English Studies

2012 Chief Assessor's Report

Government of South Australia

SACE Board of SA

ENGLISH STUDIES

2012 CHIEF ASSESSOR'S REPORT

OVERVIEW

Chief Assessors' reports give an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, the quality of student performance, and any relevant statistical information.

SCHOOL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 1: Shared Studies

The shared text component is the core of the English Studies course and it is clear that teachers aimed to enrich their students' experiences of literature by selecting a variety of texts, designing interesting tasks, and challenging students to explore ideas and stylistic features at a complex level. That much of the material presented for moderation demonstrated insightful knowledge and understanding, broad skills of analysis and application, and the capacity to communicate precisely, was ample evidence of the rich quality of teaching and learning in the subject. It was also clear that teachers have embraced the changes, challenges and possibilities of the new English Studies course and this was particularly evident in the variety of task design. While most teachers appropriately required some responses to be written in essay form, this was sensibly balanced with a range of other forms, such as oral presentations, paragraph responses, analytical annotations, poster displays, and multimodal presentations.

The most successful tasks in all formats were those that stimulated an analytical approach to the texts. Tasks that relied only on demonstrating knowledge and understanding, such as character descriptions, recounts of key moments, or oral presentations teaching the content of a poem, often prevented students from demonstrating that which is foundational to the study of literature — an awareness of the author's construction of the text and the way in which the reader is positioned to respond to the thematic concerns of the play, film, poem, or prose text they are studying.

Across the shared study, students fared best when they demonstrated knowledge and understanding of the devices and features that the author had used to influence the reader's response and how these were particular to the various text types of prose, poetry, play, or film. The students analysed how these devices were used to position the reader, and analytically explored the similarities and differences between texts when the task involved comparison. In comparative tasks, the most successful responses had a structured line of reasoning around the exploration of multiple texts and made the comparison essential to the argument.

Engaging with the question or the intention of the task, maintaining a coherent and cohesive structure, providing textual evidence that was deftly woven into the fabric of

the response, and appropriately using the correct terminology associated with the text type were also features of the most successful work. These pieces had also been drafted and polished to ensure the accuracy and fluency of communication. For this reason it is sensible to allow students the opportunity to respond to feedback and draft work. Submitting tasks that have been completed wholly under test conditions does not reflect the full range of ways in which responses may be produced. It is appropriate for students to produce initial responses under timed conditions and then be allowed to amend and improve that work for submission in the shared study when assessment may take place. This approach provides both opportunities to develop skills for the examination and for students to enhance the quality of the final product. It is also reflective of the fact that the assessment tasks for the shared studies may be produced in a wide variety of ways. While the skills developed in the production of shared study assessment tasks and the examination are transferable, the shared studies provides students who require more time reflecting, drafting, and polishing the opportunity to succeed.

Some teachers chose to construct tasks that addressed the specific feature An1 (which concerns analysis of connections between personal experiences, ideas, values, and beliefs, and those explored in familiar and unfamiliar texts) in an explicit fashion that required the student to adopt a personal voice. Some teachers assessed the specific feature through the students' implicit reference to the themes and ideas in the texts studied. Some teachers set up tasks in which students were required to analyse the ways in which authors influence and position readers and viewers to respond in particular ways to issues, ideas, and beliefs. All of these approaches are appropriate in addressing this specific feature. Also appropriate is the use of recent exam questions around which to structure tasks, and in particular the use of critical reading exercises from previous years.

It is important to note that within the shared study there should be at least one critical reading study, a study of two single texts, one paired text study, and one poetry study. These four tasks form the minimum of four required for this assessment type. There may be up to two additional assessment tasks included in the shared study. For moderation it is useful to have the shared study collated for each student. Explicit labelling of registration numbers and the clear allocation of a final grade also makes the confirmation of teacher assessment more efficient.

Assessment Type 2: Individual Study

The task design of the individual study is more rigidly defined by the subject outline and is one with which teachers are clearly familiar. The supporting study, which is not required for submission at moderation, provides the student with an opportunity to explore two texts in a broad fashion and provides the teacher with a verification tool to ensure that the work is the student's own. Students should view this component of the task as an opportunity to acquire knowledge and understanding about the two texts, analyse a range of ideas and techniques, and explore the similarities and differences between the two texts.

