



The following is an example of an upper-range response. This piece shows close meaningful textual analysis and develops a sustained argument. There is an awareness of the topic and exploring its implications throughout the essay. It is a thorough discussion that uses the text well, although better responses found more breadth in the discussion. Its expression is sound without being exceptional. This piece was awarded a score at the lower end of the top range.

This Boy's Life

i. "I had my own dreams of transformation..."

'The reader feels that Toby and his mother are never going to be able to improve their lives.'

Do you agree?

Wolff's memoir This Boy's Life positions its readers to question the ability of Tobias and his mother to 'change [their] luck'. In the midst of the post-war conservative backlash the pair are caged by societal norms that prevent them from achieving their 'dreams of transformation.' Furthermore, Tobias' impracticality and sense of entitlement lead him to reject opportunities. Despite this, the memoir ends on an optimistic note. The reader closes the novel with the belief that the lessons the pair have learned throughout their journey may offer them a chance to improve their lives.

The societal norms and expectations of the 1950's post-war America inhibit Tobias and his mother's ability to transform their lives. Toby's sense of self worth is completely broken by his inability to meet the era's stereotypes of masculinity. The notion that he 'could not break down [his] sense of being at fault to its components' who he is reveals his inability to reconcile his identity with social expectations. Wolff juxtaposes Toby's 'natural' desire to 'seek status' with his complete and total discomfort with this own self. The contrast between the pacifistic and loving young boy who cries at a squirrel's funeral and the gun-toting, rebellious teenager is a stark one. It reveals the overpowering need that Toby feels to conform. The memoir reveals that way in which Tobias' need to fit in prevents him from pursuing success. Rather than 'change [his] luck, as he initially intended, Tobias camouflages himself in the safety of social norms and joins the army. His choice to return to the 'clear life of uniforms, ranks and weapons' cements his future. He decides to commit to leading an average life through conformity rather than stay true to his identity and pursue his dreams of 'status' and wealth.

Rosemary is similarly trapped by societal customs. Post-war America designates her one position in life: the role of a housewife and mother. This convention cages her, despite her attempts to escape it. The memoir emphasises the perpetual cycle of abuse that Rosemary and her son are subjected to. The opening line of the text, 'Our car boiled over again.', demonstrates the repetitive and fruitless nature of Rosemary's attempts to transform her life. The inability of the 1950's women to escape from abuse is a prevalent element of the text. It reveals the way in which such situations were treated as normal and largely ignored. The 'strangeness' of the cycle of abuse and oppression 'over the years became normal' to both Tobias and his mother. Eventually, despite her efforts to 'run from [men she] was afraid of, Rosemary is unable to escape the pervasive violence in her life. Both she and Tobias adopt the same view of the abuse as the rest of the society does. They opt to ignore it and turn a blind eye 'languidly [convincing themselves] that the strange noises came from cats.' Thus, societal expectations prevent Rosemary and Tobias from achieving their 'dreams of transformation.'

It is not social norms alone that hinder the pair's progress in society. Toby's impractical and idealistic nature also damage his chances of success. He feels a sense of entitlement that prevents him from working hard to improve his circumstances. Toby manages to lie and manipulate his way into a good school, Hill, but does not put any effort to secure his future there. Instead, he considers it his 'desire and [his] right' to be a part of this 'great world.' Even the prospect of being expelled due to failing classes does not spur him into action. He simply 'pray[s] like a moslem' that he will be allowed to stay.

In a similar manner, he also wastes opportunities to escape granted by Mr Bolger who offers him a refuge from Dwight's abusive household. He is 'welcomed' by the family, yet he does nothing to repay their kindness. The troubles he causes them though his actions are forgivable, but his pride and inability to take responsibility for his own wrongdoings destroy his chances of remaining in his adoptive home. Tobias refuses to apologise for siphoning fuel out of the neighbours' trucks. This 'brings shame' on him and incites resentment from the Bolgers who have offered him a chance to change his future. Rather than take responsibility for his actions he 'le[aves] a dummy in [his] place to look sorry...but [he is] nowhere in the neighbourhood.' This façade of regret ultimately prevents him from finding a new home.

