

**HSC English Extension 1 Seminar
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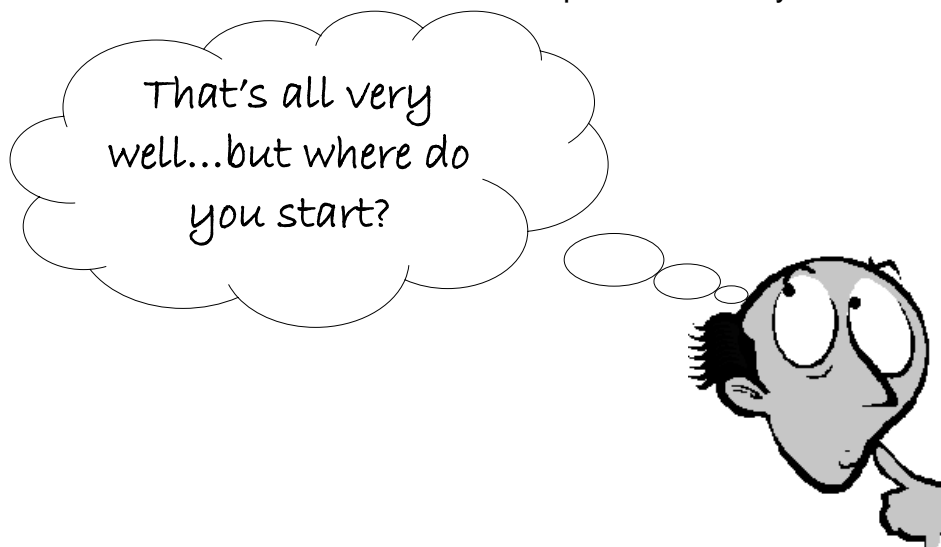
Researching Your Elective

According to the current NSW Board of Studies English Syllabus, the rationale behind the Extension 1 course is to help students “*refine their understanding and appreciation of the cultural roles and significance of texts*”¹ Sounds good, but what does this process of refinement actually entail?

The Board of Studies answers this question thus ...
“Through extended engagement in investigation and composition, students explore multiple meanings and relative values of texts. They explore a range of conceptual frameworks for the reading and composition of texts and examine a range of reading practices to develop awareness of the assumptions that guide interpretation and evaluation.”²

reading
THE
TEXT
reading

Or put another way: **READING AROUND THE TEXT**



It is true there is a lot out there to read and, when you include all that stuff bumping around in cyberspace, much of it is of dubious quality. So we are going to start by breaking the task down into establishing what ‘types’ of additional reading you need to do and then we can get into specifics.

¹ Board of Studies NSW (2009), *English Stage 6 Syllabus*, Sydney, Board of Studies NSW

² Board of Studies NSW (2009), *English Stage 6 Syllabus*, Sydney, Board of Studies NSW

In the table below is an outline and explanation of the different text types and why they might be of use to you.

Prescribed Texts	Related Texts	Academic – Historical Analysis	Academic – Literary Theory and Philosophy	Commentaries and Study Guides
<p>The need to read these is fairly self explanatory – and the texts you study in class are probably chosen for you by your teachers.</p> <p>However, if you are familiar with the other prescribed texts for your elective (the ones that you are not studying in class) it does not hurt to brush up on them as well.</p> <p>HINTS:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read your prescribed texts more than once. Make notes as you read them and gather quotes as you go. This can be done in a journal – always remember to note down the page number in case you want to go back and check it later. A full list of the HSC Prescribed Texts is available online on the Board of Studies NSW website.³ 	<p>You require at least two related texts. These texts do not have to be extended works they can include novellas, speeches, short stories, essays, films and documentaries, drama, a suite of poems (note: one poem is not enough to constitute a related text) or a visual text (such as a relevant painting or sculpture.)</p> <p>The main requirement of a related text is that it fits the parameters of the elective and it complements your prescribed texts. BUT these texts should not be too similar to your other texts (ie. It is not a good idea to study two texts by the same composer) nor should they be so vastly different that you struggle to draw any coherent parallels between them.</p> <p>Further details are included below in:</p> <p>"How to go about choosing a related text."</p>	<p>These texts are particularly pertinent if you are studying Module B: Texts and Ways of Thinking as it focuses on texts composed during particular periods of history.</p> <p>Just keep in mind – no one text is going to give you a complete picture of a period of history. A lot happens at once in this crazy ol' world of ours and you need to focus on different aspects of history and different trends and circles and groups of people etc, before you can draw any conclusions. (E.g. Some texts will tell you that McCarthyism was rampant in the USA during the Cold War, but that does not mean that all Americans at this time were opposed to Communism.)</p> <p>Note: Avoid citing popular historical fiction and check your facts before you repeat them.</p> <p>(ie. The Great Wall of China was not built to keep the rabbits out!)</p>	<p>Regardless of the Module you are studying, you need to include in your reading a portion of Literary Theory.</p> <p>Also there are specific theorists whose ideas are important to understand if you are studying certain electives. Details about these are included below.</p> <p>For more details about texts that might outline theoretical information applicable to your elective, see the section below called:</p> <p>"Look what's available at the UWS Library."</p> <p>Note: You can also search in your local and school libraries for texts that relate to the areas covered by your elective.</p>	<p>There are a host of very good HSC study guides available for purchase (and for loan at your local library) – I am particularly fond of Barry Spurr, but there are several others besides.</p> <p>There are also websites such as the "HSC Online" site⁴ that contain a host of information plus other commercial study sites which can be very useful.</p> <p>BUT these guides are a starting point for your research and should not constitute the sum total of it.</p> <p>As well as this there are many philosophy, sociology and English literature textbooks written for first year university students which are available from university libraries. Have a look at these for explanations of certain intellectual and theoretical concepts, if the original texts are too esoteric for you to comprehend.</p>

³ http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/pdf_doc/english-prescriptions-09-14.pdf

⁴ <http://hsc.csu.edu.au/english/extension1>

... AND ANOTHER THING ...

DICTIONARY AND THESAURUS

... USE THEM REGULARLY!

Where to look – a step by step guide

- Step 1: Check out what the Board of Studies recommends (after all, they are the ones in charge of the HSC examination). Go to <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au> to find the full syllabus documents, past HSC papers and notes from the marking centre, prescriptions (set texts) and a host of other information.
- Step 2: Check out the Charles Sturt University “NSW HSC Online” website. Go to <http://hsc.csu.edu.au/english/extension1/> and follow the various links for information about your particular elective.
- Step 3: Check out the NSW Department of Education and Training Curriculum Support Website. Go to <http://www.curriculumsupport.education.nsw.gov.au/secondary/english/stage6/resources/index.htm> and follow the links to suggest online resources for the various Stage 6 English courses.
- Step 4: Use the online “Navigator” service provided by the NSW State Library. Go to <http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/?fuseaction=navigator.HSCStudents&ID=5> and type in the name of your elective and see what happens.
- NOTE: Another service provided by the State Library is available once you have joined (which you can do online for free) and have been issued with a library card and password. This service is the “Literature Resource Centre”. The link below gives advice on using this service to research your particular elective.
- http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/research_guides/hsc_english/gen_info/keyword_try.html
- Step 5: Check out the UWS library, following the information listed below.
- Step 6: Don’t forget to also look into your local and school libraries.
- Step 7: **Don’t go it alone.** Whether you are visiting the State Library, a university library, local library or school library, they all have one thing in common; **LIBRARIANS!** These people have studied for years to help you with your research. Ask for help – that’s what they are there for!

Research Exercise:

Go to:

http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/research_guides/hsc_english/lists/modules_extension.html and review the list of recommended reading for your particular elective.

- 1) Make a list of books and articles you would like to look at. (Record the title, author, date and call number)
- 2) Are any of the resources available online for review? If yes, find them and either record their address online or download them to your computer, if you can.
- 3) Share your list with the people either side of you and discuss what you hope to find out from the titles you've selected.

Look what's available at the UWS Library!

The actual books in the UWS Library are spread across its many campuses however the library can be searched centrally via the University website. The university campus libraries might be a more convenient option for you if you cannot get into the city to visit the State Library in Macquarie Street. Note: You may not be able to borrow the books or journals, but you can certainly read them in the library and there are photocopy facilities that you can use.

General Texts on Literary Theory

There are many books available in the UWS library on literary theory, including some very good introductory texts as listed below. (Note: This is not an exhaustive list – there are plenty more, all you have to do to find them is go to <http://library.uws.edu.au> and type "literary theory" into the quick search tool on the library home page.)

Literary Theory Introductory Texts – suitable for all modules:

Rapaport, Herman (2011) *The Literary Theory Tool Kit: a compendium of concepts and methods*. (Pages 2 – 14 give a very concise introduction to what literary theory is about.)

