VCE® Units 1 & 2

ENGLISH YEAR 11

11

STUDY DESIGN FROM 2023

—

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Course overview

		Area of Study 1: Reading and exploring texts	Area of Study 2: Crafting texts
Unit 1	**English**	You will study: • one text selected by your school. You will write: • a personal response to the text.	You will study: • (at least) three mentor texts. You will write: • two texts • a description of your writing processes.
	EAL	You will study: • one text (or extracts from a text) selected by your school. You may produce: • a personal response to the text OR a note-form summary of key connections and ideas within the text.	You will study: • three mentor texts. You will produce: • two texts • a set of annotations on your texts, identifying the qualities of effective writing.

		Area of Study 1: Reading and exploring texts	Area of Study 2: Exploring argument
Unit 2	**English**	You will study: • one text selected by your school. You will write: • an analytical essay on the text.	You may produce: • an analysis of the use of argument and persuasive language and techniques in persuasive text/s OR a set of annotated persuasive texts. You will produce: • an oral presentation of a point of view on a local or national issue.
	EAL	You will study: • one text (or extracts from a text) selected by your school. You may produce: • an analytical essay on the text OR a detailed mind map of vocabulary, text structures, language features and ideas in the text.	You may produce one or more of: • a note-form summary of key arguments and supporting arguments in persuasive text/s • an annotated visual text/s identifying key persuasive techniques • an analysis of the use of argument and persuasive language and techniques in persuasive text/s. You will produce: • an oral presentation of a point of view on a local or national issue.

Introduction

This second edition of Insight's *English Year 11: VCE Units 1 & 2* is a comprehensive textbook for the VCE English Study Design.

This book provides core knowledge that you will use throughout VCE English, with clear explanations of all key concepts. It also includes a number of practical features.

- Activities in each chapter enable you to apply knowledge, use metalanguage and consolidate your understanding of key concepts. They will also help you to refine your writing skills in short-answer or paragraph-length responses, focusing on specific concepts before you need to synthesise your knowledge in extended responses such as your assessment pieces.

- Opportunities for working in pairs or groups are indicated in the activities by the 'GROUP' icon. Many other activities also lend themselves to discussion and collaborative learning.

- Flow charts, mind maps, tables and diagrams present information visually; you can use these same visual tools to create your own summaries and to outline processes.

- Chapters 4, 5, 11, 17 and 18 explain what you need to do to complete your assessment tasks, and include useful sentence starters, checklists for editing and proofreading, and annotated high-level responses.

- QR codes throughout the book (and weblinks for use in the digital version, accessed via the code on the inside cover) enable you to view supplementary material, including videos, templates, websites and additional sample responses.

- In Chapter 19: Exam advice, you will find practical tips and strategies for improving your writing and performing at your best in an exam or SAC.

The VCE English course requires you to understand texts created by others and to create your own. *English Year 11* will help you develop the skills you will need to write confidently and effectively in a wide range of situations – not just in your English exams, but throughout your life.

Robert Beardwood, Melanie Napthine, Leon Furze and Ben White

Reading and exploring texts

For this area of study you will study two texts, one in Unit 1 and another in Unit 2. You will write in detail about your set texts, but in slightly different ways. Your essay for formal assessment in Unit 1 will be a **personal response** to the text, in which you will explore connections between the text and your own experiences and understanding of the world.

In Unit 2, you will write **analytical essays**, using formal language and the third-person voice, focusing on textual features and the ways in which the author constructs meaning.

Scan the code or click here for a glossary for Area of Study 1.

CHAPTER 01

HOW TO READ FOR MEANING

IN THIS CHAPTER

› Reading, re-reading and note-taking

› Inferred meanings

› Symbols and motifs

› Ideas, concerns and tensions

› Different interpretations

Studying, analysing and interpreting a text means understanding it on several levels, as well as incorporating your own responses and ideas. Understanding the text on a literal level – who does what, when, where and to whom – might be straightforward. But the text's real significance will lie in its implications and suggestions. In other words, the meanings that you *infer* reveal the deeper messages of a text, and will form the basis of your own interpretation of what it is really about.

Reading, re-reading and note-taking

Before you can respond to a text you will need to know it very well. Firstly, read or watch the text for enjoyment. This initial reading is all about understanding the storyline and the characters. Aim to do this *before* you start studying the text in class. Next, re-read or watch the text more slowly, and try to spot things you missed the first time. In a printed text, make notes in the margins, highlight short passages and/or use sticky labels to signal:

- significant scenes
- useful quotations
- important dialogue
- turning points
- the climax
- elements you do not yet understand
- anything else you think is relevant.

Use different colours for different elements, such as green for quotes, yellow for characters and orange for turning points. Make your text your most valuable resource.

In addition, create a set of notes in a notebook or computer file so your observations and ideas are all in one place. (For a film text, you will need to write all your notes like this.) In these notes, you can include more detail than you can write in the margins of your text. Even just the process of summarising information will help you to remember the details, which will help your recall in assessment situations. Use the following headings, adding others if you wish.

Plot summary
Character profiles
Important scenes
Ideas and concerns
Quotations

As you continue to study the text, transfer the most significant quotations and annotations from the text itself into your file of notes. Use appropriate headings. Add any useful ideas, questions and quotes from class discussions.

Scan the code or click here to download summary sheet templates for the plot and characters of a text.

Inferred meanings

The strategies above will mostly help you to summarise information that is explicitly described in the text. However, most of the important messages that you take from a text are *inferred* meanings. This means that you, as the reader, draw conclusions and 'read between the lines' to understand what the text really means and the messages its author wants to deliver.

Sentence-level and text-level meanings

Inferred meanings work at all levels of a text, from a word or sentence to the whole narrative. For example, in the following five sentences from *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* by Mark Haddon, the narrator, Christopher, gives a very literal description of his feelings about dogs. However, the reader can infer much more than this from what Christopher says.

> I like dogs. You always know what a dog is thinking. It has four moods. Happy, sad, cross and concentrating. Also, dogs are faithful and they do not tell lies because they cannot talk.

The *explicit* meaning that Christopher likes dogs is supplemented by the *inferred* meaning that Christopher places a high value on loyalty and honesty. The reader can also **make connections** with what they have previously learned, such as a connection between the statement 'You always know what a dog is thinking' and Christopher's explanation on the previous pages of how difficult he finds it to understand people's emotions from the expressions on their faces. Together, these literal descriptions enable the reader to make inferences about Christopher's personality and the challenges he faces.

Christopher's emphasis on moods, loyalty and honesty at this early point in the narrative might also lead the reader to predict that the novel will be concerned with complex emotions, infidelity and lies – which is in fact the case.

At the level of the **whole text**, the reader also infers meanings in order to understand the broader ideas and concerns the author is exploring. In Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, for instance, King Duncan and Banquo arrive at Macbeth's castle and comment on the peaceful surroundings and the birds ('martlets' or swallows) nesting on the castle walls:

> KING: This castle hath a pleasant seat; the air
> Nimbly and sweetly recommends itself
> Unto our gentle senses.

> BANQUO: This guest of summer,
> The temple-haunting martlet, does approve
> By his loved mansionry that the heaven's breath
> Smells wooingly here.

The pleasing air, the contentedly nesting birds and the religious associations of 'temple' and 'heaven' combine to create an image of natural, familial and spiritual harmony. However, the audience knows from the previous scene that Macbeth and his wife are thinking about murdering King Duncan. This scene, and its natural **imagery**, establishes that something larger is at stake: to murder the king would be a strike against the natural order. Indeed, on the following morning, even before the murder has been discovered, one of the lords describes the wild weather:

> LENNOX: The night has been unruly: where we lay
> Our chimneys were blown down, and, as they say,
> Lamentings heard in th' air, strange screams of death.

The audience can now infer that Duncan's murder is far more than the death of a king; it throws both the human world and the natural world into disarray. In the end, Macduff kills Macbeth: on a literal level this is an act of revenge, but on a more abstract level – the inferred meaning – it is the defeat of evil that enables order to be restored.

Irony

An important source of inferred meaning in a text is irony. In an ironic statement, the real meaning – inferred by the reader – is the opposite of the literal meaning. The famous opening sentence of Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice* is an example:

> It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession
> of a good fortune must be in want of a wife.

Austen's real meaning is that this isn't a 'truth' at all, but only a widely held opinion, and that not every wealthy single man might want to get married. The suggestion that this is held to be a 'truth' also conveys Austen's critical view of people who make assumptions about what others want, especially when their assumptions also suit their own agendas.

Gaps and silences

Gaps and silences in a text also leave the reader to infer meanings that aren't directly expressed. In the play *Twelve Angry Men*, the racial identity of the accused boy is never specified. This creates an intriguing silence. At one point, the 10th Juror expresses his hostility towards the defendant and the community to which the boy belongs:

> These people are born to lie. Now, it's the way they are and no
> intelligent man is gonna tell me otherwise. They don't know what
> the truth is. Well, take a look at them. They are different. They think
> different. They act different.

These statements express the character's firmly held beliefs, but the audience can infer that he is extremely prejudiced and that his view of the accused's guilt or innocence is unreliable. The bluntness and arrogance with which the 10th Juror expresses his views makes him an extremely unsympathetic character, whose attitudes the playwright implicitly rejects – another of the inferred meanings of this passage. The play's silence regarding the boy's racial identity conveys to the audience that the playwright's concern is not with any particular form of prejudice, but with the quality of prejudice itself.

Explore inferred meanings

ACTIVITY 1.1

1   Find a sentence or group of sentences in your text in which something is stated in a plain, direct way. What additional meanings can you infer from these sentences? Think about what is suggested or implied about a character, setting or situation.

2   Find a short passage of detailed description or imagery. (For a film, look for a close-up shot or sequence of shots.) What qualities or values are suggested by this passage? Think about the associated meanings (connotations) of particular words or images, and whether the thing being described or shown might represent a larger group (such as the martlets representing families in general in the *Macbeth* example on the previous page).

3   Identify an example of irony in your text, either in dialogue or the narrative voice. Explain the literal meaning and the intended (implied) meaning.

4   Find a gap or silence in your text – where something is clear to the audience although it isn't said. It could be at a particular point in the text or across the whole text. What is said and what is left out? Why do you think this information has been deliberately omitted by the author? How does the gap or silence contribute to your understanding of the text?

Symbols and motifs

As the discussion of inferred meanings shows, understanding the literal meaning in a text is only the beginning of understanding what a text is really about. Two other important sources of meaning are **symbols** and **motifs**. As you read, look for repeated images and ideas – these are clues to an author's real concerns.

Symbols are objects that have a larger, more abstract meaning. Common symbols with widely understood meanings include:

- a crown as a symbol for the monarchy
- a red rose as a symbol for love
- a dove as a symbol for peace.

Symbols can also gain their meanings through associations with other elements of the text. An example is the image of the mockingbird in Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*. When Atticus says 'it's a sin to kill a mockingbird' he is, on a literal level, simply stating an opinion about the treatment of mockingbirds, harmless birds that live in the area. The reader, though, can make connections with the innocent characters in the novel, such as Boo Radley and Tom Robinson, and infer that the novelist is really suggesting that it is wrong to harm anything innocent. This adds a layer of meaning to the text that goes beyond our interest in what happens to individual characters. The wider concerns of justice and social acceptance are central to the novel's meaning.

Motifs are repeated images, objects or concepts. They may or may not have symbolic meanings, but they will certainly be linked to key ideas and concerns in the text. In William Golding's novel *Lord of the Flies*, the conch shell and the fire are motifs that also have symbolic meanings. The reader infers these meanings through the ways the objects are associated with the boys' activities and values. The conch is used to call meetings and to show who is authorised to speak at a given moment, so it represents civilisation and social order. The actions of Jack, who leads a rebel group of boys who prioritise hunting over meetings, cause the destruction of the conch, symbolising his rejection of civilised values. The motif of fire is more ambiguous: it is associated with both civilisation and savagery, depending on how it is used and valued by the boys.

ACTIVITY 1.2

Explore symbols and motifs

1 Find a symbol in your text. What is the object or image, and what is its symbolic meaning?

2 List all the examples of this symbol you can find in your text, and explain how the symbol is being used to present an idea.

3 Identify a motif in your text and give three or four examples of where it is used. What are this motif's associations or meanings?

Ideas, concerns and tensions

A text's ideas and concerns are what give it wider meaning and relevance. Thinking about a text's wider meaning requires you to understand how it connects to the world, and to individual readers or viewers. This is where inferential reading comes in – you work outwards from the literal details to abstract concepts and broader viewpoints.

An **idea** is a concept or thought; common examples of ideas that texts explore include love, family, identity, prejudice, war, freedom and justice. (The word 'theme' is often used to refer to ideas explored in a text.)

The term **concern** can be used as a synonym for 'idea', or to refer to a more specific concept or issue that an author wants readers to reflect on. For example, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* explores the *ideas* of love, family, truth and trust, but one of its central *concerns* is the difficulties faced by people with disability trying to fit into a world not designed for their needs.

There are three main ways in which an idea or concern can be expressed:

- as a single word, such as 'justice'

- as a phrase, such as 'the difficulty of achieving justice'

- as a complete sentence, such as, 'Justice is difficult to achieve when power is held only by a few.'

Authors use all of a text's features, such as characters, plot, narrative voice and language, to explore ideas and concerns. Sometimes they offer a clear point of view, such as when they implicitly criticise certain behaviours and endorse others. At other times a text can consider two or more sides of an issue without expressing a view one way or the other – it might simply show the complexities of human nature and behaviour.

Tensions arise in a text on a literal level from conflicts within the plot. They also arise on an inferential level from the exploration of ideas and values. They can exist between characters or between opposing groups; they can also result from a character's internal conflict as they seek to balance competing values and/or goals. Tension can also be created as we sympathise with a character and hope that they can overcome obstacles and achieve their goal. For example, in Craig Silvey's *Jasper Jones*, the inner conflicts Charlie, the protagonist, experiences are central to what keeps the reader interested in the story. He knows it is wrong to keep the location of Laura's body a secret, but he wishes to protect Jasper from harm; he desperately wants to prove his bravery to his peers, but to do so he has to pick up peaches that are covered with insects, which terrify him.

Mind map for ideas, concerns and tensions

Usually texts have several main ideas and sources of tension. The mind map below shows some of the central ideas and concerns in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*. To illustrate each idea, there is a short quote that reveals a clear tension.

Identity
'What's in a name? That which we call a rose / By any other word would smell as sweet'

Fate
'A greater power than we can contradict / Hath thwarted our intents'

Romeo and Juliet

Conflict
'Where civil blood makes civil hands unclean'

Duty
'I think she will be ruled / In all respects by me'

Love
'My only love sprung from my only hate'

Create a mind map for key ideas and concerns

Identify five or six of the main ideas in your text. Express these as single words or short phrases. Draw a mind map similar to the one for *Romeo and Juliet* on page 8, with the key ideas arranged around the title of the text. Under each idea, write a brief quote that reflects the author's exploration of that idea.

Different interpretations

An interpretation is an explanation of what a text means, supported by evidence. It is not simply an opinion about whether the text is 'good' or 'bad'; an interpretation focuses on what the text is essentially about and the view of the world it presents.

Any text can be interpreted in different ways; no two people will 'read' a text in exactly the same way. We are each affected differently by a text's characters, events and ideas; we each bring our own experiences, from life and from our reading, to help construct our *own* interpretation.

The following tips will help you to develop an original interpretation of your text.

- **Draw on your own responses to the text**, even if initially they are largely emotional. These will reflect your own unique combination of life experiences and your cultural and social contexts.

- **Read the text several times.** When you re-read, you will notice things that initially escaped your attention – subtle hints and suggestions that you can expand on by using your inferential reading skills. These are the less obvious features of the text that your interpretation can draw into the foreground, enhancing the originality of your writing.

- **Read what other people have written about the text**; even short online reviews can be useful. They will give you a sense of the main ideas readers have discussed and their attitudes towards the text. Do you agree with what has been said? Can you think of other points to make?

- **Talk to others who have read the text.** Class discussions, in particular, can be extremely useful in clarifying your ideas – they provide a live exchange of views and show up points of difference between your own responses and those of others.

CONTEXTS AND VALUES

IN THIS CHAPTER

❯ Social, historical and cultural contexts

❯ Contexts of culture and situation

❯ Contexts of production and reception

❯ Values

Context refers to the factors and influences that help to shape both the creation of a text and its reading or reception. All texts reflect, to some degree, the time and place of their creation. By understanding the relationship between a text and the context in which it was produced, you will deepen your understanding of the work. In addition, developing a stronger knowledge of the context of reception will help you to become more aware of how your own context shapes your reactions to the text.

Social, historical and cultural contexts

The three main broad types of context are social, historical and cultural.

Social	• The **social context** refers to the features of a society and their impact on people's lives. • An aspect of social context is the way society is divided into social classes and how this influences people's work and education opportunities.
Historical	• The **historical context** refers to the ideas and practices prevalent in the relevant historical period. • Political leaders, the arts, social movements, wars, scientific knowledge and discoveries are all important aspects of the historical context.
Cultural	• The **cultural context** refers to ways of living and how these are represented in the media and the arts. • Cultural contexts are shaped by education as well as nationality, ethnicity and religion.

When you are studying a text, you should have some knowledge of the social, historical and cultural contexts of its creation. This becomes especially important when one or more of these contexts is very different from your own. Ideas regarded as 'normal' in one context might well appear strange, wrong or even offensive to someone in a different context.

Contexts of culture and situation

The three broad contexts discussed in the previous section can be grouped together as the **context of culture**. To varying degrees, they affect everything that happens in a particular society.

In contrast, the **context of situation** refers to the specific circumstances around a text's creation or reception. These can include:

- events occurring at a particular time and place

- the specific circumstances around the publication or reading of the text

- the author's or reader's own **personal context**.

The author's personal context can have a strong influence on the meanings constructed by a text; likewise, the reader's personal context will influence their responses to and interpretation of a text. Personal context incorporates a number of factors that shape a person's outlook, interests and concerns.

A good example of a text clearly shaped by the author's personal context is George Orwell's *Animal Farm*.

On the surface, *Animal Farm* is the story of a group of pigs that take over a farm and then rule it through a dictatorship, taking all the farm's produce for themselves. It is partly whimsical in style; the title page even calls it 'A Fairy Story'. However, if you probe a little into the author's life then you will arrive at a deeper, and very different, understanding of the text.

George Orwell was a dedicated socialist; he fought against Fascist forces in the Spanish Civil War (1936–39) and believed that the means of production should be communal rather than private, and that there should be greater equality in society.

However, Orwell's experiences in Spain exposed him to the ruthlessness of the communist forces and gave him firsthand experience of the power of propaganda. As a journalist in wartime London he became aware of Joseph Stalin's brutal dictatorship in the communist Soviet Union (USSR), and of the difficulty of publishing anything anti-Soviet at a time when Britain was in an alliance with the USSR in a war against Nazi Germany.

Written in 1943–44, *Animal Farm* is an **allegory** (story with a political or moral message) for what had happened in the Soviet Union, and more generally for how communism had betrayed the original ideals of socialism. The novel begins with the animals trying to make the socialist vision a reality: the pigs take over the farm, ending the farmer's oppression and exploitation of the animals, and everyone is happy. But the pigs become dominant, self-interested and controlling, and the other animals begin to suffer, mirroring events in the USSR. When we read the text knowing something of Orwell's own experiences and of the wider historical context, our view of it moves from it being a simple fairytale to being an argumentative work about the failings of Stalin's USSR.

Of course, there were other important contextual factors around the publication of *Animal Farm*. During the war, British publishing houses were reluctant to take on a novel that was highly critical of the USSR's leaders. However, *Animal Farm* was eventually published in 1945, at the end of the war, and was extremely popular by the end of the 1940s – when Western nations were much more critical of Stalin's rule.

Contexts of production and reception

The **context of production** refers to the circumstances around the creation of the text, from its writing through to its publication. The context of production also includes the medium for which the text was intended. For example, *Twelve Angry Men* was originally written as a television play, then was adapted for the stage, then made into a film. Each 'production' of the text had a different context, even though they all occurred in the 1950s.

The **context of reception** refers to the circumstances around the text's readers or viewers. Again, this includes the medium in which it is consumed. A novel might have been originally published as a print book but now be available as an ebook; a film might originally have been released in cinemas but now be more often viewed at home on television or other devices.

In the case of texts produced many years ago, the context of the initial reception is likely to be quite different from our own. For example, Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* was published in 1960. Its central concern of racial injustice reflects the historical context, as the United States was in the early years of the Civil Rights Movement (a movement that promoted the rights of Black people in the United States). Socially and culturally the text also reflects its time and the likely perspectives of its first readers, with the narrative voice belonging to a white middle-class girl, while the characters who are marginalised through race or class are largely denied a voice. As we read the text now – in our own context of reception – we are aware of its resonance with the Black Lives Matter movement, but also of elements that we would now regard as problematic: the use of racist language, for example, or the characterisation of Mayella Ewell as someone who asserts she has been raped but whose testimony should not be believed.

Gregory Peck as Atticus Finch and Mary Badham as Scout in the 1962 film *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The text explores racism and prejudice, but at its centre is a white middle-class family – reflecting the likely context of the primary audience for both the novel and the film. Atlaspix / Alamy Stock Photo

Develop your understanding of context

ACTIVITY 2.1

1 Do some research into the context of production of your text. Where and when was it created? What are some important features of the historical period and the society in which it was produced?

2 The context *represented* in your text is also important. This might be the same as its context of production, but it might be quite different – as in a novel or film about an earlier period. Make notes on the historical, social and cultural contexts depicted in your text.

3 **GROUP** As a class or in small groups, brainstorm the factors that make up your context of reception as you study a text in class. Think about the broader factors – the context of culture – as well as things specific to your school and even your English class – the context of situation. In what ways does your context of reception differ from the text's context of production?

> **4** What aspects of your own personal context are relevant to the way in which you respond to and interpret your text? Think about things such as characters, settings, situations and events, and the wider ideas and concerns the text explores. (This activity is relevant to your personal response to a text, which is discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.)

Scan the code or click <u>here</u> for a video overview of contexts.

Values

Values are qualities, ideas and beliefs that a person or society considers right or desirable. They are part of the context in which a text is produced, and of the context in which a text is read or viewed.

While a text will reflect the broader values of its context of production, it will also reflect its author's values, which might differ from the values that are or were widely accepted in the author's society. Texts often contain a message about the values the author feels are important to lead a good life, or about qualities they think are undesirable.

Values underpin ideas of what it means to be ethical and moral. These ideas are rarely clear-cut, and they often involve tensions and compromises. Here are some of the common values you may encounter in your texts.

- honesty
- self-reliance
- equality
- freedom of expression
- compassion
- integrity
- selflessness

- tolerance
- justice
- loyalty
- trust
- honour
- courage
- empathy

Authors present and explore values through the characters and events of the text. Characters presented in a positive light usually share the author's values; characters presented in a negative light often have qualities that are rejected by the author. The plot and narrative structure of the text often reveal the author's view of human nature and the values they believe their audiences should endorse and protect.

For example, in Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago is deceitful and cruel; his actions lead to the deaths of Othello and Desdemona. In contrast, Cassio is loyal and honest. At the end of the play, Cassio is rewarded by becoming governor of Cyprus, while Iago faces torture and imprisonment for the rest of his life.

The conflicting values of Iago (Kenneth Branagh) and Othello (Laurence Fishburne) create tension and drama throughout *Othello*. Album / Alamy Stock Photo

Identify values in your text

1   Choose five characters from your text – some main, some minor.

2   Identify a key idea, concern or tension explored in your text; for example, the importance of loyalty, the difficulty of achieving justice, the challenge of staying true to one's beliefs. Based on what they say, think and do, summarise the views that each character expresses on this idea. How do these views reveal each character's values?

3   Make a note of the consequences of the characters' behaviour. Do some characters achieve their goals? Are some punished for their thoughts and actions?

4   Which values do you think are endorsed by the author? Justify your answer.

You may find it helpful to record your answers to these questions in table format. Create a table like the one below to summarise your ideas and the textual evidence you find.

Character	Important views	Values	Key actions and their consequences	How character reveals author's viewpoint

FEATURES OF TEXTS

IN THIS CHAPTER

‣ Novels and short stories

‣ Film

‣ Drama

‣ Nonfiction

‣ Graphic novels

‣ Poetry

This chapter explains the key features of the main types of texts you might study in Area of Study 1, with activities you can apply to your set text. You will refer to these features in your personal and analytical text responses.

Novels and short stories

Novels and short stories are fictional narratives – they tell stories about characters who grapple with conflicts and try to overcome challenges. They can be set in the past, the present or the future; the location can be somewhere familiar or an entirely imagined place.

Plot and structure

The plot or storyline of a fictional narrative is the sequence of events in the text. The structure of a narrative is created by its tensions and conflicts, which ebb and flow throughout. The plot of a linear narrative is usually structured around the following key points.

- **Crisis points** are where the tension reaches a peak.
- **Turning points** are where important changes occur.
- The **climax** is the point of greatest tension. It usually occurs near the end of the narrative.
- The **denouement** (a French word meaning 'untying') follows the climax. It provides answers to questions and untangles narrative threads.
- The **resolution** is the final part of the narrative, where the tension relaxes and conflicts are ended.

Flow chart of key plot points

You need to thoroughly know the plot of your novel or short stories: what happens, when it happens and who is involved. A flow chart is a good way to summarise the key plot points. The one below shows the main events leading up to the climax of the plot in Craig Silvey's novel *Jasper Jones*.

In 1965, while living in Corrigan (a fictitious town in WA), Charlie Bucktin and Jasper Jones find Laura Wishart dead, in a clearing in the bush; they hide her body in a dam.

↓

Charlie goes to the library to research local murders; his mother punishes him for disobeying orders to stay near home by making him dig a hole in the backyard, then fill it in again.

↓

Charlie and Jasper secretly go back to the clearing; on his return home Charlie is grounded for two weeks.

↓

Charlie's friend Jeffrey Lu plays a match for the Corrigan cricket team, scoring the winning runs; Charlie and Eliza (Laura's younger sister) watch from the sidelines and share a kiss.

↓

Jeffrey's father's prized garden is destroyed by local men in a racist act of vandalism; Charlie's father and some neighbours fight the vandals.

↓

On New Year's Eve, Charlie and Jasper go to the house of Mad Jack Lionel, whom Jasper suspects of killing Laura …

Rising and falling tension

The way in which an author creates a sequence of crisis points and turning points, with moments of relaxation and reflection in between, creates a pattern of rising and falling tension. The graph on the following page shows a typical plot pattern in which the narrative tension gradually builds towards the climax.

Diagram showing the rise and fall of **DRAMATIC TENSION** across the **NARRATIVE**, with labelled points: early crisis, turning point, middle crisis, turning point, climax, denouement, resolution.

Outline a plot

1 Create a flow chart to outline the plot of a novel or short story you are studying. Record the major events in the order they happen.

2 **GROUP** In small groups, compare your selection of events with those of your classmates. Justify your own selection with evidence from the text. Revise your flow chart if needed.

3 Identify the main elements of narrative structure in your text: crisis points, turning points, climax, denouement and resolution. Create a graph using these terms to plot the rise and fall of tension.

Linear (chronological) and nonlinear structures

When events are presented in **chronological order**, the reader will usually see a gradual change in the main character's behaviours and attitudes. The rising tension and moments of crisis keep the reader's attention because they want to find out what will happen and how challenging situations will be resolved.

Sometimes a narrative follows a linear or chronological structure with minor variations. For example, Larry Watson's novel *Montana 1948* follows the events of David Hayden's childhood in a mostly chronological order. However, it is framed by a prologue and an epilogue told from the adult David's point of view at a much later point in time. Watson also uses several flashbacks, in which David recalls events (such as shooting a magpie) that occurred before the main storyline.

In a **nonlinear structure**, events are arranged in an order that is significantly different from the chronological sequence. Here are some possible nonlinear structures.

- **A circular structure:** The narrative begins and ends at the same (or nearly the same) point in time. For example, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini begins at a point near the end of the time frame covered by the novel. The adult protagonist recalls events in his childhood, adolescence and early adult life, trying to understand how he got into his current situation. In the final pages, the narrative reaches the point in time at which the novel began, and provides a partial resolution.

- **A multi-voiced narrative:** Events are presented from different perspectives to create a contrast between characters and their circumstances. For example, the events in Fred D'Aguiar's *The Longest Memory* are described from the perspectives of several major characters. These accounts are placed in a non-chronological order. As events appear very different when described from different characters' points of view and at varying points in time, the reader faces the challenge of trying to make sense of the narrative.

- **Flashbacks:** Although flashbacks are often used in linear narratives, in some narratives the flashbacks contain most of the story. For example, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's story 'The American Embassy' has numerous flashbacks that are presented in reverse chronological order, gradually explaining how the protagonist has come to be standing in a queue at the embassy.

Understand structure

ACTIVITY 3.2

1 Use the definitions above and on the previous page to help you identify the structure of your text. Is it mainly linear or nonlinear? (If you are studying a collection of short stories, do this for three or four stories.)

2 If your text contains flashbacks, what effects are created by them?

3 Write three sentences about how the author has used structure to present ideas, concerns and tensions.

Setting

The setting is the place and time in which the action of the narrative takes place. Novels can have several settings and describe events over a long period of time; a short story usually has a single setting and a limited time frame.

Settings create the world in which the characters live. The author describes a physical environment as well as a social and cultural context for the characters. The way characters respond to particular settings allows authors to explore big ideas about society and human nature. The way that settings are described also helps to create a mood or atmosphere.

Understand setting

ACTIVITY 3.3

1 Describe the main setting (time and place) of your text. If there are several important settings, list them.

2 **GROUP** In small groups, create a visual presentation of the setting. You might choose to draw a picture or create a collage, either by hand or on your computer. Annotate your presentation with quotes from your text that refer to the setting.

3 How do the characters relate to the main setting in which the action takes place – positively or negatively? What can you infer about the characters from their attitudes towards their setting?

Narrators

The 'voice' that tells the story in a novel or short story is usually either a first-person or third-person narrator.

First-person narrators

A first-person narrator is also a character in the text. They tell the story from their own point of view using first-person pronouns such as 'I' and 'we'. Since the narrator is speaking from inside the world of the text, they communicate a strong and immediate sense of what it is like to live in that world. On the other hand, the reader must infer what the other characters are thinking and feeling from what the narrator says about them.

The fact that events and other characters are presented from this one character's subjective viewpoint can cause readers to question the reliability of the first-person narrator. An **unreliable narrator** gives a prejudiced or biased account of characters and events, or they might leave out details because they are not aware of things that are happening around them. This is particularly true of child narrators. Scout in *To Kill a Mockingbird*, Christopher in *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* and Charlie in *Jasper Jones* are first-person narrators who are not completely reliable, for different reasons.

Third-person narrators

A third-person narrator tells the story from outside the world of the text, referring to characters in the third person ('they', 'he', 'she'). The term **omniscient narrator** describes a narrator who knows everything about the world of the text and can give readers insight into the thoughts and feelings of various characters.

However, in some texts the third-person narrator only presents the story's events and characters from the protagonist's perspective, and so does not convey any more information than a first-person narrator. This is known as the **third-person limited** narrative perspective.

ACTIVITY 3.4

Understand your narrator

1 Choose the column relevant to your text in the following table and complete the four tasks in small groups.

GROUP

First-person narrator	Third-person narrator
Choose a passage in your text where the narrator is commenting on another character or describing an event. Annotate this passage, highlighting key phrases and making notes on how the narrator presents a point of view.	Choose a passage in your text where the narrator is commenting on a character or describing an event. Annotate this passage, highlighting key phrases and making notes on how the narrator presents a point of view.
Discuss how the narrator influences your response to the character or event.	Discuss how the narrator influences your response to the character or event.

First-person narrator	Third-person narrator
How reliable is the narrator? Do you believe everything the character says about themselves and the world around them? Do they omit any important information?	Is this passage written from a reliable, objective perspective, or from a certain character's perspective? Why do you think this?
Find a passage later in the text. Are the same attitudes and values evident in the narrator's descriptions? Has their outlook or understanding changed?	If possible, find a passage in which the narrative point of view shifts from showing the viewpoint of one character to that of another. What is the effect on your response to these characters?

2 Consider the implications of changing the narrator. Choose a key incident or crisis point in your text and consider how the narrator positions the reader to view it. Might it be viewed differently if it was described from a different perspective?

3 Write a short passage from the point of view of a minor character, summarising how they view events and situations in the text. Focus on the ways that this character's viewpoint and opinions might be different from the narrator's.

Characters

Characters are fictional depictions of people, and they are essential to an author's presentation of human experiences. Characters think and act in ways recognisable to us from our own experiences, even if their particular situations are dramatically different.

We learn about characters through:

- how they are described
- what they say and think
- what they do
- how they interact with other characters
- what other characters say about them.

Characters experience a range of situations and relationships in the course of a narrative. As a result they can – and often do – change. Through these changes, authors convey messages about ideas and values.

For example, the main character in Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, Ebenezer Scrooge, is visited by three ghosts who confront him with examples of his poor behaviour. Scrooge is forced to reflect on his life in the past, present and future and to acknowledge the pain he has caused others. Finally, he vows to mend his ways and to embrace the 'spirit of Christmas'.

Protagonists and main characters

The protagonist is the central character in the narrative. When two or more central characters are equally important they are referred to as the main characters.

An author will develop the protagonist and main characters in detail, adding complexity and giving them positive and negative qualities. Over the course of the narrative, the reader comes to know these characters and to understand how they think and why they act as they do. This leads the reader to sympathise with the main characters, even if they don't always agree with or approve of the characters' behaviour.

Minor characters

Minor characters are not developed in as much detail as main characters, but they still play important roles in the narrative. Minor characters can:

- embody certain attitudes and beliefs that the author wishes to examine

- act as messengers or helpers for the main characters

- be catalysts for change in the main characters, such as by bringing out the best or worst in the protagonist.

ACTIVITY 3.5

Improve your understanding of characters

1 Create character summary cards on your computer or in your notebook based on the tables below. Fill them in, using a selection of main and minor characters.

Main character
Name:
Three words to describe them:
Most important relationship:
Most important thing that happens to them:
Main way in which they change:
Five key quotations:

Minor character
Name:
Three words to describe them:
Main function in the text:
Most important thing they tell us about a main character or key idea:
Key quotation:

2 **GROUP** Compare notes with a partner or present your summary cards to the class and discuss your answers to the following questions.

a Was there general agreement about each character's most significant qualities and relationships or functions, or was there some variation?

b How much agreement was there about the most important thing that happens to the main characters?

c Why do you think there might be some differences in interpretation?

3 Consider whether anything is missing from your character summaries. Are there any important facets of a character that you need to add to your summary cards?

4 Create a collage on a poster to represent your main characters visually. Draw your own illustrations or use pictures from magazines or the internet to represent the characters' likes and dislikes, their main qualities, the events they are involved in and how they change as a result. Present your poster to the class and explain why you have included each image OR write a sentence for each image, explaining its inclusion.

Links between stories in collections

Analysing a single short story is not very different from analysing a novel, except that the events and descriptions are much more condensed. However, in addition to discussing the stories as individual narratives, you must also look for connecting links as well as differences between the stories within a collection.

Many collections have similar types of characters or relationships in their stories. For example, recurring character types might include outsiders, children, people who have experienced loss and people on the cusp of a new phase of life. Relationships commonly explored in short stories include marriages and parent–child relationships. Some collections have recurring characters. For example, in Alice Munro's collection *Runaway*, the character Juliet features in three of the eight stories.

Most short story collections have ideas or images that are common to several stories. For example, images of entrapment, illness and death appear throughout the horror stories of Edgar Allan Poe. Stories can also be linked by their settings, or by similar situations and challenges faced by the characters. For example, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie's *The Thing Around Your Neck* contains several stories in which characters with Nigerian backgrounds attempt to create new lives in the United States.

Film

A film tells a story using moving pictures and a soundtrack. Like a novel or a short story, a film can present a fictional narrative using characters and settings, placing events in an order that creates rising and falling tension.

To study a film text successfully, you need to explore and understand the visual and sound elements as well as the usual story elements. View the film you are studying in full at least twice. Revisit key scenes several times: the opening and closing scenes, the introduction of main characters, turning points, crisis points and the film's climax. Initially your focus will be on *what* happens, but as you watch scenes repeatedly you will start to notice *how* the filmmakers have created and combined shots. This is what produces the 'look and feel' of a film – in other words, the film style.

There are four elements of film style: cinematography, mise en scène, editing and sound. In most films these elements combine almost seamlessly, so that you do not notice them individually. A close analysis of a scene, however, will explain how these elements of film style work together to tell a story.

Cinematography

The cinematographer is the person who, under instruction from the director, sets up all the shots in the film. Various camera distances and angles are used to create different effects; some of the main shot types are described below and on the following pages.

Extreme close-up

Creates a magnified image that brings the viewer very close to an object or part of an object.

Close-up

Shows the subject matter in detail; often used for faces, a significant object or important text.

Medium shot (or mid shot)

Shows most or all of one or two characters with some background, placing characters in a context.

Long shot

Shows the physical environment, with people appearing further away from the camera than in a medium shot.

Aerial shot

Shows the setting from far above, establishing a sense of place.

Tilt-down shot
(or high-angle shot)

Looks down at the subject, showing it from above.

Tilt-up shot
(or low-angle shot)

Looks up at the subject, showing it from below.

Panning shot

The camera rotates from left to right (or right to left).

Zoom shot

The focal length of the camera lens changes continuously so the viewer seems to move towards (or away from) the subject.

Analyse cinematography

1 Identify three different shot types in the film you are studying. For each shot, describe what is in the frame.

2 Write two or three sentences for each, explaining why you think the director chose to use this sort of shot at this point in the film. What does it suggest about a character or a situation? What effect does it have on the viewer? Does it illuminate a tension or a key idea being explored by the film?

Mise en scène

Mise en scène means 'putting on stage', and refers to everything that can be seen within the frame at a given point in a film. Setting, acting style, costumes and lighting are the four visual elements of mise en scène.

Visual element	What to look for	Effects
Setting is the physical location of any scene.	• If outdoors, is the setting vast and intimidating, or attractive and welcoming? • If indoors, are the rooms large and comfortable, or small and constricting? • Does the setting establish a country or region?	• The setting puts characters in a context. • In conjunction with lighting and sound, a setting can help to create a mood. • The setting might contain elements that the main characters value or reject, contributing to tension and conflict.
Acting style includes facial expressions and body language.	• Is the acting style natural, exaggerated, understated or measured? • How does this help to create a character's social status, personality and attitudes?	• Key character traits can be established through exaggeration and repetition. • The actor's use of facial expressions and body language can indicate the nature of a relationship.

Characters' **costumes** include clothes, hairstyles, make-up and personal props.	• How do costumes reflect the historical period and the characters' social and cultural contexts? • How are specific items used to reveal aspects of characters?	• Clothes, hairstyles, make-up and props can reflect a character's social status and personality. • Visual elements such as colour can establish types and groups of characters.
Lighting refers to the colour, intensity, source and direction of light.	• What colour is the lighting? • How intense is the lighting? • Is the scene evenly lit, or are there areas of bright light and/or shadow?	• Lighting can be used to suggest a character's state of mind. • The degree of clarity of the light (from clear to hazy or murky) adds to the mood. • A spotlight can draw attention to a significant character.

Read the annotations to this shot from *Gattaca* (written and directed by Andrew Niccol) to see how you can analyse elements of mise en scène.

Lighting: The low-level lighting creates generally dark interiors, suggesting entrapment. Irene's face is relatively well-lit, consistent with her central role in the film.

Setting: Muted colours and featureless interiors suggest a world without variety or interest. The workers' computers dominate the space, reflecting the work-focused culture.

Acting style: The actor looks straight ahead, appearing determined, serious and possibly defiant.

Costumes: Dark clothes contribute to the sombre mood, while Irene's hair is tied back tightly, reflecting the controlled emotions in this society. Her red lipstick hints at passion and Irene's ultimate refusal to follow social conventions.

Uma Thurman as Irene in *Gattaca* (1997). Moviestore Collection Ltd / Alamy Stock Photo

Analyse mise en scène

ACTIVITY 3.7

1 Describe an important setting in your film.

2 How does the director shape your impressions of the setting? Consider the physical features of the setting, the lighting and the camera shots used.

3 Select one of the main characters and focus on that character in an important scene. Describe their costume (including any personal props such as a phone or bag) and their acting style in this scene. How do costume and acting style work together to create the character?

Editing

Film editing is the process of selecting and combining shots to tell a story. Much editing is invisible: the audience is barely aware of the sequence of shots or the ways in which they are joined. The use of sound (such as dialogue or the music soundtrack) also contributes to the illusion of continuity.

Three common types of edits are:

- **cuts**, in which one shot ends and the next begins immediately
- **dissolves**, in which one shot briefly overlaps with the next
- **fades**, in which one shot dissolves into black before the next shot begins.

One common use of a cut is in a shot/reverse-shot. In this type of edit, the film cuts back and forth between two points of view. For example, it is often used to show two people having a conversation.

A more obvious type of edit is crosscutting, which uses cuts to link shots that show action taking place in different locations. A film will typically use crosscuts to move back and forth between related or simultaneous events; more rapid crosscuts can quickly increase tension and suspense. Crosscuts can also be used to link events occurring at different times, such as in the film's present and in a flashback.

Sound

Sound consists of dialogue, music and sound effects. It can also include narrative voice-over. Sound plays an important part in the telling of the story, contributing to the plot as well as the mood of a scene. Sound works with other film elements to shape our understanding of the film's visual meaning. For example, a shot of a child screaming in a park can lead us to think the child is in danger. However, the same sound (a child's scream) used with an image of a dog about to be hit by a car or a group of children playing rowdily will have very different effects.

Diegetic sound is sound that comes from within the world of the film and can be heard by the characters. **Non-diegetic** sounds can only be heard by the audience; the music soundtrack is a common example, but if the music is created or heard by the characters themselves then it is diegetic sound.

The following are some common types of sound in a film.

Sound type	Definition	Effect
Narrative voice-over	The voice of a narrator, who is sometimes also a character in the film.	Shapes the way that the audience perceives characters and events.
Music	The soundtrack of the film, or music played within the world of the film (e.g. from a radio).	Can build suspense and express sadness, triumph or joy; a sudden change from one style to another can create tension or bring relief; can also help establish a social or cultural context for the characters.
Sound effects	Sounds that match the visuals, e.g. the sound of a car door slamming will be paired with a visual of the action.	Adds to the believability of the film; can draw the audience's attention to certain actions or events.

It is also important to realise when there is no sound – silence is a significant element of a soundtrack and should always be analysed for effect. For example, silence in a jungle or on a battlefield effectively signals impending danger, while a character standing alone and in silence might indicate a time of reflection or understanding.

Analyse a scene

ACTIVITY 3.8

Choose a two-minute section of the film you are studying. You could choose the opening two minutes, as it is interesting to explore how a film establishes important ideas and tensions. Watch the selected section a number of times and then answer these questions on the elements of film style.

Scan the code or click **here** to see a sample analysis of a scene from Ridley Scott's 1982 film *Blade Runner*.

1 Cinematography and editing

   a   How many shots can you count in this section of the film?

   b   What kinds of edits are used to combine the shots? Are the edits hardly noticeable to the audience, or have they been made deliberately noticeable? What is the effect?

   c   Identify as many camera distances and angles as you can (see pages 24–6). Why do you think these camera distances and angles have been used?

   d   Does the camera move in this section of the film? If so, who or what does the camera follow? How does this focus our attention on certain characters or events?

   e   What is left out of the frame as a result of camera position and movement?

2 Mise en scène

   a   Look closely at one shot and describe the four elements of mise en scène.

   b   What information does this shot give you about characters and their situations? What questions does it prompt you to ask about them?

   c   What is the mood (e.g. peaceful, tense, exciting) suggested by the shot, and how is it suggested?

   d   Turn the sound off and watch the shot again. To what extent is the mood created purely by visual elements?

3 Sound

   a   Comment on the music. What effect does it have on the audience? Would different music alter the mood?

   b   What sound effects are used? Do they blend seamlessly into the action or do they stand out?

Drama

Drama shares many features with other narrative genres. It involves characters, settings and elements of narrative structure such as crisis points, a climax and a resolution. Unlike a novel, though, a play is intended to be seen as a live performance. You will probably study a play by reading the print text (the script), and you might also read the parts aloud in class. However, if it is possible to see a stage production of the play you are studying, you should, as you will gain a much richer understanding of the text.

While the printed script remains the same, different productions will interpret and stage the work differently, and each live performance is unique. In this sense, a play script is not a static text; it allows for different approaches and interpretations.

ACTIVITY 3.9

Understand characters in a play

1 Complete character summary cards for the main characters in your play (see page 22).

2 In pairs, conduct an imaginary interview with an important character. One of you should devise five or six questions about the character's feelings, motivations, decisions and relationships, while the other answers the questions as the character. Next, discuss how these aspects of characterisation connect to the play's big ideas.

GROUP

Plot and structure

Most plays are structured in a way that creates rising tension, leading to a climax and then a resolution. The **exposition** of the play is its opening section: it establishes the setting and characters, and sets up the situations and conflicts that the play will develop.

Plays are usually divided into **acts**, each of which may include several **scenes**. Acts group the play's events into broad sections. For example, in Shakespeare's *Macbeth*:

- Act 1 establishes the characters and the dramatic premise – that Macbeth wishes to become king.

- Acts 2 and 3 develop the narrative tension.

- Act 4 contains a turning point – the protagonist loses the support of the people; opposing forces gather strength and support.

- Act 5 presents the climax and resolution – the protagonist fights then dies, and peace is restored.

Macbeth's murder of King Duncan increases the narrative tension in Act 2 of *Macbeth*. Ray Fearon and Tara Fitzgerald in a Globe Theatre production of *Macbeth*. theatrepix / Alamy Stock Photo

An act generally covers a limited period of time, even if the scenes require a change of setting. For example, the following are the settings of the scenes in Act 3 of *Macbeth*.

- Scene 1: Forres; the castle
- Scene 2: The castle
- Scene 3: A park near the castle
- Scene 4: Hall in the castle; a banquet table
- Scene 5: A heath
- Scene 6: Forres; the castle

As we move back and forth between the action within the castle, the action outside the castle and the witches on the heath, each scene overlaps in time with the scenes before and after. This gives the narrative continuity and shows different points of view on concurrent events.

The length of time that passes between acts can be long or short depending on the time period covered by the play. In *Macbeth*, only a few hours pass between Acts 1 and 2; yet in *Othello*, the Venetian fleet sails thousands of kilometres to Cyprus between the first two acts.

A quite different structure is used in Reginald Rose's *Twelve Angry Men*. Presented in two acts with no scene divisions, the play's action takes exactly the same amount of time as the jury's deliberations, and there is no break in the time line between the acts.

Understand the plot and structure of a play

ACTIVITY 3.10

1 Create a flow chart to summarise the plot of your drama text (see page 17).

2 Plot the main structural elements of the play on a graph (see page 18). Label the graph to show the exposition, crisis points, turning points, climax, denouement and resolution.

GROUP

3 Compare your chart and graph with a partner. Do you mostly agree on the main plot points and important stages? If not, why do you think this is?

Stage directions and stage sets

Stage directions (usually shown in italics) provide information about three main aspects of the production:

- **the set**, including props and lighting; for example, a stage direction could specify, '*An old wooden table and chairs are centre stage*' or '*A spotlight illuminates the doorway*'

- **the presentation and performances of characters**, such as their physical appearance, costumes, movements, entrances and exits, gestures, facial expressions and tone of voice; for example, the stage directions might describe a character as '*walking stealthily towards the veranda*', '*speaking furiously*' or '*frowning*'

- **sound**, including music; for example, stage directions could say, '*Children shriek downstairs*', '*The watchman can be heard tapping*' or '*Music rises*'.

Because the staging and the performances of the actors are crucial to the audience's experience, the stage directions in the script must be read closely and considered in any analysis of the play.

Ben Mendelsohn (Lewis) and Barry Otto (Roy) performed in the play *Così* by Louis Nowra, before also starring in the 1996 film adaptation, shown here. AF archive / Alamy Stock Photo

Explore stage directions

1 Select a main character from your play. Find examples in the stage directions that:

- describe the character's appearance
- describe the character's movement
- describe the character's costume and/or changes of costume
- describe props and/or backdrops relevant to the character
- describe sound and/or lighting effects that contribute to the portrayal of the character
- indicate how the character should deliver a line.

2 Choose a significant speech that lacks detailed stage directions and write the directions yourself, keeping in mind the stage set and any appropriate sound effects or music.

3 In small groups, select a key scene and perform it to the class, following the stage directions carefully but without using your voice or any other sound. The class should try to guess which scene you are miming.

GROUP

Dialogue, soliloquies and asides

In a play, there is usually no narrative voice to describe places and characters or to explain characters' thoughts and motives. This means that the play's dialogue, with the stage directions, has to provide background information, establish the tensions and concerns of the narrative, create the characters and move the plot forward.

A **soliloquy** is a speech delivered by one character alone on the stage. It communicates the character's thoughts and feelings to the audience and allows for ideas to be explored, but does not usually advance the plot. In *Macbeth*, the famous soliloquy 'Is this a dagger which I see before me' (in Act 2, Scene 1) allows Macbeth to share with the audience his horror at the fact that he is about to murder King Duncan.

Asides are brief comments to the audience that do not interrupt the action of the play. They reveal thoughts and feelings that a character wants to conceal from others who are also present onstage. Macbeth's asides when he is told he will become Thane of Cawdor (in *Macbeth*, Act 1, Scene 3) reveal to the audience his ambition to become king.

Both soliloquies and asides strengthen the connection between characters and the audience. It is understood that a character is being entirely honest in a soliloquy or aside, even though they may be deceitful or manipulative in their conversations and relationships with other characters. This means that **inferred meanings** can be very important in drama: a character might say one thing to another character, but because they have said something completely different in an earlier soliloquy, the audience can infer that the character is being deceptive and has ulterior motives.

Explore soliloquies and major speeches

If your play includes soliloquies, choose one soliloquy and answer the following questions. If there are no soliloquies, answer these questions for one of the longer speeches in your play.

1 Who is speaking?

2 What does the speech add to your understanding of the character?

3 What do you learn about the speaker's attitudes towards other characters?

4 Does the speech provide information or insights that don't appear elsewhere in the play? If so, how do these influence the audience's reactions to subsequent events?

5 How does the speech help to develop the ideas, concerns and tensions of the play?

Nonfiction

Many nonfiction texts have the same structural features as fictional narratives; for example, they tell a story in which tensions lead to a climax and some sense of resolution. However, the crucial difference between nonfiction and fiction is that nonfiction describes real individuals and actual events, and usually aims to be as accurate and truthful as possible.

Many features of fictional texts such as novels and short stories are also important in nonfiction texts. Common features include narrative structure, tensions and conflicts, narrative voice, setting and context.

In life writing (such as autobiographies and biographies), the main 'character' is usually referred to as the **subject**, and the plot or order of events is called the **time line**.

Types of nonfiction narratives

The following are the main types of nonfiction texts that you might come across in your reading.

- **Biographies** are written in the third person and record the most significant events of a person's life, usually in chronological order. A biography generally aims to have a neutral, detached tone and is written in a formal style, while giving readers new insight into the

subject. Examples include *The Trauma Cleaner* by Sarah Krasnostein and *King: A Life* by Jonathan Eig.

- **Autobiographies** are written in the first person and recount significant events of the author's life and times. There is no requirement for the writer to be neutral – an autobiography can present personal views and strong opinions, and can be written in a conversational style. Examples include Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* and Vicki Laveau-Harvie's *The Erratics*.

- **Memoirs** are also first-person records of memories, but usually cover only a certain period or series of events in the author's life, rather than their whole life. A memoir often has a specific focus or concern. For example, in *I Am Malala*, Malala Yousafzai recounts events in her childhood with a strong focus on girls' right to an education and the oppressive rule of the Taliban in Pakistan.

- **True crime** writing describes the events surrounding a well-known crime or series of crimes, often featuring a court case. Examples include Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood* and Chloe Hooper's *The Tall Man*.

- **Journalistic nonfiction** includes book-length accounts of travels or investigations, such as Jon Krakauer's *Into the Wild* and Anna Funder's *Stasiland*.

In addition, some nonfiction texts are collections of shorter pieces, such as memoirs or essays. For example, the books in Black Inc.'s *Growing Up* series are collections of memoirs that are connected by the life experiences and identities of the writers.

Create a time line

ACTIVITY 3.13

Using a flow chart (see page 17) or other graphic, create a time line to record the significant events in the nonfiction text you are studying. (If your nonfiction text consists of a number of short pieces, select one or two pieces for this activity.) Note that the text might not describe events in the order in which they actually occurred. However, you should place them in chronological order in your time line.

Label the time line to show which events correspond to the following structural elements: crisis points; turning points; climax; denouement; resolution.

Point of view and selection of events

To a large extent, nonfiction texts tell the 'truth'. However, any account of events is told from a particular point of view, and will emphasise certain aspects of events and individuals. Inevitably, it will also leave out some details and perspectives. Even biographies are written from a certain viewpoint or angle; although they might aim to remain detached, biographers will have an opinion about their subject and can never be entirely neutral. For example, some biographies of Australian bushranger Ned Kelly portray him as a hero, others as a villain.

In nonfiction texts that offer firsthand or personal accounts, the author's memory of the facts is influenced by their point of view. For instance, the events of Elie Wiesel's *Night* are narrated by a Holocaust survivor; if a German SS officer recounted the same events, their recollections would probably be quite different.

