Year 10 English Assessment Task
Creative Non-Fiction – Social Satire

Part A

Finishing an assignment like defusing a bomb.

I sat down at my desk as fast as I could, sweat dripping off my forehead. The countdown had begun, staring at me through red glowing eyes as it marked the minutes I had left. I felt my heart pounding in my chest as if it was trying to escape this doomed body. Why hadn't I asked for help sooner?

As the deadline drew nearer my hands became shakier. Fog clouded my head as panic put on a party inside my brain. I couldn't think, the pressure too intense to handle. I took a few deep breaths in a desperate attempt to calm myself down. There were too many choices to make and too little time. Backspace was no longer an option, I had to get something down. My fingers raced like rabid wolves hunting down a rabbit, pressing each letter the moment I thought of each word.

The word count was rising, along with my hope that I could get this done. I pushed my thoughts of how bad it sounded to the back of my mind as the final sentence appeared on the screen. I glanced at the time. My eyes rushed over each line in a last-minute attempt to read over it, fixing small spelling and grammar mistakes that screamed at me through coloured squiggly lines.

It wasn't perfect, but something was better than nothing.

I clicked on my pre-opened submission page and began the upload. The progress bar slugged its way across the screen as I watched the countdown. Less than a minute remained, and the upload had completed. I felt the weight lift off me and a smile began to form. But it didn't finish. I watched in horror as the stupid submission page began "optimising your files so they work on any computer".

It's just a word document!!!!!!!

This time there was no progress bar, just dots fading and reappearing in a line. I sat there, heart pounding, my mouse over the submit button, ready to strike the second it finished. Only ten seconds left! Nine. Eight. Seven. My hand was shaking like crazy, jittering the mouse. Six. Five. Four. I began spam-clicking the submit button. Three. Two. One. I froze, mouth wide open, eyes glued to the screen. A little window had popped up in the middle of my screen, as white as an angel, with a holy message.

Submission successful!

I'd once again been blessed by the assignment angels, who had stood by me year after year, with every assignment cutting it closer and closer. They had pulled me through once more, but I'm not sure how much longer they could keep it up. It was time to face the demon, named procrastination.
Battling Shyness

Hello. It's a simple word you use when you greet someone. Yet I struggle with it.

Ever since I was little, people have told me "you'll come out of your shell", "you'll grow out of it". Other people I have met tell me how shy they were as a kid, but these days they talk so much you can barely get a word in the conversation.

But here I am at 15 and still as shy and socially awkward as ever.

On bad days, I sit through recess and lunch without a single word to my group of friends. I get easily overwhelmed with social interaction and I feel the burning sensation as my face turns bright red, my hands become sweaty and my eyes battle to hold back tears. A cage surrounds my brain, holding back words with an invisible chain. Sometimes it's because I fear mistakes, fear getting judged. Other times I'm not sure what's stopping me.

After many conversations I find myself critically analysing my actions. Was I too quiet? I should have said this. Why didn't I say that? I always hesitate to knock on staffroom doors, standing awkwardly outside for a good thirty seconds. Other times I open my mouth to say something, but the words just don't come out. Despite this, sometimes I find the courage to speak and join in with my friends.

These are the good days. Days when I can have small one-on-one conversations or add to a group conversation. Days when I don't even feel nervous or scared to speak my thoughts. Days when I come home from school smiling and proud of myself for stepping out of my comfort zone. Whenever I'm having a bad day, I try to remind myself of the small accomplishments I've made which bring me closer, one step at a time, to being more confident. I remember that I have good friends who have stuck with me, undeterred my shyness and happy to have me around.

Battling shyness is tough, but every win brings me closer to victory.