

3.3.1 Imaginative writing

Effective imaginative writing is about:

- *Ideas* and
- *Writing style*
 - What do you look for when you read a story?
 - What would your English teachers value in a story? (This may differ from your personal preferences.)
 - Most importantly, can these two separate perspectives find a happy medium?

It is likely that many of the texts you study in English are quite different from the texts you read for pleasure. School texts are chosen to challenge and provide you with rich learning experiences. They may have a particular value and significance in terms of the themes they explore or the way they use language techniques to communicate a powerful message. This is particularly the case for the prescribed short texts in Module C, which have been selected for their rich and varied use of language.

Perhaps you enjoy reading stories that are high on plot and drama and low on atmosphere. A story that grabs your attention may deal with controversial issues. It may intrigue you because it takes place in a world that you know very little about. It may even be the case that you mainly enjoy reading stories from a particular genre, such as fantasy or science fiction. One of the most difficult things about composing a creative response for HSC English is that you need to put your own personal preferences aside and consider the purpose and audience of your story. The purpose is to use limited time to showcase your ability to use language in a sophisticated and effective manner, rather than to tell a plot-driven story. The ultimate audience for your story will be the examiners: English teachers.

Students often write about extreme events such as traumatic deaths and violence. If this event is too real, it can be confronting and difficult to write about but conversely if it is not real, it is just as difficult. It also places the marker in an uncomfortable position, which it is best to avoid. Given that the criteria concentrate on language, you need to be more concerned with your written expression than with developing a complex plot.

Short stories

Before we look at some hints on how to write, it is important to revisit what the relatively recent genre of the short story is.

Edgar Allan Poe's criteria for a short story

In 1842, Edgar Allan Poe, a writer of Gothic poetry and short fiction, coined the term 'short story' and described the elements of the short story. He stated that:

- A short story must create a single impression. It must be capable of being read at one sitting.
- Every word should contribute to the planned effect. The effect should be created in the opening sentence and developed throughout the work. The story should end at its climax.
- Only such characters as are essential to the effect should appear.

Since then, the short story has taken many different turns, sometimes breaking the rules of how to write a good story. Poe's advice is, however, still valuable.

Poe is commenting on length, word choice, organisation and characters. What he says makes sense. If you don't have a long time to write and only a short space to write in, then you need to limit your characters, you need to use only the most essential words and you need to organise the ideas so that they make an impact. All of this is difficult in the rush of an exam, so you need to practise as often as possible, so that you can find a way into any question.

Checklist for your short story	✓
Does the story make a single impression?	
Does every word contribute to the planned effect?	
Is the effect created in the opening and developed through the whole work?	
Does the story end at its climax?	
Are there only those characters that are essential in the story?	

Short story structure

The short story, like most narratives, can vary its pattern. There isn't always space for a separation of the orientation and the complication, so short stories can start at the complication so that the audience is immediately engaged. Then the backstory can be used to fill in only as many details as needed about the setting and the characters' lives. After the climax, you need to make sure you've resolved the story and tied up all strands. Edgar Allan Poe often added a twist at the end where the reader's expectations of how the story would turn out are overturned, but this can be hard to achieve under test conditions.

When writing your story, you should:

- Be aware of the end before you start
- Make sure the beginning leads logically into what you are writing
- Avoid too many characters
- Match your setting to the story.

You can learn a lot by using good writers as models for ways of writing. Here is one way of creating a strong effect by focusing on a single word:

I want to be free of cities. Heat. That is what cities mean to me. You get off the train and walk out of the station and you are hit with a full blast. The heat of the air, traffic and people. The heat of food and sex. The heat of tall buildings. The heat that floats out of the subways and the tunnels. It's always fifteen degrees hotter in the cities. Heat rises from the sidewalks and falls from the poisoned sky. The buses breathe heat. Heat emanates from crowds of shoppers and office workers. The entire infrastructure is based on heat, desperately uses up heat, breeds more heat. The eventual heat death of the universe that the scientists love to talk about is already well underway and you can feel it happening all around you in any large or medium sized city. Heat and wetness.

Don DeLillo, *White Noise*

Notice how the images all fall on each other? The word *heat* is the focus, emphasised by repetition, *the heat of ...* at the beginning of lines. The sentences are incomplete, often lacking a verb. It becomes a series of phrases sounding like poetry rather than prose.

From your studies in Year 11 (particularly the unit on *Reading to Write*), you will be familiar with the idea of using short pieces of writing as the stimulus for your own work. The DeLillo excerpt explores the human experience of being immersed within an urban environment.

Writing practice

- Think of an environment you are familiar with. It may be the space within a building, such as your home or your school, or it may be the atmosphere in your suburb or town at a particular time of the week. Use the DeLillo excerpt as the model for a paragraph that includes a cascade of images related to the experience of living in and observing a particular environment.

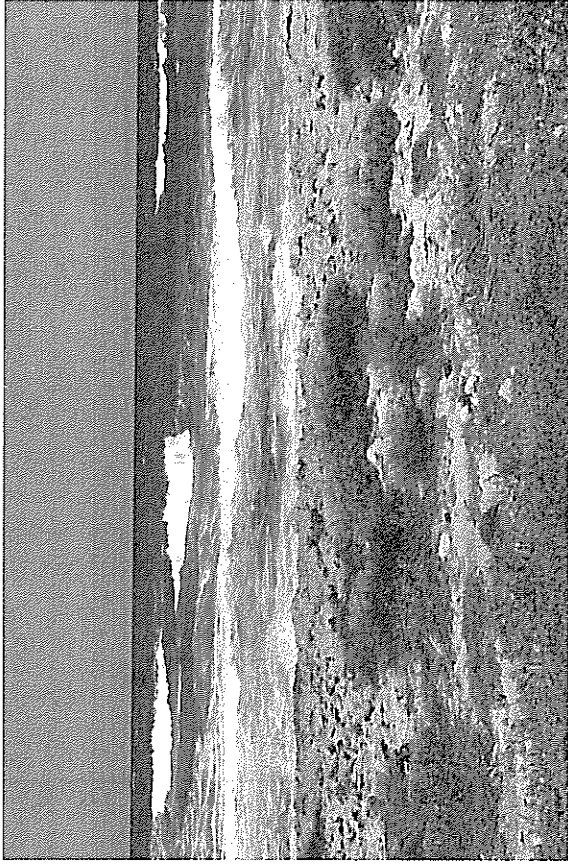
- Change the words 'cities' and 'heat' and rewrite the text with new descriptions following the pattern DeLillo sets for us. For example:

I want to be free of country towns. Stiffing. That is what country towns mean to me. You get out of the car and walk out along the road and you are hit with a full blast.

