Texts and Human Experiences
A Skills based approach to the Common Module
HSC English 2019–2023

Bruce Pattinson
INTRODUCTION TO THE COMMON MODULE:

TEXTS AND HUMAN EXPERIENCES

This book is explicitly designed to help you in understanding the Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences for the 2019 Higher School Certificate in New South Wales. This course is a common module for Advanced, Standard and English Studies courses and the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) has made it mandatory in the course requirements.

The book begins by giving you an introductory understanding of the topic ‘Human Experience’ with questions designed to extend and develop a complete, actionable response based on your set text. It may also include stimulus and/or unseen texts.

You do not have to use the book from front to back but you can pick and choose exercises as needed. This book will develop your skills and ideas about the Common Module and I hope it will expand your understanding so that this will translate into improved results.

I wish you all the best in your studies.

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Finally, we tackle the essay and the use of related textual material. The second section of Paper One of the HSC will include a question which requires a sustained answer based on your set text. It may also include stimulus and/or unseen texts. This section gives both guidance and extended annotated examples of the types of texts that could be used to reinforce the key ideas in your set text. The basics of the essay are covered as is the development of the opening paragraph.

The next section is designed to help prepare you for the type of questions you will find in the first section of Paper One for the HSC. It will consist of four to five short-answer questions which may be in the form of text response, extended text response, and prose and poetry response. This section offers a series of sample stimuli and questions to answer. Then we move on to the use of related textual material, with a focus on reading your set text alongside any other texts that may be relevant.

To assist with this process, we have developed a series of activities to increase awareness of specific facets of this complex area. These activities may include reading, writing, discussion, and analysis.

Please note that this book is not exhaustive and is intended to complement your learning experience, not replace it. The key is to practice, practice, and practice. Good luck with your studies!
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The book begins by giving you an introductory understanding of the topic 'Human Experience' with questions designed to extend and develop a complete, actionable knowledge. To assist we have developed a series of activities to increase awareness of specific facets of this complex area.

The next section is designed to help prepare you for the type of questions you will find in the first section of Paper One for the HSC. It will consist of four to five short-answer questions based on stimulus material and/or unseen texts which relate to the Common Module. You will be guided through literary and visual techniques and then offered a series of sample stimuli and questions to answer.

Finally, we tackle the essay and the use of related textual material. The second section of Paper One of the HSC will include a question which requires a sustained response based on your set text. It may also include stimulus and/or unseen texts.

This section gives both guidance and extended annotated examples of the types of texts that could be used to reinforce the key ideas in your set text. The basics of the essay are covered as is the development of the opening paragraph.

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Other Related Texts
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What is the Common Module?

The Common Module set for the 2019–23 HSC is Texts and Human Experiences. It is compulsory to study this topic as prescribed by NESA and it is common to all three English courses. Remember you will be learning how texts reveal individual and collective human experiences. There are no right or wrong answers in this module – it is about how you see and interpret material and engage with it.

In the Common Module you will be analysing one prescribed text and a range of short texts that are related to the idea of human experiences. You will analyse texts not only to investigate the ideas they represent about human experiences but also how they deliver these ideas. This means you will be looking closely at the techniques a composer uses to represent his / her messages and shape meaning.

Specifically you will look at one set text from the following list:

- Doerr, Anthony, All the Light We Cannot See
- Lohrey, Amanda, Vertigo
- Orwell, George, Nineteen Eighty-Four
- Parrett, Favel, Past the Shallows
- Harrison, Jane, Rainbow’s End
- Miller, Arthur, The Crucible
- Shakespeare, William, The Merchant of Venice
- Yousafzai, Malala & Lamb, Christina, I am Malala
- Daldry, Stephen, Billy Elliot
- O’Mahoney, Ivan, Go Back to Where You Came From – Series 1, Episodes 1, 2 and 3 and The Response
- Walker, Lucy, Waste Land

You will also study an additional related text of your own choosing. You must write about your set text and your chosen related text in the first English paper of the HSC examination.

Texts and Human Experiences: A Skills Based Approach to the Common Module
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SAMPLE
In your own words describe what you are required to do in the Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences to meet the requirements of the course.

Which text are you studying? What type of text is it?

List THREE Other Related Texts that you can use as resources. To help you we have included an annotated list of a variety of texts at the end of this workbook as a starting point.

WORKBOOK AS A STARTING POINT.

We have included an annotated list of a variety of texts at the end of this textbook for you to use as resources. To help you remember you are reading for a purpose and should make notes and highlight ideas as you read so that you can develop these ideas later.

In your own words describe what you are required to do in the Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences to meet the requirements of the course.

Which text are you studying? What type of text is it?

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What does NESA require for the Common Module?

