

STUDENT NUMBER:

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North Sydney Boys High School

ENGLISH ADVANCED

Trial Examination 2025

Paper 1 – Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences

HSC Weighting: 10%

General Instructions

- Reading time – 10 minutes
- Working time - 1 hour 30 minutes
- Write using black or blue pen with clarity
- Write in a new booklet for each question – use the correct booklet for each Section
- Extra writing booklets are available

Total Marks – 40

Section I: Short Answer

20 marks – Weighting 5%

- Attempt Question 1-4
- Allow 45 minutes for this question
- Complete answers in this booklet

Section II: Common Module Essay

20 marks – Weighting 5%

- Attempt Question 1
- Allow 45 minutes for this question
- Complete answer in Section II booklet

Attempt Questions 1 - 4

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

Use **Text 1- Magazine cover** to answer this question.

Explain how Text 1 uses visual forms and features to spark new insights about the power of art.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue or grey ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are approximately 20 lines visible. The paper has a slight shadow on the right side, suggesting it's resting on a surface.

Question 2 (5 Marks)

Use **Text 2 – Poem** to answer this question.

Analyse how Davis uses poetic techniques to explore powerful emotions.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

Question 3 (7 Marks)

Use Text 3 - Memoir Extract and Text 4 -Fiction Extract

Compare how **Text 3 - Memoir Extract** and **Text 4 - Fiction Extract** represents the power of perspective to shape the human experience.

[illegible]

[illegible]

Question 4 (5 Marks)

Use Text 5 - Non-Fiction Extract to answer this question.

Evaluate how **Text 5 - Non- Fiction Extract** represents the power of storytelling to shape an individual's understanding of place.

[illegible]

End of Question 4

Section II (20 marks)

Attempt Question 1

Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Write your answer in the writing booklet titled Section II

In your answer you 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
 - Organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and context
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Question 1:

It is through the dramatic representation of human experiences that authors represent the tension between agency and conformity.

To what extent does the statement above resonate with your understanding of 'The Merchant of Venice'. In your response make detailed reference to the play as a whole.

Prescribed Text:

- William Shakespeare, *'The Merchant of Venice'*

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Paper 1 – Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences

STIMULUS BOOKLET

Text 1 - Magazine cover

Text 2 – Poem

Text 3 – Non-Fiction Extract

Text 4 – Memoir Extract

Text 5 – Fiction Extract

Text 1: The New Yorker cover “Winter Sun” by Tom Gauld



Text 2: Poem: Elegy at 18 - By Aloma Davis

If you take an object from a scale, it is lighter.
How, then, can an absence be so heavy?
Your loss is stony ballast dragging me under.
From now on I will shoulder a calendar of days
months, years, decades leaden with your loss.

Those who questioned you during your life
face a new grammatical challenge in your death;
how to describe you in the past tense.

I cannot do it yet. You are the epitome of the present continuous.
I am certain your pirate smile will still flash around the corner;
your velvet eyes meet mine. Denial shimmers on my road.
Aquaplaning through my days,
I refuse to see the crash I know is coming.

I have been so proud of you I can barely speak.
If only you could feel them; if my wings could enfold you safe.
Guilt fills me with demented rage that has no target but myself.

In the trail of your death, their silence is ear-splitting.
Their startled eyes slide away from mine and I see their mirage,
the way they swerve. It is their own past that makes them tense.

I know, soon, I must confess the outrageous truth.
I will correct myself and say what we have been swallowing:
“you *were*, you *were*.” But today, our fierce, sweet and clever one,
be present with us a moment more. Stay with me,
and let me love you for all that you are.

Text 3: Memoir Extract: 'Hand knit Sweater' by Ken Liu

Winter evening.

Six-year-old me did my homework at the dinner table; my grandmother sat next to me, knitting a sweater. The yarn, thick and green, appeared almost black in the glow of the lone 40-watt incandescent lightbulb. My grandmother squinted as she struggled to manipulate the bamboo needles with her arthritis-gnarled fingers, the skin cracked in countless places from the arid, frosty air.

"Do your hands hurt, Nainai?"

"They do."

"Why are you still working, then?"

"I don't want you to be cold."

She made almost all my sweaters. They were bulky and thick to keep out the frigid winds of Northwestern China; they hung loose so I could grow into them and make them last; they were stained and darned repeatedly, because that was what happened to clothes worn by a child running wild with his friends, tumbling across frozen ponds, climbing ginkgoes and pines, scrambling over iron fences, fighting with fists and snowballs.

The sweaters worked great; they were beautiful.

I liked watching my grandmother knit. She never used a pattern, but drafted the design in her head, feeling her way toward the final product much like writers who refuse to outline. With only two basic stitches—the knit and the purl—she could weave a single string into a garment, transform a line into a plane, uplift one dimension into two. The tension between the different stitches gave the surface yet another dimension of texture, forming natural pleats, folds, soft ruffled rings that hugged wrists and collars. Years later, when I studied advanced mathematics, I would imagine the various curves on my graphing calculator as the yarn in my grandmother's hands, looping, twisting, knotting toward a solution in space.

I didn't learn to knit until decades later, after it was no longer possible to tell her everything I wanted to say. As my clumsy fingers grew used to the repetitive movements, I allowed my mind to drift, each stitch bringing to mind a memory of my grandmother: pushing me around in a stroller, teaching me the times tables, listening to pingshu storytellers on the radio, laughing at my first story...

"I don't want you to be cold."