- You can complete the example or start your own.

Mistakes to avoid when planning your story

If asked to compose a piece of imaginative writing such as a short story, you may be given a stimulus (either visual or written) to use as the inspiration for your writing. It is also possible that you will be asked to use one of the prescribed texts studied in Module C as the basis for your response. The example on the following page illustrates some common mistakes made by students in examinations.



Question: Use this image as the stimulus for an imaginative piece of writing that explores how individuals are influenced by their surrounding environment.

The student decides that this image suggests unfamiliar lands and starts to write a story that takes place in an exotic setting. In doing so, they become more concerned with listing the details of an unusual setting than with their own use of language and written expression.

The student decides to construct a story based around the remote and mysterious region of the Galapagos Islands. They have previously seen a nature documentary on this region and have admired images of ancient turtles. In an attempt to be original, they decide their story will be written from the perspective of a 120-year-old turtle. The animal narrator is mourning for another turtle that has mysteriously disappeared. When the story begins, the narrator is having an argument with the other turtles about whether to go out looking for their lost friend. Throughout the course of the story, the turtle is discovered by a team of hunters and is about to be eaten. He sees that they have already roasted the body of the missing turtle just before they stab him with a large spear. The story then shifts briefly to the perspective of the men who have murdered the turtle in cold blood.

What are the problems with this story?

It illustrates several common problems that students have when trying to create vivid and interesting narratives:

- **Remember this is not a persuasive text.** This is not the place to try to convince the marker of your own beliefs or ideological stances. (It is possible that your examination question may ask for a piece of persuasive writing, but this is an entirely different textual form with its own requirement.)
- **It is not based on the student's own life experiences or knowledge of the world around them.** Although the student has attempted to *use a setting as the basis of a story* (generally a good idea), the key is to *write about what you know*. You will have more to say about the town or suburb you live in or somewhere you have visited than about a place you have never seen. The same applies to any unique cultural experiences that you have. Markers will see that this is authentic and value it.
- **There are too many characters in this story.** The narrator, the absent turtle, the other turtles, and the hunters – a short story does not need a cast of thousands! If you have *two to three main characters*, you will be able to develop a better sense of characterisation.
 - Remember that the question in Module C will have TWO parts, and that you will only have 40 minutes to address both of them.
 - Pay careful attention to the way in which marks are distributed – if an imaginative response is worth 10/20 or 12/20, remember to dedicate adequate time to the other part of the question. (It is possible that an imaginative response will be paired up with an analytical or persuasive question which requires you to either critique or justify the decisions which you made in composing your story.)
- **It is a good idea to narrate a story from a credible perspective.** Arguing (and possibly talking) turtles make it difficult for this student to *create a credible and realistic narrative*. (It is true that not all narratives need to be strictly realistic. However, don't make it hard for yourself!)

- **Too much happens throughout the course of the story.** *Keep the plot to a minimum*, as it is better to cover a single event in detail than skim over several events. You may even find that your response can create suspense and tension leading up to an event, rather than depicting the event itself.
- **There is no need for sensationalism.** Many plot lines you may regard as original are actually clichéd and sensational. For example, gender changes or stories pertaining to sexuality, anorexia and self-harm are becoming too common. Killing off key characters is often a sign that the student is unsure what to do with them. In general, you should avoid *extreme* or *distressing* topics such as murder or rape. *Avoid anything that has shock value rather than value as an idea.*
- **Stories benefit from having a particular *image* or *motif*.** Recurring symbolism can help make your short stories more complex and interesting. It is a good idea to think of objects or images that can act as a metaphor for your main ideas and work one into the story to make its connection to the concept clear. A few possibilities:
 - A large albatross, which occasionally soars over the background of a story, could come to symbolise freedom and exploration.
 - An abandoned kaleidoscope could symbolise the protagonist's enlightening new perspectives that emerges from a key moment of truth within the story.
 - An ancient craggy rock could symbolise the eternal and unyielding elements of a world altered forever by cultural change and technological innovations – a symbol of stability in a fragile and evolving society.

You should also concentrate on creating a descriptive atmosphere through effective language choices, rather than attempting to cover a complex issue that is difficult to discuss in a short story.

Although the examiner's personal opinions will not affect the way they mark your story, you may be surprised to know that students commonly try to tackle controversial current issues in their story (particularly stories which have been in the media lately). A concept which you see as original may be the tenth one the examiner has read on a particular day. Covering a current issue may also mean you need to negotiate between trying to get your point of view

across and creating an imaginative narrative. Don't sabotage your story by letting the need to explore an issue overtake the need to create a literary narrative.

Use MICE

The author Orson Scott Card developed the MICE theory, which categorises short stories into four different types, depending on the focus of the story. This includes:

- Milieu** – Stories that are concerned with the setting/context
- Idea** – Stories that are based around a theme or issue
- Character** – Stories depicting interactions with others or growth of individuals
- Event** – Those stories that focus on a key climax or incident (event)

This could be a useful way of considering what you want your story to focus on – the assessment criteria tend to lend themselves to milieu and ideas stories in particular.

Remember that it is hard to examine a character and explore an idea/event as well as creating a strong sense of place within a story. By choosing only one or two of these, you may have the chance to consider what the real purpose of your story is, in terms of its ability to respond to the exam question and/or stimulus material.

