ENGLISH

ATAR REFERENCE GUIDE

CONTENTS

Tip: use the syllabus outcomes as a checklist—make sure you've covered them all before the exam! ☺

PART 1: COURSE CONCEPTS

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PART 4: COMPREHEND & RESPOND

PART 5: COMPOSE

ATAR ENGLISH: THE EXAM

COMPREHENDING (30%)

Short answer responses to unseen texts

Comprehending involves looking at a text you've never seen before, and quickly figuring out **what it's about** and **how it's been constructed.** However, comprehension is not the same as deep analysis: you should write a short, concise response, not a detailed essay.

In ATAR English exams, you usually get one or two written extracts and one visual. You have to answer three questions, one of which might ask you to compare or contrast two of the texts.

To develop good comprehension skills, you need to start by learning textual conventions and techniques, so that you can identify them quickly and figure out *why* and *how* they've been used in a text. You should also read widely and practise responding to texts under timed conditions.

RESPONDING (40%)

Analytical essay on at least one studied text

Responding is more thorough than comprehending; it requires greater detail and insight into a text. That's why, for responding tasks, you write about a text you've already studied.

In ATAR English exams, you get six questions, and you choose one to answer in the form of an essay. Some questions require you to discuss at least *two texts* you have studied in class. This may involve comparing or contrasting the texts.

To do well, you need to focus on two things: 1) answering the question, and 2) demonstrating a deep understanding of the text. This requires more than simply memorising quotes; you need to be able to apply different curriculum concepts to the text.

COMPOSING (30%)

Original imaginative, persuasive or interpretive composition

Composing is an opportunity to demonstrate your originality and creativity. It also allows you to play to your strengths, as you can write in a style that works for you.

In **ATAR English exams,** you usually get five prompts, which give you a point of inspiration and dictate the type of text you need to write. The prompts often specify something else about your composition, like the type of voice or perspective you should adopt in your writing.

To develop your composing skills, you need to practise experimenting with language and structure prior to the exam. You also need to be familiar with the conventions of different textual forms, so that you can apply these in your own writing.

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES: UNIT 3

SUMMARY

1. This unit places a HUGE emphasis on **comparison**. You need to compare both the "how" and the "what" of different texts: **compare how they are constructed**, and **compare the meaning that they convey**. Make sure you analyse texts from similar *and* different **contexts** & **genres**.

2. **Genre** is a crucial concept in this unit. You need to understand what genre means (how it refers to both form and subject matter) and have a wide knowledge of **generic conventions**. This means knowing the generic conventions of textual forms (e.g. narrative conventions, film conventions) and distinct genres (e.g. conventions of dystopian texts, conventions of gothic fiction).

3. Once you understand genre, you need to be able to explain how texts conform to, manipulate, subvert or challenge the conventions of their genres. You need to explain how texts can be transformed into different genres, how genres change over time, and how expectations of (and responses to) different genres also change. Basically, **genre is everything**. You'll probably end up dreaming in specific genres.

4. **Language** comes up quite a bit in this unit, too. Focus on the way that texts use language, but also look for *patterns in language*: lexical choices or language devices that are used a number of times over the course of a text.

SYLLABUS (ANALYTICAL OUTCOMES ONLY)

3.1 Compare texts from similar or different genres and contexts by:
*   analysing language, structural and stylistic choices
*   explaining how each text conforms to or challenges the conventions of particular genres or modes
*   analysing and evaluating how similar themes, issues, ideas and concepts are treated in different texts.

3.2 Compare and contrast distinctive features of genres by:
*   analysing the techniques and conventions used in different genres, media and modes
*   considering how the conventions of genres can be challenged, manipulated or subverted
*   examining how genres and their conventions have changed and been adapted over time.

3.3 Analyse and critically appraise how the conventions of texts influence responses, including:
*   the ways language patterns can create shades of meaning
*   how expectations of genres have developed and the effect when those expectations are met or not met, extended or subverted
*   how responses to texts and genres may change over time and in different cultural contexts
*   the role of the audience in making meaning.

3.4 Reflect on their own and others' texts by:
*   analysing and evaluating how different texts represent similar ideas in different ways
*   explaining how meaning changes when texts are transformed into a different genre or medium
*   comparing and evaluating the impact of language conventions used in a variety of texts and genres.

SYLLABUS OUTCOMES: UNIT 4

SUMMARY

1. **Perspectives**, **values** and **attitudes** are a big part of Unit 4. Remember that these concepts are interrelated: perspectives in a text are often ideological (e.g. a feminist perspective, an environmentalist perspective) and therefore contain values & attitudes within them.

2. **Context** is also a key area of focus. This builds on the syllabus outcomes from previous units (which explore the relationship between texts and contexts) by asking you to **compare the contexts** in which texts are created and received. For example, a text might be written in 19th century England, but read by you, within the context of contemporary Australian society.

3. Unit 4 promotes a **deeper, more complex understanding of meaning**; you need to consider different interpretations or readings of texts. You should think about how the omissions, inclusions, emphases and marginalisations in texts can elicit more nuanced interpretations, and challenge the assumptions made by texts. Basically, you need to go *way* beyond the obvious stuff.

4. You should also explore how texts **evoke empathy or generate controversy.** This requires careful text selection— not all issues are controversial, and not all texts elicit empathy from their audience!

SYLLABUS (ANALYTICAL OUTCOMES ONLY)

4.1 Investigate and evaluate the relationships between texts and contexts by:
- undertaking close analysis of texts
- examining how each text relates to a particular context or contexts
- comparing the contexts in which texts are created and received.

4.2 Evaluate different perspectives, attitudes and values represented in texts by:
- analysing content, purpose and choice of language
- analysing the use of voice and point of view
- exploring other interpretations and aspects of context to develop a considered response.

4.3 Evaluate how texts offer perspectives through:
- the selection of mode, medium, genre and type of text
- the ways points of view and values are represented
- the selection of language features that generate empathy or controversy.

4.4 Reflect on their own and others' texts by:
- analysing and evaluating how different attitudes and perspectives underpin texts
- questioning the assumptions and values in texts
- identifying omissions, inclusions, emphases and marginalisations
- discussing and evaluating different readings of texts.

PART 1

COURSE CONCEPTS

ATAR ENGLISH: KEY CONCEPTS

TEXTS

Type: *the nature of the text (imaginative, interpretative, persuasive or analytical)*

Genre: *the category into which the text is placed, either by subject matter (e.g. sci-fi) or form (e.g. novels, poetry)*

Mode: *the process of communication (visual, spoken, written, gestural & aural; "multimodal"= combination of these)*

Medium: *the channel of communication (e.g. speech, television, newspaper)*

Digital texts: *texts produced though digital technology.*   **Hybrid texts**: *texts that mix together different genres*

WHAT

What is the text about?
What meaning do we take from it?

1) Ideas

What are the ideas (notions, opinions or arguments) that are conveyed or explored in the text?

2) Issues

What are the social problems presented in the text?

3) Perspectives *(perspective= opinion + context)*

What opinions are expressed in the text? How is each viewpoint informed by its context?

4) Voices

How would you describe the persona of the authorial or narrative voice? Are there "multiple voices"?

5) Representations

How are certain people, places or concepts portrayed?

6) Attitudes & values

What are the values, attitudes and beliefs (or ideologies) underpinning the text?

HOW

How is the meaning of the
text conveyed to the audience?

1) Language

What kind of language does the author employ in the text? (e.g. descriptive, figurative, colloquial etc.)

2) Tone

How would you describe the attitude of the author?

3) Mood

What is the underlying atmosphere in the text?

4) Conventions

How does the author employ, manipulate or subvert the expected elements of the text's genre?

5) Structure

How are ideas in the text grouped or sequenced through syntax, paragraphing or broader structural devices?

6) Style (or *stylistic features*)

How do the author's language choices, tone, structure and/or use of conventions create a distinctive style?

WHY

Why has the text been produced, and for whom? *Why* do we respond to it the way we do?

1) Purpose

What is the author's aim in producing the text? (i.e. to persuade, inform, interpret, analyse etc.)

2) Audience

Who is the intended audience of the text?

3) Context of setting & production

What information (surrounding the author or chosen setting) influenced the construction of the text?

4) Context of reception (*reader's context*)

As a reader, how does your personal or sociocultural context shape your response to the text?

5) Intertextual connections

How could you compare the text to others?

6) Interpretations (*readings*)

What possible readings (dominant, alternative, resistant, ideological) could you apply to the text?

KEY CONCEPT: **PURPOSE**

"Purpose" is the intention or aim of the writer in producing the text. The syllabus loosely groups together texts based on their purpose:

Imaginative texts: Texts whose primary purpose is to **entertain or provoke thought** through their imaginative use of literary elements. This includes narratives and films.

Interpretive texts: Texts whose primary purpose is to **explain and interpret** issues, events, people and so forth. Unlike persuasive texts, which put forward an argument, interpretive texts often present a more **balanced discussion**. They include autobiographies, documentaries, feature articles and so on.

Persuasive texts: Texts whose primary purpose is to **put forward a point of view** and **persuade** an audience. They include advertising, debates, opinion pieces and speeches.

Analytical texts: Texts whose primary purpose is to **identify, examine and draw conclusions** about the elements or components that make up other texts.

INTENDED RESPONSES: THINKING, FEELING & ACTING

To determine the purpose of a text, start by asking yourself:

What does the author want their audience to **think**?
How does the author want their audience to **feel**?
How does the author want their audience to **act**?

"Thinking" responses

A text might be intended to:
- inform or raise awareness
- position an audience on an issue
- persuade an audience to accept an idea
- mock or ridicule someone
- question, criticise, challenge or protest a cause
- promote reflection and introspection

"Feeling" responses

A text might attempt to evoke:
- empathy or sympathy
- guilt, remorse or shame
- optimism or hope
- respect, reverence or admiration
- anger, disgust or repulsion

"Acting" responses

A text might encourage an audience to:
- take personal action (e.g. recycling, going vegetarian)
- take political action, such as voting or joining a cause
- donate money to a cause

KEY CONCEPT: AUDIENCE

DEFINITION

The audience is the person or people for whom the text is intended.

The audience of a text can be characterised by factors such as:

- Age
- Gender
- Cultural background or ethnicity
- Class (socio-economic status)
- Profession or defining interests/hobbies
- Ideology (i.e. values, attitudes, beliefs)
- Social roles and relationships (e.g. parental roles)

DETERMINING AUDIENCE

When determining the audience of a text, you need to consider:

1. **The subject matter**

   a. Is it particularly relevant to one social group in particular? For example, an article about excessive materialism is going to be most relevant for upper middle class or wealthy adults.

2. **The way the text is written/produced**

   a. Is the language deliberately simple, to make the text accessible to people without expert knowledge or a younger audience?

   b. Does the text employ imagery or textual features that would appeal to a particular audience? For example, pop culture references are more likely to appeal to teenagers or young adults.

3. **The medium and publishing source of the text**

   a. Digital media like vlogs or podcasts are more likely to be consumed by younger audiences, while print newspapers have an older demographic.

   b. Certain publications have clearly defined audiences— for example, websites like Vice or Buzzfeed are aimed at young adults; the New Matilda is aimed at a progressive (left-wing) demographic, and many magazines (e.g. *Men's Health, Woman's Day*) have a clear gendered focus.

KEY CONCEPT: CONTEXT

Context is the environment in which a text is responded to or created.

Context involves all the historical, social, cultural and personal factors that influence the way that a text is written, or the way that it is interpreted.

CONTEXT OF RECEPTION

Context of Reception

The context of reception includes both a reader's sociocultural context and their personal context. In other words, a reader will be influenced by the culture and society around them, as well as their own personal values and life experiences.

Sociocultural context: the social and cultural attitudes, values, norms, expectations, traditions and experiences that you have grown up with and that shape the way that you respond to a text.

Your sociocultural context includes:
1) The fact that you are a member of Australian society
2) The fact that you are a member of Generation Z
3) Your cultural heritage or background
4) Your socioeconomic status (class)

Personal context: the personal life experiences, values, attitudes and beliefs that shape your response to a text.

Your personal context includes:
1) Your age (16-17)
2) Your gender
3) Your race/ethnicity
4) Your personal values/ideology/religion
5) Your defining interests and life experiences

IMPACT OF CONTEXT

Consider how your context of reception shapes your interpretation of (or response to) a text. You might:

- have a particular emotional response to a text
- place more focus on, or give privilege to, certain ideas/issues in the text
- interpret the story's events or ideas differently
- be more easily (or less easily) persuaded/positioned by the text
- be more empathetic to the author or one of the characters
- adopt a particular reading practice— e.g. a resistant reading, or a feminist reading

KEY CONCEPT: CONTEXT

Context of Production

The context of production is the **environment that shapes the production of a text.**

There are two main aspects of context of production:

1. The historical and social context surrounding the **text's subject matter** or its **time & place setting.** For example, if you were writing about Steinbeck's *The Pearl*, you might research colonial Mexico in the early 1900s, and consider how this context is represented in the novella.

2. The **authorial context**: the factors that influence an author as they write a text. This includes aspects of their own life (their personal context) and the sociocultural context surrounding them at the time they wrote the text. For example, you might explore Steinbeck's own experiences with class inequality in America, and how these are reflected in the text.

Consider how the context of production influences:

1) The construction of the text:

- The construction of the text's plotline, setting and characters
- The issues and ideas conveyed in the text
- The values and attitudes that underlie the text

2) Your response to the text

- Your understanding of the text
- Your interpretation of the text, or the ideas within it that you privilege
- Your ability to empathise with or relate to the characters

KEY CONCEPT: **IDEAS**

In this course, "ideas" can be interpreted as messages, thoughts, notions, opinions, views or beliefs. An idea should be expressed as a statement (e.g. *schools should do more to support adolescent mental health*). In other words, an idea is more than a subject or issue; it cannot be summed up in one or two words.
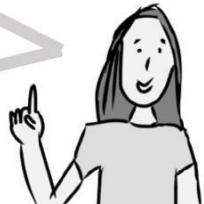
EXPRESSION

You should write about ideas in the following manner:

The text conveys the idea that [full statement]

e.g. the idea that patriarchal society is destructive to both men and women.
e.g. the idea that fast fashion creates ethical and environmental problems.

TYPES OF IDEA STATEMENTS

There are two types of idea statements:

1. **Empirical statements** simply make a judgement or insight about something *as it is.*

    e.g. Hostility comes from a fear of the unknown.
    e.g. Our society is obsessed with youth and beauty.
    e.g. Sacred Indigenous sites are often treated with disrespect.

2. **Normative statements** usually have the word "should" in them, as they propose a change.

    e.g. Schools should focus on encouraging creativity in students.
    e.g. Australia needs to address violence against women.
    e.g. The government should do more to engage young people in politics.

IDEAS IN TEXTS

If you struggle to identify the ideas in a text, start by brainstorming the subjects/issues that the text explores. For example, if you studied the documentary *Blackfish*, you might write down:

orcas   *captivity*   *safety*   *profit*   *animal welfare*

Then, take one of the subjects, and use it to form a normative or empirical idea statement.

e.g. The text conveys the idea that corporations should prioritise worker safety over profit.
e.g. The text promotes the idea that it is inhumane to keep orcas in captivity.

KEY CONCEPT: ISSUES

"Issues" are problems, injustices or subjects to which people adopt conflicting attitudes. They are often matters of dispute, topics that generate controversy and disagreement. Issues can often be boiled down into one word or a few words— they are subjects, not opinions (e.g. *deaths in custody; sexism in the workforce; mandatory sentencing laws*).
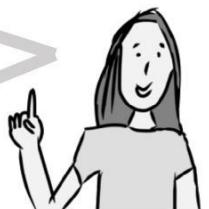
EXPRESSION

You should write about issues in the following manner:

The text explores the issue of [1-4 word topic].

e.g. The text explores the issue of gender inequality.
e.g. The author examines the issue of genetic modification.

SOCIAL, ENVIRONMENTAL & ECONOMIC ISSUES

Social issues:	Environmental issues:	Economic issues:
Class stratification	Biodiversity	Cryptocurrencies
Gender inequality	Deforestation	Corporate crime
Whitewashing in film	Pollution	Child labour
Australia Day celebrations	Eco-tourism	Wage gap
Deaths in custody	Natural disasters	Financial crises
Homophobia & transphobia	Human overpopulation	Corruption
Gun control	Depletion of resources	Recession
Asylum seeker policy	Global warming	Economic bubbles
Vaccinations	Climate change	Market failure
War and conflict	Intensive farming	Monopolisation
Gambling abuse	Renewable energy	Plutocracy
Sexual objectification	Genetic modification	Inflation
Censorship	Sea level rises	Unemployment
Inequality in education	Recycling	Negative gearing
Data mining	Drought	Housing crisis
Human trafficking	Nuclear power	Uncontrolled debt
Violence against women	Air quality	Volatile markets
Cultural appropriation	Ozone depletion	Exchange rate volatility
Euthanasia	Habitat loss	Deindustrialisation
Meat consumption	Soil erosion	Urban decay
Artificial intelligence	Toxic chemicals	Offshoring
Stem cell research	Food safety	Privatisation
Nuclear proliferation	Desertification	Income tax rates

KEY CONCEPT: **REPRESENTATIONS**

DEFINITION

Representations are the ways that people, places, events or subjects are presented in a text.

