2022 English Literary Studies Subject Assessment Advice

Overview

Subject assessment advice, based on the 2022 assessment cycle, gives an overview of how students performed in their school and external assessments in relation to the learning requirements, assessment design criteria, and performance standards set out in the relevant subject outline. They provide information and advice regarding the assessment types, the application of the performance standards in school and external assessments, and the quality of student performance.

Teachers should refer to the subject outline for specifications on content and learning requirements, and to the subject operational information for operational matters and key dates.

Across the Assessment Types for this subject, students can present their responses in oral or multimodal form, where 6 minutes is the equivalent of 1000 words. Students should not speed-up the recording of their videos excessively in an attempt to condense more content into the maximum time limit.

From 2023, if a video is flagged by markers/moderators as impacted by speed, schools will be requested to provide a transcript and markers/moderators will be advised to mark/moderate based on the evidence in the transcript, only considering evidence up to the maximum word limit.

If the speed of the recording makes the speech incomprehensible, it affects the accuracy of transcriptions and it also impacts the ability of markers/moderators to find evidence of student achievement against the performance standards.

School Assessment

Teachers can improve the moderation process and the online process by:

* thoroughly checking that all grades entered in schools online are correct.

Assessment Type 1: Responding to Texts

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* requiring a range of text forms – including essays, considered paragraphs, multimodal pieces, annotated scenes, and, if suitable, comparative writing.

The more successful responses commonly:

* showed a strong analytical approach and established the development of an argument in terms of how authors position readers to develop ideas and viewpoints. Therefore, those students who could expand their analysis beyond how devices shape an understanding of theme and character to how ideas, values and perspectives are developed achieved more highly against the performance standards
* demonstrated clear evidence in terms of connections between texts in comparative writing tasks, rather than writing paragraphs with ‘blocked’ discussion of texts
* showed a range of text forms — including essays, considered paragraphs, multimodal pieces, annotated scenes, and if suitable, comparative writing
* conveyed insight into the range of ways in which authors of different text types use such conventions and stylistic features to influence readers
* used evidence appropriately and fluently to support observations
* communicated in a register that was clear, logical, and convincing
* demonstrated an understanding of literary metalanguage and used it effectively to support their responses
* often used a clear, individual voice, demonstrating a distinct and unique writing style and a lack of reliance on group scaffolding.

The less successful responses commonly:

* created formulaic texts that only included character analyses or theme discussions which limited students’ ability to discuss their knowledge and understanding of how authors position readers to contend with issues within texts
* adopted a perceived academic style or ‘overwriting’ that served to make their work less precise and clear and often involved convoluted sentences or misused terms
* approached the critical perspective task as if the perspective in question was a device to only explore aspects of characterisation rather than a ‘lens’ through which to interrogate ideas, perspectives, and values
* attempted to answer questions that were limiting rather than challenging; for example, writing on a general theme without any requirement to analyse and develop a clear point of view
* included ‘blocked’ quotations rather than embedding ‘pithy’ quotations
* examined only one perspective or two very similar ‘lenses’ in the critical perspectives task (e.g. moral and philosophical, or feminist and gender)
* created texts that often seemed ‘formulaic’ and were in essence only slight variations of the same response, with students following the same argument, discussion points and conclusions
* attempted comparison that was either arbitrary in nature or too ‘blocked’ and without appropriate analysis of similarities and differences
* produced texts that required additional basic editing and formatting
* created multimodal responses (e.g. a discussion of critical perspectives over a shared meal) that were either poorly executed in terms of creating a persona for the audience to suit the form and/or did not allow for close analysis but more superficial comments on readings of texts.

Assessment Type 2: Creating Texts

Teachers can elicit more successful responses by:

* requiring different text types for the two tasks to avoid repeated text types such as two persuasive texts, etc. This can limit achievement in Ap 1, KU2, and KU3
* dissuade students from choosing source texts in the transformational task that possess limited literary merit; for example, artwork such as paintings and photographs, or very popular songs, where the emphasis is more on musical effects and production values rather than lyrics with sophisticated and perceptive qualities.

