MA99 EDUCATION

# Gwen Harwood: Text Pack

NSW ENGLISH STANDARD AND ENGLISH ADVANCED 11-12 SYLLABUSES 2024 FOR HSC 2027 AND LATER

## Instructions

This pack assumes the essay teaching in How to Excel (English Standard) or the Foundations Pack (English Advanced). It does not repeat essay architecture, exam timing, the techniques glossary or the vocabulary bank. It spends its pages on these poems.

**It serves both courses.** Texts and human experiences is word for word identical in the English Standard and English Advanced syllabuses, and NESA states that the Paper 1 Section II question is common to both. Nothing in this pack needs changing depending on which course you are in.

**Your edition.** Selected Poems, Penguin, 2001, ISBN 9780141006680, edited by Gregory Kratzmann. Order it by the ISBN. A different book called Selected Poems: A New Edition came out from Halcyon Press in the same year, and Angus and Robertson printed Selected Poems editions from 1975 onwards.

**This pack quotes not one word of Harwood, and that is deliberate.** She died in 1995 and her poems are in copyright until the end of 2065. Section 5A explains what this pack does instead, and why the method is worth learning even though YOU may quote your own copy freely in the examination.

# 1. How to use this pack

Five moves. The second one is not needed for any other prescribed text.

Texts and human experiences is examined in Paper 1, which carries forty marks in ninety minutes plus ten minutes reading time. Section II is one compulsory extended response on your prescribed text, worth twenty marks, and it is the same question every candidate in the state answers whichever text and whichever course they are on.

That last fact governs everything. The question will not name Harwood, will not name a poem, and will not name a speaker. It will say your prescribed text. So the work of choosing which poems to write about is done before you read the question, not after.

## One line test

Read your thesis aloud. Could a competent reader who has also read the poems refuse it?

If not, you have written a topic and called it a thesis.

Memory in Harwood is a topic. These poems keep admitting that the memories in them were told rather than recalled is a thesis.

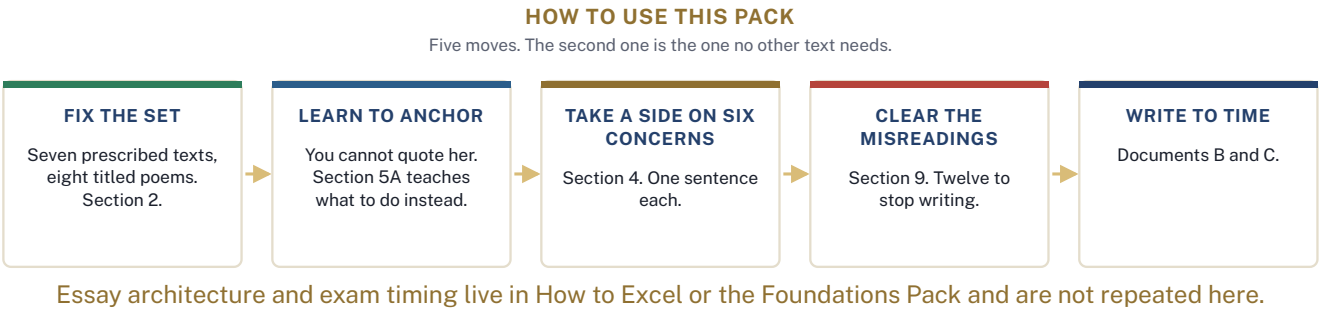



Figure 1 · How to use this pack. The order matters more than the contents.

# 2. The seven prescribed texts, and the four that are not

Get this page right before anything else. It is where marks are lost silently.

Your prescription is seven prescribed texts and eight titled poems, because Father and Child is one text in two numbered parts. Write seven prescribed texts, one of which is a two part poem, or write eight poems in seven prescribed texts. An unqualified seven poems needs the counting rule on the same page, and an unqualified eight poems is simply wrong.

**SEVEN PRESCRIBED TEXTS, EIGHT TITLED POEMS**

Father and Child is ONE prescribed text in two parts. Tick a box when you can name the poem's form without the book.

- ☐ THE GLASS JAR. Poems, 1963. Seven sestets, ABBACC.
- ☐ THE VIOLETS. Selected Poems, 1975. Free verse.
- ☐ AT MORNINGTON. Selected Poems, 1975. Continuous, cyclical.
- ☐ FATHER AND CHILD, I and II. Selected Poems, 1975. Two parts, seven sestets each.
- ☐ A VALEDICTION. The Lion's Bride, 1981. Structure not established.
- ☐ BEYOND METAPHOR. The Lion's Bride, 1981. Almost nothing established.
- ☐ THE SHARPNESS OF DEATH. The Lion's Bride, 1981. Numbered sections.
- ☐ NOT PRESCRIBED, and in the same book: Mother Who Gave Me Life, Suburban Sonnet, In the Park, Prize-Giving.

The last cell is the trap. Those four are taught constantly and none of them is on your prescription.

Figure 2 · The set, and the four in the same book that are not on it.

| PRESCRIBED TEXT | FIRST COLLECTION | WHAT IS ESTABLISHED ABOUT ITS FORM |
|---|---|---|
| **The Glass Jar** | Poems, 1963 | Seven sestets, rhyming ABBACC throughout, with a half rhyme in the final couplet. No stable metre. |
| **The Violets** | Selected Poems, 1975 | Free verse. No regular stanza or rhyme, heavy enjambment, indentation marking the shifts in time. |
| **At Mornington** | Selected Poems, 1975 | Continuous, heavily enjambed, associative and cyclical. The stanza count is NOT established: sources disagree. |
| **Father and Child, I and II** | Selected Poems, 1975 | Both parts are seven sestets. Part I rhymes ABABCC. Rhyme is not uniformly full. |
| **A Valediction** | The Lion's Bride, 1981 | NOT ESTABLISHED. No stanza count, line count or rhyme scheme was verifiable. One source records enjambment for continuity. |
| **Beyond Metaphor** | The Lion's Bride, 1981 | NOT ESTABLISHED, and almost nothing else is either. See section 5.4. |
| **The Sharpness of Death** | The Lion's Bride, 1981 | A sequence of numbered sections, cyclical, the last returning to the address of the first. The number of sections is NOT established. |

## The four that will cost you everything

Mother Who Gave Me Life, Suburban Sonnet, In the Park and Prize-Giving are all in your book, are all taught constantly, and are NOT on your prescription.

The examination question will not warn you, because it names no poem. A student who prepared Suburban Sonnet will read a perfectly answerable question and answer it on a poem that is not prescribed.

Check the prescription against your own book in week one, and write the seven titles inside the front cover.

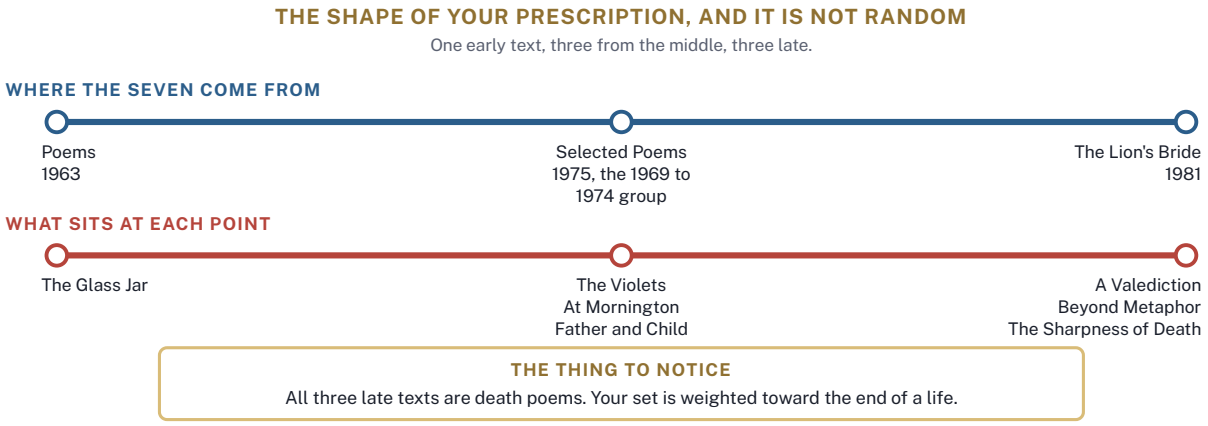



Figure 3 · Where the seven come from. One early, three middle, three late.

**The shape of the set is worth a sentence in an essay.** One text comes from Poems of 1963, three from the 1969 to 1974 group first collected in Selected Poems of 1975, and three from The Lion's Bride of 1981. All three of the late texts are death poems. Your prescription is weighted toward the end of a life, and an argument that notices that is already doing more than an argument that treats the seven as a bag of poems.

# 3. Context, and how to use it

Four facts with sources behind them, and a warning about the rest.

Context earns its place when it changes a reading and costs you space when it is decoration. Each fact below is here because it changes how a poem reads.

## 3.1 The operatic I, which is the most useful thing on this page

Harwood insisted on a distinction between the speaker of a poem and herself, and she had a term for it. Stephen Edgar, a poet who knew her in Hobart, records that she always insisted on the operatic I of her poems, "the distinction between the speaker of her verses and herself". Bonny Cassidy independently records the phrase and attributes it via the scholar Del Chessell, glossing it as Harwood's answer to critics who assumed every speaker was her.

**Why it matters more here than for most poets.** Father and Child looks like autobiography, and student writing on it slides into biography within two sentences. The operatic I is the poet's own instruction not to do that, and it is quotable.

## 3.2 The pseudonyms, and what they are evidence of

Harwood wrote under at least six other names: Walter Lehmann, Francis Geyer, Miriam Stone, Timothy Kline, W. W. Hagendoor, which is an anagram of her own name, and Alan Carvosso. Her own account, recorded in the Australian Dictionary of Biography entry written by her friend and co-editor Alison Hoddinott, is that she liked wearing masks.

