

Considering Question 5

Compare how two texts of different genres respond to the concerns of the same time period.

Interpreting the question

This question required candidates to consider the relationship between the genre of texts and their contexts. The two texts discussed must 'respond to the concerns of the same time period'; that is, they must explore issues, fears or concerns arising from a common context of culture. However, it is essential that the texts belong to distinctly different genres. Candidates must consider how the unique conventions or features of each genre provide a means of responding to contextual concerns through close comparison of their chosen texts.

The ATAR English glossary defines genre as 'categories into which texts are grouped'. Candidates could refer to texts that are grouped into genres based on their form or structure, or their subject matter. For example, you could compare a short story with a documentary (an example of grouping texts according to form and structure). Alternatively, you could compare a film from the Western genre to a horror. This is an example of grouping texts according to subject matter and their stylistic features.

Once you have distinguished your chosen texts' different genres, you must acknowledge their responses to the concerns of their time period. This is an indirect invitation to discuss elements of cultural context. Your approach to these concerns could be quite varied. You could, for example, consider how two texts represent the move towards industrialisation in the early nineteenth century, or a more specific and acute concern, such as the rise of the #MeToo movement or 'cancel culture' in contemporary society.

You must compare how the creator of each text responds to contextual concerns. This could include identifying similarities and/or differences in the ways the concerns are represented, the perspectives offered or the purposeful construction of the texts. For example, a short story focusing on a character who was inspired by the #MeToo movement to confront a sexual harasser could rely on first person point of view to build an emotional connection between the reader and the protagonist, highlighting the author's sympathetic response to this continued concern in contemporary society. Conversely, a documentary addressing the same concern may respond in a more critical way, presenting a series of talking head interviews with men who claim their careers have been ruined by unfair accusations. Stronger candidates will discuss these responses in relation to the genre of the text, making purposeful connections between the choice of genre and the nature of the response.

Advice from teachers

IMPORTANT / ESSENTIAL

- It is essential that candidates not overlook the directive term 'compare' in this question. Your response must be structured to compare texts from the moment you put pen to paper. Focus on using comparative discourse to improve the fluency of your comparisons.
- Candidates must be specific in addressing how their chosen texts respond to concerns of the same time period. It is not enough to simply identify the time period and its concerns: delve deeper to acknowledge the construction and purpose of each text.

Text construction. ——— OK - So... they know their texts really well. language is articulate/elloquent structured.

Question 5: Sample response one

This response is successful due to the candidate's complex and highly-developed understanding of their chosen texts, coupled with their impressive ability to articulate their ideas. Each paragraph establishes a deliberate focus on all parts of the question, maintaining a logical and cohesive comparative structure. The candidate demonstrates their ability to respond eloquently under timed conditions by using a variety of sophisticated phrases and appropriate metalanguage, revealing their impressive understanding of the conventions associated with different genres.

Throughout the centuries authors have utilised their texts as constructs to comment on and respond to the issues confronting the society in which they were produced. This is reflected by both Alfonso Cuarón and Kazuo Ishiguro in their respective texts: *Children of Men* - a film that explores a dystopian future where infertility is a global pandemic and *Never Let Me Go* - a novel that is centered on the journey of a human clone. Whilst Cuarón's text is of the filmic genre and Ishiguro's text is of the written, not filmic, narrative genre - both respond to the concerns confronting western society in the 21st century through their use of different techniques. Both Cuarón and Ishiguro construct their texts to warn society of the social segregation prominent in western society, however Cuarón delivers this through his use of filmic techniques, whilst Ishiguro does so through his use of written language conventions. Additionally, both texts have been constructed to respond to the immorality in 21st century society, however Cuarón achieves this through his use of mise en scene, whilst Ishiguro draws upon narrative conventions, especially characterisation.

Although Cuarón and Ishiguro both respond to the social divide prominent in 21st century western society, through warning their audiences against the inequality that it creates, they draw upon different techniques to do this. In his text, *Children of Men*, Cuarón draws upon the political and cultural context of the western world to prompt society to comprehend the instability and injustice arising from social discrimination. The year of the film's release - 2006 - saw a significant rise in Islamophobia and hostility towards immigrants following the Septem-

This response begins with a declarative statement, establishing an immediate connection to all parts of the question.