The term implies that texts are not mirrors of the real world; they are "versions of reality". In other words, if a place is represented in a text (e.g. Tokyo is portrayed in the film *Lost in Translation*) the audience isn't *really* seeing that place, but rather a constructed representation of it.

EXPRESSION
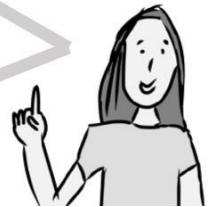
You should write about representations in the following manner:

The text represents [subject] as [description]

e.g. The text represents children as innocent and vulnerable.

The text constructs a [description] representation of [subject]

e.g. The text constructs an innocent, vulnerable representation of children.

REPRESENTATIONS

Texts will often represent particular **social groups** such as:
- Gendered groups (men/women/trans/non-binary)
- Cultural or ethnic groups
- Classes (upper class, middle class, working class)
- Age groups (children, teenagers, adults, the elderly)

They might also represent **social institutions** such as the family, marriage or religion.

Finally, they might represent **places, events**, or **issues**.

KEY CONCEPT: VOICE

DEFINITION

The voice of a text is the role or persona of the author, the narrator or a character in the text. To describe the voice of a text, you need to identify two things:
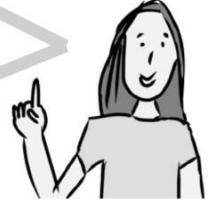
1. **Who it belongs to:** a child? A mother? An immigrant? An unknown narrator?

2. **A description of the voice**: is it poetic? Colloquial? Unbiased? Detached? Think about:
   a. Language (descriptive, casual, literal, metaphorical etc.)
   b. Tone (sarcastic, angry, melancholic, bitter, exuberant etc.)
   c. Objectivity (neutral, objective, subjective, biased)
   d. Reliability (trustworthy, reliable, unreliable)
   e. Distance from the action and emotion (close, intimate, distant, detached)

EXPRESSION

You should write about voice in the following manner:

The text constructs the [1-2 descriptive words] voice of a [persona]

e.g. The text constructs the naïve, whimsical voice of a child.
e.g. The text constructs the detached voice of an omniscient narrator.
e.g. The text constructs the impassioned voice of an Indigenous woman.

MULTIPLE VOICES

If you are asked to describe the *authorial voice*, *narrative voice*, or just the *voice* of a text, you only need to focus on one voice.

However, a question might ask about the *voices (plural)* in a text, in which case you need to identify *multiple voices*. Questions about multiple voices often draw our focus towards competing perspectives, views or ideologies in a text.

You could discuss:

1. **The voices of different characters**— for example, in *The Pearl*, Steinbeck juxtaposes Kino's desperate and incensed voice with that of his wife, Juana, whose voice is stoic and composed. Their different voices show two different responses to forces of oppression— one of frustration and resistance, and the other of weary acceptance.

2. **The voices of different subjects or people**— for example, in a documentary, different people are interviewed, lending different voices to the text. Blackfish, for example, gives voice to many SeaWorld trainers as well as a range of scientists.

KEY CONCEPT: PERSPECTIVES
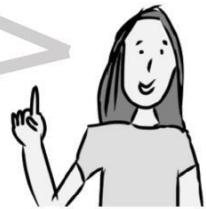
A perspective is a position from which things may be viewed or considered. People may have different perspectives on events or issues due to their age, gender, social position and beliefs.

A perspective is more than an opinion on a subject; it is the way that this opinion is influenced by context. For example, while a wealthy baby boomer, a middle-aged scientist and a young student might share the same opinion about something, they have different contexts and thus view the world from different perspectives.

You should write about perspective in the following manner:

The text presents a [context] perspective on [subject], viewing it as [opinion]

*e.g. The text presents a **feminist** perspective on **gender inequality**, viewing it **as an urgent issue** that both men and women need to address.*

Perspectives in texts can come from the author, or from characters.

In persuasive or interpretive texts, where the author is voicing their opinion or experiences directly, the dominant perspective is theirs. You should consider their context, and how this influences the opinions that they promote in the text.

In **imaginative texts**, dominant perspectives are constructed through the characters, or are indirectly voiced through the themes of the narrative. For example, in *The Pearl*, Steinbeck constructs an Indigenous perspective on the injustices of colonialism through the character of Kino. At the same time, Steinbeck also promotes (his own) socialist perspective through the themes of greed and corruption that underlie the book.

If you're struggling to identify perspectives in a text, ask yourself:

1. What is a **subject or issue** in the text?
    e.g. in Blackfish, the main issue is SeaWorld's practice of keeping orcas in captivity.

2. What is the **opinion** on the subject?
    e.g. The main opinion is that keeping orcas in captivity is inhumane.

3. Why has this opinion been formed? Which **contextual factors** are relevant?
    e.g. The key interviewees are scientists, who give evidence about orcas' nature & behaviour.

Put it together: <u>Blackfish</u> promotes a scientific perspective on SeaWorld's practice of keeping orcas in captivity, viewing it as inhumane.

KEY CONCEPT: **PERSPECTIVES**

SOCIOCULTURAL

Sociocultural perspectives

A perspective may be informed by any of the social or cultural characteristics of the author/character:

a) Age *(e.g. child's perspective)*
b) Gender *(e.g. male/female perspective; non-binary perspective)*
c) Class *(e.g. middle-class perspective)*
d) Nationality *(e.g. Australian perspective)*
e) Religion (*e.g. Muslim perspective*)
f) Cultural background or ethnicity *(e.g. Indigenous perspective)*
g) Profession/role *(e.g. parent's perspective; teacher's perspective)*

IDEOLOGICAL

Ideological perspectives

A perspective may be informed by any underlying ideology held by the author or character, e.g:

a) *Feminist perspective*
b) *Capitalist perspective*
c) *Marxist perspective*
d) *Nationalistic perspective*

You can also discuss any ideologies being challenged by an author/character, such as:

a) *Anti-capitalist perspective*
b) *Anti-consumerist perspective*

TIME-RELATED

Time-related perspectives

Time-related perspectives are informed by the time in which the text was written, such as:

a) *Modern/contemporary perspective*
b) *20th century perspective*
c) *Historical perspective*

PHYSICAL

Physical perspectives

A perspective can describe the physical distance or angle between the narrator and the subject:

a) *A close perspective or distant perspective*
b) *A perspective from below, a perspective from above, or an aerial perspective*

KEY CONCEPT: VALUES & ATTITUDES

DEFINITION & EXPRESSION

Values are the principles, standards or qualities that one sees as being important. A value can typically be summed up in one or two words— *e.g. equality, honesty, determination, justice etc.*
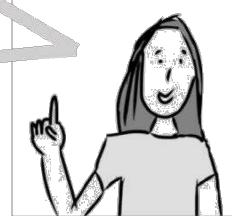
You should write about values in the following manner:

The text is shaped by the author's **value *of* [1-2 word principle]** *or*

The text promotes the **value *of* [1-2 word principle]**

e.g. Value of equality
e.g. Value of freedom

VALUES

Bravery	Beauty	Education	Humour	Peace
Compassion	Youth	Empathy	Individuality	Power
Culture	Creativity	Equality	Integrity	Respect
Family	Determination	Faith	Justice	Wealth
Freedom	Diversity	Honesty	Kindness	Wisdom

DEFINITION & EXPRESSION

Attitudes are our feelings towards certain issues or subjects. Attitudes show how our values are manifested in our actions and thoughts about other people or issues.

You should write about attitudes in the following manner:

The author promotes a **[feeling] attitude *towards* [subject]**

e.g. …a critical attitude towards coal mining
e.g. …an encouraging attitude towards men's involvement in feminism
e.g. …a scathing attitude towards the Australian government

ATTITUDES

Positive attitudes: reverent, favourable, approving, optimistic, encouraging, hopeful, sympathetic

Neutral attitudes: indifferent, apathetic, contemplative, sentimental, disinterested

Negative attitudes: contemptuous, critical, irreverent, outraged, forceful, bitter, cynical, resigned, restrained, melancholic, despairing, fearful, solemn, serious, scathing, skeptical, demanding, scornful, disdainful, pessimistic

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KEY CONCEPT: IDEOLOGY

DEFINITION

Ideology refers to a set or system of beliefs, values and attitudes, centering around such things as religion, politics or economics. It can also be understood to mean the ideas and manner of thinking that is characteristic of a group, social class, or individual.

An ideology is an underpinning worldview that unavoidably shapes the construction of a text. It also influences the meaning that an audience makes from a text— in other words, a reader's personal ideology will influence their response to a text.

DISSECTING IDEOLOGIES

You can break down ideologies into certain **beliefs, values and attitudes**:

Feminism
The **belief** that men and women are equal.
The **values** of equality and women's rights.
The **critical attitude** towards patriarchal roles and norms.

Capitalism
The **values** of competition, efficiency and profit.
The **belief** that trade and industry should be privately owned and operated, free from government interference.

COMMON IDEOLOGIES

Conservatism: a belief in retaining traditional social institutions, emphasising stability and continuity above social change.

Progressivism: the belief that social, technological and economic advancements are vital to the improvement of the human condition.

Nationalism: the belief that the members of a nation share a unique set of common interests and should place these national interests above those of other nations.

Anarchism: a belief that governments and laws are harmful or unnecessary, and that people should free themselves from oppression by the state.

Egalitarianism: the belief that all people are equal and deserve equal rights and opportunities.

Marxism: the belief that we should move away from capitalism (where some individuals hold far greater wealth and power than others) and towards an ultimately classless society, where services or means of production are publicly owned and thus shared among all people.

Fundamentalism: in a religious sense, a very strict adherence to traditional tenets and practices of a particular faith. For example, Christian fundamentalism may emphasise a strict and literal interpretation of the Bible.

KEY CONCEPT: GENRE

Genre refers to the category into which a text is grouped.

The term is used to distinguish texts on the basis of either:

1. Their *subject matter* (e.g. mystery, fantasy, romance, science fiction), <u>or</u>
2. Their *form and structure* (e.g. poetry, novels, biography, film, documentary).

A genre is defined by its expected conventions, which are called **generic conventions**. For example, we would expect a sonnet (a poetic *form*) to employ iambic pentameter, a rhyme scheme, and be 14 lines in length. Similarly, if we look at genres defined by their *subject matter*, they too will have a set of expected conventions! See the table below for an overview of some common genres.

|	Setting	Plot	Characters	Mood	Themes
Comedy	Contemporary, mainstream settings are usually employed	An accident or misunderstanding causes humorous results, which are ultimately resolved	Characters are often archetypal and exaggerated for comedic effect.	Light-hearted, comical mood	Themes are varied, but often involve interpersonal relationships like love or friendship
	Future setting in **Dystopia** which society has undergone drastic change	Protagonist & allies attempt to overthrow oppressive forces	Rebellious protagonist who questions the rules of their society	Melancholy, fear or tension	Themes are often connected to current issues (which are exaggerated in a future context)
Horror	Eerie settings— e.g. night-time, deserted places	Narrative tension is built to a clear climactic point where the victim confronts the threat	Employs villain/victim archetypes	Suspense, tension, anxiety or anticipation	Explores the concept of evil and the darker side of human nature
Science fiction	Futuristic setting, sometimes on earth, other times in outer space or other worlds	Conflict between good and evil escalates into a climax; resolves with the triumph of good	Archetypal heroes (usually taking human-like form) and villains (often taking non-human form)	Suspenseful, foreboding mood; moments of exhilarating action	Often explores the effects and consequences of technological progression or space travel
Gothic	Eerie, dark settings: medieval churches, castles & monasteries (haunted spaces that reflect haunted minds)	The plot usually involves mystery, often involving supernatural elements	Commonly features a "fallen hero" or an "antihero"	There is an atmosphere of mystery, suspense and fear	Gothic texts often interrogate the nature of religion, or the moral and psychological state of humans

KEY CONCEPT: GENRE
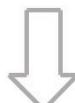
Many students understand the broad concept of genre easily, but things get a little dicey when you look at the syllabus. There are five key syllabus points from Unit 3 that require an in-depth knowledge of genre, and the easiest way to explain them is with specific examples! See the table below.

SYLLABUS POINT	EXAMPLE
1.Compare texts from similar or different genres, analysing the conventions and language/structural/stylistic choices employed in each	In a **comedy**, authors are expected to use language devices such as hyperbole and sarcasm to create a comical, light-hearted mood. In contrast, in **horror** fiction, an author might use eerie imagery and abrupt syntax to establish a tense, suspenseful mood.
2. Explain how each text either **conforms to, challenges, manipulates or subverts the conventions** of its genre	In an autobiographical text, an author might **conform** to the conventions of its genre by employing first person point of view (*I, me, my*) and past tense. However, another autobiographical text might **subvert** these conventions by writing in present tense and second person point of view (*you, your*)— distinctly unusual choices for an autobiography! Basically, manipulating and subverting genre requires making **unexpected choices**.
3. Examine how genres and their conventions have **changed and been adapted over time**, and how **responses to genres may change** over time and in different cultural contexts	The **horror genre** is a prime example of a genre that has changed over time, as technology has progressed and **audiences have become less conservative** (and more **desensitised**). Horror films no longer feature old-fashioned mummies, ghouls and monsters, but are often more psychologically driven, violent or gory, and often employ special effects to depict the supernatural.
4. Explain how **expectations of generic conventions have developed** and how audiences respond when those expectations are **met or not met, extended or subverted**	Using the same example from above, it's easy to see how **audience's expectations of horror movies have developed**, thus influencing their responses. For example, a modern audience is far less likely to be scared or shocked by an old black-and-white horror movie using only costumes to evoke fear, whereas a 1930s audience would find those conventions far more engaging.
5. Explain how **meaning changes when texts are transformed into a different genre**	When Baz Luhrmann adapted Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* in his 1996 film, he incorporated a range of cinematic techniques and modernised the text, incorporating the generic conventions of action films and westerns. In doing so, he **shifted the focus of the play's meaning**, encouraging viewers to look beyond the love story and reflect on the violent, superficial and consumer-driven nature of modern society.

KEY CONCEPT: **TEXTUAL FEATURES**

TEXTUAL FEATURES

"**Textual features**" is a broad term that encompasses **all** the techniques used in a text— visual or written, language-based or structural, conventional or unexpected. It can refer to the **broad aspects** of the text (e.g. its use of figurative language) or **specific devices** (e.g. its use of personification).

GENERIC CONVENTIONS
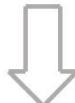
The term "generic conventions" refers ONLY to the techniques that are **expected** from the text's genre. For example, a story might employ both characterisation and colloquial language. Characterisation is **expected** from narratives, so it's a **narrative convention**. However, colloquial language isn't expected from stories, so while it's a language device, it's **not** a generic convention.

LANGUAGE DEVICES

Language devices are the techniques that operate on a **word level**. They use the sound, arrangement or meaning of **specific words** for effect. For example, **personification** is a language device because it manipulates the meaning of specific words. However, **conflict** is a narrative convention, but it can't be considered a language device: it's more of a **conceptual element** than a technique focused on words.

STRUCTURAL DEVICES

Structural devices involve the **placement, sequencing and organisation** of words/sentences/ideas in a text. The focus is on **where things are** in the text, *not* what they mean as isolated elements. For example, **juxtaposition** places two images, words or ideas next to one another for comparison. Through this structural device, the reader can infer certain meanings about the connection between the two things.

STYLISTIC CHOICES

Stylistic choices can include **any of the above techniques**— generic conventions, language devices or structural devices. An author's stylistic choices are the techniques that **define them as a writer**, the textual features that make their work **unique and recognisable**. Look for the **patterns in language or structure**, or for any **unusual/distinct uses of conventions**. For example, an author might omit speech entirely, and develop characters only through their actions. Or, an author might consistently write in short sentences, or employ personification at a number of points in their text. All of these would be considered stylistic choices!

KEY CONCEPT: DICTION & SYNTAX

If you're talking about an author's **general use of language**, you might consider their specific **choices in words (diction)**, and the **arrangement of these words into sentences (syntax)**. **Patterns of language** include repeated choices in diction and syntax in a text, but can also refer to specific language devices that are used a number of times over the course of a text.

DICTION

Diction is the choice and use of words and phrases in speech or writing: the kinds of words (or *lexical choices*) used by the author. **You cannot simply say that "an author employs diction".** This is like saying, "the author uses words" or "the painter uses paint". You need to use appropriate metalanguage (words to describe language) to preface the word "diction".

> *For example:*
>
> ✗ *The writer employs diction in order to…*
> ✓ *The writer employs* ***conversational diction*** *in order to…*

Words to describe diction:

Conversational, casual, colloquial, idiomatic……………………		*Formal, dignified, old-fashioned*
Literal, factual, scientific, technical……………………………………		*Poetic, metaphorical, connotative*
Simplistic, uncomplicated…………………………………………………		*Pompous, ostentatious, verbose, obscure*
Precise, specific…………………………………………………………		*Vague, general, broad*
Understated, restrained……………………………………………	***vs.***	*Hyperbolic, exaggerated, overwrought*
Coarse, explicit, profane, vulgar………………………………………		*Cultured, educated, academic, eloquent*
Repetitive, monotonous…………………………………………………		*Varied, musical, expressive*

SYNTAX

Syntax refers broadly to sentence structure (including sentence length and punctuation), and more specifically to the arrangement of words within a sentence.

