

MEETING KURT – THE NEXT WRITING ACTIVITY

Student Instructions Sheet

In this activity you will write a short story where the narrator's perspective is a significant feature. The narrator's point of view on events, ideas or other characters will be developed throughout the narrative. The perspective may well shift as the story unfolds. The style and tone will be influenced by the narrator's position. Whatever the style and point of view adopted, the narrator's thoughts, feelings and reactions will become evident as the story develops.

Before beginning your own writing, you will examine and discuss several short stories written by senior students.

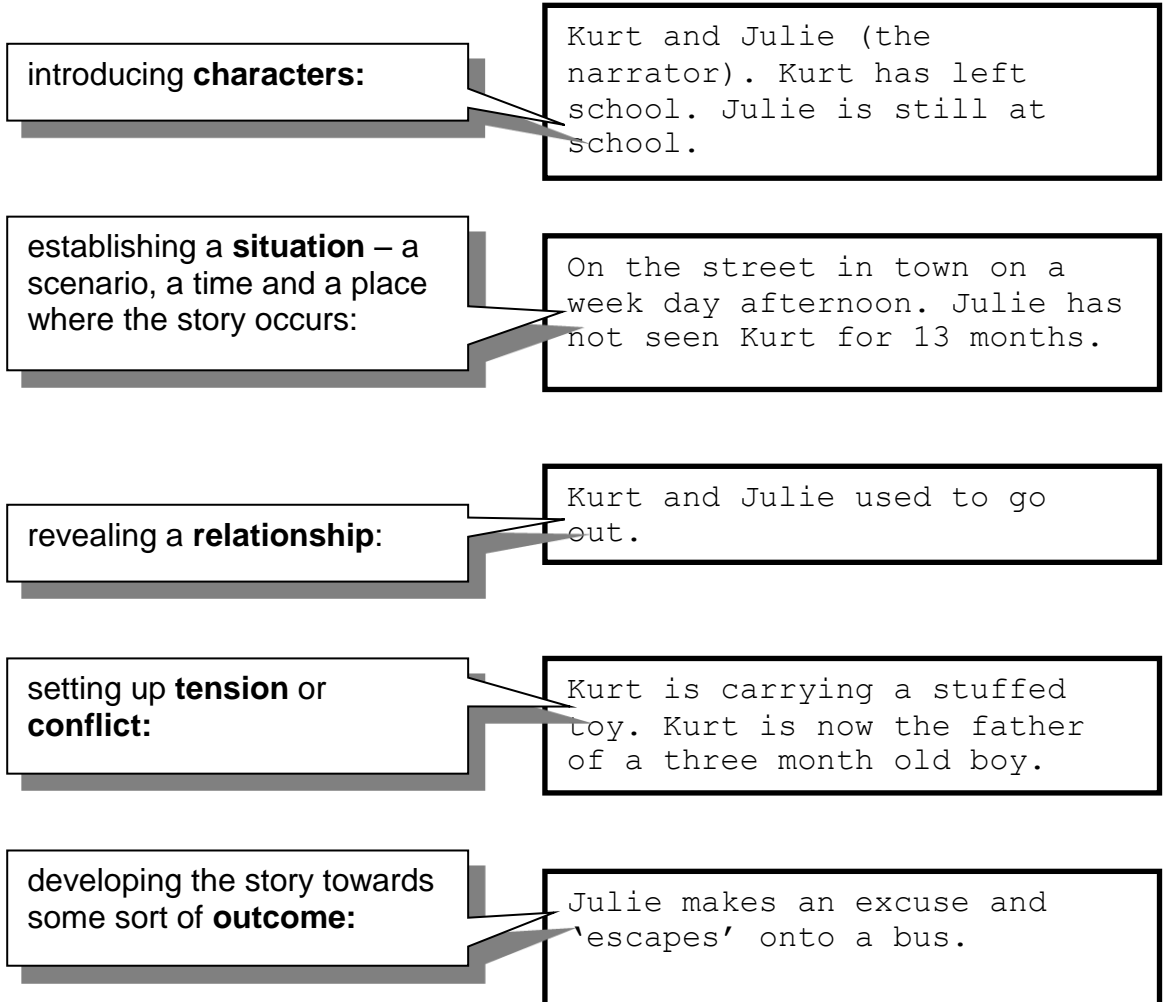
You will be assessed on your ability to

- develop and sustain the narrator's perspective throughout the short story
- craft your writing to achieve coherence across the story through your use of details, syntax or a particular style
- structure the story clearly and effectively
- use writing conventions accurately.

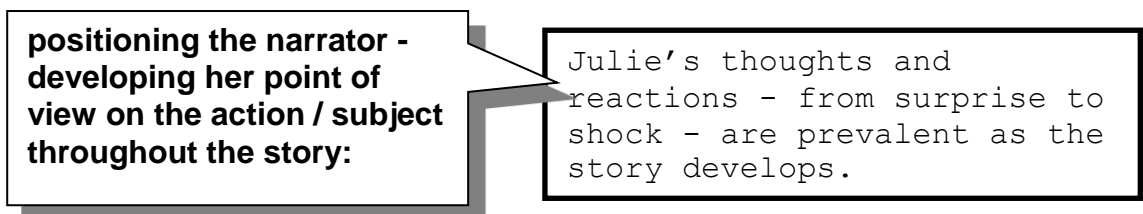
Your short story will be at least 600 words long. It should be appropriate for a readership of your peers and your English teacher. Your short story should also be suitable for publication in a collection of senior secondary students' writing.

Task 1: Integrating the narrator's perspective

- a) Before reading the short story *Meeting Kurt*, examine how the story is **structured** by:



The writer has **integrated the narrator's perspective** into the story's structure by:



- b) Read *Meeting Kurt*. Consider how structural elements might shape the story you will write. How will you position your narrator?

Meeting Kurt

In the street downtown I met Kurt who had his hair loose and blond and dirty. He smiled. A lot. His teeth were white and straight. When I used to take him home, Mum would call him "Goodlookin"but he was different now. He used to be all proper and smart and neat, and funny too with that grin that just lit up his crazy face and he'd take you over with his humour. Different now because something in his speckled-egg eyes was a lot sadder and less naïve. No. Not naïve, he'd never been that but probably more like innocently happy. No crazy grins now but the crazy smile. Calmer and more polite.

"Afternoon, Julie," he said. Pleasantly.