Here, the candidate establishes an immediate comparative structure, acknowledging the differences in the plot of each text and their categorisation in different genres.

Instead of the 'filmic genre', the candidate could refer to *Children of Men* as a feature film or a multimodal text.

It is pleasing to note the candidate's frequent use of comparative discourse. They use phrases like 'both', 'however' and 'while' to make fluent comparisons.

To truly elevate this response, further precision in developing a clear thesis statement would be ideal. This introduction ends with several points of comparison that become overly complex and unwieldy. It would be better suited to a body paragraph.

This paragraph begins with an excellent topic sentence - one that directly addresses all aspects of the question.

The candidate clearly places their chosen texts within a specific context of production, providing necessary detail about the concerns they are responding to. This detail is concise, relevant and accurate.

Think about the assessment criteria here.

First link. Text types. Look at how the introduction establishes strong and consistent links between the texts.

Topic sentence links the texts very clearly.

Lots of contextual information here.

Quite general here. Needs some specific examples really.

This is much better.

exploration of conventions - camera angles.

So, BP1 deals with the 1st text

And the TS here connects it to the 2nd text.

ber 11 attacks. Several xenophobic policies were introduced and numerous countries, including the United Kingdom, began to shut their doors to refugees, in fear that asylum seekers would pose a risk to national security. Cuaron strongly reflects and responds to such discrimination through his representation of the mistreatment of 'fugees' (refugees) in the text. Throughout the film, Cuaron exposes the viewer to disturbing sights, including fugees rounded up in cages like animals in addition to the torture and murder of fugees in detention centres. Fugees are also blamed for the state of society with signs in the street reading, "Suspicious? Report All Illegal Immigrants." In the text, Jasper expresses sympathy towards the fugees attesting to the way in which "government hunts them down like cockroaches." **Cockroach** is a term that is negatively associated with pests and often invokes fear, and through this use of an audio code, Cuaron is able to convey the government's fear of the fugees and the dehumanisation and treatment of such fugees as subhuman. Cuaron continues to mirror the concerns of the western world post 9/11 through his use of camera shots. During their walk down the streets, the camera temporarily leaves him to explore other parts of the background that he has overlooked or ignored and often focuses on the entrapment and imprisonment of fugees. It is through this that Cuaron presents the way in which those in Theo's society, similar to those living in the 21st century western society, have contributed to the alienation of refugees as their irrational fear of asylum seekers led them to turn a blind eye to their cruel treatment in society. It is through this use of audio and technical codes characteristic of the filmic genre that Cuaron is able to respond to the prominent xenophobic attitudes in 21st century society, through warning society of the way in which fear has, and continues to, inspire division within society, of which innocent minority groups are often the undeserving victims.

This is a critical word.

Ishiguro similarly constructs his text, *Never Let Me Go* to respond to the issues of segregation and discrimination.

In other words, be as specific as you can consistently as possible.

Here the candidate suggests that the filmmaker 'strongly responds', but this statement would benefit from further clarity (e.g. the filmmaker may respond with concern, panic, disgust or anxiety).

The candidate broadly refers to a scene from the film here, but this is an excellent opportunity to incorporate metalanguage. They could comment on the use of framing, sound effects or lighting for example.

It is unclear who 'Jasper' is and it should not be assumed that the marker knows the text. A brief sentence to clarify that he is a supporting character with compassionate, left-leaning views would be useful.

This paragraph continues to reveal gaps in necessary information about the text. It is not clear who the candidate is referring to when they mention 'their walk'.

Remember, your markers may not be familiar with your text and your explanations need to be detailed and clear.

Here the candidate eloquently addresses the concerns of the 21st century and how the text responds to these fears, describing them as 'irrational' and 'cruel'.

This is an excellent linking sentence as it ties the points raised in the paragraph back to the question with clarity and a particular emphasis on the text's response to the concerns presented.

Note the linking word 'similarly' to show the connection between the two texts.

