Extended response: written imaginative

This sample is intended to inform the design of assessment instruments in the senior phase of learning. It highlights the qualities of student work and the match to the syllabus standards.

Dimensions assessed

- Understanding and responding to contexts
- Understanding and controlling textual features
- Creating and evaluating meaning

Assessment instrument

The response presented in this sample is in response to an assessment task.

Context
In this unit, you have read and analysed a selection of contemporary poems to explore the ways in which various poets represent the world.

Task
Create a short story that draws on the concepts, identities, times or places represented in a published contemporary poem. Your short story can be set in either the same or a different time and place as the poem, and should use ideas, attitudes or values that underpin the original poem to influence your readers.

Genre: Short story
Role: Short story writer
Audience: Readers of the school magazine
Purpose: To create, to represent, to entertain
Length: 800–1000 words
### Instrument-specific criteria and standards

Student responses have been matched to instrument-specific criteria and standards; those that best describe the student work in this sample are shown below. For more information about the syllabus dimensions and standards descriptors, see [www.qsa.qld.edu.au/11703.html](http://www.qsa.qld.edu.au/11703.html).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Instrument-specific criteria and standards</th>
<th>Standard A</th>
<th>Standard C</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding and responding to contexts</strong></td>
<td>The student work has the following characteristics:</td>
<td>The student work has the following characteristics:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• exploitation of genre patterns and conventions of a short story <strong>to achieve specific purposes</strong></td>
<td>• use of genre patterns and conventions of a short story <strong>to achieve purposes</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• discerning selection, organisation and synthesis of relevant and substantive subject matter <strong>to support perspectives</strong></td>
<td>• selection, sequencing and organisation of relevant subject matter <strong>to support perspectives</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <strong>manipulation and control of role</strong> of the short story writer and <strong>relationship with magazine audiences</strong></td>
<td>• establishment and maintenance of role of the short story writer and <strong>relationship with magazine audiences</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Understanding and controlling textual features</strong></td>
<td>The student work has the following characteristics:</td>
<td>The student work has the following characteristics:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• a <strong>discerning combination of a range of grammatically accurate language structures for specific effects</strong>, including clauses and sentences</td>
<td>• <strong>use of a range of mostly</strong> grammatically accurate language structures <strong>to achieve purposes</strong>, including clauses and sentences</td>
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<td>• <strong>use of cohesive devices to link ideas and connect</strong> parts of the short story, including paragraphing</td>
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<td>• <strong>discerning use of a wide range of apt vocabulary for specific purposes</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>use of suitable vocabulary for purposes</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <strong>discerning use of mode-appropriate features to achieve specific effects:</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>suitable use of mode-appropriate features to achieve purposes:</strong></td>
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<td>- conventional spelling and punctuation.</td>
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<td><strong>Creating and evaluating meaning</strong></td>
<td>The student work has the following characteristics:</td>
<td>The student work has the following characteristics:</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <strong>discerning manipulation of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin the short story and influence magazine audiences</strong></td>
<td>• <strong>appropriate use of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin the short story and influence magazine audiences</strong></td>
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<td>• <strong>subtle and complex</strong> (re)creation of perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <strong>discerning use of aesthetic features to achieve specific purposes</strong> in a short story.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• <strong>use of aesthetic features to achieve purposes</strong> in a short story.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Colour highlights have been used in the table to emphasise the qualities that discriminate between the standards.

**Key:**

- Describes how well the objective is demonstrated
- Describes the effect of choices
Indicative response — Standard A

The annotations show the match to the instrument-specific standards.

She Wept

“There’s the Bridge, oh, and the Opera House too! Look, Sara, the harbour is just like a postcard...,” Jane simply breathed her amazement. With nose pressed against the window of the Ferris wheel carriage, she continued her awed narration as we began our final, rounded descent.

Lollipop roofs on canvas tents. Sun glinting off the polished brass poles of the carousel. People darting about, miniature, with all the frenzy of a colony of ants. The huge, manic mouth of Luna Park was ever hungry, greedily swallowing the frantic flow of families. It was then, as we drew closer to the ground, that I noticed a flaw, a great blemish in the rich tapestry of carnival colour.

A woman.

