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FRAMEWORK OF IDEAS

WRITING ABOUT PLAY

by Leon Furze

Framework of Ideas

Writing about play

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EXPLORING THE KEY IDEA

When you think of the word 'play', what comes to mind? Childhood? Sports? Video games? Or something else? Play is an important part of life – for both children and adults. This guide to the key idea of Writing about play within VCAA's Framework of Ideas for Unit 3 will help you to understand why play is an important part of human creativity, and how play contributes to society.

People engage in all kinds of play from the moment they are born. For babies and young children, play is a crucial part of their development. Play helps children to develop physical skills, such as fine-motor abilities and hand-eye coordination, and social skills, including how to take turns and follow rules. Play doesn't stop when you reach adulthood. For adults, play might include hobbies, games, sports, socialising and creative forms of work.

The texts associated with this key idea present a range of perspectives on play. The most important aspect of the Creating texts area of study, however, is *your* writing. This guide will take you through exploring the key idea in order to generate ideas you might use in your own writing. It will also unpack each of the four mentor texts, looking at how the authors have used language and literary techniques to create particular effects, and how you might apply those techniques yourself.

In the Framework of Ideas, the VCAA provides these elaborations about play:

> Explorations of experiences and traditions of play and playing in many cultures and through history.
>
> Students could explore play as it is applied to games, sport, acting and make-believe, music, language and images. They could also explore concepts of collaboration and connection, digital vs analogue, rules and rule breaking. There is scope to consider the ways play and play acting can represent the 'real' world, and to explore issues associated with using play or play acting to minimise or mitigate against events or actions.

In the next section we will look at some of these connected ideas in more detail.

Key terms

The word 'play' has many different meanings, some of which come from different origins. For example, as a verb it may mean: to enjoy for recreation (e.g. I *play* video games); to take part in (e.g. She would like to *play*); to compete against (e.g. Team X *plays* team Y); to act in a role (e.g. He *played* Macbeth); or to perform (e.g. She *plays* guitar). As a noun it may mean: the act of playing (e.g. Engaging in *play* has educational benefits for children); or a type of dramatic performance (e.g. The *play* was called *Cyrano*).

Some key concepts associated with play that we will explore in this guide include the following.

- **Make-believe:** The act of pretending or imagining something that is not real.
- **Collaboration:** Working together with others to achieve a common goal.
- **Imagination:** The ability to form mental images or concepts of things that are not present in the physical world.
- **Creativity:** The ability to use imagination to produce original and innovative ideas or works of art.
- **Social play:** A type of play that involves interaction with others, such as games, sports or collaborative projects, undertaken in an informal or recreational manner.
- **Games and sports:** Structured activities with rules and objectives, often involving competition or cooperation.

Cultures and traditions of play

When exploring play, it is important to consider how the concept changes across cultures and traditions. Throughout your study of this key idea, you will read texts that demonstrate different understandings of play.

The concept of play might change across history. Think about the phrase 'playing a game', and how differently that might be interpreted by a child now compared to a child in the nineteenth century. On the next page are a few examples of the games that children might have played in the 1800s.

Nineteenth-century game	Objective
Hoop and Stick	Roll a hoop along the ground using a stick, trying to keep it rolling for as long as possible.
Game of Graces	Toss a wooden hoop between two people with wooden sticks.
Marbles	Shoot marbles into a small hole in the ground or knock other marbles out of a ring using own marble.
Jacks	Throw a set of jacks (real or imitation knucklebones) in the air and catch them on the back of the hand. It could also be played by bouncing a small ball then trying to pick up a certain number of jacks before catching the ball again.

Now think about the kinds of games you play now or played as a child. Maybe some of them are similar – you might have played with marbles or hula hoops, even if the games you played were different from those played by nineteenth-century children. But you might also have played, or still play, all kinds of games that would be unimaginable to a nineteenth-century child, including video games and games on a smartphone or other device.

Games also have similarities and differences across cultures. For example, consider the multiple meanings of the word 'football'. In some parts of Australia, 'football' might mean Australian Rules football or Rugby League. In the United Kingdom, it means soccer. And in the United States, it means American football. However, in all these cases, the sports predominantly feature the kicking of a ball as part of the game play.

Traditional cultures also have their own variety of games. Brambahl, birray, marngrook and tok are some examples of First Nations games played by different nations and cultural groups in Australia. Some scholars believe that marngrook influenced the modern game of Australian Rules football.

The variations in games across history and cultures highlight the diversity of human experience and the ways in which we adapt to our environments. Some aspects of play, such as physical competition and social interaction, seem to be universal across cultures.

However, other elements, such as rules, equipment and even the objectives of games, can vary widely depending on the cultural context. These variations can reflect differences in values, beliefs and social structures, and can also serve as a means of cultural expression and identity. By studying the similarities and differences in games across cultures, we can gain insights into the complexities of human society and the ways in which we create meaning through play.

Music, drama and performance

Music and performance are incredibly important parts of play across many cultures and traditions. Playing a musical instrument – either professionally or as a hobby – can be relaxing and stimulating, and even help improve cognitive skills. Performing live in front of an audience fills some people with fear, but for others it is an exhilarating and exciting activity.

Acting in a school drama, on a stage or as part of a television show or movie could also be considered 'play'. If we extend that definition, we might also include the roles of people who act as influencers on social media platforms like TikTok and YouTube. Remember: the definition of play in terms of this key idea is very broad.

Collaboration, connection and competition

Although it is obviously possible to play alone, many sports and games require collaboration and competition to be successful. When writing about play, you will explore these ideas and the tension between working with and against others. You might ask yourself some of the following key questions when reading texts about play.

- How does collaboration contribute to the success of a game or activity?
- What are some examples of collaborative play, and how do they promote teamwork and communication?
- How does competition influence the dynamics of play, and what are some of the benefits and drawbacks of competitive play?
- Can collaboration and competition coexist in play, or are they inherently at odds with one another?
- How does connection foster a sense of community in play?
- What are some examples of how connection can bridge cultural and social differences in play?

Digital and analog

We increasingly have access to digital forms of play. This doesn't mean that physical or analog forms of play have no place in our society; it just means that we now have a greater variety of options. The table on the following page lists some forms of analog and digital play.

Analog play	Digital play
Board games	Video games
Card games	Online multiplayer games
Sports	Mobile games
Make-believe	Virtual reality games
Playing instruments	Music production software
Drama performances	Filmmaking or animation software

While you're reading the texts associated with this key idea, think about how they might apply in a physical or digital space. For example, think about how Chelsea Roffey's thoughts in 'An open letter to doubting Thomas' might reflect the ideas held by a female eSports player.

What are your preferences for play? Digital or analog? Here are some prompts to get you thinking about digital and analog play.

- What are the similarities and differences between digital and analog play, and how do they affect the experience of playing?
- How do digital and analog games differ in terms of collaboration and competition?
- What are the benefits and drawbacks of each type of play, and how do these affect players' social, emotional and cognitive development?
- How has the increasing popularity of digital forms of play affected the way we interact with each other and with the world around us?
- How can we balance the benefits of digital play with the potential negative effects, such as addiction and social isolation?

Rules and rule breaking

Games can be important teaching tools, helping us to understand the world around us. Children can learn a lot about a society or culture's 'rules' through play, as discussed in the following examples.

- **Social rules:** Taking turns, sharing and cooperating with others are all social conventions and behaviours that are practised through play. These rules help children to develop communication skills, empathy and respect, which are important when interacting with others.

- **Safety rules:** These may include wearing protective gear when playing sports and games, or following guidelines for the safe use of equipment and materials.
- **Cultural rules:** There are different customs, traditions and values associated with different cultures that can be learned through play. This helps children to develop a sense of cultural awareness and respect for diversity.
- **Game rules:** Following the rules of board games, card games or video games helps children to develop a sense of fairness and sportsmanship, as well as critical thinking and strategic planning skills.
- **Academic rules:** Important cognitive skills such as problem-solving, memory retention and attention to detail can be developed through following instructions for educational games and learning activities.
- **Creative rules:** Play can enable children to experiment with different art materials or musical instruments. This helps them to develop their imagination, creativity and self-expression skills.

Games and play are not limited to children as adults can also benefit from engaging in playful activities. In fact, many adults participate in recreational sports, gaming and other forms of play as a means of socialising, exercising or simply having fun. Like children, adults can also learn important lessons through play, such as the importance of teamwork, communication and fair play. For example, playing team sports like basketball can help adults hone their skills in working together towards a common goal, communicating effectively and supporting each other in both successes and failures.

In addition to learning positive social skills through play, adults can also learn about breaking rules in safe and constructive ways. Play can offer a space for experimentation and risk-taking, allowing adults to explore their boundaries and push the limits of what is possible. This can help them to develop greater self-awareness and confidence, as well as critical thinking and creative problem-solving skills.

The table on the following page identifies five examples of adult forms of play that offer scope for rule learning and rule breaking.

Form of play	Objective
Escape rooms	These interactive puzzle games challenge players to solve a series of clues and escape from a locked room within a set time limit.
Improv comedy	Improv (short for 'improvised') comedy involves creating scenes and characters on the spot.
Board games	In complex strategy games such as *Catan* and *Risk*, you aim to gain advantages and achieve victory.
Role-playing games	Games like *Dungeons & Dragons* involve creating characters and engaging in imaginative storytelling.
Extreme sports	Sports like skateboarding, snowboarding or parkour are about achieving new levels of skill and creativity.

Play and the real world

The last element of play discussed in the VCE English and English as an Additional Language (EAL) Study Design is 'the ways play and play acting can represent the "real" world'. Play can be a useful tool for understanding the world around us and for anticipating how certain scenarios will unfold in reality. Here are some skills learned through play that might be useful in a real-world context.

- **Decision-making:** Playing games or simulating real-world scenarios can help us develop skills for making important choices. This is particularly useful in fields such as business, law and medicine, where quick and informed decisions can have significant impacts.
- **Conflict resolution:** By role-playing different scenarios, we can learn how to handle conflicts in a constructive manner, which can lead to better communication and relationships.
- **Creative problem-solving:** Play can help us develop creativity and innovation, which are valuable skills in any field. By engaging in playful activities that encourage us to think outside the box, we can develop unique solutions to complex problems.
- **Collaboration:** Many play activities involve working with others towards a common goal. This can teach us how to collaborate effectively, communicate with others and build strong relationships.
- **Emotional intelligence:** Play can also help us develop emotional intelligence, which is the ability to recognise and manage our own

emotions and those of others. This is particularly important in fields such as psychology, counselling and social work, where empathy and understanding are essential skills.

Consider the following prompts to help you think about some of the real-world implications of play.

- How can play and play-acting be used to develop problem-solving skills and decision-making abilities in various fields, such as business, law and medicine?
- What are some examples of how role-playing can be used to enhance conflict resolution skills in personal and professional relationships?
- In what ways can play foster creativity and innovation, and how can these skills be applied in different industries and fields?
- How can collaboration in play activities translate into effective teamwork and communication in the workplace?
- What are some examples of how play can be used to develop emotional intelligence, and how might these skills be valuable in people's professional and personal lives?

Using the mentor texts

The selected mentor texts for Writing about play are varied to give you a broad understanding of the idea and a range of technical and language tools to use in your own writing. It's important to remember that the focus of this area of study is *your* writing: the mentor texts are there to inspire you and provide examples.

Keep in mind the following dos and don'ts when studying your mentor texts.

Dos:

- Do read the mentor texts closely and carefully. Take note of the language, structure and techniques used by the authors.
- Do analyse how the authors use the idea of play in their writing. Think about how they incorporate it into their themes, characters and plots, and also how the language and style contribute to their exploration of the idea.
- Do use the mentor texts as inspiration for your own writing. Think about how you can adapt and apply the techniques and ideas you've learned to your own work.

Don'ts:

- Don't copy the mentor texts word for word. Plagiarism is unacceptable and can result in serious consequences.
- Don't rely too heavily on the mentor texts. While they can be helpful models, they are not a substitute for your own creativity and originality.
- Don't limit yourself to the mentor texts. Explore other sources of inspiration and develop your own unique ideas and writing style.
- Don't *respond to* the mentor texts. There is no need to explain how another author has approached the idea.

The mentor texts

In order to get the most out of the mentor texts, be open-minded about your preferred style of writing. You may think that you only like fiction or nonfiction (or neither!), but you should be prepared to experiment with different styles and forms. The mentor texts set for study are diverse and provide a variety of models and examples for you to draw on. The four set texts are summarised in the table below.

Author	Title	Form	Useful for
Virginia Gay	Monologue from *Cyrano*	Monologue	Exploring dramatic techniques and the conventions of a spoken text
Chelsea Roffey	'An open letter to doubting Thomas'	Open letter or essay	Exploring personal creative nonfiction writing, memories and vignettes
Penni Russon	'All that we know of dreaming'	Short story	Exploring the connection between play and identity and the form of short story/ fiction
Tim Winton	'About the boys'	Excerpt from a speech presented as an article	Exploring gender stereotypes and the form of creative nonfiction/personal essay/ speech

Each of these mentor texts will be covered in detail later in this book.

Supplementary texts

According to the VCE Study Design, you will need to study three of the four mentor texts in depth. You may also study the fourth mentor text as an additional text.

Your teacher may provide supplementary texts. These could be extracts or short examples of quality writing and might reinforce the skills learned from the core mentor texts or add additional skills.

You can also bring your own additional texts into this area of study. If there are texts you have read that you have found particularly interesting or well-written, you should let your teacher know and share them with the class.

Here are a few examples of texts you might find stimulating if you are studying this key idea:

- Extracts from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by William Shakespeare. This play deals with many ideas about fantasy and reality.
- Extracts from *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins. This dystopian novel shows what can happen when 'play' has dangerous consequences.
- 'The overprotected kid' by Hanna Rosin. In this essay the author argues that play is at risk from over-protective parents and societal expectations.

Scan the code or click **here** to read Rosin's essay.

- 'The play deficit' by Peter Gray. This essay discusses the importance of play for child development.

Scan the code or click **here** to read Gray's essay.

- *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card. This science fiction novel delves into the use of games for military training.
- 'Can board games teach us about the climate crisis? Game creators say yes' by Zoe Dutton. This article explores the real-world educational power of board games.

Scan the code or click **here** to read Dutton's article.

EXPLORING THE MONOLOGUE FROM *CYRANO*

This section looks at the first of the mentor texts for Writing about play: the monologue from *Cyrano* by Virginia Gay.

Scan the code or click **here** to access a transcript of the monologue.

Scan the code or click **here** to view Gay's performance of the monologue.

Background and context

The Melbourne Theatre Company's (MTC) adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* is a fresh and modern reimagining of the classic play, which was originally written by Edmond Rostand in 1897. This contemporary version is crafted by Virginia Gay, who not only wrote the adaptation but also stars as the titular character. The play tells the tale of Cyrano, a skilled poet and swordswoman, who is secretly in love with the beautiful and intelligent Roxanne but fears that her affections will never be returned due to her perceived physical imperfection.

Edmond Rostand's original play, *Cyrano de Bergerac*, is a fictionalised account of the life of Savinien de Cyrano de Bergerac, a French author, dramatist and duellist. Set in seventeenth-century France, the play is a tragicomedy that centres on the theme of unrequited love, exploring the concept of inner beauty versus outer appearance. Rostand's work has been adapted numerous times for stage, film and television – its captivating story and vivid characters continue to capture the hearts and imaginations of audiences worldwide.

In the MTC's adaptation, the play takes on new life with the twist that involves changing the gender of the lead character. Virginia Gay's portrayal of Cyrano introduces a renewed perspective on the character, while the supporting cast adds depth and dimension to the story. The themes of love, self-doubt and desire are explored through the lens of modern sensibilities, while still retaining the essence of Rostand's original work.

The production was initially scheduled for an earlier premiere; however, it was postponed due to COVID-19 lockdowns. The pandemic forced theatres across the globe to close their doors and suspend performances, resulting in

a significant impact on the arts industry. Despite these challenges, the MTC was able to eventually stage this adaptation, demonstrating the resilience and adaptability of the creative community.

Studying this adaptation of *Cyrano de Bergerac* will allow you to gain insights into the process of adapting classic works for modern audiences. The monologue selected as a mentor text offers a wealth of techniques and inspiration for your own writing. By examining the creative choices made by Virginia Gay in her retelling, you can develop an understanding of how to reinterpret and reinvigorate existing stories. *Cyrano* also provides an opportunity for you to explore timeless ideas about love, identity and play.

