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Kate Grenville’s novel The Lieutenant is the second in a trilogy focusing on the settlers in Australia’s early colonial history. Set in the 1700s and focusing on the arrival of the First Fleet, the narrative follows the life of Daniel Rooke, a young lieutenant in the British marines, and his unlikely friendship with an Aboriginal girl, Tagaran.

THE STUDY DESIGN
VCE Units 1 and 3 ask you to identify, discuss and analyse how certain features of texts create meaning and shape interpretation. In these units, entitled ‘reading and creating texts’, you are expected to be able to develop and justify your own personal and detailed interpretations of texts.

Key knowledge and skills
For this part of the course, you will need to produce both a creative response and a sustained analytical interpretation, known as a text response essay. This study guide helps you to develop a text response essay, although some creative suggestions are also included. You will need to plan, draft and edit your essay, and ensure that it includes relevant, detailed textual evidence.

You will also need to demonstrate a range of different knowledge and skills that you have developed through your reading of the set text.

■ KEY KNOWLEDGE
Your text response should demonstrate that you:
• understand the values the text conveys
• understand how readers can interpret texts in different ways
• understand the various features of a literary text, including structure, conventions, language, metalanguage and other stylistic features.

■ KEY SKILLS
On completion of this unit of work, you should be able to:
• explain and analyse the features of a text and how these influence interpretation
• identify and analyse the implied views and values of a text
• use textual evidence accurately to justify analytical responses
• read and understand different viewpoints to develop an interpretation of your own.
What the examiners are looking for

When writing your text response essay in the examination, you need to complete three fundamental components.

First and foremost, you must answer the given question. This means writing a response that is tailored and relevant to what is being asked of you. Many students fall into the trap of writing all they know about a text, ignoring what the question is actually asking of them. A better text response should demonstrate that you can analyse, understand and discuss ideas relating to the given topic.

Secondly, you must structure your response so that it reads as a properly formulated essay, composed of an introduction, body paragraphs with supporting evidence and a conclusion.

Finally, you need to concentrate your analysis on how the author has used literary devices to create meaning. This means that your analysis focuses not just on characters and plot, but rather on the way the text is written, particularly the language and style.

Checklist

- has an introduction
- develops and sustains a contention
- defines, outlines and explores the question in the introduction
- has at least three body paragraphs
- has a clear point encapsulated in a topic sentence
- uses supporting evidence
- uses a key quotation or quotations
- uses links and connectors between paragraphs
- has a conclusion
- restates and rephrases your contention in the conclusion
- answers the topic clearly, coherently and thoroughly
- uses formal language.

Text response essay checklist
As you read, you need to become an active reader, seeking out and searching for meaning beyond the literal words on the page. Reading your text for a second and third time and understanding the following will help you to develop the skills you need to competently analyse the literary features within the text.

BEFORE READING

Context

THE FIRST FLEET AND THE PENAL COLONY IN AUSTRALIA

_The Lieutenant_ is set before, during and after the arrival of the First Fleet in Sydney Cove, New South Wales. In 1788, the First Fleet, consisting of 11 ships, left Portsmouth in England for a little-known land, far, far away on the other side of the world. Led by Arthur Philip, the convoy brought 700 convicts as well as 247 guards and soldiers in the Royal Marines, 210 Royal Navy sailors, 223 merchant seamen, 20 civil officers as well as 27 wives and 19 children to establish a colony in New South Wales.

This painting by Frank Allen, a marine artist, shows the HMS Supply, which formed part of the First Fleet, arriving in Sydney Cove in 1788.
Britain’s gaols were densely packed with petty criminals. An increase in unemployment, overcrowded cities, poor sanitation and poverty were motivations for the impoverished to steal food and clothing. The penalties for minor offences such as theft and burglary were harsh and often included transportation to the colonies. British prisoners had been shipped to the 13 colonies in North America, but with the American Revolutionary War of 1738, the recently formed United States of America categorically refused to take any more convicts. Despite past experiences, the planning of the penal colony in New South Wales was poorly executed. The British Government also feared that other imperial powers such as Spain, France and Holland might also expand their territories into the antipodes.

After voyaging for three months, the First Fleet arrived in Botany Bay on 24 January 1788, and then anchored at Sydney Cove on 26 January. Sydney Cove was equipped with a fresh water source close to a relatively sheltered shoreline.

Despite the seemingly good conditions, the settlement was troubled from the outset. Few convicts were skilled in farming the infertile soil, which was hot, dry and unsuitable for crop farming. Both officers and convicts were on food rations, which increasingly became smaller and smaller. Unfamiliar in their surroundings, they found the native plants unappetising and they were fairly poor fishermen. They supplemented their ship supplies with the occasional native rat, dingo, kangaroo or emu that they could catch.

Writer’s toolbox

The ‘antipodes’ is an informal term that inhabitants from the Northern Hemisphere use to describe Australia and New Zealand. Its generic meaning refers to something that is the direct opposite of another. The word comes from the Latin, meaning ‘having the feet opposite’.

■ This illustration depicts Sydney Cove and Botany Bay at the time of the first settlement, 20 August 1788.
The colonisers were faced with the Aboriginal people who had lived on their island in near isolation for more than 40,000 years. The Aboriginal people were wary and fearful of the colonisers. At the time of British arrival in 1788, there were approximately 700,000 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in and around the Australian continent. By 1900 this population had fallen to about 93,000 due to violence and conflict, massacres and introduced diseases.

**Author**

Kate Grenville was born in Sydney in 1950 and often uses the surrounding landscape as the backdrop of her novels. Early on, she wrote *Lillian’s Story*, *Dark Places* and *Joan Makes History*, which are seen as modern classics. In 1980 she completed her Masters in Creative Writing in Colorado in the United States. In 1992, she published *The Idea of Perfection*, which was a bestseller and winner of the Orange Prize for Fiction, Britain’s top literary award. She has also published several texts on writing and the writing process.

Appalled by the wrongs done to Aboriginal people at the time of British settlement, Grenville writes about this in her renowned colonial trilogy: *The Secret River* (2005), *The Lieutenant* (2008) and *Sarah Thornhill* (2011). *The Secret River* won the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize and the NSW Premier’s Literary Award in 2006. The historical novel was also shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, adapted as a play for the Sydney Theatre Company in 2013 and also reworked as a miniseries on the ABC in 2015.

Grenville writes about Australia’s history, but with universal themes about the struggle to survive. Her books have been translated into many languages and published worldwide. Two of her novels have been made into feature films and many of her texts are set for English courses at schools and universities.
Learning activities

1. Research England in the 1700s. What were the events that caused the transportation of convicts to Australia?

2. Research the consequences of America becoming independent from Britain. In what way did this affect the British national psyche?

3. a. Select one of the characters in The Lieutenant and tell the story of their journey by ship to Australia.
   b. Write a journal entry in first person, using present tense to convey their emotions and feelings. Consider what went on during a typical day and what conditions were like on the ship. Use the mindmap to assist with your ideas.

4. a. Research the Gadigal people and their lifestyle.
   b. Imagine what the First Fleet landing would have been like for the Aboriginal people at Sydney Cove.
   c. Write a short reflection, from the perspective of the Gadigal about what that very first encounter was like.

5. ‘Terra nullius’ is Latin for ‘land belonging to no one’. Research this term and consider how it applies to the arrival and settlement of the First Fleet in The Lieutenant.

6. What is the purpose of historical fiction? What do we learn from Grenville’s fictionalised account of the settlement of the First Fleet?