of literature and develop their written responses to this text. This genuine experience of writing to publication standard includes editing written drafts to the specifications established in the externally assessed guidelines and specifications which should be approached as the style guide for achieving a pass award for criterion 7. The guidelines and specifications provide a shared understanding for teachers and students of the course. It is best practice to go through these guidelines and the TASC Academic Integrity documents with students as they begin their Independent Study. For 2025, teachers and students must continue to focus on the level of polish – which reflects engagement with the study.

Students in 2025 are advised to pay close attention to meet the minimum overall word count. In 2024 there were a disappointing number of studies which, when the word counts were combined, did not meet the 3,000-word limit. Examiners check the word counts on the cover page when their suspicions are aroused. Folios that are less than 3,000 words (as well as folios that are over 3,300 words) were penalised a grade on criterion 7. The word limit and the penalty applied to criterion 7 are clearly outlined in the external assessment specifications and guidelines document. To be as successful as possible future students are to write responses that meet the word limit of between 3,000 and 3,300 when both the word counts for the critical response and the imaginative response are combined.

Presentation

To achieve a C on criterion 7 students must “use grammatical conventions, punctuation and spelling to achieve clarity” as well as “appropriate vocabulary and syntax”. Future students and teachers of the subject must infer from these elements that the final draft of each section of the study should be polished and free from errors (whether these are spelling mistakes or typing errors). Students need to allow enough time to undertake final checks as these details are important.

It is recommended that students use the MLA9 referencing system or another appropriate referencing system consistently throughout their Independent Study as a way of demonstrating academic integrity.

When including the cover page, it is possible to edit header and select a different first page. This will prevent the teal TASC banner going through writing. Students are reminded to complete all sections of the cover page – including the title and form for their imaginative response.

Inquiry Focus

A strong study begins with an inquiry focus question - written as a statement that can be explored. This is best framed as “how” and include the responder (first person voice). For example:

- “How has reading *The Lieutenant* informed my understanding of language as an instrument of colonisation?”
- “How has watching *The Piano* directed by Jane Campion through an intersectional feminist lens extended my understanding of agency?”
- “How does *Othello* challenge me to consider the use of deception as a tool to secure selfish ends?”
- “How has Peter Carey’s *True History of The Kelly Gang* challenged my understanding of the validity of written history?”
- “How has E.M Forster’s *A Room with a View* informed my understanding of conformity and freedom for individual expression?”

Students are encouraged to write focus questions that have a clear and direct contention. Avoid writing a question which nominates features of a text – these provide the evidence of “how” the text has influenced a responder. Questions that are many sentences and try to cover everything are often problematic. The question should guide the student to reflect on how their understanding has been challenged or altered. If this does not form part of the question it is often difficult for a student to meet the requirements of C6. Students are advised to incorporate their perspective into the question to maximise their chances of achieving a good grade on C6. This is imperative. The elements of C6 are clearly stated in the syllabus, and students often miss the opportunity to address these elements, particularly the last one: “[a student] analyses the influence of contextual features and own life experiences, expectations and/or socio-cultural background in shaping personal responses to texts”. It is also important to explore how studying the selected text has impacted a student’s outlook.

In 2024 many responses utilised appropriate questions and strategically used resources to enhance critical readings. Many responses contained focus statements rather than inquiry questions, limiting students' ability to fully utilise the analytical essay structure to evaluate the chosen text. Students should remember that the subject requires a literary focus, analysing “how”

a text communicates its ideas, necessitating an analysis of compositional features beyond characterisation.

Reflective Statement

The purpose of the Reflective Statement is to justify the student's choice of inquiry focus and to outline the connections between the Critical Response and the Imaginative Response for the assessor. The Reflective Statement allows candidates to frame their study and address criteria 6 and 7. Students are encouraged to view the Reflective Statement as a carefully crafted piece of writing that sets the tone and standard for the Folio - consider the Reflective Statement as an advocacy document that allows a space to explain and justify some of the writerly choices in the Imaginative Response.

