

YOUR GUIDE TO SUCCEEDING IN STANDARD ENGLISH

MODULE C: THE CRAFT OF WRITING



HSC COWORKS

WHAT'S SO 'CRAFTY' ABOUT WRITING?

Let's start this off by drawing a little comparison.

Just about anyone can sing, right? I bet you've belted out a few tunes in the shower or sung along to the national anthem at a major event. Maybe you've even done some karaoke in your time. We all have the ability to string some notes together, but to truly sing, in a four-chair turn on 'The Voice' kind of way, is a craft, a developed skill. Everyone starts out as a beginner, even the vocalists we admire the most. The thing they share in common is that they all committed to the craft, to a practice of developing a skill through persistent training.

Writing is exactly the same.

We all dabble with writing and all of us can string a few words together. We do it every day. But 'real' writing that moves us, grips us, inspires us, challenges us, is masterful, beautiful, skilful. The writer has practiced, trained, experimented, drafted, redrafted, researched, emulated. They've faced feedback, sometimes in the way of rejection, criticism and failure. Yet, they continue to develop their writing.



In other words, 'real' writing involves craftsmanship. Module C provides you with an opportunity to work on this craft, and for all English students to "strengthen and extend their knowledge, skills and confidence as writers" (rubric).



WHY DO I NEED TO DEVELOP MY SKILL AS A WRITER?

We live in a dynamic, innovative age.

The world does not need individuals who can compose, rote learn and regurgitate one strong piece of writing. The world needs flexible, articulate and creative thinkers; individuals who are capable of adapting to a wide range of contexts and reaching a wide range of audiences. You need to be one of those individuals.

No matter which industry ladder you choose to climb once this HSC journey is behind you, chances are, at some stage, you're going to deliver a sales pitch, a report, an impassioned and persuasive speech, perhaps even online content: blogs, website copy, taglines. Maybe you'll need to write creatively and figuratively to capture audiences through clever marketing campaigns. Who knows? What I do know for sure is that you're going to need to write. The better your skill, the better your ability to communicate ideas and shape the future.

This Module has one purpose and one purpose only. It exists to help you to make yourself a better writer.

No one can achieve this for you, so get ready to stretch and challenge yourself. The best writing happens outside of your comfort zone.





BREAKING DOWN THE RUBRIC

Let's break down a few key snippets from the NESA rubric for Mod C.

Firstly, you will be expected to:

"write for a range of authentic audiences and purposes to convey ideas with power and increasing precision."

Gone are the days where students would prepare a narrative and mangle it enough to make it suit the stimulus provided on exam day. If you're writing for a variety of audiences and purposes, naturally you're going to need proficiency in your ability to skilfully convey ideas through a variety of writing styles. Don't worry, we'll cover those styles later in this document.

"examine how writers of complex texts use language creatively and imaginatively for a range of purposes, to describe the world around them, evoke emotion, shape a perspective or to share a vision. Through the study of texts drawn from enduring, quality texts of the past as well as from recognised contemporary works, students appreciate, analyse and assess the importance and power of language."

Just like any other skill you want to master, the best starting place is to examine how successful writers have mastered the craft so you can apply the same techniques in your own writing. You have to do your research and the best research is done by reading and analysing quality texts. Language is obviously the writer's key tool and you need to be able to examine how language is moulded and shaped depending upon the writer's style and intended purpose/audience.

"Through a considered appraisal of, and imaginative engagement with these texts, students reflect on the complex and recursive process of writing to further develop their ability to apply their knowledge of textual forms and features in their own sustained and cohesive compositions."

The next step is taking your acquired knowledge and putting it into practice in your own writing. Notice the word 'practice'. If you really want to develop the craft of writing you need to train. Daily. The more you train and the more feedback you acquire, the better your writing will become. This writing needs to be done in stages: Pre-writing, drafting, revising and editing.



“During the pre-writing stage, students generate and explore ideas through discussion and speculations. Throughout the stages of drafting and revising, students experiment with a range of language forms and features for example imagery, rhetoric, voice, characterisation, point of view, dialogue and tone. Students consider purpose and audience to carefully shape meaning.