**There is an edition fact here that is easy to miss.** The poems first published under the Lehmann, Geyer and Stone names were silently reclaimed under her own name in the Selected Poems of 1975. Kratzmann reinstated the pseudonymous bylines for the 2001 edition and restored Kline. So your own book prints names other than Gwen Harwood, and every poem in it is hers. None of your seven is pseudonymous.

### A claim to handle carefully

You will read that she could not publish under her own name. That is overstated. She published under it from 1944 and won Meanjin poetry prizes under it in 1959 and 1960, before the hoax.

There IS a documented instrumental motive, that publication was substantially harder under a woman's name. State it as one motive among several, alongside her own account of liking masks.

### 3.3 The Bulletin hoax of 1961, stated accurately

In the issue of 5 August 1961, The Bulletin published two sonnets on the Abelard and Eloisa theme under the name Walter Lehmann. The first spells out an acrostic reading SO LONG BULLETIN. The second spells out a four letter obscenity directed at all editors. The issue was recalled once the acrostics were noticed, and both Harwood and the invented Lehmann were barred from the magazine thereafter.

**The point, and it is not that she was mischievous.** Her documented position is that the poems were deliberately bad and that their acceptance demonstrated the editors' incompetence. The hoax is an argument about literary gatekeeping. Contemporaries found it unthinkable that a woman had written it, which is itself the evidence.

#### What the hoax does not establish

That it launched her career. One source reports a better acceptance rate afterwards; another reports a damaging aftermath, including a hostile published rebuttal. Do not characterise the long term effect.

Who the editor was: sources give both Donald Horne and Desmond O'Grady.

How it was discovered: one source says postmark matching, another an unspecified report after publication.

### 3.4 Music and philosophy, which are facts about the poems and not only about the poet

Harwood trained seriously in music, held a music teacher's diploma, studied with the Handel scholar R. Dalley-Scarlett and was an organist in Brisbane. The claim worth making in an essay is about STRUCTURE rather than sound: the held sestet of The Glass Jar and of both halves of Father and Child, the matched pair, and The Sharpness of Death in numbered movements.

Her philosophical interest is equally documented, and the volume you hold carries poems named for Wittgenstein and one on reading Gilbert Ryle. That matters for The Sharpness of Death, where philosophical argument is brought to bear on death and found insufficient.

## 4. The six concerns

Six propositions. Every one is deniable, which is the only reason it is here.

A concern is not a topic. A topic is a noun and cannot be argued with. A concern is a sentence somebody could refuse to accept, which means it can be defended. Each of the six comes with the evidence that supports it and the strongest objection to it.

### 4.1 These poems keep admitting that their memories were told rather than recalled

**The proposition.** Harwood's memory poems do not present recollection as reliable retrieval. They repeatedly mark the memory as second hand, as triggered by something other than intention, or as reconstructed, and they do this inside the poem rather than around it.

**The evidence, by anchor.** At Mornington concedes that the childhood scene at the sea was told to the speaker as much as remembered by her. The Violets is not triggered by an act of memory at all but by scent, at dusk, and the poem is careful that the trigger is sensory rather than willed. Father and Child places forty years in a white space between its two parts and lets the intervening life be either lived or dreamed.

**The strongest objection.** That every memory poem qualifies its memory, and that reading this as a deliberate concern is finding a pattern in a convention.

**How to answer it.** Point at where the qualification sits. In a conventional memory poem the doubt arrives at the end, as a closing gesture of humility. Here it arrives early and structurally: the concession in At Mornington precedes the scene it qualifies, and the gap in Father and Child is a formal decision taken before a word of Part II is written. A convention placed at the beginning and built into the form is not being used conventionally.

### The sentence to steal

These poems do not remember and then doubt. They begin in doubt and remember anyway, which is a harder and more honest position than either certainty or scepticism.

## 4.2 The form is held constant so that the reversal reads as a change in a life

**The proposition.** Father and Child is the strongest formal argument on the prescription. Both parts are seven sestets. The situation reverses completely and the container does not move, and that decision is what makes the reversal legible as biography rather than as artifice.

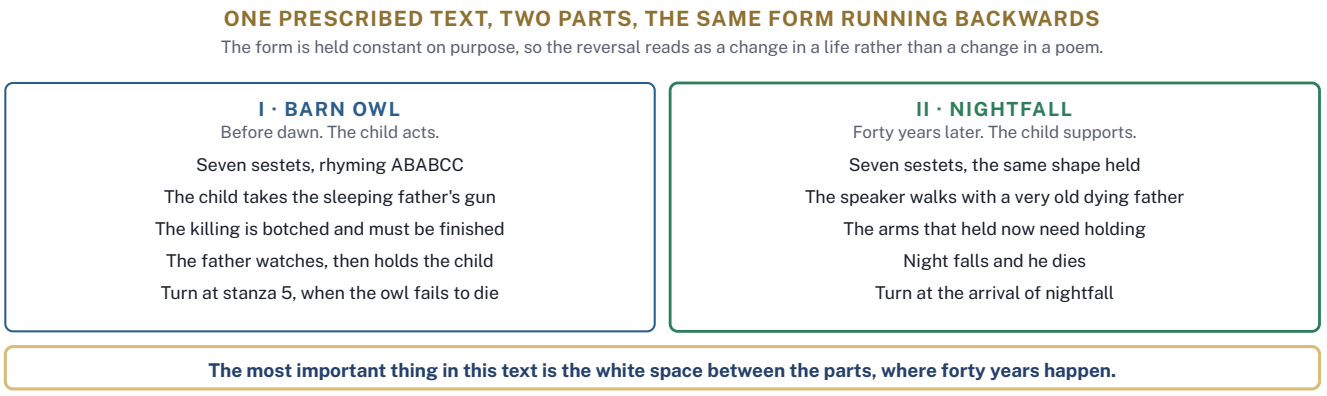



Figure 4 · One prescribed text, two parts, the same form running backwards.

**The evidence.** In Part I the child takes the sleeping father's gun, shoots a barn owl, fails to kill it, and is made to finish it while he watches. In Part II, forty years later, the speaker walks with a very old dying father in the late light and supports him. The arms that held the child now need holding. Part I moves toward dawn, Part II toward nightfall.

**The formal point, which is the one to make.** Seven sestets in each. Part I rhymes ABABCC, and the rhyme is not uniformly full, and a reader can ask whether the half rhymes fall where the poem is most uncomfortable. Holding the shape while inverting the content forces a reader to attribute the change to the life rather than to the poem.

**The strongest objection.** That a matched pair is a standard device, and that a poet writing a diptych would naturally match the halves.

**How to answer it.** Grant it, then ask what the matching costs. A poem free to change shape could have given the dying father a looser, slower form, and the reader would have felt the difference immediately. Refusing that is a decision to make the reader do the work of noticing, and it is why the white space between the parts carries more than either part.

## 4.3 The child in these poems is not innocent, and the poems refuse to make her so

**The proposition.** Harwood's children act. They are not primarily objects of adult sympathy, and the poems decline to protect them from responsibility for what they do.

**The evidence.** In Father and Child, I, the child takes a weapon from a sleeping adult and uses it on a living thing, and the poem does not soften the act. Bonny Cassidy's reading is exactly this: the child speaker is "both feisty kid-hero and bombastic villain", presented from perspectives that are innocent and knowing at once. In The Glass Jar the child is not passive either: the jar of captured light is a charm, deliberately made, and the poem's crisis is that the charm fails.

**The strongest objection.** That the child is broken by the owl's death and comforted by the father, which is the emotional centre of the poem and reads as innocence lost rather than guilt earned.

**How to answer it.** Both are true and the poem holds them together, which is Cassidy's actual point: the perspectives are simultaneous, not sequential. A response that chooses one of them has simplified a poem whose whole method is refusing to choose.

## 4.4 Consolation is offered repeatedly and declined every time

**The proposition.** The late poems on this prescription all reach a point where a conventional consolation is available, and all decline it. What they put in its place is smaller, more local and harder won.

**The evidence.** A Valediction places a copy of Donne at its centre and ends with the book left unopened: the consolation that literature is supposed to provide is declined, or found unnecessary. The Sharpness of Death brings philosophical argument to bear and finds that it does not help, and the failure is not an aside but the argument. At Mornington moves from a graveyard and a plot to mortality and settles for a shared day among pumpkins as sufficient, which is a very modest thing to settle for.

**The critical support.** Hoddinott and Kratzmann's account of the poems, quoted by Cassidy, is that Harwood's "writing embodies universal issues in vividly evoked particular settings". The particular setting is not decoration in these poems. It is what is offered in place of the universal consolation.

**The strongest objection.** That declining consolation IS a form of consolation, and a well established one in the elegiac tradition. The poems get credit for honesty and keep the emotional payoff.

**How to answer it.** This is the best objection to this concern and it should be conceded generously. Then test it on the hardest case. The Sharpness of Death does not close in acceptance. It closes in negotiation from strength, on terms: that death may have her once life has been fully had and not before. That is not the elegiac consolation of transcendence. It is a bargain, and a bargain is not a comfort.

## 4.5 The speaker is a role, and the poems are built so that you forget it

**The proposition.** The operatic I is not a disclaimer attached to the poems from outside. It is a working principle, and the poems are constructed to make a reader take the speaker for the poet, which is what makes the principle necessary.

**The evidence.** The first person is used throughout, the settings are specific and domestic, and the details are the kind a reader reads as remembered rather than invented. The poet who wrote them also published as Walter Lehmann, Francis Geyer, Miriam Stone and Timothy Kline. A body of work built on assumed voices is not accidentally producing a persuasive speaking voice.

**The critical support.** Edgar records that she always insisted on "the distinction between the speaker of her verses and herself". He also notes that even on complex material "she had the ability to make her poetry perspicuous and accessible", which is precisely the quality that makes the speaker feel like a person rather than a device.

**The strongest objection.** That a poet's own account of her practice is not binding on a reader, and that a poem which reads as autobiography can legitimately be read as autobiography.

**How to answer it.** That is a real position and worth granting. Then note what it costs: a biographical reading of Father and Child has to assert things about a real man that the poems do not establish and no source verifies. Section 9 lists three such claims that are in circulation. The operatic I is not just the poet's preference; it is the reading that does not require you to invent evidence.

