ESSAY WRITING MADE EASY

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Assuming that you have thoroughly researched your essay and organised your notes, you are ready to start the first draft. I jokingly call this chapter ‘essay writing by numbers’ but of course, writing is never as automatic as just joining the dots: it involves making choices in relation to knowledge, argument, organisation and word usage. Unlike painting by numbers, the art of essay writing is a genuinely creative one.

The method described here is only a suggested approach to help get you started, and the more familiar you become with essays, the more you’ll be able to find your own methods. Be prepared to experiment.

The method is summarised below and each point is then discussed in detail, just as the five-paragraph essay announces your points in advance and then expands on them. (However, in most essay writing, you can’t use point form.)

Before we look at this method, read the following sample essay. This essay is then reprinted with various comments and explanations. For those who are not familiar with the prescribed text, a short summary is given first. This is NOT part of the essay itself!

**Summary of The Tempest**

*The Tempest* is a late Shakespeare play set on a remote island inhabited by the former Duke of Milan, Prospero, his daughter, Miranda, and Prospero’s servants, Ariel, a spirit, and Caliban, an uncouth native of the island. The play begins with a great storm in which a passing ship
appears to be shipwrecked and is cast ashore. Onboard this ship are those responsible for Prospero losing his dukedom: principally his brother Antonio and King Alonso of Naples. Also on board is the kindly and knowledgeable Gonzalo, who had always been loyal and considerate to Prospero.

The storm is just one of a series of phantasmal events and incidents devised by Prospero and enacted by Ariel that allow him to manipulate and control these new arrivals to his island, separately, before bringing them all together. Prospero wins back his right to be Duke of Milan and orchestrates a marriage between Miranda and Ferdinand, the son of the King of Naples, securing a bright future for his daughter as Queen of Naples. Rather than exacting revenge on those who have wronged him, he opts for the path of virtue over base emotions and shows mercy and forgiveness.

Note that for the above summary I have spent quite a bit of space in telling the story: this is not usually required nor is it generally a good idea in an English essay.

The following sample essay is not perfect and there are many other ways in which the question could have been answered. You may well disagree with the thesis and with various points made. However, the purpose is to illustrate the structure of an essay and some of the techniques involved in writing one. If need be, look up any terms that are unclear to you.

Sample essay

‘The only true voyage of discovery … would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another.’ (Marcel Proust, In Search of Lost Time) To what extent does this reflect your understanding of discovery, based on your reading in the Area of Study: Discovery? Refer to your prescribed text and at least two related texts of your own choosing.

1 To a large extent Proust’s view does reflect my understanding of discovery as represented in Shakespeare’s The Tempest and in some supplementary texts. Although the historical context of great sea voyages to discover the ‘New World’ is part of the background of the play (Lindley, 2002, pp. 30–1) Prospero’s great discoveries arise not from his exploration of an unfamiliar island, but from developing ‘other eyes’ in three primary
ways: through learning and knowledge, through reason, and through imagination. It will be shown, however, in *The Tempest* and two related texts that true discovery is when it is shared with others and when change results from this.

2 Proust’s distinction between voyages of discovery and developing ‘other eyes’ hinges on the contrast between experiencing new things and simply coming to understand the world differently. This quote implies that mere experience is not sufficient nor necessary: true discovery can come about through any means that changes the way we see things. In *The Tempest*, this is shown to be the case. Three chief ways that change how Prospero sees things are knowledge, reason and imagination.

3 Prospero places a very high value on knowledge: as Duke of Milan he was reputed to be ‘without parallel’ in the ‘liberal arts’. Although Caliban complains bitterly that he had given Prospero his valuable knowledge of ‘all the qualities o’ the isle’ (1.2.338), it is not primarily from his voyage nor from his stay in a new land that Prospero discovers his true powers and, ultimately, a new way of governing. Books offer access to unlimited learning, the chance to discover entire worlds through the eyes of others. Caliban believes this knowledge to be the basis of Prospero’s power, ‘for without them he’s but a sot, as I am, nor hath not one spirit to command’ (3.2.85–6). As Miranda’s ‘schoolmaster’ Prospero has made sure to pass knowledge on to her. This he considers to yield a greater ‘profit than other princes can, that have more time for vainer hours, and tutors not so careful’ (1.2.172–4).

4 However, Prospero made the mistake, while devoting himself so much to ‘closeness, and the bettering of my mind’, of overlooking the daily running of his state, entrusting this to his brother. Prospero’s change of fortune, to living in a cell on a ‘bare island’, serves as a reminder of the perils of mere knowledge for the sake of it, as his downfall came about in part through isolating himself in his ‘secret studies’. It is only when he finds himself deposed and stranded on an island that he comes to discover the importance of applying his knowledge to practical purposes, so that when the opportunity arises he is able to overthrow his enemies and create change, through winning back his rightful place as ‘absolute Milan’.

5 A supplementary text, the movie *Creation*, about the development of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, demonstrates that discovery sometimes comes from our own research. While Prospero was largely interested in book knowledge, his discovery of the importance of
imagination and of reason was triggered by his life experience of a reversal of fortune. The experience of one of history’s greatest discoverers, Charles Darwin, lies at the other extreme: after voyages of thousands of miles, and years of studying life, he comes to write his own book.

However, it soon becomes clear to Darwin that discovery can be very difficult to communicate and share with others. Conflict arises from the fact that Darwin’s discovery contradicts traditional book learning, so that he now sees both scientific knowledge and his religion through ‘other eyes’. His wife Emma is led to say, reproachfully, ‘Do you really care so little for your immortal soul . . . that you and I may be separated for all eternity?’ Darwin’s fear of conflict in the family, and also in society at large, leads him to ‘procrastinate’ in publishing his radical theory of evolution. This fear, together with his continued illness, could have led to his research failing altogether. Darwin’s intellectual friends Huxley and Hooke continually urge him to publish, because discovery must be shared with others before it becomes true discovery.

Just as Prospero, in vowing to destroy and bury his staff and ‘drown’ his book turns his back on his books, Darwin abandons the ‘Book’, the Bible, to pursue new knowledge. He comes to see the world through ‘other eyes’: the eyes of a person no longer torn between belief in the literal truth of the Bible and his theory, but who is changed greatly by his own discovery. He expresses the magnitude of this change with a metaphor about ‘the raising of continents’. Ultimately, however, it is only through the eyes of another that Darwin’s discovery comes to be shared with the world. He entrusts the manuscript of the book to Emma, a devout Christian, and tells her to decide whether to publish or destroy it. In a telling scene she returns it to him, wrapped in a parcel and addressed to a publisher, and ruefully comments ‘so now you have made an accomplice of me’.

By the end of the play Prospero no longer finds his library ‘dukedom large enough’. Rather, he vows to live more wisely in the real world while ‘Every third thought shall be my grave’. That is, he will consider his legacy in the eyes of future generations: will it be, just like the masques, a passing vision of ‘baseless fabric’, an ‘insubstantial pageant’, or will it prove enduring, like Gonzalo’s call for Prospero’s story to be a lasting memorial ‘set . . . down with gold on lasting pillars’ (5.1.207–8)? While books have been so important to Prospero, like Darwin he has found that discovery comes not merely from books but also through
experience. Furthermore, it must be shared and applied in order to be true discovery.

9 Aside from Prospero’s great knowledge, a second, crucial form of discovery is through reason. This theme emerges in the opening scene of The Tempest, where the lower-status boatswain outrageously (in the context of that time) announces to the king and lords assembled that there is no-one on board the ship whom he loves more than himself, and taunts Gonzalo to use his ‘authority’ to quell the storm if he can. The way in which Prospero describes Alonso and others coming out of a spell could equally describe Prospero’s discovery of a new way of living: from magician to wise man.

The charm dissolves apace,
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason. (5.1.64–8)

10 As Prospero says, ‘the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance’: this new emphasis on virtue is based on reason rather than on the emotions or senses, which consistently lead other characters astray. Prospero’s experience of loss and isolation has revealed to him what it is like to be the victim of the selfishness and greed of others. But it is through the eyes of Ariel that Prospero is led to forgive Antonio and Alonso for their infamy: Ariel comments that ‘if you now beheld them, your affections would become tender’ (5.1.17–20). That is, Prospero would feel differently when he looked through the eyes of others. Indeed, when Prospero finally encounters Gonzalo he does experience emotional fellowship: ‘Mine eyes, ev’n sociable to the show of thine, / Fall fellowly drops’ (5.1.63–4).

11 The importance of reason is further underlined by the many ways in which various characters are misled by their senses or emotions. As Prospero comments, regarding the tempest and the shipwreck, ‘Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil would not infect his reason?’ (1.2.208–9). Other examples include drunken Stephano, who believes that Trinculo and Caliban form a hybrid ‘monster’, and Sebastian who, in response to the various unusual smells, sights and sounds that he encounters, appears close to losing his reason altogether: now he will believe in unicorns, the mythical phoenix and all travellers’ tales.
12 Discovery through reason is also supported by knowledge in *The Tempest*, for Prospero seeks to reform Alonso, Antonio and others by confronting them with their misdeeds. He has Ariel go forth in the guise of a harpy, to remind them of their sins and demand they make amends through repentance and resolving to do right in future: their only hope against ‘lingering perdition’ is ‘heart’s sorrow, and a clear life ensuing’ (3.3.81–2). Likewise, he allows Trinculo and drunken Stephano to hatch their ridiculous plot so that their true nature can be exposed to all. Also, as Lindley notes, the masque and other devices are designed by Prospero to ‘instruct or manipulate characters’ (2002, p. 13).

13 However, reason must be shared and must lead to change in order to create true discovery. Prospero prepares for a better way of living, back in Europe, by seeking to educate two future leaders in the importance of doing right. He stresses the virtues of work, abstinence and humility: Ferdinand, for example, is made to haul logs for no apparent purpose. The results of Prospero’s influence are conveyed in the striking scene where the ardent lovers are playing chess, a refined and controlled intellectual game: this serves as an image of the life of reason that Prospero seeks to promote.

14 The importance and the difficulty of sharing an important discovery and bringing about change through reason is the theme of Al Gore’s classic text about climate change, *An Inconvenient Truth*. This documentary is not merely factual nor for entertainment but attempts to explain climate change and to persuade us of the importance of acting on it. The text is based on Gore’s narrative of twin discoveries: firstly, how he came to learn about climate change research, from its earliest days, and secondly, how difficult he has found it to get adequate action in response to a discovery that has massive implications for our planet.

15 Gore’s discovery of climate change science begins through the eyes of another. He tells the personal narrative of how he followed the progress of his university professor, Roger Revelle, ‘who was the first person to have the idea to measure the amount of carbon dioxide in the earth’s atmosphere. He saw where the story was going’. Revelle’s discovery began with just ‘the hard data’: the professor, like Darwin, then proceeded to analyse this information, trying to understand it through the eyes of reason.

16 Gore underlines the importance of using reason to guide us through an emotional and controversial issue, relying heavily on well-chosen facts.
and information that is authoritative, credible and clear, in contrast to the unthinking, self-serving or irrational responses that he criticises. For example, Revelle’s discovery is succinctly and starkly expressed in a single powerful image: a chart that occupies a very large screen behind Gore, comparing levels of carbon dioxide in the Earth’s atmosphere to Earth temperatures over 650,000 years.

17 It is clear from *The Tempest* that there can be many barriers to reason. These include our senses, our emotions, lack of knowledge, disinformation, self-interest or sheer habit. A YouTube video titled ‘Tony Abbott: Carbon Dioxide is Weightless’ (phonytonyabbott, 2011) features Liberal MP Malcolm Turnbull at a press luncheon smiling when asked whether or not carbon dioxide is weightless. The seemingly innocent question is a reference to statements made repeatedly by his rival, Liberal leader Tony Abbott, in attacking Labor’s carbon tax, that carbon dioxide is an ‘invisible, odourless, weightless, tasteless substance’. Abbott’s claims lack reason on two grounds: firstly, the implied logic that we should not care about something we cannot see is entirely fallacious. Secondly, some of the claims are inaccurate: carbon dioxide ‘indeed has a weight’, as the uploader’s referenced comments on the webpage demonstrate.

