

Augustine's English Classes

Where Structure and Challenge Build Confidence.

PSLE ENGLISH COMPOSITION 2026

THE 3-STORY ENGINE

Three Evergreen Model Compositions

A Student + Parent Guide

**LEARN THE STORY ARCHITECTURE.
CHANGE THE DETAILS TO FIT THE QUESTION.**

MODEL 1 I MADE A MISTAKE	Mistake → Trouble → Fix → Change
MODEL 2 I FACED A CHALLENGE	Goal → Problem → Struggle → Breakthrough → Outcome
MODEL 3 SOMEONE CHANGED ME	Person → Problem → Discovery → Response → Meaning

Use the story engine first. Then fit it to the examination question with:

TOPIC → PICTURE → PROBLEM → CLIMAX → SOLUTION → TOPIC

1. How to Use the Three Models

These are not three fixed essays to copy blindly. They are **three reusable story architectures** that can be adapted to a wide range of PSLE Continuous Writing topics.

WHAT TO REMEMBER

- Remember the **sequence of events**, not every sentence.
- Remember the **reusable vocabulary and emotional progression**.
- Change the object, person, setting, problem and ending to suit the topic and pictures.
- Keep the topic central from the introduction to the conclusion.
- Use at least one picture meaningfully: it should cause, complicate or resolve something.

THE 30-SECOND CHOICE

Did the character make a poor choice or fail a responsibility?	MODEL 1 - I MADE A MISTAKE
Is the character trying to achieve, endure or overcome something?	MODEL 2 - I FACED A CHALLENGE
Is another person or relationship the heart of the story?	MODEL 3 - SOMEONE CHANGED ME

**CHOOSE ENGINE → CHOOSE PICTURE → BUILD PROBLEM →
BUILD CLIMAX → RESOLVE → RETURN TO TOPIC**

2. Model 1: I Made a Mistake

MISTAKE → TROUBLE → FIX → CHANGE

Best for: poor choices, carelessness, broken promises, secrets, lost items, responsibility, regret and personal change.

EXAMPLE TOPIC: A PROMISE



Picture chosen	The watch
Responsibility	I promise not to take a valuable family watch outside.
Mistake	I take it anyway because I want to impress my friends.
Trouble	The watch disappears.
Climax	I must choose between lying and admitting what I did.
Change	I learn that trust is harder to replace than an object.

2. Model Composition 1

A Promise

The polished surface of my grandfather's watch gleamed under the afternoon sun as I fastened it around my wrist. It was an expensive watch that he had given my mother before he passed away, and she treasured it dearly. That morning, I had begged her to let me show it to my friends. She had eventually agreed, but only after making me promise that I would leave it safely at home. I had nodded solemnly. Yet, as I prepared to meet my friends for lunch, temptation got the better of me. I convinced myself that there was no harm in wearing it for just a few hours. After all, what could possibly go wrong?

At the shopping centre, my friends immediately noticed the watch. Their admiring glances filled me with pride, and any lingering guilt quickly disappeared. We spent the afternoon wandering through the shops before stopping at a fast-food restaurant for a meal. By then, I had almost forgotten about my promise. It was only when I reached for my wallet at the cashier that I glanced at my wrist. My heart lurched. The watch was gone. For several seconds, I simply stared at the pale strip of skin where it had been. Then panic seized me. I frantically searched my pockets and emptied the contents of my bag onto the table, but the watch was nowhere to be found.

My friends helped me retrace our steps. We hurried from shop to shop, peering beneath tables and asking bewildered employees whether anyone had handed in a watch. With every unsuccessful search, the knot in my stomach tightened. The watch was valuable, but that was not what frightened me most. My mother had trusted me, and I had deliberately broken my promise. As evening approached, my friends gradually left for home while I remained at the shopping centre, exhausted and increasingly desperate. For one shameful moment, I considered inventing an excuse. Perhaps I could claim that I had never touched the watch at all. The thought offered a brief escape from the consequences, but I knew that one lie would only make my mistake worse.

A Promise - continued

When I finally returned home, my mother immediately noticed my troubled expression. I could barely meet her eyes. Instead of concocting the excuse I had rehearsed on the journey home, I admitted everything: how I had taken the watch, how carelessly I had behaved and how desperately I had searched for it. To my surprise, she did not shout. Her disappointment was far more painful. After a long silence, she picked up her phone and suggested that we contact the shopping centre's lost-and-found counter once more. Minutes later, we received the news I had scarcely dared to hope for. A cleaner had discovered the watch beneath a bench and handed it in.