Context and setting

To understand an author's viewpoint in biographical or autobiographical writing, do some research about the life and times of the subject. If you are studying Wiesel's *Night*, you should research concentration camps in World War II and the lives of other survivors. If you are studying Najaf Mazari and Robert Hillman's *The Rugmaker of Mazar-e-Sharif*, you need to know something about the history of the Taliban in Afghanistan, life in an Australian detention centre, and the process of applying for asylum in Australia.

ACTIVITY 3.14

Understand context and setting

1   Describe the opening scene of your text. What situation and which individuals are described at the beginning of the narrative? Why do you think the author decided to begin in this way?

2   In what time period is the text set? What is the main setting?

3   How does the subject of the narrative feel about the setting – positively or negatively? Include some textual evidence in your response.

4   Research the historical, social and cultural context in which the events of your text take place. How was the subject of the text affected by this context?

5   Research any particular places or significant people referred to in the text. How does the author view these places and people? Fondly? With bitterness? Explain why you think this is the case.

Vocabulary for writing about nonfiction

Some useful words and phrases for writing about nonfiction include the following.

Verbs / Verb phrases	Nouns / Noun phrases
depicts	arrangement of events
focuses on	bias
highlights	memory
includes	representation
omits	selection

Graphic novels

A graphic novel uses a combination of images and words in a comic-strip format to tell a story. The narrative voice of a graphic novel is expressed through captions, as well as through the images themselves. Dialogue is in the form of speech balloons, while thought bubbles can show characters' unspoken reflections on what is happening around them.

The drawings can combine realistic representations of people and places with abstract or surreal elements. Depictions of settings and characters' appearances convey information and also attitudes and emotions. Values are expressed through the ways characters are portrayed in the images, as well as through the narrative in the captions.

Text and image work together to convey thoughts and emotions, and to further the plot. Sometimes there is a gap or contradiction between words and image. For example, in the following spread from Shaun Tan's graphic novel *The Lost Thing*, the narrator's comment that his parents 'didn't really notice it at first' is at odds with the red creature's gigantic size. The implied meaning here is that the parents don't pay attention to what doesn't immediately concern them – a meaning that the reader can only infer by thinking about text and image in combination.

Scan the code or click **here** to read or listen to Shaun Tan's discussion of his use of words and pictures in his graphic novels.

In Shaun Tan's graphic novel *The Lost Thing* (2000), even the frames contain detailed drawings.

Analyse features of a graphic novel

1 Write a brief description of the style of drawings in the graphic novel you are studying. Include three or four adjectives that you could use in your analytical writing about this text.

2 How do the drawings help to create the world of the text? Think about how they reflect elements of the historical, social and cultural context.

3 Is the story mainly told through the characters' dialogue and the illustrations, or are the captions equally important? Explain your answer.

4 Select one panel for close analysis. Write a short paragraph explaining how image and text work together in this panel. Incorporate a discussion of the use of colour or shading, any prominent features of the illustration (e.g. a character's facial expression), the kind of text included (e.g. caption or dialogue) and how the text is presented (e.g. large or small font, capitals or lower case).

Vocabulary for writing about graphic novels

Some useful words and phrases for writing about graphic novels include the following.

Verbs / Verb phrases	Nouns / Noun phrases
complements	arrangement
exaggerates	borders
frames	design
magnifies	visual language
represents	white space

Poetry

Poets use language differently from prose writers. Poems are not necessarily written to tell a story or to convey a single, clear message; instead, they often explore ideas and emotions. Rather than using grammatically correct sentences and paragraphs, poets often play with sounds and imagery.

Analysing a poem means looking very closely at all its elements – individual words, patterns of words, sounds, images, structure and form – and seeing how they fit together to create a coherent whole. You may not see immediately what a poet is conveying and you might need to re-read the poem a number of times.

ACTIVITY 3.16

Research the poet

Before you begin a close analysis of a poem or collection of poems, research the life, opinions and published work of the poet you are studying to gain a better understanding of the context in which their poetry was written.

1 Find out where and when the poet was born and where they live or lived.

2 Identify the most important experiences in the poet's life.

3 What main beliefs or views does/did the poet hold (e.g. about society, relationships and art)?

4 Which are their most important or famous poems?

Annotating a poem

Make a copy of a poem you are studying and annotate it, or mark up an electronic copy with text and highlighting. Use different colours to identify different aspects, such as sound patterns, the speaker's voice, imagery, word choice and form.

Sound and meaning

Sound patterns often play an important part in the construction of a poem. The first step in poetry analysis should be reading the poem aloud. Pause slightly at the end of each line, but also pay close attention to the punctuation and let it guide your reading. Listen to the sounds and be attentive to any patterns, rhythms, repetition or interesting midline pauses.

After you have read or listened to a poem, make notes using the following guidelines. Don't be afraid of 'getting it wrong' – this part of the process is all about jotting down your initial ideas and questions.

- Mark any repeated sounds (alliteration, assonance, rhyming or repeated words).
- Note whether the poem has a consistent beat or rhythm.
- Indicate where the pace speeds up or slows down, and think about which words this draws attention to.
- Write down the thoughts and feelings that the poem raises.
- Note anything that you didn't understand and look up the definition of any words you don't know.

Speakers and listeners

In a work of fiction, the story is told by a narrator; in a poem, the narrator is called the **speaker** or **persona**. Remember that the speaker is a character, not the poet themselves.

There is also sometimes an **implied listener** in a poem, someone whom the speaker is addressing. This might be a particular character, such as a partner or nemesis (enemy or opposing force), or it may be a broad group, such as adult Australians.

Read the poem again, considering the characterisation of the speaker and the implied listener.

- Make notes in the margin about your impression of the speaker – are there hints about their age, gender, background, attitude, views or values? Highlight words and phrases that support your view.
- Make a list of words to describe the main tone of the poem and summarise your initial thoughts about what the speaker's opinions might be.
- Make notes about your impression of the implied listener (if there is one), and highlight words and phrases that support your view.
- Consider any other individuals in the poem. How are they described? How are we positioned to feel and think about them? Highlight relevant words and phrases.

Sample annotations

Here are the first six lines of Evelyn Araluen's poem 'Index Australis', with annotations based on the prompts for 'Sound and meaning' and 'Speakers and listeners'.

statements about Australia suggest the speaker knows the country well

repeated 's' sounds – like snakes in the outback?

slang word for Australia, based on a casual pronunciation – repeated in later lines

Straya is a wild straggly abyss
with one fence struck through
a line of tin dogs guarding the coal from the flies
Straya is brown and sharp
when you watch it through the car window
through the convex humming screen

comical image; humorous, sarcastic tone; possible political message critical of those who value coal

second person 'you': who is being addressed? – suggests a shared experience of driving/ looking

fairly steady rhythm/ beat creates forward movement (the underlined syllables are stressed)

Poetic language

Poetry often uses **figurative language** and **imagery**, because these techniques enable a poet to convey detailed and layered ideas in just a few words.

Imagery, usually involving one or more of the five senses, helps to create setting, atmosphere and mood. Figurative language is the general term for words and phrases being used in a non-literal way; examples include metaphors, similes and personification. These techniques also create images, and make connections between different objects and ideas.

For example, in 'Index Australis' the phrase 'fold linenly into horizon' uses the made-up word 'linenly' to create an image of fabric merging into the landscape. The stanza begins with the direct address 'But darl', subtly critiquing stereotyped representations of women as passive in the Australian landscape, as if they are no more substantial than the linen they wear.

The careful selection of words, or **diction**, is crucial to a poem's meaning as well as its tone and sound. Poets often use words with multiple meanings or significant **connotations** (associations) to create layers of meaning. For example, 'Index Australis' includes the terms 'darl' and 'baby'; these are colloquial terms of affection, usually directed at women, that can sometimes be patronising or belittling.

Allusions can be another important source of meaning. In 'Index Australis', the phrase 'well may we say' echoes the famous words of former prime minister Gough Whitlam on the day of his dismissal ('well may we say God Save the Queen because nothing will save the Governor-General'), while 'we will decide' echoes former prime minister John Howard's 2001 election slogan, 'we will decide who comes to this country and the circumstances in which they come'. These allusions make it clear that Araluen is examining, in a humorous and critical way, the nature of Australia's political leadership over time.

To focus on the use of language, make further annotations to your poem following these steps.

- Highlight the metaphors, similes and examples of personification. Next to each, write a short explanation of what it means and how it adds to the ideas and emotions of the poem.

- Highlight any interesting images, and comment on how they add to the atmosphere, mood and ideas of the poem.

- Underline any words that have important connotations, and note these connotations near the words. How do the connotations connect with other words and images in the poem?

- Circle any phrases that you know are (or think might be) allusions to other texts or statements, and make brief notes on the references. (If you are not sure, check them by doing an internet search.)

Analyse poetic language

In a poem you are studying, select five words or phrases that you find striking or that create strong images.

1 Identify any poetic techniques, such as metaphor, simile or personification, that are used in these words or phrases.

2 Explain the meaning of any figurative language used in these words or phrases.

3 List any words that have important connotations, and write down both the denotations (the literal or dictionary meanings) and the connotations for these words.

Use your answers to these questions to add to your annotations of the poem.

Poetic forms and structures

It is important to consider the form of the poem (the overall structure and type of poem) and how the poet has used organising techniques or patterns, such as stanzas. Think about what effect these choices of form and structure have on the meaning and impact of the poem.

Poets also use internal structures to convey their ideas, using punctuation, rhyme and metre to group or separate words and phrases. Use these guidelines to understand how form and structure are used in your poem and to make further annotations.

- Circle words or phrases that the punctuation emphasises by isolating them from the rest of the poem.

- Look for rhyming patterns at the ends of lines and consider how these might affect the pace or draw attention to certain words.

- Look for a consistent rhythm: start by dividing each line into syllables to see if there is a regular pattern in the number of syllables in each line.

- Consider how a change in the rhythm might draw your attention to particular words and phrases, or reflect the poem's meaning at that point.

- Check whether the poem is written in a recognised poetic form. If it is, consider how the traditions of the form have been used and/or **subverted** (changed to challenge the original) in this poem. For example, a sonnet is traditionally a love poem, but sometimes a poet uses a sonnet to reject the idea of romantic love. If your poem doesn't have a recognisable form or regular line or stanza lengths, it might be written in free verse, as 'Index Australis' is.

Interpreting a poem

Most poems can have a range of interpretations. However, after you have looked at each aspect of the poem you are studying, you should be able to answer the following questions.

- What is the central idea that the poem explores?

- What is the speaker's position on or view of the central idea?

- What is the implied view of the poet?

- How do the poet's choices of language and form help to convey the main message and feeling?

Analyse and interpret the poem

ACTIVITY 3.18

1 Referring to your annotations, explain what you discovered about the main elements of the poem by writing one paragraph on each of these: sound; the speaker's voice and the implied listener (if there is one); poetic language; form and structure. Each paragraph should:

- describe a feature or technique in the poem

- explain how the feature or technique works

- explain how the feature or technique helps to convey the ideas and feelings of the poem.

2 Write a paragraph explaining what you think is the central idea or message of the poem. Justify your view using material from your answer to question 1.

Vocabulary for writing about poetry

Some useful words and phrases for writing about poetry include the following.

Verbs / Verb phrases	Nouns / Noun phrases
alludes	arrangement
compares	imagery
conjures	metre
describes	mood
evokes	personification
represents	rhyme scheme

PERSONAL TEXT RESPONSES

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Identifying connections
- Planning your response
- Writing an essay
- Writing journal entries
- Building your skills
- Editing and proofreading checklists
- Sample responses

For Unit 1, Outcome 1, you need to make personal connections with a text. This involves more than just understanding the meaning of the text; you will also have to consider how the text relates to your own life – your memories, experiences and personal views on the world. Exploring personal connections to texts might also mean giving a personal response to the issues, ideas and values in texts, or reflecting on how you would respond to a conflict or tension in the text.

Identifying connections

To identify your own connections with the text, focus on the following areas.

Your ideas and values

Your major life experiences

The plot and storyline

Your relationships

Personal connections

The characters and their relationships

Challenges you have faced

Challenges the characters face

The places you have lived in and visited

The author's ideas and values

The setting/s of the text

Scan the code or click here for a video overview of the personal response task.

Identify personal connections to the text by looking for overlaps and similarities between the different areas in the diagram on the previous page. For example, what aspects of your own experiences reflect the experiences of the characters? Have you experienced any major life events that reflect key moments in the plot? What are your values and your ideas about the world, and how do they compare with those presented in the text?

You can use a table or a Venn diagram to organise your ideas. The following table incorporates four broad areas of a text.

Text: *The Great Gatsby* by F Scott Fitzgerald		
Feature	**In the text**	**In my life**
Characters, people and relationships	Jay Gatsby – young, rural background, became very wealthy.	Me – young, from a rural background in Victoria.
	Daisy Buchanan – attractive and charming but fickle and shallow.	Reminds me of influencers on social media.
Plot and important moments	Nick Carraway moves from Minnesota to New York and has conflicting feelings about the lifestyle.	I moved from the country to the city at the start of secondary school, and had to adjust to a very different way of life.
Ideas and values	The divides between classes and between the rich and the poor.	The divide between people from the city and people from the country.
Settings and places	East Egg and West Egg, the Valley of Ashes.	Rural Victoria and different parts of Melbourne (richer and poorer areas).

The following Venn diagram is more targeted than the table above, and focuses on ideas and values. It uses the text *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury.

In the text
- Censorship
- The threat of technology
- Dystopian society

Key connection
The threat of technology such as social media and phones taking over people's lives

In my life
- Social media
- Use of phones and devices
- Being controlled by adults – parents, teachers, government

Vocabulary for writing about connections

Some useful terms for writing about connections between a text and your own life / the world are shown in the table below.

Verbs / Verb phrases	Nouns / Noun phrases
calls to mind	association
echoes	contrast
highlights	juxtaposition
illuminates	parallel
reflects	resonance
reminds me of	synergy

ACTIVITY 4.1

Discuss ideas and values in your text

Everybody's perspective on a text is unique because everybody's personal context is different. For example, one person in your class might think that the most important idea in a text is *justice*, but another might think that *friendship* is a more prominent concern.

GROUP One way of exploring the range of ideas and values in your class is to hold a **fishbowl discussion**. This kind of group discussion gives people an opportunity to present and discuss their perspectives, and highlights the fact that there is no single right answer when it comes to analysing texts and making personal connections.

Prompt: What is the most important idea or value in the text, and why?

1　Arrange the classroom in two concentric circles with six to twelve chairs in the inner circle, and the rest in the outer circle.

2　Students in the inner circle should discuss the prompt, making sure that every student has the opportunity to contribute. When addressing the prompt, you should explain why you think the idea is important based on your *personal connections* to the text. For example, you might have a strong sense of justice and therefore believe that the author's values around justice, fairness and equity are important.

3　Students in the outer circle should take notes on the discussion, recording the inner circle's conversations.

4　At the end, a representative from the outer circle should summarise the discussion in a short speech to the whole group.

Planning your response

Your personal response to a text will reflect on connections between the text and your own life; it will also explore and analyse elements of the text. These elements include:

- the ideas, concerns and tensions presented in the text
- characters, settings, plot, point of view and voice
- the author's use of vocabulary, text structures and language features.

A popular form for a personal response is the essay. This form provides good practice for writing analytical text responses, as you will do in Units 2 to 4. But your personal response could also be in the form of journal entries. This would involve writing down your impressions and ideas about the text as you study it in class, drawing connections to your own life and the world. You might end your journal with a final reflection on these connections and how your understanding of the text has deepened through your study of it.

Prompts for writing

The Study Design does not state that you must respond to a set topic or prompt, but it is possible that your teacher will ask you to do this, particularly if you are writing an essay. Even if you are able to choose your own focus, you may find it useful to write a prompt. A prompt for your personal response can be based on any of the elements discussed in the first part of this chapter: character, setting, plot, ideas and values. Prompts based on ideas and values are likely to provide the best basis for your essay.

Here are a few example prompts based on key ideas in *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury.

- Discuss the ways in which technology can be used for control in both *Fahrenheit 451* and your own experience.

- In *Fahrenheit 451* and your own life, does freedom require knowledge?

- Explore your personal connections with *Fahrenheit 451* in your response to the following prompt: Are we living in a dystopian society?

- Is censorship ever a good thing? Reflect on your personal experiences and *Fahrenheit 451*.

- People find meaning in books. Discuss this idea with reference to *Fahrenheit 451* and your personal connections with the novel.

You might also be asked to respond to a more general prompt that requires you to find your own focus. For example, the VCAA suggests the following possible prompts:

- Identify two key ideas from the text, explore how they are represented in the text and then connect those ideas and representations to your own lived experience.

- Identify two key characters from the text, explore their story arc and consider the ways the text resolves their story, then connect those arcs and resolutions to your own understanding of the way individuals experience the society around them.

Write and respond to your own prompts

ACTIVITY 4.2

1 Write three prompts for the text you are studying, based on the ideas and values you share with the text. Use the examples above as a guide, or develop your own format.

2 Consider the first of the suggested prompts from the VCAA above. Select two key ideas from your text. Spend two minutes brainstorming connections between the presentation of these ideas in the text and your own thoughts and experiences of them.

3 Consider the second of the suggested prompts from the VCAA above. Choose two key characters from your text. Write two or three sentences about each, comparing their experiences to those of people you know, or know about.

Structuring your response

The most common type of personal response is a personal essay. If you are writing a personal essay, you can choose either the **block** or the **integrated** approach to structure your piece.

In the block essay, each body paragraph is self-contained and focuses on either the text or your own life.

Introduction	Point out the ideas and values in the text and explain your own thoughts on them, responding to the prompt if you have one.
Body paragraph one	Analyse the text; for example, explain how certain characters or moments from the plot reveal the author's ideas and values.
Body paragraph two	Reflect on a time when you had (or developed) similar ideas and values to those discussed in paragraph one.
Body paragraph three	Analyse different elements of the text from those discussed in paragraph one.
Body paragraph four	Reflect on a time when you had (or developed) similar ideas and values to those discussed in paragraph three.
Conclusion	Pull together the points you have made about both the text and your life, addressing the prompt if you are using one.

In the integrated essay, each body paragraph explores both the text and your own life.

Introduction	Point out the ideas and values in the text and explain your own thoughts on them, responding to the prompt if you are using one.
Body paragraphs one to four	Analyse a different aspect of the text in each paragraph and relate it to your own life. For example, consider how certain characters or moments from the plot reveal the author's ideas and values, and compare these with related aspects from your own life.
Conclusion	Pull together the points you have made about both the text and your life, and address the prompt if you are responding to one.

Advantages and disadvantages of the block approach

+ Is simple to plan and write
+ Has a clear structure
− Can be disjointed
− Can make it difficult to discuss connections

Advantages and disadvantages of the integrated approach

+ Can make clear connections
+ May be more sophisticated than the block approach
− Can be confusing or overly complex
− Can be more difficult to plan and write than the block approach

ACTIVITY 4.3

Plan your response

1 Begin by collecting your notes on the text, including the personal connections you identified and any relevant quotes about characters, settings, plot, ideas and values.

2 If you choose to use a prompt, write or find one to respond to.

3 Choose a structure – block or integrated.

4 In dot points, plan each paragraph. (Use the tables on page 46 as a guide.) Where appropriate, include some short quotes from the text.

Writing an essay

Whichever structure you choose when planning your essay, you will need to address the same aspects of the text. The following outline shows both block and integrated approaches, using the example of *The Great Gatsby* by F Scott Fitzgerald and the following prompt:

Is the American Dream a lie? Reflect on your personal experiences and *The Great Gatsby*.

The **introduction** refers to the prompt, the text, and the writer's personal life and context.

Using the **block approach**, a **body paragraph** will refer mainly to either the text or the personal life of the writer, but not both in detail. If there is a prompt, the topic sentence should address it. The following example shows the first few sentences of a body paragraph focusing on the text.

In *The Great Gatsby*, the American Dream is destroyed by greed and excess. When the narrator, Nick Carraway, first moves from Minnesota to New York, he is already somewhat cynical as a result of his time in World War I. Like many Americans in the 1920s, Carraway is searching for meaning in his new life. However, in New York he does not find the spirit of individualism and the pursuit of happiness that is the key to the American Dream. Instead, at 'gleaming, dazzling parties' thrown by Gatsby, Carraway experiences the greed and excess that marks the downfall of American society …

> The topic sentence indicates that this paragraph will focus on the text.

> Refers to a feature of the text – the first-person narrator.

> Uses a direct quote as evidence.

In an **integrated approach**, **each body paragraph** discusses both the text and the writer's life in roughly the same amount of detail.

Both the American Dream and the Australian Dream can be threatened by greed and excess. When I first moved from rural Victoria to Melbourne, one of the first things I noticed was the frantic pace of life. Like Gatsby's 'gleaming, dazzling parties', my new friends constantly wanted to whisk me away to see shows, go to concerts or attend some of the many events

> Considers both the text and the writer's context.

> Quotes can be used as evidence and also to signal aspects of personal experience.

held every weekend. All of these events – Gatsby's parties and my hectic Melbourne social life – were just a distraction from the important things in life. Back in the regional town where I grew up, I was always engaged in fundraisers and events for causes like farmers' health, drought relief and supporting the rural community. I expected to find something similar when I moved to the city, but at first it seemed as though everyone was preoccupied with their own image and status. Fitzgerald suggests the negative aspects of this lifestyle through imagery such as 'foul dust [that] floated in the wake of [Gatsby's] dreams'; I seemed to feel my own 'foul dust' that closed down my interest in helping others …

> Explores a language feature (imagery) in the text and identifies a personal connection.

Regardless of which essay structure you use, the **conclusion** highlights the connections between the text and the writer's personal experiences and outlook.

Write your essay

ACTIVITY 4.4

1 Begin with a plan and, if using one, a prompt. Gather your quotes and evidence from the text.

2 Write a clear introduction that mentions shared ideas from both the text and your personal life or the wider world. For example, you may choose to focus your essay on similar characters and events from the text and the real world, or similar settings and places, or similar ideas and values.

3 Write your body paragraphs. If you are using the block approach, make sure that you are clearly discussing *connections* and not just listing aspects of the text and your life. If you are using the integrated approach, make sure your writing does not become hard to follow; use clear topic sentences and linking words.

4 Write the conclusion, ensuring that you have addressed the prompt (if there is one). End with a clear point that makes a connection between your life or the wider world and the text.

Writing journal entries

If you are producing a journal entry or entries for your personal response, keep in mind the following.

- Just like in an analytical text response essay, it is better to focus on a few connections between the text and you / the real world in greater depth than to cover many different connections superficially.

- Although this is a *personal* response, you still need to think *analytically* about the text. Aim to include evidence that you have thought about the ways in which the text is constructed, as well as personal reflection and observation, when you write about your responses to the text.

- Use appropriate metalanguage for writing about texts – e.g. 'narrative voice', 'turning point', 'mise en scène' – where relevant.

- Include some quotations from the text. You might like to focus a journal entry or entries on unpacking or exploring important quotes related to big ideas in the text.

- If you are writing a series of journal entries over the course of your study of a text, you might choose a different focus for each entry. For example, you could write about characters and connections to real people in one entry, and a particular big idea and its relevance to your life in another.

- You might choose to take a reflective or philosophical approach to your journal entries, focusing on connections to ideas and events in the wider world, rather than connections to your own experiences in relation to the text.

- Later journal entries might reflect on how your understanding of the text has deepened or changed as a result of your study of it in class and your written explorations of it in your journal.

Write a journal entry

ACTIVITY 4.5

1 Create a table like the following to make connections between the world of the text, your own life and the wider world.

Textual feature	My experiences and/or views	The world
Quote	My reaction to this quote is …	The quote makes me think about …
Character	A key connection with this character is …	This character reminds me of …
Setting	Comparing the text's setting with my own reveals …	Thinking about the way in which this setting resembles … (familiar location) highlights … (key idea)
Event	This important event in the text suggests … (key idea)	A parallel in the real world is …

2 Choose one of your responses in the table to focus on. Write a journal entry of between 300 and 400 words reflecting on this aspect of the text and its connections to your life / the wider world.

Building your skills

Use the strategies in this section to build the skills you need to write a personal response to a text.

Personal connections

To describe personal experiences, memories, ideas and values, you will use the first-person 'I', just as you would in a reflective essay or memoir. However, you need to avoid going into too much detail about your own experiences; the point of your writing is to explore connections with the text. The following strategies will help you to improve your selection and description of personal connections.

Dig deep

The more you explore your own life and experiences, the more likely you are to find connections with the text. Try exercises such as brainstorming to write down as many ideas as possible about your past. Explore memories of major life events, places you have travelled and people you have met.

Keep a diary or journal

Whether or not you produce a journal entry or entries for assessment, it is useful to reflect on your ideas and experiences by keeping a diary or journal. This will help you to organise your thoughts and make sense of what has happened in your day, or in earlier parts of your life. You might find that connections with a text flow naturally from this process. It can also be good for your mental health. Journal writing is an effective way of getting regular writing practice, helping with all areas of English and any of your other subjects that have strong written components.

Use sentence starters

When linking your personal experiences to a text, you might find some sentence starters useful, such as those in this table.

When I first discovered / experienced / understood / noticed …
The … (aspect of the text) reminds me of a time when I …
In my own life, I have …
Throughout my life I have found that …
I share several values with … (character), such as …
I have encountered people like … (character) in my own life; for example, …
In a similar way to … (character/s), I have found that …
Reflecting … (author)'s ideas and values, I too think that …
The setting of … (place name) reminds me of a place I lived in / visited when …
Although my experience was different, I learned a similar lesson when …
I have had conflicts and challenges in my life, similar to …
Unlike … (character)'s experience in … (text), my own life has taught me …

Analysing the text

There is a strong analytical component to this task, in addition to its personal reflective elements.

Develop your analytical metalanguage

Metalanguage is the term for the words used to describe and write about language. In the sample paragraphs earlier in this chapter, the terms 'narrator' and 'imagery' are metalanguage for writing about textual features. To write about structure, you might use terms such as 'climax' and 'resolution'.

Use comparative language

To make connections between your experiences and the text, it is a good idea to use words and phrases that compare and contrast. This will enable you to explore differences as well as similarities, adding interest and complexity to your writing. Practise using words and phrases like those in this table.

Comparing	similarly	likewise	in the same way	comparably	also
Contrasting	however	unlike	on the other hand	in contrast	whereas

Editing and proofreading checklists

As with every piece of writing you do in VCE English, your personal response will benefit from editing and proofreading. The checklists below will help you to spot and fix any flaws and weaknesses in your personal response. When you are writing practice essays you will have enough time to draft and rewrite. In these situations, read your essay multiple times, using a different checklist each time. You might need to do some rewriting at each stage, such as improving topic sentences or working more personal connections into the discussion.

When you are doing a timed assessment task, you will probably only be able to check the 'Language' checklist and make corrections to smaller details such as spelling and punctuation. You might also improve some word choices, such as the connective language you use to link your own experiences, beliefs and values with the characters, events and ideas in the text. In addition, you should check that you have met any criteria your teacher has given you for the task.

Structure

☐ The response has a clear introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion.

☐ The introduction outlines a main argument or contention.

☐ The body paragraphs have clear, engaging opening sentences that (if necessary) clearly relate to the prompt.

☐ Each paragraph focuses on a single idea.

☐ Your arguments develop over the course of the essay, building to the conclusion.

☐ The essay has a concluding paragraph that addresses the prompt (if necessary) and summarises your thoughts.

Ideas and techniques

☐ You have explored the author's ideas and values.

☐ You have commented on word choices, language features and text structures.

☐ You have discussed aspects of the characters, settings and plot.

☐ You have made personal connections to the ideas and features above.

Language

☐ Each sentence is clear and grammatically correct.

☐ Punctuation is correct, including the use of commas, apostrophes and capital letters.

☐ Sentences are varied in structure for pace and impact.

☐ You have used some metalanguage when discussing the text.

☐ You have used connective language to link ideas.

☐ You have avoided clichés, overused phrases and informal language.

Sample responses

The following personal responses to texts demonstrate different approaches to this task. They are not intended to serve as models or to represent 'perfect' responses. Every reader will connect to a text in a different way, and personal responses will vary widely. Read the sample responses in this section and look for any aspects that could be useful and effective in your own personal response to a text.

Sample response 1

This personal response to a text is based on the memoir collection *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia,* edited by Anita Heiss. It addresses the following prompt.

Which elements of the story 'White bread dreaming' by Shannon Foster, and other stories in the anthology *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*, resonate most strongly with you? Discuss with reference to this anthology and your personal connections to this text.

In *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*, stories including 'White bread dreaming' by Shannon Foster share the narrator's experiences – and those of their family members – of feeling and being treated as other, of having negative stereotypes applied to them, and of experiencing racism in modern-day Australia. These memories strongly resonate with me as they remind me of my own and my family members' experiences in Australia.

In 'White bread dreaming', the first memory the narrator shares is of eating 'oyster sandwiches with vinegar and pepper and salt' because her family are 'D'harawal Guriwal – whale people' and 'eat anything that came out of [the sea]'. This fare is very unlike that of 'the other Australian kids in our working-class suburb' and immediately sets Shannon apart and marks her as different.

Food is a powerful way to express cultural identity. It is also an indicator of heritage as recipes and the types of food we eat are often passed down from generation to generation and reflect the homelands of our ancestors. Like the author of 'White bread dreaming', I didn't grow up eating 'Vegemite or peanut butter or devon and tomato sauce sandwiches' like other Australian

The opening paragraph identifies the text and the main memoir the response will be discussing.

In the introduction, the student establishes their personal connection to the text with a clear statement of how the text relates to their own life.

Metalanguage is used when discussing textual features.

Topic sentences are used to clearly indicate what each paragraph is about.

This phrase flags the discussion of a personal connection to the text.

kids. My school lunches consisted of homemade minestrone soup and arancini. My idea of processed meat was mortadella and prosciutto. There was no peanut butter or tomato sauce in the pantry at home and after school I snacked on giardiniera (pickled vegetables) and salami peeled straight off the local Italian deli's greaseproof paper. The author understands that what you eat can indicate that you are different from those around you.

'White bread dreaming' is set in a 'very Anglo-Saxon area' that is 'on the outskirts of Bankstown'; in this setting, some members of the author's family (her dad, sister and brother) are marked as other by the colour of their skin. The restricting, negative stereotypes applied to people based on their skin colour is a key idea in 'White bread dreaming' and in other stories in *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*. For example, a common racist stereotype is that First Nations people abuse alcohol. This is seen in 'White bread dreaming' when the narrator tells a story about how her sick uncle was dismissed by a doctor and told 'to go home and sleep off the grog [alcohol], even though he hadn't had a drink for days'. Other common stereotypes alluded to in 'White bread dreaming', and in many other stories in this anthology, include that First Nations people only live in the outback ('There was no way Aboriginal people lived in this blond-haired, blue-eyed suburb of Sydney; Aboriginal people lived in the Central Desert'), and that they are lazy and do not want to work, so receive a lot of welfare from the Australian Government ('Do you get lots of handouts?').

Another common damaging stereotype of Aboriginal people is examined in Keira Jenkins' story 'What it's like'. Jenkins' account shines a light on the racist perception that all First Nations people are uneducated no-hopers (that is, are not expected to succeed). In this story, the narrator – an Aboriginal woman who excelled academically from a young age – recounts coming up against this prejudice again and again. She was told, 'you're smart for an Aboriginal', and remembers having to sit a basic reading test in Year 7 ('it was the kind of thing I was given to read in kindergarten') because she was Aboriginal. When her mum investigates enrolling her bright daughter at a 'local private school', she is told her daughter would automatically 'be put in the lowest class there because of [her] race'.

Stereotypes are dangerous and can lead to prejudice and racism, which are often expressed as verbal and physical abuse. In 'White bread dreaming', the narrator shares her family's painful experiences of bigotry. Her dad was 'taunted mercilessly' for being Aboriginal by the other kids at school and was called a 'dirty black bastard' at work. Similarly, the narrator's sister was 'called horrible names because she was Aboriginal'. Most shocking is the death of the narrator's uncle after he 'was picked up by the police and taken to a cell and bashed'.

Experiences of verbal and physical abuse propelled by racism are recounted again and again by the authors of the stories in *Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*. The anthology strongly conveys the message that racism is experienced by First Nations peoples regardless of their age, success or

---

In a personal response, it is appropriate to use personal pronouns such as 'I', 'me' and 'my'.

The student includes some personal details to convey how and why the memoir has resonated with their own experiences.

Paragraphs two and three are examples of the block essay structure: paragraph two focuses on analysing the text; paragraph three focuses on the student's personal connection to the part of the text discussed in paragraph two.

This topic sentence indicates that this paragraph focuses on the text.

The student identifies an idea presented in the text that particularly resonates with them.

Uses direct quotations as evidence.

The student identifies an idea explored by the text and also relevant to their own experience, as explained in a later paragraph.

Broadens the response to show a knowledge of other stories in the collection.

position in society. In 'Finding ways home', Evelyn Araluen recounts being called '*shit-skin* and *Abo*'; Don Bemrose sarcastically thanks his primary school classmates for calling him a 'Bondi floater', 'which meant I was a piece of shit from a sewerage line'. In 'There are no halves', Jason Goninan recalls 'the taunts and slurs … the random pushing and shoulder barges in the hallway' at school. Even sporting stars – pillars of the Australian community – are not immune to racism; in 'So much still pending', Deborah Cheetham reflects that AFL legend Adam Goodes has 'been subjected to the kind of racism that would crush a lesser being'.

Restricting, negative stereotypes have also been applied to people of other cultures by members of Australia's dominant, white Anglo-Saxon class. For example, the Italian migrants who came to Australia after World War II were considered by many white Australians to be greasy, dirty, uncivilised and likely to be criminals. This stereotype of Italian people also led to prejudice and racism; while members of Foster's family were called 'dirty black bastard(s)' and 'Abos', mine were called 'dirty wogs'. The shared context of our families' experiences of racism really struck a chord.

> *This sentence links to the prompt and highlights the student's personal connection to the text.*

When the author of 'White bread dreaming' relates her family members' painful experiences of racism, her tone is unemotional and matter-of-fact: she does not use emotive language, nor figurative language like similes, nor more expressive punctuation such as exclamation marks. The linear narrative structure of 'White bread dreaming' also reflects a level of composure and control that you would forgive the author for not having. These textual features convey an authorial voice that is tough, strong and resilient and that reminds me of my Nonna and other people like her who have faced substantial obstacles.

> *In a personal response, it's important to remember to analyse the text's language features.*
>
> *Analyses the structure of the text.*
>
> *Analyses a textual element (voice).*

In conclusion, the elements of 'White bread dreaming' and other stories in *Growing Up Aboriginal* that resonate most strongly with me are the people's experiences of feeling other, of having negative stereotypes applied to them, and of experiencing racism at the hands of white Anglo-Saxon Australians. These experiences touched a nerve as they echo the encounters my family members have also weathered in this same context.

> *Makes a clear connection between an element of the text and the student's personal experiences.*
>
> *The conclusion sums up the discussion and addresses the prompt.*

Sample response 2

This personal response in the form of two journal entries is based on Truman Capote's *In Cold Blood*. The first entry was written when the student first started studying the text, and the next was written after they had been studying it for several weeks.

An important element of *In Cold Blood* is the difference between appearances and reality. Discuss with close reference to *In Cold Blood* and your personal connections with the book.

Journal entry 9 April

True crime is an enduringly popular topic of podcasts, documentaries and books. One of the most famous examples of true crime is the book *In Cold Blood* by the US author Truman Capote. I had heard of this book – I knew it was famous and was about some murders that took place quite a while ago. It turns out the murders happened in rural Kansas in 1959 – over 60 years ago! Even before I started reading, the title made it clear that the book would be about something dark. If something happens 'in cold blood' it means something is done cruelly and without feeling. Usually the 'something' is a murder.

> Begins by noting some initial impressions of the text based on its genre and title.

One of the earliest things in the book where the initial appearance does not match reality is the first mention of the killings. The author says there were 'four shotgun blasts that, all told, ended six human lives'. Obviously that maths doesn't work – how can four blasts kill six people? This inconsistency made me curious to work out what had happened while also reinforcing the destructiveness of the crime. It also gave me a hint of how many people would be involved – four victims and two perpetrators.

> Shows engagement with the prompt.

After what appears in this opening statement though, the book does not continue with its dark themes. Instead of telling us about the killings, the author chooses to show the reality of life in 1950s Kansas for a typical family – the Clutter family. Capote gives us a detailed description of the last day of their lives. This helps to build suspense as we are caught in the appearance of a regular day contrasted with the reality of the violence that is to come.

> Considers how the structure of the book disrupts expectations and therefore contributes to a key theme.

Even though they lived in 1950s Kansas, a long way in time and distance from 2025 Victoria, it was easy for me to identify with the Clutters – a regular middle-class family who, on the outside, appeared to be happy. As one character says, 'that family represented everything people hereabouts really value and respect'. Like every family, including my own, the Clutters had their challenges. The biggest challenge was obviously the mother Bonnie's depression, which had led to her repeated hospitalisation. Another issue was the daughter Nancy dating a boy who was outside the family's religious persuasion. I know many families who are dealing with challenges while externally looking like everything is perfect.

> Draws a connection between the family in the text and the student's own family and circumstances.

Later on in the book, the way the family appears may be part of their downfall. Their presentation as a prosperous family is what leads a prison inmate to tell perpetrator Dick Hickock that the Clutter family might have hidden money. A lot of us, while not necessarily trying to be flashy, may try to give the impression that we are well off. We're quick to tell a friend about some new shoes we bought but keep it a secret if we can't afford to pay for a night out.

> Considers the way in which plot and a key issue in the text are linked, then connects this idea to real-world experiences.

Journal entry 5 May

As I read more of the book, I learn more about the criminals Perry and Dick – who they are and what they did, and the reality of their crimes.

> Indicates that the response will explore changing impressions and ideas as the student becomes more familiar with the text.

Dick Hickock sets himself up as the leader of the pair, and he is the one who is adamant that no one should be left alive when they rob the Clutters. However, when we get to the end of Part 3, it is the apparently more sympathetic and compassionate Perry Smith who claims he murdered all four of the Clutters. (Although it is never quite clear if he really did kill the whole family, or if he is making it up to spare the Hickock family pain.) So, while Dick has the appearance of leadership, when it comes to the murders, Perry assumes leadership.

> Retains a focus on the idea in the prompt: that appearances do not always match reality.

In many of the earlier scenes of the book, Perry is a sympathetic character. Even when they attack the family, Perry tucks Nancy in bed and protects her from Dick. Once again appearances are deceiving – it is even more shocking when someone who appears to be so kind is so ruthless.

Personally, I found it very difficult to grapple with Perry's lack of guilt about the killings. There is a famous saying of the 'banality of evil', that was first coined when discussing Nazi war crimes ('banal' meaning boring or ordinary). When Perry Smith is interviewed by the psychologist, he talks quite openly about killing the Clutter family and does not seem to feel any regret. It was like a boring, ordinary event to him. When Perry describes murdering Mr Clutter, I found this contradiction especially shocking: 'I didn't want to harm the man. I thought he was a very nice gentleman … I thought so right up to the moment I cut his throat'.

> Identifies a personal response to an aspect of characterisation.

> Broadens the discussion to include exploration of a real-world event (the Holocaust) and commentary on it.

Finally, at the end of the book I was struck by another mismatch between appearance and reality. The criminals are executed, and it appears that justice has been done and the world has been made right again. But nothing has really changed. The author describes the feelings of lead investigator Alvin Dewey: 'Dewey had imagined that with the deaths of Smith and Hickock he would experience a sense of climax, release, of a design justly completed.' Instead, we are encouraged to reflect on the meaninglessness of it all. That the murders were pointless destruction, and the executions do nothing to change that fact.

> Concludes by identifying and expressing an interpretation of an overarching theme of the text.

Scan the code or click **here** to see a sample personal response on Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451,* together with a set of planning notes for the response.

ANALYTICAL TEXT RESPONSES

IN THIS CHAPTER

› Analysing the topic

› Planning your essay

› Writing your essay

› Building your skills

› Editing and proofreading checklists

› Sample responses

For Outcome 1 of Unit 2, you will write a formal essay that analyses your set text, in response to a topic. An analytical essay allows you to show your detailed knowledge and understanding of a text, drawing on well-chosen textual evidence to support your interpretation and your 'answer' to the topic.

Analysing the topic

Your essay will respond to and in some way 'answer' a topic set for you by your teacher.

The first step in your response is to carefully analyse the topic and break it down into parts, to understand what you are really being asked. The example below shows the typical parts of a topic; the following sections show you ways to address each part in your response.

There are no real heroes in *Rear Window.*
Do you agree?

content word – the essay must focus on the idea of heroism

direction words – you need to answer this question

limiting word – the essay needs to explore what 'real' means in the context of the film

Content words

The content words tell you the main elements you must focus on in your essay. Most often, these are ideas or values (such as 'hero'). They are usually nouns or noun phrases.

Some topics have a tension between two concepts.

Macbeth depicts a battle between chaos and order. — content words

Discuss.

This topic asks you to discuss chaos and order in *Macbeth*. However, an equally important content word is 'battle': you need to consider the tension or conflict between chaos and order in the play. What sort of a battle is it? Is it just physical conflict, or can inner conflict also be considered? Order is restored at the play's end, but at what cost? Discussing chaos and order separately will not respond to the topic or resolve the tension within it.

In *Macbeth*, fate is a more powerful force than ambition. — content words

Do you agree?

This topic has a format typical of 'do you agree' topics – you are asked to decide between two alternatives. You can agree with the statement in the topic (yes, fate *is* the more important force in the play), disagree with it (no, ambition is the more important factor) or find a position in between (both factors are equally important).

Limiting words

Limiting or qualifying words adjust the meaning of other terms in the topic. Common limiting words include 'only', 'always', 'never', 'mostly' and 'often'. Sometimes an adjective is used to qualify the meaning of a noun: for instance, '*real* hero', '*gradual* realisation'.

limiting word — All the characters are harmed by Macbeth's immoral actions.

Discuss.

A response to this topic must address the word 'all'. You might not refer to every character in the play, but you would need to consider a range – servants as well as the nobility, women as well as men, children as well as adults. You also need to engage with the idea of 'harm'.

Verbs

The verbs in essay topics are important but can easily be overlooked. In the following topic, 'characters' and 'life's challenges' are key content words, but equally important are the verbs 'struggle' and 'cope'.

content word – the essay needs to discuss more than one character

The characters in Kennedy's short stories struggle to cope with life's challenges. Discuss.

verb – cope = deal with, handle, manage

content words – what kinds of challenges do they face?

verb – struggle = battle, strive, try without succeeding

An adequate response might discuss the characters and their challenges in a few stories. But a stronger response would also explore what it means to 'cope' and *how* the characters 'struggle' – in other words, the ways in which they try, and fail, to overcome challenges.

Verbs can also describe the text's presentation of an aspect of human experience.

> Kennedy's short stories reveal the crises of everyday life.
>
> Discuss.

verb – reveal = uncover, unveil

Other verbs that can have a similar role in topics include 'show', 'demonstrate' and 'suggest'. Although their meanings are similar, they have different emphases. The verb 'reveal', for instance, implies a gradual process. Your response should consider *how* these crises are shown.

Finally, a verb can describe a relationship between two things. Look for verbs and verb phrases such as 'leads to', 'causes' or 'results from'.

> In Kennedy's stories, it is the characters' selfishness that leads to their relationship problems.
>
> Do you agree?

verb phrase – leads to = results in, causes

Here the *causal connection* between the characters' selfishness and their relationship problems needs to be central to the response.

Quotations

When a quotation from the text appears in the topic, you must address it in your response. You don't need to do this at the start of your essay; you could refer to it in one of the body paragraphs or even in the conclusion. However, at some point you need to show:

- an understanding of the quote's **context** in the text
- **why** the quote is significant
- how the quote is **relevant to the topic**.

Here are two topics on *Jasper Jones* using quotes from the text.

quote – who says or thinks this? what is it referring to specifically in the text?

> 'My point is this: the more you have to lose, the braver you are for standing up.'
>
> There is more than one kind of courage in *Jasper Jones*.
>
> Discuss.

content word

> 'Holding something doesn't make it yours.'
>
> How is this idea explored in *Jasper Jones*?

In both topics, the quote presents a point of view on a key idea in the text. In the first topic, the quote is followed by a separate statement – this is the main statement that the essay needs to take a position on (agree, partly agree, or disagree). In the second topic, the quote itself supplies the statement; the content words come directly from the quote. You are not given the option of agreeing or disagreeing; the topic presents a direct question that you must answer.

Direct questions
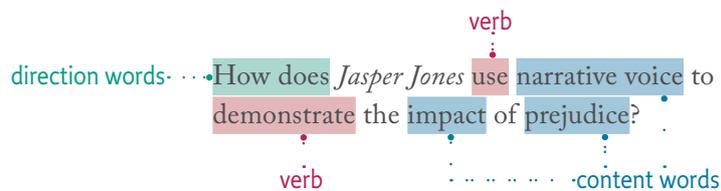
A direct question can take a few different forms, including the following.

- How does … ?
- How is … ?
- Is this … ?
- Why does … ?
- To what extent is … ?

In each case the topic will include an idea or an observation about the text that you need to accept. For instance, for the previous topic on *Jasper Jones*, you need to accept that 'holding something doesn't make it yours' *is* an idea explored in the text, and explain *how* it is explored.

'How' questions require you to discuss textual features such as vocabulary choices, structure, narrative voice, language features and aspects of the text's form and genre. You will need to use appropriate metalanguage to do this.

Here is another example on *Jasper Jones*:

direction words · · · · How does *Jasper Jones* use narrative voice to demonstrate the impact of prejudice?

verb / verb / content words

In this topic, 'narrative voice' identifies a textual feature that must be addressed. It would not be enough simply to discuss the impact of prejudice on characters in the text; you need to consider how the novelist has used the narrative voice of the thirteen-year-old narrator, Charlie Bucktin, to demonstrate these impacts. To do so, you would use metalanguage such as 'first-person perspective', 'tone' and 'style' to analyse the narrative voice.

Understand topic formats

ACTIVITY 5.1

1 Read the sample topics below and:

- circle the content words
- underline the direction words
- highlight any limiting words
- highlight the verbs in another colour
- highlight any quotes in a third colour
- rephrase each topic in your own words.

a 'It's just that we're talking about somebody's life here. I mean, we can't decide in five minutes.'
  Twelve Angry Men suggests that achieving justice is possible but difficult.
  Do you agree?

    b *Medea* demonstrates the destructive power of jealousy. To what extent do you agree?

    c All the main characters in *Jasper Jones* are outsiders in some way. Do you agree?

    d *Romeo and Juliet* demonstrates that there is much more to love than the feelings between two people. Discuss.

    e 'But that's not the way I am and there's nothing I can do to change that.'
    How does *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* explore the difficulties of dealing with change?

    f How are film techniques used in *Rear Window* to suggest that all appearances are unreliable?

2 Write five topics on your text, using the varied formats shown on pages 57–60. Include some with quotations and some direct questions.

Planning your essay

A plan for your essay will help you to construct a clear response to the topic and a consistent, logical argument. A brief plan includes:

- the main contention

- a topic sentence for each body paragraph

- brief notes on the textual evidence you will use in each body paragraph.

When you have time to draft and then refine your essay, you can draw up a fairly detailed planning sheet. In a timed assessment task it is worth writing a short plan to jot down your main ideas, as this will help you stay on topic and write a clearly structured essay.

After you have carefully analysed the topic, the first step in any essay plan is to come up with your main contention or overall argument.

Develop a main contention

Your main contention is your overall response to the topic. It states your point of view and explains why you hold this view.

- If the topic contains a direct question (including 'Do you agree?'), the main contention states your answer to this question.

- If the topic contains a statement and the direction word 'Discuss', your main contention will state whether you agree, disagree or partly agree / partly disagree with this statement and why.

To develop a main contention, try starting by writing your ideas down in a simple form like this:

I think that … because …

Then write your main contention in more formal language.

Another approach is to write down different points of view and see which one you feel you can argue for more convincingly. Remember, there is never any 'right' or 'wrong' answer.

Consider this topic on the film *Gattaca*.

> *Gattaca* suggests that luck is more important than personal qualities when it comes to achieving success. Do you agree?

Here are three different main contentions.

- The fates of the characters in *Gattaca*, including Vincent, Irene and Jerome, are ultimately decided by luck, as shown by Vincent's escaping detection, Irene's exclusion from the space mission, and Jerome's failure to win an Olympic gold medal. (agreement)

- The fates of the characters in *Gattaca* are determined by their courage, resilience and intelligence. (disagreement)

- Although the characters in *Gattaca* are affected by both good and bad luck at crucial moments, ultimately it is their courage, resilience and intelligence that determines their ability to achieve success. (partial agreement)

Each main contention can be supported with evidence from the text. Ultimately, it is *your* view of the text that needs to come through in your response.

Write a plan

If you have time, create a planning sheet before you start writing. This will help you organise your ideas logically, and sort textual evidence into the relevant body paragraphs.

Scan the code or click **here** to download a planning sheet template for an essay with three body paragraphs. You can modify it to include four or more body paragraphs.

Scan the code or click **here** to download a sample planning sheet for an essay on Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*.

Test your overall argument

ACTIVITY 5.2

1 Select a topic on your text. This could be one you have been given in class, one in this textbook or one you have found in another resource.

2 Analyse the topic by identifying the content words, direction words, verbs, and any quotations and limiting words. What is each element asking you to do?

3 Write down your main contention – a one-sentence response to the topic.

4 Write a topic sentence for each of your three or four body paragraphs. Each sentence should present a different argument or reason that supports the main contention. Check for any sentences that repeat the same point or make a contradictory point.

5 Create a short paragraph by joining together your contention and topic sentences. Does this paragraph form a cohesive response to the topic? Is there a smooth flow from one sentence to the next? If so, then your argument is logical. If not, remove or resolve contradictory or repetitive elements.

Writing your essay

An analytical essay is a formal piece of writing that presents a clear argument supported by evidence and logical thinking. The standard five-paragraph essay contains an introduction, three body paragraphs and a conclusion. You can write more than three body paragraphs but remember that each paragraph should thoroughly explore one main point.

There are many ways to write an essay. In this section, you will see both the commonly used TEEL structure and suggestions for moving away from TEEL. Structures like TEEL will help you to set your ideas down in a logical and ordered fashion. They will be useful as you develop your essay-writing skills. But once you have mastered the basics try expanding on the formula to develop your own personal style and approach to essays.

Introduction

Your opening paragraph should contain a clear response to the topic and a general outline of your main arguments. The introduction does not have to be very long or detailed. If you are writing under timed conditions it is important that you move quickly on to your main arguments.

The introduction should:

- begin with a contention that directly responds to the topic
- signpost the arguments in your essay
- include basic details such as the author's name and the title of the text.

Strong contentions

Aim for a contention that allows for multiple angles and in-depth analysis. Consider the following contentions for this topic on *Macbeth*.

Ambition is the root cause of all the tragedy in Macbeth*. Do you agree?*

Weak contention: The characters' ambitions lead to all the tragedy in the play.

- The weak contention simply paraphrases the topic.

Medium contention: The Macbeths' ambition leads to the murder of King Duncan, which ultimately causes their downfall.

- The medium contention provides an argument to support the contention.

Strong contention: While the Macbeths' ambition contributes to their downfall, many other factors compel them to act both violently and immorally, ultimately leading to tragic outcomes for both themselves and others.

- The strongest contention presents multiple angles on the topic and is more complex, allowing for in-depth analysis.

Sample introduction

The following introduction from a student essay responds to this topic on *Station Eleven*.

Station Eleven demonstrates the enduring power of art. Discuss.

Simply surviving is not enough, and in Emily St. John Mandel's novel *Station Eleven*, even though much is lost after the collapse, art remains. Mandel uses the Travelling Symphony in the novel to demonstrate the endurance of the performing arts, providing people with a space to reminisce about the civilisation they lost. Mandel also uses the *Dr. Eleven* comic books to illustrate how people take something unique and personal away from art. Ultimately, as long as humanity exists, art will exist with it.

> Includes the name of the author and the title of the text.

> Begins with a clear contention that responds to the topic.

> Signposts the main arguments to be developed in the body paragraphs.

Body paragraphs

The body paragraphs are the most important part of your essay. They demonstrate your knowledge of the text and should follow a logical order that leads the reader to agree with your contention.

A body paragraph should:

- develop a single argument about the text
- have a sentence (or two) that clearly states the argument
- use evidence from the text
- stay on topic and support your overall contention.

The TEEL structure

TEEL – Topic sentence, Evidence, Explanation, Link – is a common approach to structuring body paragraphs.

Topic sentence	*Write an opening sentence that sums up the main focus of the paragraph.*
Evidence	*Give specific examples and quotations from the text.*
Explanation	*Explain how your evidence supports the statement you made in your topic sentence.*
Link	*Create links to the topic sentence and back to the essay topic itself.*

The following body paragraph, responding to the topic on page 63, follows the TEEL structure closely.

Macbeth's initial meeting with the witches influences many of his subsequent thoughts and reactions. It means, for instance, that when Ross addresses him as Thane of Cawdor, he thinks almost at once of becoming king: 'the greatest is behind'. This signals that Glamis and Cawdor (two out of the three titles referred to by the witches) are, for him, simply stepping stones to the throne. Macbeth's ambition is evident here, just as it is in his aside, when he refers to his 'thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical'. Already he has considered murdering Duncan, but his desire to become king is now strengthened by the witches' prophecy and its early partial fulfilment. Without this prophecy, Macbeth would lack the sense that the throne was somehow his rightful destiny. This feeling, soon to be powerfully endorsed by Lady Macbeth, leads Macbeth to act against the moral order, which is a crucial factor in his eventual demise.

> Topic sentence indicates that the paragraph will focus on Macbeth's initial meeting with the witches.

