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This edition first published in 2009; reprinted in 2011 by:
Insight Publications Pty Ltd
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St Kilda, Victoria 3182
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Other contributors:

Design: Susannah Low and Kylie Hall
Cover design: Carmelina Heberle
Editing: Kirstie Innes-Will
Printed in Australia by Shannon Books Pty Ltd
Insight Publications is committed to environmentally responsible production practices.
This book has been printed on sustainably manufactured paper in Australia to minimise our carbon footprint and support local industries and expertise.
ISBN: 978 1 9214 1198 4

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank their friends and family for their support.

The writers and publishers thank the following people who contributed material to this text: Karen Boyd, Hugo Britt, Jan Bruder, G.M. Dewis, Patricia Di Risio, Gail Grove, Virginia Lee, Cameron Lowe, Angus McDonald, Maria Papatotiriou, Emma Pollock, Cara Stewart and Ross Walker.

Thanks also to the teachers who gave us feedback and suggestions, including Anne Hotta, Jill Itoh, Lisa Lander, Anne Peterson, Mary Petsinis, Emma Pollock and Helen Theodoropoulos Savopoulos.

We also thank the following students for permission to publish their essays: Jinah Byun, Jian Chen, Wayne Cheung, Hyun Joon Kim, Ivy Wu, Yan Zhu Ni.

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Michael Green for the article ‘Shifting gears’ and Robin Cowcher for the accompanying illustration.

The Sunday Age and Michael Coulter for the article ‘Nanny is not a responsible drinking mate’.

Newspix and Mark Knight for the ‘couch potato’ cartoon.

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Overview of assessment

School-assessed coursework (SAC)

Reading and responding (*Area of Study 1*)

	What is assessed?	Percentage of coursework mark	How is the SAC assessed?
Unit 3 Study one set text	A response to a selected text	30% of the Unit 3 mark	Assessment is based on how well you demonstrate key knowledge and skills.
Unit 4 Study a range of shorter texts that your school will select	As for Unit 3, above	50% of the Unit 4 mark	Assessment is based on how well you demonstrate key knowledge and skills.

Creating and presenting (*Area of Study 2*)

	What is assessed?	Percentage of coursework mark	How is the SAC assessed?
Unit 3 Study one set text	Either: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • one sustained written piece (900–1200 words) or • three to five shorter written pieces (1000–1500 words in total). Whichever of these your school chooses to set, you must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • draw on ideas/arguments relevant to your Context and presented in your set text/s • create your written piece/s for a specified audience and purpose. Note that, unlike mainstream English students, ESL students are not required to provide a written explanation as part of this SAC.	35% of the Unit 3 mark	Assessment is based on how well you demonstrate key knowledge and skills.
Unit 4 Study one set text	As for Unit 3, above.	50% of the Unit 4 mark	Assessment is based on how well you demonstrate key knowledge and skills.

Using language to persuade (*Area of Study 3*)

	What is assessed?	Percentage of coursework mark	How is the SAC assessed?
Unit 3	One sustained and reasoned point of view on the selected issue, in which you show that you can use language to persuade your audience . Your school will decide whether this SAC is in written or oral form.	35% of your Unit 3 mark	Assessment is based on how well you demonstrate key knowledge and skills.

CHAPTER 1

Getting started

Your task for Area of Study 1 involves interpreting a text. You will be looking at the different ways that authors (or directors, poets or playwrights) create meaning in their texts.

Reading/watching the text

It can be difficult to read a novel or watch a film that is not in your first language. Some ways to make it easier are:

- Get started early. If you know it might take you a while to read your text, it is better to start on it as soon as you can.
- Read or watch the text in smaller sections – for example, try reading ten pages a night, or an amount recommended by your teacher.
- Listen to a ‘talking book’ version of the text, if available.
- View the film with subtitles on in your native language the first time you watch it.
- Form a reading/discussion group outside of class.
- If your teacher agrees, you could read sections of the text out loud as a class.
- Do not stop to look up every unfamiliar word. Make a list of these to look up later, but the first time you read or watch the text, just get a sense of the story.

Taking notes

The second time you read or watch your text, start paying closer attention to the characters, language and themes. Now is the time to start taking notes. This is excellent preparation for writing essays, and will help you understand the text well.

