English Standard, Module C
Discursive part one transcript

(Duration 21 minutes 09 seconds)

(soft music)

Narrator: Welcome to the HSC hubs student support session for English Standard. This is resource one in relation to discursive writing. In this resource, we will be exploring Module C The Craft of Writing. Through the lens of discursive writing with the aim of giving students extra support in your preparation for Trial and or HSC examinations. It is important that you do not see this resource as a substitute for the classroom work with your teacher and peers that you need in order to perform at your best over the coming months. This is a review resource that will work best under the guidance of your teacher but may also be used independently to remind you of the key direction and concepts of the module. If this resource is being used in collaboration between the teacher and students, we'd like you to note that this has been designed to run for approximately 15 minutes excluding time for activities. If using this in a classroom setting, we suggest that the teacher stop the recording at key points and facilitate the said activities. Please feel free to supplement these with your own strategies.

If the student is working through this resource independently, we suggest you stop the recording when asked to and complete all the activities. This includes thinking routines, reflection activities and written responses in the student resource booklet. If you're using this resource at home independently, you will need: access to both this presentation and the student resource booklet and time to explore the activities suggested here. This resource works best, if you follow all instructions and complete the thinking routines, reflection activities and written tasks. And make sure you take adequate breaks.

There are four resources designed to assist your understanding of the discursive style and your approach to writing in this style. Make sure you have the student resource booklet for each resource. They contain spaces for writing practice along with some resources you may find very handy. This series has been designed to be completed in order. However you can dip in and out of the other sessions depending on your area of need. This resource is resource one ‘re-engaging with the module statement for Module C Standard’. Within this suite of resources, there is also a resource two, ‘finding inspiration for the discursive and the prescribed texts for Module C’, resource three, ‘responding to and unpacking sample questions and writing samples’ and finally resource four, ‘practising discursive writing’.

[Slide reads: Module C – The Craft of Writing – the module statement

In this module, students strengthen and extend their knowledge, skills and confidence as writers. They write for a range of authentic audiences and purposes to convey ideas with power and increasing precision.

Students appreciate, examine and analyse at least two challenging short prescribed texts as well as texts from their own wide reading, as models and stimulus for the development of their own ideas and written expression. They examine how writers of complex texts use language creatively and imaginatively for a range of purposes, to describe the world around them, evoke emotion, shape a perspective or to share a vision.

Through the study of texts drawn from enduring, quality texts of the past as well as from recognised contemporary works, students appreciate, analyse and assess the importance and power of language. Through a considered appraisal of, and imaginative engagement with these texts, students reflect on the complex and recursive process of writing to further develop their ability to apply their knowledge of textual forms and features in their own sustained and cohesive compositions.

During the pre-writing stage, students generate and explore ideas through discussion and speculations. Throughout the stages of drafting and revising, students experiment with a range of language forms and features for example imagery, rhetoric, voice, characterisation, point of view, dialogue and tone. Students consider purpose and audience to carefully shape meaning. During the editing stages students apply the conventions of syntax, spelling, punctuation and grammar appropriately and effectively for publication.

Students have opportunities to work independently and collaboratively to reflect, refine and strengthen their own skills in producing crafted, imaginative, discursive, persuasive and informative texts.

Note:Students may revisit prescribed texts from other modules to enhance their experiences of quality writing.

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In this first section of the resource, we will unpack what discursive texts are and the language forms and features we can choose from when writing in this style. Here we have provided the complete module statement. This is also in the resource booklet. If it has been a while since you've read the module statement, we highly recommend pausing this clip and taking the time to read and annotate the module statement found within the resource booklet. For the purposes of this session, we have bolded the section that identifies the types of writing you're expected to explore through your study of the module, imaginative, discursive, persuasive and informative texts.

Before we start exploring discursive writing together, we would like you to record your definition of discursive writing based on your current understanding of the style. If you had to explain it to a year 10 student for example, what would you say? Pause the presentation and complete activity one on page five in the resource booklet. (soft music)

[Slide reads: What is discursive writing?

NESA definition

Discursive texts are those whose primary focus is to explore an idea or variety of topics. These texts involve the discussion of an idea(s) or opinion(s) without the direct intention of persuading the reader, listener or viewer to adopt any single point of view. Discursive texts can be humorous or serious in tone and can have a formal or informal register. These texts include texts such as feature articles, creative nonfiction, blogs, personal essays, documentaries and speeches.

Module C: The Craft of Writing, Frequently Asked Questions © 2020 NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales.]