> Provides evidence, including a short quote.

> Explains the significance of the evidence in the previous sentence.

> Provides further evidence.

> Explains how the evidence supports the argument about the witches' influence on Macbeth.

> Links the evidence and explanation to the topic.

Alternatives to TEEL

There are many ways to write a successful body paragraph. One alternative to using a formula like TEEL is to find examples of quality writing and use them as models. This means breaking down examples to identify what makes them work and using these components in your own writing.

Look at the following example of a body paragraph on the *Station Eleven* topic on page 64. The annotations show how a student might analyse the techniques used in this body paragraph and make notes on them.

Although art may not be necessary for basic human survival, people need it to find meaning in life. Mandel demonstrates that 'survival is insufficient' through the endurance of the arts. These creative and expressive endeavours are what engender meaning for people. Mandel emphasises the role of the arts both before and after the collapse. This is illustrated by both Arthur Leander and the Travelling Symphony performing *King Lear*. Arthur is 'the king [standing] in a pool of blue light', while after the collapse *King Lear* is 'rehears[ed] all week', highlighting its timelessness. Mandel shows that art provides people with 'moments of transcendent beauty and joy' and a sense of normalcy. The novel suggests that art is likely to exist as long as people can experience it. Art connects people and history by fulfilling a human need for something more than just 'going through the motions of [their] lives'. *Station Eleven* demonstrates the enduring power of art, as it remains after the collapse, playing a central role in giving people a sense of meaning in life.

> Begins the opening sentence with an 'although' statement; clearly linked to topic.

> Uses a quote to further explain the opening sentence.

> Focuses on the author's intent with phrases such as 'Mandel emphasises'.

> Uses quotes mainly in the middle of the paragraph.

> Explains implications of the evidence.

> Concludes with a sentence that reinforces the opening sentence.

These annotations, and the techniques they identify, are then used as the basis for writing a body paragraph on *Macbeth*. Compare the two paragraphs, noting in particular how the student has used sentence starters and vocabulary choices.

> Although Macbeth was always ambitious, it is his initial interactions with the witches and other characters that influence many of his subsequent actions. Shakespeare demonstrates how a 'vaulting ambition' can be steered by others. The playwright emphasises that ambition alone does not lead to Macbeth's tragic downfall, but that once the idea is sown by the witches, small moments escalate quickly. When Ross addresses him as Thane of Cawdor he thinks of becoming king, and it is a short step from those thoughts to the 'fantastical' thoughts of murder later reinforced by Lady Macbeth. Without the witches' prophecy, Macbeth would lack the sense that the throne is his rightful destiny. *Macbeth* demonstrates that simple ambition can be turned towards destructive outcomes through interactions with others.

Conclusion

The final paragraph of your essay is your conclusion. Like the introduction, the conclusion should be succinct and on topic. Throughout your body paragraphs you should have explored a number of main arguments. The conclusion is your opportunity to synthesise those arguments and reinforce your initial contention.

Your conclusion should:

- synthesise the contention and supporting arguments
- resolve the tension in the topic.

Resolving the tension in the topic

Essay topics almost always have a tension – an implied question or argument – that needs to be resolved. This could be from an 'either/or' scenario (which is often the case in a 'do you agree?' topic), or a topic that asks you to discuss an issue and decide on an ultimate answer.

Consider the two topics discussed earlier in this chapter.

> *Station Eleven* demonstrates the enduring power of art.
> Discuss.

- Firstly, there is tension in the statement. *Does* the novel demonstrate this?
- Next, there is tension in the idea that art endures. *Does* art always endure?

> Ambition is the root cause of all the tragedy in *Macbeth*.
> Do you agree?

- The tension in a 'do you agree?' question comes from the implied either/or. In this case, either ambition leads to all the tragic outcomes in the play, or it doesn't.
- By the time you reach the conclusion, you should have argued strongly one way or the other.

Use words and phrases like 'ultimately', 'thus', 'hence' and 'therefore' to make your final resolution of the topic clear.

Sample conclusion

Emily St. John Mandel's *Station Eleven* demonstrates the enduring power of art because, even though many things are lost after the collapse, art is something that remains. Mandel highlights that mere survival is insufficient and people need something greater in life. She also discusses how the beauty of art gives people a way to connect to the past. *Station Eleven* highlights that, because art is open to interpretation, people who encounter it will each take away something different. Ultimately, Mandel reveals that art endures because it is a central part of the human experience; therefore, as long as humanity exists, art will be there.

> Re-uses the content words from the question, making it clear that the response is on topic.

> Clearly restates the contention.

> Provides a short synthesis of the main arguments from the body paragraphs.

> Ends on a clear point that resolves the tension in the topic.

Building your skills

Use the strategies in this section to build the skills you need to write an analytical response to a text.

Use sentence starters to analyse, not describe

A common flaw in student essays is that they tend to describe *what* happens in a text, rather than analysing *how* the author has constructed the text and why they have constructed it in this way.

Try using these sentence starters, and start keeping a file of your own, to help you focus on how and why your text has been constructed in a particular way.

Writing about characters

By portraying … (character) as …, … (author) suggests … (idea)
… (author) characterises … (character) as …, leading the reader / audience to consider the idea that …
The … (adjective) relationship between … and … embodies the idea that …
In facing the challenge of …, … (character) reveals their qualities / values of …

Writing about vocabulary and language features

By using words such as … and …, …. (author) creates a mood / atmosphere / feeling of …
The images of … convey the idea of …
The film's frequent use of … (shot type) leads the audience to feel that / have a heightened awareness of …
The symbol / motif of … foregrounds … (author)'s exploration of …

Writing about plot and structure

As a result of …, … (character) decides to …, revealing that …
The conflict between … and … (characters) comes to a head at the narrative's climax, which is effectively a battle between … and … (ideas/values)
The narrative resolution is achieved through …, leaving the reader with the impression / feeling that …
By ending with …, the text suggests that …

Writing about ideas, concerns and tensions

The tension / conflict between … and … suggests that …
… (author) highlights / emphasises / demonstrates that …
By making … a central concern of the text, … (author) makes the reader aware of …
Through the exploration of …, the text presents the idea that …

Use linking words

Your essay should read as an integrated piece of writing in which the ideas and arguments work together to create a convincing interpretation of the text and response to the topic.

If the response has been planned, the ideas should flow logically. A further way to create unity and flow is by using appropriate linking words or phrases. The following examples will help you to connect your points and show the direction your argument is taking.

Words to discuss a similar idea	Words to present a different idea	Words to show a consequence
furthermore	contrastingly	as a result
in the same way	conversely	consequently
likewise	however	for this reason
moreover	on the other hand	so
similarly	whereas	therefore

Use precise words

Having a wide vocabulary and using it effectively will improve the clarity and insightfulness of your writing. The following word bank contains a list (in the left-hand column) of common adjectives that could be used to describe characters but which lack precision and impact. Using more precise words will help you to link characters' attributes and behaviours to the text's big ideas.

Common adjective	Words with more precise (not identical) meanings			
strong	omnipotent	powerful	resilient	unyielding
weak	gullible	passive	submissive	subservient
good	admirable	compassionate	honourable	virtuous
evil	immoral	malevolent	malicious	nefarious
quiet	circumspect	contemplative	introverted	reflective
loud	boisterous	bombastic	extroverted	exuberant
true	loyal	dependable	devoted	steadfast
false	conniving	duplicitous	manipulative	scheming
happy	cheerful	delighted	ecstatic	joyous
sad	depressed	despondent	disconsolate	melancholy
nice	amiable	benevolent	magnanimous	selfless

Build your skills

1 Select three of the sentence starters on pages 67–8 and write three sentences about your set text.

2 Create three new sentence starters that will help you to analyse how your text presents ideas, concerns and tensions. Aim to incorporate metalanguage specific to the form of your text (e.g. 'character' for novels; 'stage directions' for plays; 'diegetic sound' for films).

3 Select a linking word from each of the three columns in the linking words table (page 68), and include all three words in a short paragraph about your text.

4 Find an extra word for each of the rows in the word bank of precise vocabulary (page 68) and record them in your notebook. Aim to find words that you can easily apply to your text (e.g. to particular characters).

5 Think of two common or general words you have used in essays that aren't included in the word bank. For each of these words, find five words with similar but more precise meanings.

Editing and proofreading checklists

Use the following checklists to home in on specific issues and potential weaknesses in your essay. If you have time to draft and rewrite, check the points under 'Structure' and 'Ideas and techniques' to refine your argument and essay structure, then use the 'Language' checklist to do a final proofread. Don't try to check all three categories at once: do at least three separate readings, looking for different things each time.

In a timed assessment task you will probably only have time to check the 'Language' items and correct any spelling and punctuation errors. But you might also be able to improve some of your word choices by replacing common and general words with more precise ones. Use of metalanguage is an important part of analytical text responses, so check that you have included some specific vocabulary related to the form of your set text: terms for film style if it is a film, and so on.

Structure

☐ The essay is clearly structured and consists of an introduction, at least three body paragraphs and a conclusion.

☐ The introduction states the main contention and indicates the main reasons or points of argument.

☐ Each paragraph focuses on a single idea, which is stated in a clear topic sentence.

☐ The argument develops over the course of the essay, building to the conclusion.

☐ The concluding paragraph contains a concise statement of the main contention, summarises the discussion and gives a clear response to the topic.

Ideas and techniques

☐ The essay presents a clear and consistent response to the topic.

☐ You have commented on ways in which the author has used vocabulary, structure and language features to construct meaning.

☐ You have considered some of the main ideas, concerns and tensions in the text, relevant to the essay topic.

☐ You have demonstrated a thorough knowledge of the text, and selected relevant evidence to support your points.

☐ You have incorporated short quotes into your sentences.

Language

☐ Each sentence is clear and grammatically correct.

☐ Punctuation is correct, including the use of commas, apostrophes, capital letters, and quotation marks for direct quotes from the text.

☐ Sentences are varied in structure for interest and impact.

☐ The analysis includes metalanguage relevant to the form of your text.

☐ You have used linking words to connect ideas and show the development of your argument.

☐ You have used formal language and avoided informal expressions and clichés.

☐ You have written in the third person (avoiding the first-person 'I') and in the present tense.

Sample responses

The responses in this section demonstrate the qualities of high-level text analyses.

Sample response 1

This essay is on Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* and responds to the following topic.

'… I have heard you accuse him of nothing worse than of being the son of Mr Darcy's steward …'

Pride and Prejudice shows that class is not a reliable indicator of character.

Discuss.

While class distinctions are of high importance in Jane Austen's novel *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen is critical of using class to make character judgements. In the world of *Pride and Prejudice*, society places a high value on class, and many people in the novel assume that class equates to a person's character. However, this point of view is shown to be unreliable through the author's use of satire, explicit denunciations of this perspective and by examples of people's actions displaying good or poor character across class boundaries.

Responds to the topic, presenting a contention that mostly agrees with the statement in the topic.

While the novel does show individuals acting in ways that may justify class stereotypes, ultimately it presents actions as a more reliable indicator of a person's character.

Class is central to the social world of *Pride and Prejudice*. At least partially, it is the lower status of the Bennet family that makes Darcy struggle to propose to Elizabeth, since their 'condition in life is so decidedly beneath [his] own' – this shows that Darcy places great significance on class distinctions even when they interfere with his passion for the woman he loves. A consequence of this focus on class is that, at times, many characters equate a higher class to good character. For example, Mr Collins constantly praises his patroness, Lady Catherine de Bourgh, solely because of his high regard for her status. Mr Collins describes her as 'the sort of woman whom one cannot regard with too much deference', despite others disliking her and seeing her as 'dictatorial'. The converse – that some believe being of a lower class is a reflection of poor character – is suggested by Caroline and Louisa, who, upon learning that Mr Gardiner (Elizabeth and Jane's uncle) earns his money through a profession and lives in a less desirable area, 'laugh heartily' and sarcastically state that it does not 'make [Elizabeth and Jane] one jot less agreeable'. Their mocking implies that having middle class relatives *does* lower their regard for the Bennets. The assumption that class equates to character is a key concern in the novel.

While class as a way to intuit character is a core assumption of many in the novel, *Pride and Prejudice* challenges the notion that these judgements are reliable. This is done explicitly through Elizabeth's dialogue, when she suggests the wrongheadedness of criticising Wickham based on 'nothing worse than of being the son of Mr Darcy's steward'. The narration also criticises those who take class as a proxy for character by satirising them. For example, Mr Collins is so excessive in the 'respect which he felt for [Catherine de Bourgh's] high rank' that it is comical, with him described as 'a mixture of pride and obsequiousness'; by ridiculing Mr Collins for idolising someone because of their superior class, the novel suggests that to view class in this way is in itself ridiculous. Furthermore, the book shows people across class distinctions displaying both admirable and poor character, again challenging the point of view that class equals good character. There are those of a high class who act in rude or morally dubious ways, such as Caroline and Louisa, who 'speak well of themselves, and meanly of others', suggesting that they are arrogant and overly judgemental. Conversely, the novel shows characters of a less prestigious social class acting more honourably, such as the middle-class Mr Gardiner. Mr Gardiner is a 'sensible, gentlemanlike man' who 'readily promised every assistance in his power' in the search for Lydia after her elopement, displaying his good character in his dedication to his family and his level head in a time of crisis. The novel challenges the idea that class reliably predicts character by explicitly criticising it, by satirising it and by portraying characters who transcend class stereotypes.

Annotations:

Expands on the contention by outlining an interpretation of the text in relation to the topic.

Begins by acknowledging class as a key concern of the novel.

Quotations provide textual evidence for the argument; they are appropriately brief and well integrated into sentences.

Identifies and explains two textual features – dialogue and narration – through which the text demonstrates a view on the topic, and contextualises and engages with the quote in the topic.

While the novel is at pains to show that higher and lower classes are not always synonymous with good and bad character respectively, it nevertheless does show examples of class aligning with character. This can be seen through Elizabeth's changing opinions on Wickham and Darcy. Although Elizabeth defends Wickham from the suggestion that it reflects badly on him to be the son of a steward, ultimately Wickham is revealed to be 'hatefully mercenary', which aligns with the idea that he is of low character because of his humble origins. Similarly, Darcy is in the end revealed to be of good character as well as upper class, capable of 'civility' and 'gentleness', whereas previously Elizabeth had accused him of 'arrogance', 'conceit' and 'selfish disdain of the feelings of others'. However, Elizabeth does not change her perspective on Wickham and Darcy's characters based on their class status – rather, it is through greater knowledge of their actions that she comes to a more legitimate judgement of their characters. Elizabeth's view of Wickham declines when presented with proof of his inappropriate behaviour, 'as she could bring no proof of its injustice', showing that it is the simple fact of his transgressions that proves his poor character. At the same time, Elizabeth's regard for Darcy improves in response to his kind actions, including his assistance in ensuring Wickham marries Lydia, where 'nothing was to be done that he did not do himself', with his good character proved by his generosity. The fact that the novel allows individuals across class boundaries to vary in their character shows that class cannot be a reliable way to judge a person's character, and that a person's actions are a better indicator.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen challenges the notion that class can reliably predict a person's character, while still acknowledging that class is an important consideration in the social world of the novel. *Pride and Prejudice* shows how some people view class as the determinant of a person's character, considering those of high class to be above reproach and those of lower class as worthy of disdain. However, Austen challenges this viewpoint through explicit statements in the text, through satire, and by showing higher-class individuals displaying poor character and lower-class individuals acting honourably. While character does at times align with stereotypes about class, ultimately the novel judges character based on actions, not class. And while class is still a key lens through which Austen's characters view the world, the novel undermines it as a reliable way to judge character.

Marginal notes:

Demonstrates a nuanced understanding of the topic and view of the text by acknowledging that some elements of the text do seem to support a connection between class and character.

Having conceded that the novel might seem to align class with character in some instances, in fact overall it expresses a more subtle and complex view that ultimately supports the topic statement.

Restates the main contention without repeating the words used in the introduction.

Sample response 2

This essay is on the play *Twelve Angry Men* by Reginald Rose. It responds to the following topic.

Twelve Angry Men argues that it is more important to be compassionate than to be right. Discuss.

Reginald Rose's play *Twelve Angry Men* draws a comparison between the need for compassion and consideration towards others, and the more selfish drive to win an argument or to make a point. As the jurors discuss the case before them, and are faced with the challenge of reaching a unanimous verdict, tensions rise between those willing to consider the case's uncertainties and those who deem changing their minds to be a weakness. In his construction of central characters (particularly 8th and 3rd Juror) and how this plays out in relation to the jury deliberations, Rose celebrates the capacity for compassion and critiques the stubborn refusal to be flexible.

Twelve Angry Men exposes how subjectivity can influence people's perception of details presented as facts, and how we cannot always know the full truth. While 3rd Juror claims 'you can't refute facts', 11th reminds us that 'facts may be colored by the personalities of the people who present them'; 10th bitterly agrees that 'you can twist 'em any way you like', and 8th emphasises that 'sometimes the facts that are staring you in the face are wrong'. The idea of being truly 'right' is shown to be ridiculous, thus making foolish those who stubbornly endeavour to be right. This quality is associated with self-centeredness and a refusal to consider others' perspectives (as summarised in 7th's boast that 'you couldn't change my mind if you talked for a hundred years'), as well as with impatience and antagonism (as when 10th becomes '*suddenly angry*'). The alternative is aligned with qualities such as a willingness to be fallible ('suppose we're wrong?'), respect for others ('it's not easy to stand alone') and the humility to listen ('this gentleman is asking a reasonable question'). Rose concludes unreservedly that it is more honourable to strive to demonstrate the latter qualities than to cling inflexibly to a particular version of 'truth'.

One way the play differentiates between being compassionate and insisting on being right is through the contrasting behaviour of jurors – particularly 8th and 3rd. 8th Juror represents compassion: towards the defendant, whose life is literally in the jury's hands, but also towards his fellow jurors. For example, he speaks calmly even in the face of aggression, as when 3rd, '*dark with rage*', hysterically threatens to 'kill' him. From the outset, 8th Juror is unwilling to convict the defendant, which would condemn him to the death sentence, because he believes there is reasonable doubt. He is open about lacking certainty regarding the boy's guilt, but he is certain about showing the boy the respect of careful consideration before making a decision, stating that 'we owe him a few words'. Rose presents 8th as the most humane of the jurors: rational, respectful and gentle.

Conversely, 3rd Juror is portrayed as reactive, even violent, as when 5th and 6th Jurors have to restrain him at the conclusion of Act One. He is prejudiced, disrespectful, sarcastic (e.g. 'I apologize on my knees') and inflexible ('I can sit in this goddam room for a year'), driven by his desire to see the defendant punished, possibly as a proxy for anger at his own estranged son. The play, by showing the ten other jurors who initially voted 'guilty' (including 10th, who tends to share 3rd's beliefs and attitudes) eventually changing their votes, validates the act of turning away from prejudice towards compassion.

Signals that a focus on characterisation will be a feature of the essay.

Presents a clear contention in response to the topic.

First body paragraph examines how the central conflict in the topic – the tension between compassion and being 'right' – plays out in the text, identifying the nuances of this central idea.

The final sentence of the paragraph follows on logically from the discussion and links back to the topic.

This paragraph focuses on different characters' personalities and reactions, as signposted in the introduction.

Quotations are thoughtfully selected and well integrated into the discussion.

Identifies the way in which the structure and plot of the play support the student's interpretation.

It is not only through characterisation that Rose sanctions empathy over the desire to be right. Events in the play also support this. For example, the stakes are high in the central dilemma: had all jurors held to the 'obvious' majority conclusion of the boy's guilt without questioning their assumptions, a young man would have been executed without proof of guilt. This emphasises the potential consequences of refusing to take compassionate steps towards understanding others' experiences. Even 3rd Juror says that 'everybody deserves a fair trial' – although his behaviour consistently undermines this sentiment. In other words, respect should be a fundamental value. Rose portrays such empathy in 8th's 'putting [himself] in the boy's place'. Compassion is also shown to generate more compassion, as when 9th, the first to change his 'guilty' vote, does so in support of 8th, recognising the courage it took to stand up against a volatile, prejudiced group. And in the rare glimpses of jurors' personal lives, we see that a lack of compassion leads to grief and loss, as in 3rd's story of how his use of aggression to make 'a man out of' his son led to violence and estrangement.

> Expands on the idea introduced in the previous paragraph: that elements other than characterisation support the central argument of the essay.

> Explains the significance of the evidence provided.

> Explains how a character is used to present a key idea.

The underlying values that *Twelve Angry Men* endorses are those of empathy, humility and consideration. It celebrates these qualities through the most sympathetic and relatable character, 8th Juror, and contrasts them with the bitterness, aggression and stubbornness of other characters, especially 10th and 3rd. In portraying human compassion finally winning out over an insistence on being right, the play reminds us that it is more meaningful to consider others than to focus on ourselves.

> Ends with a strong statement about the text's wider message about humanity, which is a logical extension of the essay's argument.

Analyse a text response

ACTIVITY 5.4

GROUP Select one of the essays on the previous pages and answer the following questions. Use the annotations to help you. You could discuss your answers to these questions in pairs or small groups.

1 What is the main contention? Is it stated clearly in the introduction?

2 Identify three reasons or arguments used to support this main contention.

3 Underline three pieces of textual evidence used in the essay. Does the writer clearly explain their relevance to the topic and main contention?

4 Mark up the TEEL elements in one of the body paragraphs. A good way to do this is to use a different coloured highlighter for each element. (Some sentences might contain a combination of evidence and explanation, so highlight these elements separately.)

5 Identify three linking words or phrases used in the essay. These can be connecting sentences within paragraphs, or linking one paragraph with another.

6 Identify three words or phrases that the writer has used to explain how the text is exploring ideas, concerns and tensions.

7 Identify three word choices that you think could be improved, and suggest replacements.

8 Are any sentences unclear or too wordy? If so, rewrite them so they are clear and concise.
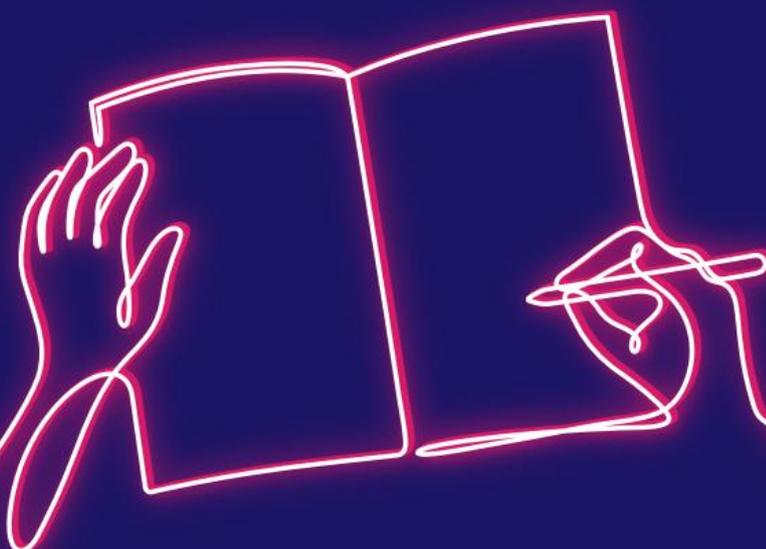
02 Crafting texts

Area of Study 2: Crafting texts is all about your writing. It gives you the freedom to explore different styles and forms of writing, and to develop your own voice.

You will study at least three texts in depth, looking at how their authors have used language and structure to achieve their purpose in a given context, and for a particular intended audience. In studying your mentor texts, you will find ways of using language and shaping ideas that you can use in your own writing.

You will also explore a framework or key idea – a broad concept that is addressed by your mentor texts. Class discussions and your own reading and thinking will help you to generate and refine your ideas.

Scan the code or click here for a writing and editing toolkit to help you hone your writing skills for this area of study.

KEY IDEAS AND MENTOR TEXTS

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Overview of the key ideas
- Writing about friendship
- Writing about futures
- Writing about food
- Writing about nature
- Writing about heroes

In Year 11 it is likely your teacher will choose a key idea that will help to frame and focus your writing. You will study three mentor texts in depth, and you might also read other texts as examples of effective writing.

The mentor texts will present different viewpoints and perspectives on your key idea, and they will influence and inspire your own writing. They could include short stories and poems, nonfiction pieces such as articles and essays, and excerpts from books. You will examine the use of vocabulary, text structures and language features in your mentor texts and draw on these in your own writing.

Overview of the key ideas

This chapter presents five frameworks or key ideas, with annotated examples of mentor texts; it also includes activities that show how the mentor texts can be used as models and springboards for your own writing. Use these in combination with the mentor texts provided by your teacher, the suggested mentor texts for each key idea in this chapter, or texts that you find for yourself. (Remember that you won't need to read a complete novel – select an excerpt in consultation with your teacher.) The broader the range of mentor texts you use, the more likely you will be able to craft a well-rounded and engaging text.

The five key ideas covered in this chapter are:

- **Writing about friendship** – an exploration of different types of friendship, and its benefits and challenges

- **Writing about futures** – an exploration of future thinking and possibilities

- **Writing about food** – an exploration of food as nourishment, and of the important roles that food plays socially, culturally and historically

- **Writing about nature** – an exploration of the natural world and environment

- **Writing about heroes** – an exploration of types of heroes and heroism, and how these reveal our values.

Even if you are studying a different key idea, it is worth reading through all the key ideas in this chapter. Each will offer different ways of developing ideas and written pieces, drawing on a range of text types, which might prompt you to take your writing in interesting and exciting new directions.

Scan the code or click here for a video overview of how you can use mentor texts in this area of study.

Writing about friendship

'Friendship' might seem a straightforward idea. But this key idea can be opened up in ways that go beyond just thinking about your close friends at school.

Doctors and psychologists have researched the protective aspects of friendship. For example, it has been shown that having close social connections can prevent mental decline in old age and help people live longer.

The lack of friends, and feelings of loneliness, can be very powerful. What happens when people struggle to find close connections with others? And what happens when a friendship breaks down or is lost for some other reason? What might the consequences be?

Friendships don't just exist between peers. Consider unexpected friendships you might have had, or heard or read about – for example, between people with a large age difference, between people who have never met, or between people who have very different interests. A friend doesn't even have to be human. People can form strong friendship bonds with pets: think about the fact that dogs are often referred to as 'man's best friend'.

Friendship can also occur between other entities, such as nations and organisations. Political friendships are also possible; for example, some have considered the allyship associated with movements like Black Lives Matter to be examples of the way in which solidarity and compassion can help to create social change.

In exploring writing about friendship, you will read, view and hear texts that explore issues such as:

- the power of friendship to sustain individuals and communities
- the consequences of the loss or lack of friendship
- ways of negotiating the complexities of friendship.

> **Possible mentor texts for writing about friendship**
> » *Archy and Mehitabel* by Don Marquis (poetry collection)
> » 'Radical Friendship' by Laura Forster (article), https://www.historyworkshop.org.uk/activism-solidarity/radical-friendship/
> » *Tomorrow, and Tomorrow, and Tomorrow* by Gabrielle Zevin (novel)
> » 'Apollo' by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie (short story), https://short-stories.co/@chimamanda/apollo-0gpz4x5xln7d
> » *Charlotte's Web* by EB White (children's novel)
> » *My Brilliant Friend* by Elena Ferrante (novel)
> » *True Friends* by Patti Miller (memoir)
> » 'The myths and reality of modern friendship' by Rebecca Roache (essay), https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20220302-the-myths-and-reality-of-modern-friendship

Developing ideas: how friendship shapes our identities

There is a well-known saying, 'Show me your friends and I'll tell you who you are.' This refers to the fact that our personalities, beliefs and attitudes are shaped by, and reflected in, the people we choose to spend time with. We might expect our friends to share certain fundamental values; for example, we might not choose to become close with someone who has opposing views on a social or political issue that is very important to us.

On the other hand, one of the great joys and benefits of friendship is being exposed to new ways of thinking and seeing the world. Different friends and friendship groups can fulfil different needs and allow you to express different aspects of yourself. They can also help to shape your ideas, beliefs and attitudes in distinct ways.

Explore friendships in popular culture

ACTIVITY 6.1

1 Brainstorm symbols and tokens of friendship – for example, friendship bracelets, 'best friends' necklaces designed to be shared between friends, blood brothers/sisters. Choose one of these tokens or traditions and research how and where it originated.

2 Think about significant friendships in books, films or other media. Choose one of these friendships and write a short dialogue between the individuals (250–400 words), in which they discuss what their friendship means to them.

Example: 'A love letter to my best friends'

 » Text: 'A love letter to my best friends' (excerpt)
 » Author: Udoka Nwansi
 » Form: letter
 » Audience: the author's friends; readers of *The Michigan Daily*
 » Purpose: to express

A love letter to my best friends

Seeing as today is Valentine's Day, love is the pressing topic on the table. While I do enjoy indulging in the romantic aesthetics of the holiday, I think Western conceptions of Valentine's Day fail to place enough emphasis on platonic love […]

So, to my dear friends,

Thank you for all the memories that we've been able to make together.

I'll always fondly recall the laughs we've shared together the mornings after eventful nights, when we would recount our varying perspectives of the same party with hoarse voices, smudged makeup and laughter so hard that our stomachs began to hurt. When we would either make our own breakfast or go out to a local diner and lightheartedly discuss any drama over copious amounts of waffles, eggs and coffee.

I'll never fail to return any of your FaceTime calls that make 300-mile distances between us feel more like three feet as we talk for hours through the phone. Calls where you patiently listen to all my long-winded stories as I tell them in the most fervent and non-linear way possible. Calls where we rant to each other about our worst classes, share our short-term and long-term goals and talk through all of our elaborate plans for the future.

I'll always stream the playlists that we've made together. It's a simple activity, yet it's one that unites us all through our love for music. Sharing new music with each other is a love language that speaks volumes when our own words fail to do so.

[…]

Life is moving so fast that it's hard to keep up sometimes. But regardless of how far we may be from each other, I'll always put in the time and effort because my relationships with you all are invaluable. I'm grateful for the emotional intimacy that has been built between us. Thank you for extending your guidance and sticking beside me as I navigate the winding road to self-discovery, losing sight of my sense of self and recovering it time and time again. You all have influenced my life in the best way possible and only continue to challenge me to blossom into a better version of myself. I'm so lucky to have grown with all of you and to have seen you progress past your hardships. I'll always be the cheerleader in your corner, rooting for each of you as you chase after your aspirations. Thank you for being my confidants, my companions and, most importantly, for continuing to add warmth and richness to my life.

With love, always,

Udoka

Using a letter as a mentor text

'A love letter to my best friends' is, of course, a letter. But it was also written for a broader public audience: readers of *The Michigan Daily*, the newspaper in which it was published. The writer aims to fulfil two purposes – to communicate her appreciation and love for her friends, and to celebrate the power of friendship generally, encouraging her audience to recognise the value of their own friends.

The techniques and conventions used in this text thus cater to the writer's two audiences, and include the following.

- The warm, intimate tone is the sort of tone a person might use when speaking with close friends, and helps the writer to build a rapport with her broader audience.

- Lyrical and evocative language (e.g. 'a love language that speaks volumes', 'the winding road to self-discovery') contributes to an elevated mood and conveys the writer's strong love for her friends.

- Use of the second person ('you') is appropriate for the letter form, while inclusive language ('we' and 'us') evokes the bond between the writer and her first audience – her friends.

- The body of the letter is structured around specific memories of shared experiences, while the first and final paragraphs take a broader outlook, reflecting on friendship and its benefits more generally.

Draw on the mentor text

ACTIVITY 6.2

1 Choose a friend or friends to whom you would like to express your feelings in a letter. Challenge yourself to choose an unexpected recipient, thinking broadly about the concept of friendship. Possibilities include:

- someone you'd like to become closer friends with

- a pet

- a treasured soft toy or other inanimate object

- a group to which you belong, such as a sport or hobby club

- everyone in your English class

- a family member

- someone you see regularly, such as a neighbour, local barista or bus driver, with whom you value your brief interactions.

2 Make notes for your letter by profiling your chosen recipient. Note down:

- three adjectives to describe them

- the quality you most value in them

- an aspect of your friendship that you find challenging

- how your friendship began

- how your see your friendship developing in the next five years.

3 Your primary audience is the friend or friends you have chosen to write to. Now, imagine your letter is going to be published in your school newsletter under the title 'Lessons in friendship'. Thinking about this title, identify the 'big idea' you would like to convey to your secondary, wider audience: your school community.

4 Drawing on your notes and keeping in mind your title and main message, write your letter.

Writing about futures

Writing about futures might mean writing about your future, our collective future, or a very distant future. Because the future is not set in stone, this might include speculative futures that imagine a 'What if ...?' scenario, or futures that are closer to the reality we currently experience.

When writing about futures, you will need to consider whose future you are writing about. As for many of the key ideas in this chapter, your writing might be on an individual, local, national or global scale.

In your exploration of writing about futures, you will find texts such as the following.

- Dystopian narratives: where something in the future has gone wrong, usually as a result of a continuation or worsening of something in the present.

- Utopian narratives: where everything is perfect, and humanity is flourishing.

- Narratives about personal futures: where people imagine what their individual lives will be like in the near or distant future.

- Narratives about global futures: where the author presents an idea of what Earth or humanity will look like in the future.

- Science fiction: where authors explore the vast range of science-based possibilities for ourselves and possibly other inhabitants of our universe.

- Texts written in the past about an imagined future, which may or may not have been proven true.

Possible mentor texts for writing about futures

- » *After Australia* ed. Michael Mohammed Ahmad (short story anthology)
- » *Things We Didn't See Coming* by Steven Amsterdam (linked short stories)
- » 'Abundance is our future' by Peter Diamandis (TED Talk), https://www.ted.com/talks/peter_diamandis_abundance_is_our_future/transcript
- » *Op-Eds From the Future* by various authors, https://www.nytimes.com/spotlight/future-oped
- » *V For Vendetta* written by Alan Moore, illustrated by David Lloyd (graphic novel)
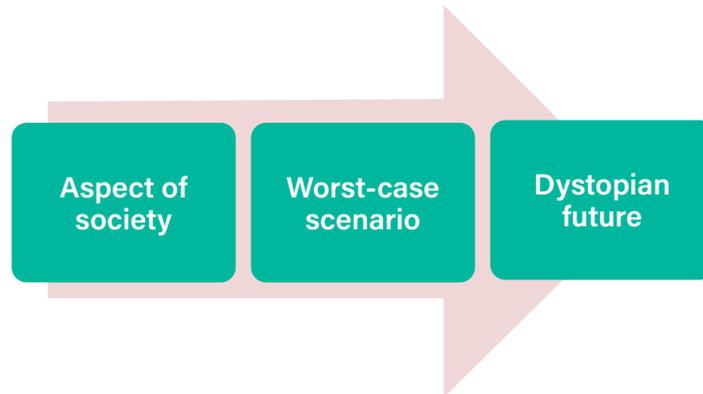
Developing ideas: extrapolating from the present

One common way authors explore the future is by extrapolating current events and imagining what would happen if things got worse, better or stayed the same. This is particularly true of dystopian fiction, where an author might look at a situation currently happening in the world and create a 'worst-case scenario'.
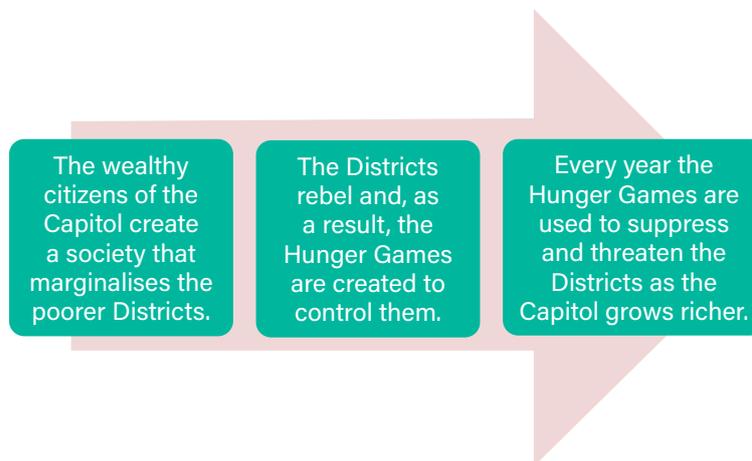
Here are some examples.

- *The Maze Runner* by James Dashner is set in a not-too-distant future in which teenagers have been transported to an elaborate stone maze filled with lethal creatures. Dashner's dystopia explores what happens when people are held against their own will, and what people will do in order to survive.

- *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell looks at the totalitarian regimes of Orwell's time (in the 1940s) and imagines what could happen if these power structures continued.

- *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins takes ideas about technology, social class and resource distribution, and extends them into the dystopian world of the Capitol and the Districts.

All of these texts follow the same pattern.

Aspect of society	Worst-case scenario	Dystopian future

For example, the premise for *The Hunger Games* could be represented like this.

The wealthy citizens of the Capitol create a society that marginalises the poorer Districts.	The Districts rebel and, as a result, the Hunger Games are created to control them.	Every year the Hunger Games are used to suppress and threaten the Districts as the Capitol grows richer.

Explore possibilities

ACTIVITY 6.3

1 Brainstorm several current real-world situations that have the potential to develop into worst-case scenarios.

2 Choose one of the situations and imagine a possible future that might result if the worst-case scenario came true. Create a diagram like the one above for *The Hunger Games*.

3 Outline a story that is set in a dystopian future, based on the worst-case scenario you selected in question 2. Make notes on how the story will begin (the exposition), the main tension or conflict, the climax and the resolution. Will you imagine a future in which the dystopian world ends and a new, fairer society takes its place? Or will the worst-case scenario remain unchanged?

Example: 'The Pedestrian'

» Text: 'The Pedestrian' (excerpts)

» Author: Ray Bradbury

» Form: short story

» Audience: American readers, 1950s

» Purpose: to express

To enter out into that silence that was the city at eight o'clock of a misty evening in November, to put your feet upon that buckling concrete walk, to step over grassy seams and make your way, hands in pockets, through the silences, that was what Mr. Leonard Mead most dearly loved to do. He would stand upon the corner of an intersection and peer down long moonlit avenues of sidewalk in four directions, deciding which way to go, but it really made no difference; he was alone in this world of A.D. 2053, or as good as alone, and with a final decision made, a path selected, he would stride off, sending patterns of frosty air before him like the smoke of a cigar.

[…]

"What is it now?" he asked the houses, noticing his wrist watch. "Eight-thirty P.M.? Time for a dozen assorted murders? A quiz? A revue? A comedian falling off the stage?"

Was that a murmur of laughter from within a moon-white house? He hesitated, but went on when nothing more happened. He stumbled over a particularly uneven section of sidewalk. The cement was vanishing under flowers and grass. In ten years of walking by night or day, for thousands of miles, he had never met another person walking, not once in all that time.

[…]

The police, of course, but what a rare, incredible thing; in a city of three million, there was only one police car left, wasn't that correct? Ever since a year ago, 2052, the election year, the force had been cut down from three cars to one. Crime was ebbing; there was no need now for the police, save for this one lone car wandering and wandering the empty streets.

[…]

"I guess you'd call me a writer."

"No profession," said the police car, as if talking to itself. The light held him fixed, like a museum specimen, needle thrust through chest.

[…]

He put his hand to the door and peered into the back seat, which was a little cell, a little black jail with bars. It smelled of riveted steel. It smelled of harsh antiseptic; it smelled too clean and hard and metallic. There was nothing soft there.

[…]

They passed one house on one street a moment later, one house in an entire city of houses that were dark, but this one particular house had all of its electric lights brightly lit, every window a loud yellow illumination, square and warm in the cool darkness.

"That's my house," said Leonard Mead.

No one answered him.

The car moved down the empty river-bed streets and off away, leaving the empty streets with the empty sidewalks, and no sound and no motion all the rest of the chill November night.

Using dystopian fiction as a mentor text

Bradbury's short story is a classic example of dystopian fiction. The author looked at trends in society in the late 1940s and early 1950s, particularly the rapidly increasing consumption of television and media, and asked: What if …? The crisis he anticipated was one of social fragmentation and increased feelings of isolation and loneliness – a crisis made explicit in his novel *Fahrenheit 451*.

Some of the techniques used in this short story that are common in dystopian fiction include:

- bleak descriptions of the environment, with 'misty' weather and 'gray phantoms' flickering in the households

- depictions of loneliness and isolation, both of the central character and the citizens of the future in general

- descriptions of dangerous technology – in this case, the televisions in people's houses have come to dominate their lives

- satire: the story mentions that 'there was no need now for the police', and after a recent election the force has been reduced to one car. This might seem like a good thing, but really Bradbury is criticising the way his society and the politicians of the time viewed crime and law enforcement.

Draw on the mentor text

ACTIVITY 6.4

1 Imagine a society in which a negative aspect of today's world is much worse. Describe the crisis that results. (It doesn't need to be set in the future, though it can be.)

2 Plan a dystopian short story about this crisis. Outline a clear beginning, middle and end. Refer to the excerpts from 'The Pedestrian' and the section on short stories in Chapter 10 (pages 117–20) for ideas that will help you to structure your story.

3 Brainstorm the language you will use to describe your dystopian world: aim for language that is bleak, depressing or unsettling.

4 Write a draft of your short story.

Writing about food

Writing about food is likely to involve appeals to all the senses: not only the obvious ones of taste, smell and sight, but also those of touch (such as the downy skin of a peach) and hearing (such as the sizzle of meat in a pan). But it will also involve exploration of the ways in which food can evoke emotions and memories; its associations with particular places, times and significant events; and its capacity to unite (and possibly divide) people.

Food is closely connected with health, raising questions about access not only to nutritious food but to accurate information about diet. You might also consider the role of hunger: as an appetite stimulant, as a form of suffering, as a social issue.

In your exploration of food, you will come across texts that include:

- personal stories about people's individual relationships with and experiences of food, both positive and negative

- nonfiction accounts of the different meanings and rituals associated with certain foods in different places, times and contexts

- vivid descriptions of food in terms of both its physical properties (taste, smell etc.) and the emotions it evokes

- descriptions of food as a means of communication.

Possible mentor texts for writing about food

- » *Animal, Vegetable, Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver (memoir)
- » 'My 14-Hour Search for the End of TGI Friday's Endless Appetizers' by Caity Weaver (article), https://www.gawkerarchives.com/my-14-hour-search-for-the-end-of-tgi-fridays-endless-ap-1606122925
- » 'Mrs Sen's' by Jhumpa Lahiri (short story)
- » 'A Song of Tomatoes to My Grandmother' by Aimee Nezhukumatathil (essay), https://electricliterature.com/a-song-of-tomatoes/
- » 'Lamb to the Slaughter' by Roald Dahl (short story)

Developing ideas: communicating through food

Exploring writing about food means making connections between food as a physical object and its role in communicating emotions and ideas. Sometimes food can be a means of expressing emotions that people might find difficult to put into words – for example, love, gratitude or sympathy. Consider, for instance, the habit of providing bereaved people with meals, or giving chocolates to say thank you.

The association of particular foods with specific occasions is also a kind of language. For example, candy canes immediately conjure up Christmas, while pumpkins are suggestive of Halloween. In Australia, barbecued sausages have even been linked to democracy, due to the popularity of the sausage sizzle at polling booths during elections. Writers can make use of these sorts of associations by using certain foods as symbols or shorthand for a range of ideas.

Explore the meanings of foods

1 Certain foods evoke particular associations that may be culturally specific.

a For each of the food items below, brainstorm as many associations as you can think of. An example has been done for you.

- apples – *health, doctors, gift for teacher, worm, rotten apples, Adam and Eve, orchard, cider, technology, nature, harvest*
- milk
- bread
- chocolate
- wine

b In a small group, discuss why these particular foods might be so evocative.

GROUP

2 There are many well-known sayings related to food.

a For each of the common examples below, write its meaning in your own words. Then suggest a possible way of exploring this idea in an original text. An example has been done for you.

Saying	Your understanding of the saying	Text idea
An apple a day keeps the doctor away.	*Eating healthily helps to prevent illness.*	*An email from a medical practice encouraging clients to make small changes to their diet to improve their wellbeing*
Hunger is the best sauce.		
You catch more flies with honey than with vinegar.		
You are what you eat.		
Too many cooks spoil the broth.		
Enough is as good as a feast.		

b Create your own saying that expresses an original idea about food, and outline a possible text you could write that explores this idea.

Example: 'Native foods: bush lollies, medicinal source, climate-change tool'

» Text: 'Native foods: bush lollies, medicinal source, climate-change tool' (excerpt)
» Author: podcast hosted by Lee Tran Lam; guest speaker is Mindy Woods
» Form: podcast script
» Audience: educated adult audience
» Purpose: to explain, to argue

Lee Tran Lam: From honey myrtle to bush tomatoes, water ribbons and lime berries, Australia's native ingredients convey the diversity of this land. 65,000-year-old grindstones found in a Kakadu rock shelter reflect the long, rich history of First Nations foods here and even Captain Cook used Warrigal greens to save crews from scurvy. But witchetty grubs appear in Sweden's Disgusting Food Museum and native ingredients are largely absent from supermarkets, so are First Nations foods misunderstood and unfairly overlooked?

I'm Lee Tran Lam and you're listening to *Should You Really Eat That*? This show explores the cultural, social and nutritional confusion over the staples in our diet.

Should you embrace olive oil, native ingredients and chocolate? Or skip the butter, salt and soy? It can be bewildering keeping up with what's quote unquote good for you and so many different beliefs shape what we consume – what's fact and what's fashion and whose perspective is being overlooked? Untangling all of this can be tricky, which is why I started this podcast!

Today's episode is on native foods.

Whether you call them traditional foods, native ingredients, bush tucker or something else, what's harvested here is unique. Australia's a "megadiverse" country, home to around 700,000 species. Many are nutritious and multifunctional wonders. Paperbark can act as natural Band-Aids and cooking foil, while pepperberry has more antioxidants than blueberries. For millennia, Indigenous science ensured sustainable supplies of eels, and Australia's home to the world's first bakers, says *Dark Emu* author Bruce Pascoe. Today, wattleseed and lemon myrtle might flavour menus, but finger lime, saltbush and other Indigenous ingredients have yet to become supermarket staples like tofu and hummus. Could greater acceptance of traditional foods pay off in widespread ways?

Mindy Woods: Jingella Jingy wallah nyari Mindy Bundjalung dubay Widjabul Nyangbal. Hello, welcome. My name is Mindy Woods. I'm a proud Bundjalung woman, native food chef, restaurateur and owner of Karkalla Byron Bay. I'm also the author of *Karkalla at Home: Native Foods and Everyday Recipes for Connecting to Country*.

I was really lucky as a child. I was actually part of an Air Force family so my dad was posted around Australia and abroad.

And every Christmas, every Easter, we would travel back home to Bundjalung Country where my beautiful nan, Margie Felton, was. And that's where I first connected with native food. Nan would take us out on Country, down to the beautiful beaches around Byron Bay. We'd be harvesting pipis, getting our yugaries. We would be out cracking oysters from the rock shelves.

…

I'm very fortunate to have those experiences, you know, as a child because I didn't realise how much it would direct and create passion around my future as a chef and as someone that really wants to advocate for native food, you know, in our beautiful country.

Using a podcast script as a mentor text

The podcast script above is from an episode of the SBS podcast series *Should You Really Eat That?*', hosted by food writer Lee Tran Lam. The podcast focuses on exploring social messaging around food and diet, and includes the perspectives of various chefs, nutritionists and social commentators.

The techniques and conventions used in this podcast segment include the following.

- The story is introduced by the podcast host, who presents background information about the topic of native foods.

- The guest speaker reflects on her own experiences with native foods, and establishes her expertise in the area with reference to her book.

- The segment includes facts and statistics that support the argument being presented: that Australian native foods are currently undervalued.

- Sentences and paragraphs are relatively short, and overly complex language or sentence structures are avoided, appropriate to a text intended to be listened to.

Draw on the mentor text

ACTIVITY 6.6

1 Think about a situation, event or time in your life, or in the life of someone you know, when food played a pivotal role. Perhaps it was used to communicate something that words could not. Identify the three main points in the story: the beginning, the climax or turning point, and the ending.

2 Tell the story to a friend, or just say it aloud. Give yourself a time limit of three minutes.

3 Now, turn the story into a script for a podcast. Write a short introduction that includes the name of the podcast and the theme of the particular episode.

4 Read your script aloud, paying close attention to how it sounds. Then edit it to improve the listener experience by shortening any overlong sentences, tightening your expression and replacing any vague or repetitive vocabulary with more precise and vivid choices.

Writing about nature

Writing about nature means exploring the natural world and our relationship with it. Nature can be both beautiful and destructive; it can provide joy and heartache. Humans have a complex relationship with nature, sometimes appreciating the natural world, and at other times causing it harm.

In exploring writing about nature, you will read, view and hear texts that address issues and topics such as:

- sources of natural beauty, from landscapes to individual plants and animals
- the destructive force of nature, such as storms and droughts
- the impact of human activity on nature
- why humans need the natural world.

Possible mentor texts for writing about nature

- » *Salt* by Bruce Pascoe (stories and essays)
- » *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens (novel)
- » William Wordsworth's poetry
- » 'Beneath Our Feet' by Deborah Wardle (essay), https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/content/dam/tnc/nature/en/documents/australia/Beneath-our-feet_Deborah-Wardle.pdf
- » 'On the margins of the good swamp' by Sue Castrique (essay), https://www.griffithreview.com/articles/on-the-margins-of-the-good-swamp/
- » *Nausicaä of the Valley of the Wind* by Hayao Miyazaki (manga)
- » *The World of Edena* by Jean Giraud, also known as Mœbius (graphic novel)

Developing ideas: reflecting on the sublime

When exploring writing about nature you may come across the term **sublime**. This concept from the Romantic era encompasses the powerful emotions that come from observing the natural world. The sublime balances sometimes contradictory emotions: wonder, astonishment and awe are entwined with feelings of being overwhelmed or even terrified.

One way to approach your writing about nature is to think of times when you have experienced complex emotions in response to the natural world.

The Romantics

The Romantic movement in literature and the arts spanned from the late 1700s to the mid 1800s and was popular across much of Europe and North America. Romantic authors included John Keats, William Wordsworth, Percy Bysshe Shelley and Mary Shelley. The Romantics wrote a great deal about nature and the power of the natural world.

Explore the sublime

ACTIVITY 6.7

1 Draw a circle in the centre of a piece of paper or Word document. In the circle, write down a natural event or occurrence you are familiar with. On the left side of the circle, identify positive emotions you have about this event, such as amazement or wonder. On the right, identify negative emotions such as fear.

2 Using the words from both sides of the page, write a short reflective piece describing how the natural event or occurrence made you feel, and why.

Example: *Carpentaria*

» Text: *Carpentaria* (extract)

» Author: Alexis Wright

» Form: novel

» Audience: readers of literary works, particularly Australian readers

» Purpose: to express

> The inside knowledge about the river and coastal region is the Aboriginal Law handed down through the ages since time began. Otherwise, how would one know where to look for the hidden underwater courses in the vast flooding mud plains, full of serpents and fish in the monsoon season? Can someone who did not grow up in a place that is sometimes under water, sometimes bone-dry, know when the trade winds blowing off the southern and northern hemispheres will merge in summer? Know the moment of climactic change better than they know themselves? Who fishes in the yellow-coloured monsoonal runoff from the drainages, with sheets of deep water pouring into the wide rivers swollen over their banks, filling vast plains with floodwaters? The cyclones linger and regroup, the rain never stops pouring, but the fat fish are abundant.

Using a novel extract as a mentor text

Of course, you will not have the time to write a novel yourself for this part of the course. However, studying an extract from a novel can allow you to explore many literary techniques you might use in your own writing, such as the following, used by Wright in this extract:

- repetition of words and phrases – here, repeated words include 'know' and 'who'

- repetition in terms of structure – Wright's paragraph is built around a series of rhetorical questions

- the personification of nature – the reference to the way the cyclones 'linger and regroup' suggests deliberate actions

- connections between the natural world and broader ideas – here, the idea of belonging to and having custodianship of the land, as well as connections between place and culture.

Draw on the mentor text

ACTIVITY 6.8

1 Choose a natural occurrence to base your piece on, and decide on a form (e.g. short story, article, reflection).

2 Brainstorm a list of descriptive words around your natural occurrence, including colours, precise adjectives and strong verbs.

3 Add figurative language such as metaphors or personification to your brainstorm.

4 Incorporate your descriptive and figurative language into a written piece about nature.

Writing about heroes

What is a hero? The answer is likely to depend on many factors: individual values, societal values, the requirements of a particular situation or time. Heroes can be real people or they can be characters in fiction or film. Some might say that everyone is capable of heroism in some way, in certain situations.

In exploring writing about heroes, you will come across texts that deal with issues such as:

- hero worship of real individuals in the public eye (e.g. sportspeople, celebrities, influencers)

- how heroes emerge in times of crisis (e.g. during wars, natural disasters and other dangerous situations)

- examples of bravery or self-sacrifice (e.g. people who give their time, money or even their lives to help others)

- personal heroes (e.g. friends, relatives or teachers whom we might look up to and wish to emulate).

> **Possible mentor texts for writing about heroes**
>
> » 'My teacher and I kept this secret for decades: she saved my life' by Louis Wang (reflective essay), https://www.theage.com.au/lifestyle/life-and-relationships/my-teacher-and-i-kept-this-secret-for-decades-she-saved-my-life-20241211-p5kxkh.html?dicbo=v2-87YXA9Q
>
> » *The Book Thief* by Markus Zusak (novel)
>
> » 'The Ravine' by Graham Salisbury (short story)
>
> » *The Guardian*'s 'My Hero' series (articles in which literary figures describe the writers who inspired them), https://www.theguardian.com/books/series/my-hero
>
> » 'Trash cart superheroes' by Mundano (speech), https://www.ted.com/talks/mundano_trash_cart_superheroes
>
> » *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank (diary)
>
> » *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* by Joseph Campbell (nonfiction)

Developing ideas: what makes a hero?

