



---

Trial Examination 2020

# **VCE English Units 3&4**

Written Examination

**Suggested Solution for Section C**

---

Neap Education (Neap) Trial Exams are licensed to be photocopied or placed on the school intranet and used only within the confines of the school purchasing them, for the purpose of examining that school's students only. They may not be otherwise reproduced or distributed. The copyright of Neap Trial Exams remains with Neap. No Neap Trial Exam or any part thereof is to be issued or passed on by any person to any party inclusive of other schools, non-practising teachers, coaching colleges, tutors, parents, students, publishing agencies or websites without the express written consent of Neap.

## SECTION C

### ARGUMENT AND PERSUASIVE LANGUAGE

*The following is an example of a high-level response to Section C that appropriately responds to all the assessment criteria.*

For a long time, Australia has struggled with the problems posed by introduced species; now domestic cats are in the spotlight. In an announcement posted on the Avonlea Community Hub on 7 February 2020, the mayor, Councillor Deva Patel, expressed grave concern regarding the issue of domestic cat management and called for a 24-hour cat curfew in the shire of Avonlea. Councillor Patel's assertions, couched in terms of benevolent concern for animal welfare, were countered by a frankly dismissive response from local resident Simon Waterford, who made use of the online forum to castigate Councillor Patel and cast doubt on both the council's motives and the efficacy of the measures proposed.

From the outset, Councillor Patel acknowledges that she is seeking to address a problem that is "very vexing" and potentially divisive. She is careful to establish her own credentials as a "cat lover" to ensure that she does not alienate other cat lovers who might otherwise see the imposition of a curfew as the act of one hostile to their beloved pets. While doing her best to keep the "responsible cat-owners" of Avonlea on side, the mayor indicates that "not everyone" is living up to their responsibilities, dichotomising the readership between those who are "responsible" and agree with her stance, and those who disagree with her and are by implication negligent and irresponsible. She betrays impatience when she states that some residents "are still asking just why cats are a problem" with the adverb "still" implying that she had hoped for an earlier resolution to the matter. There is also a suggestion that, since there has been "extensive community consultation" and the council has already "encouraged everyone to have their say", the demands of fairness have been met and the time for raising objections has passed. This exasperation is also mirrored in the accompanying photograph of a forlorn cat whose facial expression could be interpreted as similarly disappointed in irresponsible pet owners. Hence, Councillor Patel's inclusion of this image aids her in suggesting that people and animals alike are dissatisfied with current circumstances, thereby making Councillor Patel's proposal seem more appealing to her readership.

Even so, Councillor Patel still needs to present the case in favour of a curfew. She alludes to unappealing cat behaviour, describing "cats spraying on people's front doors, fighting in the street" and "defecating on front lawns". She further explains that these unpleasant acts are not uncommon occurrences; indeed, the council hears about them weekly and this may account for Councillor Patel's occasionally aggrieved tone. Councillor Patel proceeds from what may be considered "relatively trivial issues" to matters of incontestable gravity. Anticipating a possible defence on the part of her opponents, she neutralises the comforting but delusory notion that it "is only feral cats that are the problem". The owners of unrestrained domestic cats are implicated in the perpetuation of harm to the ecosystem and she wants them to know it. She poses an ominous rhetorical question concerning the "natural hunting inclinations" of all cats and follows through by citing "alarming figures" relating to the hunting radius of domestic cats and the approximately "230 million native Australian birds, reptiles and mammals" that fall victim to domestic cats every year. She also makes this issue more relevant and unavoidable for her readers by asking whether they "want Avonlea to be part of that statistic", thereby invoking their sense of community pride and desire to disassociate the name of Avonlea from such unfortunate statistics.