The more successful responses commonly:

* demonstrated an in-depth awareness of the text type (its stylistic features and conventions), audience, and purpose
* demonstrated an understanding and analysis of devices in both texts within the transformational task
* showed breadth and creativity in the development of different text types across the assessment type
* conveyed skill in creating a persona and in identifying a target audience in oral text productions
* ensured there was the provision of evidence. Teacher grades and comments were supported, where possible, by videos, audio recordings, cue cards, transcripts, photographs, and other relevant artefacts
* conveyed an understanding of audience and purpose relevant to each text type
* showed thought to the ‘weighting’ of each section of the transformation task to enable sophisticated insights into the similarities and differences between the source text and transformation
* created transformation tasks where the text was clearly converted or reimagined from the source text but still explored a similar concept or idea
* discussed the contemporary issue investigated along with an evaluation of the group processes including group life and group roles.

The less successful responses commonly:

* read notes in oral presentations without due consideration of the audience and purpose elements of a speech or presentation or the relevant text type
* repeated text types, for example, two persuasive texts, etc. This can limit achievement in Ap1, KU2 and KU3
* created recounts where there was minimal evidence of thought given to the development of ‘voice’ or the skill of indirect observation
* were not clear in regards to the conventions of the text type they were creating
* resorted to a ‘retelling’ of the text types rather than comparative analysis in the transformational task
* included lengthy writers’ statements, shifting the emphasis to analysis
* used source texts in the transformational task that lacked literary merit or devices; for example, artwork such as paintings and photographs, or very popular songs, where the emphasis is more on musical effects and production values rather than lyrics with sophisticated and perceptive quality
* created transformational tasks where the source text was too similar in text type and style to the transformed text
* created straightforward informational texts that contained minimal literary or aesthetic merit, thus limiting the opportunity to draw on their knowledge and experience of genre and literary devices
* wrote only brief or cursory comments in the writer’s statement
* the subject outline clearly states on page 9 that ‘students evaluate some of the literary conventions of the original and transformed text types’ but by employing photographs, artwork or musical compositions, this reduces the students’ ability to achieve highly against KU2, KU3, An1 and An2. If students are passionate about these art forms then these could be explored in the second AT2 task. For example, a short story in which a painter, musician or photographer struggles to achieve their artistic vision.

Student samples submitted for moderation should include all pieces of work for all tasks in an assessment type.

External Assessment

Assessment Type 3: Investigation

Part A: Comparative Text Study

This task involves the choice of one text that has been shared by the class paired with an independently selected text and results in an essay comparing both texts of up to 1500 words. The teacher may specify which shared text is to be used or may provide opportunity for students to select from the range of text types studied: drama, prose, poetry or film. In 2022, SACE subject adjustments also allowed for the student to compare to individually chosen texts. When students select poetry as a text for the essay it is advisable to narrow the study to the work of one poet and multiple poems and a range of stories by one author if they select short stories.

The more successful responses commonly:

* involved the selection of an independent text with literary merit that provided ample scope for detailed analysis
* involved a focus on a manageable concept that was able to be explored within the limit of 1500 words
* were the result of well-developed questions that included a comparative element, a sense of the role of the author, and an element of tension that led to a well-considered answer
* involved an argument that was clearly comparative and involved an exploration of the similarities and differences between texts
* involved a line of reasoning within and between paragraphs so that each unit of thought was logically structured and the whole essay involved a carefully organised argument
* involved an appropriate introduction that foregrounded the central thesis and argument of the essay
* involved well-considered paragraphs that started with clear topic sentences and were structured cohesively with logical transitions
* involved final paragraphs that avoided repetition and instead took a ‘big picture’ approach to the question, finalised the argument, and drew convincing conclusions that supported the overall thesis of the essay
* involved fluently incorporated references to a range of stylistic features and conventions
* involved the exploration of the features of the text types being analysed and drew attention to the contrast between stylistic features when the text types differed
* congruently connected the stylistic features identified with appropriate evidence and a valid effect (positioning the reader/viewer or presenting an idea)
* involved evidence that was fluently embedded into the line of reasoning so that quotations, for example, were naturally incorporated into sentences
* were polished responses in which students had: checked spelling, particularly of key words such as authors’ names and terms central to the metalanguage being used; appropriately used punctuation, particularly of problematic elements such as apostrophes, colons and semi-colons and the delineation of titles; applied the correct techniques of quoting from texts; had carefully checked the accuracy of word choices, particularly in ensuring the correct use of verbs; had been careful in the use of synonyms, realising that words have particular nuances and choosing an uncommon or unfamiliar word might inadvertently result in using it out of context.