This is really important advice. Some context is useful.

prominent in western society in the 21st century and he achieves this through his use of written language techniques as opposed to the filmic techniques utilised by Cuaron. Following the Al Qaeda attacks in the 1990s and the September 11 attacks, western society saw increased tension and hostility towards minority groups, especially Muslims. Ishiguro strongly responds to this through the construction of his text to mirror the social demise prominent during this time period. While Ishiguro conveys this alienation of minority groups in several ways, including through the construction of Hailsham and the clone's limited exposure to the outside world, he especially achieves this in the scene in which Tommy, Ruth and Kathy observe Ruth's human 'possible' - "Seeing the woman and her office life was about as close as you could hope to the one Ruth had often described for herself." The imagery of Ruth seeing her 'possible' living a free and exciting life (compared to that of the clones) communicates the clear divide that exists between the humans and the clones in society. It is through his construction of the distinctly divided society of the text in which social classes have little to no interaction, that Ishiguro is able to both reflect the division prominent in 21st century western society, while warning the reader of the threats that such division poses to the wellbeing of those who are alienated and to the prosperity of our society. **Although Cuaron and Ishiguro construct this social segregation as occurring between different groups and utilise different techniques to achieve this, they both construct their respective texts, *Children of Men* and *Never Let Me Go* to respond to the concern of social discrimination and alienation through warning their audience of the injustice and isolation that flourishes in a society that condones this.**

Cuaron continues to respond to social concerns in western society at the time of his text's production, though his use of mise en scene in warning society against the immortality and abuse of power evident in 21st century western society. The year of the film's release - 2006 - marked the closing of the Abu Ghraib prison. From 2003

The candidate offers accurate and knowledgeable contextual information here, repeating the format that was highly effective in the previous paragraph.

CONTEXT:

Once again, the candidate must not assume the marker is familiar with the text. They may not know what 'Hailsham' is, or that 'Tommy, Ruth and Kathy' are clones.

This is a relevant piece of contextual evidence, but it is not grammatically incorporated here, despite the use of an en dash. 'Chopping' this quote into smaller fragments would be more effective.

The candidate mentions that the text 'reflect[s] the divisions' existing in society, but specific attention to how the text responds to this concern would be beneficial. Perhaps the text critiques or casts judgement on the way society discriminates against individuals based on class?

Here is your point of comparison

This is an effective point of comparison, as the candidate recognises that although the texts explore concerns in slightly different ways, they articulate a similar response.

Here, the candidate accentuates how both texts respond to the concern in the form of a 'warning' to audiences.

until August 2006, Abu Ghraib was used for detention purposes by both the US led coalition (which was occupying Iraq) and the Iraqi government. During this time, several members of the United States Army and the Central Intelligence Agency committed numerous human right violations against detainees in the prison, some which included physical and sexual abuse, torture, rape and murder. Cuarón warns society against such immoral abuses of power, though his construction of the government's misconduct towards fugees in the text. Throughout the film, Cuarón exposes the viewer to this treatment of fugees, particularly upon Kee and Theo's arrival at the detention where they drive past hooded fugees kneeling on the ground with guns pointed at their heads. There, Cuarón's most explicit parallel between the government's conduct towards the fugees and the treatment of prisoners in Abu Ghraib occurs as the frame resembles an infamous photo of Ali Shallal Al Quasi - one of the prisoners who was tortured and abused in Abu Ghraib. It is through this that Cuarón draws upon the US government's human rights violations to construct the government within the film to mirror the one leading the United States in the early 2000's, which too committed horrendous crimes in the guise of national security. It is through reflecting this conflict that Cuarón is able to demonise the government within the film, and more broadly, the modern western government that it represents, warning the audience against the elite heartless monsters who continually abuse their power. It is thus through the mise en scene we see that Cuarón is able to respond to the concern of the immoral abuse of power in 21st century western society, by warning his contemporary audience of the way in which such abuse often violates the rights and freedom of the vulnerable.

While Ishiguro also constructs his novel *Never Let Me Go* to respond to the immorality prominent in western society in the 21st century, he does so through the use of written narrative techniques in contrast to the filmic techniques utilised by Cuarón. The years leading up to the novel's release in 2005 saw major technological

It is impressive to note how the candidate manages to condense complicated contextual factors into a series of eloquent sentences; they continually demonstrate their detailed understanding of their chosen texts.

