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Student Number

2020

HIGHER
SCHOOL
CERTIFICATE
EXAMINATION

English Advanced

Paper 1 – Texts and Human Experiences

Stimulus Booklet for Section I

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Section I

Text 1 — Image – Painting

Collins St, 5pm



JOHN BRACK

Text 2 — Poem

The Zoo

[i]

Fate of war—shunned
to a strange land
'Paradise' said the coloured brochures
Refuge for the abandoned,
 honeymoon pictures
Left at unversed doors,
new mother, a father—fern trees
Skeletal abode (a two-room home)
Six *'curry-munches'* crammed (given
names)

[ii]

Solitary walk to school (a week late)
Shortened route through Saint Francis church
And in crucifixion
 Christ smiled at the new boy
Across the painted gravel (black followed
white)
Arrival with the street flash of amber
 next to ghosts of raised collars
Vultures in little clusters
Barely spoke theirs (English)
Blank across the muddy face
Stared by blondes and the blue-eyed—
 day at zoo
Fame spread to the knotted fence (all in a day)
I wilted
 kowhai at midday

[iii]

Dragged along the sports field
Dye of cut grass,
the habitual stain
Face below the bolus clouds,
 chewed away
Midrib's aches—courtesy of nameless stouts
The weathered knees—size eleven shoes

Spat on the frameless face; a freckled senior
Chased daily by the two-legged hound
Living on the same street
with a black dog—his absent father
Brochures of paradise
 peeling on the bedroom walls

[iv]

Mother battled (once a believer)
Father struggled (still does)
 a liberated prisoner imprisoned
Sisters fared (better)
 reversing eastwards over rising mound
Little brother (a chameleon who crossed the sea)
Instead I,
 lived / died / lived (barely)
Worse than war! (my morning anthem)
Harnessed a glare
 Soiled words
A borrowed face
Self—
 no longer mine
Even my shirt; gift of a kind woman

[v]

Days turned the pages of solitary memoirs
Hamilton's winter fell
over the departed mind
Firewood burned steady
Anger pruned the neighbourhood trees
And painted the empty walls
Fog mourned over the distant mile
Blowing mist; permanent numb
First two years
 couldn't afford the school jacket

DESH BALASUBRAMANIAM

Text 3 — Prose Fiction Extract

Extract from the novel *The Yield*

I hung up the phone. Poppy Albert is dead. Something dark and three dimensional, something as solid as me falls out of my body then, it's as if I have become *less* suddenly. I taste the blood then. I haven't told the therapist about the things I can taste and smell that one shouldn't be able to taste and smell. A while ago she'd asked about my school lunches, I told her: when I lived with my grandparents it was always good food, always leftovers from the night before, I was the only student to use the microwave in the teachers lounge. Before that, the lunches my mother packed were just kooky. *Kooky?* I wound an invisible turbine at my ear. She nodded, had understood and closed her eyes with the serene indication to go on. One day a conventional jam sandwich, cut crusts, a tin of Christmas ginger bread in July, sometimes a bread roll smeared with something incomplete, like ketchup, and then a few distinct times I remembered opening the lunch box and there just being imitation play food, a little plastic lamb chop, plastic-cast apple with no stem—it was my mother's sense of humour. I hadn't laughed about it at the time, but I laughed about it in the office then. I didn't tell her how I was baptized by the sun, and as far, far away as I go from my country, from my home I still can't remove the scent and taste of dirt and diesel and blood from that grey hemisphere of my mind. How the worst thing that could ever happen to me already happened. Times up though.