Short sentences, minimal punctuation and straightforward word order are characteristic of simple syntax or abrupt syntax, whereas **unusual word orders, long sentences and extensive punctuation** are common in complex or elaborate syntax.

You should also consider whether sentence structures are **repeated** (creating repetitive syntax) or **changing** (creating varied syntax).

While syntax can also be thought of as a structural device, it's helpful to discuss it in the context of language. You'll notice there is often a **correlation between syntax and diction**.

Words to describe syntax:

Simple, abrupt, blunt………………………………………………………	*Complex, convoluted, ornate, elaborate*
Repetitive, monotonous…………………………………………………..	*Varied, irregular*

KEY CONCEPT: **MOOD**

Mood is the **atmosphere or feeling** in a text, which is often created through the use of descriptive language and imagery.

In order to identify & write about mood effectively, you need to actively expand your vocabulary to be able to make specific and accurate word choices. **Avoid "positive" and "negative"** and instead try to commit some of the following words to memory:

POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
calm	lethargic
peaceful	listless
tranquil	restrained
serene **low energy**	sombre **low energy**
relaxed	subdued
mellow	serious
dreamy	dreary
surreal	desolate
dream-like	gloomy
hopeful	grim
optimistic	haunting
idyllic	depressed
light-hearted	discontented
mysterious	melancholic
nostalgic	miserable
poignant	morose
cheerful	hopeless
content	eerie
blissful	agitated
joyous	restless
ecstatic	suspenseful
elated	tense
euphoric	foreboding
exhilarated **high energy**	ominous **high energy**
jubilant	menacing
giddy	fearful
lively	insidious
vibrant	sinister
animated	threatening
dynamic	hostile

KEY CONCEPT: **TONE**

Tone describes the **attitude of the author**: the feeling associated with their voice in the text.

Like mood, you need to actively expand your vocabulary to be able to make specific and accurate word choices when describing an author's tone.

POSITIVE		NEUTRAL		NEGATIVE	
optimistic hopeful		poignant introspective reflective contemplative nostalgic		resigned subdued restrained solemn serious somber	
cheerful satisfied pleased gleeful	**within self**		**within self**		**within self**
devout heartfelt sincere		candid honest frank matter-of-fact		melancholic despairing desperate fearful pessimistic	
humorous playful flippant		detached indifferent impartial apathetic		cynical skeptical scornful	
exuberant proud triumphant victorious		sentimental wistful effusive melodramatic		sarcastic mocking condescending irreverent	
romantic passionate fervent zealous		apologetic remorseful		bitter critical sharp biting	
	directed at others	ironic satirical sardonic	**directed at others**	disdainful contemptuous	**directed at others**
encouraging reverent respectful congratulatory approving admiring		strident insistent commanding didactic		outraged demanding forceful admonishing	

KEY CONCEPT: **STRUCTURE**

Structure entails two aspects of a text:

1. **Mechanical structure:** the use of syntax, paragraphing and other elements (e.g. chapters, headings) to structure a text (the length and arrangement of sentences and paragraphs).

2. **Conceptual structure:** the grouping or sequencing of ideas in a text: the way that plot events are structured in a narrative, or points are sequenced in a non-fiction text.

Choices in syntax and paragraphing can be referred to as *structural devices*. These include:

Abrupt syntax: the use of short sentences to either create tension or an emphatic, commanding tone.

Elaborate or convoluted syntax: the use of long, clause-heavy sentences, often for descriptive effect.

Paragraph breaks: these can be used to create salience in a text— for example, a single sentence could be separated out from surrounding paragraphs for emphasis.

Structural patterns: the use of repeated choices in syntax or paragraphing (e.g. each paragraph ending with a question or beginning with the same word or phrase).

The structural elements of a narrative are referred to as *plot devices*. These include:

Linear (chronological) plot structure or non-linear structure: the plot events will either unfold chronologically or through parallel/circular/disjointed time sequences.

Flashbacks or flash-forwards: where the plot shifts back or forward in time.

Foreshadowing: where an author hints at future events.

The structural elements of a non-fiction text include:

The **organisation of a text** (usually into an introduction, main body and conclusion).

The use of **juxtaposition** to compare or contrast two things.

The **placement of information** either at the start or end of a text for **salience**.

The use of **logical reasoning**— the structuring of an argument to form a natural conclusion.

The use of **shifts** in tone or mood.

The sudden **reveal** of any key pieces of information.

KEY CONCEPT: MODE & MEDIUM

DEFINITION

"Mode" refers to the process of communication: writing (**written mode**), speaking (**spoken mode**), visuals (**visual mode**), sound (**aural mode**) and gestures (**gestural mode**). **Multimodal texts** combine at least two of these modes.

"Medium" refers to the broader channel of communication within which certain modes are employed. For example, a speech is a medium that combines spoken and gestural modes. Other **media** (the plural of "medium") include newspapers, films and radio.

LINGUISTIC MODES

Writing and speaking are both **linguistic modes**, as they communicate through language (with either the written or spoken word). However, they're often said to have distinct conventions:

Written mode

Planned: carefully written and structured for effect
Formal & standard: uses grammatically standard English & formal diction
Permanent: the text remains after it has been read
Distant: the author and reader are not in proximity
Delayed: there is a delay between the text being written and being read
Transactional: one-way communication of ideas

Spoken mode

Spontaneous: words are delivered naturally with less forethought
Informal & non-standard: uses casual language or imperfect grammar
Ephemeral: the delivery of the text is fleeting
Close: speaker and listener are in close proximity
Immediate: listener hears the speech as it is delivered
Interactional: there is a two-way exchange of ideas

Obviously, **formal speeches** tend to adopt more of the conventions of writing than **casual dialogues**. Certain types of writing (for example, a conversation over messenger) will also more closely resemble conventions of speaking (often being casual, spontaneous and intermediate).

When you read a text, ask yourself: does it sound like writing, or speaking? If it sounds like a spoken text when read, it probably subverts the conventions of the written mode!

VISUAL, AURAL & GESTURAL
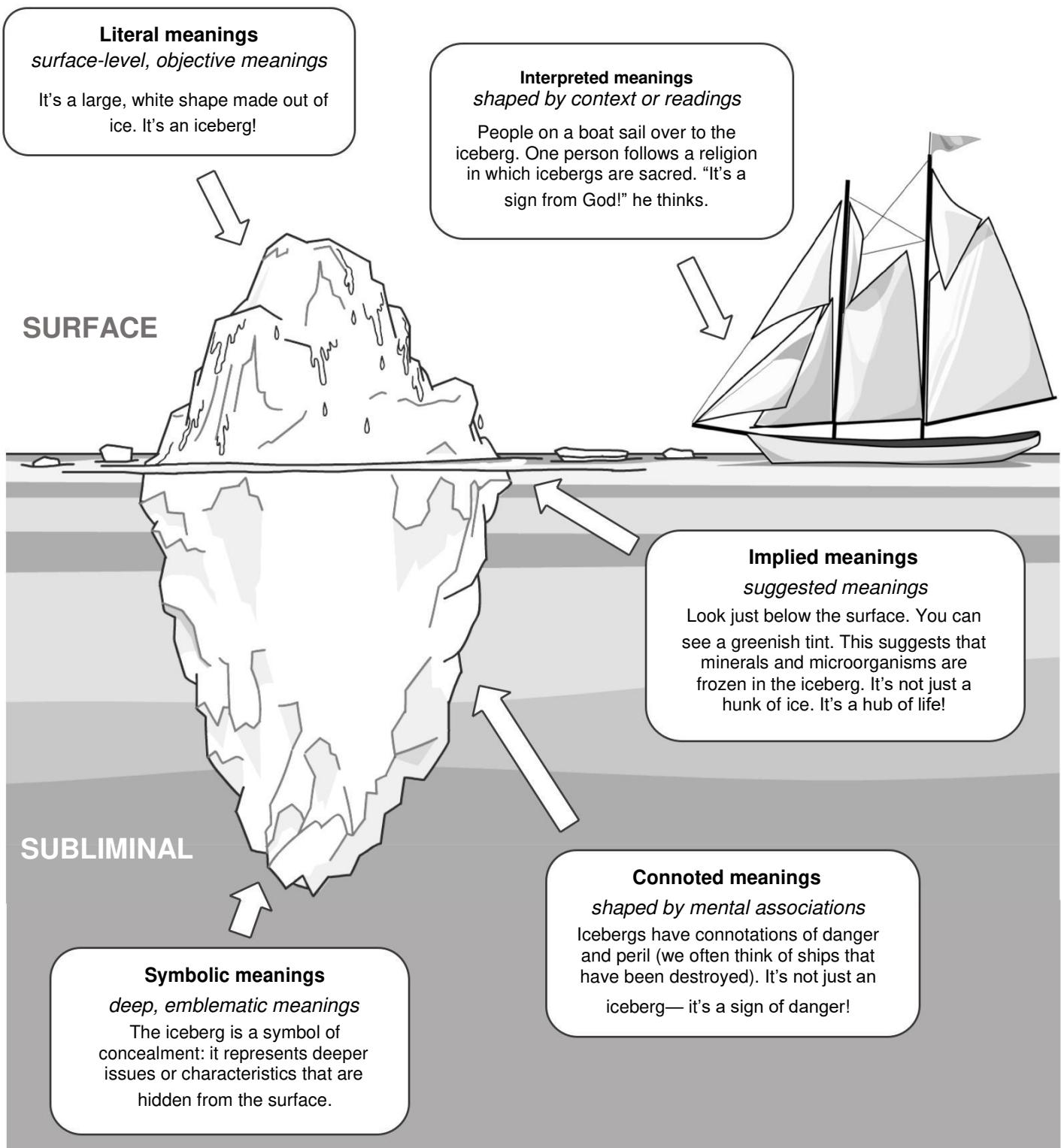
The visual mode includes images and film, and has a powerful impact on both a cognitive and emotional level. On one hand, visual information can be processed much faster than linguistic information, and research shows that we are better able to remember visual information! Yet we also have strong emotional responses to visuals.

The gestural mode includes hand gestures, posture, facial expressions and movement. These usually accompany speaking, and they play a vital role in in emphasising key points, clarifying ideas and eliciting emotion from an audience. In fact, one study (by Holler and Beatie) shows that in a speech, gestures increase the value of a message by 60%.

The aural mode is focused on sound, including music, sound effects, ambient noises, silence, tone, volume and accent. The aural mode is closely connected to emotion: research has conclusively shown that the parts of the brain that regulate emotion respond powerfully to music.

KEY CONCEPT: MEANING

When you read a text, there isn't one set meaning. It's part of the beauty of English: you can interpret a text in a number of different ways. This concept is emphasised in the ATAR syllabus, which refers to "shades of meaning", "other interpretations" and "different readings". So, you need to understand different *layers* and *types* of meanings, and be able to find them in texts! Let's illustrate this with a visual.

Literal meanings
surface-level, objective meanings

It's a large, white shape made out of ice. It's an iceberg!

Interpreted meanings
shaped by context or readings

People on a boat sail over to the iceberg. One person follows a religion in which icebergs are sacred. "It's a sign from God!" he thinks.

SURFACE

Implied meanings

suggested meanings

Look just below the surface. You can see a greenish tint. This suggests that minerals and microorganisms are frozen in the iceberg. It's not just a hunk of ice. It's a hub of life!

SUBLIMINAL

Connoted meanings

shaped by mental associations

Icebergs have connotations of danger and peril (we often think of ships that have been destroyed). It's not just an iceberg— it's a sign of danger!

Symbolic meanings

deep, emblematic meanings

The iceberg is a symbol of concealment: it represents deeper issues or characteristics that are hidden from the surface.

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KEY CONCEPT: INTERPRETATIONS

DEFINITION

The term "interpretation" refers to the process of making meaning from a text. All texts can be interpreted differently depending on the reader or viewer— a range of people could read a text and interpret it in totally different ways.

"Readings" are particular interpretations of a text.

DOMINANT, ALTERNATIVE & RESISTANT READINGS

A **dominant reading** is the reading that seems to be, for the majority of people in society, the natural or normal way to interpret a text.

> *For example, most people would read Harry Potter and interpret it as a story about the triumph of good over evil.*

An **alternate reading** is any interpretation that differs from the dominant reading. It often focuses on the nuances (subtleties), gaps or silences of a text to create meanings that seem to be fore-grounded (but not emphasised) by the text.

> *For example, some people might read of Harry Potter and note the inclusion of intelligent, gifted female characters (e.g. Hermione) who often outsmart the men around them, or the fact that institutional positions of power (e.g. in the school or the ministry) are predominantly held by men, and conclude that the books promote a feminist ideology.*

A **resistant reading** not only contradicts the dominant interpretation of a text, but actually challenges or questions the assumptions underlying the text.

> *For example, someone might read Harry Potter and challenge Rowling's lack of racial diversity (all the major characters being white) and problematic characterisation of Cho Chang (who is meant to be Chinese, but whose name is a mix of two common Korean surnames).*

LITERARY CRITICISM

There are different "schools" or "theories" of literary criticism that promote different ways to approach a text. Each theory focuses on different aspects of the text in order to elicit different meanings— for example, **psychoanalytical readings** focus on the psychological dimensions of the text, **postcolonial readings** emphasise the effects of colonialism, and **Marxist readings** concentrate on class and power relations in the text.

For example, if we consider Steinbeck's "The Pearl":

- A **Marxist reading** might elicit ideas about the corruptive forces of wealth & capitalism
- A **feminist reading** might focus on the oppression of Juana, the main female character, who is a victim of her husband's violence

PART 2

TEXTUAL
FORMS

TEXTUAL FORMS

"Textual forms" is another term for "genres", the way a text is classified based on its structure, language and conventions *(e.g. novel, film, advertisement).*

There's actually a huge range of forms that can be studied in the ATAR English course— from novels and poems to websites and computer games! However, many of these forms aren't examinable; for example, you wouldn't be asked to analyse a play script in Section 1 or be expected to write a poem in Section 3. You might *choose* to use these textual forms in the composing section, but it's not a necessary skill (and often not suited to the question). The most common textual forms featured in the exam come from novels, short stories, articles, autobiographies/biographies, speeches, photographs, posters/magazine covers & advertisements.
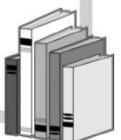
NOVEL

Text type= imaginative

Conventions:

- Employs the written mode (unusual for visuals to be included)
- Usually structured into chapters, and sometimes with broader parts or sections
- Usually follows a standard narrative arc: characters/settings are introduced in the exposition, rising tension builds to a climax, and all problems are resolved in the denouement
- Narrative elements are thoroughly developed— often involving sub-plots or parallel plots, in-depth characterisation of the protagonist, and detailed or shifting settings
- Typically uses first or third person narration and present or past tense

SHORT STORY

Text type= imaginative

Conventions:

- Employs the written mode (unusual for visuals to be included)
- Brief, and thus narrative elements (plot, character, setting) are developed in less detail
- Sometimes manipulates the standard narrative arc by using a cliff-hanger ending or an "*in medias res*" beginning
- Usually focuses on one main character and one piece of conflict
- Often leaves deliberate gaps or silences for readers to fill in
- Typically uses first or third person narration and present or past tense

AUTOBIOGRAPHY

Text type= interpretive

Conventions:

- Predominantly employs the written mode
- Uses careful selection of detail to craft a version of reality, sometimes casting real-life people as archetypal characters or sequencing events to construct a traditional narrative structure
- Written in first person point of view and past tense
- Typically employs an intimate, subjective narrative voice
- Includes a mixture of "doing" and "thinking" verbs to show emotional reactions to events
- Can take different forms— from short, structured narratives to extended, discursive novels

BIOGRAPHY

Text type= interpretive

Conventions:

- Mostly employs the written mode, with the exception of biographical films
- Structured in chronological sequence, starting with the family and childhood of the subject
- Uses careful selection of detail to craft a version of reality
- Combines fact and opinion, presenting the writer's personal view of the individual
- Written in third person point of view and past tense
- Commonly includes lengthy quotations from the subject, family, friends and colleagues
- Sometimes incorporates resource material such as family photographs and letters
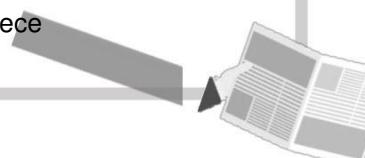
FEATURE ARTICLE

Text type= interpretive or persuasive

Conventions:

- Multimodal: employs both writing and visuals, as well as choices in font & layout
- Structured with a headline, by-line, lead (introduction), body and conclusion
- Sometimes interpretive/discursive (proposing a question and considering different ideas and perspectives) and sometimes persuasive/opinionative (proposing a thesis or argument)
- Includes evidence-based discussion, but avoids a factual or detached tone by allowing the author's voice and style to shine through
- Employs selection of detail to strengthen an argument or create a more engaging piece

FEATURE FILM

Text type= imaginative (fictional) or interpretive (for films based on real events or people)

Conventions:
- Multimodal: employs spoken, visual, aural, gestural and sometimes written modes
- Employs standard narrative conventions: setting, characterisation, conflict, symbolism etc.
- Employs a range of cinematic techniques (symbolic, audio, written and technical conventions)
- Follows varying plot structures: some films contain a linear plot, while others use flashbacks, flash-forwards and parallels to manipulate time
- Tightly connected to genre: film genres such as romantic comedy, action and horror have conventions and structures that are often employed in an almost formulaic manner.