Future students must control the register of their writing in the Reflective Statement. It is easy to become too casual. A genuine expression of the responder's engagement with the text is appreciated and rewarded.

Critical Response

The critical response is assessed as part of C6 and C7. It is strongly advised that candidates write their perspective into the focus question (using the first person) to address criterion 6 effectively. In 2024, as in previous years, some folios used the Critical Response to write sociological essays with examples from the text as evidence rather than literary analyses with references to relevant contextual issues which have influenced the reading of a text. Students are advised to make the literary and stylistic features of the text a focus. The best way to support a claim you are making about a text is to provide textual evidence then identify and explain the effects of the stylistic features used. Analysis happens when critical connections are made between features or techniques used and the meaning that is created as a result. Students are advised to move beyond a focus on characters. If selecting a film or play, it is important to identify the features unique to these text types. How have text creators used the form/medium to develop the ideas/values/perspectives?

While many candidates effectively incorporated scholarly interpretations to support their theses, some did not optimise these resources to enhance their argument. The best folios meticulously analysed the compositional elements of the text, aligning them with the self-devised Inquiry Question and substantiating their assertions with precise textual references. Conversely, some students neglected this crucial aspect, to their detriment. When integrating scholarly support, which is encouraged, candidates should employ critical theories to enhance their own arguments rather than merely summarising them. These theories should be viewed as an enhancement to the critical response, adding depth to the discussion rather than serving as its central focus – a seasoning which compliments the flavour of the student's own argument. The most successful critical responses were those that proficiently developed and substantiated the student's argument. These responses skilfully synthesised critical theories with detailed references to the text's compositional features, thereby supporting the contention established by the candidate.

When explaining the modern relevance of the text, students are advised to go beyond examples from their personal experience and consider wider social and political events and examples that might be affecting their response but don't feel like they need to relate everything to the modern world. The purpose of C6 is not necessarily to find characters that parallel to particular real-life

figures or ideologies – although this can work for some studies. The purpose of C6 is to explain *why* you hold the position that you do or why you have developed the thesis that you have – as a result of the influence of your study of the text, and as a result of your own values, views and perspective, informed by your context. Weaker responses did not explicitly interrogate the composer’s values, or provide explanation and analysis connected to their response to elements of the text. Students should not limit their personal response claims to simply writing that they have also experienced gender discrimination or suffer from anxiety. Personal engagement in some responses lacked depth, such as mentioning the conflicts in Gaza and Ukraine in an analysis of Peter Weir’s *Gallipoli*, which appeared tokenistic or could not be substantiated by a close analysis of the text.

When developing a critical response an ideological lens can provide useful analytical perspectives when writing about race, gender or class. Students are advised to approach writing about race and class with sensitivity and nuance. It was noted that in independent studies in 2024 students struggled to write about social class. This is understandable, given our Australian context where we have a long history of arguing that we are egalitarian and not acknowledging the impact of socio-economic privilege, however, reducing a society to two classes: upper and lower, does not show understanding of the complexities of class, particularly within the English texts. For example, Austen’s characters come exclusively from the upper middle class and are further stratified within this. To avoid generalisations students should also name particular social and cultural contexts that they are referring to, whether that of the author, the text or their own. This will help to avoid broad claims about ‘society’ in general. The most insightful responses were observed when students engaged with the composer’s ideas, values, and perspectives through their own intellectual frameworks, demonstrating how the text influenced their personal thinking. This was often achieved by thoughtfully crafting their inquiry to incorporate their individual viewpoints.

Conclusions can be difficult to write. Weaker folios tended to just quickly summarise paragraph topics and restate the question. Stronger folio responses used the conclusion to synthesise (not summarise) the key ideas in the essay. Some candidates were also able to offer insightful evaluation in their conclusions. While students are often advised to avoid using textual evidence in a conclusion – it is clever and engaging to end on a quote which encapsulates the contention.