18 Gore seeks to counteract barriers to reason by appealing to the audience in various ways, such as the use of humour. For example, the camera pans from left to right across Gore’s large chart, from the distant past to a point representing the present. To demonstrate future patterns of carbon emissions and temperatures, Gore employs a ‘sight gag’ in taking a hydraulic lift up to the top of the red line, to show how high the CO₂ levels are. This point is further emphasised by a low camera angle. The lift then rises much more steeply again as he attempts to demonstrate projected future levels and makes a pun, saying ‘you have heard of off the chart’. To illustrate human resistance to new discoveries, Gore offers a concrete example. He tells the story of a boy in his class who noticed the similarities in shape of the African and American continents and asked their teacher ‘Did they ever fit together?’, only to have this valid insight rubbished by the teacher. Similarly, looking at the chart where surface temperatures and CO₂ emissions closely mirror each other he jokes ‘Did they ever fit together?’.

19 Aside from humour Gore also uses emotional appeal in various forms, including images of nature, personal stories and the use of soft and reflective music. Consistent with his aim of engaging with a global
audience he emphasises an image that he describes as one of the most-reproduced in human history: a beautiful photograph of Earth taken from space in December 1968, ‘the first picture of the Earth from space that any of us ever saw’, and one that helped to inspire global consciousness. Astronauts:

snapped this picture and it became known as ‘Earth Rise’. And that one picture exploded in the consciousness of human kind. It led to dramatic changes. Within 18 months of this picture the modern environmental movement had begun.

He uses this image to encourage us to feel part of this new global consciousness and through another image, featuring Earth as a tiny island in outer space, reinforces its fragility and the importance of preserving it:

Everything that has ever happened in all of human history has happened on that pixel. All the triumphs and all the tragedies, all the wars, all the famines, all the major advances: it’s our only home.

20 Like Prospero, Gore also wants to confront us with the truth in order to make us see reason. First, he conveys a frightening, concrete picture of the world of the future through his discussion of a spate of literal tempests: various hurricanes, including Hurricane Katrina. Just as Prospero’s sea-storm is ‘raised’ by human agency, Al Gore states, in relation to increased greenhouse emissions, ‘we have done that’. He goes on to say ‘But how in God’s name could that happen here? There had been warnings that hurricanes would get stronger’. Gore resorts to uncharacteristically emphatic language here (‘in God’s name’) to underline the extreme nature of the problem. This is because he wants to challenge the reader to draw their own conclusions. As Darwin found, new knowledge must be matched with reason for ‘true discovery’ to take place.

21 In a second form of confrontation, Gore exposes the parties whom he considers at fault on the issue. His statement that climate change is a ‘moral issue’ shows that he has come to a similar conclusion to Prospero in insisting on the ‘rarer action’ of virtue. Also like Prospero he confronts wrongdoers with their misdeeds, exposing the actions of some politicians and of interest groups, such as fossil fuel industries, who mount public disinformation campaigns to create doubt over the science so as to prevent this discovery resulting in change. Further, Gore observes, reason is often under attack:
I’ve seen scientists who were persecuted, ridiculed, deprived of jobs, income, simply because the facts they discovered led them to an inconvenient truth that they insisted on telling.

A third confrontational strategy used by Gore is to address counter arguments and popular misconceptions about climate science in order to promote a deeper and better reasoned understanding. Referring to that single graph, he rebuts a common argument against this discovery, through the use of compelling facts, so as to demonstrate the true significance of current carbon dioxide levels within the context of hundreds of thousands of years worth of data:

The so-called skeptics will sometimes say ‘Oh, this whole thing is a cyclical phenomenon. There was a medieval warming period after all’. Well, yeah, there was. There it is right there. There are two others. But compared to what is going on now, there is just no comparison.

Similarly, he attacks the credibility of many popular ‘climate denialism’ arguments (Manne, 2014) with a well-chosen fact: in a survey of 928 climate science papers, 100 per cent accepted climate change theory.

Gore, like Prospero, has discovered the importance of rule by reason. Also like Prospero, he understands that discovery is only ‘true’ when it is shared with others, accepted by them, and acted upon for change. There can be many impediments to this however, as Prospero, Darwin and Gore all found. Just as Prospero seeks to correct his enemies and to educate the coming generation of rulers, Gore seeks to educate the people, those who elect leaders, about the policies they should expect to be implemented.

It has been shown that Prospero emphasised both knowledge and reason as means of discovery. Since almost the entirety of Shakespeare’s play unfolds through Prospero’s acts of imagination, it is clear that imagination is a third form of discovery that is important to him. While the masques are the work of spirits, Prospero makes it clear that it was he who called on them to ‘enact my present fancies’ (4.1.121–2). Likewise, the shipwreck, the apparitions and strange music are also Prospero’s creations. In his ‘Ye elves’ speech he revels boastfully in remembering all he has been able to do through his imagination: to dim the sun, tame the ‘mutinous winds’, split oaks with thunder, and so on.
Prospero had discovered that apparently fixed realities, such as being Duke of Milan, can suddenly fall away, a point conveyed in an image in a filmed version of the play (Taymor, 2010), the opening scene of which features a crumbling sandcastle dissolving in the rain. Prospero likewise suggests that our buildings and temples, ‘the great globe’ and we ourselves ‘are such stuff as dreams are made on’ (4.1.156–7). The fragility of the globe is also conveyed in Gore’s images of Earth viewed from space. If reality is so impermanent it therefore seems we can take an active role in reshaping it. This Prospero does through the spirit Ariel, a figure who represents imagination, in his ability to create fantastic events, masques, strange sounds and sights.

Gonzalo, in his ‘commonwealth’ speech, imagines a very different kind of society where humans simply have to take advantage of the gifts of nature: ‘all foison, all abundance to feed my innocent people’ (2.1.160–1). Although Antonio and Sebastian ridicule his ideas, given that Gonzalo is regarded highly by Prospero for his knowledge, his integrity and his caring attitude, we should not dismiss them out of hand.

It has been demonstrated that primarily, Prospero’s great discoveries arise not from his exploration of a new land, but through knowledge, reason and imagination, all of which involve seeing through ‘other eyes’. Prospero, Darwin and Gore all find, however, that discovery is true only when it is shared by others and results in change. Darwin’s Christian faith and Gore’s faith in politics and morality can never look the same again: society also is changed as a result. Gore had thought that his ‘story would be compelling enough to cause a real sea change in the way Congress reacted to that issue’. A ‘sea change’, as Ariel’s song tells us, has a certain power and beauty of transformation into something ‘rich and strange’. True discovery, supported by knowledge, tested by reason and inspired by imagination, has similar potential to transform for the better how we live on ‘island Earth’.

References


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Manne, R 2014, ‘History will condemn climate change denialists’, *The Guardian (Australia)*.

phonytonyabbott 2011, ‘Tony Abbott: Carbon Dioxide is Weightless—well, at least according to Tony Abbott’, retrieved from youtu.be/txBsY66jodA.


‘Dissected’ version of the sample essay

The same essay is reproduced below but with comments and explanations following each paragraph. I have even created mock ‘headings’ to indicate the essay’s structure.

- Paragraphs are numbered (for reference only—do not number paragraphs in your essay!).
- The key parts of topic sentences are underlined.
- The argument statement, announcing the theme of my argument, is double underlined.
- Comments following each paragraph are in italics.
- Keywords from the question are in bold type.
- Those aspect keywords that reflect the themes I have chosen to discuss in relation to the question are in reverse type.

‘The only true voyage of discovery … would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another.’ (Marcel Proust, In Search of Lost Time) To what extent does this reflect your understanding of discovery, based on your reading in the Area of Study: Discovery. Refer to your prescribed text and at least two related texts of your own choosing.

**Introduction**

1 To a large extent Proust’s view does reflect my understanding of discovery as represented in Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and in some supplementary texts. Although the historical context of great sea
voyages to discover the ‘New World’ is part of the background of the play (Lindley, 2002, pp. 30–1) Prospero’s great discoveries arise not from his exploration of an unfamiliar island, but from developing ‘other eyes’ in three primary ways: through learning and knowledge, through reason, and through imagination. It will be shown, however, in The Tempest and two related texts, that true discovery is when it is shared with others and when change results from this.

This first paragraph accomplishes three important things: firstly, ‘echoing’ the question to put the essay on track. Secondly, it introduces some aspects I choose to treat (reverse type), and thirdly, it states my own argument (double-underlined). For the sake of brevity here I have not given the titles of the other texts to be discussed. However, this is often a good idea, as it puts the reader immediately ‘in the picture’.

Although students sometimes assume that it is best to agree with any proposition put forward in an essay question, or a quote used within an essay question (as here), this is not necessarily so. You might agree partially, agree with qualifications, or largely disagree. In this case I indicate general agreement while the final sentence advances my own viewpoint, which goes beyond the scope of the quote.

Section 1: Learning and knowledge in discovery

2 Proust’s distinction between voyages of discovery and developing ‘other eyes’ hinges on the contrast between experiencing new things and simply coming to understand the world differently. This quote implies that mere experience is not sufficient nor necessary: true discovery can come about through any means that changes the way we see things. In The Tempest, this is shown to be the case. Three chief ways that change how Prospero sees things are knowledge, reason and imagination.

Sometimes it is useful to define a particular term or concept, especially when it is central to the question or your argument, in order to clarify its meaning and to help establish the grounds of your discussion. Here I have explained the nature of Proust’s distinction between two different routes to discovery. If you are finding it hard to understand a quote used in an essay question you may find it useful to go to the source, so as to understand the context in which the expression arises.
1.1 Learning and knowledge gained through the eyes of another

Prospero places a very high value on knowledge: as Duke of Milan he was reputed to be ‘without parallel’ in the ‘liberal arts’. Although Caliban complains bitterly that he had given Prospero his valuable knowledge of ‘all the qualities o’ the isle’ (1.2.338), it is not primarily from his voyage nor from his stay in a new land that Prospero discovers his true powers and, ultimately, a new way of governing. Books offer access to unlimited learning, the chance to discover entire worlds through the eyes of others. Caliban believes this knowledge to be the basis of Prospero’s power, ‘for without them he’s but a sot, as I am, nor hath not one spirit to command’ (3.2.85–6). As Miranda’s ‘schoolmaster’ Prospero has made sure to pass knowledge on to her. This he considers to yield a greater ‘profit than other princes can, that have more time for vainer hours, and tutors not so careful’ (1.2.172–4).

The first sentence introduces the first of the three main themes treated in the body of the essay.

This essay uses a different supplementary text for the first two themes, comparing and contrasting each theme in both texts. The above paragraph gives a brief summary of the first theme (book knowledge) as it relates to the set text, and in relation to the question. This prepares the way for a direct comparison with a contrasting point of view (knowledge one discovers on a literal ‘voyage’ of discovery) in my first supplementary text.

However, Prospero made the mistake, while devoting himself so much to ‘closeness, and the bettering of my mind’, of overlooking the daily running of his state, entrusting this to his brother. Prospero’s change of fortune, to living in a cell on a ‘bare island’, serves as a reminder of the perils of mere knowledge for the sake of it, as his downfall came about in part through isolating himself in his ‘secret studies’. It is only when he finds himself deposed and stranded on an island that he comes to discover the importance of applying his knowledge to practical purposes, so that when the opportunity arises he is able to overthrow his enemies and create change, through winning back his rightful place as ‘absolute Milan’.

1.2 Learning gained on a literal voyage

A supplementary text, the movie Creation, about the development of Charles Darwin’s theory of evolution, demonstrates that discovery sometimes comes from our own research. While Prospero was largely
interested in book knowledge, his discovery of the importance of imagination and of reason was triggered by his life experience of a reversal of fortune. The experience of one of history’s greatest discoverers, Charles Darwin, lies at the other extreme: after voyages of thousands of miles, and years of studying life, he comes to write his own book.