DOCUMENTARY

Text type= interpretive

Conventions:
- Multimodal: employs spoken, visual, aural, gestural and often written modes
- Employs a range of cinematic techniques (symbolic, audio, written and technical conventions)
- Often combines actuality footage, constructed footage, reconstructed footage & archival footage
- Utilises selection of detail to construct a particular version of events
- Often structured through a focaliser (a character through which we experience the events of the documentary) or a central problem or question (which keeps the audience involved because they want to know the answer).

TELEVISION SHOW

Text type= imaginative (fictional) or interpretive (for shows based on real events or people)

Conventions:
- Multimodal: employs spoken, visual, aural, gestural and sometimes written modes
- Uses a range of cinematic techniques (symbolic, audio, written and technical conventions)
- Usually employs the conventions of a specific television genre (e.g. soap, crime drama, sitcom etc.)
- Short (between 20 minutes & 1 hour) so the broader narrative arc & characters are developed over a number of episodes
- Serialised (involving a number of episodes) so the internal structure of each episode is often built in a way to maximise re-engagement (e.g. by using cliff-hanger endings)

SPEECH

Text type= interpretive or persuasive

Conventions:
- Multimodal: employs the spoken and gestural modes (& sometimes visual)
- Includes evidence-based discussion, but draws on language devices liberally for emotive effect
- Often employs a more lyrical style, using aural devices (such as repetition & alliteration) and varied sentence lengths to create verbal dynamics
- Engages directly with the audience by using second person pronouns ("you") or first person plural ("we")
- Often uses a shift in voice over the course of the speech, from personal and reflective (providing anecdotal evidence) to commanding and inclusive (sometimes ending with a call to action)

PODCAST

Text type= interpretive

Conventions:
- Predominantly uses the spoken mode, but sometimes employs the aural mode (music) for effect
- Usually a balance is struck between information and opinion, in order to provide fresh insight into a (sometimes highly specific) topic
- As a distinctly intimate medium, podcasts are a platform for subjective, unique voices, often employing colloquial language and "inside jokes" so that the reader feels included
- Conversational and dialogic (different voices and perspectives are usually shared or debated)
- Often discursive and loosely structured, transgressing from topic to topic

BLOG & VLOG

Text type= interpretive or persuasive

Conventions:
- Multimodal: blogs usually employ written & visual modes; vlogs use spoken, visual, gestural & aural
- Constructs a personal, colloquial voice— with the exception of political or social commentary blogs, the casual nature of these texts is a defining characteristic
- Largely focused on anecdotal evidence and personal experiences, therefore employing first person point of view
- Highly specific in subject matter, reflecting the personal interests of the author
- Often discursive and loosely structured, transgressing from topic to topic

Text type= persuasive

Conventions:

- Multimodal: combining written and visual modes
- Employs a range of visual conventions (composition, body language, camera angles etc.) as well as written conventions (heading, subheading etc.)
- Includes eye-catching elements (colour, striking visuals) to catch the attention of the audience
- Employs general persuasive language devices (see pp. 43-46) as well as persuasive devices specific to advertising: celebrity endorsements, comparisons, slogans, logos, branding & neologisms
- Often draws on mental associations (for example, the colour green with the environment)

POSTER

Text type= interpretive (representing another text)

Conventions:

- Multimodal: combining written and visual modes
- Employs a range of visual conventions (composition, body language, camera angles etc.) as well as written conventions (heading, subheading etc.)
- Uses the conventions of the subject-specific genre (for example, a poster for a crime drama will likely employ low-key lighting and crime-related symbols or props).
- Often embellishes or dramatises aspects of the text that it promotes
- Gives information about the time/date/station on which the show or film can be accessed

MAGAZINE COVER

Text type= interpretive

Conventions:

- Multimodal: combining written and visual modes
- Employs a range of visual conventions (composition, body language, camera angles etc.) as well as written conventions (heading/title, slogan etc.)
- Composition of text is such that title (the "masthead") and main image are large and central
- Visuals often depict people; their gaze is often directed at the camera to engage viewers
- Typically uses subheadings or "taglines" to pique interest and clarify the focus of the magazine. These also contextualise the main image, shaping the representation constructed.

PHOTOGRAPH

Text type= interpretive

Conventions:

- Employs the visual mode (although written or gestural modes may be captured in the shot)
- Uses a range of visual conventions (colour, camera angle, composition, body language etc.)
- Visual conventions such as framing, composition, colour or selective focus are used to give salience (emphasis) to one element, which is called the "focal point"
- Sometimes *candid* (unposed, natural) and sometimes *constructed* (i.e. posed, deliberate choices made in costume and setting)
- Can be a highly realistic medium, or can subvert ordinary perspective to create a surreal image

GRAPHIC NOVEL

Text type= imaginative

Conventions:

- Multimodal: employs both written and visual modes
- The text is structured in panels that contain a combination of text (speech bubbles, captions, narration) and images
- The spatial arrangement of the panels juxtaposes past and present events
- The way the text is experienced (in terms of pacing/salience) depends on the reader's focus
- The narration largely describes plot events, as the visuals primarily construct character and setting. As a result, the writing is fast paced and rarely descriptive or lengthy.

ESSAY

Text type= analytical or persuasive

Conventions:

- Employs the written mode (highly unusual for visuals to be included)
- Brief (the word "essay" comes from the French word "essayer", which means "to try"— in an essay, the author is "trying out" an idea, not exploring it at length)
- Proposes a thesis: this might be an *analytical thesis* about a text, or a *persuasive thesis* about a social issue or something in that vein
- Typically employs formal diction and a detached, objective voice
- Tautly structured using an intro, body and conclusion; distinct ideas are organised into paragraphs

PART 3

TECHNIQUES & CONVENTIONS

TECHNIQUES & CONVENTIONS: **EFFECT**

When writing essays or short responses, it's **not enough to simply identify** the conventions or techniques that have been used by the author, even if you give extensive examples.

Rather, it's crucially important that you give **detailed and specific explanations of your textual evidence**, explaining the **effect** of the various techniques that have been employed. Yet sometimes it's tricky to see exactly WHY a particular device has been used in a text. So, here are some common effects!

TONE or MOOD: many techniques evoke a particular tone or mood, which in turn will shape how a text is more broadly interpreted (e.g. if an image employs natural lighting and vivid colours to create a joyful mood, we are more likely to respond to the subject favourably).

EMPHASIS: in both written and visual texts, certain **techniques of salience** (e.g. short sentences, colour, composition) will highlight or draw attention to particular phrases or ideas.

EVIDENCE: particularly in persuasive and interpretive texts, techniques like statistics and interviews are used as supporting evidence, thus making an argument more compelling.

PACE: techniques such as syntax (sentence construction) will change the **dynamics** of the writing (i.e. speeding up/slowing down the pace) and this in turn will shape the mood of the text (i.e. making it lively/frenzied or peaceful/commanding).

RESPONSE: some techniques are employed to evoke a particular response from the reader— it could be an **emotional reaction** (like shock, guilt, sympathy or inspiration) or a **call to action**.

IMPLICATION: some techniques **directly imply** or **suggest** a particular meaning to the reader. For example, if an author uses inclusive language (with the second person pronoun "you"), they are implying that the reader is *involved*— that they are complicit in (or affected by) the issue.

COMPARISON: some devices (such as similes, metaphors and juxtaposition) **compare two things** in order to imply a similarity or difference, thus telling us something about the main subject.

CONNOTATION: a connotation is a **mental association** that we have with a particular word or image (e.g. sunshine connotes happiness, while darkness often has connotations of sadness or the unknown). Connotations are not as literal or obvious as *implied meanings*.

SYMBOLISM: certain conventions or textual elements (e.g. colour and setting) often suggest **symbolic meanings**. For example, the colour red might symbolise passion, anger or energy; a desert setting might represent sterility.

LINKING THE **EFFECT** TO THE **QUESTION**

In any analytical response, whether it is a short answer or an essay, the most crucial thing is that you **directly answer the question**. No matter how aptly you provide textual evidence or how insightfully you explain it, **you will not achieve a passing grade** without linking your explanation directly to the question.

Once you are familiar with the specific effects of techniques and able to explain them, the next step is to tie them to the question. Let's use an excerpt from Emma Watson's "He For She" speech as an example:

> *"I am from Britain and think it is right that as a woman I am paid the same as my male counterparts. I think it is right that I should be able to make decisions about my own body.*
>
> *I think it is right that women be involved on my behalf in the policies and decision-making of my country. I think it is right that socially I am afforded the same respect as men."*

SAMPLE QUESTION: *Explain how the text employs language and structure in order to convince an audience of the need for gender equality.*

TECHNIQUE	EXAMPLE	EXPLANATION 1 (specific effect)	EXPLANATION 2 (broad link to question)
Repetition *(language feature)*	Watson repeats the phrase, "I think it is right" four times in this paragraph, including it near or at the beginning of each sentence.	By employing repetition, Watson establishes a commanding, forceful **tone** in her writing; the repeated phrase also places **emphasis** on the word "right", which carries **connotations** of justice and morality.	Here, she makes it clear that achieving gender equality is essential to the creation of a fair and just society, while her emphatic tone makes this point all the more convincing.
1st person pronouns *(language feature)*	Watson consistently employs the first person pronouns "I" and "my", stating that "I am from Britain", as well as referring to "my own body" and "my country".	This use of first person pronouns helps to establish a connection between Watson and her audience, positioning them to **respond** to her on a personal level, and thus with more empathy and understanding. It also **implies** that she is directly involved in the issue and therefore can speak with greater authority.	Here, Watson is making an appeal to both logic and emotion: on one hand, her personal connection to the topic is more likely to garner feelings of compassion from her audience, but it also makes her argument more convincing on a rational level as she is clearly speaking from direct experience.
Syntax *(structural feature)*	Watson employs repetition not only in her language but in her sentence structure: each sentence is around twenty words long and employs almost identical syntax, with no commas or other internal punctuation marks.	Through this use of repetitive syntax, she builds up a strong rhythm in her writing; the accumulation of one mid-length sentence after another establishes an even, steady **pace** that makes each word sound **emphatic**. As a result, the **tone** of the writing is commanding and authoritative.	Therefore, Watson stresses the need for gender equality to her audience in a manner that is emotive, yet firm— perhaps the most powerful oratory style in terms of persuading an audience.

LANGUAGE DEVICES

EMOTIVE LANGUAGE

Language that is "emotionally charged" (i.e. involving very strong, evocative words) in a positive or negative way.

RESPONSE: Emotive language is usually intended to evoke an emotional response from the reader- e.g. fear, shock, inspiration.

CONNOTATION: Look at the specific emotive words that have been used and consider their connotations- e.g. the word "howl" might connote pain or anger.

TONE: Emotive language will establish a very powerful tone— it might be triumphant, optimistic, outraged, despairing, melancholic etc.

INCLUSIVE LANGUAGE

A direct appeal to the reader through words like "you" (second person pronouns) and "we" (first person plural pronouns).

IMPLICATION: It implies that the reader is involved, complicit in or affected by the issue.

RESPONSE: 1st person plural pronouns evoke feelings of inspiration ("*We* can do better"), whereas 2nd person pronouns often evoke feelings of guilt or responsibility ("*You* should…")

TONE: The tone can often be optimistic, celebratory or commanding if the pronoun "we" is employed, but can sound accusatory or demanding if the pronoun "you" is employed.

MODAL VERBS

Verbs that are used to imply an obligation, e.g. can/could, must, will/would, and shall/should (e.g. "We can do better. We must take action.")

RESPONSE: Modal verbs imply that there is an obligation or duty to undertake a particular action, making the reader feel pressured or compelled to act.

TONE: Modal verbs can create an inspiring or fervent tone if used in a positive way, but can also establish a forceful, commanding or even accusatory tone if used in conjunction with critical language.

RHETORICAL QUESTIONS

Statements/ideas that are phrased as questions (not for the purpose of being answered).

EMPHASIS: By phrasing a statement as a question, it is more emphatic— while a full stop brings a sentence to a rest, a question mark makes the words "ring out" by changing their inflection.

TONE: Depending on their content, rhetorical questions can create a tone that is urgent, demanding, accusatory, incredulous, outraged etc.

RESPONSE: Rhetorical questions often evoke thought or emotion from the reader, as they are being directly challenged to consider a point.

LANGUAGE DEVICES

GENERALISATIONS

Broad statements that are applied at large, without considering individual cases.

EMPHASIS: Generalisations emphasise a particular point by making broader (and therefore more emphatic) statements, rather than giving light to exceptions or nuances in situations.

TONE: Like emotive language, generalisations establish a more "extreme" tone— it could be exuberant, scathing or despairing.

REPETITION

The repeated use of words and phrases.

EMPHASIS: Repeating a word or phrase is a way of highlighting its significance in the text.

TONE: The use of repetition can establish different tones— it might be passionate, forceful, emphatic, commanding or insistent.

CONNOTATION: Consider the connotations of the individual words that have been repeated— what is their significance?

POLYSYNDETON

The deliberate overuse of conjunctions, e.g. and, but, or, nor, so.

PACE: By replacing punctuation marks (like commas) with conjunctions, polysyndeton creates fewer pauses in the flow of the writing and therefore increases the pace. This in turn raises the emotional intensity of the text.

RULE OF THREE (TRIPLES)

The concept of the rule of threes states that things are most powerful, memorable or satisfying when presented in three (e.g. "Life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness")

EMPHASIS: By establishing a list of three items or ideas, it can make a point more emphatic.

IMPLICATION: There is sometimes a vague implication that there is an abundance of factors/ideas, but those three have been listed alone for effect. This creates the impression that there is compelling evidence supporting the argument.

TONE: Like repetition, the rule of three often creates a more commanding or passionate tone, because it is more emphatic.

COLLOQUIAL LANGUAGE

Everyday, conversational speech that is often common to one language or culture (e.g. an Australian colloquialism might be a slang word like "servo" or "bottle o".)

TONE: Colloquial language establishes a more relaxed, conversational and often humorous tone.

RESPONSE: It is often is intended to evoke laughter or feelings of belonging/inclusion from the reader.

IMPLICATION: By using colloquialisms, the author is implying that there is a shared cultural understanding between them and the reader— that they come from similar contexts.

LANGUAGE DEVICES

HYPERBOLE

An exaggeration used to make a point.

EMPHASIS: Exaggerating an idea is often a way of emphasising its gravity or severity.

ALLUSION

A brief and indirect reference to a person, place, concept or event.

COMPARISON: An allusion often compares something from the subject at hand to something from another context, thus forcing the reader to consider the relevance of one to the other.

SIMILE & METAPHOR

A simile compares two things using "like" or "as" (e.g. "music is like medicine for the soul.") A metaphor compares two things directly (e.g. "music is medicine for the soul.")

COMPARISON: the nature of similes and metaphors is that they compare two things— thus making a point about the object being described.

CONNOTATION: In the same way that you might with imagery, you could explain the connotations of the individual words contained within the metaphor/simile (e.g. "He moved towards me like a snake" is a simile that suggests the character moved in a fluid and eerie manner, but the word "snake" also has sinister and dangerous connotations.)

SENSORY IMAGERY

The liberal use of adjectives, adverbs and evocative words to describe a scene:

Visual imagery evokes sight; auditory imagery evokes sound; tactile imagery evokes touch; gustatory imagery evokes taste; olfactory imagery evokes smell.

MOOD: Imagery will naturally evoke a particular mood— depending on the specific language choices, it may be cheerful, serene, mysterious, desolate, foreboding, tense etc.

RESPONSE: Imagery is often used to draw the reader into the text; for example, in a persuasive piece, imagery can be employed to illustrate the reality of an issue in a way that the reader can vividly imagine.

CONNOTATION: Your explanation can be made more detailed by identifying 1-2 evocative words within the quote and unpacking their connotations. For example, within the image of "the howling wind", you might explain how the word "howling" connotes anger and pain, thus contributing to the ominous mood.

PARALELLISM

A sentence that contains clauses/phrases with the same grammatical structure (e.g. "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.")

MOOD: Parallelism creates a sense of rhythm and flow in a piece of writing, imbuing the text with more intense emotion and power.

EMPHASIS: Parallelism is often used to emphasise a connection or contradiction between two things.

LANGUAGE DEVICES

ALLITERATION

Repeated consonant sounds at the beginning of at least two words placed near each other (e.g. "softly sing"; "the lizard leapt").

Sibilance is the repetition of "s" or "sh" sounds.

EMPHASIS: By repeating a particular sound within a phrase, it is given emphasis— particularly if the repeated sounds are hard consonant sounds.

TONE & MOOD: The type of sounds that repeated will determine the mood established: the repetition of hard consonants ("**b**eaten and **b**roken down") sounds abrupt, thus creating more of a tense mood or a blunt tone. In comparison, soft consonant sounds ("the **s**mall **s**wallow **s**oared through the **s**ky") sound gentle, thus establishing a serene or calm mood.

CHOICES IN DICTION

Put simply, diction is the type of language employed by an author.