Writing hints

If the imaginative response is one response of a two-part question, read through both parts of the question carefully before composing the imaginative response. The other part of the examination question could ask you to reflect on your processes in composing a response, or analyse your use of stylistic feature, or justify the decisions you made in discussing a prescribed text or responding to a stimulus. If the stylistic feature has to be connected to a text you have studied, make sure you use an element of style that you have studied in the specified module.

This will affect your decisions, as you will need to consider how your choices in the imaginative writing can be discussed in another textual form, such as analytical, reflective or discursive writing.

- Write in genres that you know well – crime, science fiction, romance, etc.

- Think about introspective writing and monologues as possible forms to use.
- Read lots of good short story writers (Roald Dahl, Edgar Allan Poe, Anton Chekhov, Katherine Mansfield, Joanne Harris, Peter Carey, O. Henry, Guy de Maupassant, Colin Tóibín, Margaret Atwood, Somerset Maugham, etc).
- When you read other short stories, think about how you could shorten the stories by starting near the end – experiment with this idea.
- Try answering: *who, what, where, when, how and why* for your story at the planning stage.
- Make sure your setting matches your character and idea/s.
- Sometimes creating a strong mood is enough – look at how Katherine Mansfield does this well in most of her stories.
- Focus on good passages from books you read (like the Don DeLillo excerpt) and think about how you can use the same structures – don't plagiarise!
- Decide what the ending is before you start – that way the writing will have a strong sense of direction and one central idea. **Remember** that you will generally not be required to compose a complete narrative. It is far more likely that you will be asked to compose a fragment of a story, or the opening to a narrative.
- Consider the context, stimulus or prescribed text suggested by the question.

There are some things you can work on without trying to construct an entire story, which may or may not relate to the question on the day:

- **Practise writing with a motif or recurring symbol** that could appear in your story. Describe this motif in detail and decide what it could symbolise. Use a variety of adjectives and explore how the motif could relate to different points of the story. For example: A leaf floating gently in the wind could suggest that the protagonist is lost and wistfully wondering at the beginning of the narrative, yet the repetition of this image towards the end might indicate the ability of the human spirit to soar above the pettiness and mundaneness of life.
- **Consider the possibilities** that different characters may offer you and write down descriptions of these characters. How could they change throughout the course of a narrative? What are their defining characteristics? Will you gain from exploring an adolescent perspective, or could characters of different ages offer you a richer narrative or diverse perspectives? (N.B. If you choose a child protagonist, it may be

wise to avoid narrating your story in the first person due to the limited opportunities for descriptive language usage that such a character provides.) You may also wish to consider having a complex protagonist. What character flaw/s do they have? Is there a particular ability or interest they have which will affect the way they see the world? It is useful to know the past history or backstory of your main character, even if it may not directly appear in your response.

- **Investigate different settings.** Consider these settings in different seasons and at different times of day. What can they offer to your narrative? As well as natural and rural settings, consider urban environments. A busy coffee shop can be described just as vividly as a vast golden field beneath an endless sky. Will you use different settings in your story, and to what effect?

3.3.2 Discursive writing

NESA has this definition of discursive text in the 7–10 glossary:

Discursive texts aim to examine ideas and concepts in an exploratory manner. Their purpose is to communicate knowledge, information and a variety of perspectives, rather than to persuade or to develop arguments. This means that they will discuss different opinions and standpoints, without necessarily developing definitive conclusions or privileging one side of the story. Although informative in tone, discursive texts can be humorous or light-hearted, such as a speech transcript exploring aspects of a topic.

The word *discursive* stems from a Latin word which means 'to run about'. Such writing is more than mere rambling, but proceeds to discuss the details of a topic in a manner which may be gracefully written or personal in tone. You will notice that many of the 'nonfiction' prescribed texts in Module C involve discursive elements and detailed discussion of a particular topic. Discursive (and reflective) writing have strongly personal elements of style. A discursive essay can arise from questions that include phrases like:

- *Discuss ...*
- *Examine ...*
- *To what extent do you agree ...?*

- *What are your views...?*

As you can see from the sample Module C questions, some examination questions will include discursive writing as an option for writing.

There is a wide variety of styles and possibilities in the discursive form. Thinking of the questions above, why might you choose to write a discursive essay?

- Its use of multiple perspectives is less restrictive than the form of an argumentative essay.
- Discursive writing allows you to examine a range of ideas, without necessarily having to privilege or choose between them.
- Discursive writing has personal elements, but without the need to exclusively focus on your own experiences and insights as you might in a piece of reflective writing.

Such essays allow you to wander through a topic, exploring it from different angles and through a mixture of subjective and objective writing.

Note: Discursive essays do *not* require you to adhere to a rigid structure of writing. Although you may find resources on the internet (particularly from the UK) that present models of discursive writing, you would be wise to ignore this formula in favour of composing responses which explore a series of ideas without trying to adopt a ‘for and against’ approach.

3.3.3 Persuasive writing

You may be familiar with persuasive language techniques from your previous studies. The purpose of persuasive writing is to convince the responder of your point of view. Unlike discursive writing, which seeks to address the various elements of an idea or issue, persuasive texts adopt a single viewpoint. They aim to appeal to the reader in order to justify their assertions and prove their ideas in a convincing manner.

Three modes of persuasion traditionally used in texts are *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. These terms were initially used by the Greek philosopher Aristotle and continue to offer useful alternatives to consider when composing persuasive texts. You may wish to revise your understanding of these terms:

Ethos

- This term refers to an *ethical* appeal, and one which is based upon the character of the author.
- It encourages the audience to trust in the veracity of the writer, and may also include an appeal to authority.
- The composer attempts to establish their credibility and attempts to present themselves as a knowledgeable and unbiased source of information

Pathos

- An appeal to the *emotions* (and the Greek root of the word ‘empathy’), in which the composer attempts to evoke an emotional response from the responder.
- This response may attempt to incite anger or indignation, to encourage the reader to feel sympathy, and ultimately aims to use this response to communicate their viewpoint in a convincing manner.
- Within examination responses, it is wise not to focus on provoking an emotional reaction from the marker. They are more likely to be convinced by a neutral or analytical tone

Logos

- This mode of persuasion is concerned with appealing to *reason* or logic as a strategy to convince the reader.
- Using sophisticated and effective language as the basis for logical arguments and providing evidence/facts to support key points and statements enables the composer to produce an authoritative piece of persuasive writing.