Thinking about the qualities that we admire in our heroes is a good starting point for exploring this key idea. You might consider what you as an individual value, as well as what your society more broadly celebrates as heroism. Think carefully about what these qualities really mean. For example, courage is an attribute usually associated with heroes, but this concept can be questioned and examined. What exactly is courage? Does it have to involve risking one's physical safety? Are there situations when it is braver *not* to act than to take action?

Consider, too, whether all those we might consider heroes are really deserving of the term. Do we as a society sometimes celebrate qualities that are less than desirable? For example, are social media influencers heroes? Why or why not? Are there certain qualities that might lead to heroic actions in certain situations, such as a physical emergency, but be undesirable in other contexts – for example, a tendency to act without considering the consequences?
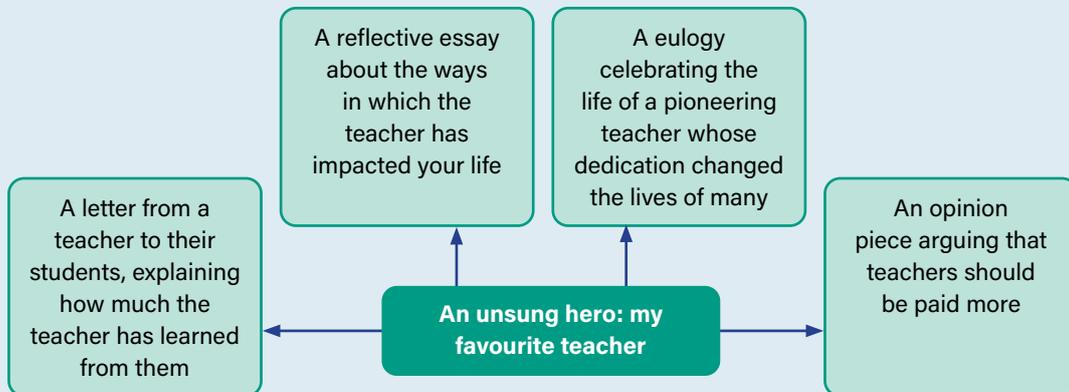
Explore what makes a hero

ACTIVITY 6.9

1 Identify a hero, real or fictitious, for each of the following categories. For each person you identify, write a sentence explaining why you selected them. Your sentence should refer to one or more of their personal qualities.

A literary hero	A sporting hero	A hero in a time of crisis	An unsung hero	A flawed hero	An undeserving hero

2 Select one of the heroes you identified in question 1. Brainstorm ways in which you could incorporate their story into a written piece. For example, you might write a memoir or biography to explain and reflect on their life and experiences. Or you might write a persuasive text arguing why the qualities your hero exhibits are those we should (or should not) value most as a society. Create a diagram like the one below to show your ideas.

A reflective essay about the ways in which the teacher has impacted your life

A eulogy celebrating the life of a pioneering teacher whose dedication changed the lives of many

A letter from a teacher to their students, explaining how much the teacher has learned from them

An opinion piece arguing that teachers should be paid more

An unsung hero: my favourite teacher

Example: 'Like Many a Hero, Flaco the Owl Made His Choice'

» Text: 'Like Many a Hero, Flaco the Owl Made His Choice' (excerpt)
» Author: Dr Carl Safina
» Form: essay / creative nonfiction
» Audience: readers of *The New York Times*, global, online
» Purpose: to express and argue

Like Many a Hero, Flaco the Owl Made His Choice

By Carl Safina

Dr. Safina is an ecologist at the State University of New York at Stony Brook.

Flaco the owl is gone, but his life had all the elements of a classic hero's story, not soon forgotten.

Born in captivity, he lived a dozen years in a comfortable cage in the Central Park Zoo where little happened and less was needed. His was a safe existence. But it was also a life without agency. Then, a little over a year ago, someone released him.

On Friday, when he died of acute traumatic injury, perhaps from a collision with a Manhattan apartment building's glass windows, his death offered us a chance to reckon with the question at the heart of many a hero's journey: Can we put a price on freedom? Flaco's liberation from his comfortable confinement came at a cost — he spent the final year of his life free, but threatened from all sides by a booming city. Was it worth it?

Almost from the moment he was released, Flaco became a symbol of hope for many of the people who followed his story and recognized parts of themselves in him. Some saw him as the embodiment of the American dream, an outsider who had come to Manhattan and made a life for himself here, like millions of others who arrived penniless and unconnected in their quest for freedom. Others saw him as a poignant reminder that you can find happiness even if you're alone (as the only free-living Eurasian eagle-owl in the Western Hemisphere, he had no chance of ever finding a wild mate).

[…]

But Flaco never looked back. Though the animal literature is peppered with stories of animals — usually pets — who suffer hardships and return home, Flaco never retreated to the zoo. Perhaps freedom itself was the home he'd discovered.

And though we feared for him, his new life thrilled us.

How many of us, our circumstances familiar and safe, are too timid to seek our more fully realized selves? How many of us, viewing our confinements as nothing out of the ordinary, have long stopped wondering what our wings are for? In one of his most surreally profound moments, Flaco turned the tables on all of us — photographed staring into the playwright Nan Knighton's apartment through a window grate, as if declaring his human viewers the captives, behind bars we built for ourselves.

Have we not all yearned for a life beyond the scope of the one we lead? Flaco showed that our yearning is not misplaced, that we were not merely projecting. His choice reaffirmed a truth: that given a chance, living things choose agency and freedom of movement.

[…]

Humans and owls last shared a common ancestor several hundred million years ago, but a preference to rediscover who we were born to be seems to be a truth universally shared. William Butler Yeats wrote in his poem "The Second Coming" of the falcon "turning and turning in the widening gyre," oblivious to the calls of the earthbound falconer. In Homer's "The Iliad," Achilles declines a long and peaceful life for one that is glorious and short. Ridley Scott's film "Blade Runner" tells us that the life that burns twice as bright burns half as long. Even those of us who are not mythic heroes confront the trade-off and make our choices.

In life, Flaco's single year of freedom proved vastly more thrilling and resonant to us than his anonymous years of cage-bound safety, proving that freedom is worth the cost, even when it comes bundled with danger.

Using creative nonfiction as a mentor text

Dr Safina's article is an example of creative nonfiction, a form very common in online articles and blogs. Safina blends elements of nonfiction, such as facts and research, with vivid storytelling techniques.

Here are some of the techniques used in Safina's article.

- Lyrical language: to present some of the 'big', philosophical ideas he is exploring, Safina uses elevated language such as 'poignant reminder', 'truth universally shared' and 'thrilling and resonant'.

- Rhetorical questions: to encourage the reader to reflect on these big ideas, Safina poses questions with implied answers, e.g. 'How many of us … are too timid to seek our more fully realized selves?' and 'Have we not all yearned for a life beyond the scope of the one we lead?'

- Literary and film references, e.g. to Yeats, Homer and Scott: these examples support Safina's thesis that people must choose between a life of risk and glory, and one of safety and comparative dullness.

- Inclusive language ('we', 'us', 'our') suggests that the author's musings are common to all people.

Tributes to Flaco the owl at a makeshift memorial in Central Park, New York / Shutterstock

Draw on the mentor text

1 Brainstorm examples of unusual heroes that you could write about, and select one. Identify the main lesson to be learned or value endorsed by your hero's choices and actions.

2 Source facts, statistics, expert opinions and/or quotes to support your arguments, as Safina does by drawing on his experience and knowledge as an ecologist and by including references to history and literature. Select appropriate evidence to support your interpretation of the positive example set by your hero.

3 Write a creative nonfiction piece in the style of Dr Carl Safina.

AUDIENCE

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Identifying your audience
- Understanding your audience
- Communicating with your audience

The audience refers to anyone viewing, reading or listening to a text. Every single text – a movie, a television show, a novel, a play, a podcast or even a TikTok – is created with a specific audience in mind. Although your teacher or assessor will read your work, they will assume the role of *your* chosen audience. For example, if your writing is intended to be read by a young adult audience, your teacher or assessor will look at it through the eyes of this demographic. You should have a strong understanding of your intended audience so you can write appropriately and effectively for that group.

Identifying your audience

The first step on your crafting texts journey is to identify your audience. Who are you going to be writing for or speaking to? This might be one person (in a letter or email) or it could be millions (in a blog or social media post). Once you have a good idea of who will be reading or listening to your work, you can then fine-tune your writing.

Identify your audience

Begin to identify your audience by answering the following questions.

1 What are you writing about?

2 Who would be interested in this topic?

3 Is there more than one audience who might be interested in this?

4 What other texts exist that are like my idea? Who are their audiences?

Understanding your audience

Once you have decided who you will be writing for, you need to think about your audience's particular needs and interests. What do they like and what do they dislike? What motivates them and makes them interested? What might prevent them from engaging with your text? One way to approach this is to put yourself in their shoes and create a stereotype – a simplified idea – of who your audience is.

For example, if you are going to write a text that farmers might read, think about what a typical farmer would care about. They would probably care about the impact of weather; they probably won't care that an inner-city pub is the new hot spot. These are just generalisations, but making generalisations is a useful first step in understanding your audience.

Here is another example. Let's assume that you are going to craft a text for an audience of young children. What are some things that young children like in books? You might stereotype this audience as enjoying humour, short sentences, plenty of illustrations, easy-to-identify characters and a simple plot (e.g. goodies versus baddies).

Stereotype your audience

Draw and complete the mind maps for the audiences below. Remember, you are only generalising at this stage – just getting the big ideas down.

Refining your understanding of your audience

When crafting your texts, it won't be enough to just say your audience is 'everyone' or 'all Australians'. You will need to refine your idea of who you are writing for.

In other words, you need to consider the demographic of your intended audience. Demographic doesn't just mean 'age'; it also takes into account, for instance, employment, education, gender, religion and ethnicity. Take the broad demographic of adults aged between eighteen and twenty-five. Some will have full-time jobs; others are at university or TAFE. The diagram below shows just some of the different concerns that these young adults might have.

Because of differences such as these, the interests of a broad demographic can vary widely. That affects how you will reach a particular group with your text. If you were writing a persuasive text for young adults who work, you probably wouldn't include statistics about attending university lectures. If you were appealing to people who go to university, you might focus on the importance of time management and meeting assignment deadlines.

ACTIVITY 7.3

Refine your understanding of audience

Draw and complete flow charts for the two demographics below. You can add as many extra boxes as you need. Some suggestions have been included to get you started.

Now that you've seen how to unpack these demographics, consider how you might refine your understanding of *your* chosen audience. This may involve some research on your part. For example, if you are going to address the Australian Government, which government department would be interested in your text? Does that department have a stake in this issue? Who is the minister? If you ask yourself these and similar questions as you're working, you'll be able to adapt your writing to suit your audience's needs and interests.
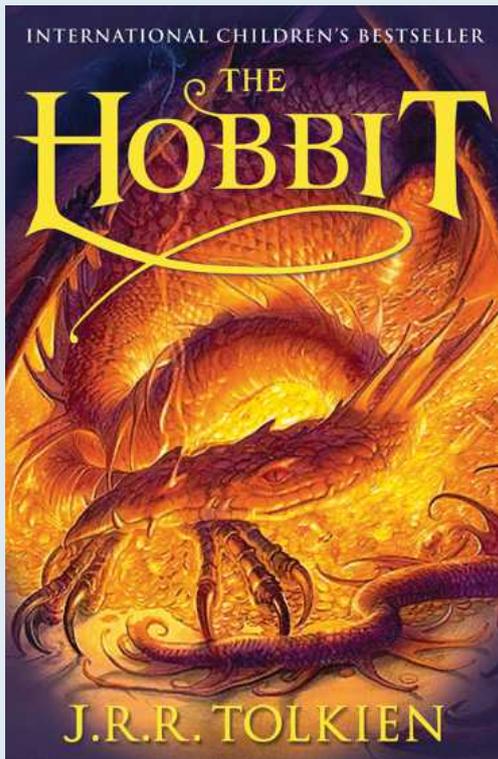
Communicating with your audience

The real importance of understanding your audience is that you can craft your language choices and subject matter for those particular readers or listeners. Take all the information you have found out about your audience and apply it to your writing. When you are studying your mentor texts, think about how their creators have used language and structure in a way that best matches the texts with their intended audiences.

ACTIVITY 7.4

Examine the link between visual language and audience

Language choice isn't just relevant to written language; it's also about visual language. Look at the covers of the two editions of JRR Tolkien's *The Hobbit* on the next page. One is aimed at teenage or young adult readers and the other is aimed at adults. The publishers have used different covers to appeal to these two audiences.

1 What are your initial impressions of each cover? What do you see, think and wonder about for each one? Create and complete the following table.

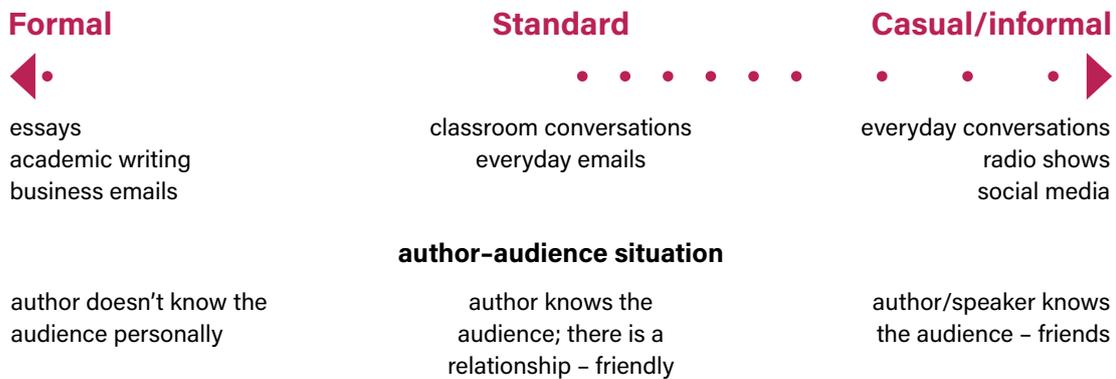|	**See** *What do you see?*	**Think** *What do you think it means?*	**Wonder** *Do you have any questions?*
Young adult edition			
Adult edition			

2 How does each cover appeal to the intended audience?

Language register

When you are crafting your text, it is important to write in the appropriate register for your audience. This is a textbook so uses mostly formal or standard English. If you were communicating the same information by text message to a friend, you'd likely use more casual language, abbreviations and perhaps non-standard grammar or spelling. These are all examples of using a particular **language register**.

The diagram below shows some common language registers with appropriate text types and a description of the author–audience situation or relationship. Notice that the closer the author and the audience are, the more casual the language choices are likely to be. Also notice that radio shows are listed as examples in which the author/speaker is 'friends' with the audience – this is the effect the speaker wants to convey rather than their actual relationship. They don't know the audience, but they want the audience to feel as if they are friends.

Formal	Standard	Casual/informal
essays	classroom conversations	everyday conversations
academic writing	everyday emails	radio shows
business emails		social media

author–audience situation

author doesn't know the audience personally	author knows the audience; there is a relationship – friendly	author/speaker knows the audience – friends

Below are examples of language choices in the three different registers.

Formal	Standard	Casual/informal
Please forward any and all research material as soon as possible.	Can you send me all the research, please?	Hi, can I get that research now? Thanks.
It was pleasing to see the teachers and students working together so well today.	It was nice to see the teachers and students getting along today.	Good vibes at school today.

Put register into action

ACTIVITY 7.5

For each of the following three scenarios, write statements in formal, standard and casual registers, and identify an appropriate audience for each statement.

1 Tell someone that Australia has won a medal in the Olympics.

2 Tell someone that the house next door has been broken into.

3 Tell someone that the weather is extreme.

Present your answers in tables like the one below.

Register for scenario 1	Audience	Statement
Formal		
Standard		
Casual/informal		

CONTEXT

IN THIS CHAPTER

› Understanding context
› Focusing on the author's context

In this area of study, you will need to consider the context your mentor texts were written in, and how that context shaped the author's use of structure and language as well as the ideas they explore. In addition, you will need to take your own context into account as you craft texts for an intended audience and purpose.
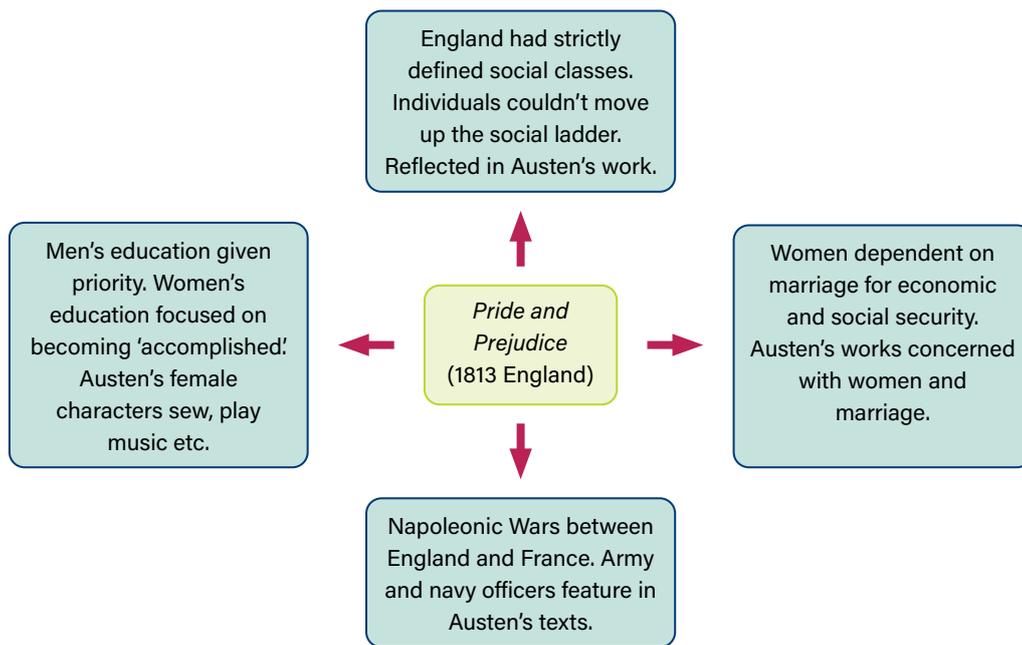
Understanding context

All texts are products of their time. Compare the action films of the 1980s with the latest blockbuster: how do those special effects hold up? Compare some of the stand-up comedians of the 1990s with those of today: are the jokes still funny, or would some now be considered offensive? These different responses result from the different context in which these texts were created, compared to the context in which we are 'reading' them. (These contexts are known as the context of production and the context of reception – see pages 12–13 for further explanations and examples.)

Similarly, those who lived through the COVID-19 pandemic will interpret and respond to texts written about this event in light of their own experiences. A shared understanding will be operating between the author, the text and the reader because of the social, historical and cultural contexts that they all share. Social and cultural practices such as Zoom meetings, working from home, mask wearing, social distancing and QR code check-ins all became commonplace over a short period of time. Moreover, these and other phrases have become part of everyday language. But what of future readers who come across literature set in this time? How will they react? Their responses will be shaped by their own contexts – such pandemics might become commonplace, or perhaps (due to effective vaccines, say) future readers might not have personally experienced one.

In other words, to understand a text thoroughly we need to know something about its social, historical and cultural contexts. This is particularly true when the text was created in a different historical context from our own, as language, social conventions and customs all change dramatically over time. A text created many years ago can now seem outdated or even strange. Placed in its correct context of time and place, however, the text begins to make more sense. Here is a context map for Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* as an example.

Context definitions

» Social contexts relate to social conventions and expectations.

» Historical contexts relate to the key events and discoveries of the time.

» Cultural contexts relate to customs, traditions and beliefs.

England had strictly defined social classes. Individuals couldn't move up the social ladder. Reflected in Austen's work.

Men's education given priority. Women's education focused on becoming 'accomplished'. Austen's female characters sew, play music etc.

Pride and Prejudice (1813 England)

Women dependent on marriage for economic and social security. Austen's works concerned with women and marriage.

Napoleonic Wars between England and France. Army and navy officers feature in Austen's texts.

Jane Austen was a keen observer of her society, and her novels are generally concerned with intelligent women who are marginalised to some degree. This isn't simply a product of Austen's imagination; it's a reflection of the society she lived in when she was writing.

Identify contexts

ACTIVITY 8.1

Answer the following questions to improve your understanding of the context of one (or more) of your mentor texts.

1 Research the period in which the text was created. Draw up a table of details such as key events, political leaders, social attitudes, types of work and entertainment, and the dominant issues of the time.

2 Identify the key events and circumstances that the author has drawn on or refers to in the text.

3 Create a context map for your mentor text, like the one for *Pride and Prejudice* above.

4 How do these events and circumstances help to shape the text's meaning? For example, is information presented in a certain way to influence your responses to characters and situations? Use evidence from the text to support your answer.

Focusing on the author's context

You've probably heard the old saying 'write what you know'. That's essentially what authors do; they draw on their experiences to give their writing credibility and conviction. While this may not be overt in a text, the author's personal context is always present.

Life experiences

An author's work will generally reflect their life experiences, and the values, attitudes and beliefs they have developed over the course of their life.

The table below shows some of the ways in which two authors' life experiences and personal views are evident in their work.

Author	Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie
Texts	e.g. *The Thing Around Your Neck* (2009), *Notes on Grief* (2021), *Dream Count* (2025)
Life experiences, views and interests	• Adichie was born and raised in Nigeria, and moved to the United States at the age of nineteen. • She is interested in the African diaspora and cultural differences.
How her experiences are reflected in her work	• A number of her works address issues related to race, identity and belonging. • She has written texts about feminism, power and relationships.

Author	Robbie Arnott
Texts	e.g. *Flames* (2018), *The Rain Heron* (2020), *Dusk* (2024)
Life experiences, views and interests	• Arnott grew up in Tasmania. • He is fascinated by Tasmanian landscapes.
How his experiences are reflected in his work	• Arnott's novels are set in Tasmania or remote landscapes reflective of Tasmania. • His novels are concerned with relationships between people and the natural world.

Scan the code or click here to watch an interview with Robbie Arnott in which he discusses different kinds of contexts for his novel *The Rain Heron*.
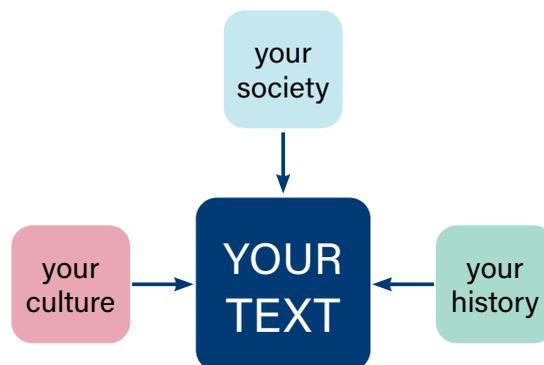
Research contexts

1 Research each of the authors on the previous page and complete a table for each that shows key elements of their social, historical and cultural contexts. (See page 10 for more explanation of these three types of contexts.)

2 Research the authors of your three mentor texts and create tables like the ones on the previous page for Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and Robbie Arnott.

3 In a small group, discuss your findings from question 2. How does knowing about the authors' contexts affect your readings of their texts?

GROUP

Your experiences

As you craft a text for a specific audience and purpose, you will inevitably be influenced by your own background – your experiences and the attitudes and values you have developed. The novelists discussed on the previous page have written imaginative texts to express ideas and have woven in their personal experiences and views; they have also been influenced by broader social and cultural factors, such as widely held concerns about climate change. While their texts are entertaining, there is also a message at the texts' core.

This is something that you can do with your text. By exploring your personal experiences, you can weave in a setting, a character or a message that is important to you. Ultimately, you are seeking to create a relationship with your reader, and drawing on your experiences, values and beliefs can lead to more authentic and meaningful communication.

Research your own context

ACTIVITY 8.3

GROUP

1 In pairs or small groups, create a mind map that explores how you are affected by your social, historical and cultural contexts. Base your diagram on the one above. Here are some questions that may help you.

a What's happening around me? Am I living through big events? Are they local, national or global?

b What is considered acceptable behaviour? What is not considered acceptable?

c How do people communicate with each other?

d How do people access information?

2 How can knowing and understanding your own context help you to craft your text? For each of the four purposes below, write a summary of an idea for a text, and identify one aspect of your context that will influence your writing. (See Chapter 9 for explanations of these four purposes.)

Purpose	Text idea	Aspect of your context
Express		
Explain		
Reflect		
Argue		

Your mode and medium

Another important part of your context is the mode you are creating your text in, and the site or medium in which it will be produced. In this area of study the emphasis is on the written mode, but you also need to think about how your words will ultimately reach your reader. If you are writing the script for a podcast, for instance, your intention will be for it to be read aloud, recorded and then downloaded by the listener. (Their context of reception, in turn, might include them going for a walk, or driving somewhere, while they listen to the podcast.) If you are writing a blog post, then the blog website, which is likely to be highly visual and interactive, forms part of the context for that post.

When thinking about context in this way you will also be thinking about your audience, and appropriate language choices. For instance, language in a newspaper feature article for a wide readership will need to be accessible and fairly formal; in contrast, language in a personal letter for a private reader can be more informal and may include words and references only you and your reader will understand.

Mode, medium and form

» The **mode** is the process of communication: writing, speaking, reading, listening and viewing.

» The **medium** is the channel of communication, e.g. a novel could be produced in print or as an ebook; a feature film could be screened in a cinema or streamed to your television.

» The **form** of a text is its type or genre; novels, plays, poems, letters, podcasts and blog posts are all forms of texts.

Consider your mode and medium

ACTIVITY 8.4

Answer these questions to better understand the context of one of your created texts.

1 What is the form of your text?

2 Which mode or modes (written or spoken) are you using?

3 What medium will it use (e.g. will it be published on a website or in a print newspaper)? Note that you might not actually publish your text or produce it in its final form, but you need to imagine where it *could* be published.

4 How are you shaping your text for this mode and medium? Think about your language choices, the structure of the text and your use of the typical features of the form you are writing in.

CHAPTER 09

PURPOSE

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Understanding purpose
- Crafting texts to express
- Crafting texts to explain
- Crafting texts to reflect
- Crafting texts to argue

There are many reasons why people write. Writers have at least one specific purpose they hope to achieve with their work; they select each aspect of their writing according to this purpose. This chapter discusses four main purposes that writing can have. These are not completely distinct, and can overlap in various ways. When you're crafting your texts for this area of study, keep in mind why you're writing, and ensure your choices of vocabulary, structure and language features are always helping you to achieve your purpose.

Understanding purpose

The purpose of a piece of writing is its intent: what the author wanted to achieve. All writing has a purpose – even personal, reflective writing. For example, diary writing might have the purpose of putting thoughts and feelings down on paper, expressing strong emotions or recording memories.

Writing is not always personal, of course, and the purpose of your writing might be related to your audience. You may wish to make your reader feel a strong emotion, such as joy, sadness, guilt or fear. Or you may want your reader to take action by doing something, such as buying a product, joining a club or signing a petition.

Your purpose will inform the vocabulary, structures and language features you use. For example, if you're writing to express ideas and emotions, you probably won't fill your text with numerous facts and figures – your audience could become bored. On the other hand, if you're intending to argue that your point of view on an issue is the correct one, then facts and figures are important kinds of evidence to use in support of your argument.

Scan the code or click here for a video overview of audience and purpose.
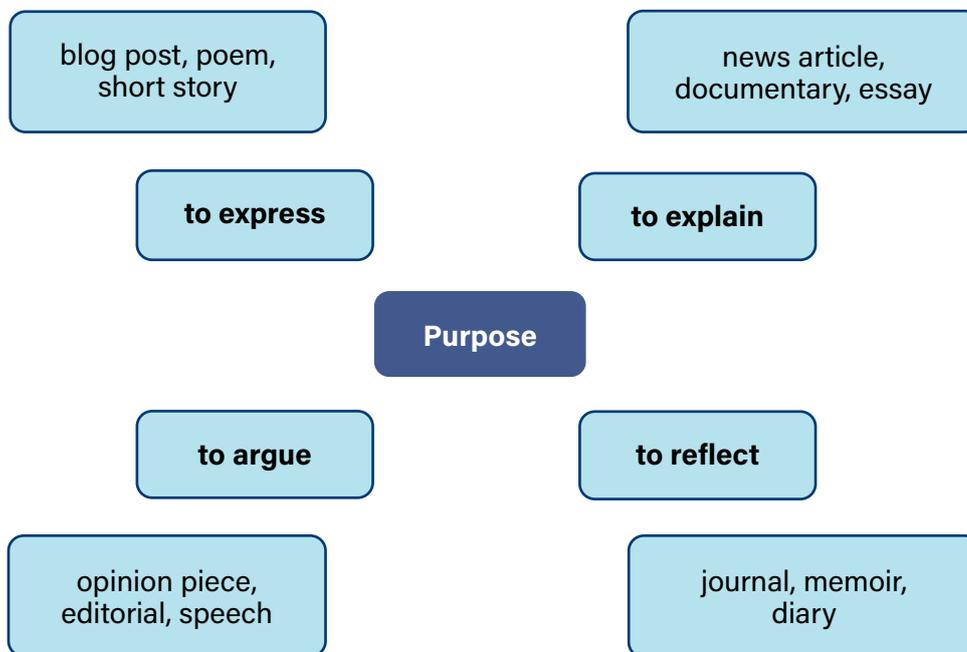
The style and language register you use will be connected to your purpose. Your language when you are writing to explain is likely to be more formal and measured than when you are writing to express; your tone in a piece of reflective writing is likely to differ from your tone in a persuasive piece.

The diagram below summarises the four purposes discussed in this chapter, and gives a few typical text types for each purpose. Note, however, that many text types can be used for different purposes: an essay, for example, can be used to reflect, to explain or to argue.

It is also common for a text to have more than one purpose. A documentary, for example, might *explain* various aspects of a controversial issue or a challenging situation, and also *argue* the case for a particular course of action.

> **Tone and style**
> » The **tone** is the mood or feeling being expressed.
> » The **style** of a text is the way it is written, e.g. plain, poetic, colourful.
> » The language **register**, an aspect of style, is the level of formality, from formal to informal or colloquial.

```
blog post, poem,          news article,
short story               documentary, essay

   to express                to explain

              Purpose

   to argue                  to reflect

opinion piece,            journal, memoir,
editorial, speech         diary
```

Crafting texts to express

Many of the texts you encounter in your everyday life are intended to explore and share ideas, experiences and emotions. The television shows and movies you watch, the novels you read and the social media posts you interact with are all expressing their creators' view of some aspect of the world and human nature. They often have the related purpose of providing entertainment – they are crafted with the intent to amuse and delight, to arouse emotions and sympathies, or to appeal to fantasy and imagination.

When writing to express, your goal is to keep your audience interested and engaged in the story you are telling. An effective short story, for instance, might feature a well-structured plot, inventive characterisation and sharp, realistic dialogue. A novel may employ a cliff-hanger at the end of a chapter or weave humour into a story that also has moments of tension and sadness.

To make your writing to express as compelling and interesting as possible, include as many of the following elements as you can.

Example of writing to express

This excerpt is from the beginning of EL Weber's short story 'Generation optimisation'. It establishes the characters and introduces tension, generating reader sympathy for Camille and expressing ideas of danger and disorientation.

> Camille shivers, exposed. A sterile overhead light buzzes and sends spots into her left eye. Faces peer down to examine her, but it's the older man with hard eyes and a grim mouth she knows she should focus on. The trouble is she can't quite place him. Murmurs simmer around her as he leans in. Her heart rate jumps, hands scrabble, splay out and touch something coarse and synthetic. It's carpet, worn thin from years of overuse; she's on the floor, in her classroom. She's blacked out again.

Reveals Camille's vulnerability.

Develops characterisation and increases narrative tension.

Explore writing to express

1 In your mentor texts, identify elements that you can use as inspiration for your own writing. Write short quotes or brief descriptions in a table like the one below.

Characters and characterisation	Setting	Dialogue	Strong start; strong finish	Varied rhythm and structure

2 Create an outline for a narrative that explores an aspect of the key idea you are studying. Using bullet points or a table, describe how your narrative will begin, its main source of tension or conflict, what will happen at the climax and how the main conflict will be resolved.

Crafting texts to explain

Writing with the purpose to explain is sometimes called expository writing or informative writing. It seeks to inform the audience, offer reasons and make connections.

When an author's purpose is to explain, they wish to improve an audience's understanding of a topic. Writing to explain takes many forms, from simple instruction manuals to long, in-depth texts outlining complex ideas. This textbook is essentially a text that explains, as are your other textbooks. Writing that explains can also take the form of essays, research papers, reports and presentations.

Although writing to explain relies heavily on facts, it also relies on the author's understanding of the subject matter to connect cause and effect and to draw conclusions. In doing this the author will use their judgement and logical reasoning. This means that there is a subjective element and even an element of argument in expository writing, although persuading the reader to agree is not the primary purpose.

When crafting an expository text, use clear, concise language and a logical, flowing structure. Build your text by placing the most important information at the start. Include several ideas and arguments, research your topic and consider all sides. Finally, appeal to your audience's sense of reason rather than their emotions. Your purpose is to get them to respond primarily with their heads rather than their hearts.

The following diagram summarises some effective approaches to writing a text that explains.

Problem and solution
- Identify the problem, provide details to explain it, then outline a solution.

Cause and effect
- Explain why something happened and what its effects will be.

Compare and contrast
- Discuss the similarities and differences between two things.

Definition and classification
- Provide a complete, systematic description of the topic.

How-to / Process
- Tell the audience about a task or process and how to complete it.

Example of writing to explain

The following excerpt is the first half of an article published in *Forty South*, a Tasmanian online magazine. Its authors describe *what* is happening to the red handfish, and offer an explanation of *why* it is happening. The authors' expertise in the field (as biologists) and their use of specialised language and concepts make their explanations credible; they also seek to use terms an educated reader can understand and follow, appropriate to the readership of *Forty South*.

Search 🔍

A head start in saving the red handfish

Jemina Stuart-Smith and Andrew Trotter

A few handfuls of fish sitting in bags filled with seawater represent almost half the world's known population of the species. We have spent the past year carefully raising them from wild-collected eggs. Now, releasing them back into the ocean represents a monumental step in saving this curious little creature from extinction.

The red handfish (*Thymichthys politus*) is an evolutionary oddity. It is a relation of the anglerfish family, known for their bizarre biology. The red handfish is no exception.

An adult red handfish. Photo: Tyson Bessell

With a down-turned mouth, bright red mohawk, fluffy pom-pom on its head, and over-sized, hand-like fins, it appears to have crawled straight out of a child's fairy tale. A critically endangered Tasmanian fish that moves by walking clumsily on the seafloor using its "hands", it spends most of its time hiding under seaweed or bumbling around amongst seagrass. Fully grown, it

Opening with a statistic alerts the reader to the fact that the handfish is endangered and indicates that the writers' main aim is to inform the reader.

The writers establish their involvement in the issue, enhancing their credibility.

Affectionate and conversational language such as 'curious little creature' and 'bizarre biology' works both to intrigue the reader by conveying the uniqueness of the red handfish, and to arouse their sympathy for the fish's plight.

Description of the fish uses a mix of informal, literary and scientific language, aiming to inform and engage a wide readership.

easily fits in the palm of your hand. Red handfish move very little. An ambush predator, they prefer the sit-and-await approach to gulp unsuspecting prey that swim by.

This species is thought to be a remnant of an ancient lineage with a wider historical distribution, but in modern times it is a "short-range endemic" with very localised distribution. When faced with habitat loss or degradation, it cannot simply disperse to new areas; it has evolved to walk on the seafloor and therefore has little ability to move, even to the next patch of suitable habitat.

In addition, they have no planktonic (free-swimming) larval stage that many species use for dispersal, so populating new areas is difficult. This combination of characteristics raises a red flag for extinction risk when habitat loss is involved. The red handfish faces a torrent of threats centred around declining habitat due to human impact. Degraded seaweed and seagrass (which are important for shelter and spawning substrate), ever-encroaching sea urchin barrens, the unknown impacts of a changing climate, and multiple other stressors combine to threaten it with extinction.

Technical terms are used to convey precise information; however, they are not overused, which might risk alienating or confusing a non-scientific audience.

A specific scientific term is explained for non-expert readers.

Though the approach is largely factual, the writers use some emotive terms such as 'torrent of threats' in order to communicate the seriousness of the risk faced by the handfish.

Explore writing to explain

ACTIVITY 9.2

1 Examine your mentor texts for elements of expository writing. Even if a text's overall purpose is not to explain, it is likely that you will find phrases and sentences that inform or give reasons. Make a list of useful expressions and word choices you could use in your own expository writing.

2 Using the key idea your class is studying, identify three topics on which you could write an expository piece. For example, for the key idea 'Writing about nature' (see Chapter 6) you could list topics such as 'the local environment', 'the beauty of nature' and 'different attitudes towards nature'.

3 For each of these topics, create a title for a text with the primary purpose of explaining.

4 For one of the titles you created in question 3, outline three contrasting approaches to writing an expository text, based on the five approaches in the diagram on page 109. Make sure your suggestions engage closely with the idea/s in your title.
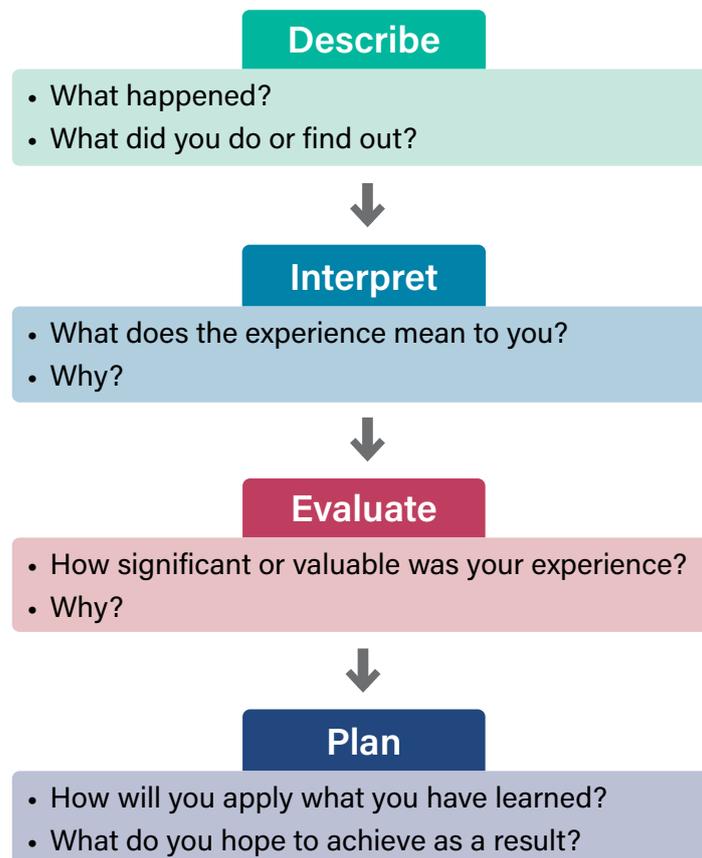
Crafting texts to reflect

Reflective writing is about you, the author. Reflective writing and thinking involve looking back on an experience, trying to make sense of it and thinking about how it has shaped your understanding of other experiences and events. You might also think about the lessons you learned and perhaps what could have been done differently to change the outcome. When you write reflectively you can gain insights and also give the reader insights into their own experiences.

For this area of study, if you choose to craft a reflective text it is likely that you will look at a key idea through the lens of your personal reflections. In other words, you will explore your framework in a very personal way. For example, if you're writing on the key idea of identity, you could reflect on an experience that helped to shape or change your own identity.

When writing reflectively, the following process will help you get your ideas on the page in a clear, coherent structure. Known as the DIEP model, this process can be applied to any mode of reflective writing.

Describe
- What happened?
- What did you do or find out?

↓

Interpret
- What does the experience mean to you?
- Why?

↓

Evaluate
- How significant or valuable was your experience?
- Why?

↓

Plan
- How will you apply what you have learned?
- What do you hope to achieve as a result?

Example of writing to reflect

On the following page is an extract from a reflective essay by Shona Hendley about her experiences growing up in an 'undesirable' suburb, which was published in *The Sydney Morning Herald*. This example of reflective writing shows the 'describe', 'interpret' and 'evaluate' elements of the DIEP process.

The suburb where I grew up was dubbed 'the ghetto'. I didn't tell friends where I lived

From age four until I left home at 17 for university, I lived in a small, modest brick dwelling in a housing commission area of a Victorian regional city. My single mum had bought the house, one of the few that were privately owned and not part of public housing, in a suburb that was dubbed everything from "the ghetto" to "dodgy", and whose residents were labelled "westies", "derros" and names much crueller.

The section I lived in backed onto a pine plantation, which acted as a border to the factory behind it and did nothing to hide the billowing smoke or mask the foul smell of food-processing chemicals that clouded the air above it. The streets were littered with shopping trolleys, graffiti decorated the often-broken fence panels, car frames sat up on blocks in the front yards of neighbouring properties and stray cats stalked the footpaths.

… I never had a friend "unfriend" me because of my address, but many still made comments, often framed as "jokes" about my neighbourhood, and weren't apprehensive about doing this in my presence. "Diamond in the rough," an ex-boyfriend called me. "In the ghetto," a friend sang, impersonating Dolly Parton every time he dropped me home or picked me up. "How many shopping trolleys can we count today?" a parent of a good friend would say as she entered my street, as if it were some sort of game.

I would always smile or laugh along, but the truth is, these comments hurt. They rubbed salt in an already very open wound.

… As I walked down the driveway, observing the sold sticker on the for-sale sign, I knew I'd never forget the joyous memories I'd made in my home and its backyard. I would remember jumping for hours on the trampoline – that sense of freedom, of flying without any obstacles in your way. I'd remember decorating my room – plastering *TV Hits* posters on my walls and listening to Mariah Carey on repeat on my CD player as a teen. I'd remember quiet nights playing board games in the loungeroom with my mum.

At the same time, neither will I ever forget the disparaging comments and how they made me feel.

> The writer provides factual detail about the focus of her essay – the place she lived when she was growing up.

> Evocatively describes the setting, focusing on details to bring the environment to life for the reader.

> Reflects on her feelings in response to the reactions of those around her.

> Examines the ways in which her experiences of her home contradict the ways that others interpreted her living situation.

> Interprets and evaluates the significance of her living situation and the responses of others to it, and acknowledges the lasting impact of these.
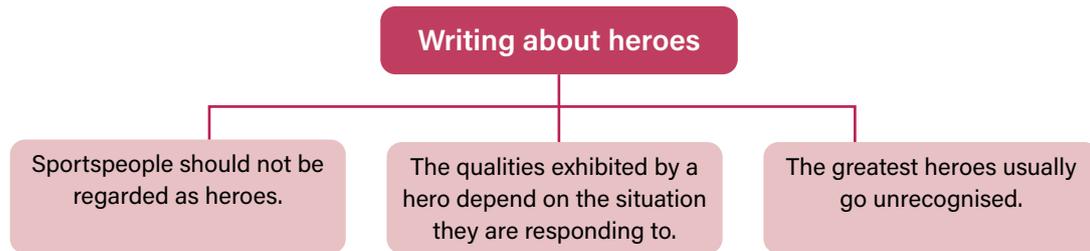
Explore writing to reflect

ACTIVITY 9.3

GROUP

1 In a small group, identify features of reflective writing in each of your mentor texts. Do any of them have reflection as their primary purpose?

2 Describe three experiences you have had that relate to the framework you are studying. Make brief notes on the connections between each experience and the key idea.

3 For one of the experiences you described in question 2, create a title and a plan for a piece of reflective writing. Indicate how you will address each element of the DIEP model in your reflective piece.

Crafting texts to argue

A text that presents an argument with the aim of convincing others to agree is known as persuasive writing. You will analyse persuasive writing in more depth in Area of Study 2: Exploring argument. In Area of Study 2: Crafting texts, the focus is on presenting your own argument on an idea or issue.

Your argument will consist of a central contention or point of view, and supporting reasons backed up by evidence and logical reasoning. For instance, some possible positions you might take in relation to the key idea 'Writing about heroes' (see Chapter 6) are shown below.

Writing about heroes

- Sportspeople should not be regarded as heroes.
- The qualities exhibited by a hero depend on the situation they are responding to.
- The greatest heroes usually go unrecognised.

To construct an argument in support of any of these positions, you would need to do some research, find the relevant facts and identify several strong reasons for holding this position.

An effective argument depends first and foremost on a thorough knowledge of the subject. This flow chart shows the keys to a successful piece of persuasive writing.

Topic
- Pick a topic you're interested in. Writing or speaking on a topic you care about is much easier than tackling a topic that doesn't really matter to you.

Audience
- Know your audience; research their interests and expectations.
- Tailor your language, arguments and persuasive techniques to your specific audience.

Contention
- Develop a strong contention – your point of view.
- Bring your arguments and reasons back to your contention.

Credibility
- Establish and build your credibility with your audience.
- If you are adopting a persona, make sure it is one you understand.

Know the issue
- Research both sides of the issue.
- Find and use up-to-date information and opinions.

Avoid an 'info dump'
- Use a range of persuasive techniques, not just facts and figures.

Example of writing to argue

The following excerpts are from an editorial published in *The Guardian* newspaper. The editorial argues that contemporary writers have an obligation to write about climate change.

Writing cannot ignore global heating

Verse's connection to nature can inspire awareness and hope amid the climate crisis, offering clarity beyond data.

No novelist writing today should ignore climate change, Paul Murray, the author of the bestselling 2023 novel *The Bee Sting*, said recently. There has been an outpouring of "eco-fiction" and "cli-fi", with apocalyptic scenarios proving fertile ground for science fiction. It is the poet's job to notice and record the minutiae of the natural world, and the changes are impossible to ignore. All contemporary nature poets are eco-poets.

… But what of the much-quoted WH Auden line that "poetry makes nothing happen"? In the face of extinction threats, a poem seems a particularly puny adversary. Poetry might not make things happen, but it can make us see things differently, especially in times of crisis. The Romantics held nature up against industrialisation and helped define the modern world.

… A poem is a moment in time in language, and as such all poems are elegies. It is no wonder poetry is being repurposed for our "age of grief". But it does not only speak of loss. A poem can make us feel and understand things with a clarity sometimes lost in a blizzard of scientific data. Great poetry endures. It inspires a sense of wonder, joy and connection with nature that is entirely hopeful. And hope is something we need more than ever.

The contention is summarised in the first sentence; the language used is elevated and lyrical, which suits the focus on writing and particularly on poetry.

Presents the first reason that writers should write about climate change: because it is part of their 'job'.

Raises a potential rebuttal in order to argue against it.

Presents a second reason in support of the contention.

Cites a historical precedent to position readers to feel that writers have been able to make a real difference in the past and so should be able to now.

Ends on a cautiously optimistic note that positions the reader to feel that poetry is an essential weapon in the battle against climate change.

Presents a third reason that writers should address climate change. '[B]lizzard of scientific data' is a vivid metaphor that evokes confusion and overwhelm, encouraging readers to view poetry as a solution to these feelings.

Explore writing to argue

ACTIVITY 9.4

1   Using your key idea, develop some positions or points of view that you would argue for.

2   Develop main reasons to support each of these positions, and write your contentions.

3   Using some of the persuasive strategies in the editorial above, write two different opening paragraphs of a persuasive piece for one of your positions, each targeting a different audience.

TEXT TYPES

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Short stories
- Podcasts
- Diary and journal entries
- Scripts
- Memoirs, autobiographies and biographies
- Letters
- Blog posts
- Essays
- Speeches
- Opinion pieces
- Hybrid texts

In your study of English, you will encounter a variety of text types. Different texts are suited to different audiences, contexts and purposes. For example, if you wanted to argue a point you might choose to write an opinion piece or a persuasive speech. If you wish to tell a story you might choose to write a short story or a script.

However, sometimes it is useful to combine text types or to use them in interesting ways. For example, when George Orwell wanted to write a political piece about the threat of communism, he could have written an essay. Instead, Orwell chose to write a fable, *Animal Farm*, and his choice of this genre of fiction led to a text that is both persuasive and entertaining.

This chapter discusses some popular types of texts that you might encounter as mentor texts or that you might choose to write. For each of these text types you will see examples, features and conventions, as well as suggestions and activities to help you develop a piece in that form.

Short stories

Short stories are generally considered to be stories between 2000 and 20 000 words in length – anything shorter than that is flash fiction or micro fiction, and anything longer is a novella or a novel. Other than the length, there are features and conventions that make short stories different from other works of fiction.

Short stories often focus on a single incident, scene or situation. Unlike a novel, a short story might only have a single setting in which all the action takes place. A short story will also typically focus on just one character, whether the story is told from that character's point of view (in the first person) or from the point of view of an external narrator (in the third person). Occasionally, short stories evoke a particular mood or feeling without having a specific plot or storyline. These types of short stories are sometimes called vignettes.

Short stories make excellent mentor texts. Because they are short, it is possible to study a few stories on a topic and look for similarities and differences between them. It is also sometimes easier to identify elements of an author's voice or style in a short story than it is in a longer work, because the language is so condensed.

If you choose to write in the form of a short story, draw on the effective features of short stories that you read, as well as on the notes about structure below. Aim to create a self-contained piece of writing that has a strong sense of unity and is compelling from the first word to the last.

> **Features and conventions of short stories**
> » Are of a limited length – usually between 2000 and 20 000 words
> » Have a limited number of characters
> » Usually have only one plot line
> » Are often based on a specific theme or mood
> » May follow specific genre conventions (e.g. detective fiction, horror fiction, science fiction)

Narrative structures for short stories

Short stories do not need to follow the same narrative conventions as longer texts such as novels. However, most short stories do have characters and a story arc, and authors can choose from a number of different narrative structures.

Linear/chronological narrative

A linear or chronological narrative has a traditional 'three-act' or 'beginning-middle-end' structure. This kind of short story typically follows the action and storyline of one character.
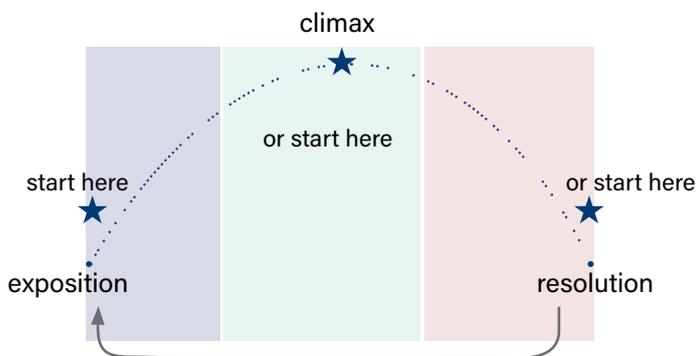
In medias res

'In medias res' means 'in the middle of things'. Short stories sometimes begin in the middle of the action, before a flashback or memory fills in some of the backstory.

Frame narrative

In a frame narrative, the main story is 'framed' by another. For example, it may be a story-within-a-story where the narrator is speaking to an audience and retelling a story. This structure is particularly common in the Gothic genre.

Circular narrative

A circular narrative can begin at any point in the plot; often the first scene is at the climax or the resolution rather than the exposition. By the end of the narrative, the character's journey has come full circle.

Abstract / no structure

Some short stories have no clear narrative structure. This can include fragmented stories that jump back and forth in time or memory, and stories that evoke a mood or feeling but have no obvious structure.

Example: 'Riddle'

The following excerpt is the closing passage of Ogbewe Amadin's short story 'Riddle', in which a young girl details her fascination with and fear of her strange aunt. Like most short stories, this one focuses on a small group of characters in a single setting – a village.

"I hate you," I said.

"Why?" she purred innocently.

"'Cause you're evil," I said.

"Are you certain?" she asked.

> This unexpected verb evokes the cunning and unpredictable nature of a cat, hinting to the reader that Aunty Adesuwa might not be quite what she seems.

"Yes," I said, nodding to myself. Mama had told me witches were evil. She had also said Aunty Adesuwa was a witch. Therefore, Aunty Adesuwa was evil.

"I know you've been watching, Idara. Your mother taught you better than to jump to conclusions," she chided.

"Consider the facts," she said. It was something Mama always said to me that helped me solve riddles.

"The riddle of witches?" I asked.

"The riddle of my witchcraft," she replied.

I pondered thoughts I had kept in the deep recesses of my mind. I was sure witches were evil because Mama never lied. I was sure Aunty Adesuwa was a witch after seeing her transformation but was I sure Aunty Adesuwa was evil?

> A combination of short and longer sentences creates a satisfying rhythm and helps the writing to flow.

Aunty Adesuwa had been kind and sweet to the stranger with the bicycle. She had loved her stepson. She had also shown her strength and independence by leaving her cheating husband and thriving without him. She was also a witch. This was my confusion.

Mama said a witch could never be these things.

> Simple language and a naive tone help to create the voice of the child narrator.

"Things not adding up, yes?" she asked, amused by my consternation.

It hit me. Aunty Adesuwa must be a good witch. They actually existed! The realization rekindled a forgotten hope of mine.

"Will you teach me to be a good witch like you?" I asked her.

She purred contentedly. She seemed to have anticipated my response. I suppose I should have been scared. I wasn't.

"Yes, sweet child. I will teach you to be a witch … just like me," she said, her tail swinging leisurely behind her.

> Another unexpected detail furthers the comparison of Aunty Adesuwa and a cat, and places the story in the magical realism genre: while much of the detail is recognisable and believable, fantasy or magical elements let the reader know that the 'rules' governing the real world do not necessarily apply in this story.

