

Year 12 English Advanced  
TRIAL EXAMINATION 2021

SYDNEY BOYS HIGH



PAPER 1 : TEXTS AND HUMAN EXPERIENCES

**QUESTION and STIMULUS BOOKLET**

---

**INSTRUCTIONS**

- Allow approximately 10 minutes for reading.
- You will have 55 minutes from 9:00am for both reading and writing.
- Submit your answers via the Canvas Quiz.

**TOTAL MARKS 20**

**Section 1** (20 marks)

Questions .....	page 2
Text 1. Poem .....	page 3
Text 2. Extract Personal Essay.....	page 4
Text 3. Prose Extract .....	page 5
Text 4. Prose Extract.....	pages 6-7
Text 5. Creative Non-Fiction.....	page 8

---

Read the texts on pages **3 - 8** of the Stimulus Booklet carefully and answer the below questions via the Canvas quiz.

---

Your answers 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
- 

**Question 1**

(3 Marks)

**Use Text 1 to answer this question.**

Explain how the poet uses language to communicate a view of the human experience.

**Question 2**

(6 Marks)

**Use Texts 2 and 3 to answer this question.**

Compare and contrast the ways in which texts 2 and 3 represent ideas about memory.

**Question 3**

(5 Marks)

**Use Text 4 to answer this question.**

Analyse the ways in which Mykaela Saunders has represented relationship and identity.

**Question 4**

(6 Marks)

**Use Text 5 to answer this question**

Explore the ways in which the writer has communicated the complex feelings associated with loss.

---

**Text 1- Poem****Perhaps the World Ends Here**

The world begins at a kitchen table. No matter what, we must eat to live.

The gifts of earth are brought and prepared, set on the table. So it has been since creation, and it will go on.

We chase chickens or dogs away from it. Babies teethe at the corners. They scrape their knees under it.

It is here that children are given the instructions on what it means to be human. We make men at it, we make women.

At this table we gossip, recall enemies and the ghosts of lovers.

Our dreams drink coffee with us as they put their arms around our children. They laugh with us at our poor, falling-down selves and as we put ourselves back together again at the table.

This table has been a house in the rain, an umbrella in the sun.

Wars have begun and ended at this table. It is a place to hide in the shadow of terror. A place to celebrate the terrible victory.

We have given birth on this table and have prepared our parents for burial here.

At this table we sing with joy, with sorrow. We pray of suffering and remorse. We give thanks.

Perhaps the world will end at the kitchen table, while we are laughing and crying, eating of the last sweet bite.

**Joy Harjo**

---

## **Text 2- Extract from Personal Essay- Monsters: A Reckoning**

I have always known that some of my memories are false. There's one, a South African memory, in which I am lying down in a darkened room. I can hear someone walking up my ear canal. Thump, thump, thump, like footsteps down a corridor. Finally, I sit up and a tiny witch on a broomstick flies out of my ear.

I am not in the least surprised. I knew she was in there.

I know now that what I heard was my pulse, my heart pumping blood through my head, but the adult gloss doesn't remove that vivid image. My tiny witch circled around my head and disappeared. I don't remember being afraid – if anything, I was delighted.

Another memory from around the same time: My first sight of the stars. As a well-disciplined child, I was sent to bed with the witches well before dark. Being up late was special. In this memory I am, I think, held in my father's arms, staring up at the sky, and it's a carnival of miraculous orbs – crimson, emerald, sapphire, gold-blazing in the darkness. I still remember the disappointed fall of my heart when, a few years later in England, I next saw the night sky. The modest freckling of tiny white stars bore no resemblance to the **flamboyance** I remembered.

That tiny witch isn't a dream. It carries exactly the same quality of conscious experience as my memories of being on the ship that took me to England when I was four, looking down from the ship into Durban Harbour at a sea full of red jellyfish. It was no surprise to me that some scientists now believe that memory is deeply related to imagination. Maybe fiction writers know this instinctively.

I'm pretty sure I'm not alone in the default assumption that my memory is a type of constantly rolling news footage, an impeccable ongoing record of my life. Maybe we need this assumption to get through the day. But consciously I know memory doesn't work like this at all, that the neurological workings that create memory are a constant dynamic process of storage, shuffling and retrieval that occurs not in the past, but in the present. We remake our memories every day, every time we recall them. I am remaking mine now.

Even now, after decades of research, neurologists don't fully understand how memory works but they do know that our memories are continually revised. They exist in neural pathways in the hippocampus, and are strengthened with use, which means that the more we remember something, the more we remember it. Sometimes, we do remember things that didn't happen. And events can be erased.

