**Year 12 English Literary Studies Task Sheet**

**Assessment Type 1: Responding to Texts (Critical Perspectives)**

**Purpose**

To provide you with the opportunity to:

* Develop an understanding that a text may be interpreted from a range of critical perspectives
* Understand that the position adopted in a critical perspective reflects a particular interpretation of a text.

**Description of assessment**

Each student will undertake detailed analysis of a poem in order to establish an informed interpretation of the chosen text, supported by close textual analysis. You will need to use appropriate critical terminology to evaluate your text and justify interpretations. This task will enable you to develop skills in close analysis, which will be useful in the external Comparative Text Study.

**Outline of the task**

Create an analysis in which you interrogate how your chosen text may be considered from two critical perspectives. Make sure the perspectives are from an identified lens (e.g. Marxist, archetypal, feminist or psychological, etc.). However, you may reflect upon your own awareness and the way in which your thinking is informed or challenged by other readers, viewers or critics.

In order to focus your analysis, it may be useful to identify key moments of action and reflection in your selected poem and examine the values and ideas that arise by applying a relevant perspective. The following link to an exemplar task at the SACE Board may be useful in determining how to analyse using a critical perspective: <https://www.sace.sa.edu.au/web/english-literary-studies/stage-2/support-materials/assessment-task-exemplars>.

**Assessment conditions**

An oral presentation of up to 6 minutes, accompanied by a written transcript, cue cards and appropriate artefacts.

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| *Assessment Design Criteria* |
| Knowledge and Understanding  KU1 Knowledge and understanding of ways in which ideas, perspectives, and values are represented in texts.  KU2 Knowledge and understanding of ways in which authors use stylistic features to communicate ideas.  KU3 Knowledge and understanding of the stylistic features and conventions of different text types.  Analysis  An1 Analysis of ways in which texts represent ideas, perspectives, and values.  An2 Analysis and evaluation of ways in which stylistic features are used to influence the interpretation of texts.  An3 Analysis of similarities and differences between texts in comparative tasks.  An4 Analysis of ways in which different critical perspectives inform interpretation.  Application  Ap1 Use of conventions, and stylistic features to create coherent texts that address the meaning and intention of the task.  Ap2 Use of evidence from texts to develop, support and justify responses.  Ap3 Use of accurate, clear, and fluent expression appropriate for purpose and audience. |

Performance Standards for Assessment Type 1 (Responding to Texts): Critical Perspectives

