

ANSWERS

TOPIC 1 THE MAGIC OF GIVING

2 Novel

(Suggested answer)

Dear Mr Kilmer

An important message in *Dear Mr Kilmer* by Anne Schraff is that war is very cruel and it leaves behind very painful results. The whole novel is set during the First World War. The people and the students discuss the war and what it does to families. There is so much emotion and pain. One event that shows this is when Roland's name is brought up in the Knight's household. Roland is Richard's uncle who died in the war. Richard's father cannot bear to discuss his pain of losing his brother. He feels that a world died when his brother died. He was not a 'slight casualty' as the papers described.

Gus, Richard's older brother, wishes to join the army to fight in the war but his father is against it. Richard knows that the soldiers live in trenches and have to put up with frightful conditions. The chances of being killed are very high. In addition, living through war conditions sometimes makes people deaf or crazy. Nevertheless, Gus enlists to join the army immediately after he graduates from high school, but he is too late to fight in this war as the war had ended when he starts training.

In an essay written by Hannah Schemer, she says that the enemy in the war is war itself. It leaves hatred and horror behind. War is evil as it breaks up families and brings about unnecessary deaths, especially of young men and women. The price is very high. The world needs 'peace without victory' as President Wilson says.

Another instance that shows the cruelty of war is when Joyce Kilmer dies. Kilmer gets killed in the war and the news devastates Richard, as the war causes him to lose a dear friend. Both Richard and Kilmer feel that there should be no wars, and instead there must be peace and understanding.

Sing to the Dawn

An important message that I have learned from *Sing to the Dawn* by Minfong Ho is that one needs a great deal of courage to go through life. It is all too easy to give up and to say that life is unfair and that you can't make it. However, those are weak excuses and will not do in reality.

Dawan proves that one has to be strong and fight for what one wants in life. She wins a scholarship to further her studies in a city school, but faces many obstacles. Her father believes that education is unnecessary for girls, so he forbids Dawan from accepting the scholarship. He is very disappointed that Kwai, Dawan's brother, does not win the scholarship.

If Dawan refuses the scholarship, then Kwai will be able to study in the city. However, Dawan too has her own dreams to achieve. In order to fulfil her dreams, she goes to many people for help. Unfortunately, her cousin Noi and her husband Ghan let her down as they say that the city is evil and not suitable for a young girl. The old monk whom she hopes would support her is very set in his ways and thinks that girls do not need an education.

Dawan's mother is afraid and will not support her. The only family member that would support Dawan is her grandmother. Her grandmother encourages her to study and do well. Strangely, Bao, who is uneducated, is very supportive of Dawan. She gives Dawan the courage to fight for her right to study.

Later on, Dawan talks to her brother and speaks up for her dreams. That opens Kwai's eyes and he realises that Dawan should have a chance to further her studies in the city school that will change her life. This shows that Kwai has the courage to change his mind and give up hopes of getting the scholarship.

Throughout the novel, Dawan stays determined to go to the city

school and that courage keeps her on the route to success.

TOPIC 2 EVERYWHERE FOR EVERYONE

SPM PRACTICE 4

2 Novel

(Suggested answer)

Dear Mr Kilmer

In *Dear Mr Kilmer* by Anne Schraff, Richard Knight's relationship with his father improves over the course of time. Richard's father is a firm and reserved person, so he seems disappointed and disapproves of some things that Richard does throughout this novel.

At the beginning of the story, Richard goes on a hunting trip with his father and brother. When his father tells him to shoot a buck, he could not bring himself to do it. So he purposely misses. Richard and his father have a small talk regarding the incident, and his father tells him not to join their hunting trips if he does not like it. It is clear that his father is greatly disappointed with him.

Later, Richard decides to reveal his passion for poetry. His father is indifferent and unimpressed. This time, it is Richard's turn to feel disappointed, but he is not discouraged.

When Mr Kilmer is killed in the war, Richard writes a poem as a tribute. This poem is published in the local newspaper. Richard worries that his father is going to be angry at him. To his surprise, his father reads and understands his poem well. It is this poem that prompted Richard's father to reveal the story about Richard's uncle, Roland, who was killed in a war in Cuba. Richard's father finally recognises his passion for poetry writing and allows him to continue doing what he loves. So, Richard continues writing poems about farm life for the local newspaper. He even read his poems aloud to his father every night, and his father would give suggestions to improve the poems.

In a nutshell, Richard and his father do not have a close relationship in the beginning, but as time passes, his determination finally changes their relationship for the better.

