



**Test Papers
Hub.**

NSW Selective Writing Practice Paper 1

Writing

**1 task · 30 minutes · stimulus-based extended response · no required length
(about 2 pages)**

How to use this booklet

- Read the stimulus and the task carefully. Spend 3 to 4 minutes planning. Your plan is not marked.
- Write ONE response in the genre named in the task, for the audience named. Aim for roughly 300 to 450 words.
- Leave the last 3 minutes to check sentences, punctuation and spelling. No dictionaries or devices.

The note was folded into a square no bigger than a postage stamp. Jai almost missed it, wedged beneath the lid of the dusty piano that nobody in the house had played for years. He lifted the lid, and a smell of old felt and lavender rose into the air like a sigh.

Unfolded, the paper was brittle as a dried leaf. The handwriting was his grandmother's, loopy and slanted, the way it had been on every birthday card. "Press the third key from the left," it said, "then listen." Jai laughed out loud. Grandma Rosa had been gone since winter, and yet here she was, giving orders.

He pressed the key. The note that rang out was flat and sour, but beneath it something else clicked, a tiny sound like a tongue against teeth. Jai crouched. The wood panel under the keyboard had shifted a fraction. He slid his fingernails into the gap, and a narrow drawer slid open, scattering dust across the floor.

Inside lay a cassette tape and a second note. "Play me when you are ready to be brave." Jai's throat tightened. Brave about what? He had been avoiding the old stereo in the garage for months, because the garage was where Grandma had always hummed while she sorted her seeds.

That evening he carried the tape into the garage and pressed play. There was a crackle, a cough, and then her voice, warm and amused. "If you are hearing this, you found the piano. Good. I never could play it, you know. I only kept it because your grandfather loved it, and some things you keep not for the music but for the memory."

Jai sat on an upturned bucket and let the tears come. She told him about the summer she had hidden every packet of sunflower seeds in the garden shed so that he would plant them himself. "They will come up in a month," she said. "Do not be sad. Be curious."

Outside, the evening was turning amber. Jai walked to the shed, found the seed packets in their coffee tin, and knelt in the soft soil by the fence. As he pressed the first seed under the earth, he realised that he was humming.

Why this response scores well

1. Opening

The stimulus is used word for word, then extended with a smell ('old felt and lavender'). Sensory detail makes the setting feel real.

2. Voice and characterisation

The grandmother is revealed through her handwriting and her instructions, so the reader learns about her without being told.

3. Pacing

Each paragraph moves the story forward: discovery, clue, second clue, the recording, the ending. There is no padding.

4. Figurative language

'Brittle as a dried leaf' and 'a sigh' are fresh, short and fit the mood. They are not overused.

5. Theme

The idea 'some things you keep not for the music but for the memory' gives the story meaning beyond the plot.

6. Ending

Jai humming mirrors his grandmother humming in the garage. The ending shows change without stating it.

A weaker opening and a stronger opening

WEAKER

Jai found a note in the piano. He was very surprised. It was from his grandma and it said to press a key. Jai pressed the key and then something happened.

STRONGER

The note was folded into a square no bigger than a postage stamp. Jai almost missed it, wedged beneath the lid of the dusty piano that nobody had played for years.

The weaker opening tells the reader how Jai feels ('very surprised') and uses 'something happened' instead of showing it. The stronger opening uses precise detail and lets the reader feel the mystery.

Check before you finish

- Does the story have a clear problem, a turning point and an ending that shows change?
- Have you shown feelings through actions and details instead of naming them?
- Is the tense consistent from start to finish?
- Does every sentence begin with a capital letter and end with the correct punctuation?
- Have you checked spelling of the longer words you chose?
- Is there a mix of short and long sentences?

LOS: WR1 Narrative writing

KEY TAKEAWAY

Show feelings through objects and actions, not labels. A single precise detail (a smell, a sound, handwriting) does more than a list of adjectives.