"Kurt!" Taken by surprise. He hadn't shaved. I wanted to hold his bristly cheeks and place my thumbs on the corners of his mouth. How long had it been since I had done that? Years, God it felt like years but it was only... what ... thirteen months my brain whispered after quick calculation. That long since we had fought so freely and loudly and I had gone back to school when the winter holidays were over, and he hadn't. I held the floating edges of my tablecloth kilt down from the wind and said hello. Asked how he was.

He sniffed "Okay" and there was an awkward silent period where we didn't say anything only looked at each other from the corners of our eyes. The sky hung so leaden and there was no sunlight there to shine up his eyes. I thought about when we had met and how long we had gone out for, for ages and I wanted to say, "Remember when we went to the beach in the summer and you got attacked by that rabid chihuahua?" or "You know Lil is still going out with that slimy George?" or something, but I couldn't. I wanted him to speak first. Then I wanted him to have a coffee with me, or maybe go get some Maccas, because he loved cheeseburgers. "You look different," he said. "Your hair." He reached out a hand to touch one lock, blown about from the wind. I hooked it behind my ear. "Dyed it. Sick of being blonde." "It looks nice."

I noticed he was carrying something - a stuffed toy. A fat, blue rabbit with new, silky fur and the tag still swinging from its ear. I smiled.

"Buying toys now? Who's the lucky one?"

He smiled back with his sad new smile. "My son. He's three months old in a couple of days."

Something that had been open inside me for the past year or so shut down and wept. All invitations for mature coffee, or funky cheeseburgers, blown away from out of my mouth and my voice was really quiet when I said "Oh."

He looked sideways, pressing his lips together and avoided my eyes because I was staring at him. His large hands played with one blue ear. Mentally I counted months in my mind. Nine plus three was twelve and ... one month after we broke up, I had been at school. School, and thinking about Kurt every day. Crying about it every day. God. "I have to get home. Work, y'know," I said. "Teachers are piling it on."

"Yeah," he said. The quietest curl of disbelief on his tongue.

"Luck in the future, I whispered and walked away.

"You too Julie," he said behind me. My shoes were scuffing on the concrete. I saw Lil in the bus, she'd want to talk. I took a seat near her and leant back, laying down my wind-swept hair. I pulled up the knees of my tights. They always got wrinkly on my knees. I sat with a bunch of other girls in our tablecloth uniforms and I watched him through the window as the bus started up. His jeans were shaggy round his heels and he stood like someone rather dazed in a crowded room. God, I realised, Ma would still call him "Goodlookin" despite... despite... and I looked away.

Task 2: Developing structures through details and syntax

- a) In task 1 you have already looked at the overall structure used in *Meeting Kurt*. Consider how structure works on a different level and has a key role in developing a narrative point of view. In *Meeting Kurt* **details are selected** and **sentence structures are crafted** to build a **pervading tone** which ranges from surprise and self consciousness in the opening to shock and disbelief later on.

Look at this extract from the middle of the story when Julie first notices the toy. These sections have been set out on separate lines to highlight key features.

D
E
T
A
I
L
S

I noticed he was carrying something
- a stuffed toy.
A fat blue rabbit with new silky fur and
the tag still swinging from its ear.

The details of the toy Kurt is carrying become more specific, foreshadowing the increasing significance the toy holds for Julie.

Consider Julie's shocked reaction a little later as the reality sinks in that Kurt has a son so soon after they lost touch:

S
Y
N
T
A
X

...one month after we broke up, I had
been at school.
School, and thinking about Kurt
every day.
Crying about it every day.
God.

A longer loosely constructed sentence reflecting Julie's thought processes as she works out dates - then sentence fragments with deliberate repetition of some words from the previous line suggest the shock Julie feels.

The minor sentences culminate in a one word sentence "God," highlighting Julie's distress.

- b) Look at how **details** and **syntax** are used in the **two opening paragraphs** of *Meeting Kurt* to develop the narrator's point of view. Using the layout above, find and analyse sections where choices of details and syntax are used to establish Julie's feelings of excitement, or surprise, or embarrassment at seeing Kurt again. These feelings dominate the narrative perspective at this stage in the story.

- c) Look at how **details** and **syntax** are used in the **final paragraph** to highlight a **shift in perspective**. Using the layout above, find and analyse sections where choices of details and syntax are used to establish that Julie is still part of an adolescent world while Kurt has become a father.
- d) Note how the careful selection of details and crafted syntax helps establish the **tone** in the opening of *Meeting Kurt* which is then developed throughout by integrating impressions and snippets of the narrator's voice into the narrative. Consider how you will build in an appropriate tone to your short story.

Task 3: Examining structure and narrative technique

- a) Read *I Hope They Feel Really Stink*.
- b) Using this template complete a structural analysis showing how *I Hope They Feel Really Stink* has been shaped. Identify and comment on the narrator's perspective. Refer back to the *Meeting Kurt* template in task 1 for further guidance.

introducing character(s) :	
establishing a situation – a scenario, a time and a place where the story occurs:	
revealing a relationship :	
setting up tension or conflict :	
developing the story towards some sort of outcome :	
positioning the narrator - developing their point of view on the action / subject throughout the story:	

- c) Consider how the controlled use of **diction** develops the narrator's point of view. Effective vocabulary selection is central to the impact of this short story. It is evident even in the title, where the word "stink" immediately conveys a defiant teenage perspective. The references to "the parents" suggest a sense of distance and their position of power and importance in the narrator's life.

Find and discuss other examples of where effective use of diction helps convey the narrator's attitude.

I Hope They Feel Really Stink

I frowned down through the safety glass to assembled parents. Mine specifically. They looked happy as if a great burden had been lifted from their shoulders and the new freedom was making them giddy. I did not like the look of this. It made me feel very uneasy.

I travelled this road many times before to visit the grandparents in Dunedin. Was it merely a coincidence that the freezing works was on the way, or did the Parents' plan entail more bloodthirsty work than the simple plot of leaving me to rot and disintegrate in a boarding school away from all those "bad influences?"

My version of a horror movie in which meat factories substituted their produce with human sausages screened in my mind. I certainly was not feeling good about this boarding school idea, "you're going if you want to or not young lady" business.

Attempting for the moment to visualise pleasant thoughts, I leaned my head against the window liking the way the idling vibration passed through to teeth and glasses. Nestled comfortably into the upholstery of the bus, I familiarised myself with this plastic fabric environment for future reference to "my parents are worse than yours" discussions.

