

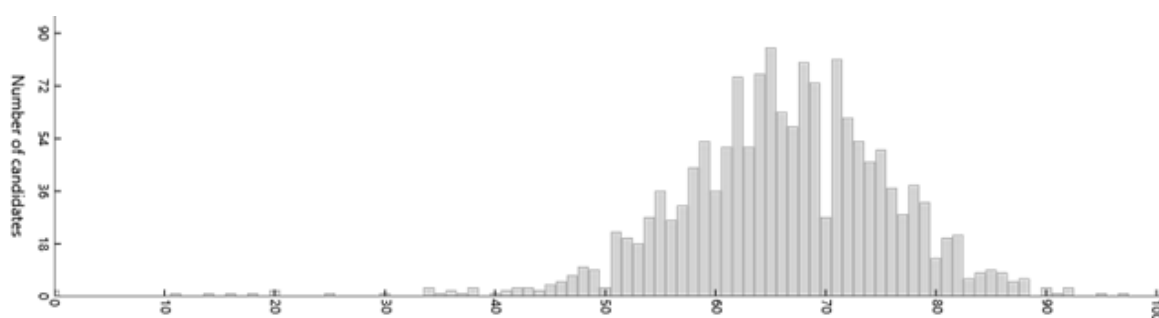


Summary report of the 2023 ATAR course examination report: Literature

Year	Number who sat	Number of absentees
2023	1552	14
2022	1496	21
2021	1587	19
2020	1453	21

The number of candidates sitting and the number attempting each section of the examination can differ as a result of non-attempts across sections of the examination.

Examination score distribution



Summary

Attempted by 1550 candidates Mean 66.17% Max 97.08% Min 0.00%

Section means were:

Section One: Response - Close reading	Mean 65.23%		
Attempted by 1543 candidates	Mean 19.57(/30)	Max 30.00	Min 0.00
Section Two: Extended response	Mean 66.58%		
Attempted by 1549 candidates	Mean 46.60(/70)	Max 68.83	Min 0.00

General comments

Questions in this examination drew on a range of course concepts including the way texts represent different groups; the way that the aesthetic qualities of texts can serve ideological functions; the manipulation of language; and intertextuality. Candidates were invited, both explicitly and implicitly, to connect their own experiences with literature to these concepts. Questions were constructed to encourage candidates to respond authentically to examination questions rather than to reproduce memorised school-based assessments. Such memorisation and replication appeared to be less prevalent this year, which is a positive development. Questions requiring candidates to write about their own personal understanding or to reflect on their own experience proved difficult for those who lack the cultural capital to do so with authenticity or confidence.

Despite the crafting of questions to align closely to syllabus language, and to emulate the style of question construction from previous years, it appeared that many candidates were struggling to ensure their responses connected directly and clearly to the question asked. Although most candidates could demonstrate their understanding of course concepts and their texts, many were not able to apply that knowledge to a given question which limited their ability to score highly.

Advice for candidates

- Plan your time carefully so that you are able to write three responses of a similar length. There is little to be gained from writing at length for one response and then running out of time to write the other two.
- Ensure you are using the language of literary discourse, including language suited to the genre of text you are referring to, and language that is relevant to the question. Using course metalanguage purposefully and discerningly is something which should be focused on.
- It is your responsibility to write clearly and legibly. Excessive use of asterisks to other locations in your examination booklet, and writing which travels up and across margins, is difficult to read and follow.

Advice for teachers

- Spend time using previous examinations to break down keywords and phrases with students, and consider how they might (or might not) work with the texts your class has studied. In doing so, remind students that they will need to take this sort of active approach in the examination – not all questions will suit their studied texts.
- Encourage your students to learn and apply metalanguage to enhance their response and showcase their understanding.
- Consider auditing the texts used in your Literature course. Responses drawing on less frequently studied texts often stand out and provide students with an opportunity to address questions in interesting and innovative ways. It is worth considering how you can lead students to deeper (rather than wider) understanding of these texts. For example, you might reflect on whether the novels you are using are too lengthy for detailed study in the timeframe of Year 12, or whether you are providing enough opportunities to deconstruct and deeply analyse short sections of the text.
- Encourage students to explore their own context and its effects, cultural assumptions and how contextual factors of a text's production shape their connection to the chosen 'social group, gender or culture'. This is something that needs to be worked on during the course, when students can be assisted to understand the nuanced nature of our identities, so that when such questions arise in the examination they are well prepared to answer confidently.

Comments on specific sections and questions

Section One: Response - Close reading (25 Marks)

There was an even spread of responses to all three genres. The Prose fiction text was slightly less popular than the Drama and Poetry. There appeared to be fewer instances of candidates making unsupported claims than in previous years, and it was noted that candidates were paying more attention to the text itself rather than the brief contextual information provided. The mean for each genre was higher in 2023 than in 2022; it is noteworthy that Prose fiction once again had the lowest mean across the three genres. A common issue in responding to Section One was a focus on retell rather than on making a reading. It was important that candidates interrogated the chosen text not for 'what it's about', but instead for 'what is its significance' and for 'how they are being positioned to respond'. Candidates needed, no matter the reading strategy or practice they employed, to consider how the text has been constructed with regard to the reading being made. It was important to demonstrate an understanding of texts as constructions.

