SAMPLE ASSESSMENT TASKS

ENGLISH
ATAR YEAR 12
Sample assessment task

English – ATAR Year 12

Task 1

Assessment type: Creating

Conditions
Period allowed for completion of the task: two weeks Semester 1, Week 2–3

Task weighting
10% of the school mark for this pair of units

Task 1  (32 marks)

Following the directions set out on the task sheet, go for a 20-minute walk. On your return, write a prose narrative in which you experiment with the narrative conventions of point of view, stream of consciousness and other language features to shape reader response.

(This is a variation on an idea from the teacher reference text, The Little Red Writing Book by Mark Tredinnick.)

• Go for a 20-minute walk. Write a page of prose narrative in the same rhythm and pace as your walk. Write in first or third person narrative but allow that narrative to be interrupted by stream of consciousness at times. If you choose first person narrative, allow the first person ‘I’ to be you or to morph into a fictional ‘I’; that is, a character who refers to himself or herself as ‘I’ but who is not necessarily you. Allow the reader an understanding of what you or your character sees, feels and thinks about while walking. Use a combination of literal and metaphorical description.

• Reflect on your piece of writing:
  - What issues, if any, are raised by what you or your character sees?
  - What issues, if any, are raised by what you or your character feels?
  - What did you think and what issues, if any, are raised by what you or your character thought?
  - What do we learn about ourselves through this activity? (Discuss the aspects of sensation and thought, of seeing and feeling, physically, on the one hand and thinking or feeling, emotionally, on the other hand.)
  - How does what you have written suggest your character?
  - How could you make your sentences more succinct? Your paragraphs more structured?
  - Why did you prefer first person narrative to third or vice versa?
  - How useful was the stream of consciousness technique?
  - Discuss this reflection with a peer.

• Write out your prose narrative again, adding and deleting until you have exactly what you want in it. Let the story develop but do not feel as though you have to reach the end of the narrative.

Marking key for sample assessment task 1

**Task 1:** Following the directions set out on the task sheet, go for a 20-minute walk. On your return, write a prose narrative in which you experiment with the narrative conventions of point of view, stream of consciousness and other language features to shape reader response.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria and categories</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Use of literal and metaphorical language – the response:</td>
<td>/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes creative use of literal and metaphorical language to produce a meaningful text with strong aesthetic qualities</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes thought-provoking use of literal and metaphorical language</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes competent use of literal and metaphorical language</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes unvaried and clichéd use of literal and metaphorical language</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses literal language only</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of narrative point of view – the response:</td>
<td>/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses narrative point of view with imagination and skill</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses narrative point of view convincingly</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses narrative point of view effectively</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses a narrative point of view that is partially effective</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses a narrative point of view that is inconsistent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Use of the stream of consciousness technique – the response:</td>
<td>/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses stream of consciousness with imagination and skill</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses stream of consciousness convincingly</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses stream of consciousness effectively</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses a stream of consciousness that is partially effective</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>uses a stream of consciousness that is inconsistent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expression – the response is written:</td>
<td>/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a coherent and sophisticated style</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a coherent and sustained style</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a purposeful and/or methodical style</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>clearly but not always coherently</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in a disjointed style, characterised by unclear expression</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of ideas explored (issues raised, themes developed, meanings made possible) – the response:</td>
<td>/12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explores thought-provoking, complex and challenging ideas</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explores thought-provoking ideas</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explores carefully-considered ideas</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explores familiar ideas</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>explores a range of ideas, none of which is clearly developed</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>presents one undeveloped idea</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\[6 \times 2 \text{ } \text{i.e. double the value of the mark for this criterion}\]

Total /32

Mark converted to percentage out of 10% for this pair of units /10%
Sample assessment task

English – ATAR Year 12

Task 8

**Assessment type:** Responding

**Conditions**
Time for the task: three weeks
In class Semester 2, Week 4
Suggested length: 700–1000 words

**Task weighting**
5% of the school mark for this pair of units.

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**Task 8:** Write an essay in which you discuss the values and attitudes that underpin this excerpt from Carl Sagan’s *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space* and the possible readings of that text. Use the ‘syllabus-arrowed’ notes and the ‘reading practices’ notes as a starting point for your discussion; comment on the language features that generate empathy or controversy; and conclude with an indication of whether, on balance, you approve or disapprove of Sagan’s perspective.

