

# VCE English Language

## Written examination – End of year

### Sample questions

#### SECTION A – Short-answer questions

The questions below are examples of the types of questions that might be set for Section A. These sample sets of questions are not intended to equal 15 marks for each sample text. The sample texts are located at the end of the sample questions.

**If Text 1 were the text set for Section A, the questions could include the following:**

**Question 1** (4 marks)

How does the use of adjectives and adjectival phrases support the purpose of this text in lines 1–25? Provide examples.

**Question 2** (4 marks)

Explain how the situational context of this text has an impact on the language used.

**Question 3** (6 marks)

Discuss the register of the text, noting features of Standard and non-Standard varieties that contribute to the relative formality of the language.

**If Text 2 were the text set for Section A, the questions could include the following:**

**Question 1** (4 marks)

Discuss **four** different stylistic techniques used to emphasise the relentless heat of summer between lines 1 and 9.

**Question 2** (3 marks)

Explain how substitution and antonymy are used to create cohesion between lines 22 and 28.

**Question 3** (4 marks)

Discuss the role of colloquial language in establishing the writer's identity. Provide **two** examples to illustrate your answer.

**Question 4** (4 marks)

How does Text 2 rely on inference to create coherence? Provide at least **two** examples to illustrate your answer.

**Question 5** (6 marks)

Comment on the writer's use of three syntactic features between lines 1 and 15.

**Question 6** (4 marks)

Discuss the effect of the writer's use of figurative language in the text.

**If Text 3 were the text set for Section A, the questions could include the following:**

**Question 1** (4 marks)

Discuss the conversational strategies used in lines 1–5 and in lines 97–101.

**Question 2** (4 marks)

Comment on the discourse function of **two** different prosodic features between lines 6 and 18.

**Question 3** (5 marks)

How does the topic management between lines 19 and 33 reflect the relationship between C and A? Discuss, using linguistic evidence.

**Question 4** (6 marks)

Compare the syntactic features of the interaction in lines 41–54 with the syntactic features of the interaction in lines 55–59.

**If Text 4 were the text set for Section A, the questions could include the following:**

**Question 1** (2 marks)

Provide **two** examples of the speaker's use of uniquely Australian noun phrases in the text.

**Question 2** (2 marks)

How does the use of semantic patterning support the function of this text? Provide **one** example to illustrate your response.

**Question 3** (3 marks)

How is repetition used to create cohesion in the text? Provide **two** examples.

**Question 4** (4 marks)

Discuss the degree of formality achieved in this text. Use evidence from **two or more** subsystems to support your response.

**Question 5** (5 marks)

Does this speech achieve its purpose? Discuss, using linguistic evidence to support your analysis.

## SECTION B – Analytical commentary

Any of the sample texts provided (Text 1, Text 2, Text 3, Text 4) could be set for Section B.

The task for Section B will be as follows:

Write an analytical commentary on the language features of Text\*.

In your response, you should comment on the:

- contextual factors affecting/surrounding the text
- social purpose and register of the text
- stylistic and discourse features of the text.

Refer to at least **two** subsystems in your analysis.

## SECTION C – Essay

### Sample question 1

#### Stimulus

- a. ‘Nothing unites a country more than its common language because from a language comes a history and a culture.’

John Howard, quoted in ‘Migrants to sit English test’, ABC News (online), 11 December 2006

- b. Linguists suggest that some people deliberately choose a low-status accent as a way of invoking prestige, although this is less common among women than men.

- c. ‘The Australian-born children of migrants from Europe, Asia and the Pacific Islands are asserting their respective cultural blends each time they open their mouths, leading to dozens of different ethnic dialects such as “wogspeak”, that much-parodied blend of Australian and various Mediterranean accents.’

Peter Munro, ‘Austrayan twang on the wane’, *The Age*, 27 January 2008

‘Your use of language sends out lots of little messages, not just about your level of education and where you come from, but about how you would like to be perceived.’

Discuss with reference to at least **two** subsystems of language.

