

WHAT IS DISCOVERY?

Discovery is the Area of Study from 2015. Let's ponder a few well-known facts about the Area of Study (AOS).

FACTS TO BE AWARE OF IN AOS:

1. Section 1 is linked to Section 2

NESA often links the three (3) or four (4) unseen texts in Section 1 to the imaginative writing requirements in Section 2.

ADVICE:

Therefore, always read the Section 2 question carefully during the ten (10) minute reading time as you may well be writing an *imaginative piece* based upon a Section 1 unseen text.

2. The types of Section 1 texts you will tested on

In AOS Section 1, the three (3) or four (4) so-called *unseen texts* (so named because *you* haven't seen them until exam day) are chosen to reflect your reading age, social predicament and youth. Therefore, the topics of the Section 1 poetry, song lyrics, short story extracts, novel extracts, travel writing, biographies and speeches selection are centred on the requirements of the Discovery Rubric and are age-appropriate.

ADVICE:

Therefore, practice writing Section 1 exams on realistic Section 1 materials. If your teachers are unable to provide these practice samples, source your own by drawing upon a range of media and find the Discovery angle of the pieces. There are also many sample Section 1 papers online.

3. The visual image in Section 1

In 2014, NESA included the customary Section 1 visual image into the content of a short story extract. This was a break with the practice of previous years where students were guided to answer Question a) with visual literacy techniques and make a link between the concept of the AOS and the written word.

ADVICE:

Revise the techniques of commonly used texts including visual literacy.

4. Identifying the concept of Discovery in the Section 1 unseen texts

The whole point of placing Section 1 at the *beginning* of the AOS examination is to put you in the right 'frame of mind' to write *informed* imaginative and critical pieces in Section 2 and Section 3 respectively. **That is, you are being guided in the Section 1 unseen texts and questions to understand the *concept* of the HSC Discovery AOS.**

The concept of the 2018 examination will be apparent in the first minute of the examination, during the ten (10) minute Reading Time. You need to actively identify this concept.

ADVICE:

Therefore, turn straight to the back of the exam during the ten (10) minute reading time and quickly read the Section 1 questions, Section 2 Imaginative Response question and Section 3 Extended Response question. This will reveal the concept of the 2018 HSC question and guide the focus of your Section 2 response.

5. How can I identify the concept of the 2018 AOS exam? Why is it important?

The *concept* of the 2018 AOS exam will be based upon ONE or TWO of the key statements in the Discovery syllabus rubric (e.g. 'Discoveries can be sudden and unexpected', 'Discoveries may be deliberate and carefully planned', etc.). **ONE or TWO of these syllabus rubric phrases will be the focus of your 2018 AOS examination.** That is, you will be expected to focus your exploration of Discovery in your unseen texts (Section 1), your creation of an imaginative response (Section 2), and analysis of your core and related text/s (Section 3) on the phrase/s NESA choose from their own syllabus rubric. **How well do you know the rubric? Could you recite it, if you had to?** Can you see why it's important now to know the rubric? Band 6 students often learn the wording of the AOS rubric like an actor, and they are wise to do so, for the reason that the focus of your *entire* first English exam will be upon ONE or TWO of these syllabus rubric phrases. Your ability to adapt to the demands of this phrase (or phrases) will determine your overall mark in AOS.

ADVICE:

Therefore, learn the rubric 'off by heart' so that you are prepared for any particular focus in the final examination.

6. Which key statement from the syllabus rubric will be chosen as the focus of the 201* HSC AoS examination?

This is the million-dollar question. There will certainly be a focus on *at least one* of the syllabus rubric statements, however, it is unlikely to leave you stranded without anything to write – as long as you have actually prepared draft Discovery responses in Section 2 and Section 3.

KNOW THE RUBRIC OF THE AREA OF STUDY

AREA OF STUDY: DISCOVERY

This Area of Study requires students to explore the ways in which the concept of discovery is represented in and through texts.

Discoveries can encompass the experience of discovering something for the first time, or rediscovering something that has been lost, forgotten or concealed. Discoveries can be sudden and unexpected, or they can emerge from a process of deliberate and careful planning evoked by curiosity, necessity or wonder. Discoveries can be fresh and intensely meaningful in ways that may be emotional, creative, intellectual, physical and spirituality. They can also be confronting and provocative. They can lead us to new worlds and values, stimulate new ideas, and enable us to speculate about future possibilities. Discoveries and discovering can offer new understandings and renewed perceptions of ourselves and others.

