



PSLE MADE EASY

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ENGLISH • COMPOSITION

A GOOD WAY TO SPEND TIME

2026 PSLE Composition Theme Guide

Learn how to turn a title and picture into a meaningful story.



Think



Understand



Explain

pslemadeeasy.com



A GOOD WAY TO SPEND TIME

SPEND TIME



tells us what the composition is about.

The story should centre on how time is spent.

GOOD

is the more important condition.

The story must show **WHY** the time was well spent.



SPENDING TIME



A GOOD WAY TO SPEND TIME

WHAT COULD "GOOD" MEAN?



enjoyable



meaningful



useful



relaxing



helping us learn or grow



strengthening a relationship

FOR THIS GUIDE:

GOOD = STRENGTHENING A RELATIONSHIP



PME PENGUIN REMINDER

Do not just show **WHAT** the characters did.
Show **WHY** that was a good way to spend their time.

READING A BOOK**Possible ideas:**

- quiet time
- learning something new
- developing an interest
- sharing an activity with someone

PICNIC**Possible ideas:**

- family or friendship
- conversation
- shared experience
- time together

NO PHONE / DEVICE**Possible ideas:**

- taking a break from screens
- giving someone full attention
- noticing the people around us
- spending time without distraction

PICTURE**POSSIBILITIES**

not

PICTURE**FIXED STORY**

For this guide, we will explore
the **PICNIC**.

3

Build the Story Idea



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TITLE

A Good Way to Spend Time



PICTURE

Picnic



WHAT MAKES IT "GOOD"?

Strengthening a relationship



WHOSE RELATIONSHIP?

Child + Mum



EXPERIENCE

A simple picnic together



4

Find the Meaningful Moment



ARRIVE



SPREAD MAT



EAT



TALK



GO HOME

Things happened, but the story did not really develop.

WHAT ONE MOMENT CAN I ZOOM IN ON?



OLD PHOTOGRAPH



SHARED MEMORIES



CONVERSATION



RECONNECTION

The meaningful moment gives the experience something to mean.



5 Choose the Right Story Structure

FISREC

Something happens that needs to be resolved.



FIOSEC

An experience is at the centre. The story develops towards a meaningful moment and reflection.



DOES EVERY COMPOSITION NEED A PROBLEM?

NO.

This story fits FIOSEC.

OUR FIOSEC STORY PLAN

F – Flashback

Finds picnic basket and photograph.



I – Introduction

Mum and child have gradually become less close.



O – Overall Events

Picnic begins awkwardly. Phone is put away. Conversation becomes natural.



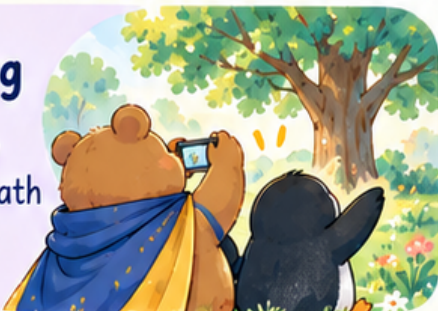
SE – Significant Event

Old photograph. Same tree. Shared memories. Realisation.



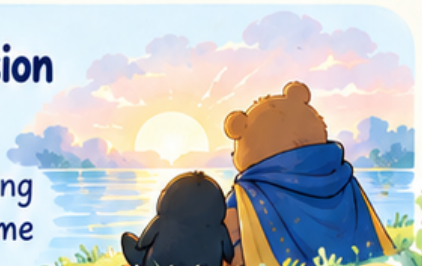
E – Ending

They take a new photograph beneath the same tree.



C – Conclusion

Return to present. Later picnics. Meaning of truly spending time together.



Strong writing is not about collecting impressive phrases.

Ask: WHAT DOES THIS SENTENCE NEED TO DO?

1

SHOW DISTANCE

- "We seemed to know less and less about each other's lives."
- "Sometimes, as I lay in bed at night, I would realise that the longest thing I had said to her all day was, 'Good night.'"

JOB: Show that two people have grown apart without forcing a quarrel into the story.

TRANSFER: Instead of simply writing, "They were no longer close," show what has changed between them.

2

SHOW FEELINGS THROUGH ACTION

- "She lingered at the doorway."
- "Her fingers tightened slightly around the handle."
- "Heat crept into my cheeks."

JOB: Let actions and physical reactions reveal feelings.

TRANSFER: Instead of naming the feeling immediately, ask: "What would this person DO if he/she felt this way?"

3

SHOW A CHANGE IN THE CHARACTER

- "My hand automatically reached for my phone."
- "Feeling ashamed, I switched off my phone and buried it at the bottom of my bag."
- "Once I began paying attention, the afternoon slowly changed."

