

AS91475: Writing Portfolio

Version 1

3.4: Produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains and structures ideas.

6 Credits

Achievement	Achievement with Merit	Achievement with Excellence
Produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains, and structures ideas.	Produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains, and structures ideas and is convincing .	Produce a selection of fluent and coherent writing which develops, sustains, and structures ideas and commands attention .

The Close Viewing Essay

Purpose

This task gives students the opportunity to analyse the visual text *Gladiator* as a representation of the genre of tragedy. Students will do so by constructing a written analysis of their independently selected scenes from *Gladiator*.

They will be assessed on the depth of insight shown in their analysis of how the conventions of tragedy are upheld in the film, the clarity with which they communicate this and how they use essay writing conventions to effectively convey their analysis.

Context

After exploring Aristotle's theory about tragedy and how this is presented in the play *King Lear* by William Shakespeare, you now have an understanding of the six defining conventions of the genre of tragedy. These conventions make the genre recognizable across a multitude of media types: print, stage and screen. Exploring tragedy on screen allows directors to utilize visual and verbal features that uphold the traditional genre conventions.

In this task, you will construct a fluent and coherent essay that explores the following statement:

Critically analyse how the traditional conventions of tragedy are manipulated through the use of visual and/or verbal features in the film *Gladiator* by Ridley Scott.

Preparation- The Viewing

- Ensure you are fluent in describing Aristotle's six defining features of tragedy: plot, character, diction, ideas, melody and spectacle.
- Have confidence in your knowledge of Roman tragic theory, as described by Horace in *Ars Poetica*.
- Watch the film *Gladiator* and consider how the text can be recognized as a tragedy.
- Make specific notes about the conventions of tragedy and how these conventions are upheld in the film. Re-watch the film once you have gathered your initial ideas and develop your notes on this further. There is a post on our classroom blog to guide you through this.
- Select two scenes to focus your critical analysis on. These scenes should allow you to identify a range of visual and/or verbal language features that develop the tragedy conventions. They should be of sufficient length to ensure you have the opportunity to develop a clear critical response. Make sure you have your scenes cleared by your teacher before you begin your analysis.
- Watch your selected scenes and make detailed observations about how Scott uses visual and/or verbal features in each scene, his intention behind the use of each feature and the subsequent position it places the audience in. Identify how the features **combine**

to develop the conventions of the genre of tragedy. Look for similarities across the two scenes and consider how similar language features are being used to develop aspects of the genre. The key points to consider are:

- A minimum of two cinematography techniques and how these work together and enhance each other.
- The directors intention with the technique, scene and text as a whole.
- The position the audience is placed in as a result of the directors manipulation of the text and how their crafting of the scene influences our viewing of the text.

Preparation- The Writing

- Plan the structure of your essay.
 - A clear introduction, body and conclusion.
 - Effective paragraphing.
 - A logical progression of ideas.
- Consider the conventions of essay writing, such as:
 - A clear thesis
 - The use of transitional and connective words and phrases.
 - The use of language devices (metaphor, analogy, imagery etc.) to build on your ideas, present your thesis or clarify your ideas.
 - The appropriate and effective use of quotations (placement and length) and examples with clear explanations of how these develop your thesis.
 - Explore the language in your selected quotations and the details of your selected examples and where these further support your thesis.
 - Effective syntax allowing you to build, connect and develop ideas.
- Read the exemplar material and identify the above features in that material. Consider ways that you can present your analysis that also allows you to showcase the stylistic features of essay writing.

The Final Piece

Size

Once your initial planning and preparation is complete, your final piece should be written in the form of an essay. While there is no specific word limit, making an effort to keep your piece to 1200-1500 words will allow you to keep your ideas focused.

Conditions

The drafting and editing of your piece will happen in class over **8 periods**. You may use any notes you have created during our exploration of *Gladiator* and you may seek feedback during the first **6 periods** of writing. After this time, your teacher will be “hands off” and it will be up to you to polish your work.

Scope

Your proficiency with spelling, grammar and punctuation will aid the clear and effective communication of your argument, as will conforming to a clear structure with your writing.

Advice

You are advised to refer to the exemplar material to develop your understanding of how an effective essay is constructed. These exemplars display effective structure, syntax and the use of language features to enhance the content.

You are encouraged to seek advice from your teacher early in the drafting process to ensure you are on the right track.

Consider how to split your time between what you want to say in your essay and how you say it. It is wise to remember that this is a writing assessment so **how you convey your ideas** and the effectiveness of this is essential to your success in this assessment.

Exemplar Material

The full copies of these essays are available on our classroom blog. Below you will find annotated extracts that highlight the strengths (both content and style) of the pieces. For further **stylistic** help, you can also refer to our last portfolio task which is still available on our blog.

Content Exemplar

This exemplar comes from an essay written by a student studying English at NCEA Level 3 in 2016.