A great many supplementary texts could cast light on the theme of discovery in The Tempest, but I have chosen mine on the basis of how well they connect to each of the main three themes I see in Shakespeare’s play. Contrasting a work where discovery does appear to result from a voyage allows me to examine both sides of Proust’s quote in relation to the question.

However, it soon becomes clear to Darwin that discovery can be very difficult to communicate and share with others. Conflict arises from the fact that Darwin’s discovery contradicts traditional book learning, so that he now sees both scientific knowledge and his religion through ‘other eyes’. His wife Emma is led to say, reproachfully, ‘Do you really care so little for your immortal soul … that you and I may be separated for all eternity?’ Darwin’s fear of conflict in the family, and also in society at large, leads him to ‘procrastinate’ in publishing his radical theory of evolution.

6 This fear, together with his continued illness, could have led to his research failing altogether. Darwin’s intellectual friends Huxley and Hooke continually urge him to publish, because discovery must be shared with others before it becomes true discovery.

7 Just as Prospero, in vowing to destroy and bury his staff and to ‘drown’ his book turns his back on his books, Darwin abandons the ‘Book’, the Bible, to pursue new knowledge. He comes to see the world through ‘other eyes’: the eyes of a person no longer torn between belief in the literal truth of the Bible and his theory, but who is changed greatly by his own discovery. He expresses the magnitude of this change with a metaphor about ‘the raising of continents’. Ultimately, however, it is only through the eyes of another that Darwin’s discovery comes to be shared with the world. He entrusts the manuscript of the book to Emma, a devout Christian, and tells her to decide whether to publish or destroy it. In a telling scene she returns it to him, wrapped in a parcel and addressed to a publisher, and ruefully comments ‘so now you have made an accomplice of me’.

The discussion of Creation is shown to relate directly to one of the essay question’s defined aspects, ‘other eyes’.
Mini-summary of Section 1

By the end of the play Prospero no longer finds his library ‘dukedom large enough’. Rather, he vows to live more wisely in the real world while ‘Every third thought shall be my grave’. That is, he will consider his legacy in the eyes of future generations: will it be, just like the masques, a passing vision of ‘baseless fabric’, an ‘insubstantial pageant’, or will it prove enduring, like Gonzalo’s call for Prospero’s story to be a lasting memorial ‘set . . . down with gold on lasting pillars’ (5.1.207–8)? While books have been so important to Prospero, like Darwin he has found that discovery comes not merely from books but also through experience. Furthermore, it must be shared and applied in order to be true discovery.

Here I explain my understanding of the ‘grave’ quotation in relation to my argument, ‘interpreting’ what it means.

In the Gonzalo quote I have used an ellipsis: three dots that signify a word (or words) has been left out. One can do so either because the deleted material is not relevant to your discussion or (as in this case) because it doesn’t fit grammatically with the sentence that introduces it.

Section 2: Reason in discovery

2.1 Reason and virtue

Aside from Prospero’s great knowledge, a second, crucial form of discovery is through reason. This theme emerges in the opening scene of The Tempest, where the lower-status boatswain outrageously (in the context of that time) announces to the king and lords assembled that there is no-one on board the ship whom he loves more than himself, and taunts Gonzalo to use his ‘authority’ to quell the storm if he can. The way in which Prospero describes Alonso and others coming out of a spell could equally describe Prospero’s discovery of a new way of living: from magician to wise man.

The charm dissolves apace,
And as the morning steals upon the night,
Melting the darkness, so their rising senses
Begin to chase the ignorant fumes that mantle
Their clearer reason. (5.1.64–8)
The opening sentence to this second section in the body of the essay draws a link from the first theme to the new theme.

As with the reference to exploration in the introduction, discussing the historical context of a given text is often very useful. Because it is not central to my argument I have made only the odd passing reference but regarding the boatswain one could, for example, refer to the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 which, well over a century after this play was written, declared that ‘We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal’.

10 As Prospero says, ‘the rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance’: this new emphasis on virtue is based on reason rather than on the emotions or senses, which consistently lead other characters astray. Prospero’s experience of loss and isolation has revealed to him what it is like to be the victim of the selfishness and greed of others. But it is through the eyes of Ariel that Prospero is led to forgive Antonio and Alonso for their infamy: Ariel comments that ‘if you now beheld them, your affections would become tender’ (5.1.17–20). That is, Prospero would feel differently when he looked through the eyes of these others. Indeed, when Prospero finally encounters Gonzalo he does experience emotional fellowship: ‘Mine eyes, ev’n sociable to the show of thine, / Fall fellowly drops’ (5.1.63–4).

11 The importance of reason is further underlined by the many ways in which various characters are misled by their senses or emotions. As Prospero comments, regarding the tempest and the shipwreck, ‘Who was so firm, so constant, that this coil would not infect his reason?’ (1.2.208–9). Other examples include drunken Stephano, who believes that Trinculo and Caliban form a hybrid ‘monster’ and Sebastian who, in response to the various unusual smells, sights and sounds that he encounters, appears close to losing his reason altogether: now he will believe in unicorns, the mythical phoenix and all travellers’ tales.

Words in Shakespeare often have a different meaning to their modern everyday usage. A good dictionary will often indicate an older meaning of a word. If you consult a useful book such as David and Ben Crystal’s Shakespeare’s Words you will find that in Shakespeare the word ‘coil’ sometimes takes on the meaning of a disturbance or of turmoil. In general, it may be worth checking a word if it seems important and does not make complete sense according to today’s meaning. Also see the Crystals’ website www.shakespeareswords.com.
12 **Discovery** through **reason** is also supported by **knowledge** in *The Tempest*, for Prospero seeks to reform Alonso, Antonio and others by confronting them with their misdeeds. He has Ariel go forth in the guise of a harpy, to remind them of their sins and demand they make amends through repentance and resolving to do right in future: their only hope against ‘lingering perdition’ is ‘heart’s sorrow, and a clear life ensuing’ (3.3.81–2). Likewise, he allows Trinculo and drunken Stephano to hatch their ridiculous plot so that their true nature can be exposed to all. Also, as Lindley notes, the masque and other devices are designed by Prospero to ‘instruct or manipulate characters’ (2002, p. 13).

*Note that this paragraph is structured as a series of examples illustrating the theme of the topic sentence.*

13 However, **reason** must be shared and must lead to change, in order to create true **discovery**. Prospero prepares for a better way of living, back in Europe, by seeking to educate two future leaders in the importance of doing right. He stresses the virtues of work, abstinence and humility: Ferdinand, for example, is made to haul logs for no apparent purpose. The results of Prospero’s influence are conveyed in the striking scene where the ardent lovers are playing chess, a refined and controlled intellectual game: this works as an image of the life of reason that Prospero seeks to promote.

### 2.2 Discovering climate change

14 The importance and the difficulty of sharing an important discovery and bringing about change through **reason** is the theme of Al Gore’s classic text about climate change, *An Inconvenient Truth*. This documentary is not merely factual nor for entertainment but attempts to explain climate change and to persuade us of the importance of acting on it. The text is based on Gore’s narrative of twin **discoveries**: firstly, how he came to learn about climate change research, from its earliest days, and secondly, how difficult he has found it to get adequate action in response to a discovery that has massive implications for our planet.

*Generally it is advisable to use language very carefully: extreme words such as ‘massive’ should be avoided unless truly warranted. Words like ‘fantastic’, ‘incredible’, ‘awesome’, and so on are often used in an unwarranted way. That is, they are not supported well by the context or the evidence.*
15. Gore’s **discovery** of climate change science begins through the **eyes of another**. He tells the personal narrative of how he followed the progress of his university professor, Roger Revelle, ‘who was the first person to have the idea to measure the amount of carbon dioxide in the earth’s atmosphere. He saw where the story was going’. Revelle’s discovery began with just ‘the hard data’: the professor, like Darwin, then proceeded to analyse this information, trying to understand it through the eyes of **reason**.

*It is important when choosing a supplementary text to ensure that meaningful connections can be made to the prescribed text. It is also sometimes useful to draw comparisons or contrasts between supplementary texts, as I have done here. Equally, one has to make sure that the chosen text relates not just to the prescribed text but, crucially, to the question.*

16. Gore underlines the importance of using **reason** to guide us through an emotional and controversial issue by relying heavily on well-chosen facts and information that is authoritative, credible and clear, in contrast to the unthinking, self-serving or irrational responses that he criticises. For example, Revelle’s discovery is succinctly and starkly expressed in a single image that says a great deal: a chart that occupies a very large screen behind Gore, comparing levels of carbon dioxide in the Earth’s atmosphere to Earth temperatures over 650,000 years.

*In this paragraph I focus on one aspect of strategies of composition, as called for in the Outcomes for the Standard English syllabus: ‘A student demonstrates understanding of how relationships between composer, responder, text and context shape meaning’. The references to narrative in paragraphs 13 and 14 are other examples of language, meaning and context.*

### 2.3 Countering objections through positive emotional appeal

17. It is clear from *The Tempest* that there can be many barriers to **reason**. These include our senses, our emotions, a lack of **knowledge**, disinformation, self-interest or sheer habit. A YouTube video titled ‘Tony Abbott: Carbon Dioxide is Weightless’ (phonytonyabbot, 2011) features Liberal MP Malcolm Turnbull at a press luncheon smiling when asked whether or not carbon dioxide is weightless. The seemingly innocent question is a reference to statements made repeatedly by his rival, Liberal leader Tony Abbott, in attacking Labor’s carbon tax, that carbon dioxide is an ‘invisible, odourless, weightless, tasteless substance’. Abbott’s claims lack reason on two grounds: firstly, the implied logic that we
should not care about something we cannot see is entirely fallacious. Secondly, some of the claims are inaccurate: carbon dioxide ‘indeed has a weight’, as the uploader’s comments on the webpage demonstrate.

*Note that I am using a simple referencing system here, where I draw on some of my background research. Various systems are available and, at time of printing, BOSTES NSW did not recommend any particular system. I am using a variant on the ‘author-date’ system, in which the author’s name, year and (where applicable) page number are listed within parentheses in the text, and then the full listing is given in a references section at the end of the essay. Check with your teacher about referencing requirements. Information on good scholarship practices is also available at the BOSTES NSW website.*

*Note that while the YouTube uploader may be no expert in this matter they do reference apparently authoritative sources.*

18 Gore seeks to counteract barriers to reason by appealing to the audience in various ways, such as the use of humour. For example, the camera pans from left to right across Gore’s large chart, from the distant past to a point representing the present. To demonstrate future patterns of carbon emissions and temperatures, Gore employs a ‘sight gag’ in taking a hydraulic lift up to the top of the red line, to show how high the CO₂ levels are. This point is further emphasised by a low camera angle. The lift then rises much more steeply again as he attempts to demonstrate projected future levels and makes a pun, saying ‘you have heard of off the chart’. To illustrate human resistance to new discoveries, Gore offers a concrete example. He tells the story of a boy in his class who noticed the similarities in shape of the African and American continents and asked their teacher ‘Did they ever fit together?’, only to have this valid insight rubbished by the teacher. Similarly, looking at the chart where surface temperatures and CO₂ emissions closely mirror each other he jokes ‘Did they ever fit together?’. 

*Just as in a written text one analyses language, it is valuable to analyse the particular means of signifying used by other media, such as film and artworks. In this case, the camera work and the ‘sight gag’ are analysed and I also explain the meaning and effect of such strategies.*

19 Aside from humour Gore also uses emotional appeal in various forms, including images of nature, personal stories and the use of soft and reflective music. Consistent with his aim of engaging with a global audience he emphasises an image that he describes as one of the most-reproduced...
in human history: a beautiful photograph of Earth taken from space in December 1968, ‘the first picture of the Earth from space that any of us ever saw’, and one that helped to inspire global consciousness.