About the author

Virginia Gay, born 16 September 1981, is an accomplished Australian actor, writer and director. She is best known for her roles in the Australian television dramas *Winners & Losers* (as Frances James), *All Saints* (as Gabrielle Jaeger) and *Savage River* (as Rachel Kennedy).

Raised in Sydney, Gay attended Summer Hill Public School and Newtown High School of the Performing Arts, focusing on drama and music. She later studied English Literature and Performance Studies at the University of Sydney but, after becoming increasingly involved as a member of the Sydney University Dramatic Society, abandoned her studies. Instead, Gay decided to turn her efforts towards acting full time and enrolled at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts (WAAPA). In 2005 she graduated with an Advanced Diploma of Performing Arts, winning the Coles Myer Institute Vocational Student of the Year Award and the Sangora Education Foundation Vocational Education and Training Award.

Gay's acting career took off when she auditioned for a role on *All Saints*. Although she didn't land the role she initially wanted, her performance impressed the directors, who later called her in for an audition for Gabrielle Jaeger, a part they'd written specifically for her. She appeared in the show from 2006 to 2009. Over the following years, Gay performed in various stage and screen productions, including *Judy & Punch* and *Breast Wishes*, as well as her cabaret show *Dirty Pretty Songs* at the Edinburgh Fringe Festival.

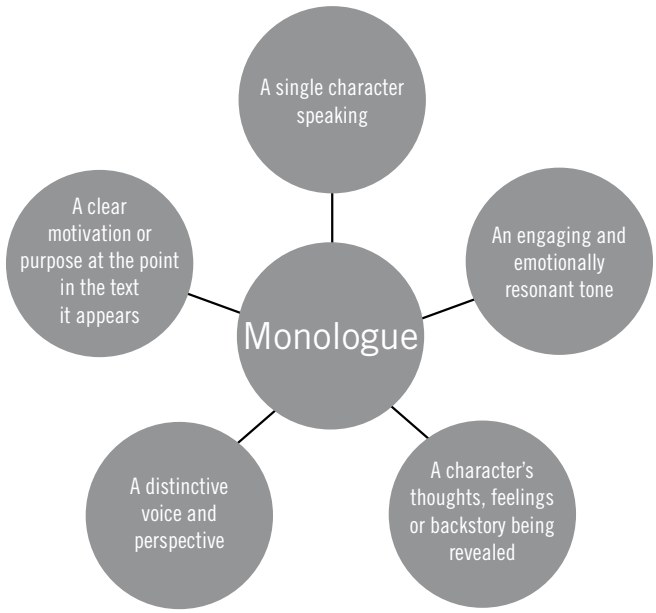
In 2016, Gay starred in the title role of the Hayes Theatre Co's production of *Calamity Jane*, reprising the role in a full production in 2017 and 2018. For this role, Gay won the Judith Johnson Award for Best Performance by a Female Actor in a Leading Role in a Musical at the 2017 Sydney Theatre Awards. She has also written, co-directed and starred in *The Boomkak Panto* and *Paper Cut.* In 2022, Gay again demonstrated both her writing and acting skills in the play *Cyrano* for the MTC.

The text's form

This mentor text is a monologue from the play. A monologue is a powerful and versatile storytelling tool that allows a character to express their inner thoughts, feelings and motivations. As a writer, you have the opportunity to delve deep into the heart of a character and reveal their unique perspective on a situation or issue. Monologues can be delivered as speeches, soliloquies or internal reflections. They can be used to create high-impact scenes, develop a character's backstory or explore their emotional journey.

When writing a monologue, it's important to focus on the character's unique voice and stay true to their perspective. Consider what they want, what they fear and what they believe as you craft their dialogue. A well-written monologue will engage your audience, targeting specific emotions and responses, and should leave a lasting impression.

Key features of a monologue include the following.



Exploring the concept of play in the text

Cyrano is a comedy and a playful text. It could also be called a 'comedy of errors', a tragicomedy or a romantic comedy. Despite the occasionally bittersweet or sad moments in the production, *Cyrano* explores many aspects of play. The table opposite shows some examples from the monologue.

Element of play	Explanation
Embracing spontaneity and whimsy	Gay's character delights in the idea of taking her love interest on unplanned adventures and impulsive experiences. She paints a picture of visiting every restaurant in the city, getting lost in a Turkish spice market and watching bad comedy in the East Village. Unexpected events and surprises, like getting 'head eggs' from day drinking or having to cram overnight guests into different corners of the house, are also mentioned. These instances add layers of excitement and unpredictability to the monologue, emphasising the beauty of life's unplanned moments and reflecting the playful nature of the speaker.
Imagination and creativity	The monologue is filled with detailed images and creative scenarios, like kissing among Rembrandt's paintings in a museum, giving away log cabins to friends and exploring foreign markets. These imaginative descriptions serve to captivate the audience and keep them engaged by conjuring vivid and specific experiences.
Playfulness in language	The language used in the monologue is engaging and often humorous, evoking a sense of playfulness. Gay uses phrases like 'butterflies in stone with transparent wings' or 'um look maybe we could talk about this later, it's just I'm on national television at the moment' to create a lighthearted and entertaining mood.
Experimenting with possibilities	The monologue explores various potential lifestyles and future scenarios, from getting rich and owning multiple log cabins to staying working-class and enjoying the value of work. Gay, as Cyrano, also contemplates the possibility of having children, showcasing her willingness to entertain different ideas for the future she hopes to share with her partner.
Interacting with the environment and the senses	Gay describes engaging with the world around her, exploring various locations and enjoying a range of sensory experiences. She mentions the sound of car horns, the smell of gasoline and jasmine, and the taste of 50-cent mimosas in Cuba. These interactions with the environment enrich the overall experience.

Crafting a compelling monologue

Crafting a compelling monologue can be a challenging task, but by following these key tips, you can create a powerful and engaging speech.

- **Choose a strong central idea:** A good monologue should have a clear idea or theme that ties the speech together and gives it purpose. Choose a topic that you are passionate about, and which will resonate with your audience.
- **Use concrete, sensory details:** To create a vivid and engaging monologue, use description to help your audience visualise and experience what you are talking about. Think about sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures.
- **Create a strong voice:** A monologue should have a powerful, consistent voice that reflects the personality and attitude of the speaker. Think about the language, tone and pacing that will best convey your character's voice and emotions.
- **Use pacing and rhythm to create tension:** Monologues that build tension and release it are often the most engaging. Use pace (indicated by stage directions) and rhythm to create tension and keep your audience engaged throughout your speech.
- **Use repetition and variation:** Repetition can be a powerful tool in creating a memorable and impactful monologue. Use repetition to create a sense of urgency or emphasis, but be sure to vary your language to keep your audience engaged.
- **Edit and refine:** Once you have a draft of your monologue, take the time to review and polish it. Pay attention to pacing, structure and language, and cut any unnecessary words or ideas. Rehearse your monologue several times to get a sense of how it sounds when spoken aloud.

Craft a character monologue

In this activity, you will compose a brief, engaging monologue for a character in less than fifteen minutes.

1. Choose a character from a favourite book or film.
2. Identify the character's motivations, making notes about their fears and desires.
3. Develop the character's voice. Focus on their unique thoughts, feelings and attitudes.

4 Compose a short original monologue (between one and two minutes in length) that showcases the character's perspective on an incident, situation or relationship. Ensure you include the key features of a monologue.
5 Share your monologue with a peer for feedback, and discuss how effectively it captures the character's distinct voice and perspective.

Voice and style

The voice of a *character* is a unique representation of their personality, shaped by their background, experiences and desires. Style, on the other hand, refers to the author's individual approach to conveying their message. It is the combination of language features such as word choice, syntax (the arrangement of words into sentence structures), figurative language (metaphors and similes), imagery and pacing.

Virginia Gay constructs a unique voice for her characterisation of Cyrano by using a combination of playful and romantic imagery, rhythmic pacing and pauses.

In particular, her use of repetition – such as 'let's …' – creates a sense of urgent excitement as the speaker communicates her desires, while the pauses and shifts in tone convey a vulnerability and honesty that makes the character feel authentic. For example, when Cyrano mentions children, there is a moment of hesitation that humanises the character and intimately connects her with the audience.

Gay also uses imagery to good effect in the monologue. The reference to 'our skin dry rubbed with clove and cinnamon' creates a sense of wonder and delight, drawing the audience into the character's fantasies.

Conveying a particular voice and style

The following advice will help you to convey a similarly rhythmic and imaginative voice and style to the one that Gay establishes.

- **Imagery:** Vivid descriptions of sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures may transport the audience to another place and allow them to develop intimacy with the character.
- **Rhythm and pacing:** The use of pauses, changes in tone and repetition can create a sense of urgency or connection, drawing the audience into the character's thoughts and feelings.

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- **Structure:** The use of paragraphs, sections or other organisational tools builds narrative and thematic coherence, helping the audience to follow the speaker's train of thought.
- **Tone:** The character's attitude and emotional state can be conveyed through the use of language, as with sarcasm, irony or playfulness.

Analyse voice and style in Gay's monologue

In this activity, you will analyse Virginia Gay's monologue from the play *Cyrano* to identify the elements of voice and style used by the writer. You will then use those elements to create your own monologue. Begin by watching the video of the monologue from *Cyrano* and reading the transcript carefully.

1 Identify the elements of voice and style used by Gay in the monologue, such as the following.
   - **Imagery:** What kinds of sensory details does Gay use to create a vivid picture for the audience?
   - **Rhythm and pacing:** How does Gay use pauses, repetition and changes in tone to create a sense of intimacy and emotion in the character's voice?
   - **Structure:** How is the monologue organised, and how does that contribute to the character's voice and personality?
   - **Tone:** What is the overall attitude or emotional state of the character, and how does Gay convey that through language?

2 Use annotations or notes to mark specific examples of these elements in the transcript or on screenshots from the video.
3 Using the elements you identified, plan your own monologue. Think about the voice and personality of the character you want to create and how you can use language, tone and structure to convey that to the audience.
4 Write a draft of your monologue, using the elements you identified as a guide. Consider how you can use pacing, rhythm and imagery to create connection to and emotional depth in your character.
5 Read your monologue aloud to yourself or to a group, paying attention to how the language and pacing sound. Revise your monologue as needed to create a strong and unique sense of voice and style.
6 Share your monologue with others and ask for feedback on the elements you used. Consider how you might use this feedback to further refine your monologue and create an even stronger sense of voice and style.

Expanding creative expression with vocabulary

Creative expression and vocabulary are essential tools for writers to convey meaning and evoke emotion in their writing. Gay's monologue uses these elements to create vivid images and an engaging character. The table below explains some of the ways in which her specific language choices have particular effects on the audience.

Quotation	Effect
'Marble that looks like flesh'	This simile emphasises the speaker's appreciation of art and beauty – in this case, sculpture. The audience is immersed in the scene through the sensual and tactile term 'flesh'.
'Butterflies in stone with transparent wings'	A sense of wonder and magic is conveyed through this metaphor, drawing the audience into the character's imagination. The use of the word 'transparent' adds to the visual appeal and ephemeral sense of the image.
'Let's get head eggs from the day drinking'	This is a unique and unexpected phrase that suggests a sense of playfulness and whimsy. The choice of 'head eggs' instead of 'hangover' contributes to a humorous and lighthearted tone, drawing the audience further into the character's perspective.
'Smell of someone pressing waffle cones'	Sensory imagery adds an element of realism, which makes the scene feel alive and dynamic. The use of the verb 'pressing' is particularly impactful in presenting this sense of activity.
'The mess and the fuss of living'	This phrase captures a universal experience and conveys authenticity and vulnerability. The terms 'mess' and 'fuss' reflect chaos and disarray, which can be relatable to many audience members, whereas 'living' provides a sense of hope, making the monologue feel more poignant and meaningful.

Improve monologues with effective vocabulary

In this activity, you will add engaging and effective vocabulary to a text you have already written.

1 Choose a monologue or creative piece that you have written.

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2 Read through the piece and highlight the vocabulary or word choices that you feel are particularly effective in conveying meaning or emotion.
3 Use a different coloured highlighter to mark any words or phrases that you feel could be improved or replaced to make the writing more impactful.
4 Rewrite the piece, keeping the effective vocabulary you highlighted and replacing any weaker words or phrases with more powerful language.
5 Read the revised piece aloud to yourself or to a group, paying attention to how the language and rhythm sound, then change any words you still feel lack precision or power.
6 Share your revised piece with others and ask for feedback on the language choices you made. Consider how you might use this feedback to further refine your writing and create an even more impactful piece.

Developing memorable characters

Characterisation is the process by which a writer creates and develops a fictional character in an imaginative text. Through characterisation, the writer can give the character a unique voice, personality and backstory, making them feel like a well-rounded, believable person to the audience. What a character says, the way they say it, how they look and dress, their actions and decisions, and how they interact with other characters are just some of the ways that writers might construct characters.

In this monologue, Gay uses vivid imagery and sensory details to create a realistic and engaging character. Cyrano is characterised as a romantic and adventurous person who is passionate about food, art and travel. This is evident when Cyrano describes wanting to kiss her love interest's neck in a museum, or when she suggests attending to the sounds and smells of the world that are pootling on outside their window in Cuba – 'car horns, shouts of people, a hammer drill … waffle cones, gasoline, jasmine'. The pacing and rhythm of the monologue also contribute to Cyrano's characterisation, with Gay using pauses and changes in tone to convey the character's emotions and desires.

Gay also characterises Cyrano's love interest, Roxanne, as strong and independent. Gay uses gaps in the monologue to give Roxanne a distinct voice, such as when Cyrano alludes to Roxanne telling her she's a vegetarian – obviously referring to a conversation in the past. This also happens when Cyrano mentions having children, which is followed by some awkwardness. By characterising Roxanne in this way, Gay creates a compelling love interest for Cyrano and adds depth and complexity to the story, even though Roxanne does not appear in this scene.

Create compelling characters in monologues

In this activity, you will brainstorm and explore different ways of characterising someone through a monologue, and develop a captivating character with a unique voice and personality.

1. Choose a character or person that you want to characterise in your monologue. This could be a fictional character, a historical figure or someone you know in real life.
2. Brainstorm different aspects of the character's personality, backstory and interests. Consider what motivates them, what they care about and their unique perspective on the world.
3. Write a list of descriptive words and phrases that capture the essence of the character. Think particularly about their mannerisms, tone of voice and way of speaking.
4. Write a rough draft of your monologue, incorporating some of the character traits and descriptive language you brainstormed.
5. Read the monologue aloud to yourself or to a group, paying attention to the pacing and rhythm of the speech. Consider how the language and tone of the monologue reflect the character's personality and emotions.
6. Practise delivering your monologue, experimenting with different tones, pacing and gestures to convey the character's emotions and personality.
7. Share your monologue with others and ask for feedback on the characterisation. Consider how you can use this feedback to further refine and develop your character, and create an even more compelling monologue.

Enhancing the theatrical experience

There are many ways to enhance a dramatic performance, including through set design, music and sound. These elements can help to create a mood or atmosphere that complements the story being told and draws the audience into the world of the play.

Scan the code or click **here** to access the education pack compiled by the Melbourne Theatre Company, which includes information about decisions made by those involved in staging the play.

Music

In this monologue, music plays an important part in setting the mood and tone of the scene. The slow and slightly melancholic strings create a sense of wistfulness and longing, appropriate for a scene in which Cyrano is expressing her desires and dreams for the future. As the monologue progresses and Cyrano talks about the possibility of having children, the music shifts to a more romantic and nostalgic tone, underscoring the emotional depth of the scene. Finally, the music builds to a crescendo, which adds a sense of urgency and excitement to the moment.

Xani Kolac, musical director for MTC's *Cyrano*, describes the music at the start of the play as 'all a bit self-conscious', just like the characters. She wrote the music to mimic the storyline of *Cyrano*, ensuring harmony and coherence with the story.

