



GENERAL COMMENTS

In 2007 the examination paper consisted of two sections: Section 1 required a response to one text, while Section 2 required students to complete three different tasks in response to the given material. The responses to Section 1 were spread across a wider range of texts this year, and the five most popular texts produced 65% of all responses. There were no responses on three of the texts and a further eight texts attracted fewer than 10 responses. In Section 2 almost all students responded to all three tasks.

Assessment is holistic; assessors relate student performance directly to the published assessment criteria. Their judgements are assisted by the use of a set of descriptors. Both the criteria and the descriptors are fully explored and directly related to the range of student responses during intensive assessor training before and during the marking process. Teachers and students should be aware of both the assessment criteria and the descriptors, which are published on the VCAA website.

Teachers and students should note that the tasks will change in the 2008 examination. To prepare for this, teachers are advised to read the Examination Specifications, the Sample Examination, the Examination Criteria and mark descriptors, all of which are available on the VCAA website.

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

Note: Student responses reproduced herein have not been corrected for grammar, spelling or factual information.

Section 1 – Text response

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	1	1	1	5	13	24	25	18	9	4	1	5.8

Students were required to produce one piece of analytical or expository writing in response to one text. There were two topics for each of the prescribed texts. The layout of the English (ESL) paper remained similar to previous years and there did not appear to be any misunderstanding about the task requirements, even for the many ESL students who are taught in mainstream classes.

The best responses showed an ability to craft meaningful, analytical and relevant discussions in direct response to the chosen question. While good answers showed detailed textual knowledge, the best ones skilfully wove this knowledge into the fabric of the analysis. Generally, the topics elicited responses that demonstrated knowledge of texts and a sustained discussion on key themes and aspects of characterisation. This was particularly the case in responses to the topics that focussed on a single proposition, feature of the characters or narrative, such as the first question on *Romulus, My Father*. With more complex topics that invited exploration and discussion around two or more components, responses often only partially addressed the topic; for example, the first question on *Look Both Ways*.

The most popular texts and their mean scores are shown in the table below.

Text	% of students	Average mark
<i>I'm not Scared</i>	19.1%	5.2
<i>Lantana</i>	16.2%	5.7
<i>Look Both Ways</i>	15.5%	5.8
<i>The Kite Runner</i>	8.7%	6.0
<i>A View from the Bridge</i>	6.8%	5.9

Both topics on *I'm Not Scared* were clearly worded and accessible, but were not handled well by a number of students. The concept of the child narrator in this text did not seem to have been prepared or considered by many students, so it was either ignored or not handled well by most of those who responded to this topic. Some students simply listed examples of adult greed and cruelty. Many glib responses to the second topic did not make a meaningful link between the 'threat of violence' and right or wrong actions. Some responses talked generally about characters who knew what was right and what was wrong.

The second *Lantana* topic tended to be interpreted as 'couples' rather than 'individuals', so very few students referred to Claudia. Many read 'problems' as 'feelings' and hence wrote about betrayal and trust. This also contributed to the tendency to work through each couple. If nothing else, this approach gave students a structure from which to write.



As a new text on the list, *Look Both Ways* elicited thoughtful responses with fresh ideas. Students generally wrote well. The first topic invited a consideration of how we live with uncertainty (as played out in the film). There was a tendency to talk about fears in general rather than focus on those associated with unpredictability. Better responses to the second topic discussed just how powerful the influence of relationships was in the lives of the characters, but mid-range responses just referred to the existence of relationships and people wanting relationships.

The first topic for *The Kite Runner* produced excellent responses from those who attempted the ‘tragedy’ part of the question. It was explained by some as almost an aside, such as ‘The pity is...’, while others explored it as a consequence of keeping secrets or as Amir’s betrayal of Hassan through jealousy. Mid-range responses tended to focus exclusively on the similarities and differences between Hassan, Amir and Baba. In the second topic, discussing the characters’ ‘cultural values’ appeared to be difficult for some students, who did not seem to have thought about the differences between personal and cultural values.