My mind drifted, searching for the penultimate reasons for my departure. Flashbacks of me poised in revengeful mid-throw. Arm stretched and taut, straining as recoiled, releasing the bike helmet and watching it spin and hurtle towards my sister's head on the other side of her bedroom. Needless to say it did not go down well with my mother. But Emily did. Falling to the ground clutching her head and screaming. The result was, for her, two stitches; for me, residence in the laundry for the night under the Parents' instruction.

Other reasons for my delightful, one way, no return ticket South Canterbury scenic trip were based on several irreversible personality flaws and misdemeanours. My bad points, preached the Parents, were doing awful things like skipping school, beating up my little sister (this was because Mum loved her best), my friends (Mum's enemies) and smoking. And of course "a better education. Without all the..... distractions."

I glanced down upon the Parents. One thing I liked about buses was their height. That height gave a different perspective on the world. Looking down on the Parents amongst the chewing gum splotched concrete and suitcases, I imagined what they might do or say. Of course Mother would make a mention of this morning's events, perhaps later at morning tea. It would seem rather uncaring of her to let the morning pass as if it was ordinary. Some may view this as an uncaring attitude. Uncaring attitudes meant psychological dysfunction in employees, leading to a lower work

output and placing greater stress on the family as anxiety levels rose. These days you could put anything down to bad office relations, or just bad relations.

The bus juddered forward rudely interrupting my thought process, but as if sensing my annoyance it settled down to a low grumble. After the expected show of hand-waving and ultra stretchy smiles directed towards the adolescent (me), we pulled out into the bright glaring February morning, down Gloucester Street with Farmers to one side and to the other, Victoria Square.

Beside the bright red Farmers sign declaring its name to potential clientele the backs of other brick buildings looked cracked and dirty. All a facade. Christchurch, I decided, was a facade. A facade of buildings, personalities and families. I wanted to rip through those brick and psychological facades.

I wondered what the Parents thought of me right now that with their heart growing fonder absence. My sarcastic mind was definitely working overtime as I sat there listlessly in the bus. I could see Mother during lunch.

"The eldest is off to a boarding school today," she would mention (in passing) to work colleagues. "Well, it was sad to see her go, but what else could we do?" the Parent would say, looking for some reassurance that "together" the family had made the right decision. The necessary reassurance would no doubt be quickly dispersed by a sympathetic listener. After they all know what it is like raising a teenager. NB Teenager is pronounced as if one sucking a very sour lemon.

I was on my way to the boarding school now. So I did what I could. I plugged in my walkman and put on an even grumpier face.

Task 5: The final impression

- a) Read the endings of *Meeting Kurt* and *I Hope They Feel Really Stink* for a second time. The final impressions the reader is left with are crucial to the impact of both stories. In *Meeting Kurt* the reader is aware that the narrator's perspective has changed significantly, where in *I Hope They Feel Really Stink* the narrator's perspective is even further entrenched.
- b) Consider how you will develop the ending of your story. Will it reinforce how the narrator's perspective has changed or will that perspective remain unaltered?

Task 6: "That vital knowingness..."

In his novel *Atonement*, Ian McEwan described a young writer's early work as lacking "that vital knowingness about the ways of the world which compels a reader's respect."

In a piece of writing seemingly ordinary events can reveal that "vital knowingness:"

- in *Meeting Kurt* former close friends bump into each other on the street.

- in *I Hope They Feel Really Stink* a daughter reflects on family conflicts on an enforced bus to boarding school.

Look back over *Meeting Kurt* and *I Hope They Feel Really Stink*. Could these short stories face the same criticism as that faced by the developing writer in *Atonement*? Discuss whether the stories lack “a vital knowingness about the ways of the world”, or if through the narrative perspective developed they reveal some sort of insight or understanding which speaks to you as a reader?

Task 7: Developing a plan

- a) In addition to the short stories already studied, you could also read the annotated exemplars which follow discussing their strengths and areas where they could be improved.
- b) Use the template in Task 3(b) to plan your story. Pay particular attention to how you will develop the narrator’s point of view. You may not include material from the exemplars or from other stories included in this activity.

Task 8: Drafting and developing a final version

Develop a final version of your story. It should:

- develop and sustain the narrator’s **thoughts and feelings** as the short story develops
- be crafted to **create effects** through carefully selected **details** and **syntax** which help to achieve a coherence across the story.
- be **effectively structured**, integrating the narrator’s perspective.
- use **writing conventions** accurately.

Your short story will be at least 600 words long. It should be appropriate for a readership of your peers and your English teacher. Your short story should also be suitable for publication in a collection of senior secondary students’ writing.

Exemplar A: Excellence

Deeper features:
achievement criteria
assessing:

- ideas
- crafting
- structure.

Ideas about the experience of meeting Kurt are developed and sustained convincingly and with insight.

The story reveals a "vital knowingness about the ways of the world" by skilfully integrating a wide range of emotions, thoughts and observations triggered by this chance meeting in a captivating credible way.

Writing is crafted, controlled and fluent. It creates effects appropriate to its audience, purpose and short story form and commands attention.

Details are thoughtfully selected.
Syntax and diction are controlled and varied.

Writing is clearly and effectively structured appropriate to its audience, purpose and short story form and achieves impact.

The story is structured, developing a convincing depiction of the meeting and integrating the narrator's perspective.

Meeting Kurt

In the street downtown I met Kurt who had his hair loose and blond and dirty. He smiled. A lot. His teeth were white and straight. When I used to take him home, Mum would call him "Goodlookin"but he was different now. He used to be all proper and smart and neat, and funny too with that grin that just lit up his crazy face and he'd take you over with his humour. Different now because something in his speckled-egg eyes was a lot sadder and less naïve. No. Not naïve, he'd never been that but probably more like innocently happy. No crazy grins now but the crazy smile. Calmer and more polite.

"Afternoon, Julie," he said. Pleasantly.

"Kurt!" Taken by surprise. He hadn't shaved. I wanted to hold his bristly cheeks and place my thumbs on the corners of his mouth. How long had it been since I had done that? Years, God it felt like years but it was only... what ... thirteen months my brain whispered after quick calculation. That long since we had fought so freely and loudly and I had gone back to school when the winter holidays were over, and he hadn't. I held the floating edges of my tablecloth kilt down from the wind and said hello. Asked how he was.

