

## ENGLISH LITERATURE (ENL315114)

### WRITTEN EXAMINATION

This Assessment Report ought to be read alongside the exam paper and the Written Paper and Independent Folio marking tools.

The Written Examination in 2017 stipulated that students answer on 2 of the Modules studied throughout the year. It stipulated that they cannot answer on the same module in both Section A or B. As a result, more students than before answered on Module 3 in Section B of the examination.

Please be mindful that the Examination Specifications and the Course document allow the setting Examiner to specify the Module that must be used in any examination item. In practical terms, if you only study one substantial text from the prescribed text list for Module 2, you can only answer on this in either Section A or B, but not in both. Using a single text from the comparative study of texts (Module 3) to respond to a single-text item is against the spirit of the course. Teachers and students are strongly advised to check the Examination Specifications for ENL315114 in Term 1, 2018.

The candidature in 2017 was 584, but teachers examining the course have noted that the candidature for this course will increase in 2018, in some cases, dramatically.

The awards in 2017 followed a similar pattern as before.

PA = 47 candidates (8%)

SA = 138 candidates (23%)

CA = 221 candidates (37%)

HA = 124 candidates (21%)

EA = 54 candidates (9%)

An EA in English Literature scored between 21.9 and 23.6 points

More students than before were either absent from the examination and/or did not submit an Independent Study Folio.

### GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

In both sections of the examination, students scoring in the A range:

- explored perceptively the extent to which the 'stated perspective' aligned with a personal understanding of the substantial text(s) studied. Students who used the work of others in an evaluative manner (especially in Section B), as directed to do so, produced very sophisticated responses.
- demonstrated a well-informed understanding of context, compositional techniques, language and ideas, using well-selected and detailed textual references. 'Well-informed' was handled in a myriad of different but valid ways but mostly were informed by evaluating the ideas of others and by an authentic close engagement with the relevant text itself. The way historical and cultural contexts

influence texts was perceptive in Section A although students are reminded that their discussion of historical and cultural context must arise out of their analysis and not be superimposed on the text.

- used judicious references from the substantial texts to substantiate their own claims. Students are reminded to not simply drop these but to meaningfully and purposefully integrate them into their discussion.
- examined the compositional features of the prescribed text critically, paying attention to how the language, in a particular medium, is used by the author to communicate ideas. This was essential for an effective response to Section B of the exam. Students and teachers are reminded that, in the past four examinations, Questions 4 and 6 have specified the compositional technique(s) candidates must use and Questions 5 and 7 allowed candidates to use any compositional techniques to explore the 'stated perspective' contained in the set Question.
- constructed a considered argument using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form. As part of their considerate argument, more able students were able to analyse and evaluate connections/ interrelationships between ideas and values in texts. The analytical essay in both sections was clearly structured, coherent and cohesive and included a clear thesis, flagging all components of the argument, at the outset. The length of the essays varied, but most candidates scoring in this top range were able to write at least 5 pages. The metalanguage used in the analytical essays was appropriate, particularly regarding the form of the substantial text(s). For example, using drama discourse when talking about Shakespearian tragedy or cinematic terms when analysing a film.
- The lack of convincing and judicious quoting from the various texts was a striking characteristic of a good number of responses in both Sections of the examination. Providing textual references is not optional, and candidates cannot hope to score well without this.

## TEXTS STUDIED IN 2017

Excluding poetry, there are 32 prescribed texts which teachers can choose to teach in Modules 2 and 3.

12 of these texts were not taught by any of the providers of the course. These are including below alongside the number of students studying these across Tasmania.

Hamlet	354	Frankenstein	45
Elizabeth	192	Beloved	41
Railway Man, The	159	Blue Jasmine	36
Medea	156	King Lear	36
Last Cab to Darwin	136	Arms and the Man	28
Burial Rites	122	Seed, The	23
Lives of Others, The	109	King Charles III	18
Persuasion	95	Reluctant Fundamentalist, The	14
Narrow Road To The Deep North, The	93	Orlando	11
Regeneration	73	Her	9

## SECTION A

### QUESTION 1: TEXTS IN CONTEXT (MODULE 1)

This question asked students to compare the portrayal of loss or love in a specified prescribed poem with one other.