Wolff's memoir, however, closes on an optimistic note. Toby is once again on the road, 'posed for flight', and journeying toward a brighter future. The passage is reminiscent of the opening of the text. The difference, however, is that this time Tobias is equipped with the resilience, resourcefulness and determination that he has gained from his troubled childhood. The final lines of the memoir are full of hope as Tobias shouts 'hymns' at the 'top of [his] lungs' and drives along the road to an uncertain but optimistic future. This causes the reader to question whether his dreams of transformation have truly been 'saved', or whether Toby is simply filled with the same naivety that he possessed at the beginning of the memoir.

The pervasive idea of 'transformation' and 'chang[ing] luck' in Wolff's This Boy's Life are hindered by multiple obstacles. Social norms and Toby's personal attributes prevent the pair from transforming their lives in the memoir. The reader is left with an overwhelming sense of optimism, however though which Tobias Wolff suggests that these 'dreams' may eventually be realised.



skills must be continually reinforced, including building more sophisticated vocabulary, continuing to improve grammar and placing more focus on sentence structure. Some continued work on effective quoting may also assist students to select brief, meaningful quotes that add more than retelling the point already made. Long, turgid quoting that wasn't relevant certainly did not add to the success of an essay.

Data on text selection and averages is provided at the end of this report.

The following is an example of an upper-range response.

Wuthering Heights

ii. 'Heathcliff's obsession makes a monster of him.' Discuss.

Emily Bronte's Wuthering Heights presents a world of polarizing characters subject to the forces of social class and a passionate love that transcends the world in which they exist. Heathcliff's actions and motivations in the morally ambiguous world constructed by Bronte portrays him not as a monster, but as a Byronic hero whose tyrannical actions are seen as the result of an all-consuming love that has been bastardized by the influence of the social mechanisms of his day. Thus Heathcliff's status as an outsider and his love of Catherine empower him to commit such horrendous actions, though he finally achieves peace in his end. This is indicative of his status of a Byronic hero, a concept that the people of Bronte's day would have known and understood, as his dark, unbridled passion punctuates his every action.

Upon his arrival at the weather-beaten purgatory that is Wuthering Heights, Heathcliff is immediately seen as an outsider. That the name 'Heathcliff' serves as both his Christian and surname divorces him from the typical traditions of the time, whilst the lack of a surname removes the societal power or status that comes with an established name, such as Linton or Earnshaw. Similarly, that his arrival, immediately labelled a 'gypsy brat' and 'villain', also characterized by the destruction of beauty through the fiddle brought back by Mr Earnshaw, serves as a device that foreshadows Heathcliff's dark, malevolent nature. Ironically, it is the subsequent removal from the normalized society that foster the transcendent bond between Heathcliff and the youthful Catherine. The bond they develop is all-conquering, not characterized by lust but the consummation of one whole, evident as Catherine states 'I am Heathcliff.' However, this bond is also a metaphysical one, as Catherine warns that anyone who comes between them shall 'befall the fate of Milo,' demonstrating a fierce, emotive connection characterized by dependence and devotion between the two young deviants.

Catherine's transformation upon returning from Thrushcross Grange is seen as the catalyst for Heathcliff's vengeful temperament. Having departed a 'wicked slip' who was 'never so happy as when we all were scolding her at once', this rebellious nature which bred the bond with Heathcliff was irreparably damaged due to the influence of social class. Transformed by the 'splendid place' that is 'carpeted with crimson,' the allure of wealth, social status and shallow beauty catalysed by the Grange is only further perpetuated by the influence of Frances, who comes from a similar world. This leads to Catherine's assertion that it would 'degrade [her] to marry Heathcliff' despite the love they share. That Catherine states that she loves 'The ground under [Edgar's] feet, and the air above his head, and everything he touches, and every word he says' is further proof of Catherine's disillusionment, as she never directly states she loves Edgar. This is indicative of Bronte's criticism of the influence of social class, her belief that it is a negative influence that promotes a false love powered by shallow values of wealth and status. That these influences are the catalyst for Heathcliff's defection from the Heights is indicative of his motivation, which inevitably becomes his obsession; to seek vengeance on that which took Catherine from him; social class and those who perpetuated its influence.