Relief flooded through me when the watch was finally returned to us, but my mother's trust could not be restored as easily as a misplaced possession. Over the following weeks, I made a conscious effort to prove that I could be responsible. I completed my chores without reminders, took greater care of my belongings and stopped making promises merely to get what I wanted. Gradually, my mother began trusting me again.

That incident taught me something far more valuable than the watch itself. A promise is easy to make when keeping it costs nothing; its true value is revealed when we are tempted to break it. I had been fortunate enough to recover what I had lost that afternoon, but I came frighteningly close to losing something much harder to replace - my mother's trust.

How to Reuse 2. Model 1

Do not memorise the watch. Memorise the **moral movement**: I was trusted → I made a poor decision → consequences followed → I was tempted to escape responsibility → I chose to put matters right → I changed.

EASY ELEMENTS TO CHANGE

Important object	watch → wallet → gift → phone → school project → library book → photograph
Responsibility	promise → instruction → secret → rule → task → duty
Mistake	showing off → rushing → ignoring advice → forgetting → lying → acting carelessly
Consequence	lost object → damaged property → hurt feelings → missed opportunity → broken trust
Ending	admit fault → repair damage → apologise → return item → rebuild trust

REUSABLE VOCABULARY

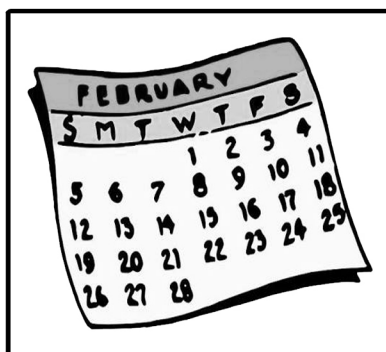
- temptation got the better of me
- any lingering guilt quickly disappeared
- my heart lurched
- panic seized me
- frantically searched
- retraced our steps
- the knot in my stomach tightened
- exhausted and increasingly desperate
- concoct an excuse
- made a conscious effort
- a permanent reminder of my carelessness

3. Model 2: I Faced a Challenge

GOAL → PROBLEM → STRUGGLE → BREAKTHROUGH → OUTCOME

Best for: competitions, fears, new experiences, waiting, teamwork, perseverance, difficult tasks and achievement.

EXAMPLE TOPIC: A LONG WAIT



Picture chosen	Stage performance
Goal	Perform well in an important school competition.
Problem	A long technical delay keeps everyone waiting.
Struggle	Confidence fades and I consider withdrawing.
Climax	I decide that fear should not make the decision for me.
Breakthrough	I step onto the stage despite my anxiety.
Outcome	I discover that courage is continuing despite fear.

3. Model Composition 2

A Long Wait

For almost two months, the date circled in red on my calendar had been impossible to ignore. It marked the day of an inter-school storytelling competition for which I had been preparing relentlessly. Every evening, I rehearsed before the mirror until the words flowed naturally, adjusting my expression and gestures whenever something seemed awkward. Public speaking had never come easily to me, so simply agreeing to represent my school had required courage. Nevertheless, as the competition drew closer, nervousness gradually gave way to anticipation. I wanted to prove, perhaps more to myself than to anyone else, that I was capable of standing confidently before an audience.

On the morning of the competition, I arrived at the venue nearly an hour early. To my dismay, the entrance was already crowded with participants, teachers and anxious parents. A technical problem had delayed the programme, and the organisers could not tell us exactly when it would begin. At first, the delay seemed insignificant. I found a seat, reviewed my notes and reminded myself to remain calm. However, one hour became two, and the waiting area grew increasingly restless. Every few minutes, I glanced towards the entrance, hoping to see an organiser approaching with good news.

As the hours dragged on, my carefully built confidence began to unravel. I had imagined stepping onto the stage while my preparation was still fresh in my mind. Instead, I sat surrounded by the murmurs of equally nervous contestants, repeatedly running through my opening lines until even familiar words began to sound strange. My palms grew clammy and an uncomfortable tightness formed in my chest. When another contestant announced that she was withdrawing because she was tired of waiting, doubt crept into my mind. Perhaps I should do the same. Nobody could blame me after such a long delay.

A Long Wait - continued

I was already gathering my belongings when I noticed my teacher sitting quietly a short distance away. She had been there throughout the entire wait without once complaining. For weeks, she had stayed after school to listen to my rehearsals and patiently corrected the same mistakes again and again. Walking away now would not erase my fear; it would merely allow fear to make the decision for me. I put my bag down, closed my notes and stopped rehearsing. Instead, I took several slow breaths and reminded myself that I did not need to deliver a perfect performance. I simply needed the courage to begin.