Please read the adapted excerpt at:
Marking key for sample assessment task 8

**Task 8:** Write an essay in which you discuss the values and attitudes that underpin this excerpt from Carl Sagan's *Pale Blue Dot: A Vision of the Human Future in Space* and the possible readings of that text. Use the ‘syllabus-arrowed’ notes and the ‘reading practices’ notes as a starting point for your discussion; comment on the language features that generate empathy or controversy; and conclude with an indication of whether, on balance, you approve or disapprove of Sagan’s perspective.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria and categories</th>
<th>Marks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion of Sagan’s values and attitudes. Your discussion was...</strong></td>
<td>/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehensive and convincing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considered and detailed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considered but brief</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no discussion provided</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Discussion of possible readings of Sagan’s text. Your discussion was...</strong></td>
<td>/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehensive and convincing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considered and detailed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considered but brief</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no discussion provided</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>An indication of the student’s approval or disapproval of Sagan’s views. The indication was...</strong></td>
<td>/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>comprehensive and convincing</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considered and detailed</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>considered but brief</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>limited</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>minimal</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>no indication provided</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The quality of the expression of your ideas. Your essay...</strong></td>
<td>/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expresses ideas in a sophisticated and lucid style</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expresses ideas in a clear, well-structured and coherent manner</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expresses ideas clearly</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expresses some ideas clearly</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>expresses ideas in a manner that is unstructured and incoherent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>express ideas incoherently</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Use of supporting evidence. Your response...</strong></td>
<td>/5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes insightful use of supporting evidence, including quotes and/or examples</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes appropriate use of supporting evidence, including quotes and/or examples</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes some use of supporting evidence, including quotes and/or examples</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes limited use of supporting evidence, including quotes and/or examples</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes minimal use of supporting evidence, including quotes and/or examples</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>makes no use of supporting evidence</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total out of 25 marks for this task</strong></td>
<td>/25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total out of 10% for this task</strong></td>
<td>/10%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Task 8: ‘Syllabus-arrowed’ notes

These ‘syllabus-arrowed’ notes relate to the Unit 4 content that might be relevant to a reading or analysis of Sagan’s text.

Unit content

Investigate and evaluate the relationships between texts and contexts by:

- undertaking close analysis of texts
- examining how each text relates to a particular context or contexts

The Catholic and the communist, the corporate and the criminal care little for Sagan’s homogenisation of cultural views and blind faith in science. In other words, the pro-science ideology does not necessarily dominate.

- comparing the contexts in which texts are created and received.

Sagan’s context emphasises how science can be fantastic and improve our world; conversely, the readers belonging to the context of those who are afflicted by the issues of our world might not see any solutions to their problems emanating from Sagan’s rhetoric.

Evaluate different perspectives, attitudes and values represented in texts by:

- analysing content, purpose and choice of language

Sagan uses language cleverly. For example, in the clause, ‘precisely because of the obscurity of our world thus revealed’, the word ‘precisely’ counterbalances with ‘obscurity’ which in turn fits oxymoronically with ‘revealed’. That something obscure is revealed implies the power of science and just a little self-congratulation on Sagan’s part for having the idea to take the shot.

- analysing the use of voice and point of view

Sagan’s voice: academic, scientific, philosophical; privileged; didactic; proselytising?

- exploring other interpretations and aspects of context to develop a considered response.

A resistant reading (an alternative interpretation) might be that the vast amounts of money spent on space exploration could help to eradicate hunger and suffering here on Earth.