## 4.6 Philosophy is brought in to fail, and the failure is the argument

**The proposition.** The Sharpness of Death is not a poem that thinks philosophically about death. It is a poem that tries to think philosophically about death, demonstrates that this does not work, and treats the demonstration as the finding.

**The evidence.** The poem is an address, not a meditation: death is personified and spoken to in the imperative, rudely, and told to leave the speaker alone. Its middle brings philosophers and the vocabulary of logical analysis to bear. Its close abandons that register entirely for the sensory and the personal. The movement is from argument to the body, and it is one directional.

**The context that supports it.** Harwood's philosophical interest is documented and the volume you hold carries poems named for Wittgenstein and one on reading Gilbert Ryle. This is not a poet reaching for philosophy she does not know. She knows it, uses it, and shows it failing.

**The strongest objection.** That a poem finding philosophy inadequate to death is close to a cliche, and that the interesting version would be a poem where it helps.

**How to answer it.** Agree that the conclusion is unoriginal and argue that the method is not. The poem does the philosophy properly before discarding it, which most poems making this move do not. And it does not replace argument with feeling: it

replaces argument with a negotiation, which is still a form of reasoning. What fails is not thought. It is a particular kind of thought.

# 5. How the poems are built

Four structural facts, each of which can be turned into a paragraph.

## 5.1 The turn, and where to find it in each poem

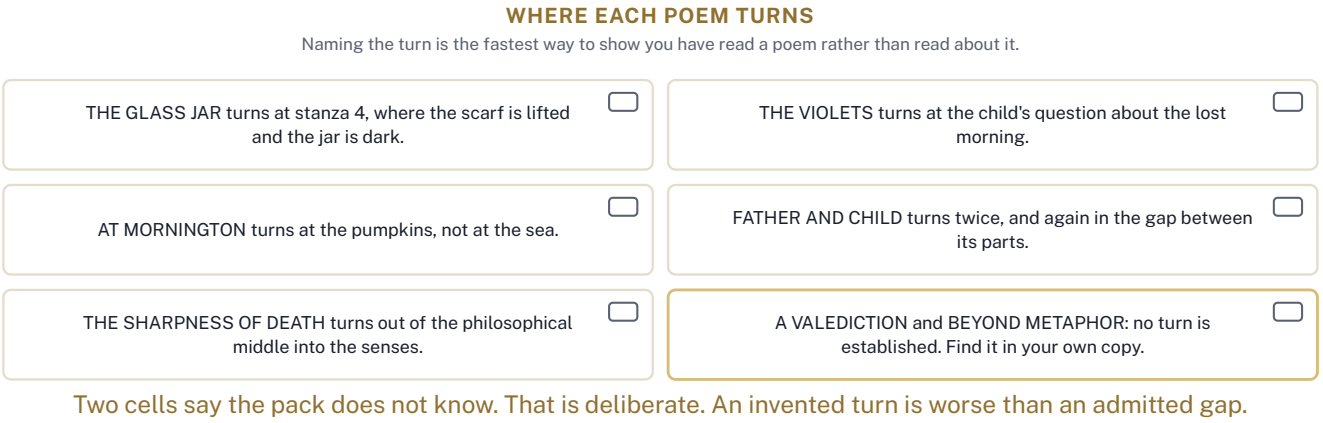



Figure 5 · Where each poem turns. Two cells say the pack does not know.

Naming the turn is the fastest way to show that you have read a poem rather than read about it. It is also the single most transferable observation across this prescription, because every one of these poems has one and they are in unexpected places.

**The one that surprises students.** At Mornington turns at the pumpkins, not at the sea. The sea material is the memory; the pumpkins on the shed roof, near the graveyard, are where the poem stops remembering and starts arguing.

## 5.2 The Glass Jar holds one shape for seven stanzas and breaks it once

Seven sestets, rhyming ABBACC all the way through. The turn is at stanza four, where the scarf is lifted and the jar is dark, and there is a lesser turn of setting at stanza seven when morning returns the light free and unasked.

**The detail worth having.** The rhyme in the final couplet is a half rhyme where the other six are full. A poem that has held a shape for six stanzas and lets it slip in the seventh has done something, and it does it at the point where the poem stops being about fear and starts being about what the morning costs.

## 5.3 Three poems in your book are called Nightfall and only one of them is yours

The 2001 contents page carries a Nightfall in the selection from Poems: Volume Two of 1968, another headed Nightfall with a dedication to the memory of Vera Cottew, and Part II of Father and Child. Only the last is prescribed.

### Navigate by the parent title, always

Go to Father and Child, then to subhead II. Never go looking for a poem called Nightfall.

In an essay, cite it as Father and Child, II Nightfall, never as Nightfall alone. A reader who follows the short citation lands in the wrong poem.

## 5.4 What this pack does not know about two of your seven

**A Valediction.** No stanza count, line count or rhyme scheme was verifiable to any source. What is established: a copy of John Donne's poems, described as an Oxford edition, sits at its centre as a physical object; the poem ranges across sacred and profane figures of love; and it ends with the book unopened. Whether Lou Andreas-Salome and Saint Therese are named in

the poem or are critics' glosses is NOT established, and neither is whether the parting is a death, a romantic separation or a departure.

**Beyond Metaphor.** Almost nothing is established. It exists, it is prescribed, it is in the edition, and it comes from The Lion's Bride of 1981, where the contents page places it between Death Has No Features of His Own and Andante. That adjacency is verified and is usable: it sits among death poems. Its title is a legitimate hook, because it asks whether figurative language can carry an experience at all, which is the same question The Sharpness of Death asks about philosophy.

### Why this page exists at all

Most study material on this poet will tell you the form of A Valediction and the argument of Beyond Metaphor with total confidence. This pack could not verify either to a source it trusts, so it says so. Your own copy of the book settles both in about four minutes. Count the stanzas, mark the turn, and write it in the margin. That is a better use of your time than reading somebody's confident guess.

## 5A. A note on the text, and why this pack quotes nothing

Read this once. It explains a restriction on the pack that is not a restriction on you.

Gwen Harwood died on 5 December 1995. Under the Australian rule the poems are in copyright until the end of 2065, and the 2001 edition is separately a copyright work: the selection, the arrangement and the editorial matter are Gregory Kratzmann's. Her letters and recorded remarks are protected too.

**So this pack quotes not one word of her.** Not a line, not a phrase, not a fragment. What it does instead is name form, sequence, the position of a turn, and images as ordinary nouns, and it anchors every observation precisely enough that you can put a finger on the place in your own copy.

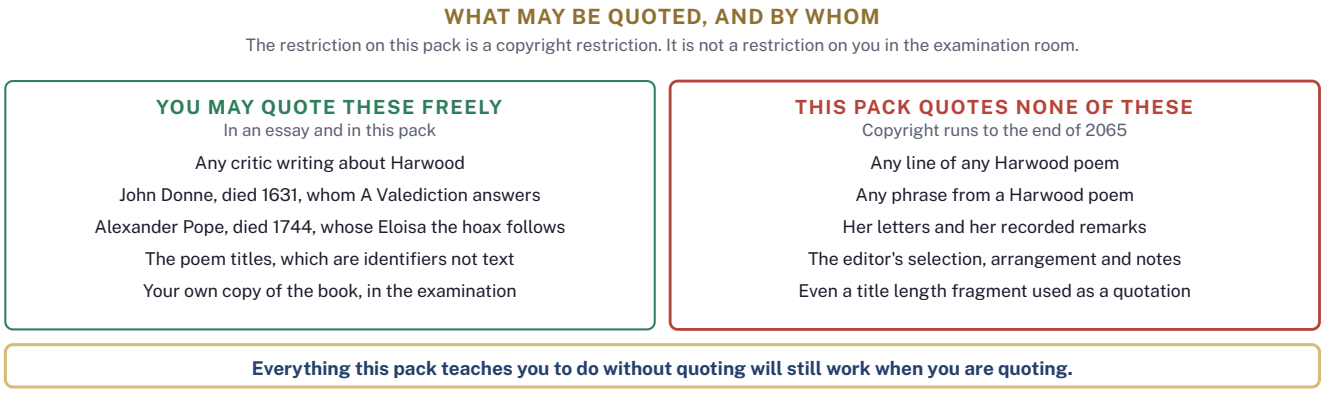



Figure 6 · What may be quoted, and by whom.

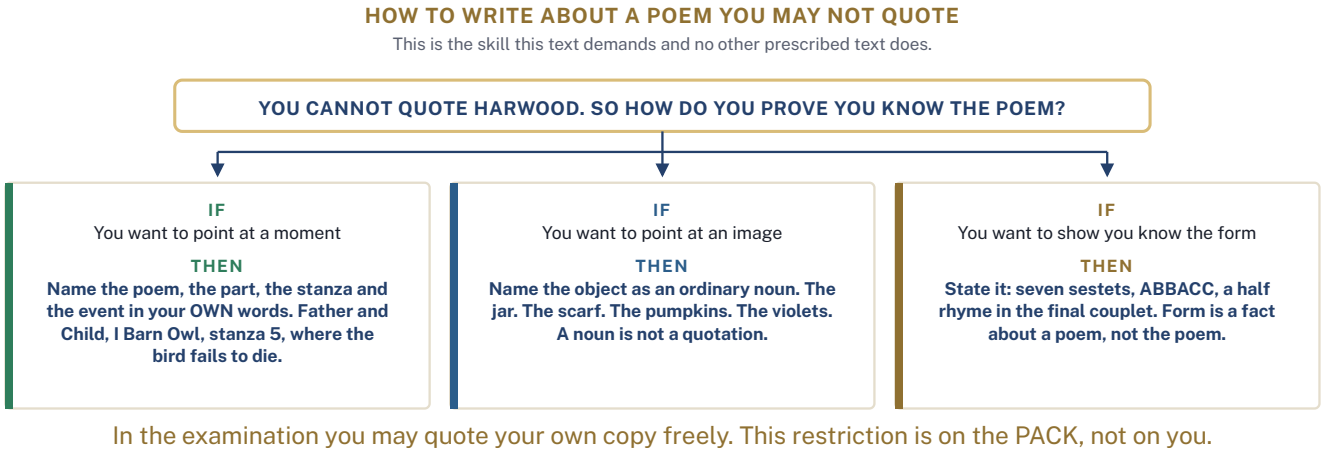



Figure 7 · How to write about a poem you may not quote.