Imaginative Response

The Imaginative Response is assessed according to criterion 5. Future students are advised to think carefully about the Imaginative Response and ensure that they treat it as seriously as the Critical Response; many seemed to be lacking the required degree of engagement and imaginative effort to create something which adds depth or insight to the ideas of the text, merely rehashing what we already know. It is important to ensure that there is a clear connection between the imaginative response and the critical response. The reflective statement should explicitly outline this connection. When drafting and developing the imaginative response, students should focus on the craft of writing. Candidates’ writing often needed subtext and figurative language in their Imaginative Response. Consider the narrative structure and pace of the piece and ensure that there is some kind of transformation.

A significant part of success with the imaginative task is choosing a style of response that is appropriate for the text, and which will successfully engage the reader. While there are texts for which an epistolary form may be appropriate, students must consider how they would include shifts in voice, mood, tone as well as how they might use descriptive detail – features of

imaginative writing are not always included in diaries or letters. Students should also carefully consider the limitations of their chosen narrative perspective. For example, a child's viewpoint may offer only a narrow focus, and writing in the form of letters between characters can similarly restrict the narrative's depth. Those who selected a form like third-person omniscient or close third-person often managed to explore more layers of the story, allowing for greater complexity and insight. Students who choose to write a script should be prepared to work on developing dialogue where each character has a *distinct* voice.

In 2024 strong imaginative responses demonstrated a variety of literary techniques and smoothly incorporated them into the writing. These techniques contributed to creating an engaging and believable response that stayed true to the world of the Independent Study text. Unfortunately, there were several where the link to the 'world of the text' is vague at best. Make use of the reflective statement to justify and advocate for the choices made in the imaginative response. A final note of caution that if the text for study deals with race and issues of race-based prejudice choosing to write from the perspective of a First Nations person or person of colour can undermine the analysis undertaken in the critical response. If the decision is made to adopt a voice which is representative, it must be done sensitively to avoid reductive and offensive caricatures.

Written Exam

English literature is the study of different kinds of texts and the study of ideas. During their study, students learn how to respond to texts in various forms of writing, including reflective, interpretative, imaginative, and analytical. In the written examination, this involves the ability to write analytical essays under timed conditions. The introduction of a thesis in response to the essay question provided is a hallmark of this text style. The purpose of the Literature examination is to examine students' knowledge of texts as well as their ability to analyse, plan, and apply their knowledge to a given topic under time limits. All suggested components, including literary language and conventions, structures, and stylistic aspects, must be addressed by students. Exam responses that do this will be rewarded. Students must respond to all aspects of a set question to achieve in the A range.

Excellent essays in 2024 demonstrated a genuine engagement with the ideas of the text and used all the components of the question to showcase original thinking within the timeframe provided. Students and teachers must consider that presenting the *same* information, citing the *same* critics, and including the *same* textual evidence as other students in the class does not demonstrate an individual's understanding and appreciation for the texts studied.

Sadly, some students even used the same structure in responding to a set question, irrespective of whether this structure suited the specific question that was asked of them.

Section A

Question 1A – Loss Poetry

Students need to prepare for all poems as the exam specifications outlines that poems can be named.

86 students attempted this question. 6 of these answers, however, were incorrectly labelled and wrote on love poetry. It is important that students correctly label their exam responses so that they will be correctly assessed.

All students included Plath's poem "Daddy" in their answer as directed by the set question and demonstrated an understanding of how the historical and cultural contexts of Plath and another poet influence their representation of loss. Most candidates showed a sound knowledge of the two poems they included in their discussion; there were many well-written, insightful and skilful responses in 2024, and candidates are to be commended for using an appropriately wonderful vocabulary (antipodean, melancholia, nostalgia, patricide, polemical) correctly.

