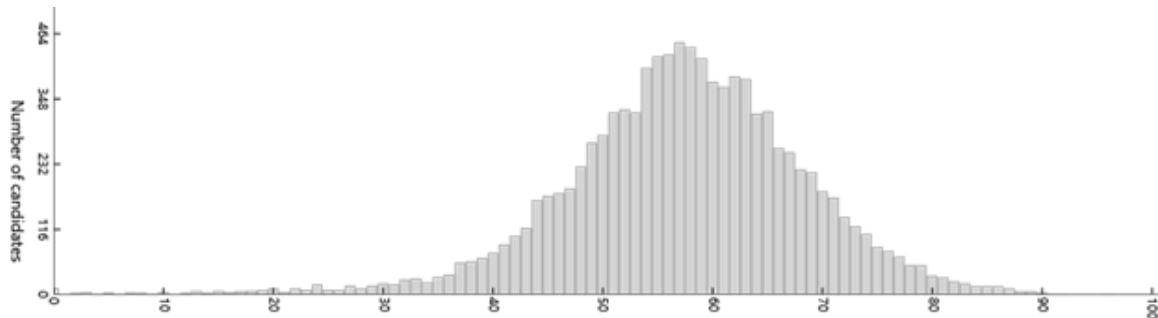




## Summary report of the 2019 ATAR course examination: English

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2019	10 275	102
2018	10 926	125
2017	11 161	121

### Examination score distribution–Written



### Summary

Attempted by 10267 candidates      Mean 57.08%      Max 95.50%      Min 0.00%

Section means were:

Section One: Comprehending	Mean 51.93%		
Attempted by 10245 candidates	Mean 15.58(/30)	Max 28.50	Min 0.00
Section Two: Responding	Mean 58.30%		
Attempted by 10217 candidates	Mean 23.32(/40)	Max 40.00	Min 0.00
Section Three: Composing	Mean 61.26%		
Attempted by 10240 candidates	Mean 18.38(/30)	Max 30.00	Min 0.00

Poor performance in Section One of the examination resulted in a lower mean than in previous examinations. While the texts themselves were largely accurately interpreted, many candidates experienced difficulty in addressing the syllabus concepts within the questions; concepts that they often explored more successfully with their studied texts. Performance in Sections Two and Three was sound. There was a higher mean in Section Three than in previous years. This is reflective of candidates' growing skills in composing imaginative, persuasive and interpretive texts.

Candidates chose to write on a wide variety of texts in Section Two. While many of these were texts that have become well-established in Western Australian classrooms, a number of interesting 'new' texts were also evident. A number of candidates wrote on texts more traditionally seen in Literature courses, such as Shakespearean plays. Many wrote thorough, intelligent and articulate discussions, reflecting a high degree of engagement with both their texts and syllabus concepts. Generally responses in Section Three demonstrated a great degree of control of form and associated conventions. In addition, candidates seem to bring a greater degree of their prior knowledge to this section, with interpretive and persuasive responses often reflecting a credible level of detail in their subject matter.

## **General comments**

Students are reminded to read and deconstruct examination questions carefully, and craft responses that focus on the specific demands of the selected question. Candidates should resist the temptation to include detail about studied or unseen texts that is not required for the purposes of the question at hand.

### *Advice for candidates*

- Familiarise yourself with the syllabus, particularly the bullet points that form the examinable content. It is from this that all examination questions are formulated. Make sure you understand each term, the phrasing of certain points, and the various aspects of each concept in the syllabus.
- Read, deconstruct and think about each question carefully. Too many candidates are unable to gain full marks as a result of not actually answering the question.
- A key skill in the examination is selecting the best question for your text. Not every question will suit every text. Choose a question that best suits your knowledge and skills. If you are uncertain about anything in a question, choose another question.
- Practise, practise, practise. Write sample responses and sample short answers and take them to your teacher for feedback.
- Textual evidence is an expectation in Section Two answers. It is essential in constructing a convincing line of discussion or argument. Specific quotes and examples from your texts are required and need to be analysed. Simply dropping in quotes without a connection to your line of argument is inappropriate.
- You should revise more than one text for the examination. Several candidates appeared underprepared when it came to questions which required them to discuss more than one text.
- In Section Three, write texts that are set in places where you have actually lived as you may be able to write more authentically about such places.
- Be original in Section Three. If you choose to retell an episode from a television show, or the storyline to a graphic novel you've read, chances are that one of the markers assigned to your paper will recognise it.
- Avoid reproducing compositions that you have previously written. Any piece you have composed prior is unlikely to meet the requirements of the examination. A key criterion by which you are assessed is engagement with the question in front of you.