An individual's discovering and their process of discovering can vary according to personal, cultural and historical and social context and values. The impact of these discoveries can be far-reaching and transformative for the individual and for broader society. Discoveries may be questioned or challenged when viewed from different perspectives and their worth may be reassessed over time. The ramifications of particular discoveries may differ for individuals and their worlds.

By exploring the concept of discovery, students can understand how texts have the potential to affirm or challenge individuals' more widely-held assumptions or beliefs about aspects of human experiences and the world. Through composing and responding to a wide range of texts, students may make discoveries about people, relationships, societies, places and events and generate new ideas. By synthesising perspectives, students may deepen their understanding of the concept of discovery. Students consider the ways composers may invite them to experience discovery through their texts and explore how the process of discoveries is represented using a variety of language modes, forms and features.

In their responses and compositions, students examine, question, and reflect and speculate on:

- Their own experiences of discovery
- The experience of discovery in and through their engagement with texts
- Assumptions underlying various representations of the concept of discovery
- How the concept of discovery is conveyed through the representations of people, relationships, societies, places, events and ideas that they encounter in the prescribed text and other related texts of their own choosing
- How the composer's choice of language modes, forms, features and structure shapes representations of discovery and discovering
- The ways in which exploring the concept of discovery may broaden and deepen their understanding of themselves and their world

(*Stage 6 Prescriptions, 2015-2020*, Board of Studies*, p 10) *now NESA

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE RUBRIC

ANALYSIS OF ITS KEY FEATURES



Let's consider the rubric in closer detail. Notice how the rubric is written in five (5) paragraphs? The **first paragraph** is a single sentence and simply states:

"This Area of Study requires students to explore the ways in which the concept of discovery is represented in and through texts."

PARAGRAPH ONE: THE CONCEPT OF DISCOVERY

The important thing to note here is that the *entire first paragraph* is devoted to having you understand that your study of Discovery 'in and through' texts is **CONCEPTUAL**, not thematic alone.

What is a concept? How can I write an imaginative response about a *concept* of Discovery as opposed to a theme?



Think of an imaginative response as a destination you seek on an ordinary GPS.

You must enter very specific details into the GPS to arrive at your destination.

In the previous illustration, you wouldn't enter 'Tribeca NY' if your actual destination was 1175 Church Street, Tribeca, NY.

You wouldn't do that, would you?

If you did so, the GPS would guide you to Tribeca, NY, but you would arrive *nowhere in particular*.

Writing an imaginative response without a concept of discovery is a very similar, disorientating experience.

Think of the theme as a suburb, and the concept as a street name, and your story's originality as the street number itself.

You need all three elements of suburb, street name and street number in order to arrive at your destination.

What would be an example of a *concept* about Discovery as opposed to a theme about Discovery?

Remember that in our analogy with the GPS, we still require the *suburb name* to arrive at our correct street address. That is, we always *begin* with a broad theme about Discovery before we **refine our theme into a concept** about Discovery.

Our broad themes are largely contained in the syllabus rubric on Discovery. And so, we might begin to construct a story about somebody discovering something for the first time (our theme).

However, once we sit down and plan our narrative, we start to think about the *consequences* of discovering something for the first time.



And we soon realise in our deep thinking: it is not *always* exciting or profitable to discover something for the first time. Some discoveries can be both painful *and* rewarding. Some discoveries arrive with the risk that they will destroy our innocence.

And so after thinking deeply about our theme of discovering something for the first time, we soon arrive at our first *concept*:

To discover something for the first time is to risk losing your innocence.

We then set about writing our imaginative response with a concept at its centre. This is what NESAs mean about the difference between theme and concept.

PARAGRAPH TWO: THE RANGE OF DISCOVERIES IN OUR TEXTS

“Discoveries can encompass the experience of discovering something for the first time, or rediscovering something that has been lost, forgotten or concealed. Discoveries can be sudden and unexpected, or they can emerge from a process of deliberate and careful planning evoked by curiosity, necessity or wonder. Discoveries can be fresh and intensely meaningful in ways that may be emotional, creative, intellectual, physical and spirituality. They can also be confronting and provocative. They can lead us to new worlds and values, stimulate new ideas, and enable us to speculate about future possibilities. Discoveries and discovering can offer new understandings and renewed perceptions of ourselves and others.”

