



ATAR course examination, 2020

LITERATURE

TEXT BOOKLET

Text A Prose fiction
Text B Poetry
Text C Drama

Text A

This is an extract from the 2013 novel *The Luminaries*, written by Eleanor Catton. Set in 1866, Anna has been travelling by sea from Sydney, Australia, to Dunedin, New Zealand, on a ship named *Fortunate Wind*.

Anna Wetherell's first glimpse of New Zealand was of the rocky heads of the Otago peninsula: mottled cliffs that dropped sharply into the white foam of the water, and above them, a rumpled cloak of grasses, raked by the wind. It was just past dawn. A pale fog was rising from the ocean, obscuring the far end of the harbour, where the hills became blue, and then purple, as the inlet narrowed, and of yellow light over the water, and lending an orange tint to the rocks on the Western shore. The city of Dunedin was not yet visible, tucked as it was behind the elbow of the harbour, and there were no dwellings or livestock on this stretch of coastline; Anna's first impression was of a lonely throat of water, a clear sky, and a rugged land untouched by human life or industry.

The first sighting had occurred in the grey hours that preceded the dawn, and so Anna had not witnessed the smudge on the horizon growing and thickening to form the contour of the peninsula, as the steamer came nearer and nearer to the coast. She had been woken, some hours later, by a strange cacophony of unfamiliar birdcalls, from which she deduced, rightly, that they must be nearing land at last. She eased herself from her berth, taking care not to wake the other women, and fixed her hair and stockings in the dark. By the time she came up the iron ladder to the deck, wrapping her shawl about her shoulders, the *Fortunate Wind* was rounding the outer heads of the harbour, and the peninsula was all around her – the relief sudden and impossible, after long weeks at sea.

'Magnificent, aren't they?'

Anna turned. A fair-headed boy in a felt cap was leaning against the portside rail. He gestured to the cliffs, and Anna saw the birds whose rancorous call had roused her from her slumber: they hung in a cloud about the cliff-face, wheeling, turning, and catching the light. She came forward to the rail. They looked to her like very large gulls, their wings black on the tops. And white beneath, their heads perfectly white, their beaks stout and pale. As she watched, one made a low pass in front of the boat, its wingtip skimming the surface of the water.

'Beautiful,' she said. 'Are they petrels – or gannets, maybe?'

'They're albatrosses!' The boy was beaming. 'They're real albatrosses! Just wait till *this* fellow comes back. He will, in a moment; he's been circling the ship for some time. Good Lord, what a feeling that must be – to *fly*! Can you imagine it?'

Anna smiled. She watched as the albatross glided away from them, turned, and began climbing on the wind.

'They're terrifically good luck, albatrosses,' the boy was saying. 'And they're the most incredible fliers. One hears stories of them following ships for months and months, and through all manner of weather – halfway around the world, sometimes. Lord only knows where these ones have been – and what they've witnessed, for that matter.'

When it turned on its side it became almost invisible. A needle of white, pale against the sky.

'So few birds are truly *mythical*,' the boy went on, still watching the albatross. 'I mean, there are ravens, I suppose, and perhaps you might say that doves have a special meaning too ... but no more than owls do, or eagles. An albatross is different. It has such a weight to it. Such symbolism. It's angelic, almost; even saying the name, one feels a kind of thrill. I'm so glad to have seen one. I feel almost touched. And how wonderful, that they guard the mouth of the harbour like they do! How's that for an omen – for a gold town! I heard them calling – that was what roused me – and I came topside because I couldn't place the sound. I thought it was pigs at first.'

Anna looked at him sidelong. Was the boy making an overture of friendship? He was speaking as if they were close familiars, though in fact they had not exchanged more than

perfunctory greetings on the journey from Sydney – Anna having kept largely to the women’s quarters, and the boy, to the men’s. She did not know his name. She had seen him from a distance, of course, but he had not made any particular impression upon her, good or bad. She saw now that he was something of an eccentric.

‘Their calling roused me too,’ she said, and then, ‘I suppose I ought to go and wake the others. It’s too perfect a sight to be missed.’

‘Don’t,’ the boy said.

Text B

'The Woman Who Almost Made It To The Moon' by Jennifer Harrison was published in *The Australian Poetry Journal* in 2018. Harrison is an Australian poet living in Melbourne, Victoria.

I wanted to see that strange light those scalloped rocks
and pristine human footprints I wanted to stand below
not above all others to feel the humble dream of space

 in Moscow in 1960 the Russians were training women
and the NASA Life Sciences Committee was happy enough
to take us on for the Lovelace training¹ 75 tests in the first week

they injected my ear with iced water until the ceiling spun
I guess you'd call that torture now but it was nothing then
Compared to the tilt table how it spun you around around

Until nausea made a maze of the examiners' faces
I needed less oxygen per minute than the average astronaut
so maybe *cost per pound we* females should have been

the ones to go to fly that first silvery rocket
 and in the isolation chamber well I floated
in a small dark swimming pool 10ft in diameter soundproofed

8-inch thick steel walls so many unbroken
hours I don't know if I woke or slept or if I outlasted the men
 I was told I was top of the class and still my wings were token

¹ Lovelace's Woman in Space Program was a privately-funded but short-lived project to test female pilots for astronaut fitness in the early 1960s.

Text C

Journey of Asylum - Waiting, was written by Australian playwright Catherine Simmonds and asylum seekers and refugees from The Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, Melbourne, who have chosen to withhold their names due to their current immigration status. It was first performed in 2010. The script was created through a process of workshops, meetings, dialogues and improvisations with asylum seekers.

