



INSIGHT
YEAR 12 Trial Exam Paper

2013

ENGLISH

Written examination

Sample responses to Section C
with assessor comments

This book contains:

- three graded sample responses for Section C
- annotated assessor comments for each response including mark range, understanding of ideas, analysis of language and visual features, and awareness and control of language

This trial examination produced by Insight Publications is NOT an official VCAA paper for the 2013 English written examination. Every effort has been made to gain permission to reproduce any images herein; failure to do so is not intended to limit the rights of the owner.

This examination paper is licensed to be printed, photocopied or placed on the school intranet and used only within the confines of the purchasing school for examining their students. No trial examination or part thereof may be issued or passed on to any other party including other schools, practising or non-practising teachers, tutors, parents, websites or publishing agencies without the written consent of Insight Publications.

Copyright © Insight Publications 2013

SECTION C – Analysis of language use

How is written and visual language used to attempt to persuade the audience to share the point of view in the opinion piece ‘**The vanishing art of handwriting**’?

SAMPLE RESPONSES

High-range response (Mark range: 9–10)

In ‘The vanishing art of handwriting’, Leslie Slater argues that although handwriting is disappearing from our lives, there is a range of reasons why it should be valued and not lost from our culture. **(1)** In a mostly moderate tone, Slater uses a range of supporting arguments and strategies to convey the value of handwriting, from personal anecdote to scientific evidence. In addition, Slater sets out the reasons why handwriting is disappearing from our lives, emphasising the risk that a valuable part of our culture could easily be lost and therefore increasing the importance of understanding how handwriting enhances our lives. **(2)**

Slater begins with a personal reflection on the pleasure of writing with a fountain pen. Although this is not overtly persuasive, the opening section does convey to the reader Slater’s strong personal interest and engagement in the issue. The connection between handwriting and human qualities is subtly suggested through phrases such as ‘a mirror held up to their human creator’. **(3)** Later, in discussing Philip Hensher’s book *The Missing Ink*, Slater favourably compares handwriting to the use of a computer. The positively loaded terms ‘personal and unique’ are used to describe handwriting, whereas the more neutral or negatively loaded terms ‘mechanical and mass-produced’ are used to describe computers. **(4)** Even though Slater is clearly presenting a personal view, the close connection Slater establishes between handwriting and humanity positions the reader to see handwriting as something inseparable from being human, and therefore something which should not be lost. **(5)**

The reference to Hensher’s book also consolidates Slater’s personal reflections, indicating that such thoughts are shared, particularly among those who are educated and interested in books and writing. **(6)** The audience for *The Missing Ink* would have a strong overlap with that of the weekend newspaper supplement in which Slater’s opinion piece appeared, which would be likely to be read by professionals looking for relaxing yet sophisticated reading material. **(7)** Slater thus appeals to shared tastes and interests, inviting the reader to feel part of a community which would be interested in and concerned about the loss of handwriting. The image placed next to the discussion of Hensher’s book also reinforces these sentiments, showing a beautiful fountain pen and neat, perfectly formed handwriting – things which appear valuable because of their beauty, and which the reader is encouraged to feel should be kept for this if for no other reason. **(8)**

The image caption ‘Beautiful handwriting: a vanishing art?’ introduces the idea – also signalled by the title of the article – that handwriting is becoming much less common. **(9)** Slater moves from Hensher’s book to consider the education system in Australia, giving the article a wider relevance and importance. The difficulties caused by the decline of handwriting in school, especially when students do exams, are conveyed by negative terms such as ‘struggle’ and ‘fatigued’. These words create an image of an exhausted and nearly defeated student, contrary to the more familiar image of teenagers as healthy and energetic, emphasising the problems already being caused by the decline of handwriting. Slater could possibly have considered the positive aspects of greater computer use in schools, such as for students who find it difficult to write by hand. The omission of such aspects encourages readers to see only the negative side of the issue, and to feel that it is inevitable that handwriting will continue to disappear from schools, and therefore from everyday life. **(10)**

