

Student Number:

Hornsby Girls High School



TRIAL
HIGHER SCHOOL
CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION

2020

English Advanced

Paper 1 — Texts and Human Experiences

Question Booklet

General Instructions

- Reading time – 10 minutes
- Working time – 1 hour and 30 minutes
- Write using black or blue pen
- A Stimulus Booklet is provided with this paper

Total marks: 40

Section I – 20 marks

- Attempt Questions 1–5
- Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Section II – 20 marks

- Attempt Question 1
- Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Student Number:

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A series of 26 horizontal dotted lines spanning the width of the page, intended for student identification or notes.

End of Section I

Student Number:

Section II

20 marks

Attempt Question 1

Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Your answer will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate understanding of human experiences in texts
 - analyse, explain and assess the ways human experiences are represented in texts
 - organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and context
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Question 1 (20 marks)

“Human experiences are complex; to represent them, we must allow for interpretation.”

To what extent does this statement reflect your understanding of your prescribed text?

The prescribed text for Section II is:

- Drama – William Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice*

**End of
questions**

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Paper 1 — Texts and Human Experiences

Stimulus Booklet

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- Text 1 – Non-fiction extract
 - Text 2 – Poetry
 - Text 3 – Image
 - Text 4 – Prose fiction extract

Section I

Text 1 — Non-fiction extract

Julia Baird, 'In the Company of Arsonists'

One day recently, while swimming at sunrise, I began thinking about how Oscar Wilde described the dawn as like a 'frightened girl' who crept along the 'long and silent street . . . with silver sandalled feet'. It suddenly struck me as so timid and British (although Wilde was an Irishman, he lived many years in London). In Australia, the dawn is an arsonist who pours petrol along the horizon, throws a match on it and watches it burn.

The sun's rise and the sun's retreat bookend our days with awe. We often take awe for granted, and yet it's something both modern scientists and ancient philosophers have told us to hunt. Awe makes us stop and stare. Being awestruck dwarfs us, humbles us, makes us aware we are part of a universe unfathomably larger than ourselves; it even, social scientists say, makes us kinder and more aware of the needs of the community around us.

Wonder is a similar sensation, and the two feelings are often entwined. Wonder makes us stop and ask questions about the world, while marvelling over something we have not seen before, whether spectacular or mundane. The eighteenth-century Scottish moral philosopher Adam Smith — the man who became known as the 'Father of Capitalism' after writing his influential book on economics, *The Wealth of Nations* — put this perfectly. He thought wonder occurred 'when something quite new and singular is presented . . . [and] memory cannot, from all its stores, cast up any image that nearly resembles this strange appearance . . . It stands alone and by itself in the imagination.' Smith believed that sometimes we could physically feel this wonder: 'that staring, and sometimes that rolling of the eyes, that suspension of the breath, and that swelling of the heart'.

Great thinkers, philosophers and eccentrics have all been inspired by the unfathomable. 'The most beautiful thing we can experience,' wrote Albert Einstein, 'is the mysterious; it is the source of all true art and all science. He to whom this emotion is a stranger, who can no longer pause to wonder and stand rapt in awe, is as good as dead; his eyes are closed.'

In my own quest to become phosphorescent — in which I lost myself many times in dark holes and swamps — it was awe and wonder that I kept returning to, and the quiet healing properties of nature: the forest, the sea and the creatures they contain. So many of us have our quiet places of escape and refuge — nearby beaches, a park bench, a magnificent tree.

A small mountain of studies in the field of nature science has repeatedly confirmed that the sheer sight of green — plants, leaves, trees, views from windows — can make us happier and healthier. This evidence and these experiences have given rise to the burgeoning Japanese-pioneered practice of forest bathing, or *shinrin yoku*, whereby participants are walked slowly through tracts of trees to touch them, listen to their sounds, and reconnect with nature.

All over the world, people increasingly want to understand how residents of an urbanised environment can tune out the cities, the traffic and the jackhammers and listen, once again, to the birds singing and the leaves whispering in the breeze. They want to settle the stirring, or restlessness, and remember who they are. Often, they seek silence, an increasingly valuable and rare commodity. Real silence is not about muffling all sounds, though, but about muffling all artificial, or human-made, sounds. As I learned on a visit to Arnhem Land, a connection to country is a fundamental part of the identity of our Indigenous people, and the call to quiet, to listen and to respect the world we live in is an ancient one. While so much of our self-exploration today is hash-tagged #wellness and displayed, it became obvious to me in the far reach of sacred lands, encircled by campfires and eucalypts, that sometimes the best way to pay attention to country is to keep your mouth shut, open your eyes and just listen.

Text 2 — Poetry

Mary Oliver, 'The Hermit Crab'

Once I looked inside
the darkness
of a shell folded like a pastry
and there was a fancy face—

or almost a face—
it turned away
and frisked up its brawny forearms
so quickly

against the light
and my looking in
I scarcely had time to see it,
gleaming

under the pure white roof
of old calcium
When I set it down, it hurried
along the tideline

of the sea,
which was slashing along as usual,
shouting and hissing
toward the future,

turning its back
with every tide on the past,
leaving the shore littered
every morning

with more ornaments of death—
what a pearly rubble
from which to choose a house
like a white flower—

and what a rebellion
to leap into it
and hold on,
connecting everything,

the past to the future—
which is of course the miracle—
which is the only argument there is
against the sea

Text 3 — Image

Judy Horacek, 'An Almost Perfect Sunset'



Text 4 — Prose fiction extract

Extract from Inga Simson, 'Studio', from *Nest*

It was the birds who saved her. They always did.