ASYLUM SEEKER AND REFUGEE CHARACTERS (The Protagonists):

HADIJA
VIENNA
AHMAN
TENGENE
HAYDAR

AUSTRALIAN CHARACTERS (The Collaborators):

TRIBUNAL MAN
MEMBER

DESIGN AND SETTING

A large projection screen is attached to exposed scaffolding. Multimedia footage is projected onto the screen throughout the performance. The projector is also linked to a hand-held 'surveillance' camera. A ladder attached to the scaffolding leads to a platform containing an archive of case files. Ten clear portable Perspex screens are used to define spaces and places; the actors also write on them using marker pens. A large Perspex box contains a microphone and can be lit from within. The MEMBER sits on a high podium chair at the back of the audience and interjects from there throughout the performance.

Soundscapes are created with radio and television sound bites taken from interviews with politicians, reporters, as well as advertisements and television shows. Some soundscapes are also composed from interviews with other asylum seekers.

PROLOGUE

TRIBUNAL MAN *enters*.

TRIBUNAL MAN: [*addressing the audience*] Before we proceed, I must ask you to switch off your mobile phones and to state who you are and your relationship with the applicant. And I must inform you that the proceedings are to be recorded. A Refugee Review Tribunal is independent of Immigration and it is therefore closed to the public.

Waits for the audience to answer before continuing.

Is there anyone else coming in? Okay good.

[*He closes a small window in one of the Perspex screens.*]

Presiding over the case is Member George Hamilton. As a part of the formal proceedings I'll ask you all to stand when the Member enters the room. The hearing is to determine if our applicant is a refugee, according to the UN Convention. A refugee is a person who has fear; the Convention also says that there should be well-founded reasons for that fear. What a refugee fears is that they will be persecuted. Persecution is a serious form of harm or punishment. Not all reasons make a person a refugee. There are five possible reasons; Race. Religion. Nationality. Membership of a particular social group. Political opinion. Do you have any questions about what I have said so far?

[He asks the question but does not give the audience a chance to answer.]

The Member is now entering the room. Please stand.

MEMBER *enters and takes his seat on the high podium at the back of the audience.*

The Member has entered the tribunal room; the tribunal is now in session. *[He looks at the time].*

Commencing at 8:35pm *[Or the actual time of the performance].*

TRIBUNAL MAN *exits.*

Soundscape: gust of wind.

HADIJA *enters.*

VIENNA *enters carrying a clay bowl.*

AHMAN *enters and lies on the ground in a spotlight.*

TENGENE *enters carrying water in a metal bucket.*

SCENE ONE: I DON'T BELIEVE YOU

Continuation of previous scene.

TENGENE *gently holds AHMAN in his arms and washes his chest.*

VIENNA *slowly and ritualistically raises and tilts the clay pot, tipping blood upon her head.*

MEMBER *[Interrupting the action from the high podium]* I don't believe you.

VIENNA, TENGENE, AHMAN and HADIJA *exit.*

A closely huddled group of asylum seeker and refugee PROTAGONISTS enters upstage. They move in unison toward the audience, exhibiting the following gestures:

- *Tense arms and clenched fists that only release with a deep breath.*
- *Head down holding stomach with a sense of longing and sadness.*
- *Arms around throat as an attempt to strangle the self—breath is laboured.*
- *Stomping action and a beating of the fist to the chest; the fist becomes an accusatory pointed finger.*
- *Very slowly leaning backwards and placing hand over mouth in a gesture of silence.*
- *Rapid movement of feet, like thunder or a stampede as the performers move downstage.*

PROTAGONISTS thrust HAYDAR forward and he falls to the floor. All except HAYDAR and MEMBER disperse and EXIT.

SCENE TWO: THIS IS NOT AN ACT

HAYDAR: [*To the audience*] I'm sick of telling my story; talk talk talk talk talk. I already told my story. It doesn't work. I don't want to. Don't make me do this. Sorry, I don't want to play.

Refusing to perform, HAYDAR moves to exit the stage but at the last moment turns to confront the audience.

If I tell you my story, am I going to get PR: Permanent Residency? Am I? I already told Immigration, Refugee Review Tribunal; they took two years. I sent it to Federal Court and I'm still waiting. All my documents are there. Why am I waiting? No work rights, no study rights, what for, to lose my brain? Who here has got your PR, put your hands up? You can tell your story if you've got permanent residency. I don't have PR. You can talk, you're free, you can say whatever you want, but I can't.

Who are you, the Government, Immigration, a spy of the Minister, who? A spy from my country, who? If I say one wrong thing about the Government, the rules, about the Minister, about anything in Australia, they'll kick me out. Without PR they can play me like a ball, kick me here, here, here. But if you have PR you have power.

Look I'm not actor, all right? It's my life. In the movies when you get shot, you stand up and do the scene again. This is my life. This is not an act.

HAYDAR exits.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

- Text A** Catton, E. (2013). *The luminaries*. London: Granta Books, pp. 625–627.
- Text B** Harrison J. (2018). The woman who almost made it to the moon. *The Australian poetry journal*, 8 (1), p. 40.
- Text C** Simmonds, C. (2013). Journey of asylum - Waiting [Play script]. *Staging asylum* (E. Cox, Ed.). New South Wales: Currency Press, pp. 142–145.

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