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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: Ransom
2: Knowing: Invictus
3: Comparing: Ransom and Invictus
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, issues 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.

PRACTICE TOPICS: THEME
1. Knowing: Ransom and Invictus: Suggested themes are: life in prison, freedom, forgiveness, leadership, justice, sport, friendship, identity.
2. Knowing: Invictus: Suggested themes are: leadership, justice, forgiveness, freedom, sport, friendship, identity.
3. Comparing: Ransom and Invictus: Suggested themes are: leadership, justice, forgiveness, freedom, sport, friendship, identity.
4. Writing the essay: Suggested themes are: leadership, justice, forgiveness, freedom, sport, friendship, identity.

PRACTICE TOPICS: PLOT
1. Knowing: Ransom and Invictus: Suggested plot topics are: plot overview, plot development, plot structure, plot events, plot outcomes.
2. Knowing: Invictus: Suggested plot topics are: plot overview, plot development, plot structure, plot events, plot outcomes.
3. Comparing: Ransom and Invictus: Suggested plot topics are: plot overview, plot development, plot structure, plot events, plot outcomes.
4. Writing the essay: Suggested plot topics are: plot overview, plot development, plot structure, plot events, plot outcomes.

PRACTICE TOPICS: IDEAS
1. Knowing: Ransom and Invictus: Suggested ideas are: ideas on how to compare texts, also provides practical tips and context and genre. This section two texts. The two texts are elements, textual elements and ideas, issues and themes.
2. Knowing: Invictus: Suggested ideas are: ideas on how to compare texts, also provides practical tips and context and genre. This section two texts. The two texts are elements, textual elements and ideas, issues and themes.
3. Comparing: Ransom and Invictus: Suggested ideas are: ideas on how to compare texts, also provides practical tips and context and genre. This section two texts. The two texts are elements, textual elements and ideas, issues and themes.
4. Writing the essay: Suggested ideas are: ideas on how to compare texts, also provides practical tips and context and genre. This section two texts. The two texts are elements, textual elements and ideas, issues and themes.

PRACTICE TOPICS: CULTURAL CONTEXT
1. Knowing: Ransom and Invictus: Suggested cultural topics are: cultural context and genre, cultural differences, cultural significance, cultural relevance.
2. Knowing: Invictus: Suggested cultural topics are: cultural context and genre, cultural differences, cultural significance, cultural relevance.
3. Comparing: Ransom and Invictus: Suggested cultural topics are: cultural context and genre, cultural differences, cultural significance, cultural relevance.
4. Writing the essay: Suggested cultural topics are: cultural context and genre, cultural differences, cultural significance, cultural relevance.
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.
Knowing: Ransom
DAVID MALOUF

Ransom is set during the Trojan War, one of the most famous events in ancient Greek mythology. It draws on The Iliad, an epic poem by Homer, which depicts events over a few months in the tenth year of the war. Malouf’s focus is even more particular, with the main events of the novel occurring over a single day and night. By foregoing a sweeping narrative typical of epic literature, Malouf is able to create an intimate exploration of his characters’ humanity.

CONTEXT AND AUTHOR

The Trojan War
The Trojan War was fought between an army of Greeks and the city of Troy. The war began after the abduction of Helen (the wife of the Spartan king Menelaus) by Paris (a prince of Troy). Helen was said to be the most beautiful woman in the world. Menelaus called upon the armies of most of the Greek-speaking world to fight for her return. The combined Greek army, commanded by Menelaus’ brother Agamemnon, besieged Troy for ten years. During this time, numerous battles took place involving heroes from both sides, many of whom were killed in the fighting.

Ransom focuses on one such incident – the death of the Trojan prince Hector at the hands of Achilles, the greatest of the Greek warriors. As a result, Hector’s father, Priam, embarks on a quest to recover the body of his fallen son.

Troy was finally defeated when the Greeks feigned retreat, leaving behind a huge wooden horse as an offering to the goddess Athena. Inside, a band of Greek warriors (led by Odysseus) waited for the horse to be taken by the celebrating Trojans into the city itself. After nightfall, the Greeks escaped from the horse and opened the city gates, allowing the Greek army to enter the city.

Did you know?

Homer and The Iliad
Homer was an Ancient Greek author, credited for being one of the first writers of epic poems. The time and place of his birth is unknown, nor do we know where he lived; however his impact and legacy on literature around the world has been immense. Homer is best known for his two epic poems, The Odyssey and The Iliad. The Iliad is set during a few weeks during the final year of the Trojan War. The war had lasted ten years and was a battle between Troy and a coalition of Greek states.
'Australia’s finest writer’ THE AUSTRALIAN

‘Ransom is a masterpiece, exquisitely written, pithy and wise and overwhelmingly moving, ... fiction, in Malouf’s hands, becomes the art of rendering the world coherent. For this we must be grateful.’ ALBERTO MANGUEL

RANSOM

DAVID MALOUF

Ransom, David Malouf
Excavated ruins from Troy, in modern day Turkey

Did you know?