The important thing to note here is that the *entire second paragraph* is devoted to having you understand that **all of your core texts** and *most* of your desired related texts fit into the Discovery concept. Think of this paragraph as a check list for NESA to tick off every medium and literary genre they included in their reading list for the Area of Study (poetry, travel writing, film, novels, scientific discoveries, political awakenings, Antarctic explorations and so forth).

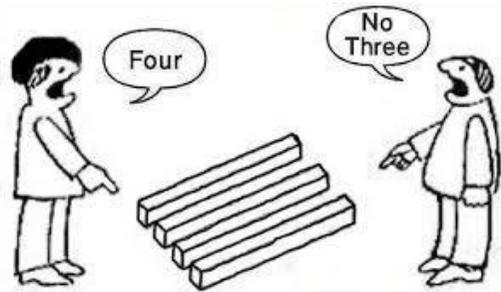
However, think of this second rubric paragraph on Discovery as the baby steps to a swimming pool. That is, you are guided to figuratively walk down the steps of the rubric in your writing rather than ‘bomb’ into the deep end of an Imaginative Response.



That is, your narrative should begin with one of the broad central themes in the second paragraph of the rubric before delving deeper into a *concept* about Discovery. This unwritten rule applies to your Extended Response as well. The HSC questions for both Section 2 and Section 3 are likely to come from this paragraph and should form the basis of your early planning.

PARAGRAPH THREE: DISCOVERIES IN THEIR PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL CONTEXT

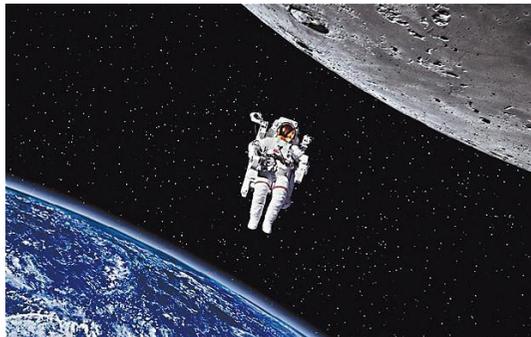
“An individual’s discovering and their process of discovering can vary according to personal, cultural and historical and social context and values. The impact of these discoveries can be far-reaching and transformative for the individual and for broader society. Discoveries may be questioned or challenged when viewed from different perspectives and their worth may be reassessed over time. The ramifications of particular discoveries may differ for individuals and their worlds.”



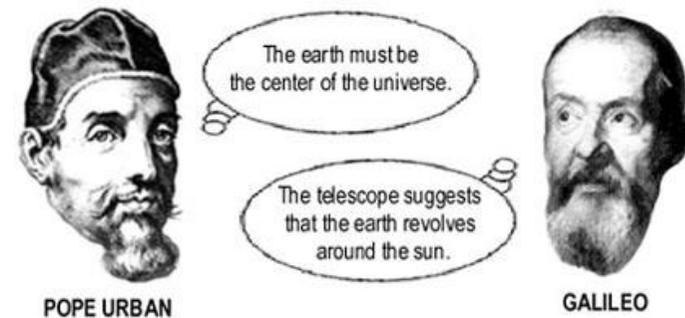
Discoveries may be questioned or challenged when viewed from different perspectives and their worth may be reassessed over time.



The ramifications of particular discoveries may differ for individuals and their worlds.



The impact of these discoveries can be far-reaching and transformative for the individual and broader society



An individual’s discovering and their process of discovering can vary according to personal, cultural and historical and social context and values.

PARAGRAPH FOUR: SYNTHESISING PERSPECTIVES

“By exploring the concept of discovery, students can understand how texts have the potential to affirm or challenge individuals’ or more widely-held assumptions or beliefs about aspects of human experiences and the world. Through composing and responding to a wide range of texts, students may make discoveries about people, relationships, societies, places and events and generate new ideas. **By synthesising perspectives, students may deepen their understanding of the concept of discovery.** Students consider the ways composers may invite them to experience discovery through their texts and explore how the process of discoveries is represented using a variety of language modes, forms and features.”



The important thing to note here is that the *fourth paragraph* builds upon the third paragraph. That is, **you first need to consider the effect of discovery and discoveries upon individuals and their broader society** (with their different social, cultural and historical contexts) *before* you can synthesise these perspectives into a coherent concept about Discovery.