## 5A.1 The anchor, and how to build your own

An anchor is the poem, the part, the stanza and the event, in your own words. Father and Child, I Barn Owl, stanza 5, where the bird fails to die. That locates a moment exactly without reproducing a syllable of it.

| DO NOT ANCHOR BY | BECAUSE | ANCHOR BY |
|---|---|---|
| **Page number** | There is one printing of this edition and page numbers do not survive a reprint or a different edition. | Poem, part, stanza. |
| **Line number** | No line numbering is in general circulation for these poems, so a line number is not checkable by anybody. | Stanza, then the event in that stanza. |
| **The title Nightfall** | Three poems in your book carry it and only one is prescribed. | Father and Child, then subhead II. |
| **A remembered phrase** | If you cannot check it you will misquote it, and a misquotation inside quotation marks is worse than a description. | A description of the moment in your own words. |

### The restriction is on this pack, not on you

In the examination you may quote your own copy of the book as freely as you like, and you should. But learn the anchor method anyway, because it forces you to know WHERE things happen rather than only what the words were, and that is the knowledge that survives exam pressure.

A student who can say what happens in stanza five will always be able to find the words. A student who has memorised the words often cannot say where they sit.

# 6. The anchor bank

This is not a quotation bank, and section 5A explains why. Learn it by argument.

Each entry names a poem, a locatable place in it, and what that place is evidence FOR. Attach each group to the concern it serves. An anchor you cannot attach to an argument is as useless as a quotation you cannot attach to one.

## 6.1 Memory as told rather than recalled

**Serves.** Concern 4.1. Learn this group as a unit.

| POEM | THE PLACE, LOCATABLE IN YOUR OWN COPY | WHAT IT IS EVIDENCE FOR |
|---|---|---|
| **At Mornington** | the concession about the sea memory | the memory is marked as second hand before it is narrated |
| **The Violets** | the scent at dusk that begins the poem | the trigger is sensory and involuntary, not an act of will |
| **The Violets** | the child waking at dusk and taking it for morning | the poem's central error of time, made by the child inside the memory |
| **At Mornington** | the child carried into the water and caught | the belief that she could walk on water, and its correction |
| **Father and Child** | the white space between I and II | forty years placed outside the poem, lived or dreamed |

## 6.2 Form held while the life reverses

**Serves.** Concern 4.2. Learn this group as a unit.

| POEM | THE PLACE, LOCATABLE IN YOUR OWN COPY | WHAT IT IS EVIDENCE FOR |
|---|---|---|
| **Father and Child, I** | seven sestets rhyming ABABCC | the container established |

| POEM | THE PLACE, LOCATABLE IN YOUR OWN COPY | WHAT IT IS EVIDENCE FOR |
|---|---|---|
| **Father and Child, II** | seven sestets, the same shape | the container held while everything in it inverts |
| **Father and Child, I** | daybreak | the direction of Part I |
| **Father and Child, II** | nightfall | the direction of Part II, and the reason for its subhead |
| **Father and Child, I and II** | the father's arms, holding then held | the reversal at its most physical |
| **The Glass Jar** | the half rhyme in the final couplet | a shape held for six stanzas and let go in the seventh |
| **The Violets** | free verse, with no regular stanza or rhyme | the contrast case: this poet is not a formalist, and form is a decision |

## 6.3 The child who acts

**Serves.** Concern 4.3. Learn this group as a unit.

| POEM | THE PLACE, LOCATABLE IN YOUR OWN COPY | WHAT IT IS EVIDENCE FOR |
|---|---|---|
| **Father and Child, I** | the taking of the sleeping father's gun | the child initiates, and takes a weapon from an adult |
| **Father and Child, I** | stanza 5, where the owl fails to die | the turn, and the point at which the act cannot be undone |
| **Father and Child, I** | the father making the child finish it | the adult response is instruction, not rescue |
| **The Glass Jar** | the jar of captured sunlight, deliberately made | the child as maker of a charm rather than a passive sufferer |
| **The Glass Jar** | stanza 4, the scarf lifted and the jar dark | the charm fails, and the poem turns |
| **The Violets** | the child's grief for the lost day | the child's feeling is absolute and unreasonable, and the poem does not soften it |

## 6.4 Consolation declined

**Serves.** Concern 4.4. Learn this group as a unit.

| POEM | THE PLACE, LOCATABLE IN YOUR OWN COPY | WHAT IT IS EVIDENCE FOR |
|---|---|---|
| **A Valediction** | the copy of Donne at the centre of the poem | literature offered as consolation, as a physical object |
| **A Valediction** | the book left unopened at the close | the offer declined, or found unnecessary |
| **The Sharpness of Death** | the philosophical middle | argument brought to bear on death |
| **The Sharpness of Death** | the sensory close | what is put in argument's place |
| **At Mornington** | the pumpkins grown on the shed roof | the turn, and the modest particular the poem settles for |
| **At Mornington** | the graveyard and the plot | mortality entering a poem about friendship |

## 6.5 The speaker as a role

**Serves.** Concern 4.5. Learn this group as a unit.

| POEM | THE PLACE, LOCATABLE IN YOUR OWN COPY | WHAT IT IS EVIDENCE FOR |
|---|---|---|
| **Father and Child** | the first person throughout, in a domestic and specific setting | the construction that invites a biographical reading |
| **The Glass Jar** | the dedication to Vivian Smith | a real named person at the head of a poem, which is not the same as a real speaker inside it |
| **The Violets** | the parents as lamplit figures in a remembered interior | figures rendered so that a reader supplies a family |

## 6.6 Philosophy brought in to fail

**Serves.** Concern 4.6. Learn this group as a unit.

| POEM | THE PLACE, LOCATABLE IN YOUR OWN COPY | WHAT IT IS EVIDENCE FOR |
|---|---|---|
| **The Sharpness of Death** | death personified and addressed in the imperative | an argument with an interlocutor, not a meditation |
| **The Sharpness of Death** | the vocabulary of logic, used and found wanting | the failure that is the finding |
| **The Sharpness of Death** | the numbered sections, the last returning to the first | the cyclical structure that refuses progress |
| **The Sharpness of Death** | the close, in teeth and biting | the body having the last word over the argument |
| **Beyond Metaphor** | its position among the death poems of 1981 | the same question asked of figurative language |

### How to use this bank

Open your own copy beside it. For every row, find the place and mark it in the margin with the concern number.

Then cover the third column and say what each place is evidence for. That is the direction an examination asks for, and it is the one that is easy to skip.

Where a row names a stanza, check the stanza number against your book. Where it does not, the pack could not verify one.

# 7. The plan bank

Six plans. Three poems each, never seven.

Forty minutes will not carry seven poems. Three is the number that lets each one do real work, and the choice of three is made before you read the question. Each plan names the three it uses and the bank group that feeds it.

#### PLAN 1 · ON MEMORY

**Proposition.** These poems begin in doubt about their own memories and remember anyway, which is harder than either certainty or scepticism.

- Paragraph 1. The Violets: the involuntary trigger, and the child's error of time
- Paragraph 2. At Mornington: the concession placed before the scene it qualifies
- Paragraph 3. Father and Child: forty years placed outside the poem
- Paragraph 4. What the three together say about what a memory poem can honestly claim

**Bank.** Group 6.1.

**Poems.** The Violets, At Mornington, Father and Child.

#### PLAN 2 · ON FORM

**Proposition.** Harwood holds a form constant so that a change reads as a change in a life rather than a change in a poem.

- Paragraph 1. Father and Child: seven sestets each side, and the inversion between them
- Paragraph 2. The Glass Jar: six stanzas of held rhyme and a seventh that slips
- Paragraph 3. The Violets: free verse, and why this poet is not a formalist
- Paragraph 4. What the variety across the three says about form as a decision rather than a habit

**Bank.** Group 6.2.

**Poems.** Father and Child, The Glass Jar, The Violets.

#### PLAN 3 · ON CHILDHOOD

**Proposition.** The child in these poems acts, and the poems decline to protect her from what she does.

- Paragraph 1. Father and Child I: the taking of the gun and the botched killing
- Paragraph 2. The Glass Jar: the child as maker of a charm that fails
- Paragraph 3. The Violets: the child's grief for the lost day, absolute and unreasonable
- Paragraph 4. Why refusing to sentimentalise the child is what makes the adult poems land

**Bank.** Group 6.3.

**Poems.** Father and Child, The Glass Jar, The Violets.

#### PLAN 4 · ON DEATH AND CONSOLATION

**Proposition.** The late poems reach the point where consolation is available and decline it every time.

- Paragraph 1. A Valediction: the book at the centre, and unopened at the close
- Paragraph 2. The Sharpness of Death: argument brought in and discarded
- Paragraph 3. At Mornington: mortality met among pumpkins, and a shared day as enough
- Paragraph 4. What is put in consolation's place, and whether it is sufficient

**Bank.** Group 6.4, with 6.6.

**Poems.** A Valediction, The Sharpness of Death, At Mornington.

#### PLAN 5 · ON THE SPEAKING VOICE

**Proposition.** The operatic I is a working principle rather than a disclaimer, and these poems are built to make a reader forget it.

- Paragraph 1. Father and Child: the construction that invites biography
- Paragraph 2. The Glass Jar: a real dedicatee outside the poem, an invented child inside it
- Paragraph 3. The Violets: parents rendered so that a reader supplies a family
- Paragraph 4. What a biographical reading has to invent, and why that is the argument against it

**Bank.** Group 6.5.

**Poems.** Father and Child, The Glass Jar, The Violets.

#### PLAN 6 · ON CONSTRUCTION, FOR A QUESTION ABOUT HOW THE TEXT IS MADE

**Proposition.** This prescription is weighted toward the end of a life, and reading it in order changes what the early poems look like.