The choice of texts is foundational to the success of the study and students should select those works that are created in such a way as to provide opportunity for analysis. Texts which are plot and/or character driven can limit students to recount and to viewing characters as real people. Contrastingly, texts that extend students, engage their interest, and provide interesting comparative elements often result in successful critical essays. Students should be aware of the features and

metalanguage of the text type that they are studying and pay particular attention to the way in which the authors have applied techniques in order to influence the reader or viewer. Labelling stylistic features provides evidence of *knowledge and understanding*, but it is the exploration of the effect of the feature that provides evidence of *analysis* and the careful selection of examples that demonstrates sophisticated *application*. Equally important is the understanding that the final critical essay, of a maximum of 2000 words, must be a paired-text essay in which the similarities and differences between texts are analysed. To do this, it is essential that comparison is integrated throughout the essay and is a foundational aspect of the critical essay.

Successful essays involve the careful construction of an argument with a clear line of reasoning. The composition of critical essays involves detailed planning in which students consider the organisation of their ideas and the overall cohesion of the document. In this endeavour, an introduction that provides an overview of the structure of the argument, topic sentences that foreground a focus to each paragraph, and appropriate links between ideas within paragraphs create an overall arrangement that make the essay accessible, fluid and cohesive. This approach avoids the introduction becoming a repetitive recount of the main ideas of the essay. In the conclusion, instead of using the final paragraph as a way to complete the argument, students are advised to reflect on the question, and end on a strong note. Polished and accurate expression is expected in the critical essay and students should avoid a convoluted writing style that appears sophisticated but in fact obscures the clarity of ideas.

Assessment Type 3: Text Production

Teachers have obviously given thought to creative ways in which to develop tasks for the text production. While narratives and expository writing formed the backbone of the written tasks, there were also a range of other tasks represented, such as poems, scripts, experimental writing, and letters. Those students who demonstrated a detailed understanding of the stylistic features of the text type with which they were working and applied this understanding in creative ways produced the most successful outcomes. Writing that was formulaic, predictable, or derivative tended to lack the flair of the more successful pieces. Tasks should therefore encourage students to use a variety of stylistic features in text productions. A narrative that involves an exploration of imagery, narrative perspective, and structural features is more likely to produce sophisticated work than a task that requires students to describe their experiences in Year 12. Designing a variety of written tasks in the folio also provides students with an opportunity to demonstrate a range of understanding, skills, and application.

While the two written tasks in the text production folio are not permitted to be responses to shared texts, it is appropriate for the oral presentations to be generated from the shared study of texts. However, it is also advisable to create variety in the oral tasks. Two analytical presentations of shared text material may not allow students to demonstrate a range of understanding and skills in presenting in the oral mode. Demonstrating an applied understanding of the stylistic features of an engaging, interesting oral which employs oral techniques in a creative fashion was the key feature of success in this assessment type. Many students had clearly engaged with this aspect of the course and a pleasing range of tasks was represented at moderation, including speeches, toasts, formal tutorials, Photo Stories, and demonstrations. Moderators did comment on the need for teachers to

carefully document and present the oral product at moderation. Recordings — both video and aural — are ideal since they provide moderators with detailed evidence of the outcome. Similarly useful are those artefacts that provide evidence of the quality of the oral: transcripts, photographs, printed PowerPoint presentations, cue cards, and so on. Detailed marking sheets, particularly those that address the elements of presentation (vocal delivery, engagement with the audience, use of resources, interest, style of presentation, pace, etc.) also provide valuable evidence of the assessment event. In presenting all of this material — recordings, artefacts, marks sheets — it is essential that teachers clearly label students and the documentation that is relevant to them.

EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT

Assessment Type 4: Examination

The insights gathered by the marking team reveal that the examination this year was clear and straightforward, and enabled students to showcase their knowledge of texts and their writing skills. The majority of the students were prepared for the task and could adapt their knowledge of the texts to the demands of the questions.

The standard of writing in the exam was very high and textual knowledge, for the most part, very good. The questions required sophisticated knowledge of texts and, in particular, knowledge of the writer's craft and the ways in which authors used language (including image and sound) to convey meaning. Markers were impressed by the students' knowledge of techniques and stylistic features in texts across the board — the C band responses almost always referred to stylistic features of texts in their various answers. In particular, students across the grade range seem to be able to discuss film techniques in quite sophisticated ways, although those in C and D bands usually referred to techniques without discussing their effects within a text or across texts. The material produced in the most successful responses had a close focus on the question, and displayed depth and detail in analysis. The marking panel was impressed by the quality of the more successful responses produced under exam conditions. This year, many markers noted a greater capacity of students to discuss structure, imagery, and irony and to actually use their knowledge to compose an answer to the question.