Barry, Peter (2009) *Beginning Theory*

Connors, Clair (2010) *Literary Theory – A Beginners Guide*

Culler, Jonathan (2000) *Literary Theory – A very short introduction*

Bertens, Hans (2001) *Literary Theory – The Basics*

Text suggestions found – suitable for specific modules:

Module	Elective	Search Criteria Used	Examples of texts located in UWS Libraries
A	Life Writing	Life Writing Analysis Biography as a literary form. Biographical Writing	Marcus, Laura (1994) <i>Auto/biographical discourses : theory, criticism, practice</i> Jolly, Margaretta (Ed) (2001) <i>Encyclopaedia of Life Writing : Autobiographical and Biographical Forms</i> Thomson, Helen (1994) <i>Bio-fictions : Brian Matthews, Drusilla Modjeska and Elizabeth Jolley</i>
	Crime Fiction	Crime Fiction Analysis Crime Genre Studies	Horsley, Lee (Ed); Rzepka, Charles J. (Ed) (2010) <i>A Companion to Crime Fiction</i> Priestman, Martin (Ed) (2003) <i>The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction</i> Cole, Cathy (2004) <i>Private dicks and feisty chicks: an interrogation of crime fiction</i>
	Science Fiction	Science Fiction Analysis Science Fiction Genre Studies	David Seed (Ed) (2008) <i>A companion to science fiction</i> Weldes, Jutta (Ed); Weldes, Jytte (Ed) (2003) <i>To Seek Out New Worlds : Exploring Links between Science Fiction and World Politics</i> Wright, Peter (Ed); Sawyer, Andy (Ed) (2011) <i>Teaching Science Fiction</i>
B	After the Bomb	Cold War in literature English literature Cold War	Piette, Adam (2009) <i>The Literary Cold War, 1945-Vietnam: Sacrificial Logic and Paranoid Plotlines</i> Goody, Alex (2011) <i>Technology, Literature and Culture</i> Lauter, Paul (Ed) (2010) <i>A companion to American literature and culture</i>
	Romanticism	Romanticism The Romantics The Enlightenment Utilitarianism	Curran, Stuart (Ed) (2010) <i>The Cambridge Companion to British Romanticism</i> Wu, Duncan (Ed) (2009) <i>Romanticism : a critical reader</i> Duncan Heath (1999) <i>Introducing romanticism</i>

	Navigating the Global	English literature globalization Baudrillard, Jameson, and Lyotard	Goody, Alex (2011) <i>Technology, Literature and Culture</i> Connell, Liam (Ed); Marsh, Nicky (Ed) <i>Literature and globalization : a reader</i> McGuigan, Jim (1999) <i>Modernity and postmodern culture</i>
C	Textual Dynamics	Intertextuality Language in literature	Graham Allen (2011) <i>Intertextuality</i> Meinhof, Ulrike H. (Ed); Smith, Jonathan (Ed) (2000) <i>Intertextuality and the media : from genre to everyday life</i> Leech, Geoffrey (2008) <i>Language in literature : style and foregrounding</i>
	Language and Gender	Language and gender analysis Gender in literature Reading gender	Levorato, Alessandra (2003) <i>Language and gender in the fairy tale tradition : a linguistic analysis of old and new story telling</i> Goodman, Lizbeth (Ed) (1996) <i>Literature and gender</i> Martino, Wayne (Ed); Cook, Chris (Ed) (1998) <i>Gender & texts : a professional development package for English teachers</i>

How to go about choosing a related text

Here is an example of one of the most common questions from HSC English students along with the most commonly received answer:



What related texts should I study!?

It depends...what do you want to argue?

This is a difficult question to answer because there are so many options to choose from and the final decision depends on many factors. That's why you may struggle to find a definitive list of options for each elective. Sorry to tell you, but the process of choosing your related texts is not something you are going to knock over in a one hour visit to the library. You need to take some time to review what is out there and find a number of texts that appeal to you and which you feel would round out your understanding of the principles covered in your elective.

This doesn't mean that you need to read/view hundreds of texts; but it does mean that you need to get out there and sample as many as you can. Find copies at the library or online and skim them; read synopsis and review articles; trawl through online and hard copy recommended reading lists (see the ABC website and various publishers eg. Penguin, Random House etc); talk to other people about books they might recommend. You can also use Google and Wikipedia to get a basic understanding of what might be on offer and what might be relevant.

The following are just some basic guidelines for choosing your related texts:

- 1) Avoid choosing overly simple or facile texts. For instance; Dr Seuss might have some very pertinent things to say about the human condition, but he wrote for very young children and there just isn't enough material there to generate a substantial discussion or argument.

Texts need to have a certain level of complexity to allow you to perform a deep analysis. For the same reason, be careful if you want to use song lyrics as a related text. There just may not be enough material in a single song to give your argument much to back it up. The same goes for poetry – one poem is not enough, you need a suite of poems composed by the same poet.

That said, your related texts must be accessible enough that you can understand and recall them and identify the significant points that you wish to discuss. For instance, there is no point selecting Ulysses by James Joyce as a related text, if you can't follow it.

- 2) Choose texts that have at least some points of similarity with your prescribed texts, otherwise you won't be able to draw many parallels, but this does not mean that you need to find texts which have identical subject matter. For instance; George Orwell's 1984 and Jonathan Swift's Gulliver's Travels, if considered in terms of plot, character and setting, are

quite different but they are both satirical novels and as such could be used together to discuss the literary genre of satire very successfully.

- 3) Leading on from the examples in point two, it is advisable to select related texts that, in combination with your prescribed texts, give you a reasonably wide sample of the area you are studying. For instance; if Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice was a prescribed text, it would be inadvisable to choose another novel by the same author, say Sense and Sensibility, as a related text because it is likely to provide extremely similar examples that support the same conclusions, giving your analysis very little depth. The point is, don't set your scope too narrowly, texts created by composers who are divided by centuries and oceans often bear more in common than you might suspect at first glance.
- 4) Finally be prepared to use related texts that take contradictory points of view or were influenced by different or opposing philosophies. Using texts that back up a single line of argument is far less impressive than using texts that show you understand that the art of composition is a multi-faceted process. An essay that can consider opposing points of view coherently and draw conclusions accordingly is far more sophisticated than an essay that takes only one line and omits anything that might contradict it.

Exam - Essay Writing Skills

Writing an essay under exam conditions requires slightly different skills compared to the process of writing an essay where you have time to edit and redraft prior to submission. In an exam, you only get one shot at getting it right and a very limited amount of time to transfer everything in your head into legible and formally written prose. Frankly if hand cramp doesn't get you a lack of essay planning certainly will.



Writing under exam conditions

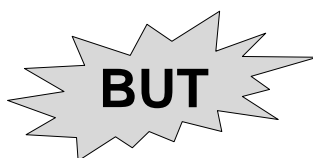
But before you flee in panic, there are skills you can learn to help you approach your exam writing in a strategic manner that will not only make the process of HSC essay writing seem less daunting, but will actually improve your chances at success.

That's the sales pitch ... now let's get down to what skills you need to learn and practise?

We begin with the exam question.

This is something you cannot know in advance so how can you possibly practise answering it?

Hmmm? Any thoughts? Well, there is a well travelled saying in the writing world that you cannot really know what you think until you read what you've written. We're going to fiddle around with that notion a bit by saying... in the HSC the exam markers cannot know what you've learnt until they've read what you've written.



The whole trick is not to write down everything you know ... Instead you need to manipulate everything you know to answer a specific question and present your ideas in a logical way that shows a great deal of insight and a certain amount of sophistication.

Pretty simple huh?!

Well let's break it down into a set of skills and see how much easier we can make it?

Skill 1: INTERROGATING THE QUESTION

All the knowledge in the world, intricately woven into the most lucid and sophisticated argument ever composed, will amount to nothing if it doesn't answer the question.

You need to practise analysing exam questions until you develop the knack to working out...

WHAT IS IT REALLY ASKING YOU TO DO?



Here's a hint: the key is in the verbs.

A glossary of key verbs used in HSC examinations is available at:

http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/glossary_keywords.html

Study these well, because the first thing you are going to do, for each and every HSC exam question is identify the key verb that tells you what the question is asking you to do.

Once you have identified the key verbs in the question, make notes about what an answer to the question actually entails.

(HSC English Extension 1 Paper 2006 - Module A - question 6)

Revenge Tragedy locates us in places of social and psychological tragedy.

Write an essay in which you **evaluate** the extent to which this is true of TWO prescribed texts AND at least TWO texts of your own choosing.

*Key Verb: **Evaluate**
Make a judgement
based on criteria;
determine the value of.*

The above question is asking you to make a judgement based on criteria, so the following questions and answers follow:

Q: What is being evaluated or judged?

A: How true is the statement; “Revenge Tragedy locates us in places of social and psychological tragedy”?

Q: What criteria should you use to determine the level of truth expressed in the statement?

A: The details you have studied about the defining (or at least the most commonly occurring) features of the genre of Revenge Tragedy ESPECIALLY those expressed in two of your prescribed texts and at least two related texts.

Q: What other criteria might you use to argue your case?

A: Instances where revenge tragedy breaks these apparent rules and continues to work effectively ESPECIALLY those expressed in two of your prescribed texts and at least two related texts.

