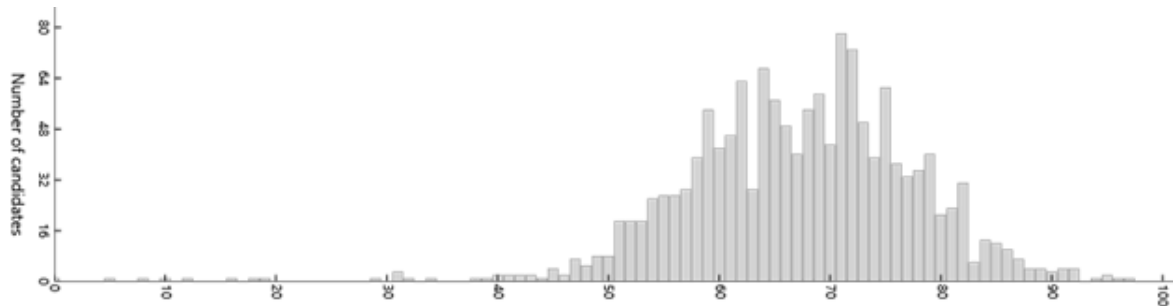




Summary report of the 2019 ATAR course examination: Literature

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2019	1461	10
2018	1456	11
2017	1518	8

Examination score distribution–Written



Summary

Attempted by 1461 candidates	Mean 67.20%	Max 97.02%	Min 0.00%
Section means were:			
Section One: Response – Close reading	Mean 67.26%		
Attempted by 1456 candidates	Mean 20.18(/30)	Max 30.00	Min 0.60
Section Two: Extended response	Mean 67.30%		
Attempted by 1459 candidates	Mean 47.11(/70)	Max 70.00	Min 0.00

General comments

Questions were carefully constructed to allow candidates to demonstrate their understanding of the selected syllabus content and the concepts that form its basis. These included *reading practices, ideology, culture* and *values*. Candidates had the opportunity to connect such concepts to family, ethical choices and social controversies to encourage them, when writing about their literary texts to highlight their relevance for the modern world. The questions did not allow candidates to merely ‘shoehorn’ prepared essays into their answers.

Candidates showed a sound knowledge of their studied texts and drew on relevant and varied evidence to support their responses. A small number of texts were used extensively, such as the poetry of Gwen Harwood, Shakespeare’s *Othello*, and Blake’s poetry from *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience* and Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale*. More local, interesting and more recent texts were used by some, such as Reg Cribb’s *The Return*, and Gail Jones’ *Sorry*. In a number of instances, candidates struggled to use relevant critical, stylistic and generic terminology consistently. Some candidates did well to analyse texts and passages closely.

Advice for candidates

- Take the time to analyse the questions carefully and to plan a response. Remember that every word in a question has been carefully selected to assess your knowledge and understandings as well as providing connections and links that serve as an aid to construct a thoughtful answer. Words and phrases embedded in questions such as ‘can reveal’, ‘the ways we think about’ and ‘has encouraged you’ are designed to help you answer the question.

- The quality of your handwriting in a written examination is vitally important. Overly slanted writing, very fine pens, crossing out, highlighting and arrows to parts of the answer booklet make it difficult to mark your answer.
- Take care to define the concepts you are using. For example, if you are referring to a particular reading practice, be sure to explain what this means and how you are using it. A short sentence is more than enough and will help to ensure that you and your reader have a common understanding.
- Quotes were being used in different ways. However, do not overdo this to ensure that you are using your own words. Avoid large sections of paragraphs in which texts are described using direct quotes, without presenting any personal contribution. Pertinent quotes and text examples require supporting comment and explanation. Use examples and quotations strategically, which means analysing quotes and explaining them in detail using literary terminology, in order to develop your argument.
- All questions require that you construct an argument which is defended. Writing strategies such as strong topic sentence and paragraph transitions can help to explain ideas, develop arguments and to write fluently.
- The course is concept rich and examination questions require a solid understanding of these concepts. It is important that you are familiar with key concepts in the syllabus so that you have a framework that you can use to interpret texts. Important concepts this year were *culture*, *attitudes*, *reading practices*, *ideology* and *interpretations of text*.
- It is important to know the appropriate conventions of each genre and be able to write with confidence about these. For example, it is important to understand characterisation and the ways characters can be constructed in texts.
- Take care with expression and allow time for reviewing and proofreading. Remember that marks are allocated for expression and that this can influence your final mark.
- Introductions could be strengthened with a brief description, even in a sentence phrase, of the ways you are using concepts and terms. For example, if you are doing a 'generic reading' in Section One, write a few words outlining what this means and what you will be doing.
- Your focus should be on the literary text and concepts outlined in the syllabus rather than expressing your personal opinion on a range of issues.

Advice for teachers

- Teachers need to be reminded that the ATAR Literature syllabus has examinable content. All dot points of examinable content must be covered in your teaching/learning program as they are the source of examination questions.
- Taking time to plan responses to questions needs to be stressed to your students as candidates were missing important aspects of questions in the examination.
- Limit the amount of text description students write in favour of text interpretation. Superfluous description was particularly evident in responses using prose fiction texts.
- Terms used by candidates, particularly in Section One, need to be explained. The terms 'dominant reading' and 'generic reading' emerged in this year's responses. It is important that candidates explain the meaning of these terms so that the approach or strategy they are using is clear.
- Remind your students that genre-specific terminology covered in Units 1 and 2 can be used to help frame their analysis and explanation of text construction and meaning.
- Remind your students about the importance of legible handwriting.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Response – Close reading (25 Marks)

Each of the three texts in this section were equally selected, suggesting that candidates found all three texts to be accessible. Poetry, the oft-focused upon genre in Section One, had higher than usual attempts in Section Two compared to previous years. Candidates were able to develop a reading competently for all three texts and there was impressive cultural and contextual knowledge that many candidates were able to apply to these texts. Issues that they drew upon included Mabo and native title, the recent closure to tourists of Uluru, Kevin Rudd's 'Sorry' speech when addressing Text A; the recent Royal Commission Into the Aging when responding to Text B; local migrant issues and history, particularly Italian communities in the Fremantle area and migrant involvement in the South West when responding to Text C.

There was the occasional forced application of unnecessary or inappropriate reading practices. Candidates should be clear that they do not need to name a specific reading practice in order to make a close reading of a text. Some candidates were able to competently apply, for example, a Marxist reading to the Prose passage (suggesting that a 'nice house on the hill' doesn't make for a 'nice person'). Candidates who insisted on a 'labelled' reading practice in this section did so in a rather clumsy way. There was often a lack of focus on the 'close' aspect of the close reading, with candidates tending to discuss their overall impressions of the piece rather than drill down into aspects such as the language which works to construct that impression. Candidates need to be encouraged to move away from the premise that a text is somehow trying to hide something from them and that they need only 'figure out what the author is trying to tell me'. It is also worth noting that *Linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology* continues to be the weakest aspect of close readings of all passages.

Section Two: Extended response (60 Marks)

Overall, performance was strong in this section. Some interesting and appropriate text choices were made by many candidates who moved away from the predictable choices of the majority, such as *The Handmaid's Tale*. Poor handwriting in too many instances affected the quality of responses. Drama texts were the favoured choice for many questions in this section. Question 5 was the least popular choice and was done poorly.