The main challenge across the paper for many students was embracing the notion of comparison, which was a mandatory element of the paper; specifically, 'Compare the ways' was the stem for every question in Section B and also for the last part of the critical reading. Some students, who otherwise showed a good knowledge and understanding of the texts and their techniques, would have benefited from structuring their answers in a way which foregrounded the comparative element that was at the core of these questions. Where comparison was required, a minority of students simply seemed to give lip-service to comparing, and instead opted to block their discussion; for instance: 'Here is my section on text 1 … and here is my section on text 2.' The integrated approach was not always present even in the more successful responses; perhaps this is a stylistic feature students could focus upon in order to more confidently show how one meets the performance standard of Ap2 (Application 2), which for the A level is:

> In comparative exercises, a perceptive recognition of connections between texts, through responses that integrate discussion of texts and move easily between them.

The more successful responses displayed a good use of connectives and were well structured to actively compare texts.

In the following section of the report, specific comments are provided on each of the questions in the examination. Extracts from the instructions to markers are provided, as are comments made by markers about the specific ways in which students responded to the questions.

SECTION A: SHARED STUDIES (Questions 1 to 6)

QUESTIONS ON SINGLE TEXTS

Question 1

How does the author of a prescribed text use arrivals and departures of one kind or another to explore ideas?

Students were able to interpret 'arrivals and departures' either literally or metaphorically. The more successful responses established the ideas being explored in their chosen text and then in their analysis discussed the fact that such arrivals and departures are:

- symbolic of ideas — for example, *Psycho*, *Secrets and Lies*
- vehicles for the introduction and/or development of ideas which underpin the narrative — for example, *Candelo*, *Border Crossing*
- a way to introduce new characters into the narrative who, in turn, represent ideas — for example, *Great Expectations*, *Snow Falling on Cedars.*

Students needed to explore how arrivals and departures are used, not simply observe that they are present in the text. Students who only provided a recount of arrivals and departures did not address all aspects of the question.

Question 2

'When systems are unjust, people of conscience must act.'

How are stylistic features used by an author to explore this idea in a prescribed text?

The quote established the focal idea and it was expected that students would contend with the concepts within it. Where they chose to place the emphasis depended upon the text; in some texts the 'system' may be a broad social context, in others it may be the microcosmic context of a family or similar grouping. In some texts 'people of conscience' may fail to act or choose not to act, in others those characters may act sacrificially or similar ways. The more successful responses established the concept of the system itself, and then explored 'people's' responses to the flaws of that system. The question also required students to show how the author uses stylistic features to explore the idea, and so a simple recount of the ideas themselves was not a feature of the more successful responses.

Question 3

How does the author of a prescribed text use elements of both the real and the imagined to explore ideas?

There were a number of ways that students responded to this question and markers were flexible in accepting students' definitions of the terms 'real' and 'imagined' (as long as the approach was justified). Students needed to show how this blend of real and imagined is used to support specific ideas which the student identified. If students chose texts based on reality (e.g. *The Shark Net* or *When We Were Kings*) the response may have involved the analysis of the way the author uses real events as the basis to their narrative and how they have balanced this with elements of fiction to explore ideas; conversely, if they chose texts that involve aspects such as science fiction or magical realism, their discussion may have considered the way that the author uses these features to explore ideas. Students could also have discussed the way in which authors use historical events around which to develop their fictional narrative and present ideas — for example, *The Lives of Others, The Secret River, Things Fall Apart, Good Night and Good Luck, The Crucible, Cabaret.* Alternatively, some students chose to analyse the way that the author takes elements of the 'real' world, and creates an 'imagined' world through which ideas are explored.

Question 4

Show how the author of a prescribed text uses the interaction between a protagonist and an antagonist to explore ideas.

Markers were flexible in accepting students' decisions about the identification of 'antagonist' and 'protagonist' (as long as the approach was justified). Successful responses to this question were those in which students analysed the way that the author utilises the tension between these opposing forces to explore ideas. In some texts, the interactions may be intentionally subtle (e.g. between the brothers in *Gattaca*), while in other texts, such as *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* or the Shakespearean tragedies, the interactions may be overtly presented in order to explore ideas. While some students chose a single antagonist and a single protagonist, those students who constructed a coherent argument exploring the concept in a range of antagonists and/or protagonists of varying sorts also responded to the question appropriately.

Question 5

How does the author of a prescribed text explore the idea that it is often the most unlikely people who perform acts of heroism?

The 'how' in this question assumed that students would be conscious of the role of the author in exploring the central idea. Thus there needed to be a presentation of the techniques used by the author. The central focus of this question is that heroism can emerge in unlikely people. It was therefore not enough for students to show that heroism is present in an individual or individuals. The better responses were an exploration of the *unexpected nature* of those qualities, and of the extent and nature of that heroism. This discussion was dependent on the text chosen and markers were flexible in accepting students' interpretations of heroism within the text — as long as the approach was justified.