Students generally demonstrated an engagement with the ideas of the texts, good essay structure and obvious confidence in how to approach the task. Stronger responses were characterised by a sharp focus on the key words in the topics, selective and considered use of the text and ideas expressed with strong language skills. There were very few short or incomprehensible responses. In some cases there was still an over-reliance on storytelling and regurgitating practice writing which had only some relevance to the topic on the paper. When planning their responses, students need to brainstorm all the key words as well as pay particular attention to modifying words and comparatives within the question. They also need to be able to explore how texts are constructed and the effects of the writer’s choices in developing a narrative.

Student Response – Example 1

This insightful response is controlled and well-structured. It understands the impact of filmic elements and, until the last few lines, is tightly focussed on how these highlight the emotional state of the characters. The language is appropriate and accurate. The minor lapses in expression are of a type which is not unusual in ESL student writing.

‘In Lantana the settings and sounds are used to highlight the emotional state of the characters.’ Discuss.

The film Lantana, directed by Ray Lawrence, explores the interconnected lives of eleven different characters. Throughout the film, settings and sounds are employed to highlight not only the emotional state of the characters, but their relationships, future and roles. At the beginning, the lantana bush serves as a metaphor for the world of layers and concealments of the characters, where all else may appear healthy and beautiful on the outside but hides secrets and problems underneath. Below the lantana bush, Valerie’s body is highlighted among the darkness, and the lingering storm indicates that death, relationships and deceit are the recurring themes throughout the film.

Leon is the detective sergeant who is involved in the investigation of Valerie’s disappearance. He is first introduced to the audience as he and Jane make love in a dark hotel room. The dim lighting in the room indicates the secrecy of their affair. In one of the jogging scene, Lawrence specifically films Leon running down a slope and constantly clutching his heart, as if he has a ‘weak heart’. Leon is going through his midlife crisis where everything seems to go ‘downhill’ for him: his deteriorating health, emptiness and loss of power. Another problem is that he has difficulty articulating his feelings and emotions effectively and often resorts to violence as an outlet. Leon is always dressed in a three-piece suit, highlighting his uptightness and repressive nature. In contrast, his wife, Sonia, is portrayed as a friendly and carefree person. She is always dressed in open-necked tops, indicating honesty. Her face is highlighted in a warm glow and a wide smile as she waits for Leon’s car. However, she is not as happy as she looks as she consults Valerie for advice in her marriage. In Valerie’s consultant room, she is often dressed in black, showing how much she is depressed and saddened by the tension in the marriage. The tension in the marriage is highlighted when Leon brutally refuses Sonya’s help after the jogging incident. She literally turns her back on him while he is left ‘reflecting’ on himself.

Another couple facing problem in their marriage are Valerie and John. Valerie publishes a book about Eleanor, her daughter who is murdered two years ago: to her, she ‘just want the whole world to know’. However, this is a different case for John as he prefers isolation. John often visits Eleanor’s murder site and lays flowers secretly. An overhead view of John’s car in the alley highlights his disempowerment by Eleanor’s death. Valerie may appear strong and brave at the book launch but she is in fact vulnerable and deeply engrossed in Eleanor’s death. She is surrounded by curtains with Eleanor’s name printed on them. While her face glows in a weak orange light amongst the dark background. She also sets up a shrine for Eleanor at home. At one instance, her face is reflected upon the mirror beside to Eleanor’s framed photograph, indicating that she may be the next – a predicted death for her. The distance between the couple is highlighted when a medium close-up shot shows John staring blankly at Valerie, as she demands him to look at her while making love to her. Her disappointment is evident as she sighs and hold John.

For Pete and Jane, their relationship is too late to be saved as Jane claims that she ‘didn’t love (him) anymore’. She is often filmed in darkness, behind the curtains, dancing by herself. This represents her loneliness and her desire for a happy life like her neighbours, Paula and Nik. Pet drops into Jane’s house at night, checking on her: he checks her bed for signs of infidelity. Pete is a victim in this relationship. His victim status is further emphasised when Valerie assaults him on the street. In contrast, Paula and Nik’s relationship is strong. The couple is often filmed in bright light, indicating that their marriage is based on trust and honesty. Nik tells Paula about Jane’s friendly invitation on their marital bed and discusses openly about his day. However, one



event that he does not tell Paula is the incident with Valerie. In the morning, he is being filmed bed ridden among a dim-lighted background – indicating his engrossment and guilt about the incident.