Evaluate how texts offer perspectives through:

- the selection of mode, medium, genre and type of text

Use of voice-over; visuals: stills and footage; text; all of which suggest a hybridity of mode, medium and genre.
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- the ways *points of view* and values are represented

> What is essentially an opinion wavers between philosophical musing and considered argument with a dose of scientific-factual tone.

- the selection of *language features* that generate empathy or controversy

> Accumulations of nouns and noun phrases, for example, ‘every hunter and forager; every hero and coward; every creator and destroyer of civilizations; every king and peasant, every young couple in love; every mother and father; hopeful child; inventor and explorer; every teacher of morals; every corrupt politician; every supreme leader; every superstar,’ act to hammer home his point, to insist on empathy.

Reflect on their own and others’ texts by:

- analysing and evaluating how different *attitudes and perspectives* underpin texts

> Sagan’s attitudes are complex but fairly clear in this text: pro-space science, pro-humanity.

- questioning the *assumptions and values* in texts

> Some assumptions and values can be questioned. For example, space research is often valued as necessary because of what we learn and because of the possibility of other life out there. All indications so far, however, suggest that there is nothing like human life (or animal life) out there, so where is the justification for the continuing expenditure?

- identifying omissions, inclusions, *emphases* and marginalisations

> Sagan’s emphases are identifiable: Sagan is pro-space research which has opened his eyes, he claims, to the idea that it is only we, human beings, who can look after ourselves and our planet. One question elided is whether governments’ budgets can accommodate both space research and social welfare and if not, which has to be allocated less than it needs?

- discussing and evaluating *different readings of texts*

> Different readings of this text are possible. See ‘reading practices’ notes.

> Sagan emphasises how insignificant our lives, history and issues are. A resistant reading might focus on the idea that they are OUR lives, history and issues and they are important to us!

> Sagan concludes with a humanitarian and eco-critical perspective e.g. ‘Like it or not, for the moment, the Earth is where we make our stand.’ ‘It underscores our responsibility to deal more kindly with one another, and to preserve and cherish the only home we’ve ever known.’
### Task 8: ‘Reading practices’ notes

Some would argue that a **reading practice** involves looking through a particular (theoretical) lens and that your reading of the text depends upon which lens you adopt and what it is that you pay attention to. With any text, ask ‘What is the story? What happens? What is the history that it refers to? How is the story told? What voices are there? What language (words, phrases, images, sounds, rhymes) get your attention? Why? Which lines/images do you like most? After you have thought about the language, consider the generic conventions the writer/text uses, then the historical context, etc. down through the list of ‘lenses’ below.

