**Stage 2 English**

Assessment Type 1: Responding to Texts

***Alice in Wonderland (film text)***

***Directed by Tim Burton***

In this film transformation of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland* and *Through the Looking Glass* Burton explores what would happen if Alice returned to Wonderland when she was older. It draws on intertextual understandings from the original texts.

**Task**

1. Imagine you are interviewing Johnny Depp, at a film festival, as part of a university presentation for film students, or for a television show such as ‘Inside the Actors studio’. Interview Depp about the film *Alice in Wonderland* directed by Tim Burton, in which he stars as the Mad Hatter. Assume the audience is composed of film experts or university students who are knowledgeable about movie making and are familiar with the language of film.
2. Devise four questions to ask Depp. Cover aspects of the following in the questions:

* film techniques (the language and stylistic features of film) such as the musical score or the special effects and computer generated imagery
* film conventions such as development of the characters or costume design
* the ideas or themes in the film such as Alice breaking with the expectations of how a young woman should act in Victorian times, the contrast between good and evil, the search for identity or the experience of growing up
* how the text is created to influence the audience of adults.(Although this is a based on a children’s story the dark nature of the text targets adults.)

1. Produce a transcript of the interview which includes the 4 questions and the answers to a total of a maximum of 1000 words.

**Assessment**

In this task you should:

1. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of ideas and perspectives presented in the film *Alice in Wonderland* (KU1)
2. demonstrate knowledge and understanding of the ways the director uses language and stylistic features, and conventions (KU2)
3. analyse the ideas and perspectives represented in the film ( An1)
4. analyse the language features, stylistic features, and conventions used in the films, and evaluate how they influence the audience (An2)
5. use evidence from the texts (Ap2)
6. produce clear and coherent writing, using appropriate vocabulary (Ap3)

Performance Standards for Stage 2 English - Overall grade A

| - | Knowledge and Understanding | Analysis | Application |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| A | Comprehensive knowledge and understanding of ideas and perspectives in a range of texts.  Thorough knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use a range of language features, stylistic features, and conventions to make meaning.  Extensive knowledge and understanding of a wide range of ways in which texts are created for different purposes, audiences, and contexts. | Complex analysis of ideas, perspectives, and/or aspects of culture represented in texts.  Perceptive analysis of language features, stylistic features, and conventions used in texts, and thoughtful evaluation of how these influence audiences.  Critical analysis of similarities and differences when comparing texts. | Versatile and precise use of language and stylistic features to create a wide range of coherent texts that address the purpose, audience, and context.  Fluently integrated use of evidence from texts to develop and support a response.  Sophisticated use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression. |
| B | Knowledge and understanding of ideas and perspectives in a range of texts.  Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use a range of language features, stylistic features, and conventions to make meaning.  Knowledge and understanding of a range of ways in which texts are created for different purposes, contexts, and audiences. | Detailed analysis of ideas, perspectives, and/or aspects of culture represented in texts.  Detailed analysis of language features, stylistic features, and conventions, and evaluation of how these influence audiences.  Clear analysis of similarities and differences when comparing texts. | Accurate use of language and stylistic features to create a range of coherent texts that address the purpose, context, and audience.  Appropriate use of evidence from texts to develop and support a response.  Consistent use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression. |
| C | Knowledge and understanding of some ideas and perspectives in texts.  Knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use some language features, stylistic features, and conventions to make meaning.  Knowledge and understanding ways in which everyday texts are created for different purposes, contexts, and audiences. | Analysis of some ideas and perspectives represented in texts.  Description and some analysis of different language features, stylistic features, and conventions, and/or some evaluation of how these influence audiences.  Analysis of some similarities and differences when comparing texts. | Generally accurate use of language and stylistic features to create texts that address the purpose, context, and audience.  Selection of some evidence from texts to develop and support a response.  Appropriate use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression. |
| D | Knowledge and understanding of some ideas in a narrow range texts.  Some knowledge and understanding of the ways in which creators of texts use language features and conventions to make meaning.  Knowledge and understanding of ways in which some everyday texts are created for different purposes and audiences. | Description of some ideas in texts.  Description of some language features, stylistic features, and/or conventions.  Description of some similarities and differences in texts. | Use of some language and stylistic features to create a narrow range of texts.  Partial use of basic evidence from texts to develop a response.  Inconsistent use of expression. |
| E | Identification of an idea in a text.  Identification of a limited range of ways in which creators of texts use language techniques.  Recognition of one or more ways in which a familiar text is created. | Reference to an idea in a text.  Recognition of language or stylistic features.  Recognition of a simple connection between texts. | Restricted use of language or stylistic features to create a text.  Limited use of evidence from a text in a response.  Limited use of clear expression. |

**After acting in numerous films by Burton, you would be very familiar with his particular style of work. Do you believe Alice in Wonderland is a true reflection of this style?**