She sat on a bench beside the duck-shooting gallery. A woman in black. A young woman but with an age of history written on her face. The brash Sydney sun, while it tap danced on the bench beside her, was unable to penetrate the dark folds of her dress. As we rounded to her level, her eyes met mine. I was struck by the sheer nakedness, the vulnerability, of her bare face framed by dark curls. On that face, tears glistened like diamonds.

She was crying – no, this was deeper, more regal somehow. Not a snivelling cry for help, a wet, sniffling, slurry of tears. It was different. The woman was… weeping. Shoulders hunched, body shuddering, lips parted slightly, emitting a deep, keening note. There was something darkly compelling about this woman and her display of emotion, incongruous in such a grossly bright, bustling place.

“So where to now?” Jane’s excitement was, for once, not so infectious.

“Shooting gallery,” I mumbled absent-mindedly.

We fell into line behind a wailing little boy who, with nose dribbling into his fairy floss, clawed at his mother’s leg with sticky insistence. She paid him scant attention, yet when his screeches reached an alarming decibel, irritably slapped his hand away. I noticed a quick flash of guilty embarrassment slide across her face as she looked up, drawn by the sight of the weeping woman’s shuddering shoulders.

By now, the woman had begun to attract interest. It was as though a message had rippled through Luna Park; perhaps the clowns whispered it to the children, the carousel horses whinnied to their riders, and the giant mouth shouted for all to hear: “There’s a woman down at the shooting gallery, weeping. No one can stop her.”

“Look at her,” Jane mused in a low voice. “What has she got to cry about? Did you see the size of the rock on her finger?” she added, with little empathy.

The line inched forward. An old woman joined the queue behind us, a sneer pinching its way across her parchment-like face as she eyed the weeping woman warily.

“What’s her problem?” she said to no one in particular. “I tell you, young women today, they think life should be a fun park.”

Some nodded in agreement, while others looked into the distance, feigning nonchalance. Though the public jostled, wriggled and pushed...
Discerning use of punctuation to achieve specific effects

Exploitation of genre patterns and conventions of a short story to achieve specific purposes

Discerning combination of a range of grammatically accurate language structures for specific effects, including clauses and sentences

Manipulation and control of roles of the short story writer and relationship with magazine audiences

Discerning use of a wide range of apt vocabulary for specific purposes

Discerning selection, organisation and synthesis of relevant and substantive subject matter to support perspectives

Discerning manipulation of the ways ideas, attitudes and values underpin the short story and influence magazine audiences

Manipulation and control of roles of the short story writer and relationship with magazine audiences

Discerning use of aesthetic features to achieve specific purposes in a short story

Short story written in response to “An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow” by Les Murray. This sample has been selected because it demonstrates a discerning selection of relevant and substantive subject matter and a subtle and complex recreation of the perspectives and representations of concepts, identities, times and places in the stimulus poem. The full text of the poem is reproduced below.

their way around the park, a wide berth was left around the woman. Still, I noticed that she had gained the attention of everyone near. I heard self-righteous whispers:

"Why on earth would she come here, of all places, to sit and mope?"

"Boyfriend troubles?" sneered another.

“Jason, darling, take the children away. I don’t want them near her; she probably stole that ring; who knows what she’s capable of.”

Yet as I watched the sound welling up and cascading from this poor woman’s body, I realised that she was not merely crying about an argument with a boyfriend; she was weeping from the core of her being. Through her tears, she maintained an infinite gravitas; I sensed that she wept for neither sorrow nor joy. Her tears told an ancient, universal story, and we who watched began to hear the story for ourselves; the story of our deepest pain, long buried, uncovered by her river of tears. She was giving us permission to remember.

I was a child of seven, visiting my grandmother in the nursing home. I kissed her wrinkled cheek; in return, she asked who I was.

As the woman wept on, disapproving features softened, faces crumpled. The gift of her weeping spread like a yawn through the crowd, giving all of us a moment to grieve, to pause, to remember.

The weeping woman’s shoulders rose and fell as she took a steadying, shuddering breath. The carousel horses rose and fell, and shuddered to a stop. The ride attendant stood by the control panel, confusion in her eyes. Then she wept. A security guard positioned outside the theatre shuffled his feet. Looking away from the crowd, he surreptitiously raised a meaty fist to his eye. But I saw. He wept.

The snivelling little boy ahead of us stepped out. He walked over to the woman, stood at her feet and stared, silent now, mouth still slightly agape. His mother moved toward him and knelt down to meet her son eye-to-eye. Gently, she wiped his tear-streaked face, and taking his hand, led him away. There was a glistening in her eyes, a softening to her mouth.

