English Standard Year 12 Module A – Language, Identity and Culture – resource booklet

Inside my Mother by Ali Cobby Eckermann

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# Resource 1 – decoding the module description

Module A – Language, Identity and Culture

Language has the power to both reflect and shape individual and collective identity. In this module, students consider how their responses to written, spoken, audio and visual texts can shape their self-perception. They also consider the impact texts have on shaping a sense of identity for individuals and/or communities. Through their responding and composing students deepen their understanding of how language can be used to affirm, ignore, reveal, challenge or disrupt prevailing assumptions and beliefs about themselves, individuals and cultural groups.

Students study one prescribed text in detail, as well as a range of textual material to explore, analyse and assess the ways in which meaning about individual and community identity, as well as cultural perspectives, is shaped in and through texts. They investigate how textual forms and conventions, as well as language structures and features, are used to communicate information, ideas, values and attitudes which inform and influence perceptions of ourselves and other people and various cultural perspectives.

Through reading, viewing and listening, students analyse, assess and critique the specific language features and form of texts. In their responding and composing students develop increasingly complex arguments and express their ideas clearly and cohesively using appropriate register, structure and modality. Students also experiment with language and form to compose imaginative texts that explore representations of identity and culture, including their own. Students draft, appraise and refine their own texts, applying the conventions of syntax, spelling and grammar appropriately and for particular effects.

# Resource 2 – NESA terminology

Table 1 – resource 2 terminology glossary

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Term | Definition |
| Account | Account for: state reasons for, report on. Give an account of: narrate a series of events or transactions |
| Analyse | Identify components and the relationship between them; draw out and relate implications |
| Apply | Use, utilise, employ in a particular situation |
| Appreciate | Make a judgement about the value of |
| Assess | Make a judgement of value, quality, outcomes, results or size |
| Calculate | Ascertain/determine from given facts, figures or information |
| Clarify | Make clear or plain |
| Classify | Arrange or include in classes/categories |
| Compare | Show how things are similar or different |
| Construct | Make; build; put together items or arguments |
| Contrast | Show how things are different or opposite |
| Critically (analyse/evaluate) | Add a degree or level of accuracy depth, knowledge and understanding, logic, questioning, reflection and quality to (analyse/evaluate) |
| Deduce | Draw conclusions |
| Demonstrate | Show by example |
| Describe | Provide characteristics and features |
| Discuss | Identify issues and provide points for and/or against |
| Distinguish | Recognise or note/indicate as being distinct or different from; to note differences between |
| Evaluate | Make a judgement based on criteria; determine the value of |
| Examine | Inquire into |
| Explain | Relate cause and effect; make the relationships between things evident; provide why and/or how |
| Extract | Choose relevant and/or appropriate details |
| Extrapolate | Infer from what is known |
| Identify | Recognise and name |
| Interpret | Draw meaning from |
| Investigate | Plan, inquire into and draw conclusions about |
| Justify | Support an argument or conclusion |
| Outline | Sketch in general terms; indicate the main features of |
| Predict | Suggest what may happen based on available information |
| Propose | Suggest what may happen based on available information |
| Recall | Present remembered ideas, facts or experiences |
| Recommend | Provide reasons in favour |
| Recount | Retell a series of events |
| Summarise | Express, concisely, the relevant details |
| Synthesise | Putting together various elements to make a whole |

# Resource 3 – word map

Table 2 – resource 3 word map

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Word | What is it? | What is it like? | What is it not like? |
|  |  |  |  |

What are some examples?

# Resource 4 – comparison of ‘Key’ and ‘Leaves’

Complete the comparison table of ‘Key’ and ‘Leaves’, exploring the similarities and differences between the poems.

Table 3 – resource 4 comparison activity

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Feature | ‘Key’ | ‘Leaves’ |
| Moments where the persona feels certain |  |  |
| Moments where the persona feels uncertain |  |  |
| Connection with family |  |  |
| Distance from family |  |  |
| References to the natural world |  |  |
| Use of imagery |  |  |
| Extended metaphor | Key | Tree |
| Message of final stanza |  |  |

# Resource 5 – connecting the meaning of ‘Unearth’

For each quote listed below, explain what connotations and meanings this line creates for you in both ‘Unearth’ and another of Eckermann’s poems you have studied.