Question 6

Show how the author of a prescribed text explores one *of the following pairs of ideas:*

- *order and chaos*
- *bound and free*
- *together and separate.*

There is contrast and tension within each pair of ideas and students were expected to discuss both aspects of the pair, but only *one* pairing. Each pairing could be read literally and/or metaphorically. The point is that the pairs of concepts are very general and students were free to apply each pair to their text as they chose. The pairs needed to be seen for what they are — catchy strategies designed to give students opportunities to demonstrate their knowledge of a text. Markers were flexible in accepting students' interpretations of order and chaos, bound and free, and together and separate, as long as the approach adopted was textually justified. Some students dealt with the concepts distinctly (e.g. they explored those elements that are ordered, and then those elements that are chaotic); alternatively, other students discussed the pairing as a single concept (e.g. they explored an author's exploration of the destructive nature of chaos and the need for order); the balance of this depended upon the text chosen.

SECTION B: SHARED STUDIES (Questions 7 to 15)

PART 1: QUESTIONS ON POETRY TEXTS

Students were instructed to write on a range of poets and poems. A range is defined as 'at least two'. While the subject outline requires *teachers* to select at least two poets from the prescribed list, the stem of each question includes the phrase 'the poets you have studied this year', and does not specifically require students to use poets from the prescribed list. Students are therefore permitted to write on any poets of their choice.

All four questions begin with the verb 'compare'. It was expected that students would examine both similarities and differences within the poets in response to this instruction. However, the balance of similarities versus differences was dependent on the poets selected for study.

All four questions required students to 'compare *the ways*' that poets approach the subject. This phrase allows students to examine the stylistic features and poetic techniques employed by the poets, and also to explore the approach taken to the idea stated in the question.

Question 7

Poetry:

- *immerses us in the lives of others*
- *raises our consciousness*
- *confronts us*
- *attempts to offer answers*
- *captures the essence of the human experience.*

Compare the ways in which the poets you studied this year fulfil one *or* two *of the purposes listed above.*

This is a broad question that allowed for a wide range of responses to a wide range of poets and poems. Markers were prepared for a wide range of interpretations for each purpose and these were but a few possible examples:

- The first point could be taken as lives of other cultures or communities, or the lives of specific individuals, characters, personae, and so on.
- The second point leads to potential social issues, but the student might have taken a narrower view of personal issues that they believed the poet explores.
- The third point also could be interpreted very broadly; we could be confronted by issues of social injustice, indifference, and the like, or we could be confronted by specific acts of cruelty, moments of intense emotion, a particular tone, attitude, or image, and so on. There are many ways that the students interpreted each of these elements.
- The fourth point could be broad in terms of the poet presenting answers to major life questions or the students could have, for example, focused on very specific questions posed within poems.
- The fifth point might allow for a focus on key life experiences — such as birth, love, death — on a broad universal level, or students might have focused closely on what they believe the poet suggests makes us human, such as certain qualities, emotional states of being, philosophical concepts, or specific moments.

However, students needed to take note of the limiting words in this question and ensure that they only addressed ‘one or two’ of the purposes. They need not have necessarily discussed each element in every poem, nor for every poet, but they needed to make sure that the comparison aspect was addressed adequately for whichever one or two purposes they chose. ‘Compare the ways’ allowed for similarities and differences and also provided opportunity for students to explore stylistic features used and/or the way in which the poets approached the subject matter itself.

Question 8

Compare the ways in which the poets you studied this year evoke emotional reactions in order to influence the reader’s response to ideas.

The emotional reactions discussed in answers to this question could cover any emotions in the broad emotional spectrum. ‘Compare the ways’ allowed for similarities and differences, but the most successful responses discussed the stylistic features used by the poets to evoke an emotional reaction to influence the reader’s response to the work. Such essays considered how that emotional reaction has had an effect on the reader’s response to an interpretation of the work; for example whether it makes the reader more aware of a particular issue, whether it spurs them to action, or whether it allows them to see from another perspective. While the question required the student to link the emotional reactions to the way the reader’s response is manipulated, there was no expectation that this must be a general reader response and so the student was free to explore personal emotional responses as a basis for the argument.

Question 9

Compare the ways in which the poets you studied this year use repeated elements as a technique to explore ideas.

