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**Literature ATAR Examination, 2022**

**Question Paper**

MARKERS’ FEEDBACK REPORT

**LITERATURE (Year 12)**

**Semester Two**

**Section One: Response – Close Reading (25 Marks)**

GENERAL FEEDBACK FOR THIS SECTION

* Some of the responses for this section were very short, which may have been a strategic choice but can suggest a lack of understanding.
* Some responses relied on the text to pad the length, often resorting to using long quotes as opposed to just using what was required to make the desired point.
* To read closely is to fully understand the conventions. Some responses were missing the terminology needed to demonstrate this ability.
* While some responses had fantastic structure, others were cobbled together in a clumsy fashion.
* Inverted commas should be used for texts which form a part of a larger whole; underlining should be used for complete texts.
* Some of the responses had too informal a tone.
* In order to make a reading, some students ignored key aspects of the text.
* We are seeing a very common problematic pattern across many student responses. Many students seem to think that the main objective in analysing texts (both studied and unseen) is to identify ‘language features’ in it; it seems to be a bit of a challenge to see how many complicated-sounding terms for features one can get into their responses. Too many response where only very ‘small’ and specific language, style and structural features are being ‘listed’, in both theses and topic sentences and they are not attached to any examples. Some syllabus points related to this kind of thing include: analysing “distinctive features in literary texts” (11 Lit Syllabus) and evaluating “the impact of the use of literary conventions and stylistic techniques” (12 Lit Syllabus). These points relate to one of the things we do in Literature, and are particularly geared towards closely analysing short texts and extracts (or ‘stepping [closely] into’ the text) but there are many other things we do as well. For example, we also “Investigate and reflect on different ways of reading literary texts” (11 Lit syllabus) and “how literature represents and/or reflects cultural change and difference” (12 Lit Syllabus) for example. The key to presenting an excellent reading of a text could include analysing any number of different things – and your reading should go beyond simple linguistic analysis. Ensure you link the specific features to examples of them and explain how they work to construct things like interesting characters and settings, or are reflective of (or even a subversion of) a genre or movement, or help to convey an interesting idea or experience, which all in turn work to REPRESENT and suggest things. Representation is such a crucial course concept and you need to be able to take steps in explaining how the little things work together to build the bigger things. E.g. you can’t simply claim that a “simile challenges the patriarchy”. Likewise, if you start with “the poet uses rhyme, metaphor and personification to covey the idea…” – you basically could be talking about ANY poem. Be specific about the text you are responding to – link your terms to examples of them, in the text – e.g. “the repeated symbol of a pulse conveys…”
* It was good to see some responses demonstrating self-awareness about their reading process and being able to articulate the ways they have made meaning from the text
* Practise writing sentences that make clear transitions and links between your different points and examples, and sentences that explain your points in explicit and cohesive ways
* Avoid being too general. Readings and responses are supposed to be specific/targeted/focused, not just everything you can say about the text in the time given.
* Excellent responses demonstrated a good understanding of the text, as a result of taking the time to thoroughly read and engage with the whole text in front of them and then deciding what they want to put in their response.

**Text A**

* Most responses were able to produce a sound reading examining parenthood/motherhood, and the (possibly gendered implications of) surrendering of one’s individual aspirations to familial obligations.
* With poetry in particular, some students tend to ignore the denotative meaning of the lines they analyse; the effect of a poetic device may not carry much weight if it’s not contextualised by a demonstration of what the line is saying on a literal level.
* Some successful answers involved analysing some of the following points (not conclusive):
* the adoption and manipulation of the sonnet form
* the domestic imagery, including the visual, auditory and tactile images
* the dejected mood and tone
* making links to feminist sentiments and waves (contexts)
* making links to other feminist texts read/studied
* analysing the connections with both musical allusions and mental health
* *the effects* of the rhymes and enjambment

**Text B**

* Not all responses to Text B were sufficiently attentive to the role of the swagman within the Australian cultural lexicon; stronger responses leaned into this when constructing a reading around Australian culture or identity.
* In reading prose, the temptation may be there to focus on narrative conventions like characterization and setting; try to look beyond these and ensure you are grounding your analysis in close attention to how language works to construct the narrative conventions where possible.
* Make connections to your understanding of Australian literature and identities (within given contexts) where possible – you are supposed to have a good knowledge of Australian literature and culture as outlined in the syllabus
* Some interesting responses included articulating how personal context impacted their reading and reaction to the text, and the ones that were specific about aspects of this personal context were great!
* Some interesting points of analysis included (not conclusive):
* Trains as a symbol of transience
* The increasing contrast of the city-bush dichotomy at the turn of the century and leading towards federation
* The implications of the bush/swag man character
* How the dog is part of the character construction
* How societal conventions/expectations implicate people’s lives and decisions
* The tension in the dialogue between characters