Thinking about memory is like stepping into a hall of mirrors, in which anything like truth constantly retreats. How can we know the reality of anything if even our personal memories might not be real? Memory is the primary way we build the narratives we know as ourselves. Consciously and unconsciously, we craft our memories to support our vision of who we are, creating coherent subjectivities that we tell ourselves are rational, reasonable and truthful.

**Flamboyance: the quality of being bright, colourful and noticeable**

**Alison Croggon**

---

**Text 3 Prose Fiction extract: opening from the novel The Gathering**

I would like to write down what happened in my grandmother's house the summer I was eight or nine, but I'm not sure if it really did happen. I need to bear witness to an uncertain event. I feel it roaring inside me – this thing that may or may not have taken place. I don't even know what name to put on it. I think you might call it a crime of the flesh, but the flesh is long fallen away and I am not sure what hurt may linger in the bones.

My brother Liam loved birds and like all boys, he loved the bones of dead animals. I have no sons myself, so when I pass any small skull or skeleton I hesitate and think of him, how he admired their intricacies. A magpie's ancient arms coming through the mess of feathers; stubby and light and clean. That is the word we use about bones: *Clean*.

I tell my daughters to step back, obviously, from the mouse skull in the woodland or the dead finch that is weathering by the garden wall. I am not sure why. Though sometimes we find, on the beach, a cuttlefish bone so pure that I have to slip it in my pocket, and I comfort my hand with the secret white arc of it.

You cannot **libel** the dead, I think, you can only console them.

So I offer Liam this picture: my two daughters running on the sandy rim of a stony beach, under a slow, turbulent sky, the shoulders of their coats shrugging behind them. Then I erase it. I close my eyes and roll with the sea's loud static. When I open them again, it is to call the girls back to the car.

Rebecca! Emily!

It does not matter. I do not know the truth, or I do not know how to tell the truth. All I have are stories, night thoughts, the sudden convictions that uncertainty spawns. All I have are ravings, more like. *She loved him!* I say. *She must have loved him!* I wait for the kind of sense that dawn makes, when you have not slept. I stay downstairs while the family breathes above me and I write it down, I lay them out in nice sentences, all my clean, white bones.

**Libel: to speak falsely of**

**Anne Enright**

---

**Text 4 - Fiction - Prose Extract from short story River Story**

**Publication: FLOCK First Nations Stories Then and Now.**

A crow-shaped shadow flies across the river. Juna knows that her daughter is coming, so the right thing to do is make her favourite feed.

Juna casts a fishing net over the river with her mind. The net drifts onto the surface, slips under the skin, and is swallowed by the rest of the water. The net descends through the deep water slowly, resting on the bed. River grass unflattens and pokes up between the spaces. Juna sings a song to attract fish to the area. The bulging tide turns the river over like a slow screw and the net follows, one corner lifting and twisting over and over itself like a tight-rolled cigarette.

Pulling the corners of the net together, Juna tugs it back into her mind. It is heavy with water and fish. Inside her skull, she unrolls the net and five dirty silver bream, one deep charcoal catfish and a dove-grey nurse shark begin to flop and bounce. The shark bares its teeth, its black eyes not giving anything away.

She inhales the shark and catfish and smaller bream into her throat, then breathes them out with a force so sharp they fly through the walls of her skull, through the window, and splash back into the river. While they're all busy reorienting themselves, the shark eats the catfish and swims away from the haunted place. She imagines this is the way her lungs will stop working inside her comatose form.

Gracey enters her mother's room. In her huge soft bed beside the window, Juna is cradled in sunlight. Gracey prowls over to the bed.

'Hey Mum', Gracey's voice catches. 'Long time no see.'

Gracey inhales; the room is musty. She treads over to the window and opens it up to clear out her mum's sick breath circulating through the room. The river shimmers. It is very low but at least there is some water – last time she was here it was bone dry. The skin of the water buzzes and cracks, licking the air, tasting the storm which is to come.

She sits on the bed beside her mother. Juna looks like she's asleep, sipping air and panting it out. Clear plastic tubes catch the light, drip fluid into her wrist from the machine next to the bed. She looks soft, fragile, too different. From her eyes, Gracey projects her sorrow onto her mother. Unspoken words of regret and sorry business dance in the space between their faces. The heart monitor beeps steady.

Juna's white hair has grown out in thin wisps barely hiding the skin of her scalp. Baby hairs are stuck down on her damp face, forming spit curls that frame her creased face in translucent waves. 'Same haircut as me, aye, Mum?' Gracey's fingers brush through Juna's hair, mussing up the smooth nap and combing out moisture from the soft cotton wool.