Sing to the Dawn

In *Sing to the Dawn* by Minfong Ho, the main character that changes for the better is Kwai. Kwai is Dawan's younger brother. In the beginning of the story, Kwai shares a close relationship with his sister. They would watch the sun rise together as they talk about their fears and dreams. In fact, Kwai loves his sister so much that he persuades their father to allow Dawan to go to school with him.

All these change when Dawan wins the scholarship to study in the city. After the winner is announced, Kwai stalks out of the classrooms. It is obvious that Kwai is jealous of his sister and is unable to be happy for her.

Later on, Kwai discovers that he ranks second in the scholarship list. He considers telling his father, knowing he would make Dawan give up her scholarship so Kwai could accept it instead. He is conflicted between his wishes and his sister's.

In the marketplace, Kwai defends and saves Bao from her brother, Vichai's abuse. After the incident, Bao does not appreciate his help and calls him a liar for not accepting his sister's decision to accept the scholarship. Kwai becomes angry and accidentally hurts Dawan. He feels guilty and runs away to the bridge where he and his sister would often go. There, he clears up his misunderstanding with Dawan. In the end, he stands up for Dawan and informs his father that he would not accept the scholarship even if he makes Dawan give it up. So, Kwai's father relents and allows Dawan to accept the scholarship.

It is clear throughout the novel that Kwai changes significantly and for the better. He was angry and jealous in the beginning, but finally accepts that his sister is going to study in the city. When Dawan leaves for the city, he sits on the same old bridge and sings the song they shared on the bridge before, as he watches her leave.

TOPIC 3 PREVENTION IS BETTER THAN CURE

SPM PRACTICE 4

2 Novel

(Suggested answer)

Dear Mr Kilmer

The character I admire in *Dear Mr. Kilmer* by Anne Schraff is Richard. Richard is a very sensitive person who stands for all the good values that we want to see in good, decent people.

He is considerate and kind. He sees that his sister is tired from doing the housework and does chores to reduce her workload. He does more than his share of work in the farm as he does not shun work. He is responsible and earns the respect of the other workers.

Richard stands up for those victimized by society. He supports Hannah when she is harassed for being a German in a country that is fighting Germany at this point. When Hannah's father's tavern is vandalized, Richard is the only one who signs a sympathy card to show his support. He gives up his position as Doughboy to show his support when Hannah declines the position of Lady Liberty as the other students resent her. He faces insults and the boys fight him, but he is brave and makes a strong stand on her behalf.

He is sensitive and writes poems. He writes to Kilmer and shares his poems as they both are kindred souls with similar thoughts and passions. He is devastated when Kilmer is killed in the war. Only poetry gives him strength and the determination to go on.

I admire Richard for being brave and doing what he believes in. He doesn't just follow the crowd, he does what he thinks is right.

Sing to the Dawn

In the novel *Sing to the Dawn* I admire the character Dawan. I admire her because she is smart and very determined in achieving her dreams.

Dawan and her brother, Kwai took an examination together. They thought Kwai would get first place and get the scholarship to study in the city. However it is Dawan who gets first place in the examination and is offered the scholarship.

When Kwai finds out that Dawan gets the first place while he gets the second place he is not happy. He does not support Dawan studying in the city. Dawan's father too is not happy that Dawan got the scholarship. He feels that it is a waste to send girls to further their studies. He too feels that Dawan stole the opportunity from Kwai. Therefore, he forbids Dawan from going to study in the city.

All these obstacles do not deter Dawan from pursuing her dreams. She goes and asks her cousin, Noi who had worked in the city to persuade her father to let her go. Noi however said that going to the city was useless and does not want to help Dawan. Dawan then goes and asks an old monk to talk to her father about sending her to study in the city. The old monk does not really see why Dawan should go to the city school. Later Kwai realises that Dawan deserves to go to the city school. He and Dawan both persuade their father to let her go. In the end Dawan's father gave his blessings for Dawan to study in the city school.

I admire Dawan because even though at first no one supported her dreams she did not give up. Finally she achieved her dreams.

TOPIC 4 TECHNOLOGY AND US

SPM PRACTICE 4

2 Novel

(Suggested answer)

Dear Mr Kilmer

In the novel *Dear Mr Kilmer*, an event that changed the life of Richard Knight was Mr Kilmer's death. After this event, Richard began writing poetry for the local newspaper and this strengthened his relationship with his father.

Richard is a farm boy and although he likes working on his father's farm he enjoys writing poetry too. He keeps his poetry writing a secret from his family as he is afraid they will not approve. One day at school, Richard's English teacher, Mrs Hansen reads a poem to the class titled "Trees" by Joyce Kilmer. Richard decides to write and ask Mr Kilmer for advice on whether to tell his family about his poetry writing. Mr Kilmer encourages

him to do so. Richard then told his family about his passion for writing poetry. His family, however is not interested.