The image accompanying the paragraph on computers potentially being used in final Year 12 exams also reinforces the idea of the widespread use of computers in education. The pencil and paper lie beside the computer, apparently not being used; indeed, some pages are screwed up, perhaps a metaphor for the rejection of the 'old' technology. Instead the hands lie seemingly relaxed on the keyboard and writing fills the screen, suggesting this is now the 'normal' way of doing work, and the pencil is simply unnecessary. Although this could be seen as contradicting Slater's argument for the value of handwriting, it does emphasise the point that handwriting is disappearing, which is part of the overall viewpoint being presented. **(11)**

The use of quotations from experts gives Slater's arguments more force and weight. An experienced teacher, Kim Jones, is quoted in the paragraph on the teaching of handwriting, and later a university professor is quoted in the discussion of handwriting's positive effects on the brain. In this part of the article the discussion becomes more serious and the style becomes slightly more formal in such phrases as 'Although it is far from clear ...' This shift in tone and style emphasises the importance of this section, which provides the strongest evidence for the importance and value of handwriting. Indeed, the enlarged quotation from Professor Berninger highlights this evidence as key to the overall argument about the need to preserve handwriting skills, drawing the reader's attention to it even when they are reading the earlier parts of the article. **(12)**

From the strongly personal tone of the opening paragraphs, the article becomes more objective towards the end, emphasising scientific evidence and expert testimony. This positions the reader to see the issue as having wide interest – attracting international research and discussion – and as having far-reaching implications. The reader is led to see handwriting not just as a matter of personal taste but as of high significance for learning and thinking. **(13)** Slater concludes by creating a greater sense of urgency in the reader's mind, with the phrase 'until it's too late' conveying the need for action. This brings together the two strands of Slater's argument: that handwriting use is declining and that handwriting has great value to humanity, giving coherence and impact to the conclusion. The use of inclusive language ('we can't also keep', 'a crucial part of our minds') moves back to the more personal tone of the article's opening, while also highlighting the wide relevance and significance of the issue. The reader is left with the feeling that Slater is right to be concerned about the future of handwriting, and that they too are a stakeholder in this issue. **(14)**

General assessor comments for high-range response

- (1) The student identifies the overall argument presented in the article.
- (2) Good general acknowledgement of some of the persuasive strategies used by Slater; effective use of metalanguage (e.g. 'personal anecdote').
- (3) Good analysis of one of the more subtle persuasive techniques.
- (4) Correct identification of how certain words are loaded in the article.
- (5) Good unpacking of the loaded terms identified.
- (6) Effective discussion of how language works to persuade the reader.
- (7) Good discussion of how the language works to persuade the intended/implied audience.
- (8) Well integrated discussion of the first image.
- (9) Identifies a link between the caption and the title – shows a good understanding of how the article works with one of its central ideas.
- (10) The student shows an astute sense of how omission of material works to persuade.
- (11) Good, nuanced discussion of the image of the computer and how it works to support Slater's overall argument.
- (12) Excellent discussion of the use of evidence and an effective link with the enlarged quotation. This shows a strong appreciation of how the content and the presentation of the article work together to persuade the reader to agree with the writer's viewpoint.
- (13) Shows good awareness of the overall shape of the argument and a strong understanding of the ideas presented.
- (14) A strong conclusion which highlights how the article works as a whole to influence the reader.

Understanding of the ideas and points of view presented

The student's response shows a strong understanding of the way in which the article works through a connected series of ideas and supporting arguments. It also conveys an understanding of the way in which the overall argument is shaped, progressively developing a sense of the importance of handwriting and its relevance to the broader culture.

Analysis of ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view and to persuade readers

The student shows a strong understanding of the ways in which the article works to persuade readers, from strategies such as the careful selection of words with particular connotations and the use of evidence, to the overall shaping of the argument and the use of tone. The visual material is analysed perceptively and clearly linked to the written material. Quotations from the article are smoothly integrated into the discussion.

Controlled and effective use of language appropriate to the task

A wide vocabulary is used to give precision and clarity to the discussion. A variety of sentence structures are used and the response is fluent and coherent. Phrases such as 'positively loaded', 'encourages readers to see' and 'consolidates' show how the writer's language and arguments shape the reader's response.