**Text C**

* This was perhaps the least popular of the three texts; some successful responses examined the text’s interrogation of gender roles within Australian culture.
* Stage directions were present in the extract, but relatively minimal. For detailed analysis, there was more of an impetus for students to look *closely* at the language in the dialogue, and how this characterises the speakers.
* Avoid making assumptions about the rest of the play if you don’t know anything about it – this can lead to your response sounding a bit silly. Focus on what you do have access to. If you want to step out of the text, ensure you are drawing on understandings you do have, rather than those you don’t.
* Good responses included some of the following points (not conclusive):
* How the characters represent the effects of expectations placed on boys and men in Australian society (with discussions about toxic masculinity)
* The friction between characters stemming from contrasting socio-economic circumstances
* The suppressed emotions and thoughts of the characters
* The gender dynamic between Rocko and Tiffany
* Ideas about youth, education, travel, socialising and growing up
* The colloquial language and links to contexts – surfing, 80’s/90’s teens, Sydney beaches, etc.
* Comparing contexts and experiences of teenagers (e.g. to now)

**Section Two: Extended Response (60 Marks)**

GENERAL FEEDBACK FOR THIS SECTION

* Some of the responses were clearly pre-prepared and forced to fit the question.
* When discussing drama, it’s essential to have variety in the conventions discussed. For some responses, there was an over-reliance on dialogue/narrative elements.
* Sometimes students did themselves a disservice in how they presented the information within the booklet, doing things like: having one paragraph per page, not flagging additional content, using inverted commas or underlining incorrectly, not embedding quotes, not labeling the paper with the question attempted.
* For some papers, the focus was too narrow. Breadth and depth of understanding needs to be demonstrated.
* Some of the responses used the quote to explain the quote, as opposed to building on the analysis.
* The best responses used words of the question. This helps the response stay on topic.
* Be careful when editing and/or inserting new content. It must be clear where this is going and how the sentence is intended to be read – sometimes the edits impacted the readability of the response.

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**Question 2 (30 marks)**

How does an author critique an ideology through marginalisation? Refer to at least ONE TEXT you have studied in your response.

* This is a complex question masquerading as a simple one. In part, this stems from level of understanding required to properly discuss ideologies. A patriarchal ideology, for example, asserts that men are physically and intellectually superior and thus deserve to be in positions of power, that men are naturally the protectors of women, that they deserve property ownership and the possession of goods via inheritance/lineage, and so on. There is a tendency to be tokenistic and simple in regards to this concept and to not fully unpack the various values, attitudes and beliefs that underpin that system of thought.
* Marginalisation can occur through the representation of characters and settings, through language choice and through form. Strong responses will articulate (in detail) how an ideology is marginalised.
* This, then, needs to be attached to a criticism of sorts. If Cummings marginalises American patriotism and/or capitalist ideologies in an effort to critique them, how does marginalisation play into this? Is it because other philosophical approaches are favoured in their place?
* Strong critical literacy is demonstrated when the least obvious elements of the text are questioned. Who speaks the least? What character is staying on the side of the set, is outside, or in the background? What idea is overlooked or treated briefly? Why are certain groups represented as being less powerful than the other? Why are some ideas ridiculed or decentralised? It is in the margins that a resistant text will destabilase a powerful movement or dominant group.

**Question 3 (30 marks)**

How might a contemporary reader react to a literary text that has been published in a diversely different time and place? Respond to this question using ONE TEXT you have studied in your answer.

* Students doing this question will need to articulate the differences between the physical and temporal settings they exist in and those of the author’s context.
* “React” can be emotional or intellectual and, as such, stronger students may engage with discussion around aesthetics and ideology to enhance their response.
* Weaker students will be overly simplistic in their response, relying on phrases like “encouraging an empathetic response towards the Joads” as all-encompassing. Stronger students will delve further into their emotional vocabulary.
* This is a comparative question and weaker students will struggle to tandem between the two contexts, then and now, per paragraph.