Keeping in mind that the module is titled *The Craft of Writing* will enable you to consider the types of persuasive tasks that could be required of you in an exam. You may be asked to:

- Persuade the examiner that you have produced a successful piece of imaginative writing, with reference to the figurative language techniques which you used within the piece
- Write about your prescribed text in a persuasive manner to discuss and prove its literary value
- Use an unseen quotation as the basis for a persuasive text that explores your growing understanding of the craft of writing. In your response, you could be required to convince the examiner of a particular belief or opinion which you hold about literary texts or about the process of writing.

There are many other possibilities for examination questions based around persuasive writing. Some of the previous material on analytical writing is also relevant to the composition of persuasive texts. Although discursive texts are of an analytical nature and seek to articulate different points of view, they can be distinguished from persuasive texts in that persuasive texts generally only develop a single perspective or main thesis statement.

When you write persuasively, you should pay particular attention to the *tone* and *narrative voice* that you seek to develop. Your tone may sound logical, informed or passionate, depending on the mode of persuasion which best suits your purpose. You may use a first-person voice if writing an evaluative text, to develop a personal connection to your topic or to encourage the responder to trust your judgements. Alternatively, the inclusive nature of second-person narration can be highly persuasive, or the more authoritative and objective third-person voice could be used if appealing to reason or developing factual arguments.

Your preparation for this section may involve the following:

- Wide reading. Media texts are excellent examples of opinion pieces which are written in a persuasive or passionate tone. Many online articles are of dubious quality, but if you search for news and some magazine websites (the *Guardian*, the *Australian*, the *SMH*, the *New Yorker*, the *Atlantic* and the *Monthly* are just a few examples), you may be able to find some excellent examples of persuasive writing.
- Complete two responses to the sample questions, with reference to the prescribed texts you studied in Module C.
- Remember this is only one of the several styles of examination questions that are possible. The question may not require you to use your prescribed text.
 - You may also wish to return to a previous piece of imaginative writing that you have produced and respond to the question: 'Write a persuasive response that justifies the decisions you have made in your imaginative writing. Explain why your imaginative response is a rich and effective text.'
- Pay attention to your vocabulary. Read over any past persuasive pieces of writing which you have completed.
 - What verbs and adjectives do you consistently use?
 - What are the connotations of these words?

- Do they have synonyms that could be equally as persuasive, or that could make your writing more fluent and precise?
- Consult an online thesaurus, but with care using only the words you understand. Then rewrite some of your statements, varying your sentences to include a wider variety of descriptive and persuasive words.

3.3.4 Informative writing

Informative writing takes many forms and may be defined by its purpose rather than its features. Obviously, the purpose of such texts is to inform the reader, but what does this word mean?

An *informative text* may:

- Enlighten the responder about aspects of a subject, idea or issue
- Contain factual details to develop the understanding of the reader
- Present an objective/unbiased discussion of a topic (as opposed to persuasive text)
- Demonstrate and communicate knowledge
- Educate and instruct the responder by acquainting them with new ideas.

On the NESAs website, there is a glossary of terms with a useful reference to the 'Types of Texts' required from students. You would be wise to read through the glossary to develop an understanding of the purpose and focus of different text types. The NESAs glossary contains a number of examples of informative texts, some of which are:

- Reports
- Instructions and directions
- Recounts of events
- News bulletins and Articles
- Websites
- Textual analysis.

This is not an exhaustive list. There are many texts written with the purpose of conveying information in an informative manner.

What does this look like in terms of the questions that you may be required to answer in the HSC examination? The sample questions for Module C often contain different options for

students in terms of the textual forms they can choose to use. It is possible that you may be asked to write either an ‘analytical, discursive or informative’ response to a question. Informative texts generally contain facts and avoid repetition to convey knowledge and information.

Questions asking you to discuss your use of a particular technique in your imaginative writing, to discuss one of your prescribed texts for Module C or to produce a report or news article may require the features of an informative text.

It is useful to consider the skills required to write informative texts as examination questions for Module C typically contain one part that requires you to write a non-fiction text of an informative nature. The form of writing may be specified (including *reflective*, *analytical* and *discursive* texts) and the response may be brief (for example, a 5-mark question asking you to discuss a literary technique).

There is *no one structure* for an informative piece of writing. It is unlike an analytical essay, which has a clearly defined structure and sequence of paragraphs. Loosely speaking, an informative text should contain a series of statements related to a topic and these statements should be expanded upon with evidence, examples and links to the set question. However, the *form* of the text will determine the structure of its composition.

Activity

Use the following questions to reflect on your thoughts about informative texts:

1. What are the differences between the skills required for informative, persuasive and analytical texts? What are the similarities?
2. How are persuasive and analytical texts also informative in nature?
3. What words would you expect to see in an examination question that require you to write an informative piece of writing?

3.3.5 Reflective writing

The purpose of reflective writing is to explore your own changing understanding of ideas and issues in a succinct and analytical manner. Reflection involves examining your personal opinions, questioning your previous assumptions and discussing your journey.

Within the Module C section of the examination, you could be required to write a short or long reflective response. The question could ask you to:

- Consider your learning experiences in *The Craft of Writing* module and how they have had an impact on your own growth as a writer
- Write reflectively about how the study of one or more of your prescribed Module C texts has assisted your understanding of the skills and processes required to produce effective texts
- Explain and discuss the decisions and processes that you engaged in when composing a piece of writing.

What do these questions have in common? You will notice that they are all concerned with processes. However, reflective writing is not a recount or an explanation of a process.

Ultimately, although it will involve an evaluation and your own judgements and opinions, reflective writing requires you to assess and appraise your own experiences and their effect on you. It is appropriate to use the first-person ‘I’ in your reflective writing. Your responses will not resemble an introspective diary entry, as academic reflective writing must be simultaneously *personal* and *analytical*. Successful reflective responses will balance these two demands.