Heathcliff's transformation upon returning to the wider realm of the Heights and the Grange is a fleeting example of the obsession that powers him. No longer a 'gypsy brat' but a 'tall, athletic, well-formed man,' Heathcliff has, at least on the surface, obtained a similar social standing to those who oppressed him. Similarly, the 'gibberish' with which he previously expressed himself is replaced with a powerful, poetic, latinate lexicon characterized by phrases such as how the world had become a 'dreadful collection of memoranda' about Catherine. However, as Catherine claims that, through death she will become 'incomparably above and beyond you all' is implicit of a force within Catherine, and, subsequently Heathcliff, transcendent of the realm in which she once existed. This is a love of Heathcliff, and without her, it consumes him. Absorbed by a 'monomania on his departed idol' Heathcliff resumes the systematic torture and oppression of those within this reach. Hareton's claim that Heathcliff 'pays dad back what he gives to me' demonstrates that Heathcliff is punishing and degenerating Hindley. Symptomatic of this, Hindley's alcoholism and resultant abuse of Hareton, such that Hareton labels him 'devil daddy' mirrors Hindley's lowering of Heathcliff to servant status and subsequent abuse. Continuing this mirroring, Heathcliff assures that Wuthering Heights becomes to young Cathy what the entrapment of Thrushcross Grange was to Catherine; a literal hell on Earth with no chance of escape. Furthermore, Edgar's disowning of Isabella perpetuates his own internal destruction, yet Isabella's claim that 'I do hate [Heathcliff]' shows Heathcliff's remarkable achievement of destroying these two symbols of social class that alienated him from Catherine. Therefore Heathcliff is seen to have undergone an overwhelming transformation which allows him to exact terrible revenge, all inspired by his love of Catherine.

In the concluding moments of the novel, Heathcliff is seen, not as remorseful, but resigning to a fate that awaits him. The two principle motivations, love and vengeance, begin to shift, as Heathcliff's love consumes his existence. Declaring that 'it is a long fight, I wish it were over' demonstrates Heathcliff's desire to welcome the afterlife. Contrasting typical religious views, as Nelly



The most successful responses drew thoughtfully from the text; the least successful only used a scene or a character in a superficial way or retold the plot of the text. These approaches were not always relevant to the prompt. There can be no definitive advice about the success of relying on a single text or employing both of the studied texts. Some students used the two texts expertly to demonstrate exceptions and qualifications, while others did little more than use the second text to add more of the same examples.

When students used more than one source for illustration of their ideas, the best pieces had a strong sense of unity and purpose. This cohesiveness was contrasted by pieces where one idea followed the next, as students went through their list of examples. The product was more a plan for an essay than a thoughtful, finished piece.

Information on assessing the Context

| Context | % | Average | Most popular text |
|--|----|---------|----------------------------|
| Encountering conflict | 46 | 5.5 | <i>Paradise Road</i> |
| Exploring issues of identity and belonging | 25 | 5.6 | <i>Skin</i> |
| Whose reality? | 22 | 5.8 | <i>Death of a Salesman</i> |
| The imaginative landscape | 7 | 6.0 | <i>One Night the Moon</i> |

Advice for teachers and students.

- Formulaic approaches were limiting.
- Avoid memorised responses.
- Students should use texts as vehicles for exploring/stimulating ideas, not as the centre of the task.
- Avoid retelling the plot of the text and presenting it as a piece of writing.
- Work on the transference of ideas offered by the texts.
- Students should practise writing using a range of approaches. If they become too comfortable with just one approach, they may find that it does not suit the task and prompt in the examination.
- Ensure there is adequate practice and strategies for exploring the prompt.
- Aim to develop greater sophistication with creative pieces.
- Work on developing well-crafted pieces.
- Discourage superficial personal stories that offer little depth to the piece of writing.

Context 3 – Encountering conflict

‘Conflict causes harm to both the powerful and the powerless.’