MORE CONTEXT.

The candidate states that the text 'warns society', but a more specific identification of the text's response to the concern would be beneficial. It may be more accurate to say that the text criticises, shames or harshly judges the concern.

The candidate maintains their eloquent expression and attention to detail here, referring to 'frame[s]' of the film and their overt allusions to prominent images from the time period.

Such an impressive control of vocabulary and expression can be seen here, particularly in phrases like 'under the guise of national security'.

A lively sense of personal voice can be seen here as the candidate refers to 'elite heartless monsters who abuse their power'. The varied and nuanced expression of this response makes it engaging to read while maintaining a logical focus on the question.

It is worth noting here that the candidate has mastered a logical paragraph structure and sticks to it, beginning each paragraph with a comparative statement that incorporates plenty of comparative discourse.

Don't get too bogged down by it though, there must be a balance between context and an explicit focus on the texts.

Candidate explores text 1 again here.

And the BP begins with a TS which invites a comparison between the texts.

advancements: in December 2001, the British Parliament passed a law condoning the use of embryos in medical research and in 2001, an embryo was successfully cloned. Ishiguro strongly responds to this acceptance of human cloning and the moral questions it raises through the construction of his protagonist, and narrator, Kathy. She addresses the audience in a warm and familiar tone, using phrases like "I'm not sure what it was like where you are" to imply that the reader is also a clone and that this practice has been completely normalised in society. A sense of structural irony is developed as the reader suspects that Tommy, Ruth and Kathy are clones that will never go on to lead full lives, yet they are unaware of this until much later in life. The clones are constructed as social pariahs, communicated when Madame stares at the innocent children (actually the clones of children) who come to greet her with "a shudder that she seems to be suppressing, the read dread that one of [them] would actually brush against her." The cloned children are valued for nothing more than their organs, "donating" to keep other humans alive until they reach the point of death. Through his construction of a likeable and warm first-person "clone" narrator, Ishiguro responds to concerns of western society in the 21st century; drawing attention to the moral implications of cloning human life. Both *Never Let Me Go* and *Children of Men* are concerned with the immorality gripping society in the early 21st century, reminding us of our basic humanity.

Although they belong to different genres, namely the filmic genre and the print narrative genre, both *Never Let Me Go* and *Children of Men* manage to explore the complex concerns of the same time period in thought provoking ways. Both texts explore the immorality 21st century was gripped with at the time of their production, representing the ways humans mistreat each other or undervalue their different human life. Through the conventions of genres, both texts offer a deeply confronting and worrying response to the concerns of their time period, suggesting that as a society, we must be very careful about how we treat each other.

MORE CONTEXT

Here the candidate repeats the phrase 'strongly responds'. Further variation in the language used to describe the nature of the response would be beneficial.

Construction is such an effective word to use because it demands that you show how.

This response consistently refers to metalanguage and the conventions of each genre, mentioning structural irony as a structural feature used in some print narratives.

The candidate seamlessly and effectively incorporates textual evidence here, working a quote naturally into their own sentence.

Convention explored consistently.

Further precision in acknowledging how the text specifically responds to concerns of the time period is needed here. It is not enough to simply state that the text responds.

Further comparison.

The candidate maintains their logical attention to the question and clear comparative structure until the very end of this response, demonstrating their excellent command of the question.

Conclusion links the ideas succinctly.

It is pleasing to see the candidate articulate the specific responses to the concerns generated by both texts, namely a 'deeply confronting and worrying response'.

Activity: Formulating a comparative response

The command word *compare* requires you to evaluate the similarities and differences between texts. This type of analysis can take many forms, but could require you to:

- evaluate how texts from different genres represent similar themes, issues or ideas
- consider the extent to which texts from the same genre adhere to, or subvert, expectations
- reflect on how texts from different genres may achieve similar purposes or reflect similar contexts
- consider how techniques and conventions are purposefully used by texts in contrasting genres or modes
- discuss how texts may reveal the progression, change or adaptation of a genre over time
- evaluate the ways texts construct voices to reveal contrasting attitudes towards an issue or idea.