- Paragraph 1. The Glass Jar, 1963: a child's night, and a charm against the dark
- Paragraph 2. Father and Child, 1975: the same dark, forty years wide
- Paragraph 3. The Sharpness of Death, 1981: the dark addressed directly and argued with
- Paragraph 4. What the sequence does that no single poem does

**Bank.** Groups 6.1 and 6.6.

**Poems.** The Glass Jar, Father and Child, The Sharpness of Death.

# 7A. Five questions to ask of any poem on this prescription

Use these on a poem you have not prepared. They work because this poet is consistent.

| ASK THIS | BECAUSE IN THESE POEMS |
|---|---|
| **Where does it turn, and is the turn where you expected?** | Every poem here has one, and several put it somewhere counter-intuitive. At Mornington turns at the pumpkins. |
| **Is the memory presented as reliable?** | Usually not, and the qualification usually arrives early rather than as a closing gesture. |
| **What shape is it holding, and does it let go?** | Form is a decision in this poet, not a habit. She writes strict sestets and she writes free verse. |
| **Who is speaking, and what would it cost to assume it is Harwood?** | The operatic I. A biographical reading nearly always has to invent something. |
| **What consolation is on offer, and is it taken?** | It is usually on offer and usually declined, and what replaces it is smaller than you expect. |

# 8. Critical perspectives

Three critics this pack can quote, and an honest account of how thin that is.

Others' readings help where they sharpen a claim you already had. The test is whether your paragraph changes if the critic is removed. If it does not, take the critic out.

## 8.1 What can be quoted, with citations

| CRITIC AND SOURCE | THE POSITION | THE PHRASE |
|---|---|---|
| **Bonny Cassidy, Reading Australia, the Copyright Agency's peer reviewed teaching resource** | The child of Barn Owl is presented from innocent and knowing perspectives at the same time, not in sequence. | "In this poem, the child speaker is both feisty kid-hero and bombastic villain" |
| **Stephen Edgar, In Memory of Gwen Harwood, Island, 1996** | Harwood insisted on the operatic I, and her poems stay accessible even on difficult material. | "the distinction between the speaker of her verses and herself" |
| **Alison Hoddinott, as quoted by Edgar** | An estimate of her standing at the end of her life, and note that the hedge is Hoddinott's own. | "arguably the finest and most highly acclaimed poet writing in Australia" |
| **Hoddinott and Kratzmann, the editors of the Collected Poems, as quoted by Cassidy** | The poems put general questions into particular settings, which is why the domestic detail is not decoration. | "writing embodies universal issues in vividly evoked particular settings" |

## 8.2 Where this pack ran out, said plainly

Note the wording. What was thin is what this pack could verify to its own standard, which is not the same as what has been published. On this poet the ratio of unattributable study site prose to checkable scholarship is unusually bad, which is exactly why the list above is short.

**Named, real, and not quotable here.** Stephanie Trigg's Gwen Harwood of 1994 is the standard single author study and Ann-Marie Priest's My Tongue Is My Own of 2022 is the standard biography. No sentence from either could be checked against a primary source when this pack was written. Both are listed as further reading and both are where you should go if you have library access.

**Attributable as positions, not as words.** Peter Porter judged Harwood the outstanding Australian poet of the twentieth century, and the judgement is widely reported, but no two sources agree on his wording and no primary was located. Say what he argued. Do not put him in quotation marks. Alison Hoddinott's reading of the child's sense of time in The Violets, and Elizabeth Lawson's on the marginal cultural position of women in Harwood, are in the same position.

## 8.3 One attribution to avoid entirely

### The Jung claim

A connection to Carl Jung on universal father figures circulates in teaching material about Father and Child. It has no source, no wording, and no evidence that Harwood used Jung.

There is no reason to reach for it. The poem's own formal argument, at concern 4.2, is stronger and is checkable.

# 9. Common misreadings

Twelve readings that are common, plausible, and wrong. The most valuable section here.

None of these is stupid. Every one is in circulation, several are in published study material, and four of them come from students preparing poems that are not on the prescription.

**THE MISREADING REGISTER, AS A CHECK CARD**

Twelve readings in circulation. Tick one only when you can say what is true instead.

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ Harwood is a formalist | ☐ The Glass Jar has eight stanzas | ☐ Nightfall is a poem |
| ☐ The father was blind | ☐ The events really happened | ☐ She could not publish as herself |
| ☐ The hoax launched her career | ☐ She was a Hobart recluse | ☐ The Violets is set in Tasmania |
| ☐ Barn Owl is in iambic tetrameter | ☐ Mother Who Gave Me Life is prescribed | ☐ The jar scene is definitely oedipal |

Four of these come from students preparing poems that are not on the prescription.

Figure 8 · The register as a check card.

#### MISREADING 1 · MOTHER WHO GAVE ME LIFE OR SUBURBAN SONNET IS ONE OF YOUR POEMS

### Correct position

Neither is prescribed. Both are in your book, both are taught constantly, and both belong to a different prescription.

In the Park and Prize-Giving are in the same position.

The examination will not warn you, because the question names no poem.

**Write this instead.** Check your seven against the prescription in week one and write them inside the front cover. This is the only misreading on this list that can cost you the whole response.

#### MISREADING 2 · HARWOOD IS A FORMALIST

### Correct position

The Violets is free verse, with no regular stanza and no rhyme.

The Glass Jar and both halves of Father and Child are strict sestets. A Valediction's form is not established at all.

**Write this instead.** Form in Harwood is a decision taken poem by poem, not a habit. The interesting question is why the strict form is used where it is used, which is concern 4.2.

### MISREADING 3 · THE GLASS JAR HAS EIGHT STANZAS

#### Correct position

It has seven sestets. The eighth comes from counting the dedication line as a stanza.

A prominent teaching site prints the eight stanza claim together with a rhyme scheme of ABBACC for stanzas one to seven and ABACBC for the last. Both halves of that are wrong.

What IS true is that the final couplet's rhyme is a half rhyme where the other six are full.

**Write this instead.** Seven sestets, ABBACC throughout, with the last couplet's rhyme slipping. That detail is worth more than the miscount is worth avoiding.

### MISREADING 4 · YOU CAN FIND PART II BY LOOKING FOR A POEM CALLED NIGHTFALL

#### Correct position

Three poems in your book carry that title and only one of them is prescribed.

The other two are in the selection from Poems: Volume Two of 1968 and a Nightfall dedicated to the memory of Vera Cottew.

**Write this instead.** Navigate by Father and Child, then subhead II, always. Cite it the same way, so a reader who follows your citation lands in the right poem.

### MISREADING 5 · THE FATHER IN FATHER AND CHILD WAS BLIND, AND THE EVENTS REALLY HAPPENED

#### Correct position

Neither is established by any source this pack could verify. The blindness claim circulates widely in student material.

Harwood's own position was the operatic I: Edgar records her insisting on "the distinction between the speaker of her verses and herself".

**Write this instead.** Treat the speaker as a construction. A biographical reading of this poem has to assert things about a real man that no source supports, and that is the argument against it rather than a detail of it.

### MISREADING 6 · SHE COULD NOT PUBLISH UNDER HER OWN NAME, SO SHE USED PSEUDONYMS

#### Correct position

She published under her own name from 1944 and won Meanjin poetry prizes under it in 1959 and 1960, before the hoax.

There IS a documented instrumental motive: publication was substantially harder under a woman's name. And her own account, via Hoddinott, is that she liked wearing masks.

**Write this instead.** Harder, not impossible, and not the only reason. The pseudonyms belong with the operatic I: a body of work built on assumed voices, of which the bylines are the outermost layer.

### MISREADING 7 · THE BULLETIN HOAX LAUNCHED HER CAREER

#### Correct position

This is unverified in both directions. One source reports a better acceptance rate afterwards. Another reports a damaging aftermath including a hostile published rebuttal.

What IS established is that the issue was recalled and that both she and the invented Lehmann were barred from the magazine.

**Write this instead.** Describe what the hoax argued rather than what it achieved. Its documented point is that the acceptance of two deliberately bad poems demonstrated the editors' incompetence.

### MISREADING 8 · HARWOOD WAS A HOBART RECLUSE

---

#### Correct position

She corresponded voluminously, wrote around thirteen opera libretti with Australian composers, and was widely honoured, including an AO in 1989 and honorary doctorates from three universities.

**Write this instead.** The isolation in the poems is a subject, not a biography. Treat the domestic settings as chosen material rather than as a description of a small life.

### MISREADING 9 · THE VIOLETS IS SET IN TASMANIA

---

#### Correct position

It is a Brisbane childhood. Harwood was born in Taringa in 1920 and moved to Tasmania in 1945, aged twenty five.

The Hobart default catches students who have learned the biography before the poems.

**Write this instead.** Name the Brisbane setting if you need a setting at all, and notice that the poem's method is sensory rather than topographical: it is triggered by scent, not by a place.

### MISREADING 10 · BARN OWL IS IN IAMBIC TETRAMETER

---

#### Correct position

No metre is established for any poem on this prescription. One source calls Part II iambic trimeter on half rhymes, and it stands alone.

Naming a metre you cannot verify is the easiest kind of error to catch and the least necessary to make.

**Write this instead.** Short lined, with no metre named. Then say something about the rhyme, which IS established: ABABCC in Part I, and not uniformly full.

### MISREADING 11 · THE GLASS JAR'S STANZAS FIVE AND SIX ARE DEFINITELY AN OEDIPAL SCENE

---

#### Correct position

The reading dominates online and it is a reading, not a fact. The language there is oblique. What the poem gives is a child seeking comfort and encountering something it cannot interpret.

**Write this instead.** Present it as the standard interpretation and as arguable. The safer and often stronger move is to write about what the child cannot interpret, which is what the poem actually stages.

### MISREADING 12 · THE SHARPNESS OF DEATH AND BEYOND METAPHOR ARE FROM BONE SCAN

---

#### Correct position

Both are from The Lion's Bride of 1981. An independent contents listing of Bone Scan of 1988 confirms neither is in it.