After the phone call I took the newspaper from the mail tray. Took the crate of almost kindling and knelt in the corner of the kitchen. I spread the newspaper out, smoothing the pages with the side of my fist. I held the hatchet and the cypress in each hand. Printed in the newspaper was a small photograph of a rhino. Above the picture it read in big ink block letters: GONE FOREVER—BLACK RHINO EXTINCT. An animal *zip! Gone!*

I never went to the zoo, so I never saw one in real life—it might as well have been a dinosaur. The paper listed other, recent extinctions. And just like that I thought, *zip! Gone!* Poppy: Albert Gondiwindi was extinct. No more Albert Gondiwindi roamed the entire face of the earth, and no more black rhino. With a bundle of kindling I fed the iron stove, close enough to redden my face in the eager first flames. Poppy Albert used to say that the land needed to burn more, a wild and contained fire, a contradiction of nature. Poppy Albert used to say that there is a lot to remembering the past, to having stories, to knowing your history, even remembering your childhood, but there is something to forgetting it too. There exists a sort of torture of memory if you let it come, if you invite the past to huddle beside you, comforting and leeching equally. He used to say there are a thousand battles being fought every day somewhere because people couldn't forget something that happened before they were born. There are few worse things than memory, yet few things better; he'd say, be careful.

During the flight I watched the GPS, the numbers rising and steadying, the plane skittering over the cartoon sea. At the other end, having reached a certain altitude, crossed the time lines, descended into new coordinates, I'd hoped it would be enough to erase the voyage. Erase the facts of the matter; erase the burials rites due reciting, erase all the erasures of us, and *that* family

we once were in the stories could exist. Not us, as we were now, godless and government housed and spread all over the place.

I disembarked into the heat wall, thirty-seven degrees—bathwater temperature, I was born in this temperature, but I'm not accustomed to it anymore. Here, Summer isn't a season, it's an Eternity. I took the train for five hours west of Sydney to arrive at Dubba Dubba, there I overdrew my account when I hired the sedan and took the Broken Highway to Massacre Plains outskirts. The Highway slices right through the yellow budding canola fields, scrubs dotted with sheep newly shorn, the desert oak trees that have begun to grow in abundance into the drier clay earth. I know this place better than any. Eventually one reaches Massacre Plains, a town that was, from as far back as I remember, home to roughly two thousand farmers, shopkeepers and their children. Massacre Plains is a lot like a sausage, both the content—no-one wants to look too closely into what goes into making the town what it is—and the colour scheme; of the faded burgundyish buildings, the dyed and poured pavements, the trimmings of the town's lampposts, bus benches, historic plaques—all painted an almost colour—pink past its used-by date. Through Massacre Plains runs a river, the Murrumbidgee, which Poppy Albert used to call the *Big Water* and which

has ceased flowing since I was a girl, not just because of the Dam Built, but because of the Rain Gone, and that because they say enough people cry water in this whole region, Murrumbidgee thinks she's not needed at all.

I stopped for supplies before the turnoff. The outside of the convenience shop was wrapped in green mesh like an art installation. More green mesh was for sale, huge rolls leant against each other just as fabric bolts do, or people would starboard as a ship were sinking. Beside the bolts of green were crates of plastic rip ties that policemen sometimes carried on weekend nights. Locals were carrying rolls to their own shop fronts; a couple of men were crouched at their cars by the petrol bowsers attaching rectangles of mesh onto the engine vents. I scanned the severe blue clear sky, the locusts were yet to arrive.

A lot of things have happened since I left, I missed all the births, deaths and marriages of most everyone, enough time had passed to almost forget the town, though I'd kept an interest in the place that swallowed my sister up, I'd rung Nana and Poppy mostly once a month, emailed the missing persons database, read the online council newsletters with their news of progress that never arrived—the train line that never came, the rural university that was almost built, the delayed library expansion. Even if I turned my back on the place, I still wanted it to own me, I think. As much as I searched for the news of Jemma's safe return, I hoped for the appeal for mine. Neither came.

TARA JUNE WINCH

Text 4 — Essay Extract

Extract Helen Garner: 'I may be an old woman, but I'm not done for yet'

Why did they ask me for an essay about stopping writing? And why did I say yes? Did I tell someone I'd stopped? Have I stopped? I could, if I wanted to, couldn't I? I'm 77 and I'm pretty tired. And lately I think I've copped what the French call "*un coup de vieux*": a blow of old. I've got arthritis in my left wrist, my right knee gives twinges, and my left foot sometimes aches and stabs all day. Other days, nothing hurts at all. I don't know what this means.