In *Lantana*, various settings and sounds are useful in highlighting the emotional state, relationship, future and role of the characters. By the end of the film Leon and Sonya are filmed dancing together, the speed of the dance represents the slow healing process for both and a hope for reconciliation. However, John is unfortunate as he loses both Valerie and Eleanor. His loneliness is shown as he stands on the cliff while great clouds loom overhead. As usual, Jane is dancing by herself, with smoke and drink on each hand, showing that she is indeed a woman ‘full of potential’. Pete is filmed driving away from Jane’s house, indicating that he has decided to move on with his life without Jane. Paula and Nik’s relationship remains strong as ever as they play with their children in the brightly lit front yard. The film demonstrates that the characters are capable of hiding secrets but all are revealed in the end and that honesty and trust are indeed most important in relationships.

Student Response – Example 2

The following mid-range response attempts to go deeper than a literal reading of the text. There are some lapses in the organisation and some unfinished ideas. The conclusion is not clearly tied back to the topic. The ideas are stronger than the language used to express them.

‘In Sky Burial it is the journey rather than the discovery that changes Wen’s life.’ Discuss.

Often people go on journey’s to discover what they are looking for and when they come to the discovery many of them often learn that the discovery hasn’t changed them in any possible way, but the path to the discovery has changed their beliefs, religion or simply completely changed them. This is a case that happened to the main character Shu Wen.

In Sky Burial Shu Wen experienced a very long and receiving journey that went on for 30 years. Shu Wen travelled from China to Tibet in order to find out what happened to her beloved husband only 100d days. Her journey to Tibet was physically and emotionally very hard at times, but it was her spiritually that kept her going for so many years. During her journey she met a long life friend Zhuoma, which helped Wen a lot as Zhuoma was her translator when they found a home at a nomads tent. She also helped her along the way to find discovery.

Shu Wen gained a lot through living with the nomad family as they were very religious and spiritual. Shu Wen watched them spin the prayer wheel as they were praying and repeating the prayer change ‘Om manmi padme hum’. Everyday she watched them do their daily chores. And soon found herself spinning the prayer wheel when she was in difficult situations. She also started to say the prayer words ‘Om mani padme hum’. Wen slowly started to change her identity from being a non-religious, non-cultural Chinese into becoming a very religious and spiritual Tibetan. Wen also felt a change when Saierbao the mother of the nomad family rewarded her with a Tibetan cultural clothing. When she put her gown on she felt like a true Tibetan, but it didn’t worry her as she said that she was proud of becoming and Tibetan. Therefore Wen gained a knowledge of Tibetan religion and the importance of spirituality. During her life with the nomad family Wen also learned to speak Tibetan and became very close to each member of the nomad family. This was very rewarding for her as she felt that her change was for the better.

During her journey Wen also gained a very close friendship with Zhuoma and Tiananmenn (Zhuoma’s lover and groomsman). These two people played a very important part during Wen’s journey. As Zhuoma and Wen first lived together for many years with the nomad family, they became very close. When Zhuoma was kidnapped, Wen was left to go on a yet another journey to find Tiananmenn who was lost. Wen took the journey and found Tiananmen and they then continue to look for kidnapped Zhuoma. During their journeys of searching for one another they together learn about life’s difficulties as they try to overcome them together.

Section 2 – Writing task

Students were presented with a number of items related to one topic. They were required to complete three tasks in response to this unseen material. The tasks were:

- a note form summary of a section of the material
- an analysis of language used in another section of the material
- a response to an issue raised by the texts.

Each task was of equal value and three separate scores were given. Clear instructions resulted in very few instances of students completing tasks on the wrong material. The universally relevant nature of the material worked well, allowing students to engage with the topic and the arguments presented.