## Sample question 2

## Stimulus

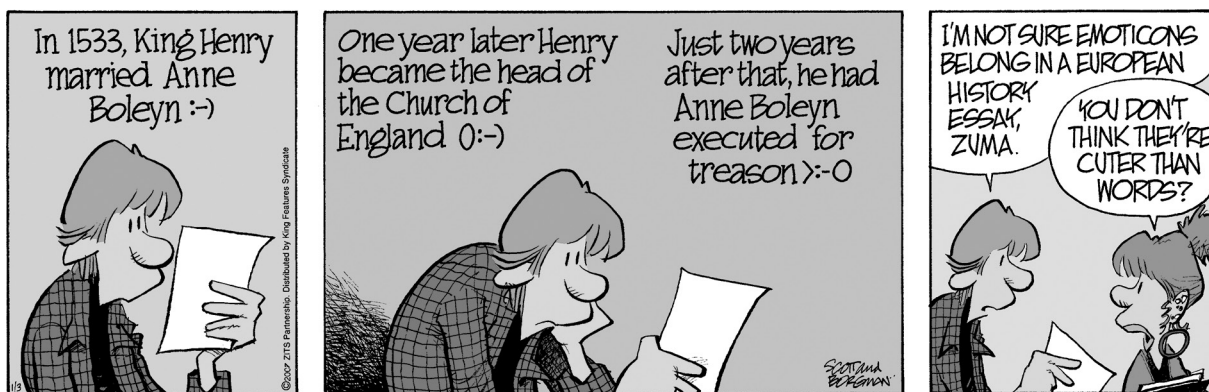
- a. [While Josephine Mandarano (22 years old)] ‘values emoticons and acronyms for adding tone and context ... she thinks netspeak is encouraging bad habits. “Rarely do I receive an email from friends that is grammatically correct and abbreviations such as ‘dere’ (there) and ‘dis n dat’ (this and that) make me cringe ... I’m a bit of a word nerd. It frustrates me when folk say, ‘Who cares? It’s only an email.’”’

Katie Cincotta, ‘Broken English’, *The Age*, 18 September 2008

- b. ‘Clearly Standard English is perceived to be intrinsically superior to other varieties. Yet examples are easy to find where nonstandard dialects appear to do things better.’

Kate Burridge, ‘Proper English: Rhetoric or Reality?’, *English Language Journal*, 2004, pp. 8–19

- c.



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The question to ask is: ‘Why not use Standard English all the time?’

## Sample texts

These texts illustrate the scope of texts that might be set for analysis in Section A and Section B of the examination. There is no standard convention of spoken text transcription. Students should always refer to the key provided in order to interpret transcripts.

### Sample text 1

The following text comes from a blog called ‘Crowded House’ on *The Age* website. It is written by share-house newcomer Joel Meares and it describes his experiences of sharing a house with other people (lines 1–25). Readers of the blog were invited to respond and discuss their own share-house experiences. This text also shows a sample of those responses (lines 29–44).

1. **Got the message? The passive-aggressive art of ‘talking’ to your housemates.**
2. Communication in a share house means doing everything to avoid a proper conversation.
3. Got a grievance? Don’t raise it at dinner or take someone aside for a chat. That kind of thing
4. is best left to talking about your housemates. Let it niggle for a while, passive-aggressively
5. hint at your displeasure with a few slammed doors, a sarcastic note on the fridge or by doing
6. someone else’s chores (loudly), then wait for the message to sink in or the housemate to
7. move out. That’s the principle behind most of the share house communiqués I’ve seen and it
8. can lead to some very interesting methods of getting the message across.
9. ‘Tenantese’ – that bizarre form of communication native to the share house – is a system
10. borne of necessity and out of frustration, an answer to the question: how do you let your
11. housemate/s know you’re two VBs away from relocating their bedroom to the kerb without
12. actually saying it?
13. In a workplace or a family, squabbling parties often sit down and chat it out. It’s right and
14. rational but not the way of the sharer. Passive-aggressive and cunning enough to be
15. completely denied, the share house response is symbolic and usually delayed: a Post-it note
16. on a housemate’s door two days later or a meal prepared for everyone, except the bastard who
17. forgot to feed the fish. If the Italian language is defined by rolling Rs and swinging arms and
18. Austrayan known for the added ‘o’, tenantese might be the language of silence, death stares
19. and underlying tensions.
20. I’m sure there are share houses that have regular meetings where somebody puts on the kettle,
21. the Assorted Creams are opened and everyone says what’s on their minds this week. I just
22. haven’t lived in or visited them. Instead of this Big Brother style house meeting, I more often
23. see minor grievances resolved through a passion play of passive-increasingly-aggressive
24. gestures that build to ‘the big one’: a half-hour outburst of tears and accusations that usually
25. ends in someone dodging a cask of goon.

