

# 2025 ASSESSMENT REPORT

## ENL315114 ENGLISH LITERATURE

### General Comments

This report is to be read alongside the exam specifications and the 2025 exam paper. These documents work together to inform future teachers and students of English Literature. The observations and comments included in this report come from the teams of markers who examined the Independent Studies and the written exam scripts in 2025.

### Folio Component (Independent Study)

The Independent Study is an opportunity to demonstrate understanding of a text selected by the candidate. The folio reflects the effort and engagement invested by students. When marking, a team of experienced examiners can identify this across the three pieces. As observed in the marking of the 2024 submissions, Criterion 6 remains the most problematic aspect of the Independent Study for students. This criterion has become a significant one, however, as to be successful, students must be reflective and honest. Large language models cannot generate these genuine connections made between a work of literature and a responder, yet.

An important observation from the 2025 assessment panel was that the folios which received discrepant results were more often the studies which focused on film texts. The cohort of students in 2026 are advised that when selecting a film text, be prepared to write detailed analysis of the features of this text type.

### How to best approach C6 in the Independent Study:

#### Inquiry Focus Questions

It was particularly impressive to note that most students “wrote themselves” into their focus question, allowing them to successfully address Criterion 6. Future students are advised to continue this and frame their inquiry focus as a “how” question. Less successful inquiry ‘questions’ were framed as statements or identified a list of compositional features. Studies which attempted to address a list of questions set out to address too much and were not as successful as those with a tighter inquiry focus. When an inquiry focus is framed as a “how” question then it makes sense for the critical response to analyse the features of the text – these devices are “how” an individual reading has been shaped, and a new understanding of an idea has been gained.

#### Reflective Statement

While the reflective statement will be the final piece that a student writes, it will be the first piece that the examiner reads. It should be of the same quality as the critical response and imaginative response and advocate for the strengths of these pieces. Students must frame the central concerns of their study and why these are important to them by making insightful connections to their reading context. The reflective statement is not just a summary – it’s a space for students to

explore how their thinking evolved. Students need to genuinely acknowledge challenges or shifts in perspective they have experienced through the close examination of their chosen text. The purpose of the reflective statement is to introduce the student's analysis of the influences of the selected texts on their ideas, values and perspectives. Students do this by evaluating the relationship between the text and their own context. A note of caution – it is not enough to identify that an issue still exists. Students must justify the connections they make between the text and the context of reception.

### Start with a clear evaluation of the composer's ideas, values, and perspectives

This is important because the texts included on the course are there as they explore universal themes (e.g., power, identity, home, gender roles). Students need to demonstrate that they have unpacked these, using textual evidence to demonstrate the intentional exploration of these central ideas.

#### Students should:

- identify the composer's "central argument" or key ideas early in their response and support it with multiple layers of evidence: quotes, scenes, techniques (e.g., visual/audio in films, symbols in literature), historical/cultural context, and critical theory. This is best done with direct quotations and explanations of how this is evidence
- avoid vague summaries – evaluate *how* the composer conveys values, through compositional techniques (e.g., subversive, performative, or paradoxical) and why it matters
- connect their thoughts about values and perspectives to broader contexts which provides depth to their analysis
- appraise the chosen's text impact on themselves. This allows for personal reflection.

### Express and justify own ideas, values, and perspectives

Successful 2025 folios emphasised a personal stance – how their values (e.g., on autonomy, authenticity, or justice) shaped *how* the text was interpreted. This showed an open-mindedness and future students are to avoid detached analysis.