While most candidates used the word "profound" in their responses to describe the loss communicated in the poems only some of the 2024 cohort explained what this means in reference to the two poems. To successfully address criterion 2, there needs to be a synthesis between understanding the significant events of the time of production and the features of the texts. Students must integrate their knowledge of the importance of historical and socio-cultural context with their analysis of the texts instead of including a snapshot of historical and social contexts which does not arise from the discussion of texts themselves. Strong responses interrogated how two poems utilise imagery to communicate a sense of loss. Similarly, most candidates could identify the poetic form used by the two poets and connect this to their discussion of loss. They did this with varying degrees of success; however, an analysis of the relevant texts is not enough. To be awarded an A, students must interrogate aspects of the socio-cultural and historical context of texts and how these have influenced the construction of a specific text.

The context discussion was knowledgeable, although some candidates must be wary of writing paragraphs focusing solely on context (even though relevant) without drawing connections to the poem being discussed. The insightful exploration of context should always arise out of the analysis of the poem. Analysis of the poems showed a good understanding of structure, style, and literary conventions. Textual evidence was well used, and candidates are encouraged to evaluate the examples they provide.

Many candidates managed to split the contextual information from the discussion of the poems and need to be reminded again to interweave the two, using contextual information to further develop an understanding of the poem and using evidence from the poem to support and show where the influences of the context can be found. The best answers managed to weave context, meaning and technical features together to create their comparison. Many had insufficient textual evidence and scant quotation from the poems. A focus on one poem characterised weaker responses at the expense of the second, with a distinct lack of literary analysis and exploration of their effect and limited historical and contextual detail.

Strong poetry responses:

- grappled immediately with all aspects of the question, literary, and stylistic devices
- explored the relevant literary context, such as poetic movements, and linked this to structure, style, and the aspects of loss being explored. Strong responses typically linked the literary movement to a wider social and cultural context, not just the poet's personal context
- weaved sophisticated contextual knowledge and analysis of poetic form and imagery throughout each body paragraph
- avoided funnelling all discussion of context into an isolated paragraph
- integrated aspects of the prevailing ideologies into the discussion on form.

Weaker responses:

- used the personal voice and offered a review of a poem – cataloguing poetic devices they noted in one paragraph and listing a few facts about the historical context of each poem in another
- did not delineate between the poet and the speaker
- did not include a discussion of the poem's title
- ignored the tone of poems and how this could be linked to the poet's intention and context which have been shaped by their values
- wrote minimally containing only two body paragraphs with each poem having a separate focus and treated it as an opportunity to dump all known facts about the devices used in the poem
- ignored the question beyond a perfunctory mention in the introduction and conclusion.

Question 1B – Love Poetry

Despite one of the poems in the question being named, there was, on the whole, an even balance between the two poems examined in responses. Good responses compared and contrasted these poems by focussing on the imagery. They were able to say which poem was more effective and why as a form of evaluation, however, this was often tacked on to the end of a paragraph or a conclusion and did not enable them to elaborate. Very good responses could name the types or categories of imagery (e.g. light/nature/seasonal/physical etc.), analyse these choices and included a wide range of poetic techniques, which they named, quoted examples and explained the effect on the meaning.

Many students were obviously 'thrown' by the naming of Byron's *She Walks in Beauty* as one of the poems. Students should be aware that any of the poems could be named in the exam, and to ensure they know all six poems, even if this knowledge is somewhat unbalanced due to their knowing the texts they used for their internal TASC assessments better than the others. Students need to know, at a minimum, the eras/Ages, relevant movements and forms, plus some quotes and examples of poetic devices for all six poems. As a result of not knowing all six poems, as evidenced through a very uneven analysis between the texts, some students were unable to achieve the rating they would otherwise have been awarded on C4.

All responses engaged with the contextual aspects of the poems, albeit with varying degrees of success. Some responses divided context into one paragraph and an analysis of the poem into a second paragraph. This presented a rather disjointed essay. A more successful technique was to support assertions and factual information about context with quotations from the poem and, vice versa, support assertions about the poem's meaning and techniques with information about the context. Many noted the inconsistencies between Byron's 'private life' and the Romantic values expressed in his poetry, however, answers should not solely focus on Byron's infamous personal life and should move to the broader philosophical movements, societal values and beliefs and literary contexts.