Part 1

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	2	3	5	9	14	18	21	18	8	1	6.1

The material for Part 1 was well understood by students, which was demonstrated in the many excellent responses. The language used in the material was appropriate and accessible, and also made it possible to discriminate higher order responses that demonstrated how the student had processed the information. In many responses the key features of note-

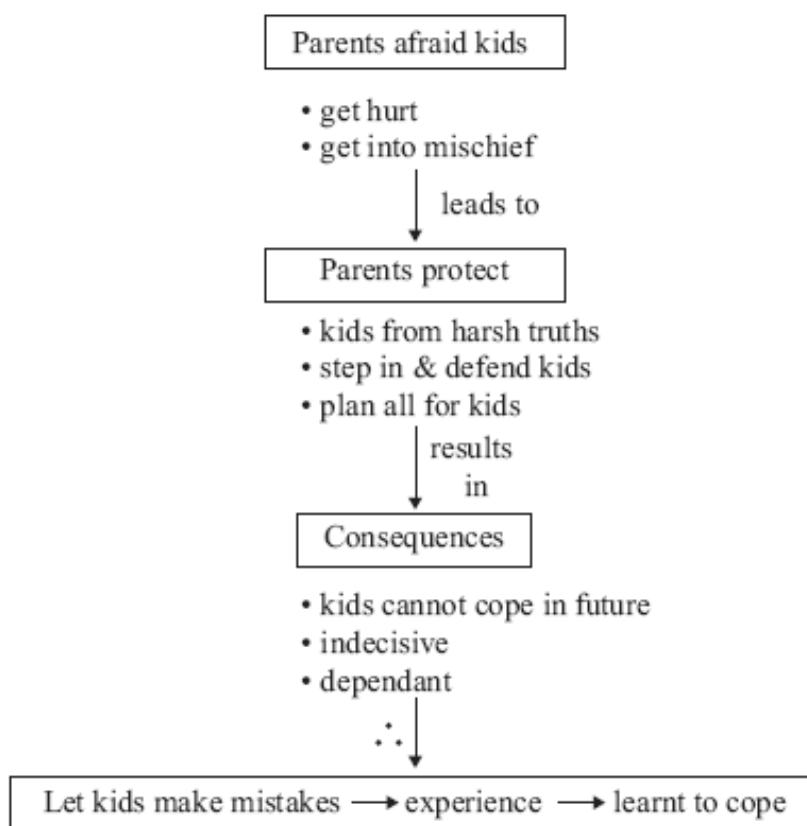


taking were used effectively to produce meaningful notes. These included the use of headings and sub-headings, abbreviations and a choice of layout which demonstrated processing of the information. Poorer and sometimes meaningless responses attempted to use a yes/no, for/against, agree/disagree approach rather than reflecting on the material presented as a case against the over protection of children. In some cases examples were overused, which resulted in unnecessarily lengthy responses.

Student Work – Example 1

This example demonstrates understanding, processing and organisation of the material in a meaningful and concise way. Sub-headings are used to good effect.