#### To achieve this, students should:

- be upfront and explicit: students should state their values upfront and succinctly (e.g., "As a 21st-century woman, I value female autonomy") and explain how values and beliefs influence their reading. Use phrases like "This perspective allows me to reflect on..." or "This idea makes me consider..."
- justify their assertions with personal context, and link what they write to their identity, experiences, or interests (e.g., Australian identity, future career in law/politics, or digital-age concerns)
- show a change in their thinking or ideology and track how their initial views shifted (e.g., from a "singular definition" to something "individualistic and subjective"). If using a theoretical framework (e.g., Marxist lens), students should explain why it resonates with their values and how it guides their response
- identify a text's impact on themselves because this personalises the analysis, demonstrating how the text isn't just "studied" but internalised/reflected. It also satisfies the criterion for showing how their perspectives shape responses.

## Reflect on the text's impact on thinking and values

The strongest responses encountered in the 2025 Folios showed meta-cognitive reflection – how the text "complicated," "reshaped," or "prompted" the views of the students. This proves the texts relevance and the student's growth.

### To realise this, students should:

- choose a specific moment – a scene or line as an anchor. Use it to illustrate change (e.g., a revelation scene or symbol). Explain how it "stuck with you" or led to re-reading/re-thinking
- state a text's impact on themselves, as the reader/responder. Discuss transformation of ideas, perspectives, ways of thinking: Move from initial assumptions to new insights (e.g., power as "fragile" or home as "paradoxical", as one student wrote on *Brooklyn* in 2025). Connect to real-world applications, like modern issues (social media, immigration, capitalism). Stating a text's impact elevates the response from analysis to synthesis, proving the text's "personal impact"
- explain how the Imaginative Response (IR) has been crafted in a deliberate way. For instance, choosing to focus the IR on a very minor character in a classic text may be a way of privileging an ideological stance. Don't assume markers will simply know this. Make this clear.

## Use of evidence in Critical Responses

The best responses in 2025 illustrated how literature helps us understand societal issues, question norms and ideologies, and reflect on identity, belonging, and change. Less successful critical responses on film texts did not offer a filmic analysis of their focus text leading to description rather than analysis required in Criterion 6.

Some responses included up to five hundred words of quotation which seemed excessive at times. Judicious quoting is essential as it allows greater opportunity for analysis. On the other hand, several had very few quotations suggesting limited engagement with the focus text and even more limited engagement with 'others' views that might help the student appreciate the greater significance of the focus text.

Students should feel confident to break up very long paragraphs. Moving away from a three TEEL paragraph structure and using connectives like 'additionally', 'moreover', 'furthermore', 'alternatively', etc. would help them to build the coherence of their thesis more strongly.

While there is not a single approach to structuring the critical response – these are some tips for students to consider:

- Integrate everything cohesively. Don't separate sections—weave evaluation, personal values, and impact into the critical response.
- Use evidence extensively but selectively. Cite specifics (quotes, scenes, respected critics without overwhelming. Aim for "multiple layers" in analysing a text.
- Use a teacher as a sounding board.
- Adapt to personal context. Students should draw from their actual background to make it authentic. If the text feels distant, bridge it to modern parallels.

- Avoid common pitfalls: Don't just paraphrase the text—evaluate and reflect. Be concise yet thorough; the extracts succeed by being direct (e.g., "This idea stuck with me on the second reading").
- Prepare proactively. Re-read texts multiple times, note personal resonances, and brainstorm focus questions to guide thinking.

By following this advice, students can create responses that feel thoughtful and transformative. This not only meets assessment criteria but also makes the course more meaningful – texts like the prescribed texts are meant to challenge perspectives, so embrace this. Authenticity comes from genuine reflection, not perfection.

## Compose well-crafted and effective Imaginative Response: Criterion 5

Students are responding positively to advice about the importance of the Imaginative Response in the overall folio. It has an entire criterion all to itself, and this year markers observed that: (1) this part of the folio appeared lengthier, with many responses coming close to the maximum word limit; (2) students made strategic use of the Reflection Statement to offer considered explanations of how the Imaginative Response connects to the Critical Response.

