



Part 1

Critical responses

Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences
Responding to unseen texts in exam conditions (Paper 1, Section I)

Stimulus Booklet and Practice Questions
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Texts and Human Experiences Stimulus Booklet

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Text 1—Prose fiction extract

Five Bells

Circular Quay: she loved even the sound of it.

Before she saw the bowl of bright water, swelling like something sexual, before she saw the blue, unprecedented, and the clear sky sloping upwards, she knew from the lilted words it would be a circle like no other, key to a new world.

The train swung in a wide arc to emerge alongside sturdy buildings and there it was, the first glimpses through struts of ironwork, and those blurred partial visions were a quiet pleasure. Down the escalator, rumbling with its heavy body-cargo, through the electronic turnstile, which captured her bent ticket, then, caught in the crowd, she was carried outside.

There was confusion at first, the shock of sudden light, all the signs, all the clamour. But the vista resolved and she saw before her the row of ferry ports, each looking like a primary-colour holiday pavilion, and the boats, bobbing, their green and yellow forms toy-like, arriving, absorbing slow lines of passengers, departing. With a trampoline heart she saw the Bridge to her left: its modern shape, its optimistic uparching. Familiar from postcards and television commercials, here now, *here-now*, was the very thing itself, neat and enthralling. There were tiny flags on top and the silhouetted ant forms of people arduously climbing the steep bow. It looked stamped against the sky, as if nothing could remove it. It looked indelible. *A coathanger*, guidebooks said, but it was so much grander than this implied. The coherence of it, the embrace, the span of frozen hard-labour. Those bold pylons at the ends, the multi-millions of hidden rivets.

From somewhere drifted the sound of a busking didgeridoo with an electronic backbeat, *boum-boum, boum-boum; boum-boum, boum-boum*. The didgeridoo dissolved in the air, thick and newly ancient.

For tourists, Ellie thought, with no disparagement. For me. For all of us. *Boum-boum, boum-boum*.

GAIL JONES

Extract from *Five Bells* (Random House, 2011), pp. 1-2.

Text 2—Poem extract

We are the Moon

Bira | moon

one revolution ago we met under a super pink moon i
stepped out from the shadows my face tilted back to soak up the
light a crisp silhouette of a night my world slept
deep toward that transition-time slipping from one fierce day to the
next

zoom-video kicks in before audio our bodies glitch through time
zones my eyes bright you arrive with the sun and
take your first sip of morning tea

we agree on the rising heat and weight of worry the global pace
is quickening to spin-out all our tomorrows we
recognise this fight-flight tremor on the verge feel the
gravitational pull transforming every cell in every living thing our body
we are running somewhere between dogged resolve trepidation
and fatigue and like all the grandmothers before us who created
everything from nothing we know there is so much work to
do so much to do so Yes we
finally say *let's think about the moon*

NATALIE HARKIN and LEANNE BETASAMOSAKE SIMPSON
Redroompoetry.org, 2021.

<https://redroompoetry.org/poets/natalie-harkin/we-are-moon/>

Text 3—Poem

Marrickville Sonnet

But to learn all there is in a street.
To treat the suburb's noise as another lesson.
The amazement of traffic. Or celebrate
small terrors that balloon from locks and veins.
O industry, garden, railway, brothel!
grafted on sandstone hill and bushland.
Where, once, a clean slow winding river.
A sacred kingfisher rests in my backyard.

Main street clogs, a continual bloodline.
Shopping hearts work with speed, decay.
Young sultans repair wheels at pools of oil.
Stabs of music hurl across the street
infuse my lines with deep bass notes.
As if heaven lies about us. Or love is brief.

JILL JONES

Screens, Jets, Heaven: New and Selected Poems (Salt Publishing, 2002).

Text 4—Memoir extract

Report from the Interior

In the beginning, everything was alive. The smallest objects were endowed with beating hearts, and even the clouds had names. Scissors could walk, telephones and teapots were first cousins, eyes and eyeglasses were brothers. The face of the clock was a human face, each pea in your bowl had a different personality, and the grille on the front of your parents' car was a grinning mouth with many teeth. Pens were airships. Coins were flying saucers. The branches of trees were arms. Stones could think, and God was everywhere.