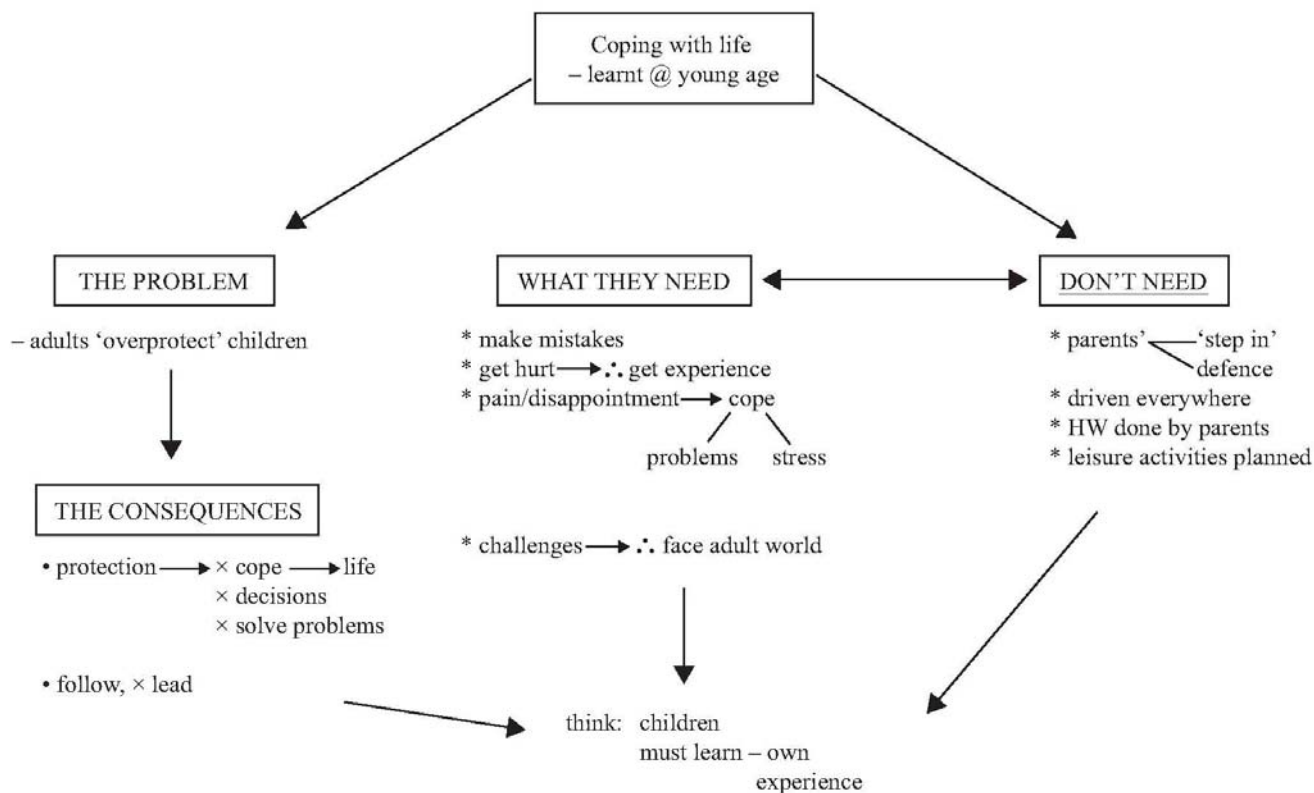
LIFE SKILLS LEARNT WHEN YOUNG





Student Work – Example 2

The following example demonstrates another possible layout. It shows excellent processing of the material and clear presentation, using sub-headings and arrows to indicate the flow of information. It is wordier and uses more examples than the previous example.



Part 2

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	17	11	11	11	11	10	10	8	6	4	2	3.8

The material for Part 2 included lots of examples of persuasive language, both obvious and subtle. However, even students who showed that they knew what to look for were not always able to apply their knowledge to the context. Strong responses provided simple explanations that were focussed on the reader, in the context of the material. There was a tendency to identify many examples simply as ‘fear tactics’. Some students obviously had difficulty understanding the purpose of the reference to the grandfather’s experience in the opening paragraph. Others clearly had enough grasp of the English language to respond, but seemed to have almost no idea of what was required to complete the task.

Weaknesses still included long and rambling analyses which had a tone of confidence but were inaccurate, limited understanding of the idea of ‘positioning the audience’ and explanations which did not relate to the examples chosen.

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Student Work – Example 1

The explanations in this example focus on the intended effect on the audience and show a clear understanding of the writer's use of persuasive language.