In the Imaginative Response, students should give voice to silenced characters or very minor characters whose background stories are not extensively covered by the author. They should reimagine characters, settings, or themes in new contexts but make sure these are justified. Whatever the focus may be, students should use plenty of literary techniques (e.g. symbolism, voice, structure) purposefully, and let their creativity be guided by their analysis—not separate from it.

Also, it is important that students embed the Imaginative Response in the world of the text without contradicting any elements of the text, or contextual truths. If students do this, they need to ensure they explicitly identify this as alternative history.

## Accurate and effective language use: Criterion 7

Future students and teachers are reminded of the importance of adherence to word counts. Several folios did not meet the word counts for the specific sections. Some exceeded the count for the Critical Response or Imaginative Response but met the overall requirement of 3,000-3,300 words, so no penalty was applied under Criterion 7. This creates some inequity for students who adhere to all word counts and spend considerable time editing to meet them whilst seeking to retain the effectiveness of their responses.

Additionally, and disappointingly, a few students did not meet the minimum word count for the entire folio, which had a devastating impact on their overall rating in Criterion 7.

## Formatting and technical requirements

The comments in last year's report about the importance of a 'polished' submission are key and worth repeating as they draw students' attention to TASC's specifications.

Teachers and students in 2026 must refer to this section of the examination specifications document. [ENL315114 English Literature External Assessment Specifications and Independent Study Guidelines](#)

## Academic Integrity

The TASC specifications currently state that the student is:

"...[E]xpected to provide a reworked, and polished, word-processed product. Your teacher is required to see all versions of your work, so it is essential to 'Save as' each time you produce a new draft of your work. The best way to protect yourself from technological failure is to make a hard copy of each draft. No allowances can be made for technological failures including software and hardware malfunctions."

MLA9 formatting remains a challenge and has an impact on the result for Criterion 7. Incorrect or incomplete citations—incorrect in-text citation format or omitting the text which forms the focus of the study from the *Works Cited*—detract from the professionalism of the folio. Teachers are advised to begin teaching how to use MLA9 referencing early so that when it comes to completing the study, students have mastery over this system of citation.

## Written Component

### General comments

The 2025 written exam paper was accessible, allowing students to demonstrate their understanding and engagement with English Literature. The clarity of the paper highlighted the distinction between students who were well-prepared and students who were ill-prepared. Students are advised against memorising essays and attempting to recreate them under exam conditions. The level of understanding and engagement with the course is examined in the ways in which students respond to the specifics of an exam question.

Future candidates are again advised to revise texts, textual evidence, compositional features, contextual details and the critical ideas of others which they then use to compose analytical responses. Prepared essays are easily identified by examiners and do not best reflect students understanding. Students who recreate memorised essays will not achieve strong results on Criterion 4.

### Advice for Students

- Engage directly with the question: avoid generic or pre-prepared responses. Tailor your argument to the specific wording of the question.
- Integrate context and conflict: Show how historical ideologies shape the resolution of conflicts and the author's stance on societal norms.
- Include critical ideas of others and identify alternative readings using ideological reading positions.
- Use Precise Language and Conventions: maintain clarity, accuracy, and formal essay structure. Underline text titles and ensure correct spelling and grammar.

- Move beyond plot summary: focus on interpretation and evaluation rather than recounting events. This requires you to identify and examine the compositional features of texts.
- Write responses in blue or black pen. Avoid writing in pencil as it smudges.

## Advice for Teachers

- emphasise question responsiveness: encourage students to adapt their knowledge to the demands of the question rather than relying on memorised material
- develop contextual literacy: reinforce the role of historical and cultural contexts in shaping textual meaning and conflict resolution
- model analytical writing: provide exemplars that demonstrate integration of context, textual evidence, and evaluative commentary
- address technical skills: continue to support spelling, grammar, and formatting conventions to ensure clarity and professionalism.

