



ATAR course examination, 2021

LITERATURE

TEXT BOOKLET

Text A Poetry
Text B Prose fiction
Text C Drama

Text A

'In Defense of Our Overgrown Garden' by Matthea Harvey was published in 2000. Harvey has lived most of her life in the United States.

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Text B

This is an extract from the 2004 novel *Home* by Indigenous Australian author Larissa Behrendt.

My father told me that the name of our town meant ‘the meeting of the rivers’ in the old language. We had set out from Sydney in the fresh hours of the morning, leaving the tame quarters of suburbia, crossing over the mountains, until the landscape bled into undulating black soil plains. The afternoon crept up on us, the distant mountain formation offering a craggy, blue-haze backdrop. Barbed-wire-fenced paddocks held flocks of cotton-wool sheep, undisturbed by our passing.

It is three o’clock in the afternoon as my father parks his car in the main street, bumper pointing at the steps of the well-worn Royal Hotel. The retiring sun sparkles red and gold, the light catching in flashing opal colours. A hot wind blows across the concrete, mortar and wood packing grit in every crevice it brushes over – between bricks, the cracks of the window frames, between teeth.

I decide that I will go to the post office. If I send a card today, it will reach my mother by Tuesday. Although that’s the day that I’m planning to return, I can see her delivering a trim pink smile of thanks (“Oh, Candy”), and she will be pleased that I have remembered her. I can also see my father dismissing this with an “Oh, Can-deese”, as he rolls his eyes.

The air conditioning in Dad’s large sleek car – I can stretch my legs out in front and not touch anything – had protected me from the aggressive heat and light film of swirling dust. I have always preferred the feeling of warmth on my skin to controlled too-frigid temperatures. I enjoy the stifling heat that now clings to my legs, underneath my skirt, embracing my face, as I walk across searing concrete. The post-office is built with old burnt-red bricks and garnished with a wide verandah and white flourishes, defying the starching weather and the stretching time.

Inside, the sails of the ceiling fans click slowly, rhythmically. I pick a faded postcard from the wire stand, disappointed that there were none more parochial, less rustic (*Greetings from Big Rig Country* or a flock of sheep: *I miss Ewe*) to send on to my best friend Kate. I look over a display of books laid out on a table, publications of the local Historical Society, mostly photocopies stapled together between colourful cardboard. I decide on a collection of old newspaper articles about the area and a book of one resident family’s memoirs. They arrived in 1904, the year my grandmother was born here. I know my father will comment on my impulse-buying. I’ve bought something at every stop we’ve made today. Dad loves to dramatise how much money I spend, as though each coin is extracted from his own pocket.

On the back of my postcard of the town centre, sun-scorched and faded, I write – *Hi Mummy, Hot and dusty; lots of sheep. By the time you get this, I’ll be home. Love Candy* – and take my purchases to the counter where a homely, wrinklefaced woman with curled grey hair waits.

“All this way from Sydney?” she asks. I suddenly feel conscious of my suit and my leather shoes that clip confidently across the wooden floor.

“Yes, I guess you can pick a tourist.”

“We get to know the faces in here. Are you staying a while or driving through?”

“I’m staying for the weekend.”

“Well there’s lots of interesting things to see around here. There are the fisheries down on the river and there’s a pioneers’ museum.”

“I’m here to visit family,” I reply.

“Really?” she answers, her interest piqued. “If they’re locals, I probably know them.”

“Well, the family names are Lance and Boney.”

“Hmmm. Doesn’t sound familiar to me. Do they live in town?”

“No, just outside.”

“Oh,” responds the woman, her mouth making a tight circle as she peers more carefully at me and then, quickly regaining her smile, processes my purchase with renewed efficiency.

Text C

This is an extract from the Australian play *Bartleby* by Julian Hobba. It was first performed in 2014.

Setting: An office. Today

Characters:

OLD LAWYER

YOUNG LAWYER

YOUNG LAWYER enters talking on the phone, take-away coffee, bag, etc. OLD LAWYER is standing at the window, listening to the market report on the radio.

OLD LAWYER Good morning.

YOUNG LAWYER *[Puts his hand up to divert OLD LAWYER's attention; stops and talks.]*
I know you've got those limitations at your end, but there's limitations right around this project and we've just got to move through – *[Pause]* no-no that's your perspective on it, but there's deliverables we need to see in those documents – *[Beat]* I don't see them in there. *[Beat]* I've been through all the pages, Ben – I read through it all on the treadmill last night. *[Beat]* Hang on. *[He puts his coffee down and pulls some documents out from his bag]* What page? *[He finds the page, thumbing through reams of plastic envelopes and pages]* Yes, yes, I saw these; this is the old set. I told you we need the new ones, and I can't get sign off at this end – *[Beat]* that came out of last week's meeting. Well we sent them through – *[To OLD LAWYER]* when did you send through those notes from last week's meeting?

