



ATAR course examination, 2018

LITERATURE

TEXT BOOKLET

Text A Drama
Text B Poetry
Text C Prose

Text A

This extract is the opening of the play *The Family*, by Jill Shearer. It was first performed by the Queensland Theatre Company at the Cremorne Theatre, Brisbane, in 1994.

CHARACTERS

EMMA, a music student, Frank's younger daughter
SARAH, a Police Inspector, thirtyish, Frank's older daughter
BARBARA, Frank's wife
FRANK, a Police Sergeant, currently suspended from duty

SETTING

The action of the play takes place in the present in Brisbane. The scene is set in the family home. Although a naturalistic setting could work, the Brisbane production, while using a multi-purpose set, set most of the story within a large neon-lit blue circle, ringed by piles of memorabilia ... old newspapers, documents, books, a box of old photographs, police records, etc. Behind it, a small platform, from beneath which a bed slid out.

Music is used throughout the play to underscore the action.

EMMA in the living room, practises on her cello, her theme (Bach) heard intermittently. FRANK, in uniform, no tie, sits facing the audience, remote control in hand, watching a video. Faint sound of old movie music is heard off stage. EMMA stops practising, looks concerned, then resumes playing. She is totally, lovingly engrossed in her playing as SARAH, in uniform, enters. EMMA slows down. After a few more bars EMMA, sensing SARAH's presence, stops.

SARAH: The front door was wide open.
Silence

EMMA: An offence, Officer?

SARAH: It's dangerous.

EMMA: I didn't leave it open. So if you had any plans of arresting ... [me]

SARAH: Don't be absurd. I'm simply saying ... [it's dangerous]
She stops and walks away.

That sounded good.

EMMA: It's alright.

SARAH: It's better than alright. Where's Mum?

EMMA: Out. She must have left it open. [*deliberately*] She's got a lot on her mind these days.

SARAH: [*nodding toward cello*] What's it for? If Alan's not on duty we might be able to ...
[come along]

EMMA: Don't do this, Inspector.

See next page

- SARAH: What?
- EMMA: You really don't know?
- SARAH: I phoned. She said things were fine.
- EMMA: Things are always fine with Mum. Hanging by her fingernails from the Gateway Bridge. 'How are you?' 'Oh I'm alright. I'm fine.'
- SARAH: Yes. Well ... Is it for something special? Is it important?
- EMMA: An audition. I'm on the job market.
- SARAH: Then you'll get it. Play like that.
- EMMA: Always so sure.
- SARAH: How's Dad?
- EMMA: Fine, if that means cutting off in there for hours. [*Drily.*] Remember those old fifties gangster things he used to like? He gets them three at a time these days. Seven when the video shop's got them on special. Watches them.
- SARAH: Emm?
- EMMA: [*gently*] Dreams them.
- SARAH: Dad wasn't the only one mentioned at the Inquiry. 'Mentioned'. That's all.
- EMMA: By a crim! A dog! Someone without a name sitting behind a screen, naming real people!
- SARAH: It wasn't followed up. Over a hundred were named. Nothing further's been done.
- EMMA: You mean Dad wasn't investigated?
- SARAH: None of them were.
- Pause.*
- I'll talk to him.
- EMMA bars her way.*
- EMMA: You're too late. Can't you understand? You're too bloody late, Sarah.
- SARAH: Emm, I know it's probably been hard.
- EMMA begins arranging her music.*
- Come on. I'm here now.
- EMMA: And I've got a rehearsal to go to.

SARAH: Look, if you're implying ...

EMMA: 'Guilt by association'? Oh, sure you're in there under your married name, but you weren't risking it.

SARAH: You can't mean that.

BARBARA enters, carrying a plastic shopping bag ... slows down.

BARBARA: Of course she doesn't. [*Holding up the laden bag.*] It's always the same thing. I go for one item and I end up with ... Sarah.

SARAH and BARBARA embrace. EMMA moves away, fiddling with the bow.

SARAH: Mum, I wanted to come before.

BARBARA: Nonsense! You're married. Two jobs.

EMMA: Three months we haven't sighted you.

BARBARA: Will you stop that? They were here for his birthday.

EMMA: [*drily*] 'For he's a jolly good fellow.'

Pause

Night after night, Dad out in the kitchen. 'Anyone drop 'round?' He meant you, Sarah.

SARAH: I'm sorry. It's been a busy time for us.

BARBARA: That meant a lot. You and Alan going to the trouble to arrange your shifts. And now you're here. That's the main thing. Your father meant ... people. Had any people ... friends ...

EMMA: The phone died. Somebody shot it.

BARBARA: That's exaggerating. They've been very kind at tennis, though they've never mentioned it. Strange, at times I've almost wanted them to ... but they haven't. Tact I suppose.

