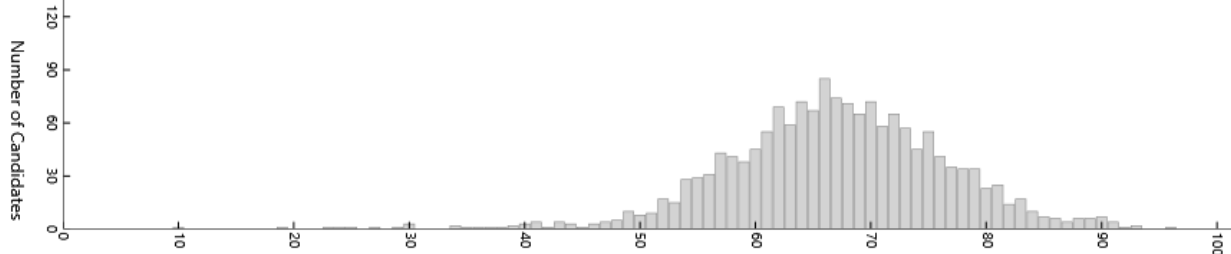




Summary report of the 2016 ATAR course examination: Literature

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2016	1606	13

Examination score distribution–Written



Summary

The examination consisted of two sections with candidates being required to attempt one close reading question in Section One from a choice of three and two questions from a choice of ten in Section Two that included three genre questions specific to poetry, prose and drama. The spread of marks ranged from 9.61% to 96% and the standard deviation was 9.71%.

Attempted by 1606 candidates Mean 66.82%(/100) Max 96.00% Min 9.60%

Section means were:

Section One: Response-Close reading Mean 19.73(/30) Max 30.00 Min 1.20
Section Two: Extended response Mean 47.17(/70) Max 70.00 Min 11.90

General comments

In general, candidates demonstrated a sound understanding of the concepts particular to the new course, although it was apparent that many did not always have a detailed knowledge that would enable them to answer questions in depth. This year, questions required a wider range of expository strategies such as in Question 3, where candidates were required to argue their case. There was a general improvement in candidates' endeavours to respond to the demands of specific questions, rather than to reproduce prepared answers. Generally candidates provided support for their answers; however, they needed to explain their use of evidence in a more detailed and articulate manner. Candidates appeared to know their chosen texts well. There were a number of candidates who were unable to answer all questions within the allocated time.

Advice for candidates

- Use the concepts and terminology of the course and become familiar with the syllabus.
- Know the course concepts in depth and frame ways they can be used to analyse texts.
- Know the appropriate conventions by which to discuss each genre.
- Refer closely to texts – use examples and quotations strategically which means to analyse quotes, explain them in detail using literary terminology and use them to help develop your argument.
- Articulate your argument clearly at the beginning of your essay - this clarity will frame the rest of your essay and lead to a more focused and nuanced response.
- Address all aspects of the question in your answer and build this into your planning.
- Take care with expression and allow time for reviewing and proofreading.

Advice for teachers

- It is important that students create a definite reading for Section One and clearly assert their reading in their introduction.
- Many candidates wrote a general essay based around themes in the extracts and needed to refer to genre more often, and be prepared to make judgements about more difficult concepts such as structure.
- Students need to analyse quotes with literary techniques and concepts in mind, particularly in Section One.
- Students need to develop the generic-specific language to demonstrate knowledge of literary concepts and terms, which is a significant part of the marking criteria for both sections of the examination.
- Students need to define and explain concepts, such as 'ideology', that are central to answering a question and to not assume a shared understanding of key words appearing in questions such as 'controversial'.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Response-Close reading

Attempted by 1602 candidates

Mean 19.73(/30)

Max 30.00

Min 1.20

The passages/texts in Section One of the paper were largely of comparable difficulty. The poem, 'The Foreigner' was much more popular than the prose and drama texts; however, the mean for the 'Reading/s of text' criterion was comparable across all texts (4.64/7, 4.57/7, 4.44/7), indicating that candidates' understanding of the different text types was analogous. Candidates were able to control their responses and overall the quality of expression was sound. They made use of the contextual information that was provided and most provided a reasonable interpretation of the chosen text. The 'close reading' requirement; however, was not evident in some responses and candidates need to give more attention to the genre of the text and how its generic conventions construct meaning and therefore influence the reading of a text. There were fewer attempts to apply rehearsed reading strategies or lenses to the texts than in previous examinations, but a number of candidates did attempt these. While some strategies were valid and useful, it is still necessary to perform a 'close reading' as the instruction indicates. Candidates should have focused on their understanding of the genre and related, appropriate terminology. Some weaker answers still seemed intent on imposing a predetermined reading practice at the expense of close attention to the text.

Text A – Poetry

Question 1a attempted by 822 candidates

Mean 16.63(/25)

Max 24

Min 3

The poem 'The Foreigner' was the most popular choice in this section. The poem was accessible and provided an opportunity for candidates to demonstrate their understanding of poetic devices, with metaphor and conceit being well understood. Candidates generally interpreted it within the context of the immigration debate and the raft of interpretations that this debate invites. There was the 'solipsistic interpretation' that this must have been the writer's experience too, which was deduced from the contextual detail that accompanied the poem. A real awareness of the genre was often missing and a number of candidates could have engaged more rigorously with form or structure.

Text B – Prose

Question 1b attempted by 379 candidates

Mean 16.39(/25)

Max 25

Min 1

While the least popular choice, this prose passage provided many opportunities for candidates to demonstrate their understanding of language and narrative devices. A number of candidates relied on their knowledge of the context depicted to form their reading; stronger responses focused on the construction of setting, the characterisation of the central figure, narrative point of view (and the differences between this narration and the character), as well as symbolism, particularly of the violin, and the flashback structure of the passage.

Text C – Drama

Question 1c attempted by 401 candidates Mean 16.09(/25) Max 25 Min 7

The drama text had the lowest mean for this section, largely a result of a lack of understanding of the drama genre. There were readings of Australia as an immigrant nation, assimilation, some 'othering', migrant alienation and the banality of suburbia. A limited number of candidates were able to discuss the construction of this dramatic passage in terms of the form, relying on dialogue and characterisation to explain their reading. There were also a number of unclear readings where comments about social structures and cultural constructions were confused and there were some awkward applications of reading strategies, particularly gender readings, where candidates were unable to connect their ideas to the strategy selected. Candidates need to consider the drama form in ways other than its use of narrative devices.

Section Two: Extended response

Attempted by 1605 candidates Mean 47.17(/70) Max 70.00 Min 11.90

The questions in this section of the examination drew attention to the shift in focus of the new syllabus to specific concepts and approaches to textual analysis. While Questions 5 and 7 were extremely popular, all questions were attempted by a reasonable number of candidates and no question was avoided. Questions were direct and the multiple elements within them gave clear indications to candidates about how to frame their responses. There were many candidates; however, who did not address all aspects of a question. Some candidates misinterpreted questions and framed a different argument than the one required. Generally expression was strong and knowledge about texts was good; however, this is not necessarily the same as expressing an understanding of a text or texts, which was limited from time to time when candidates selected less helpful texts as the basis for their response. They need to be careful to choose a text that will enable a good discussion of the question. Some candidates found it difficult to construct an argument in relation to their chosen text as it did not engage with the central concept of a question. Specific generic and structural features were not always discussed well.