The stipulated poem was 'Ode to Autumn' (for Loss) and 'Whoso list to hunt' (for Love).

Some unevenness in the quality of students' essays in Q1 was demonstrated, and in most cases, the depth of analysis favoured the 'unspecified' poem.

Again, as in past year, students are advised to read the question very carefully and to ensure that they have used all keywords in their response. Only the very able candidates paid any attention to the 'portrayal' of love or loss in their response. Such a keyword in an English examination is a prompt to discuss the 'representation' or 'constructedness' of an idea.

Stronger responses used poems from contrasting eras, from the respective nominated poem, which enhanced the cohesiveness of their argument, demonstrating changing ideas and values.

Stronger responses demonstrated how an understanding of context enabled the reader to gain a greater appreciation and understanding of the nature of love/love and their impact on individuals. These responses also discussed the literary language and conventions, structures and stylistic features used by the two poets to convey their ideas. Some information about context was superimposed on the discussion instead of arising out of the close detail of the poems.

Weaker essay responses displayed an imbalance between the various elements of the Question. Many also showed an imbalance in the treatment of the two poems.

Weaker essays also had difficulty identifying the correct historical context for both Love and Loss. Wyatt and Keats did not write in the Victorian Era.

### QUESTION 2 (MODULE 2)

Students were asked to discuss how the author of one substantial text from Module 2 shows the importance of having the courage to act by one's beliefs and values.

This was a demanding but fair question.

Candidates who demonstrated a superior understanding of Module 2 were able to tailor their written response appropriately and to categorise their main ideas regarding having the courage to act in accordance with one's beliefs and values. More cogent responses explicitly discussed how this is achieved through characterisation. The depth of textual knowledge demonstrated by these candidates was impressive.

Most students engaged with the question, however, many only referenced 'having the courage to act by one's beliefs and actions' at the end of what were otherwise very general paragraphs. Medea was a popular text in this section, and most identified and illustrated the values of the time. Claiming Medea acts with intense courage throughout the play in defying Jason without or only cursorily mentioning the killing of her children was problematic in showing understanding of this play. There was a common lack of textual evidence in many Question 2 scripts.

Texts which were handled well included *Persuasion*, *Burial Rites*, *Hamlet* and *Medea*.

Disturbingly, some essays were similar in structure and content, suggesting that candidates from the same college, may be using 'practice' essays instead of responding to the set examination question.

Essays on *Hamlet* were well versed on the historical and cultural context of the play, but many struggled to offer a strong argument on "having the courage to act in accordance to one's beliefs and values."

Candidates wanting to improve their result they simply must provide a much more cohesive essay structure. This requires using the essential word/s of the question, topic sentences and providing quotations as evidence. The composition of a sharp and clear thesis in the introductory section of the essay is an essential element of an essay. More evidence of quotations was needed by most candidates. Weaker answers simply resorted to retelling the plot and were limited by being often two and a half pages in length.

### QUESTION 3 (MODULE 3)

This Question was attempted by very few candidates. The question asked candidates to discuss the extent to which the authors often raise important questions about the way life should be lived.

The question was handled well, and the two texts in Module 3 were fairly treated in terms of insight.

Most candidates were able to successfully discuss the importance of the historical and socio-cultural context of the two texts in their analysis.

The responses to this question were fair and most candidates were able to discuss the two texts in Module c in an equal manner. Weaker students, however, seemed somewhat overwhelmed with discussing all elements of the two texts. Reference to composition techniques was not explicit and claims, made by the candidates, must be supported by quotations from the texts themselves.

Less effective responses struggled to structure their responses clearly in a way that adequately covered two substantial texts and failed to explicitly identify why their respective character(s) in the two chosen texts were not in control of their own lives.

A marked imbalance in the treatment of the two texts was also a characteristic of C-range responses.

## SECTION B

All questions in Section B asked candidates to "refer to the critical interpretation of others to support your own understanding". This is a compulsory aspect of the course and will remain in place in 2018 and 2019.

As stated previously, critical interpretations of others must support the idea being discussed and therefore deepen the analysis. At times interpretations were included in the response without evaluating how this supported the reading of the text being presented. Better answers used the ideas of others to extend their interpretation by including supporting views and those they rejected. This is within the spirit of the syllabus and is an essential requirement of Criterion 1.

