



BOARD OF STUDIES
NEW SOUTH WALES

HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

1998

ENGLISH

2/3 UNIT (COMMON)

PAPER 1

RESOURCES AND USES OF ENGLISH
AND
SHAKESPEARE
(Hamlet)

*Time allowed—Two hours
(Plus 10 minutes reading time)*

DIRECTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Attempt ALL questions.
- Answer Questions 1 and 3 in SEPARATE Writing Booklets.
- You may ask for extra Writing Booklets if you need them.
- Answer Question 2 in the Question 2 Answer Booklet provided.

Section I

- **Question 1. Reading Task** (15 marks). Allow about 30 minutes for this question.
- **Question 2. Writing Task** (20 marks). Allow about 40 minutes for this question.

Section II

- **Question 3. Shakespeare, *Hamlet*** (25 marks). Allow about 50 minutes for this question.

SECTION I—RESOURCES AND USES OF ENGLISH

QUESTION 1. Reading Task (15 marks)

Use a SEPARATE Writing Booklet. Allow about 30 minutes for this question.

Read the following TWO passages carefully. Each is the opening of a novel.

Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the writers' use of language, and comment on the effectiveness of EACH piece of writing.

PASSAGE A

Here is an account of a few years in the life of Quoyle, born in Brooklyn and raised in a shuffle of dreary upstate towns.

Hive-spangled, gut roaring with gas and cramp, he survived childhood; at the state university, hand clapped over his chin, he camouflaged torment with smiles and silence. Stumbled through his twenties and into his thirties learning to separate his feelings from his life, counting on nothing. He ate prodigiously, liked a ham knuckle, buttered spuds.

His jobs: distributor of vending-machine candy, all-night clerk in a convenience store, a third-rate newspaperman. At thirty-six, bereft, brimming with grief and thwarted love, Quoyle steered away to Newfoundland, the rock that had generated his ancestors, a place he had never been nor thought to go.

A watery place. And Quoyle feared water, could not swim. Again and again the father had broken his clenched grip and thrown him into pools, brooks, lakes and surf. Quoyle knew the flavour of brack and waterweed.

From this youngest son's failure to dog-paddle, the father saw other failures multiply like an explosion of virulent cells—failure to speak clearly; failure to sit up straight; failure to get up in the morning; failure in attitude; failure in ambition and ability; indeed, in everything. His own failure.

Quoyle shambled, a head taller than any child around him, was soft. He knew it. 'Ah, you lout,' said the father. But no pygmy himself. And brother Dick, the father's favourite, pretended to throw up when Quoyle came into a room, hissed 'Lardass, Snotface, Ugly Pig, Warthog, Stupid, Stinkbomb, Fart-tub, Greasebag,' pummelled and kicked until Quoyle curled, hands over head, snivelling on the linoleum. All stemmed from Quoyle's chief failure, a failure of normal appearance.

A great damp loaf of a body. At six he weighed eighty pounds. At sixteen he was buried under a casement of flesh. Head shaped like a crenshaw, no neck, reddish hair rucked back. Features as bunched as kissed fingertips. Eyes the colour of plastic. The monstrous chin, a freakish shelf jutting from the lower face.

Some anomalous gene had fired up at the moment of his begetting as a single spark sometimes leaps from banked coals, had given him a giant's chin. As a child he invented stratagems to deflect stares; a smile, downcast gaze, the right hand darting up to cover the chin.

His earliest sense of self was as a distant figure: there in the foreground was his family; here, at the limit of the far view, was he. Until he was fourteen he cherished the idea that he had been given to the wrong family, that somewhere his real people, saddled with the changeling of the Quoyles, longed for him.

QUESTION 1. (Continued)

PASSAGE B

There were crows in his eyes when he came right out with it, confessing that he had been the murderer. You could see them flapping in there. And now and again the glint of a beak. You can't tell me anything about crows I don't already know at eighty. Nor about him, either.

It's no good saying, like Norah used to, that I'm always the one who lets his imagination run riot. You ought to have seen the hungry fluttering in that look of his, those scavengers working away at the rotten flesh of corpses long dead and mostly forgotten.