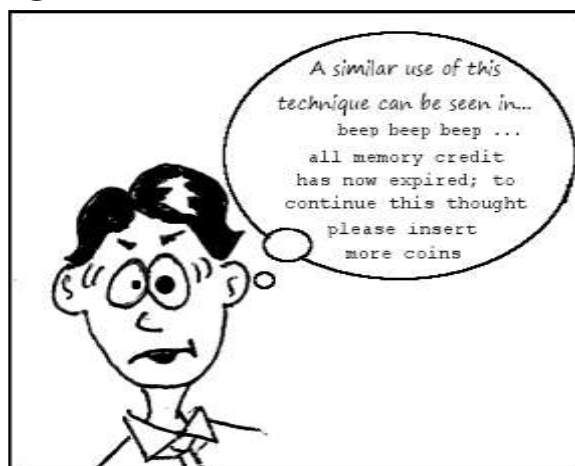
Essay Writing Exercise 1:

Go to the Board of Studies website and locate the past HSC papers for the English Extension 1 course. Perform this analysis again on the questions you find there.

Skill 2: GATHERING YOUR RESOURCES

The next stage is to quickly note down, in some form of short hand, everything you can recall from your texts and from your wider reading that will help you answer the question. **This is imperative!**

These notes, scrawled in the work area of the exam paper, will not be marked by the examiner but they will be invaluable to you if, thirty minutes into the writing process, you go blank and can't recall the other examples you were going to use. (Exam pressure does funny things to the brain and this sort of thing happens to the best of us, so it is best to be prepared.)



...the effects of exam pressure.

When you make the list of points, you need to organise them in some way, which will help you plan your essay. One way to do this is by looking at the details of the question and asking more questions that will help you gather your thoughts.

The following are some questions you might use to group your information if you were answering the example question used above.

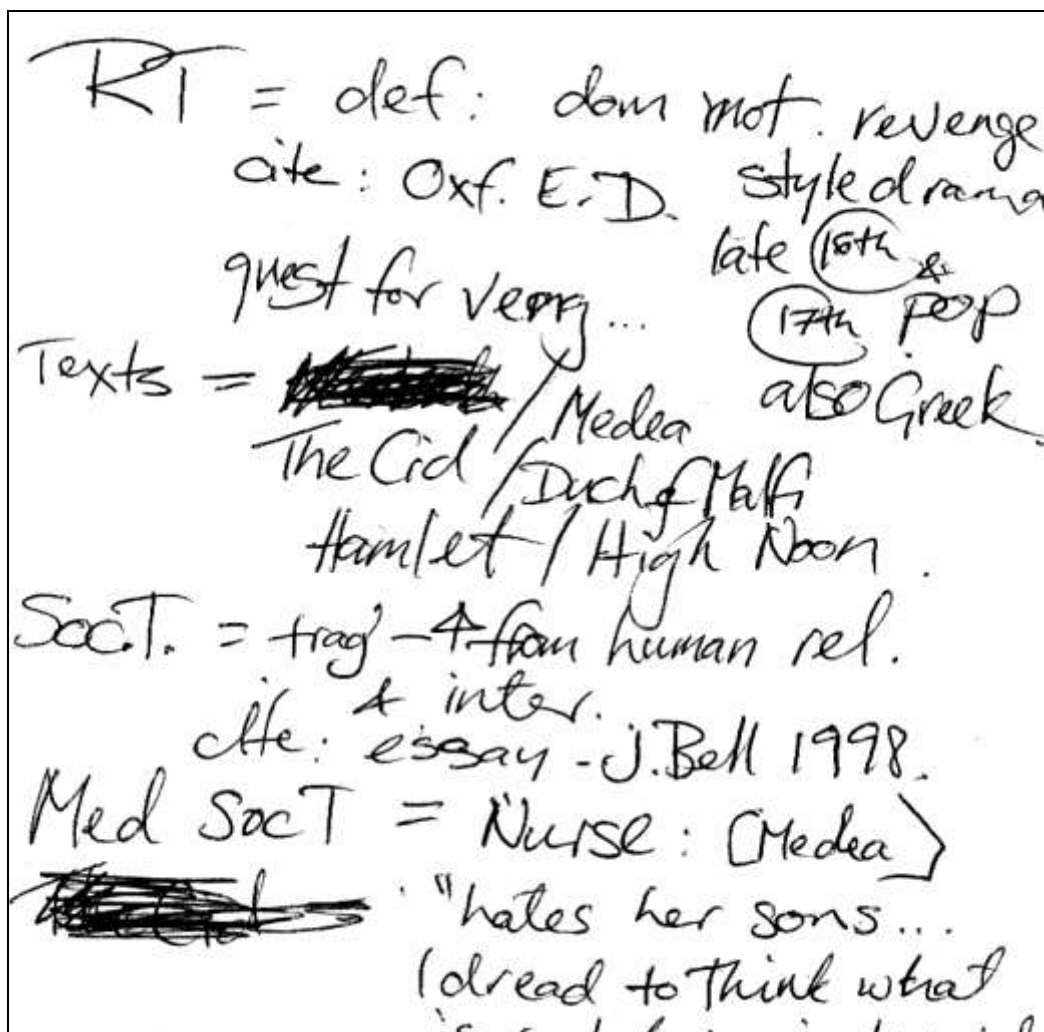
- Q1:** How do I define Revenge Tragedy? *And;*
- What theoretical basis do I have support this definition?
 - Which texts will I cite as examples of Revenge Tragedy?
- Q2:** How do I define social tragedy in relation to the wider definition of Revenge Tragedy? *And;*
- What theoretical basis do I have for this definition?
 - What theoretical basis do I have to support that this form of tragedy is an integral part of my over-arching definition of Revenge Tragedy?
 - What examples from my texts support this type of tragedy as being an integral part of my over-arching definition of Revenge Tragedy?
- Q3:** How do I define psychological tragedy in relation to the wider definition of Revenge Tragedy? *And;*
- What theoretical basis do I have for this definition?
 - What theoretical basis do I have to support that this form of tragedy is an integral part of my over-arching definition of Revenge Tragedy?
 - What examples from my texts support this type of tragedy as being an integral part of my over-arching definition of Revenge Tragedy?
- Q4:** What examples exist in my texts that contradict the view that revenge tragedy places us in social and psychological tragedy? *And;*
- What theory can I quote that supports the contradiction of the statement and claim the Revenge Tragedy does not have to be comprised of these two forms of tragedy?
 - What example do I have from my texts that support the absence of these types of tragedy?

And before you ask....

Of course you won't have time to write out all those questions in full on your notes area during the exam!

This is just an example of how your brain might be trained to break up the task. What **you** write down is the answers to these sorts of questions and even then, you need to do it quickly and in short hand. Whatever style suits you will do, so long as it is in a manner that you can decipher. (It makes no difference if no one else can make head-nor-tail of it.)

This is what your notes might look like:



Essay Writing Exercise 2:

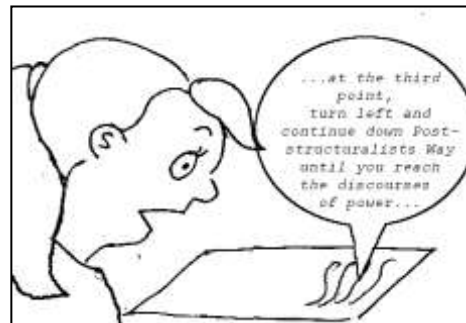
Go to the Board of Studies website and locate last year's HSC paper for the English Extension 1 course. Find the question that relates to your elective and take ten minutes to write some notes in shorthand about what resources you have to answer that question.

Look over your notes. Do you have enough material to write a decent essay? If not, identify what is missing – i.e. do you need another or a better related text? Have you studied enough theory? Do you know enough quotes? Etc

Skill 3: WRITING YOUR THESIS STATEMENT

You are now at the point where you need to sift through all those notes and decide what it is you are going to say. **Under exam conditions, this is the most important part of the essay writing process – it will shape your entire essay and it is imperative that you get it right.**

This differs to the essay writing process when you have time to redraft before submission. When you have time to polish your essay, you can revisit your thesis statement numerous times and adjust it as you write if necessary. This often happens if your style is to write and research the essay simultaneously. However in an exam, you have one chance to get it right, so it is worth spending a little bit of time on it.



...using a thesis GPS...

Remember: your thesis statement is like a road map for your essay – draw your map poorly and you’re likely to get lost somewhere down the track!

What must a thesis statement do?

Your thesis statement is the hardest working paragraph in your whole essay. Here is a list of points that must be included in it:

1) The opening statement.

(This is probably the most difficult part of the essay; putting pen to paper and actually starting. Many students fall into the trap of simply re-writing the question. Let me give you some advice – “Don’t!” It wastes valuable time and does nothing to advance your thinking.)

An approach that works is to start with a general statement that relates broadly to your topic and will lead you into the answer to the question. Remembering that your essay is a one sided argument that you plan to win, so you start by pointing yourself and your reader in the direction you want to go. (This is your orientation – if your thesis is your essay map; then the first line is the location of North.)

