



--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Student Number

Sydney Girls High School

2021 ALTERNATE TASK FOUR

English Advanced

Short Answer – Texts and Human Experiences

**General
Instructions**

- Working time – 60 minutes
- The reading time is included in the 60 minutes. It is up to you to divide your time between reading and writing appropriately.
- Type your response in the space provided. Do not exceed the allocated space by editing the form or changing the font size.

**Total Marks:
20**

Section I – 20 marks

- Attempt Questions 1-4

Section I

20 marks

Attempt Questions 1–4

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
-

Question 1 (7 marks)

Text 1 – Prose fiction extract

When I was five my brother and I made poison. We kept it in a paint tin under someone else's house and we put all the poisonous things into it that we could think of—toad stools, dead mice, mountain ash berries which may not have been poisonous but looked it. Piss which we saved up in order to add it to the paint tin. By the time the tin was full everything in it was poisonous.

The problem was that once having made the poison we couldn't just leave it there. We had to do something with it. We didn't want to put it in anyone's food, but we wanted an object, a completion. There was no one we hated enough, that was the difficulty.

I can't remember what we did with the poison in the end. Did we leave it under the corner of the house, which was made of wood and brownish yellow? Did we throw it at someone, some innocuous child? We wouldn't have dared an adult. Is this a true image I have, a small face streaming with tears and red berries, the sudden knowledge that the poison was really poisonous after all? Or did we throw it out, do I remember those red berries floating down a gutter, into a culvert, am I innocent?

Why did we make the poison in the first place? I can remember the glee with which we stirred and added, the sense of magic and accomplishment. Making poison is as much fun as making a cake. People like to make poison. If you don't understand this you will never understand anything.

Text 2 – Nonfiction extract

My childhood landscape was not the land but the end of the land—the cold, salt, running hills of the Atlantic. I sometimes think my vision of the sea is the clearest thing I own. I pick it up, exile that I am, like the purple 'lucky stones' I used to collect with a white ring all the way round, or the shell of a blue mussel with its rainbow fingernail interior; and in one wash of memory the colours deepen and gleam, the early world draws breath.

For a time I believed not in God nor Santa Claus, but in Mermaids. They seemed as logical and possible to me as the brittle twig of a seahorse in the Zoo aquarium.

The road I knew curved into the waves with the ocean on one side, the bay on the other; and

Text 2 continues on page 3

Text 2 (continued)

my grandmother's house, halfway out, faced east, full of red sun and sea lights.

To this day I remember her phone number OCEAN 1212-W. I would repeat it to the operator, from my home on the quieter bayside, an incantation, a fine rhythm, half expecting the black earpiece to give me back, like a conch, the susurrus* of the sea out there as well as my grandmother's voice.

The breath of the sea then. And then its lights. Even with my eyes shut I could feel the glimmers off its bright mirrors spider over my lids. I lay in a watery cradle and sea gleams found the chinks in the dark green window blind, playing and dancing, or resting and trembling a little. At naptime I chinked my fingernail on the hollow, brass bedstead for the music of it, and once, in a fit of discovery and surprise, found the join in the new rose wallpaper and with the same curious nail bared a great bald space of wall. I got scolded for this, spanked too, and then my grandfather extracted me from the domestic furies for a long beachcombing stroll over mountains of rattling and crackling purple stones.

* susurrus

whispering

End of Text 2

Compare the ways Texts 1 and 2 represent memories of childhood.

7

Question 1 continues on page 4

Question 1 (continued)

End of Question 1

Question 2 (4 marks)

Text 3 – Poem

You glide on through town,
Your mudguards damp with cloud
The houses there wear their verandahs out of shyness,
All day in the calendared kitchens, women listen
For cars on the road,
Lost children in the bush,
A cry from the mill, a footstep-
Nothing happens.

Sometimes a woman, sweeping her front step,
or a plain young wife at a tank stand fetching water
in a metal bucket will turn round and gaze
at the mountains in wonderment,
looking for a city.

As night comes down, the houses watch each other,
a light going out in a window has a meaning.
Men sit after tea
by the stove where their wives talk, rolling a dead match
between their fingers,
thinking of the future.

How does the poet represent the experience of life in a country town?

4

Question 2 continues on page 6

Question 2 (continued)

End of Question 2

Question 3 (4 marks)

Text 4 – Feature article

What makes us attached to buildings?

What is it about four walls and a door that evokes such a pull from the heart? A tug of emotion for something inanimate that seems wholly unreasonable and even slightly ridiculous?

I recently went back to my childhood home, because I had received a letter in the mail letting me know that it was to be demolished.

I can't say I disagreed with the decision; it was pretty run-down.

Yet at the same time, I was hit with that sense of regret. I was genuinely upset that it had to be knocked down. 'Really?' I wanted to ask. 'Do you know how much is in there for me?' I felt a rush of affection for the bricks and mortar that sat there.