A yellow-tailed black cockatoo called from below the cottage, one lonely rising and falling note. It called again, this time answered by its mate, a little further off. It was the season for feasting on borer grubs in the acacias. One bird would rip the bark off the tree while the other screeched and squawked and chuffed from the ground or a nearby low branch.

When she had first heard the ruckus, she had thought the birds in distress, a young one fallen from the nest, perhaps, and made her way down the slope to see if they needed her help. The birds were fine, enjoying their ritual, and barely acknowledging her. Their dining practices pretty much destroyed the tree, exposing its hollow insides, but with that level of grub infestation, its life had already been on the wane.

While the robins were her favourite, she had come to see the cockatoos as her totem bird. They tended to appear whenever she asked for answers – and sometimes when she hadn't – giving some sort of sign. Hearing them fly overhead, or in the trees, was always a good omen. During the winter of her first year back, when her courage had failed her, only they had come to call her out of the darkness.

The morning she had been unable to get out of bed, still lying amid the white sheets in full sunlight, a dozen had turned up screeching and carrying on in the treetops. Their cries were somehow sympathetic.

Whether they sensed her plans for departure, or had taken in the unmown lawn strewn with sticks, the leaf-filled gutters, the junk mail poking out of the box, and thought her already gone, she was unsure. The cottage, after all, was not unlike a giant bird house.

One cockatoo had perched right outside the window, peering in. Despite herself, Jen hadn't been able to help smiling at its comical cocked head, the clown-like spots of yellow on its cheeks. Only when Jen got herself up and out of bed did the bird fly off, screeching, settling on a high branch with the others.

She opened all of the windows of her studio, pulling the screens from the frames and depositing them outside. The kookaburras were at it up on the ridge, chortling and cavorting for all to hear. It was difficult to imagine what they were communicating with such volume and gusto, and to fight the feeling that she was the butt of their jokes. Probably it was just a weather forecast. It was Percy Grainger who said that the soul of the climate and land could be heard in the song of native birds. It was in all of the other animals and plants, too, but only the birds had been given a singing voice.

The light had softened, filtering through the trees, and for a moment she was tempted to leave the studio in its own filth and go outside to keep on with the weeding. Weeding, however, was not on her list for today.

Jen sighed. Where to start? She stripped the daybed and put the linen on to wash, dragged the mattress out into the sun on the back deck and propped it against the rail, her nose upturned.

The old canvasses, too, had to come out, their top edges crusted with gecko poop and dust. She sniffed for mould. Perhaps they would be better burned than left to rot away. She carried them all outside, wiped down their exposed edges and set them apart to air, without looking at their fronts.

She emptied the room, her desk and cleared the sloped drawing table. Took down all of the pictures, removed each object and placed them on the dining table. Wheeled her chair out into the light, blinking and smarting in the sun like a wombat.

She extracted the vacuum cleaner from the hall cupboard and set it down in the middle of the room. Pulled its cord and plugged it in. 'Okay, here we go.' She vacuumed the ceiling, rafters and windows, knocking down a hornet's nest, sucking up webs and the spiders that fled them. Then the floor, pushing into every corner, and using the brush attachment to run along the skirting boards and window ledges. She sucked everything out from under her desk and the back of the cupboard.

'Ha.' She shut off the machine's noise. The room was beginning to look habitable. Or, more to the point, workable. Then she would be right out of excuses.

Jen set to cleaning the windows, inside first. The grime of summer came off black on the cloth. Fairy-wrens hopped from branch to branch in the lilli pillis outside, celebrating the beauty of their small lives – lives free of cleaning duties.

She gathered up all of the found objects Craig had given her, arranged on the windowsill in front of her drawing table. The fragment of a paper wasp's nest in a hexagonal shape, replicating each individual cell inside. The heart-shaped rock, a piece of pale green beach glass tumbled smooth – the colour of her eyes, he'd said – the pair of matching cowrie shells, and the leaf with a gall on one end so large it resembled a snail. It had dried and curled brown now, a husk of its original fresh green. She rearranged them each time she dusted, which wasn't very often, but they kept their places there, in her line of sight.

She had got rid of some of them over the years. Those rotting or decayed or the worse for wear. Some had disappeared, carried off by ants or mice. There had been so many at first; it had seemed an abundance. Even on a trip to the local shop to fetch milk, he would find some treasure, a butterfly's wing or an empty chrysalis, and bring it home as if trying to prove that even in the burbs nature survived. That there were forces at work visible only to him.

Now she had to hang on to the few she had left.

At her old place – the flat with the sad-eyed windows – her friend, Mary, one of the other teachers from school, had joked about her 'shrine to Craig'. Jen had smiled, and said nothing, but had not invited her over again.

Here, at least, there was no one to pester her.