Table 4 – resource 5 quotation activity

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Quote | Connotations and meanings |
| ‘let’s dig up the soil and excavate the past’ |  |
| ‘breathe life into the bodies of our ancestors’ |  |
| ‘boomerangs will rattle in unison’ | This connotation of ‘boomerangs’ creates a historical link between Eckermann’s present and the long history of Aboriginal people. The sounds created in this poem contrast with the silence established in ‘Oombulgarri’, where ‘even the creak of the gate is silent.’ |
| ‘stirred by wind’ |  |
| ‘a people suppressed by dread’ |  |
| ‘we glimpse warriors in the mirage’ |  |
| ‘excavation holes are dug in our minds’ |  |
| ‘there is blood on the truth’ |  |

# Resource 6 – connotations of mother

Table 5 – resource 6 connotations activity

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Connotation | Evidence of this symbolic meaning (find examples from 2 different poems for each row) |
| Mother as a familial figure |  |
| Motherland |  |
| Mother tongue |  |

# Resource 7 – poetic style

Listed below are 3 quotes from the Red Room Poetry resource, [Ali Cobby Eckermann – Interview HSC Part II](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqQbiVZl4OQ)

For each quote, respond to the question posed to deepen your understanding and appreciation of Eckermann’s conscious choices as a poet.

1. “I think the use of minimal punctuation in my poetry is a little rebellion…”

How does Eckermann’s poetry embody the idea of rebellion both for herself as a person, and as a symbolic act for Aboriginal people?

1. “I write for people that maybe haven’t had the opportunity of a lot of education, and writing it simply on the page is an invitation for them. If it’s all rules and regulations about how poetry is written I think we’re excluding people that haven’t had those opportunities.”

In what ways does Eckermann use her poetic voice to offer inclusion to those who have been marginalised from literature?

1. “The freedom of poetry today. Those old rules don’t exist. So, if you don’t want to use punctuation, don’t use it. If you don’t want to make the first letter of each line a capital letter well don’t use it. The emphasis is on the words and the meaning’ more than the structure.”

Eckermann’s poetic style rejects the ‘old rules‘. What deeper meaning can you draw from this quote about the way Eckermann uses the poetic process as an act of empowerment?

# Resource 8 – chalk talk

Table 6 – resource 8 chalk talk activity Connection to culture

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Connection to culture |  |
| ‘Trance’ | ‘Unearth’ |
| ‘Oombulgarri’ | ‘Eyes’ |
| ‘Leaves’ | ‘Key’ |

Table 7 – resource 8 chalk talk activity Dispossession

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Dispossession |  |
| ‘Trance’ | ‘Unearth’ |
| ‘Oombulgarri’ | ‘Eyes’ |
| ‘Leaves’ | ‘Key’ |

Table 8 – resource 8 chalk talk activity Family and kinship

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Family and kinship |  |
| ‘Trance’ | ‘Unearth’ |
| ‘Oombulgarri’ | ‘Eyes’ |
| ‘Leaves’ | ‘Key’ |

Table 9 – resource 8 chalk talk activity for Connections to land and country

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Connections to land and country |  |
| ‘Trance’ | ‘Unearth’ |
| ‘Oombulgarri’ | ‘Eyes’ |
| ‘Leaves’ | ‘Key’ |

Table 10 – resource 8 chalk talk activity for Natural world

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Natural world |  |
| ‘Trance’ | ‘Unearth’ |
| ‘Oombulgarri’ | ‘Eyes’ |
| ‘Leaves’ | ‘Key’ |

# Resource 9 – sample student response

This response was written in response to the [2019 HSC question:](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/resource-finder/hsc-exam-papers/2019/english-standard-2019-hsc-exam-pack+)

Poetry relies primarily on symbolism to create cultural tension. To what extent do you agree with this statement? In your response, make detailed reference to your prescribed text. (NESA 2019)

A strength of this response is its strong personal voice. A weakness is the fluency of the overall expression. Read the response and make annotations in the right column identifying the strengths of this response, and any feedback you would give to this student.