"Thank you, Aunty," I said.

She stalked away into the deep foliage gesturing me to follow with her tail.

As I followed, I thought of Mama. Mama never lied but she was human. She could make mistakes. She didn't know about good witches.

I thought about how I would make her proud. I would show her the beauty I had only ever seen in my sea of dreams.

Explore short stories

1 This is the end of the story. In a group, discuss how the story might have opened. Why might the narrator 'hate' Aunty Adesuwa? What qualities or behaviours might have led to her being labelled a witch?

2 What does the extract reveal about the relationship between Idara and her mother? How does it do this without describing this relationship explicitly?

3 Use the ending of the story as your starting point. Write the beginning of the story (500–700 words) by presenting the events or situations that might have led up to the conversation between Idara and her aunt.

Podcasts

A podcast is an audio text that is usually streamed or downloaded from a particular podcast website or app. The word podcast is a portmanteau – a joined-together word – made up of the words 'iPod' and 'broadcast'.

Features and conventions of podcasts
- » Can vary in length; usually no longer than one hour
- » Are usually recorded in series or seasons
- » Often use short sound effects called 'stings' to separate segments
- » Often feature recognisable intro or section music

You can find a podcast on just about any subject. Podcasts can be fiction or nonfiction. They can also be ongoing and updated regularly or run as limited series. They are often focused on a specific idea, issue, hobby or interest. For example, you might listen to a podcast about news or current affairs, sport or music, short stories or a serialised novel. Some have been running for a long time and have millions of listeners. Podcasts can range from very simple – such as a three-to-five-minute news item – to much more complex. For example, some fiction podcasts feature multiple voice actors as well as music and sound effects, and follow a narrative structure just like a television series or novel. Careful editing brings the various elements together into a fluent, coherent narrative.

To use a podcast as a mentor text, it might be helpful to get a transcript of the podcast, or to make your own. A transcript is a written copy of the podcast made after its production. A script is the text used to create the podcast and includes directions for any music, sound effects, ad breaks or other common features and conventions. Some podcasts, such as those featuring interviews, do not follow a close script. Even with interviews, however, it is likely that the podcaster had prepared a list of questions for the interviewee, and possible that the interviewee prepared their answers beforehand.

If you choose to write a podcast, aim to produce a script for one episode of a series. Your episode can be fiction – like an episode of a radio show – or nonfiction. Whichever you choose, be sure to follow podcast conventions involving sound, music and production, like the following example.

Example: 'The Kamarooka Panther'

This script for the opening of an episode of the podcast series *Look History in the Eye*, produced by Public Record Office Victoria, demonstrates many of the typical features of the form. Read the script then complete the activity that follows.

The Kamarooka Panther

Desiree Pettit-Keating

It certainly wasn't the first sighting or suspected big cat in the Bendigo and Goldfields area. There'd been a couple of instances where goats or sheep had been killed, and various people in the community had said that they'd seen a tiger or lion or some other variety of big cat. But this is the one that they've picked up and ran with a bit.

Tara Oldfield

It's 1907, a Thursday in late January, sisters Alheith and Trine Christensen are driving through the Whipstick to the family farm at Kamarooka.

Climbing a crest some 18 miles north of Bendigo, they see what they initially think to be a fox atop the hill. The animal appears to have no fear as it approaches their buggy. The women, terrified, rush home to the farm to tell their family of the animal which they have determined to be no fox at all. Three to four feet in length with a long tail, thick neck and head, like a cat about the nose but more oblong, about 24 inches tall with a glossy brown body and lighter undercarriage, and walking "in a sneaking attitude and gait". The sisters are convinced that they have faced a panther. But are they credible witnesses?

You're listening to the Podcast "Look History in the Eye" produced by Public Record Office Victoria, the archive of the state government of Victoria. Where over one hundred kilometres of public records about Victoria's past are carefully preserved in climate-controlled vaults. We meet the people who dig into those boxes, look history in the eye, and bother to wonder … why.

I'm Tara Oldfield, the Communications Advisor at Public Record Office Victoria.

Background music plays behind the first speaker's words, contributing to the podcast's mood and atmosphere.

The opening introduces the topic and gives some brief background and context.

Podcasts often have a more informal register than other media forms.

The speaker takes a storytelling approach to the subject, beginning by establishing the time and place of the cat-sighting incident.

The question aims to intrigue the listener and encourage them to keep listening to find out the answer.

Identifies the podcast's title and the organisation that produces it, establishing its aim - to inform as well as to entertain.

The host introduces herself by name and title, highlighting her qualification to speak on historical matters.

Explore podcasts

1 Visit a podcast website or app and listen to a few podcasts on subjects you're interested in. Identify the common features between the podcasts.

2 Take an idea you have been working on, perhaps inspired by one of your mentor texts. Brainstorm ways you could produce a podcast – fiction or nonfiction – based on those ideas.

3 What are the advantages of choosing a podcast script for one of your written pieces? What are the disadvantages or potential drawbacks?

Scan the code or click **here** for a video overview of podcasts.

Diary and journal entries

Diary and journal entries are very reflective forms of writing. Diary entries are sometimes mundane, but they reveal deeply personal aspects of the author's life and thoughts.

Diaries are usually nonfiction – such as *The Diary of a Young Girl* by Anne Frank – but the diary form can also be used in works of fiction. The popular children's series *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney and Helen Fielding's *Bridget Jones's Diary* are examples of fictional diaries.

You can use the diary form in a variety of ways. You may choose to write a diary or journal entry from the point of view of a well-known person related to the key idea you are discussing in class. You could also include a short diary entry within a longer creative piece, such as a diary entry by a character in a short story.

Features and conventions of diary and journal entries
» Are written in the first person (I, me, my)
» Are personal and reflective
» Are often private and confessional
» Have the date at the top of each entry

Example: *Diary of a Young Naturalist*

The following extract is from writer and environmentalist Dara McAnulty's book *Diary of a Young Naturalist,* published when he was sixteen. It explores his connection to nature and his experiences with autism.

Wednesday 1 August

We take Rosie into the Castlewellan Forest Park, which is fewer than 300 steps from our front door – even fewer if you hop over the back fence. Rosie is our constant companion on walks. We call her the "autistic dog" because she always wants to walk the same route. If we're not all together, or if Mum isn't with us, Rosie stops suddenly, digs her heels in. I remember once Dad phoning Mum pleading for help because Rosie wouldn't budge. Mum had to go out and physically move her. Since then, it's a standing joke that Mum is top dog. She-wolf.

> Diary entries usually begin with the date.

> A first-person voice is used; little introduction is given to other people and places.

The walk is easy and I'm chatting with Mum because I've promised myself, and her, that I won't hold things in to fester any more. First I tell her how much I'm missing our Fermanagh places, and that everything here is so strange and different. "It smells different," I explain. "Not in a bad way, it just does. It sounds different, too, in a good way. There are definitely more birds here, more insects."

> Reported conversations may be included but the focus usually remains on the author's thoughts and feelings.

I then go on to tell her about Jude next door, my new friend. This makes her smile and the dimples in her cheeks become more pronounced – this happens when she's tired. There are also shadows under her eyes, and seeing them I want to find the beauty in everything and promise not to let the bullies weigh me down. I have so much love around me. I want to do it for her. I want to do it for myself. It's all around me, beauty, so why should it be hard?

> Description enables the author to represent other characters.

Silver Y moths feast on the purple blooms – some rest, drunk with nectar, before refilling, whirling and dancing.

> Literary language and techniques may be used to evoke particular images, moods or emotions.

Explore diary entries

1 Keep a diary for one week; write a summary of your actions, thoughts and feelings each day.

2 At the end of the week, review the diary and select the most important or interesting parts. Expand these into longer entries, adding more description.

3 'Fictionalise' your diary entries: add imaginary details and dialogue, embellish characters and situations and turn your diary entries into a piece of fiction (700–900 words).

4 Give your fictionalised diary a title.

Scripts

A script is the written 'instructions' for a play, movie, television show or other audio or audiovisual text. Scripts generally include much more than just the spoken words. For example, a script for a television show might include directions to the actors on how to perform, or information about the set design. A script for a podcast might include information on sound and music.

Using scripts as mentor texts can be challenging and rewarding. You may wish to find scripts for television shows and movies you are familiar with and follow the final production alongside the script. Often, you will find that the final production deviates from the script – perhaps because the actors have been allowed to improvise, or because the director has made decisions after the filming to edit or change the final version.

Features and conventions of scripts

» Use specific formatting conventions, e.g. aligned or centred text, italics, capital letters

» Include stage directions, music and sound effects, as well as dialogue

» May include a short synopsis of the scene or an initial description of the mood

» Are readable and easy to follow

Writing a script will require you to imagine what the final production will look or sound like. To be realistic, your script will need to follow specific conventions for formatting and layout. Different rules are used by different industries, but scripts still have many features in common. For example, you will need to separate the spoken parts from the stage directions, incorporate any lighting, music and sound effects appropriate to your chosen form, and write the script clearly so that it is easy for the actors or performers to read.

Example: *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*

The following is an extract from the script for Stephen Chbosky's film *The Perks of Being a Wallflower*. Use it as an example of how to format scripts for television programs or films.

```
INT. MILL GROVE HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY – LAST DAY

We see it in Charlie's mind. Slow motion and
wondrous. The kids clear out their lockers by
throwing their old papers in the air like a
New York confetti parade.

                    CHARLIE (V.O.)
       As I enter the school for the first
       time, I will visualize what it will be
       like on the last day of my senior year.

Charlie walks down the hall.    Triumphant.
Confident.    Happy.

              CHARLIE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
       Unfortunately, I counted, and that's...

                              SMASH CUT TO:
INT. MILL GROVE HIGH SCHOOL HALLWAY – FIRST DAY

Reality. The bell rings, and we see the chaotic
maze from Charlie's POV. A SENIOR BULLY leads
the ritual, making dozens of freshmen hop down
the hall.

                    SENIOR BULLY
       Hop, freshman toads. Hop!  Move it, boys!

As seniors grab more victims, Charlie moves to
the wall.

                    CHARLIE (V.O.)
       ... 1,385 days from now.
```

The setting is capitalised. INT. stands for 'interior' – an inside scene. Outside scenes are EXT. (exterior). Here, the time of year as well as the place is indicated.

Stage directions are written in normal font, aligned to the left. In addition to providing information, they can contribute to the tone, mood and style of the script.

Character names are centred, and the speaking parts are indented from both left and right sides. Voice-overs are indicated by (V.O.).

Directions regarding camera movements and editorial decisions (e.g. 'smash cut') can be included in a script.

Emma Watson and Logan Lerman in *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* / Alamy Stock Photo

Explore scripts

ACTIVITY 10.4

1 Research different script formats online. Make notes on the similarities and differences, such as between play, television and film scripts.

GROUP

2 Choose an issue or idea you have been discussing in class. In a small group, brainstorm ways to write a script about the issue in three forms: play, movie and podcast.

3 Choose one of the three forms you brainstormed in question 2, and write a script of 700–900 words, including stage directions.

Memoirs, autobiographies and biographies

Memoirs and autobiographies are written by the author about their own life. A memoir – sometimes written as a diary or including diary extracts – can be more personal than an autobiography, which may take a big-picture look at the author's life. A biography is also the story of a person's life, but is written by someone else.

Memoirs and autobiographies are personal and reflective texts. They give insight into a person's life either by focusing on a pivotal, important moment or period (in a memoir), or by covering a series of moments across the author's life, usually starting in childhood and working towards the time of writing (in an autobiography). Biographies tend to have a more formal, detached style; they involve extensive research and – if possible – interviews with the subject and people who have known the subject.

Features and conventions of memoirs, autobiographies and biographies

» Are written by the subject (memoir/autobiography) or about the subject (biography)

» Focus on one important moment or a series of moments

» Bring together multiple stories to show the broad 'theme' of a person's life

!

Using a piece of life writing as a mentor text provides an interesting opportunity to take a specific angle on your key idea. If your idea is very broad – for example, identity or the future – it can be useful to choose a single, personal focus that will give the issue a human side.

Your written pieces won't be as long as a full-length book, so if you choose to write a biography you will need to select a particular moment or period from the subject's life. If you are writing about your own life, choose an important, pivotal event.

Example 1: *Shy*

Read the following excerpt from Melbourne-based radio broadcaster and writer Sian Prior's memoir *Shy*.

I began asking around, trying to work out if my self-conscious adolescent anxiety had been unusual or if everyone felt the same way at that age. Most of the teenagers I knew seemed so much more confident than I had ever been, including Tom's two teenage daughters. One night when they were visiting us for dinner I asked the older one about the kids at her high school. She quickly summed up the social clique in her year with a neat list of shorthand labels: 'You've got the Fashion Girls, the Cool Guys, the Nice Girls, the Arty Crowd, the Sports Jocks and the Invisibles.'

At the last label I caught my breath.

'You know,' she explained patiently, 'the ones you don't notice much. They don't belong to any group and never really say anything. So, like, they're invisible.'

I did know, and could recall how often I felt like one of them.

One summer in the early 1980s I went away to a bluestone boarding school just outside Melbourne on a national music camp. On the first morning of the camp I squeezed myself onto the end of a long bench at the communal breakfast table. The dining room had high ceilings and leadlight windows – a Hogwarts set, although this was decades before Harry first slipped on his invisibility cloak. The long table was crowded with young people I had never met.

As I began to eat, shyness struck like a sudden palsy. The spoon of soggy cereal started to shake and I had to put it down. There were two certainties in my mind, and they were perfectly contradictory. First: everyone is looking at me. Second: no one can see me.

> The first-person voice and a reflective tone are typical of the memoir genre.

> Like a novel or short story, memoir often includes dialogue that contributes to characterisation and the exploration of ideas.

> Specific details about the author's life and experiences are included, grounding the story in a particular time and place.

> Literary techniques such as similes and evocative language help to engage the reader in the author's world and experiences.

Example 2: *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*

This excerpt is from the biography *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks*, by Rebecca Skloot. It was published in 2010, nearly sixty years after the subject's death.

PROLOGUE

The Woman in the Photograph

There's a photo on my wall of a woman I've never met, its left corner torn and patched together with tape. She looks straight into the camera and smiles, hands on hips, dress suit neatly pressed, lips painted deep red. It's the late 1940s and she hasn't yet reached the age of thirty. Her light brown skin is smooth, her eyes still young and playful, oblivious to the tumor growing inside her – a tumor that would leave her five children motherless and change the future of medicine. Beneath the photo, a caption says her name is "Henrietta Lacks, Helen Lane or Helen Larson."

No one knows who took that picture, but it's appeared hundreds of times in magazines and science textbooks, on blogs and laboratory walls. She's usually identified as Helen Lane, but often she has no name at all. She's simply called HeLa, the code name given to the world's first immortal human cells – *her* cells, cut from her cervix just months before she died.

Her real name is Henrietta Lacks.

> Skloot begins with a physical description drawn from an old photograph.

> The author foreshadows the main points of the text early in the prologue: the subject's tumour and her lack of recognition (reflected in the uncertainty about or absence of her name) despite her contribution to modern medicine.

Explore memoir and biography

1 Sian Prior's memoir is very personal, focusing on her interior life and experiences associated with her shyness. Rebecca Skloot's biography is written about a subject who died long before the text was published. What are the advantages and disadvantages of both approaches? Write notes in a table like the following.

Text type	Advantages	Disadvantages
Memoir		
Biography		

2 Based on the advantages and disadvantages of the text type and your own personal interest, choose to do some research for either a memoir or a biography. Create a document for your research, including:

a key events in the subject's life

b key people who had an impact on the subject's life

c major world events that had an impact on the subject.

3 Write an account of one important event in your subject's life (700–900 words). Give your text a one-word title that encapsulates a major idea, like Sian Prior's *Shy*.

Letters

Like diary entries, letters are often personal and reveal the writer's thoughts and feelings on an issue or event. Unlike diary entries, they are written with a specific audience in mind, such as a friend, a loved one, a colleague, or perhaps an editor of a newspaper or magazine.

Letters vary in format, but generally begin with a salutation such as 'Dear …' or 'To whom it may concern', followed by an outline of the writer's intent. For personal letters to a friend or family member, the letter may be a recount of recent events – a way of staying connected to a loved one. In a letter to the editor, the writer might argue for or against something that has recently appeared in the publication.

> **Features and conventions of letters**
> » Are written for a specific audience
> » Are often personal, revealing the thoughts and feelings of the author
> » Can be informal (e.g. a personal letter) or formal (e.g. a letter to an employer)
> » Usually have short paragraphs
> » Usually begin with a salutation ('Dear …') and end with a sign-off ('Yours, …')

To use letters as mentor texts, choose ones that are not too simple or short. It will be difficult to gain much understanding of language or structure from a letter that only takes a shallow approach to an issue or idea. To use the letter form as the basis of one of your written pieces, you could consider writing a series of letters back and forth between correspondents, or including a letter in response to a longer article such as an editorial.

Example: letter from Kurt Vonnegut to students

In 2006, five New York secondary school students wrote to writer Kurt Vonnegut to ask him to visit their school. Vonnegut replied with the following letter, addressed to the students and their English teacher Ms Lockwood. Read the letter then complete the activity.

Dear Xavier High School, and Ms. Lockwood, and Messrs Perin, McFeely, Batten, Maurer and Congiusta:

I thank you for your friendly letters. You sure know how to cheer up a really old geezer (84) in his sunset years. I don't make public appearances anymore because I now resemble nothing so much as an iguana.

What I had to say to you, moreover, would not take long, to wit: Practise any art, music, singing, dancing, acting, drawing, painting, sculpting, poetry, fiction, essays, reportage, no matter how well or badly, not to get money and fame, but to experience becoming, to find out what's inside you, to make your soul grow.

Seriously! I mean starting right now, do art and do it for the rest of your lives. Draw a funny or nice picture of Ms. Lockwood, and give it to her. Dance home after school, and sing in the shower and on and on. Make a face in your mashed potatoes. Pretend you're Count Dracula.

The formal terms 'Ms.' and 'Messrs' (short for 'Misters') convey politeness and respect, and suggest Vonnegut is taking the students' request seriously.

Casual expressions balance the occasional formality, and present Vonnegut as good-humoured. They also help him connect with his younger audience.

Lyrical language allows Vonnegut to express important ideas and inspire his young audience.

Vonnegut's humorous advice is likely to take the readers by surprise and thus engage their attention.

Here's an assignment for tonight, and I hope Ms. Lockwood will flunk you if you don't do it: Write a six-line poem, about anything, but rhymed. No fair tennis without a net. Make it as good as you possibly can. But don't tell anybody what you're doing. Don't show it or recite it to anybody, not even your girlfriend or parents or whatever, or Ms. Lockwood. OK?

Tear it up into teeny-weeny pieces, and discard them into widely separated trash receptacles. You will find that you have already been gloriously rewarded for your poem. You have experienced becoming, learned a lot more about what's inside you, and you have made your soul grow.

God bless you all!

Kurt Vonnegut

A warm and affectionate sign-off leaves the readers with a positive final impression and helps to communicate Vonnegut's sincerity.

Explore letters

1   Give three words to describe your impression of Vonnegut's personality from this letter. For each descriptor, circle or highlight a word or phrase in the letter that contributes to this impression.

2   Compose a letter to a writer you admire, asking them to visit your school. Explain what you appreciate about their work and/or life, and what you think you would gain from their visit.

3   Now, imagine that you are a much older person writing to a group of Year 11 English students. Offer them some important advice regarding their English studies, or life in general. Aim to write 700–900 words in total.

Blog posts

The word 'blog' is an abbreviation of 'weblog', literally a 'log' or journal on the internet (web). The first blogs were written in the 1990s and were generally brief pieces of text containing links to other websites the authors found interesting. Since then, the blogging industry has grown, and many authors make a living from writing blog posts and online articles.

Blogging shares many of its features and conventions with traditional print journalism but brings in elements of digital texts, including embedding multimedia (such as videos) and offering ways to share the content. Blogs can also be much more interactive and audience-driven

Features and conventions of blog posts

» Are generally short – around 700–1000 words

» Often mirror conventions of traditional journalism

» Are most commonly nonfiction but can be fictional

» Generally have an informal, approachable style

» Have a strong awareness of audience

than traditional forms of writing. Some bloggers even use their platforms to raise awareness of important world-changing issues. Blog post topics are extremely varied: they can range from highly specific special interests to more general topics such as sports and current affairs. There are also many kinds of blogs, including opinion pieces, video blogs (vlogs) and listicles – such as the '5 best X ever' kinds of blogs, which are very popular.

Blog posts make effective mentor texts since they are often about the same length as the pieces you will need to write, and they tend to focus on an issue or idea, just as your own writing will.

Scan the code or click <u>here</u> to see a video overview of blogs.

Example: Nature positive tourism blog post

Search

What is nature positive tourism?

Responsible Travel aims to contribute to a nature positive world by 2030. We believe that nature positive tourism will play a vital role in addressing the global biodiversity crisis – and the subsequent impacts that the ongoing, dramatic loss of our wild spaces is having on our climate. But what is nature positive tourism? And why do we believe it's the next necessary step for all tourism businesses, not just eco tours or wildlife safaris? Our CEO and Co-Founder Justin Francis explains.

Why should we care about biodiversity?

Biodiversity is in crisis. Since 1970, the world's wildlife populations have plummeted by two-thirds. We are losing habitats, wild spaces and natural resources at a staggering rate, with dire consequences for our climate, food security and health.

Blog posts usually have an attention-grabbing headline; in this case, the intention is to intrigue the reader with a question about a potentially unfamiliar term.

Images are often used to make the blog post more attractive and appealing, and to highlight key ideas.

This blog post takes a problem-and-solution approach: evoking alarm in the reader then offering them a way to relieve that fear.

Search 🔍

What is nature positive tourism?

Quite simply, nature positive holidays are those which directly contribute to, and advance, the protection of habitats and wildlife, and support the rewilding of the planet's natural spaces. Responsible Travel aims to contribute to a nature positive world by 2030, meaning all holidays available on our site will not only not do any harm to wildlife and habitats, but actively leave them with more protection and support.

So, you're just talking about safaris and wildlife holidays?

No, we're talking about all forms of tourism, from city breaks to cycling trips, beach breaks to safaris. Just 7% of holidays we take focus on wildlife and nature positive tourism needs to be much more wide-reaching. All tourism is reliant on nature – from the clean water you drink to the climate and views you enjoy – and nature is impacted by all types of tourism. We need to start changing the way we think about nature on our holidays, and the impact we are having.

What can I do?

Look for holidays which aim to contribute to a nature positive world. You're already in the right place for that and the movement is growing. You can also ask questions – about whether you're paying national park fees and if they go directly to conservation projects or whether your tour operator supports rewilding initiatives. On each of the holidays on our website we tell you how that specific trip is supporting nature and wildlife – so you can make an informed, nature positive holiday choice.

Blogs often use inclusive language and personal pronouns. Using 'we', 'us', 'my', 'you' and 'your' creates a familiarity with the audience.

Organising an online text into short sections with subheadings makes it easier for readers to consume. Structuring the post around questions and answers also involves the reader in the conversation, building rapport and engagement.

Explore blogs

ACTIVITY 10.7

1 The blog post is organised around a series of questions and answers. Can you think of an alternative way of organising the same information? What might be the advantages and disadvantages of each approach?

2 **GROUP** This blog post focuses on travel. In a small group, find a subject you are all interested in and come up with between five and ten key pieces of information or advice that could be written as a question-and-answer blog post, like the one above. Brainstorm possible titles for the post. Then, using one of these titles, write the text as a group or individually.

3 Blog posts can be on serious issues that are being covered in the mainstream media. Choose a current issue related to the key idea you are studying and express your views on it (700–900 words). Include at least one image and some hyperlinks to related online articles.

Essays

In school, essays are usually the end point of a text study or a research task. You will be familiar with the type of essay that has an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion, and includes quotes from the text you have been studying or from experts in the field. But the essay is also a well-respected form of text in areas outside the world of education.

Essays can fall into a broader category called creative nonfiction. In creative nonfiction, authors blend the features of nonfiction – research, evidence and facts, compelling arguments, real-world issues – with elements of creative writing such as evocative descriptions, figurative language, strong characters and narrative arcs. This style of essay can be found in long-form journalism such as feature articles in newspapers and magazines, and in essay collections.

A writer's purpose in writing an essay can vary widely. Some essays are reflective and expressive. Other essays are more argumentative, presenting an opinion or interpretation supported by evidence and reasoning. Essays in the category of creative nonfiction will generally have more than one purpose, seamlessly combining expressive, expository, reflective and/or argumentative qualities.

When you explore essays as mentor texts, you will encounter examples that go far beyond the standard five-paragraph structure. The style and structure of the essays will vary depending on who writes them and where they are published. But all essays will be underpinned by a passion for the topic, solid research, and imaginative and entertaining writing.

> **Features and conventions of essays**
> » Are based on research, facts and evidence
> » Are longer than other forms of journalism
> » Use a reasonably formal register
> » Can contain elements of creative writing, e.g. figurative language
> » Reflect on important issues

Example: 'The libraries we must enter, the songs we will sing'

The following excerpt is the opening of an essay by writer Jamil Badi. Authors often choose to write essays on issues that are personally important to them. In this case, the essay is a reflection on storytelling and its role in passing on history and culture.

The libraries we must enter, the songs we will sing

When a griot dies, it is as if a library has burned down.

– West African saying

Since the 14th century, the griots have been the human archives of many West African communities. The responsibilities of the griot are rooted in the importance of oral storytelling as a way of preserving and passing on history. Like the saying suggests, griots would collect and memorise the history of their communities, sharing the collective past through poetry, music, and performance. Before history was written and typed, it was spoken and sung in the form of stories.

The opening quotation signals the essay's topic and evokes the writer's familial connection to West Africa.

This word is not explicitly defined for readers who might not be familiar with it: rather, its meaning is made clear by the context in which it is used and the focus of the essay.

The opening paragraph establishes the main theme of the essay: the role of storytelling.

For as long as I can remember, my father has worn a ring the colour of bone. The ring is smooth but worn down on the inside, with a slight split through the bottom to adjust for finger size. Atop the ring is the head of a creature resembling a friendly lion, whose mane merges into the overall shape of the ring. In my early teens, I noticed my father stopped wearing the ring, and left it in a small wooden box, seemingly forgotten. There were a handful of items throughout my childhood I associated with my father: shirts with large pictures of lions or Bob Marley, a red beret which I dubbed 'The Apple Hat', a necklace with beads the colours of the Rastafarian flag, and the lion ring. Considering my father's clothes were far too big for me, the necklace too long, and the beret not suiting my head, I decided to ask my father if I could keep the ring for myself, seeing as he clearly had no use for it. He looked over his shoulder and told me I could have it. Perhaps he didn't think much of it, but at the time, I felt slightly closer to him, as we now shared something: we had both worn the same ring …

The practice of storytelling as a way of passing down history and shaping identity isn't exclusive to the griots. As people living through experiences, remembering and reminiscing on what we have seen and heard, we are all human archives. The stories we hear from others, the ones which move us, are in part preserved within the library atop our shoulders.

> The ring is a motif that will gain significance and meaning as the essay continues.

> Specific details help to bring the writer's father to life for the reader.

> Badi uses elements of creative writing, such as this vivid metaphor likening our memories of the stories we have heard to the books in a library.

Explore essays

ACTIVITY 10.8

1 The essay excerpt above reflects the ideas and perspective of the author. Badi writes on something he is passionate about: the importance of storytelling. Brainstorm and list some hobbies, passions or skills of your own that you could write an essay about.

2 Highlight or make notes on any elements of creative writing you see in this essay, such as figurative language, symbols and descriptive language.

3 Choose one of your topics from question 1 and write an outline for an essay.

Speeches

A speech can be a highly persuasive form of text; it can also be entertaining and informative. The best speeches captivate an audience and draw on the experiences and emotions of audience members to pull them into the speaker's world. Speeches might use visual aids such as slides, photographs or short videos, but the power of the speech relies on the written text and the manner in which the speaker delivers it.

To write an effective speech, you will need to research your topic and develop an angle or approach that will be both entertaining and compelling. This means that a

Features and conventions of speeches

» Vary in length from a few minutes up to an hour or more
» Are clear and compelling
» Often use persuasive techniques and appeals
» Express a view on something the speaker is passionate about
» May indicate tone, pitch and other notes on delivery in the written text

speech is a good choice of text type if the issue is one about which you are already passionate and have a certain amount of background knowledge. Quality research might include looking up stories that you can use as anecdotes, drawing on your own experiences, and finding facts and statistics that support your argument.

Speeches are designed to be delivered orally. They should be written in a way that makes them clear and powerful when spoken aloud. This might include using shorter, more impactful sentences and repetition. The rule of three, in which ideas are grouped together in a trio, such as 'I came, I saw, I conquered', is a form of repetition commonly used in persuasive writing and speeches.

Remember that speakers should vary their pace and intonation, so include features (such as rhetorical questions) that will help them to do this. You might even include in the script some instructions on how the speech should be delivered – places to pause, for instance, or to use a more urgent tone.

Example: Emma McKeon's acceptance speech

The following excerpt is from swimmer Emma McKeon's acceptance speech when she was announced as the Young Australian of the Year in 2024.

Scan the code or click **here** to see McKeon deliver the speech.

I want young kids to know that I was once in the same position that they are now, hoping and dreaming of one day doing something big. I want to have an impact on people's lives by encouraging them to push hard and go after their dreams and what they are passionate about. Don't be afraid to take on hard things and set aspirational goals that at times might be scary – this is how we push ourselves to achieve our dreams.

I want to share three things tonight that I've learned across my years in sport and that I remind myself of daily to keep me going. Number one is: don't worry about the time it will take to achieve your dreams. Obstacles and failures are all part of it when you're aiming for something high – they are what build the character to take you to even higher levels if you allow it.

The second thing: be the best that you can be. We can't control the results of other people; we can only control the effort that we put in ourselves.

And three: don't be afraid to have big dreams. We are capable of far more than we realise.

> Repetition of this phrase helps to focus the audience's attention on the speaker's aims, and helps to give the speech coherence and focus.

> Acknowledging that goal-setting can be 'scary' helps to present McKeon as relatable, despite her exceptional achievements.

> Numbering her points helps the audience to follow McKeon's speech easily.

> In addition to her use of the second-person 'you', McKeon uses inclusive language to support her contention that her audience, like her, can achieve their dreams if they follow her advice.

> Directly addressing the audience with the words 'you' and 'your' helps them to feel invested in and engaged by McKeon's advice.

Explore speeches

1 McKeon presents advice for following one's dreams, drawing on her experiences as a successful athlete. In a small group or as a class, discuss a topic or issue related to the key idea you are studying, and contribute personal stories that are relevant to it.

2 McKeon structures her speech around three main pieces of advice she wants to give her audience. Write three pieces of advice or information you could use in a speech on the topic you discussed in question 1.

3 Look at the table of persuasive techniques and appeals on pages 201–6. Plan a speech on the topic you used in question 1, making a note of where you will use various persuasive techniques or appeals.

Emma McKeon after winning a gold medal in the 50-metre freestyle event at the Tokyo Olympics / Alamy Stock Photo

Opinion pieces

An opinion piece presents a strong opinion on a topic or issue, supported by evidence. It may be written by an in-house journalist or by a person associated with a relevant industry. For example, the writer of an opinion piece in a sports journal might work for the publication or might be an academic in the sports industry or a sportsperson. An opinion piece is generally written by someone who has strong views on the issue and a personal and/or professional interest.

Opinion pieces are written to present an argument with the intention of persuading the reader to agree with the author's point of view. Some publications will indicate if the author is a stakeholder in the issue, for example because of where they work, and therefore might be presenting a biased point of view. Others will not include this information, and the reader will need to find this out for themselves.

Opinion pieces can be found in traditional print journalism (newspapers and magazines) and in online publications. If you choose to write an opinion piece, you should research your topic to ensure that you can find enough evidence to support your argument, and develop a clear and credible point of view.

Features and conventions of opinion pieces

» Have an introduction-body-conclusion structure
» Establish the issue and the writer's main argument early in the text
» Are well researched and supported by evidence
» Use persuasive language and strategies

Example: 'Why the AFL draft needs an overhaul to a two-tier system'

The following excerpt is the opening of an opinion piece by sports writer Michael Gleeson. It was published in *The Age* and argues that the Australian Football League (AFL) should change its draft system to better protect young players.

Why the AFL draft needs an overhaul to a two-tier system

The opinion – that the AFL needs a new two-tier draft system – is clearly stated in the headline.

Before they find out their ATAR scores, hundreds of young footballers' futures will already be decided.

The AFL's national draft in November will decide the immediate futures of these schoolboys who are barely men.

Barely 18, they will attend, or log in to, a national draft at which dreams will either be realised or dashed, bags packed for cross-country flights or cross-city drives, or, more commonly, thrown against a wall in despair.

If lucky enough to be chosen in the draft, they will enter an AFL industry of acute pressure. The demand to perform is urgent, the analysis of individual sporting performance granular, the intensity of social media attention sudden and unsparing.

Overwhelmingly, the teenagers arriving in the system are not physically, emotionally or mentally ready for the pervasive intensity of the game. Many 18-year-olds struggle with the change from school routines to university or work, let alone a professional football environment.

The mental health problems of footballers are real and now well-known.

AFL chief executive Andrew Dillon wrote in his foreword to the *AFL Industry Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy* for 2024–27: "Mental health remains the number one issue of importance for our players".

And yet kids enter a system, get paid a relatively large amount of money, suddenly find themselves minor celebrities whose work performances are also scrutinised and as an industry, we wonder why they have high levels of mental health problems.

There is a persuasive argument to lift the draft age by at least by a year, but preferably two, to 20.

Sentences and paragraphs tend to be short so it is easier for the reader to take in the main points and ideas.

The writer uses emotive, even lyrical language to garner audience sympathy for young footballers.

Evidence in the form of expert testimony is cited to bolster the writer's argument.

The writer's main contention is reiterated and presented as a stand-alone paragraph, to give it weight and emphasis.

Explore opinion pieces

1 Choose an issue you are passionate about that has two sides. Brainstorm everything you currently know about both sides of the issue. Summarise your information in a table like this one.

Issue:	
Side 1:	**Side 2:**
<reasons and evidence for side 1>	<reasons and evidence for side 2>

2 Choose a side to argue, and research additional evidence to reinforce what you already know. Try to find facts and statistics, quotes from important people in the field/industry, and emotional or 'human' stories that back up your argument.

3 Write a compelling headline for your opinion piece, or write the entire opinion piece (700–900 words).

Hybrid texts

Hybrid texts blend one or more text types together to create an interesting or unique form. Using the text types discussed in this chapter, here are a few examples of hybrid texts you could use in your own writing.

- a **podcast episode** that is a self-contained **short story**
- a **recount** told in a **letter**
- a **script** for a televised **speech**
- a **blog post** presented as a **diary entry**
- a **memoir** read aloud as a **podcast episode**
- an **essay** written for a **blog**
- an **opinion piece** contained within a **short story** (as part of a frame narrative)
- a **biography** presented as a **long-form essay** on a **blog**

Features and conventions of hybrid texts

» Blend together the conventions of other text types

» Might cross over genres as well as forms

» Are often deliberately constructed to be unique or surprising

Hybrid texts will contain elements and conventions of the text types they blend together. For example, a hybrid text made up of a diary entry and a blog may contain the personal, reflective language of the diary as well as the understanding that the audience consists of online readers who will 'like' and 'share' the text. Consider how writing a diary for the blog audience is different from writing a personal diary intended only for yourself.

Hybrid texts can be very successful as they have the potential to be unique and interesting. Many writers blend the conventions of forms and genres to produce their personal styles. Once you have read a few examples of different texts on your chosen idea or issue, you may notice that they are actually hybrids of two or more text types.

Scan the code or click **here** to view a video explaining hybrid texts.

Example: *The Simple Gift*

The following extract is from Steven Herrick's verse novel *The Simple Gift*. A verse novel is a hybrid form because it combines elements of a novel, which usually tells a story in prose, and elements of poetry such as short lines and unconventional punctuation.

Bendarat   *Billy*

Dawn is fog-closed and cold.
A ute bounces along the dirt road
beside the track,
its lights dancing in the mist.
I see a street sign,
'Bendarat – five kilometres'.
I pack my bag quickly,
warm my hands
close to the heater
and wait for the three whistles
to dump me in another State,
miles from home
miles from school,
with the sun finally
lifting the fog
as the train slows
and Ernie whistles good luck.
I climb down,
wave ahead,
and walk slowly
into Bendarat.

The author indicates the name of the speaker using a different font from the rest of the text; experimenting with visual elements like fonts and layout is more typical of verse than novels.

The author describes the setting using complete sentences, typical of a novel.

Imagery is a feature of both poetry and imaginative prose.

The author creates a sense of the speaker's character and of events unfolding, typical of a prose narrative.

The verse form is evident in the short lines with unconventional punctuation – in prose there would be a comma or conjunction after 'home' to make the sentence grammatically correct.

Explore hybrid texts

ACTIVITY 10.11
GROUP

1 In a small group, choose two of the examples of hybrid texts in the list on page 137 and discuss how an author might blend the conventions of the text types. Which conventions would be kept? Which would have to be abandoned? Refer to the sections earlier in the chapter for the features and conventions of each text type.

2 Select an idea or issue you have been studying. Which two or more text types could you blend to make a hybrid text about this idea or issue?

3 List the conventions of your two favourite text types (at least five conventions for each). Use this brainstorm as the basis for planning a hybrid text of 700–900 words.

CRAFTING YOUR RESPONSE

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Working with titles and stimulus material
- Pulling it together
- Reflecting on the writing process
- Editing and proofreading checklists
- Sample responses

This chapter guides you through the process of crafting your own texts, helping you to maintain an awareness of your audience, purpose and context. It also explains the reflective commentary, in which you reflect on the choices you made during the writing process, that forms part of the assessment task for the 'Crafting texts' area of study.

The annotated sample responses at the end of this chapter provide examples of texts crafted for a specific purpose. Read the annotations to see how each text uses vocabulary, structure, language features and text conventions to produce a coherent and effective piece of writing.

Working with titles and stimulus material

In Section B of the end-of-Year-12 exam, you will be provided with a title that you must use for your written text. You will also be provided with a set of stimuli, which could include quotations, poems and images. You will need to respond to at least one of these stimuli.

In your classwork, SACs and exams in Units 1 and 2, you might also work with titles and various kinds of stimulus material. It is important to engage with this material in your writing, and to make connections between the title you are given, the stimuli and the framework you are studying.

Responding to a title

The title you might be given to shape your written text around will usually be open-ended, allowing you to take your writing in many possible directions. You will still be able to choose the form, target audience and purpose of your piece, as well as the main focus. But this focus should clearly connect to the title; whatever choices you make regarding other elements of your text, your piece will need to clearly show that you have engaged with and thought carefully about this title.

A good way to begin exploring a title is to brainstorm all the words and ideas it calls to mind. For instance, if you were studying the framework 'Writing about food' and were given the title 'Flavours of Home', you might create a mind map of associations like the following.

```
culture    gatherings    conflict    nostalgia    memories
                            │
                      Flavours
                      of Home
                            │
 evocative aromas   love and warmth   family meals   deprivation
```

Creating a mind map or list of ideas like this will help to stimulate your thinking about the title in relation to the framework you are studying. A useful next step is to choose two or three of the words or phrases in your mind map and jot down some possible ways in which you could turn these into a written text. For example, drawing on the mind map above, you might come up with:

<div align="center">

family meals

↓

</div>

- an explanatory text that explores the history and significance of gathering together as a family for the evening meal
- an entertaining memoir about a particular family meal for a special occasion, when things did not go as planned
- a short story told from the point of view of a character who feels like the odd one out in their family, a feeling that is most pronounced when the family members gather around the table for dinner each night

<div align="center">

deprivation

↓

</div>

- an opinion piece advocating for socially isolated, elderly, ill and unhoused people to be provided not only with enough food to eat but also with more opportunities to eat communally, to improve their mental, emotional and physical health
- a reflective essay from the point of view of someone who grew up provided with plenty of food but with little love associated with its cooking and eating
- a script for an episode of a podcast devoted to the challenges and joys of cooking on a tight budget

Whatever text idea you decide to develop, you should plan it around the title and keep this title in mind as you write. Ways to ensure that you have adequately responded to the title include:

- having each paragraph or section of your piece focus on a different aspect of the idea in the title
- incorporating the title word/s in your written piece (although this alone is not enough to show your engagement with it)
- using the title as a symbol or motif within the text
- having a character or other individual in your text directly discuss or refer to the idea in the title
- opening or concluding with explicit reflection on your interpretation of the title.

Once you have drafted your text, read it over, keeping the title firmly in mind. Does the text clearly connect with and address the idea in the title? Will the person reading your work be able to identify the connections easily? If not, you might need to revise your work to make your engagement with the title clearer.

Practise working with titles

ACTIVITY 11.1

1 GROUP Work with a partner to generate a set of five titles each. The titles should all relate to the framework you are studying and allow for a range of possible written responses.

2 GROUP Swap titles with your partner. Choose one of the titles your partner has suggested and follow the brainstorming process outlined on page 140.

3 Write a detailed plan for one of the writing ideas you generated for question 2.

4 GROUP Swap plans with your partner and provide each other with feedback regarding how effectively you incorporated the title.

Responding to stimulus material

You can use a similar process to the one described above for working with titles, to begin exploring connections between the stimulus material, the framework and your own thoughts. Begin by selecting one stimulus, and make notes around it identifying the associations and emotions it evokes, the ideas it raises and your own responses to these ideas and emotions.

Next, choose one or two of these ideas and brainstorm some possible texts you could develop. (See the example for titles on page 140.)

Possible ways to respond to stimulus material are shown in the table below.

Responding to text	Responding to an image
Include a quotation or line of poetry in your text. Perhaps it is spoken by a character in a creative text at a crucial point in the narrative.	Use the image as the basis for your text, adopt the setting and characters/elements it presents, and fill in the backstory with additional details of your own invention.
Reflect on an idea in the poem, possibly exploring its relevance to an experience you have had or an observation you have made.	Speculate about the events or situation that might have led to the moment captured in an image, or that might have happened after this moment.
Respond directly to the idea in the quote or extract in a piece whose primary purpose is to argue. Present your own opinion on the idea, unpacking it in detail and drawing in evidence from your study of the framework and mentor texts.	Identify the main mood or atmosphere of the image and aim to evoke this through words. Try coming up with a list of adjectives that describe the image, then include these in your text.
Create a persona who might have spoken or written a stimulus quotation or poem.	Think about the message or point of view that is being conveyed by the image, and write a persuasive piece in which you argue for or against this idea.

Remember, though, that the most important thing is to show your engagement with the framework and title you are given. The role of the stimulus material is to generate ideas relevant to these two elements. If your piece does not explore and develop an idea relevant to the framework and driven by the title you are presented with, it will not successfully meet the requirements of the task.

Practise responding to stimulus material

ACTIVITY 11.2

1 Create or curate (select) a set of stimuli relevant to the framework you are studying. Aim for three stimulus items, consisting of:

- a quotation or statement
- an image
- a poem or short extract from a text.

2 **GROUP** Swap the stimuli from question 1 with a partner. Complete a table like the one below, generating ideas for possible responses to each of the stimuli from your partner.

Responding to the quotation or statement	Responding to the image	Responding to the poem / text extract

3 Choose one of the text options you came up with in question 2. Write an original text of between 300 and 500 words.

4 Take it in turns to explain to each other how you went about responding to the stimuli. In what ways did your partner's use of stimulus material surprise, challenge and/or inspire you?

GROUP

Pulling it together

As you are planning and drafting your written pieces, you will be focusing on creating well-structured, engaging texts that explore your key idea, respond to a title and stimulus, and are rewarding to read. You will also need to show an awareness of the context of your pieces, their intended audience and the purpose you are hoping to achieve. The following sections help you to pull together your understanding of these core concepts and address them in your writing.

Context

The context of a text is everything that is happening around it and that helps to shape both the text and its reception. Broadly, there are historical, social and cultural factors that affect everyone in a society, as well as more specific factors that vary from person to person. (See pages 10–13 for more on the different types of context.)

When crafting your texts, you must consider your own context and the context of your audience. You also need to think about the context in which you envisage your texts being published, produced or presented. This includes the mode (e.g. written or spoken), the medium (e.g. print or digital) and the type of publication or website (which in turn can determine the target audience).

Of course, you might not actually produce a podcast, deliver a speech or create a website for your blog post, and the assessment of your texts will be focused on the writing. Nevertheless, you will need to show your awareness of the way in which your text is intended to be delivered and received, for example by including notes in your podcast script to show where music or sound effects will occur, or by making your speech easy to read aloud and to listen to.

Link your writing with your context

ACTIVITY 11.3

1 With a partner, discuss how one of your mentor texts reveals aspects of the social, cultural and historical context in which it was developed. Identify also ways in which the writer has taken into account the publishing context of the text.

GROUP

2 List four aspects of your context that are reflected in the texts you have written or are developing. List two from your context of culture (your wider historical, social and cultural context) and two from your own personal context.

3 Explain how one of the factors you listed for question 2 has influenced your writing.

Audience

The intended audience of your texts is determined by you. Although you will be submitting your writing to your teacher or assessor, they will assume the role of whichever audience you decide on. You will need to think about the expectations of your audience so you can shape your writing appropriately; your task as the writer is to engage your audience and guide them through your material.

ACTIVITY 11.4

Link your writing with your audience

1 List five topics you may wish to write about or are developing texts on. The topics should be relevant to the framework you are studying.

2 For each of these topics, write a paragraph that describes the audience you would like to address and the kind of impact you want to have on this audience. Consider how you would like your audience to think or feel about the topic, and the kind of language that would present the topic in a way that is interesting and relevant to them.

Purpose

The purpose of your text is its end goal – what you are aiming to achieve. The four broad purposes for your writing are summarised in the table below (see Chapter 9 for detailed explanations and examples). Your purpose might be much more specific than these – for example, writing that argues might seek to encourage the audience to act in a certain way; writing that expresses might aim to entertain, terrify, unsettle or reassure them.

Any of the four broad purposes can be combined to create a text that has more than one purpose. You could, for example, create a reflective text that argues for a particular point of view.

Express	Explain	Reflect	Argue
Writing to express could explore story-telling to engage with experiences and ideas.	Writing to explain could explore causes and consequences of actions and events.	Writing to reflect could explore experiences of personal discovery and understanding.	Writing to argue could explore a point of view, take a stand or propose solutions.

ACTIVITY 11.5

Consider your purpose

1 For the following text types, develop topic ideas that combine two or more of the above purposes.

　a a short story

　b a letter to the editor

　c a personal letter

2 Using one of these topics, create a mind map exploring how each purpose might influence your writing. Consider the audience and any potential language choices you need to make.

3 For a text you are developing or have written, decide whether its main purpose is to express, explain, reflect or argue. Now see if you can state your purpose in a more specific, precise way. What do you want your readers to feel, think or do?

Text type

Once you've settled on a purpose for your writing, you can select an appropriate text type. Different text types suit different purposes. If you're looking to express you might decide to write a short story; a personal essay might suit a reflective purpose.

Chapter 10 covers a number of different text types and their conventions in depth, but below is a summary to start you thinking about how you might approach your text.

Express	Explain	Reflect	Argue
blog	blog	autobiography	editorial
play script	essay (expository)	diary / journal entries	essay (argumentative)
podcast script	feature article	essay (reflective)	letter to the editor
poem	podcast script	memoir	opinion piece
short story	report	speech (monologue)	speech

ACTIVITY 11.6

Consider your text type

1 For one of your created texts, identify the text type you chose to write, and explain why you made this choice.

2 List five features or conventions of the text type you chose to use.

3 Explain how you used each of these features or conventions to help you achieve your purpose.

Language

The vocabulary choices you make as you craft your text will be determined by your purpose, your intended audience and your context. The authors of your mentor texts have all carefully chosen their language to create a distinct effect on the audience they expect to read their work; as you study these texts, examine the authors' language choices and note any words and phrases you feel would be effective in your own writing.

Language choice is also about the register or formality of the words you choose. As you are writing, think about how your audience will respond to your language, and how appropriate your language register is for the context you are writing for and the purpose you want to achieve.

Link your language choices to audience, purpose and context

1 For one of the texts you are crafting, write a short paragraph explaining which language register you will use and why it is appropriate for your audience. (See pages 99–100 for an explanation of language register.)

2 What is the purpose of your text? Read through your draft. Think of three words or phrases and three language features you haven't used that would help your piece achieve its purpose, then add them into your draft.

3 Which text type are you writing and where do you envisage your text being published, produced or presented? List three elements of the language you have used in your text that are appropriate to this context.

Reflecting on the writing process

A key part of this area of study is writing a reflection on the process of crafting your texts. Like the mentor texts you study, your own texts will be deliberately constructed; you will include certain elements and choose particular words for specific reasons. Your reflective commentary is your chance to explain these reasons.

Essentially, the reflective commentary is an analysis of your own work – you will be explaining your use of language and structure in terms of the purpose, audience and context of your writing. The *how* and *why* of your choices are important. You can also reflect on aspects that you found challenging and on things that you found inspiring and useful – such as the title and stimulus material you engaged with (if applicable) and your mentor texts.

Your reflective commentary is all about you and your writing, so you will be able to write in the first person ('I chose', 'my decision') and to use language that shows your strong engagement with the writing process. In Unit 3, the suggested length for the written commentary is 400 words, so you might want to aim for approximately this length in Unit 1 also.

Scan the code or click here to download a summary sheet that you can use to make and organise notes for your reflective commentary.

The following sentence starters will help you to describe your writing processes, and avoid simply describing the writing itself. You can vary these to suit your particular text type.

The idea encapsulated in the title inspired my focus on …
I decided to write a … (text type) because it allowed me to …
I chose to use the words … (examples of vocabulary choices) in order to make my reader understand / feel / interested in …
By opening with a … and moving on to … I hoped to lead my reader towards a …

To make my writing more colourful / engaging / persuasive, I used … (language features)
I found inspiration for my piece by reading …
By closely studying … (mentor text) I was able to see a way to …
I knew my audience of … would need … so I included …
My purpose was to express the idea that / inform my audience about / reflect on the experience of / argue the case that …
Although I knew how to begin and end, I found it hard to approach the middle sections in a way that would …
To solve the problem of … I decided to …

Explain authorial choices

ACTIVITY 11.8

1 Using one of your mentor texts, assume the role of the author and write a paragraph explaining your authorial choices. Aim to cover two or more of the following elements: vocabulary, text structures, language features, and conventions of the text type. Your explanations should be in terms of what you see as the author's purpose and their intended audience.

2 Consider the title of the text. Write a short paragraph explaining why the writer might have chosen this title and how it encapsulates or connects to the ideas the text explores.

Sample reflective commentary

The following reflective commentary accompanies the persuasive speech on pages 160–1.

For my speech, I adopted the persona of someone close to finishing their university degree. The speech addresses the key idea of writing about futures and focuses on the idea in the given title 'Finding the Path', which suggests the need to make important decisions. I wanted to capture the uncertainty about the future that so many school leavers feel. The persona I created is a few years older than me, which enabled me to explore the reality of having finished school and experienced a few years of work as well as further study. This persona also suited the context of my audience, who I thought would react better to someone near their age.

The purpose of my speech is to convince students who are finishing high school of the benefits of taking a gap year. I used a range of arguments and strategies to help sway their opinion on this issue. I opened the speech by addressing them directly in a very relaxed, conversational way, so that they would feel comfortable with the speaker and receptive to the speaker's message. I then moved on to discussing the students' current situation, emphasising that the topic would be directly relevant to their lives.

Throughout my presentation I adopted language that would appeal to my audience. I used casual, colloquial language such as 'uni' instead of the more

> Discusses the choice of a persona.

> Relates the choice of persona to the target audience.

> Discusses purpose and audience.

> Considers the choice of language register, supported with examples and an explanation of why this language register was used.

▶

formal 'university', and everyday expressions such as 'I was over it'. The reason for this was to engage with the audience and to make my point about the value of a gap year more relateable, and therefore more realistic and plausible.

I used supporting arguments that my audience would find appealing and thus convincing. I included information about increased government payments because income is always a concern for students who are trying to juggle work and study commitments. I also included statistics about first-year dropout rates and shared an anecdote about not really knowing the correct university course to choose, since Year 12 students would hope to avoid problems such as these. I ended my speech with a warning that if students do go to uni without really knowing what they want, then it could result in them having a HELP debt without the benefit of a qualification. By presenting several problems my audience might easily face in the near future, I was able to offer the idea of taking a gap year (or two) as an attractive and effective solution.

In keeping with the informal language style, I envisage this speech being delivered in a lighthearted manner, appropriate to the audience and context.

> Discusses the use of supporting arguments and evidence, consistent with the purpose of arguing for a position.

> Considers aspects of delivery, showing an understanding of the mode (spoken).

Examine the reflective commentary

ACTIVITY 11.9

GROUP Answers to the following questions can be discussed in pairs or small groups.

1. Find three places in the reflective commentary where the writer refers to the use of structure in the speech. Is the use of structure clearly related to the writer's purpose?

2. In the third paragraph of the reflective commentary, the writer discusses language choices. Read the speech on pages 160–1 and find some examples of other language elements (e.g. word choices, persuasive language features) that could have been commented on.

3. Although this commentary identifies a number of relevant features of the speech, it doesn't include many comments on the writing process itself. Think of some statements you could include to show a stronger engagement with the process of drafting and refining the speech.

Editing and proofreading checklists

The process of writing, from planning through drafting, refining and completing, is at the centre of this area of study. This means that your editing skills are particularly important. When you have the opportunity to draft and rewrite, you should scrutinise your work as critically as you can, and take advantage of any feedback you receive from your teacher or other readers, to add clarity and interest to your writing.