The less successful responses commonly:

* did not involve a structured argument and were, instead, a collection of observations about texts that lacked holistic line of reasoning
* involved a sequential, non-comparative exploration of texts
* involved only a few very lengthy paragraphs in which a logical structure was not sustained or many small paragraphs that skimmed over the texts
* sometimes wrote in a convoluted or overly wordy style that lost clarity
* paraphrased or incorporated quotations without acknowledgement into their response
* involved large slabs of quotation that were not integrated into the line of reasoning
* were a recount of events, or descriptions of characters, rather than an analysis of thematic concerns and stylistic features
* focused on a descriptive discussion of author biography rather than textual analysis
* involved the labelling of stylistic features, either without analysis of the way in which these features were used to reinforce/present ideas or the provision of examples that were not clearly connected to that device or explanations about the effect of the feature that were illogical
* focused on an individual poem or short story as one of the texts that did not provide students with ample material to construct in-depth arguments
* were unbalanced, giving much more attention to one text than the other
* included images from films that did not add to their analysis, rather distracted from it, and often meant the reader was left to infer meaning.

Assessment Type 4: Examination

Part B: Critical Reading

The texts displayed a rich range of language, stylistic features, and conventions, and both literal and figurative meanings. This allowed access for less able students to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. However, the level of analysis possible in these texts also provided opportunities for more able students to demonstrate higher-order thinking and sophisticated performance, particularly in relation to the level of depth they provide in their analysis and the ways in which they structure their responses. A differentiator was how they explored the nuances of each question and how they compared texts in question 3.

The quality of student responses was pleasing, and there were few short answers and unfinished papers. Students seemed confident and comfortable working and communicating in this medium, and teachers had clearly prepared their classes for the task. In further developing responses to the examination, it is worth noting the following:

* students who planned and organised their responses developed more successful answers than those who may have written a lot of material but allowed responses to become unstructured and repetitive. Very long paragraphs became convoluted and lost focus. It is important that students understand that quality, not quantity, attracts better marks
* while there is some facility to copy and paste sections of text within the electronic platform, students who integrated quotes and examples into the line of reasoning fared better than those who used the cut-and-paste function to insert material without incorporating it strategically
* practicing editing electronic responses to tasks during the year is highly recommended. It would be good advice to students to ‘reflect before you write’ and/or certainly to review and edit what has been written, even if the time put into this means writing fewer words in each answer.

The more successful responses commonly:

* addressed the question, ensuring that all material was relevant to the answer provided
* answered the question immediately rather than beginning with generic observations
* organised the responses around clear ideas that were logical and accessible or around a concept like, ‘the experience of growing up’ for example, moving from security to curiosity to the unknown, creating a more focused response and allowing them to develop a complex and thought-provoking stance
* ensured that the stylistic feature being explored clearly connected, in a logical and demonstrated way, to an idea or ideas
* avoided didactic explanation of stylistic features that relied on discussion about an implied audience (e.g. ‘the camera shot makes the reader think about…’)
* avoided exploring the effect of stylistic features as generalised emotional/cognitive outcomes (e.g. ‘helps the reader be more interested in the text’; ‘makes the text more enjoyable’ etc.)
* used specific labels of the stylistic features that revealed an appreciation of the metalanguage appropriate to the text type
* were aware that authors are in control of the text; authors use/explore/construct etc.
* used sophisticated metalanguage and appropriate examples when discussing conventions and stylistic features, and clearly connected these with an effect (in positioning the reader and emphasising ideas)
* provided detailed evidence from the texts to support points and ensured that these references supported the idea being explored
* chose succinct quotations that were integrated into the line of reasoning and avoided copying large slabs of text
* understood the conventions of the text type represented in the examination, particularly features of film, poetry, and prose
* made connections and contrasts between texts when comparing texts in an integrated way
* understood that ‘How’ in each question implied what stylistic and language features have been used by the authors
* appropriately divided their time, paying heed to the recommendations of length as an indication of the relative ‘weight’ of the question
* selected key stylistic features of the texts about which to write, rather than following a formula that led to the exploration of peripheral techniques
* avoided slipping into recount by centring the answer on the question and ensuring – when appropriate – that a particular stylistic feature was at the forefront of the analysis.
* wrote with accuracy, precision and an appropriate application of terminology.