|  | **Knowledge and Understanding** | **Analysis** | **Application** |
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| **A** | Detailed knowledge and understanding of ways in which ideas, perspectives, and values are represented in texts.  Thorough knowledge and understanding of a range of ways in which authors use stylistic features to communicate ideas.  Detailed knowledge and understanding of a range of stylistic features and conventions of different text types. | Perceptive analysis of the ways in which texts represent ideas, perspectives, and values.  Perceptive analysis and evaluation of the complex ways in which stylistic features are used to influence the interpretation of texts.  Perceptive analysis of similarities and differences between texts in comparative tasks.  Perceptive analysis of ways in which different critical perspectives inform critical interpretation. | Sophisticated use of a wide range of conventions, and/or stylistic features to create coherent texts that address the meaning and intention of the task.  Detailed and appropriate use of evidence from texts develop, support, and justify responses, with textual references incorporated fluently in discussion.  Use of precise and fluent expression, which is appropriate for audience and purpose. |
| **B** | Knowledge and understanding of a range of ways in which ideas, perspectives, and values are represented in most texts.  Knowledge and understanding of a range of ways in which authors use stylistic features to communicate ideas.  Knowledge and understanding of a range of stylistic features and conventions of different text types. | Clear analysis of the ways in which texts represent ideas, perspectives, and values.  Clear analysis and evaluation of the complex ways in which stylistic features are used to influence the reading of texts.  Clear analysis of similarities and differences between texts in comparative tasks.  Clear analysis of ways in which different critical perspectives inform critical interpretation. | Use of a range of conventions, and/or stylistic features to create coherent texts that address the meaning and intention of the task.  Appropriate use of evidence from texts to develop, support, and justify responses, with textual references incorporated in discussion.  Mostly accurate and fluent expression, which is appropriate for audience and purpose. |
| **C** | Knowledge and understanding of some ways in which ideas, perspectives, and values are represented in texts.  Knowledge and understanding of some ways in which authors use stylistic features to communicate ideas.  Knowledge and understanding of some of the stylistic features and conventions of different text types. | Some analysis of ways in which texts represent ideas, perspectives, and values.  Description, with some analysis and evaluation, of ways in which stylistic features are used to influence the reading of texts.  Description, with some analysis, of similarities and differences between texts in comparative tasks.  Some analysis of ways in which different critical perspectives inform critical interpretation. | Competent use of conventions, and/or stylistic features to create texts that address the meaning and intention of the task.  Competent use of evidence from texts to develop, support, and justify responses, with some use of textual references in discussion.  Generally fluent and clear expression, which is mostly appropriate for audience and purpose. |
| **D** | Some knowledge and restricted understanding of a narrow range of ways in which ideas and values are represented in texts.  Some knowledge and restricted understanding of a narrow range of ways in which authors use stylistic features to communicate ideas.  Some knowledge and restricted understanding of a few of the stylistic features and conventions of different text types. | Description of the ideas and values represented in texts.  Description of some ways in which stylistic features are used to influence the reading of texts.  Some description of similarities and differences between texts in comparative tasks.  Recognition of some ways in which different critical perspectives inform critical interpretation. | Use of some language features to create texts that address the meaning and intention of the task in a limited way.  Some use of evidence from texts to develop, support , and attempt to justify responses, with use of a narrow range of textual references.  Occasionally clear expression, which is appropriate for some audiences and purposes. |
| **E** | Simplistic knowledge and very restricted understanding of the way in which an idea or a value is represented in a text.  Limited knowledge and restricted understanding of a restricted range of stylistic features used by authors.  Limited knowledge and restricted understanding of different text types and conventions. | Reference to an idea or value represented in a text.  Limited description of a way in which a stylistic feature is used to influence the reading of a text.  Simplistic description of a connection between texts in a comparative task.  Reference to a critical perspective. | Attempted use of some language features to create texts that attempt to address the meaning and intention of the task in a limited way.  Restricted use of evidence from texts to develop and support a simple response, with minimal textual references.  Emerging development of control of expression. |

**Oral presentation transcript**

Good morning. For my critical perspectives task I chose the Bruce Dawe poem “Drifters.” I’m going to look at it through the lens of moral and then psychological criticism. I think both of these will open up the poem and allow us to understand it better. It’s timeless and can teach us much.

Moral criticism is a way of tackling a text and helps us to receive life instruction. The key lessons in this poem concern family. So what are we taught? The father and husband is Tom and he’s the most powerful figure in this family. This is suggested to us as he is the only character the poet, Dawe, gives a name to. We don’t learn the names of the daughters or his wife and this reminds us of Curley’s wife in Of Mice and Men, a similarly powerless female character.

The tragedy of this family is that the family is split in terms of their happiness. The father Tom, seems to be ignorant to this and he makes all the decisions about where they move and where they live. He seems to act in isolation and with no regard for his family. In the poem Dawe writes about the impending move, in the future tense which emphasizes the inevitability of it. He will tell the daughters they’ve moving and the different reactions can teach us much about how to know raise a family-

And how the youngest girl is beaming because she

wasn’t.

Tom also behaves immorally in his relationship with his wife. A marriage should be a partnership in which each person contributes to the decision-making, but it is not the case here. We also get the impression that the family is trapped in a cycle or a pattern of behaviour. I feel sorry for the wife, especially in these lines as these show how hurt she is, and how alone

She won’t even ask why they’re leaving this time,

or where they’re heading for

I think we can all learn from this and it encourages us to feel empathy for the family. These feelings are heightened by Drifters’ last lines as these leave us with the final impression that these people are all somehow in a prison made by Tom.

—she’ll only remember how, when they came

here,

she held out her hands bright with berries,

the first of the season, and said:

’Make a wish, Tom, make a wish.’