This is not intended to be an exhaustive list, rather it is an illustration of the varied and intricate ways texts can be compared. A fundamental understanding of how to articulate the similarities and differences between your studied texts is an essential skill in the ATAR English course.

The following activity models for you the process of deconstructing a comparative question and formulating a clear line of comparison. You may find it useful to recreate this for a variety of texts and questions you have encountered this year.

Command Words	Concept Words	Condition Words	Critical Words
Compare how	genres, time period (cultural context), concerns (issues)	two texts	different, same, respond

The example overleaf offers you a comparative model for texts belonging to different structural genres, namely print narrative and feature film. However, this is not the only approach to comparing genres. You could also compare the thematic genres of texts, such as the romance genre and the future fiction genre, or the horror and Western genres.

Hint: Transition markers	
Help your comparative essay maintain its structure by using transition markers (linking words) to clearly indicate whether the next point you make is a similarity or difference.	
Comparison	Similarly, likewise, in a similar way, in a similar fashion, equally, in the same way, to the same extent, this is mirrored in, also apparent, echoed by, we also see this in
Contrast	On the other hand, this is clearly contrasted in, despite this, in direct opposition to, whereas, on the contrary, contrastingly, this is different to, the same cannot be said for, in a different way

Text: <i>Never Let Me Go</i> (print narrative)	Text: <i>Ex Machina</i> (feature film)
<p>Concerns of the same time period: Although <i>Never Let Me Go</i> focuses on clones and <i>Ex Machina</i> features robots, both texts fearfully respond to the risks and ethical dilemmas associated with technology that allows the creation of 'artificial' life. This is a prominent concern of the twenty-first century as technology edges us closer to the ability to 'play God'.</p>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Told in first-person retrospective narrative point of view from the perspective of Kathy, a clone, who establishes a warm and familiar tone and sense of openness with the reader. • Kathy uses terms specific to the context of the clones, such as 'donating' and 'completion', indicating that cloning is an accepted and normalised part of society. • Drawing is a significant symbol in the text as the clones are instructed to 'donate' their work to Madame's gallery. This is to familiarise them with the process of eventually 'donating' their organs. • A tragic love story between Tommy and Kathy is established through dialogue and her revealing narrative voice, drawing attention to the injustice of the clones not being entitled to live a normal life. The reader is saddened that Kathy must care for Tommy during his final donations, as he 'gives up' on finding a way to escape the fate of a clone. • The use of the romantic tune 'Never Let Me Go' is a significant symbol in the text, reminding the reader that the clones are in fact humans who are vulnerable to human emotion. • Supporting characters are deliberately constructed to reveal contrasting perspectives on the morality and ethics of raising clones for 'donation'. Miss Lucy has a humane perspective, believing the clones are being misinformed and mistreated, whereas Miss Emily is proud of the work she did in creating 'Hailsham' - a place where clones could live a 'decent' childhood in a 'sanctuary' while the rest of society disdained them. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ava (an advanced robot) is constructed as human. Her body language is delicate and she speaks with a gentle, flirtatious tone. The boundary between human and robot is blurred by her characterisation. • Ava is kept in a glass cage, connotating a caged animal. Despite this, she appears distinctly human. A close-up of a crack in the glass foreshadows potential danger or distress. • Nathan (Ava's creator) is represented as a menacing technological genius. When he first appears on-screen he is kickboxing and muscular. There are locked doors in his compound that he tells Caleb 'not to worry about': • Nathan's maid Kyoko remains silent throughout the film, despite the ways he demeans her. It is revealed in the resolution that she is also a robot and is complicit in Ava's escape. • Ava's costume gradually develops over the course of the text as she wears floral and feminine dresses to conceal her circuitry. However, robotic 'swooshing' sounds can still be heard when she moves or gestures. This serves to remind the audience that she is in fact a robot. • Ominous music and glowing red lighting are used to reveal Ava's moments of anger. The same music is repeated as she turns her back on Caleb and walks out of the compound. • The final chilling scene is framed in a long-shot with Caleb frantically banging on the glass of the same cage Ava was once trapped in as she walks boldly towards the camera, revealing her final move to 'outsmart' the men who created her.