The less successful responses commonly:

* struggled with structuring their answers; they wrote topic sentences that simply repeated the question and did not provide a thesis statement in answer to the prompt
* used a list-like approach to organise the response (‘also… additionally…furthermore…also…’) and slipped into recount by not maintaining a focus upon the central idea at the start of points
* struggled with sentence structure where the sentences ran-on, or in which the subject/verb agreement was inaccurate, or in which word choices made the meaning obscure
* utilised verbs that affected accuracy of the responses, particularly when describing the actions of the author/s (‘the author transcribes the characters’; ‘the author elucidates the plot’ etc.)
* contained colloquial or non-conceptual adjectives which inhibited the sophistication of the writing (describing ‘strong imagery’ or ‘heavy metaphors’ etc.)
* often relied on quotations without explaining or unpacking them or did not provide evidence to support their claims
* discussed characters as if they were real people, not constructs of the authors
* listed techniques and did not provide examples or when they did, they did not show how this information helped to address the question; paragraph/s often became observations about stylistic elements without a logical connection to a concept
* used metalanguage incorrectly, mislabelling devices and leading to incorrect evaluations and analysis
* tended to repeat the ideas/devices that had been explored in previous questions
* separated the two texts in the comparative question into individual paragraphs and therefore did not address the comparative requirement of the question.

Specific comments about each question

Question One

Most students considered each text and what the main adult figures offered the children. These ‘offerings’ were generally positive varied based on the student’s reading of the texts. Stronger responses found similar and different offerings: love, imagination, escape, affirmation, education etc. This was not required to be a comparative answer though some students thoughtfully chose to connect/compare texts in some way. In less successful responses, students tended to have a narrow focus and often answered in the form of a recounting of points or strayed into a focus on the characters as people.

Question Two

More successful responses commented on many different aspects of the experience of growing up and suggested it is complicated. Better responses drew out a range of aspects of this experience in their discussion, for example, the tensions inherent in the complexity of growing up. Stronger responses drew on a range of ways that Duffy explored this idea, such as pathetic fallacy, structure, enjambment, simile, metaphor, symbolism, etc. They considered their effects showing a clear understanding of the author as the creator. Less successful responses made unsubstantiated statements about the reader and did not make textually provable statements about the author's choices. These were usually statements about how the reader would ‘relate’ to the experience of ‘growing up’ rather than what Duffy conveyed in her poem. Less successful response also referred to a narrow range of devices and often did not explain their effect, and meaning was left for the reader to infer.

Question Three

There must be a comparative element to this response. Stronger responses explored similarities and differences in how the authors use devices to ‘emphasise the importance of creativity’. More successful responses integrated their comparison across a series of paragraphs. They commented on how both authors emphasise the importance of creativity but do so in similar and/or different ways and for similar/different ends. For example, Lambkin’s short film uses aspects of cinematography to highlight how creativity can allow for the growth of an emotional bond between people, the boy and his grandfather experience joy through shared imagination. Vonnegut’s letter uses rhetorical means to persuade his reader of the individual benefit derived from creativity, as it allows one to experience ‘becoming’, a concept suggesting emotional growth. Less successful answers often dealt with the texts separately and only identified a limited range of devices in a descriptive manner. These students tended to struggle with the literary conventions of the letter.

The following notes were provided to markers for the process of assessing the critical reading. As general principles markers were instructed that:

* The critical reading was marked as a whole. Material relevant to particular questions may have appeared in the response to other questions and markers were instructed to credit this material.
* It was not required that students address each of the aspects covered in these notes. These are a guide to the possible responses students may have provided. Equally, students may have written about additional aspects not covered in these notes.
* The suggestions of length were guidelines; students may have written more or may have written less; it was the quality of the answer that was to be assessed.

What do the main adult figures offer the children in each of the texts: film, letter, and poem? (approximately 100–200 words)

* The main adult figures in each of the three texts could be said to offer the children affirmation, imagination, escape, self-expression, education, love etc.