This is the paragraph which most challenges students studying Discovery and therefore the paragraph most students will ignore. Make sure that you are swimming in this ‘deep end’ of your Section 2 Imaginative Response. Practically speaking, this means ensure that your narrative explores the paradox of your concept (e.g. although discovering something for the first time may illuminate our thinking in one regard, it might also cast shadows across other aspects of our previous knowledge. We might say that to discover something new is also to lose a perspective which is old or outdated).

PARAGRAPH FOUR (CONTINUED): LITERARY TECHNIQUES

“By exploring the concept of discovery, students can understand how texts have the potential to affirm or challenge individuals’ more widely-held assumptions or beliefs about aspects of human experiences and the world. Through composing and responding to a wide range of texts, students may make discoveries about people, relationships, societies, places and events and generate new ideas. By synthesising perspectives, students may deepen their understanding of the concept of discovery. **Students consider the ways composers may invite them to experience discovery through their texts and explore how the process of discoveries is represented using a variety of language modes, forms and features.**”



The important thing to note here is that the *fourth paragraph* invites you to draw upon literary techniques in your Section 2 writing, just as you are required to analyse the literary techniques of composers in your Section 3 core and related texts. That is, **you need to consider what literary techniques you have employed to demonstrate the concept of Discovery in your Imaginative Response.**

Remember the ‘paradox’ of our Imaginative Response on the previous page? “Although discovering something for the first time may illuminate our thinking in one regard, it might also cast shadows across other aspects of our previous knowledge.”

Practically speaking, we might draw upon setting and symbolism via descriptions of light, shadows and scrub forests at sunset to convey our concept that discovering something for the first time has unintended or paradoxical effects upon our ways of thinking about Discovery.

PARAGRAPH FIVE: THE PERSONAL RESPONSE. THE STUDENT AS A RESPONDER TO TEXT.

“In their responses and compositions, students examine, question, and reflect and speculate on:

- ***Their own experiences of discovery***
- ***The experience of discovery in and through their engagement with texts***
- *Assumptions underlying various representations of the concept of discovery*
- *How the concept of discovery is conveyed through the representations of people, relationships, societies, places, events and ideas that they encounter in the prescribed text and other related texts of their own choosing*
- *How the composer’s choice of language modes, forms, features and structure shapes representations of discovery and discovering*
- ***The ways in which exploring the concept of discovery may broaden and deepen their understanding of themselves and their world.”***

The important thing to note here is that the *fifth paragraph* is another type of check list from the NESAs to have you firmly understand that we highly value **your role as a responder and composer of Discovery texts.**



Practically speaking, you must work to develop a *personal understanding* of the nature of Discovery and this must be demonstrated in the sophistication of your Section 2 Imaginative Responses. Ideally, you will *apply* your understanding of Discovery and possibly draw upon your life experiences to construct an original and engaging Section 2 Imaginative Response.

PARAGRAPH FIVE (CONTINUED): ASSUMPTIONS UNDERLYING DISCOVERY

“In their responses and compositions, students examine, question, and reflect and speculate on:

- *Their own experiences of discovery*
- *The experience of discovery in and through their engagement with texts*
- **Assumptions underlying various representations of the concept of discovery**
- *How the concept of discovery is conveyed through the representations of people, relationships, societies, places, events and ideas that they encounter in the prescribed text and other related texts of their own choosing*
- *How the composer’s choice of language modes, forms, features and structure shapes representations of discovery and discovering*
- *The ways in which exploring the concept of discovery may broaden and deepen their understanding of themselves and their world.”*

The important thing to note here is that the *fifth paragraph* focuses upon the **assumptions** which commonly underlie the various representations of Discovery. As students in your final year of secondary school, you are expected to demonstrate ‘critical literacy’ in the way that you *deconstruct* your own texts, and the films, novels, poetry and websites of others. **Think of your own texts as an onion with many layers.** What is beneath the outer layers of character description, setting and storyline? What assumptions have your characters made about other characters’ discoveries? Are those assumptions based upon bad thinking and false perceptions? How do you choose to represent those assumptions via literary techniques in your narratives?



Practically speaking, you can include this reference to assumptions in your story’s character arc. That is, you must strive to show the examiners you are aware that your characters belong to a certain social, cultural and historical context which affects their assumptions about Discovery. Ideally, you will *apply* your understanding of assumptions and Discovery via the character arc of your protagonist who will change their opinion about their own or others’ discoveries and evolve as a character throughout the narrative.