The error matters because it puts them in the wrong decade of a prescription whose shape is chronological.

**Write this instead.** The Lion's Bride, 1981, along with A Valediction. Those three late texts are the death poems, and the fact that they arrive together is worth a sentence.

## 10. Six things almost nobody writes about

Each is established, is arguable, and is not the first thing a reader reaches for.

| THE OBSERVATION | WHY IT IS WORTH A PARAGRAPH |
|---|---|
| **Your prescription is chronological and back weighted.** | One text from 1963, three from the 1969 to 1974 group, three from 1981, and all three of the late ones are death poems. The set has a shape and most responses treat it as a bag. |
| **The Glass Jar carries a dedication to a real living poet.** | Vivian Smith, an Australian poet and Hobart contemporary. A real name outside the poem and an invented child inside it, in one text, is the operatic I made visible. |
| **Father and Child is one prescribed text, not two poems.** | Which means the white space between the parts is inside the text you were set. The forty years are prescribed material. |
| **The poet was a professional musician before she was a published poet.** | A music teacher's diploma, study with a Handel scholar, and work as a church organist. The structural argument, not the sound one, is the one that pays. |
| **Beyond Metaphor sits between two other death poems in its own collection.** | Verified from the contents page. Its neighbours are Death Has No Features of His Own and Andante, which is a fact about placement you can use where you have nothing else. |
| **Your book prints names other than Gwen Harwood over poems that are hers.** | Kratzmann reinstated the pseudonymous bylines for the 2001 edition. It is easy to read past, and it is the pseudonym argument made concrete in the object you are holding. |

## 11. The vocabulary this text needs

**SIX WORDS THIS TEXT NEEDS**

Cut these out. The third one will save you from the commonest error on this poet.

**SESTET**
- A six line stanza
- The Glass Jar is seven of them
- Both halves of Father and Child are seven
- Naming it is not quoting

**HALF RHYME**
- A rhyme that does not quite close
- Falls where the moral ground is soft
- The Glass Jar's last couplet is one

**THE OPERATIC I**
- Harwood's own term, via Del Chessell
- The speaker is a role, not the poet
- The single best defence against the biographical fallacy

**ANCHOR**
- Poem, part, stanza, event
- This pack's substitute for quotation
- Never a page number: one printing only
- Never a line number: none in circulation

**ACROSTIC**
- First letters spelling a message
- The 1961 Bulletin hoax used two
- An argument about gatekeeping, not a prank

**ELEGY**
- A poem of mourning
- Three of your seven are death poems
- None of them consoles in the usual way

Figure 9 · Six words, as cut out cards.

| WORD | WHAT IT MEANS HERE | WHERE IT BITES |
|---|---|---|
| **Sestet** | A six line stanza. The Glass Jar is seven of them and each half of Father and Child is seven. | Naming the form is not quoting the poem |
| **Half rhyme** | A rhyme that does not quite close. In these poems it falls where the moral ground is softest. | The Glass Jar's final couplet |
| **The operatic I** | Harwood's own term for the speaker as a role rather than herself. | The single best defence against a biographical reading |
| **Anchor** | Poem, part, stanza, event. This pack's substitute for quotation. | Never a page number, never a line number |
| **Acrostic** | First letters spelling a message down a poem. The 1961 hoax used two. | An argument about gatekeeping, not a prank |
| **Elegy** | A poem of mourning. Three of your seven are death poems and none consoles conventionally. | Concern 4.4 |

# 11A. Triage

If you have left it late, read this bottom up.

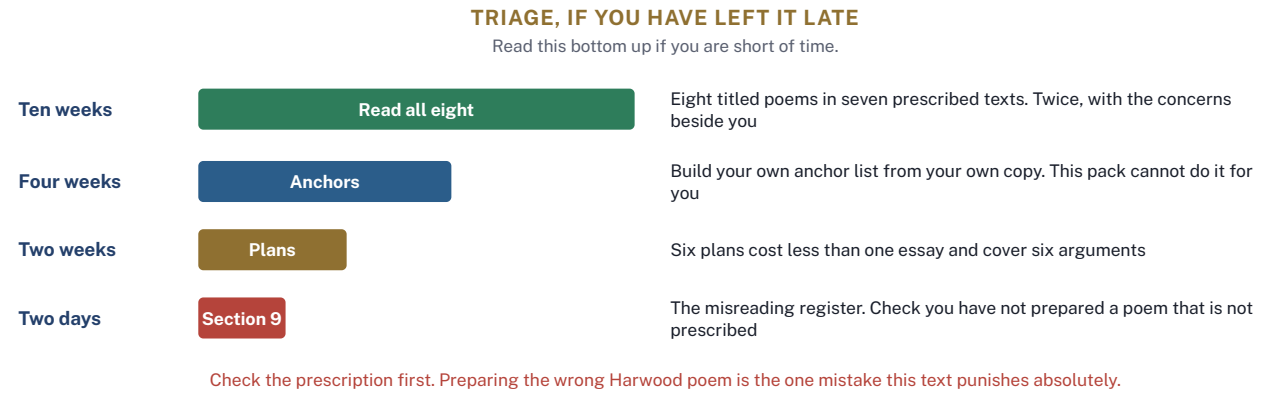



Figure 10 · Triage at ten weeks, four weeks, two weeks and two days.

The one thing to do first, whatever your timeframe, is check the prescription against your own book. Every other mistake on this text is recoverable inside the examination. Preparing a poem that is not prescribed is not.

# 12. The twelve minute weekly drill

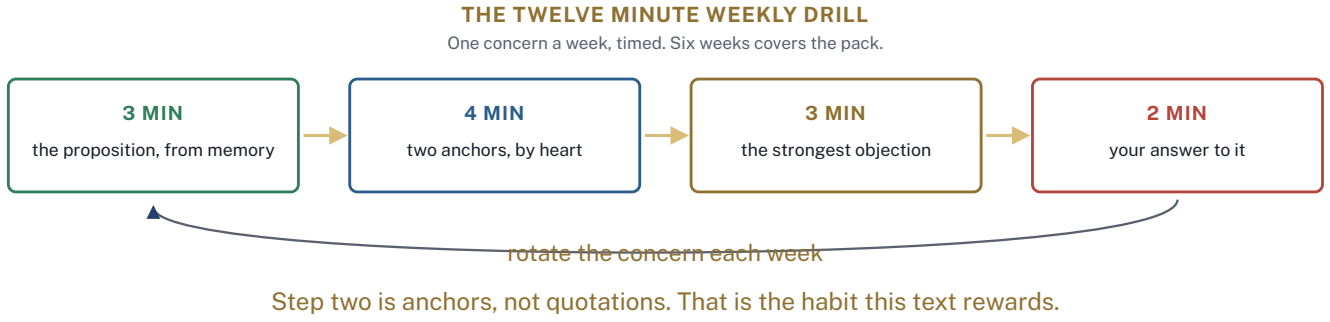



Figure 11 · The drill. Step two is anchors, not quotations.

Set a timer. Pick one of the six concerns. Three minutes to write its proposition from memory. Four minutes to add two anchors from the right group, without the book. Three minutes to write the strongest objection to your own proposition. Two minutes to answer it in one sentence.

Step two is the one that matters for this poet. An anchor recalled without the book means you know where a thing happens, and that knowledge is what lets you find the words when the book is in front of you.

| WEEK | CONCERN | PROPOSITION, FROM MEMORY | OBJECTION | DATE |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | | | | |
| 2 | | | | |
| 3 | | | | |
| 4 | | | | |
| 5 | | | | |
| 6 | | | | |

# 13. Reference cards

### CARDS TO COPY

Six cards. The second one is the one to carry.

**THE SEVEN, BY BOOK**

- 1963: The Glass Jar
- 1975: The Violets, At Mornington, Father and Child I and II
- 1981: A Valediction, Beyond Metaphor, The Sharpness of Death

**NOT YOURS**

- Mother Who Gave Me Life
- Suburban Sonnet
- In the Park
- Prize-Giving
- All in your book. None prescribed.

**THE ANCHOR**

- Poem. Part. Stanza. Event.
- Father and Child, I, stanza 5
- Never by the title Nightfall alone
- Three poems in the book carry it

**SIX CONCERNS**

- Memory is told, not recalled
- The form holds while the life reverses
- Consolation is offered and declined
- The speaker is a role
- Philosophy fails on purpose
- The child is not innocent

**SAY THIS, NOT THAT**

- Not formalist, but formally various
- Not autobiography, but the operatic I
- Not role reversal, but one form reversed
- Not consolation, but negotiation

**IN THE ROOM**

- The stem names no poem and no poet
- Choose your poems before you read it
- Three poems, not seven, in forty minutes
- Quote your own copy freely

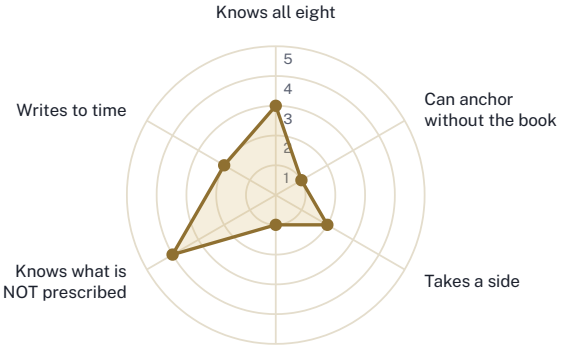
Figure 12 · Cards to copy. Six cards. The second one is the one to carry.

## Your shape on this text

### YOUR SHAPE ON THIS TEXT

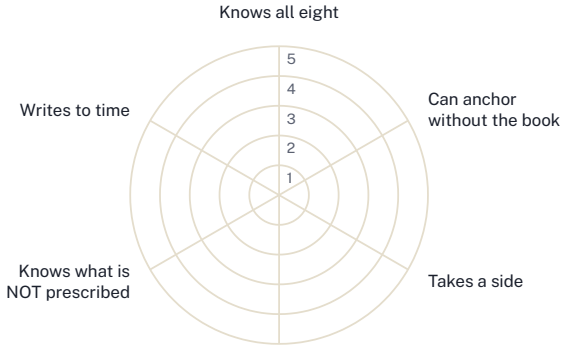
Plot yourself now, and again in a month. Date both.