I am an old woman.

I've never written at home, because when I'm hanging round here I keep thinking up tasks, inventing housework, bargaining with my laziness: if I put on a load of washing, for example, 40 minutes later I'll be allowed to get up from the desk and hang it on the line. So I've always rented an office in another suburb, a drab room without wifi where there's nothing to do except work. It's spartan, my office; some people might call it grim. I like it very much. But I'm not going there today. It's summer and the family's gone away. I'm here on my own, without even the dog. My job is to guard the chooks and the vegetable garden. I know it's neurotic, but I can't go out. Somebody might break into the house. Junkies from the flats might climb the back fence and steal the bikes. A northerly might get up and tear the nets off the fruit trees. I have to stay home.

Right. The essay. I open the laptop at the kitchen table. Nothing happens. I copy out a ferocious quote from a Rachel Cusk essay I'm reading about the artist's "inviolable selfishness in the face of other people's needs". Don't want to think about that right now. I chew some sugarless gum and spit it into a torn envelope. I go to the broom cupboard and put on my apron: maybe that'll make me feel businesslike. Maybe I'll ask them to put an apron on my coffin, if I ever bloody well die. I turn on the radio. Norman Swan is saying that cognitive decline does not necessarily mean Alzheimer's. How many years have I got left before I hit the age Mum was when she died of Alzheimer's? Five years. Four and a bit. At that moment the bloke with the mower and the whipper-snipper charges through the back gate. Cheerfully he puts on his headphones and sets up his tremendous roar. Energised by the proximity of someone else's manual labour, I start randomly rattling away on the keyboard. I may be an old woman, but I'm not done for yet.

These days, when in the circumstances I am not getting much done, well-wishers think to comfort one by instancing what one has done already. This is no reassurance. One's back-catalogue is more of a tribunal. One is arraigned before it and current work (or lack of it) judged. – Alan Bennett, in his 2019 London Review of Books diary.

Years ago, in one of those moments of self-hatred that can overcome a woman whose marriage is about to blow up in her face, I asked the man in my life if he thought I was lazy. “No,” he said coolly. “I think you’re a hard-working little money-making machine.” And I was. For 40 years, between books, I wrote freelance journalism. I always had a deadline hanging over me and I loved it: it fed my anxiety, my driven nature. But the years went by, and I grew older. I became a hands-on grandmother. The work I had done began to amount to something. I had a backlist in print. I won a couple of generous awards. Money came to me from people who had died – my parents, and a woman who was a silent benefactor to me and to certain other artists of this country. The tight link between work and money loosened, and fell away. Now, when an editor offers me work, I don’t have to do it. I can open my mouth, and take a breath, and say no. At long last, I’m free.

I’m out here, floating.

This is the worst possible thing that could happen to a person like me.

The thing about writing for publication is that it’s intimately connected with time. You’re always pointed at a future. Someone’s depending on you, waiting for you – probably tapping his foot and looking at his watch, breathing out sharply through his nose, only just holding back a roar of impatience. (My father? Still?) And if that deadline is removed, or so you think, everything will fracture, or go saggy and shapeless. How will I pass the day? Why will I get up in the morning? And what about the things that are swarming all around at me at every moment? Who’s going to see them, record them, save them from oblivion? How will the world continue to exist if I don’t keep writing about it?

What I really mean is: How will I stay alive, if I stop writing?

Oh, for God’s sake, woman, calm down. Mary Oliver has it covered: “What about all the little stones, sitting alone in the moonlight? ... What about the grass?” Again and again she writes about learning to love the world. Is that what I’m trying to get at here?

Last year I published *Yellow Notebook (Text)*, a diary that I kept in the 1970s and 1980s. Back then I never thought of it as publishable work. In fact I never thought of it as work at all. I wrote it to clear my head, to keep a record of things I didn’t want to forget, to calm myself before I went to sleep. But mostly I wrote it for the hell of it, because I really love writing. I mean, I love a pen and paper. I love words and sentences, and the way you can knit them together and shift them around and pile them up and spread them out. I love the way the raw material of an ordinary day doesn’t start to reveal its deeper meaning until you’ve got the pen in your hand and you’re halfway down the page.

