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ABOUT THIS SERIES

The aim of this series is to present a range of written Context responses on a variety of prompts, so that you can see different ways in which other students have approached writing on a Context. The pieces here will also provide you with a range of ideas you can draw on for your own writing.

Responses of varying quality have been included, along with assessor comments, to give you the opportunity to see what distinguishes an excellent piece of work.

This book contains sample Context responses from students writing on the Context **Whose Reality?** and drawing on Robert Drewe's *The Shark Net* as a source of ideas.

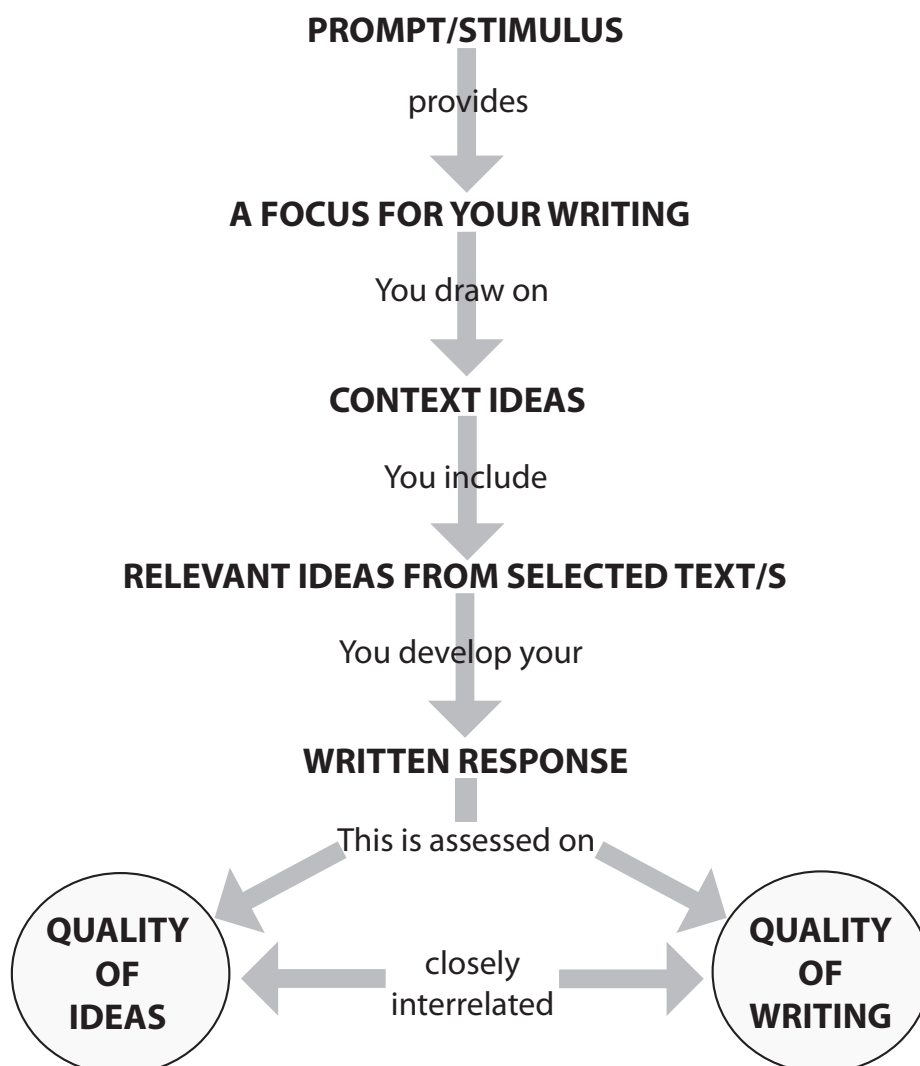
Each piece has been assessed by an English teacher and assigned a grade according to the following marking scale:

1–2	Very Low
3	Low
4–7	Medium
8	High
9–10	Very High

The grade and the assessor's comments appear below each piece of writing.

Note: The pieces have been reproduced here exactly as they were submitted by students. Spelling and grammatical errors have been underlined.

Key elements for Context writing



ASSESSORS' EXAMINATION ADVICE

General notes

- Good ideas and quality writing are the keys to success.
- The guidelines for the 2009 exam state that "Students will be required to base their writing on unseen stimulus material or prompts associated with the ideas and/ or arguments suggested by the four texts set for each Context."
- Your written piece should clearly use the prompt/ stimulus material but does not have to provide a definite 'answer' or stick rigidly to the prompt/ stimulus material. You can use the prompt/ stimulus material as a starting point for a wider discussion on the Context.
- Very high to outstanding written pieces can be achieved in ALL forms – imaginative pieces have the same chance of getting very high marks as expository, persuasive and hybrid forms. The quality of your writing and ideas will determine your score.