Shortly afterwards, my name was finally called. As I stepped onto the stage, the bright lights momentarily blinded me and my heartbeat thundered in my ears. Then I saw my teacher in the audience and began. The first few sentences were shaky, but gradually my training took over. My voice steadied, my gestures became more natural and the nervousness that had tormented me for hours faded into the background. When I reached the final line, the applause that followed felt almost unreal.

I did not win first prize that day, but the certificate I received mattered less than I had expected. The real achievement had occurred before I ever stepped onto the stage. The long wait had tested my patience, confidence and determination more severely than the competition itself. I left the venue understanding that courage does not mean feeling no fear. Sometimes, it simply means refusing to walk away while fear is telling you to do exactly that.

How to Reuse 3. Model 2

Memorise the progression: **I wanted something → an obstacle appeared → I struggled → I nearly gave up → I made a decisive choice → I completed the challenge → I understood something about myself.**

EASY ELEMENTS TO CHANGE

Goal	competition → performance → race → presentation → new activity → difficult task
Obstacle	delay → fear → first failure → injury → bad weather → disagreement → missing equipment
Struggle	self-doubt → frustration → embarrassment → exhaustion → pressure
Breakthrough	change approach → ask for help → try again → cooperate → control fear
Outcome	success → partial success → meaningful failure → personal growth

REUSABLE VOCABULARY

- preparing relentlessly
- nervousness gradually gave way to anticipation
- to my dismay
- grew increasingly restless
- my carefully built confidence began to unravel
- my palms grew clammy
- doubt crept into my mind
- my heartbeat thundered in my ears
- my training took over
- patience, confidence and determination

TOPICS THIS ENGINE CAN SUPPORT

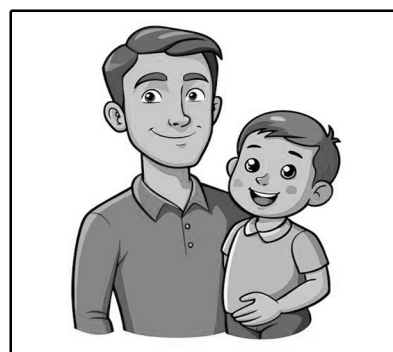
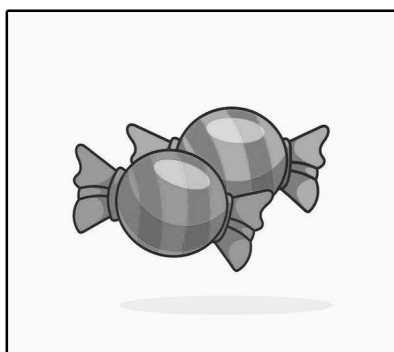
**A Long Wait • Trying Something New • Teamwork • A Celebration • A
Change for the Better • Being Thankful**

4. Model 3: Someone Changed Me

PERSON → PROBLEM → DISCOVERY → RESPONSE → MEANING

Best for: gratitude, gifts, friendship, family, misunderstanding, sacrifice, kindness, secrets and relationships.

EXAMPLE TOPIC: BEING THANKFUL



Picture chosen	Father and child
Person	My father, whose daily care I have taken for granted.
Problem	I see his reminders and concern as irritating.
Discovery	An unexpected delay makes me notice the quiet things he does for me.
Climax	I realise that his ordinary routines are acts of care.
Response	I begin showing appreciation through my own actions.
Meaning	Gratitude is not merely saying 'thank you'; it is recognising and responding to care.

4. Model Composition 3

Being Thankful

For years, I regarded my father's daily routine as something entirely ordinary. Every morning, breakfast would be waiting before I left for school. Every afternoon, he would message me to ask when I was coming home. If I had an examination, he remembered the date; if I misplaced something, he somehow seemed to know where to look. Rather than appreciating these small acts, I often found them irritating. His reminders sounded like nagging, his questions felt unnecessary, and I sometimes answered him impatiently. I had grown so accustomed to his care that I no longer recognised it as care at all.

One Friday afternoon, I was supposed to meet him at the shopping centre after school. He had promised to take me out for a meal because my examinations had finally ended. When I arrived, however, he was nowhere to be seen. Ten minutes passed, followed by twenty. I checked my phone repeatedly, growing more annoyed each time the screen remained blank. By the time nearly an hour had passed, irritation had hardened into anger. I imagined confronting him when he finally appeared. After all, he was always reminding me to be punctual. Surely he should follow his own advice.