This question was interpreted quite broadly to cover a wide range of repeated elements. Students analysed repeated phrases, symbols, images, punctuation, themes and so on. Students may have focused on one repeated element, or they may have discussed several, but all needed to refer to *one* poet in terms of this repetition. It was not appropriate to discuss how two or three poets use a repeated element among themselves; they needed to have analysed the repetition first of all within a single poet, and then as a comparison with others. The comparison needed to centre on the similar or different ways that poets use repetition.

Question 10

'We can never return.'

Compare the ways in which the poets you studied this year explore this idea.

This is primarily a thematic question, and students were quite broad in their interpretation of 'we can never return.' Some wrote about the idea of childhood being a time of innocence, or the fact that time does not stand still, or humanity's irreversible impact on the environment. Students needed to have clearly addressed the idea of never returning, focusing on a single idea, or a range of different ideas, but the defining link of the more successful essays was in the concept of never returning.

PART 2: QUESTIONS ON PAIRED TEXTS

In this section it is important that students referred to both texts in approximately equal proportions, making comparisons as they wrote their responses. This is an essential element of Ap2, 'recognition of connections between texts, and an integrated approach to comparing and contrasting texts.' It was limiting for the student to write half the essay on one text, and the other half on the second text.

Question 11

Compare the ways in which the authors of two texts use structural features to explore similar ideas.

The stem of the question permitted students to discuss both similarities and differences in terms of the *structural features* employed by authors, but students needed to have explored similar *ideas*. There may, however, be subtle emphases in the way in which ideas are presented. A generous interpretation was afforded to the term 'structural'. While some students focused specifically on the author's arrangements of the text, it was acceptable for other students to have considered a broader range of the elements of construction (such as narrative voice and plot development in novels, and stage direction, dialogue, costuming, props, lighting, and sound, as applicable to plays and films). Markers accepted the student's definition of structural features as long as there was some justification in the student's interpretation.

Question 12

Compare the ways in which the authors of two texts explore the idea that sometimes it is necessary to stand alone.

The stem of the question permitted students to discuss both similarities and differences, but the student needed to have contended with the idea that 'sometimes

it is necessary to stand alone'. Markers accepted a broad interpretation of what it is that one must stand against or what one must separate oneself from: it may be societal oppression, relationship pressures, or even existential angst. The qualifying adverb 'sometimes' provided scope for consideration; some students balanced their position with varying perspectives and thus avoided a black and white answer. It was permissible for students to read this qualifier as allowing them to argue that *sometimes*, too, it may be necessary to operate together.

Question 13

'Obsession leads to failure.'

Compare the ways in which the authors of two texts explore this idea.

The stem of the question permitted students to discuss both similarities and differences in authors' approaches, and the most successful responses needed to grapple with the tension evident in the statement that 'obsession leads to failure'. Successful responses were not a general treatment of the concept of obsession, but rather ones in which the links are drawn to whether the characters' various compulsions lead to failure. The key term here was *obsession* rather than *failure*, because in some texts it may well be that characters' obsessions may see them succeed or even triumph. Of course, a nuanced answer was also possible; for example, a character may gain something because of his or her obsessive nature, but lose in other areas, whether it be one's personal growth, one's personal relationships, or in terms of broader social goals shared by a collective.

Question 14

Compare the ways in which the authors of two texts explore the importance of confronting one *of the following:*

- *secrets*
- *attitudes*
- *the past*
- *oneself.*

The stem of the question permitted students to discuss both similarities and differences, and, in addition, this question permitted the student to choose his or her approach within the list of four options. Students should only have written on *one* of the possible approaches in this question, although it was acceptable for a student to write on one but touch on other options while maintaining a logical, well-shaped essay. The intention was to steer students away from writing mini-essays within the main body of the response. The tension within this question is the focus on the forceful participle, 'confronting'. There needed to be a strong response evident within the world of the text to this confronting of secrets, attitudes, the past, or oneself.

Question 15

Compare the ways in which the authors of two texts position the reader to condemn a social system.

The stem of the question permitted students to discuss both similarities and differences, and required the student to consider by what means the author leads the reader to disavow a social system. The key here is not that authors use characterisation, setting, narrative voice, language, and other features to highlight the

failings of a social system, but how the author uses such means in an attempt to force the reader to adopt a particular point of view.

SECTION C: CRITICAL READING (Question 16)

The critical reading this year appeared to be handled well by the majority of students. The hallmark of successful responses was the integration of the comparative element in parts (b) and (c) in an efficient and logical manner. The three texts offered a range of styles and most students were able to comment on the features of each text type. Some students were challenged in this section because of poor time management; they had spent so long on the other responses that they were forced to use dot points, particularly in response to part (c).