Set design

In the creative team's artistic vision for *Cyrano*, set design plays a significant role in enhancing the theatrical experience. Although Rostand's original script for *Cyrano de Bergerac* was set across various locations including a hotel, pastry shop and war-torn countryside, Gay's adaptation is simply set on 'an empty stage'. The concept is meta-theatrical; that is, the play acknowledges the fact that it is a constructed work rather than 'real'. The actors play a travelling group of actors who arrive on the empty stage and begin to set up the story, allowing the theatre itself to come alive. Set designer Elizabeth Gadsby notes that the design needed to 'step in and out of telling the old story', so her construction presents the audience with a 'theatre within a theatre'.

The version of the monologue listed for study is from Virginia Gay's performance on the ABC television show *Q+A*. Although this version does not take place on the stage envisioned by Elizabeth Gadsby, it does incorporate some elements of set design that are worthy of note. For example, Gay performs the monologue alone at the centre of an empty stage, as befits both a monologue and the intent of the original set design. The stage is lit with subdued red and blue lights, which contribute to the romantic and nostalgic atmosphere of the scene.

Incorporating theatrical elements into your writing

Your VCE Creating texts outcome is not designed to be performed (although there's nothing to say that what you write can't ultimately become a full production!). When writing a monologue, however, you can still incorporate theatrical elements like music, stage directions, lighting and set design.

Stage directions might appear alongside your monologue, like this:

> [As Sarah enters, the stage is bathed in a warm, orange light that gradually fades to a deep blue.]

Alternatively, you might incorporate music into your piece, indicating the style and mood you want to evoke. For example:

> [As Van speaks, a haunting melody begins to play softly in the background, growing in intensity and volume as the monologue reaches its climax.]

Remember, incorporating theatrical elements into your writing can add depth and impact to your monologue, helping to transport your audience into the world of your story. Be creative and experiment with different elements to see what works best for your piece.

EXPLORING 'AN OPEN LETTER TO DOUBTING THOMAS'

This section looks at the second of the mentor texts for Writing about play: 'An open letter to doubting Thomas' by Chelsea Roffey.

Scan the code or click **here** to read the text.

Background and context

Chelsea Roffey's 'An open letter to doubting Thomas' first appeared in an anthology called *From the Outer: Footy Like You've Never Heard It*. *From the Outer* is a collection of creative nonfiction, poetry and short fiction that highlights the diverse perspectives on Australian Rules football. Edited by Alicia Sometimes and Nicole Hayes, the anthology brings together 30 personal stories from 'those who are female, Indigenous or gay; those with a disability, a foreign accent or … literary learnings'.

The anthology as a whole captures the passion and dedication of those 'who love the game even when the game hasn't always loved them' back. With contributions from individuals such as Leila Gurruwiwi, Angela Pippos, Jason Tuazon-McCheyne, Christos Tsiolkas, Sophie Cunningham, Tony Birch and Alice Pung, *From the Outer* showcases the splendour of the game while shedding light on the challenges faced by those on the fringes of the AFL (Australian Football League) community. The narratives act as both a mirror to and a window into Australian culture, delving deep into metaphor, memory, humour and hard truths. If you are looking to expand your studies, the anthology could provide additional useful supplementary texts.

In her open letter, Roffey addresses an unidentifiable male persona called 'Thomas', who functions as the voice of doubt to her career goals and aspirations. The text provides insight into Roffey's determination and resilience, as she confronts and dismantles gender stereotypes in the world of football. Roffey's account of being an elite football official is both sharp and funny, offering an introspective personal account of her push into a traditionally male domain.

About the author

Chelsea Roffey, born on 1 August 1981 in South Australia, is a speaker, writer and researcher who is best known for being a goal umpire in the AFL. Entering the world of goal umpiring at the young age of 17, she challenged gender norms and stereotypes in a field historically dominated by middle-aged men.

In 2012, Roffey made history as the first woman to umpire an AFL Grand Final, and she was subsequently named as the Official of the Year at both the Victorian and Queensland Sports Awards. Her career highlights include umpiring over 280 AFL games and 16 finals. Her achievements also extend beyond the sports arena, with an academic background in music, biomedical science and journalism. She notes that she has been able to combine her 'love of language and communication with the adrenaline-charged life of AFL football'.

Roffey's pursuit of equality and performance has led her to explore these themes across various international platforms. As an invited guest, she has attended events such as the APEC Women Leadership Forum in Beijing and the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York. Roffey was awarded a Winston Churchill Fellowship in 2014, which took her to the US, Canada, the UK, Sweden and India.

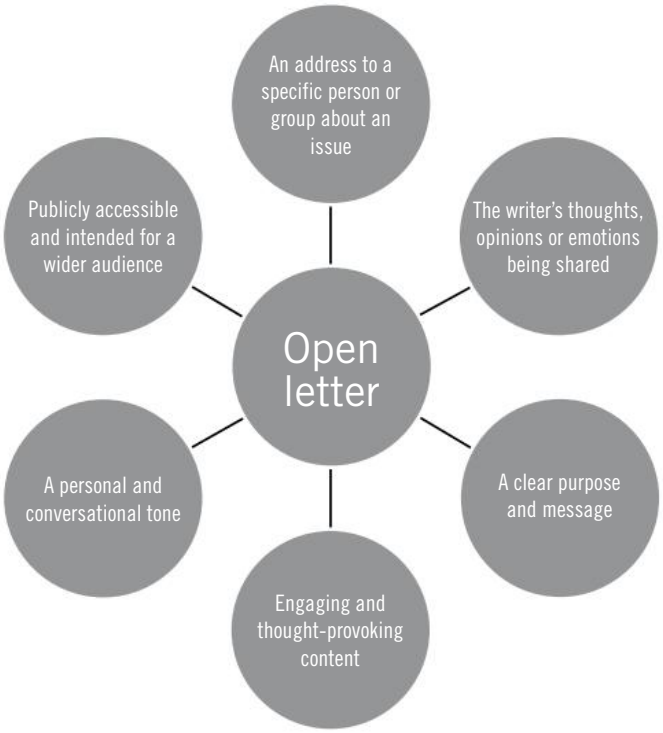
Roffey's career has been dedicated to examining the barriers to and opportunities for diversity and inclusion. Over the years, her commitment to these topics has driven her to excel both individually and as part of a team. By sharing evidence-based insights and real-life stories, she empowers individuals and groups in her work.

The text's form

Roffey's text is an open letter. An open letter is a compelling and engaging form that allows a writer to address a specific person, group or issue in a public manner. As a writer, you have the opportunity to share your thoughts, opinions and emotions with a wider audience while maintaining a personal and conversational tone. Open letters can be used to convey a message, raise awareness or create a call to action, and they can be written in various formats, such as essays, articles or blog posts.

When writing an open letter, it's essential to establish a clear purpose and audience, and to maintain a strong, authentic voice throughout. Consider the message you want to convey, the emotions you want to evoke and the impact you hope to achieve as you craft your open letter. A well-written open letter will engage your readers, provoke thought and inspire action.

Key features of an open letter include the following.



Craft an open letter

In this activity, you will compose a concise, engaging open letter on a topic of your choice.

1. Select a subject that you feel passionately about or have a strong opinion on.
2. Determine the person, group or issue you want to address in your open letter.
3. Focus on maintaining a strong, authentic voice that reflects your thoughts and emotions.
4. Compose a short open letter (about one or two pages in length) that communicates your message effectively, incorporating the key features of an open letter above.
5. Share your open letter with a peer for feedback, and discuss how effectively it captures your voice, purpose and message.

Exploring the concept of play in the text

Roffey's open letter is deliberately humorous and ironic. It also touches on many different aspects of play. Here are some examples of how Roffey writes about play.

Element of play	Explanation
Childhood play and competition	Roffey talks about her early experiences in various activities, from apple-bobbing contests and dancing to orchestral performances and performing in high school productions. She also mentions how her mother believed she was born with a 'fear of missing out', which encouraged her to try new things. Roffey shares these playful moments from her upbringing and how her parents instilled self-worth and aspirations in her. These experiences helped her develop the skills and resilience needed to handle the pressures of being an AFL umpire in front of large crowds.
Handling criticism and backlash	Roffey discusses how she has been publicly scrutinised and had commentators questioning her decisions during games. She acknowledges the importance of learning from mistakes and being held accountable while also developing a thick skin.
Navigating a male-dominated sport	Roffey shares the challenges she has experienced as a result of being a woman in a male-dominated field, particularly in terms of dealing with preconceptions about her competence and finding a balance between professionalism and personal style. She emphasises the importance of proving her knowledge and skills in order to be taken seriously as an umpire.
Finding strength through humour	Roffey uses a sarcastic tone throughout her open letter, highlighting how she's learned to embrace humour when facing hardships and to use it as a means to encourage change. For example, she wittily mentions wearing 'a sensible pair' of underwear when umpiring 'that, truth be told, rivalled the knickers Renée Zellweger made famous in *Bridget Jones' Diary*'. Roffey uses a comparison to a well-known romantic comedy – which many of her readers would connect with – to provide a detailed and humorous description of gender disparities in sports. She also shares the lessons she's learned through building humour and camaraderie among her colleagues, including navigating the nuances of male-dominated jokes and finding a balance between assertiveness and likeability.

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Acceptance and growth	Roffey reflects on the importance of self-acceptance and embracing her imperfections, recognising that being constantly reminded of her limitations can be a powerful tool for encouragement and growth. She appreciates the support and feedback she has received and acknowledges the remarkable highlights of her career, despite the challenges she has faced along the way.

Creating engaging nonfiction

As a budding writer, you might have been drawn to the world of fiction, with its limitless possibilities for creating characters and stories. However, nonfiction can be just as compelling and descriptive as fiction, offering you the chance to explore real-life events, people and issues in creative ways. By harnessing the power of storytelling and language, you can bring to life even the most factual or historical subjects.

Creative nonfiction is a genre that combines the art of storytelling with the accuracy and depth of factual information. This type of writing allows you to delve into your chosen subject matter and share your insights, research and experiences with your audience in a way that is both informative and entertaining.

Here are six tips to help you create engaging nonfiction pieces.

- **Choose a compelling topic:** Select a subject that genuinely interests you and engages your readers. Your passion for the topic will shine through in your writing, making it more captivating for your audience.
- **Research thoroughly:** Dive deep into your subject matter, gathering as much information as possible to provide a rich, accurate and detailed account. Your credibility should be enhanced by doing so, and your research will also help you uncover fascinating facts and stories to share.
- **Find your unique angle:** Explore your topic from a fresh perspective or focus on a specific aspect that hasn't been covered extensively. This will make your piece stand out and pique the curiosity of your readers.
- **Use descriptive language:** Incorporate vivid and sensory details to help your readers visualise the people, places and events you're describing and make your nonfiction piece more immersive and memorable. There is more on this later in this section.

- **Emphasise storytelling:** Even though your piece is based on facts, remember to weave a compelling narrative that engages your readers and keeps them hooked. Use elements of storytelling – such as tension, pacing and character development – to bring your nonfiction to life.
- **Edit and revise:** Once you've written your piece, take the time to review and refine it. This will help you eliminate any errors, tighten your prose and ensure your writing is clear, concise and polished. Remember that great writing often comes from careful revision and attention to detail.

Voice and style

In Roffey's text, we can see how the author's unique voice and writing style play a significant role in making the piece engaging and memorable.

Roffey's voice is conversational and humorous, making her writing feel like a friendly chat while using self-deprecation and wit to keep the reader entertained. Irony and mockery are used extensively throughout the letter to draw attention to significant social issues in a way that is accessible to the reader, particularly in regard to the treatment of women in the male-dominated sporting industry.

Roffey's writing style is characterised by vivid descriptions where she uses sensory details and imagery to help the reader visualise and engage with the scenes she's describing. She also shares personal experiences and anecdotal stories to illustrate her points and create a deeper connection with the reader. This connection with the reader is further built through her strong sense of personality, which shines through in her writing.

Capturing a humorous and vivid voice and style

The following advice will help you to convey a similarly humorous and vivid voice and style to that used by Roffey.

- **Be authentic:** Write in a way that feels true to your personality and experiences.
- **Experiment with tone:** Try using different tones to find the one that best suits your writing and subject matter.
- **Share personal anecdotes:** Including personal stories and experiences can make your writing more relatable and engaging. →

- **Use humour:** Incorporating wit and humour can make your writing more enjoyable for readers.
- **Play with language:** Use descriptive language and imagery to paint a vivid picture in your reader's mind.

Develop your voice

In this activity, you'll work on capturing and developing your unique voice through audio recording, transcribing, brainstorming and reflective writing.

1. Have a conversation with a friend or family member and record it (with their permission). Choose a topic that interests you and encourages discussion.
2. Listen to the recording and transcribe the conversation. You can find free apps online that do this for you. Pay close attention to your speech patterns, your tone and the way you express your thoughts.
3. Reflect on your transcribed conversation and brainstorm the elements that make your voice unique. Consider your tone, humour, personality and storytelling style.
4. Using your brainstormed list as a guide, write a short reflective piece (approximately 500 words) on a topic of your choice. You can choose the topic you were discussing in the conversation, or another one entirely. Focus on incorporating your unique voice and style throughout the piece.
5. Review your reflective piece, ensuring that your voice is consistent and authentic. Make any necessary revisions to polish your writing and capture your voice effectively.

Using vignettes and memories in nonfiction

A vignette is a brief evocative scene or description that captures a moment, character or idea in a vivid way. Memories, on the other hand, are personal recollections of past experiences that can be used to bring depth, emotion and authenticity to nonfiction writing.

In Chelsea Roffey's open letter, the author skilfully weaves vignettes and memories throughout her piece, creating a rich tapestry of experiences. These brief scenes and recollections allow the reader to see the world through her eyes and better understand her journey and unique perspective. By incorporating vignettes and memories into her writing, Roffey invites the reader to join her in reliving these moments, making her nonfiction writing more engaging, compelling and relatable.

The table below highlights a few examples of Roffey's use of vignettes and memories in her text.

Quotation	Effect
'Failings are always front of mind, but there have been remarkable highlights, too – from the roar of the crowd on Anzac Day, to being enveloped by Port Adelaide supporters' heartfelt rendition of "Never Tear Us Apart", to being unknowingly featured on a campaign for Sportsbet's "big behinds" promotion.'	Roffey shares her experiences with football fans – both the positives and the negatives. By providing these vignettes, she creates descriptive scenes that quickly immerse the reader in distinct moments in her life. In these examples, the reader is provided with a brief impression of the disrespect she is shown as a woman in the sporting industry, as well as the sense of community she experiences in sport.
'To add to the hype, Prime Minister Gillard requested access to the umpires' rooms ahead of the match.'	The author recounts a memorable encounter with Australia's first female Prime Minister, offering a glimpse into their shared experiences as pioneering women.
'Becoming "one of the boys" has taught me many life lessons, Thomas.'	Roffey reflects on the lessons she's learned from working in a male-dominated environment, providing insight into her personal growth and resilience.

Five ways to capture memories for your writing

- **Journalling:** Regularly jot down your thoughts, feelings and experiences in a journal to create a record of your memories.
- **Photographs:** Use photos as visual prompts to help you recall details and emotions from specific moments.
- **Conversations:** Talk with friends or family members about shared experiences to gain new perspectives and insights.
- **Sensory cues**: Engage your senses by revisiting sights, sounds, smells, tastes or textures that evoke memories from your past.
- **Objects:** Collect objects or mementos that hold personal significance to remind you of specific experiences or moments in time.

Turn a memory into a piece of writing

In this activity, you will focus on a particularly strong memory and use it to develop a piece of descriptive nonfiction writing.

1. Select a personal memory that holds significance or evokes strong emotions.
2. Make a list of words associated with this recollection, focusing on sensory details such as sights, sounds, smells, tastes and textures.
3. Organise your list of words into categories or themes.
4. Using your brainstormed list as a guide, write a brief evocative scene or description that captures the essence of your memory. Focus on incorporating sensory details and emotions to bring it to life.
5. Review your vignette, ensuring that it effectively conveys your memory and the emotions it evokes. Make any necessary revisions to create a polished piece.

Blending fictional and nonfictional elements

In effective nonfiction writing, authors often incorporate elements of fiction to create a more engaging and immersive reading experience. By borrowing techniques commonly used in fiction, nonfiction writers can craft compelling narratives, evoke vivid imagery and draw readers into the world they've created. This fusion of fictional and nonfictional elements helps to bring stories to life, making them more relatable and memorable for readers.