Diction is NOT a language device on its own! I repeat: do NOT write, "the author uses diction"! It's like saying, "The author uses words." You need to preface it with a describing word (e.g. colloquial diction, formal diction, eloquent diction).

RESPONSE: Choices in diction are often used to evoke responses from the reader—for example, colloquial diction might make the reader feel involved in a friendly manner, or scholastic diction might lend the author a sense of authority.

TONE & MOOD: The kind of diction will influence the tone or mood of a piece; for example, colloquial diction might create a lighthearted tone.

PERSONIFICATION

Where a non-human thing is given human characteristics.

IMPLICATION: By personifying an object, the text is implying a particular characteristic or action (e.g. "the trees whispered" implies that they quietly rustled in the wind).

MOOD: Personification is a key device in establishing specific moods— for example, it can be employed to create quite an eerie or unnerving atmosphere by bringing an otherwise inanimate setting to life, but it can also be used to create a lively or serene mood.

CONNOTATION: After explaining the broad implications of the use of personification, your explanation can be made more detailed by unpacking the connotations of individual words (e.g. the phrase "the flowers danced in the wind" implies that the flowers were moving around wildly, but the word "danced" also has connotations of joyful liveliness.)

ONOMATOPOEIA

Any word whose sound is suggestive of its meaning (e.g. "bang", "crackle", "hiss")

EMPHASIS: The use of onomatopoeia is often emphatic, depending on the sound (e.g. onomatopoetic words with harder consonants like "bang" and "crack" sound more emphatic/forceful).

CONNOTATION: Some onomatopoetic words carry their own connotations (e.g. the word "smack" has connotations of violence).

STRUCTURAL DEVICES

CHOICES IN SYNTAX

Syntax is sentence structure— the arrangement of words, as well as length of sentences and the type of punctuation used to construct them.

Like diction "syntax" is not a technique on its own! That would be like saying, "The author uses sentences". You need to add describing words, e.g. abrupt syntax, varied syntax, monotonous syntax or elaborate syntax.

PACE: Usually, **short sentences** slow down the pace of the writing (as full stops denote fairly long pauses), whereas **longer sentences** (you can call these long, clause-heavy sentences) speed up the pace, particularly if they employ conjunctions (joining words like "and") rather than punctuation marks (like commas and semi-colons, which create short pauses in the writing). Varied syntax sounds the most musical or lyrical, as it creates shifts in dynamics.

MOOD & TONE: The slower pace created by short sentences often creates quite a commanding or emphatic tone, or a tense mood. In contrast, the faster pace of long sentences can create a sense of liveliness or agitation.

SHIFTS

A shift in mood, setting, point of view, imagery, perspective etc.

COMPARISON: A shift often invites the reader to compare and contrast two different settings, ideas or perspectives.

CHOICES IN PARAGRAPHING

Paragraphing is the grouping together of sentences or ideas; paragraph breaks separate chunks of text.

You might discuss the length of paragraphs, or the way that key sentences are separated for emphasis.

EMPHASIS: Sentences that are separated from surrounding paragraphs are always given salience (emphasis) in a text.

MOOD & TONE: Short paragraphs tend to feel more abrupt or tense, while longer, discursive paragraphs are often more descriptive.

SEQUENCING OF EVENTS

Events can be structured in a linear (chronological) way, or can be non-linear.

PACE: If a series of events occur quickly, or if there are "jumps" from one event to another, (with little description or explanation in between), this increases the pace of the writing.

MOOD: Non-linear structures often create a more surreal mood, whereas fast-paced linear structures increase tension and suspense.

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STRUCTURAL DEVICES

JUXTAPOSITION

The placement of two images or ideas together for comparison.

COMPARISON: The juxtaposition of two images or ideas naturally invites a comparison/contrast between the two in order to suggest a particular point.

FLASHBACKS/FLASH-FORWARDS

A shift back or forward in time in a narrative text.

MOOD: Flashbacks can feel nostalgic or unsettling (depending on content), while flash forwards can increase the pace of the writing and thus can feel unnerving.

COMPARISON: Jumps in time are often used to highlight a contrast between two time settings— they highlight a change that has occurred.

PLACEMENT OF INFORMATION

What information is given where in the text— e.g. what we are we told at the start, middle and end of the text.

EMPHASIS: You might argue that the information given at the beginning of a text is emphasised most, or that it's actually the end of the text that is the most memorable.

RESPONSE: Sometimes one idea is placed after another in a text in order to draw the reader towards a logical conclusion— i.e. to structure a convincing argument.

FORESHADOWING

Where a text hints at future events.

MOOD: Foreshadowing often creates tension in a narrative, or evokes an ominous mood.

EMPHASIS: Foreshadowing an event is one way to emphasise its significance in a text.

PERSUASIVE DEVICES

FACTS & STATISTICS

Facts are true statements that can be proven and statistics are numerical figures that often support facts.

EVIDENCE: Facts and statistics are what we call "hard evidence"— evidence that cannot easily be refuted because it is supported by research.

INTERVIEWS

Extensive accounts or quotes from people involved, which help to provide further information and include a variety of perspectives.

EVIDENCE: Interviews can provide anecdotal evidence to support an argument.

RESPONSE: An audience is more likely to be engaged and emotionally connected to a story from someone's life than, say, a series of statistics. Interviews are therefore effective in evoking empathy from a reader/viewer.

GENERALISATIONS

Broad statements that are applied at large, without considering individual cases or exceptions.

RESPONSE: Generalisations are often used to heighten the response from an audience.

EXPERT OPINIONS

Quotes or statements from experts— these carry the credibility of authority.

EVIDENCE: Expert opinions establish evidence that supports an argument.

ANECDOTES

Short, amusing or powerful stories about the writer's own personal experiences or another person's real life— these engage the reader on a personal level.

EVIDENCE: Personal stories provide anecdotal evidence to support an argument.

RESPONSE: In the same case as an interview, an audience is more likely to be engaged and emotionally connected to a story from someone's life than, say, a series of statistics. Anecdotes are therefore effective in evoking empathy from a reader/viewer.

HUMOUR

The quality of being amusing or comic.

RESPONSE: The use of humour encourages readers to react positively to a text.

PERSUASIVE DEVICES

ANALOGIES

Another word for 'comparisons', analogies are used to draw parallels between two problems or ideas— e.g. between refugee camps today and the concentration camps of WW2.

RESPONSE: Analogies are often used to evoke two kinds of responses from an audience. On one hand, they can appeal to the audience's sense of logic, by inviting them to apply the same logic to one case as they would to a similar one. However, analogies can also evoke emotion from an audience, by using emotive examples in a comparison.

HYPOTHETICALS

Imagined scenarios which can be constructed to illustrate a future problem/solution or a comparative situation. Hypotheticals often start with "Imagine…", "If…" or "Picture this:…"

RESPONSE: When illustrating a future problem or solution, hypotheticals often position the audience to feel either alarmed or inspired. When illustrating a comparative situation, they function like analogies: they can appeal to the audience's sense of logic by inviting them to apply the same logic to one case as they would to a similar one.

SELECTION/OMISSION OF DETAIL

The writer's deliberate selection of certain pieces of information that support their argument, rather than presenting all the facts about a story.

EVIDENCE: When inconsistent or conflicting pieces of information are withheld, the evidence supporting an argument seems more compelling.

PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

All the persuasive language techniques mentioned in the "language" section can also be considered as general persuasive devices.

RESPONSE: Unlike evidence-based persuasive conventions (such as facts, statistics and anecdotes), language devices tend to evoke an emotional response from the audience, rather than appealing to their sense of logic.

NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

SETTING

Time setting: the time in which a story is set. It can refer to the time of day or season, or a broad time in history, such as the industrial age.

Place setting: This is where a story is set. It might be a general geographical location, such as a particular country or planet, or a more specific locational setting, such as a school, courtroom or family kitchen.

Settings can significantly influence the themes explored or the characters present in the narrative; alternatively, they can provide a neutral backdrop to the story.

SYMBOLS & MOTIFS

Symbol: A person, place, event, or object that suggests deeper meaning in the story.

Motif: A recurring symbolic element.

Symbols are also often used to foreground the deeper themes in the text.

PLOT DEVICES

Flashbacks occur when a linear story is intercut with memories of a past event, which provides a "back story" and informs the main story.

Foreshadowing is a technique whereby the author gives hints or clues about events that will occur later in the story.

PLOT STRUCTURE

The **plot** (**structural development** or narrative arc) typically includes the following stages:

Exposition (Orientation): The opening of a narrative, where the setting & characters are introduced.

Complication (Rising Tension): Where the status quo is upset by conflict or a complication.

Climax: This is the turning point that marks a change, for better or worse, for the protagonist.

Falling Tension: At this point, the conflict between the protagonist and antagonist unravels.

Resolution (Denouement): All the 'loose ends' are tied up, all the major questions answered; the story has reached a satisfactory conclusion.

CONFLICT

The opposition or struggle between characters or forces in a text.

External conflict involves conflict between two characters, or a character and a social or natural force. The conflict may take the form of direct opposition, or it may be a subtler conflict between clashing intentions, desires, attitudes or values.

Internal conflict involves opposing forces within a character. Often, a character must overcome their own nature or choose between two or more paths (such as good and evil; logic and emotion).

The tension created by this conflict drives the narrative arc and foregrounds the story's themes.

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NARRATIVE CONVENTIONS

POINT OF VIEW

The author's choice of narrator, and the relation of the narrator to both the reader and the fictional world they describe.

First Person: Where the story is presented from the perspective of a character within the story, usually the protagonist. This gives the reader/viewer access to the protagonist's thoughts, feelings and experiences. However, this means that the reader/viewer is only informed of things that the protagonist knows and sees (a *subjective* version of events). The use of pronouns such as "I", "me" (first person singular), "we" or "us" (first person plural) indicate this point of view.

Second Person: Where the story is told as if the narrator is addressing the reader: it is identified by the use of "you" as the main pronoun. This often draws the reader into the story by directly addressing them.

Third Person Omniscient: Where the narrator of a story is not a character within it, but is an outside entity. The narrator knows everything about every character and has unlimited knowledge of time, people, places and events within the story. It therefore presents a more detached, *objective* version of events. Third person omniscient can be identified by the use of "they", "them", "he" and "she".

Third Person Limited: Where the narrator of a story is not a character within it, but is an outside entity. However, in contrast to the third person omniscient point of view, where the narrator knows everything about every character, the reader only has access to <u>one</u> character only. It cannot describe anything that is not known to or seen by the focal character; the narrator effectively 'sits on the shoulder' of the protagonist.

CHARACTERS

There are a number of terms used to describe the characters within a story, but the two most common are:

> The **protagonist**: the central character of the story.
>
> The **antagonist**: the character who opposes the main character.

Characters "hook" us into a story by giving us a human element to relate to: through characters, authors can **evoke empathy** or **explore different ideas and issues**.

Characters can also **represent certain social groups** or sets of values. For example, a poor family in a text might represent the struggle of the working class in society.

There are two types of characterisation:

1. **Direct characterisation**, where the author tells the reader explicitly about the personality of a character (e.g. "*Sally was painfully shy*").

2. **Indirect characterisation**, where the author gives the reader information about the character, from which they can make assumptions about their personality (e.g. "*While the rest of us laughed and chatted, Sally sat silently and stared at her shoes.*")

Characters can be constructed **indirectly** through:
- Appearance
- Behaviour
- Dialogue
- Thoughts/Feelings
- Relationships & interactions with others

CONVENTIONS OF INTERPRETIVE TEXTS

RESEARCH/INFORMATION

Interpretive texts must include some kind of information about a person, issue, place or event. This can be presented as basic background information or more specific, detailed research (often including facts and statistics).

EVIDENCE: This lends an interpretive text evidence, substantiating any opinions or suggestions put forward.

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

*Interpretive texts like autobiographies and documentaries often develop a strong **narrative structure**, selecting details from real-life events in such a way that creates an exposition, conflict and a resolution. Although the ends might not tie up as neatly as they would in a fictional story, often a sense of cohesion is created through selection of detail and other techniques.*

RESPONSE: Narrative structure makes a text more engaging for an audience, as we naturally find stories more entertaining.

EMPHASIS: If an event is framed as the climactic point within a narrative arc, it will naturally be given more emphasis in the story.

SELECTION OF DETAIL

*Interpretive texts **interpret reality**, showing us **one version** of a real event, issue or person. As such, the meaning that we take from them depends entirely on the details selected by the author. The selection of detail is used to make a text more interesting, create a narrative structure, or position the audience to respond in a particular way to a subject/issue.*

In written interpretive texts, **selection of detail** will be used in the **pieces of information** that are presented in the writing. In visual texts, selection of detail will also be used in the chosen **pieces of footage** or images that are included.

RESPONSE: The details chosen are more likely to position an audience in a particular way, or evoke a response like empathy.

ARCHETYPAL CHARACTERS

*In the same way that interpretive texts often create a traditional narrative structure, they also frequently construct **archetypal characters**, presenting real-life people in such a way that casts them as heroes, villains, victims, experts etc.*

RESPONSE: Well-developed "characters" are more effective in evoking empathy or other emotional reactions from an audience.

WRITTEN CONVENTIONS

TITLES/HEADINGS

The title of a film is often included as part of the opening credits (which also introduce the important members of the production), while the title of a magazine/poster will often be in large, salient writing.

EMPHASIS: The title often draws the audience's attention towards certain themes or issues in the text.

IMPLICATION: In a magazine, the title often suggests the audience or subject matter.

SUBHEADINGS

Subheadings are the smaller headings given to subsections or articles within the broader text.

CONNOTATION: Subheadings provide information about a subject in the text, but their choices in language will shape the audience's impression of the subject.

JUXTAPOSITION: Subheadings are often juxtaposed with the visual elements, making the audience think about the connection between the two.

FONT

The font is the size and style of the written elements.

EMPHASIS: Choices in font (size, bold, italics etc.) are used to give salience to pieces of text.

CONNOTATION: Different fonts often connote different meanings and contexts (e.g. gothic fonts are associated with horror or gothic texts).

CAPTIONS

Captions are titles, short explanations, or descriptions accompanying different shots or scenes in the film.

Captions are a useful source of information in films or documentaries— they are often included at the very end, telling the viewer what happened in the aftermath of the events shown in the film.

SUBTITLES

Subtitles are displayed at the bottom of a movie or television screen, translating or transcribing the dialogue.

Subtitles help to translate inaudible words or dialogue in foreign languages. They are sometimes used for comedic effect.

VISUAL CONVENTIONS: SYMBOLIC

COLOUR

The use of different hues and shades for aesthetic and symbolic effect.

SYMBOLISM: Different colours can have symbolic meanings— e.g. red often symbolises anger, while white symbolises innocence.

MOOD: Colour creates a particular mood or atmosphere— it may be festive/cheerful or sombre/ominous

EMPHASIS: Colours, particularly vivid colours, can be used to emphasise certain aspects of a scene.

SETTING & PROPS

The setting includes the environment captured in the image, as well as any props or objects that have been used to construct a set.

MOOD: The setting is instrumental in establishing the mood of a particular image.

IMPLICATION: As the backdrop, the setting carries implications about the people, conflict or events shown in the image.

SYMBOLISM: Certain settings carry symbolic meanings; for example, a desert might symbolise sterility and lifelessness.

LIGHTING

Lighting can be bright or dark, natural (ambient) or artificial.

High-key lighting is even, bright lighting with few shadows, while low-key lighting is subdued, uneven lighting with shadows.

EMPHASIS: Concentrated sources of light (e.g. a spotlight) can be used in order to highlight or emphasise certain aspects of a scene.

MOOD: Lighting helps to create the mood— e.g. natural, bright lighting can create a joyous, uninhibited mood, while low-key lighting can create a sense of confinement, suspense or danger.

CLOTHING/COSTUME

"Clothing" is the natural, non-stylised attire of subjects in an image/on screen, while the word "costume" suggests the deliberate clothing choices that have been made.

IMPLICATION: Costumes often imply the time or era in which the image is set/has been captured, as well as the place setting (e.g. suits might imply a city environment). They also suggest the roles of the subjects (e.g. a suit might imply that the person holds a corporate or formal role).

CONNOTATION: Aspects of clothing carry connotations to viewers— for example, a suit might connote wealth or power.

VISUAL CONVENTIONS: BODY LANGUAGE

Body language includes facial expressions, gaze, posture and gesture. You can describe an individual's body language, or the body language of a group (taking into account factors like

Body language also implies the relationships and power dynamics *between* subjects— for example,

positioning and proximity).

Body language tells the audience about the states and personalities of individual subjects; for example, a subject's slumped shoulders and downcast face would suggest sadness or hopelessness.

subjects might display protective, intimate, hostile or detached behavior towards one another.

