

Macmillan
English
QCE Units 3 and 4

Series
Consultant
Jo Genders

Margaret Miller
Robyn Colwill



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English

QCE Units 3 and 4





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Foreword

This book written for Year 12 studies of General English in Queensland extends on the approaches and texts studied in *Macmillan English QCE Units 1 and 2*. The content aligns with the texts and approaches outlined in the General Senior English Syllabus 2019.

The first chapter in each unit unpacks key concepts and understandings that will be used in the other four chapters relating to the unit. The four subsequent units unpack ways of reading, viewing, shaping, writing and speaking about the selected texts.

The General English Syllabus 2019 has a prescribed text list for 2019–2021 with texts chosen to provide opportunities to meet the syllabus requirements of Senior study. The writers, in making a selection from the prescribed list of texts, have developed a range of stimulating and challenging activities with which students can engage in both units.

Unit 3 is based around a detailed study of the George Orwell novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and of the Stanley Kubrick film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. The unit opens up multiple opportunities to engage with, critique and reflect on a range of significant current social issues, concepts and challenges. These derive from the initial study of the novel and film which are then linked to a carefully selected range of contemporary online audio-visual presentations as well as journal and magazine articles.

Unit 4 introduces poems from a number of the nominated poets (Ali Alizadeh, Emily Dickinson, Judith Wright, Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, Robert Browning, Robert Frost, Sylvia Plath, Wilfred Owen and William Butler Yeats) each of which might be the source for extended imaginative writing as required by Summative internal assessment 3.

Two chapters in Unit 4 are devoted to the study of Shakespeare's great classic *Hamlet* as preparation for the external examination. These chapters are founded in considerable research in order to open up a number of opportunities while encouraging greater independence.

Unit 4 also offers the possibility of an alternative text for study if it was the school's decision not to follow the Unit 3 option which, nevertheless, will be useful for its careful scaffolding of an approach. Alternatively, a school might wish to situate the Shakespeare studies earlier in the year and use *Cat's Eye* by Margaret Atwood in Unit 4. Knowing Queensland teachers' propensity for independence, we decided to provide opportunity for some flexibility of approach. *Cat's Eye*, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *Hamlet* are all on the prescribed list as external assessment texts.

The syllabus requires that in Units 3 and 4 students must study at least four texts from the prescribed text list:

- One complete play – i.e. *Hamlet*
- One complete prose text – novel, non-fiction or a collection of short stories – i.e. *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *Cat's Eye* and short stories by Katherine Mansfield
- A selection of poetry (at least five poems) – twelve poems from nine poets from different times and places are available for study
- A multimodal text – i.e. film *2001: A Space Odyssey*

We believe we have carefully scaffolded learning within these units for those who wish to closely follow the units focused on *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, *Hamlet* and a study of poetry but also left some flexibility for those schools that might choose to use the text as a resource. The units carefully unpack the knowledge, skills and cognitions needed to be successful in the four mandated assessments.

Both authors are widely experienced, practicing educators in their respective secondary and tertiary fields in English education. The authors wish users well in their studies of Senior English.

Margaret Miller, June 2019

A man in a black suit is standing in the center of the page. Behind him is a large, light blue number '3' that is partially obscured by his figure. The background is a solid dark blue. The text 'UNIT TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS THREE' is overlaid on the image in white, with 'UNIT' on the left, 'TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS' in the middle, and 'THREE' on the right.

UNIT TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS THREE

In this unit you will explore how to make connections between texts by examining how they represent the same concepts and issues in different ways. You will also consider whether the representations in different texts are aligned or opposed, and how those texts are constructed to take issues and concepts in different directions.

This unit allows you to explore how the connections between texts contribute to the meaning that audiences draw from them. As well as examining existing texts, you will create texts of your own for a variety of purposes and audiences.

ASSESSMENT

BY THE END OF THIS UNIT, YOU WILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT TASKS:

TASK ONE

A written essay (1000–1500 words) responding to two texts connected by the representation of a concept, identity, time or place, and written for a public audience.

TASK TWO

A persuasive presentation (5–8 minutes) responding to representations of a contemporary social issue in the media within the previous year.

THE INFORMATION IN THIS UNIT WILL PREPARE YOU FOR BOTH OF THESE ASSESSMENT TASKS:

ONE

unpacks the key concept of drawing connections between texts

TWO

involves making close readings of two connected texts

THREE

develops the skills of writing an analytical media text

FOUR

examines texts that present and discuss social issues

FIVE

develops the skills of presenting a persuasive spoken response

CHAPTER
ONE

TEXTUAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CONCEPTS

Whenever we have a conversation with another person, there is the potential to make a connection – we can exchange ideas, thoughts, opinions, feelings, and perspectives on a topic. Such conversations allow us to explore and refine our own understandings, as well as share in the fresh perspectives and ideas of the other person. When we engage with texts – books, magazines, blogs, video streams, podcasts, films and more – we also make connections, not just with that text but with other relevant texts that we have experienced.