As you can see here in NESA's definition, discursive texts explore at least one idea or topic. They can express an opinion but do not demand that the reader, listener or viewer agree with that opinion by the end of the text. Like the other types of texts you can choose from, they can be humorous or serious or both. Pause the presentation and read the definition. This is also provided within your resource booklet. Research the definitions of any terminology unfamiliar to you. (soft music)

[Slide reads: In other words, keeping it simple

Discursive writing is a style of writing rather than a set form. This style explores ideas, places, people – positively more often than negatively – without pushing a particular opinion or agenda. The writer leaves it open for the responder to decide on what they think, to add their own experiences and values.

There is no one scaffold that will support students to write discursively – the scaffold will depend on what form is chosen to write in a discursive style or approach.]

It is really important that you understand and appreciate that discursive texts are a stylistic choice. Just like there are many ways to write imaginative and persuasive texts, the options for discursive texts are similarly wide. The key requirement is that unlike persuasive texts, the composer offers up ideas to its audience rather than demands us agree with their point of view on the topic being explored. There is no one definitive form a discursive text can take, just like imaginative and persuasive texts. It is in the choices made within the form that makes a text discursive. Discursive texts as we just saw in the NESA definition can include feature articles, creative nonfiction, blogs, personal essays, documentaries and speeches. Pause the presentation and read the outline. This is also provided within your resource booklet. As we said previously, make sure you are researching the definitions of any terminology unfamiliar to you. (soft music)

This visual is one way of thinking about the differences in the purpose of the persuasive and the discursive. Discursive texts offer us ideas, thoughts and examples on a given topic, encouraging us to see topic in multifaceted ways and make our own conclusions. Persuasive texts in contrast, demand their audience to believe in and trust their stance or point of view. They convince us to agree with their conclusions through their focused examination of a topic.

On the left, we have an image of a girl looking at a series of floating globes. Each globe contains a different image of a place such as different buildings and natural features. This image represents the many ways we can think about a topic or an idea. So texts written about a topic or idea from a range of viewpoints are likely to be discursive because the composer is wanting to explore that topic or idea more broadly without pushing one particular point of view over another. While on the right, we have an image of a person holding up a protest sign that says, "We don't have time" with a picture of the world in the centre. This image represents the reality that persuasive texts aim to convince us to accept their perspective on their chosen topic and demand that we join them in their call to action. So speeches presented at rallies or protests are likely to be highly emotive and persuasive.

The following slides present you with a little analogy to help you with your thinking about the discursive writing style. In this analogy, discursive texts are like a series of cogs and wheels with the ideas spinning in different directions around a central topic. They do all fit together but they don't all follow the same point of view or focus. In this analogy discursive texts are like a meandering river. They twist turn and even double back on themselves as they explore their focus topic. Now it is your turn. Can you think of any other analogies that could help you keep the key ideas of the module in mind as you prepare for exams and potentially writing a discursive response? See activity two in the resource booklet for a space to create your own analogy. Pause the presentation here and complete activity two found on page six for the resource booklet. (soft music)

How did you go? Share your analogy with your teacher and a peer and discuss how this activity helped refine your thinking. Now we will explore some of the common features found within discursive texts. This information has been provided by NESA and it is found within The Craft of Writing frequently asked questions document. A link to this is provided in your resource booklet. Pause the presentation here and read this information.

Welcome back. Which information was new to you? Is there anything that you need to define or research before we move on? Make sure you do so now. It's also a great idea to chat with your teacher or a peer if there is something in particular that you are stuck on. Let's quickly run through each of these dot points and expand on what they mean. Dot point one, explores an issue or an idea and may suggest a position or point of view. This means the response has a central purpose to showcase the author's thinking about a topic but the purpose isn't to persuade you to their perspective or position.

Dot point two, approaches the topic from different angles and explores themes and issues in a style that balances personal observations with different perspectives. This means they will be exploring a topic and looking at it in various ways. Their modality will not be high or forceful. It is likely to be low and exploratory suggesting various ways of looking at and thinking about a topic. Dot point three, uses personal anecdotes and may have a conversational tone. Often these types of texts are very personal. They contain personal stories and moments in time to support the idea or topic that they are exploring. These often show the personal nature of the experience. The tone reflects this and it's conversational, meaning the register is likely to be less formal than what you would see in an essay, but this does depend on the composer's purpose and context. For example, the prescribed texts for English Advanced, Eulogy for Gough Whitlam is very sombre and formal in many ways because this is a formal speech presented at a funeral. However, Pearson litters his speech with beautiful and very funny personal stories to enhance his characterisation of Whitlam and the significance of Whitlam and the legacy of his policies to Pearson as both a boy and a man.