Words to describe

powerful **body language:**

- Confident
- Assertive
- Assured
- Poised
- Commanding

- Forceful
- Authoritative
- Triumphant
- Victorious
- Comfortable
- Relaxed

FACIAL EXPRESSION

A subject might have a:

- Clenched or slack jaw
- Furrowed brow or raised eyebrows
- Smile, grin, smirk, grimace, scowl, sneer, snarl, pout or wince
- Mouth that is agape, pursed or set in a straight line
- Blank or emotionless expression

GAZE

A subject's gaze might be:

- Squinted or narrowed
- Downcast or lowered
- Directed at the camera, the setting or another subject
- Intensely focused (connoting strength, concentration or fear)
- Wandering/unfocused

Words to describe

vulnerable **body language:**

- Fearful
- Feeble
- Timid
- Apprehensive

- Frightened
- Agitated
- Distraught
- Distressed
- Uneasy
- Uncomfortable

POSTURE

A subject's head, shoulders or body might be:

- Slumped, hunched or bowed
- Outstretched or raised
- Squared
- Limp or lifeless

GESTURE

A subject's hands, fists, palms or limbs might be:

- Pointed, outstretched or extended
- Clenched, clasped or open
- Tensed or flexed
- Crossed, bent or twisted

VISUAL CONVENTIONS: TECHNICAL

CAMERA DISTANCE

A long shot shows at least a person in full-length on screen; a mid-shot shows a person from the waist up, and a close-up roughly shows a human face filling the screen.

EMPHASIS: Long shots are often used to highlight the setting of an image, while close ups show the expressions and emotions of subjects.

RESPONSE: Close up shots (which highlight emotion) are often used to create a connection with the viewer, who is invited to emphasise with the subject on a personal level.

COMPOSITION & FRAMING

Composition is the way the elements of the image are arranged in the frame, i.e. which elements are the largest or smallest, and which elements are in the foreground or background. Framing is a special technique of composition where the focal point is "framed" by another element of the shot (e.g. a person might be framed by a doorway).

EMPHASIS: Elements in the centre or foreground, or elements that are framed, are given the most salience or emphasis in an image.

IMPLICATION: Elements that appear larger, in the foreground or in the centre are often seen as important. In contrast, elements that are smaller, in the background or positioned near the margins often seem less important (i.e. they are 'marginalised').

*Sometimes, a question will ask you about the "**arrangement of visual elements**" in a text. This refers to both the **overall composition** of a text and the **position of subjects/aspects of the setting** in relation to one another.*

CAMERA ANGLE

Eye-level: the camera is roughly level with the eyes of the subject.
High angle: the camera looks down onto the scene/subject.
Low angle: the camera looks up at the subject.

CONNOTATION: A low camera angle on a subject has connotations of power or threat, whereas a high camera angle on a subject has connotations of vulnerability or weakness.

RESPONSE: An eye level shot allows the viewer to connect with the subject, as we are on the same level as them. A high camera angle positions us to sympathise for a more vulnerable subject, while a low camera angle might position us to admire a more powerful subject.

FOCUS

Images that are crisp and detailed are in sharp focus, while those that appear "hazy" are in soft focus. The technique of shallow focus sharpens only the foreground of an image.

EMPHASIS: The technique of selective focus will emphasise certain aspects of an image (i.e. areas in sharp focus) and draw our attention away from other aspects (areas in soft focus). If an image employs shallow focus, only the foreground will be cast in sharp detail (and therefore given salience), while the background will lose our attention.

MOOD: While sharp focus can create a sense of stark realism in an image, soft focus can create a more surrealistic, dreamy mood.

VISUAL CONVENTIONS: TECHNICAL

CAMERA MOVEMENT

Panning shot: a horizontal swivelling movement of the camera. Panning shots help to show the setting or the range of action, as they show the scene in detail.

Tilting shot: a vertical movement of the camera. Tilting shots often build suspense as they slowly reveal a character, object or setting.

Dolly shot: where the camera floats forward or backward to get closer to a subject or move away from it. Dolly shots help to build suspense as the viewer is brought closer to the action— they also make it clear who or what is the main focus of the scene.

Tracking shot: a sideways movement of the camera, used to keep a moving object in the shot. Tracking shots help to create a sense of action or drama, as they follow moving objects or subjects.

Zoom: the zoom creates the impression of movement by zooming toward or away from the action. The use of zoom in a film draws our attention in to a particular character or object, and creates a surreal sense of drama.

VECTORS

Vectors are lines in an image that lead from one element to another.

EMPHASIS: Vectors create salience; they draw our attention to certain aspects of the image.

EDITING

The way that camera shots are cut, sequenced and transitioned.

Editing is used to vary the pace of a film or to make connections between shots— it allows for the **juxtaposition** of certain ideas or events in the film by placing two shots side by side.

Montage: the sequencing of a number of short shots together to condense time. The use of montage implies a connection between each of the shots.

Cross-cutting: the switching back and forth between different camera shots. Cross-cutting clearly **juxtaposes** two shots, thus allowing us to see a connection between two images or scenes. Cross-cutting also helps to show that two events are occurring at the same time.

Jump cut: the abrupt shifting of time or place from one shot to another. A jump cut can be used to compress the action or to make unexpected connections between events or ideas.

Fast-cutting: the use of brief, rapid shots in a sequence. Fast-cutting creates a quick pace, thus developing an energetic or frenetic mood.

Fade: where the shot fades into or out of darkness. A fade is usually used to indicate the end of a scene or to suggest the passage of time.

Dissolve: where one frame fades out and is gradually replaced by another so that at the midpoint, both frames can be seen. The dissolve can enhance the juxtaposition of two shots, as for the moment of transition, one image will directly overlay the other.

AUDIO CONVENTIONS

Diegetic sound: sound coming from the actual film, which the characters can hear as well as the audience, and that usually elicits a reaction from characters (*e.g. dialogue, ambient sounds*).

Non-diegetic sound: sound that is added during the editing process, i.e. its source is neither visible on the screen, nor has been implied to be present in the action (*e.g. narration, sound effects, music*).

DIALOGUE

The words spoken by the characters/subjects in the film make up the dialogue.

As part of the action, dialogue helps to develop the plot and characters in the film— it also allows for a range of different voices/perspectives to be shared.

NARRATION

Narration is where one of the film's characters/subjects or an unseen narrator provides commentary on the story.

Narration helps to structure the story in a clear way, and it can give the audience a particular perspective on the action. It can also be used to introduce pieces of information to the film/documentary.

MUSIC

Music can be written specifically for a film (called a "score") or can take the form of a soundtrack.

Music helps to build suspense or create the mood of the film— it may be frenetic, poignant, powerful, dramatic, melancholic, sentimental etc.

SOUND EFFECTS

Sound effects include all the sounds that are not music or dialogue (e.g. a gunshot).

Sound effects help to tell the story, build suspense, and have an emotional impact on the viewer.

SILENCE

Equally important to the use of sound in a film is silence: the absence of sound.

Silence can be used to build tension, create a feeling of unease/isolation, or can emphasise the significance of a moment (by drawing a sharp contrast with sound or music).

PART 4

COMPREHEND & RESPOND

DECONSTRUCTING QUESTIONS

All questions consist of a **command word** (which tells you what kind of essay you need to write— analytical, intertextual or evaluative)**,** and a number of **conceptual elements** (aspects of the text to discuss).

The elements of a question are usually easy to identify, as they are almost always phrased in the same manner as the **syllabus concepts** (e.g. attitudes, perspectives, textual features). Sometimes, a conceptual element will be more specific (e.g. "ideas about human nature") and sometimes it will *infer* a syllabus concept (e.g. "*how*", "*how a text has been constructed*" and "*how a text works*" mean "*through which textual features")*.

A COMMAND WORD

Discuss/explain/ explore/examine	**Compare**	**Contrast**	**Evaluate**
This means *analyse* how; *comment upon in detail*.	Highlight similarities and/or differences between two texts.	Highlight differences between two texts.	This means *make a judgement about how effective* an element of the text is.

⇩

HOW THE TEXT EMPLOYS

AN ELEMENT OF CONSTRUCTION

Language or language patterns	Generic conventions	Voice
Tone or mood	Stylistic choices	Perspective
Narrative point of view	Mode and medium	Structure

⇩

IN ORDER TO

A MEANING OR RESULT

Convey ideas	Represent people, places or groups
Explore issues	Promote values & attitudes
Construct perspectives	Shape interpretations of texts
Achieve the text's purpose	Generate responses to texts (e.g. empathy, controversy)

⇩

AND/OR CONSIDERING

AN INFLUENTIAL FACTOR

A specific audience	A particular context	Another text

DECONSTRUCTING QUESTIONS

Before you deconstruct a question, you must check:

THE NUMBER OF TEXTS: Should you discuss one text, or two? Or, *at least* one or *at least* two?

THE CONJUNCTION: Does it use the word "**and**", "**or**", or "**and**/**or**"? For example, if a question asked you to discuss the values **and** attitudes within a text, you should address both.

SINGULAR/**PLURAL**: Is the question asking you to discuss multiple things, or only one? For example, if the question asked you to discuss "idea**s**", you should find *more than one*.

2-PART QUESTIONS

These straightforward questions are particularly common in the Year 11 ATAR course, although questions tend to get more complicated in Year 12.

Explain how <u>language</u> has been used to <u>promote particular values or attitudes</u> in a text.

PART 1		PART 2

2-PART COMPOUND QUESTIONS

In these questions, one of the "parts" will combine two syllabus concepts together. You don't discuss the concepts separately, you talk about them as one "compound". This is easy if you know how to express syllabus concepts (e.g. with the question below, you could discuss a "mother's perspective on parental leave".)

Discuss how a text you have studied <u>has been constructed</u> to present a <u>perspective on an issue</u>.

PART 1	PART 2 (COMPOUND)

3-PART QUESTIONS

These questions often build upon a 2-element question by adding an influential factor, like context or audience.

With reference to at least one text you have studied, explore how an author makes <u>stylistic choices</u> to achieve their <u>purpose</u> for a particular <u>audience</u>.

PART 1

PART 2	PART 3

<u>A side-note</u>: 3-part compound questions (and even 4-part questions) do come up sometimes. If you're going to attempt them, be very careful. You'll find them much more difficult to answer.

PLANNING A RESPONSE

STEP 1

Step 1: Break the question down into (at least) two parts

The most common type of essay question will ask you to explain _how an aspect of the text_ produces a _particular effect/result._ Sometimes, questions might have a 3rd or even 4th part— these are tricky! You'll need to add on extra columns to your planning table (see Step 2).

STEP 2

Step 2: Make a planning table with two columns and 3-4 rows.

This planning table will not only ensure that you answer all parts of the question, but it will highlight your focus for each main body paragraph. This will help you to form specific, clear topic sentences, and actually write your essay quickly once you finish planning!

EXAMPLE

| PART 1 | | PART 2 |

Example question: _Explore how language has been used to promote particular values or attitudes in one text you have studied._

Example text: _the "He For She" Speech by Emma Watson_

LANGUAGE FEATURES	ATTITUDES PROMOTED
Repetition ("I think it is right…"; "I've seen…")	**Scathing attitude** towards social & institutional gender inequality
Inclusive language ("Gender equality is your issue too")	**Encouraging attitude** towards men's involvement in feminism
Parallelism ("If men don't have to control, women won't have to be controlled.")	**Critical attitude** towards traditional gender roles

**This small table is all you need to actually write down when you plan— the elaborated table on the next page just shows you how to use it to actually write your essay!**

Step 3: Refer back to your planning table as you write your introduction and main body paragraphs.

In your introduction, your **thesis** will broadly summarise the points covered in the table, and your **outline** will give the specifics from each box.

Each row will define the focus of each **main body paragraph**, and your **topic sentences** should contain the information from both of the columns (so that you address all parts of the question, not just one!)

LANGUAGE FEATURE	ATTITUDE PROMOTED	TOPIC SENTENCES
Repetition ("I think it is right…"; "I've seen…")	**Scathing attitude** towards social & institutional gender inequality	**MAIN BODY PARAGRAPH 1** Topic sentence: *During her speech, Watson frequently employs repetition to highlight her scathing attitude towards social and institutional gender inequality.*
Inclusive language ("Gender equality is <u>your</u> issue too")	**Encouraging attitude** towards men's involvement in feminism	**MAIN BODY PARAGRAPH 2** Topic sentence: *Moreover, Watson appeals directly to her male demographic through inclusive language, showing her encouraging attitude towards men's involvement in feminism.*
Parallelism ("If men don't have to control, women won't have to be controlled.")	**Critical attitude** towards traditional gender roles	**MAIN BODY PARAGRAPH 3** Topic sentence: *Finally, Watson's use of parallelism in the middle of her speech emphasises her critical attitude towards gender roles.*

THESIS (summarises table): *Watson draws upon a range of language devices to promote her critical attitude towards gender roles and inequality, while simultaneously encouraging men to join the discussion about feminism.*

OUTLINE (gives specifics): *By involving her audience with inclusive language and employing devices such as repetition and parallelism, she suggests that our society's ideas and expectations around gender are damaging to both men and women.*

ANALYTICAL ESSAY STRUCTURE

INTRODUCTION

Your introduction should contain at least four sentences:

1. **HOOK**: write an interesting statement that "hooks" your reader into the essay.

2. **NUTSHELL**: tell the reader the name of the author or director, the title of the text, and very briefly what the text is about.

3. **THESIS STATEMENT**: summarise the main argument that you will make in the essay. This should respond directly to *all parts* of the essay question.

4. **OUTLINE OF POINTS**: elaborate on your thesis statement by outlining the main points that you will raise in the essay.

MAIN BODY PARAGRAPHS

Your essay should contain at least 3-4 main body paragraphs.

1. **TOPIC SENTENCE**: write a sentence that summarises the main point of the paragraph, linking directly to all parts of the question.

2. **EXPANSION**: expand on your topic sentence by clarifying your main point, explaining it in more detail or describing the part of the text from which your example has been taken.

3. **EXAMPLE**: give a quote/example from the text that supports the point you are making in the paragraph. For films, your examples should include quotes *and* cinematic techniques.

4. **EXPLANATION**: explain what the quote/example *means* or *shows*: how does it support your point?
   *NOTE: You can then **repeat sentences 3 and 4** to give your paragraph more depth and detail, giving **another** example and then explaining it.*

5. **LINK**: relate the point of the paragraph back to the topic sentence, and indirectly to the main argument of the whole essay (i.e. the thesis statement).

CONCLUSION

Your conclusion should contain at least three sentences:

1. **THESIS STATEMENT**: restate or reword your thesis statement— the main point or argument of the essay.

2. **RECAP**: summarise the points you have raised.

3. **FINAL COMMENT:** end the essay with a final interesting comment that ties in to your thesis statement, but also provides something extra. For example, you might provide your opinion, or comment on the connection between the text and your society.

SHORT ANSWER STRUCTURE

A short answer response (for Section 1 of the exam) does not necessarily have to follow a specific format. SCSA has decreed that you can take different approaches to structuring your answer, as long as your response is succinct, addresses the question and provides evidence by referring to the text.

However, following a framework often helps you to organise your ideas in a clear and methodical way. My suggestion is *THESIS — PARAGRAPH 1 — PARAGRAPH 2*, leaving a space between each of these elements.

THESIS

Your thesis should concisely answer the question, giving an overview of the points you will make in your response. Make sure you identify the key parts of the question and respond to *all* of these in your thesis.

For example, take the question, *"Explain how language techniques have been used in Text 1 to construct a representation of Perth."*

Your thesis could be something like: *"In Text 1, visual imagery and personification have been employed to represent Perth as tranquil and safe."*

TWO PARAGRAPHS

You should then write two TEEEL paragraphs (see the previous page for an elaboration of the TEEEL structure). Depending on the question, you can usually organise these around the "what" or the "how" of the text. With the example thesis above, you could structure your response in either of the following ways:

PARAGRAPH 1: Visual imagery   *PARAGRAPH 1: Representation of Perth as tranquil*

or

PARAGRAPH 2: Personification   *PARAGRAPH 2: Representation of Perth as safe*

COMPARATIVE

Sometimes, Section 1 questions will ask you to compare two texts. In this case, you can organise your response in either of these ways:

PARAGRAPH 1: Similarities between texts   *PARAGRAPH 1: Focus on Text 1*

or

PARAGRAPH 2: Differences between texts   *PARAGRAPH 2: Focus on Text 2*

See the next page for an elaboration on comparative responses.

INTERTEXTUAL RESPONSES

An intertextual response requires you to make a comparison between at least two texts.

Essentially, you might be asked to compare two texts in terms of:

- **The "what" of each text:** the ideas/issues/perspectives/attitudes constructed in each text
- **The "how" of each text:** the techniques, devices or generic conventions that each text uses
- **The success or impact of each text**: how effectively the texts achieve their purposes, influence an audience or construct meaning *(i.e. evaluate which text is more successful)*

COMMAND WORDS

There are two main command words that indicate an intertextual response is required:

COMPARE: while this once referred only to similarities, in the current ATAR course, the word "compare" essentially means "highlight similarities and/or differences".

CONTRAST: this means "highlight differences". You should not consider similarities, just focus on the points where the two texts diverge.

If the question asks you to "discuss two texts" or "refer to two texts" (without actually including the words "compare" or "contrast"), you might like to comment on the connections between the two texts, but you don't *have* to do so.