## Section A

### Criterion 2 and 4

The most insightful responses understood that context is not a bolt-on addition but intrinsic to meaning-making. These students wove sophisticated contextual knowledge throughout their body paragraphs, linking literary movements (e.g., Romanticism, Metaphysical poetry, Modernism) to wider social ideologies, then demonstrated how these pressures shaped the poem's structure and imagery.

Contextual discussion must be symbiotic with textual analysis. Evidence of context must be found within the text itself.

Weaker essays tended to involve clunky discussion of historical features that did not necessarily emerge from the text they were discussing. Students in this range also tended to list techniques rather than focus on imagery.

### Question 1 a) – Loss Poetry

The 2025 cohort is to be commended for a generally impressive standard of response to Question 1a. Responses were, for the most part, well-detailed and developed, demonstrating sound to skilful understanding of the prescribed texts. It was pleasing to note that candidates approached the examination with appropriately sophisticated vocabulary, elevating the register of their analytical writing.

The set question required candidates to explore how two poets utilise natural imagery to reflect themes of loss and renewal, while critically engaging with the poets' contexts and stylistic choices. The prompt naturally favoured specific texts within the canon; consequently, John Keats's *Ode to Autumn* was a popular choice. Students were astute in their selection of natural imagery from other prescribed poems.

While student appreciation of the prescribed poems was high, the distinction between competent and exceptional responses lay in the synthesis of context and the nuanced exploration of 'renewal' alongside different manifestations of loss. However, addressing 'renewal' specifically acted as a significant discriminator in the marking. Stronger responses treated renewal with the same

analytical depth as loss, exploring nature's cyclical patterns or implied spiritual regeneration. Weaker responses tended to gloss over this aspect, focusing almost exclusively on melancholic elements. A handful of candidates struggled to write convincingly that the 'Holocaust' and 'stifling' imagery in Plath's *Daddy* exemplified natural imagery. This serves as a reminder that candidates must be prepared to analyse all six poems, allowing the examination question itself to dictate the most suitable pairing.

Future candidates must ensure they deconstruct all keywords in the prompt. A response focusing 90% on loss will not satisfy criteria for comprehensive argument when the question explicitly requires analysis of both loss and renewal.

The vast majority of responses were well-supported with detailed textual references. However, strong analysis requires equitable treatment of both texts. Weaker responses often offered thorough exploration of one poem at the expense of the second, resulting in inadequate comparative literary analysis.

Candidates generally showed solid grasp of poetic form, correctly identifying structures such as Keats's use of the ode and the sonnet forms utilised by Donne and Shelley. However, identification alone is insufficient for top marks. Weaker responses labelled form but failed to explain its function. High-achieving candidates interrogated why the poet chose that form to convey loss, integrating discussion of prevailing ideologies into their analysis; for example, how a sonnet's constraints might reflect grief's constraints or death's inevitability.

### Question 1 b) – Love Poetry

The best love poetry essays understood how to link the “love and connection” aspect of the question to discussion of natural imagery and historical features. These strong essays showed an understanding that authors had innovated with regards to text structures and showed skill in describing how mood and atmosphere were created by these devices. The phrase “natural imagery” was interpreted in a variety of ways. For example, some students discussed “nature” in its celestial and botanical form – especially relating to the Romantic poets. Conversely, other students examined Judith Wright’s poem and discussed in detail the bodily and sexual imagery. Both interpretations were valid and had the capacity to be well linked to the historical criteria assessed.

Strong candidates were able to identify a range of poetic devices and evaluate textual evidence. These analytical responses were framed around a contention which used the wording from the and develop their argument throughout a logically structured essay.

Future candidates are advised to consider how they present their essay. While it is understood that it is difficult to present a polished essay in exam conditions, in 2025, a number of candidates organised their essay so each new paragraph started on a new page. The marker was guided to move between the essay and side notes. This made it difficult for candidates to synthesise ideas/ensure their writing flowed well, and for the marker to follow the argument. Essays presented this way often did not achieve the highest results for criterion 4.

Weaker candidates did not use the wording from the question to their advantage.