For Instance;

The plot of a Revenge Tragedy generally revolves around an individual’s quest for vengeance and as this quest would be pointless without the protagonist having first suffered, it follows that the negotiation of human suffering is an essential ingredient in this form of drama.

2) A direct and clear response to the question.

(Don’t leave your marker guessing – tell them up front how you will respond to the question.)

For Instance; returning for a moment to our example HSC exam question, this questions asks you to “evaluate” the given statement, so in your direct and clear response to the question, you need to evaluate the given statement.

As such there is a great deal of textual evidence available to support the statement that Revenge Tragedy locates us in places of social and psychological tragedy, played out through an

exploration of how human misery affects the protagonist internally and then causes them to act on their suffering by inflicting pain on those around them. There is also evidence to support the view that psychological tragedy is a key element of the genre as an individual cannot plot revenge without first dwelling on the suffering that has inspired it. However a wider analysis of the genre does produce some evidence to support the idea that Revenge Tragedy does not depend exclusively on the use of social tragedy. This follows as there is the possibility that the vengeance, upon which the plot hinges, can be directed towards a non-social entity such as nature, God or even be reflected back at the protagonist themselves.

In other words I am telling the marker that - I agree in principle with the statement but by way of evaluation – although I think it is absolutely true that psychological tragedy is a necessary element of Revenge Tragedy, I do not think it is entirely true that social tragedy must exist in all Revenge Tragedies. This is because revenge can be enacted (however misguided an attempt to do so might be) on other, non-social elements, such as nature, God or the self.

3) A statement about how you will support your response to the question.

(Surprise endings are great in murder mysteries but in an essay you need to be entirely up front with how you are going to solve this particular puzzle. You also need to state it at the beginning of the essay so that you have a logical sequence of statements and evidence mapped out for both you (as you write it) and your marker (as they read it). This makes life easier for everyone!)

For Instance: Returning again to our example HSC exam question: we've stated our argument - we are now going to briefly summarise how we can prove it.

Evidence to support the above statements can be found in a number of Revenge Tragedies; specifically evidenced in the works of Smith, Kovács & Kowalski. There is also evidence to support the claim that only psychological tragedy (and not social tragedy), as defined by An Introduction to Revenge Tragedy is absolutely necessary to the genre. This evidence can be found in the work of Schmidt where psychological tragedy exists in the text but social tragedy is replaced by another element.

In other words I am telling the marker that;

- I am going to cite the works of three composers (you don't need to name the actual texts until you get to the body of your essay) to show general support for the given statement.
- I am then going to cite the definition of psychological and social tragedy from a reputable source and use this as the basis of my argument that psychological tragedy is the only essential element of Revenge Tragedy.
- Finally I am going to cite one further composer as the exception to the rule that provides an example of Revenge Tragedy that does not contain elements of social tragedy and I will use the discussion about this text to back it up.

Skill 4: WRITING THE BODY OF YOUR ESSAY

You now have a map; it's time to start driving. Your essay structure needs to follow the basic outline in your thesis statement. As stated before there should be no surprises lurking in the body of your essay, only the expansion of your points and textual evidence to back up what you are saying. Also, follow the structure that you have outlined in your thesis and you won't get lost or miss anything. **Note: ALL the points from your thesis must be expanded and backed up in the body of your essay.**

For Instance: Returning again to our example HSC exam question: the following is a rough outline of the contents of the paragraphs following the thesis statement. Note: each point represents one paragraph.

*(Oh...and just a point of style – **One paragraph should never equate to one sentence!** If you find that you tend to write long rambling sentences, practise the delicate art of “using a full stop” and learn to break up your sentences into smaller more manageable chunks.)*

Thesis statement

P1 – Define ‘Revenge Tragedy’, ‘social tragedy’ and ‘psychological tragedy’ in full and cite where these specific definitions came from.

P2 – Explain how both the elements of psychological and social tragedy could be seen as very common elements in the genre of Revenge Tragedy and provide explanations from the theory you have studied to back it up.

P3 – Provide textual evidence from your three earlier cited composers (and this is where you name the texts in full) that demonstrates the use of both psychological and social tragedy.

P4 – Insert the turning point of your argument “However...”. This is where you expand on the notion that only psychological tragedy is essential to Revenge Tragedy.

P5 – Explain why you believe this and provide hypothetical situations where social tragedy might not be an element of Revenge Tragedy and cite the theory you have studied to back it up.

P6 – Provide textual evidence from your other composer that supports the argument that social tragedy is not always an element of Revenge Tragedy even though psychological tragedy is.

Skill 5: WRITING A STRONG CONCLUSION

Don't just write your thesis statement again!

To tie your essay up neatly you need to make reference to the question and to your thesis statement but don't just repeat them word for word. Instead paraphrase the thesis statement, explain again how it answers the question and then summarise the main conclusions your points have led you to.

For Instance: Returning again to our example HSC exam question:

In conclusion, as shown in the texts by Smith, Kovács & Kowalski, Revenge Tragedy often locates us in places of social and psychological tragedy. Indeed, evidence is so abundant it

would seem that these two elements are essential to all Revenge Tragedy. However as evidenced in the text by *Schmidt* and discussed in the application of definitions provided by literary theory and the theoretical exploration of the aforementioned *Schmidt* text, Revenge Tragedy does not always locate us in places of social tragedy, even if it does always seem to locate us in places of psychological tragedy.

Essay Writing Exercise 3:

Go to the Board of Studies website and locate all the previous HSC papers for the English Extension 1 course. Find the questions that relate to your elective and follow the above steps over and over again until you feel you can write a solid HSC essay in response to whatever the BOS might throw at you! Give these essays to your teacher (in a timely and polite manner of course) and ask for feedback.

And finally: LISTEN TO THE FEEDBACK and APPLY IT TO THE NEXT PRACTISE ESSAY!

Sample Thesis Statements for the 2011 HSC Exam Questions

Module A: Genre

In this module, there is an overarching idea that must be present in your thesis statement (and hence your essay) – you need to show that you understand the conventions and values that are associated with the genre you have studied and how composers have worked within as well as against those constraints and how this has shaped the meaning in the works created.

2011 HSC – English Extension 1 Paper

Question 1: Elective 1: Life Writing

The opening statement is a general statement about the nature of Life Writing and sets up the idea that composers cannot simply record the details of a life – they have to take an active role when constructing the text.

Then using the question's structure the thesis statement says "but" to evaluate the second part of the statement and state that composers DO manipulate form and feature and why? Because detail alone is not enough, the text's arrangement and language also influence meaning.

In Life Writing, composers not only interrogate the representation of lives **but** also experiment with textual forms and features in response to different contexts.

Evaluate this statement with reference to TWO prescribed texts AND texts of your own choosing.

The representation of someone's life is a complex task as no human life can be summarised as a simple linear progression, nor can it be distilled into a concise statement without omissions and simplifications. Life writers respond to this challenge by interrogating the various aspects of the life to be represented to determine the key elements. The elements chosen will be those of greatest value to the composer's purpose for writing which in turn will be in response to a particular context. Hence life writers, regardless of how objective their purpose for writing might be, carefully interrogate the representation of their subject's life and select the elements that best suit their intended message. **But** this is not enough to ensure that the representation is responded to in the desired manner. The composer must carefully consider how the information must be compiled and the language to be used to represent it and therefore life writers also experiment with textual form and features in an effort to achieve their desired effect on the responder. Evidence to support the above statements can be found in ... <outline composers to be analysed and used as evidence in the essay>

Here the first part of the statement is being evaluated by stating that life writers DO interrogate representations of their subject's life and why? Because they need to choose the elements that best suit their purpose for writing, in response to different contexts.

Finally a brief statement about the composers that will be cited to provide evidence for what has been asserted above.

So the body of this essay you need to explore the following:

- How the two set texts and your related texts can be seen as a set of carefully selected elements of each subject's life that have been selected in response to a certain context and support the overarching tone of the text.
 - o What is the composer's purpose for writing the text – are they attempting to appear objective or is there a distinct bias in relation to the subject that they are trying to emphasise?
 - o What context is each story embedded?
 - o What are the most important elements of each text?
- How the composers experimented with textual forms and feature
 - o Would you view the life of the subject differently if it had been presented in a different way?
 - o How has the manipulation of textual form and features influenced meaning?

2011 HSC – English Extension 1 Paper

Question 3: Elective 2: Crime Writing

The opening statement in relation to Crime Writing and sets up the idea that the justice is a relative term. This leads into the notion that as justice is ambiguous an exploration of it generates uncertainty which forms the basis of suspense.

Then using the question's structure the thesis statement says "however" to evaluate the second part of the statement and state that composers DO experiment with form and feature and why? Because the notion of justice can be so ambiguous the composers needs to be clever in the arrangement of context and language in an effort to influence meaning.

In Crime Writing, composers not only scrutinise justice but also experiment with textual forms and features in response to different contexts.

Evaluate this statement with reference to TWO prescribed texts AND texts of your own choosing.

