**http://lawleryr12.weebly.com/91100-unfamiliar-text.html**

**QUESTION ONE: NON-FICTION**

Refer to Text A, “A Transit of Venus”, on page 2 of the resource booklet to answer this question.

Analyse how the writer describes his experiences of science, and his understanding that the boundaries of scientific discovery are expanding.

In your answer you should:

* identify and give examples of techniques used in the text, and explain their effects (techniques might include syntax, similes, and metaphors)
* show understanding of the key ideas that the writer is presenting
* show understanding of the writer’s overall purpose.

**TEXT A: NON-FICTION**

This passage refers to the transit of Venus (the movement of that planet across the face of the Sun) that occurred in 2012, an event previously witnessed by Captain James Cook in 1769. The author reflects on the role of science in his life and the changing nature of scientific discovery.

**A Transit of Venus**

I watched a transit of Venus, once upon a time.

I had chosen for my viewing post a small clearing, on a low, bush-clad promontory above a sweeping beach. The night before, a winter storm had pummelled the coast, dusting the mountains with snow. In its wake the sky was cloudless and transparent. Below me, lingering Tasman Sea swells crashed against a tottering finger of rock, their white foam unexpectedly 5 bright in the gathering morning light.

My observatory was small but versatile. Two telescopes, binoculars, hand-held dark filters for unmagnified naked-eye viewing. Cook and his sponsors were driven by curiosity: so was I. I watched for thirty minutes as Venus gradually revealed her presence, becoming visible by concealment, masking part of the Sun. First a tiny sliver, hinted at rather than seen; then an 10 obvious bite out of the Sun, like a small chip in a dinner plate; finally a tangible midnight disc, kissing the Sun from within and then detaching. Her full journey across the Sun would take six hours. In the months leading up to the transit I realised I had been anticipating the event, deep in my subconscious, since first reading about it in a childhood astronomy book fifty years ago and realising it would happen within my lifetime. I felt no need to hurry. 15

Children from the twenty-strong local school called by on their way home, fluttering like fantails, well aware of what they were seeing. The hand-held filters were a big hit.

“The Sun is so small!” “It’s round, just like the Moon!”

Earlier in the day, the class had used the transit to talk about scale, in time as well as distance. 20 Our lifetimes are getting longer, their teacher suggested.

Our journey into the twenty-first century can be likened to a voyage of discovery, but it is very different from what confronted the *Endeavour*. The world beyond the edge of Cook’s charts was unknown, but not unknowable. The technology of the day sufficed. The blanks on the map were finite, and the compass showed where to find them. As the known world 25 expanded, the unknown world shrank.

Not so the coming century. Our awareness of rapid and irresistible technological change is pervasive. As the children had just learned, horizons can be defined by time as well as by space. The ocean in front of us is measured not by latitude and longitude, but by dimensions made from technologies we have yet to discover, pointing along axes that we cannot yet 30 discern. And it might as well be infinite.

**Glossed words**

promontory = a prominent piece of land that juts out into the sea pervasive = widespread