Thinking reflectively

Reflective writing is concerned with self-knowledge: your changing view of the world, and how you are able to identify, discuss, synthesise and personally evaluate the processes and experiences which have led you to develop your insights.

Ultimately, reflective writing involves discussing your changing beliefs, making connections between your learning experiences and your own sense of growth. You are able to discuss

how learning about new ideas has challenged and stimulated you, and examine changes in your own perceptions.

Here are some questions that may assist you in reflecting on a text you have studied:

- What have I learned from studying this text?
- What is my personal relationship with the themes/ideas/values/opinions contained within the text? Has it challenged or reinforced any of my previous beliefs and assumptions?
- Are there particular events or moments within the text that have enabled me to understand myself or the world around me in a new or different way? Is there anything particularly interesting or challenging about the text?
- What is my reaction to the style and form of the text? Has it inspired me to experiment with my own writing?
- What has my study of this text taught me about writing? How does studying this text inform my own understanding of effective writing, or assist in my own development as a writer?

It is often more challenging to write reflectively about your own compositions. However, developing a reflective mindset will help you to become a better writer and learner. Not only is reflective writing a key textual form used in many university courses, the processes involved in assessing, evaluating and considering your own work will assist you to develop your skills as a writer.

When reflecting on a piece of writing which you have composed, you may wish to ask yourself:

- What choices have I made in terms of language and structure? What options did I consider or reject, and why?
- How has my understanding of the craft of writing influenced my decisions?
- Does the text that I have composed contain ideas or techniques which I have recently experimented with as a result of my learning experiences?
- What difficulties have I encountered when composing this text? How have I responded to these challenges?

- How have my perceptions, interests and strengths influenced my choices when composing this text? How does this text reflect my growth and development as a writer?

- What connections can I make between my learning experiences, my understanding of my own goals and desires as a writer and the work I have produced?

Note that the questions require you to consider yourself as a *writer*. While you are obviously composing a text as part of the HSC examinations, this course is the culmination of 13 years of schooling. After the HSC, you will engage with the world as an adult who has developed a voice and gained skills in writing a variety of texts. Instead of seeing yourself merely as a student, you should begin to develop a sense of identity as a writer who has developed personal and valuable ideas, perspectives and opinions.

Revising for the examination

Reflective writing does not take place in a vacuum. There always needs to be an experience or a product that is the basis or stimulus for reflection. To revise for the examination, you may wish to write short pieces in timed conditions.

You may wish to reflect on:

- Your experiences in Year 11 English.
 - What was the unit which you learnt the most on?
 - What skills did you gain from this unit?
 - What skills do you hope to further develop in the future?
 - What are your strengths and limitations as an English student?
- A past piece of creative writing. It does not need to be from your work in *The Craft of Writing* – any writing that you have saved can be used. Read through the piece.
 - What decisions did you make?
 - What would you change if you were to write this piece again now?
 - How have your attitudes towards composing imaginative texts changed as a result of your recent learning experiences?

- Your changing relationship with a text that has particular meaning or value for you. You do not need to select a text that you have studied in English, but you should select a text which is rich, complex and meaningful. Ideally, it should be a text that you first encountered at least a year ago.
 - Has your attitude towards the text changed? If so, why?
 - What aspects of the text initially engaged you?
 - Did your beliefs about the text change the last time you read or viewed it? Did you focus on different themes or ideas?
 - Do you merely enjoy this text as a responder, or appreciate its value as a complex and rich text? Is there a difference between enjoyment and appreciation?

You should write your responses in paragraph form – aim to take no more than 20 minutes to compose a single response. You may then wish to read over your draft writing. Consider how you have used a first-person narrative voice, and whether you have managed to balance the personal and analytical nature of this textual form.

Part 4: Practice examination papers

In Part 4 you will find sample questions for Paper 1 Section I, Section II and Paper 2 for you to practise your skills, including responses to the Cambridge sample Paper 1.

Because *Texts and Human Experience* will not be examined until 2019 there is no complete sample Paper 1, but NESAs has provided samples of the types of texts and questions to be asked. Do not regard the questions to Section I as forming a complete paper. You will find that the NESAs website does not have copyright clearance for all the texts so we have reproduced the texts here with their questions. Go to the NESAs website for the sample responses to these questions; answer the questions first to test yourself before looking at the responses NESAs has offered.

A second practice set of Paper I texts and questions has been devised for this book. The Cambridge Paper 1 sample questions appear with sample responses – the texts and questions imitate the examples and advice given on the NESAs website.

Advice on using Part 4

It is always a good idea to give yourself as many experiences at testing as you can. For this reason, it is recommended that you try answering the exam questions yourself before looking at responses. Some questions in the HSC will be the same or Standard and Advanced students but some will be juts for Advanced students. This is indicated with each question.

Start with Paper 1 Section I Questions

- **Read Part 1** (The HSC Examination) so you know what it will look like and the types of questions to expect
- **Read Part 2** (Understanding the Modules) to remind yourself of what is required by each module. This is very necessary as it gives insight into possible areas of focus that questions may target.
- **Read the practice examination questions** to develop familiarity with the structure of the questions but don't answer the questions yet.

Module C Sample Responses

Text: *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens
(Prose fiction)

Module C Question 3: Example A

(20 marks)

'Guard your roving thoughts with a jealous care, for speech is but the dealer of thoughts, and every fool can plainly read in your words what is the hour of your thoughts.'

Alfred Lord Tennyson

Use this warning as a stimulus for a piece of persuasive, discursive or imaginative writing that expresses your perspective about a **significant concern or idea** that you have engaged with in **ONE** of your prescribed texts from Module A, B or C.

Response by: *Simon Day, Eva Gold and Mel Dixon*

Responds to all parts of the question, linking a concern in the novel with the modern world and the stimulus, using a personal discursive style

In a world where the news may be accused of being 'fake' every day, a society that is manipulated via 140 characters, and where image is more appealing than reality, Alfred Lord Tennyson's warning about guarding one's roving thoughts with jealous care remains more pertinent than ever. His contemporary Victorians were certainly aware of the danger of roving thoughts, if the novels of that period are to be believed. However, if we hold our Facebook society against a novel like *Great Expectations*, we find that sometimes secrecy and guarded thoughts are just as bad as its opposite: a world where everything is blurred out before there is any time to think. We may know too much about everyone's secret business but maybe Victorians didn't know enough.