Great Adventures

* Lambkin dramatises the adventures remembered by a small boy with his grandfather.
* The grandfather offers an escape from the mundanity of suburban life through the exciting possibilities of imagination.
* He offers the scope for a child’s imagination to bloom. Via creative conspiracy, the grandson is shown how to imagine oneself into other times, places, and experiences.
* The boy’s laughter when his grandfather pretends to lose a hand from frostbite indicates the way such experiences bring joy.
* Offers an intimacy of connection - the conspiratorial nature of the two, when the grandmother enters the room, serves to further the idea of imagination as having value, it is viewed as precious and secret etc.

Kurt Vonnegut’s Letter

* In his letter to Ms Lockwood’s high school class, Kurt Vonnegut offers advice intended to free them, encouraging genuine self-development that makes the ‘soul grow’.
* Offers generosity of spirit in wanting to reach out to students and their teacher by sharing rich personal insights about life from someone in his sunset years.
* Offers students sage advice regarding daily pursuits and practicing art. The opportunity to see the value in exercising the imagination in a variety of ways, and suggests this value comes from the experience of it, as it brings about the concept of ‘becoming’.
* Vonnegut offers a contradictory perspective on living, and questions our rationale for why we follow the norms of society etc.

Mrs Tilscher’s Class

* Mrs Tilscher in Duffy’s poem offers her children the gift of education and opening their horizons.
* In a time of uncertainty and change, both societal and personal, Mrs Tilscher also offers a sense of security and comfort, reflected in the setting of the classroom that glows like a sweet shop.
* Offers love, nurturing and encouragement for each child.

In the poem, how does the poet explore the experience of growing up? (approximately 300–500 words)

* Carol Ann Duffy’s poem In Mrs Tilscher’s Class explores the experience of growing up within the backdrop of a child’s positive classroom environment.
* Duffy structures her poem to coincide with the cycle of a school year in the UK as reflective of maturation and addresses the reader using second-person pronouns to establish the commonality of the experience despite the singularity of a ‘Mrs Tilscher’.
* Within the poem Duffy reveals that growing up is inevitable and there is a change of pace; it escalates from a meandering pace filled with wonder and security to a time filled with tension and ‘electricity’.
* Simile in “The classroom glowed like a sweetshop” presents the appetising, stimulating nature of the classroom, demonstrating its appeal through the connection with other childish interests, such as sweets.
* Olfactory imagery of the scent of pencil shavings and aural imagery from the xylophone “heard from another form” add to the poem’s reminiscent quality, taking readers back to the world of the busy and bustling classroom. It is a place ripe with possibilities and apt to help a child to grow through the opportunities it offers.
* Duffy uses contrast between the outside world and world of the classroom to suggest how the experience of growing up can be a positive one when placed in an environment of physical and emotional safety.
* Duffy explores the experience of growing up in a series of images evocative of time and place. The first stanza recalls a world when the pyramids and Ancient Egypt were standard primary school fare, but also conveys the magic of learning about the ancient world in that classroom.
* Duffy imitates Mrs Tilscher’s ‘chant[ing] the scenery’ with the 4 words ‘Tana. Ethiopia. Khartoum. Aswan.’- the caesuras investing each (and all) with the magic and mystery of the exotic which the speaker remembers.
* Evocative images — ‘the skittle of milk’, ‘the window opened with a long pole’ and ‘the laugh of a bell’ recall a child’s school life in the 60s remembered with almost a wistful nostalgia.
* Duffy repeats the technique of short phrases given emphasis through caesura in Stanza 2 – ‘Sugar paper. Coloured shapes’ to recreate the secure bright world in which ‘Mrs Tilscher loved you’ – the latter short sentence presenting this as an indisputable truth. This certainty is vaguely menaced by the reference to ‘Brady and Hindley’ but the ‘gold star’ and the comforting familiar smells and sounds present this world as safe and wonderful.
* This is challenged by the shift in focus in stanza 3- the secure world is also a world of change; the anecdote of the ‘rough boy’ who ‘told you how you were born’ humorously captures the idea that childhood slips away when you are presented with knowledge that makes you see the world differently. In this case the awareness of sex happening in your very own home is the marker of this imminent change. The word ‘appalled’ captures the impact of that knowledge precisely.
* The trajectory of the poem is that of the child on the cusp of adolescence: aware of moving beyond the childhood experiences so fondly recalled.
* The last stanza, with the extended metaphor of the weather and the discomfort of the humidity that presages the ‘thunderstorm’ to come, suggests that growing up begins when you can recall with fondness your childhood experiences but are aware of the desire to move beyond them.
* The speaker is aware that Mrs Tilscher will no longer provide all the answers and recalls the last school day of the year ‘that feverish July’ when she ’ran through the gates, impatient to be grown’. The anticipation of adulthood, with all its experiences, is compared to the air that ‘tasted of electricity’. An electrical storm thus becomes Duffy’s metaphor for the anticipatory feelings of a young adult who is ready to experience the world.
* The final pathetic fallacy when ‘the sky split open into a thunderstorm’ suggests the significance of the moment as the end of childhood; it is charged with tumultuous, unpredictable, and surging feelings etc.