<p>V's gloved hand places the first domino down with the amplified diegetic click of wood against concrete, symbolising his plan against society being put in motion. If pushed, one domino will have no significant effect, but when multiple dominoes fall, they set off a series of events that is virtually impossible to cease. The placing of the first domino is a prominent example of cinematographic symbolism- the director is communicating to the audience that one domino represents the individual. When V</p>	<p><i>A strength of this paragraph is the details that it captures without waffling. The one and mood of the film is implied through the language choices of the writer- amplified diegetic click.</i></p> <p><i>It uses a range of technical terms to describe the scene: diegetic, high angle, panning, symbolism. The essay doesn't rely on a play by play of each scene as the writer uses technical terms fluently and accurately, making it easy to imagine the scene without</i></p>
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stands alone he is just a man with an idea. To contest society he must build an army of influence, so that when the first domino falls, the chain reaction is voraciously insuppressible. The scene then shifts to a high angle shot, panning over a number of freight trains parked on the tracks. On the right track, one lone train stands, while on the opposite track a legion of trains wait while they are stacked with abundant numbers of British Freight Company boxes. The strategic framing of the high angle shot by **McTeigue informs the viewer** that the citizens under Chancellor Sutler have two diverging potential paths. They can continue to live under repression, or they can follow the unknown path created by V, which begins with the destruction of many thousands of Guy Fawkes masks. Made famous by the 1806 Gunpowder Plot, the mask is a pivotal symbol to V's vendetta, **incorporated by McTeigue because** of its emblematic capacity to communicate the protagonist's idea that society should not exploit its power by abusing its citizens.

McTeigue's protagonist V is **widely regarded by viewers as a hero**, and this may be because his fundamental ideas are to advance society's human rights. As an audience member it is easy to skip over or justify the many lives taken during the film because they are sacrifices for the benefit of society. **In a sick kind of irony, both V and Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi fought or are fighting for what they believe is the**

describing everything around it.

The connection between each technique and its purpose is made clear through phrases such as "the director is communicating..." and "McTeigue informs the viewer...". The intentions of the director are clear and well worded.

The importance of the ideas being portrayed by the technique are also made clear through phrases such as "If pushed, one domino will have no significant effect, but when multiple dominoes fall, they set off a series of events that is virtually impossible to cease. The placing of the first domino is a prominent example of cinematographic symbolism..."

This shows the connection between what is being shown on the screen, the technique being used and the wider ideas that that technique is communicating. Your essay may not focus on the ideas of the film (the chaos that comes from the destruction of the natural order) but connecting the genre convention that your technique is developing would be done in a similar manner to this.

The essay addresses the influence that the director's creation (in this case the character) has on the audience and recognizes that by developing an idea or character in a specific way, the director is able to manipulate how the audience views the film and their reactions to it become 'constructed'. It also addresses why the

<p>'greater good'- so on moral ground, who is right? It is an abstruse question and one that McTeigue deliberately confronts the viewer with to challenge their own definition of moralistic actions. V for Vendetta relates to modern society because both men are examples of individuals who fought against their respective societies because of their religious or moral faith.</p>	<p><i>audience is susceptible to being manipulated in this way by addressing highly emotive ideas (human rights).</i></p> <p><i>It then shocks the reader, intentionally, when the writer draws a parallel between V and a well known leader that much of the world considers to be (in want of a better world), evil. This is showing a high level of originality and displays the writer's ability to view the film perceptively.</i></p>
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Writing Style Exemplar

Launched into Nowhere (*written by Anna Aslanyan for Times Literary Supplement*)

<p><i>The first section of this essay has been omitted.</i></p> <p>The subtitles could have done with more editing, but in the end, it doesn't seem to matter. For all the narrators' over-articulate delivery and linguistic quirks, the film mainly relies not on their words but on the soundscape created by their inflections. Towards the end, as another set-piece is being recited, the camera homes in on an old Sony cassette player with a tape rolling inside. The time travel effect is complete: the monologue could have been recorded thirty years ago, when the country evoked still existed, and occupied one sixth of the</p>	<p>This extract uses a range of sentence structures to connect and develop the ideas</p> <p>It uses prepositional and transitional phrases to guide the reader through</p>
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<p>globe.</p> <p>Among a number of striking images in Extinction, the most memorable is that of the Buzludzha Memorial House in Bulgaria, built in 1981 as a tribute to socialism, now disused. A concrete flying saucer on a hilltop, it is no longer a futuristic symbol but a melancholic monument to a future that never happened. Inside, propaganda murals have been mostly obscured by graffiti. Lit by fireworks, the interior looks like a ghostly time machine being launched into nowhere.</p> <p><i>For the full copy of this review, please follow the link on the blog post this task handout is in or visit:</i></p> <p><i>https://www.the-tls.co.uk/articles/public/launched-into-nowhere/</i></p>	
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A Fantastic Woman- movie review (written by Jame Robins for The Listener)

<p>As her older lover, Orlando (Francisco Reyes), lies dying on a hospital gurney, Marina Vidal (Daniela Vega) finds her problems are only beginning. The couple had spent the evening together, dancing, drinking and planning a holiday. Now she has been pulled aside by a doctor who looks at her face, then her chest, as if trying to prove something ought to be there. He calls the police.</p>	
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The cops ask Marina for her ID, which bears a male name: she is a transgender woman (as is the actor who plays her) and under suspicion because of it. **Then comes the pressure from the “Sexual Offences Unit”, gentle at first, then humiliating, as she’s obliged to have a “physical evaluation”.**

Orlando’s family don’t want her at the funeral. **“I don’t know what you are,” one of them spits. “I don’t know what I’m seeing.”** Always there is the idea that Marina is being deceitful, rather than simply mourning her lost partner.

As a portrait of the indignities transgender people face, A Fantastic Woman is certainly confronting. It contrasts the warmth of Marina’s love with the scorn of those who cannot see her as human – Orlando’s ex-wife calls her a “perversion”; his son brands her a “chimera” – but these bigots are creatures of reflexive prejudice rather than fully fledged characters with complicated motivations.