**Question 4 (30 marks)**

How is a text you have studied reflective of a literary movement? Explore AT LEAST ONE TEXT you have studied in your response.

* Students should identify the movement and ensure it is a clear focus throughout the essay. Many of our texts belong to multiple literary movements and some students acknowledged this across their essays.
* “Reflect” allows students to engage with generic conventions and representation as part of their discussion.
* Better students will engage with these by adding reader response and/or authorial intent to their discussion.

**Question 5 (30 marks)**

When a reader acknowledges the role authorial context plays in a text’s representations, they gain a greater perspective. Endorse this statement by referring to AT LEAST ONE TEXT you have studied in your response.

* This is a tricky comparative question. “Greater understanding” implies that students need to identify an initial reaction as well as one supported by greater contextual knowledge.
* An author’s context can be personal, social, cultural and/or historical provided it is justified.
* The gained perspective can be towards characters, settings and events etc. inside the text and also a personal, authorial and particular reader’s perspective can be expanded outside of the text. The stronger candidate would wisely set the parameters of their investigation, within their thesis, when exploring the multifaceted concept of perspective.

**Question 6 (30 marks)**

Explore how an author has used non-traditional methods to introduce new ideas to a particular readership. Refer to AT LEAST ONE TEXT you have studied in your answer.

* A strong plan is needed for this hard question. It demands an observation between a traditional text **and** your analysis of a non-traditional **AND** an observation between old ideas **and** a representation of new ideas prevalent within your studied text. A stronger student will be prepared with the knowledge that Literary methods and ideas often go hand in hand. Eg: Cummings’ attempt to disturb the formal hierarchies in society, disturbs the formal structure of a sentence. They will focus their approach and not be lead into different directions trying to tandem between differing methods and varying ideas, eras and contexts.
* A method is a procedure or an approach to something (approach to the ‘new idea’ in the question.) The term ‘method’ can also imply that there are ways of constructing a text. If the student fashions this angle in their thesis, a strong technical toolbox will be needed. For example, Cumming’s misuse of form offers new ideas about rigid rules in poetry, or Hwang’s Post-Modern stage offers the audience new ideas about interaction/participation, or Steinbeck’s chapters offer new ideas about fiction/non-fiction elements.
* If the student has come to the exam with a thorough understanding of how their studied text is resistant, this will be an easier essay to plan. All of the texts we studied this year were resistant of some method that came before it.

**Question 7 (30 marks)**

Challenge what it is to be Australian by deconstructing ONE ICONIC AUSTRALIAN TEXT you have studied and its attempt to build a national identity.

* The term challenge demands a voice. The student is required to compare what they believe it is to be Australian today with a representation of Australians in a dated text.
* Stronger literature students realise that a national identity is a complex and fraught term as the dominant group in any nation is privileged over the less dominant groups. It also changes dramatically over time, while other aspects of our identity have prevailed, for example, we are good swimmers and big drinkers. Therefore, this question demands a resistance to what an Australian text is attempting to do – either because it is unethical, inaccurate, outdated or irrelevant.

**Question 8 (30 marks)**

Intertextuality offers readers the ability to maximise on meaning. Celebrate this technique and/or reading strategy using AT LEAST ONE TEXT you have studied in your response.

* The student is required to either celebrate how a text within a studied text makes it more interesting or profound or how relating a studied text to another text can build a fully picture of something.
* The term ‘celebrate’ demands a voice. In turn, stronger students will use tonal words to reveal their awe, wonder, appreciation and/or joy when working with two texts in relation to each other.
* The term ‘maximise’ suggests that linking to other texts provides polysemy – multiple meanings, not just another idea! For example, think of how many ways Hwang’s use of Puccini’s text within the play has impacted the audience/reader.

**Question 9 (30 marks)**

How has an author you have studied sought to naturalise ways of thinking and being? Make detailed reference to ONE PROSE TEXT you have studied in your response.

* The concept ‘naturalise’ in our post-modern era suggest there is no such thing as ‘normal’ only attempts to make something atypical typical. Normalisation occurs when the society absorbs representations to the point of forming stereotypes. That is why texts attempt to naturalise in order to sway puplic assumptions. A stronger student will form this angle in their thesis and attempt to show how an author has resisted a dominant representation in society.
* This question asks students to analyse ideologies, ideas, theories or philosophies of thought **AND** cultural activities, individual actions and/or group behaviours. A carefully worded thesis will support a student’s focus throughout their response. A stronger student will link how a person thinks with how they act in each paragraph for easier execution.