A sharp jab from Jane brought me back to reality. She pointed at the weeping woman, who was now standing. No one spoke. Luna Park froze.

The woman straightened her dress, patted down her hair, delicately wiped the moisture from beneath her eyes, and stood tall. She took a deep, steadying breath. Then, with queenly grace, she walked away from the crowd.

Almost immediately, Luna Park erupted into life. Carnival music roared, children shrieked, lights flashed. Hands were brushed hurriedly across wet eyes as memories receded and faces composed themselves once again. As if after a rainstorm, colours appeared brighter, more intense. I felt cleansed, somehow lighter in spirit.

The woman walked purposefully toward the exit, her dress ballooning gently behind her, carving a silent, yacht-like progress through the crowd. On she went, through the great gaping mouth of the fun park.
An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow

The word goes round Repins,
the murmur goes round Lorenzinis,
at Tattersalls, men look up from sheets of numbers,
the Stock Exchange scribblers forget the chalk in their hands
and men with bread in their pockets leave the Greek Club:
There's a fellow crying in Martin Place. They can't stop him.
The traffic in George Street is banked up for half a mile
and drained of motion. The crowds are edgy with talk
and more crowds come hurrying. Many run in the back streets
which minutes ago were busy main streets, pointing:
There's a fellow weeping down there. No one can stop him.
The man we surround, the man no one approaches
simply weeps, and does not cover it, weeps
not like a child, not like the wind, like a man
and does not declaim it, nor beat his breast, nor even
sob very loudly - yet the dignity of his weeping
holds us back from his space, the hollow he makes about him
in the midday light, in his pentagram of sorrow,
and uniforms back in the crowd who tried to seize him
stare out at him, and feel, with amazement, their minds
longing for tears as children for a rainbow.
Some will say, in the years to come, a halo
or force stood around him. There is no such thing.
Some will say they were shocked and would have stopped him
but they will not have been there. The fiercest manhood,
the toughest reserve, the slickest wit amongst us
trembles with silence, and burns with unexpected
judgements of peace. Some in the concourse scream
who thought themselves happy. Only the smallest children
and such as look out of Paradise come near him
and sit at his feet, with dogs and dusty pigeons.
Ridiculous, says a man near me, and stops
his mouth with his hands, as if it uttered vomit —
and I see a woman, shining, stretch her hand
and shake as she receives the gift of weeping;
as many as follow her also receive it
and many weep for sheer acceptance, and more
refuse to weep for fear of all acceptance,
but the weeping man, like the earth, requires nothing,
the man who weeps ignores us, and cries out
of his withen face and ordinary body
not words, but grief, not messages, but sorrow,
hard as the earth, sheer, present as the sea —
and when he stops, he simply walks between us
mopping his face with the dignity of one
man who has wept, and now has finished weeping.
Evading believers, he hurries off down Pitt Street.

Les Murray
From *The Weatherboard Cathedral*, 1969

Poem used with permission of Les Murray. The views and opinions of authors expressed on the Queensland Studies Authority website do not necessarily state or reflect those of Les Murray.
A Last Resort

I walked through the eerie mist that had once again crept over the back streets of Sydney. The distant sounds of traffic horns and all the city congestion was carried across this suburb which I call home. It wasn’t much on the eye, dull brown and faded grey homes with backyards with just enough room for the old ‘hills hoist’ and a pathway through to the front door. Not your typical ‘aussie backyard’. A stray dog wandered across the lonely road ahead just as I reached the rusted front gate to our house. It stopped and dropped a dark grey object at its feet. It looked at me with its deceitful black eyes as though it were sizing me up. Its strange presence made me shudder. As I looked away, it started barking.

‘Stupid dog’ I thought, and continued through the gate and into the home.

After a long day at school, most teenagers would be happy to go home. However it was a different story for me. When I was young, too young to remember, mum told me I lost Gary my dad in a terrible car accident while he was driving under the influence. And for that, I hated him. He left my mum to take care of me. Single handedly raise me while still providing the rent for the house and my education. It wasn’t until I was thirteen that I found out I was adopted. That’s when I had to take up a night job at the local servo to help pay for my education.

The familiar sight as I opened the front door. I could hear mum’s recognizable cough echo through the house. I stormed down the hallway to the lounge room.