Mid-range response (Mark range: 4–6)

In ‘The vanishing art of handwriting’ the writer Leslie Slater argues that handwriting is disappearing due to the increasing use of computers and smartphones. He **(1)** uses experts and evidence to convince the reader that handwriting should not be lost altogether, using a moderate tone to reason with the reader. **(2)**

At first Slater shows that he enjoys handwriting with a fountain pen. This is a personal viewpoint and draws the reader into the article. Slater suggests that fountain pens are more environmentally friendly than disposable pens, which is another argument in their favour. He refers to a new book that also describes handwriting in positive ways, and which also argues that handwriting is disappearing. This supports the point of view presented by Slater and shows the reader that the issue is being discussed more widely. **(3)**

Next Slater considers the use of computers in schools and suggests that because computers are so common students find it hard to handwrite their exams. A quotation from teacher Kim Jones backs this up. The words ‘sore and fatigued’ make the reader associate pain with handwriting, making them think that the current system is just making it difficult for students, and something should be changed. **(4)** It is inevitable that all exams will be done on computers anyway so then handwriting will disappear even more. Slater uses a cliché ‘the writing is on the wall’ to emphasise this fact in a humorous way. **(5)**

Slater uses a number of rhetorical questions to make the reader reflect on the issue. This sets the reader up to see how Slater will answer those questions with evidence about how handwriting is really important. This evidence comes from Professor Virginia Berninger who found that children ‘wrote more and wrote faster’ when handwriting compared to using a computer. This quotation also appears in big letters which draws the reader’s attention to this evidence as being very significant. Slater also includes other research in favour of handwriting and uses phrases like ‘brain scans’ to show that the research is scientific and therefore reliable. The fact that research has been done into the issue makes the reader feel that it is very important and also gives solid facts to back up Slater’s personal point of view. **(6)**

The images in the article show the different forms of writing. In one a fountain pen and very neat handwriting show the way writing was done in the past. In the other picture somebody is writing at a computer which is now very common. The first picture looks very old fashioned and not part of the present world at all, which supports Slater’s view that handwriting is disappearing. In contrast, writing on a computer looks very normal. Beside the computer are some pieces of paper and a pencil, suggesting that the old and the new can exist side by side. This suggests that Slater’s idea that handwriting is on the way out could be too extreme and alarmist. **(7)**

In conclusion Slater raises the reader’s anxiety about handwriting no longer being used or even taught in schools. This makes the issue seem very important and urgent, and inclines the reader to agree with Slater that we should not just let handwriting disappear from our lives. **(8)**

General assessor comments for mid-range response

- (1) The use of the male pronoun 'he' when the actual gender of the writer is unclear is acceptable, providing the pronoun use is consistent.
- (2) A clear introduction that shows a sound understanding of the issue.
- (3) The student identifies and brings together ideas to support the importance of handwriting. However they do not focus on specific words or phrases, or use metalanguage. This makes the analysis a little too general.
- (4) Good analysis of the terms 'sore' and 'fatigued'.
- (5) The reference to a cliché needs to be unpacked further. Words such as 'anyway' and 'even more' are too informal for the level of analysis required here.
- (6) This paragraph contains some good points that highlight how Slater uses scientific evidence to support his/her point of view.
- (7) The discussion of images is sound but should be more detailed, and should relate the images to Slater's article.
- (8) A simple but adequate conclusion.

Understanding of the ideas and points of view presented

The student shows a sound understanding of the ideas, though tends to express them in simple terms. The ways in which the ideas are connected or deliberately placed in a certain order are not considered. The response is a little short; more detail and a closer focus on ideas and the overall structure of the article would have improved the response significantly.

Analysis of ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view and to persuade readers

Some persuasive techniques are identified, such as rhetorical questions, cliché and the use of scientific terminology for evidence. The student goes some way to explaining how these impact on the reader, but this analysis tends to be brief and too vague (e.g. 'makes the reader feel that it is very important'). Discussing the images all together in a single paragraph is less effective than considering them in relation to the written material.

Controlled and effective use of language appropriate to the task

The student's expression is clear and fairly fluent, and some metalanguage is used appropriately. Sentences tend to have a simple structure and do not always flow well. Some vocabulary is not precise enough to do the job of a language analysis (e.g. 'big letters', 'really important'), and there are occasional lapses into an informal register (e.g. 'anyway').