Criterion 1 requires a strong personal response that is supported by an examination of the compositional features of the text. The use of the first person is perfectly acceptable in this section as is a third person response, however, the marker needs to be able to identify the candidate's position without the need to extrapolate. Where this occurs, it is indicative of a poorly structured response that lacks clarity and cohesiveness.

Pleasingly, more candidates than in previous years referred to other critics or literary perspectives to strengthen their arguments in their answers.

Weaker responses in the lower C-range and the ones awarded a 't' had trouble even identifying the composer of the text and relied, mostly, on pre-prepared material, that may not have been original. This is not quite the same thing as referring to 'the critical interpretations of others' as directed by the Question.

The critical understandings of texts is an essential component of Criterion 1 which candidates need to demonstrate by referring to the Marking Tool.

The most striking aspect of essays in Section B, particularly those belonging to weaker candidates, was the scant consideration paid to the phrasing of the set questions, and the failure to respond to all aspects of the set question consistently, evenly and explicitly.

## QUESTION 4 (MODULE 2)

For the last three years, Question 4 identified the compositional techniques that are to be addressed by students, and this will continue for the 2018 cohort. 2017 candidates were asked to “analyse how the author of one substantial text from Module 2 has constructed contrasting characters in reinforcing the main ideas.” This was the least demanding Question in Section B and candidates performed well. Some excellent responses were written on *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Persuasion* and *Regeneration*. *Last Cab to Darwin* was problematic here because even though students treated Rex, they mostly fail to discuss how other characters mentioned explicitly were a contrast to the protagonist.

A good number of candidates struggled to contrast characters as the question stipulated. Instead, the discussion was limited to how characters reinforced the main ideas, but there was little, if any, contrast between characters. It is helpful for students to use the metalanguage of English and identify characters regarding major, minor, fully-developed, static and so forth. It was remarkable to see how many students failed to mention that *Hamlet* was an eponymous character and that the play was a Shakespearian tragedy.

Popular choices in this section were *Hamlet* and *Regeneration*, which were written on expertly. Most students identified contrasting characters and how they developed the ideas of the text. Good essays established how the respective composers had made them contrasting.

Poorer responses failed to include critical interpretations of others.

Some responses in Question 4 were very well-written but failed to answer this very straightforward question explicitly and consistently. Again, this points to poor preparation technique on behalf of the candidates. Being able to memorise and reproduce an excellent pre-prepared response on a prescribed text, with little reshaping in reference to the set question, will NOT score well. And it is certainly not recommended. What is recommended is to know your prescribed texts in detail and to use this excellent understanding to respond to the set question.

## QUESTION 5 (MODULE 2)

There were many competent and impressive answers to this question.

This was a popular choice for *Medea* and *Hamlet*. Satisfactory essays established where and how betrayals happened in the text. Good essays made convincing statements about what ideas about betrayal emerge as a result of the compositional features of the texts.

The more successful candidates addressed all three stipulated aspects of the question including its focus (betrayal), compositional techniques and the interpretations of others.

Although students could use any compositional techniques in their discussion of betrayal, it would have been unwise not to base their essay around the text’s protagonist because this was stipulated in the Question. The essay Question was straight-forward and fair and provided students with two central plans of attack: the betrayal of the protagonist by family and or friends and the treachery of the main character or the betrayal of his/her own values.

Despite this, many candidates answered on a multitude of other main ideas such as revenge, honour, power and even love with passing reference to betrayal or, in some cases, ignoring the set Question altogether. This is unwise and no matter how competent and erudite your discussion of the main ideas, you will not score well if you do not answer on what is being asked.

This, once again, highlighted the reality that candidates will not be rewarded for writing competent and impressive essays that are regurgitated, with only partial relevance to the set Question.

## QUESTION 6 (MODULE 3)

Some exciting pairings in Module 3 included the following:

- *King Lear* and *Last Cab to Darwin*
- *King Charles III* and *Last Cab to Darwin*
- *Persuasion* and *Elizabeth*
- *Medea* and *Burial Rites*
- *Regeneration* and *The Railway Man*
- *The Narrow Road to the Deep North* and *The Lives of Others*
- *The Railway Man* and *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*
- *Regeneration* and *Arms and The Man*

Notably, the most popular prescribed text, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, was not included in most responses in Module 3.