**Question 10 (30 marks)**

A poem is more than a collection of language features. Discuss this notion by analysing other poetic conventions and their ability to make meaning in AT LEAST ONE POEM you have studied in your response.

* Language features and its other conventions will need to be observed in a balanced way in this response. A stronger student will establish in each paragraph how a convention, other than its language, is also worth observing. This implies an evaluation. How is the setting more important than a metaphor in Grapes of Wrath? How is the structure of a poem on the page more important than Cummings’ use of onomatopoeia?
* Weaker students offered an analysis of other conventions, while stronger students established a voice around a literary obsession with analysing language devices.

**Question 11 (30 marks)**

Justify as a response, how ONE DRAMATIC TEXT you have studied attempts to retell the truths of a situation.

* As post-modernists, we believe there is no truth, only perspectives. There are no facts only interpretations. A stronger student will establish this premise early and herald an author that can question truths of the past. Truths can be ideologies, historical events, contextual representations, normalised stereotypes, dominant readings, established dichotomies etc.
* This question is comparative and demands a connection between an old truth with the new one being told. Retelling is an act of resistance as it suggests that the original version is flawed, in need of clarification or a new voice.
* Directors often use the stage to go back and retell a narrative from a different perspective. A student will then need to analyse *HOW* a director has attempted to offer an audience this view.
* The Post-Modern stage often retells perspectives using subversion, mimicry, parody, silencing, marginalisation, privileging, historical distortion etc. Stronger students that came to the exam with a thorough understanding of the era we are currently in, fared well in the MOCKS and will be prepared for the likelihood of a PM text Section One of the WACE exam.

**External Marker’s Report**

**Year 12 Literature Examination Semester 2 2022**

Students are writing fluently and are demonstrating their familiarity with their studied texts on many levels. Most students were able to provide relevant evidence to support their ideas. However, their engagement with the question is an area of concern. Many responses appeared to have been based on previous memorised pieces which students did not adapt well to the chosen question. Although these responses appeared to address the concepts involved in the question on some level, direct reference to the words used in the question is central to demonstrating engagement with it as is using key, relevant, syllabus terms (very few students referred to representation a key Literature ATAR concept).

Knowledge and understanding of linguistic choices is strong with students including close analysis of their evidence. Stylistic discussion is not as well covered. Where close linguistic analysis works for poetry because of the features of this genre, this approach is not leading students to demonstrate their knowledge of drama and prose in the same way. Some students for example wrote about the studied novels without referring to any narrative conventions. Focussing on the ideas in a play without referring to performance aspects, and the audience, does not demonstrate the students’ understanding of course concepts involving this genre. The extended questions are not about close reading, they are designed to assess students’ broader understanding and application of course concepts.

Many students are opening their responses with interesting quotes and statements but then do not use them to formulate their thesis statement or reading of the text in relation to the question. There is no point in including this if the idea is not informing the response. When a student used the ideas in the quote in their conclusion, the closing of their response left the reader thinking.

Some students need to work on their choice of question. Being familiar with the course concepts that underlie each question is key here.

**Question 2**

**How does an author critique an ideology through marginalisation?**

Students were able to identify ideologies including how capitalism is critiqued in *The Grapes of Wrath* and the way in which orientalism is critiqued in *M Butterfly*. Stronger responses identified the defining beliefs, attitudes and values of these ideologies and explained how they were represented. Some students did not appear to understand what is meant by marginalisation (it involves groups who are denied voice by society, are disempowered by societal structures etc it is not, for example, how the capitalists are marginalised because they are not given a role in the text).

**Question 3**

**How might a contemporary reader react to a literary text that has been published in a diversely different time and place?**

This is essentially a context question but many students did not clearly articulate the prevailing attitudes and values of each context. Stronger responses connected ideas to the student’s own experience during Covid or with climate change. “Diversely different time and place” was not really addressed. Writing the date of publication is not enough to cover this part of the question.

Some students wrote about ideas resonating with or being rejected by the contemporary reader but did not indicate why they would react this way by explaining what values and attitudes they are bringing to the text.