The weakest responses did not include an introduction or conclusion – they simply included two paragraphs, one about each poem. This meant that these candidates were unable to achieve a

pass rating for criterion 4. Some weaker responses wrote introductions that were more than one page long and included the candidate's own interpretation of what love and connection are, rather than introducing the argument. Future students are advised that examiners know the poems and there is no need to give an overview of the poems in the introduction.

Weaker responses failed to demonstrate a sound understanding of the eras/relevant movements etc. Many candidates would have benefited from including more information about the eras/relevant movements and forms. Romanticism, in particular, was under-utilised. Weaker responses revealed that they were genuinely confused about the historical and social context and mixed up key details. These responses could have been strengthened through the inclusion of more textual evidence.

## Question 2 – Single Text Study

This question required candidates to evaluate how the resolution of conflicts in a substantial text from Module 2 reflects or challenges the author's perspective on societal norms. Strong responses demonstrated a nuanced understanding of the interplay between historical context, societal ideologies, and textual meaning, while weaker responses often lacked integration and clarity.

The characteristics of strong responses were those which interrogated the influence of historical contexts on pre-20<sup>th</sup> century texts. These discussions appraised the relationship between texts and culture, as well as evaluating whether context aids or limits conflict resolution. High-performing essays employed language and conventions appropriate to interpretative analytical writing, supported by well-selected textual references. Some candidates successfully explored how the author's perspective on societal norms enhanced the text's aesthetic appeal—though this was rare.

### Areas for improvement

- Integration of context: many responses discussed historical context but failed to connect it meaningfully to the resolution of conflicts.
- Question relevance: pre-prepared essays, particularly those focused on Caliban and Miranda (*The Tempest*), scored poorly due to limited engagement with the specific question.
- Technical accuracy: frequent issues included poor spelling, unclear expression, weak sentence structure, and grammatical errors.
- Formatting: few candidates underlined text titles, and some misinterpreted historical context as a theme rather than a shaping influence.

## Specific observations on popular texts

### *The Tempest*

The historical, social, and cultural aspects of Jacobean context were addressed with varying degrees of success by the 2025 candidates. Most cited Divine Right of Kings, the Great Chain of Being, and colonialism, but only stronger responses connected these ideas to the resolution of conflicts in the play.

Social hierarchies were frequently discussed, often in terms of:

- Class structure – rigid distinctions between nobility (Prospero, Alonso) and servants (Caliban, Ariel).
- Master-servant relationships – Prospero’s authority over Ariel and Caliban; Stephano and Trinculo’s drunken rebellion.
- Patriarchy – Prospero’s control over Miranda’s marriage; women as political pawns.
- Education and knowledge – Prospero’s books as a source of power; attempts to “civilise” Caliban through language.

However, these points were often presented in isolation rather than integrated with the set question.

Some candidates identified the 1609 Sea Venture shipwreck in Bermuda, “New World” encounters, and Montaigne’s *Of Cannibals* (1580) as influential in shaping colonial themes. Witchcraft anxieties, evident in James I’s *Daemonologie* (1597), were mentioned by only a handful of candidates, usually in reference to Sycorax as a witch. Most candidates overlooked Reformation tensions within Jacobean society entirely.

## *Dracula*

Many candidates addressed gender and sexuality, often commenting on the “Angel in the House” ideal through Mina’s virtuousness contrasted with Lucy’s flirtatiousness. The concept of the “New Woman” was also handled well, particularly through Mina’s use of the typewriter and shorthand. Discussions of anxieties surrounding female sexuality varied in quality, though most candidates noted that Mina’s virtue ensures her survival. Only two candidates explored Victorian prudery in contrast to maternal anxieties, highlighting vampire Lucy’s predation on children as a form of perverted motherhood.