Focuses on the modern world ending with a very clear direction into the Victorian novel

Times dictate behaviour and values and times have changed. In the age of social media, we may feel like we are having a conversation between friends, connecting directly with family and friends instantly over vast distances. And we are! Social media break down time and borders, allowing thoughts to be shared through an ever-widening network of friendships with similar 'likes'. When we feel we are communicating with friends and intimates some of us are as candid with them online as we are in person. But we are in fact shouting our thoughts through a universal megaphone: circumsppection has become as anachronistic as the telegraph or, should I say, the Victorian novel.

Intimate sense of writing to an audience

Many Victorian novels were first published as serials in newspapers. Not able to access the wonders of Netflix and binge TV, the Victorians couldn't get enough of these serialised novels. This was the age of the social novel where, unlike the Facebook society, we find discretion the

Constant balance between Victorian period and present times in the

or, should I say, the Victorian novel.

sentence structures

mark of all communications. Dickens' *Great Expectations* is a perfect example: there, society is not open but secretive, guarding 'roving thoughts' often so as not to betray wicked intentions or social improprieties. Consequently, the novel is riddled with treachery: Miss Havisham's fiancé's ditching her on the very day of her marriage, her half-brother's plot to defraud her of her inheritance, Orlick's murderousness and Drummle's deception of Estella, all hidden under the cloak of deception. Miss Havisham intentionally deceives Pip, leading him to assume that she is his benefactor and that she has intentions that he marry Estella. Even when acts are motivated by good intentions in the novel, secrecy prevails. Jaggers, under required attorney-client privilege, does not reveal details of Pip's benefactor or the parentage of Estella. I suppose if Pip had been able to read them all and see into their thoughts, the story may have been a lot shorter – and perhaps happier.

Evidence from the text is synthesised through listing

Ends with a judgment about the text that links to the stimulus quote

Links back to the last paragraph but moves to the modern world

Sounds a lot more like the treacherous Facebook world we know than we would like to admit but the difference is it's no longer behind the scenes. The almost limitless scope of the internet and pervasiveness of social media platforms allows individuals to present fantasy versions of themselves. It's all about living in a virtual world of egotism and promotion of this wanna-be self. But our world is constantly changing and our view of what we want in the public domain changes too. What brought us a flood of 'likes' one year, rocketing us to internet stardom, becomes an embarrassment the next, when we need to present a more carefully curated image of ourselves to reassure family or work colleagues.

The world *curated* connects paragraphs

Not that Miss Havisham's carefully curated image was such a success. Anyone who keeps wearing the same bridal dress for years on end and keeping a room filled with an old wedding feast really needs to learn to move on – the health risk alone from all that putrid food is more than enough. Is anyone surprised that this was a fire waiting to happen? But Pip can't even see through this Victorian fakeworld any more than we can see through fake news. Estella becomes his 'star': unattainable, shining brightly, distant and cold – driving Pip's ambitions. Pip tries to move on from being a poor orphan to become a gentleman. He wants material wealth and the social acceptance just as much as Estella wants people to admire her. Materialism and popularity are as much the aim of individuals then as they are now and there are plenty of modern Miss Havishams ready to take advantage of all the wannabes and spread lies. Those who seek to manipulate us have the perfect vehicle in social media. Like Pip, whether words were actually spoken, typed or posted, they have an impact on us.

Colloquial rhetorical question assumes reader knowledge of novel

Moves between the two contexts to establish a connection

A casual final statement inclusive of reader, linking all the parts of the question

Let's face it, human nature is endlessly changeable but there are some pieces of advice that persist through the ages, nuggets such 'as do every act as if it were your last,' and the one that is particularly appropriate for our contemporary world: Alfred Lord Tennyson's counsel to "guard your roving thoughts with a jealous care, for speech is but the dealer of thoughts, and every fool can plainly read in your words what is the hour of your thoughts". It is fascinating to see just how this has become increasingly more significant for all of us since the proliferation of social media.

Why this writing works:

The sample response works because it brings together the quotation, a relevant concern from a text AND a personal perspective. This discursive essay displays all the features of discursive essays – the personal voice, the movement between ideas, a balance of different perspectives – and does this in a logical and cohesive way. Every paragraph is coherent and moves through ideas in a connected manner. Evidence is given but it is not academic in its presentation. The audience is invited into the discussion through rhetorical questions, the first person singular and plural pronoun and colloquial asides. The purpose is to make you think, rather than to fall on one position. Even though the question asks for a response about an idea in the modules it does not repeat an essay but shows that the writer is versatile and can address the module text in an original way.

Note: *The Craft of Writing* response needs to do something different to the essays in the Modules even if the question asks for you to refer to the prescribed text in any module. In this case, the questions asks for persuasive, discursive or imaginative writing ABOUT a concern that comes from another module text. This could be mistaken for a direction for an argumentative essay but it directs you to discuss YOUR perspective ABOUT a concern that comes from a text and not to trace a concern IN a text or THROUGH a text.

Text: *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin
(Prose Fiction)

Module C Question 3: Example B

(20 marks)

Part A – 12 marks

Choose a character, persona or speaker from ONE prescribed text that you have studied in Module C. Express the thought processes of this character, persona or speaker by exploring a moment of tension in the text from an alternative point of view.

Part B – 8 marks

Justify the creative decisions that you have made in your writing in Part A.

Response by: *Kate Murphy*

Part A: Imaginative response (12 marks)

The setting and voice imitate the Awakening

Few places were as vibrant as Grand Isle on a midsummer's morning. The water sparkled brilliantly, and the cry of a friendly parrot echoed on the gentle breeze which fanned the bright young faces on the beach.