Poor old bloke, the dill. Dismal is what you'd call him. Dismal the whole of his life. I can be sure of this because I knew him for all but the first couple of years of it.

He spoke the word *murder* in a croak. Even this came crow-sweet, what with Ireland still hanging on him, afraid to let him go, counting every one of her children (me included) and mad for numbers. *Marder*, he said it. Then, on account of being in his deathbed, which this time was permanent enough, the wings in his coaxing eyes fluttered and folded, twitched out again, and really did fold.

He looked peaceful; the picture of a man who has confessed his soul's torment and expects eternal absolution just for the saying of it. But I knew he was raging with excitement. What he always promised himself he would do, he had done. He never thought he'd rouse enough courage. And now here he was, flat on this back, being listened to by an inspector of police. Oh yes, he had gone that high. Not just Jim, our local constable, but an inspector down from Sydney on a special visit to nobody else.

Poor coot had scored the top brass and you could see how it set his blood spinning with grief that he hadn't made this occasion when he was younger and might have enjoyed it to the full. But there was no one else to blame, so he shut his mouth and shut his eyes and made such a good impression of being gratified that, if the whole town didn't know him for a wowser, a witness might have been pardoned for thinking he was drunk. This excitement put the colour back into his skin. He looked as if he might not die, after all. One word, *murder*, bringing him to life again. I thought: We shall be laughing over this for years to come.

Then he spoke some more, the flurry of crows now getting to his voice, muffling and rattling it.

QUESTION 2. Writing Task (20 marks)

Answer the question in the Question 2 Answer Booklet provided.

Allow about 40 minutes for this question.

Look at the picture below.



Imagine the letter she is reading.

Your task: write the letter.

Write at least 300 words.

(Do NOT sign the letter with your own name or address.)

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SECTION II—SHAKESPEARE

QUESTION 3. *Hamlet* (25 marks)

Use a SEPARATE Writing Booklet. Allow about 50 minutes for this question.

HAMLET O that this too too sallied flesh would melt,
 Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew,
 Or that the Everlasting had not fixt
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter. O God, God,
 135 How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
 Seem to me all the uses of this world!
 Fie on't, ah fie, 'tis an unweeded garden
 That grows to seed. Things rank and gross in nature
 Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
 140 But two months dead. Nay, not so much, not two!
 So excellent a King, that was to this,
 Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother
 That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
 Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,
 145 Must I remember? Why, she should hang on him
 As if increase of appetite had grown
 By what it fed on, and yet, within a month—
 Let me not think on't! Frailty, thy name is woman.
 A little month, or ere those shoes were old
 150 With which she followed my poor father's body
 Like Niobe, all tears, why she—
 O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
 Would have mourn'd longer—married with my uncle,
 My father's brother, but no more like my father
 155 Than I to Hercules. Within a month,
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
 She married. O most wicked speed, to post
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
 160 It is not, nor it cannot, come to good.
 But break my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

I. ii

- 131 *sallied* (*F* solid) prob. a variant spelling of 'sullied' (cf. II.i.43) although the possible meaning 'assailed' cannot be excluded
 132 *resolve* change into a simpler form
 134 *canon* law, decree. 'Thou shalt not kill' was taken as a commandment against suicide, which was also the sin of despair. *self F Q* scale 135 *weary F Q* wary
 138 *rank* 'coarsely luxuriant' (Onions) *gross* overgrown, bloated
 139 *merely* utterly, entirely *to this F Q* thus
 142 *Hyperion* the sun god *satyr* goat-like creature with lecherous tendencies
 143 *beteem* permit 148 *on't* I.i.63
 151 *Niobe* type of the grieving woman, who still wept for her children after she had been turned to stone
 152 *wants* lacks *discourse* 'process or faculty of reasoning' (OED discourse 2b) which distinguishes men from the beasts
 155 *Hercules* the hero of myth, who performed superhuman labours
 156 *unrighteous* because belied by her actions
 157 *flushing* redness *galled* smarting 158 *post* speed, hasten
 159 *incestuous* marriage to a husband's brother was regarded as incest

QUESTION 3. (Continued)

How does the language of the play convey Hamlet's perception of the world and of his place in it?

Base your answer on the soliloquy printed here, but you should consider other speeches in the play as well.

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