Surprisingly, the historical context relating to empire, colonialism, “otherness,” xenophobia, and Orientalism was largely omitted, with many responses focusing instead on contrasting Lucy and Mina. While candidates often linked Lucy’s social status to her sexual morality, few elaborated on cultural mores of the Victorian era, neglecting references to the syphilis epidemic, debates on prostitution, the Contagious Diseases Acts, and anxieties about blood purity and miscegenation.

Some able candidates explored class and social hierarchy, noting Borgo Pass as an example of Social Darwinism and the rise of the middle class (represented by the vampire hunters-lawyer, doctor, businessman) over the decay of aristocracy embodied by Dracula as a decadent, parasitic nobleman. A handful also observed how working-class characters (Renfield, the Demeter crew) were portrayed as vulnerable or complicit, leading to their demise.

Themes of Darwinism and evolution, Lombroso’s criminal anthropology, psychiatry and mental illness, and emerging sexology (e.g., Krafft-Ebing’s studies of deviant sexuality; vampirism as sexual pathology) were only briefly mentioned. Similarly, scientific and medical advances – such as germ theory, contagion, and blood transfusions – were discussed by only a few candidates in relation to the novel’s ending.

Religion and spirituality, another key aspect of Stoker’s context, were sidelined by most candidates, even when discussing iconography such as crucifixes, holy wafers, sacred rituals, and Lucy’s staking. One strong response examined Dracula’s elimination as an embodiment of Satan

and linked this to the crisis of faith following Darwin's *Origin of Species* (1859), which undermined religious certainty.

Finally, technology and modernity were addressed mainly in stronger scripts, which highlighted the tension between old and new – ancient superstition versus modern rationalism – with Van Helsing bridging both worlds.

### *A Doll's House*

Many candidates demonstrated stronger understanding of socio-cultural aspects than historical or political ones, and many failed to specify the Norwegian setting of the play.

A common observation was the financial dependence of women who are unable to take loans, own property, or conduct business without male permission (as seen in Nora's forgery). However, most responses lacked reference to actual historical realities such as coverture laws, lack of divorce rights, and automatic male guardianship of children.

Marriage and domesticity were generally well handled, with candidates noting women/wives as property (evident in Torvald's pet names like "little squirrel" and "little lark", which infantilise Nora), marriage as an economic contract, and patriarchal authority.

Aspects related to class and social mobility in Ibsen's work were less effectively addressed and often only implied. Stronger responses connected the resolution of conflicts to bourgeois respectability (Torvald's obsession with reputation and social standing), fear of scandal (Krogstad's social ostracism), economic anxiety, and the limited options available to working-class women such as Helene and Anne-Marie.

While Nora's forgery was frequently mentioned, few candidates explored its connection to economic and industrial change, including the rise of capitalism and emerging consumer culture of the era. One strong response examined the tension between legal and moral law in Nora's liberation. Many overlooked that forgery was also a criminal offence.

Very few candidates addressed the masculine honour code—Torvald's prioritisation of reputation over Nora's wellbeing—as part of their gendered analysis of the play's ending.

Most candidates were hesitant to explore how Enlightenment ideals—individual autonomy and rational self-determination—influenced Ibsen's resolution of the play's conflicts. There was only one mention of the Norwegian independence movement in relation to themes of autonomy.

Some excellent responses discussed the Realist movement—its rejection of Romantic melodrama and focus on contemporary social issues—as part of the play's challenge to audience expectations.

Connections between the play's resolution and women's rights movements were generally strong, with references to emerging suffrage and property rights campaigns across Europe. Some candidates mentioned Norwegian feminist writer Camilla Collett, while others cited John Stuart Mill's *The Subjection of Women* (1869). A few even referenced Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) as influential on Nora's decision.

Finally, some candidates linked Nora's assertion of individual rights to Enlightenment legacies, and a handful emphasised her authenticity.