Having worked to activate a sense of civic pride, Councillor Patel outlines her proposal and buttresses it with the claim that it has garnered "broad-based community support". Those who stand outside this consensus risk being branded irresponsible and insufficiently appreciative of the "wonderful forms of birdlife and native fauna" that, as she states earlier, "make Avonlea so very special". Somewhat self-righteously, Councillor Patel asserts that it is only proper to keep "cats indoors, as I do mine". Failure to do so, she argues, may expose them to dangers, and the accompanying image subtly reinforces this by depicting a cat outdoors who seems tired and miserable. This would be particularly impactful for those in Councillor Patel's readership who are cat owners and do not wish to see their own pets so dejected. Thus, introducing a cat curfew – far from reflecting a negative view of cats – is presented as the genuinely cat-loving thing to do.

As Councillor Patel nears the conclusion of her announcement, her tone becomes increasingly authoritarian and bureaucratic. Gone is the attempt to present an engaging picture of an everyday person “owned by two adorable Siamese”. In its place is an impersonal insistence on “clear frameworks that spell out consequences” for the “infringements of bylaws”. Councillor Patel employs plural first-person pronouns to indicate that the authority of the council is behind her in phrases such as “we are still working through the details”. Furthermore, she makes telling, if evasive, use of the passive voice. Perhaps she does not want to be too closely identified with a potentially unpopular decision, and therefore assures readers, without specifying just who will determine the penalties, that “penalties will be introduced for owners whose cats break the rules”. Councillor Patel then concludes with a return to a friendlier and more approachable tone. She assures the public, perhaps a little patronisingly, that the council has their best interests at heart and are “committed to delivering the best possible outcome for all concerned”. This is intended to underscore the image of the council as impartial, dedicated and acting from the highest motives. In order to reinforce this positive note, she makes it seem that a solution is within easy reach. She merges her agenda seamlessly with the greater good of the community, maintaining that it is all “quite simple, really” and uses plural voice to demonstrate that she regards herself as just one of many who will do the right thing by keeping “our pet cats contained”.

Despite her best endeavours, it is clear that Councillor Patel fails to persuade Simon Waterford. Waterford, who has “heard this sort of thing from the Council before”, is sceptical of the mayor’s claims and makes use of direct quotation to condemn Councillor Patel’s own words. He opens on a note of civility and faux regret with the phrase “it is with a heavy heart”, but promptly reveals his true agenda by casting doubt on the Council’s merely “professed concern” for positive outcomes. Like Councillor Patel, Waterford is keen to establish that he is a “responsible cat-owner” who does not chafe at sensible restrictions, but he brands the 24-hour curfew proposal “preposterous and unnecessary”. Taking on the role of the voice of the people, Waterford asserts that very few Avonlea residents have “hundreds of dollars to spare” on cat enclosures. He contrasts the limited resources of ordinary households with the greed of the Council, insinuating that the Council will get “a kickback” and questioning their bona fides in introducing a lucrative measure under the guise of acting to protect animal welfare. Waterford positions himself as the genuine champion of animal welfare, speaking with empathy of the “the miserable specimen shown in the photo” and suggesting that the proposal could in fact be a source of animal distress rather than a solution for it. Though both Councillor Patel and Waterford encourage readers to sympathise with the upset cat, Waterford directly addresses the image and recontextualises it to support his characterisation of Councillor Patel and the Council as lacking genuine concern for cats’ wellbeing.

Through a series of mocking questions, Waterford lays bare faults in Councillor Patel’s proposal and exposes her working methods to scorn. He suggests it is “rather late in the day to still be ‘working through the details’” and impugns the professionalism of Councillor Patel and her colleagues by branding the plan a “vague and ill-considered proposal”. Further attacking the commitment of the Council to environmental goals, he accuses them of double-speak, claiming that they “may talk about the protection of native wildlife” but their true motives – far from being of the “purest and loftiest” – are mercenary and, ultimately, self-interested. In a fitting culmination to the tone of exasperation that he has displayed throughout his reply, Waterford concludes with a calculated affront to Councillor Patel. Deftly turning her attempt to bond with the reader against her, he sends his regards to her two “adorable Siamese”, hinting, perhaps, that it would be much better to associate with them than their owner.

Where Councillor Patel employs bureaucratic language leavened by occasional personal notes to defuse resentment and recruit support, Simon Waterford is resolutely adversarial and derisive. Given their opposed views, there is little prospect of these two “growing together in Avonlea”.