I looked through all the rooms. Some bore clear marks of change, some just looked like they did when we had left: a bit bare, but essentially the same. So what was it that made me want to chain myself to the front of the house and hold a sign saying 'NO BULLDOZERS'?

Travelling through the house, I remembered little stories from each room; from the kitchen, where I used to wait hungrily for dinner and watch nana cook, to the right corner of the living room, where my mum used to send my brother when he was being naughty (never worked though, because my brother would just watch TV on mute and she was none the wiser). I remember specifically the time when we were fighting about something stupid, because it was always stupid when we fought, and he got so angry he hurled his lunch at me. I ducked, and it hit the wall in the hallway and left a giant stain... I guess the next family painted over it.

Text 4 continues on page 7

Text 4 (continued)

Every part of the house had a little story tucked away for me, hidden under a few layers of dust, but it's not as if suddenly everything that had ever happened there rushed at me. Every memory had one thing in common – and it took me some time to work this out – the things I remembered were moments that made me feel safe. Like I was at home. That was what I remembered.

Even my brother throwing his spaghetti bolognaise at me made me feel safe, because I knew that if we made a mess, it was in our own house, and mum could only hold a grudge for so long and then she'd forgive us. And my brother forgave me the next day for ducking and getting him in trouble too.

I remember lazy Sunday afternoons spent in my mum's bed, and doing homework everywhere except my own room because it was already messy enough. I remember lying on my back in the backyard and following the sun as it moved across the sky, to stay warm. I remember ducking through the house in my underwear because I'd forgotten to take my pajama bottoms with me to shower.

But I always felt so safe doing it, because these were places where I belonged. This was where I was supposed to be, in this seat at the dining table, in this bed, in these rooms.

I realised, quite suddenly, sitting on the floor of my brother's room, how you could grow so attached to something that wasn't living, breathing, that just sat there.

It's not the buildings that we love, it's the memories that we attach to them. I'd attached my entire childhood to this mass of bricks and wood. But it's not just any old memories. It's the memories of what meant the most to us as children; the ones that remind us that we were safe here, that we had somewhere to go and be ourselves, because this was exactly where we were supposed to be.

It was where you were supposed to be when you didn't want to belong there too. I remember being consumed by the desire to move out, to leave home, to forge a path of my own. Because 'home' at that age was suffocating, was defining me in all the ways I didn't want it to. I remember storming out, yelling back 'why should I have to be here?' And I remember my mum's reply too.

Because you belong here.

I didn't understand it at the time. It meant nothing to me. Why did I have to belong there? Why I couldn't I just choose to belong to that house instead? Or this tree? Why did I have to be back by this time, or dress this way? Questions that I suppose everyone asked at some stage (or maybe I was just a bratty kid).

Belonging to something means making a few sacrifices. And it's not the same for every situation, because some things you should never sacrifice to fit in, but in this case, I was giving up a little bit of my freedom so that I could have a place to call home. And really, it's not a bad tradeoff. I thought it was the 'biggest deal' at the time, and I sulked because I couldn't do

Text 4 continues on page 8

Text 4 (continued)

everything that I wanted. But they were trying to keep me safe, and keep my brother safe (he had to follow the same rules.) And for a few hours less of fun, and a few more hours of work, I got to have what I had in this house. Memories, and happy ones too. A place of safety, of being able to be an idiot and get away with it, someone to turn to.

That is what a home means.

A house is not a home, because a home means so much more. It makes you want to chain yourself to the front door and wear a ‘NO BULLDOZERS’ sign just to save it, because of how much it has shielded you from.

But I couldn’t do that, so I stepped aside graciously after holding them up for an hour, and let them do their job.

I didn’t watch, because even though it looked completely different, home still meant something to me.

But though the physical traces of it are gone, all the memories of what I had there still exist.

End of Text 4

Explore the ways in which Text 4 represents human connection to place.

4

Question 3 continues on page 9

Question 3 (continued)

End of Question 3

Question 4 (5 marks)

Text 5 – prose fiction extract

1.45 AM

Sometimes I'd be half-asleep and it was difficult to tell how much was real and how much was just hanging behind my eyes. The alarm tearing into my dreams; a cold clenched fist in my stomach. Everyone else would be sleeping, Dad snoring in the next room. I'd sleep with most of my clothes on, slump out of bed- fatigue and resentment a single emotion- and do as much as I could in darkness.

Black coffee to scour a clogged throat, woke me up as if there were some purpose to this. Kid myself. In the bathroom I'd put the light on. Stung my eyes like shampoo does when you are a child. In the mirror always the same vampire face, the matted hair, red eyes, pale skin. So tired, so incredibly tired and fighting against it.