The following checklists will help you to focus on specific elements – don't try to check for every element on a single read-through, as you are bound to miss some.

Content

- ☐ The text engages closely with the idea/s in the given title (if applicable).
- ☐ The text explores an aspect of your key idea.
- ☐ The text engages with any stimulus material provided.
- ☐ The idea that you are seeking to express is clear and understandable to your audience.
- ☐ Your text follows the conventions and includes the features of your chosen text type.
- ☐ The content is appropriate for its context, including the context in which it might be published, produced or presented.

Structure

- ☐ The text is cohesive and well organised.
- ☐ The beginning engages the reader and sets up the text's main concerns.
- ☐ The ending leaves your reader with a strong impression or feeling.
- ☐ The structure is consistent with the text type.
- ☐ The structure helps the text to achieve its purpose.

Language

- ☐ Your language choices are appropriate to your purpose, audience and context.
- ☐ Sentence structures are varied and effective.
- ☐ Your vocabulary is varied and precise.
- ☐ Punctuation (e.g. capital letters, commas) is correct throughout.
- ☐ Grammar is correct throughout (dialogue or narrative voice can be exceptions, if everyday speech is being represented).
- ☐ Spelling is correct throughout.

Sample responses

This section includes annotated examples of responses for each of the four purposes discussed in Chapter 9. The pieces also respond to given titles and stimulus material. Read the reflective commentaries to see how the students have responded to titles and stimuli; how vocabulary, text structures and language features have been deliberately used; and, in some cases, how mentor texts have provided models and inspiration.

Writing to express

Telling stories is one of the most common forms of writing and communicating. Stories express hopes and fears, portray diverse people and situations, and help us to make sense of our experiences. Keys to successful storytelling include using a wide vocabulary effectively to bring characters, settings and situations to life, and creating a compelling narrative structure.

The following short story addresses the idea of writing about friendship.

Title: 'Friends Forever'

Stimulus 1

'Friendship is compromise and acceptance.'

Stimulus 2

Stimulus 3

'There are parts of the puzzle that remain unseen.

There are parts of the picture that could never be.

There are good friends watching silently.

There are those that you are yet to meet.

Who knows who might be watching out for you?'

(Clare Bowditch, 'Who Knows Who?')

For such a time you have waited. Waited for someone. You have left room for them by your side, set a seat for them at your table, held space for them in your heart. You have heard the saying that nature abhors a vacuum, and you have always known that if you waited, if you made a place for them, someone would arrive to fill it. For so long you have felt empty and solitary, but with the certain knowledge that it would not be forever.

Behind a closed door, around a corner, at the next bus stop. Somewhere.

It is not as though you have always been lonely. As a child you were happy, had playmates, explored the world, learned what it was to give and receive kindness, and to care for others. To put others ahead of yourself, and to feel valued and appreciated when others did you favours or paid you compliments. As you grew older you worked at building and protecting those connections. You shared giggles and tears. But some people moved away, some people changed, some people were lost. And then you were left without. Without the comfort of someone who knew you more closely than you knew yourself. Without the habits and in-jokes and shortcuts and routines of someone who always assumed you would default to their company. Without the reassurance of knowing someone was there for you through thick or thin. And you longed for all those things. You longed for that privilege and responsibility.

You longed for a best friend.

For such a time you have longed. Never knowing when that person might appear. Never knowing where you would meet them. Never knowing who they would be. But always knowing, always, that they existed, and always ready for the moment when your lives would intersect.

And they will. Soon. Maybe sooner than you know.

Did you know that they think of you too, and hold a place for you in their lives? Imagine that person imagining you now: waiting for you to arrive in their life the way you are waiting for them.

Soon. That person is coming. The person you will be able to laugh hysterically with and share moments of grief and loss with. The person whose companionship will always be there when you need it, and who will always need you too.

Here's how it's going to happen.

At a party, you will be introduced to someone. The cousin of a workmate. You'll connect straight away over the fact that the music is too loud, and you mishear each other's names. That will make you both smile because you'll both have been feeling out of place and suddenly you will both be at ease.

You'll walk outside to a place where you can hear each other talk and you'll ask each other a million questions and you'll find out that you have so many things in common: not just that you grew up in neighbouring suburbs, not just that you both love playing soccer, not just that your favourite play is *Much Ado About Nothing*, not just that you both studied Chinese at school and did an exchange semester in China in Year Ten, not just that you love experimenting with cooking new recipes, not just that you each have pet chickens. But also that you both really care about human rights. And that you both think it's more important to be funny than to be rich. And that you both wish you could have been astronauts. And so much more.

And as the months go by, after that first meeting, you will also discover so many things about each other that are completely divergent. And that will delight you just as much as the things you have in common. You will learn things from each other and challenge each other to understand new ideas about the world and to question and stand up for – or sometimes relinquish – your own long-held beliefs. You will respect each other's differences because ultimately you share all the things that matter: a belief in making the world better, in being kind to those around you, in doing your best.

One day, years later, you will discover something else about that person, and it will scare you, because you will wonder how to keep believing in them, knowing what you know. You'll think differently of them, wondering what could have made them do the thing they did. It will take time for you to come to terms with it, and then you will take the big step of asking them about it, after weeks and weeks of not talking to each other. Weeks that fill you both with sadness and regret. And you will come to understand a more complicated story, and realise that things are not black and white, and that sometimes people make the wrong choices. And you will forgive, because what you value and love about that person is much more significant than the errors they might have made in their past. And because you know that they will forgive you too, if you ever make a mistake.

You will go back to the familiar, comforting relationship you have come to trust and rely on, for many more years, until both of you are so old you can barely remember a time before your lives crossed paths.

For such a time you have been lonely, knowing there is there is still someone you are yet to meet. Hold on. Soon, soon. The time is almost here.

Reflective commentary

My purpose in this text was to tell a simple, familiar story – of two people meeting and becoming best friends – using an unusual tone and style in order to make the reader consider how remarkable something as common as making friends can be. By using the second person and the future tense, I created an unexpected voice, which contrasted with the sometimes-predictable ideas that can be associated with the idea of friendship. The underlying theme of waiting to meet a friend was inspired by the title I was given ('Friends Forever') and Stimulus 3's notion that 'There are those that you are yet to meet' (echoed in my story's final paragraph).

I initially set myself the challenge to avoid using the word 'friend' (or obvious synonyms), to see how I could construct and express the idea and mood of friendship without using the word, instead using other poetic language that described the functions and roles a friend can fulfil, such as: 'to give and receive kindness … to feel valued and appreciated'; 'you have so many things in common', 'reassurance', 'comfort', 'trust', and 'respect each other's differences' (a phrase inspired by the title, as forever friendship inevitably involves some challenges and conflicts along the way, and by Stimulus 1 and its reminder that friendship can involve both work and generosity). Setting this challenge helped me to write carefully about the meanings of friendship and to think of different ways to express ideas rather than relying on clichés or overused sentimental phrases. However, it became difficult to sustain and so to prevent ambiguity I chose to use the word 'friend' a single time, to accentuate the concept's significance to the story. This gave me permission to create a strong intentional moment, forming structural emphasis by isolating it to a single short paragraph.

I used Stimulus 1, along with the sense of tension inherent in Stimulus 2 created by the sole figure who appears to be waiting for company, as a reminder for myself that

all short stories need to contain some form of conflict, and I included this traditional element of the text type by introducing the unnamed negative discovery about the friend in the third-last paragraph. (I chose to leave the discovery unspecified as a way to engage the reader's imagination and curiosity.) This added a sense of discomfort to contrast with the fond, emotional and poetic language choices in the rest of the piece. These language choices develop the heightened emotional and symbolic tone of the story and include fragment sentences such as 'Maybe sooner than you know.', evocative verbs such as 'longing', repetition of phrases and sentence structures and even allusions to other literary texts such as a Shakespeare play.

Just as important as conflict in short stories is some form of resolution, and I made sure to include this in the second-last paragraph, while still retaining a small degree of intrigue in the final paragraph, leaving the reader with a sense of anticipation at the end of the story.

Examine the short story

ACTIVITY 11.10

1 Describe the likely intended audience for this short story. Give three pieces of evidence from the story to support your answer.

2 Writing to express often explores ideas and aspects of experience. What are three ideas or aspects of experience in this short story that the writer has explored?

3 Effective short stories contain strong descriptive writing that evokes a scene or a feeling in a few words. Find a descriptive sentence in this short story that you find especially effective and explain why you think it works so well.

4 Annotate the story, indicating how the writer has made particular choices to cater to a specific audience and achieve a particular purpose.

Scan the code or click **here** to view another sample response in the form of a short story.

Writing to explain

If your purpose is to explain something to your audience, you will want to leave them with new knowledge and understanding. Facts and information are essential, but a fluent, uncluttered style and a clear structure are also key elements of successful writing to explain.

The following sample response addresses the key idea of writing about food, and is in the form of a blog post.

Title: 'Food for Thought'

Stimulus 1

'We should enjoy food and have fun. It is one of the simplest and nicest pleasures in life.' (Julia Child)

Stimulus 2

Hey friends, welcome back to my blog. I know it's been a while since I've written, so thanks for sticking with me! I was pretty busy over the break, with lots of great family catch-ups and plenty of festive eating, so that's my excuse: too busy stuffing my face (and then recovering!) to get my fingers on the keyboard! Anyway, happy new year to you all.

One of my highlights from the festive season was all the delicious treats I got to eat, and only get to eat once a year, like my gran's tangy potato salad with the fresh garden herbs. And then there are the desserts – like my Uncle Max's amazing mud cake. OMG, my mouth is watering just THINKING about that fudge sauce he makes for it! The warm oozing chocolate with the caramel chips mixed in … okay, don't even get me started on the desserts.

But here's the thing. Not everyone has a great time eating over the holidays. Today I want to write about something a bit more serious than my normal blogging fare (pun intended). I want to tell you all a story. A story about what it can be like when eating *isn't* fun. When it's scary and challenging and a long way from being 'one of the … nicest pleasures in life'. A story about coping in a world where most of the people around you spend their morning thinking about what's for lunch, and their afternoon thinking about what to make for dinner. I want to tell you a story about getting through big celebration meals and special family occasions that focus on eating, when you just wish you could go outside and play and think about the rest of your body instead of your mouth and your tummy and how worried you feel.

A story about my little brother.

When my brother was young, he was called a 'fussy eater', and my parents struggled every day to get enough nutrition into him once he started on solid food. At primary school he was bullied because of it, and teachers told him he needed to make an effort and toughen up. Sometimes they'd keep him in at lunchtime until he'd finished whatever was in his lunchbox. I know they meant well. I know they wanted to make sure he was getting enough food to stay healthy, and they wanted to help him overcome his pickiness. One time, I snuck in through the classroom window and ate his sandwich for him so he would be allowed out to play with his friends instead of having to sit there miserably staring at food he couldn't bear the thought of.

Loads of people are fussy about what they eat. Kids especially. Sometimes it's a phase, sometimes it's an attitude or a behavioural problem, sometimes it's a reflection of other fears or worries, sometimes it's a normal part of development and kids grow out of it (although some adults are picky eaters too!). But sometimes, like for my little bro, it's something else. Sometimes it could be an eating disorder like ARFID: Avoidant/Restrictive Food Intake Disorder.

ARFID is not super common – around one in 300 Australians is diagnosed with it, and even within that, there are different varieties. Nobody knows exactly what causes it. And while it's classified as an eating disorder, it's different from some of the more well-known ones like anorexia nervosa because it isn't related to body image. It's also not necessarily related to other psychological conditions or neurodivergences, although it can be. I'm guessing heaps of you have never even heard of it.

And that's why I wanted to talk about it here. I'm sick of people judging my brother, not understanding his experience. I wish people had a bit more empathy, and without knowledge it can be hard to do that.

For my brother, like lots of people with ARFID, it's not as simple as just disliking the taste of specific things. It's mostly to do with the actual sensory qualities: the textures, the temperatures, the smells, even the colours.

Obviously everyone has foods they don't enjoy the feel of in their mouth (I hate how slimy eggplant is!) but for most of us, it's just a couple of things and it doesn't mess up our social lives or our health. For my brother, it's nearly everything: there are only a few 'safe foods' he feels ok to eat. And those don't give him a great range of nutrition. He mostly feels comfortable with 'white' foods, which rules out a lot of vegetables, for example. So as a family, and with the help of his doctors, we've worked carefully for years to gently help him try more foods, to expand his options, and to lessen his distress about eating.

And as challenging as it is for us, it's *way* more challenging for him. Knowing how hard he works and how confronting things like big parties can be for him, I felt like it was my job to try to do something to make his world a little easier: to try to help even a few more people (that's you!) start to understand what food means to him. How scary it can feel, how much it can dominate his life, and how difficult it is when people don't understand that he's not just a 'fussy eater'.

So please, for my brother's sake, next time you're enjoying the wonderful treats that can be a part of the festive season for so many of us, just remember that one person's feast might be another person's fear.

Reflective commentary

The positive imagery and description in the two stimuli made me reflect on how much emphasis we put on eating, flavour and food in our society and how confronting this might be for people who find eating difficult or not enjoyable – whether this is due to allergies, personal preferences or cultural or religious dietary restrictions. Both the quote and the image assert the positives of food – socially, emotionally and nutritionally. The healthy eating pyramid, particularly, emphasises diversity of colour, texture and flavour, and I wanted to write a piece that explains what it can be like when these things have negative rather than positive connotations. The quote, too, was emotionally evocative and so I decided to directly incorporate part of it. The blog aims to challenge the stimuli's shared assumptions that food is a universally positive experience, and to explain an alternative perspective.

Writing about food often involves rich, descriptive sensory language that communicates the visceral experience of eating, and my second paragraph is a nod to this, demonstrating my ability to create vivid food-related imagery and to convey the bodily enjoyment of food. However, writing about food can also be more conceptual and theoretical and the title provided for the piece helped me to focus on this. For the majority of the text, I wanted to avoid the kinds of sensory descriptions that might prompt unpleasant associations for anyone who – like the little brother in the blog – has food sensitivities. In using language that discussed the concept of food (such as 'nutrition') rather than the food itself, I wanted to show that it is possible to be considerate of others' experiences with food, which is the blog-writer's purpose: to help people understand perspectives that might be very different from their own.

One challenge I faced was in choosing to explain someone else's experience instead of writing it from a first-person perspective of someone with ARFID. I didn't want to appropriate the experience of ARFID, as it is not something I have experienced personally, and instead was writing from a position of empathy after researching the condition. This decision came with a risk of being too removed from the emotional focus of the material, so in my language choices I worked at demonstrating the blog-writer's compassion, and desire to educate and inform readers accessibly. This involved a range of techniques including using a casual register as demonstrated in features such as the heavy use of exclamation marks, abbreviations like 'OMG' and using inclusive language such as 'our' to build rapport with the reader; including specific examples, such as the statistic regarding diagnosed cases; choosing vocabulary that emphasises a sensitive awareness of diverse experience; and explicitly stating that the purpose of the blog post was to help people become more empathetic.

Examine the blog post

1 Describe the intended audience for this piece as precisely as you can. Which features of the text make you think this?

2 How does the writer show that they have responded directly to the title they have been provided with?

3 The broad purpose of this piece is 'to explain'. What do you think the writer's more specific purpose in writing this blog post might be?

4 Identify one strength and one area for improvement for this text.

Writing to reflect

When writing to reflect, you are trying to make sense of and possibly learn from an event or experience, both for yourself and for your readers. Reflective writing is personal, so you can use the first person. The language does not need to be formal or technical, but an authentic voice and a strong engagement with the reader are features of successful reflective writing.

The following sample response is a hybrid piece of writing: it combines elements of writing to reflect and writing to express. It is in the form of an interview, focusing on the thoughts and feelings of the fictional interviewee. It explores the idea of writing about heroes.

Title: 'They Look Up to You, You Know'

Stimulus 1

'The only perfect people are the ones you don't know very well.'

Stimulus 2

School Newsletter: Hello and welcome to One-Question Wonder, where we nominate a member of our school community as our Local Legend each month, and ask them just one question to get to know them a bit better and understand what makes them tick. This week we're chatting to Chaz Hamilton: climate warrior, father, amateur French horn player, passionate Magpies supporter and, according to his own evaluation, 'not very good gardener'!

Chaz, the students have nominated you as a role model because of your volunteer work in climate action, and our question to you is: What does it mean to you to be a Local Legend?

Chaz: Well, first I'd like to thank you for selecting me as a Local Legend, I really appreciate the school community taking note of my work and acknowledging the importance of what people like me do. (And by 'people like me', I really mean *all* of us. Anyone can be an advocate!) I'm so grateful that environmental issues are a priority to the school my children attend.

But in fact, I feel conflicted about being considered anyone's hero. The work I do in advocating for climate action is driven by my passions and beliefs. It's not work that I do for glory, for recognition, for money, for awards, or any of those other external factors that motivate some people. For me, it's all about integrity: about making sure that at the end of every day I can be proud of my own actions and that those actions align with what I feel is most important in the world. And apart from basic honesty and kindness to others, to me the most important thing in the world is that we take care of what's around us and that we protect the future for our children. And that means putting pressure on our government and our industries to take measurable and sustainable action against climate risks. So, that's what I do as much of as I can.

I know that I'm a kind of hero to my kids – on my good days, that is! (On the other days I'm just Dad, the mean old guy who won't let them stay up late to play Minecraft until midnight.) And that's a kind of 'hero' I'm happy to be: I'm happy to be someone my kids look up to and feel positive about. They know me well, so it matters to me that they respect my decisions and choices in life.

But the idea of being idolised for my work makes me a little anxious. To me, considering someone a hero for what they do shifts the focus from the work itself to the individual, and that can be concerning for a number of reasons. It can mean that we build up unreasonable expectations of someone's capacities or even their responsibilities, and unreasonable expectations can never be fulfilled. So I worry that when we idolise people, even though we mean to celebrate their successes, we may actually be setting them up for failure.

In Australia, there's an urban myth that we as a society are constantly fulfilling the 'tall poppy syndrome' – defined by the Macquarie Dictionary as 'a desire to diminish in stature those people who have attained excellence'. And I think sometimes, unconsciously, when we idolise heroes, we are also at the same time preparing to tear them down. When people don't live up to the unrealistic standards we set for them, we no longer recognise the good that they do, and instead we about-face and criticise them.

I suppose what I'm saying is that I think we need to be very conscious of the risks involved in even playfully labelling people as 'Legends'. Please don't misunderstand me; I don't want to sound ungrateful. I'm thrilled that my local community respects

me and what I do. But I wanted to use this conversation to think about what we really mean when we say someone is a hero or a legend: what do we expect from them? How reasonable is our view? Maybe in some cases it's true, heroes are people who are a million times better than us in every way, and we *should* idolise them. But mostly, I think we should acknowledge that everyone is human. We all do great things, some on a bigger scale than others, and we all also have our imperfections – that's part of being human.

I hope that anyone who respects and values my work can see me as an inspiration for their own actions. Stand up and do what you believe, and do it for the right reasons. Argue for it if you need to, or nurture it if it's already happening. Looking back at my proudest moments, it's when I've watched my children or those around me become their own legends, and act with passion and integrity. Thanks again for believing I'm doing good things.

Reflective commentary

The set title for this piece prompted me to think about the pressures inherent in being considered a hero. We often associate heroes with such positive connotations: they're people we look up to for whatever reason; for example, because they've done or achieved things we wish we could do or achieve, they're people we idolise and wish we were like, they're celebrated and respected, and sometimes they're rich and famous. But the second half of the title ('You Know') to me implied a warning, and made me ponder the darker sides of hero worship culture: What are the things we should be careful about when we idolise someone? Stimulus 1 also connects with this idea, as it reminds us that sometimes when we admire others, we fail to see that they are still merely human – an idea my text discusses.

Rather than reflecting on these ideas from the perspective of the person 'Looking Up', which is the perspective I'm most familiar with in my own life, I wanted to experiment with writing in a persona of someone who has been elevated to the position of being considered a hero in some way. I still wanted to write from a relatable point of view, however, so instead of choosing to write as a mega celebrity, I chose an 'ordinary person' who has done admirable things and is appreciated by their local community. For this I was also inspired by Stimulus 2, the image illustrating how heroes can appear ordinary on the outside, but inside – as indicated by the shadow on the wall in the photo that shows the figure's inner superhero – they have remarkable qualities. The 'hero' in my piece talks about how he is also a hero to his own children, which is a kind of mundane, everyday way of being looked up to.

Although I was reflecting on some of the dangers of considering people to be heroes, I still chose positive vocabulary relating to particular value sets, in order to invite the reader to consider the qualities we associate with heroism, including terms such as 'integrity', 'passion', 'inspiration' and 'respect'. In some cases, I used these terms more than once (near the beginning and the end of the piece, to ensure they were not repetitive), to emphasise how central they are to the key idea of heroes.

Although the context is semi-informal (a school newsletter), I decided to use a standard register, even leaning at times towards the slightly formal (e.g. 'concerning for a number of reasons'). This echoes the fact that much of Chaz's climate advocacy work involves written communication with government and industry, where specific and professional language serve to convey his ideas most clearly and convincingly. It also reflects the seriousness of the environmental concerns underlying his role. However, the audience of students and families reading the newsletter would also expect an approachable tone, so I have avoided using jargon or overly complex or long sentences.

Examine the reflective piece

ACTIVITY 11.12

1 Underline or highlight three sentences that are typical of reflective writing.

2 List three effective vocabulary choices in this piece and explain why they are effective. In your answer, refer to the writer's purpose and the text's subject matter.

3 Describe the ways in which the writer has responded to the given stimuli.

Writing to argue

The purpose of persuasive writing is to convince the audience to agree with the writer's point of view. When writing to argue you will present a strong case using evidence and logic, as well as persuasive techniques such as emotive appeals. To present an effective argument, you will also order your points in a way that reinforces the strength of your case.

This sample response addresses the key idea of writing about futures. It is the transcript of a speech by a young university student who is talking to an audience of Year 12 students. The context for the speech is a careers day at which various invited speakers are contributing advice and information. This text includes annotations indicating some of the choices the writer has made, and their effects.

Title: 'Finding the Path'

Stimulus: 'Not all who wander are lost.'

Hey, how's everyone doing?

So you're getting to the end of high school. Your teachers are going on about your final SACs and the practice exams. You've probably heard from your careers teacher by now that it's time to start applying for university, or to plan some other pathway. Everyone's talking to you about your future. Well, that's good. You should be thinking about that. Actually, *are* you thinking about your future? I know I wasn't when I was your age.

> Opens with a question to get the audience's attention and present a friendly, relaxed persona.

> Uses colloquial language appropriate for the audience, signalling that the speaker can relate to the audience's concerns.

As I was coming to the end of high school, like you are now, I was a bit lost. What was I going to study? Was uni for me? Like you've probably been told not to do, I just entered a random uni course into VTAC – Sports Science if you're wondering – and figured I'd work it out when the time came. I did the exams, studied all night, crammed, went to 18ths instead of studying, and ended up with an alright ATAR. Didn't blow anyone's socks off, but it got me into my random uni course. Good. Everyone's happy. What next?

> Continues to establish relatability and credibility with the audience, sustaining a relaxed, conversational style.

> Three short sentences, including a rhetorical question, create a shift to a more serious tone and the speaker's main point.

Your future is up to you. That's why I'm here to talk to you about considering taking a gap year. A gap year is a great idea because, apart from not having any deadlines or assignments to worry about, it gives you a chance to actually figure out what you're going to do with your life. Maybe not your whole life, but the next part of it. I took a gap year; in fact, I took two. And it was the best thing I ever did.

> Presents the main contention in the middle of the speech.

I decided that the right thing for me was not to go straight to uni. I was over it. The assignments, the deadlines, the lessons, the teachers. Instead, I found a full-time job in hospitality, and it worked out perfectly. Why? As well as earning money that I could then spend on things I wanted, I made a whole lot of new friends. On top of that, when I finally did go to uni, I learned that, because I was earning enough money to be considered an independent student, I was able to get more money from the government. Love that.

> Uses a sentence fragment for impact.

> Presents an argument supporting the main contention: independent students qualify for more support if they meet certain income thresholds.

Once I did make it to uni, I actually decided that the course I originally applied for wasn't for me. I spoke to people in a few different departments and was able to change courses. I ended up doing an engineering degree. I did some research, and found out that apparently 20% of first-year uni students drop out because they don't want to study anymore, or because they don't like the course they chose. Some don't drop out until after the census date – which means they now owe the government money. A HELP debt with no degree? No thanks.

> Presents another argument: the dropout rate for first-year students is high because they're unsure what to do.

So, listen to your teachers, they know best. I have to say that. And do all the right things with your study and your exams, and don't go to too many parties. Apply on VTAC, but really think about what you're applying for. Speak to your careers teacher. And seriously consider a gap year. You earn money, you make friends, and you don't have any assignments. Remember: your future is yours to design.

> Repetition leaves the audience with a strong impression of the benefits of a gap year.

Examine the speech

1 The audience for this speech is Year 12 students. What language choices does the writer make to appeal to this audience? Do you think these would be effective for the writer's purpose and context?

2 What changes would you need to make to this speech if it were to be delivered as part of a series of formal presentations to the parents of Year 12 students?

3 Find or create two more items of stimulus material – an image and a short poem – that connect to the ideas in the speech.
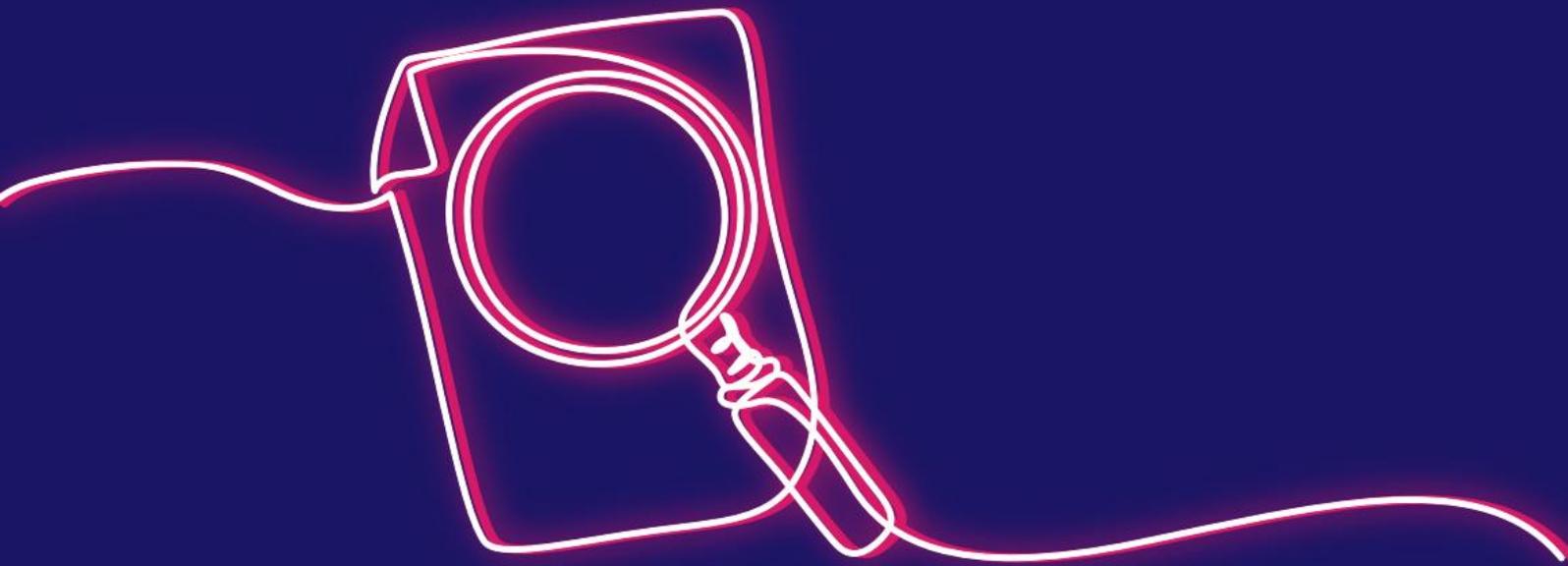
03 Exploring argument

In Area of Study 2: Exploring argument, you will strengthen your understanding of how arguments are constructed and presented to persuade readers, listeners or viewers to agree with the point of view being put forward.

You will create two kinds of texts in this area of study: an analytical text in which you explain how the creator of a text has used argument and language to persuade, and a persuasive text in which you present your own point of view in oral form.

UNDERSTANDING ARGUMENT AND PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Audience, purpose and context
- Main contention
- Argument
- Language

Many elements of an argument combine to persuade a reader, listener or viewer to agree. Those elements are chosen by the writer to suit their purpose, the context of the persuasive piece and the particular audience the writer wants to persuade. In analysing a persuasive text you will consider *why* the writer has made these choices and *how* the audience is likely to be positioned and influenced. This chapter looks at some fundamental concepts, then Chapters 13–16 will consider how they work together.

Audience, purpose and context

The **audience** is anyone reading, viewing or listening to a text. The writer of a persuasive text will have in mind a particular audience whose thoughts, feelings and/or actions they hope to influence.

The writer will also have a clear **purpose** in mind. They might wish to persuade the reader to buy a certain product, sign a petition, vote for a particular political candidate, donate money to a cause or just agree with the point of view being expressed.

The **context** is the place and time in which a text is published or delivered. The place could be a newspaper, a media company's website, a social media platform or a community meeting. Context also refers to the broader circumstances around the issue being debated – where and when it arises, what else is taking place at the time, and the factors that shape people's opinions on the issue.

The context will partly determine the **text type** or **form**. A persuasive text published in a print newspaper will be in one of the typical newspaper text types, such as a letter to the editor, opinion piece or editorial (see Chapter 13). The same newspaper's online version will include other text types, such as blogs and online comments.

ACTIVITY 12.1

Understand audience and purpose

1 Match the purpose to the most likely audience.

Purpose	Audience
To convince people to vote for you in local council elections	The state government minister for transport
To make public transport free	The parents of a school's students
To encourage the audience to help a school eliminate litter in its grounds	People who live in a shire

2 For each matched purpose and audience above, choose the most appropriate text type from the following options. Write a sentence for each explaining your choices.

formal letter	opinion piece	podcast	speech

post on a Facebook page	email	flyer dropped in letterboxes

Main contention

The **topic** or subject of a persuasive piece will be the broad **issue** under discussion. It can usually be expressed in a word or a few words. The **main contention** presents the writer's point of view on an issue. It is often expressed in a single sentence early in the written piece or speech, and it can also be captured in the headline or title of an article. Alternatively, the main contention can be stated in the middle or near the end of a piece, or it might be *implied* by the attitudes and opinions the writer expresses. To show that you understand the main contention of a piece, try expressing it in a single sentence.

The following online comment was published on *The Sydney Morning Herald* website in 2024. It expresses a point of view on the Australian Government's proposed plan to protect native animals from pet and feral cats.

Just completely outlaw cats. The amount of damage they cause to Australian native wildlife is staggering. And whilst I understand that there are quite a lot of responsible cat owners out there who don't let their pets run feral, way more are not as responsible; they're ignorant or stupid, and unfortunately that is the demographic we have to make rules for.

Inca

Can you identify the main contention in this letter to the editor? Is the contention clearly expressed, or is it implied?

To write about a main contention, first aim to express it in your own words. For example:

Australians should not be allowed to keep cats as pets because they harm native wildlife.

Next, state how the writer is presenting it.

The writer argues calmly but confidently that Australians should not be allowed to keep cats as pets because they harm native wildlife.

Understand a main contention

The following extract from an opinion piece by Jaana Dielenberg, published on *The Conversation* website, also presents a point of view on protecting native wildlife from cats.

Local councils are embracing cat containment

More than a third of local councils in Australia now require cats to be contained overnight or 24 hours a day. Most are in the ACT and Victoria. Given how good cats are at climbing and jumping, containing cats usually requires keeping them indoors or in secure runs. The main reasons cited by local governments for these regulations are:

- Improving pet welfare: contained cats live longer and healthier lives with fewer vet bills because they are protected from traumatic injuries from car accidents, dog attacks and cat fights, infections, diseases and other misadventures.
- Saving wildlife: four out of five cats allowed outside will hunt and kill an average of two to three animals per week. With millions of pet cats in Australia, each year this adds up to 6,000–11,000 animals killed in our suburbs per square kilometre and 323 million native animals killed nationally. Night curfews only protect nocturnal species such as possums.
- Reducing nuisance to neighbours: containment results in less disturbance from cat fights and prevents the neighbour's cat killing the birds and lizards living in your backyard or nearby park, which many community members value.

ACTIVITY 12.2

1 What is the main contention of this opinion piece?

2 What emotion or emotions does the opinion piece encourage the reader to feel?

3 Write a statement that identifies the main contention and describes how the writer is presenting it.

Argument

A writer's main contention needs to be supported by an argument. A well-reasoned argument consists of one or more points connected logically to the writer's main contention.

Contention: the writer's main point of view on the issue

supported by a series of

Reasons: explanations and evidence that support the writer's contention

expressed through

Persuasive strategies: structural and language choices intended to position an audience to agree

Writers carefully choose their supporting reasons and the order in which they will present them. They might start with the most important reason, or they might start with an anecdote to reveal their personal experience with the issue and engage the audience. Another approach is to begin with a reason or reasons for rejecting the opposing point of view – known as **rebuttal**.

When selecting and arranging supporting reasons for their argument, writers take into account their purpose and audience, as well as the context in which they are writing.

Understand argument

ACTIVITY 12.3

1 Identify the main contention and two supporting reasons in the response by animal protection organisation the RSPCA to the issue of cat management (below).

2 The organisation's argument includes a rebuttal of the Australian Government's proposed cat management plan. What alternative solution does the text suggest?

3 The text was produced by the RSPCA and published on their website. How might this affect the reader's response to the opinion it expresses?

Search 🔍

The RSPCA has welcomed investment in new technologies and research into the best and most humane approach to managing feral cats across Australia, but has called on the Federal Government to reconsider its decision to include domestic cats in its Feral Cat Threat Abatement Plan, a move that could put thousands of cats who live alongside humans at risk.

"Cat management is complex, and of course there's a need to control feral cats to protect wildlife," said RSPCA Australia Chief Science Officer Dr Suzie Fowler.

Search

"Under the most recent draft we've seen of the Government's Feral Cat Threat Abatement Plan, there are now only two types of cat — 'feral' and 'pet'.

"This means that unowned and semi-owned cats — cats who live alongside humans and have some form of contact with and reliance on people — will now be classed as 'feral'.

"This includes cats who are provided with care by someone, often multiple people — people who often have strong relationships with the cats they care for. The cat who stops by your neighbours' houses for a pat and to get fed is not the same as a cat who lives completely wild — but this plan treats them the same.

...

Dr Fowler said that the language used by the Government was also concerning.

"Vilifying cats and declaring 'war' on them shifts the focus away from what should be the key objective — to protect and conserve vulnerable native species — to instead promoting the killing of as many cats as possible.

...

"Oversimplifying the issue, and simply locking up or killing cats is not going to solve the problem — a considered and collaborative approach including community engagement, desexing, microchipping and encouraging keeping cats safe at home will be more successful in the long run."

Language

A persuasive writer or speaker uses language to communicate ideas and information, and also to arouse emotions. Words can be combined to create specific persuasive techniques, many of which are explained in the table on pages 201–6. Remember, too, that words are often accompanied by images, or by a speaker's gestures and facial expressions.

Tone

Tone is the mood or feeling of a piece of writing. It reflects the writer's attitudes or emotions towards the topic. A useful way of identifying the main tone of a piece of writing is to consider how it would sound if it were read aloud.

A writer will use a particular tone to generate a specific emotional response in the reader. An aggressive tone might be used to present an attack on an opposing viewpoint; writers who want to present their view as balanced and fair will often use a calm tone. Shifting the tone within a piece can also be an effective way to manipulate an audience's attitudes.

The following table contains a selection of useful words for writing about tone. These are all adjectives that you can use in a sentence like this one:

In an <u>assertive</u> tone, the writer argues that …

Alternatively, many of these adjectives have equivalent adverbs that you can use in a sentence like this:

The writer argues <u>assertively</u> that …

Positive	Neutral	Negative
assertive	authoritative	accusing
confident	calm	admonishing
earnest	concerned	aggressive
encouraging	considered	arrogant
enthusiastic	dispassionate	bitter
optimistic	measured	condescending
playful	reasonable	contemptuous
proud	restrained	cynical
respectful	serious	mocking
soothing	thoughtful	outraged
sympathetic	unemotional	sarcastic

Identify tone

ACTIVITY 12.4

1 Describe the main tone of the text by the RSPCA on pages 166–7. Highlight three words or phrases that help to create this tone.

2 Use your answer to question 1 to write a sentence about the RSPCA's main contention and the tone used to present it. A useful sentence structure could be:
In a … tone, the RSPCA argues that …

3 Circle or highlight two words or phrases that help to create the main tone.

4 How does the tone of the text support the RSPCA's message?

5 Give your own opinion on cat management in two or three sentences. Aim to create a calm but assertive tone. Highlight the word choices that help you to do this.

Word choices and connotations

Writers choose their words carefully to evoke certain reactions in the reader. One of the ways they do this is by selecting words with particular **connotations**. Connotations are the extra meanings or associations attached to a word, beyond its literal meaning.

For example, the word 'home' literally means the place where a person lives. But 'home' also carries emotional associations of comfort, support and refuge. By contrast, the word 'house', which has a similar literal meaning, does not carry those same associations.

Consider word choices

1 A cline is a graded scale. Word clines place words on a continuum from the *least* to the *most* extreme meaning. For example, here is a word cline for describing the weather:

balmy	warm	hot	scorching

Create a word cline by placing the following words in order, from least to most disturbed.

agitated   placid   chaotic   unsettled   still

2 Select an adjective in a piece of persuasive writing. Using a thesaurus, find four similar words that would fit the context and arrange them in a word cline from weakest to strongest.

3 Read the three sets of sentences below containing positive, neutral and negative statements about meat. Working in pairs or small groups, explain the different impacts the words in bold could have on the reader.

GROUP

Positive	Neutral	Negative
Meat is a **tasty, highly nutritious** food.	Meat is a **common type** of food.	Eating too much meat can lead to **life-threatening illnesses**.
Meat is a **vital** source of income for our **precious** farmers and regional towns.	Meat comes from the **farming of livestock**.	Eating meat involves **cruelty to animals**.

4 Create your own positive, neutral and negative statements about each of the topics below.

  a the sport of boxing

  b a four-day working week

  c starting the school day at 9:30 am

5 For each of the following hypothetical scenarios, create a statement that will evoke in the reader the emotion shown in brackets.

  a The government has announced that the GST will be raised to fifteen per cent. (anger)

  b New research shows that most of Australia will be classified as desert by 2040. (fear)

  c International Students' Day will become a public holiday in Australia. (delight)

Visual language

In nearly all media texts, images such as photographs, illustrations and cartoons are used to deliver messages, elicit emotions, attract attention and influence the audience's point of view on topics and issues. Visual language also refers to elements such as:

- colour
- font styles and sizes
- logos

- borders, frames and lines
- headings
- layout.

Understand visual language

On the next page is the first page of a factsheet about the risks of roaming pet cats. The fact sheet was produced by the Invasive Species Council, a group with 'a passion for the Australian bush and a desire to protect it from damaging invasive species'. Look at the page carefully. Then answer the following questions.

1 There are six logos on this fact sheet excerpt. What messages do these logos convey?

2 Look at the main image on the page. Make notes in the table below about some of the elements of this image.

Element	Description	What it positions the reader to feel
Cat		
Trees and shrubs		
Caption		

3 The dominant colour on the page is green. Why might this colour have been chosen? What associations does it suggest?

4 The subheading 'Every loose cat is a threat to wildlife' appears in a green banner and in a larger font than the main text. How might this affect viewers' responses to this message?

5 Which line of text do you think comes closest to expressing the main message of the page?

6 How do all the elements of the page work together to influence viewers' attitudes towards managing cats' threats to wildlife?

Science for Saving Species

Research findings factsheet

Project 7.4

Threatened Species Recovery Hub

National Environmental Science Programme

The impact of pet cats on Australian wildlife

Every loose cat is a threat to wildlife

Just over one-quarter of Australian households (27%) have pet cats, and about half of cat-owning households have two or more cats: the total pet cat population in Australia is about 3.8 million.

Pet cats that are kept contained 24 hours per day (either inside a house or contained in an outdoor cat run) are safe for wildlife. In Australia, 1.1 million pet cats are contained in this way 24 hours per day by responsible pet owners.

The remaining 2.7 million pet cats – 71% of all pet cats in Australia – are able to roam and hunt, and present a major threat to the wildlife in their local areas.

Many people are unaware that their pet cat is leaving the house and roaming. A radio-tracking study in Adelaide found that of the 177 cats whom owners believed were inside at night, 69 (39%) were sneaking out for nocturnal adventures.

Many owners believe their cats don't hunt because they never come across evidence of killed animals.

However, studies of pet cats using video-tracking collars or scat analysis have established that the vast majority (85%) of the animals killed by pet cats are not brought home.

Feral cats are an enormous problem for wildlife – across Australia, feral cats collectively kill more than three billion animals per year.

Cats have played a leading role in most of Australia's 34 mammal extinctions since 1788, and are a big reason why populations of at least 123 other threatened native species are declining.

Many species of native mammal cannot persist in the presence of even a few cats.

Pet cats, despite their valued role as companion animals, are also a major threat to native wildlife. We undertook an analysis that compiled the results of 66 different studies on pet cats to gauge the impact of Australia's pet cat population on the country's wildlife. This analysis considered only owned (pet) cats, and the results were compared to earlier work which has quantified the impacts of feral cats on wildlife.

On average, each pet cat that is allowed to roam (even for only part of the day or night) kills 186 reptiles, birds and mammals per year in Australia. This number includes 110 native animals (40 reptiles, 38 birds and 32 mammals). This means that each roaming pet cat kills, on average, more than two native animals every week. Collectively, roaming pet cats kill 390 million animals per year in Australia.

Keeping your pet cat indoors will not only be beneficial for your cat, but will also enable you to enjoy more of the nature around you. Image: Jaana Dielenberg

THE UNIVERSITY OF QUEENSLAND AUSTRALIA

Australian National University

CHARLES DARWIN UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA

THE UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY

Murdoch UNIVERSITY

© Invasive Species Council

WRITTEN PERSUASIVE TEXTS

IN THIS CHAPTER

› Editorials
› Opinion pieces and blog posts
› Letters to the editor and online comments
› Petitions

Written persuasive texts appear in printed newspapers and magazines, as well as on the websites of many organisations, including media companies. They present a point of view on events and issues that are of interest to a wide readership.

This chapter describes several common types of written persuasive texts, and explains how they can be used to present a point of view on an issue and position an audience to agree.

Editorials

Editorials are written by a newspaper's senior editor or group of senior editors to express the newspaper's collective point of view on an issue. They are often designed to sway public opinion and the opinions of decision-makers in society.

Newspaper editorials were traditionally written in a formal register, but many now use a more informal style with contractions (e.g. 'it's') and occasional **colloquialisms** (casual or everyday expressions).

Features and conventions of editorials

» Clearly state the newspaper's official position
» Include relevant background information
» May present opposing arguments and perspectives on an issue before coming to a conclusion
» Use an authoritative tone and may use specialised language
» Can use 'we' or 'our' but never 'I'

!

Read the following editorial, then answer the questions on page 174.

Consumer watchdog should name banks most vulnerable to scammers

Increasing numbers of Australians are being cold-called by fraudsters who warn them their bank accounts are compromised and then con them into transferring money into new accounts, allegedly opened in their names.

More than 8000 Australians have been bilked by bank impersonation scammers, who siphoned off some $10 million from small accounts so far this year, according to reports made by the public to the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's Scamwatch website.

But Australia's consumer watchdog refuses to disclose which banks and customers have been most affected.

The ACCC has repeatedly rejected requests to identify the banks whose customers have been falling victim to impersonation scams, instead redacting the names of the institutions from the released data. In response to a freedom of information request, the ACCC argued that disclosing the information could make it harder for its National Anti-Scam Centre to obtain confidential information.

"I have taken account of the interest in public administration and transparency, and the interests of the third parties [banks] in the document requested," the FOI decision said. "I have given more weight to the fact that this material has been provided on a voluntary basis, and that disclosure is likely to prejudice the ability of the National Anti-Scam Centre to obtain similar information on a voluntary basis in the future. The public interest in having the National Anti-Scam Centre continue to perform its functions is important."

The partially censored data suggests fraudsters find certain banks easier targets. Nearly 3000 customers of one unnamed Australian bank have reported bank impersonation scams this year. In contrast, several banks have remained impregnable, with customers not losing a single cent to scammers masquerading as their workers.

Such small-scale confidence tricksters are part of a huge fraud industry in which Australians have lost more than $3.1 billion to scams, with the digital nature of the criminal operations, often traversing borders and legal jurisdictions, making the problem particularly challenging for authorities. Many of the victims of these scams have lost considerable amounts of money – their life savings, in some instances – and it is bank customers who are overwhelmingly left to pick up the bill for scam losses, with very few being compensated. Data shows of the more than $500 million lost in scams by Australians through the big four banks, only $21 million was paid in compensation. The British parliament last year passed legislation that makes UK banks legally liable to reimburse customers within five days if they are victims of scams on their platforms.

Australia is still baulking at going down a similar path. It is passing strange that the ACCC should see fit not to reveal which banks are most vulnerable to scams.

The consumer watchdog believes keeping the identity of banks secret will protect its ability to investigate. But in reality it is prioritising banks over consumers. It is a public service to reveal which banks better protect customers' interests, especially as the customers, not the institutions, currently bear the brunt of the losses.

The Sydney Morning Herald

Analyse an editorial

1 In your own words, write down the main contention of the editorial on the previous page.

2 Is the main contention stated clearly in the editorial, or is it implied? Explain your answer.

3 Identify the main tone of the editorial. Provide two or three examples of the writer's word choices that help to create this tone. How does the tone support the writer's argument?

4 Circle or highlight all the terms used to refer to people or groups who try to deceive bank customers in order to obtain their money. What impression of these people does this language create?

5 For each of the following examples of loaded language, write a sentence identifying the connotations and intended effect on the reader.

  • bilked

  • repeatedly rejected

  • impregnable

  • victims

6 **GROUP** Find an editorial on a topic that interests you and bring it to class. In small groups, exchange the editorials so that no one has the editorial they brought in. Identify the **main contention** and the **main tone** of the editorial you receive. Then choose three examples of **persuasive techniques or language** and explain their likely effects. Next, swap editorials and repeat the exercise, until you have looked at all the editorials in the group. Compare your answers with those of your classmates.

7 Select one of the editorials you analysed in question 6. Write five sentences on how the main contention, tone and persuasive techniques work together to persuade the reader.

Opinion pieces and blog posts

An opinion piece usually gives one person's point of view on an issue, although some opinion pieces are written by more than one person. They are often written by experts in a particular area, or by someone with some authority in the community (e.g. a politician). They might also be written by a journalist or freelance writer.

Features and conventions of opinion pieces and blog posts

» Present a clear point of view on an issue

» Aim to persuade the audience to agree

» Use a range of persuasive language and strategies

» Can use fairly formal language in opinion pieces, although blog posts tend to be more informal

» Often use personal pronouns such as 'I', 'you' and 'our'

» Can use specialised language, especially when the writer is an expert in a relevant field

Social media is impacting our children's brains negatively

With so many students becoming more anxious, distracted and sleep-deprived, this neuroscience expert is proposing parents implement these measures now, before it is too late.

Jill Sweatman

We cannot plead ignorance any longer.

The academic and mental health impacts of social media on our young people are indisputable. The allure and compulsive overuse of social media by our children, of all ages, is having a profound effect on their brains.

The research is accumulating. The evidence is strong. The results are escalating. Countries are taking action.

Our children's brains do not have the luxury of time. The foundations of brain development are programmed to occur at particular ages yet these are being delayed and the consequences are mounting.

Why are so many students failing to reach their potential and becoming increasingly anxious, distracted and sleep-deprived? We have only to look at the decline in NAPLAN results and international PISA scores to see how, over time, ubiquitous screen use both at home and in schools can be detrimental to academic performance.

Why is this?

We have stopped being diligent about devices in our children's hands. And now the results are inescapable.

We need to start being accountable and stop blaming Covid-19 and schools for our distracted sons and daughters.

We must return control to our own families and establish the values we wish our children to embody.

Are we genuinely serious about addressing this issue for our children's sake and that of generations to come? If so, this calls for significant measures, not tokens, that will change the trajectory of the alarming statistics on mental illness and worsening academic performance.

I propose delaying access to smartphones until our children are at least in Year 8 and avoiding access to social media sites like Instagram and TikTok until 18 years of age.

My opinion is based on sound neuroscience evidence.

The effects on the brain are measurable. Scans of the brains of children who use social media intensively and for an extended period reveal a change in the density of the brain – less white matter and less grey matter.

Search

Scans of the brains of children who overuse social media reveal a change in the density of the brain.

The compulsion to scroll, click and remain absorbed in yet another video is changing the structure of the brain at the expense of the crucial executive part which regulates focus and attention, self-control of behaviour and emotion, reasoning and decision making.

If every parent knew this, surely, they would not readily hand their child a smartphone.

Give your child a cognitive advantage – for life – by having the courage to delay smartphone access.

Children cannot legally smoke nor drink alcohol before the age of 18 years because we know these affect brain development. Yet we hand our children a smartphone with unlimited access to the internet, opening a portal to the world, instantly.

The immediate solution lies with us – first. We cannot delegate the level of parenting required to establish the values and standards of behaviour for digital use. Diligent digital supervision must be a top priority in every home.

Many of our children are teetering on the tip of an iceberg in no danger of melting. Globally, our family and community climates must change – without delay.

Be prepared for pushback. This confirms that you are on the right track and is all the more reason to be persistent. Are you willing to sacrifice popularity and what is easy, for your child's future?

Is it time to have this courageous conversation about social media use with your family, before it's too late?

Are you prepared to be accountable for your child's overuse of social media?

If not now, when?

Jill Sweatman is a neuroscience strategist in learning & development.

Herald Sun

Analyse an opinion piece

1 In your own words, write down the main contention of the opinion piece on the previous two pages.

2 Describe the main tone used by the writer. List three words or phrases from the opinion piece that help to generate this tone.

3 Is the same tone used throughout the piece, or does the tone vary? Discuss the effect of the use of tone, and support your discussion with short quotations from the text.

4 Who do you think the main audience for this article might be? What makes you think this?

5 What do you think the writer's main purpose was in writing this opinion piece?

6 Identify three reasons used by the writer to support her argument.

7 Underline or circle three examples of particularly persuasive language. What response is each example aiming to get from the reader?

Letters to the editor and online comments

Letters to the editor and online comments allow members of the public to present their opinion on an issue and contribute to a public discussion. They also enable people with expert knowledge or personal experience to contribute to a debate. Letters and comments often respond to other letters or comments, as well as to news articles, either agreeing or disagreeing with the previous writer.

In a letter to the editor, the writer's name and suburb are usually printed at the end of the letter. This, along with the fact that the letters published in a newspaper or magazine are selected by an editor, means that the opinions presented are usually based on facts and reason, and are expressed respectfully.

The language used in the following letter to the editor reflects the writer's personal experience of the issue (school days), as well as the context of publication, in the 'Letters' section of *The Age* newspaper.

Features and conventions of letters to the editor and online comments

» Present a clear point of view on an issue
» Aim to persuade the audience to agree
» Are usually short and to the point
» Can use formal language in a letter, but online comments mostly use more informal language (e.g. abbreviations)
» Often use personal pronouns such as 'I', 'we' and 'our'
» Often convey strong emotions

The four-day week

I'm not surprised that teachers want a four-day work week ("Radical shift in teaching proposed to tackle worker shortage", 18/10). They have to spend five days a week dealing with students, most of them disliking school. The headache, I imagine, must be unbearable. As a year 9 student myself, I also feel tired from the five-day school week, and find that I get much more work done in a week when we happen to have a public holiday or curriculum day during it.

Alix Dinh, Tarneit

In contrast, online comments might not be moderated (supervised and controlled) and the writers' anonymity can mean that opinions are expressed in a more blunt or casual way. Because they follow the article or comment they are responding to, they don't need to repeat background information: the writer can simply state their opinions and observations.

The following three online comments respond to an article in *The Guardian* newspaper, titled 'Four-day weeks, shorter days: Radical ideas to shake up schools'. Note the differences in tone and language between these comments and the letter to the editor.

COMMENTS

MarkJ

For goodness sake, why do no politicians have the guts to raise taxes to improve teacher conditions? We need more teachers, not less time in the classroom.

JanRL

A fancy sounding excuse for dumbing down state education. May as well offer VCE basket-weaving as it's all many kids will be capable of doing.

Hols

Am guessing there will be lots of negative comments to this idea from people who have never taught, but are big experts. It's a creative and interesting concept and definitely worth exploring.

Analyse a letter to the editor and online comments

ACTIVITY 13.3

1 What are the main contentions of the letter to the editor and the three online comments? (Note that in the comments, the main contention is not necessarily stated explicitly.)

2 Identify one reason offered by each writer for their point of view, and one example of persuasive language in each piece. Explain how each example of persuasive language is working to position the reader and influence their response to the writer's argument.

3 How do argument and language work together in the letter to the editor to persuade the reader to agree with the writer?

4 What is the main tone of each of the three online comments? How is each writer's use of tone related to their purpose?

5 Write your own online comment on this issue. Before you begin, decide on your main contention and one or two supporting reasons. Note down the main tone you will use and at least three words or phrases you will use to achieve your intended effect.