A person's story is knitted together from the single dimension of inexorably passing time, twisting, looping, knotting, winding through memory and experience and grief and hope and regret until it becomes something with a shape, with texture and tension and strength.

Some things could never be said, and if we're lucky, they needn't be.

Text 4: Fiction extract from 'The Wren, The Wren' by Anne Enright

There is a psychologist in Nevada called Russell T. Hurlburt who is interested in the different ways people think. In 2009, he fitted a young woman called Melanie with a beeper that went off randomly during the day, prompting her to record everything in her awareness at that moment, and she later reconstructed these mental events for his research.

On the third day of Melanie's experiment, as her boyfriend was asking her a question about insurance, she was trying to remember the word 'periodontist'. On the fourth day, she was having a strong urge to go scuba diving. On the sixth day, she was picking flower petals from the sink while hearing echoes of the phrase 'nice long time'.

Dr Hurlburt says that there are great variations in the way our inner lives play themselves out in our heads. 'My research says that there are a lot of people who don't ever naturally form images, and then there are other people who form very florid, Technicolor, moving images.' Some people have inner lives dominated by speech or emotions, and yet others by 'unsymbolized thinking' that can take the form of wordless questions like, 'Should I have the ham sandwich or the roast beef?'

I find this experiment very useful. No explanations are sought or given. Melanie thinks this way because that is the way she thinks. There may be no reason for Melanie to have the mind of a poet, with her sink full of faded petals, and her inner ear enjoying the words 'nice long time', where other people would see used teabags and think 'my life is turning to shit'.

I wonder what was going through her boyfriend's mind at these moments.

Let's get insured!

or:

Why is she ignoring me?

or:

If I talk about insurance I don't have to think about death, except usefully.

*

Melanie and her boyfriend. I wish them well. I think she is a dreamer and he is a treasure, he keeps them both safe. And in time – in time – they will each learn exactly what the other one thinks.

We don't walk down the same street as the person walking beside us. All we can do is tell the other person what we see. We can point at things and try to name them. If we do this well, our friend can look at the world in a new way. We can meet.

When I began thinking about all this I was interested in empathy, like it's the solution (and it is! it is!) to pretty much everything. I thought about gender and empathy, religion and empathy, the

evolutionary benefits of empathy. I had a big beautiful cake in my head called 'Feeling the Pain of Others' and I sliced it this way and that because I thought that emotion is the bridge between people, sentiment crosses space, sympathy is a gas, exhaled by one, inhaled by the other.

Empathy! It's just like melting.

We can merge, you know. We can connect. We can cry at the same movie. You and I. But some people can't do this – really quite complicated – thing. There is a gap.

Text 5: Non Fiction Extract: Not One Vietnam, But Many: Vinh Nguyen on Capturing a Multifarious Country in Memoir by Vinh Nguyen

It's not that I was unaware of the highly political nature of writing about refugees who fled post-war Vietnam during the seventies and eighties, but I had been so laser focused on crafting my narrative, that I didn't even stop to *think* about the many contexts in which my narrative might exist and actually be read.

Having completed an entire book about leaving and returning to Vietnam, I was, for the first time, contemplating larger questions about whose memories can be honored, what stories are allowed to be counted, and how to hold the contradictions of a place my family and I escaped.

These questions are relevant for any displaced writer negotiating home, but they are even more heightened for me because Vietnam is such a contested terrain. Half a century after the end of the war in 1975, Vietnam is still a site of multiple, often competing, significations. Battles to claim "Vietnam" and to bring forth a vision of its future—as a nation, homeland, world-historical moment, lesson, and ideal—continue to be fought.

With some time and reflection, I wonder if my mind intentionally avoided asking questions about Vietnam while I was writing, saving me from being pushed and pulled in all directions at once. I'm not so sure what Vietnam I wrote about in my book. I haven't yet decided which Vietnam I believe in. I tried to reconstruct Vietnam and then to make it my own.

And when memory reached its limits, proving inadequate, I turned to speculation to explore the truths not of what happened, but of what could have been. I wrote the stories I desired into being, to grope at the uncertainties and irresolutions of living in the ruptures of war.

But doing so, I now realize, was also a way for me to elude the pressing weight of "Vietnam." An early reader of my writing said that my story needed history, and for a long time, I resisted this requirement, exclaiming to myself and to others, "I'm not a historian!" But when at last I reached the outer boundaries of the personal story and things began to fray, I decided to fabulate a "history" of

twentieth century Vietnam in the most fictional way possible, via a concocted romance between my parents.

I condensed space and sketched composites, bringing people and events separated in time together, so they could draw the most meaning from each other. I made up a Vietnam from research and imagination, and used it to show how lives develop, transform, or are lost during wartime.

The Vietnam I conjured served as the only background I was willing to give, even if it won't satisfy readers' need to understand what really happened. It also allowed me to circumnavigate all that I didn't know, and will never know, about Vietnam.

There's a scene in my book when my father can't take the misfortunes life throws at him anymore and grabs hold of his fate by the collar. Pushed to the edge, he decides to flee, to step foot inside a boat, not knowing that this decision would take his life. It happens in the early morning darkness at Turtle Lake. He gets on his bicycle and pedals down an empty street.

The last time I visited Vietnam, I saw the country through my own writing of it. I walked to Turtle Lake in Ho Chi Minh City and experienced the uncanniest recognition. My words describing the rustling leaves framed my view of the towering trees in front of me. I saw, or thought I saw, my father in his flipflops ascending a flight of stairs. I heard echoes of a wheel turning.

It was the most substantial Vietnam had ever felt to me.