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How to use

The Pearson English VCE Comparing Guides have been written to the new Victorian Certificate of Education English and English as an Additional Language Study Design for 2016–2020 and cover Units 2–4 Area of Study 1 Reading and comparing texts.

The Comparing guides are divided into four sections:
1: Knowing: Made in Dagenham
2: Knowing: I am Malala
3: Comparing: Made in Dagenham and I am Malala
4: Writing the essay.

Knowing the texts

These sections provide a deep insight into the texts, covering context and author, structural elements, textual elements and ideas, and themes. At the end of each section is a set of learning activities.

Comparing texts

This section outlines how to compare and contrast the two texts. The two texts are compared and contrasted in regards to: themes, cultural context and genre. This section also provides practical tips and ideas on how to compare texts as well as practice topics.
Writing the essay

This section provides a step-by-step guide on how students can plan and write a comparing essay. Four different essay styles have been included as well as an essay sample with annotations.

eBook and online resources

Online resources support the comparing of texts and include:
- essay templates
- graphic organiser templates
- worksheets.
Made in Dagenham is a 2010 film directed by Nigel Cole. Set in the 1960s in Dagenham, East London, this film is based on a true story. It dramatises the journey of Rita O’Grady and the sewing machinists at the Ford motor factory. Disgruntled with their classification as ‘unskilled’ workers, the women stop work and eventually upscale their strike, demanding equal pay for women. Spurred on by her union representative, Albert, Rita faces up to the powerful Ford executives. Rita and her co-workers lead the actions resulting in the Labour Government introducing the Equal Pay Act 1970.

CONTEXT AND DIRECTOR

Britain in the 1960s

Made in Dagenham is set in the late 1960s, and portrays the lives of the baby boomer generation. The baby boomers were born after the Second World War, and enjoyed greater freedom than their parents, including freedom from wartime conscription. In the mid 1960s, a cultural explosion was occurring, due to increasing affluence (thanks to industry growth and job prosperity), mass consumerism and a sexual revolution. This resulted in more freedom for women, and an increasingly liberal attitude towards sex.

Rock and roll was popular, and artists such as the Beatles and the Rolling Stones were at the forefront of British music culture. Pop-culture lyrics were often revolutionary and encouraged young people to stand up for their beliefs and to question authority. The liberal ideas of the time were also reflected in fashion. Miniskirts and hot pants (including designs by Mary Quant) became popular in Britain.

By the end of the decade, feminism had become an influential force, as more jobs became available to young women. Employment opportunities allowed women to live independently and enjoy greater freedom. In addition, the contraceptive pill was legalised in Britain in 1968. Access to birth control gave women opportunities beyond motherhood and marriage, and constituted a key aspect of the women’s liberation movement.

However, underneath all this glamour and upheaval, Britain was relatively conservative. Despite the liberalisation, widespread traditional attitudes were hard to change. Intellectuals became concerned that affluence and mass consumerism were undermining the traditional working-class culture. By the end of the decade, the British economy was suffering, and many issues arose around workplace relations, trade unionism and rising class tensions.
FROM THE DIRECTOR OF

CALENDAR GIRLS

SALLY HAWKINS
BOB HOSKINS
MIRANDA RICHARDSON
GERALDINE JAMES
ROSAUND PIKE
ANDREA RISEBOROUGH
JAIME WINSTONE
DANIEL MAYS

MADE IN DAGENHAM

1968. IT'S A MAN'S WORLD. BUT NOT FOR LONG...

WE WANT SE

Made in Dagenham (2010), film poster
The Ford Factory in Dagenham

Four years prior to the sewing machinists dispute of 1968, the unions had already been in conflict with Ford. The disputes were over stagnant wages and higher productivity expectations. Ford’s managers and the unions had agreed upon a complex new pay grading structure. This pay structure created immense conflict across the entire Ford workplace (something that is hinted at in the film). Workers felt their jobs were devalued and their workloads increased. By 1968, when 187 sewing machine operators at the Ford plant sought to be fairly labelled as ‘skilled’ workers, the Ford plant was already experiencing hundreds of claims and grievances.

The problems at Ford were symptomatic of widespread problems throughout the stagnant British industrial sector. Almost a quarter of British citizens were living in poverty, or near poverty, and wages remained stationary, despite increases in productivity and inflation. In 1966–67, the Labour government imposed a mandatory wage freeze, as well as cutting government spending on health. Therefore, employees had less spending power, due to rising costs of living.

The women workers campaign for equal pay, Made in Dagenham (2010)
**Director: Nigel Cole**

Nigel Cole, the film’s director, was born in Cornwall, United Kingdom, in 1959. He began his career in the 1980s, as an actor in theatre, commercials and television. Cole made his film-directing debut with *Saving Grace* (2000), a comedic portrayal of a struggling widow, who finds herself growing and dealing cannabis. Cole directed *Calendar Girls* (2003), based on a true story about a group of women from Yorkshire who create a nude calendar to fundraise for cancer research. *Made in Dagenham* (2010) was nominated for Best British Film in the BAFTA awards.

**STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS**

**Genre**

*Made in Dagenham* is a historical film and part of the retro film genre. Retro refers to contemporary films set in the recent past, and this style has become popular in the last two decades. Such films seek to imitate the trends, music, fashion and attitudes of the recent past, often the 60s, 70s and 80s. Television shows like *That 70s Show* and *Mad Men* are examples of the retro genre. Films such as *The Wedding Singer*, *An Education* and *Wondrous Oblivion* are examples of how mainstream cinema has also adopted the retro aesthetic.

Retro films often contain a strong social message, exploring changing attitudes towards issues such as race, gender, equal employment and sexual liberation. *Made in Dagenham* is clearly a retro film – set in the 1960s it references the fashion from the period, uses culturally appropriate music and sends a clear message about women’s rights in the workforce.

**Story**

*Made in Dagenham* begins with the 187 female sewing machinists at Ford’s Dagenham plant. Working in the basement of the factory (which is swelteringly hot in summer and leaky in the rain), Rita O’Grady and her co-workers sew seat covers for Ford Capris, Cortinas and Zephyrs. They have recently been labelled as ‘unskilled’ workers. They decide to go on a 24-hour stoppage, fighting to be reclassified as ‘semi-skilled’ and to demand a pay rise. After a harsh written response from Ford’s management, the outraged women, led by Rita O’Grady, refuse to relent. Their protests escalate to work and overtime stoppages, and finally to an ‘all out stoppage’.

Rita and her colleagues (including Sandra, Eileen, Brenda and Connie) portray the optimism of the late 1960s. Rita leads the women in defying the Ford factory management and executives, as well as the trade union’s leadership, when they try to prevent further action.

The women struggle on their ‘strike’ pay of three pounds per day. They also struggle to maintain the support of their male co-workers, who eventually lose their jobs, as the Ford factory is forced to close. A conflict emerges between Rita and her husband, Eddie, who finds it difficult to cope with the domestic duties he is forced to take over while Rita is leading the strike action.

Ford uses various tactics to divide the workforce and control the union. The striking women of Dagenham travel to the other Ford plants, publicly protesting and uniting England’s female workforce. At the Trade Union Conference in Eastbourne, Rita manages to convince the male unionists to support the women’s plight.
Comparing: Made in Dagenham and I am Malala

There are different kinds of comparative questions and different ways to approach them. This section will help you develop an understanding of how to use a range of strategies when planning your essays about Made in Dagenham and I am Malala. These strategies, or graphic organisers, such as Venn diagrams, scales and data charts are especially useful tools in assisting you to explore the similarities and differences between the texts.

TYPES OF QUESTIONS

There are three types of questions:

- the themes, issues and ideas
- the social, historical and cultural context
- the genre and style.

Common words used in essay questions include the following.

- Discuss: Debate the arguments for and against the topic backing up these ideas with selected evidence from the text. Provide a conclusion.
- To what extent: Assess the evidence in your text that would support an argument. Also look at alternative explanations.
- Do you agree?: An opinion is being sought as to the extent to which the statement or quote is accurate. Evidence should be provided to support or contend the point of view.
- Quotes: Essay questions that use quotations are a way to delve into the issues embedded in a text. You should make reference to the quote and the ideas that it raises.

Theme questions

Themes are prominent, recurring ideas that pervade a literary work. Theme questions ask us to consider any ideas common to both texts. Both Made in Dagenham and I am Malala explore themes related to:

- women’s rights
- activism
- perseverance and courage
- justice
- family relationships
- entrapment
- generational differences.
In Made in Dagenham Rita faces corrupt union officials and hard-lined Ford managers, while Malala faces violence and Taliban threats. A related theme question might ask you to explore fighting for a person’s beliefs in spite of obstacles.

Both texts explore the idea of women being trapped within society and their family roles or in the workplace. In Made in Dagenham, Rita feels trapped in her low-paying job, while Lisa is trapped in her marriage. In I am Malala, Malala is trapped in Swat and her education is threatened by the Taliban, and later her mother feels trapped in Birmingham as she speaks little English and cannot read and write.

Examples of theme topics are:

• specific: What obstacles must the women of Made in Dagenham and I am Malala overcome in their struggle for gender equality?
• general: Compare family relationships and dynamics and how they are presented in both Made in Dagenham and I am Malala.

Cultural context questions
Cultural context questions ask you to consider the cultural backgrounds against which the texts are set, the events in history that shape the texts, and the social worlds that both texts reflect. Both texts explore cultural and contextual ideas about:

• the rights of women throughout history
• education and women in the workforce
• the role of women in families and domestic spaces
• gender equality
• patriarchal societies
• class and social status.

Cultural questions might focus on gender equality, as both texts feature women struggling to achieve equal status with men in terms of equal pay and the right to an education. Questions might be about class and social status. In Made in Dagenham this would involve exploring the social hierarchies – from the factory workers, to the white-collar managers, to the upper echelons of government. In I am Malala you would explore the different levels of wealth and poverty the characters experience, from the street children collecting rubbish in the tip, to the often corrupt and wealthy officials, army generals and political leaders. Examples of cultural topics are:

• specific: How do both Nigel Cole and Malala Yousafzai represent the patriarchal societies of 1960s Britain and contemporary Pakistan?
• general: How does setting function in both Made in Dagenham and I am Malala?