Richard continues to write to Mr Kilmer and share his poetry with him. One day Richard finds out that Mr Kilmer has been killed in the war. Richard is devastated. This is also a turning point for Richard. He writes a poem as a tribute to Mr Kilmer. The poem is then printed in the local newspaper, "The Turtle Lake Weekly" and Richard's father reads it. At first Richard was afraid that his father would be angry with him. However, his father begins talking about what happened to Richard's uncle, Roland who had been killed in a war in Cuba. His father finally realises how important poetry could be. He begins supporting Richard's passion for poetry.

The event that changes Richard's life is tragic but it allows him to freely express himself through poetry and it strengthens his ties with his father.

Sing to the Dawn

In the novel *Sing to the Dawn* an event that changed Dawan's life was when she places first in the examination and is offered a scholarship to study in the city. It makes her determined to follow her dreams.

When Dawan first finds out that she has won the scholarship to study in the city she is overjoyed. However, her family, especially her father and brother, Kwai do not share her joy. Her father feels that education is wasted on a girl. He also feels that Dawan has stolen the opportunity from Kwai. Therefore he forbid Dawan from going to study in the city. Kwai too feels that he should be the one to go and study in the city.

Dawan, however, disagrees. She feels that she can do a lot of good for the village if she takes up the scholarship. She then asks her cousin, Noi who had once worked in the city, to persuade her father to let her go to the city. But Noi feels that the city is not a good place and refuses to help Dawan. Dawan does not give up and goes to ask for help from an old monk but he agrees with Dawan's father. In the end, Kwai

realises that Dawan deserves to go to the school in the city. He and Dawan then both persuade their father to let her go. Finally, Dawan's father gave his blessings for Dawan to study in the city school.

Winning the scholarship allows Dawan an opportunity to get an education and perhaps change the fate of her family and the people in her village. It is indeed an important event will forever change her life.

TOPIC 5 IN OUR HANDS

SPM PRACTICE 4

2 Novel

(Suggested answer)

Dear Mr Kilmer

The novel I have read is *Dear Mr Kilmer* by Anne Schraff. The most important moral value that I have learned from the novel is that one should not give in to other people's influences but stand up for oneself. It is not important to fit in with others.

Gus fits in with his family and school easily. He goes hunting because his father and grandfather did it. Richard, on the other hand, does not like hunting or killing animals. When Gus pushes Richard to try for the baseball team, Richard does not give in as he has no interest in sports or games.

Richard writes poems, something which many people think is 'sissy' but he finds support in his teacher and Mr Kilmer who prove that reading or writing poems is not for the weak or the wimpy.

In class, Richard stands up for Hannah whom others ostracize because she is a German – America was fighting with Germany at the time. For example, Richard is the only student in his class to sign the card to express sympathy for Hannah's family when their tavern is vandalised. He is brave enough to stand up against his whole class. Others in the class warn him not to be an oddball but Richard will have none of that. He gets into a fight with Abner and Harry because of his stand.

In another event, Richard decides to give up a role in a school play because Hannah is forced to decline hers due to the resentment of the other students. Richard's decision is made to show his support to Hannah. He stands firm by his

decision even when his classmates insult him and call him a traitor. He has a strong sense of responsibility and conscience. He is not afraid to be different.

All these events show that Richard does not simply follow the crowd when he thinks it is the wrong thing to do, even if it means not fitting in with his family and schoolmates. So, I have learned that one must be courageous and stand up for what one believes in. It is not necessary to follow the crowd or give in to peer pressure.

Sing to the Dawn

The most important moral value that I have learned from *Sing to the Dawn* by Minfong Ho is that we should not be afraid of change. Change is inevitable in life. We need to change in order to move forward.

Despite her determination to study in the city, Dawan's grandmother senses that Dawan feels some reservations about going there. She talks to Dawan and imparts an important lesson. Just as a lotus needs sunlight and water in order to bloom, Dawan needs to attend school in the city in order to realise her potential and live life to the fullest.

Dawan's grandmother assures her that there is a beautiful pattern to all the changes, even when she is unsure if she should embrace them. Certainly, Dawan will have to change in order to survive in the city but her grandmother assures her that she could still return to the village to be the girl that she used to be. Dawan may not return the same person as she is now but that is part and parcel of life. We change and mature, hopefully for the better.