Using a narrative structure in nonfiction

Employing a narrative structure in nonfiction writing can help guide readers through the story, making it easier for them to follow and understand the author's message. A clear and engaging narrative structure can also create a sense of flow and cohesion within the text.

Roffey's text is structured as an open letter addressed to 'Thomas' but it has a clear beginning, middle and end supported by the order of memories. In addition, she shares anecdotes and experiences throughout the letter, creating a natural progression of events and building her narrative.

Using descriptive language in nonfiction

Incorporating descriptive language into nonfiction writing can help paint a vivid picture for readers, allowing them to visualise the events, settings and emotions described by the author. Descriptive language can also make nonfiction writing more engaging and emotionally resonant.

For example, Roffey notes in her text that 'as a baby of the '80s, there was one thing I noticed that a truly decisive man, a real man, wore with absolute pride: a moustache'. She lists a number of well-known examples, including filmmaker Alby Mangles who had 'a mop of golden locks offset by an unkempt spray of whiskers'. The description of the classic 1980s 'mo' extends for almost a full page and provides the background to gender representations in the rest of the letter.

Using figurative language in nonfiction

Figurative language, such as metaphors and similes, can add depth and complexity to nonfiction writing, making it more thought-provoking and memorable. By using figurative language, authors can convey abstract ideas and emotions more effectively, helping readers connect with the material on a deeper level.

Roffey uses figurative language devices throughout her letter for humorous and meaningful effect. She frequently uses similes to create imagery for her points in the letter, such as her description of her work ethic as 'like a rat in a lab experiment' where she 'kept coming back for more'. She also uses a combination of a sexist idiom and onomatopoeia when referring to the 'young man who playfully referred to [her] as a "cougar". Grrrrrr!' These figurative language devices work here to emphasise the ridiculousness of gendered comments from people in the sporting community.

Using narrative elements in nonfiction

Narrative devices are those aspects of fiction writing that work together to create a cohesive story. They include the specific choices that writers have made to develop their story and get their message across.

The table below identifies a few narrative elements that are commonly used in fiction writing and provides suggestions for how these may be transferred into nonfiction writing.

Narrative elements of fiction	How they might be used in nonfiction
Plot	Organising events in a logical sequence to create a compelling narrative
Setting	Describing the physical environment or context in which events occur

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Characterisation	Providing insights into the personalities, motivations and emotions of real people
Conflict	Presenting real-life challenges, tensions or dilemmas
Theme	Conveying underlying ideas or messages that emerge from the author's experiences

Blend fictional and nonfictional elements in your writing

In this activity, you will use a graphic organiser to help plan your nonfiction writing using elements of fiction.

1. Select a topic or experience from your own life that you'd like to write about.
2. Create a graphic organiser by dividing a sheet of paper into five sections, one for each of the narrative elements of fiction (plot, setting, characterisation, conflict and theme).
3. In each section of the graphic organiser, consider how you can incorporate a corresponding nonfictional element. Write down your ideas and any specific examples or details you'd like to include.
4. Using the ideas you've generated in your graphic organiser, outline the overall structure of your nonfiction piece, ensuring that the fictional elements are seamlessly integrated.
5. Examine your graphic organiser and narrative structure plan, checking for cohesion and flow. Ensure that the blend of fictional and nonfictional elements enhances the overall impact of your planned writing. Make any necessary adjustments to refine your plan before you begin writing.

EXPLORING 'ALL THAT WE KNOW OF DREAMING'

In this section, we explore the third of the mentor texts for Writing about play: Penni Russon's 'All that we know of dreaming', a short story featured in the anthology *Something Special, Something Rare: Outstanding Short Stories by Australian Women*.

Scan the code or click **here** to read the story.

Background and context

Penni Russon's short story 'All that we know of dreaming' was first published in *The Big Issue Fiction Edition* in 2009, before being taken up by the Australian publisher Black Inc. for inclusion in their anthologies, *The Best Australian Stories 2009* and *Something Special, Something Rare* in 2015. In line with the VCE English and EAL Text List, we will be looking at the background and context of Russon's text in *Something Special, Something Rare,* a collection of short stories by Australian women. It offers readers insights into various facets of life, showcasing both established writers such as Kate Grenville and Joan London, and writers such as Tara June Winch and Anna Krien, who are in the earlier stages of their careers.

Black Inc. describes the anthology as 'tales of love, secrets, doubt and torment, the everyday and the extraordinary'. This description reflects the unique power of short stories to convey depth, complexity and emotional resonance within a limited framework. They can evoke a sense of wonder, deliver a potent message or provide a snapshot of a character's life.

'All that we know of dreaming' is one such story that exemplifies the strengths of short fiction. Russon wrote the text while living with her family near the Black Saturday bushfires in the Kinglake area in Victoria. As part of this carefully curated collection, Russon's work stands alongside other masterful tales, each contributing to a collection of 'brilliant, shocking and profound' short stories, as they are characterised on the back cover of *Something Special, Something Rare*. As you delve into the world of 'All that we know of dreaming', keep in mind the tapestry of Australian stories it belongs to. Take inspiration from the wide array of styles and themes present in *Something Special, Something Rare*, and consider how the unique qualities of short fiction can be harnessed to create powerful and unforgettable narratives.

About the author

Dr Penni Russon is an accomplished Australian author born in Tasmania in 1974. With a passion for writing that began with poetry, Russon has authored numerous novels for children and young adults, including the *Undine* trilogy, *The Indigo Girls*, *Only Ever Always* and *The Endsister*. Her work has been featured in various publications, such as *Kill Your Darlings*; *Eat the Sky*, *Drink the Ocean*; *Island* and *Review of Australian Fiction*.

Russon's academic journey took her to Monash University, where she studied Children's Literature, and RMIT University, where she focused on Professional Writing and Editing. Her research interests lie at the intersection of reading and writing, with a focus on how texts generate meaning, as well as the formation of communities around texts. In 2020, she completed her PhD in youth mental health and graphic medicine, examining the role of comics in moderated online social therapy. This research has had an international impact on the lives of young people, with applications in mental health service delivery across Europe, North America and Australia.

Not only is Russon a celebrated author and researcher, but she also has over two decades of experience as a freelance editor, working primarily on books for children and teenagers. As a creative writing and structural editing instructor, she shares her expertise with students at the University of Melbourne's undergraduate and graduate programs.

With an impressive range of novels and academic achievements, and a genuine interest in the impact of literature on readers, Penni Russon serves as an inspiring mentor to emerging writers, guiding them to explore their own creativity and the power of the written word.

Explore the author and their context

1 Look online, in your school library or in a local library to find other work by Penni Russon. Read two or three pieces (such as short stories or excerpts from her novels). What similarities do they have with 'All that we know of dreaming'? What are the differences? Look at elements such as word choices, sentence structures, style and tone.

2 Other authors in *Something Special, Something Rare* include well-known writers Cate Kennedy, Joan London, Sonya Harnett and Favel Parrett. Find a novel or short story by one of these writers, and read a passage. How does it compare to Russon's work? Note any striking language or imagery.

The text's form

Short stories have long been a beloved literary form, offering readers a chance to dive into a narrative world within a compact space. They are often characterised by their ability to create a powerful impact using concise language, well-crafted characters and a carefully chosen setting. The brevity of short stories challenges authors to engage readers quickly and maintain their attention, often requiring a keen understanding of pacing, structure and narrative economy.

The beauty of short stories lies in their versatility. They can explore a wide range of themes, settings and styles, providing a rich canvas for experimentation and creativity. For example, short stories may be presented through narrative, introspection or dialogue, or a combination of these. Writers can use the short story form to hone their skills, explore new ideas or deliver powerful messages. This versatility also offers readers a unique opportunity to experience a variety of narrative voices, perspectives and themes in a single sitting.

As you embark on your own short story journey, remember that the form's strength lies in its ability to capture the essence of a moment, character or idea with precision and clarity. With a strong focus on quality over quantity, a successful short story can leave a lasting impression on readers, inviting them to reflect on the narrative long after they've finished reading.

Key features of a short story include the following.

Exploring the concept of play in the text

Russon's story is an evocative exploration of play in both children and adults. The table below shows some of the ways Russon explores the concept of play.

Element of play	Explanation
The imaginative world of children	One passage describes the children playing in the orchard, planning to catch a bird and make it a pet, and engaging in other imaginative games. This shows the capacity of play to evoke the boundless creativity and curiosity of children, as they explore the world and create their own narratives.
Evoking memories and creating connections	The main character and her sister reminisce about their own childhood games, which were played over long periods of time, and how they can still see themselves in the actions of children playing. The sisters delegate roles in an imaginary game and bond over their shared histories. This demonstrates how play has the power to evoke memories and reconnect adults with their own childhood experiences.
Processing emotions for adults	The main character processes her emotions and feelings of being lost by engaging in imaginative play and envisioning scenarios. She gets caught up with her imagination when exploring the rusted wreck and the heart of the forest, visualising people known and unknown to her. This shows that play can serve as a coping mechanism and help individuals deal with complex emotions.
Children's adaptability and resilience	The children, despite being pinched and scolded, are able to adapt and continue to engage in play, showcasing the strength and flexibility of children in various situations.
Emotional expression in young children	Mimi's engagement in play allows her to express her emotions. For example, she conveys happiness and contentment when interacting with the kangaroo and sliding on her backside.

Creating compelling short stories

A crucial aspect of crafting captivating short stories is the ability to generate and resolve tension efficiently. With fewer words at their disposal compared to novels, authors must build engaging narratives without relying on intricate character arcs or intertwined storylines.

Consider these strategies to maintain a compelling and potent narrative in your short story, despite the limited word count.

- **Start strong:** Begin your story with an opening line or scene that immediately grabs the reader's attention.
- **Embrace simplicity:** Focus on a single idea, theme or conflict that can be explored and resolved effectively within the constraints of a short story format. A simple, well-executed concept can have a profound impact.
- **Establish stakes:** Quickly clarify what your characters stand to gain or lose in the story. High stakes will heighten reader interest and investment in the story's outcome.
- **Create dynamic characters:** Develop characters that are complex enough to evoke empathy or curiosity, yet simple enough to fit within a short narrative. Flesh them out with engaging dialogue and distinctive traits, motivations and desires, making them feel real and relatable to readers. A strong character can drive the story and make it memorable.
- **Use pacing:** Skilfully manipulate the pacing of your story, balancing exposition, action and reflection to keep readers engaged and control narrative tension. It can be helpful to plan your story's beginning, middle and end, ensuring a well-paced and cohesive flow.
- **Craft vivid settings:** Choose settings that contribute to the atmosphere and tone of your story. If you use descriptive language and vivid imagery to immerse readers in these settings, you'll allow them to experience it rather than just read about it.
- **Incorporate surprise:** Introduce unexpected twists or turns in your story to maintain reader interest. A timely surprise can create tension and drive the story to a satisfying conclusion.
- **Harness the power of subtext:** Use subtext to add depth and complexity to your story. By implying underlying emotions, motivations or conflicts, you can create layers of meaning without adding unnecessary words.
- **Emphasise transformation:** Focus on a pivotal moment or turning point in your character's life, showing how they change or grow as a result. A transformation can be subtle yet impactful.
- **Refine your language:** Write with clarity and precision, using carefully selected and evocative language to create an immersive experience for your readers. Strong, concise writing can convey powerful emotions and make your short story memorable. →

- **Leave an impression:** Aim to leave your readers with a lasting thought, question or emotion. A thought-provoking or emotionally resonant ending can elevate your short story.

Keep these strategies in mind as you craft your own stories and enjoy the creative process of exploring the endless possibilities within this form.

Find your story strategies

In this activity, you will discover short stories that resonate with you and serve as mentor texts for your own writing.

1 Find places where you can access a range of short stories. This may include online or in-person places and events. You may like to consider the following suggestions.
   - Explore online literary magazines and websites that feature short stories.
   - Visit your local library or bookstore and peruse anthologies and collections of short stories.
   - Consult your teachers or peers for recommendations, asking them to suggest short stories they've enjoyed or found impactful.
   - Attend local readings or literary events, where you can listen to authors read their short stories and gain insight into their creative process.
   - Join a writing group or book club focused on short stories, using the discussions to further your understanding of the form and discover new works.

2 Choose five short stories that you were most intrigued or inspired by during your reading research.
3 Reflect on the short stories you've selected, identifying the elements that resonated with you most. It will be helpful to review the short story strategies listed on pages 41–2, such as the use of vivid settings, surprise, pacing and character transformation.
4 Consider how you can incorporate these aspects into your own writing and write a list of ideas to refer back to when constructing your next short story.

Voice and style

Penni Russon's short story exhibits a distinct voice and style that is characterised by a blend of introspection and observation. This balance between the interior and exterior world allows the reader to delve into the protagonist's thoughts and emotions as well as her surroundings. Russon's voice and style captivate the reader through a reflective tone, rich imagery and poetic language.

Russon's narrative voice conveys a sense of introspection, often revealing the protagonist's innermost world. For example, when the protagonist speaks to her sister on the phone, her feelings of uncertainty and vulnerability are apparent: '"Well then, who am I?" My voice sounded far more plaintive than I meant it to.' The protagonist's contemplative moments give the reader insight into her personal struggles and the complexity of her character.

One of the striking aspects of Russon's style is her use of vivid and evocative imagery, which is evident throughout the story. The protagonist's description of the pears, for instance, creates a sensory experience that engages the reader: 'One side was smooth, classical, like the curve from waist to hip. Yet just as I laid my hand on the hardness of the pale green skin, I saw that the other side of the pear had been eaten out, and the fruit was filled with quivering wasps, entering and exiting, gorging on the interior.' The juxtaposition of the pear's beauty with the unsettling image of the wasps creates a sense of unease that permeates the story.

Another aspect of Russon's style is her poetic language, which lends the story an almost dreamlike quality. This is particularly evident in the protagonist's descriptions of her surroundings, such as when she observes the car wreck: 'The tissue of meaning that connects things has grown wild and dangerous, now everything is connected, everything is enmeshed.' This poetic language not only adds depth to the narrative but also reinforces the story's themes of connection, dreams and memory.

Developing an evocative and introspective voice and style

The following advice will help you to develop an evocative and introspective voice and style, like that of Russon.

- **Embrace vivid imagery:** Pay close attention to your descriptions and focus on engaging the reader's senses. Use specific details to create a strong mental image and evoke emotions, whether it's the beauty of nature or the unsettling presence of insects in a piece of fruit. →

- **Delve into introspection:** Explore your characters' inner worlds by sharing their feelings, doubts and insecurities. Use introspection to reveal their struggles and complexities, helping your reader to empathise and connect with your characters on a deeper level.
- **Employ poetic language:** Use poetic language and play with the rhythm and flow of your sentences. Experiment with figurative language, such as metaphors and similes, and choose words that evoke a certain mood or atmosphere. This will add complexity and beauty to your narrative and enhance the overall reading experience.
- **Focus on themes and motifs:** Identify the themes and motifs you want to explore in your own writing and weave them throughout your narrative. This will not only add depth to your story but also create a cohesive and engaging narrative for your reader.

Look inwards

In this activity, you will develop a character who has a meaningful past life with questions, doubts and insecurities.

1. Brainstorm ideas for a character with a complex past, including their background, relationships and experiences.
2. Write for 10–15 minutes without stopping, exploring your character's thoughts, feelings and emotions.
3. Review your free writing by identifying emerging themes, and reflect on how you can further develop your character and their backstory.
4. Create an outline of a short narrative piece that showcases your character's past and present struggles, including setting, plot and other characters.
5. Use your outline as a guide to write a short narrative piece focusing on introspection, vivid imagery and poetic language.
6. Take a break before editing and revising your narrative to improve clarity, coherence and flow.

Poetic language in short stories

The language of poetry is often very evocative and rich, while being concise, focused and meaningful. That makes poetic language perfect for short stories too.

In Russon's short story, we see many examples of poetic language, as explored in the table opposite.

