The question:Discuss the ways distinctive voices communicate distinctive experiences in at least TWO speeches set for study and ONE other related text of your own choosing.

What it requires:
- Identify what are the distinctive experiences in your text and a related text (ideas/issues).
- Identify the techniques that create the distinctive voice in your text and a related text.
- Put it together: explain how the distinctive voices help us to understand ideas through techniques.

Sample response: Nonfiction

Prescribed text:
- Speeches: ‘I Have a Dream’, Martin Luther King, 1963
  - ‘Address to the Plenary Session at the Earth Summit, Rio Centro, Brazil’, Severn Cullis-Suzuki, 1992

Related text: The Big Sleep, Chandler, 1939 (prose fiction)

Voice in texts is one of the main ways that composers connect with their audiences. It tells us what the composer thinks about his or her subject matter, the people involved and the events that take place. Three texts that communicate distinctive experiences and personalities through their own distinctive voices are the speeches ‘I Have a Dream’ (Martin Luther King, 1963) and ‘Address to the Plenary Session at the Earth Summit’ (Severn Cullis-Suzuki, 1992) and the novel The Big Sleep (Raymond Chandler, 1939).

Introduction responds to question, links this to understanding about the module, presents a thesis and names texts and authors

Both Martin Luther King and Severn Cullis-Suzuki are making a plea for change in their speeches. King’s speech was delivered in Washington in 1963, as the finale to a protest march of more than 200,000 people demanding jobs and political rights for African-Americans. ‘I Have a Dream’ is one of the best-known speeches of the twentieth century, a thoughtful and rousing call to social justice that clearly conveys King’s impatience with continuing racial discrimination. Severn Cullis-Suzuki uses a very different but still distinctive voice in ‘Address to the Plenary Session, Earth Summit’, delivered when she was twelve years old, to the 1992 Earth Summit in Brazil, held by the UN to develop global responses to problems of climate change and sustainability.

Structure linked to purpose

Specific evidence is given and explained

Different sections are linked to offer an overview

Quotations are integrated (made part of the sentence)

King’s content is structured to create a compelling argument for immediate action and change. He begins with a reminder of US democratic traditions and emancipation, with “Five score years” echoing the “Four score years and twenty” of Lincoln’s Gettysburg address, placing the speech in the context of the history of the African-American struggle in the USA. Lincoln’s promise, however, has not been honoured. African-Americans have metaphorically been given a “bad cheque”. The social temperature is rising but they will seek justice through doing what is right, not through resorting to violence and civil disorder. Black and white people will walk together towards a better future, acknowledging the suffering that many have already undergone in this cause. King tells them not to despair because he has a “dream”, “hope” and “faith”. If they all dream the same dream, they will be “free at last”. In structuring his points this way, King takes his audience from recognition of the problem, to acknowledgement of their frustration and anger, to the need to remain hopeful, positive and united, to the final attainment of their collective “dream”. His voice is inspirational, urgent, progressive, thoughtful and determined. He remains
positive throughout, and certain of the legitimacy and rightness of his claims.

The content and structure of Cullis-Suzuki’s speech reflect her youth, being essentially a set of points about her fears, her feelings and her concerns that adults, who have all the power, appear to be doing nothing. She establishes her context as a child in a very adult scientific and political world, dependent on the good-will of those adults to hear her out and then act on her concerns. She establishes her authority by saying that she is speaking on behalf of future generations and the other powerless children of her own generation. She makes a number of appeals to her audience: to stop adding to the environmental problems, to remember that they are part of a global community, to stop the waste, to spend on making life better, not on war, and to stop being hypocritical.

The diction in King’s speech is uplifting, intended to fill his audience with hope and energy to continue fighting peacefully for their rights and to come out of the “dark and desolate valley”, whose depths are accentuated in the alliteration. King was a Baptist minister, reflected in the sermon-like structure of the speech and the many biblical allusions. The biblical construction and language of “every valley shall be exalted”, “the solid rock of brotherhood” and “the glory of the Lord shall be revealed” elevate his speech and give it the authority of a respectable religious address. When urging action on his listeners, he maintains a positive outlook, with words and phrases such as “the high place of dignity and discipline”, “creative”, “majestic” and “soul force”, to keep his audience inspired yet peaceful.

All speeches use tricks of expression, rhetorical devices, to establish a bond with the audience and drive home the most important points. The most compelling of these in ‘I Have a Dream’ is King’s use of repetition. This is also a feature of Cullis-Suzuki’s address. King shares with his audience the dreams he has for a new, racially united America through the repetition of the phrase ‘I have a dream’. Each dream he expresses is a simple statement about giving to black people the rights and conditions that white people already have. By saying that each of these is a dream, a wish-list, he is really reminding his audience of how little actual freedom African-Americans have. King also uses the imperative mood effectively, especially in the phrase “Let freedom ring”, where it is combined with repetition. He wants freedom to be allowed (“let”) across the nation, from the tolerant north to the intolerant south.