Table 11 – resource 9 sample response

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Sample student response | Annotations |
| Cultural tension is created within poetry through the primary use of symbolism. Ali Cobby Eckermann’s poetry series *Inside my Mother* explores the use of symbolism to reinforce her cultural opinions. The poems ‘Oombulgurri’ and ‘Unearth’ explore the cultural tension that has been created by past events. ‘Oombulgurri’ explores the effect that the government taking over and closing down the town has on the Aboriginal community that lived there. ‘Unearth’ explores the effect that the past mistreatment of Aboriginals has on the current Aboriginal people. Both poems explore the key ideas of traditional connection to land, connection to culture and connection to ancestors past and present. Eckermann conveys these ideas to the audience through the use of symbolism and complimentary language devices, ultimately creating cultural tension. |  |
| ‘Oombulgurri’ is a poem that explores the effect that the government taking over has on the traditional land owners. Eckermann’s purpose of creating this poem is to allow the audience to gain a further understanding that Aboriginal people have to the land. Eckermann uses a metaphoric simile in ‘the town is empty now / as empty as the promises / that once held it together’. The quote explores the chaos that is created by the government interaction. The promises are a symbol of trust that the town members had with the government, the symbolism creates a false sense of trust because the government have shown no respect for the town. This further creates cultural tension between the government and the Aboriginal community to do the loss of culture and land the community feels. Additionally the use of symbolic imagery Eckermann has portrayed a loss of culture to the evidence in ‘tumble weeds of blue pattern dresses / drift down empty streets / where paddy wagons once patrolled’. |  |
| The blue pattern dresses are a symbol of vibrant colours and culture that once occurred in the town, however the tumble weeds now lead to an empty town and loss of culture. The paddy wagons are symbols of Aboriginal incarceration that once featured in the town. Through the use of symbolic imagery Eckermann has gained a connection with the audience as they have been made aware of the cultural tension the government created.  This shows that symbolism is a very important part of creating cultural tension. Furthermore, the use of personification and alliteration allow Eckermann to create a symbol of Aboriginal culture within ‘hysterical energy, whips and wails, and wails’. The quote proves a visual symbol of the loss of culture due to the government intervention. ‘hysterical energy’ is a symbol of the culture the town posed, by now creates cultural tension due to the loss of the town. Overall, ‘Oombulgurri’ exhibits that symbolism is a primary technique that has been used to create cultural tension by Eckermann, which is achieved by exhibiting the key ideas of loss of culture and connection to land. |  |
| ‘Unearth’ is a poem that explores the mistreatment of Aboriginal people in the past and the effect this has on the current generations. Eckermann conveys the main ideas of connection to land and connection to ancestors past and present to convey the cultural tension. Eckermann’s main purpose for creating this poem is to allow the reader to further understand the mistreatment of Aboriginal people in the past. Through the use of natural imagery Eckermann explores symbolism and a connection to land in ‘the noise of the poinciana’. The poinciana is a native Australian tree that Aboriginal people would use to access their ancestors. The tree is a symbol of Aboriginal culture and the past warriors that have died. This symbolism creates cultural tension as the audience is forced to consider the tree as a symbol of past mistreatment. Additionally, the use of a metaphoric statement allows Eckermann to explore the effect the past has on Aboriginal people in ‘people suppressed by dread’. |  |
| This portrays that the past mistreatment always effects their lives and they won’t forgot the past. The quote is also a symbol of the dispossession of children in the past. Cultural tension is created as an emotional connection is gained with the audience, the connection is from the mistreatment one culture had on another. Furthermore, Eckermann uses symbolism and visual imagery to convey the torment caused in ‘excavation holes are dug in our minds’. The symbolism creates a strong idea that Aboriginal people have reason to fear the horrors of the past. The quote portrays the effect the symbolism can have when exploring cultural tension. This is due to the symbol of past torment. Overall, ‘Unearth’ explores the impact that symbolism has when used as the primary technique to explore cultural tension. |  |
| Ali Cobby Eckermann’s poems ‘Oombulgurri’ and ‘Unearth’ display that poetry primary relies on symbolism to create cultural tension. Symbolism is achieved to create symbols of the key ideas connection to land, connection to culture and connection to ancestors past and present. |  |