The notion of justice is highly relative; what represents justice for one individual may indeed be perceived as injustice by another. Crime writers make use of this conundrum and generate reader interest by scrutinising the concepts of justice within the context of a particular story; an account of a crime and potentially the circumstances of its perpetration, detection and resolution. As the story progresses, the composer provides more and more information to engage the responder's own sense of morality and builds suspense as to whether or not, by the end of the narrative, justice will be served in this particular situation. However, as the notion of justice is so very relative to the individual, the context of the plot plays a key role in the representation. Therefore in the creation of crime fiction, composers use the context of the crime in conjunction with the language features and textual form to attempt to manipulate the responder's views. To that end a certain amount of experimentation has been used by many crime writers as the moral questions raised in texts are open to conjecture and therefore make it difficult to paint the achievement of justice in a definitive light.

Evidence to support the above statements can be found in ... <outline composers to be analysed and used as evidence in the essay>

Here the first part of the statement is being evaluated by stating that crime writers DO scrutinize justice and why? Because the ambiguous and relative nature of justice lends itself well to the building of suspense which is integral to crime fiction.

Finally a brief statement about the composers that will be cited to provide evidence for what has been asserted above.

So the body of this essay you need to explore the following:

- How the two set texts and your related texts can be seen as a means of scrutinizing justice and the different ways the composers have conceived justice (or injustice) and represented it.
 - o What is the composer's purpose for writing the text – are they making a comment about justice in society or are they simply relating a situation and calling on the responder to make up their own mind?
 - o In what context is the crime in each story embedded? Does this affect the interpretation of justice in relation to the crime?
- How the composers experimented with textual forms and feature
 - o Would you view the crime and retribution differently if it had been presented in a different way?
 - o How has the manipulation of textual form and features influenced meaning?

2011 HSC – English Extension 1 Paper

Question 5: Elective 3: Science Fiction

The opening statement is a general statement about the nature of Science Fiction and sets up the idea that its purpose is speculative and therefore challenging towards traditional perspectives.

Then using the question's structure the thesis statement says "however" to evaluate the second part of the statement and state that composers DO experiment with form and feature and why?

Because with speculative fiction you have to if you wish to communicate ideas that only exist in a context which is outside the scope of human experience.

In Science Fiction, composers not only challenge traditional perspectives on humanity but also experiment with textual forms and features in response to different contexts.

Evaluate this statement with reference to TWO prescribed texts AND texts of your own choosing.

The purpose of science fiction is to speculate about the future or an alternative reality and imagine how human beings or human-like beings might interact with a potential context that is both similar to, but at the same time fundamentally different from, our own. It is a speculative approach to viewing humanity and as such it challenges our traditional way of seeing ourselves because it provides a wholly new context within which to make judgements. However, any form of speculation requires a certain amount of experimentation and this is not just restricted to the settings of science fiction stories, but often requires composers to try new ways to manipulate textual form and features in an effort to communicate ideas that are contextualised in a place that can only be accessed via the composer's imagination. Evidence to support the above statements can be found in ... <outline composers to be analysed and used as evidence in the essay>

Here the first part of the statement is being evaluated by stating that science fiction writers DO challenge traditional perspectives on humanity and why? Because it is in the nature of the genre to place humanity in an entirely new context which challenges the way we think about ourselves.

Finally a brief statement about the composers that will be cited to provide evidence for what has been asserted above.

So the body of this essay you need to explore the following:

- How the two set texts and your related texts can be seen as a means of challenging traditional perspectives on humanity and the different ways the composers have built parallels between their own context and the imagined context of their creation to provide a basis with which to view contemporary society within a wholly new context.
 - o What is the composer's purpose for writing the text – are they making a comment about humanity or society or are they simply relating a "speculative" situation and calling on the responder to make up their own mind?
 - o In what context is each story embedded? Does this affect the interpretation of how it relates to our own understanding of humanity?
- How the composers experimented with textual forms and feature
 - o Would you have envisioned the speculative "setting" differently if it had been presented in a different way?
 - o How has the manipulation of textual form and features influenced meaning?

Module B: Texts and Ways of Thinking

In this module, there is an overarching idea that must be present in your thesis statement (and hence your essay) – You need to show that you understand that the texts and the ways of thinking that are reflected in them are a direct result of what was happening around the composers at the time (context). Texts are not created in a vacuum and the purpose of this module is to highlight that there are personal, social and political circumstances which influence the way composers construct their work as well as their subject matter.

The opening statement is a general statement about the period of history known as the “Cold War” period. It sets up the idea that it is changes in power structures that inspired some of the thinking of the time.

Following the question’s structure the thesis statement says “however regardless of the values critiqued” and goes on to evaluate the second part of the statement and state that cold war composers DID experiment with form and feature and why? Because they were trying to communicate complex and confronting new ideas and they needed to play with form and feature to get these messages across. Also artistically, for many the message was conveyed more by the challenging form of the text than by the actual words (eg. The Theatre of the Absurd.)

In After the Bomb, composers not only critique personal and political values but also manipulate textual forms and features in response to their times.

Evaluate this statement with reference to TWO prescribed texts AND texts of your own choosing.

The period of history known as the “Cold War” was a time of enormous political, social, philosophical and economic change. Many of the changes that occurred, especially in the Western world, were largely the result of the enormous power shifts in Europe and the United States that followed the world wars. The result of the unravelling of previously dominant power structures lead to a great deal of questioning in society of the values upon which those structures had been built. Although this questioning ranged widely across many intellectual fronts, two areas of particular interest related to the political and social values underpinning the class system and the comparative value of the opposing ideologies of socialism and capitalism. Another area of intense questioning at this time, related to the personal and social values that underpin the gender roles and gender identity in society. The various composers of the time naturally responded differently to what was going on around them, however regardless of which particular values the composers were critiquing there was also a pervading trend to challenge the modes of expression that dominated the previous generations. This was done both for the sake of artistic innovation but also to assist with communicating the new ways of thinking with which they engaged; as such many composers at this time manipulated traditional textual forms and features to supplement the meaning of the words and create new meaning. Evidence to support the above statements can be found in ... <outline composers to be analysed and used as evidence in the essay>

Here the first part of the statement is being evaluated by stating that cold war writers DID critique personal and political values and why? Because power was shifting into new domains and society was questioning the old power structures that before seemed off limits. Note: I’ve chosen to focus on left wing/right wing values and feminist concerns with patriarchal values. You could also focus on metaphysics, meta-narratives, religion, sexuality or other value structures that were challenged at the time.

Finally a brief statement about the composers that will be cited to provide evidence for what has been asserted above.

So the body of this essay you need to explore the following:

- How the two set texts and your related texts can be seen as a critique of the political and personal values mentioned in the thesis statement.
 - o What is the composer’s purpose for writing the text – are they making a comment about the values that underpin the power structures of society or are they simply relating a story and calling on the responder to make up their own mind?
 - o How are the values being critiqued a specific reaction to this particular period of history?
- How the composers experimented with textual forms and feature
 - o Could what they wanted to express be presented in a different/traditional way?
 - o How has the manipulation of textual form and features influenced meaning?

2011 HSC – English Extension 1 Paper

Question 9: Elective 2: Romanticism

The opening statement is a general statement about the period of history known as the “Romantic” period. It sets us up to argue the idea that romanticism was a reaction to the enlightenment and the accompanying horrors of the industrial revolution.

Following the question’s structure the thesis statement says “however” and goes on to evaluate the second part of the statement and state that romantic composers DID experiment with form and feature and why? Because they were reacting to the “neoclassical” form and were endeavoring to create a new style (albeit harking back to the middle ages) that better suited their needs. They were also trying to communicate new ideas and generally rebel and so they needed to play with form and feature to get these messages across.

In Romanticism, composers not only transform human experience through imagination but also manipulate textual forms and features in response to their times.

Evaluate this statement with reference to TWO prescribed texts AND texts of your own choosing.

The Romantic Movement that rose to prominence between the late-18th and mid-19th century was in many ways a reaction to the Age of the Enlightenment. The Enlightenment had been a driving intellectual force in the century leading up to this period of history and was still a dominant force at the time; propping up the technological and social innovations of the Industrial Revolution. This pervading rationalism caused many composers at the time to react in direct opposition. The Romantics assigned greater importance to imagination over reason and although the composers of the time naturally responded differently to the horrors of the Industrial Revolution that was going on around them, there was a pervading trend amongst the Romantics to attempt to transform the human experiences they observed and escape their reality through the use of imagination.

However the Romantics also reacted to the neoclassical form which was favoured by the proponents of the Enlightenment. The Romantics actively sought to challenge the “classical” forms inspired by Greek and Roman antiquity and they manipulated traditional textual forms and features to suit their own artistic and intellectual needs. Through their less restrained textual forms and emotive language features they endeavoured to communicate their alternative ways of thinking and rebel against the mainstream ideologies. Evidence to support the above statements can be found in ... <outline composers to be analysed and used as evidence in the essay>

Here the first part of the statement is being evaluated by stating that romantic writers DID transform human experience through imagination and why? Because the rationalism of the enlightenment was too restrictive for them and they rebelled against it by championing imagination and emotion over reason. Also the horrors around them inspired an art form that is largely escapist and as imagination was the only way out – that was the route they took.