THESIS

Here are some thesis starters you could use:

TO SHOW SIMILARITIES: Both [TEXT 1] and [TEXT 2]…………………

TO SHOW DIFFERENCES: While [TEXT 1]…………………, [TEXT 2]…………………

TO SHOW SIMILARITIES & DIFFERENCES: While both texts ………………….., [TEXT 1/2] …………………

MAIN BODY

OPTION 1

P1) Text 1, *1st point*
P2) Text 2, *1st point*
P3) Text 1, *2nd point*
P4) Text 2, *2nd point*

Alternate between each text from one paragraph to another

OPTION 2

P1) Text 1, *1st point*
P2) Text 1, *2nd point*
P3) Text 2, *1st point*
P4) Text 2, *2nd point*

Discuss all of one text first, then move on to the second text

To show similarities: similarly; comparably; likewise; in the same manner; in the same way

To show differences: conversely, however, in contrast, on the contrary

EVALUATIVE RESPONSES

An evaluative response asks you to make a judgement about a text: you must go beyond analysing it, and actually evaluate how effective, valid or powerful it is.

There are three aspects of an evaluative response:
- **The focus**: the question might ask you to evaluate the ideas promoted by a text, or how well a text achieves its purpose/engages the audience/evokes a response etc.
- **The evaluation**: you need to *make a judgement* about the text *based on this point of focus*
- **The evidence**: you need to back up your judgement by providing examples from the text.

TERMINOLOGY

The text (or an aspect of a text) might be:
- Highly effective/successful/powerful/important/well-reasoned
- Moderately effective/successful/powerful etc.
- Ineffective, minimally effective, unsuccessful, weak or problematic
- Significantly more/less effective
- Marginally more/less effective

*e.g. Text 1 is **highly successful** in achieving its purpose, effectively persuading its audience through the use of emotive language and repetition.*

*e.g. Text 1 is **marginally more effective** than Text 2 at eliciting empathy from the audience. While both texts use anecdotes to establish a personal connection with readers, Text 1 constructs vivid, haunting imagery and therefore is more emotive.*

MAKING A JUDGEMENT

Many students feel less comfortable answering evaluative questions, because they require you to **formulate an opinion**. You have to decide what you think of a text, and sometimes that's kind of scary! Try to talk yourself through the following steps:

1. **Overall, did you find the text enjoyable or powerful**? It's more difficult to argue that a text is effective if you just really hated it. Remember, you are allowed to respond critically!
2. **Why do you think you had that response**?
   a. Was it because of **your context**? For example, if you're a hardworking teenager, you'll probably respond critically to a text arguing that teenagers are lazy!
   b. Was it because of **how the text was composed**? It's easiest to evaluate a text based on *how* it has been constructed. For example, perhaps the language was too convoluted for the text to be effective, or the argument was poorly evidenced.
   c. Was it because of the **meaning conveyed**? For example, you might evaluate the ideas or attitudes of a text and find them problematic or ignorant!

ANALYTICAL WRITING: **VOCABULARY**

To describe the author's focus on an issue or subject in the text:

The text/author
1. explores
2. examines
3. considers
4. interrogates
5. addresses
6. investigates

*EXAMPLE: The text **examines** the oppression of Indigenous people in colonised places.*

To describe the author's *representation* of a something in the text:

The text/author
1. portrays
2. depicts
3. illustrates
4. represents
5. characterises
6. shows

*EXAMPLE: The text **portrays** children as naïve and vulnerable.*

To describe the way an author *implies* a particular idea/argument:

The text/author
1. suggests
2. implies
3. insinuates
4. conveys (the idea)

*EXAMPLE: The text **suggests** that the attainment of power leads only to corruption.*

To describe the author's use of a convention or technique:

The text/author
1. uses
2. utilises
3. employs

*EXAMPLE: The text **employs** third person omniscient point of view in order to…*

To describe the author's *openly stated* opinion/argument:

The text/author
1. argues
2. proposes
3. claims
4. maintains
5. contends
6. posits
7. asserts
8. declares

*EXAMPLE: The text **contends** that feminism is a movement for both men and women.*

To describe unconventional or oppositional approaches taken by a text:

The text/author
1. manipulates
2. challenges
3. subverts
4. undermines
5. satirises
6. experiments (with)

*EXAMPLE: The text **subverts** the archetypal characters usually found in horror texts.*
*EXAMPLE: The text **experiments with** unexpected characters to **manipulate** the horror genre.*

LINKING WORDS & PHRASES

These linking words are useful for analytical, interpretive or persuasive writing. Please note that almost all of these words or phrases should be followed by a <u>comma</u>!

To add a piece of information or introduce a new point:

1. Moreover
2. Additionally
3. Furthermore
4. In addition to this

To introduce an example:

1. For example
2. For instance
3. One example of this is
4. According to [author's name]
5. [Author] describes how

To show causation between two things:

1. Consequently
2. As a result
3. Therefore/thus
4. Accordingly
5. Consistently
6. For this reason

To emphasise a point:

1. Indeed
2. Certainly
3. Undoubtedly
4. Undeniably
5. In fact
6. Clearly

To show similarities between two things:

1. In the same manner
2. In the same way
3. Likewise
4. Equally
5. Similarly
6. Also

To show differences between two things:

1. That said
2. Conversely
3. However
4. On the contrary
5. On the other hand
6. Yet

To clarify a point:

1. That is
2. In other words
3. More specifically
4. Put simply
5. Essentially
6. Fundamentally

To conclude:

1. Ultimately
2. In sum
3. Finally
4. All in all
5. On the whole
6. All things considered

QUOTING

GIVE CONTEXT FOR QUOTES

You need to identify <u>who</u> says the quote, <u>where</u> it is in the text, and give any other <u>relevant information</u> that will help your reader to understand the example. You can provide this information either in the sentence BEFORE the quote, or leading up to the quote in the same sentence.

e.g. Watson begins her speech with a direct appeal to her audience. She proclaims, "I am reaching out to you because I need your help."

e.g. After the death of her son, Juana is "as remote and as removed as Heaven."

e.g. At the end of the story, the villagers set upon Mrs Hutchinson as she screams, "It isn't fair, it isn't right."

INTEGRATE QUOTES INTO SENTENCES

Try to pick out short snippets of the quote; choose the most important words or phrases. Then, weave these into a sentence. You should be able to imagine that you could remove the quotation marks and the sentence would still make sense.

e.g. The doctor is characterised as a repugnant man, having a mouth that "drooped with discontent" and eyes that "rested in puffy little hammocks of flesh".

e.g. In Blackfish, scientists describe orcas as "amazingly friendly and intuitive", with "highly elaborated" social systems.

FOR LONGER QUOTES

If you can't just pull out a snippet from a quote— you need the whole line— you can do this in a few different ways.

1. If you introduce the quote with a dependent clause (an incomplete sentence), use a comma.

e.g. As one trainer says, "It was just like kidnapping a little kid away from a mother."

2. If you introduce the quote with a full sentence, use a colon.

e.g. Orcas are described as exceedingly bright and emotional creatures: "The orca brain just screams out intelligence, awareness…they've got a part of the brain that humans don't have."

Honestly, for high school essays, you shouldn't need to quote more than one line at a time. It's MUCH better to use shorter, integrated quotes than to sling one giant paragraph-long quote into your essay.

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PART 5

COMPOSE

COMPOSING: SYLLABUS OUTCOMES

UNDERSTANDING PURPOSE, CONTEXT & AUDIENCE

- Use appropriate form, content, style and tone for different purposes and audiences in real and imagined contexts.

Basically, you need to understand different text types, audiences and contexts, and be able to write accordingly.

USING DIFFERENT MODES & MEDIA

- Draw on a range of technologies
- Combine visual, spoken and written elements where appropriate

Obviously, you can only do this for take-home assessments. DO NOT try to draw a visual in your exam. You'll just waste precious time!

LANGUAGE & VOICE

- Develop and sustain voice, tone and style
- Make innovative and imaginative use of language features
- Use nuanced language
- Use appropriate language and stylistic features to sustain a personal voice and perspective

The best way to use language effectively is to find a style that works for you. Some students write in a sparse, terse manner; others write in a flowery, poetic way. Either is fine! You can find textual forms or voices that work for your style.

FORMING & STRUCTURING ARGUMENTS

- Substantiate and justify your response using textual evidence
- Sustain analysis and argument
- Synthesise ideas and opinions to develop complex argument (Year 12)

This applies to any analytical, persuasive and interpretive texts that you create. You need to know how to construct a thesis and logically sequence your ideas (with evidence) to form a conclusion.

TRANSFORMING & EXPERIMENTING WITH TEXTS

- Experiment with text structures, language features and multimodal devices
- Use and experiment with text structures and language features related to specific genres for particular effects (Year 12)
- Transform and adapt texts for different purposes, contexts and audiences (Year 12)

Some students achieve success by simply employing the conventions of a form/genre and writing really well. However, some questions or school tasks may require you to rewrite a text for a different audience or genre, or manipulate/subvert conventions of a text to create something more unusual.

REFERENCING & EDITING

- Use appropriate quotation and referencing protocols
- Use strategies for planning, drafting, editing and proofreading
- Use accurate spelling, punctuation, syntax and metalanguage.

Ok, so you don't need to worry about referencing in an exam. However, make sure that you use the editing strategies outlined on Page 89!

COMPOSING: MARKING CRITERIA

ENGAGEMENT WITH THE TOPIC/STIMULUS

✓	Addresses all aspects of the stimulus (with direction to form, content, audience or style)	✗	Regurgitates a memorised response that does not properly address the stimulus
✓	Stimulus bears *sustained* significance to the response; the stimulus is a core aspect of the text	✗	Response only briefly or superficially addresses the stimulus

MECHANICS OF WRITING

✓	Writing is fluent and succinct; syntax is varied for effect (using correct punctuation)	✗	Sentences are convoluted, poorly constructed or monotonous (misusing punctuation)
✓	Words are spelled accurately	✗	Multiple errors in spelling
✓	Point of view and tense are kept consistent throughout	✗	Switches in tense or point of view disrupt the cohesion of the text

CONTENT

✓	Text is original, creative and meaningful	✗	Explores clichéd or common tropes/topics, is overly simplistic or random/meaningless
✓	Text is cohesive: all elements link together with a sense of finality in the resolution or conclusion	✗	Elements of the text do not link together cohesively
✓	Demonstrates an understanding of relevant context	✗	Text or plotline is unrealistic or oddly divorced from relevant context

EXPRESSION

✓	Vocabulary is rich and varied, using both simple and complex words where suitable	✗	Vocabulary is simplistic or overly verbose, or words are poorly chosen for their intended meaning
✓	Employs language devices, such as imagery, figurative language and sound devices	✗	Fails to include language devices for effect
✓	A distinctive persona/voice is established in the writing that is suitable for the content/audience	✗	Writing is bland or clichéd (lacking distinct stylistic choices)

GENRE & FORM/STRUCTURE

| ✓	Employs key conventions for the genre/text type	✗	Fails to employ generic conventions (e.g. lacking character development)
✓	Employs structural elements for developing an argument or a narrative arc	✗	Text lacks structure; points or events are poorly organised or sequenced
✓	Details are sequenced logically and are balanced	✗	Text is too brief, overly detailed or unbalanced (i.e. too much time devoted to one element)
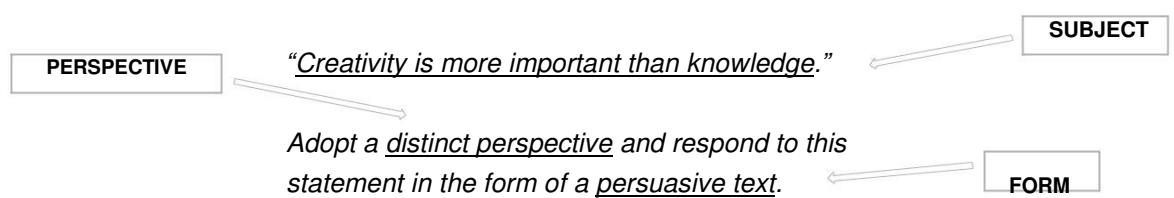
ADDRESSING THE STIMULUS

Most composing stimuli will give you very specific directives, and you need to address ALL OF THESE in your response. Questions usually stipulate between two and four of the following elements:
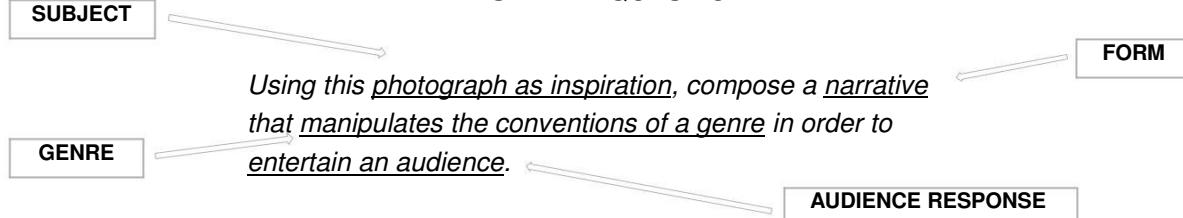
1. **The form**: Most questions will broadly specify the type of text you need to write (e.g. *a persuasive text; an interpretive text; an imaginative text; a form of your choice*) and then you need to choose your specific form *(e.g. a feature article, a short story, a persuasive speech).*

2. **The subject**: if the question gives you an image of a person or place, usually it should be present in your response as a character or setting. If the prompt gives you a quote or a statement, you should include this, and use it to shape your response. The subject given to you should *significantly* inform the piece that you write— in other words, it should be a *focus* of your response, not a brief reference.

3. **The audience response**: the prompt may ask you to "challenge" or "surprise" or "alienate" your reader, or evoke empathy from them, or elicit any other type of mental/emotional response. In this case, you need to think about who your audience is (if it's broad, think about the dominant attitudes of most people) and then what would prompt such a response from them.

4. **The genre**: prompts can't ask you to write to a specific genre, but you need to be able to demonstrate an understanding of the conventions that fit your chosen genre. Keep in mind that some quotes or images will lend themselves to one particular genre over others. A question might also ask you to manipulate, adapt, subvert or challenge the conventions of a genre for effect.

5. **The style/voice/perspective/techniques**: again, a stimulus probably won't ask you to adopt a very precise voice or style, but it might stipulate that you should employ "stylistic features" or a "distinct" voice or an "unexpected" or "unusual" perspective. You can fit these broad descriptors to a specific style/voice/perspective that works for you.

STEP 1: HIGHLIGHT KEY WORDS

SAMPLE QUESTION 1

PERSPECTIVE

SUBJECT

"Creativity is more important than knowledge."

Adopt a distinct perspective and respond to this statement in the form of a persuasive text.

FORM

SAMPLE QUESTION 2

SUBJECT

FORM

Using this photograph as inspiration, compose a narrative that manipulates the conventions of a genre in order to entertain an audience.

GENRE

AUDIENCE RESPONSE

STEP 2: LINK TITLE/SUBTITLE TO STIMULUS

Basically, you don't want your marker to be trying to figure out what on earth your response has to do with the stimulus. Make it obvious from the very start! Using an extended title is a great way to do this.

SAMPLE QUESTION

"Creativity is more important than knowledge."

Adopt a distinct perspective and respond to

this statement in the form of a persuasive text.

SAMPLE TITLE

"Creativity: The Lifeblood of our Society"

A persuasive speech from a

scientist's perspective

Here, this title/subtitle combo identifies the **form of the response** (persuasive speech) and the **perspective** (that of a scientist). It also includes a **creative element** ("Creativity: The Lifeblood of our Society") so it reads like a title, not a statement of intent.

SAMPLE QUESTION

Using this photograph as inspiration, compose a narrative that manipulates the conventions of a genre in order to surprise an audience.

SAMPLE TITLE

"Night of the Living Bread"
A comedic spin on a short horror story

Here, this title/subtitle combo identifies the **form of the response** (short story) and **how it will manipulate the conventions of a genre** (by incorporating comedy into a horror text). It also includes a **creative element** ("Night of the Living Bread") to engage the reader.

STEP 3: REFERENCE THE STIMULUS *THROUGHOUT* YOUR RESPONSE

There are a number of ways you can easily do this:

1. **If your chosen stimulus is an image, pick out a range of details** (look for the small ones, too!) and weave these through your story.

2. **If it's a quote or a statement, highlight the key words**, and then include these at a number of points in your piece. You can use repetition for effect, OR, you can use synonyms if you want to vary your language.

ELEMENTS OF A GOOD NARRATIVE

LANGUAGE

Language= choices in words and their arrangement into sentences.

The language used in a narrative is important for two reasons. Firstly, you need to create a mental picture of the characters and setting for your reader. Secondly, you need to capture a distinct and coherent voice in your writing.

You can use language effectively by:

- Using a range of language devices, such as personification, imagery and alliteration
- Extending your vocabulary so that you can choose fitting and evocative words
- Making consistent choices to maintain your voice—for example, using stark imagery and short sentences *throughout* the story

TENSION

Tension= the sense of suspense, mystery or unease that drives the story.

Tension is integral because it engages the reader in the story. If a story feels flat— if there's no complication, mystery or unresolved matter— it's far less likely that readers will want to keep turning the page.
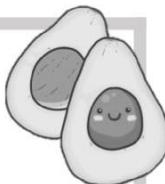
You can build tension by:

- Introducing a problem or "complication" near the beginning of your story
- Foreshadowing future events
- Raising questions or mysteries to be solved
- Establishing a gap between what the narrator/characters know and what the reader knows

COHESION

Cohesion= all the elements of a text fitting together as a unified whole.