This page is blank

Low-range response (Mark range: 2–3)

In ‘The vanishing art of handwriting’ the writer (1) says it would be a loss if handwriting was no longer used. Slater enjoys using a fountain pen and likes how each person shows something of themselves in their handwriting. The writer also quotes evidence to show that people learn better if they write rather than use a computer. (2)

Slater begins with personal experience, using the first person I to show a personal connection to the issue. (3) Slater’s enjoyment of using a fountain pen comes through in the description of using it and also the negative aspects to disposable pens that end up in landfill. The article then refers to a new book on the issue that agrees that handwriting is worthwhile but is being lost. It then goes on to consider school exams which are still written but might be done on computers in the future. This shows that the writer has considered the issue from different angles and the article is not just giving their personal preference for writing with a fountain pen. (4) The reader is led to see the issue as relevant, especially in the area of education.

Next the article quotes evidence that people learn better and can write better when using handwriting compared to using a computer. This evidence suggests there is something more to handwriting than just a way of recording something, and that it involves our brains as well as our hands. Phrases such as ‘brain scans’ and ‘recognition tests’ make the research appear more scientific and therefore reliable. (5) This makes the reader think the issue is important and more research should be done before people forget how to write altogether.

The images show both handwriting and a computer, showing both forms of writing discussed in the article. The image of the pen and running writing shows the kind of writing that might not be done for much longer. (6) The image of the computer and pages printed out by a printer show what is more common now. The caption stating that ‘exams are still handwritten’ makes the reader think that this is a bit outdated (7) when so many people are using computers. The scrunched up sheets of paper suggest the waste of using pencil and paper when editing can easily be done on screen. (8)

In conclusion the writer suggests that handwriting should not be lost as it is a valuable thing from the past and it can possibly help us to learn better. (9) The words ‘valuable’, ‘unique’ and ‘beautiful’ lead the reader to think we should not lose the ability to handwrite and show the writer’s strong belief in this idea. (10)

General assessor comments for low-range response

- (1) The writer's name should be used.
- (2) The introduction states two points made in the article, but does not identify the main contention or overall point of view presented.
- (3) Identifying the narrative voice is a good first step, but the analysis then needs to explain how this is used to persuade. Instead, the discussion goes on to summarise the points made, which is not required by the task.
- (4) This paragraph concludes with useful comments, but these need to be developed in more detail to explain how the writer attempts to persuade the reader to agree.
- (5) A good comment on the use of evidence and the quotations are well chosen. However, there is no connection made between this evidence and the point of view being presented by the writer.
- (6) This discussion of the images is too descriptive; the repetition of 'shows'/'showing' weakens the effectiveness of the writing and does not explain the persuasive effect of the images.
- (7) The phrase 'a bit outdated' is too informal, though the idea and observation are good and could have been expanded.
- (8) A good observation of a detail of one image; however, this needs to be linked with the writer's overall argument and other parts of the article.
- (9) This summary of the article's conclusion is too general and again gives a summary rather than analysing the persuasive impact.
- (10) The focus on the writer's word choices is good, but the discussion provides only a simple version of the overall argument and does not explain the persuasive effects of the writer's language in sufficient detail.

Understanding of the ideas and points of view presented

The student shows a general understanding of the writer's main ideas and supporting points. The overall point of view is never clearly identified, though, which is a major weakness in the analysis. The student also overlooks the complexities in the argument and does not consider the use of tone or the way in which the argument is shaped.

Analysis of ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view and to persuade readers

Because the overall point of view is never clearly identified, the student is unable to explain the ways in which language might work to persuade readers to agree with this point of view. Instead, most of the response is simply a summary of the writer's points. Nevertheless, phrases such as 'This makes the reader think' show the student has understood the nature of the task, and some comments do show a limited sense of how the language influences the reader to respond.

Controlled and effective use of language appropriate to the task

Although the student's expression is clear, it is fairly simple and occasionally repetitive. A more varied and precise vocabulary for analysing persuasive language would have enhanced this response.

END OF SAMPLE RESPONSES