Cullis-Suzuki uses repetition for a different reason from King, to express her fears and her frustration at her powerlessness. There is relentless accusation in the repetition of the colloquial “You don’t know”, reinforcing the ignorance of adult decision-making and actions and the potentially catastrophic results of this ignorance. This is driven home by the shift from “don’t know” to “can’t”, stressing her lack of confidence in the adult world and her belief that adults cannot bring about meaningful change. She lists the reasons why “I am here”, the repetition of the phrase highlighting her accumulating concerns.
Audience, purpose, and effect are linked to specific words

As a child in a very adult world, Cullis-Suzuki cannot hope to convince through logic and argument, so she appeals directly to the better natures and guilty consciences of her audience. She acknowledges at the outset that she is out of place at the Summit and is only there because she and other children are very fearful. She reminds them throughout the speech that she is aware of the differences between herself and the audience. She is “only a child” and children are referred to as “us” and “we”, a collective that does not include her audience. She uses highly emotive language, referring to “losing my future”, “starving children” and “fish full of cancers”, appealing to the human side of her audience, reminding them that they are not merely their job titles, but members of families who are relying on them to do the right thing. She also accuses her audience of many failings: of ignorance, of excessive waste, of greed, of neglecting the starving and needy, of hypocrisy and of spending on destruction at the expense of building a better world. The “you” throughout her speech leaves the audience in no doubt that she is addressing them personally about her fears and anxieties and that they are different from the “we” and “us” of her fellow children. The final sentences of her speech remind her audience how vulnerable she and other children are and she places responsibility on the adults because “What you do makes me cry at night”. Cullis-Suzuki finishes with an appeal to “make your actions reflect your words”.

Related text is introduced with contrast about purpose

Rather than persuade, Chandler’s purpose in The Big Sleep (1939) is to entertain his audience through a memorable character, using a first person narrative. Marlowe is hard-bitten, cynical and tough but vulnerable. Chandler admires his flawed but likeable detective and wants his audience to like him too. Marlowe’s voice is established in the first paragraph of the novel, when he tells us the day is the “sun not shining and a look of hard wet rain”. The negativity of “not” and the gloom of “hard wet” immediately establish an unwelcoming atmosphere. Marlowe describes his appearance as “neat, clean, shaved and sober”, as though these are unusual occurrences, reinforced when he says he “didn’t care who knew it”. This tells us that he has a sense of humour and also a dark side, like the weather he has just described.

Links voice to the text type

The hard-boiled detective genre that Chandler helped establish aims to give its readers the distinctive experience of lives a little less ordinary: crime, sordid excitement, danger narrowly avoided at the last moment. Marlowe is a successful detective in this world because he walks the edge between toughness and respectability. He knows both worlds and does not really belong in either. This gives him a very distinctive voice as the narrator in The Big Sleep. He tells General Sternwood, “I’m unmarried because I don’t like policemen’s wives” and that he was fired from the police force for insubordination. Both these statements tell us that he is a renegade, someone who has chosen not to fit into the world of law and order. They also tell us that he knows enough about law and order to be on our side and is someone to be relied on in difficulties, especially because he is independent and not a mere follower.

Voice is connected to character and events

Marlowe’s voice is designed to tell us a great deal about him and about the events and other characters in the novel. We learn that he is educated, as well as ironic (Mrs Regan’s legs are “long and slim and with enough melodic line for a tone poem”). He is also a good observer, of both locations and people. Descriptions are often highly detailed, so we know exactly what someone looks like, as well as what Marlowe thinks of them.
We know that he doesn’t like the boy who glares at him with “sharp black eyes in a face as hard and white as cold mutton fat”. He is a shrewd judge of character, never taking things for granted or trusting to first impressions: another character has “a great deal of domed brown forehead that might at a careless glance have seemed a dwelling place for brains”.

Everything is recounted from Marlowe’s point of view, so we see the world through his eyes and hear it from his voice. His distinctive combination of mental and physical attributes gives him an air of competence and authority, so the audience trusts his judgement and commentary on people and events. We know that the world according to Marlowe will always be interesting and will mostly turn out all right in the end.

Through careful combinations of words and phrases and through the deliberate organisation of ideas in a particular order, composers are able to influence an audience to understand a distinctive experience. King, Cullis-Suzuki and Chandler all use language in different ways and for different purposes, but all create a distinctive idea of the speaker and the issues.

**Working with the sample response**

Read the Notes from the Marking Centre and complete the questions below.

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**Notes from the Marking Centre: General Comments on Module A**

Most candidates displayed a genuine understanding of voice/visual with good levels of literacy and well-structured responses being evident.

Responses were varied and therefore interesting in the ways that they approached the question. Many candidates were clearly well prepared and were able to shape their knowledge to answer the question.

Weaknesses were evident where candidates were clearly using old electives.

The use of one related text meant that candidates were expected to analyse in detail and with depth. There was a wide variety of related texts but better choices were those that were more relevant to distinctive voices or the distinctively visual.

Candidates who made their own selection of related texts usually provided a more genuine and personal response, rather than a common or generic response. Candidates who demonstrated a deep engagement with the related text were often able to provide a purposeful answer to the requirements of the question.

Photographs, paintings, picture books and films were popular as related texts, and offered potential for a purposeful and integrated response in the Distinctively Visual elective. In the Distinctive Voices elective, popular choices were speeches, poems, songs, films and television shows. While also offering potential for purposeful discussion, they appeared more difficult for candidates to analyse and shape to the question.

Better responses analysed their related text in terms of the question and in relationship to the prescribed text or its ideas, furthering their thesis. Connections were made in a variety of ways in terms of experiences, ideas, themes, style and techniques. The use of their related text was purposeful, thoughtful, effective and relevant to the requirements of the question. Better responses demonstrated high levels of visual literacy.