He sniffed "Okay" and there was an awkward silent period where we didn't say anything only looked at each other from the comers of our eyes. The sky hung so leaden and there was no sunlight there to shine up his eyes. I thought about when we had met and how long we had gone out for, for ages and I wanted to say,
"Remember when we went to the beach in the summer and you got attacked by that rabid chihuahua?" or "You know Lil is still going out with that slimy George?" or something, but I couldn't. I wanted him to speak first. Then I wanted him to have a coffee with me, or maybe go get some Maccas, because he loved cheeseburgers.

"You look different," he said. "Your hair." He reached out a hand to touch one lock, blown about from the wind. I hooked it behind my ear. "Dyed it. Sick of being blonde."

"It looks nice."

I noticed he was carrying something - a stuffed toy. A fat, blue rabbit with new, silky fur and the tag still swinging from its ear. I smiled.

"Buying toys now? Who's the lucky one?"

He smiled back with his sad new smile. "My son. He's three months old in a couple of days."

Something that had been open inside me for the past year or so shut down and wept. All invitations for mature coffee, or funky cheeseburgers, blown away from out of my mouth and my voice was really quiet when I said "Oh."

He looked sideways, pressing his lips together and avoided my eyes because I was staring at him. His large hands

Surface features:
achievement criteria
assessing:
• conventions.

Writing conventions are used accurately throughout:

accurate use of syntax, paragraphing, punctuation and spelling.
(NB: a few random errors, or minor editing lapses, are acceptable).

played with one blue ear. Mentally I counted months in my mind. Nine plus three was twelve and ... one month after we broke up, I had been at school. School, and thinking about Kurt every day. Crying about it every day. God.

"I have to get home. Work, y'know," I said. "Teachers are piling it on."

"Yeah," he said. The quietest curl of disbelief on his tongue.

"Luck in the future, I whispered and walked away.

"You too Julie," he said behind me. My shoes were scuffing on the concrete. I saw Lil in the bus, she'd want to talk. I took a seat near her and leant back, laying down my wind-swept hair. I pulled up the knees of my tights. They always got wrinkly on my knees. I sat with a bunch of other girls in our tablecloth uniforms and I watched him through the window as the bus started up. His jeans were shaggy round his heels and he stood like someone rather dazed in a crowded room. God, I realised, Ma would still call him "Goodlookin" despite... despite... and I looked away.

Exemplar B: Excellence

I Hope They Feel Really Stink

Deeper features:
achievement criteria
assessing:

- ideas
- crafting
- structure.

Surface features:
achievement criteria
assessing:

- conventions.

I frowned down through the safety glass to assembled parents. Mine specifically. They looked happy as if a great burden had been lifted from their shoulders and the new freedom was making them giddy. I did not like the look of this. It made me feel very uneasy.

I travelled this road many times before to visit the grandparents in Dunedin. Was it merely a coincidence that the freezing works was on the way, or did the Parents' plan entail more bloodthirsty work than the simple plot of leaving me to rot and disintegrate in a boarding school away from all those "bad influences?"

My version of a horror movie in which meat factories substituted their produce with human sausages screened in my mind. I certainly was not feeling good about this boarding school idea, "you're going if you want to or not young lady" business.

Attempting for the moment to visualise pleasant thoughts, I leaned my head against the window liking the way the idling vibration passed through to teeth and glasses. Nestled comfortably into the upholstery of the bus, I familiarised myself with this plastic fabric environment for future reference to "my parents are worse than yours" discussions.

My mind drifted, searching for the penultimate reasons for my departure. Flashbacks of me poised in revengeful mid-throw. Arm stretched and taut, straining as recoiled, releasing the bike

Ideas are developed and sustained convincingly and with insight.

The story skilfully integrates a wide range of thoughts and observations, as the central character begins a bus trip that will take her on an enforced trip to boarding school.

Writing is crafted, controlled and fluent. It creates effects appropriate to its audience, purpose and short story form and commands attention.

Details are thoughtfully selected. Syntax and diction are controlled and varied. Fresh use of language, observant eye for detail.

Writing conventions are used accurately throughout:

accurate use of syntax, paragraphing, punctuation and spelling.
(NB: a few random errors, or minor editing lapses, are acceptable).

helmet and watching it spin and hurtle towards my sister's head on the other side of her bedroom. Needless to say it did not go down well with my mother. But Emily did. Falling to the ground clutching her head and screaming. The result was, for her, two stitches; for me, residence in the laundry for the night under the Parents' instruction.

Writing is clearly and effectively structured appropriate to its audience, purpose and short story form and achieves impact.

The structure achieves impact, integrating the narrator's perspective on recollections of previous events and present time. Occasional random links in keeping with stream of consciousness style.

Other reasons for my delightful, one way, no return ticket South Canterbury scenic trip were based on several irreversible personality flaws and misdemeanours. My bad points, preached the Parents, were doing awful things like skipping school, beating up my little sister (this was because Mum loved her best), my friends (Mum's enemies) and smoking. And of course "a better education. Without all the..... distractions."

I glanced down upon the Parents. One thing I liked about buses was their height. That height gave a different perspective on the world. Looking down on the Parents amongst the chewing gum splotched concrete and suitcases, I imagined what they might do or say. Of course Mother would make a mention of this morning's events, perhaps later at morning tea. It would seem rather uncaring of her to let the morning pass as if it was ordinary. Some may view this as an uncaring attitude. Uncaring attitudes meant psychological dysfunction in employees, leading to a lower work output and placing greater stress on the family as anxiety levels rose. These days you could put anything down to bad office relations, or just bad relations.

The bus juddered forward rudely interrupting my thought process, but as if sensing my annoyance it settled down to a low grumble. After the expected show of hand-waving and ultra stretchy smiles directed towards the adolescent (me), we pulled out into the bright glaring February morning, down Gloucester Street with Farmers to one side and to the other, Victoria Square.

Beside the bright red Farmers sign declaring its name to potential clientele the backs of other brick buildings looked cracked and dirty. All a facade. Christchurch, I decided, was a facade. A facade of buildings, personalities and families. I wanted to rip through those brick and psychological facades.

I wondered what the Parents thought of me right now that with their heart growing fonder absence. My sarcastic mind was definitely working overtime as I sat there listlessly in the bus. I could see Mother during lunch.