|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Create a reading of this text, paying particular attention to the use of **language**, for example, choices of words, use of literal/figurative language, creation of images, sentence structure, tone, style, language techniques. | Figurative language: ‘a mote of dust suspended in a sunbeam’ to suggest the Earth’s relative insignificance, a theme developed throughout the piece. Tone: authoritative, reflective e.g. ‘every...every...every...’ followed by the statement, ‘The Earth is a very small stage in a vast cosmic arena.’  
While the text refers generally to ‘the endless cruelties’ humans visit on each other, the footage contains graphic images of just that, for example, of the naked Vietnamese child running in terror from the advance of the Vietcong.  
Other images in the footage worthy of comment are: the rocket blasting off; of outer space; of human achievement, joy, love and suffering; (the fictional character of film representations of such); of war; of the scene from *Citizen Kane*; of Superman; from Asian/Chinese films; of the Earth sitting, a pixel, in a beam of light. |
<p>| Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to <strong>generic conventions</strong>, for example, how the text is typical/atypical of a particular genre or form, for example, how it conforms or doesn’t conform to a specific form (e.g. ode, short story, absurdist drama) within a broad genre of poetry, prose or drama. Discuss techniques used that are typical of the form. | It’s a hybrid text, combining the features of an essay (an extended argument) with visuals that one would associate with a documentary. A docu-essay? An essaydoc? |
| Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to the <strong>historical context</strong> in which it was written, including the time and place in which it was written and the values of that society or culture at that time. | Created in an era of space exploration, an era when space exploration had had its hits and misses, when some were questioning various countries’ involvement in space exploration when money could have been re-directed to social issues like poverty, employment and education. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to the <strong>historical context</strong> in which it is being read now, the time and place in which it is being read now and the values of this contemporary society or culture.</th>
<th>Ironic and sad that we need to spend billions on space research to reach Sagan’s conclusion that we (and we only) can fix our problems on Earth which, in turn, could partly be fixed using those billions. A starving peasant does not need a photo from Saturn to be reminded that poverty is an issue here on Earth. OR Space research is an aspect of our scientific curiosity that needs to be satisfied.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to comparing/contrasting how the historical/cultural contexts affect the way the text was read when it was written and how the text is being read now.</td>
<td>As in the two sides of the debate outlined above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to representations of <strong>class</strong> within the text or implied by the text, for example, whether ‘society’ is represented as being divided into classes and whether one class is deemed to have power over another.</td>
<td>Arguably, a class issue exists regarding how a government allocates taxpayers’ money to health, education, welfare etc. compared to space exploration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to representations of <strong>race/ethnicity</strong>, for example, what the text is suggesting or implying about particular abstract ideas about race or ethnic groups. Create a <strong>post-colonial</strong> reading of this text.</td>
<td>Sagan’s article refers to one of the probes regarding Saturn. Nonetheless, other space research has considered the questions: is there other life out there? Are conditions conducive to life on...? Could humans survive on...? The first to walk on the moon planted a USA flag. Are there characteristics of colonialism in space research? What uses will other planets/aspects of space be put to?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to representations of <strong>gender</strong>, for example, of ‘male’ or ‘female’ or ‘feminine’ or ‘masculine’. A feminist reading is an example of a gendered reading.</td>
<td>For the most part, Sagan creates a gender-neutral text although he does refer to king (not queen), hero (not heroine) and then to generals and emperors who are would-be ‘masters’.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to representations of <strong>culture</strong>, cultural identity or nationality, for example, of groups of people, for example, ‘Australians’ or ‘immigrants’ or ‘country people’ or ‘bikies’ or ‘emos’. Does the text, through such representations, ‘naturalise’ aspects of culture?</td>
<td>One positive aspect of Sagan’s script is that he objects to our ‘obsession with nationalisms’; simultaneously, however, the text reminds us of how ‘inconsequential’ we are and our ‘imagined self-importance’ which on the one hand is useful, especially with regard to the negative things humans have done to each other but on the other hand has the effect of homogenising the human race, denying it its cultural and ideological diversity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to **representations of religion** or religious groups, for example, ‘fundamentalists’ or ‘Christianity’ or ‘hotgospellers’ or ‘pantheism’. Discuss the pervading ideology of the text: is it pro-religion, pro-secularism, pro-freedom of choice?

The reference to ‘confident religions’ might be read as a criticism of them, especially in the context of Sagan’s interest in the scientific evidence of other worlds, other universes out there and his avowed caution about religions’ claims.

Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to representations of ‘the other’ or ‘the marginalised’, for example, of minority groups within society, for example, of the disabled, of the ill, of the unemployed, of the itinerant, of the disempowered, of the old.

Again the conundrum: are you, as a human being, in a position to enjoy the curiosity being satisfied by space exploration or are your poverty, ill-health and lack of education denying you that opportunity?

Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to representations of any number of abstracts like ‘love’ or ‘responsibility’ or ‘morality’ or ‘the rights of the individual’ or ‘power’. Discuss the moral, ethical or philosophical ideas represented in the text.

Space exploration is represented in a positive light either or both because of its intrinsic value or for what it reveals about our own world.

Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to representations of any number of groups, for example, ‘teenagers’, ‘labourers’, ‘children’, ‘students’, ‘shoppers’, ‘capitalists’. What groups are ‘represented’ in this text? In what ways? Why? What values and attitudes are at work, are being challenged?