Compare the ways the authors of the film and the letter emphasise the importance of creativity. (approximately 400–700 words)

* Lambkin's adult narrator- the grown-up Billy Thomas presents his grandfather as enabling the kind of creativity that Kurt Vonnegut suggests to his schoolboy readers 'Pretend you're Count Dracula'.
* The voice of the adult Billy reinforces the wondrous effect of the grandfather's creativity – “62 Acacia Road – the most exciting place in the universe!”
* What we see dramatised in the film is the way the grandfather uses imagination to extend the boy's experience and knowledge and how the adult Billy, with his direct gaze at the camera, is aware that this (to use Vonnegut's terms) '[made his] soul grow'.
* The structure of the two pieces allows both to develop their themes. The bond shared by the boy and his grandad through creativity is made apparent through the film's bookends which show the grandmother entering the room.
* The close-up on the darkened door handle, followed by the front-on, symmetrical two-shot of the boy and his grandad at opposite ends of the couch, suggests a separation between the two as they sit apart, reading, a solitary pursuit. However, the boy's comic and the grandfather's National Geographic are upside down. This acts as a visual cue to the reader, suggesting the disruption of hijinks and escapades.
* When this scene repeats, the boy reads National Geographic, and the grandad reads the comic, showing the interchangeability between the two, whose bond, forged in creativity, transcends age and personal interest.
* Vonnegut similarly bookends his letter with a call to the reader ‘to make your soul grow’. He begins, in his second paragraph, by suggesting the importance of creativity in allowing someone to find themselves, urging the students to "Practice any art ... not to get money but to experience becoming, to find out what's inside you, to make your soul grow."
* After discussing ways of practising such art, he ends the letter with the suggestion that through such an experience, "You have experienced becoming, learned a lot more about what's inside you, and you have made your soul grow." Vonnegut's structural and linguistic repetition emphasises the possible reward from engagement in the creative process. Thus, structurally, both authors suggest creativity can be a rewarding experience.
* While both authors emphasise a different quality that is part of this reward of creativity – a shared bond for Lambkin and an individual understanding of your inner soul for Vonnegut – their language choices add weight to the quality of this reward.
* Vonnegut uses his “assignment for tonight” as the basis for the students to experience this reward firsthand, using language appropriate for their level, such as ‘flunk’ and ‘ok’ to connect with his young readers. His metaphor, "No fair tennis without a net", to describe the importance of rhyming, along with the instruction to "Make it as good as you possibly can" emphasises the power of the reward is contingent upon the effort put in.
* Lambkin uses voice-over, from the persona of the young boy as a mature adult, to similarly demonstrate, but after the fact, the reward derived from the creativity shared between himself and his grandfather. While the piece ends with the hyperbolic statement that 62 Acacia Road was ‘the most exciting place in the universe’, the tonal shift and linguistic change in the narrator as the game of imagination begins shows the power of creativity.
* Moving from explanation of what other grandads do (‘the beach’, ‘the footy’), he shifts into highly evocative description and imagery, discussing how "We hunkered down in a ragged tent" as the "icy wind suck[ed] the marrow from our bones". The snowflakes are "as big as dinner plates", and they create "porcelain white drifts". The relish with which the narrator recalls the act of creation adds to the importance of the recollection to him. The act of creativity thus creates an emotional shift in those who experience it.
* For Vonnegut, the act of creation is also powerful; indeed, it is its own reward. He claims, "You will find that you have already been gloriously rewarded for your poem", using hyperbolic language, like Lambkin, to emphasise the importance of the creative experience. For Vonnegut, this reward is not ‘money’ or ‘fame’ but the understanding of the inner workings of the human soul.
* Vonnegut's imperatives in "Seriously! I mean starting right now," as well as the modality of "do art and do it for the rest of your lives" implores the reader to act, working similarly to Lambkin's tonal shift, to suggest that the benefit derived from creativity can have lasting impact.