"The eldest is off to a boarding school today," she would mention (in passing) to work colleagues. "Well, it was sad to see her go, but what else could we do?" the Parent would say, looking for some reassurance that "together" the family had made the right decision. The necessary reassurance would no doubt be quickly dispersed by a sympathetic listener. After they all know what it is like raising a teenager. NB Teenager is pronounced as if one sucking a very sour lemon.

I was on my way to the boarding school now. So I did what I could. I plugged in my walkman and put on an even grumpier face.

Exemplar C: Merit

The Little Blue Honda

Deeper features:
achievement criteria
assessing:

- ideas
- crafting
- structure.

Writing is crafted and controlled. Diary style reminiscence sustained. Narrator's perspective effectively conveyed throughout. Simple diction sustained and effective, but does not command attention needed for excellence.

Writing is structured clearly and effectively.
"You / I" structure is appropriate and sustained.

Ideas are developed and sustained convincingly.
Narrator's uncertain feelings about the boy coupled with her interest in him are effectively developed.

Do you remember the time you drove me to your bach? You picked me up after school in your little blue Honda. I wore my new red jersey to make myself look better. You wore your work clothes and you still looked good. We stopped off at my house and my brother peeked through the crack in the door. He didn't know who you were. I didn't tell him. When we got back in the car Mum came outside with a jacket. 'Wear it just in case,' she said. 'It might get cold'. We drove off down the street listening to the thumping of your car stereo's subs. You were so proud of them. They gave me a headache.

You weren't meant to bring people out to your bach. When we saw your Dad's navy blue four wheel drive parked on the front lawn you freaked out and turned the car around. We drove to Coes Ford. You played with my nerves by driving through muddy potholes along the dirt road. Your little blue Honda wasn't blue anymore. We parked beside a large pine hedge and leaned our car seats all the way back. We watched the blackbirds and seagulls perched in the trees. You said you could shoot them down from here. I said you were horrible. We sat in the recently blue Honda and waited. What for? We weren't really sure. You showed me your cleverly hidden Rockford Fosgate amplifier which you were so proud of. I said that Rockford Fosgate sounded like a name for an American millionaire and not for an amplifier. You just looked at me. Some duck shooters arrived and you suggested we leave. You knew I hated hunters.

We put our seats back up and drove back to the bach the long way. It was dark by the time we got back. Your Dad's four wheel drive was nowhere to be seen. You drove up onto the lawn and stopped the engine. "Welcome to the bach," you said and smiled. You loved that place. It was your hideaway. You never took anyone there. That made me nervous, my opinion meant everything. We went inside and you opened Mustangs for both of us. Vodka and energy drink. It left a bad taste in my mouth and made my teeth feel fuzzy. I drank it anyway. We ate chicken for dinner. We watched Dante's Peak and the music channel and stayed up until we couldn't keep our eyes open anymore. I slept in the bed your father had made but I didn't sleep well. Possums on the roof and strange surroundings

Surface features:
achievement criteria
assessing:

- conventions.

Writing conventions are used accurately throughout:
accurate use of syntax, paragraphing, punctuation and spelling.
(NB: a few random errors, or minor editing lapses, are acceptable).

made for eerie dreams and unbroken sleep. You didn't wake once.

Effective parallel **structure**. Simple revealing allusion to duck hunting – and male 'conquests'.

I awoke in the morning to find you gone. Hunting. I hated hunters but this time was different. I didn't mind. It gave me a chance to explore your hideaway. Baby photos. You knew how to shoot a gun from age four. Duck shooting medals. You were winning from age twelve. There wasn't much more to find. You'd made sure of that. The rumbling of your four wheeler signalled your return. I knew you'd been successful before you even opened your mouth. Your smile revealed it all. Three dead ducks lying on the porch. Three more notches on your decoy.

It was cold at the bach. Icy cold. My jacket was wrapped around my toes and I cursed my mother for being right. We drove back to town in the early morning sun and you turned the little blue Honda's heater on full. The bright sunlight shone straight into our eyes and we could hardly see until we reached the university roundabout. We said goodbye at my gate and you and your little blue Honda drove off down the road, your stereo thumping all the way.

Exemplar D: Merit

Isn't So Bad

Deeper features:
achievement criteria
assessing:

- ideas
- crafting
- structure.

Ideas are developed and sustained convincingly.

Character's wide range of feelings about the experience are effectively developed. Strong use of sensory details.

"Your vision may be impaired", says the ophthalmic surgeon. He speaks to someone. It is me. I glimpse a dark cave. My mind comes up with the horror of running into walls. My life suddenly flashes before me, the difficulty of living life as a blind person. My mouth dries up, and tears start flooding my eyes. Fear tingles down my spine. My thoughts are overwhelmed with blindness. Out of the cave I see a blind man stumbling along with a harnessed Labrador guide dog. I don't want to end up like that, depending on a dog. I want to live an exciting life of vision and normality.

I don't even know what happens in the examination room. All I know is that the world looks very lifeless and black. The colours and feelings of terror and fear. The hospital room becomes a cage with me as a terrified victim of chance. I see the darkness of the room. The white walls are a dirty grey like sea scum and the bed in the corner is a ghostly goblin. The chair in front of me feels like ice.

A mysterious hand, with a pen in it, scribbles in a patchy vanilla-brown folder. A name tag shining in the darkness reveals the surgeon's name "Doctor Herman". He

Surface features:
achievement criteria
assessing:
• conventions.

Writing conventions are used accurately throughout:

accurate use of syntax, paragraphing, punctuation and spelling.

(NB: a few random errors, or minor editing lapses, are acceptable).

Writing is crafted and controlled.

Extended 'monster' image developed effectively, but some

unexpectedly asks me rapid-fire questions about my health, eyes and school. I come back to a safer world. The monster is quelled momentarily. He starts shining a bright white light, flooding in my eyes. It is like the sun from a science fiction galaxy. I sit dazed as he starts poking an ice cream stick into my eye's skin, pushing it in all directions. Then a double dose of azure blue solution squirts in. This liquid feels cool as a subtle breeze. I begin to relax. Then the eye chart. I read some of the letters easily. The rest seem a hieroglyphic blur. I glimpse claws and hair again.

Another machine swings at me, a machine with mounted glasses, a gun pointing at me. I stare through the glasses frightened as a siege of light attacks my eyes. Emerald-green lights brighter than the sun flood in. Two suction cups stick out from the glasses. They cover both eyes. All I see is black. Black nothingness. Black void. Black terror. The cave again. The demons are back.