Juna's synapses are firing, old circuits lighting up like a refired grid. Neurons spark and spread like wildfire. Her daughter is here, in a way, but she's still feeling too sorry for herself to be present. Always so serious that girl.

In her mind Juna takes each fish and lays them on the hardwood bench she's set up over her left temple. She separates their bodies from their heads with her machete, fins and tails them and shaves

---

**Text 4 (continued)**

them down with her scaling knife. Her hands become slick in the handling. She slits a fish from tail to throat, and opens it up like a thick, pink purse. The flesh is cold and sticky. She locates the dimensions of its spine and removes the entire skeleton in one go. Without its internal framework, the body is malleable in her hands. She prepares the rest of the fish, carves each body into thick fillets, forearm muscles tightening and softening with each slice. She tosses the fillets into a bowl so the meat can relax while her daughter does her thing.

Juna builds a campfire behind her eyes and sits beside it. And she waits for her daughter, she throws the fish heads into the river for Old Man Pelican.

Old Man Pelican rises over the river, lifting himself on powerful white wings, showing red and purple sinew underwing. Up he flies with an eye on the electric water and folds his wings before descent. He chomps and swallows, skinny throat expanding and contracting to pull the fish down into his body.

The campfire crackles.

Gracey takes her mum's skinny hand; her skin is damp and hot. Using the sheet, she pulls Juna's body away from the encroaching sunlight, and arranges her arms and legs in a foetal position facing the window.

She picks up the framed photo on the bedside table: Juna's holding little Grace in her lap. She's about ten years old – many years before she grew up to hate this place and leave. They were in the backyard here, fishing. Juna took this selfie, squinting and smiling into the camera. The river was fuller then, but still not as full as it should have been. Mum's and daughter's long black curls are whipping out to the side, entwined in the wind. Once upon a time, they were close.

**Mykaela Saunders**

---

## Text 5 - Creative Non-Fiction

### Last Shot

George Orwell wrote an essay called “How the Poor Die” about his experience in the public ward of a Paris hospital during his lean years. I happened to read it not long ago because one of my sons was writing a paper on Orwell, and I wanted to be able to talk to him about it. The essay was new to me. I liked it for its gallows humour and cool watchfulness. Orwell had me in the palm of his hand till I came to this line: “It is a great thing to die in your own boots.”

It stopped me cold. Figure of speech or not, he meant it, and anyway the words could not be separated from their martial beat and the rhetoric that promotes dying young as some kind of a good deal. They affected me like an insult. I was so angry I had to get up and walk it off. Later I looked up the date of the essay and found that Orwell had written it before Spain and World War II, before he’d had a chance to see what dying in your boots actually means. (The truth is, many of those who “die in their boots” are literally blown right out of them.)

Several men I knew were killed in Vietnam. Most of them I didn’t know well, and haven’t thought much about since. But my friend Hugh Pierce was a different case. We were very close and would have gone on being close, as I am with my other good friends from those years. He would have been one of them, another godfather for my children, another big-hearted man for them to admire and stay up late listening to. An old friend, someone I couldn’t fool, who would hold me to the best dreams of my youth as I would hold him to his.

Instead of remembering Hugh as I knew him, I too often think of him in terms of what he never had a chance to be. The things the rest of us know, he will not know. He will not know what it is to make a life with someone else. To have a child slip in beside him as he lies reading on a Sunday morning. To work at, and then look back on, a labour of years. Watch the decline of his parents, and attend their dissolution. Lose faith. Pray anyway. Persist. We are made to persist, to complete the whole tour. That’s how we find out who we are.

I know it’s wrong to think of Hugh as an absence, a thwarted shadow. It’s my awareness of his absence that I’m describing, and maybe something else, some embarrassment, kept hidden even from myself that I went on without him. To think of Hugh like this is to make selfish use of him. So of course, is making him a character in a book. Let me at least remember him as he was. He loved to jump. He was the one who started the “My Girl” business, singing and doing the Stroll to the door of the plane. I always take the position behind him, hand on his back, according to the drill we’ve been taught. I do not love to jump, to tell the truth, but I feel better about it when I’m connected to Hugh. Men are disappearing out the door ahead of us, the sound of the engine is getting louder. Hugh is singing in falsetto, doing a goofy routine with his hands. Just before he reaches the door he looks back and says something to me. I can’t hear him for the wind. What? I say. He yells, *Are we having fun?* He laughs at the look on my face, then turns and takes his place in the door, and jumps, and is gone.

**Tobias  
Wolff**