For the last three years, Question 6 stipulated the compositional technique to be explored by candidates. Students had difficulty analysing the meaning of the title and often mentioned it as an aside. The discussion of the opening scenes or chapters was more successful and students were able to link events and features of the opening to the emerging ideas of the text. Some students focused more on the ideas, rather than the opening and title and this limited their ratings.

Question 6 was not attempted by many candidates but the ones who did attempt it did so with mixed results. Better candidates addressed both aspects of the Question including the titles of texts and their opening scenes or chapters. The examiners were very generous on what constituted ‘an opening section’ in a text. Such candidates wrote coherently, critically and beautifully on Module 3.

The central idea in the two texts was handled well by candidates, but it was surprisingly how students did themselves a disservice by discussing two, and in some cases, three main ideas in their texts. Again, candidates need to read the examination paper carefully and only answer on what is asked of them. This is, after all, what an examination is about.

Nearly all candidates were able to provide some evidence to support their claim, although better candidates were able to provide textual references that were very appropriate to their claims. It was interesting to observe that students who were not as well prepared as others could only provide textual references that did not involve the protagonist of the text, as a result of this the success of the response was compromised.

## QUESTION 7

Question 7 provides a specific idea/issue to be explored. The question this year asked students to examine how the authors of two substantial texts in Module 3 explore the impact of personal choice.

On the whole, most of the essays in this section were competent and interesting to read. Candidates were taught well by the various provided and most provided a sound discussion on how the compositional techniques reveal the idea of personal choice.

Some candidates spent too much time discussing the importance of the context of the texts. Discussing the importance of context in Section B makes up for a sophisticated and nuanced answer, but this should not be the dominant focus here.

The provision of references to support the claims made by the candidates were inadequate, as in other parts of the examination.

## INDEPENDENT STUDY – FOLIO

Candidates completed their Independent Study on ONE text from either the 2017 Prescribed Text list OR from the List of Additional Titles for Module 4. Students were only allowed to choose one text to use for their Independent Study in 2017. This will continue for 2018.

Students completed their study of Module 4 on the following texts:

Fiction	Non-fiction	Drama	Film	Poetry
<i>Burial Rites</i> [50]	<i>Behind the Beautiful</i>	<i>Medea</i> [14]	<i>Her</i> [47]	The poetry of Plath
<i>Wuthering Heights</i> [37]	<i>Forevers</i> [26]	<i>Hamlet</i> [7]	<i>Last Cab to Darwin</i>	Sylvia [10]
<i>Frankenstein</i> [33]		<i>A Streetcar Named</i>	[31]	The poetry of W.B.
<i>Heart of Darkness</i> [27]		<i>Desire</i> [6]	<i>Babel</i> [18]	Yeats [3]
<i>The Narrow Road to The Deep</i>		<i>Arms and the Man</i>	<i>Blue Jasmine</i> [13]	The poetry of Emily
<i>North</i> [25]		[5]	<i>Far from the Madding</i>	Dickinson [2]
<i>The Children Act</i> [22]		<i>Disgraced</i> [5]	<i>Crowd</i> [12]	
<i>Regeneration</i> [20]		<i>King Lear</i> [4]	<i>Sophie Scholl</i> [12]	
<i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i> [20]		<i>King Charles III</i> [4]	<i>Elizabeth</i> [9]	
<i>Persuasion</i> [16]		<i>Richard III</i> [3]	<i>The Railway Man</i> [9]	
<i>Beloved</i> [14]		<i>The Seed</i> [1]	<i>The Hours</i> , [8]	
<i>The Age of Innocence</i> [12]		<i>The Wild Duck</i> [1]	<i>Orlando</i> [1]	
<i>The Namesake</i> [11]				
<i>That Deadman Dance</i> [10]				
<i>The Mill on The Floss</i> [5]				

Candidates who performed well expressed their focus as a study question and showed an authoritative understanding of Criterion 6 and 7.

As in the past, there were many impressive and excellent Independent Studies this year, although some examiners expressed the opinion that, overall, the quality of the Independent Study folios was not as impressive as in previous years.