Tips for note-taking

- Highlight or underline key quotations.
- Draw up a table in your journal like this:

	Characters	Plot	Setting	Themes and values	Key quotations
<p>Example:</p> <p><i>Cat's Eye</i> by Margaret Atwood</p>	<p>Elaine Risley Cordelia Grace Smeath Carol Campbell Mrs Smeath (Grace's mother) Stephen Risley (Elaine's brother) Jon (Elaine's first husband) Mr and Mrs Risley (Elaine's parents) Josef Hrbik</p>	<p>The present day: Elaine, a painter, comes to Toronto for a retrospective of her work.</p> <p>Elaine's childhood: Elaine remembers her childhood, in particular her relationship with Cordelia and the other girls who bullied her, and her eventual breaking away from that group.</p> <p>Elaine's adolescence: Elaine does not clearly remember the bullying she endured as a young girl, but is haunted by it. She attends university, finds her start in the art world, has her first sexual experience and meets her first husband.</p> <p>Elaine's early adult years: Elaine experiences marital problems, a divorce, a cross-country move, a second marriage, and raises two daughters. She experiences the deaths of her brother and both of her parents, and eventually remembers all that happened to her as a child, circling back to the present day, where she is middle-aged.</p>	<p>Toronto: particularly the Leaside neighbourhood for Elaine's childhood and also the present day, during her visit from Vancouver</p> <p>Vancouver: after Elaine's divorce</p> <p>The countryside of northern Ontario: north of Toronto, Elaine's early childhood</p>	<p>Memory and time: The time in which things happened to Elaine is less important than their emotional effect.</p> <p>Gender roles and expectations: Elaine's experiences are deeply influenced by her gender and the pressures and expectations unique to being a young girl.</p> <p>Belonging and identity: Elaine's need for belonging, while not negative in itself, makes her vulnerable to various people throughout her life, and makes it difficult for her to forge an identity for herself.</p> <p>Change and ageing: Elaine's experiences highlight the tension between expectations and reality – the difference between what people hope will happen as they get older and how things actually turn out.</p> <p>Perceptions, secrets and knowledge: Characters demonstrate how people often perceive situations to be different from reality because of their personal experiences or prejudices.</p>	<p>'You don't look back along time, but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away.' (p.3)</p> <p>'I am not normal, I am not like other girls.' (p.140)</p> <p>'I am not afraid of seeing Cordelia. I am afraid of being Cordelia.' (p.267)</p> <p>'Forgiving men is so much easier than forgiving women.' (p.314)</p>
<p>Your text:</p>					

Record quotations or evidence as you come to it in the appropriate column.

- Make a list of key quotations for each main character and each main idea or theme.
- Use post-it notes to mark pages where important events, dialogue or quotations occur.

Metalanguage for novels and short stories

Metalanguage is the special vocabulary we use to discuss texts. Using the correct words will help you be precise when talking about texts. The following table shows some of the most useful words for talking and writing about texts.

WORD	EXAMPLE
Author: The person who creates a text such as a novel or short story.	The author of <i>Cat's Eye</i> is Margaret Atwood.
Context: The historical, social and cultural environment the story is set in. For example, context can refer to whether the story is set during a war, or among the working class or the upper class.	<i>The Reluctant Fundamentalist</i> is set in the context of the post-9/11 world.
Fiction: Any piece of writing that isn't intended to be a factual account of real-life people or events.	<i>Ransom</i> is fiction .
Genre: The category a text belongs to. All genres have certain 'rules' or guidelines for their form or structure. For example, a novel is longer than a short story, and a biography is a factual account of a real person's life.	<i>Things We Didn't See Coming</i> belongs to the novel genre .
Main character: Who the story is mostly about. This character usually has a realistic and complicated personality, just like a real person.	The main character in <i>Cat's Eye</i> is Elaine Risley.
Minor character: Other characters in the text who don't play as big a role as the main character. Often their personalities are not as complicated as the main character's.	Andrea is a minor character in <i>Cat's Eye</i> .
Narrative: A story which may be true or fictitious.	<i>Dreams from My Father</i> is a narrative about the life of Barack Obama up until his entry to law school.
First-person narrative: A narrative told from one character's point of view. That character uses the words 'I' and 'me' to refer to themselves.	The novel <i>Cat's Eye</i> is a first-person narrative .
Third-person narrative: A narrative told from the point of view of someone who is <i>not</i> one of the characters in the text. All characters are referred to as 'he', 'she' and 'they'.	'A Temporary Matter' is a third-person narrative .
Narrator: The person or 'voice' who tells the story.	The narrator of Jhumpa Lahiri's short story 'The Third and Final Continent' is a Bengali man living in America.
Nonfiction: A story that is based on real-life events or people.	<i>Dreams from My Father</i> is a nonfiction text.
Plot: The arrangement of events in the text. It can also refer to the main storyline.	The plot of <i>Cat's Eye</i> begins with Elaine talking to her brother about the nature of time and ends with Elaine visiting the ravine that she fell into when she was younger.