* Both authors also reveal that the importance of creativity is in being active. Vonnegut reveals that creativity stems from the arts; his active verbs of needing to, pretend, dance, draw and sing, all allude to engaging the senses requiring energy and creativity.
* Lambkin juxtaposes settings, colour palette, and visual framings that evoke the banal symmetries of a 1950's suburban home and formal living room where afternoon tea is served, with the dynamic chiaroscuro close-ups of the room interior transformed into a set from Scott of the Antarctic. The setting becomes dimly lit, and the over-turned couch (with the coffee table pushed out of the way) becomes their shelter. The mid-shot sees them both cowering and shaking from the freezing elements; imagination places them in the arctic, not reading about it but living it. Both Vonnegut and Lambkin capture the spirit of creativity, which is to lose oneself in a moment but only by actively engaging in creative pursuits.
* Vonnegut's letter conveys the whimsical practice of the imagination by its explicit advice and through the imperative mode, hyperbolic listing of creative practices, humorous juxtaposition of quirky activities, playful diction ("a really old geezer" who "now resemble[s] nothing so much as an iguana"), along with its blend of formal and informal registers. The film's juxtaposition of staid weekend visitation with elaborate theatrical performance has the same effect of celebrating the enactment of imagination as not only the heart of a loving familial relationship between grandfather and grandchild, but a lifelong lesson in the importance of creativity.
* Additionally, both texts emphasise the possibility of transcendence achieved through the creative process. The use, in Lambkin's film, of key-lighting to emphasise the boy's and grandfather's faces, along with the non-diegetic score that slowly builds to a crescendo, features not present in their reality, add to the idea that creativity allows one to go beyond the present, to transcend the here and now.
* Vonnegut suggests a similar concept to "Dance home after school, and sing in the shower and on and on." These pursuits are not for the benefit of anyone else but allow the performer to experience transcendence beyond the ordinary. Through these acts of creativity, it gives one a glimpse into what he or she may become.
* Black humour is used as the two characters face their doom. The boy suggests that the howling wind could just be the 'restless huskies', but the grandfather replies, “impossible, we ate the last one last night”. Resigned to their fate, they move to shake hands – one 'old bean' to another – and the grandfather lets the glove slip out of his sleeve with the glib comment, “it's just the frostbite”.
* The film has many layers – the slight giggle of the grandson in the 'frostbite' moment shows him slip momentarily out of his imaginary play demonstrating the multidimensional nature of the experience. The grandfather encourages the boy to think himself into the situation, and we see both engage enthusiastically. Still, the giggle makes the viewer aware of their willing suspension of disbelief.
* Vonnegut follows the conventional format of a letter, but the style is somewhat unconventional – there is the formal address (Messrs!), the amusing self-deprecation (I now resemble nothing so much as an Iguana) followed by several paragraphs of advice.
* Consistent use of imperatives – 'Do art and do it for the rest of your lives' and 'pretend you're Count Dracula'. He slips in colloquial language adopting the diction of the audience 'seriously!' but stays on message: 'Practice any art… to experience becoming, to find out what's inside you, to make your soul grow'.
* Being creative enables you to learn 'what's inside you'. This idea is central to both texts: the narrator in the film extract looks back on his participation in his grandfather's created worlds as central to his growth as a person, as life changing. Vonnegut's letter is meant to inspire the recipients to value creativity in their lives.
* Vonnegut signs off in a conventional way but practices what he preaches by including the quirky caricature of himself as the signature. The extract from the film is bookended with the image of the ordinary weatherboard house to enclose the Antarctica fantasy. Both texts combine ordinary and extraordinary elements to emphasise the idea of creativity as life-enhancing, suggesting that if you are creative, it makes a defining and everlasting impact.