High-scoring folio's included sophisticated third person and first person critical responses, clever, imaginative responses with strong links to the critical focus and insightful, reflective statements which provided relevant personal context.

The MLA 8 Referencing System was used in 2017 by the candidates with varying degrees of success. The majority of candidates demonstrated an understanding of the importance of meticulous referencing to address many of the pieces of evidence of criterion 7. Of particular concern was those who chose to include extensive bibliographies and no in-text references. Some candidates are still failing to reference their chosen text. Failure to use this Referencing system correctly compromises the grade awarded for C7.

However, for many candidates, even some of the very good ones, there was a reliance on less 'reputable' sources of information, e.g. *Schmoop*, *Literature Charts* and the like. A useful bibliography and reference list should demonstrate sound researching skills and extensive reading. Students should aim to utilise some scholarly sources. Those who did evidently benefitted from engaging with them.

Another major problem is the use of cover pages for each different component of the folio and the non-use of the cover page which was mandated in the Folio Guidelines. This is included as an appendix here and must be used appropriately in 2017 by all candidates.



Other presentation conventions stipulated in the Independent Study Guidelines including font size and line spacing must be adhered to.

Many candidates had carried out careful research on their text and author and used this research in a scholarly and enlightening way to support their interpretation and focus. A number, too, had thought carefully, but with a sense of daring, about what form would best allow them to explore their focus in the Imaginative Response; given that this must be print-based. A refined focus question is crucial – it is best to be precise and not too wordy. Solid focus questions usually refer to values to reflect upon and explore, cultural contexts to interrogate, and compositional features to analyse, which are utilised in the creative response. Students who had chosen broad statements to discuss rather than inquiry questions were less successful in addressing Criterion 6.

## THE INQUIRY QUESTION

Successful candidates chose inquiry questions that enabled them to incorporate their own personal context in the Reflective Statement and in the Critical Essay. Some students had decided to focus on a particular literary reading such as postcolonialism, or feminism and their personal perspective was evidenced in a sophisticated manner through their third person discussion.

The most notable weakness in the folios were those who did not address the inquiry questions candidates set for themselves. Candidates must be encouraged to craft an inquiry question which allows them to address Criterion Six while focusing their responses on manageable ideas. An inquiry question which attempts to address all of the “themes and issues” will not allow candidates to respond in detail to their own ideas and the ideas of others. It is vital that students identify their area of enquiry and create a ‘useable’ question that connects to their area of study and that also gives them the opportunity to address criterion requirements. There were many issues that arose from the type of question that students framed their responses around including:

- Questions that weren't questions, but in fact were statements about the text and some of the ideas encountered in the text. Many of these were up to 100 words in length. General statements, instead of particular questions, do not provide enough direction to focus on particular aspects of the text, develop an argument or compare own with others' ideas.
- Questions that didn't allow for the requirements of C6, specifically to consider the perspective of the individual within the folio. For some folios such as these, it was challenging for students to attain grades that correlated with their achievements for C5 and C7 as the assessor had to painstakingly search for any of the students own (and sometimes others) perspectives.
- There were several Independent Studies that lacked a question altogether! The question was not identified on the cover page or within the body of work. This will incur a penalty in 2018.
- Naming particular ideas in the question provides a strong focus and addresses Criterion 6, Element 1.
- Referring to one or more compositional features in the questions is an excellent way to address the influence of own ideas of language in the text (Criterion 6, Element 2).
- Integrating the personal pronoun “I” into the question is a good way to prompt the articulation of “own ideas, values and perspectives” (Criterion 6, Element 3).
- Building on the question a comparison between the presence, absence or transformation of ideas from the context of the study text to own context is a right way of addressing Criterion 6, Element 4.

## THE REFLECTIVE STATEMENT

Nearly all candidates wrote between 450 - 600 words and recognised that the Reflective Statement is not part of the word count.



Many students wasted the gift of 600 words in the Reflective Statement. Some students' Reflective Statements were very brief while others were clearly first drafts and were full of errors of expression and syntax. In some cases, the quality of the expression in the Reflection Statement and the rest of the folio, particularly the critical response, was so varied that it prompted the examiner to ponder if it was written by the same candidate. The marked unevenness of expression, complexity and sophistication between the Critical component and the RS suggests that too many candidates are still rushing their reflective statements, seeing them as less important than the other two components. This also flagged some concerns for some markers that possible undue assistance may have been provided for sections of the Independent Study.