6 Exchange comments with a partner. Can your partner identify your contention, supporting reasons, and the main tone you wanted to create? If not, make changes to your comment. Write three sentences on the overall effect your partner's comment had on you, the reader.

GROUP

Petitions

Petitions are formal requests signed by multiple people, directed at a person or an organisation with the power to act on the request. Usually, the more people who sign a petition, the more likely the request will be considered. Petitions are usually written in formal language and use an urgent tone.

The petition below appears on the website change.org.

Features and conventions of petitions
» State a clear point of view
» Usually address a person or group who could grant the request, as well as a broader audience who might support the petition
» Often use personal pronouns such as 'I', 'we' and 'our'
» Can express strong emotions

Search 🔍

Reinstate Free Pool Entry For Our Community

Last year entry to pools across the Warrumbungle Shire was FREE.

This year? They want to charge you $4.70. Every. Single. Visit.

Our community, primarily one of low socioeconomic background, is struggling. We are currently caught in the grip of a national cost-of-living crisis along with limited options for recreation. Moreover, there are few 'third spaces' left for us to gather as a community, and the scorching heat is making matters worse. The pool was one of the few places we could get a brief respite and enjoy ourselves.

The action to end free pool entry hits harder than ticket prices. It negatively impacts our collective life. It's true that public services need funding, but denying access to something as fundamental as a swimming facility, especially in a hot climate, is a form of social inequity. Pools provide multiple benefits, including physical exercise and mental wellness. But what's most important for us? It's relief from the sweltering heat and a place to build community.

We call upon the relevant authorities to reinstate free pool entry immediately for this year and beyond. End the pay-to-swim mandate and bring back our free community pool entry. We encourage everyone to sign this petition and lend their voice to our cause!

Annotate a petition

ACTIVITY 13.4

Annotate the text, identifying an example of each of the following persuasive strategies and briefly explaining their intended effect.

- appeal to a sense of community
- inclusive language
- appeal to a sense of justice
- emotive language

VISUAL PERSUASIVE TEXTS

IN THIS CHAPTER

- › Cartoons
- › Photographs
- › Graphs, infographics and tables

Visual persuasive texts use images (and sometimes words) to comment on issues and events. They might accompany written persuasive texts or they might function independently to provide information and suggest a point of view. Compared to written text, images often have a more immediate emotional impact on viewers, who will interpret what they see based on their own knowledge and experience. Images such as photographs and graphs can seem to represent an objective reality, but they are often created in a way that conveys a perspective or angle on the subject matter.

This chapter describes the main types of visual texts that can be used to present a point of view, and explains some of the main effects of visual language that can be used to position and persuade a viewer.

Cartoons

Cartoons use images with few words (or no words) to take a humorous approach to a serious issue. In newspapers they usually offer an opinion on an issue in the news, often depicting well-known figures as **caricatures** (people drawn with highly exaggerated features). A cartoon can appear straightforward, but the drawing usually includes very complex details and sometimes subtle messages.

Features and conventions of cartoons

- » Present a critical but humorous perspective on an issue
- » Often use exaggeration
- » Can include speech balloons, thought bubbles, captions and other written text
- » Often use irony and/or sarcasm

When analysing cartoons, consider the impact of the following elements:

- text in speech balloons and thought bubbles

- captions or other written text

- the use of colour to capture emotion or to convey a symbolic meaning
  (e.g. green = nature)

- objects with symbolic meanings

- stereotypes, caricatures and clichés

- the use of shading in black-and-white cartoons

- facial expressions

- background details that help to present the setting or context for the issue.

Study this cartoon by Warren Brown then answer the questions in the activity.

Analyse a cartoon

1 What issue is the cartoonist presenting a point of view on?

2 Describe the main message or contention being presented by the cartoon.

3 Describe the police officer's expression. What emotions is this depiction likely to arouse in viewers?

4 Why has the cartoonist presented the various jobs performed by police officers on a roulette-style wheel? What does this suggest about the nature of police work?

5 Write a short paragraph analysing how visuals and text work together to comment on the issue.

Photographs

Photographs have an immediate impact. They can convey information, tell a story and evoke an emotional response from the viewer without any written text being present. They can also draw attention to an article and suggest a perspective on the story or issue.

When analysing a photograph, consider the impact of the following:

- composition – the arrangement of elements within the frame

- how close or far away the subject appears to be

- the camera angle – for example, the camera might look up at the subject to suggest their power or status, down on the subject to suggest their vulnerability, or straight on at the subject to suggest equality

- areas of light and shadow that direct the viewer's attention to a particular part of the image and/or create a mood

- the use of focus to draw the viewer's attention to certain parts of the subject – for instance, by blurring the background setting or, alternatively, presenting it in sharp focus to suggest its importance

- the use of framing to include certain objects and exclude others

- how much or little of the background is shown

- colours in the image, including the associations these colours have, and whether the colours are natural or have been enhanced

- any digital manipulation (editing) of the image to disguise or emphasise certain features of a person or their environment

- the use of a caption to influence the viewer's response to the photograph and the related issue.

The photograph on the next page was taken at a climate change protest in Melbourne. Examine the photograph then answer the questions in the activity.

> **Features and conventions of photographs**
> » Present a subject in a certain way, using a range of visual features such as colour, focus, framing, lighting, angle and distance
> » Can have a caption that adds information or reinforces a perspective on the subject
> » Can be digitally manipulated
> » Often accompany a written article

Photo © Adam Calaitzis / Dreamstime.com

Analyse a photograph

1 Who or what is the main subject of the photograph? Why do you think the photographer chose this particular focus for the image?

2 What emotions does the photograph elicit from the viewer? Are they positive or negative, or does it depend on how the photograph is interpreted?

3 What point of view or message does the photograph present? Make notes in the table below about particular features of the image that help to present this message.

Element	Description	What it positions the reader to feel
Background		
Camera angle / distance		
Colour		
Composition		
Framing		

4 Write your own captions for this photograph, including one that would encourage viewers to regard the subject sympathetically, and one that is more negative in tone.

Graphs, infographics and tables

Multimodal images such as graphs, infographics and tables combine visual and written language. They are effective ways of presenting information – especially numbers and statistics – clearly and concisely. They make it easier for the viewer to recognise patterns and trends, which are generally discussed in more detail in an accompanying article.

Graphs, infographics and tables are based on data, so give the impression that the conclusions they lead viewers to are factual and objective. Nevertheless, there are various ways in which they can present a particular interpretation of data to support an argument. The scale and/or range of the axes of graphs can be selected to emphasise a particular trend; colours can add an emotive element. Tables present data in a less obviously manipulated way. However, the way in which data is sorted into categories in order to be turned into a table (or a graph) can introduce subtle distortions and biases. Remember, all data presented in media texts is selected and organised to support a particular viewpoint.

An infographic combines visual elements such as illustrations or photographs with text and numbers, and a graph can be overlaid on an image. This means they can have a strong emotional impact that comes from the associated images, which influences the viewer's response to the actual data and the argument being presented.

The infographic on the next page appears on the website of Recycle Right, a Western Australian governmental organisation that promotes recycling. It presents information about food waste in a factsheet designed to be distributed in schools.

Features and conventions of graphs, infographics and tables

» Present information (especially numerical data) visually
» Can create striking effects through design elements such as colours and fonts
» Often combine visual language, words and numbers
» Can present a point of view on the data being shown, especially when supplementing a written text

Analyse an infographic

ACTIVITY 14.3

1 What is the primary purpose of the infographic on the next page?

2 How does the structure of the infographic (the way it is divided into sections and the order of those sections) help to achieve this purpose?

3 In what ways does the factsheet aim to appeal to its target audience?

4 What effect do the visuals have on the viewer? How do they help the viewer to form an opinion on the statistics and information in the infographic? Do they present those statistics in positive, neutral or negative terms? Think about elements such as illustrations, colours and fonts.

5 What message is conveyed by the photograph of the young boy? How does this image contribute to the overall message of the infographic?

6 Write a paragraph explaining how written and visual language and the layout of the infographic work together to present a point of view on waste-free school lunches.

Factsheet

recycle right

Waste Free School Lunches

Class Room Activities:

- Make your own packaging
- Discover where packaging comes from
- Have a nude food zero waste lunch day and measure the waste reduced
- Start a worm farm or composting

- Take a FREE class excursion to the Regional Resource Recovery Centre and see what happens to your waste

Free Incursions:

Our tour guides can run a free waste avoidance lunch activity incursion at your school. To book call **9256 9555** or email us **tours@smrc.com.au**.

Did you know?

- Packaging waste in landfill produces the same amount of greenhouse gas as 860,000 cars.
  (source: http://environmentvictoria.org.au/index.php?q=content/packaging-0#.VOKVysZsG9S)

- The chemical industry admits that food packaging contains substances that can migrate into food. One chemical is of particular concern, BPA, because it can mimic our hormones and disrupt reproductive development. Monitoring has shown more than 90% of people have "detectable levels of BPA in their bodies".
  (source: www.webmd.com/food-recipes/features/cookware-plastics-shoppers-guide-to-food-safety)

- More than one million birds and marine animals die each year from consuming or becoming caught in plastic and other debris.
  (source: www.biologicaldiversity.org/campaigns/ocean_plastics/)

- Australians waste over 4,000,000 tonnes of food each year - that's $8bn worth – enough to fill 450,000 garbage trucks!
  (source: National Waste Report 2010)

- Whilst we throw out almost half of what's grown, 2 million Australians don't have enough to eat and are in need of food aid.
  (source: www.foodwise.com.au/)

Find out more...

To find out more about recycling and to download education kits, visit recycleright.wa.gov.au

recycleright.wa.gov.au   phone: 9329 2700 email: hello@recycleright.wa.gov.au

AUDIO AND AUDIOVISUAL TEXTS

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Television texts
- Radio texts and podcasts
- Internet texts
- Speeches
- Working with transcripts

This chapter looks at a variety of persuasive audio and audiovisual texts, which have become more common as the mainstream media has increasingly moved online over the last three decades.

Spoken texts can be particularly persuasive because the speaker can use the qualities of their voice, such as volume, pitch, tone and pace, to reinforce their meaning and enhance the impact of their language. Other sounds, such as music and sound effects, are also crucial to the ways in which listeners are positioned to respond.

Persuasive **audiovisual texts** include television news and current affairs programs as well as video segments that appear in these programs, are embedded in online articles or are hosted on video-sharing platforms such as YouTube. They combine audio elements with still and moving images.

You might analyse audio or audiovisual texts on their own, or you might analyse audio or audiovisual elements of texts that are primarily written.

Television texts

Persuasive television texts about topical issues primarily appear on current affairs programs. These programs usually have a program presenter or panel in a studio combined with video content that presents information and points of view on current events and issues. These elements help to position an audience and present an angle on a particular story.

As in written media texts, language choices are central to the presentation of a point of view in audiovisual texts. The following are some additional important elements of visual and aural language to consider when analysing a segment from a current affairs or news-related program.

- **The set:** The program presenter or panel usually sits behind or stands beside a desk. What does this arrangement suggest about the role of these people?

- **The backdrop:** This is placed behind the presenter to provide a visual context. What colours or images are used, and what mood do they create? Does the backdrop add to the presentation of a story? How?

- **Light, colour and sound:** Is the lighting dim or bright, and what mood does this create? Is the set colourful and busy to suggest a lively, dynamic environment? Or does it use a limited colour palette to convey a sense of calm focus? What does the signature music suggest about the program's approach?

- **Presenters and guests:** What is their manner, and what does this convey to the viewer about their attitude towards the subject? Their clothes, make-up, age, voice and body language all contribute to the message being presented.

Video segments in news and current affairs programs are integral to storytelling and to the presentation of a point of view. Live or recorded footage can make it seem as though the viewer is witnessing events as they happen. In fact, both the footage and the stories are carefully selected and edited. This is especially true of packaged stories, like those seen on programs such as *The Project* or *A Current Affair*, which blend commentary, testimonials and footage.

The following are some important elements to look for when analysing a video segment of a current affairs program.

- **'Talking heads' and eyewitness accounts:** The experts, spokespeople and eyewitnesses who are interviewed by journalists are selected to give the story credibility and authenticity. Whose viewpoints are sought, and how much time is given to alternative perspectives? Do the journalist's questions suggest a particular line of argument? Is an expert opinion included? Why, or why not?

- **Location footage:** Images of the location of an event give the story a strong sense of immediacy and truthfulness. If the reporter is shown to be present at the scene, the story can seem more credible, especially if it is supported by eyewitness accounts. If the reporter's commentary accompanies location footage, it is likely to strongly influence the audience's interpretation of the images.

- **Editing:** Various elements of a video segment are deliberately selected, combined and sequenced to present information and perspectives in particular ways. How does the segment begin and end? What is the balance between the reporter, experts and eyewitnesses or others who are affected by the issue? Have any important perspectives or facts been omitted?

- **Sound:** This includes aspects of the speakers' voices (especially tone, as it conveys emotions and attitudes), as well as sound effects and music. Are there sound effects that create a stronger sense of realism or enhance an emotional aspect of the story? If music is used, why do you think that particular piece of music was chosen?

Scan the code or click **here** to view a segment from *The Project* about the growing popularity of paying by cash. After viewing the text, answer the questions in the activity.

Analyse a segment from a current affairs program

1 What is the main issue being considered by the segment? Do you think enough background information is provided to give viewers a clear understanding of the issue?

2 What is the main contention of the segment? Is it explicitly stated by one of the presenters or guests, or is it implied?

3 What mood is evoked in the video? How is it evoked and how does it work to support the main contention?

4 Copy the table below and complete the right-hand column by commenting on the effect of the audio and visual elements on the audience.

Element	Effect on the audience
Set	
Backdrops	
Light, colour and sound	
Presenters and guests	
Expert opinion	
Editing	

5 Write a detailed paragraph outlining the purpose of the video and explaining how the audio and visual elements are used to achieve this purpose.

Radio texts and podcasts

Like television, radio productions also involve the careful selection and editing of stories. Podcasts are a specific form of radio program that can be listened to on demand via various audio streaming services. Many radio programs and podcasts present viewpoints on issues and may be openly persuasive.

Consider the following questions when listening to a radio program or podcast. (Obtaining a transcript can help you to better understand the audio content.)

- **Speakers:** Is there only one speaker, such as the regular presenter, or are there also guests, such as experts, eyewitnesses or concerned parties? If there are guests, how do the speakers interact – are they friendly or adversarial?

- **Speech:** What tone of voice do the speakers use? Does the tone shift at any point? If so, why? Consider pacing and volume – do these shift at key moments? For example, does a speaker talk more quickly and loudly to evoke excitement, or more slowly and softly to create a sense of anticipation?

- **Viewpoint:** Does the presenter convey or openly express a point of view on the issue or story? If so, how? What effect does this have on the listener?

- **Persuasive techniques:** Do any speakers use techniques such as analogies, anecdotes, repetition, rhetorical questions or emotive language? Are there any attacks on individuals or groups? Are there interviews with experts or people affected by the issue?

- **Music:** What atmosphere does the music create? If there are lyrics, do they communicate a particular message? Does the music complement or contrast with the spoken content of the podcast?

- **Sound effects:** Are sound effects used to create a mood, convey a sense of realism or evoke a particular emotion in the listener? Are they used as a backdrop to the spoken content, or do they function on their own to tell a story?

- **Continuity:** Does the episode stand alone or does it need to be considered in relation to the rest of the series?

When you are listening to an audio text it is important to realise that some meanings are conveyed by **paralinguistic** elements. These are non-verbal elements that can convey attitudes and emotions and have many other effects, as summarised in the table below.

Paralinguistic element	Persuasive effect
Intonation – the variation in pitch (the note of the voice) as someone talks	Speakers vary their pitch depending on the response they seek from their audience. For example, a higher pitch can be used to add emphasis to a rhetorical question, while a lower pitch can be used to underscore that a particular argument is serious and should be carefully considered by the audience.
Pace – the speed at which a person speaks	Speakers will often vary their pace throughout a discussion to emphasise certain points. For example, a speaker might slow their pace to highlight a key word or concept, or they might increase their pace to create a sense of urgency or alarm.

Pauses – breaks in the flow of the speech or conversation	Intentional breaks are often used immediately after a speaker states an important point, giving the listener time to consider what has been said. If used occasionally and at appropriate moments, pauses can help listeners recall particular arguments after a speech is finished.
Rhythm – a strong, regular, repeated pattern of sounds	A steady rhythm in speech can convey confidence and certainty, encouraging listeners to view the speaker's argument as strong and well-founded. A steady rhythm can also help the listener to follow the speaker's ideas more easily.
Stress or emphasis – how forcefully or loudly certain words, or parts of words, are said	Stress can be used to emphasise important words and give extra weight to repeated words. This encourages listeners to pay more attention to these terms and reflect on why they are so important to the speaker's argument.
Tone – the mood or feeling created by word choices, delivery and other persuasive techniques	Tone helps to convey the writer's attitude towards the topic, and can evoke a specific emotional response from the listener. For example, an urgent tone might position listeners to be fearful and want immediate action on the issue.
Volume – how loudly a person speaks	Speakers often increase the volume of their voice to emphasise an important point, making the audience consider it worth thinking about. Contrastingly, a speaker might speak quietly to encourage the audience to listen more closely, or in conjunction with a calm, reassuring tone.

Scan the code or click **here** to listen to an episode from the ABC's podcast series *Future Tense*, about robot devices in the home. Listen to the first ten minutes or, if you have time, listen to the episode in full, then answer the questions in the activity.

Analyse a podcast

1 What is the main message or point of view conveyed by this podcast?

2 Identify two main ways in which the presenter aims to persuade the listener to agree with this message or point of view.

3 Select two speakers. For each speaker, describe the main tone of their voice and explain how this helps to convey their opinion or attitude.

4 Find examples in the podcast of two of the paralinguistic elements in the table on pages 189–90 and explain how they help to present a speaker's point of view.

5 Write a short paragraph analysing how the various elements of this podcast are used to persuade listeners to agree with the point of view on robot devices being presented. Consider the language used by the speakers, how they speak and the way in which their voices combine to produce an overall effect.

Internet texts

Audio and audiovisual elements are often embedded in web pages, helping to increase user engagement and the persuasive impact of the website. They often work as an addition to, or in conjunction with, written text. Often creators will upload standalone videos to video-sharing platforms such as YouTube and TikTok.

Scan the code or click here to view a video from the Australian Marine Conservation Society (AMCS), which appears on the organisation's official YouTube channel. A transcript of the video appears below.

Transcript

You're scrolling through your socials, when a petition catches your eye. You care about marine conservation, so you sign it. After all, why not?

So, what happens next?

Your simple action sets off a chain reaction. You see, the petition influences public decisions. The issue grabs media attention or companies are alerted about customer concerns, and the more signatures, the more influential it becomes. Because if enough people care about an issue, the government will too.

So you chat with friends who sign it. Feeling inspired, you share your experience online, which empowers others to take action. Together, you amplify your impact as each action sparks more action.

This is the true lifespan of a petition. One signature starts a chain reaction and changes our world, one signature at a time.

We are the voice for Australia's oceans. Join us to create a thriving ocean for a healthy planet.

Some elements of this audiovisual text that an analysis could focus on are discussed below.

- **The colour scheme:** The video uses a predominantly blue and white colour palette, which has associations with the ocean. This reinforces the identity and purpose of the AMCS and helps to link the act of signing petitions to helping marine life.

- **The speaker:** The speaker's voice is young and male, and his tone is friendly and casual. This choice of speaker is intended to reflect the main target audience of young people, who are likely to be more receptive to such an approach and tone than they might be to a more formal tone or an older speaking persona.

- **The images:** The frequently changing images, a combination of artwork and photographs, provide visual support for the spoken information in an accessible way. They also work with the speaker's casual tone to encourage the viewer to see petition-signing as important and effective, but also as a relatively easy way to make a difference.

- **A call to action:** The video ends with the organisation encouraging viewers to 'join us' to support its work. Making a link between 'thriving' oceans and the health of the planet encourages viewers to feel that the organisation's work is important and necessary.

- **A website address:** Appearing at the conclusion of the video, the URL for the AMCS website prompts the viewer to follow the organisation's suggestion to 'join us' to support marine health.

Analyse a video from a website

ACTIVITY 15.3

Referring to the AMCS video and transcript above, answer the following questions.

1 What is the main message or point of view conveyed by the video?

2 Annotate the transcript to identify:
- two examples of persuasive language
- one place where the speaker stresses a word for emphasis
- one place where the speaker changes their tone or pitch for emphasis.

3 How does the visual content of the video help to support the spoken content?

4 Identify three elements of the video (e.g. colours, images, the speaker, settings) and explain how they position the viewer to support or agree with the point of view being presented.

Speeches

Speakers can use a range of techniques to convince an audience to agree with their point of view. The following are three of the main aural and visual elements that a speaker might use to enhance their presentation of an argument.

- **Voice:** Speakers can use volume, pace, tone, pitch and intonation to convey emotions and attitudes. For example, they may talk loudly and emphatically to attack an idea or point of view, or they may speak in a calm tone to suggest that they are arguing logically and rationally. (See pages 189–90 for more about paralinguistic elements.)

- **Body language and facial expressions:** A thump on the lectern can communicate conviction or anger, and two raised hands can communicate pride or victory. Facial expressions convey attitudes and emotions; looking directly at the audience strengthens the connection between speaker and audience.

- **Appearance:** Clothes, hairstyles and personal props can all have an impact on the audience and help to generate an impression of the speaker and their beliefs. For example, wearing a suit conveys seriousness and authority, while casual clothes might reflect the speaker's opposition to authority or establishment figures. Logos and slogans on a speaker's clothing, as well as the colour of their clothes, can also convey ideas, beliefs and attitudes.

Speakers also tend to use certain persuasive language devices to position their audience and to present their arguments in ways that are easy for listeners to follow and remember. Common examples include:

- humour and anecdote
- inclusive language
- repetition
- rhetorical questions.

For more on persuasive techniques and strategies, see Chapter 16.

The following transcript is of part of a speech by Australian environmentalist Susan Graham. A video of the speech was published on YouTube.

Susan Graham speaking about technology and the environment

Scan the code or click **here** to view the complete speech, then read the excerpt and the annotations highlighting persuasive elements of the words and the manner in which they are delivered.

We, as humans, invented the chainsaw and yet we didn't invent the equal technology to then restore and plant that tree as quickly as we could chop it down. We need that same level of innovation and dedication on the solution of restoring our ecosystems.

By combining digital intelligence with automation we're able to combine the right species at the right location and when we upload that into the drone it just goes out and follows that path and plants those trees where they're needed. What we do is put the seed into this pod that's biodegradable; it has all the nutrients it needs so that when it gets shot into the ground it has a fighting chance to grow into a big, strong, healthy tree that we can climb in 20 years' time.

...

And we have a target of planting 500 billion trees. There's a saying that goes that the best time to plant a tree was 20 years ago and the second best time is today. We have this opportunity now and we need to act today.

> Graham's pace slows slightly, allowing the audience time to absorb her point.

> Inclusive language is commonly used in speeches to encourage the audience to share the speaker's attitude.

> Graham emphasises the word 'need', creating a sense of urgency in the viewer.

> Graham's smile and enthusiastic tone support her message about the power and potential of technology.

> Hand gestures and a sincere expression encourage the viewer to share Graham's enthusiasm for the use of digital technology to help the environment.

> Images of nature remind the viewer what is at stake and the value of what might be saved by technological developments.

Analyse a speech

ACTIVITY 15.4

Select a video of a speech that you find both interesting and persuasive, and answer the following questions.

1 What does the speaker's presentation convey to the audience about the purpose and message of the speech? Consider the speaker's appearance, dress, voice and body language.

2 Who is the main audience for the speech? Which elements of the speech suggest that this is the main audience? Can you identify any other possible audiences?

3 What is the setting for the speech? What impact might this setting have had on the way the speech was delivered? How might it have influenced the audience's response to the speech?

4 What is the main tone of the speech? Does the tone change at any point? If so, what do you think the intended effect on the audience might be?

5 Which persuasive devices can you identify in the language used by the speaker? What is the intended effect of each on the audience?

6 Comment on the likely overall effect of the speech on the audience. Consider the way in which visual and aural information, and a variety of persuasive techniques, operate together to influence the audience's thoughts and feelings on the issue.

Working with transcripts

When analysing an audio or audiovisual text, or audio or audiovisual elements included with a written text, you might have the opportunity to work with a transcript of the audio content. Some things to keep in mind when working with transcripts include the following.

- **Highlight key words and phrases that you might analyse in your response.** You could use a colour-coded system, highlighting persuasive words and phrases in yellow, for example, argument strategies in pink, and structural features in green.

- **Annotate the transcript with notes about the speaker's delivery.** You might like to use a system such as underlining words or phrases that are stressed by the speaker, and circling words or phrases that are delivered more slowly, for emphasis.

- **Remember that transcripts might not always be completely accurate**, especially if they are auto-generated (as they are on YouTube, for example). Be alert to any possible mistakes, such as words that don't make sense in the context, and try to decipher what the speaker might actually be saying before attempting to analyse a particular word or phrase. (If you can't be certain of a particular word or phrase, it's best not to focus on it in your analysis.)

- **If you are analysing an audiovisual text, you should note how visual material – e.g. setting and backdrop – is used to support the spoken word** in specific ways at particular points in the text.

- **Remember that your focus needs to be not only on *what* is said but also on *how* it is said and *why* it is said in that way.** Your annotations should link the content of the audio material with the speaker's delivery and the intended effects of both on the audience. This means including analysis of paralinguistic features. (See the table on pages 189–90.)

ACTIVITY 15.5

Work with a transcript

1 Scan the code or click <u>here</u> to watch a video on the benefits of playing sport.

Alternatively, you can work with a short YouTube video on an issue of your own choice. Watch the video without referring to a transcript. Make notes about the video's main message, main reasons and tone. Also note down three words that describe the mood or emotions generated by the video.

2 Now, turn on the transcript function. (You can do this by clicking the 'CC' or Subtitles / Closed Caption icon on the bottom right of the video.) Watch the video, paying attention to the words. Check for errors and note down corrections to the transcript if needed.

3 Create a document divided into two columns. Copy the transcript into the left-hand column.

4 In the right-hand column, make notes about the persuasive features of the written text and the audio or audiovisual content. Write each note next to the corresponding part of the transcript.

5 Drawing on your annotations, write an analytical paragraph about the ways in which the message of the written text is supported by its delivery via sound or sound and images.

PERSUASIVE STRATEGIES AND TECHNIQUES

IN THIS CHAPTER

- How arguments are constructed
- Summary table of persuasive techniques
- Analysing the cumulative effects of argument and language

An argument is a clear contention justified by supporting reasons and evidence. Constructing a strong argument involves making careful choices about the order that reasons and evidence are presented in, as well as about the best use of language and persuasive techniques to convince the audience to agree.

This chapter outlines some key persuasive language techniques and their likely effects on an audience. But remember that persuasive techniques don't operate in isolation. They work *together* with the tone and style of the language, the selected reasons and evidence, and the structure of the text, to create an overall effect.

For this reason, you should always think about a persuasive text as a whole and consider the cumulative (combined) effects of argument and language.

How arguments are constructed

An argument is a clear opinion supported by reasons. A contention presented without a reason – for example, 'Australia's voting age should be lowered to sixteen' – is not an argument; valid and logical reasons must be put forward to justify the statement.

Of course, writers will take different approaches to presenting and supporting their contentions. When analysing a persuasive text, pay attention to the way in which the writer structures their argument, their potential biases and the persuasive techniques they use to position the audience to agree with their point of view.

Main contention and supporting reasons

A good argument consists of:

- a main contention
- reasons that support and justify the main contention.

The main contention presents the writer's point of view on an issue. Consider the following example, from the home page of the website *Makeit16*, which promotes lowering the voting age to sixteen.

Search

Why make it 16?

Our generation of 16- and 17-year-olds is politically engaged and we want a say in government decisions that affect our lives and future. Yet politicians are ignoring us because we can't vote.

We are making valuable contributions to society

By 16 we can work full time, pay income tax, serve in the army, drive a car, get married and be charged with criminal offences. We have the right and the capacity to be heard, to shape policies that affect our lives, and to be an integral part of our democracy.

We are already experiencing the challenges of our generation

Lowering the voting age acknowledges the national and global crises that young people are experiencing and will inherit. From climate change to housing and education, young people are already experiencing these challenges first and worst, so we deserve a say.

We can strengthen our democracy

Democracies thrive with broader participation. The expansion of voting rights, from men without property to women, Indigenous people, and those aged 18–21 in the 1970s, has consistently strengthened democracy. Granting voting rights to 16- and 17-year-olds in Australian elections and referendums will bring about a similar positive impact.

> The contention is implied by the heading in the form of a question.

> Reasons are stated clearly in bold subheadings.

Identifying the contention and supporting points is not always so straightforward. In some texts the contention is implied (suggested rather than stated directly) by the writer's attitudes and opinions. Consider, for example, the following online comment.

> Sixteen-year-olds are still children. You can hardly turn on the TV without hearing another story about overloaded, stressed-out youth suffering serious anxiety. It is also scientifically established that our brains are not mature until our mid-twenties. Why burden our young people with such a responsibility before they're ready?

This comment does not include a clearly stated contention. Rather, it consists of a list of statements and a question that, taken together, strongly imply the writer's viewpoint: that the voting age in Australia should *not* be lowered to sixteen.

Structuring strategies

Writers make careful decisions about how to arrange their arguments in order to create particular effects. Structuring strategies include:

- starting with the strongest supporting reasons and ending with the weakest
- starting with specific information or one particular case and ending with general information
- starting with personal experience and ending with universal examples
- beginning with a rebuttal then presenting the preferred alternative
- ending with a rebuttal to clinch the argument
- placing the main contention in a strategic position (at the start, in the middle or at the end)
- starting with the problem then moving towards the solution
- using subheadings to break up the text and signal the main points to the reader
- glossing over or downplaying information that undermines the writer's case.

To understand the intended effects of an argument's structure, look at where the main contention is placed and the order in which the main supporting reasons are presented.

Consider the structure of the argument in this message board post.

> Vastly increasing the number of phone detection cameras would surely be an obvious first step towards reducing the road toll. In the space of about an hour in the city yesterday, I spotted at least a dozen drivers on their phones and not sticking to their lanes or maintaining a reasonable speed due to their distraction. This careless, selfish behaviour resulted in several near misses with pedestrians and other vehicles. Meanwhile I only noticed two phone detection cameras.

The writer begins with a clearly stated contention expressed in an assertive but moderate tone. This creates the impression that the writer is clear thinking and confident in their view. Following the contention with supporting reasons and evidence indicates that the argument is based on sound logic and an up-to-date knowledge of the issue.

Now consider the effect of rearranging the argument so that the contention is placed at the end of the comment.

> In the space of about an hour in the city yesterday, I spotted at least a dozen drivers on their phones and not sticking to their lanes or maintaining a reasonable speed due to their distraction. This careless, selfish behaviour resulted in several near misses with pedestrians and other vehicles. Meanwhile I only noticed two phone detection cameras. Vastly increasing the number of phone detection cameras would surely be an obvious first step towards reducing the road toll.

Both arguments have the same reasons and evidence, but by beginning with the statement about increasing the number of phone detection cameras, the first comment is more of an attack on current measures aimed at reducing the road toll, and has a more outraged tone than the second comment. For example, the word 'surely' takes on a more strident tone when included in the first rather than the final sentence. Placing the main contention at the end presents it as the solution to a problem, which can be an effective way of structuring an argument. However, some readers might not accept the conclusion of the second comment, due to its reliance on anecdotal evidence.

Analyse argument structure

ACTIVITY 16.1

Select a written persuasive text and answer the following questions to understand how it is structured and the effects of the writer's structural choices. You could use the opinion piece by Jill Sweatman on pages 175–6 or the one by Kate Charlesworth on pages 208–9, or choose a text on an issue you are studying.

1 Summarise the writer's contention in your own words.

2 Identify the supporting reasons and write them out in order of most important to least important.

3 Look closely at where the contention is stated or most clearly implied, and how the main reasons are ordered. Why might the writer have chosen to present the contention and supporting reasons in this order?

4 Identify one structural change you could make to the piece in order to create a different effect on the reader. Consider the paragraph order, main contention placement, and the sequencing of examples and evidence. Write a paragraph that describes your change and the specific effect you think it would have.

Summary table of persuasive techniques

Use the table in this section as a quick reference to build and consolidate your understanding of persuasive techniques and how they are used to persuade the reader, viewer or listener. (Note that, for simplicity, the term 'writer' is used to represent all kinds of text creators, speakers, presenters and so on.)

While the table is a useful summary, it can also be helpful to think of the various techniques as belonging to a few broad groups. One way to do this is to use the three traditional categories for discussing rhetoric, or the art of persuasion.

- **Logos** is the use of techniques that appeal to the audience's sense that logic and reason are reliable and truthful. It employs devices such as statistics, formal language and jargon.

- **Ethos** is the use of information and evidence that establishes credibility and character. Writers include features such as anecdotes, endorsements and references to their qualifications and/or professional status.

- **Pathos** is the use of appeals to the audience's emotions. Techniques such as hyperbole, emotive language and figurative language are used, along with the various 'appeals to …' in the table.

Persuasive technique	How it influences the audience	Example
Ad hominem attack An attack on a person rather than on their opinion or reasoning.	• Often uses emotive language to create a strong negative depiction of a person or group. • Undermines the opposition's credibility, positioning the audience to dismiss their ideas or viewpoint.	Elon Musk is not interested in science or astronomy. He is merely after a new area to conquer and exploit in his quest for power and wealth.
Alliteration The repetition of consonant or vowel sounds at the start of words.	• Gains the audience's attention by adding emphasis, especially in headlines. • Draws attention to the key words that can have a positive or negative impact.	Climbing ban causes chaos and confusion (headline about a ban on rock-climbing at Mount Arapiles)
Analogy A comparison between two things that helps the audience to draw conclusions about their similarities.	• Explains a complex point in more familiar terms, usually with a clearly positive or negative slant. • Can help to make the contention look simple and obvious by linking it to something that the audience knows well or can grasp easily.	We are heading towards environmental disaster on a global scale like the Titanic towards an iceberg – with no will or clear plan for turning the ship around.

Persuasive technique	How it influences the audience	Example
Anecdote A story about someone or something that the writer has experienced or heard about.	• Lends weight/credibility to the writer's viewpoint, inclining the reader to trust the writer's opinion as being well informed. • Gives the issue a more human angle, making it seem more relevant or real.	Our public transport system needs fixing. Last Saturday I saw two buses go past without stopping because they were too full; later I caught a train but had to get a replacement bus for half the journey. We deserve better.
Appeal to being up-to-date Engages with people's desire to be part of the in-crowd and not be left behind.	• Encourages the audience to want to adopt new technologies and practices, or to reject existing ones. • Can make change seem less intimidating.	Face it, the future is cashless – either get on board or be left behind.
Appeal to family values Draws on the assumption that families, especially traditional nuclear families, are inherently good.	• Invokes the audience's desire for emotional security and a protective, nurturing environment for children. • Can work implicitly when antisocial behaviour is blamed on dysfunctional families.	Our kids have never had so many options but they're missing out on precious family time – having dinner together, watching TV as a family, playing board games. These experiences are the foundation of wellbeing and belonging.
Appeal to fear and insecurity Arouses fear and anxiety by suggesting that harmful or unpleasant effects will follow.	• Plays on people's fears, eliciting a strong emotional reaction to the issue rather than a logical, reasoned response. • Inclines the audience to want to lessen the threat to themselves or society by taking the writer's advice.	Most countries are now experiencing unprecedented climatic conditions – wildfires, floods, collapsing coastlines, thawing permafrost. The scary thing is that this is only the beginning. We need urgent, drastic action to halt and reverse this mounting crisis.
Appeal to financial self-interest Suggests that people should pay the least amount possible, either individually or as a society, and that public funds should be used appropriately.	• Positive impact: the audience feels pleased about getting value for money. • Negative impact: the audience is annoyed about paying too much or about the misuse of money.	Us regular taxpayers contribute to our schools, hospitals, unis and other vital public services. Not so some 1200 major companies who are able to, quite legally, avoid their civic duty to pay tax.

Persuasive technique	How it influences the audience	Example
Appeal to justice and fairness Draws on the belief that everyone has the right to be treated equally and fairly.	• Encourages the audience to feel that action should be taken to avoid injustice. • Places any practice that treats people fairly in a positive light.	It's only fair that the generations who enjoyed the benefits of fossil fuels and plastics clean up their mess, and don't make it worse with a nuclear-fantasy 'solution' that will add a whole new meaning to toxic legacy.
Appeal to loyalty and/or patriotism Suggests that audience members should be loyal to their group and/or love their country.	• Invokes feelings of pride, a shared identity and a common purpose. • Can be used to attack a practice or points of view as being inconsistent with the group's values.	I'd like to see an end to offshore detention centres – it would end the weight of shame and disgust that so many of us, as Australians, have carried on our shoulders.
Appeal to tradition and custom Suggests that traditional customs are valuable and should be preserved.	• Inclines the audience to resist change and to favour past or existing traditions. • Comparisons with 'modern' lifestyles can make the audience feel that social cohesion is being lost.	When I was growing up, the streets were filled with the sounds of children playing, enjoying fresh air, exercise and friendship. Now screens and overblown concerns for safety leave our streets empty and our children struggling with unprecedented levels of mental illness.
Cliché A common and overused phrase quickly understood by a wide audience.	• Reassures the audience through familiarity. • Often has a comic effect, either reducing tension or producing a sarcastic, critical tone as part of an attack.	The government's answer to these issues is to bury its head in the sand.
Creating a dichotomy A description of an issue in terms of two opposing sides, one 'good' and the other 'bad'.	• Positions the audience to see the writer's viewpoint as obvious or self-evident. • Uses loaded language to characterise the two sides in strongly positive and negative terms.	E-scooter riders have proven themselves to be reckless menaces whose selfish behaviour puts innocent, law-abiding road-users at risk.

Persuasive technique	How it influences the audience	Example
Emotive language Language that has a strong emotional impact, and uses the positive and negative connotations of words to influence the audience's response.	• Encourages the audience to respond on an emotional level. • The audience's emotional response positions them to share the writer's viewpoint.	The iconic koala is now officially listed as endangered, following years of ruthless land clearing, savage droughts and catastrophic bushfires. Sadly, the fate of the koala now rests entirely on the will of the government to protect precious habitats.
Exaggeration, overstatement and hyperbole An exaggeration of the actual situation for dramatic impact.	• Attracts the audience's attention through a surprising or extreme claim. • Can generate humour to make the audience regard the writer's viewpoint positively.	If Easter eggs and bunnies were in the shops any earlier they would be keeping Santa Claus company.
Facts and figures The use of numerical data, official information and research findings to suggest a rational or scientific basis for a point of view.	• Makes the writer's viewpoint seem objective rather than subjective/personal. • Can create a convincing but potentially misleading impression through selective use of data.	A serious rental problem has emerged, with rental vacancies dropping from 5.2% last year to just 1.8% in March. In the outer suburbs it is even worse, with just 0.4% of rental properties available.
Figurative language The use of words and phrases in a non-literal way (e.g. metaphors, similes).	• Creates a striking image, often working on an emotional level through the connotations of words or the associations of the image. • Can capture the audience's attention by being more engaging than dry description.	Capitalism is a rapacious beast that requires careful handling and strict controls lest it swallow the vulnerable.
Generalisation A sweeping statement that suggests what is true for some is true for most or all.	• Appeals to a widely held belief or assumption. • Can manipulate the audience's view by simplifying a complex issue.	They're meant to be the enlightened generation, but Gen Z's online bullying tactics reveal they're not as caring and tolerant as they think they are.
Inclusive language The use of 'we', 'our', 'us' etc. to include the audience in the same group as the writer.	• Appeals to a desire for a sense of belonging, and positions audience members to want to share the same ideas as others within the group. • Invokes the audience's desire not to be left out or regarded as an outsider.	It's time for us to redesign our community playground to be inclusive for all ages and abilities, so everyone in our community can interact together.

Persuasive technique	How it influences the audience	Example
Irony and sarcasm Language use in which the real meaning is the opposite of what is literally stated.	• Inclines the audience to disapprove of the situation or the view being criticised. • Can subtly align the audience with the writer's viewpoint, which is presented as superior by implication.	How can we be in a cost-of-living crisis when I see an ever-increasing horde of mega-SUVs and massive utes, which cost a lot of money and guzzle petrol? The Toorak tractors have gone mad, complete with snorkels for fording all the wild rivers of suburban Melbourne.
Jargon Specialised language used by experts in a field of knowledge.	• Can help to convey the writer's expertise in a field. • Can suggest objectivity or fact-based opinion, adding credibility.	Increasing the prevalence of everything from lung cancer to peanut allergies, and causing 11 000 premature deaths per annum (10 times more than the road toll), traffic exhaust pollutants like nitrogen dioxide and particulate matter PM2.5 in our air should not be acceptable.
Puns and plays on words Words with multiple meanings, used to imply multiple ideas with the one phrase; can play on a word with the same or a similar sound but different spelling (e.g. whole/hole).	• Often attracts the audience's attention, especially in a headline. • Can generate humour to endorse or mock an idea or group. • Can present a point of view on a topic through the positive or negative connotations of the multiple meanings of a word.	Testing times for exam authorities (headline about mistakes in VCE examinations)
Reason and logic The use of language and reasoning to show a logical or causal connection between facts and ideas.	• Suggests that the writer's viewpoint is true and not just their opinion or emotional response. • Positions the audience to feel that opposing viewpoints lack substance. • Often used with a detached tone and/or formal style to suggest authority.	Crippling HECS debt will deter many bright students from further education. Reducing the debt burden of young Australians is therefore a necessary investment in our future.

Persuasive technique	How it influences the audience	Example
Repetition Using a word or phrase several times.	• Emphasises the main point or key term. • Often used in speeches to reinforce or highlight a point, and to make it more memorable.	Guide dogs are more than just playmates. They're more than just companions. They're essential supports for thousands of Australians.
Rhetorical question A question with an implied but unstated answer.	• Encourages the audience to (mentally) supply the answer and see things from the writer's perspective. • Implies that the answer is self-evident and therefore opposing viewpoints can be rejected. • Can be combined with an emotional appeal and/or inclusive language.	Democracy brings responsibilities as well as benefits. How can the US be called a democracy when voting is optional?

Analysing the cumulative effects of argument and language

Analysing the ways in which argument and language are used to persuade requires more than just identifying reasons or persuasive techniques. The key to an effective analysis is an understanding of how argument and language work together to create an overall, or cumulative, effect on the reader. Analysing an argument as a whole means looking at *how* the argument is shaped and expressed to form a cohesive piece of persuasive writing, and *why* the writer has shaped and expressed it in this way.

The strategies outlined below will help you to look for and write about the cumulative effects of an argument's structure and the writer's selection of evidence, persuasive techniques and vocabulary.

Think about purpose and audience

A writer's main contention is directly linked to their purpose, so start by identifying the contention. Then think about what the writer's purpose is, and the sorts of responses they might want to evoke in the audience to achieve their purpose. Throughout your analysis, relate the effects of words and phrases to the writer's main contention and overall purpose. Thinking about purpose will help you to answer 'why' questions – *why* has the writer given this reason / chosen this word / used this image? – which are key to an effective analysis.

It is also helpful to consider who the writer's intended audience might be, as the writer's purpose will often be tied to a specific audience, and they will select evidence and examples that will be relevant and meaningful to this audience. In addition, certain persuasive techniques, word choices and language registers will work more effectively with some audiences than with others.

Consider the argument's structure

The structure of an argument and the order of the supporting reasons play an important role in positioning readers. Look at how the argument begins and ends, where the writer places the main contention and where they rebut opposing viewpoints. A well-structured argument will lead the audience on a journey, by the end of which the writer's point of view will appear well-founded and convincing.

Changes of tone are key structuring points; they often signal the introduction of a new reason or a shift in the overall approach, such as from attempting to evoke negative emotions to attempting to evoke positive ones, or from being highly emotive to very logical. Look at how language choices produce this shift, what the effect on the audience might be and why the writer has chosen to turn the argument in a new direction.

Analyse how persuasive techniques work together

Consider the editorial on page 173. The writer creates a dichotomy between scammers and their innocent 'victims'. Their language for describing scammers is peppered with negative terms such as 'siphoned', 'fraudsters' and 'masquerading'. Although the tone is generally matter-of-fact, positioning readers to regard the opinion expressed in the editorial as reasonable and practical, this regular use of negative language steadily builds a picture of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission (ACCC) as on the side of banks rather than on the side of the real 'victims' of scammers – their customers. The word 'victims', together with words and phrases such as 'bilked' and 'bear the brunt of', positions readers to sympathise and identify with banks' customers and thus to agree that the ACCC should also side with customers rather than banks.

The serious and objective tone of the editorial underlines this concern, while the formality of the language (e.g. 'the digital nature of the criminal operations', 'traversing borders and legal jurisdictions') encourages the reader to view the editorial's conclusion as authoritative and reliable.

Overall, the editorial uses appeals to sympathy for customers and highly negative language for scammers to position the reader to agree that the ACCC should reveal which banks are most targeted by criminals.

Consider cumulative effects

Read the following opinion piece then answer the questions to understand the cumulative effects of argument and language.

We protect our kids from smoking, so why do cars get a free ride?

Kate Charlesworth
Physician, councillor with the Climate Council

Since the 1990s, Australia has been a global leader in creating smoke-free zones. Aware of the mounting health impacts, we banned cigarette smoking in shopping centres, playgrounds, schools, and in cars with minors. This has cleaned up our air and significantly reduced our kids' exposure to harmful second-hand smoke.

Yet all of us, regardless of smoking status, still inhale another harmful type of air pollution – exhaust fumes from the petrol and diesel cars and trucks on our roads.

Children grow up with the consequences of traffic pollution. Joe Armao / *The Age*

According to a recent Climate Council analysis, there are more than 3000 Australian schools and childcare centres operating close to major roads. But just last week, a world-first study found that Australian children exposed to high levels of air pollution from birth could have increased odds of developing a peanut allergy, and a likelihood it will persist across the first 10 years of life.

This is a troubling reminder that improving our air quality plays a bigger role in our children's long-term health. Peanut allergies are common among young Australians, affecting 3 per cent of children under 12 months.

For many parents, it's unsettling to think that the air around the places where their children learn and play could be contributing to long-term health challenges. With so many children at risk, minimising their exposure to air pollutants makes a real difference.

We've all experienced the stench of petrol fumes, especially in congested cities. Our children are even more vulnerable to the effects. The more time that children spend near busy roads, the greater their exposure to traffic-related air pollution and the greater their risk of poor health outcomes due to their faster breathing rates, and immature lungs and immune systems.

As a doctor with young children, I'm painfully aware of what's happening to their bodies when our kids breathe traffic pollution. Prolonged exposure has been linked to higher rates of childhood asthma, and increased hospitalisations for respiratory conditions – in many cases, similar to the poor health outcomes associated with passive smoking. Children exposed to harmful air pollution are more likely to suffer lifelong health impacts such as reduced lung function. In pregnancy, breathing in pollutants increases the risk of low birth weight babies and premature babies, which can have long-term impacts for those children.

But there's hope. Unlike smoking bans, which took years to implement, we already have solutions to dramatically reduce traffic pollution, and they're ready to go. There is no reason why we can't clean up our roads and our lungs at the same time. By accelerating the shift towards cleaner transport, we can reduce air pollution from traffic that's clogging our streets. This also cuts the climate pollution that's overheating our planet. We've already started doing this by accelerating the shift to electric vehicles, powering our grid with clean energy and providing more people with cleaner ways of getting around.

The New Vehicle Efficiency Standard in force from January 1 is a step in the right direction. It's expected to prevent 20 million tonnes of climate pollution by 2030 and 80 million tonnes by 2035. This gives Australians better access to low- and zero-emission vehicles while reducing the need for polluting petrol and diesel cars. Expanding shared and active transport options – such as walking, cycling and public transport – will cut traffic pollution even further. These cleaner, healthier alternatives to private car travel can rapidly improve the air quality around our schools and neighbourhoods, making them safer for everyone.

Cleaner cars, safer streets and healthier ways to get around will let our kids learn and play without risking their health. But to ensure younger generations enjoy that safer future, we also need to take on fossil fuels, since burning coal, oil and gas are major contributors to air pollution. The industries that are making us sick, producing most of the toxins we're breathing in and overheating the planet, are still propped up by billions in government subsidies.

The Age

1 What is the main contention of the opinion piece? At what point or points in the piece is it expressed? Or is it implied rather than stated explicitly?

2 What reasons does the writer present in support of her viewpoint? How are these reasons ordered?

3 What is Dr Charlesworth's purpose in this opinion piece? How would you describe her intended audience?

4 The tone shifts several times in this piece. Identify two places where the tone changes and explain how these shifts contribute to the writer's argument.

5 Identify three persuasive techniques used by the writer. For each of these techniques, write down a sentence from the opinion piece in which that technique is used, and explain the likely effect on the reader.

6 Does the writer mainly try to influence the reader's emotions, or does she try to persuade through logic and reason? Or does she use a combination of the two approaches? Explain your answer.

7 What is the intended effect of the image on the reader? How does it contribute to the persuasiveness of the written piece?

8 Write two paragraphs on the way in which argument and language work together to create an overall persuasive effect.

WRITING AN ANALYSIS

IN THIS CHAPTER

- Reading and annotating the task material
- Planning your analysis
- Writing your analysis
- Editing and proofreading checklists
- Sample issue and analysis

Part of your assessment in Unit 2, Area of Study 2 will involve the analysis of argument and language in a media text. Your analysis will explain and 'unpack' the ways in which language and argument work together to position the audience to agree with the point of view being presented.

There are three main steps in writing your analysis: annotating, planning and writing. The following sections show how to complete these steps. At the end of the chapter, an annotated opinion piece and sample analysis model an approach to this task, and show how the annotations can feed directly into the analysis.

Reading and annotating the task material

The first step in preparing your analysis is to collect all the information you will need. Firstly, read, view or listen to the text (or texts) for meaning and the general shape of the argument. Then read, view or listen again, this time carefully looking for the main supporting points or reasons, the order they are placed in and the emotions and reactions the text aims to evoke in the audience.

For a written text, annotate the text as you are reading (except if you are using the reading time in an exam, when you will need to wait until writing time commences to make annotations). You can do this by highlighting, circling and underlining words and phrases in the text as well as by writing notes in the margins of the text. If you are doing this on paper you can use a variety of pens and highlighters; in a Word document or PDF you can annotate with the 'comment' functions in the software you are using.

For an audio or audiovisual text, make notes as you are listening or viewing and, whenever possible, listen to or view the text several times.

Annotating is a skill – it requires using a system you are familiar with as well as an ability to read a text on several levels. There are many ways to annotate a text; find the method that works best for you. Here are some general tips.

- **Look at the text as a whole.** On first looking at a text, notice the layout of text and image/s on the page, and any headings and subheadings that break the text into sections.

- **Make notes in the margins.** Jot down the main contention, the reasons being presented and the main tone of the piece.

- **Zoom in.** Look for patterns, repetition and the sequence of ideas.

- **Get even closer.** Look for individual words that are particularly surprising, interesting or effective.

- **Ask questions.** In the margins, note any questions that arise. Later, you can return to the questions and see if they have been answered by another part of the text.

- **Use your own symbols and system.** In the example annotated opinion piece later in this chapter (pages 220–2) you will see symbols such as !, V and ? identifying important points, vocabulary and questions. Create your own set of symbols such as these.

The following three sections provide more detail on how you can annotate your text. The annotations are grouped into three broad categories:

- structure

- argument

- language.

In the annotated opinion piece on pages 220–2 you can see examples of annotations that fit into these three groups.

Annotating for structure

The structure of the text refers to both its physical layout and the sequence in which the ideas and arguments are presented.

- Look at the visual arrangement of the text, noting the size and placement of any images. Have any images been placed in important positions such as at the very start of the text?

- For a longer written text, identify the introduction, body and conclusion. How has the writer chosen to begin and end?

- Identify 'white space' and other major breaks in the text. These often indicate places where the writer changes their tone, introduces a new reason or presents additional evidence. (In an audio text, a pause can have a similar effect.)

- Look for headings and subheadings that divide and organise the content. These often express the main reasons or ideas.

- If the text is visual (e.g. a cartoon or photograph), look at the size and placement of the main elements of the image.

Annotating for argument

In persuasive texts the argument consists of a main contention supported by several reasons. Often, the writer will make the structure of their argument clear by discussing each supporting reason in a separate paragraph; alternatively, one reason might be raised in more than one part of the text. Annotations that show the main reasons for the writer's point of view will make it easier for you to analyse the argument.

- Underline or circle the contention and rewrite it in your own words. The contention is often expressed in the heading and/or the introductory paragraph; sometimes it is not clearly stated until the end of the piece. If the contention is implied rather than stated explicitly, write the implied contention as concisely as you can.

- Clearly identify the main reasons or points of argument. You could highlight or underline each reason in a different colour, draw a box around each reason, or summarise the reason in a margin note and draw a line connecting it to the relevant part of the text.

- Number the reasons. This will make it easier to analyse the text at a later stage.

- Look for rebuttal – where an opposing argument or point of view is being rejected. This might be associated with one of the writer's main reasons, or it could be a separate reason.

- If the text is visual, make notes in the margin about the point of view being presented by the cartoonist, illustrator or photographer.

- For an audio text, listen for signposting words such as 'firstly', 'as a result' and 'in conclusion' that indicate how the speaker has constructed their argument.