**A WORKED EXAMPLE**




A common shape: knows the poems, cannot yet point at them without the book open.

**NOW PLOT YOUR OWN**




Yours. Score each 0 to 5 and write the date beside it.

Figure 13 · Plot yourself now and again in a month. Date both.

## Next steps

Document B of this pack is the question bank, written in the Paper 1 Section II format, where no stem names a poet or a poem because the real question does not either. Document C is three responses to one question, taken apart line by line, with a self marking scorecard.

For essay architecture, the unseen method and exam timing, go back to How to Excel (English Standard) or the Foundations Pack (English Advanced). This pack has deliberately not repeated any of it.

> Seven texts, three poems in the room. Choose your three before you read the question, not after.

## Coverage and limits

This document covers Gwen Harwood's seven prescribed texts for Texts and human experiences, examined in Paper 1 Section II. The focus area content is identical in the English Standard and English Advanced 11-12 Syllabuses (2024) and the question is common to both, so this pack serves both courses. NOT ONE WORD OF HARWOOD IS QUOTED ANYWHERE IN IT. Her poems are in copyright until the end of 2065 and the 2001 edition is separately a copyright work. The only quoted wording is from attributed critics.

Every critical quotation is fifteen words or fewer and is attributed with its source. Where the research behind this pack could not verify something, sections 5.4 and 8.2 say so rather than filling the gap. No claim is made anywhere about how responses are marked. The first HSC under these syllabuses is 2027 and no released marking material exists.

# About this resource

MA99 EDUCATION

### Scope

NSW English Standard and English Advanced, Year 12. Written to the NSW English Standard and English Advanced 11-12 Syllabuses 2024, Gwen Harwood, for students sitting the HSC in 2027 and later years. Texts and human experiences is common to both courses, so this resource serves students in either. Document A, Document B and Document C are the three files of this set: the Text Pack, the Practice Questions and the Graduated Exemplars. References to them in this resource point to those files.

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MA99 EDUCATION

# Gwen Harwood: Practice Questions

NSW ENGLISH STANDARD AND ENGLISH ADVANCED 11-12 SYLLABUSES 2024 FOR HSC 2027 AND LATER

## Instructions

Every question here was written for this document. The first HSC under these syllabuses is 2027, so no past paper exists for this course and nothing here is adapted from one.

**Every stem is deliberately general, and that is not laziness.** Paper 1 Section II is ONE question, common to English Standard and English Advanced, answered by every candidate in the state on their own prescribed text. It cannot name Harwood, cannot name a poem, and cannot name a speaker. These stems do not either.

**What that means for you.** The work of deciding which poems to write about is done before the examination, not during it. Sections 2 to 5 are the questions. Section 6 is two timed attempts. Section 7 is the method for choosing under time.

## 1. How these questions work

Read this page once. It explains the paper, the clock and the tiers.

Paper 1 carries forty marks in ninety minutes plus ten minutes reading time, in two sections of twenty marks. Section I is short answer on stimulus and/or unseen texts. Section II is one compulsory extended response on your prescribed text, and NESA states that the question is common to English Standard and English Advanced.

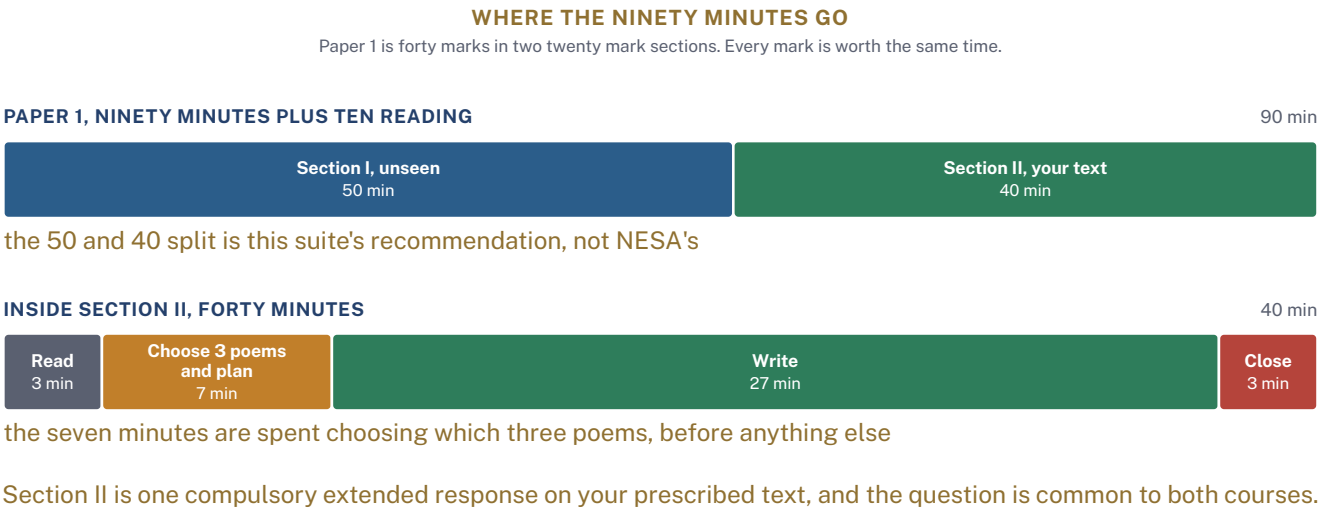



Figure 1 · Where the ninety minutes go.

**The seven minutes that decide the response.** Inside Section II, after the three minute read, spend seven minutes choosing which three poems you will use and writing the thesis. Not reading. Choosing. A student who starts writing at minute three with all seven poems in play produces seven summaries.

## 1.1 What a common question can and cannot say

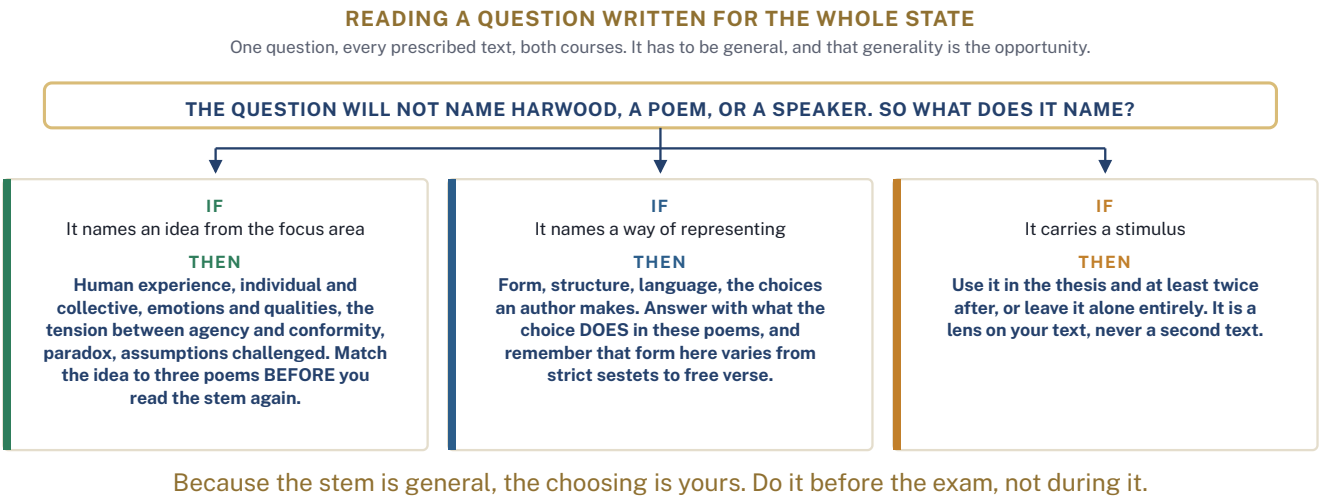



Figure 2 · Reading a question written for the whole state.

Because one stem must work for a novel, a play, a film, a nonfiction book and a set of poems, it will point at the focus area rather than at a text. The vocabulary it can draw on is the vocabulary of the focus area itself: human experience, individual and collective, emotions and qualities, the tension between agency and conformity, paradox, and assumptions challenged.

### The advantage this gives you, and it is easy to waste

A general stem cannot ambush you with a poem you did not prepare. It can only ask you to bring what you have to an idea.

So the preparation that pays is not covering all seven prescribed texts evenly. It is having three or four combinations ready, each built around one of the six concerns, any of which can be pointed at whatever idea the stem names.

Plan 1 to Plan 6 in Document A are exactly those combinations.

## 1.2 The four tiers

**FOUNDATION** One idea, clearly stated, with the poems attached to it. Answer these first and answer them fully.

**BUILDING** Two ideas held together, or one idea tested against an objection. This is where most of the work sits.

**STRETCH** A question that resists its own premise, or asks for a judgement. Attempt these once the first two tiers are secure.

**EXAM-STYLE** Written exactly as a Paper 1 Section II question would be written: one sentence, general, twenty marks, forty minutes.

# 2. Foundation

Six questions. One idea each. Every stem is text neutral.

**FOUNDATION** One idea, clearly stated, with the poems attached to it.

### Question 1

Explain how your prescribed text represents individual human experiences. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Concern 4.1 or 4.3. Three poems, not seven. The Violets and Father and Child I give you a child's experience rendered without sentiment, and The Glass Jar gives you a child who acts.

### Question 2

Analyse how your prescribed text represents the relationship between a parent and a child. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Father and Child is the obvious spine and it is a trap if it is the only text used, because it will produce a summary. Pair it with The Glass Jar, where the parents fail to comfort, and The Violets, where they are remembered rather than present.

### Question 3

Explain how form and structure shape meaning in your prescribed text. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Concern 4.2. The strongest available answer on this prescription, because the form varies so widely: strict sestets, free verse, and numbered sections. Say why each poem is in the shape it is in.