I lie in the hospital bed, panic and horror my companions. Waiting for surgery, waiting. A nurse appears with a syringe clutched in her left hand like a sword. My heart stops. I suddenly remember, I am afraid of needles. My eyes quickly lock onto the syringe. Inside the syringe appears a sky blue solution. I notice my body shake and my right arm feels a tiny jab. I slowly start dozing off as the trolley sways and rattles down the smooth corridor.

With my eyes barely open, I try looking around but I can see people in green gowns surrounding me. The lights start getting brighter as I feel the heat touch my skin softly. The air smells minty. I slowly breathe as I see my stomach move up and down in rhythm. My eyes close until I see nothing but a black void. Another black bottomless void.

A wave of light suddenly appears. It seems magical as all the colours appear across the spectrum to me. Guy Fawkes when I was little. Enchanting and wonderful. Then I hear buttons clicking like beetles. Every time the buttons are pressed rapidly the flashes get brighter. The light starts getting brighter and I notice I start going blind again. My heart beats rapidly, flash after flash. My body is tormented by light. Suddenly it is over. The blackness recedes back into its cave.

I open my eyes. The laser surgery is over. I speak to Dad. "Isn't the sky bluer than usual?" He smiles with thankfulness and I gratefully adore our sunlit world of vision and light.

Writing is crafted and controlled.

Narrator's perspective effectively conveyed throughout. Some original powerful imagery and a wide vocabulary range are used, but crafting is not sustained throughout the piece.

Does not command attention needed for excellence. Overwriting in some sections detracts from impact: eg: "as I feel the heat touch my skin softly."

Writing is clearly and effectively structured,

integrating a range of experiences of the eye examination and surgery from the character's perspective. 'Cave' motif used effectively as a structural device.

Exemplar E: Achievement

Love Hurts

Deeper features:
achievement criteria
assessing:

- ideas
- crafting
- structure.

Surface features:
achievement criteria
assessing:

- conventions.

It's happened again. Again I'd seen that tearful look that precedes the words, "it's over." As always it vividly reminds me of my first love, my true love.

The clouds were thick and the rain was relentless. Luckily I had seen the weather forecast the night before and was prepared. The blustery wind that accompanied the rain blew me through the doors of the cafe.

Writing is generally crafted, controlled and fluent in some places, but not sustained elsewhere as needed for merit.
Eg: Opening paragraphs create interest and atmosphere through varied use of well chosen vocabulary.

The darkness of the cafe absorbed me and I stared blindly. The air was heavy with the aroma of fresh coffee. Slowly the dark blur lifted and my eyes set upon a silhouette hunched in the corner. The near crash while driving here and the throbbing pain from my sore ankle which I had twisted earlier in the day faded from my mind. What had happened?

Writing conventions are used accurately throughout:
appropriate syntax, paragraphing, punctuation and spelling.
(NB: a few random errors, or minor editing lapses, are acceptable).

As I walked nearer the silhouette took form and I noticed that her normal bright eyes were replaced with deep pools that looked as though they'd overflow any minute. Her hair, normally neatly brushed, was dirty and dishevelled. She was wearing some sort of tracksuit. I took the seat opposite her.

Writing is generally crafted and controlled, but a greater level of fluency required for merit.
Some less effective expressions detract from overall impact.
Eg: Several sentences beginning: "My ears struggled..."

"Sorry I'm late." An automatic response. I had stopped in a CD store on the way and lost track of time. Her nervous reply was distressed and lacked her normal confidence. "I ordered you a hot chocolate, I even asked for extra marshmallows." She knew I loved marshmallows. For my birthday she gave me 2kgs of them. "How'd u sleep?" I asked. My ears struggled to understand the mumbled reply. It carried on like this for quite sometime. What had happened? What did I do? I had already apologised for laughing at her dog wearing that cone the vet had put on him to stop him scratching. Sure I was a klutz but what had I done that was this bad? Somehow sorry didn't seem very appropriate. My mind wandered as worry took over. I lacked an attention span and quickly I was looking around. Inwardly I giggled at the woman showing her frustration at the door's inability to push. Can't she read? The cafe was busy today and the surroundings drew my attention for a while.

Ideas are developed.
Character's perspective of the ending of the relationship is sustained throughout.

Gradually our conversation descended into silence. The waitress glided gracefully towards our table. Two steaming cups of hot chocolate were placed in front of us. For no apparent reason I remembered a newspaper article I had read earlier. A 70 year old man from Invercargill had drowned in his cup of coffee. To avoid the awkwardness I considered it as a possibility.

"So, what's up?" I had no idea what I was meant to say. How was I meant to approach her obvious discomfort? All of a sudden her barrier crumbled and the news rushed out of her like a waterfall. "Dad's been transferred to Melbourne, we leave in a week."

Not knowing what to do or say I withdrew into myself. I couldn't sit still. My leg had a mind of its own and started to jiggle fast and violently. Stalling for time I stared into my cup and watched the foam on the surface.

"There's nothing we can do, it's over." How can three years be over? Three years! Do three years mean nothing to her? I did not want to hear the cheesy speech that was about to happen. The feeling that I felt inside began to show itself in the form of tears which I could not fight. My pride helped me rise to my feet. My hand wasn't quick enough and she clutched it fiercely. My eyes told her to back down and I ripped my arm free of her before turning, and forcing myself not to look back. I walked away and didn't stop.

Writing is structured.

Narrative builds to an effective climax. Abrupt conclusion reduces impact.

Exemplar F: Achievement

Surely Not Jason

Deeper features:
achievement criteria assessing:

- ideas
- crafting
- structure.

Writing is crafted, controlled and creates effects.

Several short sentences convey sense of nervousness and rush.

Writing is crafted and controlled. An effective build up to recognising Jason.

Ideas are developed
Narrator's perspective of the experience is sustained throughout.

I'm going to be late. I'm going to miss the bus. I hitch up my school pack and make a mad dash across the street towards the bus stop. You'd have thought that I'd have gotten into the habit of walking faster to get there on time. I guess there's always something you never learn. The bus idles impatiently ready to go. I'm the last one up the step. I pay the driver and take a seat, sighing with relief to have made it on time. It's 3 pm. I will make it to work on time after all. I feel irritated travelling sitting facing backwards on the bus, but it's the only seat available. I guess I have to deal with it. It's certainly better than standing. I have a half hour bus ride to go. As usual, I stare out the window at the moving scenery and sink into a state of boredom.