Genre questions
Genre questions consider the similarities or differences in the structure of each text, and how and why the authors conveyed their ideas in certain ways. There are different stylistic features for memoirs and films. One asks you to consider literary aspects of the language, and the other asks about the cinematic conventions. Questions about genre may ask you to explore the use of:

• characterisation
• symbols and motifs
• choice of words, language and dialogue
• narrative voice or perspective
• tone and mood
• sound and sound devices
• figurative language
• mise en scene
• structure.

Genre questions could be about the stylistic features used. You could compare how Malala Yousafzai and Nigel Cole create likeable, sympathetic characters in Rita and Malala by imbuing them with honest language, revealing their character flaws, through the relationships they have with others, or through their use of vivid and colourful language. Genre questions might ask you to comment on the mood and tone. In Made in Dagenham it is conveyed through lighting, camera shots, use of mood music and pace. In I am Malala, this is created through the voice of the narrator, the combination of historical information and personal details, and through the use of inviting chapter titles. Genre questions could also ask about structure and how the narrative is constructed. You might explore the prologue and epilogue in I am Malala and how the opening and closing scenes are mirrored in Made in Dagenham. Examples of genre questions are:

• specific: What motifs and symbols that express liberty and strength are used by director Nigel Cole and author Malala Yousafzai in their respective texts?
• general: How are words and language used as powerful tools of expression in Made in Dagenham and I am Malala?

THE COMPARISON

How to compare

The following section shows you a number of ways to compare the two texts. A variety of methods have been used, such as tables that allow you to chart and track data and graphic organisers that let you see quickly the links and variations.

In a comparison essay, you must critically analyse any two texts pointing out their similarities and/or differences. It could also be called a compare and contrast essay. Your task could be comparative only (looking only at similarities), contrasting only (pointing out the differences) or both comparative and contrasting.

Theme

Although the texts are unique, and the protagonists, Rita and Malala, come from different times, places and eras, each spends time with her family. The way the protagonists function within their family is important to the narrative. Each text looks at family relationships and the role of women within a household; Rita changes the family dynamic when she becomes busy campaigning, while Malala tells us that in Pakistan, women have fewer rights than men and are expected to perform all the domestic duties. When exploring questions about theme, you can use Venn diagrams as a way to help structure your thinking.
There are many different ways to write compare and contrast essays. Selecting an essay framework for comparative writing can be challenging because essays need to be more than lists of ideas. Rather they should aim to be thoughtful, in-depth analyses of the two texts, Made in Dagenham and I am Malala. Compare and contrast essays encourage critical thinking, and the more complex comparative models provide more scope to demonstrate these skills.

**SHAPING INFORMATION AND PLANNING**

Once you have read or viewed your texts, deconstructed for meaning and prepared your notes, it is time to start to write essays.

This section models how to:

- work through a topic
- brainstorm a topic
- develop a contention
- create an essay plan
- write different types of essays.

**High-scoring responses**

High-scoring responses should include the following:

- consistent engagement with the topic throughout
- a well-sustained contention, supported by strong arguments and excellent use of evidence
- complex but well-controlled sentences that use punctuation accurately and purposefully
- formal language of critical analysis used effectively
- accurate and specific details supported by judiciously used quotations and examples
- weaving of the two texts throughout the analysis
- complex links that recognise similarities and differences but also go further to establish subtle distinctions.
Before you start

■ BRAINSTORMING THE TOPIC
Begin by brainstorming the topic. Consider any sub-questions that are raised by the topic, and think about what evidence you have from each text to support these ideas.
Consider the topic: ‘Rights. Not privileges.’ How are both Made in Dagenham and I am Malala about universal human rights?
Your brainstorm might look like this:
• What are universal human rights?
• What kinds of things do we consider to be human rights?
• What are the different human rights that Rita and Malala stand up for?
• How are the rights they stand up for particularly about women and girls? Is this important?
• Which characters and groups of characters disagree with Rita and Malala? How do they stand in their way?
• What rights did women in 1960s Britain have, and what rights did women in Pakistan in the 2000s have? How are they similar and different?
• What do Rita and Malala do about these rights? How do they campaign and stand up for their rights in different ways?

■ CREATING AN ESSAY PLAN
After you have brainstormed the topic and created a list of useful quotations as evidence, you should begin planning your essay. Your essay plan can be developed using a simple table tool, which is a valuable way to consider the most important points that will make up your body paragraphs. A detailed analysis of an essay question should include at least three main arguments or body paragraphs.

Writer’s toolbox
When you brainstorm you should ask questions about the topic. A good way to do this is to make sure you answer or include the Who? What? Where? Why? When? Which? and How? of the topic.

Writer’s toolbox
Make sure you are developing an argument and not falling into the habit of storytelling. If you find yourself writing about what happens for the majority of your paragraph, then you are probably storytelling. Try arguing a case by asking Why? and How? in each paragraph.