

Generals Question from the VCE Exam

1. 'This text demonstrates that individuals in dangerous situations are protected more by their rank than by their courage.'

Discuss.

2. "We have learned who our enemies are – the lice, some of our officers, and Death."
'In war, there are many enemies but no true friends.'

Discuss.

3. 'Generals die in bed suggests that desensitisation is the price one must pay if one is to survive the emotional and physical sufferings of war.'

Discuss.

4. "Can't you forget the front for the few days you have before you?"
In *Generals die in bed*, why is it so hard for soldiers to enjoy their leave?

5. "Where are we going? we wonder."
Does the war have any meaning for the soldiers?

6. 'The horrors of life in the trenches are heightened for the reader by the blunt reporting style of the narration.'

Discuss.

7. How does the narrator in *Generals die in bed* show that war erases individuality?

Exam Criteria

Section A – Text response (Reading and responding)

- detailed knowledge and understanding of the selected text, demonstrated appropriately in response to the topic
- development in the writing of a coherent and effective discussion in response to the task
- controlled use of expressive and effective language appropriate to the task

Selected feedback from the 2009 examiner's report

"Some students did not fully engage with the actual elements of the topics and prompts. Greater care needs to be taken in analysing and recognising the specific expectations of each topic or prompt"

"this is an English examination and strong language skills (including correct spelling and grammar) are expected and necessary for success"

"It is worthwhile commenting that the better responses did not rely entirely on the most obvious scenes from the texts. Their familiarity with the entire text and the discerning selection of scenes to support and explore ideas ensured thoughtful responses that moved beyond predictable and superficial discussions."

"There were far fewer responses that simply provided a plot summary, suggesting that students have been well taught how to select relevant supporting evidence. Where this did occur, it was often due to poorly constructed paragraphs where the direction of the topic sentence caused students to simply retell an incident or scene rather than deal with the ideas offered by the topic. Students should not offer a series of examples that support the general premise of the topic without exploring its implications."

"There is no 'expected' response to a topic and the most successful pieces were those that were thoughtful and fresh. Assessors do not have to agree with the interpretation of a topic or text but students must be able to support their interpretations with insightful supporting evidence from the text. If students have an excellent knowledge of their text and a grasp of the topic, then they should be confident and bold when constructing their essays and presenting their ideas."