Poetic language technique	Quotation	Effect
Imagery	'The morning was dazzling and damp; a fine mist hovered over the opposite hills.'	Russon creates vivid mental pictures with her descriptions. These images engage the reader's senses and help them visualise the scene.
Rhythm and sound	'As I walked down the low stone steps into the orchard, I pictured you netting the twin pear trees at the beginning of summer, tossing the large white nets over the stretching body of each tree with a graceful gesture, like covering a bed with a sheet.'	Russon's language has a rhythmic quality that contributes to the overall atmosphere of the story. Phrases have a natural flow and melody that engages the reader on an auditory level.
Simile	'One side was smooth, classical, like the curve from waist to hip.'	The use of similes allows Russon to draw comparisons between seemingly unrelated objects or concepts, creating a richer understanding of the story's elements.
Metaphor	'Treelike herself: half of the soil, half of the sky, bending where the wind takes her but fixed in place by other, sturdier forces.'	In this phrase, Russon employs metaphor to express the character's connection to both the earthly and spiritual realms. This metaphor deepens the reader's insight into the character's personality and experiences.
Conciseness	'Their bodies spilled off the blanket; they tussled, fighting for territory.'	Poetic language is often concise and focused, as demonstrated in the example. Russon's choice of words is deliberate and purposeful, conveying a great deal of meaning in just a few words.

Incorporate poetic language into your writing

In this activity, you will take a piece of existing writing and incorporate poetic techniques such as metaphor and concise language.

1. Choose a short passage from a story, essay or any piece of writing you have previously written.
2. Identify at least two places in your passage where you can incorporate imagery to create vivid mental pictures. Rewrite these sections to include more descriptive language.
3. Find opportunities to use similes or metaphors in your passage, adding at least one of each. Look for places where comparisons can be made to enhance the meaning or create a richer understanding of the story's elements.
4. Review each sentence and consider if the language can be more focused and meaningful. Remove unnecessary words and replace weak phrases with stronger, more precise language.
5. Read your passage aloud and listen for any awkward phrasings or places where the flow could be improved. Revise the passage to enhance its auditory appeal.
6. Share your revised passage with a peer or teacher. Discuss how the incorporation of poetic language has affected the overall impact and atmosphere of your writing. Reflect on how you can continue to use poetic language in your future work.

EXPLORING 'ABOUT THE BOYS'

In this section, we will examine the last of the mentor texts for Writing about play: the speech excerpt by Tim Winton that was published as a feature article in *The Guardian.*

Scan the code or click **here** to read the text.

Background and context

'About the boys: Tim Winton on how toxic masculinity is shackling men to misogyny' is an extract from a speech delivered by Tim Winton at The School of Life in Melbourne, where he discussed his novel *The Shepherd's Hut*. As you read this mentor text, it is crucial to understand the context in which the speech was given, and the themes explored in Winton's work.

The School of Life, the organisation through which Winton delivered his speech, is an institution dedicated to helping individuals learn, heal and grow through offering resources, services and programs. Drawing from various disciplines such as 'psychology, psychotherapy, philosophy, art and culture', the School of Life aims to teach people how to live a fulfilling and meaningful life.

The Shepherd's Hut tells the story of Jaxie Clackton, a teenage boy on the run in the wild saltlands of Australia's arid west. Winton's novel delves into themes of survival, love, redemption and faith, while exposing raw emotions and the experiences of outsiders. The book is also a commentary on toxic masculinity, as it explores the relationship between Jaxie and his abusive father.

In the speech, Winton particularly focuses on the issue of toxic masculinity and how it shackles men to misogyny. By analysing this extract from his speech, you will gain insights into the author's perspective on the themes present in *The Shepherd's Hut* and better understand the societal issues that his work addresses. As you create your own texts inspired by this mentor text, consider how Winton's exploration of toxic masculinity, relationships and redemption might influence your writing and help you to convey your own unique message.

About the author

Tim Winton is a notable Australian author whose work includes both adult and children's literature. Born on 4 August 1960, Winton grew up in Perth before moving to the regional city of Albany at the age of 12.

Tim Winton began his writing journey at the Western Australian Institute of Technology, now called Curtin University, where he wrote his first novel, *An Open Swimmer*. This debut novel earned him *The Australian* / Vogel Literary Award in 1981, which marked the beginning of a successful career. Winton has won the prestigious Miles Franklin Award four times for *Shallows*, *Cloudstreet*, *Dirt Music* and *Breath*, and has been shortlisted for the Booker Prize twice for *The Riders* and *Dirt Music*. His writing often revisits places and characters, allowing readers to become intimately familiar with his literary universe.

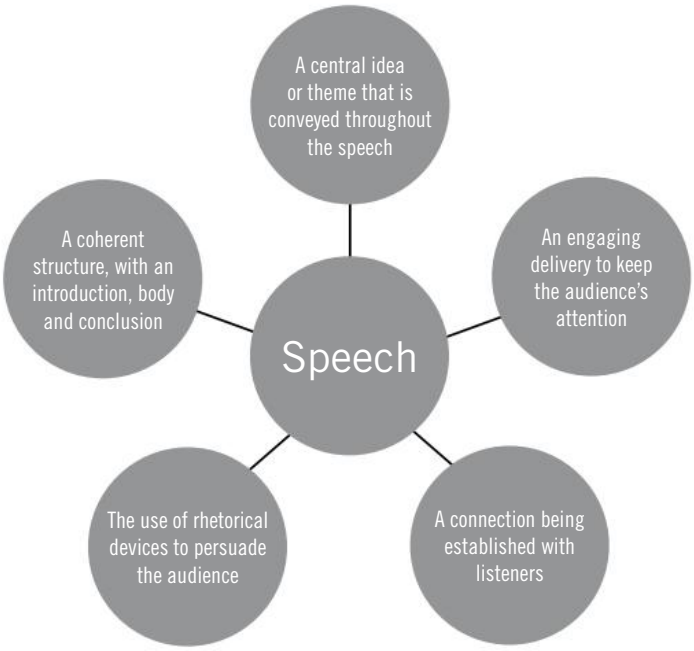
Winton's inspiration primarily stems from the places of coastal Western Australia. In an article in *The Age* titled 'The sea side of Tim Winton' (2008), he is quoted as saying that 'place comes first' in his writing, and that an interesting place is necessary for him to feel and understand the people inhabiting it. This connection to place is a critical element in his works, which frequently depict family life, the dynamics of human relationships and characters in the process of transformation.

The text's form

A speech is a formal address delivered to an audience, with the aim of conveying information and ideas, or expressing thoughts and feelings on a particular topic. Speeches can be delivered in various settings, such as political events, educational institutions and social gatherings. The purpose of a speech can range from entertaining and inspiring to persuading or informing the audience.

Speeches are powerful tools of communication that can leave a lasting impact on listeners. A well-crafted speech can evoke strong emotions, change perspectives or inspire people to act. The effectiveness of a speech depends on several factors, including the speaker's credibility, the clarity of their message and their ability to connect with the audience emotionally and intellectually. To create a meaningful connection with listeners, a speaker must carefully consider the audience's needs, interests and expectations while crafting their speech.

Key features of a speech include the following.



Inspire yourself with speeches

1 Watch some famous and inspiring speeches to better understand the power of speeches and their impact on audiences. Three suggested speeches to view are:

- Martin Luther King Jr's 'I have a dream' speech, delivered during the 1963 March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom
- Malala Yousafzai's address to the United Nations Youth Assembly in 2013, advocating for the right to education for all children
- Barack Obama's victory speech in 2008, following his election as the 44th President of the United States.

2 Analyse these speeches, focusing on their key features, the speaker's delivery and the impact they had on their respective audiences. Consider how these speeches can inspire and inform your own writing and speech delivery.

Exploring the concept of play in the text

Tim Winton often writes about masculinity. In the context of this speech, Winton also links masculinity to many ideas about play.

Element of play	Explanation
Exploring play through surfing	Winton describes his experience of play in the context of surfing, where he spends a lot of time waiting for waves and engaging in conversations with others. This element of play provides an opportunity for social interaction, relaxation and escape from the daily grind.
Gender performance	The speech touches upon the roles of boys and men in society, and how certain pressures can stifle their ability to play and express themselves freely. He points out that boys are often 'rehearsing and projecting' their masculinity by testing different versions of themselves in their interactions with others. This playful experimentation allows them to navigate societal expectations as they seek out cues from those around them. Winton also mentions the increasing number of girls participating in surfing, celebrating this shift towards a more inclusive and diverse environment.
Playfulness in conversation	Winton discusses the conversations he has with boys while surfing, describing them as a form of play where teasing, joking and navigating social interactions are part of the experience. These conversations can be both heart-warming and troubling, highlighting the challenges faced by boys in finding their place in the world.
The importance of rituals	The speech criticises the lack of meaningful and enriching rituals in modern Australian society, suggesting that this absence forces young people to create their own rites of passage from 'cheap and defective' spare parts. This highlights the importance of play and ritual in shaping identity and providing a sense of belonging.
Transformative power	Winton argues that boys need help to overcome the shackles of misogyny and patriarchy that disfigure them and limit their ability to play freely. By attending to boys, having higher expectations of them and providing better role models, it is possible to transform their experiences and ultimately create a more equitable and just society for all.

Play as a means of connection	Throughout the speech, Winton emphasises the importance of connection, whether it be through the playful interactions between surfers or the need for adult men to take responsibility for the next generation. By fostering connections, it is possible to address issues of gender inequality, societal expectations and the search for meaning in a modern world.

Writing a compelling speech

Writing a speech that matters begins with choosing a topic that is significant to you as the speaker, and to your audience. Select a subject that resonates with your listeners and encourages them to engage with your message. Once you have identified a topic, invest time in researching and gathering relevant information to support your points and strengthen your argument.

The next step in crafting a speech that matters is to develop a persuasive and coherent narrative. This involves presenting your ideas and arguments in a logical order that is easy for your audience to follow. Your speech should be structured with a clear beginning, middle and end, using transitions to guide the listeners through your ideas. Alongside a strong narrative, employing an engaging and authentic speaking style will help establish a connection with your audience and enhance the overall impact of your speech.

Tips for writing a speech that matters

- **Know your audience:** Understand their demographics, background and interests to tailor your speech accordingly.
- **Be authentic:** Speak from the heart and share personal experiences or anecdotes that support your message.
- **Use clear and concise language:** Avoid jargon and complex terminology, opting for straightforward words and phrases that are easy to understand.
- **Incorporate impactful examples:** Use real-life stories, statistics and quotes to illustrate your points and make them memorable.
- **Practise and refine:** Even if you're not going to actually present the speech, you should rehearse it multiple times, refining your word choices, sentence structures and the use of pauses and emphasis to ensure a fluent, effective presentation. Remember that speeches are meant to be performed, and all these oral conventions will have an impact on the writing.

Crafting a speech that matters

In this activity, you will create a compelling and impactful speech on a topic close to your heart.

1. Choose a meaningful topic that resonates with you and your audience.
2. Research the topic thoroughly, gathering relevant information and examples.
3. Understand your audience's demographics, background and interests to tailor your speech.
4. Organise your ideas into a clear narrative with a beginning, middle and end.
5. Use authentic language and share personal experiences or anecdotes to support your message.
6. Incorporate real-life stories, statistics and quotes to illustrate your points.
7. Rehearse your speech, refine your delivery and seek feedback from friends or family members.

Voice and style

In the extract from Tim Winton's speech, his voice and style are immediately recognisable. Winton writes with a conversational tone, sharing anecdotes and observations from his personal experiences. For example, he writes: 'These boys in the surf. The things they say to me! The stuff I hear them saying to their mates!' This approachable and relatable style makes his message accessible to a wide range of people. His use of vivid and honest descriptions allows his audience to visualise the scenes and emotions he portrays, fostering a deeper understanding of the issues he discusses. This is seen, for example, when Winton declares that 'the wonderful thing about getting older – something many women will understand – is that after a certain age you become invisible'.

Winton's voice is both compassionate and critical, revealing his concern for the wellbeing of boys and young men in contemporary society. He identifies how this group 'are so routinely expected to betray their better natures, to smother their consciences, to renounce the best of themselves and submit to something low and mean'. He is not afraid to tackle and scrutinise challenging topics – such as toxic masculinity and the shortcomings of modern rites of passage – while still maintaining a sense of empathy. Through this balance, Winton encourages readers to consider their own roles in perpetuating or challenging societal norms.

Creating a relatable and persuasive voice and style

The following advice will help you to create a relatable and persuasive voice and style, similar to Winton's.

- **Conversational tone:** Making your writing feel like a chat between friends will make it easy to engage with.
- **Vivid and honest descriptions:** Paint clear pictures with your words, allowing your audience to immerse themselves in the experiences you describe.
- **Relatable anecdotes and observations:** Providing personal stories will make your message more accessible and relatable to your audience.
- **Balanced approach:** Expressing a complex range of emotions about your topic will allow you to present new angles that haven't been previously considered and encourage your audience to think deeply on your topic.
- **Tackle challenging topics:** Don't shy away from addressing difficult issues, as this will foster important conversations.

Use personal anecdotes to develop your voice

In this activity, you will use a personal anecdote to develop your voice.

1. Choose a topic you are passionate about or have personal experience with.
2. Write a short speech or essay addressing a topic you're familiar with, using Tim Winton's conversational and personal voice and style as inspiration.
3. Focus on including personal anecdotes that make your writing more relatable and engaging.
4. Share your writing with a peer or teacher and ask for feedback on your use of personal anecdotes. Discuss how you can further develop your unique writing voice by incorporating more anecdotes and refining your style.

Structuring your speech

When you examine Tim Winton's extract, you'll notice that it has a clear and effective structure. Winton starts with a strong opening statement that captures the audience's attention and sets the tone for the rest of the text. He then organises the content in a logical way, with each point building on the previous one to develop a coherent argument. By sharing personal anecdotes and connecting them to broader societal concerns, Winton is able to make his speech both relatable and significant.

Towards the end of the extract, Winton effectively wraps up his main points and concludes with a call to action. This encourages the audience to reflect on their own beliefs and actions and consider how they can contribute to positive change. Overall, the structure of Winton's speech extract keeps the audience engaged and makes his message clear and impactful.

Tips for structuring your speech

- **Start with a strong opening:** The beginning of your speech should grab your audience's attention and introduce your topic.
- **Organise your ideas:** Each point should logically build on from the previous one.
- **Use transitions:** These words and phrases will guide your audience from one point to the next and help you to maintain a smooth flow.
- **Share personal anecdotes:** Stories from your own life will help to create relatability and an emotional connection with your audience.
- **Balance personal stories with broader issues:** This will make your speech both engaging and significant.
- **Use rhetorical questions:** These devices provoke thought and encourage reflection.
- **Summarise your main points:** Towards the end of your speech, restate your main ideas to reinforce your message.
- **Conclude with a call to action:** Let your audience act on your speech by challenging them to take responsibility and make a difference.

Structure your speech

In this activity, you will plan and organise the structure of your speech.

1. Choose a topic for your speech that you feel passionate about.
2. Craft a strong opening statement that captures the attention of your audience.
3. Develop your main points, using personal anecdotes to create an emotional connection with your audience.
4. Write an outline using your opening statement, main points and personal anecdotes, paying attention to the order in which you want these discussed.
5. Conclude your speech with a call to action, challenging your audience to take responsibility and contribute to positive change. (See the following section for more on calls to action.)

The call to action

Many speeches are delivered with an intent to convince the audience to change their mind about something, or to take action. This 'call to action' (CTA) can be woven throughout the speech or revealed at the end. Winton uses a CTA to encourage the audience to pay attention to young men and help them navigate the challenges of toxic masculinity.

Here are some of the types of CTAs often found in speeches.

- **Encouraging personal reflection and self-improvement:** The speaker might ask the audience to examine their thoughts, beliefs or actions and consider making a change for the better.
- **Asking for contributions:** This type of CTA might encourage the audience to donate time, money or resources to support a cause.
- **Urging groups to campaign:** In this case, the speaker might ask the audience to take a public stand on an issue by joining a movement or adding their signature to a petition.
- **Inspiring discussions:** The speaker could encourage the audience to start conversations with others about the topic or use social media to raise awareness and promote the cause.
- **Challenging behaviours or mindsets:** This CTA could involve asking the audience to reconsider their actions or beliefs and adopt a new perspective on a particular issue.

Persuasive techniques that support a CTA often include emotive language, anecdotes and rhetorical questions.

Brainstorm calls to action

In this activity, you will take an existing piece of writing and think about ways to add clear CTAs.