Astronauts:

snapped this picture and it became known as ‘Earth Rise’. And that one picture exploded in the consciousness of human kind. It led to dramatic changes. Within 18 months of this picture the modern environmental movement had begun.

He uses this image to encourage us to feel part of this new global consciousness and through another image, featuring Earth as a tiny island in outer space, reinforces its fragility and the importance of preserving it:

Everything that has ever happened in all of human history has happened on that pixel. All the triumphs and all the tragedies, all the wars, all the famines, all the major advances: it’s our only home. And that is what is at stake: our ability to live on planet Earth, to have a future as a civilization.

Note that each quote is used for a purpose and that I interpret their meaning in my discussion.

2.4 Confrontation with the facts

2.4.1: A concrete vision of the climate change scenario

20 Like Prospero, Gore also wants to confront us with the truth in order to make us see reason. First, through negative emotional appeal, he conveys a frightening, concrete picture of the world of the future through his discussion of a spate of literal tempests: various hurricanes, including Hurricane Katrina. Just as Prospero’s sea-storm is ‘raised’ by human agency, Al Gore states, in relation to increased greenhouse emissions, ‘we have done that’. He goes on to say ‘But how in God’s name could that happen here? There had been warnings that hurricanes would get stronger’. Gore resorts to uncharacteristically emphatic language here (‘in God’s name’) to underline the extreme nature of the problem. This is because he wants to challenge the reader to draw their own conclusions. As Darwin found, new knowledge must be matched with reason for ‘true discovery’ to take place.

Here I refer to my concluding argument, an idea stated as early as my introduction.
2.4.2: Exposing parties at fault

In a second form of confrontation, Gore exposes the parties whom he considers at fault on the issue. His statement that climate change is a ‘moral issue’ shows that he has come to a similar conclusion to Prospero in insisting on the ‘rarer action’ of virtue. Also like Prospero he confronts wrongdoers with their misdeeds, exposing the actions of some politicians and of interest groups, such as fossil fuel industries, who mount public disinformation campaigns to create doubt over the science so as to prevent this discovery resulting in change. Further, Gore observes, reason is often under attack:

I’ve seen scientists who were persecuted, ridiculed, deprived of jobs, income simply because the facts they discovered led them to an inconvenient truth that they insisted on telling.

It is important to bear in mind that the dialogue in the actual film may differ from the published film script. Also, the filmed version of The Tempest I refer to makes some very significant departures from Shakespeare’s play.

2.4.3: Attacking contrary arguments

A third confrontational strategy used by Gore is to address counter arguments and popular misconceptions about climate science in order to promote a deeper and better reasoned understanding. Referring to that single graph, he rebuts a common argument against this discovery through the use of compelling facts so as to demonstrate the true significance of current carbon dioxide levels within the context of hundreds of thousands of years worth of data:

The so-called skeptics will sometimes say ‘Oh, this whole thing is a cyclical phenomenon. There was a medieval warming period after all’. Well, yeah, there was. There it is right there. There are two others. But compared to what is going on now, there is just no comparison.

Similarly, he attacks the credibility of many popular ‘climate denialism’ arguments (Manne, 2014) with a well-chosen fact: in a survey of 928 climate science papers, 100 per cent accepted climate change theory.

There are of course many resources available on the question of climate change. Manne’s is one resource I could have drawn on and analysed as a supplementary text. The choice often comes down to what text is most helpful in terms of one’s overall argument.
Mini-summary of Section 2

23 Gore, like Prospero, has discovered the importance of rule by reason. Also like Prospero, he understands that discovery is only ‘true’ when it is shared with others, accepted by them, and acted upon for change. There can be many impediments to this however, as Prospero, Darwin and Gore all found. Just as Prospero seeks to correct his enemies and to educate the coming generation of rulers, Gore seeks to educate the people, those who elect leaders, about the policies they should expect to be implemented.

In this concluding mini-summary of the second theme of my essay I refer back to my thesis. It will be noticed that Section 2, on reason, is larger than Sections 1 or 3: this is because in my argument reason is at the core of Prospero’s ‘true discovery’ and I had more to say about this.

Section 3: Imagination in discovery

3.1 Imagination and change

24 It has been shown that Prospero emphasised both knowledge and reason as means of discovery. Since almost the entirety of Shakespeare’s play unfolds through Prospero’s acts of imagination, it is clear that imagination is a third form of discovery that is important to him. While the masques are the work of spirits, Prospero makes it clear that it was he who called on them to ‘enact my present fancies’ (4.1.121–2). Likewise, the shipwreck, the apparitions and strange music are also Prospero’s creations. In his ‘Ye elves’ speech he revels boastfully in remembering all he has been able to do through his imagination: to dim the sun, tame the ‘mutinous winds’, split oaks with thunder, and so on.

My introduction to this third and final section also incorporates reference to the previous two sections, placing it in the context of my overall argument.

3.2 Truth versus repose

25 Prospero had discovered that apparently fixed realities, such as being Duke of Milan, can suddenly fall away, a point conveyed in an image in a filmed version of the play (Taymor, 2010), the opening scene of which features a crumbling sandcastle dissolving in the rain. Prospero likewise suggests that our buildings and temples, ‘the great globe’ and we ourselves ‘are such stuff as dreams are made on’ (4.1.156–7). The fragility of the globe is also conveyed in Gore’s images of Earth viewed...
from space. If reality is so impermanent it therefore seems we can take an active role in reshaping it. This Prospero does through the spirit Ariel, a figure who represents imagination, in his ability to create fantastic events, masques, strange sounds and sights.

Note the 1-2-3 pattern employed here. The first sentence announces the theme of the paragraph. Most of the paragraph substantiates the claim made there, while the second last, ‘so what’ sentence, concludes by uncovering a further, hidden implication of what has been established so far.

26 Gonzalo, in his ‘commonwealth’ speech, imagines a very different kind of society where humans simply have to take advantage of the gifts of nature: ‘all foison, all abundance to feed my innocent people’ (2.1.160–1). Although Antonio and Sebastian ridicule his ideas, given that Gonzalo is regarded highly by Prospero for his knowledge, his integrity and his caring attitude, we should not dismiss them out of hand.

For reasons of space I have deleted a passage where background/historical context is drawn upon, in which I referred to the Bate (2014) reference, which discusses philosophical influences on Shakespeare. I have also deleted reference to a third supplementary text, the Compagnoni (2004–5) reference (see also Zuel [2005]), for the same reason. This would have been used to elaborate on the theme of imagination and its application to governance.

Conclusion

27 It has been demonstrated that primarily, Prospero’s great discoveries arise not from his exploration of a new land, but through knowledge, reason and imagination, all of which involve seeing through ‘other eyes’. Prospero, Darwin and Gore all find, however, that discovery is true only when it is shared by others and results in change. Darwin’s Christian faith and Gore’s faith in politics and morality can never look the same again: society also is changed as a result. Gore had thought that his ‘story would be compelling enough to cause a real sea change in the way Congress reacted to that issue’. A ‘sea change’, as Ariel’s song tells us, has a certain power and beauty of transformation into something ‘rich and strange’. True discovery, supported by knowledge, tested by reason and inspired by imagination, has similar potential to transform for the better how we live on ‘island Earth’.
The conclusion finishes by briefly restating my thesis in relation to the question, refers back to my related texts, and ends with a final statement reflecting my ‘understanding of discovery’, as called for in the essay question. The final two sentences are an example of ‘capping off’ the conclusion with an extra statement based on my own insights.

Note that ‘strange’ did not necessarily mean ‘odd’ in Shakespeare’s time. It could also mean remarkable, unfamiliar, and so on.

Twelve steps in essay writing ‘by numbers’

The following twelve steps form a suggested method to help you learn the process of essay writing, but you should be prepared to discover what works best for yourself. This method has been devised with ‘take-home’, researched essays in mind. Exam essays are discussed in Chapter 9.

1 Analyse the question.
   Find the keywords: subject, topic, aspect.

2 Note the ‘doing’ words.

3 Organise data.
   (a) Research
   (b) Assemble
   (c) Group
   (d) Rank/order

4 Develop an argument or theme.

5 Plan the essay.
   The keyhole essay plan
   Other ways of planning: ‘mind maps’
   The long walk
   Audition
   The structured response

6 Draft an introduction.
   (a) ‘Echo’, re-state or paraphrase the question.
   (b) State your argument.
   (c) Indicate the key points.
   (d) (Anticipate your conclusion.)

7 Check your introduction against the checklist.

8 Draft the body of the essay.
   Treat each topic in turn.
   Sustain your argument.
Refer back to your argument.
Give specific ‘proofs’.
Use ‘transition’ or linking words and phrases.
Paragraph carefully.
Qualify your statements.

9 Draft the conclusion.
Re-read the essay question.
Re-read the introduction.
Summarise your argument and main points.
Cap off your argument.

10 Redraft the essay.
Make a fresh start.
Keep an open mind.

11 Macro-editing
Subtraction
Addition

12 Micro-editing
Sentence length
Grammar
Spelling

Each of the above steps is treated below, in detail. Note that this is a suggested sequence only. It is common to do some of these steps ‘out of order’ and/or to go back to a particular step to revise or develop something.

Step 1: Analyse the question

Find the keywords: subject, topic, aspect

The importance of answering the question has been emphasised repeatedly. Your first step in doing so is to make sure you understand the question, aided by focusing on keywords. (These are explained in Chapter 4.) Let’s look at the sample essay question again:

‘The only true voyage of discovery ... would be not to visit strange lands but to possess other eyes, to behold the universe through the eyes of another.’ (Marcel Proust, In Search of Lost Time). To what extent does this reflect your understanding of discovery, based on your reading in the Area of Study: Discovery? Refer to your prescribed text and at least two related texts of your own choosing.
Subject keywords: Area of Study: Discovery

Topic keywords: Understanding of discovery

Aspect keywords: True voyage of discovery, possess other eyes, eyes of another

Doing keywords: Refer

Note that this question is quite ‘closed’, as it specifies a few aspects to be covered. Often you will encounter a more open question, which puts the onus on you to decide on the specifics.

The following would be a much more ‘open’ version of the question:

‘Discovery is not a solitary voyage’. Analyse this statement in reference to your prescribed text and to at least two related texts of your own choosing.

In this version the only topic keyword is ‘solitary’ and aspect keywords are not specified so you would need to decide what aspects to treat. You should indicate these aspects very early in your essay. Also note with the sample essay in this chapter that one usually supplies aspect keywords of one’s own, reflecting one’s argument in answer to the question. My aspect keywords are shown in reverse type in the ‘dissected’ form of that essay.

Step 2: Note the ‘doing’ words

In the majority of questions a requirement to perform one task or the other is specified in an instruction or ‘doing’ word. Where this is the case, we must ensure we meet that requirement. The best understanding of what you’re required to do will always be found in the context of the question: that is, in consideration of the question as a whole. In addition, BOSTES NSW has standardised the use of common instruction words. Some of the most common are reproduced at the end of Chapter 9.

Note that not all questions will contain instruction words. An example would be ‘Why would this poem be a good inclusion in an anthology for young Australians?’. In the sample essay question the only instruction word asks you to ‘refer’ to two supplementary texts. This means, in effect, to identify at least two texts and show how they help to cast light on discovery in relation to the specified aspects.
Step 3: Organise data

Steps 1 and 2 are concerned with understanding and ‘listening to’ the question. In Steps 3 and 4 we begin to prepare our detailed answer by re-reading the texts, researching further, and then organising the data into manageable sets of notes.

(a) Research

Make a list of research areas before researching. For the sample essay, information needed to be researched for four broad themes, which could in turn be divided into smaller subthemes. The initial themes were:

- Understanding of discovery.
- True voyage of discovery.
- Possessing other eyes.
- The eyes of another.
To write this essay, I first read the main text quickly, viewed the film of the play, and then read the play again, this time taking notes with special reference to the themes I had identified. After this, I looked for additional texts related to these themes and also researched some questions, facts or ideas I had jotted down.