TOPIC 6 GIFT OF THE HEART

SPM PRACTICE 4

2 Novel

(Suggested answer)

Captain Nobody

I like the ending of the story *Captain Nobody* by Dean Pitchford. The story ends on an exciting note. Newt, the neglected kid in the novel is finally vindicated when he is acknowledged as a 'hero' by the town's newspaper for his daring role in the Water Tower event.

The novel begins with Newt

preparing breakfast for his family but they are all too busy to even touch it. During Halloween, Newt joins his best friends, JJ and Cecil dressed in some fancy costumes. For a little boy who is often overlooked at home and ignored in school, it seems fitting that Newt calls himself Captain Nobody. It seems to have a magical effect on Newt because whenever he is dressed as Captain Nobody, he is quickly drawn into adventures beyond his wildest imagination.

By the end of the story, the entire town of Appleton finally gets to know the 'hero' behind the strange happenings. The town learns that it is Captain Nobody who sent Mr Clay home after finding him on the street. It is also Captain Nobody who foiled the robbery at Mr Sullivan's Jewellery Store, rescued Ferret the Ferocious and prevented a plane from crashing on the highway. Of course, the most dramatic episode is when Captain Nobody rescues Reggie Ratner from the Water Tower and clears his name. The best and most important event towards the end of the novel is when Newt brings his older brother, Chris, out of his coma.

The ending is delightful and satisfying. I really like it because Newt is no longer an invisible and neglected boy but a famous 'somebody' in Appleton.

Sing to the Dawn

I like the ending of the story *Sing to the Dawn* by Minfong Ho. The end brings to a conclusion the whole issue of Dawan getting a scholarship and whether she should go to a school in the city or not.

She has a father who thinks that education is not important for girls and wishes that his son had won the scholarship instead, but he allows her to go to the city school in the end. Dawan's brother, Kwai is very unhappy that he didn't get the scholarship. Furthermore, he placed second which means that if Dawan declines the offer, he can go to the city. But now he comes to accept the idea that Dawan should go and they make peace. She tells him to sing her morning song to the dawn. Her brother weeps.

Her grandmother clears her

lingering doubts and uncertainties and tells her that she is like a lotus bud which has yet to bloom. She gives her a bud and tells her to watch what happens.

Dawan gets on the bus to the city and there are many people to see her off. But she cannot see Kwai in that crowd and she strains her neck to catch a glimpse of him. Then she sees him sitting on the rickety bridge and singing her song that they sing every morning. She sings together with him and all too soon the bus goes past him. But she understands things better. As the sun streaks into the bus, the lotus bud unfolds.

It is a heart-warming ending because the siblings understand each other better now. Dawan is happy to start her new life in the city and she will come back one day to the village she grew up in. I like the ending as it gives much hope for a better life for Dawan and Kwai. There will be changes in everyone's lives and many will be for the better.

TOPIC 7 A LEARNING COMMUNITY

SPM PRACTICE 4

2 Novel

(Suggested answer)

Dear Mr Kilmer

In *Dear Mr Kilmer* by Anne Schraff, the event where Richard writes a poem as a tribute to Mr Kilmer is one that I find very interesting. Joyce Kilmer is Richard's pen pal before he is killed in the war between the Allies and the Germans.

Richard is introduced to Mr Kilmer when his homeroom teacher, Mrs Hansen, reads a poem entitled 'Trees' written by Mr Kilmer. He is impressed by the thoughts expressed in the poem, so he begins a correspondence with Mr Kilmer. In his first letter to Mr Kilmer, Richard tells him about his love for his simple poems and reveals that he too, writes poems. Richard does not expect any reply from Mr Kilmer, so he is very surprised when he receives a letter from him. From then on, they begin exchanging letters.

Richard will always send a poem with his letters. Mr Kilmer will praise Richard and provide suggestions to improve his poem. In their later correspondence, Richard asks Mr Kilmer if he should reveal

his secret – poem writing – to everybody. Mr Kilmer encourages Richard to overcome his fear and share his poetry with everyone around him. Richard accepts Mr Kilmer's advice and shares his poems with his family and friends. Even though not everyone shares his passion for poetry, Richard is not discouraged.

Sergeant Kilmer's death greatly upsets Richard and prompts him to write a poem entitled 'In Memory of Sergeant Joyce Kilmer'. This poem is printed in the local newspaper, 'The Turtle Lake Weekly'. Initially, Richard is afraid that his father is going to be angry at him since his father does not like Richard writing poems. However, once Richard's father reads the poem, he finally tells Richard about what happened to Richard's uncle, Roland. Richard's father regards Roland as his 'world', just like Richard regards Mr Kilmer as his. It is through this poem that Richard's father finally accepts and supports Richard's passion in writing poetry.

