



2022

Trial HSC Examination

English Advanced

Paper 1 — Texts and Human Experiences

General Instructions

- Reading Time – 10 minutes
- Working Time – 1 hour and 30 minutes
- Write using black pen
- Write on BOTH sides of the paper
- Submit EACH SECTION in a SEPARATE BOOKLET
- Write your candidate number on each page
- Attempt ALL QUESTIONS
- Write the question number at the top of your page

Total marks – 40

SECTION I

Page 2

20 marks

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

SECTION II

Page 3

20 marks

- Attempt Question 2
- Allow about 45 minutes for this section

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Section I

Text 1 – Illustration



Illustration by LEVI HASTINGS

From *Seattle Pride Guide 2021* by Seattle Met

End of Text 1

Text 2 – Nonfiction Extract

The Opposite of Toxic Positivity

“Tragic optimism” is the search for meaning during the inevitable tragedies of human existence, and is better for us than avoiding darkness and trying to “stay positive.”

Countless books have been written on the “power of gratitude” and the importance of counting your blessings, but that sentiment may feel like cold comfort during the coronavirus pandemic, when blessings have often seemed scant. Refusing to look at life’s darkness and avoiding uncomfortable experiences can be detrimental to mental health. This “toxic positivity” is ultimately a denial of reality. Telling someone to “stay positive” in the middle of a global crisis is missing out on an opportunity for growth, not to mention likely to backfire and only make them feel worse. As the gratitude researcher Robert Emmons of UC Davis writes, “To deny that life has its share of disappointments, frustrations, losses, hurts, setbacks, and sadness would be unrealistic and untenable. Life is suffering. No amount of positive thinking exercises will change this truth.”

The antidote to toxic positivity is “tragic optimism,” a phrase coined by the existential-humanistic psychologist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl. Tragic optimism involves the search for meaning amid the inevitable tragedies of human existence, something far more practical and realistic during these trying times. Researchers who study “post-traumatic growth” have found that people can grow in many ways from difficult times—including having a greater appreciation of one’s life and relationships, as well as increased compassion, altruism, purpose, utilization of personal strengths, spiritual development, and creativity. Importantly, it’s not the traumatic event *itself* that leads to growth (no one is thankful for COVID-19), but rather how the event is processed, the changes in worldview that result from the event, and the active search for meaning that people undertake during and after it.

In recent years, scientists have begun to recognise that the practice of gratitude can be a key driver of post-traumatic growth after an adverse event, and that gratitude can be a healing force. Indeed, a number of positive mental-health outcomes are linked to a regular gratitude practice, such as reduced lifetime risk for depression, anxiety, and substance-abuse disorders.

The human capacity for resiliency is quite remarkable and underrated. A recent study surveyed more than 500 people from March to May 2020. It found that even during those terrifying early months of the pandemic, more than 56 percent of people reported feeling grateful, which was 17 percent higher than any other positive emotion. Those who reported feeling more grateful also reported being happier. What’s more, even more people—69 percent of respondents—reported expecting to feel grateful two to three months in the future.

I believe that an overlooked route to gratitude is exposure to difficult circumstances. There are many basic advantages of life itself that we too often take for granted. After all, humans have a natural tendency to adapt and become used to situations that are relatively stable. When individuals become aware that their advantages are not guaranteed, many then come to appreciate them more. As the writer G. K. Chesterton put it, “Until we realize that things might not be, we cannot realize that things are.”

Indeed, several studies have found that people who have confronted difficult circumstances report that their appreciation for life itself has increased, and some of the most grateful people have gone through some of the hardest experiences. Kristi Nelson, the executive director of A Network for Grateful Living, faced her own mortality at the age of 33, when she received a cancer diagnosis and had to undergo multiple surgeries, chemo, and radiation. Nevertheless, she writes that she was constantly on the lookout for opportunities to cultivate gratefulness:

I was in the hospital, separated from all my friends and family and tethered to all kinds of IVs and dealing with pain. And yet, I had nurses and technicians and doctors and cleaners who came into my room every single day. I remember thinking, what if this is my whole world now, what if this is all I have? And then I thought, I can always love these people.

Nelson makes a distinction between *gratitude*—a momentary emotion—and *gratefulness*, an “overall orientation” that is “not contingent on something happening to us, but rather a way that we arrive to life.” Part of being human is that we will forget our past suffering and start to take our current life for granted. But as Nelson notes, “The work is to remember more often than we forget.”

The spiritual core of gratefulness is essential if gratitude is to be more than a tool for narcissistic self-improvement. A common misconception is that gratitude is necessarily self-serving, that it’s all about appreciating *my* life and *my* blessings, in spite of the suffering of others. But as Emmons and the psychoanalyst Robin Stern of the Yale Center for Emotional Intelligence note, “True gratefulness rejoices in the other. Its ultimate goal is to reflect back the goodness that one has received by creatively seeking opportunities for giving.” Indeed, the researchers who did the pandemic gratitude study found that the more grateful people were, the more they reported that they were more likely to help others.

Gratitude as a fleeting emotion can come and go, but gratefulness, or “existential gratitude,” can pervade your entire life, throughout its ups and downs. It asks for nothing but is on the lookout to find the hidden benefit and the opportunities for growth in everything—even during a global pandemic. As Emmons said at the recent International Meaning Conference, “Gratitude is not just a switch to turn on when things go well; it is also a light that shines in the darkness.”