(b) Assemble
Bring all your notes together, organised in plastic clip folders, manila folders or some other way, so you can find the information quickly. It may be worthwhile to create a master list of notes, citing where to find various bits of information. Of course, computer-based notes can be readily filed under different folders and directories, clearly marked so you know where to look for particular information. It is easy to copy information and paste it exactly where you want it, but be very careful to ensure that you reference the source if the data is not your own original work, put all direct quotes in inverted commas, and note page references where applicable.

For this essay, I had notes about each text I planned to use, as well as separate notes under the headings of different themes I was exploring.

(c) Group
As outlined in Chapter 3, there are different ways of grouping and ordering information. For a question about the themes of a particular work or collection of poems, you would group data under thematic headings. For a question based on the use of language, your headings would relate to various aspects of language.

After researching and thinking about *The Tempest*, I took notes under the original four research themes that emerged from my analysis of the question. The following is a sample of my early notes, not all of which ended up being used in the actual essay. As you will see below, I later chose to re-organise the notes differently when my own argument began to emerge.

**Essay notes**
True discovery and seeing through the eyes of others in *The Tempest*

1 **Understanding of discovery**
My thesis about discovery in *The Tempest* is that there are three phases to Prospero’s discovery:
To write this essay, I first read the main text quickly, viewed the film of the play, and then read the play again, this time taking notes with special reference to the themes I had identified. After this, I looked for additional texts related to these themes and also researched some questions, facts or ideas I had jotted down.

(b) Assemble

Bring all your notes together, organised in plastic clip folders, manila folders or some other way, so you can find the information quickly. It may be worthwhile to create a master list of notes, citing where to find various bits of information. Of course, computer-based notes can be readily filed under different folders and directories, clearly marked so you know where to look for particular information. It is easy to copy information and paste it exactly where you want it, but be very careful to ensure that you reference the source if the data is not your own original work, put all direct quotes in inverted commas, and note page references where applicable.

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**Essay notes**

1 Discovery, through his experience of losing the dukedom of Milan, that the solid world we know is a much more fragile thing than we imagine.

2 Discovery through books and learning, but he learns that book learning, without applying it and sharing it, is a very lonely world.

3 Discovering, late in the play, the importance of reason and virtue instead of following individual ends and being led by emotions.

**2 True voyage of discovery**

‘True voyage’ implies that some discoveries aren’t real.

How can we distinguish between true discovery and false discovery?

What makes a ‘true’ voyage?

A voyage can be a literal journey, but could also be a figurative voyage: anything that involves travelling beyond familiar ideas and beliefs into new ways of thinking and experiencing.

A ‘true’ voyage is when the new way of seeing things that we encounter is later confirmed, and the change in our thinking lasts some time.

Darwin’s theory of evolution came about, in part at least, from a literal voyage of discovery.

For Darwin, his discovery was still not ‘true’ until it was shared by writing a book that attempted to prove his theory.

**3 Possessing other eyes**

This is a metaphorical expression: it just means seeing things differently. Various ways this can happen include:

1 Education

2 People whose views influence us: thinkers, artists, politicians, advertisers

3 Books and other sources of learning

4 Our independent research.

The mashup ‘Imagine this’ invites us to see recent political history (e.g. war in Iraq) through the eyes of pacifist John Lennon.

This relates to Gonzalo’s speech in The Tempest about his ‘commonwealth of contraries’.
Art, using imagination, is one way to discover something through the eyes of another.

Imagination is central in *The Tempest*: virtually the entire play proceeds through Prospero’s inventive ideas. Prospero orchestrates the tempest, masques, Ariel appearing as a harpy, and so on, and these experiences lead to various characters seeing themselves, and the world about them, in very different ways.

Sebastian and Antonio say that they will believe in unicorns, the phoenix, all travellers’ tales, and so on, after all the marvels they have encountered on the island.

4 The eyes of another

To see through the eyes of another is to try to view something from another’s viewpoint.

Prospero is full of anger but after Ariel indicates that his enemies are in a bad way, and that if he were human he would feel pity for them, Prospero is led to reconsider his anger.

Al Gore tells a different story of scientific discovery, compared to Darwin, of discovery through the eyes of another, his professor.

(d) Rank/Order

The final step in organising data is to decide on the sequence in which to discuss topics. Usually we start with the broad picture, the overview, then discuss points in detail, one after the other. There are two levels of ordering or ranking:

1 order of topics

2 ordering points *within* each topic.

My original notes—Step 3(a)—were made under headings that came straight from the essay question keywords. Once my ideas began to emerge, however, I decided to organise the essay according to my own argument about discovery in *The Tempest* (see first section of Essay notes above). I needed to be careful when doing so, to ensure that my response would adequately answer the question.

I then started to develop and organise more detailed notes under the following headings:
Art, using imagination, is one way to discover something through the eyes of another. Imagination is central in The Tempest: virtually the entire play proceeds through Prospero’s inventive ideas. Prospero orchestrates the tempest, masques, Ariel appearing as a harpy, and so on, and these experiences lead to various characters seeing themselves, and the world about them, in very different ways.

Sebastian and Antonio say that they will believe in unicorns, the phoenix, all travellers’ tales, and so on, after all the marvels they have encountered on the island.

To see through the eyes of another is to try to view something from another’s viewpoint. Prospero is full of anger but after Ariel indicates that his enemies are in a bad way, and that if he were human he would feel pity for them, Prospero is led to reconsider his anger.

Al Gore tells a different story of scientific discovery, compared to Darwin, of discovery through the eyes of another, his professor.

The final step in organising data is to decide on the sequence in which to discuss topics. Usually we start with the broad picture, the overview, then discuss points in detail, one after the other. There are two levels of ordering or ranking:

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2. Ordering points within each topic.

My original notes—Step 3(a)—were made under headings that came straight from the essay question keywords. Once my ideas began to emerge, however, I decided to organise the essay according to my own argument about discovery in The Tempest (see first section of Essay notes above). I needed to be careful when doing so, to ensure that my response would adequately answer the question.

I then started to develop and organise more detailed notes under the following headings:

1. Discovery through books and learning (this usually involves learning through the eyes of others).
2. Original discovery of our own: discovery through our own research.
3. Importance of reason (a logical system of thinking and acting that most reasonable people could agree with and share).
4. Importance of imagination (getting our ideas from the ideas of others, or coming up with our own ideas and sharing them).

Here, the broad organisational principle is by theme. Within this structure, each theme is treated first in relation to the prescribed text, and is then compared to a supplementary text.

**Step 4: Develop an argument or theme**

Now that you have re-read your notes and organised your information, you will have some kind of idea about your response. For a home essay, this idea may change as your writing progresses. For exam essays, you are meant to have explored and tested your thoughts already, although you will have to address this understanding to the specific requirements of the question.

The argument or theme should constitute the backbone of your essay, the trunk of your tree. This is how an essay can handle complicated, multi-sided topics in a balanced and orderly way. (The more involved your discussion, the better organised it needs to be, as the sample essay demonstrates.) The argument should be stated early in the essay, referred back to regularly in the body and returned to in the conclusion.

**Step 5: Plan the essay**

Now you have all the ingredients for an essay, create a rough plan. While it is preferable to plan before writing your first draft, some people simply can’t plan until the first draft has been written. For others, a plan is essential before they can even begin to research the essay. You simply need to experiment and find which ways suit you best. You may even find that you can plan some essays, but not others.

In the exam room it is essential to do a quick plan so you have at least a rough guide to what you want to say before committing yourself to paper.

Plans, like first drafts, are created for yourself, so they can take any form you find helpful. I discuss two very different kinds below.
The keyhole essay plan

This kind of plan does indeed give you the ‘key’ to the whole essay. The first part opens onto the main theme. This is followed by the main points that substantiate the argument. Finally, the plan broadens out with a statement of conclusion.

(a) Jot down an ‘argument statement’—one or two sentences setting out your main idea.

(b) Follow this with the list of points, noting how they relate to the argument.

(c) Write a concluding statement (if possible).

Keyhole essay plan, *The Tempest*

Argument statement: Prospero’s great discoveries arise mainly from developing ‘other eyes’ in three primary ways. These are through knowledge, reason and imagination. All three forms can entail individual ‘voyages of discovery’, but true discovery takes place when it is shared with others, and when change results from this.

1. Books and learning the basis of Prospero’s power: discovery through the eyes of others.
2. But knowledge must be applied to real life: Prospero and others must govern by reason.
3. Imagination is equally important to a life in *The Tempest*.

Concluding statement: Knowledge, reason and imagination are only potent when applied to change; discovery is only true when it is shared with others.
Other ways of planning: ‘mind mapping’
Some writers like to visualise their plan first, literally, so you can draw some kind of diagram if you like. One such method is mind mapping. You start this in the centre of the page, writing your theme in the centre of the map. The main branches come next, and stem from it directly.

These branches in turn can have branches and sub-branches. You can extend these as far as you like, getting as detailed as you wish.

The long walk
Some writers find that going for a long walk, and planning everything in their head, is essential preparation before putting pen to paper. (Definitely not practical in the exam room, however!)
Audition
You can even start to plan by talking aloud to a friend, or to an audio recorder, such as a smart phone!

The structured response
In the ‘structured response’ type of question, you must respond to a series of questions in order. This can make planning a lot easier. Even when a structured response question isn’t used, sometimes the way the question is written suggests a rough outline:

Describe the origins of the Delian League. What was its purpose? How successful was it?

If you’re not an Ancient History student and haven’t got the faintest idea what the Delian League was, you can still plan an essay. Even if you think that the Delian League is a basketball competition, you can produce a ‘correct’ plan, useful for guiding research.

Delian League skeleton essay plan

Introduction: Explain what the Delian League was, and how it arose.

Its purpose

Success: (a) Did it achieve its purpose(s)?
(b) To what extent, in what ways?
(c) Evaluation, overall

Conclusion: Summarise
Cap off.

Step 6: Draft an introduction

Your introduction has two chief functions:

1. to demonstrate that you have understood the question;
2. to state your argument.

You are ready to start your first draft. Many students complain that the hardest thing is to get started. Once begun, you simply have to follow on the same way, and a good introduction is a reference point you can return to if lost. A well-researched essay can still ‘run off the rails’ very quickly: you might answer a question on the characters in As You Like it with a detailed and insightful account of how it would have been staged in Shakespeare’s time. Wrong!
In exams, it’s even more crucial to ‘stay on track’ because every moment you spend on something irrelevant is time and space lost for material that could earn you marks. In many HSC subjects you will get very little consideration for answers that are off the point. So let’s get this introduction right on track.

One way to picture your introduction is as a kind of ‘curtain speech’.

Think of an old-style drama theatre—you’ve no doubt seen them in films. There’s a grand, plush curtain hiding the stage from us. The houselights dim, and in the dark a spotlight shoots out: the announcer strolls into the light and gives a brief speech telling us what treats are in store tonight, in order of appearance. Thunderous applause, the curtains go up and the show begins.

Your introduction is a ‘curtain speech’: you don’t launch straight into the ‘main act’. First, prepare your audience, the reader; get them settled in, let them know what to expect. Only in following paragraphs do you ‘raise the curtain’ and start discussing your topics in detail. In the ‘curtain speech’, announce the main ideas but don’t give away all the surprises.

The piece of advice allegedly given by a successful preacher in the United States is often repeated. Asked the secret of his success, he replied something like this: ‘First I tell them what I’m going to say. Then I say it. Then I tell them what I just said’. Introduction, body, conclusion. Your reader will appreciate the courtesy.
(a) ‘Echo’ the question

Consider your poor teachers and examiners. Reading a pile of essays can become tedious and difficult when the writer does not ‘signpost’. It is extremely easy to forget something that seems so obvious. It is not enough just to know what you are trying to say or do: it’s your job to communicate. You can only earn marks for what’s in your essay, not what was in your head.