<i>Example</i>	<i>Explanation</i>
<i>'Now I have my own kids...unsupervised means unsafe.'</i>	<i>Jack Lee introduces himself to his readers as a father with his 'own kids'. It reassures readers that his is a man who is personally involved in the issue, concerned about the safety of his own children. Readers are more inclined to agree with Lee's point of view, understanding that he is sincerely concerned about the welfare of all children, including his own.</i>
<i>'evening news bombards viewers...bloodiest massacre...has occurred.'</i>	<i>In this sentence, Jack Lee employs the use of strong emotive words such as 'bombards', 'carnage' and 'bloodiest massacre' to evoke fear and terror in readers. Feeling as such, readers realise that they do not want their children to be confronted with the same terrible fear and consequently feel that children must be protected from these gory images.</i>
<i>'It terrifies me'</i>	<i>This short and succinct statement succeeds in having a strong impact in the reader's mind. A simple 'it terrifies me' conveys the feeling that the dangers children are vulnerable and susceptible to is very worrying indeed.</i>
<i>'Don't tell me that kids should see all this. What does it do to them?'</i>	<i>In this rhetorical question, Jack Lee engages his audience and invited them to consider the potentially terrible consequences of the children being constantly attacked with negative images of the world around them. Having explored these damaging consequences, readers would feel that it is better to protect their children from the harsh realities of life.</i>
<i>'Like all responsible parents I want my children...'</i>	<i>Jack Lee claims that he is 'like all responsible parents' implying that any good and reasonable parent would want the same things he does: for their children to be optimistic about the future. Wanting to be one of the 'responsible parents' readers would feel that they are obligated to protect their children from negative images of the world.</i>



Student Work – Example 2

The explanations in the following response avoid naming techniques and show a strong understanding of the writer’s use of persuasive language. There is sometimes a glib assumption that the reader will agree with the writer, rather than just a focus on what the writer intends.

<i>Examples</i>	<i>Effects on readers</i>
<i>‘Now I have my own kids and I say unsupervised means unsafe.’</i>	<i>The writer tells readers that he is a parent and knows what is best for his children. As a parent, he has a lot of concern for this issue and the readers would feel that the writer genuinely wants the best outcome of this issue and would tend to agree with him.</i>
<i>‘...according to a major study done by well-known psychologists.’</i>	<i>By referring his arguments to expert opinion the writer strengthens the belief of the readers in him that he has research this issue thoroughly and knows what he is talking about. The readers would feel comforted and agree with the writer that the future is indeed bleak and horrible.</i>
<i>‘What a bleak and horrible world our children see.’</i>	<i>Jack Lee uses the words ‘bleak’ and ‘horrible’ to generate fear in the readers on the horrifying truth of real life. The readers would also fear that their children won’t be safe in that ‘world’. The readers would tend to agree with the writer’s opinions that their children is unsafe in that world by themselves.</i>
<i>‘What will we do without water? Is there anything we can do to stop our planet from being destroyed?’</i>	<i>The writer lets the readers think about the effect of the climate changes themselves. By asking these questions, the writer let the readers realise how gloomy the future is for their children and agree with him, that their children should be protected from these horrible predictions.</i>
<i>‘Like all responsible parents, I want my children to have something to look forward to in the future.’</i>	<i>The writer claims that ‘all responsible parents’ would agree with him that children should be protected to have something to hope for in the future. Readers would tend to agree with him because every parent would want to be responsible and want the best for their children.</i>

Part 3

Marks	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Average
%	2	2	5	8	15	23	21	14	6	2	1	5.2

Part 3 asked students to write a speech for an oral presentation to their class. Higher order responses displayed a clear, strong ‘voice’. Generally students responded well to the material and selected material from it appropriately. The supplementary material generally was not well used. Many responses just listed statistics and very few referred to the cartoon. There was insufficient processing of the graphs, with information copied from the graphs without interpretation or selection.

Good responses integrated personal experience and the task material well, although the topic lent itself to some responses overdoing the ‘personal experience’ part. Many fluent, internally consistent responses were essentially off the topic. Hence, a small but significant proportion of scripts discussed over protection with reference to the child’s right to freedom and fun as a marker of childhood.

Student Response – Example 1

This high range response is an ambitious, but not always successful, attempt to integrate the ideas of the task material in an individual response that presents a clear point of view. It includes some use of the supplementary material and uses personal experience as a starting point to gain the attention of the audience. The vocabulary is appropriate and varied even though the language skills have some obvious features of second language writing.