26. **Posted by Joel Meares**

27. **16 July 2008 8:04 AM**

### 28. COMMENTS POSTED ON THE BLOG

29. We have a whiteboard in our kitchen. Very grown up of us? hmm . . . maybe not. It’s only used
30. when someone has something not so nice to say. When we are all getting along, the
31. whiteboard is inconspicuous but as soon as there’s a problem – bam! The whiteboard is staring
32. you in the face when you walk in the room with red texta and underlined words. It’s actually
33. quite amusing, that is, when ‘the whiteboard’s’ attacking someone else.

**34. Posted by: heyhay on 16 July 2008 3:09 PM**

35. hmmm. well i just tried to do the grown up thing and have a, what i was hoping to be,  
36. friendly chat about how often her boyf is staying over and that he made the kitchen a real  
37. mess over the weekend. wish i'd just slammed doors and been sarcastic – a show down is  
38. expected tonight – thank god the local is only 15 m away!

**39. Posted by: scared on 16 July 2008 6:23 PM**

40. once shared a house with 3 girls . . . gold I assumed! not. I didnt last long – the post-it notes?  
41. This extreme fussy pedantic house drove me mad. Im clean – reasonable tidy . . . but to have a  
42. magazine left in the lounge create a note? Last straw and moved in with 2 guys . . . heaven! Sure  
43. it got messy – really bad, but then we'd all just clean it . . . down with female housemates!!

**44. Posted by: nixon on 24 July 2008 8:40 AM**

Source: extract from 'Crowded House' © Joel Meares, *The Age Blogs*, 16 July 2008

**Sample text 2**

This text is a memoir by John Harms, a journalist, who reflects on his childhood summers in the Darling Downs, Queensland. It was published in *The Age* in January 2008.

**Nothing like a good sweltering**

1. It's hot. It's bloody hot. But I reckon when I was a kid every Darling Downs
2. summer was this hot. Easy.
3. All my summer memories are of heat. The local pool, our back yard, the veranda.
4. We kids barefoot and as brown as pennies. If we ever had shoes on, it was to play
5. some official game. Cricket daily. Golf occasionally. Tennis often.
6. Dunlop Volleys and socks coagulated together by a cocktail of sweat and ant-bed
7. tennis court dust. Matches fought out in sweltering conditions, monumental struggles
8. against the Leahy kid from the Commercial Hotel. If you had to play on the asphalt
9. court your Volleys left their tread mark in the doughy surface. It was hot.
10. In my memory it's always holidays. And it's always the first day of a Test match.
11. Waking up every morning with a body so rested and full of energy you were ready
12. to go all day. The sky a perfect blue and the ABC newsreader full of information.
13. Gulped Milo. Already too hot for toast and Vegemite. And as you pedalled out the
14. front gate, all you could hear was your mum's voice screaming:
15. "Have you kids brushed your teeth?"
16. Down to the pool, where the supervisor was scooping out the Christmas beetles.
17. He wore his weathered skin loosely, like a trendy sports jacket. Ours was
18. dolphin-svelte. And we swam with effervescent joy. Like Flipper himself. A lot of
19. time spent doing bombs off the big board. Movements of Olympian grace,
20. choreographed to make the biggest splash possible. You were so skinny your
21. technique had to be perfect to get marks on the corner light pole.
22. Then leaning on the rail of the big board watching the grade nine girls down on the
23. grass putting coconut oil all over themselves. They were so old. But not as old as
24. the tough who was climbing the steps. He had left school a couple of years ago to
25. become a boner at the abattoir. Tough all right. He didn't speak and you didn't
26. dare look him in the eye. He was a giant to us, his huge tummy hanging over his
27. stubbies. We giggled behind our little hands as he walked past, his bum-crack
28. the source of great amusement.
29. Time for the cricket. Straight on the treadlies and back home with just minutes to
30. spare. Little voices excitedly preparing for the first delivery, as a big voice yelled
31. from some mother's room, where mothers did mothers' stuff: "I hope you kids
32. have got towels down on those lounge chairs."
33. As the day grew even hotter we squirmed in our chairs. Lemon barley water with ice.
34. The cat stretched under the divan. More lemon water. Salad sandwiches for lunch.
35. And fruit. Nectarines and rockmelon. And watermelon for later on. And a run through
36. the sprinkler to cool off before the start of the next session.

