



English Standard

SIC, 2024

Trial Examination

Stimulus Booklet
for
Paper One, Section I

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Section I

Text 1 – Memoir

I wasn't a nice kid. I'll be the first to admit that. I was loud and smart-arse, scrappy and scabby and I didn't sleep. I had eyebrows as thick as your thumb and in the front of my mouth were two rotten front teeth, so I smiled like a carnivorous marsupial. I mostly ate noodles or crab sticks, and I lived on the dreaded silver detention seats.

I am twenty-four now, remembering a smaller and sassier me. I was born at the base of the Blue Mountains, the valley of Dharug country, by the Nepean River and the Mulgoa road Maccas. The third child of six, so quintessentially middle child I even had to share with my little sister. Before the dark and stormy night when I came into the world, my Father saw water lillies.

Our Auntie Gloria gave him my name, Araluen. She's from Yorta Yorta country, Cummeragunja Reserve. She has the softest voice and tells stories the sweetest you'll ever hear. But we're not from Cummeragunja. We're not from Dharug, either. We've been here for a long time, but not for eternal time. Not for time immemorial.

Growing up I didn't know what it meant to have ancestral country; Dad never spoke of anything in possessives, much less place. I knew that Aboriginal meant that we were here before the tall ships came. Bits of us. But bits of us came on those tall ships too. I was a teenager when my big sis finally told me 'The Story.' Our great- grandparents. Evelyn. Eva. Harry. Douglas. Harry. Baryulgil. Bundjalung. Then the other side, maybe Wiraadjuri? And what about Moonahcullah? Unslipping silence and denial through the generations. 'It's not simple,' she told me, black-gold-red-painted gumnuts rattling from her rearview mirror. 'We're never going to be one of those families that knows everything.'

EVELYN ARULEAN

Extract adapted from '*Growing Up Aboriginal in Australia*'

Text 2 – Prose fiction

Land is older than man, and man is older than a house, and yet a house has power. It entombs and excavates man. Or it becomes an extension of the land, a fertile outgrowth that gestates and propagates man. Anything that can invite or exile, incarcerate or release, that can be locked and unlocked, that can rot and be embalmed, that can be reincarnated and rebuilt, that can be pregnant with emptiness and then overfull, that can possess and be possessed and be a possession in itself – has life, has purpose, has lore.

Shepherd's Mill was three acres interred in deep bush, which clicked and whistled and whirred as Aliyah and Sakina pulled in, whispering of their arrival. A corrugated-iron-roofed cabin hunched in the north-east corner of the property. Close to the windmill was a splintering barn, and, in the south, a house two storeys tall, encircled by the skeleton of a wraparound porch, and what might have once been a garden. The house was boarded with worn wooden panelling, roofed with lichenous shingles, and necklaces of ivy and wisteria fell around it like pearls. Further out were untended furrows overgrown with dandelions and sky-reaching reeds; and, beyond those, burgeoning pastures and neat rows of rotting apple trees. In the distance, opposite the cabin, barely visible to the naked eye, was a winking, glittering pond.

By the house, Sakina picked up a branch and stamped it like a staff to the ground, raising her other hand to shield her eyes from the sun. She spun around to her mother, exclaiming, *'It's like The Secret Garden! Let's do a tour! Or an exhibition.'*

Sakina leapt to her feet and flew brightly at her mother from the bonnet with arms wide and a cooee of excursional glee.

There was little to unpack: essentials, objects of sentimental value, and books (which fell under both categories). The house came furnished. Aliyah knew next to nothing of the previous owners; they had left scant evidence of their lives besides a shamrock velvet sofa, and chairs and tables with ornamental legs. They had left their emptiness, mostly. There were bare cupboards and an air of slow, involuntary dilapidation. The floorboards were dust-kissed, as were the empty bookshelves, the cracking windowsills, the brass doorknobs, the Persian rug and its gold tassels. A constellation of motes hung in the cosmos of a liquid sunbeam. Aliyah coughed. Sakina raised her hand to carve the prism of light like a rower trailing their fingers through a stream. 'You can see the air,' she said, looking to her mother for approval. Aliyah was overcome. Then a day was already gone, and the gloved hand of night covered them. The twilight was wide, and the house was alone, and the trees stood sentry. An entomologist's orchestra played a nocturne, and in the noise and the silence, Aliyah had no dreams.

JUMAANA ABDU Extract adapted from the novel, *Translations*

Text 3- Poem
Would You Rather

Fly or be invisible?
asks my son.

Cranes glide over the Himalayas
at inconceivable heights.
Even muffin-plumped mallards
commute in domestic convoys
a thousand metres above our heads.
You'd have to be a little dead
inside not to choose the sky.

Yet invisibility was always the goal.
As a child, I lived by its rules.
Never speak Teochew* in public.
Shampoo the garlic funk from your hair.
Cringe at your mother's voice, plangent
in any room, full-time fortissimo.
Stand a little further from her every year.

I squandered over half my life in the quest
to be good: crouched like prey, all thunderous
pulse and terror-tamed muscles, striving
for perfect camouflage in this country
that would scope out, then scoop out, my heart.
Later, I grasped that good meant White.
By then, my body was the shape of apology.

My white-passing kid is very interested
in his Chineseness, I tell a friend. Her eyebrows
leap high. *Well*, she says, at last. *That's progress*.
Like winning the lottery but keeping your day job,
I think, though I'd never say that aloud.
I can identify all the selves I despise, recant
all the banana jokes I ever cracked. Still.

Do I have to choose? I ask my son.
He grins, like the answer is easy.

Y.S. LEE

*Language spoken in the Chaoshan region in South China

Text 4 – Prose fiction

She stands looking out over her father's garden. Old memories stamp on wet leaves, swing on rope, huddle in the bushes, voices calling out from the past, ready or not, here I come. Watching the ash tree that he planted for her tenth birthday towering over the narrow plot. Bailey swishing through the long grass and kicking at leaves while Molly takes pictures of the wintered plants. Eilish turns from the table where her father sits with his nose in the newspaper. She lifts two mugs and peers inside them, squeaks her finger around the rim. Dad, look at these mugs, why won't you use the dishwasher, you really need to wear your glasses when washing up. I'm wearing my glasses right now, he says. Yes, but you need to wear them while washing up, these mugs are ringed with tea. You can blame that useless cleaning woman who comes around here, there was never a dirty cup in this house when your mother was alive.

Watching him now she enters into the feeling of her childhood, seeing her father as he used to be, the hawk-like nose and quick, scrutinising eyes, the figure that now shrinks into the chair, the back rounding in the wool cardigan, the fine bones of the fingers voicing through the papery skin. He folds the newspaper and pours the tea and begins to drum his fingers on the table. I don't know why I read this thing, he says, there is nothing in it but the big lie. His fingers have ceased their drumming, without looking she can sense him examining her but when she lifts her eyes he is frowning. For an instant she looks outside and then turns to her father taking his hand. Dad, that is Bailey outside with Molly, I am sitting here. A bewildered look passes across his face and then he blinks and dismisses her with a wave of his hand, pushes back his chair. Yes, of course, he says.

PAUL LYNCH

Extract adapted from the novel, *The Prophet*

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