- By responding to a range of texts, further develop skills and confidence using various literary devices, language concepts, modes and media to formulate a considered response to texts;
- To examine how different modes and media use visual, verbal and/or digital language elements;
- To communicate ideas using figurative language to express universal themes and further develop skills in using metalanguage, correct grammar and syntax to make increasingly informed judgements about how aspects of these texts, for example context, purpose, structure, stylistic and grammatical features, and form shape meaning;
- To study one prescribed text and a range of short texts that provide rich opportunities to further explore representations of human experiences;
- To explore how texts may give insight into the anomalies, paradoxes and personally;
- To reflect particular lives and cultures;
- To examine how texts represent human qualities and emotions associated with, or arising from, these experiences;
- To consider how different modes and media illuminate in texts;
- To analyse language and express a personal perspective about a text.

In your own words describe what you are required to do in the Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences to meet the requirements of the course.

Which text are you studying? What type of text is it?

List THREE Other Related Texts that you can use as resources. To help you we have included an annotated list of a variety of texts at the end of this workbook as a starting point.
What does NESA require for the Common Module?

The NESA documentation of the Common Module: Texts and Human Experiences states that students:

- deepen their understanding of how texts represent individual and collective human experiences;
- examine how texts represent human qualities and emotions associated with, or arising from, these experiences;
- appreciate, explore, interpret, analyse and evaluate the ways language is used to shape these representations in a range of texts in a variety of forms, modes and media;
- explore how texts may give insight into the anomalies, paradoxes and inconsistencies in human behaviour and motivations, inviting the responder to see the world differently, to challenge assumptions, ignite new ideas or reflect personally;
- may also consider the role of storytelling throughout time to express and reflect particular lives and cultures;
- by responding to a range of texts, further develop skills and confidence using various literary devices, language concepts, modes and media to formulate a considered response to texts;
- study one prescribed text and a range of short texts that provide rich opportunities to further explore representations of human experiences illuminated in texts;
- make increasingly informed judgements about how aspects of these texts, for example context, purpose, structure, stylistic and grammatical features, and form shape meaning;
- select one related text and draw from personal experience to make connections between themselves, the world of the text and their wider world;
- by responding and composing throughout the module, further develop a repertoire of skills in comprehending, interpreting and analysing complex texts;
- examine how different modes and media use visual, verbal and/or digital language elements;
- communicate ideas using figurative language to express universal themes and evaluative language to make informed judgements about texts; and
- further develop skills in using metalanguage, correct grammar and syntax to analyse language and express a personal perspective about a text.

If this is what is required by NESA we need to examine the concept of human experience carefully so we can adequately respond in these ways. I would recommend that you read the complete document which is on the NESA website and can be downloaded in Word or Adobe. Understanding this document is an important step in handling the textual material within the guidelines required — remember you are reading for a purpose and should make notes and highlight ideas as you read so that you can develop these ideas later.
Find the English Stage 6 Prescriptions 2019–2023 document on the NESA website and download it. Write the URL below.

In your own words write what you think you need to do to be confident in completing Paper One successfully. What are some of the skills required?

List ONE area of weakness you think you might have and how you can develop your skills in that area.

Texts and Human Experiences: Vocabulary

The terminologies listed are words you need to be familiar with. You should read the list carefully and if you are unfamiliar with the word and its meaning find the meaning of the word and how it is used. Some words are defined in the English Syllabus which can be found online at the NESA website while the others can be found in any online dictionary. Try to find the meaning in your own words and be mindful of the context—some words have subtle changes in meaning depending on the context.

General Terms
- individual
- collective
- human qualities
- emotions
- anomalies
- paradoxes
- inconsistencies
- behaviour
- motivation
- assumptions

English Terminology
- texts
- represent
- appreciate
- explore
- interpret
- analyse
- evaluate
- form
- mode
- media
- metalanguage
- responder
- reflect
- context
- purpose
- structure
- stylistic features
- grammatical features
- repertoire
- figurative
- universal themes
- perspective
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**General Terms**

individual  paradoaxes
collective  inconsistencies
human qualities  behaviour
emotions  motivation
anomalies  assumptions

**English Terminology**

texts  responder
represent  reflect
appreciate  context
explore  purpose
interpret  structure
analyse  stylistic features
form  repertoire
mode  figurative
media  universal themes
metalanguage  perspective

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Understanding the Common Module

What are Human Experiences?

The concept of Human Experiences is at the heart of the Common Module.

Human Experiences are experiences of individuals or a group of people (e.g., a family, society, or nation) in life. There are a very wide range of human experiences which include but go beyond this list:

- feelings or reactions (momentary or long term): love, hate, anger, joy, fear, disgust
- key milestones or stages: birth, childhood, adulthood, marriage, divorce, death
- culture, belonging and identity
- conformity and rebellion
- innocence and guilt, justice
- freedom and repression
- education, vocation, work, sport, leisure
- attraction to a person, idea, group of cause
- opposition to an idea, cause, political system
- religious faith or belief
- extreme events such as an earthquake, avalanche, tsunami
- regular events such as walking, eating, singing, dancing, discussing ideas.