Source: extract from 'Nothing like a good sweltering' © John Harms, *The Age*, 7 January 2008

**Sample text 3**

Catherine and Anita are at a local writers' festival. Catherine is working at a book stall and is selling Anita the books that Anita has selected.

The following symbols are used in the transcript:

<A A>	fast-paced utterance	.	final intonation
<L L>	slow-paced utterance	?	questioning intonation
<P P>	soft voice	/	rising pitch
<F F>	loud voice	\	falling pitch
(.)	short pause	^	primary accent
(...)	longer pause	@@@	laughter
-	truncated word	<H H>	intake of breath
--	truncated intonation unit	=	lengthening of a sound
,	continuing intonation	[ ]	overlapping speech

1. C: <A Are you waiting to be served? A> (...)
2. A: <P Yep, just [the --] P>
3. C: [H-how] did you want to ^pay for ^those?
4. A: On my ^card/
5. C: <A Yep/, sure\ A> (.) ^o=kay/ (.)  
Background sounds of scanner beeping, recording price of books selected.
6. C: How was the drive ^in?
7. A: I had three hours from Geelong, just arriv[ed]
8. C: [ <H H> ]
9. C: ^You're ^joking/ [^Oh]
10. A: [The] ^traffic, I've ^never seen [it] like this.
11. C: [Yeah],
12. C: It's=, I've hea=rd, it's ^shocking.
13. A: [Yeah]
14. C: [Yeah]
15. C: And, <A we've had a lot of people coming in late,
16. C: I think, well, obviously -- A>,
17. A: Yeah
18. C: Coz the traffic (.) <L ^three ^hou=rs L>.
19. A: ^Yes= coz the (.) I didn't come over the Westgate, I did a --,
20. C: Went arou=nd?
21. A: I sort of went 'rou[nd] the other way,
22. C: [Yeah]
23. A: But it was still --,
24. C: Yep
25. A: Everyone was [doing that too],
26. C: [Well everyone's] doing that too @@@,
27. C: <A aren't [they] A>?
28. A: [and] everyone's going slow and, and --
29. C: Yeah [well]
30. A: [Yeah]



31. C: It's, it's, I mean it's ^really ^pouring so= (...)
32. C: Well, you're ^here [now]\
33. A: [which] is good.
34. C: [^Yes]
35. A: [So] I just said well/, <A [I'm] going to be late A>,
36. C: [Well]
37. A: And I'll just have to miss the first session.
38. C: Yeah=, look, I think a lot of people,
39. C: I mean (.) [it's just] (.) unusually (.) ^wet/ (...)
40. A: [Yeah]
41. C: Were you here yesterday? (.) Or is it [just] --
42. A: [Yes], yes, yeah
43. C: And how did you find yesterday?
44. A: Well, I got here in the two hours I expected it would take.
45. C: [Yeah]
46. A: [Yeah], yeah,
47. C: Yep\
48. A: And actually, I thought ^ooh, this is a breeze,
49. A: <A I thought I'd come along Barkly Street and A>,
50. C: [Yeah]
51. A: [Barkly] Street was deserted and at [forty ks]
52. C: [^Oh/ ^right/]
53. A: You're actually going faster than [most cars] going [over the West]gate and--
54. C: [Yeah, yeah,] [that's true, yeah]
55. C: <F It's \$146.50 for ^that/ F>
56. A: <P Thank you P>
57. C: [On/]
58. A: [On] credit\. Thank [you]/
59. C: [Credit/], okay\  
*Background sounds of EFTPOS machine processing the sale.*
60. C: Yeah, sorry, you were saying (.) It was (.) a good run/
61. A: Yeah/
62. C: Yeah\  
 63. A: I thought ^ooh, I'm going to do that again today @@@,  
 64. C: ^Yes=  
 65. A: <F Did you put that on ^savings, did you? F>  
 66. C: Ah ^no, it's on, um, credit.  
 67. C: You can put a PIN in or you can sign, <A whatever [you] -- A>  
 68. A: [I'll] sign [please]/  
 69. C: [You'll] sign/  
 70. A: Yeah  
 71. C: Yep/  
 72. A: Yep\  
 73. C: There's a pen there [for you]  
 74. A: <P [I'm not ready to --] ^sorry P>