Suddenly for no apparent reason, the boy in front of me bends down to get something and at that same moment I happen to wake from my boredom and look straight into his eyes. I catch my breath, my heart leaps and I feel weak. He's sitting at the back of the bus, in my direct line of vision. Surely it's not... it is. Jason.

Why do these things have to happen to me? It's like one of those soaps that people watch so often, like Shortland Street or something stupid like that. I can't look him directly in the face. It seems he can't look at me either. But then again, does he even remember me? His history of girlfriends is so long, I was probably just one amongst the crowd. It seems a shame it wasn't anything, just a silly little crush I had on him in Year Nine. At least I can say I haven't been that stupid since.

Surface features:
achievement criteria assessing:
• conventions.

Writing conventions are used accurately throughout:
appropriate syntax, paragraphing, punctuation and spelling.
(NB: a few random errors, or minor editing lapses, are acceptable).

Writing is generally crafted and controlled

but some cliches detract eg "...like he has ants in his pants..."

Greater level of fluency and more effective vocabulary selection needed for merit.

I start to fidget with the zips on my school pack. I wish I had my disc-man, at least then I'd have a reason not to look at him and it'd be easier to tune out and concentrate on something else. I begin to feel almost hysterical stuck on a bus packed with hot, sweaty bodies and my ex in my direct line of vision, but it's ironic too. I can't help grinning, thinking about what everyone will say when I tell them I've seen him after this long. They know the stories, what he was like and how he had treated me. He was one of those guys driven by sex. He probably kept count of how many girls he could get. I have so many memories of having liked him racing through my head, like going to movies and things like that - before he tried the personal stuff. He was such a charmer, lots of girls liked him. He's still good looking, but when you get to know him, watch out! I mean, what was I thinking? A bubble of laughter wells up from inside me. I swallow furiously to hold it down. If I start giggling hysterically, I'll make a fool of myself.

The boy in front of me keeps moving like he has ants in his pants, so that every so often I can see Jason sitting down the back looking at me. When we make eye contact, he looks away. I can't wait until he gets off. His stop will be here soon enough. I stare out the window trying to let the passing trees catch my interest. The bus slows, stops and the doors hiss open. I wish that someone I know would hop on the bus, sit next to me and start a conversation, instead of being left to my overwhelming thoughts and this crazy, annoying silence. Damn, it's only a few school kids who are getting on. I guess I must be condemned to this awful torture. How many people get in this situation and deal with it better than I am?

Writing is structured.

Narrative builds to a clear conclusion. An effective link made back to the earlier disc-man reference.

Finally the moment arrives. This is his stop. Yes! He's getting off, thank God! I watch as he struggles with his heavy pack and shoes. No backwards glance from him as he jumps onto the footpath, I can't expect too much, can I? After all, what was I expecting, a hint of recognition? He probably doesn't care. I smirk silently and sigh with relief. I relax and settle into my seat after having been so keyed up. As the bus pulls up at my stop I resolve that I don't want anything like that to happen to me again. I'll get off the bus rather than sit there like that again. I start walking to work. God likes being spontaneous. He probably finds enjoyment watching people in awkward situations like that. At least next time I'll be prepared. I'll bring my disc-man.

Exemplar G: Not achieved

Judgement Day

Deeper features:
achievement criteria assessing:

- ideas
- crafting
- structure.

It was the summer holidays. Exam results were due soon, judgement day was on the horizon. I was working for the holidays. Not giving a toss about judgement day, just concentrating on the task at hand. Working and earning the money for the I-Pod I had been wanting for ages. However, because my stingy parents

Surface features:
achievement criteria assessing:

- conventions.

Ideas are developed.

Narrator's perspective of the experience of waiting for results is evident

Writing conventions [grammar, punctuation and spelling] are used sufficiently accurately. There are some errors, but

wouldn't buy me one for my birthday back in October or even go halves on it, I had to earn the money to buy one myself. Days shot passed and work was just peachy. We never repeated the last days work. We were out in the sun. Removing and installing billboard skins, trimming gorse and weed, doing it all proud in our reflector vests. My mates would work at the same time and having them around made it more fun. To make time shoot past faster, that I-Pod was edging even closer.

Judgement day was looming, but working and the thought of a new I-Pod, pushed it to the back of my mind.

However, my exam results kept crawling to the front of my mind through 'kindly' reminders I received in the post. Of course frequent nagging reminders from my mum would come into the picture. "Exam results are coming soon. Your results better be good," she would say. "Yes mum," I would reply with a sigh, rolling my eyes. I wished she would get off my case.

It was now judgement day, the ego had landed.

What horrors were to be revealed? Luckily for me I was working for the day and the judging would have to wait till I got home later. I received a text message from mum kindly reminding me that my results had rolled in while I was removing a billboard skin. My mind then worked its magic and took me back to the days I was at the library 'studying'. Where studying for my upcoming exams turned into studying the fine female specimens that were circling the library chatting to guys I knew from school and guys from other schools. I wished I had enough guts to go and talk to those fine female specimens. This would have at least made my 'studying' worthwhile.

My mind then warped me to my sitting of the exams. Maths had been a mission throughout the year and making that worse, my lack of Maths study made a diabolical equation to failure. So I expected my Maths results to resemble a dog's breakfast.

Physics I knew I could count on. Physics and I were like peas and carrots. It was my favourite subject and 'it' being my favourite subject I studied the most. Physics had been good for the year, my class was full of gimps, but I sat in the 'cool corner' with some mates doing trajectory experiments with pieces of paper while slacking off.

English I thought would be debatable, I felt that I would scrape through into Year 13 English. Though I didn't enjoy English much and didn't like my teacher (who hadn't a clue about what would interest sixteen year old boys). She gave us the worst possible movie to study for our visual text assessment, Casablanca which the whole class hated. What was she thinking?

However, judgement would have to wait because I wouldn't be knocking off work for another few hours yet. My mind's flashbacks would haunt me for the rest of that day. The thought of my

Writing is not sufficiently crafted and controlled.

Awkward expression in several places: eg:

"It was my favourite subject and 'it' being my favourite subject I studied the most."

