Improving Writing for the HSC

Hunter ETA Study Day 2012

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Building your ability to

• Respond to your prescribed text
• Select appropriate related texts
• Understand the complexity of texts
• Write sophisticated, sustained responses

The Challenge: What can you do to improve your writing in Section 3 of Paper 1?
**Prose Fiction**: Joy Luck Club, Namesake, Great Expectations, Heat and Dust, Swallow the Air?

**Non-fiction**: Romulus?

**Drama**: Crucible/ Rainbow’s End?

**Film**: Ballroom/ Ten Canoes?

**Shakespeare**: As You Like It?
Building your ability to

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The Challenge: What can you do to improve your writing in Section 3 of Paper 1?
Question 3 (15 marks)

Explore how perceptions of belonging and not belonging can be influenced by connections to places.

In your response, refer to your prescribed text and at least ONE other related text of your own choosing.
I agree that perceptions of belonging and not belonging can be influenced by connections to places. Some texts that deal with these ideas are “Romulus My Father” by Raymond Gaita, “Touching the Void” by Kevin McDonald and “The Lion King” by Roger Allers. In all these texts a connection to place is important.

In “The Lion King”, Scar uses the hyenas to cause a stampede through the canyon where Mufasa and Simba are, and makes sure Mufasa falls to his death. Simba flees the Pride Lands meaning never to return home. While he finds friendship with Timon and Pumbba, his sense of belonging to the land pulls him back. Eventually he comes back to the decimated Pride Rock:

    Timon: We're gonna fight your uncle... for this?
    Simba: Yes, Timon. This is my home.
    Timon: Whoa. Talk about your fixer-upper.

Timon uses colloquial language and humour here to make the movie more enjoyable. The movie is making the point that we are just like Simba because we feel a connection to place.
• literate.
• organised.
• It knows how to refer to texts.
• some good vocab
• The example relates to the question.
• The writer is keeping the question in mind.
• Weak opening sentence
• Ideas are only ‘commonsense’
• Vocab is very plain: ‘makes sure’ not ‘ensures’
• Sentences are very two-clause. Compounded, not a lot of complexity
• Cohesion is ‘commonsense’ – ‘this goes with that’ logic
• Short on evaluation. Sees connections but doesn’t explore them.
• ‘wasted words’ – look at all the narrative.
• The example!
Romulus throughout his lifetime can’t seem to connect and understand the Australian landscape, he longs for ‘European foliage’. Romulus alienates himself from the Australian place, calling the landscape ‘desolate’ and ‘barrenness’, Raimond reminds us that ‘even after forty years my father could not become reconciled to it’. The negative connotations of the landscape shows Romulus’ antipathy perception of the Australian place.
• Language errors

• Better vocab (but ‘antipathy perceptions’ – as a marker, points for trying – a student attempting to move towards ‘uncommonsense’ language.)

• More complex sentences

• Gets way from narrative. It’s analytical.


• Quote as direct proof

BUT

• The big problem is a lack of elaboration
Skrzynecki’s poetry explores the perceptions of belonging of the displaced. ‘Postcard’ explores this directly, through the personified voice of the ‘old town’ that reminds the poet of his disconnection from the Warsaw of his parents that he ‘hardly knew’. Skrzynecki also makes interesting use of place as a metaphor in ‘Feliks Skrzynecki’ when he describes himself ‘pegging my tent further and further south of Hadrian’s Wall.’ Significantly in the quote, he makes use of the metaphor of a ‘tent’, a piece of temporary accommodation; it’s an indication of the poet’s own uncertainties about his place. The reference to Hadrian’s Wall evokes the retreat of Roman ‘civilisation’ from Britain, further complicating the image. Additionally, his father, who belongs to the land on the north side of the wall, alludes to the ‘prophet’ Teiresias; Skrzynecki’s ‘tent’ is moving away from significant wisdom. In combination, these language features combine to illuminate the poet’s sense of disconnection from place.
• Uncommonsense!
• Narrative is omitted!
• An integrated discussion – more than one poem, on the point, explores the topic
• part of a sophisticated argument
• Elaborates
• Use of evidence is sophisticated
• Vocabulary is sophisticated
• Logic is sophisticated
• Sentences are complex/ embedded/ highly cohesive.
• Sense of differences between poems
• a sense of how texts construct Belonging
• In short, it has an insightful, academic voice.