75. C: That's alright/, that's ^fine\.
76. A: <P I know I should get technology P>
77. C: Well/, it's normally your (.),
78. C: It's normally the same PIN (.) as your, um (.) savings [so],
79. A: [Oh] okay/
80. C: So when I (.) well, that's what mine is [anyway].
81. A: [Right]
82. C: I just put in the same PIN that I use at the ATM and --
83. A: Oh okay/
84. C: If I did EFTPOS, I'd put in the same PIN [so=]
85. A: [Yeah]
86. C: Yeah, [um],
87. A: <P [Oh well\] P>. I'll sign ^this?
88. C: <A Sign that ^one A>.
89. C: Yes (.) I mean check with your ^bank but (.) often that's what it is.
90. A: Oh, okay/
91. C: And I just [did it] (...)
92. A: <P [I haven't got around to --]P>
93. C: I just tried it one day.
94. A: Yeah/
95. C: Actually, I'll, I'll staple that for you ^here.
96. A: Thank-you.
97. C: <F That's ^everything.
98. C: That's your ^invoice/ Enjoy the ^day/ F>
99. C: Thanks so much.
100. A: Thanks Catherine
101. C: It's a ^pleasure.

**Sample text 4**

This is a prepared speech given by a 17-year-old secondary school student (S) in a public-speaking competition in 2003.

The following symbols are used in the transcript:

(.)	short pause	<word>	especially slow in relation to surrounding speech
(..)	medium pause	:	prolongation of sound to the left
(...)	long pause	/	marked rising intonation
Word	stress through pitch/amplitude	\	marked falling intonation
WORD	especially loud in relation to surrounding speech	(H)	audible inhalation
>word<	especially fast in relation to surrounding speech		

1. S: Why should /we\ (.) buy (.) Australian\ (...)
2. >We are in the /middle\< of Australia's /worst\ drought ever/
3. Our country has not recovered\ from horrendous/ bush fires\
4. And the Australian dollar\ is worth (.) sixty (.) five (.) US cents\ (..)
5. That's like/ (..) buying a cup of coffee/ (H)
6. And getting (.) little more\ than half\ (.) the cup\ (...)
7. However/ (.) Australia/ is (.) fa:r (..) from being defeated\
8. >And there is< a /way\ (...)
9. for our farmers\ (.) our land\ (.) and our economy/
10. To get back on their feet\ (.)
11. and /receive\ (..) a full cup (.) of coffee/(...)
12. We can begin\ (..) by replacing Aeroplane Jelly\ (..)
13. with Dick Smith's:::/ Helicopter Jelly\
14. And/ >Mr Sheen window cleaner/< with Big Kev\
15. That's right\ (..)
16. I'M EXCITED/
17. >Because if< we/ buy/ Australian\
18. Our farmers\ (..) our land/ (..) and our economy/
19. Will\ (..) be resurrected\ (...)
20. (H) Wherever/ possible\ (.) we all/ have a duty\ to buy\ Australian\
21. >And the reason< why\ (..)
22. For our own\ (..) sake\
23. >Because if we< don't\ (..)
24. we are only/ short-changing\ ourself/
25. In <every (.) possible (.) way/>
26. So as well/ as Australians\ (..) supporting/ Australian businesses\
27. We should\ (..) be acknowledging industries\ (.)
28. that are exporting/ overseas\
29. And giving\ (..) the (.) whole (.) world/ (.) the opportunity of choice\
30. The choice\ (..) to buy\ (..) Australian\(...)
31. Let's begin/ (.) by thinking/ (.)
32. about the clothes/ (.) on our\ (.) very/ (.) own\ (.) back\
33. What does/ (..) the clothing on our backs\ have in common/
34. >They have all been< (.) hung out to dry/(.) <on the Hills/ Hoist>

