



2015 NAPLAN Topic – Years 7 & 9

Simply the Best

Choose:

- the best movie, TV show or performance you have seen, or
- the best book you have read.

Write to persuade a reader that they should see or read what you have chosen to write about.

Note: This exemplar was written by Jen McVeity, creator of the Seven Steps to Writing Success and the author of over 20 books. She wrote this in the exact time that all children receive to draft and submit their NAPLAN writing test. We have not checked or changed Jen's spelling, grammar or punctuation – this example is exactly as she wrote it in the time allowed.

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Planning (8.5 minutes)

Writing (32 minutes)

Editing (4.5 minutes)

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Hills End – Just the Beginning

Sizzling Start (6.5 minutes)

'Jen, lights out.'

Jen, I told you, stop reading. Get to sleep.'

'JENNIFER!' Oh oh ... I put down the book and switched off the lights. When I got the 'JENNIFER' call from Mum I knew I was in trouble. I waited a while, until I heard her footsteps recede, listened ... coast clear. Then I switched on the torch under the covers and kept reading.

Thousands of books kept me company in my childhood. Thousands gave me insights into other lives. Only a special few have stayed close to me, as a guide and an inspiration to my life.

Ivan Southall wrote Hills End. A story about a group of kids in a mining town who got cut off by floods from the adults and had to survive.

Hills End is simply the best book I've ever read.

Because it has stayed with me always.

Argument 1 (8.5 minutes)

Books teach. Not like a lecture, but sideways, sliding the information in so that you are fascinated and want to learn more. Hills End was set in a timber logging town in a remote area. I was a sort of city girl. But reading one book, just three hours of my life, I learnt what it was like to live in a remote town, cut off from shops and cities, the only way out over 80 kms of dirt trails and bridges that got washed away in floods. I learnt never drink the waters of a flood because of disease and bacteria. I learnt about different parenting styles, the hard demanding father, head of the logging corporation, the more democratic styles of the parents of the kids who didn't crack under the pressure and the dedication of the teacher, injured and suffering but still trying to guide.

Argument 2 (5 minutes)

As a kid your life is often the four walls of the classroom and the four walls of your bedroom. Unless you had a book. Then you could escape, go on a journey, have an adventure. Authors of children's books try to get rid of parents so their main characters can have LOTS of adventures without parents getting in the way. (Look at all the books that have single parents, or are set in boarding schools. Hello Harry Potter.) After Hills End I got interested in caving, I went camping, I followed the logging debates. And swear I looked at those small country towns we drove through on family holidays, as places where floods and fire were about to happen and if I just hung around long enough, I could be part of the action and know exactly what to do to save everyone.

Argument 3 (6 minutes)

Kids are strong. We often disempower them. 'Be careful!' 'Don't fall!' 'Watch out for ...'

Message: The world's a scary place. Yet Alexander the Great conquered a large part of the world when he was 16 years old. Matt Reilly, Paul Jennings, John Marsden – kids love reading their books, for underneath all these stories of strong young protagonists is a message of empowerment. Look, this girl slays dragons. Here is a boy stranded on a desert island, I could survive that too. In Hills End, the children fought and struggled, there were leadership battles, they made mistakes. I loved discovering that. You could make mistakes, and still succeed! Kids actually CAN succeed. When you read this often enough (and I read Hills End a lot!) you start to imagine it. And slowly, you start to believe it. That's a powerful belief to take into adulthood.

Ending with Impact (6 minutes)

Years ago, when I held my first book in my hand (and tried to believe I had actually written it), I unexpectedly realised the theme. A story of five kids lost in the bush and the fear of their parents as they waited through three days of searching for news of their children. Of course, through their courage and determination, the children survive. But as I held the book in my hand I suddenly realised I had written a tribute to Hills End.

I packaged up the first copy of my book and sent it to Ivan Southall. 'Thank you for your inspiration and for all the days of enjoyment you have given me. I will remember.'

He sent back a letter I treasure.