Note: Skrzynecki compares his father to ‘Teiresias’ in:
Pianosaurus
Examination Rubric

Section III
In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate understanding of the concept of belonging in the context of your study
- analyse, explain and assess the ways belonging is represented in a variety of texts
- organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and context
2011 Marking Guidelines

- Explores skilfully how perceptions of belonging and not belonging can be influenced by connections to places

- Presents a skilful response with well-chosen detailed textual references from the prescribed text and at least one other related text

- Composes a well-integrated response using language appropriate to audience, purpose and context
Building Writing Competency

Colloquial  ➔  Authoritative

Conversational  ➔  Expert
Personal  ➔  Objective
Everyday  ➔  Specialised
Less  ➔  More
Articulate  ➔  Articulate
Commonsense  ➔  Uncommonsense
Congruent  ➔  Incongruent
Unelaborated  ➔  Elaborated
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Modelled teaching</th>
<th>Guided teaching</th>
<th>Independent teaching</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The teacher uses this teaching strategy when students need to learn new literacy skills and concepts.</td>
<td>The teacher uses this teaching strategy when students need guided support to practise and apply new literacy skills and concepts.</td>
<td>The teacher uses this teaching strategy when students need minimal support to apply and demonstrate new literacy skills and concepts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The teacher assumes major responsibility for the interactions that take place between the teacher and students.</td>
<td>The teacher structures interactions in a way that allows students to assume more responsibility and demonstrate more control over what they are learning.</td>
<td>The teacher structures interactions in a way that allows students to assume a greater degree of the responsibility.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Introduction to Quality Literacy Teaching
Improving Writing for the HSC

Comprehension strategies

- Making Connections
- Predicting
- Questioning
- Monitoring
- Summarising
- Visualising

Source: Teaching Comprehension Strategies
Improved student writing

- Build ‘uncommon sense’ language
- Build text structures
- Elaborate
- Build sentences
- Cohesion – logical, sustained
- Drive towards conceptual thinking

Improving Writing for the HSC
A better instrument
John Foulcher
Summer Rain
Summer rain

At 4 o'clock cars clutter on the highway like abacus beads. No one dares overtake. Sunlight scrawls through the dust and the fumes, and the shadows slap at the edge of the grass.

Somewhere ahead, there's been an accident. One by one, the engines stop, the cars slump into dusk.

You wrench yourself from the road, sift the dark trees for diversion.

Sub-division houses - teacups of colour from television sets, steam rising from ovens and showers like mist across a swampland. The cricket sound of voices and cutlery.

Only the children stay outside, bruised with dirt and school, squeezing play from the tattered edges of the afternoon. In the darkness, they grow to be heroes, clash in the park like cars on a highway, pound out grudges tight as steel. At last they slacken home forgetfully.

As the wreck is cleared, rain trembles across the cars and the charred, unbroken road.

- John Foulcher
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- John Foulcher
John Foulcher’s poem Summer Rain has very different ideas about Belonging than Peter Skrzynecki’s work. Foulcher describes rush hour traffic: ‘cars clutter on the highway like abacus beads.’ The consonance here gives the poem a harsh edge that shows the unpleasantness of this situation. Foulcher makes the suburban environment seem like a harsh and unpleasant place where people don’t really belong.
Improved student writing

- Build ‘uncommon-sense’ language
- Build text structures
- Build sentences
- Elaborate
- Drive towards conceptual thinking
- Cohesion – logical, sustained
Build ‘uncommon-sense’ language
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Poem</th>
<th>Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>abacus beads</td>
<td>evokes both the visual – the cars stuck, unable to move – and the motivation for it: slaves to the economy, worker ants, fiscal control of the individual in the late post-capitalist world</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacups of colour/ mists across a swampland</td>
<td>again, very visual. But teacups – an insignificant amount. Swamplands – a dank, unpleasant place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the rain trembles</td>
<td>nature’s last gasp in the urban environment. Anti-romanticism. Nature overwhelmed by ‘progress’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>the charred, unbroken road</td>
<td>the experience of death in post-industrial society: anonymous, unwitnessed, insignificant; the best you can hope for is to be remembered for delaying the traffic.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
John Foulcher’s poem Summer Rain has very different ideas about Belonging than Peter Skrzynecki’s work. Foulcher’s description of rush hour traffic - ‘cars clutter on the highway like abacus beads.’ - uses visual imagery to evoke a very critical view of society. The consonance here gives the poem a harsh edge that shows the unpleasantness of this situation. For Foulcher, the suburban environment is a ‘swampland’, a dank, unpleasant place in conflict with the natural world.
Improving Writing for the HSC