Of course the poem is set in post-war Australia when social conditions were much different. Families tended to be more patriarchal and women and children had less say in how things were organized. Does this mean we can excuse Tom’s autocratic behaviour? Is it overly harsh to judge him and his situation with our modern morality?

Another consideration is that the family is probably drifting because of economic reasons. Tom moves his family around because he is following the work and the money needed to clothe and feed his family. Does he really have a choice? Possibly not, but there are still lessons for us to learn, approaches to embed within our own lives and these include be considerate, listening to others and being responsive to the needs of others.

My second perspective requires me to explore the poem through a psychological perspective. While the poem is brief we learn much about the inner lives of the characters. Tom’s wife is interesting and we see her hopes and fears through two distinct actions. The poem’s concluding image of her holding out the berries is of course the earliest action, chronologically-speaking. It shows her as optimistic and intimate, reaching out to her husband and trying to forge a shared future.

This contrasts sharply with the other insight we gain which displays resignation and sublimation of her wishes. One could suggest that it shows her as defeated and withdrawn, probably resulting from her husband’s dictatorial behaviour. In this we see the central problem of the poem-

She won’t even ask why they’re leaving this time,

or where they’re heading for

I imagine she’s regretful about her situation and marriage and feels that her daughters are at risk. The constant uncertainty in her life must come at a big cost.

We also learn of Dawe’s psychology through the poem as he and his family moved around when he was young and he attended six schools before going to university. Writing this poem gave him the opportunity to explore his childhood anxieties and remind himself of what a cruel and nomadic life was like. The threat of having to regularly move must have been difficult and I think the opening to the poem shows the sadness of this personally for Dawe when he writes-

One day soon he’ll tell her it’s time to start

packing,

The fact that he sets the poem in the future emphasises the crushing feeling this must have on those who don’t want to go.

Drifters is a sad poem and looking at it through moral and psychological perspectives teaches us much about its complexities.

(846 words- approximately 5 minutes)

**Task:** **Critical Perspectives Task (‘Drifters’) (C+ grade)**

*Knowledge and Understanding*

* KU1: Knowledge and understanding of some ways in which ideas are explored by Dawe in the poem. There is comment about ‘life instruction’ and notions of family but these concepts are not really established into a clear thesis or argument.
* KU2: There is some knowledge and understanding of the use of stylistic features but this is more by accident than intent it would seem. The student grapples with characterisation and highlights the use of contrast and action, but such attempts do not clearly communicate ideas.
* KU3: While there is a clear awareness of the text as a poem, the conventions of poetry are only referenced in a cursory way; there is an awareness of the chronology of events in the poem and how a persona is developed, but attempts to address conventions are not sustained. (dependent upon task design, may not be applicable)

*Analysis*

* An1: While the analysis is a little lacklustre, there are moments of clear insight; the student comments on patriarchy and contextualises the era in which the poem is set.
* An2: The analysis of stylistic features and how they support a particular reading is more by accident, but the analysis of character motivation is reasonably effective in supporting viewpoints. (dependent upon task design, may not be applicable)
* An4: There is some analysis of two perspectives—moral and psychological—although the balance of analysis is weighted more to a moral perspective. At times, however, the response reads a bit too much like a character summary than an application of the two lenses to explore ideas about life lessons and family.

*Application*

* Ap1: While the form of the speech is generally well structured, the task could have better signposted by a clear argument or contention and clear topic sentences as they connect to the central thesis. (dependent upon task design, may not be applicable)
* Ap2: The use of evidence is appropriate although the quotations and close references to the poem tend to be tacked on to points rather than woven into the discussion.
* Ap3: There is generally fluent and clear expression, but the register needed to be more appropriate for the audience; it’s a little informal at times.

*Overall*

The transcript does possess some analysis and is generally competent but there needed to be a more balanced approach to applying the two perspectives in more of an equal measure. While the focus was on moral and psychological criticism, it felt as though the student veered into reader response and biographical criticism at times. The student may have fared better if the perspectives were ‘unpacked’ a little more and if the response had a clearer line of argument rather than simply a thematic focus.