Dot point four, primarily uses first person although third person can also be used. The point we just made is a perfect example of this. These texts are usually written in first person. However, it really depends on the purpose, audience and context of the text and this is why you need to have these things firmly planned in your head before you start writing in the discursive style. Dot point five uses figurative language or maybe more factual. Again, this will depend on the purpose, context and audience and there will often be elements of both as the author explores their ideas. Dot point six draws upon real life experiences and or draws from wide reading. Due to the personal nature discursive texts, the composer will often draw on real life experiences to connect their ideas. These can come from their own lives or the lives of others. Similarly, to add authority to their ideas. The author may refer to other texts as well as quote facts and interesting details on a wide range of subjects. Dot point seven uses engaging imagery and language features. This is certainly a key feature of many discursive texts as this rich use of language engages the audience and connects the ideas. For example, in the English Standard text, ‘A Comparison’, Sylvia Plath incorporates a range of figurative devices including the unexpected motif of the toothbrush to convey the differences between novels and poetry. Dot point eight begins with an event an anecdote or relevant quote that is then used to explore an idea. These different approaches to introducing the topic or idea are effective at hooking the audience and setting the tone of the piece. They also make them highly personal which is a key feature of the style. Dot point nine, resolution may be reflective or open ended. This feature of discursive texts is one that clearly separates this style from the persuasive. There is a conclusion to the text but it does not demand their audience agree with their conclusions or that even they themselves have been able to come to a conclusion.

So if we summarise the previous two slides, we can see that discursive texts do have a clear structure in which they organise and explore their ideas. These ideas that are offered to the audience to consider and are expanded on through the use of often very personal examples including personal anecdotes. Discursive texts celebrate and play with language developing and sustaining their personal voice throughout. Now that you've explored some ideas and observations about the discursive, we would like you to update your own definition of what is the discursive text. How would you confidently know one when you see it? What would it look like if you were writing one of your own? Pause the presentation and complete activity three in your resource booklet. (soft music)

It is important that you understand that many different textual forms can be discursive in style. They can be a personal essay, a feature article, a speech, a eulogy, a blog post, a letter, creative nonfiction but what else could they be? Remember, it is in the purpose of the text, the approach to the topic and the engagement with the audience in context that ensure your texts can be identified as discursive. Pause the presentation and explore activity four in the resource booklet. Here we would like you to read two examples, one persuasive and one discursive. We want you to identify the features we have been exploring and identify the offer provided within the discursive text and the demand made through the persuasive. This is to highlight the differences with the discursive style and the persuasive type of text. Please note that each text identified is connected to a synopsis. In consultation with your teacher, select the relevant text you will read. It is important teachers read these texts in their entirety before assigning them to students and choose texts appropriate for their students' needs and contexts. One of the persuasive texts, ‘Like Danny’, explores mental health and the loss of a mate to suicide. These texts have been chosen because they clearly illustrate either the discursive or the persuasive style of writing and some also experiment with form. Certainly teachers could supplement the suggested text in the resource booklet or change them to others they think are more suitable for their context (soft music)

In activity five, we want you to go back to the module statement and identify the requirements for and links to discursive writing. Utilising the table and the information provided from the module statement, identify evidence from one of the discursive texts you read for activity four that showcases why this is an effective text to examine as part of your study. For example, the eulogy ’Like Danny, there was a time I thought iI was fixed’, clearly fits with a point made in the first paragraph of the module statement: ’write for a range of authentic audiences and purposes to convey ideas with power and increasing precision’. Through its use of powerful yet cliched idioms connected to stereotypes of masculine expectations, such as ‘harden up’ and ‘man up’ to connect to an audience of predominantly AFL footballers and other males connected through sport at Danny's funeral. In our own writing, we're then reminded to choose a clear and specific audience, as well as the potential to use idioms, to explore our ideas. Pause the presentation and complete activity five in the resource booklet. (soft music)

Now that you have explored the discursive style in some detail, it is your turn to compose a discursive text focusing on the topic where I live. In the resource booklet, you have room to plan your piece including making choices on the purpose, form, audience and context. It is a good idea to brainstorm all the different ways you could talk about the place you live, the street, suburb, town or city and then decide on which ones you will keep and in which order they will appear in the text. Remember our analogies, the cogs and wheels and the meandering river and think about where the swings will be most effective. This topic is also perfect for including some personal anecdotes and some great imagery to help us picture this location in our heads.

Finally as you write, remember you are offering up ideas on this place that you live. You are not trying to persuade someone to come there or not to come there. Pause the presentation and complete activity six in your resource booklet. You might like to just do your planning at this stage and come back and write the text at a later time. Ideally you should allocate no more than 30 minutes to compose the response. Once you've finished the text, take the time to complete the self-reflection. What discursive features did you use? What worked well and what else could you do next time to make it a more effective discursive text? (soft music)

Time to reflect on your learning for one last time. What are the key points you will remember from resource one about discursive texts and the module statement? The thinking routine ‘I used to think, now I think’, helps highlight how your thinking and understanding has expanded. Take a moment now to complete the thinking routine in the student resource booklet before you finish this session.

Thank you for joining us for this HSC, hub Standard English student support session and good luck for the months ahead.

(soft music)

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