



ATAR course examination, 2023

LITERATURE

TEXT BOOKLET

Text A Poetry
Text B Prose fiction
Text C Drama

Text A Poetry

The following poem was written by Western Australian poet Rhian Healy. It was published in 2022.

On the Road to Margaret River

for Peter Thompson

WE SPEAK about photographs while we drive.
It is late afternoon and the sun is falling to our right,
where the sea is. We talk about the golden ratio,
and Fibonacci's spiral¹ unwinds in my head.
Now is the time to chase the light, when
it comes in slant, when it eases around the edges of things.
We talk about the photographs
we miss, the opportunities that pass, because,
like now, we can't stop. This is a freeway,
there is nowhere to stop, the traffic compels
us forward, while
glorious photos pass by uncaptured.
The green spring grass, for instance, like a new haircut,
and out of it, thin dark trees rising, their canopies high and awkward, like broken
umbrellas, and through them you can see the falling light
paint highlights on the salmon gums, and bleed out beyond, into the bottom of the sky.
Peter talks about the rule of thirds,
and we look for examples. On one side, we divide the horizon and the clouds
into thirds; and on the other side we find big trees or buildings
to lock the golden ratio to.
Dark clouds limned by light. Little rays of light spearing through cloud on the horizon like
epiphanies
and one great eucalyptus standing alone.
In the foreground, little black lumps of cow, seemingly doubled over
in awe at the glory of the end of this October day.

¹ Fibonacci's spiral and the golden ratio are mathematical rules which, when applied in design (such as art and architecture), create visually-appealing proportions. They are also seen in the natural world, such as in snail shells, sunflowers and spiral galaxies.

Text B Prose fiction

This text is an extract from the short story 'Early Music', by Jeffrey Eugenides. It was published in the collection *Fresh Complaint* in 2017.

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Text C Drama

This is an extract from the play *Dogged*, written by Andrea James and Catherine Ryan. It was first published in 2021.

Characters

Dingo: All-seeing and all-knowing across time and place. Real and unreal. Mystical and earthly. Starving and grieving her lost mate and litter of three pups; she is protective, nurturing, fearsome and wily. Dexterous and supremely clever, she can twist and bend herself out of most tricky situations. Bound to this earth, her very survival depends on running with her lost pack.

Setting

Gunaikurnai Mountain Country – noting that this scenario plays out in its own ways in Countries all across Australia.

Time

An everpresent boundless immediate now.

Prelude/audience entry

From the foyer; the audience enter into a completely darkened space, filled with summer night sounds of the Gunaikurnai bush. The audience should be shown to their seats by torchlight. It takes some time until the audience have fully transitioned into this dark world, and are immersed. Any theatre pre-show announcements should happen in the foyer; prior to entry. The sounds of heartbeats gather one by one, until there is a cacophony of heartbeat rhythms. When the entire audience is seated, the soundscape begins to almost imperceptibly thin – particular sounds disappear one by one, leaving increasing aural space and the heartbeat of a lone agitated female.

Scene One

*Imperceptibly, the lights fade up to a dim level on the audience.
DINGO emerges. She is emaciated, desperate, unpredictable and sometimes playful.*

DINGO: Pfft!

Pfft !

Ever feel like you're being watched? Eyes in the bush.

A flicker.

A flash of yellow, or black or tan ...

Was it ...?

Did I just ...?

She approaches the audience very cautiously, looking for food, always looking for an escape if need be.

Do you have a snack?

A rabbit in your handbag?

A possum under your T-shirt?

Gotta get my strength up.

Find my little ones.

She jumps on the ledge and listens to the audience's heartbeats.

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Boom boom. Boom boom. Boom boom.
I could hear your heartbeats from miles away.

I've been sussing you out. Who's weaning their young. The little pups. Watching your eyebrows move. Your noses twitch, a lick of the lips. How sharp your teeth are.

Or not!

The way your ears never move. Never.

What's with that?

Boom boom. Boom boom. Boom boom.

Where are the weaklings? Which one of you is gonna get left behind to shrivel under a tree and who's gonna lead the pack?

Who limps, who coughs. Who's got a weak heartbeat.

[Faintly] Boom boom. Boom boom. Boom ... boom ... boom ... boom.

She locates a weakling in the audience and targets them.

Ahhhhh. It's you!

A cough here.

Coughing.

A snuffle there.

Sniffing.

Which one of you is the alpha?
Boom boom! Boom boom! Boom boom! Boom boom!

She locates the alpha in the audience pack. Sits next to them.

Grrrrrrr.
Settle down there.
Settle down.

Have you seen my pups?!

My little ones?
Two boys and a girl?

I swear to Dog, I'll rip your throat out!

She paws at her painful teats.

Swollen teats.
Milk's going hard.

I've been searching for days.
Weeks!

She sniffs the audience again.

[*Looking forward*] Do you have a sausage, a snack, a tidbit for an old girl?

Just leave it on the ground. I'll come back later.

Gotta build up my strength.

Find my little ones.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Text A** Healy, R. (2022). *On the Road to Margaret River* [Poem]. Retrieved May, 2023, from <https://wapoets.com/creatix-57-poetry/#Rhian>
- Text B** Eugenides, J. (2017). Early Music. In *Fresh Complaint*. 4th Estate, pp. 85–86.
- Text C** James, A., & Ryan, C. (2021). *Dogged* [Playscript]. Currency Press. Retrieved May, 2023, from https://apt.org.au/perusal-view/?partner_cd=CP&product_cd=3605&pdftype=PDF_extract

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