This is an interesting event to me because this poem mends the rift between Richard and his father. Richard's father has never bothered about Richard's poems before and he gets angry when Richard brings them up. However, this particular poem that Richard writes as a tribute to Mr Kilmer has made his father divulge the story about his uncle, Roland – a story that he has never told Richard or Gus. Richard's father even supports Richard's passion in writing poetry soon after.

Captain Nobody

In the novel *Captain Nobody* by Dean Pitchford, an event that I find interesting is when Reggie Ratner gets the blame for causing Chris' coma. He is harassed by the players and students of Fillmore High School. Reggie is very upset by all the commotion. One day, Reggie climbs the tall Water Tower – causing great alarm because people think he wants to commit suicide. The townspeople gather at the base screaming for him to come down. Soon, the police arrive and the media helicopters circle the tower for a good view of Merrimac's top

football player looking rather confused by all the attention.

Reggie does not know that the whole town believes that he wants to take his own life for causing Chris' coma. In truth, Reggie only went up there to spray the tower with slogans from Merrimac High and to 'think'. Around the same time, Newt finally remembers that it is Darryl Peeps who knocked out Chris during the Big Game. So, Newt dresses up as Captain Nobody and go up the tower to tell Reggie the truth before he jumps.

When he reaches Reggie, Newt realises that Reggie's left foot is actually stuck in a hole. Captain Nobody goes into action and frees Reggie's foot. Then, he helps him down the tower. Just as they are about to reach the bottom, Reggie panics and they both fall. Newt is crushed under Reggie's 280-pound body, which breaks his ankle and a couple of his ribs.

The reason I find this event interesting is because Newt, a tiny 10-year-old, goes to the rescue of a seventh-grader freeing him from a tight spot and also freeing him of blame. I think Newt, who is also known as Captain Nobody, is very brave and he is the real hero.

TOPIC 8 ARE YOU AT RISK? SPM PRACTICE 4

2 Novel

Dear Mr Kilmer

A challenge that Richard Knight has to face in *Dear Mr Kilmer* by Anne Schraff is fitting in with society. Richard is a sensitive and gentle person. He loves poetry and writes poems from time to time.

Richard also loves animals. He cannot bring himself to shoot a buck when his father tells him to. He purposely misses his target, which upsets his brother and disappoints his father. When his father asks him why he does it, Richard tells him that he feels awful to kill a beautiful animal like the buck. So, his father tells him not to go hunting anymore if he does not like it. This shows that Richard is the black sheep of the family, as it has been a tradition in his family that males have to go hunting. Instead, Richard prefers to daydream and write poems.

One day, Mrs Hansen, his homeroom teacher, asks the class to

sign a card for the Schermers. The Schermers is a German family who moved to Iowa a few years ago. Someone has vandalised the tavern owned by Hannah's father, Mr Schermer. So, Mrs Hansen buys a card to express regret for what has happened and asks the class to sign it. Nobody wants to sign it out of spite or fear. Only Richard does. He even offers to bring the card to Hannah. This incident basically isolates him from the rest of his schoolmates.

Then, Richard shares his secret about poetry writing with his family, but they remain unimpressed and his father tells him that he can continue as long as it does not interfere with his chores. When he does the same with his schoolmates, some of them think that writing poetry is for 'sissies' and ridicule Richard's passion.

In the end, Richard stands by what he loves and believes is right. He does not try to fit in by changing himself or stop doing what he likes.

Captain Nobody

In *Captain Nobody* by Dean Pitchford, a challenge that Newt Newman has to face is overcoming his fear of heights. He has to face this fear twice in the novel.

The first time Newt has to overcome his fear is when Cecil, one of his best friend, asks him to retrieve the bass drum from the top of a Dumpster. Newt is reluctant at first, but he convinces himself that he has to help his best friend because nobody else will. He also tells himself that Captain Nobody is a fearless hero.

Newt faces his fear again when he has to climb the Appleton water tower to save Reggie Ratner. The entire town of Appleton thinks that Reggie Ratner is trying takes his own life when in actuality Reggie only went up there to spray the tower with slogans from Merrimac High and to 'think'. However, before Reggie can carry out his plan, his foot breaks through the rotten roof and gets stuck. Around the same time, Newt finally remembers that Reggie is not the one who put Chris into a coma. It is actually Darryl Peeps. So, Newt decides to save Reggie and reveal the truth to him. In order to do that, Newt has to

climb the water tower. He is terrified as he climbs the tower, but is determined to save Reggie so he bravely continues his climb upwards.