OLD LAWYER Tuesday?

YOUNG LAWYER *[To phone]* Tuesday. Uh-huh. *[Pause]*. He's looking through his email.

OLD LAWYER goes to speak, but YOUNG LAWYER puts his hand up to stop him speaking and gestures for the radio to be turned down or off; he goes back to the phone. OLD LAWYER goes to his desk, turns the radio off and goes through some pages.

Have you checked the junk folder?

OLD LAWYER finds a piece of paper from his desk and goes over to YOUNG LAWYER with it.

OLD LAWYER I faxed it.

YOUNG LAWYER Ben. He faxed it. *[Beat]* I apologise for that. I'm going to re-send that now as an attachment. What you need to do is to revise that document and send it through to me with the new info, okay? *[Beat]* Alright; apologies. I'll talk to you again after I've got across those changes. *[Pause. He doesn't look up from his computer screen]*. You faxed it? *[Silence]* Now I have to re-send it. Where is it saved? *[Silence]* Hello?

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- OLD LAWYER Oh, are you talking to me?
- YOUNG LAWYER Where will I find those minutes with the new deliverables for Ben?
- OLD LAWYER Ben's?
- YOUNG LAWYER Deliverables. Deliverables. The things he's got to do.
- OLD LAWYER Oh, yes, they're saved in the drive.
- YOUNG LAWYER Uh huh. Where?
- OLD LAWYER Let me see, I'll have to find it; in the –
- YOUNG LAWYER Can't you just tell me?
- OLD LAWYER I know where it is, I just have to ... *[Extended pause, YOUNG LAWYER makes his way over to OLD LAWYER's desk]* yep, here it is, right-o, if you go ... it's ... F drive – then, contracts – 2013 – financial services – ah ... majors – KPMG – then ... audits – meetings – minutes and notes – September – September 22 – I think that's the equinox; though it does change each year and from memory *[Beat, no response]* – sorry, September 22 – and in there you'll see 'scans of long hands from big KPMG meeting'.
- YOUNG LAWYER How would I ever be able to find that?
- OLD LAWYER It's a bit labrynthine, all these folders, but that's what's there.
- YOUNG LAWYER I'm not talking about the folders, there's a system in place for the folders; but the documents need to be saved according to the format we agreed.
- OLD LAWYER All of them?
- YOUNG LAWYER It's a pretty useless system if it doesn't apply to all of them.
- OLD LAWYER So it's ...
- YOUNG LAWYER Year, month, day, company, document type, specifics.
- OLD LAWYER See I tend to think day, month, year, etcetera.
- YOUNG LAWYER Do you need me to print out the instructions again so you have them close by?
- OLD LAWYER No, I know it.
- YOUNG LAWYER I'll print them out.
- OLD LAWYER I'm not sure where you'll find space to put them. *[There are a multitude of sheets of instructions on the wall by his desk]* I should be able to build a rocket with all these instructions. A rocket–ship. One used to say ship in that context, now it's just rocket, or it's not even rocket, that's reverted to a verb, 'it rocketed along', or, if it's a noun, it's the type of small projectile a person might make in a shed. Did you ever make a rocket?

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- YOUNG LAWYER *[Glaring at him].*
- OLD LAWYER A ship now is more or less exclusively what you might have called an ocean liner, previously. *[Pause]* A ship is what Captain Ahab had.
- YOUNG LAWYER Are you finished?
- OLD LAWYER Sorry, thinking out loud.
- YOUNG LAWYER I have to be able to find the documents. If you weren't here now and I had to get Ben across those deliverables quite urgently, like I have to now, we'd be in real trouble. It's important. Okay? *[YOUNG LAWYER brings over the instructions to stick up near the desk].* I don't make the rules for no reason.
- OLD LAWYER *[Sitting back as the sticking up takes place]* I just wonder if they don't become meaningless if there's too many to follow. Red tape is the enemy of invention. Who said that?
- [Pause]* Churchill or someone.
- [YOUNG LAWYER has stuck up the piece of paper].*
- Alright. *[He makes to get stuck back into work].*
- They are both at their desks.*
- There's something I've been meaning to ask you.
- YOUNG LAWYER *[Is ignoring him, he is typing, typing, typing; eventually ...]* Hang on. *[Types, types, types ... types, types, types, eventually, turns around].* Yes?
- OLD LAWYER What are you doing for Christmas this year?
- YOUNG LAWYER I don't have time for that conversation right now. Thanks for asking but I've got a hundred –
- There is a buzz on an intercom.*

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Text A** Harvey, M. (2000). *In defense of our overgrown garden* [Poem]. Retrieved May, 2021, from <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/51616/in-defense-of-our-overgrown-garden>
- Text B** Behrendt, L. (2004). *Home*. University of Queensland Press, pp. 3–5.
- Text C** Hobba, J. (2015). *Bartleby* [Playscript]. Playlab. pp. 9–12.

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