Cohesion makes a story more engaging and satisfying for the reader. Imagine if a story introduced a new character or plot event on every page— the lack of cohesion would be really frustrating! There's definitely a place for confusing, disjointed texts *(looking at you, James Joyce)*, but at the high school level, aim for clarity and cohesion.

You can create cohesion by:

- Making sure all the plot events are connected and make sense
- Foreshadowing future events
- Embedding a consistent theme/motif
- Resolving the story in a fitting way

MEANING

Meaning= the deeper ideas, values or themes conveyed by a text.

Without a deeper message, a story can feel superficial or pointless. Entertainment value is important, but the most powerful texts (even in lighter genres like comedy) will explore broader ideas or promote certain attitudes.

You can develop meaning by:

- Writing with an idea of the theme/message from the start of the story
- Using the characters or plotline to imply an idea to the reader
- Avoiding stating an idea directly!
- Creating layers of meaning through symbolism or connotation

NARRATIVE STRUCTURE

There are so many ways to structure a story, and more confident writers can often subvert the traditional narrative arc. However, if you're looking for a tried-and-tested model, the one below is usually effective!

PART 1: EXPOSITION

All stories begin with two things: a character and a setting. Your exposition will introduce them, ideally employing descriptive language to evoke a mental picture for your reader.

If you find it difficult to come up with interesting story ideas, **(1) start by developing a character**. Think of a person in society (a ballet dancer, a child, a teacher, a hiking enthusiast) and then give them a defining personality trait. For example, you might think of a nervous police officer, or a pompous mayor, or a conservative grandmother.

(2) Then, place your character into a setting. You have two choices here:

1. Put them into a **familiar setting**. For example, you might have your pompous mayor sitting at an old oak desk in a lavish office, or your nervous police officer pacing outside an interrogation room.

2. Put them in an **unexpected setting**. What could happen if you put your conservative grandmother into a nightclub? Or placed the nervous policeman up a tree? Creating an unusual character/setting combination will engage your reader and make for an interesting premise.

(3) Finally, use descriptive language to bring your character and setting to life. See the example below.

Florence Goldman had not been in a nightclub for forty years.

Her blouse was weathered and worn, faded from countless washes; the blue fibres seemed to cling desperately to each other as if they might be pulled apart by the slightest movement. Yet it was immaculately clean, tucked neatly into linen pants. You could imagine her wrinkled hands carefully smoothing it down in front of the mirror, brow furrowed in concentration, fingers sternly buttoning it to the top. Her hair shone silver, tied neatly into a bun at the top of her head.

She stood stiffly on the edge of the dark room, her shifting gaze shooting straight lines through the swirling haze of writhing bodies. It was as if the throbbing music stopped short of her ears, pushed away by some invisible barrier. Her expression was blank and smooth– perfectly matching her attire– but her hands were clenched tightly at her sides, knuckles straining under aging skin. A few feet away, young men laughed and hollered in each other's faces, throwing their limbs out wildly into the humid air.

If you look at the example above, you'll notice that it fulfils the requirements of an exposition:

1. It clearly introduces a character and a setting
2. It uses a range of language devices (imagery, personification, metaphor) to set the scene and elicit a mental picture for the reader
3. It engages the reader by raising a question (*what on earth is she doing in the club?*)

PART 2: COMPLICATION

This part of the story fuels any action that unfolds. It can be:

1. A problem or issue that arises— an unexpected, troubling, awkward or mysterious event
2. A goal, desire or aim that is expressed by the protagonist

Essentially, the complication is the part of the story where **the status quo is disturbed**. You've described the scene, the reader gets a sense of things as they are— and then you introduce a new element.

See the example below.

> *Florence had lived a dreary life for far too long, and she was tired of it. Every day she'd risen from bed at the same hour, put on the same worn slippers, made a cup of the same Earl Grey tea, and had followed her usual routine of visiting aging friends and watering the geraniums.*
> *She was sick of the mundanity. Bored of ordinary life. Ready for something new, something different. So she'd put on her orthopaedic shoes, called a taxi, and asked the driver to take her to the nearest club.*

In this example, you can see that this complication takes the form of an *aim or goal* that has been expressed by the protagonist. If you put your character into an unfamiliar setting, you should use this section to explain what the character is doing there— for example, if you wrote about a nervous police officer in a tree, the complication might be that he has to save a cat from the top branch.

PART 3: ACTION

Here, you should write a number of paragraphs that escalate in tension. The final paragraph of this section is the climax: the point in the story where the character is closest to confronting the problem or achieving their aim.

See the example below (only the start of each paragraph has been provided):

> *Standing at the edge of the dancefloor, Florence felt uneasy. A denim-clad woman emerged from the bathroom behind her and said something animatedly, but Florence didn't have her hearing aid in and the music would have been too loud anyway…(cont.)*
> *Maybe she just needed a drink. Florence tried to remember what her doctor had told her about the state of her liver, but then brushed off the thought. What was the point in perfectly maintaining a car that had done so many kilometres, anyway? She walked up to the bar and ordered a shot of whiskey…(cont.)*
> *The drink had warmed her chest, and she started to notice a strange sensation. The music was so loud that it made a scrambled mess in her head, but she could feel it thudding in her chest. Oh, sod it, she thought, and made her way to the dancefloor. (cont.)*

You can see that each paragraph escalates in tension (probably up to a climactic point of Florence climbing into the DJ booth and playing 70s disco, *who knows*). You should plan out your plot events before you start writing, to make sure that you get the sequence right. Otherwise, you'll find yourself overemphasising minor events, or writing in circles and struggling to build tension.

PART 4: RESOLUTION

This part of the story needs to resolve the complication and action in a way that is fitting, but not cliched or predictable. It's a tricky balance! You might try one of the following:

1. Resolve the complication with a **seemingly positive outcome**, but one that either fails to satisfy the protagonist or that causes unseen consequences. *For instance, with the "police officer in the tree" example— he could save the cat from the tree, only to realise that the cat was actually hiding from a bear (which is now threatening them both).*

2. Resolve the complication with a **seemingly negative outcome**, but one where the protagonist finds some other source of satisfaction, or there's some kind of positive effect. *For example, the police officer could fall out of the tree, failing to save the cat. However, he might notice that he's fallen onto freshly packed earth…and, lo and behold, it turns out he's found a buried murder weapon and has accidentally solved his squad's biggest criminal investigation.*

It's crucial that you foreshadow your resolution. For example, you would need to refer to the recent criminal investigation much earlier in the narrative, thus creating a sense of cohesion when all the pieces of the puzzle are brought together. Try to bring it up these "clues" casually, so your reader doesn't see the ending coming!

As for our friend Florence, see the example resolution below:

> *By all standards, the night should have been thrilling. But, wiping the sweat from her wrinkled brow, Florence felt stressed. It was too loud, too crowded! Her head ached; her hands shook. She burst out of the club, enveloped once again by the cool night air, and started walking home.*
>
> *There's no use, she thought. I may as well go back to drinking tea and doing the crossword.*
>
> *She remembered she'd run out of tea and stopped in at a convenience store. Under the fluorescent lights, she scanned the shelves for her usual packet of Earl Grey.*
>
> *Suddenly, she felt her hand reach out, as if possessed by a strange force. It went straight past the Earl Grey and picked up a different product altogether.*
>
> *Looking at the packet in her hand, Florence smiled. In bright pink letters, it read, "Strawberry Surprise". It was an odd flavour of tea. It was bound to be ghastly, Florence thought. But she placed it down on the counter, paid, and walked out of the store, clutching it tightly to her chest.*
>
> *Later, as she sipped at the Strawberry Surprise, Florence stretched out her toes and sighed contentedly. The sweet brew was unexpectedly enjoyable.*
>
> *This, she thought, is about as much excitement as I need. She didn't need flashing lights or hollering men. Just the crossword, her slippers, and this pleasant new tea.*

Here, you can see that the resolution has been foregrounded earlier in the story (during the "complication"), when Florence's routine of drinking Earl Grey tea was mentioned. The resolution also helps to convey the story's idea—that sometimes the smallest things in life, or the smallest changes, can bring us happiness.

The examples I've included here are pretty silly, and a little farfetched. However, they should illustrate the basic principles of structuring a story, which you can apply to any premise! Just keep in mind that it's better to be a bit quirky than to be excessively dark or melodramatic. Markers read so many bleak stories that we rarely find them compelling. Maybe open yourself up to a little bit of whimsy!

USING SYMBOLS & MOTIFS

DEFINITION

Symbols are places, people, events, or objects that suggest deeper meaning in the story.

Motifs are recurring symbolic elements in a story. They often aren't as concrete as symbols, and they must occur a number of times within a text. They could be:

1. **Objects** (e.g. trees, fruit, books) or
2. **Verbs/actions** (e.g. falling, closing, counting) or
3. **More abstract concepts** (e.g. emptiness, silence, heat).

WHY USE SYMBOLISM?

Symbolism is important for a number of reasons:

1. **It communicates meaning in a deeper, more nuanced way.** Often, narratives convey their themes through the use of symbolism, rather than having to voice an idea in a more direct or literal way. This also forces the reader to think more actively, as they have to consider meaning on different levels.

2. **It creates cohesion in a text.** If you use a recurring motif, your story will be pulled together in a cohesive way. For example, the story on the next page creates cohesion by referring to the symbol (of the potatoes) at the beginning and the very end of the text.

3. **It allows you to play around with narrative structure or conventions.** The most subversive or unusual stories are often the ones that draw on symbolism. Because you are constructing deeper meanings, the surface layers of the text (the characters, plotline etc.) can be manipulated or developed in less detail.

IDEAS FOR SYMBOLS & MOTIFS

CONCRETE OBJECTS		ACTIONS	CONCEPTS
Water/ice	Food/fruits	Falling	Seasons/time of day
Dirt/dust	Trees/leaves	Closing	Mess/chaos
Rocks/gems	Animals	Observing	Music, noise or silence
Fog/mist	Clock	Emptying	Light or darkness
Flowers	Roads	Measuring	Heat or cold
Paper	Sunrise/sunset	Leaking	Numbers
Paint	Sun/moon/stars	Cleaning	Colour (general or specific)
Soap	Clothes	Stretching	Directions (north/south/east/west)
Metal	Rooms/places	Holding	Fullness or emptiness
Stairs	Windows	Counting	Residue

USING SYMBOLISM: AN EXAMPLE

The narrative below gives you an example of how you can create meaning and cohesion by using symbolism. There are some elements of traditional narrative structure— a descriptive exposition, some unease/tension, and a sense of resolution. However, very little actually *happens* in the plotline. Rather, the story relies on its symbolic layers and gaps (for the reader to fill in) in order to construct meaning.

I hear a car pull in to the driveway. She's here.

Looking around, I imagine the room through foreign eyes, and the swelling anxiety in my stomach spurs me into action. Scrambling to my feet, I hastily smooth down the couch cushions behind me. They're old and worn, sagging down miserably in the middle, and I swipe haphazardly at the stained fabric. It's pointless. I can almost hear the fibres sigh as I beat them into shape.

It's been a year since I had a visitor.

Well, to be specific, it's been eleven months, two weeks and four days. That's exactly how long it takes for a dozen potatoes to decompose almost completely in a box at the bottom of a kitchen cupboard. I know that because my mother brought me some at the beginning of the year, and I've been watching them slowly rot with a strange mixture of curiosity and shame.

The doorbell rings and I rush to the hallway. The deadlock is heavy in my fingers; it takes me three tries to open it.

My friend Isobel swans in to the house, gushing compliments and excuses as she envelops me in a bony hug. I return it. My limbs feel too long to fit comfortably around her body. Her perfume crawls up my nostrils.

"Babe," she says, "It's been *forever*. We have *so* much to catch up on."

I smile back at her.

We sip tea as she tells me about her boyfriend's new job and the trip to Europe that they're planning. She asks me about my life and I tell her about the articles I'm writing for an online magazine and the fundraiser I'm helping to organise. I tell her about the lawyer I'm going out with on Tuesday night and the half-marathon I'm training for. Isobel's eyes widen as I ramble. She's impressed. I continue, tracing wide circles with my hands as I talk, painting watercolours in the air with my fingertips. The tea, our silent intermediary, slowly goes cold.

Finally, she picks up her bag to leave. She pauses for a moment by the door and I hold my breath.

"What's that smell? Is something rotten?"

"Ah, it's just the compost," I say quickly. "I'm about to take it out to the garden. My vegie patch is just *flourishing*."

"Gosh," Isobel chatters, one hand fumbling for her car keys. "I don't know *how* you find the time."

She reverses swiftly out of the driveway, one hand waving a gaudy farewell from the car window. I imagine that the hand is a puppet, oscillating wildly on a string. My own wave is barely perceptible—a flash of beige against the wooden door as I pull it closed.

At the bottom of the kitchen pantry, the potatoes are turning a terrible shade of green.

TRANSFORMING & EXPERIMENTING

Experimenting with a text and transforming a text are very different processes:

- **To experiment with a text simply means to do something *unusual*,** whether it be making strange choices in language, or going against the expected conventions of a genre.
- **To transform a text means to rewrite a text for a different genre, purpose or audience.** You end up with a second iteration of a text, not an original.

EXPERIMENTING

For example, to experiment with the genre of autobiography by subverting some of its conventions, you might write in second person point of view and present tense (rather than 1st person PoV and past tense, which are well-established generic conventions):

Amidst the colourful clutter of my childhood bedroom, my mother taught me to read. Holding my clammy hand in hers, she would gently trace my fingers over giant letters in colourful picture books. We would mouth the sounds out together: cuh-ah-tuh-pi-lar.

Amidst the colourful clutter of your childhood bedroom, your mother teaches you to read. Holding your clammy hand in hers, she gently traces your fingers over giant letters in colourful picture books. You mouth the sounds out together: cuh-ah-tuh-pi-lar.

Here, you'll notice that subverting just two conventions, you can radically change the nature of a text. The "adapted" text includes the reader in an intimate manner, pulling them directly into the story. This effect is amplified by the use of present tense, which creates a greater sense of immediacy and realism.

TRANSFORMING

For example, you might transform a text from one genre to another (for example, one author took the fantasy novel "Lord of the Rings" and transformed it into "Bored of the Rings", a parody of the original). You can also transform texts from one form to another: this is very common, as books are often transformed into films! The example below transforms a play extract into narrative form:

SAM: Let's go, Dad. (touching his father's arm)

MICK: Wait a moment. Just wait.

Sam looked at his father with pleading eyes. "Let's go, Dad." He touched Mick's weathered arm, a gesture of desperation.
"Wait a moment. Just wait." Mick stood, silent and unmoving, and Sam knew he had lost.

Here, you'll see how the same event is told very differently; indeed, plays require gestural and visual modes to communicate much of the meaning that narratives convey with description and thoughts. Because textual forms are constructed and experienced so differently, transformation inevitably alters the meaning of a text.

EDITING YOUR COMPOSITION

In the ATAR course, editing is often a luxury. In exams and in-class assessments, many students are so rushed to finish that they simply don't have time to edit. Of course, it's optimal if you can quickly check some of the basic aspects of your writing (see Steps 1 and 2). However, the extensive list below is *most* helpful for take-home tasks, where you can really refine your writing!

STEP 1: Check the mechanics of your writing

The "mechanics of writing" include spelling, syntax and paragraphing. Check that you haven't made any obvious errors in spelling (such as American spellings) or punctuation (for example, many students forget to include question marks, or use commas where they need a semi-colon). You'll also need to make sure you've grouped your ideas into clear paragraphs, or have used the TiPToP rule for a narrative.

STEP 2: Check your consistency

You need to go back through your piece and make sure that your tense and point of view are both consistent. Many students accidentally switch between past and present tense in creative writing! You should also make sure that your voice is consistent— you should maintain the same persona or stylistic choices throughout.

STEP 3: Check your clarity and flow

There are two things that need to be clear in your composition: *what* you say, and *how* you're saying it. Read through each sentence (saying it aloud in your head) and make sure that it sounds natural and flowing. Then, think about your argument or plotline: are your points or plot events clear to your reader? If you're vague or convoluted in your writing, there is a high chance that your reader will be confused.

STEP 4: Check for cohesion

This is related to clarity, because part of cohesion is your ideas fitting and flowing together. You can do this by using linking words or phrases (e.g. "however, additionally, similarly" in a non-fiction text, or phrases like "Later that day" in a narrative). You should also make sure that you tie in elements from your introduction/exposition with your conclusion/resolution, so that your piece pulls together as one fitting whole.

STEP 5: Check your structure

Is your composition structured? Obviously, some readers can manipulate structures for effect, but usually your piece should have (at the very least) a clear beginning, middle and end. There are a number of writing structures in this reference guide— if you haven't followed any of them, *ask yourself why*. If you've played around with structure for effect, that's great! But make sure you're not handing in an unstructured mess.

STEP 6: Check your use of language

Annotate your writing, highlighting the verbs/adjectives/adverbs and the language devices like personification or hyperbole. Have you used the word "said" repeatedly? Replace it with *mumbled, answered, burst or asked*. Is your piece chock-a-block full of similes or adjectives? Maybe you need to take some out. Perhaps you haven't used any figurative language at all— in that case, it's time to add some in! Using language well is all about balancing *consistency* (in style) with *variation* (in word and syntactical choices). This requires careful editing!