Use the keywords in your introduction. (See the sample essay.) This doesn’t mean that you have to rewrite or to parrot the question, which examiners may find annoying. ‘Echoing’ has two main advantages:

- The reader can ‘tune in’ quickly and read with greater ease.
- It shows that you are organised, familiar with the formal, essay structure and that you understand the question.

(b) State your argument

Having demonstrated that you’ve understood the question, now indicate the argument you are making in response.
(c) Indicate the key points

A mere mention is sufficient at this stage.

*Tip.* Even when the ‘doing’ words of the essay question don’t ask you to ‘define’, it can be a very good idea to define any keywords that may be unclear—both for your benefit and that of the reader, who may not be sure what you mean by it. For example, a word like ‘destiny’ will mean something to you, but can you define it adequately? In some subjects, you’ll need to go beyond everyday dictionaries to find good definitions of specialised terms.

(d) Anticipate the conclusion (optional, advanced)

You can go one step beyond stating your initial argument, by indicating your conclusion. (I have done so in the sample essay.)

**Step 7: Check your introduction against the checklist**

There is a checklist at the end of this chapter. Try to read your introduction objectively, or ask someone else to check it. If it matches the relevant items, you’ve laid the foundations for the entire essay. If not, try to fix this up before proceeding. The words don’t have to be perfect, but the direction should be clear.

**Step 8: Draft the body of the essay**

As we’ve said, the hardest thing is to ‘get going’. But don’t forget, when drafting the body of the essay:

- Treat each topic in turn.
- Sustain your argument.
- Refer back to your thesis.
- Give specific ‘proofs’.
- Use ‘transition’ or linking words and phrases.
- Paragraph carefully.
- Qualify your statements.

Treat each topic in turn

If you have listed your topics or points in the introduction, it’s usual to discuss them in the order of listing. This makes it easier to follow the argument.
Sustain your argument

One of the most common weaknesses in student essays is the lack of topic sentences. It’s annoying to read a paragraph of discussion with no obvious focus. Don’t forget what you’re setting out to prove, and don’t forget to point out how your discussion supports your case.

If you lose track of your argument, try writing a topic sentence for that paragraph. It’s a good practice to write a topic sentence at the start of each paragraph, until topic sentences become a habit.

Refer back to your argument

Keep returning to your theme. You can avoid restating your argument in full, just by concentrating on keywords.

Give specific ‘proofs’

Assertions (statements of fact) are very weak if not supported by evidence. Unless what you’re saying is definitely well known or quite obvious it’s better to give details or reasons. (There is no need to prove that there is such a thing as gravity, for instance!). There are many kinds of ‘proof’: quotes, examples, statistics, use of language, events, the opinions of critics, historians or economists, and so on.

Use ‘transition’ or linking words and phrases

See Chapter 4.

Paragraph carefully

See Chapter 4.

Qualify your statements (advanced skill)

‘Qualifying’ does not come naturally to us. To ‘qualify’ means to evaluate or give an opinion rather more carefully than you might initially feel inclined to. It is the opposite of being too simplistic, or of making sweeping statements about something. Instead of saying that ‘Australian writers should write about Australia’, reflect that they might also write about overseas experiences or events. Avoid statements beginning with ‘Everybody knows that’ or ‘All ...’ unless you are quite sure of what you’re saying.

Consider the weaknesses of your argument before someone else does. Just because your argument has weak points doesn’t mean it’s invalid, only that (like all things) it has its limits. The ability to consider arguments
contrary to your own is actually an impressive skill, well worth developing. The ability to see fine ‘shades of grey’ is evidence of a perceptive, analytical approach.

**Step 9: Draft the conclusion**

- Re-read the essay question.
- Re-read the introduction.
- Summarise your argument and main points.
- Cap off your argument.

An impressive conclusion can sometimes make the difference between an average essay and a very good one. Many students seem to have the idea that so long as the introduction and conclusion are okay, then the bits in between are just to fill up pages. They might also think that the conclusion is ‘basically a summary’ and that’s all. Wrong on both counts!

Although a conclusion will often start with a brief summary, the best essays go beyond this. This is the hardest essay-writing skill to teach, but one worth developing when you get more confident. I will at least describe the general idea. Your conclusion, by the way, does not have to be limited to one paragraph. It can run to two or more. The same goes for introductions. Suit length to the nature of your essay: the bulk of the essay must always be the body.

You must refer back to the introduction and remind us of what we set out to ‘analyse’, ‘discover’, ‘discuss’, ‘compare’ or ‘describe’ (for example). So you will again use the keywords.

Finally, don’t forget that question: ‘So what?’ Your conclusion can make further assessments or comparisons, take the argument further or point to its implications. To cap it off in some way makes a valuable final impression and may give you an edge. (The sample essay goes beyond simply answering the question about discovery as voyage versus discovery through other eyes, to advance the view that discovery must be shared and applied to change, in order to be true discovery.)

Some possible ‘stings in the tail’ are:

- A further consequence of the argument.
■ Relating the conclusion to a wider context:
  – implications for the author, character, a question, for our understanding of the work;
  – implications for other works by this author;
  – implications for our understanding of (say) other themes, characters, scenes, and so on;
  – referring to an outside opinion or author.

**Step 10: Redraft the essay**

As noted above, in your first draft the attention is on ideas and facts, on developing your argument, rather than on the words used. All first drafts tend to be ‘writer-based’: they might make perfect sense to ourselves, but not necessarily to others yet. In the second draft you must first check the structure, organisation, the clarity of your argument and concepts before worrying about the use of language. The job of translating that draft into a reader-friendly essay begins.

**Make a fresh start**

It is quite difficult to read our own writing objectively, as if we were some other reader. But if you’ve been well organised, and managed to write an early first draft, you can put it away for a couple of days or so, then read it back with fresh eyes (the same principle applies to any later drafts too, if you have the luxury of time). Imagine that someone else wrote it, and try to read the draft ‘objectively’: take note of your immediate reactions when you read, because they will often guide you as to what is working and what isn’t. Remember that your role is to encourage this writer, so concentrate more on the strong parts than on the weaknesses! The worst thing you can do to this poor person is to simply dismiss their work; your criticism must be constructive, and based on objective questions:

■ Is the main argument clear?
■ Does there seem to be a point to this essay?
■ Are the ideas backed up with evidence?
■ Does it actually say what you think it should be saying?
■ Do you find it hard to understand what it is saying?
Keep an open mind

An American writing theorist, William Zinsser, has described a ‘writing to learn’ approach in a book of the same name, based on the idea that in the process of writing you learn by developing your ideas and gaining a truer and deeper understanding. Keep an open mind: above all, it is your job to write a good essay. If it ends up saying what you had wanted it to say, well and good. But be prepared to let it take on a shape of its own if this will be a more accurate, clearer or better argued essay.

If stuck, look again at the data you have collected and organised: what do the facts themselves ‘say’ to you? What conclusions do they suggest? In most subjects other than English, this approach is automatic, but even in English, the argument you choose should come from the evidence. Sometimes it’s easier to base your response on the information you do have than to search for facts to support the argument you wanted to develop. And if you can’t find much supporting evidence, this suggests you need to reconsider anyway!

**Step 11: Macro-editing**

There are two main processes of editing: taking away what does not belong to the essay, and adding whatever else is needed.

**Subtraction**

Imagine a painting of Sydney Harbour. All the usual beauties are there: Opera House, Harbour Bridge, Circular Quay and … Mount Kosciusko. The mountain touches the whole scene off beautifully—it’s well painted and looks great there. Take it away, it doesn’t belong. Likewise, take away the bits in your essay that have no relevance: they stand out a mile, they look silly and they’ll only lead you astray! It’s often tempting to use a favourite quote, to retell the story or discuss your pet obsession in detail, but leave it out unless it advances your argument in some way.

**Addition**

It’s easier to discover what an essay doesn’t need than what it does, but with practice you can develop this skill. A good start is to test whether or not you are supporting each assertion. And if you have ‘proved’ it sufficiently, have you told us why it matters? So what?

You might, for example, be exploring the social and historical context of a prescribed text such as *Stasiland*. This might entail some research about
modern European history, about communism and the Cold War, and so on. Then finally, furnish some consequence or result: ‘So what?’. For example, what do the stories of various characters in *Stasiland* tell us about human needs, the human spirit?

It has already been mentioned that some students run out of points to make and spend a lot of space just restating their argument. A better strategy is to extend your ‘tree trunk’ further, or to add new branches.

Some additions that may be appropriate are:
- a quote to support an assertion;
- inserting a topic sentence where a paragraph has none;
- links between paragraphs;
- capping off any paragraph topic, sub-point, or conclusion;
- discussing in greater detail.

**Step 12: Micro-editing**

When you are reasonably happy with the structure and argument, you should work on improving the language. Many writers find that they keep making improvements to various parts of the essay right up to the final draft. However, in the final draft, your focus will probably be on fine tuning. Below, I discuss a few hints and pointers relating to some of the most common problems.

But be warned: it is possible to get very neurotic over an essay and to be unable to ‘let it go’. If you find you can’t bring yourself to stop fiddling with the final draft, or if you can’t bear to hand it up, call your mentor immediately. Tell them it’s an emergency! One way of guarding against this danger is to self-evaluate: how many changes did I make in that last redraft? Are they definitely improvements? Why? How important were they? Would they be likely to affect my mark?

**Sentence length**

I am occasionally asked how long sentences or paragraphs should be. The answer to both questions is ‘as long as they need to be’. The most common problem with long sentences is that the writer is trying to cram in too many points. Sometimes they are trying to express several ideas in the one sentence! When in doubt, stick to one main idea per sentence, and treat related material in following sentences.
Many of you will be using a grammar checker with your word processing program. This can be a helpful source of suggestions, but do realise that your own brain is a far more powerful computer than any computer, and most programs rely only on certain guidelines, which cannot cover all circumstances and issues. The final decision must always rest with you, and certainly don’t believe everything your computer tells you. There is no grammatical rule about the length of sentences!

On the other hand. Sentences can be too short. This is a problem. Try linking phrases together into longer sentences like this one, instead of writing something like ‘Try linking phrases. Together they can make longer sentences.’

A worse crime, and an extremely common one, is the ‘run-on sentence’. You should finish a sentence where the thought ends instead of just keeping it going forever even if the thought is quite complete some people just let those words keep flowing on. (And I hope you can see where a full stop should go in the previous sentence!)

Grammar

With grammar, spelling and punctuation, we tend to repeat our mistakes over and over again. Take careful note of all feedback marked on your essays: this is valuable information that should help you to strengthen your writing. Make sure you understand why each mark was made, and if in doubt, ask your teacher for clarification.

Spelling

Good spelling is impressive, and spelling skills will always be a valuable asset to you, if only to save you embarrassment! Spelling is essentially a memory skill, and as discussed in Chapter 7, the basis of good memory is good organisation and study.

There are a few rules about spelling in English, but because our language is a hybrid of many different languages there are so many exceptions to these rules that they only have limited applicability. One that you certainly should know however, since so many people have problems here, is ‘i’ before ‘e’ except after ‘c’. This will help you spell ‘believe’ correctly, ‘receive’ and many other frequently misspelt words.

Make lists of words you have misspelt, and ask someone to test you occasionally. See how many words you can cross off your list by getting them right three times in a row!
One memory trick you can use is to say the word aloud as it is spelt, rather than how it’s meant to sound. How would you pronounce the word ‘sword’ for instance? Another way of remembering is by creating some image or saying, for example, ‘There are too many o’s in the word ‘too’.

I’ve had students tell me smugly that IBM or ‘Mac’ do all their spelling for them, ‘but eye due knot no foreshore weather spell chequers ah all ways ewes full. Dew yew? Sum wood say their nigh the hear gnaw they’re.’ Also, American software can have unreliable ideas about Australian spelling.

Essay editing checklist

Overall
Writer-based or reader-based?
Is there a clear argument?
Is this material relevant?
What further information is needed?
Is this statement backed up with evidence?
Is there an organisational principle ordering the points discussed?
Is the wording clear? (Try it out on someone else.)
How can I express this more clearly?