Finally a brief statement about the composers that will be cited to provide evidence for what has been asserted above.

So the body of this essay you need to explore the following:

- How the two set texts and your related texts can be seen to transform human experience through imagination.
 - o What was the composer’s purpose for writing the text – what values do they champion over reason and how is this assisted by the transformation of the human stories through imaginative treatment?
 - o How is this a reaction to the pervading rationalism of this period of history?
 - o How is it escapist? Contextually – what is the composer seeking to escape from?
- How the composers experimented with textual forms and feature
 - o Could what they wanted to express be presented in a different/traditional way?
 - o How is the manipulation of textual form and feature evidence of a break from neoclassicism?
 - o How has the manipulation of textual form and features influenced meaning?

2011 HSC – English Extension 1 Paper

Question 11: Elective 3: Navigating the Global

The opening statement is a general statement about the complexity of the globalization issue which leads into the argument that it is the complexity of the issue that has led to the dilemmas to be confronted and the required manipulation of textual form and feature to explore them adequately.

Following the question's structure the thesis statement says "however" and goes on to evaluate the second part of the statement and state that contemporary DO experiment with form and feature and why? Because they are dealing with a very complex and multifaceted problem and as such need to stretch and mold the language and the textual form to assist them to communicate the issues.

In Navigating the Global, composers not only confront the dilemmas of globalisation but also manipulate textual forms and features in response to their times.

Evaluate this statement with reference to TWO prescribed texts AND texts of your own choosing.

There is an uncertainty about the long term effect of globalisation and the blurring of cultural boundaries that result. Whether it will lead to a better or worse global situation is difficult to quantify or even discuss with any certainty. However it is in this uncertainty, about what will become of societies and cultures threatened by the advance of global entities; we find one of the major dilemmas of globalisation. That said, it can be argued that becoming overwhelmed presents dilemmas not only for those beset by globalisation but those who benefit from it as well. Cultural theorists such as Jean Baudrillard noted that one of the greatest dilemmas created by the growth of a global network of information is that there is just too much information available to us via the internet and the result can be an effacement of reality. This loss of a sense of reality and concern that the more we know the more the truth escapes us is another major dilemma. Also with increased intercultural contact there is an increase in awareness of multiple perspectives making many ethical questions even more complex to decipher and there is the constant pressure on the individual to negotiate "difference" and accommodate opposing points of view. Different composers respond differently to what is going on around them however there has been a pervading trend amongst many contemporary composers to confront the above mentioned dilemmas of globalisation, as well as others, and in the process they have also challenged and manipulated traditional textual forms and features as they attempt to explore, critique and confront such a complex and multifaceted issue. Evidence to support the above statements can be found in ... <outline composers to be analysed and used as evidence in the essay>

Here the first part of the statement is being evaluated by stating that contemporary writers DO confront the dilemmas of globalisation and why? Because many of the dilemmas are huge problems that cause massive uncertainty in our lives – whether it is due to the encroaching of the world on vulnerable societies, the loss of truth in the melee of information or the loss of identity through the constant negotiation with difference.

Finally a brief statement about the composers that will be cited to provide evidence for what has been asserted above.

So the body of this essay you need to explore the following:

- How the two set texts and your related texts can be seen to confront the dilemmas of globalisation as outlined in the thesis statement.
 - o What was the composer's purpose for writing the text – are they for globalisation or against it? How do you know?
 - o How is the above a reaction to the uncertainty of the effect of globalisation on our world?
- How the composers experimented with textual forms and feature
 - o Could what they wanted to express be presented in a different/traditional way?
 - o How have they incorporated contemporary communication methods, imagery and ideas into the form of the text?
 - o How has this manipulation of textual form and features influenced meaning?

Module C: Textual Dynamics

In this module, there is an overarching idea that must be present in your thesis statement (and hence your essay), as follows: You need to show that you understand that language is responsible for both shaping and reflecting culture and values. You need to be able to identify how language is used to actively support and endorse certain values but at the same time how language is encoded with the values (sometimes unconsciously) of the composer and the composer's context.

2011 HSC – English Extension 1 Paper

Question 13: Elective 1: Textual Dynamics

The opening statement is a general statement about the link between reading and the act of writing and leads into the argument that writers are readers and this shared experience with their responder is something upon which they draw.

In Textual Dynamics, composers play with textual forms and features in order to transform ideas, experience and the act of reading.

Evaluate this statement with reference to TWO prescribed texts AND texts of your own choosing.

It could be argued that writers cannot begin writing without first learning to read. It follows then that the experience a composer has had reading will impact on the work they produce and the type and breadth of material they have read will inform their writing practise. Many composers have drawn on their experiences as readers and the inherent value they place on the act of reading and have consciously manipulated textual forms and features in their own writing in an effort to make the responder conscious of the act that they are performing while reading. Composers who do this are either consciously or unconsciously endorsing the idea that every new text read is informed by what was read before and present their work to the responder, mindful of the fact that the responder will only fully appreciate the work if they share much of the reading experience of the composer. With this expectation in place, the composer is free to play with textual conventions and thereby transform the text in unexpected ways to illicit surprise from the reader, whom the composer is aware, would have been expecting something else. Thus they transform the act of reading and the experience of reading. They also allude to other works, with which the responder may be familiar and by removing those ideas expressed within the context of another work and inserting it, consciously, into a new context for consideration, they transform the ideas. Evidence to support the above statements can be found in ... <outline composers to be analysed and used as evidence in the essay>

Here the first part of the statement is being evaluated by stating that composers DO manipulate textual forms and features and thereby transform the experience and the act of reading and how? By drawing on their own experience as readers to enable them to anticipate what the reader expects and then subvert it by doing something unexpected.

Finally a brief statement about the composers that will be cited to provide evidence for what has been asserted above.

This evaluates the part of the statement that composers DO transform ideas and how? By drawing on the works of previously composers (intertextuality) and providing a new context within which to examine the ideas.

So the body of this essay you need to explore the following:

- How the composers of the two set texts and your related texts can be shown to have manipulated textual form and features to produce an unexpected result and transform the experience of reading in a conscious way.
 - o What was the composer's use of language and stylistic devices in each text and how have they been used unexpectedly? What was the effect?
- How the composers used intertextuality to engage with the responder's shared reading experience.
 - o What other texts were referenced in each text? How were the ideas expressed transformed in the new context they have been used.
 - o How has this manipulation of textual form influenced meaning?

2011 HSC – English Extension 1 Paper

Question 15: Elective 2: Language and Gender

The opening statement is a general statement about the nature of identity and leads into the argument that as most aspects of identity are socially and culturally determined, composers are at liberty to deconstruct and reconstruct those aspects to form and challenge the notion of identity.

In Language and Gender, composers play with textual forms and features in order to investigate, challenge and construct aspects of identity.

Evaluate this statement with reference to TWO prescribed texts AND texts of your own choosing.

There are numerous different facets that make up a person's sense of self and although some of these are integral to being a member of the homosapien species, it could be argued that most aspects of identity are culturally and socially embedded. The sources of gender identity, in particular, are a rich area of speculation for composers. There is a great deal more to gender identity than simply a question of anatomy and what it feels like or means to be one gender or another differs drastically between cultures and various periods of history within each culture. Indeed even the question of the possibility of an individual being both genders simultaneously or neither has been the subject of debate. In response to this complex issue of gender identity, many composers have manipulated textual form and features in an effort to explore the conundrum.

Particularly through the use of cinematic form, the presentation, investigation and reconstruction of gender stereotypes has been pursued. Likewise through the exploration and exposition of character and the use of unconventional plot twists in fictional texts, the values that determine gender identity have been challenged by composers. Evidence to support the above statements can be found in ... <outline composers to be analysed and used as evidence in the essay>

Here the first part of the statement is being evaluated by stating that composers DO manipulate textual forms and features as a means of challenging gender identity specifically and why? Because gender identity is fraught and a difficult issue to pin down because it is so socially and culturally embedded.

Finally a brief statement about the composers that will be cited to provide evidence for what has been asserted above.

This evaluates the part of the statement that composers DO to investigate, challenge and construct aspects of identity and how? Through the use of form (such as film) and textual features such as character and plot devices.

So the body of this essay you need to explore the following:

- How the composers of the two set texts and your related texts introduced the aspects and values the underpin gender identity.
 - o How have the presentation of gender identity differed between texts and how much of this can be attributed to differing cultural and social values, underpinning the composer's context?
 - o What was the composer's use of language and stylistic devices in each text and how have they been used to expose notions of gender in a certain way? How have they challenged stereotypical gender identifiers?
- How the composers manipulated textual form and features to investigate and construct gender identity within the context of the text?
 - o How has this manipulation of textual form and feature influenced meaning?