Good morning to Mrs_____ and my fellow classmates. To start off with my speech this morning, I’d like to post a question for you: Do you think that your parents were too strict with you? As a teenager, I’m sure most of you would rush to answer ‘Yes’. However, think about it again. Most of you turned out to become independent, hardworking and understanding students. Our parents’ discipline and lessons taught us well. They shaped and molded us to perfection through their love and protection. I do not think that children should be left to run wild in the neighbourhood but at the same time, I do not think that overprotecting them is the best way to prepare them for the future.



Most people think back to 'the good old days' when there are heaps of children to be raised in a family. Children were independent and learned through their own mistakes, and lot of them turned out to be 'independent, caring, university-educated' people. However, they did not realise that the world was not the world three decades before. The world then was simple, without terrorists, or the horror of increasing crime rates or the evils of the internet. They do not see that the world now are filled with dangers that can entice the impressionable children to dangerous activities.

The media nowadays are filled to the brim with tragedies and the evil acts of humans. If children are exposed to these stories without the right guidance, it would slowly become a norm to them. What will happen to the future societies if this happens? I am sure that all responsible parents would shudder at the thought of the possible skewed moral values that these young children would have if the necessary actions are not implemented. These children should be taught love and hope, that one day these evils in the society could be banished. They should also be taught that crimes aren't the norm of society. How could we expect the young and innocent children to know all these if we wash our hands off them? They would only learn what they see and the future would indeed be bleak and horrible if this happens.

Of course, I am not implying that children should be wrapped in bubbles. Too much protection would render as much harm as too little care would. A normal childhood that allow children to learn and play freely would be sufficient. It is definitely shocking to find out that 18% of children are not allowed to play with water while another 21 are not allowed to ride bikes and skateboards. These restrictions are just outrageous. A scratched knee or a fall would not have a permanent effect on the children's health. But by preventing them to happen, 'big babies' are definitely the word for the future 'adults'.

I also agree with the retired principal, Jane Brown, that children has to experience the pain of failure and disappointment to become adults who can cope with and learn from the stresses and problems that happen in life. Parents should let their children have a chance to cope with their own school life, experience the consequences of their acts and to be more independent to manage their lives. These are important to prevent future mistakes. Parents should be there for their children after their fall, not saving them from every disappointment and mistake.

As a conclusion, children should be guided not overprotected. I am sure most of you would agree that things should be done in moderation. To love your children is not to restrict them, overprotect them, but to guide them, train them and comfort them after their mistakes and failures. Thank you.

Student Response – Example 2

This mid-range response expresses a clear point of view that is developed around the task material. There is a strong voice and attempt to engage the audience. The conclusions are sometimes simplistic and the language skills are average, but the message was clearly communicated.

Good morning everyone! I would like to thanks all of you for listening my presentation. As what we have been told and hear, teenagers in this age are getting worse and worse. They can not make their own decisions, they like to follow others, they can not organised things by themselves. Even they still rely on their parents for all their daily needs. How terrible they are! Of course, the main reason is because their parents actions. I have no idea why there are many parents now believe they should do everything for their kids. they called it 'protect'. How funny it is! Do they really think what they have done is going to protect their children in this world? Their children are losing important life skills because of their parents funny mind – do everything for children.

Of course we all remember how we learnt our life skills, such as making hard decisions, how to organise time table, how to make a good relationship with people and etc. Yes, from childhood hard experiences, from those time we made wrong choices and mistakes, we got hurt but we learnt from them, so our life skills are developing. Think what is going to happen to us if our parents have done everything to us, to 'protect' us? We won't have those important skills! Who is going to look after us after our parents pass away? Only ourselves. Do you really believe we can learn anything if our parents did all of homework for us? We have to experience it ourselves if want to learn from it.

Some parents are saying the world is changed, it is now unsafe for children. Of course the world is changing, but kids need to be prepared for it, not just run away from those hardships. I am sure they will be angry after their parents passed away because their parents never give them a change to learn how to face problems in their lives. Now they have to face it themselves, they will feel ten thousand times harder to learn how to cope with they lives because they missed the best time already – childhood time.

It is sad for those kids who have no chance to learn life skills through their own experience. I hope every parents are smart enough to understand how important it is for children to learn life skills themselves, rather than do little tasks for them.