1. Choose an existing piece of writing or a speech with a weak or unclear CTA.
2. Identify the main message or goal of the writing or speech.
3. Brainstorm ways to incorporate persuasive techniques, such as emotive language, anecdotes or rhetorical questions, to strengthen the CTA.
4. Rewrite the CTA, incorporating the brainstormed ideas and techniques to make it more effective and compelling.
5. Share your work with a peer and discuss the improvements made and the impact on the overall message.

CREATING YOUR OWN WRITING ABOUT PLAY

In this section, you will apply your learning from the mentor texts and begin creating your own pieces of writing about play. In doing so, you will need to consider the purpose of your writing, your intended audience, and what text form or forms are most suitable. Tips and strategies for planning, drafting, redrafting, editing and proofreading your writing are also included.

Understanding the purpose of your writing

In the VCE English and EAL Study Design, the section on Creating texts suggests four main purposes of writing: to express, to explain, to reflect and to argue. These purposes help guide your creative process, allowing you to craft meaningful and effective texts.

As you explore and engage with the mentor texts, you'll discover how authors use various forms and structures to achieve these goals. In this section, we'll provide a brief overview of each purpose and illustrate different text types that can align with these purposes. The text types listed here are not exhaustive, and many forms can be used for multiple purposes.

Purpose	Overview	Possible text types
To express	Writing to express is about conveying emotions, feelings or ideas. It can be a deeply personal process, often capturing an individual's unique voice, thoughts and experiences.	Short story, monologue, poem, song lyrics, blog
To explain	Writing to explain aims to provide information, clarify concepts or describe processes. This type of writing is typically informative and educational, helping readers gain a better understanding of a topic or issue.	Podcast, blog, explanatory article, infographic, speech
To reflect	Writing to reflect involves examining and exploring one's own experiences, thoughts or beliefs. This type of writing encourages self-awareness and personal growth, as well as providing insight into the human condition.	Personal essay, diary entry, memoir, reflective podcast

To argue	Writing to argue involves presenting a point of view, supporting it with evidence and persuading readers to agree with or favourably consider your perspective. This purpose often requires critical thinking, analysis and logical reasoning.	Speech, open letter, opinion piece, debate transcript

Hybrid writing

In some cases, you may find that your writing doesn't fit neatly into one specific purpose. This is where hybrid writing comes in. Hybrid writing blends two or more purposes, resulting in a text that is rich, complex and engaging. For example, you might craft a short story that both expresses personal emotions and argues a particular viewpoint. Or you could create a podcast that explains a topic while also reflecting on your own experiences related to that topic.

As you work on your own creations, don't be afraid to experiment with hybrid writing. It can be a powerful way to explore and express multiple layers of meaning, making your text more dynamic and compelling. Remember, the goal is to create texts that resonate with readers, and hybrid writing can be an excellent tool for achieving that aim.

Writing in different forms

There are many different text types and styles that you can use to express your ideas effectively. Choosing the appropriate style for your response is essential as it can impact the way your message is received by your audience. The right form can also help you to structure your ideas and present them in a clear and coherent manner.

Exploring different text types and styles

To choose the right style, you need to consider the purpose of your response, the context and your audience. For example, if you are writing an opinion piece, you will need to use persuasive language and structure your argument in a logical and coherent way. If you are writing a short story, you will need to use narrative techniques and descriptive language to develop your characters and plot.

To help you select the right form for your response, the table on the following page provides some guidance on the appropriate text types for different writing purposes.

Form	Useful for
Blog post	Reflecting on a topic
Opinion piece	Arguing a point
Short story	Telling a story
Poem	Expressing emotions
Script	Creating a dialogue or narrative
TED Talk	Delivering a persuasive speech
Podcast	Discussing a topic
Review	Critiquing or analysing a subject
Personal essay	Sharing a personal experience
Feature article	Exploring a topic in depth

Using this table, you can select the right form for your response based on your purpose and audience. Keep in mind that this is not an exhaustive list, and you may need to adapt your selection after discussing with your teacher.

Choosing based on mentor and supplementary texts

Choosing a form based on a mentor text can be a useful way to identify the most appropriate style for your response. A mentor text can inspire, motivate or demonstrate the features of effective writing. When considering a mentor text, it is important to think about the purpose of your response, the context and your audience.

It is also important that you seek out supplementary texts to further your understanding of the key idea in the Framework of Ideas. Choose texts that resonate with you, look for styles that you enjoy reading and try to identify the features that make these texts effective. Think about tone, structure and language features, and how these elements work together to convey the author's message.

Here are some steps you can follow when choosing a form based on a selection of mentor and supplementary texts.

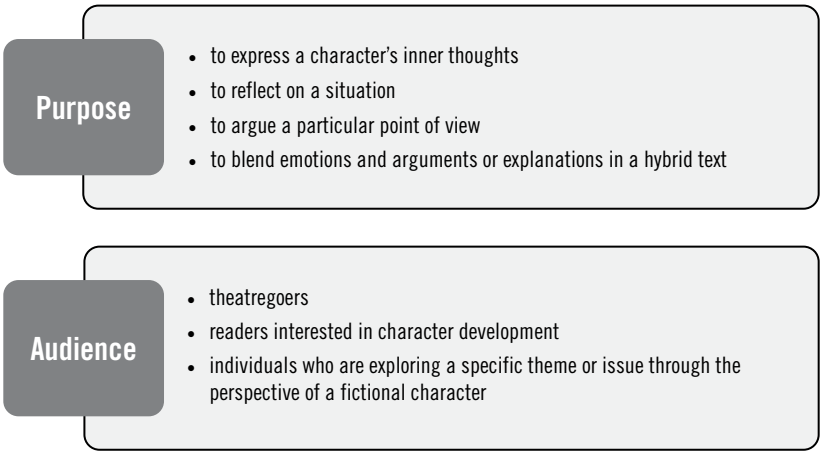
- Identify a range of mentor and supplementary texts that you find inspiring, motivating or particularly well-written. Include a variety of text types, such as short stories, poems, opinion pieces, podcasts and TED Talks. Remember to include the three main mentor texts you are studying, but try to read more widely also.

- Read and analyse each text carefully. Identify the purpose, audience and context of each text, and think about how the author uses language, tone and structure to convey their message.
- Consider how the texts relate to the key idea you are studying. Choose a text that best aligns with your purpose and message.
- Identify the features that make the text effective, such as persuasive language, narrative techniques or descriptive imagery. Use these features as inspiration for your own writing.
- Choose a form that allows you to convey your ideas effectively and engage your audience. Consider the mentor and supplementary texts' styles that you enjoy reading, and choose a form that aligns with your writing style and interests.

As you create your texts, keep in mind the four purposes of writing: to express, to explain, to reflect and to argue. By experimenting with different forms and incorporating these purposes, you'll develop a more versatile and engaging writing style. The following are some of the forms explored elsewhere in this guide, as well as a few other popular forms.

Monologue

A monologue is a speech or extended passage in which a single character expresses their thoughts or feelings out loud.



Example outline

- **Introduction:** Establish the character's voice, emotional state and the context in which they are speaking.
- **Background:** Provide context for the character's thoughts or feelings by revealing relevant past experiences or events.
- **Conflict:** Introduce the character's internal struggle or the external circumstances causing tension.
- **Reflection:** Show the character's thought process as they contemplate the conflict and consider possible solutions or actions.
- **Resolution:** Demonstrate the character's decision, realisation or acceptance of the situation.

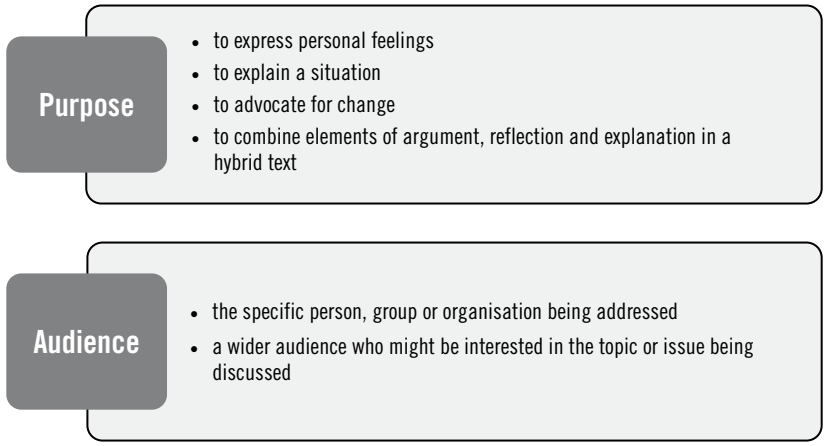
Example opening paragraph

> I've been standing at this crossroads for what feels like an eternity, unable to take a step in either direction. People always talk about the importance of choices, but they never mention how paralysing it can be to make one.

(For more on monologues, read the section on Virginia Gay's monologue from *Cyrano*.)

Open letter

An open letter is a letter addressed to a specific person, group or organisation, intended to be read by a wider audience.



Example outline

- **Salutation:** Address the specific person, group or organisation being targeted.
- **Introduction:** State the purpose of the letter in a strong opening statement and briefly outline the main issue or concern.
- **Background:** Provide context or background information on the issue being discussed.
- **Argument:** Present the reasons or evidence supporting your stance or request for action.
- **Call to action:** Encourage the recipient to take specific steps to address the issue.
- **Conclusion:** Summarise the main points and express gratitude for the recipient's attention.

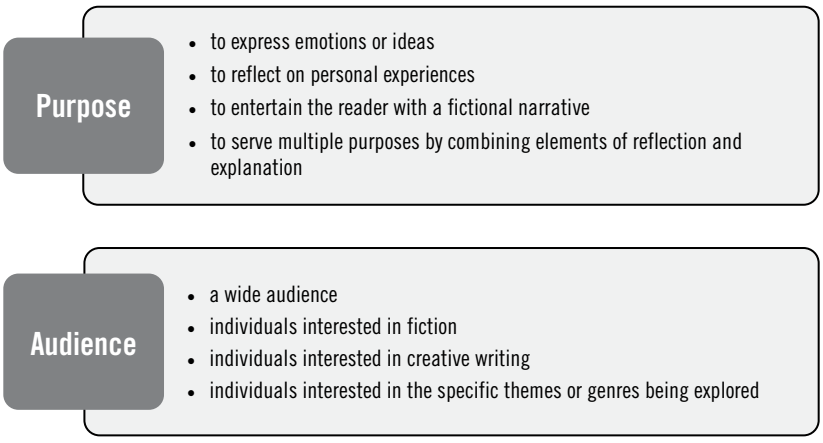
Example opening paragraph

> Dear School Board Members, I write to you today as a concerned parent, eager to address the urgent need for mental health support in our schools. The wellbeing of our students must be a top priority, and I believe it is time to take action.

(For more on open letters, read the section on Chelsea Roffey's 'An open letter to doubting Thomas'.)

Short story

A short story is a brief work of fiction that typically focuses on a single event or character.



Example outline

- **Introduction:** Introduce the main character and setting, and hint at the central conflict in an engaging opening paragraph.
- **Rising action:** Develop the central conflict and reveal the character's motivations, desires and struggles.
- **Climax:** Craft the turning point of the story, where the main character faces the central conflict head-on.
- **Falling action:** Show the consequences of the climax and how the characters deal with the aftermath.
- **Resolution:** Resolve the central conflict and demonstrate how the main character has changed or grown through their experiences.

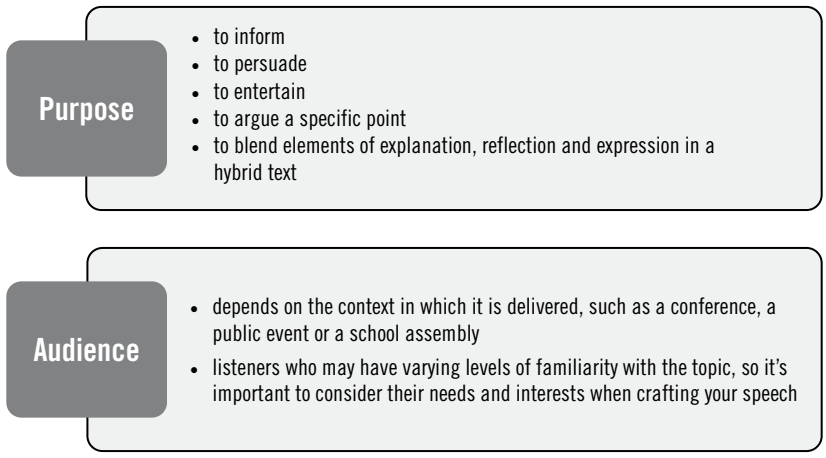
Example opening paragraph

> As the sun dipped below the horizon, casting long shadows across the dusty plains, Jack gazed at the dry landscape, his heart heavy with uncertainty. The decision he was about to make would forever change not only his life, but the lives of those who called this small, forgotten town home.

(For more advice about short stories, read the section on Penni Russon's 'All that we know of dreaming'.)

Speech

A speech is an oral presentation intended to inform, persuade or entertain an audience.



Example outline

- **Introduction:** Grab the audience's attention and establish the topic and purpose of the speech.
- **Background:** Provide context or background information on the topic being discussed.
- **Main points:** Present the key arguments, evidence or points related to the topic.
- **Counterarguments (optional):** Address potential opposing viewpoints or arguments.
- **Conclusion:** Summarise the main points, reiterate the purpose and end with a call to action or a memorable statement.

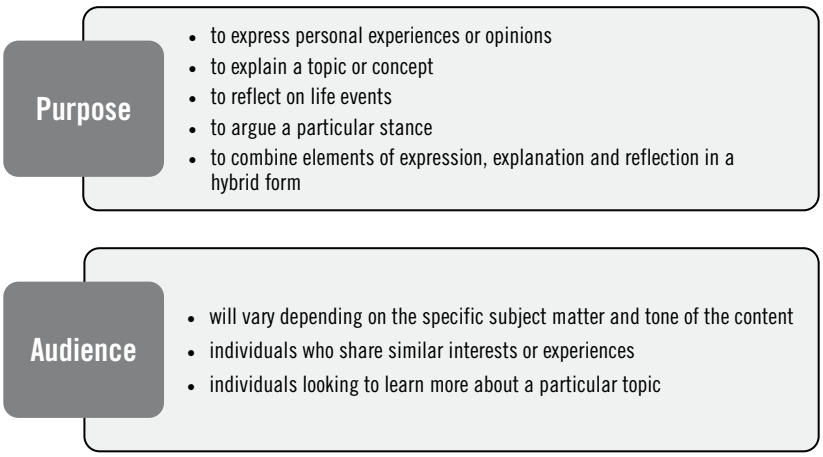
Example opening paragraph

> Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for joining me today as we gather to discuss a matter of great importance. The future of our environment is at stake, and it's up to us to make a change. Together, we can create a more sustainable world for generations to come.

(For more on speeches, read the section on Tim Winton's 'About the boys'.)

Blog post

A blog is an online platform where you can write and share your thoughts, experiences and opinions on various topics.



Example outline

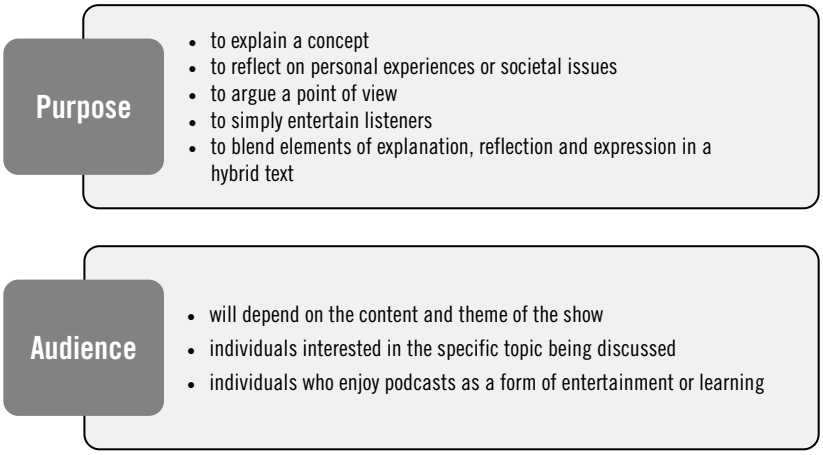
- **Introduction:** Introduce the topic of the blog post, provide a hook to engage readers, and outline your intentions and goals for the blog.
- **Background:** Offer context or background information on the topic being discussed.
- **Main points:** Share personal experiences, opinions or insights related to the topic.
- **Supporting evidence (optional):** Provide facts, statistics or research to support your points.
- **Conclusion:** Summarise the main points and encourage reader interaction or further exploration of the topic.