Identifying what constitutes a 'profound sense of love' had mixed success. Some responses claimed any idea about love was profound. Some did not mention the term at all. Some responses took issue with Byron's ideas about love suggesting that they were not particularly profound. When well-argued with supporting evidence, this was a successful choice.

Weaker responses demonstrated confusion about different eras/Ages (and occasionally confused Byron's context and poem with that of another poet). Weaker responses did not demonstrate a sound knowledge of form and structure (e.g., lyric poem, free verse, sonnet, stanzas, sections, quatrains) and included limited evidence from the texts.

To note for next time: Romanticism is an historical movement and needs a capital 'R'.

Question 2 – Single Text Study (with examples and references to answers on *The Tempest*)

Most responses successfully identified minor characters (Miranda, Caliban and Antonio) and were able to discuss the role that they played in the text. They were also able to list and describe some aspects of Jacobean context.

Better responses identified how these minor characters reflected or were impacted by or influenced by the socio-cultural and historical context. They also engaged with a broader range of contextual factors, from gender roles to the political dimensions to the broader context of colonisation.

Some responses boldly named Prospero as a minor character in order to use the material they had pre-prepared. This limited their ability to address C4. Some more cleverly, used Prospero as a device through which minor characters were empowered or limited. This enabled them to discuss the protagonist and still answer the questions. One really wonderful response examined how Shakespeare's choices of dialogue and other multiple poetic techniques embedded and reinforced the powerlessness and limitations of characters. This is a good moment to recognise that Shakespeare is a poet, and a close analysis of his writing choices will be rewarded.

This question caused many students problems, with the instruction to 'examine... two minor characters'. Some students completely ignored the question and wrote their prepared essay, which often focussed on Prospero. The ambiguity of 'minor characters' was a real issue with this question. Many students wrote on Miranda, Caliban, Ariel, Ferdinand and Antonio – all of whom are not really minor. Students who used those characters as a starting point for major themes were quite successful e.g. Caliban led into a discussion on colonisation – historical context – Prospero's role, etc. Miranda led into a discussion on the patriarchy and role of women. Antonio and/ or Ferdinand led into a discussion on the Divine Right of Kings/Great Chain of Being and the nature of power.

There were many weak responses characterised by poor spelling, lack of clarity, poor sentencing and grammar. Very few students underlined the titles of the texts. Some also treated historical context as a theme. For some reason some wrote each new paragraph on a new page, and some wrote in pencil.

Again, students must focus on answering the set question. Pre-prepared answers do not do this.

Question 3 – Comparative Text Study

It is concerning when responses do not engage with context at all as this is the focus on Section A. Responses focussed mainly on the context of setting and explained how the time and place in which the texts are set impacted on the choice and behaviour of the protagonists. Some stronger responses also included an examination of how the protagonists are used as devices by the composer to explore and critique societal norms.

When writing on *Boy Swallows Universe* and *Billy Elliot* candidates were able to detail the shared temporal context of the two texts as well as connect personal details from the lives of the text creators, examining how these events had influenced the attitudes, values and beliefs represented in the texts. Students are reminded that it is important to make clear connections between the text and the contextual information. For example, referring to Margaret Thatcher or the corruption of the Queensland police force in the 1980s must be linked to the text – where have these historical elements been explored by text creators? What influence have these events had on the attitudes explored by the texts?

Section B

Students were most successful when they evaluated the literary or cinematic choices made by the composers. Strong responses effectively used critical interpretations to support their own analyses and engaged thoughtfully with quoted critics. However, some responses were overly general and repetitive, merely quoting critics without further engagement. Strong responses used textual evidence as well as critical ideas of others to support their contention.

Less successful answers used textual evidence or ideas of others which weren't relevant to the discussion. One of the skills demonstrated in an exam is to select appropriate evidence. Use quotations and references selectively to effectively support an argument; accuracy is essential. Examiners are familiar with the TASC-prescribed texts, so there is no need to re-tell or paraphrase.