Successful candidates identified from the outset at least one way in which the study text had influenced their thinking on a topic, idea and shaped thinking and values. Articulating the way the focus text had changed thinking was a compelling feature of strong Reflective Statements.

Explaining how the CR and IR are connected does not necessarily mean that they should be discussed in the same sentence. Successful candidates were able to explain how particular ideas from the CR were further developed in the IR and how they had manipulated particular features of the IR to highlight the augmentation of meaning.

Many neglected to identify important potential elements including (as for example):

- how the text had an impact on them
- how the ideas/circumstances from the text are evident in/absent from their own world
- the connections between their imaginative and critical pieces.
- why the ideas in their text are important to consider in the world in which we live.
- outlining their intentions for the pieces.

All Reflective Statements were written in the first person as instructed. Unfortunately, many Reflective Statements did not follow the instruction to:

- give markers an understanding of your intentions for your chosen focus
- explain the relationship between your stated focus and both the imaginative and critical responses
- outline the way(s) in which your imaginative response relates to the critical response
- analyse the influence of chosen text(s) on your own ideas, values and perspectives
- outline any independent investigation/research you may have carried out as part of your Independent Study.

As a Consequence, they did not support the Critical and Imaginative as comprehensively as it could have been possible.

Most candidates utilised the Reflective Statement as a platform for Criterion 6 to good effect. Most candidates outlined their focus area and linked their imaginative and critical response effectively. Three examples of how students tackled C6 are included for your consideration.

It is important to be explicit about the form of the Imaginative Response in the Reflective Statement. Most candidates explained how the Imaginative and Critical Responses connected regarding ideas and sometimes setting, but few specified form. In some cases, discerning the form was difficult, even when reading the piece.

## THE CRITICAL RESPONSE

The Critical Response was, typically, the most substantial piece in the Independent Study which suggests that the time allocation given to all three pieces was uneven. The object of the critical response is to express a personal

position and examine your own ideas, values and perspectives and those of others by critically reflecting on the text(s).

Writing in the third person does not preclude you from doing this.

Having the question stated at the beginning of section was useful rather than having to go back to the cover sheet. There is no need for candidates to include a question as a header because this becomes annoying.

A carefully phrased question is essential for a successful critical response. To evaluate textual integrity as part of a critical reflection, an analysis of compositional features is required; to express a personal position, candidates needed to reflect on the influence of the text on their own ideas, values and perspectives. The most successful questions made specific reference to both of these components. This often involved a two-part question.

Critical components that showed understanding of texts as purposeful constructs were outstanding and sophisticated. These candidates were able to use present tense when discussing characters and plot as constructs, and past tense when referring to historical and cultural contextual information relevant to their text. Such sophisticated critical writing showed candidates' understanding of the complexity of the issues explored and how composers can create characters to highlight such issues. There were some outstanding critical components written in the third person which were complemented with reflective statements explaining personal contextual information resulting in the position adopted in the study. Such positions included literary perspectives such as Feminist and Marxist readings.

The way in which the stronger Critical Responses moved so effortlessly between textual analysis and their own response to the text, each helping the other to reach a new level of understanding, was impressive. There were many remarkable critical responses in both the first and the third person, and both were equally acknowledged and rewarded for the insight of their analysis. Those candidates who wrote using the more traditional third-person ensured that a personal interpretation and position was discernible in their writing.