Example opening paragraph

> Welcome to 'The art of play,' a blog dedicated to exploring the transformative power of creativity and imagination. In this space, I'll share my journey as an artist, discuss the importance of play in our lives and offer practical tips and inspiration for nurturing your own creative spirit.

Podcast

A podcast is an audio program covering a specific topic or theme, often featuring interviews, discussions or storytelling.



Example outline

- **Introduction:** Introduce the podcast's theme, your name and your credentials.
- **Overview:** Outline the structure and content of the episode, such as with key talking points, and any guests or interviews you might include.
- **Topic 1:** Discuss a current event or issue related to your theme.
- **Interview:** Talk to an expert or someone with personal experience related to the topic.
- **Topic 2:** Share a relevant story, case study or anecdote.
- **Conclusion:** Sum up the episode and give a preview of what's coming up in the next episode.

Example opening paragraph

> Hello and welcome to *Innovative Minds*, the podcast where we dive into the world of groundbreaking ideas and the people behind them. I'm your host, Jane Smith, a passionate explorer of creativity and innovation. In today's episode, we'll be talking about the fascinating developments in sustainable technology and how it's shaping our future. We have an exclusive interview with renowned environmental scientist Dr Ibrahim Muhammed, who will share her insights on the latest advances in the field. So, buckle up and get ready for an inspiring journey into the world of sustainable innovation. Let's get started!

Planning your writing

The writing process involves several stages, including prewriting, planning, outlining, drafting, redrafting, editing and proofreading. Each stage is important, and skipping any of them can result in a less effective response.

Before you start writing, it's important to plan your response carefully. This will help you to organise your ideas, structure your writing effectively and avoid writer's block. Prewriting is especially important, as it helps you to generate and organise your ideas. It's also recommended that you create a

clear outline from your ideas as this will provide you with a road map to follow, making it easier to stay organised and maintain a logical flow in your writing.

Prewriting checklist

- ☐ Define the purpose and audience of your response.
- ☐ Brainstorm and generate a range of ideas.
- ☐ Organise your ideas into categories or themes.
- ☐ Use graphic organisers or other tools to visualise your ideas.
- ☐ Identify any research or additional information that may be needed.

Planning checklist

- ☐ Review your prewriting notes and select the most important ideas.
- ☐ Choose an appropriate form.
- ☐ Follow up on any additional research or sources that may be needed.
- ☐ Determine the structure and order of your response.
- ☐ Consider the language, style and tone appropriate for your purpose and audience.

Outlining checklist

- ☐ Use your planning notes to organise your ideas and make a final selection of what you will include.
- ☐ Identify a clear introduction, body and conclusion for your response, or a narrative structure. If your response is in a form such as poetry, consider how you will structure a poem or collection.
- ☐ Create headings and subheadings to organise your content.
- ☐ Ensure your outline follows a clear and logical order.
- ☐ Review your outline to ensure that it reflects your purpose and audience.

Drafting, editing and finishing your work

Once you have a planned outline, it's time to begin writing your piece. Drafting is an essential step in the writing process that allows you to explore your ideas, refine your message and create a coherent structure. It's important that you redraft your writing as you go, to enhance your voice and style for the specific purposes of the piece. Pay attention to your language choices,

tone, use of transitions, overarching structure and other important features of your chosen text form. Once you're happy with your written piece, you'll then need to edit and proofread the content to put it in the best shape possible.

Drafting and redrafting

The process of drafting and redrafting is very personal, and there are no right or wrong ways to do it, but you should try various methods to make sure you find what suits you best.

Some people draft and edit carefully as they write, working very slowly to construct sentences and paragraphs that are complete and need only proofreading for minor details at the final stage. Others work more quickly initially, jotting down ideas and thoughts as they come, but then spend longer at the editing stage to shape the notes or drafts into cohesive sentences and complete pieces of writing.

Whichever way you work, you should always try to give yourself time and space during the process so that you can step away and come back to it with fresh eyes.

General tips for the writing and drafting process include the following.

- **Break the process into manageable chunks:** Drafting can feel overwhelming, especially for longer pieces. To make the process more manageable, break your writing into smaller parts or tasks, such as completing a specific section, writing a certain number of words or addressing a particular argument. This will help you stay focused and maintain momentum.
- **Write notes:** Keep a notebook beside you or a separate notes document open on your computer as you work, and use it to jot down anything that comes to mind that might interrupt the flow of your writing. These may include ideas you want to follow up on later in your piece, quotes you want to refer back to, or even items for your grocery shopping list!
- **Save your work:** If you work digitally (writing straight onto a computer rather than writing the first drafts by hand), it is worth saving multiple versions of your document as you go. Use a logical file naming system that makes sense for you, and don't simply continue saving changes to a single document. Sometimes you may want to return to ideas or content that you wrote earlier in your drafting and if you don't save new versions, you may lose valuable work that you previously deleted.

→

- **Work on tricky sections separately:** If you want to make significant changes or rewrite a sentence or paragraph, copy and paste it into an empty document. This will allow you to work on it without the distraction of the surrounding paragraphs, and without any concerns about getting tangled or accidentally deleting something important. Then, when you are happy with the changes, you can copy and paste it back into your main document.
- **Keep focused:** If you need to, turn off your phone and even disconnect your computer from the internet for short periods while writing. (You can use your notes page to jot down relevant things that you want to google later, so you don't get distracted by doing it in the middle of your writing period.)
- **Take breaks:** If you get stuck with what you are writing, try to move to a different section of your piece then come back later, rather than getting bogged down on something that isn't working. Alternatively, you can give yourself a quick break by trying one of the writing exercises in the previous sections.
- **Seek feedback and revise as needed:** As you work through your draft, don't be afraid to share it with others for feedback. This can help you identify areas that need improvement, and it can also provide valuable insights and perspectives that you might not have considered. Be open to constructive criticism and be prepared to revise your draft based on the feedback you receive. Remember that drafting is an ongoing process, and it's essential to be flexible and adaptable as you refine your work.

Editing and proofreading

Once you have finished your piece, it's time to edit and proofread it. At this point it can be very useful to take a break, because when you are too close to your work (for example, if you have now read and re-read it a million times and have been working on it for hours or days in a row), it is almost impossible to spot errors. This is because when you read, your brain will see what you expect to see or what you intended to write, not necessarily what is actually on the page. Ideally you would have days or even weeks between writing and editing, but obviously this is not always practical. If you are pushed for time, even a few hours in between is better than nothing, and will increase how effectively you are able to edit.

If possible, get a classmate or friend to give your work an edit, as they will be far more likely to spot errors, inconsistencies or issues. (You may want to do this with someone not working on the same assignment as you.) Make a

clear arrangement about what they will be doing for you and what they are not expected to do. You may not always agree with feedback, and you may or may not make changes in response (remember that feedback can always be subjective). But it is important to take on board any issues raised – your editor is your reader, and they are giving you information about how well your writing is working from an external perspective.

Below are some questions you may want to ask in order to get feedback that is useful. Let your partner know how you would like them to provide the feedback. For example, you might give them a printed copy and ask them to make notes and highlight or underline parts; you might prefer digital mark-ups; you might like them to read the work and then have a face-to-face conversation so that you can discuss questions.

Potential questions for peer editors include the following.

- Is there any way the opening of my piece could be more engaging?
- Is there anything about my piece that is unclear (such as a confusing turn in the argument, events that don't make sense, characters who don't fit the context etc.)?
- Are there any inconsistencies you noted? (This might apply to the argument, narrative point of view, use of certain terms, fonts and headings, features of characters such as age etc.)
- Are there any points in the piece that felt jarring? (This could be a change in the line of argument, a change in perspective, a particular piece of dialogue or imagery, an awkward sentence etc.)
- Can you identify the purpose of my piece?
- Can you summarise my main argument?
- How would you describe the tone of my piece?
- Is it clear how my piece addresses the key topic/idea?
- Is there anything you felt could be left out?
- Is there any part you would have liked to see more of?
- Is my ending satisfying?

You might also have specific questions about anything you are uncertain of in your piece, such as whether a particular character is believable, whether a change in setting is effective, whether your argument is convincing or whether a piece of subtext came across. In some cases, you may not want to ask these questions until *after* your peer has read your piece – for example, if there is a twist or an element you want to check the effectiveness of, but do not want to artificially direct the reader's attention towards while they are reading.

Proofreading checklist

- ☐ Underline any sentences in which you felt the meaning was unclear the first time you read them.
- ☐ Highlight any paragraphs that do not flow on smoothly from the paragraph before.
- ☐ Circle any spelling errors or typos, or punctuation that is incorrect or awkward.
- ☐ Circle any words or phrases that have been overused.
- ☐ Circle any phrasing or vocabulary that seems inappropriate for the context, text type or audience (for example, in terms of complexity, formality or style).
- ☐ Note any points where the tone is inconsistent.
- ☐ Note any content that feels irrelevant or out of place.
- ☐ Note any content that feels repetitive.

If you do not have a peer who you can ask to edit your work, you can use all of the questions and tasks above to help you in your own editing and proofreading of your work. Try to imagine you are reading someone else's work, and make any notes or corrections that you would make for them.

A trick to help you separate yourself from what you have written while you are editing and proofreading it is to read it aloud. This will slow your reading down and force you to pay more attention so that you don't skip over anything.

Understanding the reflective commentary

In order to write an effective reflective commentary, it is important to reflect on the writing process and the choices made during that process. This includes considering all the language and structural elements that went into the writing, as well as why and how the piece was written. (Note that EAL students will produce a set of annotations of one or both of their original texts outlining their writing choices, rather than an extended commentary.)

Additionally, reflecting on the effectiveness of these choices is key, considering what worked and what didn't, and what could have been done differently.

Reflecting on the writing process and authorial choices

To reflect on authorial choices in a reflective commentary, you should consider:

- the purpose and audience of the response

- the form and genre chosen
- the language features used
- the effectiveness of the response in meeting the purpose and audience
- the impact of mentor texts on authorial choices
- the writing process and the role of feedback in shaping authorial choices.

The following is a partial example that demonstrates consideration of some of those aspects. The next section of this book includes full examples.

> For my response, I chose to create a podcast in the form of a series of personal reflections. I was inspired by Sir Ken Robinson's TED Talk on 'Do schools kill creativity?', the playful storytelling in Michael Ende's *The Neverending Story* and Chelsea Roffey's humorously reflective 'An open letter to doubting Thomas' because [connection to texts ...]. I felt that the podcast form was a great fit for my purpose because it allowed me to share my personal experiences and reflections on the role of play in creativity and learning in an engaging and authentic way.
>
> During the writing process, I made some deliberate decisions about the vocabulary, text structures, language features and conventions that I used, such as [examples from the podcast ...]. I wanted to create a sense of curiosity and connection with my audience, so I used a conversational tone and incorporated personal anecdotes to make my message more relatable.
>
> Reflecting on my writing process has allowed me to gain a deeper understanding of my own writing style and preferences. It has also given me insight into how I can continue to develop my skills and improve my writing in the future. Overall, I found the writing process to be a valuable exercise in self-reflection and critical thinking because [what was learned ...].

Analyse language features and text structures

In this activity, you will reflect on the effectiveness of the language features and text structures used in your own writing.

1. Choose a piece of writing you have completed and read through it.
2. Identify the different language features and text structures you have used, such as imagery, figurative language, dialogue and different types of sentences.
3. Analyse the effectiveness of these features and structures. Consider how they contribute to the meaning and impact of your writing.
4. Reflect on any changes you could make to improve the effectiveness of your writing, such as adding more descriptive language or varying the sentence structure.
5. Revise your writing based on your reflections, incorporating any changes you have identified.

Stimuli for writing about play

Here you will practise your own writing about play, using a range of stimuli and prompts. Use this opportunity to draw from the learnings in this book, such as exploring aspects of play and using textual features best suited to your audience and purpose. Remember to review the strategies for planning, drafting and editing your work.

The power of play

Below is a sample stimulus and prompt for writing about play for a specified audience and context. This stimulus material is followed by some suggestions for possible responses.

Stimulus: In our fast-paced, productivity-focused society, play is often dismissed as frivolous or unproductive. However, both children and adults can benefit immensely from engaging in playful activities. Play allows for the exploration of new ideas, fosters creativity, facilitates social connection and provides an escape from daily routines. Despite its inherent benefits, many adults find it challenging to incorporate play into their lives due to work commitments, societal expectations or simply forgetting the joy it can bring.

Prompt: Extract from *HealthWize*, the fictional podcast for busy commuters

> Host: 'Now here's something that really caught my attention. Did you know that according to a study by the National Institute

for Play, adults who engage in regular play are actually less likely to suffer from stress-related diseases? They're often more content, more productive and have a more positive outlook on life. It's fascinating, really. We often associate play with children, but there's something extraordinarily liberating about an adult indulging in a game of tag or picking up a paintbrush just for the joy of it. It's not about winning or creating a masterpiece, it's about immersing ourselves in the moment, letting our imaginations run wild. So next time you see a swing in a park, why not give it a try? It might just be the stress reliever you need!'

Audience: podcast listeners interested in human psychology, personal growth and societal phenomena

Context: podcast episode

Purpose: free choice (See below for some examples.)

- Explain the role of play in human development, weaving in personal anecdotes and scholarly research. Use storytelling techniques to keep your audience engaged.
- Reflect on your personal experiences with play and how it has impacted your life. Draw parallels between play and personal growth.
- Advocate for the importance of play in both personal and professional environments. Discuss how play can boost creativity, enhance social skills and improve overall wellbeing.
- Analyse societal attitudes towards play, arguing that embracing play can lead to a more balanced and fulfilling life. Use a combination of personal insights, stories and research to support your argument.

Additional stimulus material

The following list provides some additional prompts you could use to help you generate ideas for your writing. In your choice of form, engage with the stimuli about play, attending to what you have learned in previous sections of this book.

Stimulus 1: quote from Kathy Hirsh-Pasek and Roberta Golinkoff

'Play is the primary way children were designed to learn.'

Stimulus 2: David Elkind in *The Power of Play: How Spontaneous, Imaginative Activities Lead to Happier, Healthier Children*

> 'Play is not a luxury but rather a crucial dynamic of healthy physical, intellectual, and social-emotional development at all age levels.'

Stimulus 3: quote from George Bernard Shaw

> 'We don't stop playing because we grow old; we grow old because we stop playing.'

Stimulus 4: *The Art of Play: Exploring the Impact of Play on Adult Creativity* by fictitious author Linda Hallford

> 'As we step into adulthood, play transforms into a tool that fuels our imaginations, daring us to explore new concepts and unfathomable realms.'

Stimulus 5: 'From sandbox to boardroom: The role of play in professional development', an article in a fictitious magazine, *Business Matters*, by author John Nguyen

> 'In the boardrooms of the world, one might not expect the idea of play to hold much sway. Yet, it is the sandbox of our childhood where we first learn collaboration, negotiation and problem-solving skills that are foundational to professional success. Our capacity for play as adults is directly related to our ability to adapt, innovate and navigate the complex structures of the corporate world. Embracing play in our professional lives is not about disregarding seriousness, but about harnessing the creative, unencumbered mindset of our childhood selves to inspire novel solutions and foster harmonious workplaces.'

SAMPLE RESPONSES

This section presents sample texts in a range of forms. Each explores a different aspect of the key idea of play and draws on the structures, features and language of the mentor texts.

Sample response one: Short story

The sun was setting behind the old schoolyard, casting a warm orange glow on the cracked asphalt. A group of children, their laughter and energy palpable, ran around the playground, making up games as they went along. They were oblivious to the weight of the world, their minds focused solely on the joy of the present moment. In the midst of this scene, I stood by the fence, watching my younger brother Tommy and his friends as they played. I couldn't help but feel a sense of longing for the days when I, too, had found such simple pleasure in the act of play.

Tommy was wearing his favourite superhero cape: a tattered piece of fabric that he had found in our attic. He would sprint around, arms outstretched, imagining himself soaring through the sky like Superman. As I watched him, I thought back to my own childhood, and how my friends and I would spend hours playing pretend, our imaginations transporting us to far-off lands and exciting adventures.