Use of selected texts

- From 2009 onwards, you must name your primary text on your exam booklet as directed.
- Engagement with the ideas of the text relevant to the Context and the prompt/ stimulus material is essential. A common fault is a fairly descriptive account of the selected text; these responses tend not to score very highly (typically mid-range, i.e. 4 to 7 marks).
- Use a range of ideas from the Context as well as ideas from other texts, events, sources of information and so on.
- Do not focus exclusively on your selected text (or the other text studied for Area of Study 2, if applicable). These essays tend to look like Text Response essays, sticking closely to textual detail; again, this can result in a mid-range mark (4 to 7) depending on the complexity and sophistication of the writing.
- It is essential to refer to the selected text in some way but this need not be explicit or detailed, as long as the ideas are recognisably drawn from the text.
- Using the text as a resource for Context ideas is essential. Demonstrating a close, detailed knowledge of the text is not important or necessary; however, the accuracy of any textual detail you provide is very important.
- If it is impossible to see how the response draws on your selected text, you risk getting a low-range mark (1 to 3).

Written explanation

- No written explanation is required on the exam.
- On last year's exam, some students provided a brief explanation of their response – this is not required and will be ignored.

Exam task

- Check the exam task material very closely for details about the requirements for your writing.

Other references

- VCE Examiners' Reports on the VCAA website at www.vcaa.vic.edu.au
- 'Reading between the Lines' by Bob Hillman, *The Age*, Education, 16 February 2009

SAMPLE 1: THREE-PART SAC

Prompt 1: 'There are no facts, only interpretations.' (Friedrich Nietzsche)

Form: Expository

WRITTEN EXPLANATION

In order to explore and develop an opinionative piece on this topic, I chose to model Robert Drewe's "The Shark Net", which retells the story of Drewe's childhood and his expectations, interpretations and influences that he faced as a boy. From this, I discovered that Drewe's recount of his childhood is not entirely a truthful story, and what he thought as 'reality' and 'fact' as a child was merely his interpretations. Thus, my piece contends that our interpretations of fact initiate at a young age and is guided by different perspectives that we gather from our elders, and as we age, we tend to design these interpretations according to our suitability.

To explore and persuade my contention in the most suitable way, I wrote the piece primarily for an adult audience, with the aid of philosophical principles such as epistemology, phenomenology and Plato's cave allegory. I used snippets from Drewe's childhood such as his views on Perth which originate from her mother's opinions to expand on my first topic sentence, and to also display my understanding of epistemology. The second paragraph explores Drewe's writing style, and his own interpretations of facts that he manipulates according to his convenience as a writer. This supports the theory of a phenomenological reality that suggests that the true meaning of fact differs according to our interpretations. Thus, my piece is primarily designed for an adult audience and philosophical scholars as the philosophical principles and terminologies that I have used to support my theories may be difficult to comprehend for younger students.

(257 words)

CONTEXT RESPONSE

Our knowledge of fact is widely believed to be easily interpreted, however philosophers such as Plato believe that our knowledge of fact is merely "shadows on a wall" and there are only a select few that venture from a cold, tangible world to face a more harsher and invisible realm of reasoning and understanding. During our childhood, we are constantly educated with different versions of fact, but as we mature, our interpretations evolve into a more broader and subjective concept. While we may develop a greater outlook on various facts through age and experience, the true meaning of reality remains unreachable and we are merely left with our own interpretations of fact, rather than fact itself.

It is during childhood when individuals are at their most vulnerable and malleable state, where family influences help to construct different interpretations of fact. Thus, reality is described as a fluid concept, and one can never really ascertain its true meaning. This is supported by epistemological principles that suggest a gap will always exist between our understanding and what we comprehend as 'truth'. As children, we are constantly educated by members of our family who play an influential role in our learning process. While we may be able to derive the essence of truth or fact from different theories that are posed, its existence and meaning remain out of our reach. Indeed, the influential power of family is demonstrated in Robert Drewe's memoir "The Shark Net" where young Robert's views on Perth as a city stem from her mother's interpretations. As Drewe's mother is unhappy to leave Melbourne, she imagines the worst of Perth and sorrowfully exclaims "It must as well be Africa!" This has an effect on young Robert, as it makes the journey "more scary but more interesting" for him. As a child, Robert has various interpretations of a mysterious adult world that cannot be identified without experience; however these mature as he grows.