Part (a) offered an opportunity to show a competent level of comprehension, and this question worked well. Most students were able to clearly and relatively succinctly establish their understanding of the common thread that ran through the texts.

Part (b) was competently answered, but the discriminator was whether or not the discussion was integrated. Successful responses linked the consequences and noted the civic consequences in Text 2; they also discussed the reverse idea of anonymity explored in this text. The idea that this one was an opinionative piece was noted by most, but the most successful responses were able to make the leap to connect this with the others in which fame was so intimately on show.

Part (c) regarding Texts 1 and 3 was generally well answered, with students able to sustain the comparison and discussing the use of simile, metaphor, and so on in the two texts. Not many identified Text 1 as a form of interior monologue, although most commented on the detached observer voice of the speaker in ‘Beautiful’ (Text 3) — observing like the camera. Most used quotation to support their comparisons. Not all students focused in any depth on the plant metaphor in Text 1. Almost all referred to the ‘voice attached like an invisible vampire at my throat’ and the simile in ‘applause flew around it like a flock of red birds’, but the structural and conceptual importance of the plant metaphor was only seen in the most successful responses. Most students identified the stanza sequence as plotting the degeneration of the subject in ‘Beautiful’, but not all saw the images where ‘her hair was platinum, her teeth gems, her eyes sapphires’ as undesirable, and indicative of dehumanisation and commodification. Most responses showed an understanding of stylistic features in this text.

Text 2 was sometimes given scant attention in part (c) and often treated separately from the other two texts. Students did identify the personal voice and compared it with the first-person narration in Text 1, but at times they struggled with the comparison. The most successful responses were able to identify the structural features in Text 2 — the anecdote leading to what is presented as personal reflection, the rhetorical question followed by speculation, the reference to the shaman leading to the conclusion, and so on — and were able to make some constructive comments about this text in relation to the other two because the structural features were so different in each case. It was interesting that some students had the most difficulty with Text 2 — the one that seems to be the most like everyday or familiar texts. Students seemed to be more comfortable with the other two texts and their more literary features.

Additional Notes on Question 16

The following notes are provided to indicate the possible responses students may provide for the critical reading section. Students did not need to cover all these points to complete a successful response. Some students may have thought of additional, perceptive insights. These notes are a guide as to what students may observe in their reading of the texts. It should be noted that students did not need to recognise the subject of the poem 'Beautiful' as Marilyn Monroe.

Part (a)

The 'what' in the stem allows students to present their views on each text separately Although the message in each text is that the quest for fame brings unforeseen problems and complications — and indeed in Smalley's text (Text 2) 'getting famous' is shown *not* to be everyone's goal in life — it is expected that students accept the premise of the question that 'getting famous' has 'appeal' for many and explore perspectives on the question presented in each text.

In her opinion piece, Smalley, having identified 'getting famous' as a form of 'attention-getting', speculates on the reasons for what she identifies as the increase in such behaviour: the quest for identity and the struggle to be 'unique among 6 billion people'; parents' focus on the uniqueness of each child; and the technology of 'media access' that now gives so many opportunities for 'striving for attention' and 'self-promotion'. Atwood's interior monologue (Text 1), narrated by someone for whom fame is on the brink of decline, presents the appeal of 'getting famous' in terms of a similar attachment to the attention, the trappings of fame, that the talent (cultivated 'as a hothouse plant') has afforded the narrator — 'My voice was courted. Bouquets were thrown at it. Money was bestowed on it. Men fell on their knees before it. Applause flew around it …' By contrast, in Duffy's 'Beautiful' (Text 3) the appeal of 'getting famous' is not explicitly stated and indeed the trappings of fame seem totally disadvantageous to the subject of the poem. Students could identify the implied appeal of the flattery and attention in Stanza 1 ('an athlete licked …') and Stanza 2 ('a poet came, found her wondrous …'), as well as the servants, the access to drugs, and contact with other famous people. Duffy and Atwood, more sympathetically than Smalley, also suggest that the desire to be 'loved' and valued are reasons why 'getting famous' is appealing. All three writers suggest that fame perhaps creates and reinforces an identity, a sense of 'who we are' in a world where 'being unique … requires a lot of work' (Smalley).

Part (b)

The most successful answers to this question are able to integrate their discussion of the consequences of fame as presented in the three texts. Students are expected to discuss both the similarities and differences in the views presented in the three texts and to support their answers with reference to the texts.

Students may consider some of the following points.