There was no problem in believing that the man in the moon was an actual man. You could see his face looking down at you from the night sky, and without question it was the face of a man. Little matter that this man had no body—he was still a man as far as you were concerned, and the possibility that there might be a contradiction in all this never once entered your thoughts. At the same time, it seemed perfectly credible that a cow could jump over the moon. And that a dish could run away with a spoon.

Your earliest thoughts, remnants of how you lived inside yourself as a small boy. You can remember only some of it, isolated bits and pieces, brief flashes of recognition that surge up in you unexpectedly at random moments—brought on by the smell of something, or the touch of something, or the way the light falls on something in the here and now of adulthood. At least you think you can remember, you believe you remember, but perhaps you are not remembering at all, or remembering only a later remembrance of what you think you thought in that distant time which is all but lost to you now.

PAUL AUSTER

Report from the Interior (Henry Holt & Co., 2013), pp. 3-4.

Text 5—Feature article extract

A lament for the lost art of letter-writing—a radical art form reflecting ‘the full catastrophe of life’

The disappearance of letter-writing from Western cultural life is such a recent phenomenon that I don't dare proclaim its death. From Abelard and Heloise's 12th-century love missives, dense with biblical references but no less dense with longing, to the letters of Vincent Van Gogh to his brother Theo, it's hard to imagine how we might have made sense of the human condition without the insights gleaned from letters.

What would we know of the interior worlds of articles and writers, scientists and politicians, sisters and friends and lovers? What would we know about life itself? Or, as importantly, about *how to live*?

Unlike the essay or the novel, letters facilitate a kind of collapsing of low and high, profound and profane, the life of domesticity and the life of the spirit. They are not master accounts of ourselves, with all the incidentals written out.

No one, writing a letter, agonises over the wording of a sentence that links two paragraphs. A trail of unexplained ellipses has a particular function in a letter—to break a chain of thought, to attest to bodily movement in temporal space: a kettle being put on, a doorbell answered, a nappy changed.

While famous love letters of the past are collected, collated and curated for public consumption, I'm not sure a 21st-century romantic email correspondence will have the same longevity. Emails don't contain the mark of the person, the peculiarities of handwriting or, yes, spelling mistakes—autocorrect puts out these interesting little fires. Email won't ever be a replacement for the unfolding, from a wadded envelopment, of several pages of lovingly tended text.

