

INTUITION EDUCATION

HSC 2026 · PREDICTED PRACTICE PAPER

2026 HSC English — Paper 1: Texts and Human Experiences

Original practice material — not a NESA paper

Total marks: 40

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS

- Reading time — 10 minutes
- Working time — 1 hour and 30 minutes
- Write using black pen
- Section I — 20 marks. Attempt Questions 1–5. Allow about 45 minutes for this section
- Section II — 20 marks. Attempt Question 6. Allow about 45 minutes for this section

HOW THIS PAPER WAS BUILT

Paper 1 is common to English Advanced and English Standard, so this practice paper was built from the merged consensus of BOTH courses' six-model AI panels (twelve model-runs: deepseek, fable, gemini-3.1-pro, gpt-5.6-sol, grok and opus for each course), each of which independently predicted the 2026 examination from the 2019–2025 papers and NESA marking feedback. The 66 Paper 1 question-level predictions were clustered (synthesis/english_paper1-consensus-questions.yaml); every cluster with material consensus is realised below, and each question is tagged with the cluster it realises. Every stimulus text is an original work composed for this paper; the authors and sources named are fictional, and no real author's work or style is imitated. No question is copied from a past paper.

Answers and marking notes are published as a separate PDF — sit the paper first, then download the solutions from intuitioneducation.com.au/hsc-2026/english-paper-1.

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Section I — Stimulus Booklet

Texts 1–5

TEXT 1 — POEM

Stone Fruit

The ladder always leaned where the bark had worn it a paler grey, and I went up into the apricot tree the way you enter a house you have lived in all your life — without looking, hands knowing the door.

My grandmother stood below with her apron held out, a hammock for the summer to fall into. *Gently*, she said, *they bruise* — and I learnt the weight of a thing by how carefully it must be given away.

The kitchen that afternoon smelled of sugar scorched a little on purpose. Jars in rows on the sill caught the light and held it the way I thought we would hold every summer after.

The tree is still there. The house is sold. Somewhere a stranger's child climbs through those same slow rooms of leaves and does not know she is climbing through the middle of my life.

I own nothing of it now but the knowing: how to cup a ripe thing in the palm, how to lower it down without falling, how sweetness is a kind of grief that has learnt to keep.

— *Alira Wenden* (fictional author; original work)

TEXT 2 — PROSE FICTION EXTRACT**from** *The Long Table*

By one o'clock the backyard was full, and Nadia had been hugged by eleven people whose faces she loved and whose lives she no longer knew. She carried the salads out. She carried the chairs out. If she kept carrying things, she had discovered, nobody asked her anything.

Her aunties had annexed the kitchen, as they always did, and were conducting three arguments at once in two languages, as they always were. It should have been simple to step in among them. It had been simple once. She stood in the doorway holding a bowl of beans and understood that she was performing the entrance the way an actor performs a room she has only seen in photographs — every gesture correct, nothing true.

And whose fault was that? Nobody had sent her away. She had wanted the scholarship, the city, the small bright flat with her name alone on the lease. She had wanted it fiercely; she wanted it still. That was the thing no one warned you about wanting: it was not a door you walked through but a tide you swam out on, and when you turned around, the shore was still there, still golden, still calling you in for lunch — only further, every year a little further.

'Nadia! Sit, sit. You remember how to sit?' Her uncle patted the bench beside him, laughing at his own joke, and the whole table laughed with him, and she did too, because it was funny, and because it wasn't.

She sat. The talk closed over her head like water. Under the long table, her grandmother's hand found hers and pressed it — one firm, unhurried pulse, the way you press a seam flat, the way you say *I know* without saying anything — and Nadia held on, belonging and not belonging, both at once, all afternoon.

— *S. J. Marrick* (fictional author; original work)

TEXT 3 — FEATURE ARTICLE EXTRACT**from 'The Full Room', a weekend magazine essay**

There are one hundred and forty-three people in my pocket. I counted. Friends, colleagues, a plumber, a man I met once at a conference in 2019 who sends me articles about productivity. At any moment of any day, I can reach more human beings than my great-grandmother met in her entire life.

So why did I stand in my kitchen last Tuesday, phone glowing in my hand like a small hearth, and feel that the house had never been so quiet?

We have mistaken access for company. A message is not a conversation; a conversation is not a presence; and presence — the old, inefficient kind, where somebody's whole afternoon is spent in the same room as your whole afternoon — is the one thing the technology of connection cannot deliver. It can deliver everything else: the update, the reaction, the thumbs-up rising like a small balloon and vanishing. It is astonishing. It is not enough.