During the editing stages students apply the conventions of syntax, spelling, punctuation and grammar appropriately and effectively for publication. Students have opportunities to work independently and collaboratively to reflect, refine and strengthen their own skills in producing crafted, imaginative, discursive, persuasive and informative texts.”

WHY ARE THERE PRESCRIBED TEXTS FOR MOD C?

One more important snippet from the rubric to note:

“Students appreciate, examine and analyse at least two challenging short prescribed texts as well as texts from their own wide reading, as models and stimulus for the development of their own ideas and written expression”

In this module, your teacher will select two texts for you to study from the prescribed list. You will study these texts in depth to get a sophisticated understanding of how each composer powerfully and purposefully crafts language to shape their ideas. You will be required to emulate some of these techniques in your own writing to develop your own mastery.





WHAT WRITING STYLES DO I NEED TO PRACTICE?

The rubric identified four specific writing styles you should become very familiar with through this module, so make sure you know the unique features of each style:

Imaginative:

This category covers your creative texts. It could encompass a range of forms including short stories, poetry. You should be very familiar with these texts as you've been studying these styles in your English lessons right through junior and senior English, especially the Preliminary Common Module: Reading to Write. When writing imaginatively it's important to incorporate all of those figurative and descriptive language techniques you've been studying. Your success in the imaginative realm will depend upon your ability to develop an authentic sense of place as well as believable and relatable characters.



Persuasive:

Put simply, this is writing that aims to convince the reader to take on a particular perspective on an argument or idea. Most commonly, if you're writing persuasively, you're probably scripting up an academic or personal essay, or speech, depending upon the context and audience. When writing in this style, you need to work on your ability to craft a unique voice, so that you're developing a good balance between creative and analytical writing.





Informative:

As the name implies, this is writing that seeks to inform a reader about a particular topic. As such, you'll usually be required to include a significant level of detail and the appropriate language and jargon related to the topic you're discussing. The style is factual in nature and required evidence to support the information.



Discursive:

This new style of writing appeared in the revised syllabus and has caused many an English student to ask, 'what is discursive writing?'. Good question. Let's start with what it's not. Discursive writing is not argumentative, nor is it imaginative. This text type encompasses a variety of different forms, with the purpose of provoking thought in the reader and engaging them in an idea, typically by presenting multiple perspectives on a topic (which differentiates it from persuasive writing, which only focusses on one perspective). Discursive text types tend to be reflective and more openly subjective in nature. They include forms such as creative non-fiction, travel blogs, discussion essays, speeches and personal essays. The key to the discursive form is the notion of various perspectives.

The exciting element of discursive writing is the flexibility in this form. It can be humorous in tone, or serious. Writers can integrate figurative devices if they wish as well as a mix of formal and informal language.





HOW WILL I BE ASSESSED IN THE HSC?

You will be assessed on Module C in Paper 2 of the HSC examination. This is a new Module, so it comes with new types of questions. Luckily, the nice people at NESA have released some sample questions so you can get a feel for the new questions styles you may be asked to respond to:

SAMPLE QUESTIONS:

1. Type A (1-part totalling 20 marks)

Example A (20 marks)

Above us, the Milky Way is a slash of sheer silver gossamer, studded with diamonds. The stars of other constellations are in sharp focus, stretching far out into the heavens. Two trains blaze past in the night, sirens and headlights blaring as the signal bells ring on the road next to us. They pierce the total silence and wake some of the campers. There is quiet talking, singing. The pitch-dark explodes again a little later to the headlights of a semitrailer roaring past on the track, its load shaking with corrugations. Then perfect quiet settles until dawn.