Annotating for vocabulary and language features

To make annotations about vocabulary and language features you will need to drill down to the fine detail of a text to examine the writer's word choices and use of persuasive techniques (see Chapter 16 for definitions and examples of these). A useful system for annotating is to highlight/circle/underline words and phrases with the same colour you use to highlight the reason that is presented at that point in the text.

- Highlight any interesting words or phrases that stand out. Make a note of why you highlighted the word – did it have a strong impact on you?

- In the margins, write the main tone of the piece. Circle some words that help to create this tone.

- Look for any shifts in tone and make a note on the text where these occur (often when a new reason is introduced, or there is a shift from presenting an argument to rebutting the opposing view).

- Highlight any persuasive techniques, such as repetition, emotional appeals, facts and statistics, figurative language or the rule of three. Make a note of the intended effect on the reader. You won't be able to discuss all these techniques, but identifying them will help you select the most relevant ones for your analysis.

- Write a symbol (such as a question mark) near any words you do not understand. If you have time later, find a definition.

Planning your analysis

Once you have gathered all the required information, you need to begin organising your ideas. If there is time, organise your annotations by summarising them in an information sheet. This will enable you to group together ideas and examples in preparation for writing an analysis.

Scan the code or click here to download an information sheet template.

Once you have an idea of which elements of the text you are going to write about, you need to create a plan for your analysis. It might only be brief, especially in a timed assessment task, but it will help you to analyse the argument and language in a coherent fashion and to avoid simply giving a recount of what the writer has said.

The outline below shows a typical breakdown of the paragraphs in an analysis.

Introduction One paragraph	• Briefly introduce the issue. • State the writer's contention in your own words. • Include the name of the writer, the source of the text, the text type (e.g. opinion piece, blog post), its main audience and the date it was published. Use purposeful verbs to link these details to the writer's main aim. • Identify the main tone of the text and the overall persuasive approach. • Refer briefly to any visual material.
Body paragraphs Three to five paragraphs	• Identify a focus for the paragraph. • Give examples. • Explain the likely effects of the selected examples and how they work to persuade.
Conclusion One paragraph (optional)	• Briefly explain the overall effect of the writer's argument and persuasive language.

A brief plan would include:

- the writer's main contention
- the text's main tone
- the focus for each of your body paragraphs
- notes on the examples you will use.

Structuring your analysis

The way you structure your analysis can have a significant impact on its fluency and cohesiveness. Here are three ways to organise your ideas and information into paragraphs.

- **Reason by reason:** If you annotate the text using the process on pages 211–13, you can devote each body paragraph to analysing the way in which each reason is presented and argued. Make sure you explain the effect of each reason, with reference to the language used to present it, and how it helps the writer to achieve their purpose.

- **Paragraph by paragraph:** Analyse each paragraph of the text in order. (If there is more than one text, analyse the shorter text after you analyse the main one.) Be careful not to simply paraphrase or rewrite what the writer has said; try to identify the intent behind each paragraph and its role in the writer's argument.

- **Beginning with structure, then focusing on language:** This approach involves moving from the general, big-picture effects of the text to the particular effects of language use. You might base your first paragraph on the structure of a writer's argument and the main techniques used (e.g. emotional appeals, reason and logic). Subsequent paragraphs would then look more closely at the language and analyse the specific effects that word choices and persuasive techniques have on the reader. Here is an example of a paragraph near the beginning of a response organised in this way.

The writer's argument moves from the general to the particular, beginning with a calm, fact-based discussion of the recent introduction of new laws; then moving on to case studies; and finally, with a more personal and emotive approach, describing individual experiences. The writer thus aims to gradually increase the reader's sense that the legislation, rather than being a theoretical decision by a far-removed government, is likely to directly affect their own lives. This, in turn, is intended to elicit feelings of concern and the desire to take action.

Structuring body paragraphs

Here are two ways you can approach your body paragraphs. Both cover essentially the same elements of analysis but have different emphases.

Option 1: The *What? How? Why?* approach.

- Explain *what* the writer is saying. Keep this brief – don't provide a recount.

- Explain *how* the writer is saying it. Do particular word choices have an impact? Does the writer appeal to the emotions, or instead emphasise facts, figures and logic?

- Explain *why* the writer has chosen to say it in this way. What are the likely effects on the reader? How does this help the writer achieve their purpose?

Option 2: The PEE approach.

- P = Persuasive element. Explain one key element of the writer's attempt to persuade the reader to agree. It could be a reason or point of argument, a structural element, a persuasive strategy or the choice of particular words.

- E = Example/s. Give some examples of this persuasive element, explaining where the examples occur in the piece and what their place is in the writer's argument.

- E = Effect. Explain what the reader is likely to think or feel, how they are being positioned or influenced to agree with an argument and how this is helping the writer to achieve their purpose.

Scan the code on the left or click here to see a short video explaining the importance of identifying the audience when analysing a persuasive text. Scan the code on the right or click here to see a video outlining an approach to writing an analysis of argument and persuasive language.

Writing your analysis

This section gives you sentence-level strategies for writing an analysis of argument and persuasive language. The emphasis is on sentences that maintain your focus on *analysis* – explaining how argument and language are working to present a point of view and to persuade an audience to agree.

Writing about the effects of persuasive techniques

The table below contains sentence starters for writing about how argument and persuasive language can influence the reader or audience.

The writer …	The reader …	The persuasive technique …
evokes the reader's sense of outrage by …	is encouraged to feel …	positions the reader to …
seeks to create a negative response by …	is positioned to share the writer's opinion by …	elicits the reader's sympathy by …
proposes a solution to …	is likely to be provoked to anger by …	appeals to the reader's sense of … in order to …
uses emotive language to …	is included in the debate by …	encourages the reader to believe …
exaggerates the situation in order to …	is intended to …	works to engage the reader's support by …

Writing about the effects of visual language

Your analysis should include close discussion of any images associated with the text or texts. This means *analysing*, not just describing, the visual material, linking it to the written text and the writer's purpose and audience. Here are some sentence starters that contain useful phrases for writing about the effects of various visual language features.

The cartoon contrasts the powerful with the powerless by exaggerating the individuals' relative sizes, which has the effect of …
The cartoonist shows their contempt for the individuals at the centre of this issue, using thought bubbles / a caption / speech balloons to reveal …
By placing the subject in focus at the centre of the photograph, the photographer positions the viewer to feel …
The photograph captures the natural environment in detail, showing rich greens and blues, encouraging the viewer to feel …
The graph shows earlier data in shades of blue, changing to purple for more recent data then red for the latest, eliciting feelings of …
By presenting high numbers in large bold fonts, the infographic draws the viewer's attention to …
Reinforcing the message of the written text, the image appeals to …

Written persuasive texts often include images; if this is the case for the text you are analysing, consider the relationship between words and images. Usually the visual material will support or present a similar point of view to the written text, but there might be subtle differences between the messages they convey. In other cases, the image might be a separate text from the written piece and might offer a different point of view on the issue. The table below contains some useful words and phrases for comparing and contrasting the persuasive effects of images with those of written texts.

To discuss a similarity between an image and a written text	To discuss a difference between an image and a written text
The image …	The image …
supports, reinforces, echoes, reiterates, delivers a similar message to, bolsters, confirms, corroborates, consolidates	undermines, contradicts, conveys an alternative message to, places pressure on, counters, challenges, questions, opposes
… the point of view expressed in the text.	… the point of view expressed in the text.

Writing about the impact of structure

Structure is a crucial part of any argument, and you should discuss the effects of at least some elements of structure as part of your analysis. Consider the following points.

- **Placement of the main contention:** Is the main contention stated at the outset of the piece? Or does it appear towards the end of the piece, as the inevitable conclusion of the writer's discussion? Is it clearly stated, or only implied? Why might the writer have chosen to present their contention in this place and manner?

- **Use of headings:** What does the main heading suggest about the writer's point of view and/or their main approach? Do subheadings indicate a logical structure or an examination of different angles on an issue?

- **Order of supporting reasons:** Does the writer present their main points in order of strongest to weakest? Or do they save their strongest point till last to leave a powerful impression on the reader?

- **Placement of rebuttal:** Are reasons for rejecting alternative points of view placed near the start so that the audience rejects alternatives at the outset, or is rebuttal woven throughout as part of a compare/contrast structure (see page 218)?

- **Shifts in tone:** A change in a writer's tone may signal the shift to a different approach in their argument. For example, they may begin with a personal story presented in a sad and emotional tone designed to arouse the reader's sympathy, before moving to a more matter-of-fact tone to present evidence and statistics.

As always, your analysis should focus on *why* the writer made the choices they did.

By moving from a touching anecdote, expressed in a sympathetic tone, to the results of surveys carried out by university scholars, the writer creates the impression that their argument is both based on lived experience and endorsed by research. This positions the reader to see the broader consequences of the issue and to accept the writer's argument that a response from authorities is needed.

Writing about the combined effects of argument and language

Your analysis needs to explain the ways in which argument and language interact to position the reader. Often, certain approaches to argument are associated with particular persuasive techniques. For instance, an appeal to group loyalty may be presented using inclusive language, while an ad hominem attack might be delivered in highly emotive language with a mocking tone.

When writing about language used to **support an argument** you can phrase your sentence like this:

*The writer's use of … (language/technique) **supports** their argument that … (argument being presented).*

Here are some alternatives to 'supports'.

advances	enhances	strengthens
bolsters	promotes	sustains
develops	reinforces	underlines

Sometimes a writer will use a **compare/contrast** approach to consider their own and opposing viewpoints side by side. To do so they will **create a dichotomy**, using words with positive associations for their own argument, and words with negative associations for opposing arguments.

To discuss the writer's use of a compare/contrast approach, you could use words such as the following.

compares	contrasts	juxtaposes	opposes

For example:

*The writer favourably **compares** their preferred model with the alternative, positioning the reader to feel the solution is straightforward and obvious.*

You can vary the sentence structure by using the '-ing' form of these verbs.

comparing	contrasting	juxtaposing	opposing

Using the -ing form of the verb can be a good way to immediately connect a writer's persuasive strategy with their intended effect. For example:

*By **juxtaposing** the benefits of their preferred model with the supposed downfalls of the alternative approach, the writer encourages the reader to feel the alternative is simply not viable.*

Editing and proofreading checklists

Sometimes you will have the opportunity to carefully annotate a persuasive text, then plan, draft, refine and edit your analysis, such as when you are completing a practice task at home or in class. However, when you are writing under time constraints you might only have five minutes to plan and five minutes to edit.

In either case, it is worth allocating time to planning and editing. Annotating the text before you start writing will help you to clarify your ideas and identify evidence you can incorporate into your analysis. Once you have written a draft, editing will help to ensure your expression is clear, your thoughts are logically organised and you have addressed all parts of the task. Use the checklists below to assess your analysis and revise it where necessary.

Structure

☐ The introduction gives the key details of the text (writer, publication details, text type) and states the writer's main contention, linking these to their purpose and specific audience.

☐ The introduction refers to the main tone of the piece and the writer's overall approach to persuading the audience.

☐ Each body paragraph has a clear focus and does not repeat points from a previous paragraph.

Analysis of argument and persuasive language

☐ Each body paragraph discusses the effects of argument and language choices on the audience and relates these effects to the writer's purpose and main contention.

☐ You have discussed the impact of context, purpose and audience on the writer's choices of argument and language.

☐ You have discussed the tone of the text and related it to the writer's purpose and argument, and identified and analysed the likely impact of any shifts in tone.

☐ Each body paragraph includes a variety of short examples or quotes.

☐ You have analysed the impact of visual and/or audio elements and their relationship to any written text they are associated with.

Language

☐ Every sentence is clear and grammatically correct.

☐ Spelling is correct (especially of names of people and places in the text).

☐ Punctuation is correct, including the use of commas, apostrophes, capital letters, and quotation marks for direct quotes from the text.

☐ You have used linking words to make your analysis fluent and coherent.

☐ You have used relevant metalanguage to analyse persuasive strategies and their effects.

☐ You have used formal language and avoided informal expressions and clichés.

☐ You have written in the third person (avoiding the first-person 'I') .

Sample issue and analysis

This section is in two parts:

- an annotated opinion piece that includes an image
- an annotated sample analysis of how the writer uses argument and language to present a point of view.

Although you might not be studying the issue being addressed by the opinion piece, look closely at the approach and the vocabulary used in the annotations and the sample analysis. You can make use of these in your own analyses of persuasive texts.

Annotated opinion piece

The following opinion piece presents a point of view on the issue of the introduction of a rock-climbing ban at Mount Arapiles in Victoria. The annotations are typical of the sorts of notes you might make on your own persuasive text.

Scan the code or click **here** to read the opinion piece on the *Herald Sun* website, and view the accompanying embedded video.

Rock climbing ban at Mt Arapiles shows Victoria's cultural heritage laws are broken

The secret process used to ban rock climbing at the world-famous Mt Arapiles dramatically highlights how broken Victoria's cultural heritage legislation is. And similar access bans are spreading.

Mike Tomkins

Argument: clearly outlines contention – legislation is needlessly limiting access to natural areas.

? Where are they spreading?

Image: evokes a sense of awe and demonstrates what will be lost due to the ban.

Rock climbers are being threatened with fines of more than $346,000 per offence in Victoria.

The move to gut rock climbing at the world famous Mt Arapiles in Victoria's western region is something straight out of an episode of the political dark comedy *Utopia*.

The most wholesome and positive activity that you can imagine has been sacrificed on a false premise.

The government is committed and revolt is now inevitable.

On Monday, Victorian Premier Jacinta Allan announced that the cultural wonder of Mt Arapiles will be secured by spending $1.7m of taxpayer funds on new visitor facilities.

Unfortunately, for unfathomable reasons, about half the rock climbing in the area must be banned in the process.

This, we are told by government figures, will apparently bring to life what can only emerge as Australia's most disappointing tourist attraction.

Sadly, there is barely any visible trace of the ancient culture that was once practised in the region.

Among the 3,000 famous rock climbs at Mt Arapiles, there are only six minor examples of ancient art. Faint, small, but valuable.

Ravaged by thousands of years of bushfires and rock exfoliation – a small emu foot painting is the most impressive item I have seen in 22 years of visits.

It's difficult to spot and well worth preserving. But it's no Kakadu. Image enhancement apps are necessary to even find these last remnants.

Nobody is going to make the four-hour journey from Melbourne to view invisible art or rock quarrying remnants.

The protection of quarried rock chips is the policy that has killed climbing.

Nowhere else in the world protects chipped rock, formed when early humans sought basic cutting tools. Are we pioneers or fools?

There is not a single photo of the alleged cultural wonders to act as a draw card. What will the Google reviews show? Nothing.

In 60 years of climbing at Arapiles, there has been zero harm to any cultural heritage.

Climbers have been especially active in finding and reporting rock art. Educational signage is our recommendation.

Let's celebrate what is left.

Yet the rich modern culture of rock climbing has been devastated by both the Allan government and Parks Victoria to allegedly protect something that was never at risk in the first place.

This sorry and tragic episode of political folly has been visited upon all Victorians courtesy of broken cultural heritage legislation.

All the reports are secret, there is no consultation and no compromise is considered.

If you wanted to stoke a culture war, this is how you would do it.

Annotations (left margin):

? How is this show relevant to the issue?

(V) 'wholesome' contrasts with the use of 'sacrificed' and 'false premise' to paint the government as unreasonable.

! Key point: the issue under the microscope.

Argument: by referencing his experience, the writer presents himself as knowledgeable on the issue.

? Why does this happen here?

Argument: highlights the good things that climbers have done in the area.

Argument: refers to broader discussions and debates, relying on reader knowledge and suggesting larger issues are at stake to encourage readers to take a side.

Annotations (right margin):

Argument: figures are used to reinforce the author's opinion that the ban and fines are extreme.

Language: implies that rock climbers are preparing to fight the decision.

Language: word choice is aimed at creating feelings of confusion and absurdity.

Language: short sentence for impact.

(V) 'killed' creates a powerful image of unjustifiable violence.

(V) 'alleged' positions the reader to question the validity of the government's claims.

Argument: repeats the main contention, reinforcing the writer's disdain for the government.

Language: repetition (of 'no') and alliteration are used to highlight and reinforce a key point.

(V) 'ashamed' is a powerful and highly emotive word choice.

! Key point; directly links back to the article subhead.

Argument: writer is a stakeholder with a personal connection to the issue.

I am ashamed of our government.

This must be fixed if we are to avoid further *Utopia* episodes.

It is one thing to destroy a community of climbers. It is quite another to effectively write off businesses and farmers – the little climbers' town of Natimuk is in mourning and the few businesses there face a grim and uncertain future.

Similar access bans are spreading throughout Australia.

The local Sea Lake Mallee Rally, Mount Warning, the Glass House Mountains and many more iconic public land locations are going the way of Uluru. No touching. Secret business.

Heritage protection, hatched in bizarre secrecy, has failed every Victorian terribly.

Mike Tomkins is the president of the Australian Climbing Association (Victoria)

Herald Sun

! Key point; affects more than just climbers.

Language: short sentences link back to earlier arguments.

Annotated sample analysis

In his opinion piece for the *Herald Sun*, Mike Tomkins argues forcefully that the recent decision to limit climbing on and around Mt Arapiles in western Victoria is pointless and unfair, and will do little more than curb a popular sport and negatively affect nearby towns. As president of the Australian Climbing Association (Victoria), Tomkins draws on his knowledge of the area as well as of the climbing community in his rejection of the ban and his disparagement of the government. He refers to other places in Australia being affected by similar decisions, aiming to convince the reader that the quality of examples of ancient culture needs to be considered for truly effective heritage preservation to occur.

Tomkins begins his article with emotive language designed to create a dichotomy, with rock climbers wishing to pursue their 'wholesome and positive' hobby on the one hand, and those who support a ban on climbing on the other. He describes the ban as based on a 'false premise' and characterises its impact on climbing as a 'sacrifice', promoting an image of supporters of the ban as misguided and cruel. The reader is positioned to identify and wish to side with climbers through Tomkins' use of the inclusive 'you' and his depiction of climbers as victims of the government's 'unfathomable' decision. This is reinforced by the photograph, which shows a climber, whose smile suggests her good intentions as well as the enjoyment she gets from climbing. The wide shot shows the grandeur of the mountain, reminding the viewer of what a ban might deprive them of.

The inadequacy of the ban is reinforced by Tomkins' minimising references to known artworks in the area and to artwork he has personally

The introduction includes the name of the writer, the issue, the text type, the publication and the writer's contention, linking these to the writer's 'forceful' approach.

Persuasive elements are always connected to the writer's intended effect on the reader.

The analysis shows an awareness throughout of the ways in which particular language and argument strategies work together with the aim of producing particular effects on the reader.

seen – namely, 'only six minor examples of ancient art' that are difficult to spot, and a 'small emu foot painting'. The words 'only' and 'small' work together to suggest that these artworks are minor and thus cannot justify the 'sacrifice' required by those who wish to climb the mountain. Tomkins contrasts these examples with those at Kakadu and Uluru, which are well known for their deep cultural heritage, suggesting that the ban will achieve little in terms of preserving ancient art while having many drawbacks and negative impacts on the community.

> The analysis includes reference to assumed knowledge that supports the argument.

By referencing his '22 years of visits', Tomkins encourages readers to see him as an expert on the matter, with significant personal experience and deep knowledge of the area. Weighed against nameless 'government figures', readers are thus positioned to perceive Tomkins' point of view as well informed and trustworthy in comparison to that of unknown decision-makers. He showcases the good that rock climbers do for rock art and their positive impact on areas and towns surrounding popular rock-climbing destinations. Pointing out that rock climbers have found and reported rock art, and recommend placing educational signage, Tomkins characterises climbers as being helpful to the cause of protecting the area's heritage rather than potentially damaging, as the ban implies. His recommendation for educational signage rather than a climbing ban reinforces this impression by suggesting that climbers are willing to compromise and work with authorities to protect rock art. The government and Parks Victoria are thus made to seem unreasonable and illogical by contrast.

> The response includes short quotes, key words and phrases, persuasive techniques and explanations of reasons / points of arguments.

> Develops the analysis of the ways in which Tomkins characterises those on either side of the debate in contrasting ways.

This negative image of authorities is reinforced by Tomkins' repeated use of language intended to ridicule them, such as 'fools', 'folly' and 'bizarre'. This diminishing language works together with Tomkins' use of verbs with aggressive and attacking connotations, such as 'gut', 'killed' and 'destroy', to describe the authorities' actions. Collectively, these language choices suggest an unwarranted and violent attack on innocent and well-intentioned climbers aimed at arousing the reader's fear and outrage.

> Homes in on particular language examples and their connotations to pinpoint the desired emotional impact on the reader.

To reinforce his argument that this is a 'spreading' issue, and thus to signal to the reader that the problem is one that could affect and should therefore concern them, Tomkins refers to other areas in Australia that have been impacted by decisions centring around the protection of cultural heritage. These include well-known places such as Uluru in the Northern Territory and the Glass House Mountains in Queensland, alongside the Mallee Rally that was previously held at Sea Lake in Victoria. Tomkins encourages readers to question this level of regulation by comparing Australia's stance to other countries where 'chipped rock' is not protected as cultural heritage. His rhetorical question, 'Are we pioneers or fools?' aims to evoke the reader's incredulity and even embarrassment at the decisions being made on their behalf by authorities, encouraging them to share Tomkins' sense of shame about the government's actions.

> Discusses the presentation of a key supporting point in Tomkins' argument, showing understanding of how it develops.

Towards the end of his article, Tomkins reminds the reader that his concerns are not just for his own community of rock climbers but for 'every Victorian'. He advocates for 'the little climbers' town of Natimuk' and insists that local businesses and farmers are facing a 'grim and uncertain future', a prospect that implies the government has not considered the wider effects of the ban. The aim is to appeal to the reader's sympathy and to position them to take the side of the 'little' or less powerful people against the destructive forces of authority. The repetition and alliteration of 'no consultation and no compromise is considered' draws attention to and reinforces Tomkins' argument that the government has been heavy-handed and failed to consider the needs of a variety of groups, appealing to the reader's sense of justice.

Ultimately, in a link back to the article's title, Tomkins' final assertion is that heritage protection is failing Victorians. Supported by the short, sharp sentences of 'No touching. Secret Business' and emotive language that clearly conveys his rejection of the heritage laws (e.g. 'failed', 'terribly'), Tomkins' conclusion positions the reader to agree that the minimal and questionable benefits of the ban are far outweighed by its destructive effects.

> Phrases like 'towards the end' show the structure of the article has been considered.

> Considers the use of language techniques to reinforce and highlight particular aspects of the argument.

> The conclusion of the analysis considers how the final paragraphs of the opinion piece encapsulate the writer's argument and leave the reader with a strong final impression.

Analyse an analysis of argument and language

ACTIVITY 17.1

GROUP Read the opinion piece on pages 220–2 and then read the analysis a couple of times. The following questions ask you to examine the analysis with a view to identifying elements you can use in your own work. You can answer the questions individually or use them as the basis for group discussion.

1 Does the introduction clearly identify the issue and outline the writer's main contention? Is there anything you would add or delete?

2 Select a body paragraph and see if it conforms to one of the two structures outlined on page 215 – the *What? How? Why?* structure or the PEE structure. Can you find all the elements of one of these structures? If not, what is missing? Does this weaken the analysis? Or does the paragraph use a different structure that you could use in an analysis?

3 Find a sentence that connects the writer's use of language to a particular point of argument. Does the analysis explain the likely effect on the reader?

4 Identify an example of metalanguage in the analysis. Does the writer do more than simply label a technique, by going on to analyse its likely effect?

5 Does the analysis include sufficient explanations of *why* the writer has made certain choices about argument and language?

6 There is no discussion in the analysis of who the likely intended audience is. Who do you think this audience might be? How could the analysis have shown an understanding of how the writer's argument and language choices aim to appeal to this particular audience?

PRESENTING A POINT OF VIEW

As part of your study of persuasive texts and media issues in Unit 2, you will present your own point of view on an issue being debated in the Australian media. To do this, you will need to develop a sound understanding of the issue, including the arguments on either side, and decide what your own position is.

Your point of view will be delivered as an oral presentation, and your teacher will let you know which form this presentation can take. You might deliver it as a speech to your class; alternatively, you might present a speech as part of a debate, or participate in a panel discussion. In all these cases, the effectiveness of your presentation will depend on your ability to argue a convincing case and to rebut the arguments on the opposing side.

Developing a point of view

A media issue is created when an aspect of a broad topic is debated in the media and the wider community. For example, energy generation is a broad topic; an aspect of it that is debated is whether there should be more use of renewable energy sources.

There will always be different points of view on any given issue. Even when people are in broad agreement, their reasons for adopting a position can vary widely, and individuals can be affected by the issue in quite different ways. Some underlying factors that lead to different viewpoints are:

- personal experience of a particular issue
- individual background – family, culture, specialised knowledge, ethical or moral beliefs, political leaning
- being a stakeholder with a vested interest in an issue.

When you are developing your own point of view, you will look at the various arguments on either side, assess their merits, and incorporate (or rebut) them in your own presentation.

Summarise points of view on an issue

This activity shows you how to gather information and summarise the main viewpoints on an issue.

1 Create a table like the one below. You can also scan the code or click here to download a fillable template. Write a brief description of the issue in the top row and then summarise one of the main points of view on the issue in the second row.

The issue:	
Main point of view:	
For this point of view	**Against this point of view**
Writer and text type: Reasons given:	Writer and text type: Reasons given:
Writer and text type: Reasons given:	Writer and text type: Reasons given:

2 As you read, view and listen to media texts on this issue, list all the opinions for and against the main point of view you have identified. For each article, provide the name of the writer and the text type (e.g. Susie O'Brien, *Herald Sun* blog post) and a brief statement of the main reason/s the writer gives to support their point of view.

3 Analyse the information in your table by answering the following questions.

a What are the factors that influence each writer's point of view?

b Who are the experts on this issue?

c Who is affected by this issue?

d What facts, statistics and anecdotal evidence do the writers provide?

e Which side would you support in this issue? Explain why.

Next, use the guidelines in this flow chart to develop your argument.

Main contention	Write down your main contention. (See pages 198–9 for an explanation of main contentions.)
Reasons	Decide on the main reasons you will present to support your contention.
Evidence	Collect evidence for each of your reasons. Evidence can include facts, examples, anecdotes, statements by authority figures, research findings and so on.
Rebuttal	Identify one or two of the strongest reasons for the opposing viewpoints and decide how you will rebut (argue against) them.

Delivering an oral presentation

When you deliver a point of view as an oral presentation, you will use your voice, facial expressions and body language, in addition to argument and persuasive language, to influence and persuade your audience.

If your oral presentation is part of a **discussion**, some of what you say will be in response to what others say, so this part of your presentation cannot be written in advance. But you can prepare by making notes that summarise key facts and arguments you might draw on.

A common form of **debate** involves two teams with three speakers each. The affirmative team argues in favour of the topic, while the negative team argues against it. A 'presidential' style of debate, on the other hand, is between only two speakers who take it in turns to present arguments, respond to each other's statements and even ask each other questions.

Scan the code or click **here** to view guidelines for a debate between two teams of three speakers.

Scan the code or click **here** to see a sample debate speech that presents a point of view on young people and social media use.

Structural features

If you are writing a speech, keep the aural and visual elements of your delivery in mind. Here are a few basics to help you structure your writing effectively. For a debate or discussion, the conventions are slightly different; however, most of these elements are still relevant.

- Present a clear, strong contention near the start of your presentation.
- Begin by making the topic relevant to your audience, and use your knowledge of the audience to appeal to their interests and sympathies.
- Ask your audience direct questions to engage them.
- Use signposting words such as 'firstly' and 'secondly' to help the audience follow your argument.
- Repeat key words and phrases.
- End strongly, perhaps with a repetition of your contention or with a statement prompting the audience to take action.

Delivery guidelines

Practise delivering your presentation to improve your fluency and confidence. You could deliver the speech to your family and ask for their feedback; stand in front of a mirror; or record yourself. Are you looking up and out at the audience? Are you talking too quickly? Is there enough variation in your voice to make the speech engaging for your audience?

Avoid reading your speech word for word; instead, place your main points and key facts on cue cards. Know your content well so that you can just glance at your cards occasionally, maintaining as much eye contact with your audience as possible.

The table on the next page summarises some useful delivery tips.

Cue cards	Voice	Body language
Use numbered cue cards, with writing on one side only.	Vary the pitch of your voice and emphasise the important points for an expressive delivery.	Look directly at your listeners as much as possible.
Write dot points, rather than your whole speech in full. It's easier to connect with your audience if you're not reading from a script.	Make sure the tone of your voice is appropriate to the subject matter and the emotions you want your audience to feel.	Remember the value of gestures, but keep them natural. They should enrich, not detract from, what you are saying.
Use abbreviations and symbols (such as arrows) to minimise the amount of text on each card.	Slow down. Pauses are vital. (You could write 'PAUSE' in appropriate places on cue cards, to remind you.)	Think about your posture and facial expressions – be positive and engaging.
Know the meaning and pronunciation of all the words you use.	Do not make sentences too long or you may find yourself running out of breath.	Your conclusion is the most important part – know it off by heart so that you can look at the audience as you deliver it.

Sample point of view

The following point-of-view text is a speech on the use of social media by young people.

What do you think about the ban from social media for everyone aged under 16? The Prime Minister says it's bad for our mental health. We all know that there are negative sides to social media but it's not all bad. In fact, it can be a lifeline. A ban is not the answer. Education is.

A few years ago, when I was diagnosed with ADHD, I wasn't sure who to talk to. No one else in my class seemed to struggle to sit still and concentrate, no one else constantly forgot and lost things, and I was nervous about mentioning my ADHD. I got online and I saw a couple of people like me, and then dozens, and then hundreds of kids with ADHD. I didn't feel alone anymore. Since then, I've found people my age who I can talk to, who understand, who don't judge me. I've also found services and support groups for those with ADHD, which have really helped me. Social media has been my lifeline.

There are so many kids out there who rely on social media to find their people, to get support, to feel they are not alone. They don't have to have a disorder or disability, or be from a minority group or from a small country town. All kids rely on social media to connect, to talk, to share their experiences, to feel part of a community.

The speaker begins by directly addressing the audience with a rhetorical question, intended to get the audience's attention and suggest that the issue is relevant to them.

Inclusive language ('we', 'us', 'our') helps to align the audience with the speaker and reinforces the idea that this topic should be important to them.

The speaker clearly states their contention at the start of the speech.

The speaker's anecdote shows they have experience of the issue, inclining the audience to trust their judgement.

Yes, there are negative sides to social media. Cyberbullying. Inappropriate content. Experiencing or seeing racism, sexism or homophobia. The tsunami of misinformation. But there are negative sides to everyday life. The answer is not to ban us from social media but to teach us how to deal with what we come across. In school, we should learn how to judge whether what we're seeing and reading is fact or fiction, what to do in response to cyberbullying, and how to spot a scam. We should be shown what meaningful, healthy participation in the digital world looks like. We also need a deep understanding of AI: how it works and what it means, as this is critical to our futures.

> Short, sharp sentences and the vivid analogy are characteristic of speeches, helping the audience to quickly grasp the speaker's point and enhancing its emotional impact.

There are other reasons why banning teenagers from social media is a bad idea.

First, kicking us off social media will mean that we will be behind the eight ball when it comes to being ready for work. Many employers presume that their employees understand social media and can use it appropriately. More importantly, for the jobs that many of us will have in the future – such as in marketing, communication, HR, PR, sales and customer service – we will need to use social media. In fact, this morning, I looked up jobs on Seek that required the employee to use social media: there were 2000 jobs in our city alone! Isn't it better to learn and experiment when we're at school, rather than make costly mistakes on the job? The Prime Minister's ban is cutting off our ability to develop important life skills.

> Occasional informal language is appropriate for an audience of the speaker's peers, helping them to feel that the speaker is 'one of them' and thus on their side.

> The speaker uses signposts (first, second) to help the audience follow the speech.

Second, a ban can't really work because it's not enforceable. Let's be realistic: some of us will access social media in secret. In a global online space, a ban only works if it's worldwide, and it's all too easy to bypass one country's age-based restrictions. Australia's eSafety Commissioner understands this. She says that the ban could result in kids 'accessing social media without adequate protections in place'. She has also warned that to avoid detection, kids will be more likely to 'use less regulated, non-mainstream services that increase the likelihood of exposure to serious risk'. The Director of Digital Media Research at Queensland University agrees, saying the bans could 'potentially [drive teenagers] to lower quality online spaces'. He describes the Prime Minister's decision as 'reckless' and not based on evidence. Therefore, an age-based ban on social media, rather than protecting us from online harm, could actually drive us towards it.

> Spoken texts often have more informal language features, such as contractions, than written texts in similar contexts.

> The speaker quotes people in positions of authority with professional knowledge of the issue, which adds credibility and objectivity to their arguments.

In conclusion, let's reflect on something the Prime Minister has said. Like a true non-digital native, the Prime Minister has claimed that, 'We know social media is causing social harm, and it is taking kids away from real friends and real experiences!' He doesn't get it. We do. A ban is not the answer.

> The final sentence of the speech reiterates the speaker's contention, firmly and clearly summing up the speech.

Analyse the point of view

GROUP The questions in this activity ask you to consider the sample point-of-view text, and identify effective elements that you could use in your own presentation. You can discuss your answers in small groups or answer the questions individually.

1   Find three examples of persuasive language or techniques. How do they work to present the speaker's argument and position the audience to respond?

2   Identify an example of language that uses logic and reasoning. What is the speaker's tone at this point? What is the audience likely to think and feel?

3   Identify an example of emotive language. What emotion or emotions is it likely to evoke?

4   Find one example of language that you think would work well in an oral presentation, and one example of language that might not work as well. Explain your answers.

5   Add two annotations to the speech, identifying one strength and one weakness.

6   Edit the speech to make it more effective and persuasive. Replace any weak or imprecise language choices and add evidence to bolster the argument where necessary.

7   Swap revised speeches with a partner. Did you make similar changes? Discuss why or why not.

EXAM ADVICE

IN THIS CHAPTER

- About the exam
- General study tips
- Reading and exploring texts
- Crafting texts
- Exploring argument
- Proofreading and revising

You are likely to complete an English exam at the end of each semester, covering all you have learned to that point. Your Year 11 English exam (or exams) will provide excellent practice for your end-of-Year-12 exam, and will also help you identify your strengths and areas for improvement.

This chapter presents advice and tips for tackling an English examination for Units 1 and 2.

About the exam

Your Year 11 English exam is likely to be based on the format of the official VCAA Units 3 and 4 exam. It may be divided into sections, as shown in the table below.

Exam section	Area of study	What you need to do
Analytical response to a text	Area of Study 1: Reading and exploring texts	Demonstrate your knowledge of the text, your ability to write an analytical essay and your use of evidence to support an argument.
Crafting a text	Area of Study 2: Crafting texts	Draw on ideas from the framework you are studying, use the title and stimulus material, if provided, and create a text with a clear purpose and voice.
Analysis of argument and language	Area of Study 2: Exploring argument	Understand arguments, analyse written and spoken language and visuals, and use evidence to support your analysis.

All sections require you to demonstrate your ability to write clearly and fluently.

Each section of the exam will likely be worth the same number of marks; if not, your teacher will let you know. They will also tell you how long the exam will be. A typical length is two hours. A typical length per section is 60 minutes. You will need to manage your time carefully so that you can produce the required number of complete pieces of writing in the available time. The best way to do this is to allow roughly the same amount of time for each section of the exam (if each section is equally weighted). Take a few minutes to create a plan for each piece of writing, and allow some time at the end of the exam to look over your work to make sure all pieces are complete and to correct any spelling or grammatical errors.

Use the reading time (usually fifteen minutes) to select the topic or topics you will write on (if you are given a choice), and read the persuasive media text (if this is part of the exam).

General study tips

These tips will help you to study effectively in the lead-up to the exam.

- **Create a study schedule.** You will likely have exams for your other subjects, too, so in the weeks leading up to your exams, allocate time to study for each subject.

- **Practise handwriting.** You might not be used to writing by hand for an extended period of time. In the lead-up to the exam, handwrite as much as possible, to improve your speed, legibility and stamina.

- **Complete practice exams and sample tasks.** Some organisations produce trial exams or exam revision material specifically for Year 11 English. Your teacher might also be able to provide you with practice material for each section of the exam. You could work with a partner or small study group to create and share topics on your text; titles and stimulus material; and persuasive texts for analysis.

- **Proofread your practice pieces.** Get into the habit of reading over every practice piece you write to check for spelling, grammar and punctuation errors, as well as for fluency and clarity of expression. Try swapping work with a partner and correcting each other's work. The more you practise the skill of identifying and fixing errors, the better you will get at proofreading your work in a time-limited situation like an exam.

- **Read past exam reports.** Although these reports relate to the end-of-Year-12 exam, they still contain useful advice and information relevant to your Year 11 exam tasks. The exam reports on the VCAA website are written by senior VCAA English assessors. They offer advice on what assessors are looking for in exam responses, and explain common mistakes that students make in each section of the Year 12 exam. (Note that English exams in 2023 and earlier were for previous Study Designs, when there was a different task for Section B. The assessment criteria and expected qualities descriptors for the current Year 12 exam are also different from those used to assess previous exams. But the assessor comments for the text response and analysis of the argument and language sections will still be very helpful.)

Reading and exploring texts

This section of the exam is likely to ask you to write an analytical essay in response to one of two topics on a text you have studied.

Preparing for the Reading and exploring texts section

The following strategies will help you revise your knowledge of your set text and prepare for writing an analytical text response.

- **Re-read or re-watch your text.** Even if you have read or watched it multiple times already, you should do so again in the lead-up to the exam, so your knowledge of it is fresh.

- **Create a file of notes on your text.** You might divide these into categories, such as information and ideas about characters, information and ideas about concerns and tensions, and so on.

- **Memorise key spellings and textual details.** You should know how to spell the title of your text and the name of the writer or director, as well as the characters and places in the text. Writing down these key details multiple times, by hand, will help you to remember them and will also provide valuable handwriting practice. Place sticky notes around your desk with author, character and place names written on them, so that you see them frequently.

- **Make a list of key quotations.** Aim to memorise approximately twenty key quotes. These don't have to be long – each should be less than ten words and some might be just a key word or phrase. Choose a range of quotes that say something significant about key concepts or tensions in the text, or reveal important aspects of main characters and their relationships. You might like to put these on sticky notes also, and place them in prominent places around the house to help cement them in your mind.

- **Summarise the plot.** Make sure you know the essential details of your text: what happens when, where and to whom. Summarise the events in your text in a time line, flow chart or table. It can also be helpful to explain the plot to a friend or family member, to check your recollection of important events.

- **Understand the context and background of your text.** Being aware of relevant background information about your text is especially important if your text is set in a historical period or an unfamiliar setting. For example, to really understand Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* you should know that it was intended to criticise the persecution of people accused by the US government of being Communists during the 1950s. Try summarising relevant background information in dot-point form or explaining it to a friend, to solidify your understanding.

- **Create interpretive statements.** The topics you will respond to in this section of the exam will focus on the ideas, concerns and tensions – or 'big ideas' – in the text. Make a list of three or four of these key ideas, then write an interpretive statement about each. For example, if you identified 'courage' as a key idea in your text, an interpretive statement might be, 'The text suggests that sometimes it takes more courage to refrain from acting than it does to take action'. Next, find three key quotes or pieces of textual evidence to support each interpretive statement.

- **Generate word banks for the big ideas and concerns in the text.** Be alert to nuances in the meanings of the different words, and practise using them to extend and develop your interpretive statements and your understanding of the big ideas. For example, words related to 'courage' include 'bravery', 'fearlessness' and 'heroism'; each of these words has slightly different meanings and connotations.

- **Identify some of the strategies used by the writer/director to create meaning.** These might include, for example, motif, setting, imagery, narrative voice, camera angle and editing. Practise incorporating these into your paragraphs so that you can demonstrate awareness of how these elements build meaning.

- **Write essay topics and plans.** Creating your own topics makes you think carefully about the text and about the importance of each word in a topic. You can then swap topics with a partner and practise writing plans and essays in response to unseen topics.

ACTIVITY 19.1

Create practice plans

1 Develop five topics on your text, using the sample topics in this book or those given to you in class as models.

2 Create an essay plan for each topic. The plan should include:

- a main contention
- a topic sentence for each of your body paragraphs
- dot-point notes about textual evidence
- notes about what the evidence reveals about a particular idea.

In the exam

Begin by reading your selected topic carefully, to make sure you understand what you need to respond to. Then identify the key terms in the topic, so you are clear about what your essay should focus on. Next, form a contention in response to the topic. Spend a few minutes writing a brief plan that includes your contention, three or four topic sentences and one or two pieces of textual evidence for each topic sentence.

The following strategies will help you to write an effective analytical text response in an exam.

- **Respond to the complete topic.** Weaker text responses often focus just on the main idea, or one key term, in a topic. Stronger responses will address *every word* in the topic, including limiting words such as 'always' and 'never'. Many topics require you to agree or disagree with a statement; remember that partially agreeing can often lead to a more sophisticated and thoughtful response that shows that you have thought deeply about the complexities of the text.

- **Ensure you understand what the writer is trying to say about the topic.** In your body paragraphs, explain how they are doing this.

- **Aim to organise the paragraphs around ideas or concerns.** Most topics will ask you to explore the text's big ideas, rather than individual characters. When you do discuss characters, link them to the larger messages of the text.

- **Refer to a variety of textual features.** Don't just refer to characters or events in the plot to support your argument. Consider also the structure of the text, the setting/s and the use of symbols, for example. Refer to film techniques if you are analysing a film, and stage directions if you are writing about a play. Referring to a variety of textual evidence will show that you know your text very well and also help you to present a deeper, more thoughtful response.

- **Use quotations appropriately.** Your essay should include quotes from the text. But they shouldn't just be scattered haphazardly throughout. Choose quotes carefully to support particular points you are making, and integrate them smoothly into your sentences. Avoid starting or ending paragraphs with a quote, or including quotes as standalone sentences. Instead, weave short quotations into your sentences and explain *why* they are significant and *how* they support your point.

- **Use metalanguage appropriately.** Metalanguage isn't just about knowing big words – it allows you to communicate your ideas clearly and precisely. Strong text responses will use metalanguage specific to the text type you are writing about. For example, if you are studying a film, you should use terms such as 'cross-cut' and 'mise en scène'; if you are studying a collection of poems, you should refer to features such as 'rhythm' and 'stanzas'. You should also be able to discuss how and why these techniques generate meaning.

- **Use your conclusion to reaffirm your argument and also to resolve the topic.** Consider what the text/writer reveals to readers about human nature/behaviour and, if possible, articulate what the writer's message or purpose might be. For example, you might see the text as revealing the impact of human action on the natural world and the writer as exhorting readers to treat nature with respect.

Crafting texts

This section of the exam will likely ask you to write a text that responds to a given title and at least one piece of stimulus material (such as a quotation, a poem or an image), with a focus on the framework you are studying. Your piece should also aim to achieve a particular purpose for a specific audience.

Preparing for the Crafting texts section

The following strategies will help you hone your writing skills and prepare to write an original text.

- **Re-read your mentor texts.** Make notes about particular textual features that you think are effective and that you might use in your own writing. You can also use the mentor texts to help generate ideas relevant to your framework.

- **Create a file about the framework you are studying.** You should be able to build on or draw from resources and notes you have already collected in your work on this area of study. Focus especially on formulating your own original ideas connected to the framework. This will provide a good bank of ideas to draw on and develop when responding to the stimulus material in the exam.

- **Consider how the framework connects to your own knowledge and interests.** Explore these connections to help you produce authentic and nuanced texts.

- **Identify your strengths as a writer, including your preferred form of text.** Practise writing in this form and honing your writing skills, responding to different sorts of stimulus material and titles.

- **Develop your vocabulary.** This section of the exam is all about your writing skills (as well as the quality of your ideas), so ensure you enter the exam well prepared with a wide vocabulary. Hone your vocabulary by creating word banks with lists of precise words and their definitions. Make a point of using a variety of words and newly learned terms in your practice pieces. Reading widely is also an excellent way to improve your vocabulary, as well as to find more ideas to explore in your writing. But be careful! Using too many complex or unusual words can make your writing sound awkward and overwritten. Develop your vocabulary so that you can choose the most precise and appropriate word in every instance, *not* so you can dazzle your reader with all the complex words you know.

- **Create or curate sets of stimulus material.** These should include evocative titles, short poems, quotations and interesting images. Swap these sets with a partner or in a small group, to practise responding to stimuli.

- **Practise writing within a time limit.** It can be challenging to craft an original text within a set amount of time, but the more you practise the skill the easier it will become. Having a good bank of ideas related to your framework to draw from will also help with this.

- **Swap work and get feedback.** Getting your teacher's feedback on your practice exam responses will be extremely valuable if this is possible. You can also swap practice pieces with a partner. This feedback is particularly useful for this section of the exam because your piece must have a clear purpose: to explain, to express, to reflect or to argue. It also needs to respond to a given topic if there is one (as is likely in an exam situation). Ask your reader to let you know:

  » what they think the purpose of your piece is
  » if it is clear that you have responded to the title and stimulus material
  » if you have clearly engaged with ideas relevant to the framework
  » if your writing is clear and flows logically
  » if the voice is appropriate to the form and purpose.

  Revise your piece according to your partner's feedback.

Practise planning texts

1   Search online for a quote or an image related to the framework you are studying. Write down the quote or paste the image at the top of a piece of paper.

2   Create a short title connected to your framework and write it on the same page.

3   Give yourself five minutes to create the outline of a response. Identify:

- the text type
- your purpose(s)
- your intended audience
- how you will use the quote/image
- how you will use the idea/s encapsulated in the title
- key ideas you wish to explore
- how these ideas connect to the framework.

In the exam

The following strategies will help you to write an effective original text for a particular purpose, that responds to the stimuli and title you are given.

- **Make sure your writing is clearly relevant to the framework you are studying.** This means that your written text should clearly reveal the ideas and perspectives you've explored during your study of the framework. It should show that you have thought deeply about these ideas and come to some conclusions of your own.

- **Integrate the title and at least one stimulus into your writing.** Responding to the title means engaging directly with the idea or ideas it suggests. Your piece should be shaped around the given title, and show that you have thought about it in some depth. The title could provide the main theme, a character arc, an important symbol or another key element of your writing. The connection between the title and the content of your piece should be clear to the person marking your work. You should also respond to at least one of the stimuli (if you are presented with more than one). You could do this by using the stimulus as the central idea in your text (providing this clearly works with the set title), including or referring to it at a key point in your text to reveal an important idea, or setting your piece within the world of an image.

- **Carefully consider your intended purpose and your specific target audience.** It is best to choose an audience your age or older. It is hard to produce a sophisticated and subtle text if your target audience is very young.

- **Have a clear structure.** Your piece should have a clear beginning, middle and end, whether it is a short story, an opinion piece or a reflective essay. The plot or your key points should flow logically and your paragraphs should clearly separate your ideas. Taking some time to plan your piece before you start writing will help you to achieve a strong, coherent structure.

- **Choose your language and voice carefully.** In the end-of-Year-12 exam, you are allowed to write in any form you like, apart from poetry or song lyrics. This is likely to be the case in your Year 11 exam also. You will probably be able to choose the purpose and audience you are writing for. You don't need to specify these details anywhere in your piece, but your choices about your language, style and tone should help the person marking your work to identify your audience and purpose. This means you need to select the vocabulary and sentence structures best suited to your aim and audience.

- **Write fluently and expressively.** Take time to read over your work and replace any clichéd or dull words or phrases with more precise and interesting ones. Check that you have varied your sentence structures and that your writing flows well. Think about your target audience as you do this. Do your language choices suit their needs and help you to achieve your purpose? Do they create an effective and original voice?

Exploring argument

In this section of the exam you will analyse a persuasive text aimed at convincing a particular audience to agree with the writer's point of view on an issue. The text will be written but will contain one or more visual elements that you will also need to analyse.

Preparing for the Exploring argument section

Use the following strategies to help you prepare for writing an analysis of argument and language.

- **Read a wide variety of persuasive texts.** Make sure you are familiar with a range of persuasive text types and approaches to persuasion, so that you are prepared for whichever text type you see in the exam. Different structures and language choices are associated with different types of texts, such as opinion pieces, blog posts, podcast transcripts, speeches and so on. Try to find written pieces that include one or two images, and consider how the written and visual language work together to persuade the target audience.

- **Practise analysing the main persuasive elements of a text.** In the exam you will need to read the task material and identify key elements quickly, so you can spend most of your time writing. For each persuasive text you find, give yourself ten minutes to read the text and identify:

  » the main contention
  » two or three supporting reasons
  » how the writer sequences and builds on their argument, and why
  » the writer's purpose (where do they want to lead the reader, and why?)
  » the main tone and any changes in tone, and the intended effect of these on the implied reader
  » three examples of persuasive language and their intended effects
  » how the visual material works with the written text to present a point of view.

- **Practise analysing the structure of persuasive texts.** To improve your ability to analyse structure, annotate each persuasive text you read to identify:

  » how the writer begins

  » the order of the supporting reasons or arguments

  » where the writer argues against (rebuts) opposing points of view

  » how the writer ends.

  Make notes about the likely effect on the reader of putting the elements of the argument in this particular sequence. Why did the writer present them in this order?

- **Practise analysing persuasive examples.** Work with a partner to collect a range of sentences and phrases on a variety of issues. To hone your ability to drill down and analyse specific language choices, practise writing two or three analytical sentences about each of your examples. Consider the associations and connotations of particular words, and pinpoint the intended emotional impact on the reader.

- **Practise analysing visual language.** The visual component of the persuasive exam text is an important aspect you will be expected to analyse. Practise with visual texts such as cartoons, photographs, infographics and charts to refine your ability to identify particular features of visual texts and how they are used to persuade the viewer. Revise metalanguage associated with visual texts, and remember to consider how visual elements *work together* with written text to create a combined or overall persuasive effect. Think also about any text, such as a caption, associated with the image, as well as the image's placement within the text. Does it connect to a particular section or example in the written text?

Practise analysing texts

ACTIVITY 19.3

GROUP Work in a group of four or five people for this activity.

1 Individually, find a persuasive text with accompanying visual material.

2 In your group, share your texts. Make notes on the purpose, target audience, main contention, tone and supporting reasons in each text.

3 Highlight four or five examples of persuasive strategies or techniques used in each text and make notes about their intended effects on the reader.

4 Make notes on the persuasive effect of the visual language. Focus on two or three specific elements of the visual material and identify their intended effects on the viewer.

5 Compare your answers. Discuss any similarities and differences in your responses.

In the exam

The following strategies will help you to write an effective analysis of a persuasive text.

- **Identify the writer's contention.** Your first step should be to make sure you understand the writer's purpose and their contention. Describe these in your introduction, and be specific. For example, if you were analysing the editorial on page 173 of this book, rather than saying, 'The writer believes the ACCC should do more about scammers', you should pinpoint the exact argument being presented, which is that the ACCC should reveal to the public which banks are the most frequent targets of scammers.

- **Show that you have read the background information carefully.** In the exam, you will likely see a short paragraph of background information that tells you where the text was published or presented, and some context surrounding the issue. It might also identify the intended audience. Take these details into account in your analysis by explaining how the writer has shaped their text for their particular audience and context. For example, they might be targeting certain emotions their audience is likely to be experiencing, or appealing to their audience's interests or needs. Remember, too, that a text might have more than one intended audience, so pay attention to how the writer caters to the needs and attitudes of different groups.

- **Consider the way the writer has structured their argument.** For example, they might save their most important reason until last to leave a powerful final impression; or they might begin with a friendly tone or personal anecdote to get the audience on side before shifting to a more aggressive tone or to presenting hard-hitting facts and figures. Refer to the overall shape of the argument and discuss why it has been shaped in this way, to show that you have considered its structure as well as its content.

- **Choose which persuasive language examples you will analyse.** You won't have time to analyse every example of persuasive language use in a text. Focus on:
  - » examples of language use that you feel confident analysing
  - » persuasive techniques that are repeated in the text
  - » persuasive language that is especially powerful or noticeable.

- **Use effective verbs.** Strong, carefully chosen verbs enable you to describe exactly what the writer is doing, how they are doing it and, most importantly, *why* they are doing it. Avoid repeating verbs such as 'positions' and 'persuades', which don't help you to provide precise explanations. Verbs such as 'reinforces', 'emphasises', 'instils', 'elicits' and 'undermines' will help you to show a stronger understanding of the language and the writer's intentions.

- **Analyse how argument, language and visuals work together.** Do not treat these as separate elements of the text, since an audience's response will be influenced by how all these elements work together. Look at how language is used to present an argument, and how an image reinforces particular reasons or pieces of evidence, all with the aim of achieving the writer's purpose.

Proofreading and revising

Aim to finish writing all your responses with five to ten minutes to spare. This gives you time to read over your answers and identify errors or ways to improve your work. It also enables you to add a short concluding paragraph to any incomplete responses.

- **In the Reading and exploring texts section**, check that your text response clearly addresses the topic.

- **In the Crafting texts section**, check that you have effectively incorporated the idea/s in the title and at least one piece of stimulus material into your text, that your intended purpose is clear and that your writing clearly connects to your framework.

- **In the Exploring argument section**, check that you have analysed the 'big-picture' elements of the persuasive text, such as the writer's purpose, contention and reasons, as well as some of the finer detail, such as particularly persuasive words and phrases.

- **Check that each piece flows well**; add some linking words if needed.

- **Make sure no words are omitted or incorrectly repeated.**

- **Check spelling, punctuation and grammar are correct.**

- **Replace uninteresting or imprecise vocabulary** with stronger word choices.

- **Check that all words in your responses are legible**; neatly cross out and rewrite any that are not.

Acknowledgements

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