# Resource 10 – sample assessment task

Table 12 – resource 10 overview of assessment task

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Course – English Standard | Task details |
| Task number | 2 |
| Task type | Critical response (800-1000 words) with reflection (200-300 words) |
| Mode | Writing and responding |
| Weighting | 20% |
| Issue date |  |
| Due date |  |
| Submission process | Submit to your class teacher at the start of your English lesson. |
| Outcomes | * **EN12-3** analyses and uses language forms, features and structures of texts and justifies their appropriateness for purpose, audience and context and explains effects on meaning * **EN12-5** thinks imaginatively, creatively, interpretively, analytically and discerningly to respond to and compose texts that include considered and detailed information, ideas and arguments * **EN12-8** explains and assesses cultural assumptions in texts and their effects on meaning |

[English Standard Stage 6 Syllabus](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/11-12/stage-6-learning-areas/stage-6-english/english-standard-2017) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2017.

## Task description

This task has 2 parts.

**Part 1 – critical response (800–1000 words)**

*Inside my Mother* has been described in a [Writing NSW book review](https://writingnsw.org.au/poetry-book-review-inside-my-mother-by-ali-cobby-eckermann/) as a collection that ‘beats with anger and sadness, but also a deep calmness’.

Compose a critical response in response to the following question:

In what ways does Eckermann use poetic language to deepen and widen cultural understanding?

**Part 2 – reflection (200–300 words)**

During your study of Module A, you have learnt about the features of academic writing. Compose a reflective paragraph explaining 2 language forms, features or structures of texts that you used in composing your critical response, and your intended effect in using these features while composing and editing your response.

## Assessment criteria

In your response you will be assessed on how well you:

* compose a critical piece of writing that demonstrates an understanding of how language is used to shape meaning about individuals and/or cultural groups
* organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and context
* justify your use of 2 language forms and features and their intended effect.

## Feedback to be provided

During the drafting and editing process, the teacher will provide verbal and written feedback, identifying areas for improvement.

After submission, the teacher will provide written feedback outlining strengths and areas for improvement with a focus on building knowledge, understanding and skills for future learning.

## Marking guidelines

Table 13 – marking guidelines

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Criteria | Grade |
| * Analyses effectively how Eckermann uses poetic language to deepen and widen cultural understanding * Presents an effective response using relevant, detailed textual evidence * Organises, develops and expresses ideas effectively using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form * Effectively justifies the use and intended effect of two language forms and features in their own writing | A  17–20 |
| * Analyses competently how Eckermann uses poetic language to deepen and widen cultural understanding * Presents a competent response using relevant textual evidence * Organises, develops and expresses ideas competently using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form * Competently justifies the use and intended effect of two language forms and features in their own writing | B  13–16 |
| * Analyses how Eckermann uses poetic language to deepen and widen cultural understanding * Presents a response using adequate textual evidence * Organises, develops and expresses ideas competently using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form * Competently justifies the use and intended effect of two language forms and features in their own writing | C  9–12 |
| * Describes how Eckermann uses poetic language to deepen and widen cultural understanding * Presents a response using limited textual evidence * Attempts to organise a response in a limited way * Attempts to justify the use and intended effect of two language forms and features in their own writing in a limited way | D  5–8 |
| * Attempts to describe aspects of the text * Attempts to organise a response in an elementary way * Attempts to justify the use and intended effect of two language forms and features in their own writing in an elementary way | E  1–4 |
| * Non-attempt or non-serious attempt | 0 |

# References

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NESA (NSW Education Standards Authority) (2019) [2019 Higher School Certificate Examination: English Standard: Paper 2 – Modules](https://educationstandards.nsw.edu.au/wps/portal/nesa/resource-finder/hsc-exam-papers/2019/english-standard-2019-hsc-exam-pack+) © NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) for and on behalf of the Crown in right of the State of New South Wales, 2017.

Red Room Poetry (20 June 2018) [‘Ali Cobby Eckermann –- Interview HSC Part II’ [video]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vqQbiVZl4OQ), *Red Room Poetry*, YouTube, accessed 12 January 2024.

Smith ER (2015) [‘Book Review / Inside My Mother by Ali Cobby Eckermann’](https://writingnsw.org.au/poetry-book-review-inside-my-mother-by-ali-cobby-eckermann/), Writing NSW, accessed 12 January 2024.

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