### Question 4

Analyse how your prescribed text represents memory. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Concern 4.1. The move that separates a good response from an adequate one is noticing that the poems qualify their memories early rather than at the end.

### Question 5

Explain how your prescribed text represents the passing of time. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Father and Child holds forty years in a white space. At Mornington moves between a childhood and a present. The Glass Jar covers one night.

### Question 6

Analyse the ways your prescribed text uses images drawn from the natural world. (20 marks)

**On this text.** The owl, the violets, blossom, the sea, pumpkins. Name them as objects and say what each is doing, and do not let the paragraph become a list of nouns.

### What a foundation question still requires

A thesis. Explain how your prescribed text represents memory is still answered with a proposition, not a survey.

Three poems, each doing different work. Not seven texts each getting a sentence.

An anchor precise enough that a reader could find the place in the book, and an effect named with a verb.

## 3. Building

Eight questions. Two ideas held together, or one idea against an objection.

**BUILDING** Two ideas held together, or one idea tested against an objection.

### Question 7

Analyse how your prescribed text represents the tension between agency and conformity in human experience. (20 marks)

**On this text.** This wording is the focus area's own. Concern 4.3: the child who takes the gun has agency and is held to it.

### Question 8

To what extent does your prescribed text present human experience as something that can be reliably remembered? (20 marks)

**On this text.** Concern 4.1, and the strongest single question on this list for this text. A question of degree: neither yes nor no.

### Question 9

Analyse how your prescribed text uses structure to shape a reader's response to change over time. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Concern 4.2. Father and Child is the case. The argument is that the form is held constant so the change reads as biography.

### Question 10

Explain how your prescribed text represents the paradoxes of motivation and behaviour. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Also focus area wording. The child in Barn Owl is the paradox: Cassidy reads the speaker as innocent and knowing at once, not in sequence.

### Question 11

Analyse how your prescribed text invites a reader to reconsider an assumption. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Concern 4.5. The assumption most readers bring to these poems is that the speaker is the poet, and the poems are built to encourage it.

### Question 12

To what extent does your prescribed text offer consolation for what it represents? (20 marks)

**On this text.** Concern 4.4. A Valediction, The Sharpness of Death and At Mornington. The answer is neither yes nor no: consolation is offered and declined, and something smaller is put in its place.

### Question 13

Analyse how your prescribed text represents collective as well as individual experience. (20 marks)

**On this text.** The harder question for a set of first person lyric poems, and worth attempting for that reason. The pseudonyms and the operatic I are the way in.

### Question 14

Explain how your prescribed text represents an experience that resists being put into language. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Concern 4.6, and the title of Beyond Metaphor is a legitimate hook even though almost nothing about that poem is established.

## 4. Stretch

Six questions that resist their own premise or ask for a judgement.

**STRETCH** A question that resists its own premise, or asks you to judge rather than explain.

### Question 15

Texts about personal experience are most valuable when they are most honest. Analyse your prescribed text in the light of this statement. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Name what the statement assumes, which is that honesty and value run together. These poems are honest about the unreliability of their own material, which is a different and more awkward kind of honesty.

### Question 16

Assess the view that a text can represent an experience more truthfully by declining to explain it. (20 marks)

**On this text.** The Glass Jar's stanzas five and six are the case: the child encounters something it cannot interpret and the poem does not interpret it either.

### Question 17

To what extent is the reader of your prescribed text asked to do work the text will not do? (20 marks)

**On this text.** The white space in Father and Child. The unopened book in A Valediction. Both hand the reader something the poem declines to complete.

### Question 18

A text that refuses consolation offers a consolation of its own. To what extent do you agree, with reference to your prescribed text? (20 marks)

**On this text.** The strongest objection to concern 4.4, turned into a question. Concede it generously and then test it on The Sharpness of Death, which closes in negotiation rather than acceptance.

### Question 19

Analyse the significance of what your prescribed text chooses not to represent. (20 marks)

**On this text.** Forty years. The intervening life in Father and Child is prescribed material and it is not written.

### Question 20

Assess the view that the speaking voice in a text should be read as the author's own. (20 marks)

**On this text.** The operatic I, directly. Edgar is quotable here. The argument against a biographical reading is that it must invent evidence, which section 9 of Document A lists.

### How to handle a question that resists its premise

Do not accept the statement and do not simply refuse it. Name what it assumes, then decide whether the assumption holds for your poems.

Question 15 assumes honesty and value run together. Question 18 assumes refusal and consolation are opposites. Saying so IS the thesis.

## 5. With a stimulus

Four questions with an original stimulus. NESA states a Section II question may include one.

The specification says the question may include stimulus and/or unseen texts, and nothing is published about what form one would take under these syllabuses. The four below cover the range: a proposition, a critical sentence, a question, and an image described in words.

The rule is the same for all four. Use the stimulus in your thesis and at least twice after, or do not use it at all.

**EXAM-STYLE** One sentence, general, twenty marks, forty minutes.

### Stimulus

An experience remembered is not the same thing as an experience had.

### Question 21

Analyse your prescribed text in the light of this statement. (20 marks)

### Stimulus

Writing embodies universal issues in vividly evoked particular settings.

### Question 22

With reference to this statement by the editors Alison Hoddinott and Gregory Kratzmann, analyse how your prescribed text represents human experience. (20 marks)

### Stimulus

Who is speaking, and how would you know?

### Question 23

Respond to this question with close reference to your prescribed text. (20 marks)

### Stimulus

An image: a room remembered at dusk, in which the light is wrong and the hour cannot be named.

### Question 24

Analyse how your prescribed text explores what is suggested by this image. (20 marks)

### A note on question 22

The sentence is genuinely Hoddinott and Kratzmann's, quoted by Bonny Cassidy, and it is nine words long.

If a stimulus in an examination attributes a sentence to a critic, respond to the SENTENCE. You are not required to know their wider argument and you must not invent it.

## 6. Two full attempts, timed

Forty minutes each, no notes, one sitting. Choose your three poems in the seven minutes after the three minute read.

## 6.1 Attempt one

### Question 25

Analyse how your prescribed text represents experiences that are remembered rather than lived. (20 marks)

**Before you start.** Seven minutes: choose three poems, write the thesis as one sentence, then four paragraph claims and the bank group each draws on. Then thirty minutes, and do not open Document A again.

Write your response in a separate writing booklet.

## 6.2 Attempt two

### Question 26

To what extent does your prescribed text represent human experience as something a reader can be told rather than shown? (20 marks)

**Before you start.** A question of degree. Decide where on the scale you stand and put it in the thesis. Do not use the same three poems you used for attempt one.

Write your response in a separate writing booklet.

### After each attempt

Leave it a day. Then use the scorecard in Document C section 8 and score yourself out of eight before reading the annotated responses.

Then write ONE sentence naming the single change that would most improve it. Not five. One.

## 7. Choosing three poems under time

The method, in seven minutes, for a stem you have not seen.

| MINUTE | DO THIS | ON THIS PRESCRIPTION |
|---|---|---|
| **0 to 1** | Underline the command verb and the noun the stem is about. | Analyse, explain, assess, to what extent. Then: experience, memory, relationship, form, assumption, consolation. |
| **1 to 3** | Name the concern the stem is closest to. | The six in Document A section 4. Every stem on this list maps to one of them, and so will the real one. |
| **3 to 5** | Take the three poems from that concern's plan. | Plans 1 to 6 in Document A already pair a concern with three poems. This is the step the plans exist for. |
| **5 to 7** | Write the thesis, with a verb of judgement. | Not shows or explores. Qualifies, withholds, declines, concedes, refuses to resolve. |

### 7.1 If the stem does not map to a concern

It will happen and it is not a disaster. Use the five questions at section 7A of Document A, which produce a paragraph from any poem on this prescription, and attach what you find to the nearest concern. A stem about place, or about silence, or about what a text values, is answered by the six concerns even though none is named after those things.

### 7.2 The three sentences that will not do

| DO NOT WRITE | BECAUSE | WRITE INSTEAD |
|---|---|---|
| **Harwood uses many techniques to explore the theme of memory.** | It names a topic, promises a list, and contains no judgement. It would also name the poet, which the question does not. | These poems mark their memories as unreliable before they narrate them, and go on remembering anyway. |
| **This shows the poet's own childhood experience.** | It asserts biography the poems do not establish, and the poet's own position was the opposite. | The speaker is constructed to be taken for the poet, which is what makes the poem's claim on a reader work. |
| **In conclusion, the poems show that memory is important.** | The conclusion repeats the introduction, so nothing has moved. | What the poems finally offer is not a memory but the admission that a memory was told, which is a smaller and steadier thing to stand on. |

### The last sentence

Reserve four minutes. A closing sentence that could have been written before you started tells a reader the response did not develop.

The test: could your final sentence have been your first? If yes, write a different one.

Fill in four of your own: a closing sentence you must not write, why it fails, and what to write instead.

| DO NOT WRITE | BECAUSE | WRITE INSTEAD |
|---|---|---|
| | | |

| DO NOT WRITE | BECAUSE | WRITE INSTEAD |
|---|---|---|
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## Coverage and limits

This document covers question types, stimulus handling and question reading for Gwen Harwood's seven prescribed texts in Texts and human experiences, examined in Paper 1 Section II.

All twenty six questions and three of the four stimulus items are original writing composed for this document. The fourth quotes the editors of the Collected Poems and attributes them. No past paper exists for this course.

EVERY STEM IS TEXT NEUTRAL AND COHORT NEUTRAL, because the real question is. The annotations under them are text specific.

NOT ONE WORD OF HARWOOD IS QUOTED. The only quoted wording is from attributed critics.

No claim is made anywhere about how responses are marked.

## About this resource

MA99 EDUCATION

### Scope

NSW English Standard and English Advanced, Year 12. Written to the NSW English Standard and English Advanced 11-12 Syllabuses 2024, Gwen Harwood, for students sitting the HSC in 2027 and later years. Texts and human experiences is common to both courses, so this resource serves students in either. Document A, Document B and Document C are the three files of this set: the Text Pack, the Practice Questions and the Graduated Exemplars. References to them in this resource point to those files.

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