*Alice in Wonderland* incorporates many characteristic 'Burton' elements such as gothic influence, comparison between light and dark and an emphasis on oddity. The 'gothic' sense is encapsulated by the chaotic state of Underland. In addition, there is prominence on the dark side of life and human nature, revealing to the audience an alternative perception of the world. In the film, Burton uses a dichotomy between the two sides of human nature· evil and purity. The White Queen is portrayed in a White castle, with white soldiers, in the sunlight of daytime. Using a chiaroscuro effect, this contrasts to the Red Queen and her castle, which emanates darkness, as dark grey clouds whirl above it. Regarding personality, the White Queen is presented as a peace lover who made Underland a gentler place under her rule. This is directly compared to her child-like sister, the Red Queen, in her current vindictive reign over Underland. She is unable to love and feel empathy, concluding that "It is far better to be feared than loved" (scene 84). Although essentially a 'misfit', she makes her abnormality 'the norm'; superficially followed by her court. Moreover, Burton is able to create emotional hooks to misfit characters like the Red Queen by revealing their internal struggles. For example, we come to understand that the Red Queen's stunted emotional growth stems from a deep resentment towards her sister, as the favoured daughter. Like the Red Queen, Alice can also be classified as a 'misfit' she is unable to understand and agree with the conformities of the Victorian society she lives in. These characters trigger the audience to question what the definition of 'normal' actually is- a question presented in many of Burton's films.

**Burton is famous for his highly developed mise en scene, particularly in regards to the physical appearance of characters. How was this manipulated, with acting, to reveal the complex character of the Mad Hatter?**

Costume and make-up were eccentric, external details that depicted, to the viewers, the Hatter's internal, psychological state. We wanted his behaviour to be erratic; an allusion to the mercury poisoning suffered by many hatters in the 19th century. Mercurial 'madness' is conveyed in every visual way possible: his translucent green eyes, frizzy orange hair and yellowed fingernails. His double-sided personality is uncovered particularly through the use of makeup, computer manipulation of eyes and my acting. I was changing from a cheery English accent, with a lisp, to a Scottish accent with a sinister tone. This change occurs when the Hatter is remembering the past or anticipating the fall of the Red Queen. One example is when he recites part of the 'Jabberwocky' poem to Alice, suggesting a suppressed violence within him. His eyes also turn from glowing green to a deep red and makeup colours change from flamboyant to dark. In this way, his emotions are very close to the surface, causing the audience to oscillate with him through the personalities. This was essentially the aim: to create an original Hatter, shown with human sentiment, and therefore allowing an emotional connection with the audience. Despite his erratic behaviour, there is an implication of something supplementary to the facade of 'madness', as he becomes involved in planning the fall of the Red Queen.

**Besides creating an emotional connection with the audience, what other roles did the Hatter have in the composition of the film?**

A technical aspect of the film is the portrayal of Underland as a paradoxical world to the Victorian society. The audience journeys with Alice between the two worlds in her quest of identity. Many of the characters in the real world are coupled to characters in Underland. The Mad Hatter plays a role in highlighting, to the audience, the suppression of Alice's creative personality, through juxtaposition to Hamish Ascot (Alice's suitor). In Victorian society, Hamish represents status and wealth. On the other hand, the Hatter is considered an outsider. However, it is in this aspect that Alice is able to identify with the Hatter more than Hamish. The aristocratic Victorian society is clearly one that Alice does not fit into; she refuses to wear a corset and stockings beneath her gown and finds an arranged marriage disturbing. Hamish stifles Alice's creativity, advising her that, "It would be best to keep your visions to yourself," and asks why " ... waste your time thinking about such an impossible thing?" (Scene 7) Paradoxically, the Mad hatter encourages her creativity, praising the thinking of impossible things as " ... an excellent practice" (scene 98). In fact, it was the listing of impossible things that gave Alice the courage to slay the jabberwocky. Where Alice's real world suppresses her creativity, the Hatter and the events in Underland give her the opportunity to regain her "muchness" (scene 35).

**It seems that Alice's suppression and struggle with identity is an important theme in the film. Can you tell us more about how it progresses?**

Alice's suppression is shaped from the opening scene, when she challenges the social norms of the Victorian era. She questions her mother, "Who is to say what is proper?" (Scene 5) when told she was not properly dressed. Alice's inability to be herself is revealed, as she is forced to conform to societal expectations. Alice is psychologically suppressed by Victorian society. However, through her adventure in Underland, she is able to liberate herself, symbolised by her defeat over the jabberwocky. The state of Underland reflects Alice's mind- chaotic and confused- brought about by the loss of her father and expectations of society. After the jabberwocky is slain, Underland returns to its former state, reflecting Alice's mind being liberated. The battle, for Alice, represents the decision to be herself, not what society inflicts upon her. She realises that in life, like in Underland, she can " ... make the path" and decide" ... what I must do and who I must be" (scene 41). Thus, she stands up to the people suppressing her and instead of accepting the arranged marriage, takes place in her father's former role in the family business. This is a position whereby she can be herself and exercise self-determination in her own way. In viewing Alice and her journey, Burton challenges the audience to have the courage to live and act in a way that caters their own unique personalities.