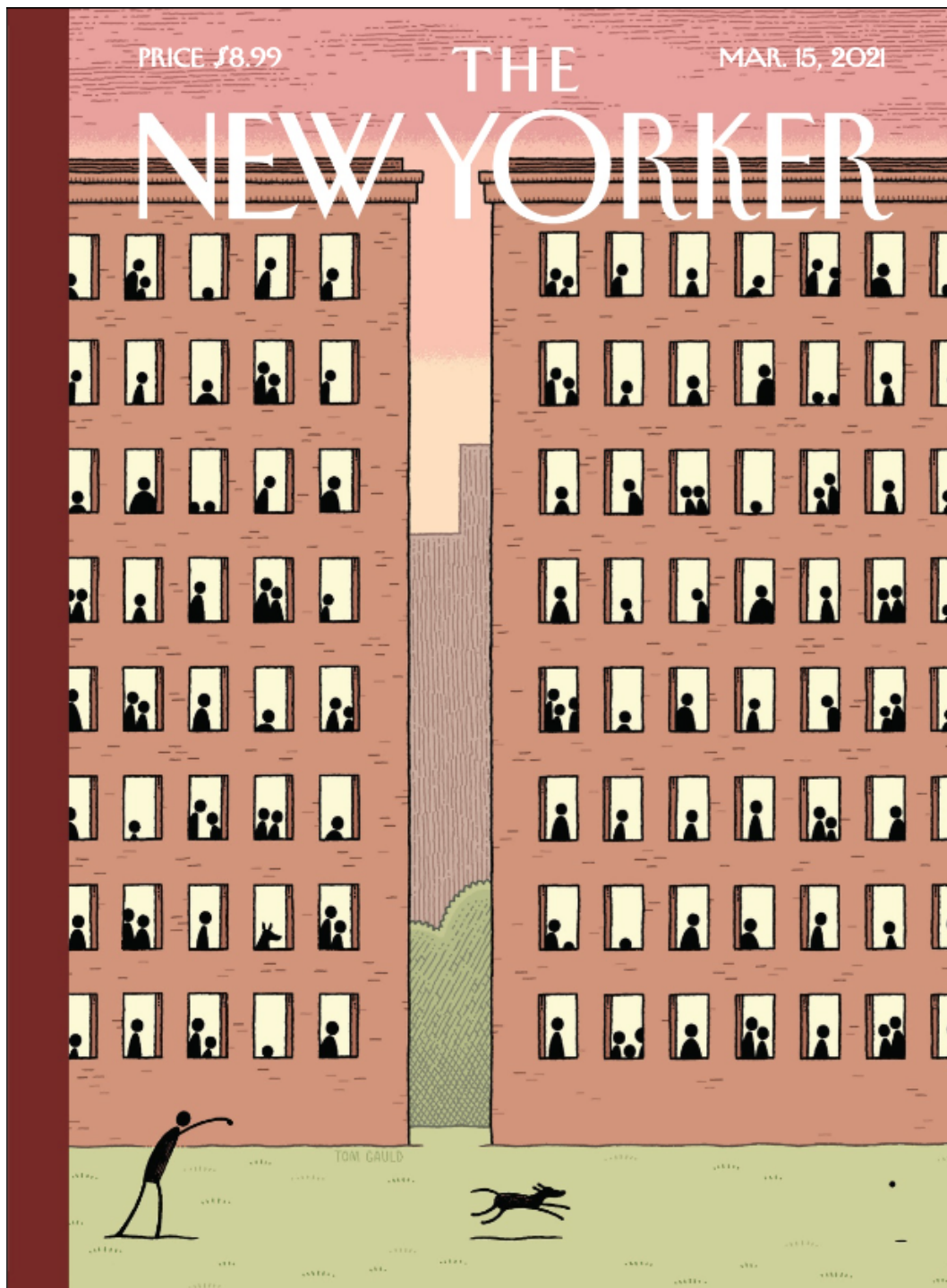
Letters are immediate; we write them from inside the moment, and so the immediate, the moment, becomes the truth. Their vigour, and their value, lies in this unedited, uneditable quality: they document us, trap fleeting moments in glass. We might even say things that bare our souls.

EDWINA PRESTON

The Conversation, 17 March 2023.

<https://theconversation.com/friday-essay-a-lament-for-the-lost-art-of-letter-writing-a-radical-art-form-reflecting-the-full-catastrophe-of-life-19742>

Text 6—Magazine cover



TOM GOULD
'Captive Audience', *The New Yorker*, 15 March 2021.

Text 7—Book cover



ROMAN KRZNARIC
How to Find Fulfilling Work (The School of Life, 2012).

Practice Questions For Advanced and Standard

Text 1—Prose fiction extract

Explain how Gail Jones uses language to convey the experience of encountering a new place for the first time.

Text 2—Poem extract

Analyse how Natalie Harkin and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson convey the experience of uncertainty.

Text 3—Poem

Explain how Jill Jones represents interactions between humans and urban space.

Text 4—Memoir extract

How does Paul Auster convey the power of imagination in this extract?

Text 5—feature article extract

Analyse how the writer explores the power of letter writing.

Text 6—magazine cover

How does Tom Gould represent diverse experiences?

Text 7—book cover

How does the visual text represent the experience of work?

Comparative questions

Text 1—Prose fiction extract, Text 3—Poem and Text 6—magazine article

How do these texts use a variety of language and visual forms and features to explore the importance of place?

Text 2—Poem extract and Text 5—feature article extract

Compare how the writers represent the experience of connection.

Text 4—Prose fiction extract, Text 4—memoir extract and Text 7—book cover

To what extent is the importance of creativity explored in the texts?