References to social opinions are consistent with Chopin's omniscient narrative voice

Hesitantly, the two Pontellier children headed for the shores with their buckets and spades. How strange that little Etienne was oblivious of the dangers of the water! Hushed voices whispered sympathetically as they passed by with their quadroon nurse. No one had expected to see them this year, the poor motherless souls – particularly in such a place.

Reality and subjectivity are concerns of the prescribed text

Raoul and Etienne were unaware of the excitement that their appearance aroused. Their spades scraped through the gentle sand, burrowing underneath to the less yielding layers of mud at the water's edge. Mr Pontellier was taking an early siesta, and the Ratignolle children were splashing in the water, joyful and heedless of the harsh sunlight.

Present tense signals child's subjective position

The older Pontellier boy is silent looking out to the vast expanse of water.

A naive perspective is juxtaposed with references to Raoul's exclusion from key events

The year had passed by in a dream, a series of strange scenes and people coming and going from the house. He had not seen his mother vanish on the horizon, just as he had not been present in the church on the day his father had walked out of the house in a stiff black suit, and not returned until late that night.

Erroneous speculations create pathos

"A terrible accident," Mr Pontellier had said gently to the boy, and patted him on the head. Raoul knew then that his father did not understand. People do not simply disappear by accident.

Present tense signals boy's introspection and connects to the original text

He is only six years old, and even he has learnt to swim. The water holds no perils for Raoul anymore.

Perhaps Mother had gone to her relatives in Kentucky and had stayed there for a long time. Perhaps her letters had been lost.

Actions and thoughts follow each other to contrast outer appearance and inner emotion

Raoul burrows through the sand until he reaches the water and splashes his hand on the surface of the murky puddle.

Mother may have simply gone for a walk around the world. The world is a great big ball, and when Mother has walked for long enough, she will find herself at their front door again.

Edna's limitations as a mother are mentioned, as both her son and society judge her

She was not always a happy mother. Not plump and jolly and laughing like Madame Ratignolle, who bought her children ice creams and did not get angry when they made messes on their clothes. Raoul wanted to make Mother happy, to make her smile at the things he did. But she did not embrace him or plant kisses on his cheek or smile at the things he said.

The effect of the mother's death

His father had become much quieter after Mother had disappeared. He sometimes forgot to bring bon bons to Raoul and Etienne and was often home too late to play with them before bed now. Leonce Pontellier had been under a strain, people said, and his late wife gave him much to deal with. Despite his efforts, he cut a tragic figure as a widower. Mr Pontellier must think of the boys, they said, and he did.

Relationships are not fully understood

Raoul knows he loves his father, but he is unsure about his feelings for his mother. Of course, he would say he had loved Mother if anyone asks – he knows this is the correct answer. But she was always dazed, neglectful, wrapped up in her own worries.

A childish hope creates pathos

If she ever returns, if she decides after all to reappear, then he hopes she will have learnt to smile more.

The crumbled castle acts as a metaphor for Raoul's shattered childhood

He scoops some sand into his bucket and presses it down, then turns the bucket upside down. The castle he has built crumbles quickly to the ground, insubstantial as a wish.

Part B: Justification

(8 marks)

The unusual decision to use the voice of a naive and unreliable child narrator is justified

Within my story, I chose to provide a glimpse of the lives of the characters after the events. Using the voice of an unreliable narrator to explore the climax of *The Awakening* and reflect on its protagonist poses specific challenges. The voice of Raoul offers an often unsympathetic perspective of Edna Pontellier, and unconsciously reflects the judgemental attitudes of her society. Although Raoul's naive thought processes demonstrate his incomplete understanding of events, implicit in my text is an understanding that the ambivalent nature of Edna's death is liable to be misinterpreted by others and misunderstood by her husband. To overcome the limitations of a child narrator, I chose to emulate Chopin's use of third-person omniscient narration, shifting from society's perspective to a focus on the feelings of individuals. My study of *The Awakening* emphasised the strong collective voice present within the text and that any imaginative adaptation of the text needs to incorporate a sense of the often restrictive and insular attitudes of American society at the time.

A clear link to the text is made to explain the decisions in Part A

Narrative elements such as setting, character and motif are justified through references to the prescribed text

I chose to locate the story within Grand Isle, the emotional centre of the novel. The imperative to "think of the children" within the story inspired me to consider the elder child's reaction to his mother's death, and his internal thoughts are juxtaposed with references to the radiant holiday atmosphere which provides a tragic contrast to his bereavement. Within the novella, Mr Pontellier is portrayed as a simple character, and this response also reflects his conformist and seemingly inflexible nature even as he is faced with his wife's loss. The motif of the spade digging beneath the sand reflects Raoul's longing to fully understand the truth about his mother, although he is clearly unable to fully grasp the significance of her drowning. The beach simultaneously functions as a reminder of Edna's death and provides a realistic setting for Raoul to revisit, in keeping with Chopin's emphasis on naturalism.

The decision to employ naturalism is explained

A brief conclusion sums up the purpose of the response

My aim was to present a perspective which, though largely ignored in the original text, shapes our reaction to the decisions made by Edna Pontellier as she seeks to overcome the restrictive constraints of turn-of-the-century Creole society.

What makes the writing work:

Both parts of this response demonstrate a very deep engagement with both the text's ideas and the craft of the text. In Part A the writer captures the tone, mood and voice of the original and yet adds a new element through the employment of the unreliable narrator. The story captures the contextual constraints and limitations, suggesting the variety of perspectives around the event of Edna's death. Part B reveals a writer who is in control of the craft of writing and can articulate clearly what is produced and why it has been produced with very intelligent references to the class text.

Text: *Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird* by Wallace Stevens
(Poetry)

Module C Question 3: Sample C

(20 marks)

Part A – 10 marks

Then, although it was still the end of the story, I put it at the beginning of the novel, as if I needed to tell the end first in order to go on and tell the rest.

Lydia Davis, *The End of the Story: A Novel*

Use this sentence as a stimulus for the opening of an imaginative, discursive or persuasive piece of writing that begins with the end.

In your response, you must include at least ONE literary device or stylistic feature that you have explored during your study of a prescribed text in Module C.