Sample 1

This response shows a genuine attempt to engage with ideas of the prompt and uses textual knowledge to make conclusions and offer insights. Effective use of text is not consistent, however, and some of the ideas are not well developed. The student works to create a sense of cohesion with the piece. There is some control of language, but there are a number of expression weaknesses. It is typical of an upper-middle script, and its strength is that it works with the prompt from start to end. The nominated text is *Every Man in this Village is a Liar*.

Conflict is like a raging fire, it is often unexplainable, random and devastating. These merciless qualities often mean that damage is done to both the powerful and powerless. Although fire does not choose which houses it burns, the powerful may be able to delay the fire. Ultimately conflict will cause some kind of harm to the powerful and to the powerless, so in accepting this harm we can learn about the conflict and rebuild again.

*Due to its personal nature, conflict often results in damages to the powerful and the powerless. Conflict has the ability to strike us deeply and then we are hurt we often fight back. Megan Stack recounts the differences between powers in her journalistic account *Every Man in this Village is a Liar*. Muammar Gaddafi has a strong hold on power with this extreme scheme to ‘rule on terror’, this means that the victims, the people, can not speak out with fears ‘of being shot’. Although they are powerless, the people yell in the only place they can ‘a soccer stadium’. Eventually over 40 years Gaddafi was overthrown by a revolt of these people. Although it often takes longer and can sometimes be unrelenting, Conflict when inflicted upon personal behaviour will eventually cause damage to both the powerless and the powerful.*

External forces in conflict often cause harm to both the powerful and the powerless. External forces such as war can lay devastation randomly and forcefully. Stack’s entrance to Kurdistan was surrounded by devastation as Stack witnessed scenes ‘Like a hurricane was locked in’, children powerless were attached by the unforgiving nature of war. Stack’s role as a journalist



even though had minimal power was still 'threatened as she tried to convince herself 'it was not blood.' Stack found 'it was getting harder and harder to find a dry piece of ground' and even with the little power she had, she lost it as she eventually 'wound up nowhere.' Similarly Pyke's confrontation of Fowler in 'The Quiet American' was surrounded by the force of war. Fowler attempts to convince himself he is degage, a 'clean, safe...distance' away from war yet still he is affected by it. Upon witnessing a 'river' of corpses Fowler is disturbed and as much as he is convinced he is 'distant' reveals, 'I hate war.' Conflict's external force means it often does not choose its victims. Often even with the little power we have, it is used against us as we also become the one harmed.

Although, through accepting the harm associated with conflict the powerless often become the powerful. Mahatma Gandhi who grew up in a strict Hindu religion was subject to much racism and abuse. In England studying as a lawyer Gandhi became the powerless; he was beaten for not removing his turban in court, subject to the qualms of the seemingly 'powerful' English. Yet Gandhi accepted this beatings and more then that questioned as to why these views of religions exist. Instead of backing away Gandhi approached the harm through understanding it as a politician. This acceptance led him to reveal 'All religions are equal and all are helpful to one another' possibly turning him into the iconic figure of wisdom he is today. Gandhi accepted harm when he was powerless and in doing so gained the power he is known for today.

As Newton keenly suggested in the world of Physics 'to each force, there is an equal and opposite force.' This is often not the case in conflict due to the presence of external forces such as war and emotion, this fact can cause greater harm to those that witness it. Although harm can often come to the powerless, when we accept it and fight to understand it is often when the most lasting solution is found, ultimately resulting in status as the 'powerful'.

Sample 2

This is a thoughtful piece that explores the ideas of both the prompt and the Context. It is constructed in an interesting manner, and there is a clear voice that contributes to the success of the piece. The use of supporting material is provocative and interesting. It is well written and shows excellent control. It was assessed as an upper-range script. The nominated text is *The Life of Galileo*.

1942

The Mask of Evil

'Sympathetically I observe,

The swollen veins of the forehead, indicating

What a strain it is to be evil.' B.B.