It may seem insignificant that Newt only has to face his fear twice throughout this novel, but I believe it is a great feat for a 10-year-old boy. It is really admirable that Newt finally conquers his fear of height at the end of the novel.

TOPIC 9 VIEW FROM AFAR SPM PRACTICE 4

2 Novel

(Suggested answer)

Captain Nobody

In my opinion, the title 'Captain Nobody' is relevant to the novel. The novel is about Newt (Newton) Newman, a boy who is mostly ignored and unappreciated. Newt is a skinny, freckled, ten-year-old boy. With workaholic parents and an older brother who is a high school football star, Newt feels left out.

When a very important football game ends with his brother, Chris, goes into a coma, Newt feels even more left out as his parents spend most of their time with their eldest son at the hospital. To cheer him up, Newt's two best friends help him create a Halloween costume from Chris' old clothes.

The costume gives Newt self-confidence. Dressed in his costume, Newt finds himself helping an elderly man return home, stopping a robbery, and accidentally clearing a freeway in time for an aeroplane to make an emergency landing.

In his final adventure as Captain Nobody, Newt helps a football player from a rival high school. The incident ends with Newt in the hospital, next to his unconscious brother. He somehow manages to wake his brother up, much to everyone's surprise. Newt is hailed a hero for all his good deeds. It is a happy day for a boy who has been invisible almost all his life.

I believe that the title is relevant to the novel because the entire novel revolves around Newt whose alter ego is Captain Nobody. He takes on many challenges – whether intentionally or accidentally, as Captain Nobody.

Sing to the Dawn

Sing to the Dawn is about Dawan, a young Thai girl who wins a scholarship to pursue her studies in the city. In my opinion, 'Sing to the Dawn' is a relevant title to the novel.

In the story, Dawan is about to take the first step towards a new life or 'a new dawn'. As the story develops, she faces many obstacles. When she finally overcomes all those obstacles, she goes on her way singing to the new dawn, in a new place.

Another reason why I think the title is relevant to the novel is because at the beginning of the story, Dawan and her brother get up very early. As they greet the dawn, Dawan sings a song she made up herself. They are excited because it is the day the winner of the scholarship is announced. Whoever wins the scholarship will be able to improve the lives of everyone in the village with all the knowledge gained from an education in the city. It will be a 'new dawn' for the village too.

The title is relevant to the novel because Dawan hopes to bring a new dawn to the village. She hopes to help the villagers enjoy a better life. At the same time, Dawan, being the first girl from the village to get the chance to further her studies, shows a new dawn for the girls. It is the first step in bringing gender equality to the village.

The story ends with Dawan's departure for the city. Dawan asks Kwai to continue singing her song on the old bridge whenever he can. They both realise that nothing will be the same again. As the bus leaves the village, Dawan hears Kwai's voice singing her dawn song. She sings along with him and waves goodbye. For all these reasons, I think 'Sing to the Dawn' is a relevant title for the novel.

TOPIC 10 EARTH MATTERS

2 Novel

Dear Mr Kilmer

The character that supports his family in every way in *Dear Mr Kilmer* by Anne Schraff is Richard Knight. It may not be clear in the beginning of the story, but it shows as the story progresses.

Richard's mother died at a very young age, so Angie, Richard's sister has to leave school after eighth grade

and immediately takes on the role of a full-time farm woman. She spends her days cooking, cleaning, washing, and sewing. Richard helps Angie with house chores because he wants to ease his sister's work load.

Richard enjoys working alongside his father in the field and helps around whenever he can. He often does twice the amount of work on the farm because his older brother, Gus, is busy with sports. In the first chapter, when Gus protests that being on the football team has not kept him from doing farm work, Richard wants to retort but he does not. This indicates that Richard wants to keep peace with his family and is determined to support his family in any way he can.

After Richard's poem entitled 'In Memory of Sergeant Joyce Kilmer' is published in the local newspapers, his father finally recognises his love for poetry writing. Richard continues writing poems about farm life for the local newspaper and at the same time does his chores on the farm. He spends his nights reading his poems aloud to his father. He accepts his father's criticism in order to improve his craft. This shows that Richard never forgets his roots and still supports his family as much as possible.

In conclusion, family should support their loved ones in every difficult situation just like Richard Knight does with his family.

Sing to the Dawn

The character in the novel *Sing to the Dawn* who supports their loved ones regardless of the situation is Kwai. Kwai is the younger brother of the protagonist, Dawan. Kwai actually shares a close relationship with his sister. He enjoys watching sunrise with her and often listens to his sister's opinion. It is Kwai who persuades their father to allow Dawan to study alongside him. This shows that Kwai is supportive of his sister regardless of her gender.