A: Introduction
Demonstrates an understanding of the question
States the argument
Indicates what topics/points will be discussed
(Optional) Anticipates the conclusion.

B: Body
Paragrazed
Transitions from paragraph to paragraph
Topics treated in order
Argument sustained
Refers back to argument
Detailed, specific ‘proofs’
Signpostded
Statements qualified
C: Conclusion
Initial summary
Follows on from
(a) thesis, and
(b) points made
Capped off: consequences/extra points are observed

D: Final draft
Word choice
Sentence construction
Grammar
Neat presentation: typed or word processed if possible
Spelling
section four:

Study hints and subject guide
Chapter 9

Exams, and essays in other subjects

So: if a good essay takes several drafts, how can you be expected to write an ‘extended response’ in 40 minutes and one draft only, in the exam room? Good question. First, don’t panic: examiners are aware of this issue, and take it into account. Secondly, everyone’s in the same position. Thirdly, you can prepare yourself for exams by ‘rehearsing’ with old exam papers, timing yourself and working under exam-like conditions, by writing draft exam essays and by organising your study well.

There are several important differences between exam essays and other essays:

- There is a strict time limit (and, although you are not marked according to the length of your essay, a detailed, complete essay does impress).
- You don’t have time to polish a rough draft.
- You can’t research. (That is why your study must be as well organised as possible beforehand.)
- Planning is essential, because there is no time to change your argument midway through the essay.

Exam strategies

- Read the entire paper quickly. Start to think about which questions you’ll do, and how to answer them.
- Try outlining a quick essay plan for each question before you start to answer any. Sometimes, forgotten information or ‘inspiration’ will come to your aid when you return to that question. It’s as if the unconscious mind works on automatic pilot!
If you get stuck with one essay, go on to the others before coming back to it.

Make sure you read ALL instructions and follow them exactly (it’s easy to overlook something important).

Know in advance how much time is allowed for each question, and stick to it. It may be tempting to write extra material on one question, but the gains you could make will be minimal compared to the marks you might lose in the next question.

Some questions are split into a number of different parts, each with a separate weighting of marks. Look at what each question is worth and tailor the length of your response and the amount of time you spend on it, accordingly. If a question is worth twelve marks, and part (a) is worth three marks, you should spend about a quarter of the total time allocated to that question on part (a).

Make doubly sure that you answer ALL parts of the question. If the question makes two or more demands, answer all of them.

Try to leave a minute or so to check back over each essay, fixing up any glaring omissions or errors.

A sample exam essay

Following is an example of an exam essay. As noted in Chapter 7, the virtue of the thesis essay as a study tool is that it helps you to organise your thoughts and your supporting data to the point that they are pre-digested. It is excellent preparation for exams and offers practice in developing an argument that mounts a clear thesis uniting the discussion, analysis, selection and treatment of texts.

This exam essay was developed in response to a previous Area of Study, Belonging, but the same principles and approach would apply to writing an exam essay on the present Area of Study, Discovery.

You might also note that this essay employs a different organisational principle to the thesis essay: here, the argument is developed text by text rather than theme by theme.

‘If you are alone you belong entirely to yourself. If you are accompanied by even one companion you belong only half to yourself, or even less, in proportion to the thoughtlessness of his conduct; and if you have
more than one companion you will fall more deeply into the same plight.’ (Leonardo da Vinci) To what extent do the texts you have studied support this understanding of belonging? In your response, refer to your prescribed text, and at least TWO other related texts of your own choosing.

1 Da Vinci’s understanding of belonging is that it diminishes our individualism and integrity. We become less ourselves, due to the influence of others’ behaviour, attitudes and expectations. This is supported to some extent in the texts I have studied, but mainly when characters are incompatible. Study of Charles Dickens’ *Great Expectations*, the film *Australian Rules* and Judith Wright’s poem ‘The Company of Lovers’ suggests, however, that belonging can help us to reach our potential and thus truly become ourselves. We can belong to others without jeopardising our individuality and our own principles, despite various obstacles.

2 In *Great Expectations*, belonging can come at the cost of being oneself. As a boy, Pip finds it difficult to express himself in the family home. When guests are present, he is insulted and told to keep quiet. Dickens uses metaphor to suggest that the conversation, pretending to be for his betterment, in reality tortures Pip like a dumb animal: he ‘might have been an unfortunate little bull’ who is ‘touched up by these moral goads’. When he encounters the worse than ‘thoughtless’ influence of Magwitch, Pip is led to steal from his own sister and to tell lies as well, behaviour he knows to be unacceptable: again, the company he keeps lessens him.

3 Equally, belonging to a ‘gentlemanly’ class does not agree well with Pip: the Finches of the Grove club is foolish, drunken and quarrelsome, and members like Bentley Drummle are odious. Dickens uses contrasting language to demonstrate the reality starkly: Pip and Herbert spend ‘as much money’ as they can to get as little back as possible, while racking up dangerous debt. Pip notes that the ‘gay fiction’ of happiness is contradicted by the ‘bare skeleton’ of truth that they are miserable. The ‘torture’ exacted by Estella on his visits further illustrates Da Vinci’s ‘plight’ of belonging.

4 However, not to belong to others creates the plight of withering away. Dickens conveys through imagery that Miss Havisham’s life, shut off from others, is unnatural and cold: she is initially described by Pip as yellow, faded, a ‘waxwork’. She lives behind dark walls inside the decaying Satis House, ‘in which her life was hidden from the sun’. The
sun symbolises human love: without it, we wither like plants, rather than blooming. Estella too is taught by Havisham that daylight is her ‘enemy and destroyer’ and she has grown up loveless and cold. She knits away mechanically when Pip declares his love for her. The simile of her knitting fingers being like a ‘dumb alphabet’ conveys that she is emotionally stunted.

5 Estella’s tragedy is a combination of two disasters: first, in accord with Da Vinci’s theme, her life has been shaped by thoughtless others like Miss Havisham, who used her to take revenge on men. When she does finally marry, it is another unsuitable match, to the ‘brute’ Drummle, and she ends up alone, having wasted her life and her fortune. Secondly, like Havisham she is isolated from the sun of human love. By the end of the novel, belonging to herself is no great consolation. Dickens uses stilted formal language to convey her emotions, demonstrating that she still puts up verbal walls against others: she speaks of her ‘wifely duty’ not being ‘incompatible with the admission of that remembrance’ of the importance of her friendship with Pip.

6 Thus, the study of Great Expectations suggests that, in contrast to Da Vinci’s view, belonging to others is key to becoming ourself. However, belonging with the wrong people can diminish us. Pip grows into a better person when he makes decisions about whom he should associate with, and how he should interact with them. He stops exerting bad influence on Herbert and instead helps to set up his business. He shows compassion and care for Magwitch, and eventually comes to realise how important humble Joe and Biddy are to him.

7 That we need others in order to achieve our potential is underlined clearly in Australian Rules, where the ‘great expectations’ of winning the Aussie Rules grand final are shared by the whole community. This is emphasised from the opening frames of the film, with a close-up on dry, cracked earth symbolising the ‘common ground’ and common interests of the white and the Aboriginal communities. The voiceover by the central character Blackie is used to draw this to our attention, stating that Prospect Bay, which he describes as ‘bloody hopeless’, would not be in the grand final without the Aboriginal players: in fact, ‘we wouldn’t even have a team’. The team’s colours, black and white, featured throughout the movie, symbolise this need for unity. In contrast to Da Vinci’s theme, this movie suggests it is important to belong and to contribute to the community.
In fact, it is the contributions of very individual people to the team that make it so strong, despite the town’s divisive attitudes of racism, sexism and anti-intellectualism. Two people who make decisive contributions to the grand final win are the Aboriginal player Dumby and Blackie’s mother, who works out the winning strategy. Blackie uses language very well, unlike ‘Arks’ (‘ask’) the coach and Blackie’s Dad, locks himself in the toilet to read the dictionary, is called ‘a gutless bloody wonder’, a ‘pussy’ and is accused of ‘wanking’. The stark contrast of language register demonstrates the thoughtlessness of Blackie’s company, but ultimately Blackie triumphs and wins the final play of the game by being himself, and playing against the coach’s instructions.

When division and intolerance take over again, after the game is won, Blackie can no longer belong, without damage to his integrity. He feels forced to leave Prospect Bay because of intolerance. In a climactic scene where he is surprised together with his Aboriginal girlfriend Clarence, he is assaulted by his father, who forces him to deny Clarence in front of her. He is diminished by this, and does not belong to himself at this point, so that he has little choice but to regain his freedom and integrity by leaving.

Similarly to *Great Expectations* then, belonging to the wrong circles, and barriers to belonging, are much bigger problems than the influence of belonging. So long as the community stays committed to thoughtless attitudes, Prospect Bay will remain deep in its plight. The footy legend Glen Bright quotes that ‘When men (sic) get together wonderful things happen’. When, however, people are divided, dreadful things happen, people fail to grow, and the town reverts to being ‘bloody hopeless’.

Judith Wright’s poem ‘The Company of Lovers’ expresses almost the opposite viewpoint to Da Vinci’s: belonging is more important than individualism and integrity: ‘We meet and part now over all the world’. The repeated use of the first person plural ‘we’ invites us to feel part of this company. Through the use of the internal half-rhyme ‘meet/part’ she suggests the equivalence of these two verbs, and conveys that belonging is only a ‘brief happiness’ and therefore precious. In contrast to *Australian Rules* and to *Great Expectations*, expectations and other pursuits become just the ‘many things’ that we ‘throw away’ in favour of the sheer desire for intimate company.
The use of very general terms like ‘company’ and ‘over all the world’ to describe the comfort of belonging is in stark contrast to Wright’s precise description of being alone. ‘Belonging to ourself’ merely diminishes us: it means just to live with a ‘chilling heart’, to live with ‘my fear’. Our ultimate destiny is to belong only to ourselves in the ‘narrow grave’, in which ‘we shall be lonely’ and thus belonging to oneself is a form of death, a theme underlined by Wright’s sparing but telling use of adjectives: ‘lost’, ‘brief’, ‘chilling’, ‘dark’.

Da Vinci’s description of belonging is partly supported by these texts. Belonging can diminish us, leading us to behave in ways contrary to our own beliefs, but it also provides opportunities to grow and to better ourselves; as the lives of Miss Havisham and Estella demonstrate, to be shut off from other people is to wither. However, Pip and Blackie learn that it is important to make good choices in whom we associate with, and in how we relate to others. We can learn to belong better, as a pathway to happiness and to achieving our own potential: only when we reach our potential do we truly belong to ourselves.

Exam hints: English (Standard and Advanced) Paper 1: Area of Study

As one example of meeting exam requirements, here are some hints for treating the English Standard papers.

(Note: the following hints are based on the 2001 Specimen Papers. The format of exam papers may change so you should always check with your teacher as to what the requirements are.)

Time management: Paper 1 involves answering three questions, 40 minutes allowed per question, with a total of ten minutes additional reading time.

Note that the paper should state briefly, at the head of each section, what you will be assessed on.
Section I

This section involves reading unseen texts related to the Area of Study and consists of a number of shorter responses.

Don’t assume that it is adequate to give the ‘right answer’ in just a few words. Assume that the examiner will be unconvinced until you demonstrate your comprehension fully using the three-step method (see Chapter 4). The more marks the question is worth, the more your answer needs to be complete and satisfying.

Other hints

■ Read or examine all the texts and all the questions before answering. Try to determine the overall tone—the author’s attitude to the subject matter—and the theme or opinion being developed.

■ Take careful note of the mark allocation per question; these vary considerably.

■ Answer questions with reference to the context of the text(s). Often the context of a phrase or detail will indicate a different meaning from dictionary or everyday meanings.

■ Make sure your answer is from the text(s) rather than from your general knowledge!