Creative Writing Preparation

Preparing for the creative writing section of the exam is **NOT** a matter of writing a short story that fits the elective, memorising it and hoping with all your might that you can somehow work it around in the exam to fit the stimulus you are given. A much better approach is to go into the exam with a fully formed character in mind that is all ready to do your bidding, at the direction of whatever stimulus you get. The more time you spend developing this character the better.

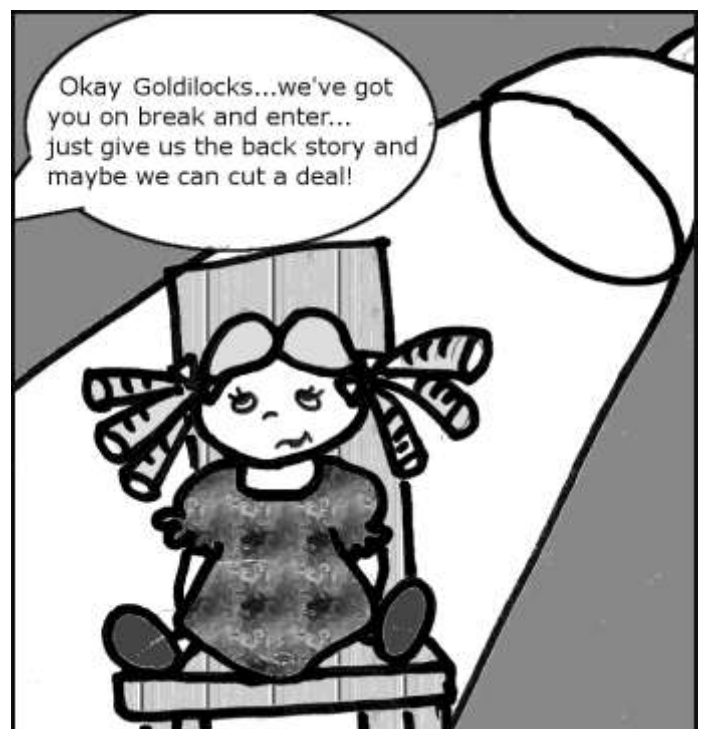
NOTE: It is extremely important that when you prepare your character, you keep in mind the elements of the over-arching module and elective that you have studied and design your character in a manner that will allow you to best illustrate what you have learned.

Remember: In the following exercise, what you want to create for your character is a “back-story”. **This is not the story that you will write in the exam.**

Only **you** need to know the full story behind your character, your reader will not know, nor need to know the bulk of what you create in the following exercise **BUT** it is essential that you know it.

So to begin... you start with a vague notion about who will become the vehicle by which you will explore the parameters of your elective. Give them a name and then sit them down in a metaphorical rickety wooden chair, shine a very bright imaginary light into their fictional eyes and interrogate them thoroughly.

If you need help - just fill in the details on the attached **Character Profile Sheet**.



Character Profile Sheet

Name:

Gender:

Age:

Nationality:

Current Location:

Ethnicity:

Religious/Philosophical Affiliations:

Social Status:

Level of Wealth:

Level of Education:

Sexual Orientation:

Moral Codes:

(What constraints exist on this character? Remember that even apparently amoral people have some rules that they live by, even if the rules are a little perverse or twisted.)

Describe their appearance:

(Include as much detail as you can, including not only actual physical details, but figurative descriptions... to get at the essence of what they are like.)

Describe how they move (walk, sit, run, stand etc):

(How a person carries themselves says a lot about either the persona they are trying to project or their feelings which they are failing to conceal. This is not always sinister – a person who moves freely and uses open body language, may be failing to conceal that they are a happy and carefree person.)

Describe how they speak:

(Include here the tone and quality of their voice, their accent (if it is relevant) – basically describe the voice you hear in your head when the character speaks.)

Describe what they do for work:

(How do they get by on a day to day basis?)

Describe how they live (what do they do the most, hobbies?):

(What else do they do beyond work?)

Describe what they eat and how they eat:

(This may seem like a strange detail to include, but it is important especially if you are creating a historical figure or someone from the future.)

Describe their world through their eyes:

(This is the area that will help you show what you know about your elective – the way your character sees the world needs to in some way reflect what you’ve learned about the “Ways of Thinking” explored in the elective you have studied. Take your time and do this properly. How you approach it will depend on which elective you have studied.)

Additional Information:

(Locate your chosen module/elective in the following pages and think about the further questions provided.)

Module A: Genre

Elective 1: Life Writing

- Is your protagonist based on a real life study of an individual?
- If so how much do you actually know for sure about the person and how much is based on speculation? What justification do you have for your speculations?
- Are there any glaringly obvious gaps or inconsistencies in your information about your protagonist's story? Do you need to fill them in with invention or can these elements be reasonably left unknown?
- If not, what elements do you need to include if you wish to make them sound authentic? Would you believe your character is real if you didn't already know they were fictional?
- What challenges has your character had to overcome in their lives? How have these experiences changed them? In other words what is their back-story and how have you made it appear authentic or believable?
- Either way, how does your character help to illustrate what you understand about the genre of life writing?

Elective 2: Crime Writing

- What is the nature of the crime in which your protagonist has become involved?
- What is his/her relationship to the crime? (Perpetrator, investigator, victim, witness, reporter...or something else?)
- What is your character's understanding of the term "justice"? Is there any specific justice that they are seeking? If so, describe what they want?
- Does your character believe that there is a clearly defined definition of right and wrong or do they find that the lines between the two often blur? What is the reason for this belief?
- How does their moral code reflect the values of the situation and time they exist? (Do they subscribe to the moral code of the society around them or do they react to that code and live by another? If they are living by another code, outline what they believe is right and what is wrong and some justification for their belief.) Does your character exist on the fringe of their society or are they an integral part of it?
- Is there anything about your character that you could describe as a "crime fiction cliché"? Is this deliberate and if so, why?
- How does your character help illustrate what you understand about the genre of crime fiction?

Elective 3: Science Fiction

- Where does your protagonist exist in the context of the story? Describe the imaginary world in which they live - what are the parameters? (in the future, in the past, on another planet, in another reality/universe etc)
- How does your protagonist's world differ from ours? In what ways is it similar? Are the similarities deliberate? Do you intend to use these similarities as a way of commenting on our own era and world? If so, what specifically do you want to say?
- How important is technology in the story of your protagonist? What does the technology allow him/her to do? How many details about the technology should you include? Does your character understand the technology or are they merely a user of it with no notion of how it works or what it really does?
- Is technology in your character's story helpful or sinister?
- Does your protagonist come from this place originally? If not, where does he/she come from and how did they come to be where they are now?
- Is there anything about your character that you could describe as a "science fiction cliché"? Is this deliberate and if so, why?
- How does your character help illustrate what you understand about the genre of science fiction?

Module B: Texts and Ways of Thinking

Elective 1: After the Bomb

- What specific "cold war" historical events have occurred during the time that your character has been alive? (eg. Did they live through WWII? Were they in the USA during the Cuban missile crisis? Did they know about the Hungarian Uprising against the Soviet Union in 1956? etc) How did these events affect the way they think?
- Is your character politically motivated? If so to which side of the Left Wing/Right Wing divide do they occupy? What is their attitude to those currently in power in their own part of the world?
- Does your character subscribe to any philosophical movements prevalent during this period of history? (Existentialism, Marxism, Liberalism, Feminism etc) How does this affect their interpretation of the events unfolding around them?

- OR is your character unaware of the philosophies driving their motivations – do they subscribe to the hype around them (e.g. McCarthyism) without really questioning it?
- Where does your character get their information from? Do they only know what is fed to them via official government controlled media or do they have an ‘underground’ or ‘subversive’ source of information?
- Does your character believe all, some or none of what they are told? Why?
- What concerns your character about the world as a whole and about their local environment? What do they fear and why do they fear it? (Think in terms of politics, scientific advancement (*ie computers/television/space exploration/birth control*), religion (*are they a theist or an atheist or something else and why?*)
- How does your character help illustrate what you understand about the period of history commonly known as the 'Cold War'?

Elective 2: Romanticism

- What is your character’s relationship with the natural world? How do they interact with and experience nature?
- Are they individualistic or idiosyncratic in behaviour? Is this genuine or affected?
- What is their emotional state? Do they value reason or emotion more? How do they react to highly emotional people? How do they react when their emotions are heightened? What moves them?
- How does their imagination help/hinder them? What ‘flights of fancy’ are they given to?
- Do they believe in the super-natural and if so, how do they experience it? Is it real or imagined? Are they aware of the source of these experiences?
- What concerns your character about their world as a whole and about their local environment? What do they fear and why do they fear it? (Think in terms of political concerns (*slavery, revolution, monarchy, the separation of church and state etc*) scientific advancement (*ie industrial revolution, Newtonian physics etc*), religion (*are they a theist, atheist, pantheist, deist or something else and why?*), crime and punishment (*execution, transportation, exile etc*)
- How does your character help illustrate what you understand about the period of history commonly known as the “Romantic Period”?