SCOTT BARRY KAUFMAN
Edited Extract from *The Opposite of Toxic Positivity*

End of Text 2

Text 3 – Poem

The Thing Is

to love life, to love it even
when you have no stomach for it
and everything you've held dear
crumbles like burnt paper in your hands,
your throat filled with the silt of it.
When grief sits with you, its tropical heat
thickening the air, heavy as water
more fit for gills than lungs;
when grief weights you down like your own flesh
only more of it, an obesity of grief,
you think, *How can a body withstand this?*
Then you hold life like a face
between your palms, a plain face,
no charming smile, no violet eyes,
and you say, yes, I will take you
I will love you, again.

ELLEN BASS

End of Text 3

Text 4 – Prose Fiction Extract

You and Dad watch Terry's DVD while you eat dinner. You always liked science. At high school, the only teacher that gave you the time of day was your science teacher. She never smiled, but you never wagged her classes either. You liked the rules, the formulas, the logic of her lessons. Nothing messy like English, or History that made you feel shame for being Aboriginal, for not even inventing the wheel, for just copping it and not fighting back.

One day she discussed a saying with your class about the philosophy of the scientific method. *If you always do what you've always done, you'll always have what you've always got.* She said it applied to life as well. The discussion led your mind to interesting places.

The sentence had floated in your head and you examined it from a few different angles. At first, it seemed like a formula, or a magic spell; if you don't try new things, things'll stay the same—and things hadn't been too good at home. When the bell rang for the end of class, you'd folded the sentence up and scrunched it into a crevice of your mind.

When Dad picked you up from jail a few weeks ago, looking sicker than he'd let on, the car rattled over a speed bump and dislodged the old saying from your brain. It unfurled from its hidey-hole and rippled like a banner in the wind. The words became a warning for how stagnant lives start to putrefy.

On the DVD, the grandfatherly narrator explains that every seven years a human being becomes a completely new person. Within this time, every molecule in your body is attracted back into the environment, to be replaced by a new molecule from your surroundings. You gradually become something else, by a process of osmosis, of gift and exchange with your world.

You've spent the last seven years in and out of jail, penned in with angry men. Most of the light you saw was artificial. White walls, sharp angles and straight lines. Bars on the windows. People with power over you barking you into quiescence. You'd spent the seven years before that becoming a piece of shit that deserved to be there. Everyone eventually gave up on you. Your dad coughs and shifts in his seat.

The narrator reckons it takes fourteen days to unlearn a habit and fourteen to cement it with a new one. One turn of the moon. Each new day a period of adjustment, plateau, and new stress to keep ascending, to not let the process peter out on a flat line.

Progress needs to be sustainable, he says. True long-lasting change is slow, incremental; each new iteration is folded in bit by bit—assimilated and stirred, so the original material changes structurally over time—not dumped in all at once to provoke rejection. Otherwise, the new ingredients will split and separate. It's like injecting a substance intravenously; you mix the foreign substance with a bit of the host blood first, so the system isn't shocked, doesn't spasm and shut down. You don't want to hot shot your new behaviour.

Neurons that fire together, wire together, says the narrator. You're doing the right thing: becoming a better person, hacking new pathways and abandoning the well-worn roads. As you finish your dinner, you can feel the old molecules slipping outside of yourself, being replaced by new ones.

After you get Dad into bed, you cross another day off the calendar and place a tick next to the date. Those fifteen ticks in row look good. You check your alarm is set for six o'clock, ready your shoes beside the bed and put your training clothes on so that you can get up and go before the old you gets his hooks in. Routine is ritual, a prayer to becoming.

You lie in bed and listen to a guided meditation, waiting for sleep to come. The space between who you used to be and who you want to be is so vast that you can't see how many steps it will take. You are in the middle, the fulcrum that holds the balance. It's a waiting game, to see which version will win.

MYKAELA SAUNDERS
Extract from *Long Road: Becoming*

Section I

20 Marks

Attempt Questions 1-5

Allow About 45 Minutes For This Section

Read the texts on pages 2 - 7 of the Stimulus Booklet carefully and then answer the questions in the spaces provided.

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 text
-

Text 1: - Image

- (1) Explain how the image depicts a variety of emotional experiences. (3 marks)

Text 2: - Article

- (2) How does the article use language features to explain the experience of gratitude? (4 marks)

Text 3: - Poem

- (3) How does the poem explore the paradox of grief? (4 marks)

Text 4: - Prose fiction extract

- (4) Analyse the ways this text gives insight into human motivations. (4 marks)

Combination: -

- (5) How does the prose fiction extract and ONE other text ignite new ideas about human experiences? (5 marks)

Section II - Texts and Human Experiences

20 Marks

Attempt Question 2

Allow About 45 Minutes For This Section

Answer The Question In The Section II Writing Booklet. Extra Writing Booklets Are Available

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 text
 - Organise, Develop and Express Ideas Using Language Appropriate to Audience, Purpose and Context
-

Analyse how your prescribed text represents the experience of loss. (20 marks)

Poetry

(c) Rosemary Dobson, *Rosemary Dobson Collected*

The Prescribed Poems Are:

- Young Girl at a Window
- Over The Hill
- Summer's End
- The Conversation
- Cock Crow
- Amy Caroline
- Canberra Morning

End of Paper