Many modern scholars assumed that Troy and the Trojan War were legends. This position was challenged in 1870 when German archaeologist Heinrich Schliemann unearthed the ruins of an ancient city in the area described by *The Iliad*. This location, in modern Turkey, is now widely accepted as the site of Homer’s Troy. While the story recounted by Homer is undoubtedly fictional, it is likely that this legend was based on an actual historical event that took place over three thousand years ago.

Ancient Greek beliefs

Malouf draws upon the religious and cultural beliefs of ancient Greek mythology to emphasise his own current-day ideas. To fully appreciate *Ransom* we need to understand how the ideas, views and values of classical Greece are different from those of today.

To the Greeks, individuals were subject to divine forces that constantly shaped their lives. The gods were active participants in the world, and they often acted in capricious ways. The gods could be jealous, vain and vengeful. They were easily insulted and often deceitful. Rather than being the source of moral authority, they often acted immorally themselves, and could indulge in destructive behaviour such as murder, rape and theft. It was vital that mortals acted in ways that pleased the gods, otherwise retribution was swift and cruel.

A force that was even more important than the gods was fate. The Greeks believed that a person’s fate was decided at birth and to try to avoid fate was futile. This provided a sense of order to the universe. Events unfolded according to a plan, and this overrode the hopes and dreams of mortals. Even the gods could not change fate and they were often reduced to mourning its power over the world. This fatalistic world-view is very different to a modern western outlook, in which individuals have free will and are able to shape their lives. The modern world is characterised by randomness, rather than a divine plan. In *Ransom* Malouf seems to suggest that freedom provides the key to understanding our true humanity.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Greek (Homeric) world-view</th>
<th>Modern (western) world-view</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gods act in the world and directly shape the lives of individuals according to their own whims. Humankind lives in the shadow of the gods.</td>
<td>Humankind is at the centre of the world, and people determine their own fate. Individuals have free will, and must take responsibility for their actions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rituals provide order and a way to maintain the favour of the gods.</td>
<td>Change is valued and traditions are open to challenge.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fate is predetermined and can be revealed through prophesies and visions. A person’s fate ultimately limits the range of actions a person can take in their life.</td>
<td>The world is characterised by chance and randomness. Divine order does not limit individual action.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comparison of Ancient Greek and modern western views and values

Author: David Malouf

David Malouf is an Australian author who has won numerous national and international awards. Born in Brisbane, Queensland in 1934, Malouf first heard the story of Troy as a primary school student. This was in 1943, two years into Australia’s war with Japan, when fears of Japanese bombing and invasion were very real. Brisbane was teeming with efforts to protect the city from bombing and troops were preparing to go to war. Malouf related the story of Troy to his own experience of war, something he revisited in a 1972 poem entitled ‘Episode from an Early War’. Parts of this poem and Malouf’s reflections can be found in the afterword of Ransom. Malouf’s abilities as a poet are evident in the lyrical nature of his prose and his skilful use of imagery throughout the novel.

STRUCTURAL ELEMENTS

Style

Ransom is notable for the way in which it retains epic features of The Iliad while moving beyond the grand, sweeping narrative of Homer to reveal the humanity of the characters. By building his narrative around a single event told from multiple perspectives, Malouf is free to explore the inner life of each character.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Epic features</th>
<th>Malouf’s innovations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Focus on the acts of great heroes</td>
<td>Develops the inner life of the characters through introspection, revealing their inner turmoil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mythological setting</td>
<td>Descriptions of the natural world and common, everyday places and actions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involvement of the gods</td>
<td>Incorporation of a common person, Somax, as an integral part of the narrative</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Malouf’s use of epic features in Ransom
Comparing: *Ransom* and *Invictus*

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 *Ransom* and *Invictus*. 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 *Ransom* and *Invictus* explore themes related to:

- characteristics of effective leadership
- the power of shared human experiences to unite
- reconciliation.
Cultural context questions

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

- ancient and modern views about fate, chance and human agency
- political systems: monarchy and democracy
- modern concepts of multiculturalism and racism and ancient ideas of foreigners as barbarians.

Genre questions

Genre questions could ask you to think about the conventions of the genre and consider how and why the authors conveyed their ideas in certain ways.

When asked to compare the genre of each text we are looking at how each story is told. Although one text is a novel and the other a film we can find both similarities and differences in the construction and conventions of each text. Questions about genre may ask you to explore the use of:

- narrative perspectives
- cinematic and literary techniques
- use of symbols.

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.
Ransom
• Neither free will nor fate are absolute – both shape people’s lives.
• In ancient times, leaders were detached from the common people and lived in ceremonial isolation from their subjects.
• Women are largely invisible and lack power.
• Shifting narrative perspectives reveal inner thoughts and feelings of characters.
• Masculine traits such as physical strength and aggression limit the potential for self-realisation.