Five years ago, today, I penned it. And yet here I am, in another time, in another country, 'evil' as ever. I've seen it all before. Back in Munich and Berlin, it was whistles and stink bombs on opening night from the Nazis in the audience – Rise and Fall of Mahogany, apparently, not their favourite opera. Here, it's all about government lists and HUAC enquiries, though the sentiment remains the same. About to be blacklisted, and about to be expelled, I know what happens next. I've seen it all before. To think my faced actor, the original 'Galileo', would pass up a trip home to London! I'm losing my footing amidst this 'Red Scare' and they are scared. Loughton, more than most. The show must go on, but the show can't go on now, without him. It is as if I were Death himself, and any further association, a resignation into the blazing underworld' the 'Red Hell'.

It was Bertolt Brecht's scathing appraisal of the prevailing social and political climate, as conveyed through such poems as 'The Mask of Evil', that saw him raise the ire of authorities desperate to preserve their power. Additionally, it was the Marxist sentiment of plays like Rise and Fall of Mahogany that caused him to be blacklisted in both Nazi Germany, and in post-war America by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC). This ongoing political pressure in both nations instigated many problems from Brecht, both personal and professional. The man with whom he had translated and scripted the play, Charles Loughton, decided to remove himself from the play, Life of Galileo, as Brecht was seen to be a communist, which at the time, was a dangerous association to have. It is ironic that Loughton faced a similar dilemma to that of his stage persona, Galileo, and experienced the same kind of internal conflict. Both were torn between the value of loyalty – to a friend, or to scientific truth – and the promise of safety. Loughton left the play, and its tour to England was therefore cancelled, and Galileo recanted halting scientific advances for a number of years. But can we judge the people who make these decisions?

Brecht did. He labelled Galileo's recantation an 'absolute crime', and went so far as to write a satirical Obituary for C. Loughton – the man was 'dead' to him once he decided not to act for Brecht.

But can we look at these situations anyhow, and see the immense harm it did to both men. Galileo, having previously stated that 'any man who knows the truth, and calls it a lie, is a crook', chastised himself and lived in immense guilt for the remainder of



Section B Samples

There are two samples from each of the four Contexts and they show a range of writing styles.

Context 1 – The imaginative landscape

'We create the places in which we dwell.'

Context 1, Sample A

Complex in nature, the human interplay whether physical or imagined, collective or individual, has a great impact on how people form a place in which one dwells. The many landscapes we traverse across our lives are paradoxical in nature as the same setting may illicit very different reactions from people. For some, a place may inspire feelings of security and sanctuary, though for others it may bring about depression and downfall. Such aspects of the imaginative landscape are connected to the human condition by famed African American writer and Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison who stated that 'Home is where the memory of self dwells. Whether those memories spawn or shrivel us determine who we are and what we may become.' Landscapes permit individuals to connect to a sense of unity, validity and with clear communication; functional and stable relationships can continue to engender growth.

Key to these are the rituals and routines attached with tradition that allow one to create a place in which they inhabit. Conversely, a disconnection to a landscape due to conflicting appreciation and outlook on the land can have a detrimental effect upon people causing derision, animosity and a rupture between person and place. This lack of connection brings about isolation between self, society and their associated traditions and history that can cause a hostile environment in which one is dwelling.

The multifaceted landscapes we inhabit and the impact that they have upon the human condition is exemplified by Rachel Perkins' Australian film 'One Night the Moon'.

Individual and societies' connecting to their environment and identities are one of the most vital foundation towards engendering growth, allowing one to create an emotional connection to their landscape. Feeling a sense of belonging endless one to express themselves in a landscape with a sense of purpose enabling aspirations to be met. When environments allow one to feel welcomed and comfortable, it helps individuals and groups to prosper in their imagining landscape that they have formed and connected both physically and emotionally to. Albert the Aboriginal 'black tracker' in Perkins' film 'One Night the Moon' demonstrates a powerful and spiritual connection with the landscape in which he dwells, allowing his sense of identity to thrive. The lyrics of the song 'This Land is My Land' demonstrates Albert's distinct correlation to the landscape as he says 'this land is my rock, water, animal and tree', sustaining his identity. Perkins' musical choice to make Albert sing in a lower register represents Albert's deep grounding that is further emphasised by the ancient sounds of the didgeridoo, allowing him to read the land rather than merely looking at it, permitting him to be comfortable in the place in which he inhabits. Furthermore, Albert quitting the police force is symbolic of his self-assurance, as he knows his true identity in his environment and will not settle for anything less than what he desires.