When Kwai finds out that Dawan has secured a scholarship to further her studies, he feels angry and jealous. Nonetheless, when Kwai inadvertently hurts Dawan as he tries to help Bao, he attempts to tend to her wound. However,

Dawan jerks her leg away. Kwai feels guilty and runs away. This is a clear indication that Kwai loves his sister even when he is feeling jealous of her. If he is truly selfish, he will not have felt guilt or tried to help his sister.

Later on, Kwai talks to Dawan and clears up his misunderstanding with her. Subsequently, he supports Dawan's decision to accept the scholarship and stands up for her. He tells his father that he will not accept the scholarship even if Dawan gives it up. Their father finally gives in and lets Dawan study in the city.

TOPIC 11 NOTHING IS IMPOSSIBLE

SPM PRACTICE 4

2 Novel

(Suggested answer)

Captain Nobody

In *Captain Nobody* by Dean Pitchford, the character who did not give up their dream despite the obstacles is Newton Newman. Newt's dream is to change himself from someone who is invisible to others into someone who is recognised by others.

At home, Newt's parents often neglects him. They would be so busy answering phones that they do not even have time to enjoy the breakfast Newt prepares for them every morning. In school, Newt's schoolmates would look right through him and ignore him – not knowing he is the younger brother of the famous football star, Chris Newman. His schoolmates would shove him and his close friends – Cecil and JJ, away from the water fountain, slide their food off the table, and squeeze them out of their seats.

Despite the obstacles, Newt begins to realize his dream when he starts going around wearing the Captain Nobody costume. It is then that all his schoolmates and teachers started to notice him.

Later on, Newt becomes famous in his town when he appears on the news because of the good deeds that he did to help others as Captain Nobody. First, he foiled a robbery when he was just trying to advise the store owner about the sign boards. Then, he unintentionally

saved an aeroplane from crashing. Lastly, he saved Reggie Ratner from 'committing suicide'.

In the end, Newt's effort in becoming Captain Nobody made his dream a reality even when his father and teachers tried to stop him from wearing the costume. Newt finally changed from someone who is invisible to all into a hero.

Sing to the Dawn

The novel that I have read is *Sing to the Dawn* by Minfong Ho. Dawan, the protagonist of this novel, did not give up her dream to study in the city despite the many challenges she faced. She wants to study in the city so she could gain knowledge that will help her family and the people in her village.

Dawan is an intelligent girl who obtains good marks in school. One day, she wins a scholarship to study in a school in the city. One of the greatest challenges that she has to face in order to fulfil her dream is to persuade her father to allow her to accept the scholarship. Dawan's father forbids Dawan to accept the scholarship as he believes that education is unnecessary for girls. He wants Dawan to reject the offer.

However, Dawan is determined to find a way that would allow her to accept the scholarship. Firstly, she walks about 3 km under the scorching sun to her cousin, Noi's house, with her mother. Dawan hopes that Noi could convince her father to allow her to study in the city since Noi once lived in the city. Unfortunately, Noi talks negatively about the city and would not help Dawan as she hoped. Next, Dawan visits the head monk at the temple. She thinks that the head monk could convince her father since her father respects the old monk's opinion. However, the head monk refuses to help as well. He, too, believes that girls do not need to be educated.

In the end, Dawan's perseverance pays off as her brother, Kwai decides to support her dream to study in the city. He is able to convince their father to allow Dawan to accept the scholarship instead of him. He tells his father that he will not accept the scholarship even if Dawan gives it up. So, his father finally relents and

allows Dawan to pursue her dream. This shows that one can achieve their dreams as long as they do not give up even in the face of various obstacles.

TOPIC 12 THEN AND NOW SPM PRACTICE 4

2 Novel

(Suggested answer)

Captain Nobody

In the novel *Captain Nobody*, a good role model for teenagers is Chris Newman. I think he possesses qualities that many teenagers should have. Chris has a good relationship with his younger brother, is humble and forgiving.

Chris has a good relationship with Newt. We can see this from the way Newt feels so proud when he reads about his brother in the newspapers. We can also see it from the way Chris reacts when Newt sprayed him with cold water to wake him up. Another example is his habit of going to Newt's room to switch off the lights before Newt goes to sleep. Finally, when Chris praises his sketches, Newt is very happy and proud; happier and prouder than when he was cheered by the people at the parade or when he received the key to the city from the mayor. All these show us that Chris has a good relationship with Newt.