The three authors seem to share the belief that the quest for fame is destructive to the famous and, in Smalley's view, to society. Students noted that Smalley in Text 2 presents the consequences of the desire for fame in terms of the cost to society — 'civic involvement and spiritual engagement have lost ground' and 'energy available to effect change' is dissipated. There is an absence of being 'content, happy and kind' as presented via the case study at the beginning of this text and referred to throughout. By contrast, students also observed that Atwood focuses on the cost to

the individual as the persona who narrates 'Voice' reveals her attachment to fame, her awareness that her identity is tied up in her voice ('I was sought after, or rather my voice was') and her intense and growing fear that fame is transient, as perhaps is identity. The plant metaphor documents this feared decline — 'as voices do, it would begin to shrivel' becomes 'It's begun to happen, the shrivelling'. The voice has brought glamour and fame, but also a sense of loss — 'How much of my life do I have left? Left over that is: my voice has used up most of it.' Students made reference to the irony in this text that the narrator is both aware that her attachment to fame has become a dependence that has consumed her 'like an invisible vampire' attached 'to my throat' and at the same time alert to the inevitability of its decline and the vacuum that will be left behind. The narrator in Atwood's text, in contrast to the idealised woman in Smalley's text, is presented as unhappy, anxious, and self-absorbed. Atwood's narrator, in contrast to the views expressed by Smalley, expresses a fear of anonymity.

In discussing 'Beautiful', students noted that the consequences of fame are plotted through the sequence of stanzas: when you become a phenomenon, there is wonder and novelty (Stanza 1); then you lose control of your life and become a commodity (Stanza 2); then life degenerates into a world of 'coffee, pills, booze, Frank on the record-player … Somebody big was watching her …' (Stanza 3). Stanza 4 represents the irony that fame is destructive and life-sapping, yet the images of fame, false and contrived, outlast the life of the famous. Unlike the narrator in Atwood's text, Duffy's subject loses her self-awareness: the irony is in the observer's tone — 'she couldn't die when she died … couldn't stop saying the lines or singing the tunes'. Students may identify that Atwood and Duffy force us to see the negative consequences of fame for individuals, while Smalley, who is concerned more with the bigger picture of the consequences of the celebrity culture for society, also asks us to turn 'a lens on our inward experiences with an eye toward detection of such striving [i.e. attention-seeking] … in order that we may find ourselves more content, happy and kind'.

Students also observed that one of the consequences of fame is that the famous individual becomes a commodity and this is depicted by Atwood and Duffy in vivid ways. Atwood's narrator declares that 'all the best places wanted us' and Duffy documents how 'the camera loved her' became 'they filmed her harder, harder' and she 'gushed at the greased-up lens, her skin investors' gold'. Whereas technology is presented in Smalley's text as presenting the media for the 'crescendo of "look at me" activity' via 'bloggers, tweets, wikipages and Facebook friends', media attention is depicted in Duffy's text as destructive and alienating. For the camera, the maid 'painted the beauty on' and the 'greased-up lens' softened the fame-hardened image. The subject in 'Beautiful' is depicted as a victim of media attention and Atwood's narrator is sadly dependent on it. Smalley's call for anonymity presents a startling alternative to the brittle public lives of the famous depicted in the other two texts.

Part (c)

Students may have covered a number of 'stylistic features' in their previous answers. The most successful answers integrated the comparison of the stylistic features used in the three texts and discussed the effect of these within the texts. It is possible to consider separately the features used in each text, but the comparison must be explicitly attended to in some way.

Students may have included some or all of the following:

The way in which the writer uses the structural features of the text type
Smalley's text is an opinion piece and the writer begins with the case-study of the woman who 'radiates contentment', then moves from the woman's question — 'Who would want to be famous?' — to a consideration of why such a goal is so prevalent, to a position, via the mention of the shaman's values, that advocates anonymity, because 'there is greater freedom to act when action is not tinged with attention-seeking'. The piece is designed to present a point of view — that celebrity culture is damaging to the social fabric — and the structure of the text supports that intention, enabling the writer to advocate an alternative perspective at the end. Atwood's text, by contrast, is an interior monologue, with the narrator reflecting in a personal voice, the 'I', on the effects of fame in her life. The narrator uses short, sharp sentences to plot the trajectory of her quest for fame — 'I was given a voice … The voice bloomed … It's begun to happen, the shrivelling.' The structure of the piece reveals stages in the writer's awareness that fame is transient, but also her desperate determination to cling to it — 'Then we'll descend to the foyer, glittering like ice, my voice attached like an invisible vampire to my throat.'