“What the hell are you doing’ home?” slurred mum as she gave a quick glance towards me.

“School’s over mum. I finish at three, same as every day. What the hell are you doing,” I yelled as I snatched the bottle from her hands, “you can’t go on like this. We don’t have the money!”

“Don’t tell me what to do!” she replied.

I didn’t want to handle this. I didn’t have to handle this. I could feel the anger being bottled up inside me. I decided to leave before this argument escalated. I stormed out of the room, passed the rubbish bin where I disposed of the bottle, and then into my bedroom. Collapsing on my bed, my mind raged at the fact that we literally had no money. I could hear a rattle back in the kitchen, where I knew mum was searching the garbage.

I rolled in my bed in disgust, only to discover a couple of letters sitting on the edge. The first one was an average white envelope with the school emblem printed on the top right corner on the front of the envelope and addressed to me. It’s about the upcoming formal that I knew I couldn’t go to. The one underneath was similar, but it had a big red stamp across the front reading FINAL NOTICE. I tore open the letter to find that mum was yet to pay the electricity bill. That was the final straw. My rage was overflowing. I got up and kicked my door open and made my way outside.
Walking back out onto the streets, I tried my hardest to slam the rusted gate, but it only moved a few inches. I crossed the street and felt eyes gazing down my back. I stopped in the middle of the road and looked back at the house, thinking it was mum staring out of the window. There was no one peeking through the curtains, not even any of the neighbours were disturbed by our fight. I scanned the street only to find the same stray dog, sitting in the gutter five metres from me. It cheerfully barked and picked up an old tennis ball and trotted over to. It dropped the dusty ball at my feet, I could now see how terribly flea infested the dogs fur was.

“No wonder you’re homeless. What right-minded person would want to keep you?” I said.

Still outraged by the earlier proceedings, I decided to tease the dog. I picked up a rock, swapped hands with the rock and the old ball, and threw the rock down the street as far as I could. It took the bait and went off down the street chasing the rock.

“Stupid dog. Ugly and dumb.” I chuckled to myself and I put the ball in the pocket of my parka hood and started walking in the other direction.

I wandered the street aimlessly for hours, trying to gather my thoughts. I ended up sitting on a park bench under the dim light of a close street light. I realised that the job I had wasn’t going to pay for my education and the bills. I had to find another source of income. At this very moment, a very impatient business man came and sat next to me. He was fruitlessly searching his pockets for something.

“Where is that bloody thing,” he muttered to himself.

He started unloading his pockets, looking for something deep within the depths of his business jacket. On the seat he put some small reminders, business cards, and then, his wallet. It was overflowing with cash. I stared at it, and then came to the poor decision to take it. I took it and run. Ran like there was no tomorrow. I could hear the shouts coming from the man.

“STOP! THIEF! STOP THAT KID!” he screamed.

I kept running. I thought I was in the clear when I heard the words that no criminal ever wants to hear.

“STOP! POLICE! STOP RIGHT THERE!”

Those words ran through my head. I knew I couldn’t out run a couple of police officers. But I was so close to home, I continue to run, until I saw a hedge ahead. The perfect hiding spot. I slid, and disappeared into the darkness of the hedges. My heart a drum pounding inside of me, I thought I had won. I saw the police stop at the opposite corner of the street. They couldn’t see me. Perfect. I felt safer, until I saw it. That dog came trotting once again up the street. It came to a halt, facing me five metres away. And then it barked. The policemen’s eyes darted over to the hedges I was in. They came charging towards me. I had nowhere to run, nowhere to hide. All I could do was stand up, and put my hands in the air, ready to be arrested.
As they sat me down on the curb of the street while filling out paper work, that stray dog came and sat beside me. This was the closest the dog had ever come to me. And underneath its flea infested fur, I could see the sweet innocent eyes of a small, playful puppy. It got up and submerged its head into my oversized parka's pocket, and pulled out the same tennis ball. I had clearly misjudged this small canine. I thought he was just a burden on the rest of the world, adding nothing to the lives of anyone. I was wrong. All this puppy wanted was a little bit of love, and in return, would offer its loyal companion ship. And as I thought this, I looked back at the dog, who had started to trot off down the street, searching for someone new to share his love with.

Short story written in response to “Don’t Judge a Book by its Cover” (Anonymous)

Acknowledgments

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