Text A (Poetry)

attempted by 566 candidates	Mean 16.20(/25)	Max 24.5	Min 0
<i>Reading/s of text</i>	Mean 4.41 (/7)	Max 7	Min 0
<i>Close textual analysis</i>	Mean 3.99 (/6)	Max 6	Min 0
<i>Linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology</i>	Mean 3.73 (/6)	Max 6	Min 0
<i>Expression of ideas</i>	Mean 4.07 (/6)	Max 6	Min 0

Responses to the poem frequently discussed road trips or photographs as representing significant moments in time, and the fleetingness of life, as important ideas within the text. Many candidates wrote quite superficially about the beauty of nature or about social media. Candidates needed to go deeper in their analysis by looking beyond the general topic and digging into how poetic features are employed to present a more nuanced image or idea. Few candidates made the connection between the dedication 'For Peter Thompson' to the naming of Peter within the poem, or the capitalisation of 'WE SPEAK' at the beginning. Paying attention to such features could have provided avenues for candidates to connect ideas to the construction of the text. Some candidates demonstrated impressive language use when discussing the poem.

Text B (Prose fiction)

attempted by 414 candidates	Mean 15.78(/25)	Max 24.5	Min 0
<i>Reading/s of text</i>	Mean 4.31 (/7)	Max 7	Min 0
<i>Close textual analysis</i>	Mean 3.86 (/6)	Max 6	Min 0
<i>Linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology</i>	Mean 3.51 (/6)	Max 6	Min 0
<i>Expression of ideas</i>	Mean 4.10 (/6)	Max 6	Min 0

Many responses to this text were framed (either explicitly or implicitly) by a Marxist reading, focusing on the consequences of capitalism on the ability of a worker to exist and thrive outside of work. Some readings interpreting the protagonist as neglectful or selfish seemed based upon very superficial attitudes towards the role of men in the family and society broadly. Responses suggested that constructs of masculinity need to be reviewed, as the reading of this text suggested superficial gender assumptions. Few picked up on the extremely short time Rodney was 'allowed' to spend in his own space before being summoned, and instead derided his desire to spend time alone and play music. A number of candidates made generalisations about the protagonist being neurodiverse (despite little direct evidence to support this) which was perhaps suggestive of current issues relevant to and being thought about by candidates. Readings were often little more than retell and responses included very limited literary, stylistic and critical terminology. This aspect of Section One responses has improved markedly over the years for Drama and Poetry texts; however, it appeared that this improvement in the use of appropriate literary terminology did not apply so much to Prose fiction. Responses to Prose fiction texts also needed to focus more on how text construction contributed to their reading. Candidates needed to remember that the construction of the text is just as important in Prose Fiction as it is in Drama and Poetry.

Text C (Drama)

attempted by 563 candidates	Mean 16.80(/25)	Max 25	Min 0
<i>Reading/s of text</i>	Mean 4.54 (/7)	Max 7	Min 0
<i>Close textual analysis</i>	Mean 4.19 (/6)	Max 6	Min 0
<i>Linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology</i>	Mean 3.87 (/6)	Max 6	Min 0
<i>Expression of ideas</i>	Mean 4.21 (/6)	Max 6	Min 0

Responses to this text often focused on ideas of motherhood and indigeneity, with many excellent responses discussing the role of dramatic elements such as soundscape, lighting, and the breaking of the fourth wall in communicating with the audience. Some strong responses discussed the construction of DINGO through connections to treatment of Indigenous peoples. Candidates are advised to be thoughtful about their reading strategy when encountering any text. In responses that aimed to make use of a gendered reading strategy, candidates instead tended to read for their own gender expectations and thus focused on what wasn't there (e.g., a father figure) rather than who was actually being represented (e.g., a mother figure) and how this was constructed. A gendered reading strategy would have been appropriate for this text, but it was important that the text rather than the candidate's own attitudes or expectations, was what should have driven that strategy. This question elicited the highest section score (25) and the highest section mean (16.8).

Section Two: Extended response (30 Marks)

There seemed to be fewer prepared responses from candidates this year than in previous years. Sometimes there was a lack of engagement with a question and only tangentially relevant material was cited.

Candidates frequently appeared to forget or ignore key parts of the question they were answering or were simply tacking a keyword onto the final sentence of their response. The best responses came from those candidates who unpacked the entire question, that included responding to such qualifying words as 'integral', 'relied upon', 'maximise', and 'fundamentally'. The strongest candidates were able to consider what such words indicated about a nuanced response to the question and consequently explored these words as part of their answer.

The mean for responses in this section was generally similar across questions and genres with some notable exceptions. Responses drawing on Poetry texts tended to elicit higher scores, suggesting that candidates were demonstrating good knowledge of their poems and using appropriate metalanguage when analysing them. Conversely, Prose fiction was used less adeptly and often devolved into retell or irrelevance. It was common to see a 'scattered' approach to using Prose fiction texts in responses in Section Two, where candidates were taking very small, disparate examples from across entire Prose fiction texts. This often led to superficial and unconvincing responses.