The casual, ‘I thought it would be a good idea...’ bespeaks of a somewhat privileged status that some space scientists have and perhaps the nobility of their cause, a representation, as suggested, that is subject to debate.

Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to the author: that is, the author’s context, the author’s biography, the author’s values, attitudes and beliefs, the author’s oeuvre.

Notes from Wikipedia: Sagan’s contributions were central to the discovery of the high surface temperatures of **Venus**. However, he is best known for his contributions to the scientific research of **extraterrestrial life**, including experimental demonstration of the production of **amino acids** from basic chemicals by **radiation**. Sagan assembled the first physical messages that were sent into space: his mother, a woman who had known ‘extreme poverty as a child’ in New York City during **World War I**; ‘my parents were not scientists. They knew almost nothing about science. But in introducing me simultaneously to scepticism and to wonder, they taught me the two uneasily cohabiting modes of thought that are central to the scientific method’; his father was not especially religious, but his mother ‘definitely believed in God’; Sagan himself cautious about religions and their claims. Sagan not born wealthy; in 1939, he also saw one of the Fair’s most publicized events, the burial of a **time**
capsule at Flushing Meadows, which contained mementos of the 1930s to be recovered by Earth's descendants in a future millennium. 'The time capsule thrilled Carl,' writes Davidson. As an adult, Sagan and his colleagues would create similar time capsules – ones that would be sent out into the galaxy; these were the Pioneer plaque and the Voyager Golden Record records, all of which were spinoffs of Sagan's memories of the World's Fair; an advocate of nuclear disarmament; wrote books to popularise science and the novel Contact; ‘If there is life on Mars, I believe we should do nothing with Mars. Mars then belongs to the Martians, even if the Martians are only microbes.’ Sagan approved of what was observable and therefore put no great credence in UFOs or aliens even though he pioneered attempts to contact extraterrestrial beings. Sagan has produced science fiction films.

Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to the intertextual links that one can observe with other texts. Such links might work in relation to theme, style, technique, generic convention, genre, reading practice employed, ideology, context.


Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to the reader, to your response as a reader, to your context, to the values and attitudes, beliefs and ideologies that you bring to the text, to your reading practices.

Knowledge of science, space science. Religious beliefs or lack thereof. Degree of scepticism.

Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to the aesthetic qualities of the text as opposed to the ideological qualities, the form as opposed to the content, the expression as opposed to the ideas, the beauty (or otherwise) of the technique as opposed to the theme. What is 'beautiful' (in literature, fiction, non-fiction, film etc.)? Who decides? How do we decide?

Quite a compelling argument, expressed well for the most part. Some clever use of language.

Create a psychoanalytical reading of this text. Psychoanalytical readings tend to focus on desires and motivations, values and attitudes, ideologies perhaps, for example, of characters, of real-life individuals, of authors, even of cultures or societies.

Sagan’s voice-over suggests two competing desires, a desire for the advancement of space research and the desire for those on Earth to look after the earth, including those on earth, better than we do now.
Create a reading of this text in which you argue that this text is typical/atypical of texts belonging to **a particular period or style**, for example, a ‘Romantic’ text, a ‘metaphysical’ text, an ‘existentialist’ text, Victorian, ‘Dickensian’, a post-modern text, science fiction, social media, hybrid, comedy, tragedy, satire, magic realism...

Perhaps typical of a popular science text, pitched to a general audience, not an audience of science specialists.

Create a reading of this text paying attention to ideologies relating to **ecology or conservation**, to representations of the landscape and cultures’ relationships with the landscape, to images of the urban and industrial or the rural, regional or pastoral.

Sagan’s text (and beliefs) are eco-critical given the emphasis on caring for our environment (even though he allegedly once agreed with the idea of detonating a nuclear device on the moon’s surface!)

Create a reading of this text paying particular attention to any **combination** of the above reading practices.