However such scenery does not seem to fit for all characters. Some may feel at unease if they are disconnected their landscape, resulting to suffering and displacement in particular dwellings. These enduring motives inflame the inhibited growth of an individual, leading to stunted growth, anguish and death. As seen in 'One Night the Moon,' the audience gains a sense of Jim Ryan's lack of identity in the opening scenes of the film when he is presented drunk, distressed a feeling displaced in his environment. Paul Kelly and Kev Carmody's composition choices in the song 'This land is Mine,' stresses Ryan's high register, underscored by frenzied Celtic strings which in this context emphasises both his worried insistence and desperation that he must own the land and be in charge of it, trying to create his own place in an environment that is not his. In addition, the cinematographic technique of the camera evolving around Ryan seems to show the faults in the settlers view of the land as he 'signed on the dotted line' through the process of optical effects post production which drained the images in pink tone, thus giving the landscape a rugged and threatening presence. Perkins attempts to convey a loss of foundation on the part of Ryan's character based on his absence of identity with the land 'working hard just to make it pay' when juxtaposed with Albert's emotional insight of the land 'from generations passed to infinity,' allowing him to connect favourably to the creation of the place in which he lives.

Providing a sense of cohesion and strength, a single person and community are able to develop respect and trust towards each other if they have similar outlooks on the land of which they inherit. This broader perception of each other offers a feel of togetherness and comfort, hence allowing for clear communication and mutual respect to develop offering a sense of grounding for all. Clear interpretation and interaction of the land is not possible unless humans collectively share the same vision and understanding of a particular locale. Albert's ability to collaborate with the land and work on mutual terms with it rather than impose on it, and, his interaction with white people is of significant importance. The mother takes a powerful step within the settler community as she interacts with Albert to locate her lost daughter Emily. The duet which the mother sings with Albert '...business...you and me' represents the functional partnership of the mother and Albert uniting together to locate Emily. Her acknowledgement of Albert's innate superior understanding of the land, shows how when individuals have both minds set on similar outlooks, they can both work together to achieve a common goal; that is to retrieve Emily.

Language Analysis Examples

- Medium range response - VCE Unit 3&4 English - 2012

When first drawn to this speech, **readers are** automatically driven to focus on the visual images provided. One image **has a** globe sitting in someone's hands. This would indicate to readers what this speech **is about** and that the message that the image **is giving** is that the world is in your hands. This would **have a** great affect on readers as they would feel responsible and needed to help in the world. The quote by Thomas Eisner that **is given** under the image is also significant. By referring to biodiversity as a 'treasure', **readers are** made to think that biodiversity is rare, that it cannot be replaced and that it must be taken care of. **Readers would also be** impacted that biodiversity's diminishment is to be prevented at all costs', as it would appear that nothing should stand in the way, which highlights the importance to readers. The other **image given has a** much lighter affect on readers. '2010' is imprinted with images to tell readers what makes up biodiversity. With these images printed over '2010', readers would presume that something to do with biodiversity is going to be done over this year.

- Upper range response - - VCE Unit 3&4 English - 2012

The alarmist tone **transforms** into an attack on the audience, not in a vicious way so as not to offend the audience, but instead **urges** them to want to take action. Lee **contends** that it is due to 'our thoughtless human actions' that species are suffering, the 'destruction of natural habitats, hunting,' and the list continues. As it is 'our' fault that biodiversity is diminishing, the speaker **declares** that it should be 'us' who reverse the trend, 'We have no excuse for inaction.' The continued use of inclusive language **engages** the audience and the speaker **implies** that it is their problem and they must right their wrong. **Lee's use of adjectives 'wonderful', 'glossy' and 'inspiring'** all **connote** a glamorous, easy and passive method of convincing others to take action, and this is strongly contrasted when followed by 'real action'. Here, the speaker **accuses** the conservationists and other influential people of not doing what they are supposed to do, opening their eyes to the reality of the situation. Lee **describes** talk at the conference as 'platitudes,' this disapproving tone used to further reprimand the audience, and Lee **passes on** guilt with the words, a strong motivator for action.