



B O A R D O F S T U D I E S
NEW SOUTH WALES

2010 HSC English (Standard) and English (Advanced) Paper 1 — Area of Study Sample Answers

This document contains ‘sample answers’, or, in the case of some questions, ‘answers could include’. These are developed by the examination committee for two purposes. The committee does this:

- (a) as part of the development of the examination paper to ensure the questions will effectively assess students’ knowledge and skills, and
- (b) in order to provide some advice to the Supervisor of Marking about the nature and scope of the responses expected of students.

The ‘sample answers’ or similar advice are not intended to be exemplary or even complete answers or responses. As they are part of the examination committee’s ‘working document’, they may contain typographical errors, omissions, or only some of the possible correct answers.

Section I

Question 1 (a)

Answers may include:

- The image depicts four figures with their bodies merging at points, suggesting a close family unit.
- A sense of belonging to a family is depicted by the overall coherence of body shape and form, though the individuality of each is suggested by variations in colour and shape.
- The physical interdependence of the figures is suggested by their body orientation.
- Features indicating gender, race and age are occluded, suggesting the universality of the concept of family and belonging.
- The salience of the four as a group, as distinct from the background/void behind them, emphasises a sense of belonging to the self-contained family unit.
- The heavy black frame suggests the tradition of the family portrait, which contains the representation of family as a sculpture/construct.
- Against the uncertainty of the dark void/outside world, the family are foregrounded to suggest a strength and unity: the vibrancy of the colour against the monochrome background presents an effective contrast.
- The lack of individualised facial features may indicate a lack of individual identity, which could represent a sense of not belonging, or the need to conform.
- The sculpting of the bodies might suggest a sense of strained, contrived photograph album pose, which might undermine a sense of belonging or suggest its falseness.
- The fact that each of the figures has a separate colour could emphasise individuality over belonging to the family group.
- The pink figure on the right is leaning in the opposite direction to the others and this could be interpreted as difference/exclusion or moving against the current of the family.

Question 1 (b)***Answers may include:***

- The speaker feels distance from his brother because he is physically different.
- The speaker seeks acceptance and recognition from his brother, but has predominantly experienced oppression.
- The speaker feels shut out because he has a strong sense of his physical difference and sense of not belonging with his father and brother.
- The speaker's brother is physically adept and speaking in an Australian accent, while the speaker's physical prowess is limited and he is solitary.
- The speaker's relationship with his brother is thwarted by the inability of either one to communicate effectively or understand each other.
- The speaker admires his brother and aspires to be like him but at the same time displays feelings of resentment at his brother's treatment of him.

Question 1 (c)***Answers may include:***

- The extract explores the complex feelings and experiences of the speaker as she reflects on the differences between familial relationships and friendships.
- The speaker brings to the fore these differences through contrast and juxtaposition. When talking about her friendship with Beth, the language and descriptions are warm, lyrical and evocative. When talking about her sisters, there is a sharpness to the language and a clipped tone, suggesting anger, pain, hurt and sense of not belonging.
- The use of repetition of references to the physical and emotional beauty of the friend is contrasted with the less positive imagery associated with the sisters ('flood plain of incomprehension').
- The use of rhetorical questions emphasises these ambivalent and complex feelings, suggesting the speaker's efforts to make sense of the feelings of alienation and pain.
- The tone and mood of the piece is complex and shifting: it modulates between being reflective, lyrical, regretful, poignant and angry. An intimate tone is established, as the speaker exposes her feelings (first person narrative, conversational tone mixed with more descriptive language etc).
- The piece is structured around reflections that swing like a pendulum between the past and present, as the speaker seeks to make sense of the experiences of family relationships and friendship. She is implicitly questioning where she belongs.
- There is a counterpointing of the intuitive and the rational: the speaker struggles with the intuitive need/convention to belong to family and the lived experience of belonging more authentically to her friend. The speaker seeks to assuage a sense of guilt that she does not feel she belongs to her family. This attitude is revealed in the resignation of the conclusion ('no wonder it's difficult').

Question 1 (d)***Answers may include:***

- The speaker's attitude to the family photo album moves from ambivalence to explicit disdain.
- According to the speaker, the photo album constructs a view of family and belonging that is ultimately exposed as false, constructed and artificial. This attitude is captured in the notion of the family 'surrendering' to the 'camera's indifferent gaze'.
- There is an increasing attitude of negativity towards the photo album as a store of (false) memories and constructed family ties and times. This poem is actually deconstructing the concept of the family album; the realities 'behind' the images are emphasised in the poem.
- The poem explores the process of artificially constructing a sense of belonging where it may not exist.
- The use of the pronoun 'we' makes the speaker part of the conspiracy, so that his/her anger is also self directed. The speaker has been complicit in constructing the artifice of the album – the 'desired life'.
- There is a counterpointing of descriptions of the images in the photo album with the speaker's reflections on the memories of past events. This creates a disjunction between what the photo album captures and the speaker's memory of the lived experience.
- The poem represents a harsh critique of the process of constructing a sense of belonging.
- The language is conversational (enjambment) but towards the end, stronger modality presents the bitter conclusion. A turning point in the poem is signalled by the lines, 'This is the record of our desired life . . . But this history contains no record . . .'.
- The speaker's attitude to the photo album as a record of belonging is that of a person who sees omissions and falseness in the 'easy belonging' of accepted beliefs. The speaker's attitude/ tone is derisive, with mocking platitudes, and is satiric in tone.
- The speaker uses oxymorons (earnest intimacy, tinny laughter) to undermine the traditional connotations of positive family life.
- There is a mix of abstract verbs ('we believe', 'we thought') with concrete examples of what is remembered. This undermines the 'reality' of the photographs.
- The speaker demythologises the photo album as the idealised repository for recording belonging/family experience.

Question 1 (e)***Answers may include:***

- Each text offers distinctive perspectives of belonging and not belonging to family. Each text presents the concept of belonging in complex, nuanced, and at times, paradoxical ways.
- Each text challenges idealised visions/conventional versions/traditional notions of family and belonging. Each text challenges expectations of belonging, and not belonging, to family.
- In text one, the distinctive perspective is conveyed through form, colour, positioning, framing, angles, background and foreground, the generic nature of the faces and the alignment of the figures.
- Text two conveys an ambivalent perspective on family and belonging, with the speaker feeling both alienated from his brother and also yearning for his brother's acceptance.
- Text three conveys distinctive perspectives through a strong narrative voice reflecting on relationships, past and present, with family and friend.
- Text four conveys a distinctive perspective on the traditional view of the photo album by critiquing its artifice and therefore challenging traditional views of family and a sense of belonging.
- Each text is distinctive in that each represents the concept of family/belonging through the prism of personal experience, while at the same time, each explores/challenges/critiques/contests/problematises the conventional ideas of belonging and family.