From another perspective, the poem 'Beautiful' uses the stanza structure to plot the degeneration of her celebrity as a glamorous star — 'The camera loved her … Guys fell in love, dames copied her.' While the speaker of the poem is the detached observer of the decline, unlike the narrator of Atwood's piece, the poem's structure traces the inevitable trajectory — for example, in the last lines in stanzas 1 to 3 the exuberant 'whooped' becomes 'swooned' and then 'drooled', the words conveying a sense of morality compromised in media hysteria. Atwood's piece and Duffy's poem are structured to demonstrate the effects of fame on individuals, whereas Smalley's text is structured to advocate explicitly for an alternative set of values.

The way in which the writer positions the reader
Smalley presents herself as an expert in the psychology of human behaviour and her credentials are given prominence in the text. Smalley's use of the first-person perspective invites the reader to trust her opinion and agree with it. Her confessional style — 'I often find myself caught in that web of self-promotion' — her speculative tone — 'Perhaps this striving has escalated because …' — and her inclusive language — 'I think we all need to value anonymity a bit more' — encourage the reader to identify with her point of view. Atwood's piece also uses the personal voice to great effect to position the reader to engage with a character who reveals a self-focused attachment to success, a fear of anonymity, and a grim determination to maintain the facade that she is not losing her grip — 'shrivelling'. The personal voice positions the reader to understand the cynical persona of the narrator and sympathise with her vulnerability. The stream-of-consciousness, confessional style suggests that self-absorption is indeed a consequence of fame. Atwood's piece provides the reader with an insight into the kind of 'striving' that Smalley encourages the reader to resist.

The third piece, in contrast to the other two, positions the reader as a detached yet sympathetic observer of the celebrity victim of media attention and popular adulation. The speaker of the poem, as if through the camera lens, observes her degeneration — 'The camera loved her … They filmed her harder … Dumb beauty. … They filmed on …' The staccato rhythm of the last stanza conveys the frenzy of attention that ultimately devours the victim. Both Atwood and Duffy convey the isolation of their famous characters — Atwood through the personal voice of the narrator and Duffy through the voice of the detached speaker in the poem. Both texts encourage an emotional attachment to the individual subjects depicted, whereas Smalley positions

the reader to agree with her rationally arrived-at position. However, not all would agree with Smalley that the contented woman depicted in her text is the model of 'civic engagement' that Smalley seems to be advocating.

Use of imagery and metaphor
Students observed the rich array of visual imagery and evocative language used by Duffy to present the view of the celebrity as victim of her fame. In Stanza 1 she is presented as the sex symbol — 'the waxy pouting of her mouth', 'the sleepy, startled gaze'. The hardening images in Stanza 2 — 'her teeth gems, her eyes sapphires pressed by a banker's thumb' — signal her value as a commodity. Visual language such as 'the maid came, sponged at her puffy face, painted the beauty on in beige, pinks, blues' conveys helpless degeneration. Atwood also uses visual language, the most notable example of which serves as a motif throughout the piece — 'I pictured this voice as a hothouse plant'. The plant image leads to the confronting 'shrivel' and 'shrivelling' which convey to the reader the narrator's intense awareness of fame in decline. The plant metaphor enables the writer to show how 'the voice' has its own life and its life saps hers. The same reliance on the visual image is not as evident in Smalley's text, though a key idea is that fame catches you in 'a web of self-promotion' and the image of entrapment here applies equally as an idea to the other two texts.

The conclusion in each text impacts on the reader differently
Smalley ends with an exhortation to 'value anonymity a bit more' and a sense of optimism that this may be possible. Atwood's narrator concludes with a determination to resist anonymity and ignore the fear that fame has claimed her identity, but as she descends 'to the foyer, glittering like ice, my voice attached like an invisible vampire to my throat' there is a final flash of self-awareness that challenges the reader. That fame is presented as so seductive also in these two texts suggests that Smalley's pitch for anonymity may be a lame hope. Smalley's concept of 'turning a lens on our inward experiences' is, however, apt in its application to the other two texts. Atwood's character is astute enough to turn the lens on her attachment to fame and resist what it shows her, even as Duffy's beauty is trapped and bewildered by hers.

What the title tells us
Students often refer, not always productively, to the role of the title in such texts in response to questions on 'stylistic features'. They identify the exhortation of the imperative in Smalley's title — 'Look at me: Living in a society of attention seekers'— and see that this aligns with the key ideas in Smalley's piece about affirming more socially useful goals in life. They may contrast this type of title with the evocative single-word titles given to the other two texts. Both could be read, possibly, as signalling the delusion that the 'Voice' and the valuing of the 'Beautiful' represent in those texts and the emotional isolation of the victims depicted.

Chief Assessor
English Studies