Subplot: A minor storyline within the main story.	A subplot of <i>Cat's Eye</i> concerns the world of art for female artists.
Setting: The place and time the events in the text happen.	The setting of <i>A Christmas Carol</i> is England in the mid-nineteenth century.
Structure: The way the elements or 'bits' of the text are arranged. For example, the text might have events happening chronologically, i.e. from earliest to most recent, as in real life. Or it might use flashbacks, have one or two subplots running alongside the major plot, or be divided into sections.	The structure of <i>Dreams from My Father</i> has roughly three sections – Obama's early years in Hawaii and Jakarta, his involvement with grassroots organisations in Chicago, and finally his emotional trip to Kenya.
Theme: A major idea running through the text. Examples are growing up, identity and the future.	Food is a major theme in <i>A Christmas Carol</i> .
Values: Qualities that are thought to be important to live a good life. Examples are honesty and loyalty.	Family loyalty is an important value endorsed by <i>Ransom</i> .

Different words for different genres

	Novel Short story Biography Autobiography Memoir	Film	Play	Poetry
Creator	Author	Director	Playwright	Poet
Person who tells the story	Narrator	Narrator/Voice-over	Narrator	Speaker/Persona
Special features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Chapters • Point of view (first-person or third-person) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Camera shots • Actors • Sound effects and music • Lighting • Sets • Props 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acts • Scenes • Sound effects and music • Lighting • Sets • Props 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Language • Metaphor • Simile • Imagery

Referring to texts

No matter what tense your text is written in, *always* use the present tense when referring to texts in your essays.

WRONG: David Malouf **drew** on the final section of Homer's epic poem *The Iliad* for his novel *Ransom* and **retold** the events that occurred following the death of Patroclus, cousin of Achilles.

RIGHT: David Malouf **draws** on the final section of Homer's epic poem *The Iliad* for his novel *Ransom* and **retells** the events that occurred following the death of Patroclus, cousin of Achilles.

CHAPTER 2

Studying texts

Characters

Characters are *who* the story is about. Main characters, also called **protagonists**, are the people who are the main focus of the text. They are usually shown in a realistic way, with both good and bad qualities, just like people in real life. Minor characters are often shown in less detail than major characters.

How to study characters

We learn about characters in a text in a number of ways:

- by how they are described
- by what they do
- by what they say
- by what other characters say about them.

Activity 2.1

Fill in the table below with evidence about the main character from your own text. An example has been done for you.

Sample text: <i>Twelve Angry Men</i>				
Main character	How they are described	What they do	What they say	What other characters say about them
8th Juror	'stands alone ... we know that this is the problem that has been tormenting him' (p.30) 'calmly' (p.48) 'remains silent' (p.67)	'paces, counting steps silently' (p.45) 'holds his ground' (p.47) Persistently and thoroughly re-examines the evidence Refuses to give in to pressure from others 'The 8th Juror helps him [the 3rd Juror] on with his jacket.' (p.78)	'I'm not trying to change your mind. It's just that we're talking about somebody's life here ... suppose we're wrong?' (p.12) 'I started to get a peculiar feeling about this trial. I mean, nothing is that positive.' (p.19) 'We may be wrong ... No one can really know. But we have a reasonable doubt.' (p.66)	'Boy-oh-boy! There's always one!' (10th Juror, p.11) 'He oughta write for the Amazing Detective Monthly. He'd make a fortune.' (7th Juror, p.37) 'You're the leader of the cause.' (3rd Juror, p.67)

Your text:				
Main character	How they are described	What they do	What they say	What other characters say about them

Minor characters

Minor characters, as well as being a part of the story's plot, often serve a particular function in a text.

They might:

- support the main character
- criticise the main character
- hold opposite views to the main character
- give background information on the main character
- be someone the main character can tell his or her inner thoughts and feelings to
- demonstrate an attitude or quality the author wants us to approve of
- demonstrate an attitude or quality the author wants us to disapprove of.

Activity 2.2

Think about two minor characters in your text. What function do they serve? It might be one from the list above or a different function.

Sample answer

Minor character's name: 3rd Juror

Function: An important function of the 3rd Juror in *Twelve Angry Men* is to demonstrate the negative influence of prejudice in the processes of justice.

Your answer

Minor character's name: _____

Function: An important function of _____ (character's name) in _____ (the text) is _____ (function).

Minor character's name: _____

Function: An important function of _____ (character's name) in _____ (the text) is _____ (function).

Word banks for characters

Adjective word bank

The following adjective word bank gives you some useful adjectives for describing characters. In the left-hand column you'll see some common adjectives that could be used to describe characters. However these words are very vague, and you don't want to repeat the same words over and over in your essays.