■ Pass over and return to the ‘too hard’ questions: they may ‘click into place’ once you’ve progressed further and relaxed a bit more.

■ You may find it helpful to mark relevant passages on the exam paper, to make it easier to find answers.

Section II

In this section you are required to compose (write) or adapt (change) a text for a specific purpose. Knowledge of a wide variety of forms of writing (genres) will help greatly, enriching your general knowledge, your vocabulary and understanding of the different features of different genres. Expect the unexpected!

Always write with a clear purpose. This will help you stand out from those writers who just pour out ideas haphazardly. The instructions will indicate what is required.

You can practise for this section by writing pieces that vary the use of register, purpose, form, format, audience, role and vocabulary. You might
be asked to write a letter, an interview, a play script or some other piece, or to produce a piece for a specific magazine and suggest accompanying graphics. Whatever the task, suit the language and structure to the genre of writing.

You can practise your command of register by writing dialogue for two different characters requiring different kinds of speech: for example, compare a politician’s public speech with her or his normal speech at home, or compare ‘street-kid’ speech with a businessperson’s on the same subject.

Examples of different genres:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Thriller novels</th>
<th>Comedy sketches</th>
<th>Political speeches</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Autobiographies</td>
<td>Press releases</td>
<td>Obituaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV news broadcasts</td>
<td>Encyclopaedia entries</td>
<td>Hypertext writing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recipes</td>
<td>Government reports</td>
<td>Advertisements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaries</td>
<td>‘Blogs’ (web logs)</td>
<td>Love letters</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature articles</td>
<td>Drama scripts</td>
<td>Hypertext novels</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Song lyrics</td>
<td>Eulogies</td>
<td>Editorials</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Film reviews</td>
<td>Fan letters</td>
<td>Raps</td>
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Section III

This section involves an extended response to a question based on the Area of Study, and generally in the form of an essay, unless otherwise specified. Gathering a range of supplementary material is important as it allows you greater scope in your response. Materials can be gleaned from a very wide range of sources, including newspapers, magazines, radio or television broadcasts, brochures from government or private organisations, library collections, audiovisual or multimedia sources, interviews, etc.

English (Standard) Paper 2: Modules

This paper is worth 60 marks, compared to Paper 1 (40 marks).

Time management: Three questions, each of equal value. Forty minutes should be allocated to each question, and there is an additional five minutes reading time for the paper. Each question requires an ‘extended response’.

This paper should state briefly, at the head of each section, what you will be assessed on.
Essay writing in other subjects

While this book focuses on the essay or extended response in English, all the skills you practise will aid your writing in short responses, in other genres (such as reports) and in other HSC subjects also. Contrary to what many people imagine, the English essay makes as many demands as any other kind, as the specified outcomes in the syllabus make explicit. The best English essays are analytical and critical, detailed and specific; they interpret and explain relevant facts and ideas. In fact, English is especially demanding since it emphasises not only your knowledge of the topic, but also your ability to formulate an individual response and to use language well.

However, don’t assume that expectations are identical in each HSC subject, since the essay can take different forms and operate under different rules. Pay careful attention to your teacher’s stipulations, and don’t hesitate to ask questions if you are still unsure. (Some subjects allow you to include headings and graphs, for example.) Once you have mastered the techniques in this book, you will have little trouble in customising your writing to somewhat different expectations.

Assessment in each subject is focused on the specified outcomes. In many, the emphasis is on your knowledge and understanding of the subject, your ability to explain and discuss issues and topics in relation to appropriate theories, concepts, practices and systems of thought (e.g. the law), rather than on your opinion or individual response.

Extended-response questions may be in the form of a structured response, which requires you to answer a series of questions in order. The individual parts of these questions may each attract separate marks, the final question often being worth the greatest number of marks.

A number of students have successfully adapted the ‘thesis essay’ idea to other subjects: Economics, Ancient and Modern History, Legal Studies, etc. If you prepare for such exams in this way, bear in mind that the examiner is more interested in your knowledge and understanding than in your personal response, and don’t try to simply regurgitate a prepared essay!

Non-argument essay modes

We have seen that the basis of essays in HSC English is the argument, around which the essay is structured. However, argument is only one of four writing modes. Essays and other formal writings commonly use the
other three modes too: *description, exposition* (explanation), and *narration*. In other subjects, depending on the question, you might use one or more of these modes. It is not uncommon for an essay to use all four modes, in different sections.

Two of these modes can be prescribed in essay questions, where you are required to ‘describe’ or ‘explain’ in some detail. Generally you should still consider using the standard essay structure. Other commonly prescribed ‘doing words’ are ‘evaluate’, ‘analyse’, ‘assess’ and ‘discuss’. Often it is necessary to *describe*, *explain* or *narrate* in order to communicate your knowledge and understanding, before proceeding to evaluate, analyse, assess or discuss.

Familiarising yourself with the meaning of these ‘doing words’ as defined in a glossary by BOSTES NSW, and becoming aware of these other modes, will help you meet the expectations of your writing. A selection from that glossary is reproduced at the end of this chapter.

**Description**

BOSTES NSW defines the instruction word ‘describe’ as ‘provide characteristics and features’. Bear in mind that this describing should be relevant to the question.

*Describe important aspects of chemical usage that need to be considered to provide safeguards to the farm environment.*

*(Adapted from 2001 HSC Specimen Paper, Agriculture, BOSTES NSW)*

One could write an essay in response to this question, establishing a theme or argument, then in the body describing ‘important aspects’. Here is a sample essay outline:

**Introduction**

Chemicals have many positive uses and can be indispensable to many farmers.

If not used correctly, they can have implications for:

1. occupational health and safety of farm workers;
2. farm environment generally;
3. contaminating produce and hurting sales and profitability.

So various practices and precautions need to be followed.
**Body**

1. *Describe* the benefits of chemical usage.
2. *Describe* the positive aspects of chemical usage.
3. **Dangers:**
   - (a) Occupational health and safety: *Describe* how chemical usage affects it.
   - (b) Farm environment: *Describe* chemical usage’s possible effects.
4. *Describe* the results of carelessness or abuse of chemical usage.

**Conclusion**

Briefly restate the theme based on discussion.
Cap off: Chemicals are very useful but can endanger the farm environment.
The key is their proper usage and disposal.

In such an essay, you would use the mode of *description* for much of the essay, but still use the usual essay format, basing it on a theme.

Although the following question does not ask you to *describe*, description is implied:

> Evaluate traditional and contemporary approaches to the management and protection of one ecosystem you have studied and one ecosystem evident in the Stimulus Booklet.

(2001 HSC Specimen Paper, Geography, BOSTES NSW).

Before *evaluating*, you need to *describe* different approaches to the management and protection of two separate ecosystems.

**Exposition: (explaining)**

‘*Explain*’ is defined by BOSTES NSW as ‘relate cause and effect; make the relationship between things evident; provide why and/or how.’

> Explain how an individual economy (other than Australia) is endeavouring to promote its level of economic development, in an environment where globalisation is affecting living standards.


In the above essay, much of the body would be devoted to *explaining* an economy’s efforts to promote its economic development, and perhaps
describing the environment of globalisation and its effects on living standards.

The following is a possible essay outline (based on a fictional economy).

**Introduction**

The economy of Troglia is attempting to promote its economic development in the following ways:

- economic reform program suggested by World Bank;
- taking advantage of freed-up trade opportunities;
- attracting investment capital for target industries;
- promoting tourism.

**Body**

- *Explain* the benefits of economic reform for economic development.
- *Explain* how freer trade can aid economic development.
- *Explain* the role of target industries in promoting economic development.
- *Explain* the value of tourism for economic development.

**Conclusion**

Globalisation offers challenges and benefits to Troglia. Troglia is responding so as to maximise its opportunities for economic development.

**Narration**

Like ‘argument’, narration is a mode that is unlikely to be specified in the ‘doing words’ of an essay question. However, at times it is helpful to ‘tell a story’: to give historical background to an event or phenomenon, to explain the sequence of events, or to narrate how you conducted primary research.

**Suggestions for other subjects**

The following are some general suggestions to help you come to grips with the particular requirements of essays in subjects other than English:

- You are marked not merely on your knowledge and on your ability to present that knowledge in a well-structured, sustained way, but specifically on the designated outcomes for each unit of study you take. Become
familiar with these outcomes and with the marking ‘rubrics’ that guide your markers. (This information can be found at the BOSTES NSW website.) Criteria might include: wide range of sources, using up-to-date sources, ability to make use of the stimulus text, and understanding of key concepts.

- It is especially important to shape and structure your response according to the question and target outcomes, not to get bogged down in mere data for the sake of it.
- Pay close attention to the ‘doing words’ in the question.
- Consult specialised study guides for that subject.
- Read past examination papers, and the specimen papers available on the BOSTES NSW website.
- Study actively, always thinking about themes and issues. Ask questions as you study. Interpret information: what significance do these statistics have? What are the implications? How do they affect my ideas about this topic? Does this source agree with other sources, or contradict them?
- Practise on previous exam papers in that subject, under exam conditions.
- Go over all your returned assessments: What are your strengths and weaknesses, and how can you improve both? Ask your teacher for additional feedback if necessary.
- For assignments, keep within specified word limits unless your teacher states otherwise. (Ten per cent allowance either way is often acceptable.)

**Structured-response exam questions**

An example of a structured-response question is the following:

**Question 9—Heritage and Identity (30 marks)**

(a) Using the source above and your own knowledge, answer the following:

(i) Explain how indigenous art has been exploited for commercial gain.

(ii) What does the NIAAA spokesman mean in his last sentence as it relates to Aboriginal art?

(b) To what extent have contemporary expressions of Aboriginal heritage and identity contributed to the strengthening of Aboriginal culture? Use your Local Aboriginal Community Case Study in your answer.

(2001 HSC Specimen Paper, Aboriginal Studies, BOSTES NSW)
In this example, the question is worth 30 marks and the first two parts in (a) are worth 5 marks each. That leaves 20 marks for part (b), in which you would write an ‘extended response’. Your essay could develop an argument based on the evidence of your Case Study.

**Subject-specific tips**

**Geography**

An unusual form of essay you might use in assignments is the pictorial essay, based on various visual stimuli, rather than on words. Make sure that all visual items are titled and referenced.

**Ancient and Modern History**

Wide reading is especially important in history, as is your ability to analyse data critically. Whereas English encourages you to compose in various written genres, and different registers, history consistently expects a formal quality of language.

**Society and Culture**

In this subject, as in all subjects, it is important to use the relevant terms and language, to ‘think’ in that language. You may need to write about Primary research (your original research), Secondary research, or both. Depending on the question, it may be appropriate to use a more personal tone in passages where you reflect on your own experience, for example in relation to the Personal Reflection methodology.

**Select glossary of instruction words**

**Account:** Account for: state reasons for, report on. Give an account of: narrate a series of events or transactions.

**Analyse:** Identify components and the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications.

**Apply:** Use, utilise, employ in a particular situation.

**Assess:** Make a judgement of value, quality, outcomes, results or size.

**Calculate:** Ascertain/determine from given facts, figures or information.
Compare: Show how things are similar or different.

Contrast: Show how things are different or opposite.

Critically (analyse/evaluate): Add a degree or level of accuracy, depth, knowledge and understanding, questioning, reflection and quality to (analysis/evaluation).

Define: State meaning and identify essential qualities.

Demonstrate: Show by example.

Describe: Provide characteristics and features.

Discuss: Identify issues and provide points for and/or against.

Distinguish: Recognise or note/indicate as being distinct or different from; to note differences between.

Evaluate: Make a judgement based on criteria; determine the value of.

Examine: Inquire into.

Explain: Relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how.

Interpret: Draw meaning from.

Outline: Sketch in general terms; indicate the main features of.

Summarise: Express, concisely, the relevant details.

Synthesise: Put together various elements to make a whole.

The above is a selection from a comprehensive list of instruction words, available from the BOSTES NSW website at www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au