The word experience seems innately connected to the human condition and it is something we have each day whether a mundane experience that is repetitive or something new and dramatic which offers challenges and rewards. Experiences can vary greatly in their impact on individuals, groups and countries. One example might be a war that is a negative experience on a whole population while we may vary greatly in their impact on individuals, groups and countries. One example might something new and dramatic which offers challenges and rewards. Experiences can be a particular instance of personally encountering or undergoing something:

- religious faith or belief
- extreme events such as an earthquake, avalanche, tsunami
- regular events such as walking, eating, singing, dancing, discussing ideas.
- attraction to a person, idea, group of cause
- opposition to an idea, cause, political system
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The search for the ‘new experience’ has driven much of the development of something we have each day whether a mundane experience that is repetitive or something new and dramatic which offers challenges and rewards. Experiences can be a particular instance of personally encountering or undergoing something:

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Defining Human Experiences

Now let’s attempt to define what human experiences are and shape them into a more coherent and easily understood framework so we can begin our investigation at a basic level of understanding before moving into more complex analysis and looking at how the texts illuminate our understanding of the term.

Dictionary.com defines the term experience as:

noun
1. a particular instance of personally encountering or undergoing something:
2. the process or fact of personally observing, encountering, or undergoing something:
3. the observing, encountering, or undergoing of things generally as they occur in the course of time: to learn from experience; the range of human experience.
4. knowledge or practical wisdom gained from what one has observed, learned from experience; the range of human experience.
5. Philosophy: the totality of the cognitions given by perception; all that is perceived, understood, and remembered.
6. to have experience of; meet with; undergo; feel: to experience nausea.
7. to learn by experience.
8. experienced, experiencing.

verb (used with object), experienced, experiencing.
6. to have experience of; meet with; undergo; feel: to experience nausea.
7. to learn by experience.

Idioms
8. experience religion; to undergo a spiritual conversion by which one gains or regains faith in God.

Obviously there are a number of definitions according to context, but all are applicable to our study in some shape or form, as the range of human experiences is so vast. The search for the ‘new experience’ has driven much of the development of people, groups, cultures and nations over past millennia. New experiences are always met with excitement and often trepidation as to what change they might bring.

Think historically about how people have reacted to change. It can cause great upheavals in society, with violent reactions while other changes brought through
various experiences are welcomed and may change how people live and comprehend the world. Experiences affect us emotionally in many cases rather than logically and when we deal emotionally, behaviours become unpredictable. This causes the paradoxes, anomalies and inconsistencies mentioned in the rubric. If we were logical beings, the world would be an easier place.

These definitions all point to the fact that the memory is the key to experience. The experience is stored in memory and drawn upon when the circumstances are repeated or closely mimicked so we can deal with them — hopefully better than on the initial experience.

Experiences can come in many ways and the synonyms listed below for experience help us to understand the concept even further. They assist in defining how an experience can arise:

**Synonyms**

- actions
- background
- contacts
- involvement
- know-how
- maturity
- participation
- patience
- practice
- reality
- sense
- skill
- struggle
- training
- understanding
- judgment
- observation
- acquaintance
- practicality
- cautious
- proofs
- combat
- usages
- evidence
- practices
- existence
- exposures
- intimacy
- syntax
- worldliness
- forebearance

http://www.thesaurus.com/browse/experience?s=t

These synonyms show partly the vast array of words that our language has created around this concept, and also shows how important it is in the human psyche. We, as humans, want to experience. Now we will look at some examples of experiences and examine how they can impact. It is important to remember that our experiences do not have to be positive. You might experience a huge problem, a bereavement, a car accident, an unwelcome relationship or something totally bizarre that rocks your world. There can be a more opaque side to any experience that may need to be addressed.

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The whole aim of this Common Module is to examine the text closely but also relate it to the concept of human experiences and decide how examining it in this way enables us to better understand both the text and the concept of humanity.

It is important that you unpack what each text you study shows you about human experiences and what ideas/themes arise from those experiences. Formulate your own ideas about the text.

Read the NESA Stage 6 document called English Stage 6: Annotations of selected texts prescribed for the Higher School Certificate 2019-23 for the set text you are studying. This document offers insights into the way each particular text should be examined by outlining key ideas and areas for clarification.

Go back to the list of words on page 9 as these show you the types of experiences and effects that you will be studying. If you didn’t find the meanings of these words then – do it now. This is one of the key elements to understanding what you study and how to convey that information effectively.

Human experiences and ways of experiencing vary due to individual circumstance and these experiences can change many things about individual lives, communities and the world. When we examine the concept of human experience in relation to a text, we need to examine the assumptions or biases we bring to it as well as how experiencing the text itself may change us and how we view things. The text may challenge and confront how we view the human experience or we may have preconceived ideas that make it more difficult for this to happen.

Students can also think about their own ‘personal experience’ to make connections between themselves, the world of the text and their wider world. Examining and enjoying any text is an experience in itself but it is what we take away from the text and apply that is the crucial aspect. That is not to say that every text will be enjoyed or offer a human experience that is significant either positively or negatively. Some texts may not personally engage you and that is fine. This is especially so when you begin to look for other related material that links to Texts and Human Experiences. We recommend that you find examples of texts that link but also personally appeal to you so that you can relate empathetically with them.