JOB: Make an internal change visible through actions.

TRANSFER: Show what the character did BEFORE and AFTER the change.

4

MAKE THE RECONNECTION SPECIFIC

- "One story led naturally to another."
- "Soon, we were interrupting each other, laughing and sharing the small details of our lives that we had stopped telling each other."
- "Forgotten pieces of that afternoon began returning to me."

JOB: Do not simply write, "We became close again." Show the conversations, memories and small moments that bring the characters closer.

TRANSFER: Replace general statements with moments the reader can picture.

5

SHOW MEANING AND LASTING CHANGE

- "Simply being in the same place was not the same as truly spending time together."
- "Mum and I continued to make time for each other."
- "What mattered was how that time was spent and who it was shared with."

JOB: Show what the experience changed and connect that change to the title.

TRANSFER: Ask: "What does the character understand now that he or she did not understand before?"



PME PENGUIN REMINDER

Do not ask: "What impressive phrase can I memorise?"

Ask: "What does this sentence need to DO?"

7

Writer's Technique - Use a Repeated Object

A story can feel more connected when an important object appears again for a reason.

THE PICNIC BASKET



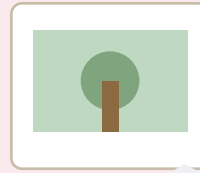
present-day trigger

used for the important picnic

used again for later picnics

returns to the storeroom

THE PHOTOGRAPHS



old photograph

unlocks the memory

creates the meaningful moment

new photograph records the renewed relationship

old and new photographs meet again in the present

WHY IT WORKS

The objects are not just decorations.

They help connect different parts of the story:

PRESENT → MEMORY → MEANING → PRESENT

Read this to see how the planning decisions become a story. Do not memorise it.

A GOOD WAY TO SPEND TIME

I was searching for an old board game in the storeroom when I spotted a picnic basket wedged behind a stack of boxes on the highest shelf. Its once-bright blue cover had faded to a dull grey-blue, and a thin layer of dust coated its wicker sides. One of its handles hung loosely, held together by only a few strands. As I carefully lowered the basket, something slipped from beneath its cover and fluttered onto the floor.

It was a small, faded photograph. Its corners had curled with age, and the colours had softened until the grass in the background was almost grey. In the centre sat a much younger Mum beside a little boy whose face I immediately recognised as my own. Both of us were laughing at the camera.

I stared at the photograph.

As I studied the faded faces, memories of that Saturday began flooding back...

Several years earlier, Mum and I had gradually become less close. Nothing terrible had happened between us; perhaps that was what made it even sadder. Mum often returned home late from work, and on the evenings when she came back early, I was usually bent over my schoolwork or absorbed in my phone. We still lived in the same flat, ate at the same table and saw each other every day, yet we seemed to know less and less about each other's lives. Sometimes, as I lay in bed at night, I would realise that the longest thing I had said to her all day was, "Good night." I missed the days when I used to tell her everything, but somehow neither of us seemed to know how to return to them.

One Saturday morning, Mum appeared at my bedroom door carrying the old blue picnic basket. Instead of walking straight in as she used to, she lingered at the doorway. Her fingers tightened slightly around the handle, and for a moment, she seemed unsure of what to say.

"Would you like to go to the park today?" she finally asked. "Maybe we could have a picnic... just the two of us."

I looked at her in surprise. Mum and I had not gone anywhere together, just the two of us, for months. My eyes drifted towards the unfinished homework on my desk and then to the messages flashing across my phone. My first instinct was to tell her that I was busy.

Then I looked back at Mum. She was still standing at the doorway, waiting quietly for my answer. For the first time, I wondered whether asking me had been difficult for her too.

"All right," I said. "Let's go."

By noon, we had found a shady spot beneath a broad rain tree in the park. I helped Mum spread the picnic mat while she unpacked sandwiches, slices of watermelon and two small chocolate cakes. She had even remembered to remove the crust from one of my sandwiches, something she had done for me since I was little. Around us, children raced across the grass while a gentle breeze rustled the leaves overhead. Somewhere nearby, a squirrel darted towards a bench before disappearing behind it.

Despite the cheerful surroundings, the silence between Mum and me felt strangely uncomfortable at first. We spoke about the weather. Then about the food. Then there was silence again. Each time the conversation faded, my hand automatically reached for my phone.

After checking it for the third time, I looked up. Mum was quietly arranging some fruit on my plate while I sat opposite her, barely noticing the effort she had made. She had planned the outing, prepared my favourite food and given up her Saturday afternoon, yet I was more interested in a glowing screen than in the person sitting in front of me.