35. This/ (.) remarkable\ (.) Australian/ (.) invention\ (.)  
 36. Has taken\ the world\ by storm\  
 37. Who in the world/ could dry their clothes\ on anything but (.) <a Hills\ Hoist\  
 38. I/ myself/ >can only think of< one person\  
 39. And I'm ashamed to say\ that person\ is my very own\ mother\  
 40. What an unpatriotic Australian she is\  
 41. But that/ (.) is another story\ for another day  
 42. >Moving on< to/ a much brighter/ note\  
 43. Another wonderful/ (.) Australian (.) contribution/ to the world\  
 44. Is the discovery\ (.) of penicillin\ (...)  
 45. >And if it was not< for (.) one Australian\ (..) Howard Florey\ (..)  
 46. Who was influential/ in the discovery\ of penicillin\  
 47. Then fifty mill:::ion people around the world\  
 48. Fifty (..) mill:::ion/ (..) people/ would be/ dead\  
 49. That's well and /truly\ over twice (.) Australia's population\  
 50. And even today/  
 51. The whole world continues/ (.) to benefit from/  
 52. And buy/ (.) >Australian medical technology\  
 53. You may/ not know/ of the inventor\  
 54. But I'm sure\ (.) you have all heard\ (.) of the invention\ (..)  
 55. (H) The retractable syringe\  
 56. It's going to put an end/ (.) to needle stick injuries/ forever\  
 57. And >believe it or not< it is an Australian invention\  
 58. By a very proud\ and successful Australian\ (..) Bruce Kiehne (..)  
 59. It's amazing\ that even today/  
 60. Australia still lives\ (.) >on the back of a sheep\  
 61. And that's/ because/ our /meat\  
 62. is in huge demand/ (.) around the world\  
 63. And/ >how could I forget/< (..) our/ wine\  
 64. The entire/ world/ is convinced/  
 65. That Australian wine/ (.) is (..) the best in the world\  
 66. >But how could I< know\  
 67. Because (.) I'm not eighteen\  
 68. So (.) let's keep it legal/  
 69. Seeing as we are in the Premier's/ building\  
 70. And say that my knowledge\ (.) of Australian wine\  
 71. Comes from (.) um wider (.) reading\ (...)  
 72. The creations::/ of our/ nation::\ (.) are remarkable\  
 73. >And are even< exported\ overseas/  
 74. Which is/ (...) fantastic\  
 75. But how can we/ the Australian people/ let these goods pass by\  
 76. And not/ reap the rewards/ of our efforts/ our hard yakka/  
 77. And our/ determination\ to Advance (..) Australia (..) Fair\ (..)  
 78. >So the next time< you enjoy a hot cup of tea/ or coffee\  
 79. Think/ (..) to yourself\

80. What would /I rather\<
81. Sixty-five cents worth and (..) >half a cup/<
82. Or buy (..) Australian (..) and receive a full cup
83. If you buy Australian\< (..)
84. You are (..) in the long term\<
85. Giving:::/ our farmers\< (.) and industry (.)\< a helping hand/<
86. And in the short term
87. We are getting:::\ a (.) full (..) cup (.) of coffee(.)/<
88. And that's what you need\< (.) right now/ (.)
89. to sit back (..) and reflect/ upon\<
90. Upon this wonderful country of ours\<
91. The choice\< (...) is easy\<
92. Buy (.) Australian\<