'Dear Jen,

I loved your book. Your kids are strong and inspiring. Isn't that the legacy we want to leave?'

Oh yes. Simply the best.

Marked Results

2015 NAPLAN Writing Task – Years 7 & 9 Persuasive Genre

NAPLAN Marker: Anna Gojkovic, Master Teacher, Wellers Hill SS

Criterion	Marks	Score	Comments
Audience	0–6	6	Writing is crafted to influence the reader through sustained use of persuasive techniques. Text establishes a strong, credible voice with an engaging introduction.
Text Structure	0–4	4	All components are well developed. The introduction foreshadows the argument that follows. The body develops each point of argument and the conclusion reinforces the argument that has been presented.
Ideas	0–5	5	Ideas are carefully selected and crafted to be highly persuasive and effectively contribute to the writer's position.
Persuasive Devices	0–4	4	Uses a range of persuasive devices appropriate to the style of argument, e.g. emotive language, 'That's a powerful belief to take into adulthood', personal address, 'I loved discovering that', rhetorical question, 'Isn't that the legacy we want to leave?'
Vocabulary	0–5	5	Language choices are well matched to the style of argument: 'strong, young protagonists', 'a message of empowerment', 'sliding the information in', 'leadership battles'.
Cohesion	0–4	4	A range of cohesive devices are used correctly and deliberately. Consistently correct use of referring words, text connectives and word associations.
Paragraphing	0–3	3	Paragraphs are ordered to pace and direct the reader's attention and cumulatively build argument across text.
Sentence Structure	0–6	5	Sentences are correct and demonstrate a variety of clause structures, phrases and sentence lengths. Minor slips.
Punctuation	0–5	5	Controls sentence punctuation and correctly uses a range of other punctuation.
Spelling	0–6	6	Text meets requirements for Category 6.

Total Score:

47 out of 48 – Band 10

Planning and Insights

I thought you might like to see some of the planning that went into this NAPLAN test.

There is a twofold planning requirement in open-ended questions like this. First you have to decide what you want to write about (e.g. brainstorm what book, movie or performance). Secondly, you then have to brainstorm again for ideas on that specific topic. So it is a double thinking process.

A mere five minutes for planning is therefore certainly not enough. If you want quality thoughts and ideas, you have to allow time for that. I learnt from sitting the Year 3 & 5 topic NOT to spend too much time on planning in a test situation – however, I still spent 8.5 mins planning rather than the recommended 5 mins.

Brainstorming possible topics (3 minutes)

Coming up with a topic was easy as being an author, I was leaning very much towards a book anyway. However, it is still best to brainstorm ideas just to be sure. This was about as far as I got in 3 minutes.

- Book – Ivan Southall's *Hills End*.
- Performance – Keynote talk Washington DC
- Courage not absence of fear, mastery of fear
- TV shows – boring
- Movie – Avatar
- Susan Boyle

Brainstorming ideas on the book (5.5 minutes)

Topic: Ivan Southall's *Hills End*

Learn

- About logging towns
- Parenting values (harsh boss father)
- Courage of teacher
- How to make sausages
- Water in floods dangerous

Escape

- Four walls bedroom
- Adventures
- Leads to real adventures, camping, caving

Inspiration

- Kids are strong. We disempower them. 'Be careful.' 'The world's a scary place.'
- Books get rid of parents (boarding houses) so kids can have adventures.
- Think of kids in home where they are not safe. Abused, alcoholic. Poor. Hungry. They are strong.
- Boys own adventures. Matt Reilly. Paul Jennings.
- They succeed. We can too

Sizzling Start

I was the kid reading under covers. 1,000 books – one I remember even now.

Ending with Impact

Letter to Ivan. I'd written tribute to *Hills End*.

Thank you again to Anna Gojkovic (Wellers Hill SS) for being brave enough to mark this test and patient enough to explain to me how the marking system operates. It has been a wonderful learning experience.

Jen McVeity

Author, Churchill Fellow, Creator: Seven Steps to Writing Success