ROS MORIARTY
Listening to Country

- | | |
|--|----|
| (a) Describe how the writer creates a mood or atmosphere in this text. In your response make reference to at least ONE language device or stylistic feature. | 5 |
| (b) Write the next part of the narrative where the mood or atmosphere in the text is changed because of a surprising or unexpected event. | 15 |
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Part A of this question is not too dissimilar from previous comprehensive question styles we've seen in Paper One of the HSC. Your success in this response would depend upon your skill in textual analysis (your ability to know how the composer uses various techniques to create a specific effect. Part B of this question is a straightforward imaginative writing task, but you would need to ensure that you read the question carefully so that your response addressed the components of the question. It would be impossible to attempt to write a 'pre-prepared' piece of creative writing, so be ready to think imaginatively on the spot.



2. Type B (2 parts totalling 20 marks)

Example B (20 marks)

- (a) I must go down to the seas again, to the lonely sea and the sky...

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JOHN MASEFIELD, *Sea Fever*

OR

A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to get its pants on.

SIR WINSTON CHURCHILL

Use ONE of the lines above as a stimulus for the opening of an imaginative, discursive or persuasive piece of writing. In your piece of writing incorporate at least ONE example of figurative language that you have learned about through your study of the prescribed texts for Module C.

- (b) Explain how your writing in part (a) was influenced by what you have learned about figurative language through the study of your prescribed texts for Module C.

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This question is also split into two parts. This question contains a stimulus item and, unlike Type A above, the student is given a choice regarding the specific form of the text they create (as long as it follows the specific instructions in the question, in this instance requiring the student to incorporate at least ONE example of the figurative language.

This question style also requires the student to reflect upon how their style has been shaped and influenced by their study of the prescribed texts and what they have learned about figurative language through this study. In order to do well in this question you would need to be clear about the specific process you undertake to shape meaning in your own writing.





3. Type C (2 parts totalling 20 marks)

Example C (20 marks)

(a)



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Questions in this section may or may not require reference to Module C prescribed text.

Use the image above to write creatively about a character's response to entering this unfamiliar setting for the first time.

Students are not expected to construct a complete narrative. They may choose to craft the opening, ending, a significant event, a fragment or a particular point of tension.

- (b) Assess how effectively you evoked your character's response to this experience, making detailed reference to your use of a range of language devices and stylistic features.

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This question is also split into two parts. Part A question contains a stimulus item and asks for a specific text type. Notice that the markers are not looking for a complete narrative, only a segment. You would need to use the mark allocation to guide how much time you would allow for this question.

Part B of this question assesses your ability to evaluate your own creative choices and how well you managed to compose a particular idea through the language and stylistic features you implemented. In a similar manner to the other questions above, it would be impossible to write a pre-prepared response to this question. In order to do well you would need to practice the skill of evaluating your own writing.

It's important that you're familiar with each of the above question styles and that you are spending some time practicing each one. This is the best training technique for success.



WHAT CAN I DO TO PREPARE AND PRACTICE MY SKILLS IN MODULE C?

Here at HSC CoWorks, there's no reason that you won't be ready for your Module C assessments and examination if you've followed the program. As you read above, the purpose of this module is to improve your proficiency and skill as a writer. If you intend to make this happen, you need to train. Here are five opportunities available to you right now:

1. Planning Tools

- Success will inevitably depend upon solid planning. Use the planning pads as a resource to determine how you will go about attacking this module to the best of your ability. Talk over your plan with a coach. They will help you to recognise the strengths and areas for development in your writing so you know where to focus your time and energy.

2. The Challenge Feed

- There is a constant stream of challenges that filter to you via the Challenge Feed for this Module. This is an excellent training ground. Attack these challenges enthusiastically and use the feedback to enhance your writing technique.

3. Video Lessons and Online Resources

- Have you checked out the Creative Writing Video Lesson? Have you explored the writing resources available through the online lessons? Be sure to take the time to check these out and use the hints and tips when creating your own compositions.

4. Essay Building Templates

- These are available for both creative and analytical writing. Use these templates to plan your responses. Be sure to submit them to the marking team to get feedback before you move onto the drafting stage of your writing.

5. Online Submissions

- We have a team of experienced HSC markers ready and eager to provide you with feedback to improve your writing and enhance your style. Consider submitting the formal and informal tasks you complete at school through the website to take advantage of this valuable feedback.