### Question 3

This question provided an opportunity for candidates to showcase their knowledge and understanding of their comparative texts. The majority of responses being on *Billy Elliot/Boy Swallows Universe*, *Pygmalion/Muriel's Wedding*, *Arrival/The Lieutenant* and *The King's Speech/King Charles III* comprised the remainder of the responses.

Candidates who were rewarded not only wrote good length responses but were able to do so in a sophisticated and cohesive way. They were able to examine a range of limiting factors in the protagonists' social standings as well as ways in which they were also enriched. Stronger responses were able to connect points of context to relevant elements of the texts as they wrote, rather than providing an overview of context in the first body paragraph, disconnected to how this was evident in the texts. Stronger responses were also able to weave discussion and analysis of compositional features throughout their response rather than leaving this as a signposted final paragraph before the conclusion. Textual evidence was, on the whole, well used. Candidates are encouraged, however, to broaden their use of evidence (rather than using the tried and true, more obvious examples), particularly dialogue quotes, as this can demonstrate a broader and more holistic understanding of the texts. Candidates who included effective *mise-en-scène* examples were also rewarded.

Introductions were generally good although many did not signpost context as part of the discussion. While the majority of candidates did go on to discuss context, some did not. Candidates are encouraged to ensure their introduction responds to all elements of the question; this can also be a reminder to them to ensure they do discuss context when revising their essay if time permits. Essays are a formal piece of writing and use of first person pronouns (I, we, us, you) are better avoided. Correct indication of titles was also problematic, with very few students doing this – all should be underlined only as substantial texts.

Several candidates included critical interpretations and no context, suggesting they had prepared their comparative text for a Section B response but pivoted to Section A given the nature of the question. Candidates are advised to ensure they prepare their texts for both a Section A and Section B response.

## Section B

### Question 5 – Module Two: Single Text Study

This report summarises observations from marking 72 responses to Part B Question 5, which asked students to evaluate how successfully pre-twentieth century authors use compositional features to resolve personal, social, or supernatural conflicts in their work.

#### Text Selection

The distribution of texts showed clear preferences:

- ***The Tempest*** (William Shakespeare) – overwhelmingly the most popular choice
- ***Dracula*** (Bram Stoker) – also popular
- Smaller numbers of students wrote on:
  - *The Trojan Women* (Euripides)
  - *A Doll's House* (Ibsen)

- *Emma* (Austen)

## Overall quality of responses

The quality of responses was very good overall. Students demonstrated:

- sophisticated engagement with the course content and requirements
- detailed knowledge of their chosen texts
- a depth of understanding of critical interpretations and theoretical frameworks
- clear comprehension of the question, with substantial material to explore in response.

Strong responses demonstrated thorough preparation and sustained analytical thinking. Responses in the 'C' range tended to demonstrate less insight into the text and provided inaccurate quotations or very few quotations. Future students are advised to embed textual evidence rather than dropping in lines from the text in without making a clear connection to the contention, instead relying on the reader to make the connection. Of note was that even 'C' range responses provided either an ideological lens through which to interpret the text or 'dropped in' a quotation from a literary authority.

## Characteristics of higher-quality responses

### Criterion 1: Perceptive/Informed Understanding

Stronger responses demonstrated their critical understanding through:

- Strong thesis development: establishing a clear, arguable position in response to the question and sustaining it across 3-4 well-structured paragraphs
- Judicious textual evidence: selecting specific, relevant references rather than over-quoting or providing excessive evidence
- Analytical depth: moving beyond identifying compositional features to analysing *how* these features function to resolve conflicts
- Evaluation of compositional choices: explaining *why* the author might have made particular compositional decisions and their effectiveness.

### Criterion 4: Skilful/Coherent Essay Response

Better responses showed synthesis skills by:

- Sophisticated use of critical perspectives: going beyond simply citing experts or dropping in quotations as "proof"
- Explanation of evidence: articulating clearly how the critical interpretation or textual evidence supported their argument
- Integration of counterviews: some students demonstrated advanced critical thinking by acknowledging alternative interpretations and arguing against them, strengthening their own position.