Elective 3: Navigating the Global

- What is your character's relationship with the wider world? How do they interact with the world? Do they subscribe to international news broadcasts? Do they use social media? Do they travel internationally? OR Do they retreat from the global? Do they embrace traditional culture and attempt to preserve that which is still untouched?
- What is their experience/understanding of globalisation? Do they fear it or embrace it? What are their positive/negative views on the subject?
- How do they attempt to make sense of the vast amount of information available in the modern world? Do they ignore most of it? Does it overwhelm them? Can they not get enough of it?
- Does your character have a clear sense of personal and cultural identity? Do they know who they are and where they came from OR is this as much of mystery as where they are headed?
- Do they feel that their own identity and culture is under threat? If so, why and who is threatening it? OR Do they feel compelled to change themselves to better integrate with the modern world? OR Do they feel the need to force their own culture on others from a different background? If so, why?
- How does your character help illustrate what you understand about the ways of thinking in the late 20th and early 21st centuries?

Module C: Language and Values

Elective 1: Textual Dynamics

- What does your character like to read? How are they influenced by what they have read? How do they express the influence that literature has had in their lives? What insights has it given to them?
- Is there a particular theme/phrase/quote that weaves itself into their lives and finds multiple ways to be expressed, given the different circumstances? (e.g. are they constantly on the lookout for a "Catch 22" or someone "ill met by moonlight"?)
- How does your character use language? Do they have a bent for linguistic playfulness? (e.g. using puns, cryptic crossword clues, anagrams, spoonerisms, rhymes etc) OR do they like to modify famous quotes to suit their whims? (e.g. In response to having watched a dreadful film, might they utter; "I came, I saw, I cankered"?)

- How could your character manipulate the interplay of intention and expectation? How could they be used to challenge conventions and provide a new perspective on certain situations or concepts?
- How does your character's use of language reflect their value system? How would they behave/speak if they were to be used as a tool to persuade a reader to feel a certain way? What reaction would you like this character to draw from your reader? How could this be achieved?
- How does your character help illustrate what you understand about textual dynamics?

Elective 2: Language and Gender

- Does your character have a clear sense of identity; specifically in terms of gender or is this identity somewhat confused or ambiguous? If the latter, how have they come to be so ambiguous?
- Does your character seek to conceal their gender? If so, why and how do they use language to conceal or enhance the masculine/feminine aspects of their identity?
- Does your character use language to project a certain persona? How does this persona differ from their real selves? Why do they feel the need to perform in this way and what are the intricacies of the performance?
- What does your character understand as the definition of "being female" or "being male"? What codes or indicators do they look for in other people to determine their gender or identify their gender confusion or concealment?
- What does your character value about "being male" or "being female"? Where have these values come from and are they aware of why they value certain masculine/feminine attributes over others?
- How does your character help illustrate what you understand about the interplay between language and gender?

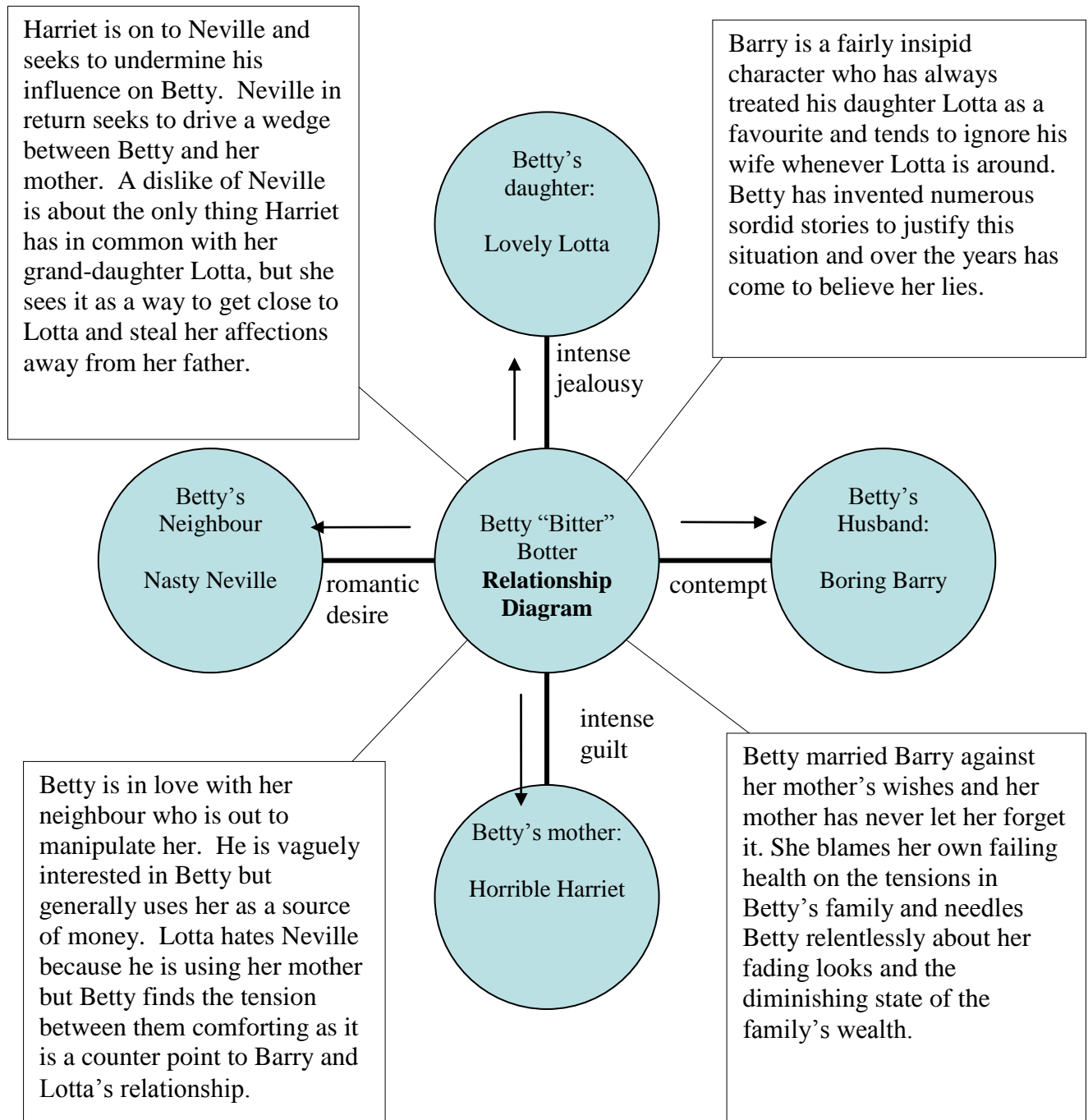
Creative Writing Exercise 1:

Perhaps you're not a list maker...that's okay. Here are a couple of other ways you can complete a character profile exercise.

- 1) Rewrite the above questions as though they were the script for an interview and let your character answer them in the first person.
- 2) Create a visual representation for the various aspects of your character as illustrated in the example below.

For Instance: *Elective X – Revenge Tragedy*

This is an example of a relationship diagram that could be drawn for a character. Similar diagrams could be drawn to cover other aspects of character such as motivations, emotional state, political affiliation, personal philosophy etc



A final word on creative writing....

The best way to practise creative writing under pressure and in response to a stimulus is to creatively write under pressure and in response to a stimulus. It sounds obvious, but you would be surprised how many students think that the only way to prepare for a creative writing task is to write a story, memorise it and then regurgitate it in the exam and hope that it somehow fits the stimulus. Sounds like a lot of work to me, when you could spend your time better and having a good deal more fun!

This is what I suggest – once you have created and interrogated your character, get together with a few of your classmates and practise your creative writing. These sessions should be fun, supportive and include a number of warm-up free writing exercises before you get stuck into the practising for the exam.

Some warm up exercises are as follows:

Note: All exercises should be completed in a set time frame (about 2 - 10 minutes but no more)

- Ask everyone to contribute a verb/noun/adjective/whatever and then you all separately write a single sentence for each word suggested. *Next take the sentences and attempt to put them together into a coherent story. (Only a paragraph or so.)*
- Ask everyone to write an obituary piece following the death of a famous; circus animal/free-form interpretational dancer/ experimental pot plant/whatever.
- Ask everyone to take a walk through their dream/horror house and describe each room as the narrator who is walking through it. Use unusual senses to describe different elements – ie. use visual imagery to describe the atmosphere, tactile imagery to describe something smelly, or sounds to describe something bright and glaring.
- **Or you can Google “free writing exercises”; there are thousands of them out there in cyber-space. Have a look and go crazy with it – there are no rules, these are just the warm up!**

Everyone should read their stories to each other and have a good laugh. (This exercise should be fun as it is only a warm up and a way to get used to reading your stuff to other people.)

Creative Writing Exercise 2:

Go to the Board of Studies website and locate a previous HSC papers for the English Extension 1 course. Find a creative question that relates to your elective and use the stimulus to write a short story, using your “made-to-order” character. Take 1 hour to write the story and then swap stories with your writing buddies. Read each other’s work and provide feedback.

LISTEN TO THE FEEDBACK and APPLY IT TO THE NEXT PRACTISE CREATIVE PIECE!