English Standard, Module C
Discursive part two transcript

(Duration 19 minutes 21 seconds)

(soft music)

Welcome to the HSC hub student support session for English Standard. This is resource two in relation to the series of four resources, supporting your understanding of discursive writing. In this resource, we will be exploring Module C The Craft of Writing through the lens of discursive writing. We will help students find inspiration for the discursive in the prescribed texts for Module C. The purpose of this resource is to give students extra support in their preparation for Trial or HSC examinations. It is important that this resource is not seen as a substitute for classroom work with teachers and peers that students will need in order to perform at their best over the coming months. This is a review of resources that will work best under the guidance of the classroom teacher, but it may also be used independently to remind students of the key direction and concepts within this module.

If this resource is being used in collaboration between the teacher and students, we'd like you to take note that this has been designed to run for approximately 20 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 set activities. Please feel free to supplement the resource booklet with your own strategies. These reminders are also found at the start of the student resource booklet.

[Slide reads: If using this resource at home independently you will need:

* access to some of your school classwork and assessment tasks
* access to both this presentation and the student resource booklet
* 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. Make sure you take adequate breaks!]

If you are a student and you're working through this resource independently, we suggest that you stop the recording at key sections and complete the activities. This includes thinking routines, reflection, activities, and written responses. And these are all provided within the resource booklet. The information that is on the screen now is also provided in the resource booklet. Take a moment to read this information.

Within this series of resources, there are four 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 that 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 particular resource is number two, finding inspiration for the discursive in the prescribed texts for Module C.

Take a moment now and read the information provided within resource two, activity one. This contains annotations of the two texts that we will explore. It also contains an outline of the other texts set for study within Module C in both Advanced and Standard that NESA has identified as being discursive. In this section, we are going to explore excerpts from two of the Standard texts. If you would like to read the others as a point of interest, you are more than welcome to do so, and this can be part of your wide reading experience. Please note that resource 1 within your activity booklet is the module statement. (soft music)

These two texts are identified in the Module C The Craft of Writing support document. And this is found within the English Standard syllabus page on the NESA website. The links are also provided within resource 2. Text 1 is Helen Garner's 'Dear Mrs. Dunkley.' And text 2 is Sylvia Plath's 'A Comparison.' These texts are both identified as being discursive, but they each take a different form and style, offer different purposes, and utilise different language features and devices. Our focus right now will be identifying these texts as discursive, and then exploring specifically why this is the case.

We will now examine an extract from ‘Dear Mrs. Dunkley’. Please note that this is part of a much longer piece of writing. Garner wrote, “Dear Mrs. Dunkley. You taught us not only arithmetic. One day, making us all sick with shame that our mothers had neglected their duties, you taught the whole of grade five to darn a sock. You taught us to spell, and how to write a proper letter: the address, the date, the courteous salutation, the correct layout of the page, the formal signing off. But most crucially, you taught us grammar and syntax. On the blackboard you drew up meticulous columns, and introduced us to parts of speech, parsing, analysis. You showed us how to take a sentence apart, identify its components, and fit them back together with a fresh understanding of the way they worked. One day, you listed the functions of the adverb. You said, "An adverb can modify an adjective." Until that moment, I had known only that adverbs modified verbs: They laughed loudly; sadly she hung her head. I knew I was supposed to be scratching away with my dip pen, copying the list into my exercise book, but I was so excited by this new idea that I put up my hand and said, "Mrs. Dunkley, how can an adverb modify an adjective?"”

 Now we would like you to unpack this extract and identify the discursive features. Please complete each of the steps involved in activity two ‘a’. First of all, you need to read through the extract, then read through table two. Then we want you to annotate the extract, identifying as many of the features from table two as you can. You might want to do this with a peer so that you can help each other, share your annotation with a peer, and compare your observations and ideas. Complete the column for text one in table two, identify a textual evidence to support your ideas, and then explain your observations and ideas. This may work best, as we've already suggested, completing this with a peer. (soft music)

How did you go? Did you identify any of the following? Did you identify the personal anecdote or the first person singular and plural point of view, particularly the use of the inclusive 'we' and 'us'? There were quotes from remembered dialogue with particular vernacular reflecting context. There is a memorable, at times, excited and engaging tone showing the composer’s memories of this person. There is a repetition of 'you' as a direct address to the recipient of the letter. There were a variety of sentence types with particular use of punctuation, including tricolon and anaphora.

[Slide reads:
Dear Mrs Dunkley. You taught us (anaphora) not only arithmetic. One day, making us all sick with shame that our mothers had neglected their duties, you taught the whole of grade five to darn a sock (personal anecdote). You taught us (first person inclusive) to spell, and how to write a proper letter: the address, the date, the courteous salutation, the correct layout of the page, the formal signing off. But most crucially, you taught us grammar and syntax. On the blackboard you drew up meticulous columns, and introduced us to parts of speech, parsing, analysis. You showed us how to take a sentence apart, identify its components, and fit them back together with a fresh understanding of the way they worked.

One day you (repetition of you / second person singular) listed the functions of the adverb. You said, "An ad­verb can modify an adjective." (quote from remembered dialogue) Until that moment I had known only that adverbs modified verbs: they laughed loudly; sadly she hung her head (italicised content indicates examples of remembered activities). I knew I (variety of sentence beginnings) was supposed to be scratching away with my dip pen, copying the list into my exercise book, but I was so excited by this new idea that I put up my hand and said, "Mrs Dunkley. How can an adverb modify an adjective?” (dialogue from the memory) (Overall a variety of sentence types and structures – simple, compound, complex and compound complex).]