Other observations about the Critical Responses included the following from markers:

- A balance between "own and others' ideas" also means providing judicious textual evidence and then analysing the meaning and significance of that evidence.
- A balance between "own and others' ideas" is necessary. The composer's ideas, and the candidates' response to those ideas must not be lost in contextual information or the interpretations of critics.
- As well as articulating and responding to the composer's ideas, candidates effectively developed their view of the text by expressing an interpretive statement, often in the first person, at the end of each body paragraph. These statements of "own ideas, values and perspectives" built incrementally to form an argument which was fully articulated as a compelling interpretation of the meaning and significance of the text in the conclusion.
- Close textual analysis still provides the most effective and original examination of a text. A focus on language was often missing from critical responses in favour of extensive descriptions of events.
- Far too many candidates are not treating characters as fictional constructs of the composer. This led to many pedestrian statements that implied the characters were real people.
- Higher quality responses analyse the construction of the text, e.g. point of view, characterisation, symbolism, etc. (traditional literary criticism) about themes and ideas.
- Paragraphs were generally accurately structured with clear topic sentences. In-text referencing was usually accurate, but there were numerous Independent Studies without alphabetised bibliographies. Spelling was typically excellent.
- Several high quality 'critical literacy' essays examined the significance of the cultural context relevant to composer and responder. Quite a few alternative and resistant readings offered thought-

provoking, insightful and original arguments as they usually go beyond the dominant interpretation. While feminist readings of texts are the most common, text criticism that deconstructs class and/or race also enabled a rich contextual exploration.

- Successful candidates wrote about the ending of the focus text. Many studies seemed unfinished because the structural integrity of the focus text was not supported by an interpretation of its concluding section and the opportunity to powerfully respond to the final iteration of the composer's perspective was therefore lost.
- The composer's ideas, values and perspectives must be examined. Successful candidates developed a critical distance and recognized the composer's ideas as constructs within the text, explicitly identified, explained and appraised them; less successful candidates discussed the ideas generally as part of the world of the text.
- The conclusion of the Critical Response should not be a repeat of the introduction; it should be more specific because it clearly articulates the answer to the inquiry question. Whereas the focus of the introduction is on the composer's "ideas, values and perspectives; the emphasis in the conclusion is on the influence of the text on own ideas, values and perspectives.
- The introduction of the Critical Response should signpost the landscape of the essay to follow – clear, succinct and constructing a purposeful thesis. Long introductions highlight lack of clarity and focus, as do bloated body paragraphs. Making connections between paragraphs through transitional links or via the essay focus is crucial to overall cohesiveness. Above all, avoid retelling the narrative. Sometimes it may be necessary to recount aspects of the text, and ensure there is analysis and relevance to the focus question. Mid-range folios lose sight of their focus.
- Topic sentences are necessary to build a logical argument and ensure all aspects of the inquiry question are addressed. Topic sentences also help to ensure that retelling the story is avoided.

## THE IMAGINATIVE RESPONSE

The intention of the Imaginative Response is to further develop the ideas, values and perspectives in the focus text and the Critical Response, so the implication is that the Imaginative Response will contain something more. Retelling the same content, even from a different character's point of view, limits the capacity of the Imaginative Response to augment the meaning interpreted in the Critical Response.

Candidates in 2017 were well-versed in the need for the imaginative response to relate clearly to the critical response and serve as another way of showing knowledge and understanding of the chosen text(s). Nearly all Imaginative responses were set in the world of the text, as instructed, but unfortunately, a number of candidates included information which was already available in the text.

Generally, with few notable exceptions, successful Independent Studies used more demanding and expansive texts such as novels, as opposed to films. Some of the latter, such as *Her*, due to their limiting focus tend to inspired Independent Studies which all sound similar. This was mainly problematic in the imaginative responses, where many candidates based their response on the character of Amy.

The 1200-word count was taken more seriously this year, and there were some very sophisticated and engaging responses that strongly resonated with focus topics. Stronger students used their imaginative responses to extend their understanding of the text and to do something fresh and original, whether it was to write from a different character's perspective, to insert a chapter etc. Most imaginative responses were extensions of the texts themselves.

Adaptations of the nominated text are fine and welcomed, but these must be addressed explicitly in the Reflection statement.

What differentiated the stronger responses from, the more pedestrian was the believability of the characters. Weaker students are still changing the very essence of their text's characters which does not make a convincing read! Also transforming the first-person narration of events in a text into the same protagonist's diary entries with very little new material does not constitute a successful imaginative response.

Insightful, creative responses explored minor characters' viewpoints and/or what happened next (using the language and style of the original text). The most successful imaginative responses showed a preparedness to 'play' with language and to integrate literary and stylistic features into the piece; for example, writing from a particular character's perspective which endeavoured to capture the voice of the character was rewarded.