While not a weakness in most responses, the distinction between adequate and strong work often came down to whether students could explain the *function* and *effectiveness* of compositional features in resolving conflicts, rather than simply identifying that such features existed. The ability

to evaluate authorial choices and synthesise critical perspectives meaningfully (rather than decoratively) distinguished responses in the 'A' range responses.

### Question 6: Module 3 Comparative Text Study

This question provided candidates with a frame for exploring the central ideas – expressed as “the spirit of the text”. To directly address the question, students need to evaluate the success of the titles of the two texts they had studied. This component of the question proved difficult and there were very few in the 49 papers on this question which successfully dealt with the title.

There were many responses on *Billy Elliot* and *Boy Swallows Universe* - none of which directly referenced the story from Hindu mythology – which Slim tells Eli and August on pages 217 and 218 of the novel.

Future candidates are instructed to make clear distinctions between the two sections of the paper. In Section B, the focus is an understanding of ideas. This discussion needs to be supported with textual evidence and critical ideas of others. While an ideological reading position is one way to demonstrate an understanding of the ideas in the text, students will be more successful if they accurately apply one lens, rather than attempting to use a range of reading positions. The purpose of incorporating the insights of others is to support and develop one’s own understanding.

### Question 7: Module 3 Comparative Text Study

Section B Question 7 asked students to evaluate “how convincingly” are “communication and connection explored in the comparative texts”.

Sound responses named communication and connection as themes of the comparative texts and could explore some examples where communication and connection took place in the texts.

It was not enough to make the claim that the composers of the texts effectively “communicated” their respective ideas – the question asked for an examination of communication and connection as ideas/themes, not for a list of techniques through which other ideas/themes are “communicated” that then “connect” with an audience.

Good responses added an evaluative element, explaining how each text made the case for communication and connection being important and included the ‘how’ and ‘why’. Most responses focussed on communications between characters – mentors, family, etc., as important for the protagonists’ growth.

Some very good responses evaluated the impact of miscommunication and disconnection; connection with place; communication of and connection with self; communication through violence or speech; and communication as propaganda in interesting ways.

#### **Some issues noted by the examiner:**

Many responses included the discussion of the same scenes or events in the texts in the same order, using the same direct quotations, suggesting that students were rote learning a narrow or singular approach to the texts. Many responses also featured identical ideas in the same paragraph order, loosely linked to “communication and connection” at the start and ending of the paragraphs, again, suggesting a rote-learned interpretation. These narrow readings do not allow

students to develop “own” interpretation (Criterion 1), nor respond in an agile way to the question to show their understanding of the texts.

A number of responses simply listed a range of compositional features in their introductions, never to return to these in the body of their essays. Eg: “Communication and connection are explored through symbolism, motifs, characters and plot.”

Similarly, some responses signposted a critical perspective in their introduction to meet the “critical interpretations of others” element of Criterion 1 e.g. “from a cultural materialist perspective” or “from a Marxist perspective” but did not return to this perspective in the rest of the essay.

Weaker responses attempted to engage with the question and provide some direct evidence from the texts. There were segments of the story retold in length without analysis nor explanation of what it meant. They included little to no reference to the interpretation of others. Some responses discussed the texts separately, in separate sections and saved the comparison for introduction and conclusion. Opportunities for the use of evidence and analysis of film techniques, when a film was one of the texts, was missed. Evidence was mostly in the form of dialogue. The analysis was sometimes unbalanced, included more of one text than the other.

Stronger responses linked the ideas, techniques and critical ideas of others. They demonstrated a critical understanding of the texts by the inclusion of strong and relevant textual evidence. Different sources for the interpretation of others were included. Comparative responses that included films explained in specific detail the film techniques used in relevant scenes with connection to the meaning they represented. They made critical judgements of how the key ideas ‘communication and connection’ named in the question were explored.