Here is the paradox we have built for ourselves: the fuller the room, the lonelier the standing in it. We scroll through other people's dinners while ours goes cold. We are never out of touch and rarely in it.

I am not proposing we throw the phones in the river. I am proposing something harder: that we notice what the full room is emptying us of, and begin — awkwardly, inefficiently, one unscheduled hour at a time — to be somewhere, wholly, with someone, again.

— *Tomas Ellery* (fictional author; original work)

TEXT 4 — MEMOIR EXTRACT**from *Mudlines: A Year on the Estuary***

Low tide, first light, and the flats have laid the river's diary open again. You can read the night in it if you go slowly: the drag-line of a crab, commas of bird-print, the long deliberate sentence of an eel making for deeper water. Every six hours the tide wipes the page and the estuary begins its patient writing again.

My father taught me to walk here the way his mother taught him: barefoot, unhurried, weight back on the heels so the mud accepts you rather than swallows you. *The flats don't belong to you, he'd say. You belong to them, or you sink.* I thought for years this was a warning. I understand now it was an instruction for happiness.

Cities had me for two decades, and in all that time some part of me kept the tide chart running. I would be in a meeting, in traffic, in the fluorescent nowhere of an airport, and know without knowing that the water was drawing back off the flats at home, that the diary lay open and unread.

When I finally came back, the mud remembered my weight before I did. Ten steps out from the mangroves the old balance returned — heels back, hurry gone — and the place resumed writing me as if I were a line it had left unfinished. We speak of reading landscape. We speak less of the reverse: that a landscape reads its people, keeps its own record of us, and misses us, in its tidal fashion, when we go.

— *Dana Okafor-Hale* (fictional author; original work)

TEXT 5 — PHOTOGRAPH**DATA PROVIDED IN THE EXAM**

black-and-white photograph. A weatherboard house — a whole house, complete with corrugated-iron roof and a front door still bearing its brass number — is loaded on the tray of a wide removal truck, travelling along a flat country road at dawn. The house fills the left two-thirds of the frame and leans very slightly with the camber of the road; its windows are curtained, as if still lived in. On the right, at the road's edge, an elderly woman stands beside a letterbox on a post, the only thing left standing on the cleared block behind her, watching the house go. Her figure is small in the frame but sharply in focus; the strong horizontal vector of the road and truck leads the viewer's eye from her towards the house as it departs. Long early-morning shadows run from her feet towards the viewer. The caption reads: Relocation day.

— photographer: R. Amaya (fictional; original described image)

Section I**20 marks — Attempt Questions 1–5 — Allow about 45 minutes for this section**

Your answers will be assessed on how well you demonstrate understanding of human experiences in texts, and analyse, explain and assess the ways human experiences are represented in texts.

Question 1**(3 marks)**

Use **Text 1** to answer this question.

Explain how the poet conveys the significance of a remembered place. **(3)**

Question 2**(4 marks)**

Use **Text 2** to answer this question.

Analyse how the narrative voice reveals Nadia's experience of belonging and not belonging. **(4)**

Question 3**(4 marks)**

Use **Text 3** to answer this question.

'The fuller the room, the lonelier the standing in it.'

Analyse how the writer explores this paradox of human behaviour. **(4)**

Question 4**(4 marks)**

Use **Text 4** to answer this question.

Assess how effectively the writer represents the connection between people and landscape. **(4)**

Question 5**(5 marks)**

Use **Text 1** and **Text 5** to answer this question.

Compare how Text 1 and Text 5 represent the ways people hold on to the places they have lost. **(5)**

Section II

20 marks — Attempt Question 6 — Allow about 45 minutes for this section

Your answer will be assessed on how well you demonstrate understanding of human experiences in texts, analyse how meaning is shaped in texts, and organise, develop and express ideas using language appropriate to audience, purpose and form.

Question 6**(20 marks)**

'It is in the inconsistencies of human behaviour — the gap between what we intend and what we do — that texts reveal us most truthfully.'

To what extent does this statement reflect the representation of human experiences in your prescribed text?

In your response, make detailed reference to your prescribed text. **(20)**

(This question is answered with reference to whichever prescribed text you studied for the common module, in either course.)

Built by a six-model AI panel and backtested against the hidden 2025 papers before publication — method at intuitioneducation.com.au/hsc-2026/how-we-did-it. Scored publicly in November 2026. Independent Intuition Education material from publicly available NESA documents; not affiliated with or endorsed by NESA.