Does not meet the standard for the crafting criterion.

parent's disappointment would also trouble me from this point on. I knew that I should have just locked myself in the house and studied instead of going bird watching in the 'jungle of books' - the library. However, I knew what was done, was done and that I would just have to live with it.

I had finished work much to my disgust. I wanted to carry on so judgement would be further away and my I-Pod would be closer. On the way, home regretting my exams, my stomach became butterfly heaven. Arriving home, I strolled down the path, "Hello," my mum said who had slaved in the garden for the day, "Hi" I would reply.

Writing is not sufficiently crafted.
Does not show evidence of selecting language to create effects.

My results were enclosed in their envelope where they belonged. I opened my results thinking let the judging be done. My results mirrored the flashbacks I had experienced earlier, Maths was a dog's breakfast, and physics was just short of spectacular. English was a shock. I had not done as well as I had thought. I had not gained enough credits to scrape into Year 13 English, though English was never a strong subject on my list. I was pretty gutted. Then looking back at my flashbacks, I passed what I deserved. I wasn't prepared to pay the money to have my papers remarked, not now, that I was so close to purchasing my I-Pod. "How did you go?" Dad asked, "Not great," I replied.

Writing is clearly structured.
Meets the standard for the structure criterion.

The judging had been done and the results were not good, but my worries of my results were gone, my I-Pod would be mine for real next week.

Exemplar H: Not achieved

Deeper features:
achievement criteria
assessing:

- ideas
- crafting
- structure.

Writing is not crafted and controlled.

Overwritten in several sections. Imagery is ineffective. Does not meet the standard for the crafting criterion.

Writing is not crafted and controlled.

Expression needs editing for achievement. Eg "absurd amount..." (and elsewhere).

Writing is not crafted

Loosely expressed. Colloquialisms are not used in a controlled or deliberate way. Eg: "she was pretty cool" (and elsewhere).

Needless repetition eg "strip".

Writing is not crafted and controlled. Shift in tenses.

This Won't Hurt A Bit

I stepped off the bus, the hydraulic doors whoosing behind me. Reaching into my back pocket I took out the note and for what seemed like the hundredth time read the appointment time. It still said 9.30AM.

The face of my watch flashed 9.20am. I was early. Deciding on the bold approach I rushed forward like a manic bulldozer crashing its way through a run down hovel.

Thrusting the front door aside, I ignored the old lady I nearly hit, and stormed over to the reception area, giving my name like a condemned prisoner to the lady behind the desk. I was checked in and sat amongst the others.

Brushing aside the out dated women's magazines I checked out the people around me. To the right, a young couple, she obviously pregnant, he obviously a nervous wreck. The rest of the area consisting of an absurd amount of old people, their frowning faces adding more wrinkles to their already well stocked collections. I felt a warm glow knowing I wasn't the only one around with a large amount of butterflies fluttering around inside me.

So I waited. Waited while nurses collected their victims. Waited while they ignored the important ones. ME!!! 20 long minutes of waiting patiently like a man about to be executed. Like a bolt out of the blue it came.

"Andrew."

With a badly disguised grin of impatience I stood. Let the fun begin!

Following the nurse like a well trained dog we set off down the corridor. She stopped and with a yank pulled across the green curtain magically making a cubicle appear. I stepped inside. She was pretty cool and explained the sordid procedure, how long it will take and that it wouldn't hurt a bit. I should hope not! With that and with a well practiced smile she was gone. Time to strip.

I began to strip, at the same time making sure no one would barge in. I have my pride you know.

I pick up the blue gown. Wait a minute there's 3 holes in the damn thing, I've only got 2 arms, what the hell? OK put my arm through there, give it a twist Jump up and down.. Aaah no sweat....I feel as snug as Houdini in a straight jacket.

Next thing I knew I was doing my best impression of a dead corpse in a morgue routine. I lay there trying to figure out where to rest my arms. The cold steel of the bench is giving me the chills while what looked like a disfigured overhead projector stared at me from above.

To my right the nurse and doctor (called Neville!!) stood in a little room sealed away from me. What am I? Contagious or something? With a slightly monotonous drone he pumped instructions at me.

Surface features:
achievement criteria
assessing:
• conventions.

Writing conventions are not used accurately throughout:

Some confusion over paragraphing. Accurate use of syntax, punctuation and spelling. (NB: a few random errors, or minor editing lapses, are acceptable).

Does not meet the standard for the conventions criterion.

"Turn this way, no no to your right, hold still, breathe in, hold, just a little longer, breathe out!"

This went on for a while till the bench tilted up into a vertical position, my feet sliding to a stop against a small platform extending out from the bench.

Towards me came the nurse with a small paper cup of grey thick liquid. This was Barium. She said it was bland and tasteless. I asked for 2 sugars. She laughed. I took a sip and my mouth filled with this thick gooey banal glue like substance. I actually wondered if Barium was the medical term for glue! Trying not to eject this slime over my nice new blue gown the doctor saved me. "Swallow" he bellowed. With a big swallow down it went. Oh my God!!

The bitterness rose like bile in my throat. I squeezed my eyes and shivered.

4 or 5 gulps + 2 or 3later it was over.

I felt like I had been on the bungy jump from hell, the dizziness creeping up on me like a bad rash. I had an urge to burp! Not one but as many burps as I could spew forth. But I couldn't! It was like they were stuck, unable to break free. Told you it was glue.

I refused their coffee. I wanted out as quickly as I could. I shuffled my way back to my hotel room-whoops sorry my cubicle, periodically cursing the inventor of Barium.

My clothes jumped back on me as fast as they came off and before I knew it I was outside.

The cool morning air brushed over me, calming me. However my stomach began to rumble, like a dormant volcano ready to blow, it hadn't eaten in 11 hours. It demanded a sacrifice. It got one.

14.7 seconds later a steamy apple pie found its way down my throat. Food never tasted so good!

If I was to draw a conclusion it would be that sometimes you have to go through nasty things to find out you're OK. It turns out I was fine after all so in the end it was worth it.

Writing is not crafted and controlled.

Inappropriate vocabulary chosen
Eg "banal"
(and elsewhere).

Ideas are developed and sustained.

Narrator's reactions and emotions linked to the experience are effectively conveyed despite lack of crafting.

Does not meet the standard for the ideas criterion.

Writing is not crafted and controlled.

Loosely constructed sentences. (and elsewhere).

Writing is not structured clearly.

Weak conclusion appears to be an afterthought.

Does not meet the standard for the structure criterion.