I'd tip cups of water, cold, over my head. A shock like toothache to bring me alive. After the coffee, go outside shivering to try to start the van. Freezing in scarf, gloves, hat, everything. The heater in the van didn't work and there were gaps around all the windows. Once I'd started the engine I'd have to get out again and clear the ice from the wind-screen. There's be snow in the driveway and the cat's footprints over the roof of the van.

The drive to work. A roller coaster of left-over dream images and sudden black bends. Trees and walls leaping out of nothingness directly into my path. The line between sleep and wakefulness as blurred as the hedgerows rushing past. Reaching the outskirts of town- a flood of orange lights, the odd police car; cats and lovers hurrying home down some side-street; the warehouse. Like defeat and acceptance and long since abandoned bitterness.

Sometimes there'd be thick, bitter tea in unwashed cups. A treat if it was the foreman's night off. There'd be nothing to say. I'd be looking at their dead white faces, tanned by neon and touched by moonlight more than sun, thinking: Is that me? Do I look like that?

The machine would rattle and hum and my fingers, the skin too colourless to bleed, would crack on the strapping as the parcels piled up. In the yard, wagons shunted and lumbered, spewing carbon monoxide into the loading bay, gears grinding and grating on my nerves.

Text 5 continues on page 10

Text 5 (continued)

I'd leave the yard with tyres spinning gravel and the door still half-open. Leave the window down to hear the engine, the screaming engine, to flood the van with night.

Never cruising. Always accelerating madly or braking desperately, blocking out the times when I'd leave the tarmac and lose control. Just for a second but long enough careering down unlit country lanes on the wrong side of the road, the rush of fear was the one spark of life in this robot existence. And the metal of the van would screech in protest, remembering its twisted frame and bucked wheels and shattered glass not so many nights ago on a road exactly like this.

All this to possess those last ten minutes and say 'These are mine.' To park on the road along the beach and hear the engine ticking as it cooled. And outside hear the surf and the gulls. I could watch the sea and watch the sunrise, watch the birds with marble eyes scavenging the empty chip bags, coca cola cans, rubbish stacks. See the first light paint the sky and glint across the grey waves.

I saw my future and my past: a hall of mirrors reflecting to infinity in all directions with me at the centre, staring through the filthy windows of a Ford transit van, watching the sea and shivering inside.

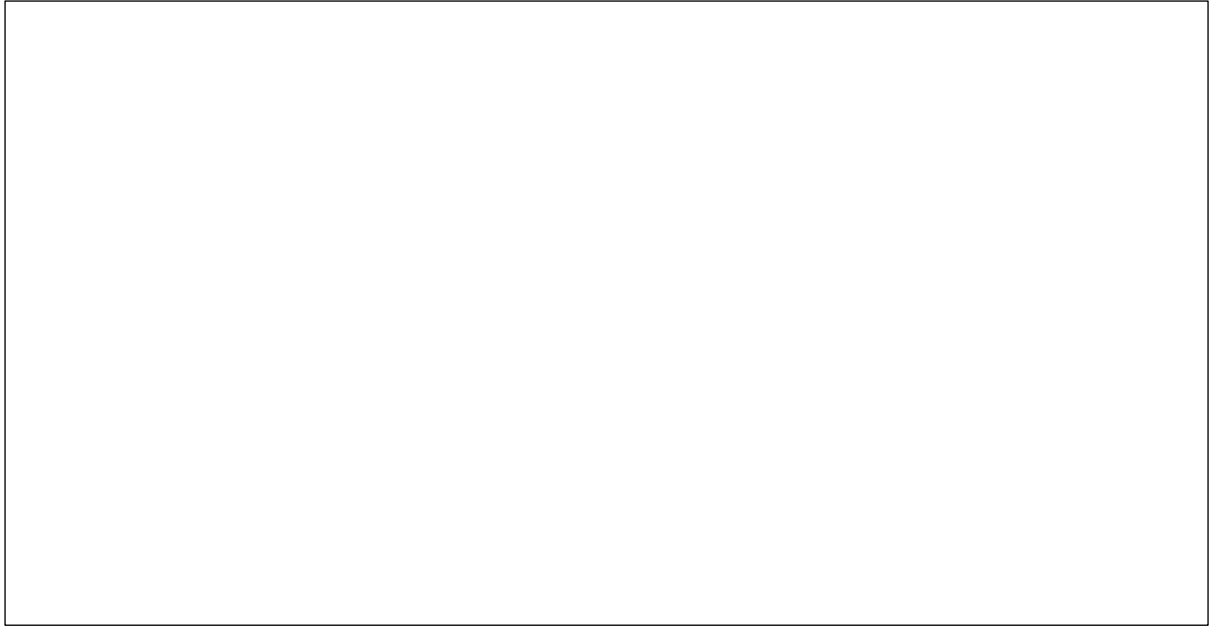
End of Text 5

How is the longing for escape from drudgery represented in Text 5?

5

Question 4 continues on page 11

Question 4 (continued)



End of Question 4

End of paper