“Might” is an important word too as it suggests that there may be differing reactions – this was not acknowledged with more of a generic “reader response” being offered.

A majority of the studied texts were published in a diversely different time and place – what is it that a contemporary reader brings to the text that allows them to engage with the ideas? For example, what is E E Cummings saying in the interwar period about his society, or about coming of age etc?

**Question 4**

**How is a text you have studied reflective of a literary movement?**

Again only a few students defined the key terms and how they were interpreting them in their response.

Is the counterculture movement of 1960s/70s a literary movement? In reference to *Monkey Grip* would not feminist literary movement be more appropriate. This question seemed made for responding with reference to E E Cummings or *M Butterfly* as examples of modernism.

Is naturalism a literary movement? Some students made up literary movements (counter-culturism is a social movement not literary for example). Being a naturist is not the same as naturalism, a literary theory.

**Question 5**

**When a reader acknowledges the role authorial context plays in a text’s representations, they gain a greater perspective.**

This is a complex question in many ways. The reader’s initial understanding of the text, needs to be articulated so that the greater perspective can be discussed – what has changed having taken the author’s context into account. Perspective is a syllabus concept that was not acknowledged. Perspective can change depending on an individual’s experiences, in this case familiarity with the author’s context and what is influencing them in writing. What are the representations that are being offered?

**Question 6**

**Explore how an author has used non-traditional methods to introduce new ideas to a particular readership.**

Again the key words were not defined in enough responses. What are the new ideas? Who is the particular audience? What is meant by non-traditional methods? Those who accounted for these three key points wrote well.

Arguing Wagan Watson’s poetry is non-traditional by discussing vivid imagery is not enough. Confronting imagery has been used by many poets including Wilfred Owen, Maya Angelou and Bruce Dawe. Is it something about the form and structure, have genres been blended, have conventions been subverted? Has WW used traditional language?

**Question 7**

**Challenge what it is to be Australian deconstructing one iconic Australian text you have studied and its attempt to build a national identity.**

Very few responses to this question. Important to define what makes the text iconic and what constitutes national identity. What ideas, values, beliefs etc bring Australians together, are important in the collective thinking about ourselves as a nation. The challenge part of the question was not addressed.

**Question 8**

**Intertextuality offers readers the ability to maximise on meaning. Celebrate this technique and/or reading strategy using at least one text you have studied in your response.**

Some good responses about *M Butterfly* and the inter/intra-textual *Madama Butterfly*. The discussion of Biblical allusion by Steinbeck was sound and was strongest when linked to his purpose – foregrounding altruism – the idea that collectively people can overcome adversity. He is rejecting Christianity as a faith but sees that people need spiritual beliefs - where does he think they will come from?

**Question 9 (Prose)**

**How has an author you have studied sought to naturalise ways of thinking and being?**

This was a difficult question for the studied texts as writers do not set out to naturalise ideas. Both Steinbeck and Garner offer a representation of their respective societies that challenge the dominant values that define them in their contexts. Steinbeck critiques capitalism so he is writing against what he sees in his context. Garner is offering one of the first examples of feminist literature to Australians – what Nora, Jaro et al get up to in the 1970s is countercultural, again this is not a representation of dominant attitudes of Australian society.

Naturalising is not about representing nature and human beings’ connection to the land. Naturalising is not a conscious act by the author to change ways of thinking – rather it is a way of representing that reinforces dominant attitudes and ideologies.

Where is the reference to narrative conventions, narrative point of view, setting, etc? Responses relied on discussion of characterisation.

**Question 10 (Poetry)**

**A poem is more than a collection of language features. Discuss this notion by analysing other poetic conventions and their ability to make meaning.**

Students know their poems but many did not distinguish between language features and poetic conventions. It was difficult as many poetic conventions involved language features. Stronger responses looked at enjambment (not many references to caesura), the way in which poems are structured. No response took into account the title of the poem in this question. There was a lot of discussion of imagery which was conveyed through alliteration, metaphor etc. I would argue these are language features.

**Question 11 (Drama) – most popular question**

**Justify as a response how one dramatic text you have studied attempts to retell the truths of a situation**.

Overall well handled. Again some responses not using the words of the question or referring to dramatic conventions. For example, what are the “truths”, how has the playwright represented the situation and revealed what was really happening? How does Huang expose orientalism and patriarchal ideas in his play?