Part B – 10 marks

Explain how at least ONE of your prescribed texts from Module C has influenced your writing style in part (a). In your response, focus on ONE literary device or stylistic feature that you have used in part (a).

Response by: Jake Henzler

Part A – 10 marks

The final scene of the narrative, used first, establishes the contrasting symbolism of the umbrella

It was gone. At some point on a Tuesday, unknowingly, I had given it away to the chaotic, unchangeable circumstances of life.

Standing on an anonymous corner of a city I still didn't really know, it occurred to me that I wouldn't be seeing my father's umbrella again. At best, it had been picked up by a stranger in need, seeing an immediate use for an entirely functional object. Either way, like all things eventually had to be, it was gone.

Focalses father's experience and mindset

Two days before I moved to the city, I visited my father in hospital. It was the late afternoon and he was propped up in bed watching people gamble with money they didn't own. He was pleased to see me.

Dialogue helps to establish relationship with father

We talked for a couple of hours and, in the uncomfortable manner of one adult trying to convince another, he gave me two pieces of advice packaged as one.

"Do your best," – his own way of wishing someone good luck – "and try not to want for too much."

"Got it, Dad."

Introduction of umbrella as symbol of support and protection.

He lifted himself in the bed and pointed to the corner of the room, where his tartan umbrella stood. Every day before this week, he had taken a walk around the grounds to keep active. On good days, the umbrella was a kind of insurance policy against bad weather. On bad days, he could lean on it to keep himself stable.

Father's acceptance of imminent death is implied by the handing over of the umbrella

"Take that with you."

"Your umbrella? I can buy my own, Dad. They're cheap."

"Not when they're made like that they aren't. Just take it, will you?"

"Shouldn't you hold onto it?" I asked.

Life cycle

"People tend to associate Japanese brands with low-quality but this one should last you a long time." He looked down at his feet, forming small mountains beneath the tightly tucked bedsheet, then back at me.

Sense of hope from son

"Fine." I conceded, "But I'll bring it back in a few weeks when you're feeling better."

Change of scene and time – back to the city	Particularly in the first few months, heavy rain always made the city streets seem busier.
The umbrella is seen as a weapon	Navigating the flow of the heavily crowded footpaths, I had to hold the umbrella up quite high to keep it out of striking distance of the other pointed prongs. In the daily mass of people, every pedestrian seemed to imagine themselves an untouchable urban warrior, wielding their spiked shields above their heads. I was determined to return mine in the same condition I had received it.
Sense of vulnerability	But in protecting the umbrella, I was always exposing myself, the thick dripping run-off from the lower surrounding brollies soaking into the shoulders and back of my coat.
Sense of envy	On the train home, I often envied the happily dry life of the shortest commuter, whose umbrella, held close to the head and tipped slightly forward, served both to part the oncoming crowd and to deflect any last drops from the layered canopies above.
Sense of despair: all these scenes of the umbrella reflect a relationship with the father	On sunny mornings after a storm, I passed rubbish bins stuffed full of broken umbrellas, their arms and handles bent at violent angles, and their nylon pulled tightly up the ribs. I tried to imagine the exact scenario that had led to each umbrella's demise.

Part B – 10 marks

Introduction names the text and locates the specific stylistic device that has influenced the written response in A	In Wallace Stevens' <i>Thirteen ways of looking at a blackbird</i> , he constructs a series of brief stanzas that each recycle the image of a blackbird for a different purpose, presenting the reader with a spectrum of possible meanings by shifting the setting, tone and narrative perspective in each stanza. His use of problematic symbolism offers a complexity of meaning to the blackbird. It is simultaneously a creature of spiritual significance, a bad omen, a representation of mindset, an image of survival, an emblem of nature's simplicity, and a metaphor for humanity's limitations.
Identifies the chosen literary device/stylistic feature in text A	In my creative piece, I have used a series of short episodes (vignettes) to establish and develop the symbolism of the central image, an umbrella. By drawing on the same technique of multifaceted symbolism of Stevens' blackbird, I have provided a depth of meaning to each scene in the story.

Reference to the stimulus is explained as affecting craft	As prompted by the stimulus, the piece begins with its ending, setting out both the sentimental significance of "my father's umbrella," and conversely its practicality. Lydia Davis talks about needing to tell the end in order to tell the rest and from this exercise I realise the importance of having the end in mind. Starting at the end – in this case the loss of the umbrella – places the rest of the story into perspective as a story of loss. We can guess from the opening that the father will die, that he passes on his legacy. The sense of loss may be about the father or perhaps it is about going in a different direction and losing his legacy? Like Stevens' blackbird poem, the view depends on where you are standing.
Links back to the poem	In the hospital, the umbrella takes on a traditional role as an emblem of physical protection and comfort, allowing the character of the father to maintain a mobile lifestyle. This is highlighted by its description as "a kind of insurance policy," and the fact that the father "could lean on it to keep himself stable." Gifting this to his child suggests that the father's condition has deteriorated beyond the point of support and makes the umbrella a symbol of familial protection.
Consistently uses quotations from the written response as evidence that is explained	Taking inspiration from Wallace Stevens' use of complex, unfixed symbolism, my creative piece offers readers an opportunity to see in a single object an evolving series of meanings. By using the symbol of the umbrella as a focus for the piece of writing, I have been able to explore a range of ideas, including the sentimental associations we make with material things, the complex relationships that we experience with our parents, and the transient and enduring aspects of our experiences.
Conclusion refers back to the influence that the studied text has had on the written response in A	

What makes the writing work:

One of the strengths of this response is its attention to the criteria, particularly its focus on the marks distributed to each part of the question. Although it is tempting to compose a more lengthy response to the creative section, the author has dedicated equal attention to critiquing his writing. The writer adeptly emulates and transforms the prose style of the prescribed text, and skilfully adopts a sparse but evocative narrative voice. He adeptly draws connections between Stevens' text and his own writing. Most notably, he responds to the specific requirements of an *opening*: although a motif is introduced, the writer does not attempt to structure a complete narrative or include a climactic moment.