SARAH: Mum, it was a line in a newspaper. That's all.

BARBARA: But people read it, even stuck away in a corner on the back page. Over thirty-five years dedicated service and no one caring. Our name in all that sordidness! Filth!

SARAH: It's over. An Inquiry like that, some innocent people were bound to be hurt.

EMMA: 'Innocent people'? It's Dad we're talking about! God, you even talk like a book.

SARAH: I talk like a Police Officer.

EMMA catches SARAH glancing at her mother. They want to be alone.

Text B

Meg Mooney is an Australian poet and natural scientist who lives in Alice Springs. This poem, from *The Best Australian Poems*, was published in 2012.

My Town

It was that time when I felt
like I was in a car smash
for weeks, although it was my son
who had really crashed

I've just had my legs waxed
walk out onto the main street
turn down towards my car
when someone calls out, an Aboriginal bloke –
only whitefellas like quiet streets –
it sounds like my name, which is short –
shouts often confuse me like this

I walk on, the calls continue
maybe it is my name
it could be Tjakamarra
I gave him some money a few days ago
I'll just ignore it

then a child yells my name, clear and high
down the street, I turn
see the boy and young couple
my teacher friends from the community
waving from the lawn –

if I didn't know them, I might think
this man and woman were drunks sitting there
wanting to sell cheap paintings
it's easy to get things very wrong in this town –

I'm not up to much chat but that's OK
they just want to say hello
and merry christmas

I walk back down the street thinking
they don't know but it's like they do
and having my name shouted down the street
helped somehow, like they were letting everyone know
to catch me, because inside I was falling

Text C

This extract is the opening of the novel *This Book Will Save Your Life*, by American author A. M. Homes. It was first published in 2006.

He stands at the glass looking out. The city spreads below him, blanketed in foggy slumber. Low pressure. Clouds roll over the hills, seeping out of cracks and crevices as if the geography itself is sending smoke signals.

Below him, far down the hill, a woman swims, her long brown hair floating through the water. Her suit is a beautiful bright-red dot, a rare tropical bird in a pool of unnatural blue. Every morning she swims – crawls like an Olympian. He takes comfort in her swimming, in her determination, rhythm, routine, in the fact that she is awake when he is awake. There is urgency in her stroke; she cannot *not* swim. She is his confidante, his muse, his mermaid.

He is at the glass; usually he is not here, not now. Usually he gets up and gets on his machine – he runs while she swims. He runs watching the electronic ticker tape go by, trading from a keyboard strapped to the treadmill, typing as he trots, placing his bets, going long and short, seeing how far up or down he can go, riding an invisible electronic wave.

Usually he, he usually. Everything today is not the same, and yet it is exactly the same and it can never be the same again.

He stands at the glass. The mechanical sounds of the house catch him off guard. Ice tumbles into the freezer bin, the coffee-pot begins to fill with water, air whooshes out of the vent, billowing up the leg of his pants. He shudders.

Usually he doesn't hear it. He hears nothing, feels nothing, he makes sure of that. He wakes up, puts on his noise-canceling headset, goes to the glass, looks at the woman swimming, and gets on his machine.

He is in a vacuum of silence – life canceled.

He didn't even know the coffeemaker was automatic – he doesn't drink coffee; it is brewing for Cecelia, the house-keeper, who comes between seven-thirty and eight. He breathes deeply – nice, the smell of coffee.

After years of making sure that he is left alone, he is suddenly afraid to be alone, afraid not to hear, not to feel, not to notice. He presses his ear to the glass. Music. Up the hill men are installing a lawn where there would otherwise be nothing – scrub. They have built a bulkhead, a frame for the grass, and are rolling out sod. They are making a small putting green – one hole.

Above and below, a chain of houses climbs the canyon wall: a social chain, an economic chain, a food chain. The goal is to be on top, king of the hill – to win. Each person looks down on the next, thinking they somehow have it better, but there is always someone else either pressing up from below or looking down from above. There is no way to win.

He stands at the point of the house, where two thick panes of glass meet, a sharp corner jutting out over the hill like the prow of a ship. He stands – captain, lord, master, prisoner of his own making.

Ahead, in the distance, there is something orange and smoky; it takes him a moment to decide – brush fire or simply dawn in Los Angeles?

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Text A** Excerpt from: Shearer, J. (1995). *The family*. Sydney: Currency Press, pp. 13–16.
- Text B** Mooney, M. (2012). My town [Poem]. In Tranter, J. (Ed.). *The best Australian poems 2012*. Melbourne: Black Inc., pp.79–80.
- Text C** Excerpt from: Homes, A. (2006). *This book will save your life*. London: Granta Books, pp. 1–2.

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