Someone remarked that a lot of the entries “could have been the starts of novels”. I’d had the same thought, while I was editing the old exercise books, and it surprised me. Often I asked

myself why I had let this or that incident get past me, why I hadn't followed it to wherever it might have led, and dug out its potential riches. But the force that draws a writer to one story rather than another does not tap politely at the front door. It shoots an invisible arrow into some murky region of the writer's unknown needs, and hits a target she didn't even know was there. That's when the trouble starts.

You have to believe, against the scornful trumpeting of your intellect, in the miraculous ability of form to create itself out of chaos. You have to hold the line through all the wretched days, months, even years that you spend not writing – doing anything but write: “wasting time”, indulging in displacement activities, wandering about pointlessly, biting people's heads off, seething with anxiety and self-reproach. You have to believe that you're preparing the ground for something to manifest out of the darkness, to present itself, to be born. Having already gone through this process countless times does not help. You forget, every single time, that it's coming at you. The anxiety, the self-reproach are always total, unremitting, inescapable. You have to submit to it, allow yourself to suffer it, right to the end.

How melodramatic it sounds. Almost laughable. But every writer I know would recognise that description, and shudder.

So perhaps, after all, it would be a relief if it never came to me again, that sharp little secret arrow. Do I really miss it, or am I glad to be spared? Will I be spared?

While I'm waiting for the answer, quietly growing wearier and achier and deafer, a great treasure is being offered to me daily, a humble glory on a platter, right here in front of me, under my nose.

“Are you going to keep on writing about us?” says my 15-year-old grandson in the kitchen, dashing off the crossword that I have cursed and abandoned.

“I don't know.” I look up guiltily. “Would you rather I stopped?”

A long pause.

“No,” he says, with his philosophical smile. “I don't think you should stop.”

“Why not?”

“Because,” butts in his 12-year-old brother, bouncing his football in a forceful rhythm, “it shows – that we – exist.”

HELEN GARNER

2020 Trial HSC English Advanced --- Paper 1 Section 1 Marking Criteria

Student Number:

Mark: /20

Question 1: Analyse the ways in which human experiences are represented in the painting. (3 marks)

Criteria	Marks
Analyses effectively the ways in which human experiences are represented in the painting	3
Analyses some of the ways in which human experiences are represented in the painting	2
Describes the painting and/or an experience	1

Question 2: How is language used in the poem to explore the complex relationship between place and identity? (5 marks)

Criteria	Marks
Explains effectively how a range of language devices are used to explore the complex relationship between place and identity	5
Explains how language is used in the poem to explore the complex relationship between place and identity	4
Explains some of the ways in which language is used to explore place and identity	2-3
Provides some relevant information about the text	1

Question 3: Explain how **Text 3** explores ideas and emotions associated with loss. (5 marks)

Criteria	Marks
Explains effectively how the ideas and emotions associated with loss are conveyed in the text using well-selected supporting evidence.	5
Explains how the ideas and emotions associated with loss are conveyed in the text using appropriate supporting evidence.	4
Describes how the ideas and/or emotions associated with loss are conveyed in the text with some supporting evidence.	2-3
Provides some relevant information about the text.	1

Question 4: Compare how **Text 3** and **Text 4** represent the challenges associated with the human experience. (7 marks)

Criteria	Marks
Compares skilfully how both texts represent the challenges associated with the human experience using well selected supporting evidence	7
Compares effectively how both texts represent the challenges associated with the human experience using effective supporting evidence	6
Compares how both texts represent the challenges or a challenge associated with the human experience using appropriate supporting evidence	5-4
Explains how both texts represent a challenge associated with the human experience using some evidence which may not be balanced	3-2
Provides some information about the text(s)	1

For Administration (after marking)

Name:

Class:

Entered in Markbook