



HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE EXAMINATION

1997

ENGLISH

2 UNIT GENERAL

PAPER 1

**USES OF ENGLISH AND
TOPIC AREAS**

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

DIRECTIONS TO CANDIDATES

- Attempt ALL questions.
- | | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|------------|
| Section I | Reading Task | Question 1 |
| Section II | Writing Task | Question 2 |
| Section III | Topic Areas | Question 3 |
- All questions are of equal value.
- Allow about 40 minutes for each question.
- 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—READING TASK

QUESTION 1. Use a *separate* Writing Booklet. (20 marks)

Allow about 40 minutes for this question.

Read the following passage, then answer the questions on page 3.

THE GREATEST LYRICS EVER SOLD

Rock'n'roll changed the way we live—and the songs we sing.
But don't ever confuse it with poetry.

SHAKESPEARE knew the difference between lyrics and poetry. When he wrote poetry he wrote lines such as:

5 *When to the sessions of sweet silent thought
I summon up remembrance of things past,
I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,
10 And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste.*

When he felt a song coming on he wrote lyrics such as:

15 *It was a lover and his lass,
With a hey, and a ho, and a hey-nonny-no,
That o'er the green cornfield did pass
20 In spring-time, the only pretty ring-time
When birds do sing, hey ding-a-ding ding,
Sweet lovers love the spring.*

You don't need to be a poet, critic or
25 English Literature graduate to recognise the difference. Quality is not the issue—lyrics are not 'bad' poetry—it's a case of confusing the horse with the ass. They might have a superficial similarity but they
30 are different and any comparison is both silly and pointless.

A famous songwriter once observed:
'Anyone who thinks I'm a poet has obviously never read real poetry.' The
35 romantic image of the long-suffering, poverty-stricken poet persists, however,

and rock music is full of misguided 'wannabes' all writing moderately interesting lyrics and dreaming of fame.

40 So, when it comes to the truly great lyrics written in the rock and pop idiom, where do you start, what do you look for? How on Earth does anyone attempt any kind of evaluation of the millions of words which
45 are unleashed on the hordes of indiscriminating pop pickers each year? A reasonable starting point is to recognise that great lyrics cannot exist in isolation.

A great lyric is one which works,
50 seamlessly and organically, with the music which surrounds it. It is a total experience of music, vocals and lyrics. Often a lyric which would look stupid on the printed page can be given layers of meaning by the
55 intonation in the singer's voice and the way the words mesh with the rhythms and arrangements which surround them.

This need for an integrated whole means that some of the best 'poetic' lyrics rule
60 themselves out of contention because the songwriter, entranced by the imagery, simply forgot that he or she was writing a song.

Since its beginnings in the early 1950s,
65 rock'n'roll and pop music have been centrally concerned with the various aspects of adolescent lifestyle. Thus sex and love (in all their endless variations), relations with peers and parents, rebellion
70 by those who are essentially powerless, the monotony and boredom of a life which should be filled with excitement, life as an absurd comedy, and dreams of a problem-

QUESTION 1. (Continued)

free world are the stuff from which most
75 lyrics are made.

There is nothing wrong with this subject
matter. If these themes were good enough
for Shakespeare (and you really need look
no further than *Romeo and Juliet* and
80 *Hamlet*) they are certainly good enough for
the modern pop song.

The point is that each generation finds its
own way to give expression to these
themes—and the way that expression
85 occurs reflects the musical and lyrical
styles of the time.

The central problem here is the issue of the
larger context in which the lyrics are first
heard. Popular music is a living sound-
90 track to daily life. It is not some kind of
work of art to be preserved in the pages of
a book or hung on an art gallery wall. It is
one element in the experience of driving a
car, working at a dreary job, going to a
95 party, sitting in your bedroom being bored
and romancing someone who has just
turned your neurones into champagne
bubbles.

The songs acquire a power which goes
100 beyond what they say because, at a critical
point in a person's development, they
articulate thoughts and feelings which that
person has not been able to express.

So, what is the greatest rock lyric ever
105 written? Simple. It's the ultimate
statement of antagonism between those
who want conformity and those who know
there is more to life than a dull, nine-to-five
job. It's a song which captures
110 perfectly the sounds of non-stop nagging
so hated by harassed adolescents and lay-
abouts. Out of a torrent of
incomprehensible noise come the three
words scorned by those staring down the
115 long tunnel of boredom and social
convention. It was written as long ago as
1958 by Rick Lewis of The Silhouettes.

He wrote it while he was in the U.S.
Army. It got to No. 1, something that Bob
120 Dylan has never managed to do, and it is
still as relevant today as it was then—you
can dance to it and you can sing along after
only a single listen.

What more could anyone ask from a song?

125 *Sha na na na Sha na na na na,*
Sha na na na Sha na na na na,
Sha na na na Sha na na na na,
Sha na na na Sha na na na na,
Yip yip yip yip Yip yip yip yip
130 *Mum mum mum mum*
Mum mum Get a job.

—adapted from: BRUCE ELDER, *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 1996

Sydney Morning Herald 28/12/96, Spectrum 5s. Reproduced with permission.

Marks

- | | | |
|-----|---|----------|
| (a) | In what ways are the headline and subheading effective in catching the readers' attention? | 3 |
| (b) | Who do you think is the intended audience for this article? Give your reasons. | 3 |
| (c) | In what ways, according to the article, do 'songs acquire a power' (line 99)? | 6 |
| (d) | How does your reading of the last three paragraphs (lines 104–31) affect your response to the article as a whole? | 8 |

SECTION II—WRITING TASK**QUESTION 2.** (20 marks)

Answer the question in the Question 2 Answer Booklet provided.

Allow about 40 minutes for this question.

The road has provided our common language with many familiar phrases, images, and metaphors.

Road closed

Round the bend...

There's a track winding back...

**WRONG WAY!
GO BACK**

On the Road...

Proceed With Caution

eyes on the road...

The road not taken

end of the line

Use ONE of the phrases in the stimulus material above as the basis for a piece of writing, and use it as your title.

Write in any form you wish, and from any point(s) of view.

SECTION III—TOPIC AREAS

QUESTION 3. Use a *separate* Writing Booklet. (20 marks)

Allow about 40 minutes for this question.

The Topic Areas for 1997 are (a) Aboriginal Experience and (b) Crossing Boundaries.

EITHER

(a) Aboriginal Experience

What, to you, is distinctive about the Aboriginal experience?

In your answer, refer to ONE of the set texts and a variety of supplementary materials.

The texts set for study are:

Jack Davis, Stephen Muecke, Mudrooroo, and Adam Shoemaker (eds),
Paperbark: A Collection of Black Australian Writings.
 Ruby Langford, *Don't Take Your Love to Town.*
 Sally Morgan, *My Place.*
 Mudrooroo (Colin Johnson), *Wild Cat Falling.*

OR

(b) Crossing Boundaries

‘We share boundaries. How they are crossed is the measure of personal achievement.’

In what ways do the text and supplementary material you have studied demonstrate this?

In your answer, refer to ONE of the set texts and a variety of supplementary materials.

The texts set for study are:

Nadine Gordimer, *July's People.*
 Melina Marchetta, *Looking for Alibrandi.*
 Beryl Markham, *West with the Night.*
 Willy Russell, *Educating Rita.*

BLANK PAGE

BLANK PAGE

BLANK PAGE