The best candidates demonstrated a well-developed thesis. It is essential to address the exam questions directly rather than relying on memorised essays. When responding to the exam question, students should construct a strong thesis statement that incorporates the key terms of the question; failing to do so can negatively impact performance in criterion 4.

When drawing on critical ideas of others simply quoting critics is insufficient, especially if using the same sources as others. Students should integrate critical quotes to enhance their analysis of the text's central ideas. Appropriate reporting verbs, mentioning the critic's full name and credentials initially, then surname only in subsequent references should be used. Avoid over-reliance on critical interpretations, which can detract from direct engagement with the text. Focus should be placed on analysis and interaction with the text rather than just paraphrasing critiques.

While critical perspectives can enhance an essay, they should not overshadow a student's original ideas. Essays should primarily present personal insights, with critical perspectives used to reinforce the argument. Adhering to MLA guidelines, underlining the titles of published works or using italics if typing is permitted.

Question 4

This question suited all texts studied in the single text module. Students were asked to explore the extent to which the structure and genre of one prescribed text they have studied this year communicated powerful and pertinent ideas. They were also required to provide appropriate textual evidence to substantiate their claims. Markers commented that, in doing so, students had every opportunity to demonstrate a critical understanding of the prescribed text. This understanding should have been supported by appropriate textual evidence and by referring to a range of critical interpretations of others. Students need to source scholarly works to support their own interpretation of classic texts.

Interrogating the set question and providing evaluation are key to more successful responses. Most responses were able to explain an author's choice of structure and genre, but better candidates discussed why an author might make this choice and how this deliberate choice helped them to communicate their ideas.

The evaluation of a text's aesthetic and artistic qualities remains a component of perceptive responses, and students who wish to score in the A range should tackle this course component.

Question 5

This was a popular question in Section B. Strong responses on *The Tempest* made a connection between ideas of regret and reconciliation and compositional features, e.g., master-slave motif, plot and sub-plot, in the introduction and followed their contention throughout the essay. Stronger responses used many quotes from the text and critics and a lens such as post-colonial/humanist/feminist.

Weaker responses were unable to adapt the student's knowledge to answer the specific question and contained tangential information that was not about regret and reconciliation.

Weaker responses used a 'scattergun' approach, where the student recounted everything they knew without maintaining a structured approach to answering the question. Others had limited or inaccurate knowledge of the ideas in the text.

Question 6 – Comparative Text Study

This question lent itself very well to *The Lieutenant* and *Arrival*. Students who attempted to answer analysing *Boy Swallows Universe* and *Billy Elliot* struggled with the idea of miscommunication being nominated. Good answers focussed on the idea of miscommunication and were able to examine moments in the texts where miscommunication took place. This was often coupled with the importance of communication as a central theme of both texts. Better answers were able to explicitly name the consequences of miscommunication. A very strong answer was able to explain what might have been had the miscommunication not happened. It is concerning that a good number of essays did not include any critical interpretations of others; this is a named element of C1 and needs to be addressed.

Other issues to note are:

- the lack of capital letters in many responses: "british", "indigenous", "sydney cove" and even "arrival" were common throughout responses
- referring to the Cadigal people of Sydney Cove as "the aboriginals" or "the indigenous" felt rather disrespectful and it would be better to say "the Aboriginal characters" or "Indigenous people".

Question 7 – Comparative Text Study

This question was not as successful for *The Lieutenant* and *Arrival*. Students writing on *Boy Swallow Universe* and *Billy Elliot* also faced difficulties as the question nominated both a feature of the text (contrasting characters) and the idea of power. Responses struggled with unpacking the idea of power. Most focussed on the power that each protagonist had in their respective societies, but did not extend to what they thought each composer had to say about power as an idea.

Some good responses examined the power of communication or the power of language as a way of being able to discuss the material they had revised. The nominated feature of contrasting characters resulted in many candidates addressing a wide range of characters rather than identifying the contrasting characters in their introduction.