One day, during a particularly intense game of cops and robbers, I had slipped and fallen, scraping my knee on the rough ground. Tears filled my eyes, but I held them back, remembering the words of my father: 'Big boys don't cry.' Even at that young age, I felt the pressure to conform to society's expectations of masculinity. The world of play, once a safe haven for expression, had become a battleground for proving my toughness.

As I grew older, my friends and I stopped playing make-believe. We traded in our capes and swords for phones and video games, and our laughter-filled afternoons were replaced with silent hours spent staring at screens. Though we were still physically present, it felt as though we had lost a vital connection to the world around us. Then, one day, I stumbled upon a group of kids playing soccer in the park. I hesitated, feeling a strange urge to join them, but stopped myself. What would people think of an 18-year-old playing with children? The fear of judgement held me back, and I walked away, my heart heavy with the knowledge that I had allowed societal norms to stifle my ability to play.

Watching Tommy and his friends, I made a decision. I wouldn't let fear hold me back any longer. I wanted to recapture the sense of joy and freedom that I had once found in play. With a deep breath, I approached the group of children, a smile spreading across my face. 'Hey, can I join you guys?' I asked, feeling the weight of my own expectations lifting. To my surprise, they welcomed me with open arms, their faces lighting up with excitement. As we ran around the playground, I felt my heart swell with happiness. I was no longer just an observer of play, but an active participant, embracing the joy of the present moment. The laughter and energy of the children were contagious, and I found myself immersed in their world of endless possibilities.

As the sun dipped below the horizon, we finally slowed down, our faces flushed and smiles wide. I looked at Tommy, his eyes shining with pride and admiration, and I knew that this was a moment I would cherish forever. Through the simple act of play, I had not only reconnected with my own sense of wonder and imagination but also forged a deeper bond with my brother.

Reflection

In crafting this short story, I sought to explore the theme of play and its significance not only for children but also for individuals of all ages. Inspired by the vivid imagery and introspective tone found in Penni Russon's 'All that we know of dreaming' and Virginia Gay's monologue from *Cyrano*, I aimed to create a world where the reader could feel immersed in the protagonist's experiences and emotions.

One of the key authorial choices I made was to incorporate societal expectations and pressures surrounding the concept of play, particularly in relation to masculinity. Drawing from Tim Winton's speech 'About the boys', I introduced the protagonist's memories of childhood games and the pressure to conform to traditional gender roles. This decision allowed me to delve deeper into the protagonist's emotional journey and highlight the transformative power of play in overcoming societal barriers. I also used descriptive language and the protagonist's memories and reflections to draw from the playfulness and authenticity found in Chelsea Roffey's 'An open letter to doubting Thomas'. By blending elements from Roffey's and Winton's mentor texts, I aimed to create a relatable, engaging and thought-provoking narrative that would resonate with readers.

Lastly, my choice to have the protagonist actively engage in play and reconnect with their younger brother demonstrates the importance of embracing playfulness and imagination in our daily lives. In doing so, I sought to convey a strong central message, as emphasised in Penni Russon's and Tim Winton's texts. This story serves as a reminder that play is not restricted by age or societal expectations, but rather, it is an essential aspect of the

human experience that fosters connections, personal growth and self-expression. By blending elements from the various mentor texts, I aimed to create a unique and engaging narrative that encourages readers to reflect on their own relationship with play.

Sample response two: Blog post

Play: The missing ingredient in our schools

When I was a child, I had a vivid imagination. I was often lost in my own world, creating scenarios and acting out stories with my friends. As I grew older, the demands of school and the pressure to excel academically took its toll on my creative pursuits. I'm sure many of you can relate. We are taught to value academic achievement over the simple joys of play and creativity. It's time to bring play back into our lives and rekindle that sense of wonder we had as children.

As teenagers, we are often encouraged to focus on our grades and college applications, leaving little room for play and creative exploration. But what if I told you that play is not only important for our emotional wellbeing, but it can also enhance our academic performance? Research has shown that play is essential for brain development and can improve memory and attention, as well as help us develop critical skills such as collaboration, problem-solving and adaptability. These skills are essential in today's ever-changing world and can ultimately help us become more successful in our personal and professional lives. So why are schools so focused on academics and standardised tests, rather than nurturing our innate creativity?

Schools can learn a thing or two from those who embrace playfulness and creativity in the face of adversity. By overcoming criticism and scepticism with humour and

friendship, individuals can persevere and find acceptance. Similarly, schools should recognise the importance of fostering a playful, supportive environment where students can thrive academically and creatively.

To bring play back into our schools, we need to start by valuing creative pursuits as much as we do academic ones. Schools can introduce more art, music and drama classes, or even incorporate creative writing and storytelling into the curriculum. Teachers can encourage students to engage in role-playing activities or assign projects that require collaboration and imagination.

But it's not just about what schools can do – we can make a difference too. Start a creative club at your school, organise a talent show or simply encourage your peers to embrace their own unique talents and interests. We can create a more inclusive and supportive environment for everyone, regardless of their preferred form of expression.

Furthermore, we can advocate for the importance of play and creativity in our education system by engaging with our school administrators and local communities. Let's start conversations about the value of play and how it can positively impact our lives. Together, we can change the narrative surrounding education and promote a more balanced approach that values both academic and creative pursuits.

Incorporating play into our daily lives doesn't have to be complicated. It can be as simple as taking a break from studying to doodle in a notebook, participating in a pick-up game of basketball or just enjoying a good laugh with friends. Play can take many forms, and it's important to find the ones that resonate with us.

So let's challenge the status quo and redefine what it means to be a successful student. Let's acknowledge the

importance of play and creativity in our education system and work together to create a more balanced, supportive environment for all students. By doing so, we can unleash our true potential and rediscover the joy of learning.

Reflection

As I began writing this blog post, I wanted to ensure that my authorial choices would resonate with my teenage audience. To achieve this, I adopted a conversational tone that would make the content relatable and engaging. I drew inspiration from Chelsea Roffey's open letter, incorporating facts and personal stories to make my points more compelling and believable. I also found it essential to strike a balance between providing information and evoking emotions, as this would encourage readers to consider the importance of play and creativity in their own lives.

I opted for a clear and concise structure that would allow readers to easily follow my arguments. I started with a personal reflection to establish a connection with my audience before delving into the benefits of play and creativity. This approach helped to establish a strong foundation for my subsequent discussion on the need to prioritise play in schools. To maintain the blog conventions, I kept paragraphs short and focused on a single idea, making the content easily digestible for readers who may be quickly scanning the page.

I also made use of calls to action in my blog post, inspired by those used throughout Tim Winton's speech extract 'About the boys'. By doing so, I encouraged teenagers to stand up for their right to play and have their creativity celebrated in schools. This is an important element to use in blog posts as the target audience needs to have something to do with the information they learn, if it is to have real-world impact.

As for my use of mentor texts, I found them to be a valuable source of inspiration, particularly in terms of voice and style. Their influence is present in various aspects of my writing. For instance, the playfulness of language and the emphasis on personal experience in Roffey's open letter inspired my approach to discussing the importance of play in education. By blending elements from these mentor texts, I was able to create a unique and engaging blog post that effectively communicates the significance of play and creativity for teenagers and encourages them to take action in their schools and communities.

Sample response three: Open letter

Dear Fun Police,

You don't know me, but I've been hearing your name everywhere lately. It seems like you've taken it upon yourself to enforce restrictions and curfews on video gaming. Quite frankly, I'm baffled. I think it's time we had a little chat about this whole 'play' thing you seem so keen to control.

I remember growing up, spending hours in front of the TV, controller in hand, navigating worlds filled with vibrant colours, puzzles and the occasional boss battle. The excitement that came with unlocking a new level or beating my previous high score was unmatched.

Now, I understand that you have concerns about the potential dangers of excessive gaming, like addiction, social isolation and physical health issues. These are valid concerns. However, your current approach seems to lack a certain nuance. By placing arbitrary restrictions on gaming, you're not addressing the root causes of these issues.

When I was 14, I discovered a game that not only challenged my mind but also inspired me to connect with others who shared my passion. We'd spend hours discussing strategies, exchanging tips and simply revelling in the joy of play. This community became my safe haven, where I could truly be myself.

It's not just about the game itself; it's about the experiences and connections that are formed through play. There's a reason why so many of us have fond memories of playing games with friends and family, whether it's huddling around a console or competing in online matches. These shared experiences bring us closer together, forging bonds that can last a lifetime.

You see, Fun Police, the concept of play isn't just about entertainment; it's an essential part of human development. From early childhood, play helps us develop cognitive, emotional and social skills that we carry with us throughout our lives. Research has shown that video games can even enhance problem-solving, critical thinking and hand-eye coordination. When you place restrictions on gaming, you're potentially hindering the development of these valuable skills.

In a world where mental health is becoming an increasingly important topic of discussion, it's essential to recognise that play, including video gaming, can serve as a therapeutic outlet for many individuals. For some, it's a way to cope with stress, anxiety or depression. By allowing players to immerse themselves in alternate realities and explore new challenges, games can provide a safe space for emotional expression and self-discovery. However, your stringent rules may prevent people from accessing this crucial form of self-care.

I'd also like to address the misconception that all video games are inherently violent or mindless. In reality, the world of gaming is vast and diverse, encompassing a wide range of genres, styles and themes. There are games that promote creativity, collaboration and even education. By painting all games with the same brush and imposing blanket restrictions, you're perpetuating stereotypes and undermining the potential benefits that gaming can offer.

And, Fun Police, by imposing curfews and restrictions, you're not just affecting the gamers themselves; you're also affecting those around them. You're stifling creativity, limiting opportunities for social interaction and, most importantly, you're robbing people of the chance to enjoy a much-needed escape from reality.

So, I propose a different approach. Instead of trying to dictate when and how people can play, let's focus on promoting healthy gaming habits. Let's teach gamers to recognise when they need to take a break and step away from the screen. Let's encourage parents to engage with their kids, to understand the games they play and to create an open dialogue about responsible gaming.

We need to remember that play is an essential part of our lives, regardless of our age. It's a way for us to unwind, to explore, to connect and to grow. Let's not allow fear and misunderstanding to prevent us from enjoying the magic of play.

In closing, I ask you, Fun Police, to consider the implications of your actions. Remember the joy that play has brought into your own life and the lives of countless others. Let's work together to create a world where play can be enjoyed responsibly and without fear.

Sincerely,

A Concerned Gamer

Reflection

As an 18-year-old secondary school student, I wanted to create an open letter that would engage the reader while discussing the subject of 'play' in the context of video gaming. I was inspired by the mentor texts, particularly Chelsea Roffey's open letter, which I used as a model for my conversational tone and the inclusion of personal anecdotes. By incorporating my own gaming experiences, such as 'navigating worlds filled with vibrant colours, puzzles and the occasional boss battle', I aimed to build an emotional connection with the reader, enabling them to understand the importance of play in my life and the lives of others.

In terms of language use, I drew inspiration from Penni Russon's short story and its evocative imagery. I wanted to create vivid mental pictures that could resonate with the reader, as demonstrated by my description of gaming as 'a way for us to unwind, to explore, to connect and to grow'. Additionally, I was inspired by Tim Winton's speech to incorporate a call to action, urging the Fun Police to consider an alternative approach to addressing gaming concerns. By doing so, I hoped to not only persuade the reader but also to spark reflection and conversation around the topic of responsible gaming.

Throughout the open letter, I've blended elements from the mentor texts to craft a compelling and emotionally resonant piece. By using a conversational tone, personal anecdotes and vivid imagery, I was able to communicate the significance of play in our lives and challenge the restrictions and curfews imposed by the Fun Police. My intention was to create a thought-provoking piece that would encourage readers to reconsider their views on gaming and the concept of play, while also demonstrating

the power of language and storytelling to influence and inspire change.

Sample response four: Short story

Underneath the canopy of a million stars, the children of the village gathered on the outskirts, their laughter echoing in the night air. The sky was alive with colours as the aurora borealis danced above them, casting a glow on the snow-covered ground. It was here, in this magical place, that the children played their ancient game.

'Tonight, we become the heroes of old,' whispered Maya, the eldest of the group, her eyes shimmering with excitement. The others huddled close, listening intently. She began to tell the tale of the Nightwalkers, the celestial beings who ruled the skies, protecting the world from darkness.

As the story unfolded, each child felt a tingling sensation, their imaginations taking flight. They began to morph into the Nightwalkers, their bodies adorned with shimmering wings and ethereal garments. The village was transformed into a realm of wonder, where every gust of wind carried whispers of legends. The Nightwalkers took to the skies, their playful laughter mingling with the howling wind. They soared through the heavens, painting the world below with the colours of the aurora. In this celestial realm, they were invincible, their powers boundless.

The children revelled in their new-found abilities, diving through clouds and weaving intricate patterns in the sky. Each one drew on their unique strengths, working together to defend their world from darkness. They found joy in their unity, a bond forged through the ancient game.

In the midst of their play, a sudden darkness began to descend upon the world. Shadows crept in, slinking across the landscape and enveloping the celestial realm in a blanket of obsidian. As they advanced, the darkness seemed almost alive, pulsating with an ominous energy that threatened to extinguish the light of the stars. The once-vibrant sky was now marred by this encroaching void, a stark contrast to the luminescent beauty the Nightwalkers had revelled in mere moments ago.

Sensing the danger, the Nightwalkers gathered in a circle, their wings beating in unison and creating a gentle, rhythmic hum. They could feel the shadows drawing nearer, their cold tendrils attempting to snuff out the warmth of their celestial radiance. Maya, now a formidable celestial being with a commanding presence, moved forward, her eyes alight with determination. She knew deep within her heart that the power of play held the key to vanquishing the shadows that sought to consume their world. Drawing upon the strength of their shared bond, she called upon her fellow Nightwalkers, her voice carrying the weight of their collective hope.

'Remember the joy and laughter that has carried us so far,' she implored, her words resonating with each of them. As she spoke, the memories of their play and unity surged through their minds – the camaraderie, the sense of belonging and the sheer exhilaration of their game. It was this unbreakable bond forged through play that had given them the power to become Nightwalkers, and it was this same power that would enable them to stand against the darkness. The Nightwalkers, inspired by Maya's words, rallied together, their spirits renewed and prepared to face the shadows with the indomitable force of their shared laughter and joy.

As they united, the Nightwalkers' laughter and joy swelled into a powerful force, radiating outwards like a supernova. The darkness recoiled, unable to withstand the light of their play. With each beat of their wings, the shadows retreated, banished to the farthest corners of the universe. The world below awoke to a new dawn, the aurora borealis painting the sky in brilliant hues. The children, their game complete, returned to their village, forever changed by their celestial adventure. They had learned the power of play, of unity and of imagination.

Though they could no longer see the Nightwalkers, the villagers felt their presence in the dance of the northern lights. And the children, now keepers of an ancient secret, continued to gather under the stars, their laughter echoing through the night.

Reflection

My choice to set the story beneath the aurora borealis creates an otherworldly atmosphere that lends itself to the exploration of the concept of play. By using vivid and evocative imagery like 'the sky was alive with colours as the aurora borealis danced above them', I immerse the reader in a fantastical realm where children can transform into celestial beings and harness the power of play to overcome challenges. This enchanting setting, which mirrors the imaginative world of the characters, serves to underscore the theme of play throughout the narrative.

The language employed in the story is both poetic and introspective, adding depth and emotion to the narrative. I use phrases such as 'the village was transformed into a realm of wonder, where every gust of wind carried whispers of legends' to engage the reader's senses and emotions, drawing them into the world of the

Nightwalkers. By crafting a narrative with such rich and evocative language, I highlight the power of imagination and play, further emphasising the story's central theme.

The influence of the mentor texts is evident in my approach to the concept of play. The story draws inspiration from Penni Russon's 'All that we know of dreaming' by incorporating themes such as the imaginative world of children and the role of play in developing children's adaptability and resilience. The narrative also reflects the mentor text's emphasis on unity and bonding through play, as seen in the Nightwalkers' triumphant battle against the darkness. I use various language techniques evident in Russon's writing, such as poetic language and vivid imagery.

Overall, my short story explores the power of children playing as a positive force in the world. Through embracing play and imagination, the characters overcome challenges and are able to form strong connections. Using the mentor texts was essential in developing my voice and style in this piece, where I learned to use descriptive and sensory imagery and poetic language to immerse my readers in play.

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