Improved student writing

- Drive towards conceptual thinking
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- Cohesion – logical, sustained
- Build sentences
- Elaborate

Build text structures
S – Statement
E – Evidence
E – Explanation
D – Development
### Paragraph structure

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>T</strong></td>
<td><strong>Topic sentence/ Thesis</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
<td><strong>expand</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
<td><strong>example</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
<td><strong>explain</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>X</strong></td>
<td><strong>elaborate</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>C</strong></td>
<td><strong>continue or conclude</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Building 'uncommon sense' language

Drive towards conceptual thinking

Build text structures

Cohesion – logical, sustained

Build sentences

Elaborate

Improved student writing
John Foulcher’s poem Summer Rain has very different ideas about Belonging than Peter Skrzynecki’s work. Foulcher description of rush hour traffic - ‘cars clutter on the highway like abacus beads.’ – uses visual imagery to evoke a very critical view of society. The consonance here gives the poem a harsh edge that shows the unpleasantness of this situation. For Foulcher, the suburban environment is a ‘swampland’, a dank, unpleasant place in conflict with the natural world. Foulcher’s poem is anti-romantic, pointing out how our society has overwhelmed nature to the point where a summer storm becomes a ‘tremble’.
Improved student writing

- Build ‘uncommon sense’ language
- Build text structures
- Elaborate
- Drive towards conceptual thinking
- Cohesion – logical, sustained
- Build sentences
Foulcher’s poem ‘Summer Rain’ is anti-romantic, pointing out how our society has overwhelmed nature to the point where a summer storm becomes a ‘tremble’.

The consonance of Foulcher’s opening description of the cars that ‘clutter on the highway like abacus beads’ gives the image a hard edge, and introduces the poem’s challenge to concepts of a carefree suburban existence.

In the suburban ‘swampland’, not even children can escape the mindless materialism that, according to Foulcher, drives suburban living. In the growing dark they ‘clash in the park like cars on a highway.’
Foulcher’s poem ‘Summer Rain’ is anti-romantic, pointing out how our society has overwhelmed nature to the point where a summer storm becomes a ‘tremble’. The consonance of Foulcher’s opening description of the cars that ‘clutter on the highway like abacus beads’ gives the image a hard edge, and introduces the poem’s challenge to concepts of a carefree suburban existence. In the suburban ‘swampland’, not even children can escape the mindless materialism that, according to Foulcher, drives suburban living. In the growing dark they ‘clash in the park like cars on a highway.'
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- Cohesion – logical, sustained

- Improved student writing
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohesive Device</th>
<th>Detail</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Simple connectives</td>
<td>one point is/ another point is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Logical connectives</td>
<td>However, therefore, additionally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Reference’ words</td>
<td>– typically from the question or the thesis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complex word associations:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Synonyms</td>
<td>carefree existence, peaceful life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Collocations</td>
<td>urban, materialism, fear, meaningless, regimented</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Substitutions</td>
<td>natural, unnatural, environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Foulcher’s poem ‘Summer Rain’ is anti-romantic, pointing out how our society has overwhelmed nature to the point where a summer storm becomes a ‘tremble’. The hard edge of Foulcher’s opening description of cars that ‘clutter on the highway like abacus beads’ introduces the concept that our suburban existence is unnatural and challenges concepts of a carefree existence. ‘No-one dares overtake’ because fear and regimentation are part of this existence. It is a challenge that is continued later in the poem where Foulcher subverts our expectations of children’s play. ‘Only the children play outside’ for a moment suggests carefree play but our expectation is subverted by the next line: in the suburban ‘swampland’, not even children can escape the mindless materialism that, according to Foulcher, drives suburban living. In the growing dark they ‘clash in the park like cars on a highway’. 
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Acknowledgements: this PowerPoint was prepared by Stewart McGowan in consultation with other consultants in the Hunter Region. The work of Gai Chambers, Hayley McDonald and Bronwyn Tubnor is gratefully acknowledged.