### *Advice for teachers*

- Be familiar with the examinable content within the syllabus. There are major concepts embedded throughout (genre, perspective, context etc.) the syllabus and teachers are required to address quite specific skills and understandings within those concepts. The syllabus is common to all teachers and students, and questions in the examination will draw explicitly from this document. Ensure you and your students are familiar with its metalanguage, phrasing and content.
- You are encouraged to provide multiple opportunities for students to analyse short, unseen extracts. Careful selection of such extracts that connect in meaningful ways with studied texts can help foster intertextual understandings. Teachers should look at different examples of texts from the same genre to foster an understanding of generic conventions, or other examples of work from the same author to help develop an appreciation of their style.
- Encourage your students to understand that you are teaching them skills and concepts. The texts are simply the vehicles through which these skills and understandings are developed. This may help them when it comes to transferring their understandings to unseen situations.
- 'Readings' does not necessitate undertaking ideological readings such as Marxist or post-colonial readings. Teachers are to continue encouraging their students to develop multiple readings of texts. Encourage students to develop thematic readings of texts,

contextual readings, to consider different audience viewpoints. Look at texts in terms of gender, or power, or its representations of certain groups. Host class discussions where different participants share their thoughts, the very expression of multiple interpretations of a text. Read reviews of films, and the comments that follow internet texts.

- Students' understanding of *style*, *voice*, *mode* and *narrative point of view* needs further consolidation.
- Your students should be able to clearly identify what is and what is not a language feature. They should also be aware that language features do not pertain solely to written language, but to all modes: there are spoken language features and visual language features as well, for example.
- Students need more experience crafting varied and effective paragraphs.
- Your students need to be taught that simply dropping in quotes as if their meanings were self-evident, or of 'quote-stringing' do not substitute for analysis.
- In Section Three, remind students that Statements of Intent are not useful. Instead, teach the art of an effective title.

### ***Comments on specific sections and questions***

#### **Section One: Comprehending (30 Marks)**

Most candidates attempted all three questions. Generally candidates interpreted each text accurately, suggesting that each text was accessible. However, candidates were not always successful in meeting the requirements of the question at hand. Overall, candidates appeared to have an apparent inability to engage with core concepts of English.

In Section One, the three texts comprised of a still image, an imaginative (short narrative) extract and a persuasive open letter. Each question was grounded in specific syllabus concepts, requiring candidates to analyse textual features and relate such analysis to their personal responses to texts, the attitudes and perspectives communicated within texts, and their purposes.

Some candidates attempted to write 'mini-essays' with brief introductions and/or conclusions that do no more than repeat information from the analytical paragraphs. This is entirely unnecessary given the short time frame in which to respond. Time could be better spent on developing an analysis.

#### **Section Two: Responding (40 Marks)**

Core concepts of genre, perspective, voice and context continued to feature in the 2019 examination. Previously unexamined syllabus points (style, multiple interpretations) were also evident.

Candidates wrote extensively in this section, sometimes to their detriment. Stronger planning and selection of detail may have ensured they remained focused on discussion relevant to the question. Stronger responses tended to offer more carefully curated discussions, rather than a regurgitation of everything known about the studied text.

There was a lack of textual evidence with many candidates including little to no direct textual evidence, instead generalising about the content or broad conventions of their chosen text. This hampered them from offering successful, well-argued and evidence-based discussions. There was also a lack of a clear structure provided in responses. Clear transition markers and identifiable topic sentences are necessary to create a cohesive and logical discussion.

The mean for this section was slightly lower than last years', influenced by poor performance within Question 5. The means for most individual questions, however, were similar to those of previous years.

### **Section Three: Composing (30 Marks)**

Candidates performed quite well in this section. They seemed to have sound control of the features of the forms in which they chose to write, and generally attended to the requirements of each question successfully. Candidates appeared to have spent time developing their skills in composition, constructing texts that largely employed effective conventions of form and structure. Some, however, attempted to recycle a prepared piece that was rarely successful. Engagement with the question remains a significant criterion by which responses are judged. It was noted that some candidates' responses lacked originality, and were thinly disguised replications of texts that they had read or viewed.

High-performing responses were generally characterised by effective planning, the use of titles to orient readers, clear use of conventions of form, and the development of clear and articulate voices. Importantly, several questions in this section allowed candidates to write on topics with which they had significant background knowledge. This resulted in compositions that were informed, credible, confident and, at times, demonstrated great sensitivity and authenticity.

Climate change, technology and social connection featured heavily, though there were also touching explorations of almost all aspects of the human condition, including family life, grief, mental illness, joy, sexuality and identity. Genre fiction appeared in the forms of science-fiction, dystopian fiction and coming-of-age stories, as well as comedy, realism, noir and even hard-boiled detective fiction.