Invictus
• Assumed outcomes can be overcome through determination and force of will.
• In the modern, democratic era, national leaders are personalities who seek to demonstrate the ‘common touch’.
• While men are the primary decision-makers, women are treated as equals.
• Characters’ thoughts and motivations are demonstrated through their actions.
• While physical strength is celebrated, strength of will is recognised as the greater of the two.

Similarities
• There are supportive male figures.
• Reconciliation is essential to resolving conflict.
• The legacy of the past can be overcome.
• Life experiences shape us in powerful ways.
• Change requires effective leadership.
• Effective leadership involves humility, willingness to do something new or unexpected, empathy and facing down opposition from your own side.

Theme
Both Ransom and Invictus explore themes related to the following.

LEADERSHIP
Leadership is a central concern in Ransom and Invictus, with different leadership styles explored in each text. Both texts are interested in ‘affairs of state’ and what it means to rule. President Mandela describes political decision-making as ‘a human calculation’, and constantly identifies himself with ordinary people. This is in stark contrast to the ceremonial detachment of Priam’s kingship, which separates him completely from those he rules.

In resolving personal and political conflicts, it is essential to have the ability to inspire others, and build bridges between opposing factions. While Priam and President Mandela provide strong examples of leadership in the texts, be prepared to consider the leadership qualities exhibited by Francois, Achilles and others as well. The following tables show the qualities of leadership in the texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ransom</th>
<th>Invictus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Empathy: all people are bound by a shared human experience that transcends the superficial differences. Effective leaders appeal to this shared humanity, emphasising empathy over coercion. In doing so, they demonstrate that the ties that bind us are stronger than the forces of division.</td>
<td>Assumed outcomes can be overcome through determination and force of will.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As he becomes aware of the meaning of his life experiences, Priam is prepared to make his appeal to Achilles. He appeals to Achilles as a father and as a mortal subject to suffering and death. Priam’s empathetic appeal suggests a new way to lead, where dignity is more important than ritual.</td>
<td>President Mandela’s great skill is to understand the feelings of others, even those of his oppressors. For example, he studied his jailors in an effort to understand them. President Mandela is prepared to meet the needs of his oppressors if it helps him achieve his vision of a reconciled and prosperous nation.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Authority: it is bestowed upon leaders in different ways. It can come from the roles they’ve been given, the experiences they have had or the decisions they make.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ransom</th>
<th>Invictus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authority is predominantly based on inherited positions of power. It conforms to the hierarchies and norms of the ancient world. Priam’s authority derives from his upholding of the ancient laws and customs of Troy, which he defies by approaching Achilles. Achilles’s authority is enhanced (and eventually undermined) by his exploits on the battlefield.</td>
<td>Nelson Mandela’s position as president gives him power, but his authority as president is initially questioned by many white South Africans. He also has unquestioned authority, derived from his heroic resistance to apartheid and the persecution he endured. Over time, President Mandela’s common touch and powers of persuasion suggest an important source of authority in democratic systems.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Personal cost: in fulfilling their responsibilities, leaders must set themselves apart from those they lead. This can come at a personal cost, as these responsibilities can take a personal toll. Pain can also be inflicted by others with opposing views.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ransom</th>
<th>Invictus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both Priam and Achilles are burdened by their leadership roles. The expectations surrounding these roles diminish their ability to live authentically. They must sacrifice loving family relationships and the pleasures of everyday life in the name of duty. Ultimately, Priam and Achilles are subject to fate in ways that common people like Somax are not.</td>
<td>President Mandela’s responsibilities to his country and his cause overshadow those to his own family. His relationship with his wife and children causes him pain, which is portrayed as a necessary burden. The physical effects of imprisonment and the exhaustion caused by overwork demonstrate the humanity behind the great leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- The qualities of leadership in *Ransom* and *Invictus*

- THE POWER OF SHARED HUMAN EXPERIENCES TO UNITE

Both texts explore the forces that divide people into different, often conflicting groups. Each text appeals to the universal experiences that define the human condition, and the opportunities to cross cultural divides. The texts question whether these shared experiences, some of which are listed below, are powerful enough to overcome the legacies of war and racial conflict.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ransom</th>
<th>Invictus</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fatherhood</td>
<td>Dignity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Love</td>
<td>Suffering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loss</td>
<td>Belonging</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grief</td>
<td>Pride</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mortality</td>
<td>Fear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Elements of the human condition explored in *Ransom* and *Invictus*

The following diagram provides a comparison of how ideas about shared human experiences are explored in both texts. You can use this model to extend this comparison, or apply it to other areas of the texts.
Writing the essay

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, *Ransom* and *Invictus*. 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 supporting 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 quotes and examples
- weaving of the two texts throughout the analysis
- complex links which 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.

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.
This diagram illustrates how to start asking yourself questions about the topic, so that you can plan how to address the essay question. What evidence would you use to support your ideas?