Then my phone rang. My mother explained that my father had been delayed because my grandmother had suddenly fallen ill. He had rushed over to help her and, amid the confusion, had been unable to contact me. My anger disappeared almost instantly, replaced by embarrassment. Sitting alone at the table, I opened my school bag and noticed the lunch box he had packed for me that morning. Attached to it was a small note reminding me not to skip my meal because he knew I tended to do so whenever I was busy. I stared at the familiar handwriting for a long time.

Being Thankful - continued

For the first time, I began thinking about all the things my father did that I had dismissed as insignificant. He woke earlier than necessary to prepare breakfast, rearranged his schedule whenever I needed him and remembered countless details that I myself often forgot. None of these actions was dramatic enough to attract attention. Perhaps that was precisely why I had overlooked them. I had expected his care so consistently that I had begun treating it as an obligation rather than a gift.

When he finally returned home that evening, looking exhausted, I did not deliver the angry speech I had prepared. I heated up the dinner my mother had left for him and placed it on the table. Over the following weeks, I began making small changes of my own. I stopped responding impatiently to his reminders, helped with household chores without being asked and occasionally prepared a drink for him when he returned from work. They were insignificant gestures compared with everything he had done for me, but they were my way of showing that I had finally noticed.

I used to think gratitude was expressed by saying "thank you" after receiving something special. My father taught me otherwise without ever intending to. Sometimes, the people who deserve our gratitude most are those whose kindness has become so familiar that we barely notice it. I had spent years taking my father's quiet acts of love for granted. I was thankful that I finally learnt to appreciate them while I still had the opportunity to show him that they mattered.

How to Reuse 4. Model 3

Memorise the emotional movement: **I took someone for granted or misunderstood them → something happened → I discovered the truth → my attitude changed → I showed that change through action.**

EASY ELEMENTS TO CHANGE

Important person	father → mother → grandparent → sibling → friend → teacher → stranger
Problem	taking for granted → disagreement → misunderstanding → jealousy → impatience
Discovery	hidden sacrifice → unexpected kindness → truth revealed → person needs help
Response	help → apologise → return kindness → make sacrifice → change behaviour
Meaning	gratitude → forgiveness → trust → friendship → appreciation

REUSABLE VOCABULARY

- regarded ... as something entirely ordinary
- grown so accustomed to
- irritation had hardened into anger
- my anger disappeared almost instantly
- replaced by embarrassment
- dismissed as insignificant
- that was precisely why I had overlooked them
- treating it as an obligation rather than a gift
- small acts of care
- taking ... for granted

5. Which Model Should I Use?

The topic does not automatically dictate one story. Choose the engine that gives you the **clearest problem, strongest climax and most natural ending**.

PAST PSLE TOPICS

TOPIC	BEST STARTING ENGINE
A Secret	Model 3 - Someone Changed Me
A Special Gift	Model 3 - Someone Changed Me
Teamwork	Model 2 - I Faced a Challenge
A Celebration	Model 2 - I Faced a Challenge
Something That Was Lost	Model 1 - I Made a Mistake
A Promise	Model 1 - I Made a Mistake
A Long Wait	Model 2 - I Faced a Challenge
A Change for the Better	Model 1 or Model 2
Trying Something New	Model 2 - I Faced a Challenge
Being Thankful	Model 3 - Someone Changed Me

THE RULE THAT MATTERS MOST

**DO NOT FORCE THE MODEL ONTO THE TOPIC.
CHANGE THE MODEL UNTIL THE TOPIC BECOMES CENTRAL.**

6. Final Memory Page

Before the examination, students do not need to memorise dozens of plots. They need to recognise which of these three narrative movements will give them the strongest story.

1. I MADE A MISTAKE
MISTAKE → TROUBLE → FIX → CHANGE

2. I FACED A CHALLENGE
GOAL → PROBLEM → STRUGGLE → BREAKTHROUGH → OUTCOME

3. SOMEONE CHANGED ME
PERSON → PROBLEM → DISCOVERY → RESPONSE → MEANING

THEN FIT THE QUESTION

TOPIC → PICTURE → PROBLEM → CLIMAX → SOLUTION → TOPIC

WHAT TO CARRY INTO THE EXAM

- One clear story engine.
- One picture that genuinely matters.
- One manageable problem.
- One strong climax involving an action, choice or realisation.
- One developed solution.
- An ending that unmistakably returns to the topic.
- Vocabulary you understand well enough to use accurately.