Heat crept into my cheeks. Feeling ashamed, I switched off my phone and buried it at the bottom of my bag.

Once I began paying attention, the afternoon slowly changed. Mum pointed out the squirrel creeping towards our packet of bread, and we both tried to remain perfectly still as it edged closer. When it suddenly snatched a crumb and scampered away, we burst out laughing. I told Mum about a classmate who had accidentally given a ridiculous answer during Science, and she told me about a mistake she had made at work that morning. One story led naturally to another. Soon, we were interrupting each other, laughing and sharing the small details of our lives that we had stopped telling each other.

While searching inside the basket for a packet of tissues, Mum suddenly paused.

"Do you remember this?"

She handed me an old photograph.

I studied it carefully. A five-year-old version of me sat on a picnic mat with crumbs around my mouth and half a sandwich clutched in one hand. Mum sat beside me, laughing. Behind us stood a large tree with a thick branch stretching towards one side.

Something about it seemed familiar.

I looked beyond the photograph and then slowly raised my eyes to the tree above us.

It was the same tree.

As I stared at the picture again, forgotten pieces of that afternoon began returning to me. I remembered chasing pigeons across the grass until Mum had to run after me. I remembered begging her to push me higher and higher on the swings. I even remembered bursting into tears after dropping my sandwich onto the ground and Mum giving me half of hers.

Mum smiled as she watched me.

"You made me bring you here almost every Saturday for a month," she said. "You used to call them your favourite days."

For a while, I could not reply.

I looked at the little boy in the photograph and then at Mum sitting across from me. We had still been spending plenty of time under the same roof, but I suddenly realised that simply being in the same place was not the same as truly spending time together.

10 Suggested Essay - continued

Years earlier, an ordinary afternoon with her had been enough to make an entire Saturday special. Somewhere along the way, I had become so busy filling my time with homework, messages and screens that I had forgotten how meaningful it could be simply to give my attention to someone who mattered.

We stayed until the afternoon sun began to sink and the shadows of the trees stretched across the grass. Neither of us checked the time. Before packing up, I balanced my phone against a nearby bench and set the timer. Mum and I sat beneath the same tree, shoulder to shoulder, trying to copy the position in the old photograph.

The camera clicked, capturing an older Mum and an older me beneath the same tree...

"Have you found that board game yet?"

Mum's voice from the hallway pulled me back to the storeroom.

I blinked and looked down. The faded photograph was still in my hand.

"Not yet," I called. "But I found something else."

I carried the picnic basket out together with the two photographs. Mum took one look at them and smiled.

Since that afternoon, our relationship had changed in small but important ways. Picnics became one of the ways we made time for each other. Whenever our schedules allowed, Mum would take out the old blue basket and we would return to the park, sometimes to the same rain tree and sometimes to a different quiet corner. We did not need anything elaborate — a few sandwiches, some fruit and an afternoon with nowhere else to rush to were enough.

Of course, we could not have a picnic every week. On busy weekends, we went for a walk, shared lunch downstairs or simply sat at the dining table and talked with our phones put aside. What mattered was that we had stopped assuming that living in the same home meant we were automatically spending time together.

As I grew older, our picnics became less frequent, and eventually the old blue basket found its way back onto the storeroom shelf. However, the habit that had begun with that first picnic remained: Mum and I continued to make time for each other.

I placed the faded photograph beside the newer one. Years separated the two pictures, but both showed Mum and me doing something very ordinary — simply spending an afternoon together.

That picnic had taught me that a good way to spend time was not about filling every minute with something exciting or expensive. What mattered was how that time was spent and who it was shared with.

For Mum and me, a simple picnic had become much more than an outing. It had become one of our favourite ways to slow down, talk and enjoy being together. Sometimes, the best way to spend time is simply to give someone we love our full attention and be truly present with them.

Can the Same Thinking Work Differently?

Do not memorise the picnic story. **Transfer the thinking.**

READING A BOOK

Could “good” mean:

A parent and child begin reading together, giving them something they enjoy sharing?



NO-DEVICE IDEA

Could “good” mean:

A family puts their devices aside and begins talking and noticing one another again?



WHEN YOU PLAN A COMPOSITION...

1



Understand the title.

4



Find one meaningful moment.

2



Explore the picture.

5



Choose a structure that fits the story.

3



Decide what the important word means.

6



Connect the ending back to the title.

**DO NOT MEMORISE THE STORY.
REMEMBER THE THINKING.**



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You've reached the end.

But the important part is what you can now see and do for yourself.

Now try using the idea on a different question.



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