Chris is a humble boy. For example, even though he has led the football team to a Big Game victory twice, he does not consider himself a hero. As he tells Newt, his success in football is just because he 'happened to be in the right place at the right time'. He also refuses to be in the victory parade, but instead says Newt should lead the victory parade in his place because Newt is a hero. Not only that, he also thinks it is funny when a sweet old couple do not know that he is a football star but instead knows his younger brother. We can see that Chris is a humble boy despite his fame.

Chris is a forgiving person. He does not have any hard feelings for Darryl Peeps, who knocked him unconscious and sent him into a coma. As he says in an interview, 'It's all part of the game'. I think this is an admirable trait that

everyone, not just teenagers, should have.

In conclusion, Chris is a good role model for teenagers. He possesses traits that every teenager should have; a good relationship with his sibling, humility and a willingness to forgive.

Sing to the Dawn

In the novel *Sing to the Dawn* by Minfong Ho, a good role model for teenagers is Dawan. This is because she is intelligent, determined and brave. In the following paragraphs, I will discuss this with close reference to the text.

Dawan is an intelligent girl. Despite starting school late, she always gets good marks in school. In fact, she wins a scholarship to study in a school in the city. Another example is the way she questions why the landlord takes the rice that the whole village has worked for the whole year. This is a question that no one has thought to ask. This shows that Dawan has the intelligence to think and see an injustice in society, and ask questions about it.

Dawan is a brave girl. Despite opposition from her father, her brother, her cousin and the head monk, she does her best to pursue her dream of studying in the city so she could gain knowledge that will help her family and the people in her village. Her father wants her to give up her place for her brother, Kwai. However, Dawan stands her ground.

Dawan is a determined girl. She lives in a community where education is not considered important for girls. Everyone around her considers a girl's place is in the home. Dawan is able to go to school only because her younger brother insisted that she be allowed to go to school with him. When everyone tells her she cannot succeed because she is a girl, Dawan does not give up. She is determined to prove that she is as good as her brother, that she can 'fight and argue and lead, and help make a better place' for her family and the villagers to live in.

In conclusion, Dawan is a good role model for teenagers. She possesses traits that every teenager should have; intelligence, determination and bravery.

SPM MODEL TEST

PAPER 2

Section D

33 (Suggested answer)

Dear Mr Kilmer

I like the ending of the novel *Dear Mr Kilmer*. Even though there is a lot of sadness and some death in the novel, the story ends on a happy note.

Towards the end of the novel, Mr Kilmer dies while fighting in France. His death brings untold grief to Richard Knight. However, he did not die in vain. Due to his sacrifices and also that of many Americans soldiers, World War I comes to an end. Kilmer's letters and poems live on in our hearts as messages of peace.

After the death of Mr Kilmer, Richard composes a poem as a tribute to him. The poem praises Joyce Kilmer and also expresses the private grief every reader has for his loved ones. One of the readers is Richard's own father. He has grieved privately for many years over his brother's death in another war. This poem touches his heart and he finally accepts Richard love for poetry. The poem heals

Richard's father's old wounds and brings son and father closer together.

After the poem is published in the local newspaper, Richard is recognised as a promising poet by the local community. The Turtle Lake Weekly gives him a weekly column for his poems. The novel also ends with a strong impression that Hannah and Richard will end up together.

I like the ending because in the end, even though Joyce Kilmer dies, he does not die in vain. His death triggers a series of events which allowed Richard and his father to get to know each other better and become closer. In addition, Richard becomes well-known in his community for his poems.

Sing to the Dawn

I like the ending of the novel *Sing to the Dawn* because it not only has a happy ending but an emotional one as well. The main character went through hardships but in the end triumphed.

In the beginning, even though Dawan wins a scholarship to study in the city, her father forbids her to

go. However in the end, he gives her his blessing and she leaves for the city to take up her scholarship to study there. After all the obstacles she faced, this is indeed a great victory for her. Dawan receives her grandmother's blessing too. Before Dawan leaves, at the ritual prayer her grandmother gives her a lotus bud and explains its significance. Therefore, Dawan leaves with spiritual strength.

When Dawan is about to leave she looks around for Kwai but she cannot find him. She then boards the bus and as the bus passes the river, Dawan sees her brother. He is waving joyously to her. Dawan is overjoyed as this is the moment she has been waiting for. She realises at that moment that Kwai loves and cares for her. Dawan feels happy that her family is fully united in their moral support for her. It is really a touching scene.

The ending is happy because Dawan finally gets her father's blessing to study in the city. Her grandmother too gives her spiritual blessing and finally Kwai shows how much he loves and cares for his sister.