Now take a moment to read the annotation that's provided on the screen. Did you identify some of these features? Anything you missed, add to your own annotation. Don't forget to research terms unfamiliar to you and read examples online. If you search examples of tricolon, for example, you will find a wealth of support material, then experiment with using these new features or devices in your own writing. To help you with this process, complete steps eight to 10 of activity two ‘a’. (soft music)

Plath writes, “Perhaps I shall anger some poets by implying that the poem is proud. The poem, too, can include everything they will tell me. And with far more precision and power than those baggy, dishevelled and undiscriminate creatures we call novels. Well, I concede these poets their steamshovels and old trousers. I really don't think poems should be all that chaste. I would, I think even concede a toothbrush, if the poem was a real one. But these apparitions, these poetical toothbrushes, are rare. And when they do arrive, they are inclined like my obstreperous yew tree, to think themselves singled out and rather special. Not so in novels. There the toothbrush returns to its rack with beautiful promptitude and is forgot. Time flows, eddies, meanders, and people have leisure to grow and alter before our eyes. The rich junk of life bobs all about us: bureaus, thimbles, cats, the whole much-loved, well-thumbed catalog of the miscellaneous, which the novelist wishes us to share. I do not mean that there is no pattern, no discernment, no rigorous ordering here. I am only suggesting that perhaps the pattern does not insist so much. The door of the novel, like the door of the poem, also shuts. But not so fast, nor with such manic, unanswerable finality.”

Now we would like you to unpack this extract and identify the discursive features. This information is found within activity two ‘b’. Please complete each of the following steps. First, read through the extract. Second, complete the column for text two in table two, then identify textual evidence to support your ideas and finally explain your observations and ideas. Now, pause the presentation and complete activity two ‘b’. (soft music)

Did you notice any of the following? Did you notice the use of first-person singular point of view? Did you notice that Plath approaches a topic from different angles? She uses various figurative devices to illustrate her point, symbols, personification, and undermining juxtaposition, litter her response, providing analogist moments. There is engaging imagery through these figurative devices. There is a variety of sentence types and phrase types. There's also a variety of sentence structures. And again, tricolon, in particular, impacts the pacing and the flow of the sentences. Plath also plays with style. There seems to be a nod to the stream of consciousness. The complex sentences are used to explore complex ideas, and these build layers to her thoughts. And then she adds a simple sentence as a statement that counterpoints that complexity. This creates an accumulation of thoughts and ideas, which in turn build her earnestness. At times, the style with this sentence structure seems to mirror an internal monologue, mimicking the complex nature of the personal thought process. Once again, pause the presentation and add any ideas you missed to your annotation. (soft music)

Thinking about this learning and the texts that you read within resource one, a few common features might be standing out to you. Your discursive response should have an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. It should offer, not demand. Each idea should be introduced in a new paragraph. Each idea is expanded upon through examples and "evidence," but that evidence can look different from text to text. Evidence does not include detailed language analysis of texts. This is not an analytical personal response. They usually celebrate language using anecdotes, analogies, specific vernacular, and figurative language. Just to name a few. They are usually written in active, personal voice using the first person 'I' in particular, but most importantly, they are engaging. Now it's your turn. Create your own discursive response exploring childhood. The purpose is to explore childhood for a range of perspectives or exploring a range of ideas. Use the form of a letter, feature article, or if you want to push yourself into a new area, the personal essay. You might like to use Plath's essay as a guide. In terms of your ideas, you can explore whatever you'd like, but a few suggestions are to explore the experience of playing in the street, friendships, school, dinner time, or holidays. When you are planning, use table three and make note of how and why you were going to use some of the common features of the discursive. What anecdotes will you tell? What analogies will you create? Which extended metaphors, motifs or symbols will you thread through the response? And don't forget to research. The focus in this module is using mentor texts as stimulus and models to guide your writing. When it comes to structure, what will be the order of your ideas within your paragraphs? Where are swings and roundabouts? Where will you start and where will you end up? In terms of audience and context, we're leaving these fairly open, but we would really like you to focus on your year 12 peers in some way. Don't forget to pause the presentation and complete activity three. (soft music)

Now that you have completed some planning and you have recorded some ideas, and you have a little bit of direction for where you would like to head with this writing, now it's time to experiment and actually engage in the writing process. Set yourself a timer and write for 30 minutes using the plans that you have just created. All right, let's experiment. (soft music)

How did you go? Are you finding that this process gets a little easier each time because you're now settling in to consistent writing practice? Now that you've explored some ideas and observations about the discursive and you've experimented in your own writing write a reflection explaining how this study has enabled you to create an engaging discursive piece. If it has been a while since you wrote a reflection, revisit your assessment or coursework for this module and review a reflection you have written previously. Don't forget that in the resource, ‘Staying focused on the Module’, we also dive to pretty deeply into how to write a reflection under examination conditions, and we provided you with an annotated sample. Set yourself around 10 minutes to complete this activity. (soft music)

Now we will reflect on our learning, and to complete this section, you will need to utilise activity five in the student booklet. Here, we've provided you with a Harvard Thinking Routine. "I used to think... Now, I think." And this routine helps you identify how your knowledge, skills, and understanding, have developed through your engagement with this resource. Pause the presentation and complete activity five. Make sure you take a break after completing this final activity. (soft music)

This is the end of resource 2. Don't forget that there is also resource 3 and resource 4 that are a part of this four resource structure. (soft music)

End of transcript