In this chapter, you will examine the key concept of textual connections – how texts can be examined in relation to other texts. One text may make representations of concepts and issues, while a second text represents the same concept and issues differently. Exploring how texts connect to each other allows you to analyse each text more deeply.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

TEXTS IN THIS CHAPTER:

TEXTS IN
CONTEXT

- explore a range of texts from diverse times and places
- explore the intertextual relationships among texts

LANGUAGE
AND TEXTUAL
ANALYSIS

- analyse how representations are constructed in different contexts
- examine how aesthetic features and stylistic devices affect interpretations of texts

RESPONDING TO
AND CREATING
TEXTS

- investigate how interpretation of one text changes when considered in relation to another text
- synthesise subject matter and substantiate a response using textual evidence.

- 'Desperate Journeys' – report
- 'European Migrant Crisis' – news photo
- 'Turning back the boats' – cartoon
- 'Not Waving but Drowning' – poem
- *The Happiest Refugee* – memoir
- 'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings' – poem
- 'Freedom Sculpture' – artwork
- *Macbeth* – play and film
- *Hamlet* – play and film
- 'Design' – poem
- Cartoons by Michael Leunig – cartoons
- *The Lost Thing* – short film



Making textual connections

Whenever we engage with a text – whether it is a book, magazine, blog post, podcast, movie, video game or any other text – we make connections from that text. These connections can be drawn in three different directions.

- **Text-to-self:** These are connections between the text and our own personal experiences, values, attitudes and beliefs.
- **Text-to-world:** These connections draw upon our prior knowledge, information about, and complex understandings of, the world around us.
- **Text-to-text:** These are connections to other texts that may share points of similarity or difference, enabling us to make comparisons and draw contrasts.



All three types of connections may occur simultaneously as we engage with our own individual inner conversation or dialogue with the new text that we are reading, listening to, or viewing.

While all of these types of connections are important, the main focus throughout this Unit is on **text-to-text** connections.

When we interact with any text, we also engage with the representations of, and perspectives on, key concepts and issues that are embedded (explicitly or implicitly) throughout the text. You will examine some issues in Chapters 4 and 5; for now, we will consider concepts.

Connecting with concepts

A **concept** may be defined as *an abstract idea or mental image that corresponds with the essential features associated with that notion*. Abstract ideas represent something detached from physical or concrete reality.

All your Senior subjects are underpinned by concepts related to that particular field of study, seen in the examples below.

- Concepts in Physics include waves, energy and momentum.
- History examines concepts of continuity and change.
- Art is associated with concepts such as creativity and aesthetics.

Concepts help us to shape and refine our perceptions and descriptions of the world. They derive from thought processes associated with a particular idea or notion.

concept

a mental representation of an abstract idea or notion

The concept of freedom

Throughout this chapter, you will consider the concept of ‘freedom’ as a recurring example, examining the many ways it can be presented, considered and questioned in texts.

As a concept, ‘freedom’ is a mental **abstraction** that is associated with its concrete manifestations in the world around us. A dictionary definition provides a basic meaning of this concept.

freedom (*'fri:dəm*)

noun

- 1 *the power or right to act, speak, or think as one wants.*
 - 2 *the state of not being imprisoned or enslaved.*
 - 3 *the state of not being subject to or affected by (something undesirable).*
-

abstraction

something that exists as an idea or term rather than as a practical result or event

DISCUSSION

Abstract concepts of freedom

Consider the abstract concept of ‘freedom’.

- 1 Discuss some free associations that you make when you think of this abstract concept. For example, you might make associations with human rights, democracy, being in a natural environment, freedom of speech or those who have fought for freedom from oppression.

- 2 How might the images here represent the concept of freedom? Make a quick sketch of an image that represents the concept of freedom for you. Share your sketch with the class and discuss your different perspectives.



Representing concepts in texts

Authors of texts invite readers to take up positions through the choices they make in the selective representation of concepts. These representations are underpinned by cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs that work to invite audiences to take up positions in relation to the textual representations.

Almost any concept can be presented in different ways, and audiences can be positioned to respond in different ways towards that same concept. The concept of freedom, for example, can be represented to invite a wide range of possible positions.

Political representations of freedom

The concept of freedom clearly has political associations in certain texts. Consider the plight of refugees who are fleeing for their lives, often from war-torn countries where they are persecuted. They are seeking a life of freedom from such persecution, despite the risks that this quest for freedom may involve. Texts that present information about refugees may therefore present the concept of freedom as vital and life-saving.

Consider the following linked texts – a UNHCR report and a news photo. Think about the different representations and perspectives they contain that are associated with the quest for freedom.

Text 1

Desperate Journeys: Refugees and migrants arriving in Europe and at Europe's borders, January–August 2018

REPORT from UN High Commissioner for Refugees, 03 September 2018

Mediterranean crossings deadlier than ever, new UNHCR report shows

Three years on from the shocking images of lifeless Syrian toddler Alan Kurdi on a Turkish beach, a new report by UNHCR, the UN Refugee Agency, shows that crossing the Mediterranean Sea has become even more deadly.

UNHCR's new 'Desperate Journeys' report shows that more than 1600 people have died or gone missing while attempting to reach Europe so far this year.

The report shows that while the total number of people arriving in Europe has fallen, the rate of deaths has risen sharply, particularly for those crossing via the Mediterranean Sea. In the Central Mediterranean, one person died or went missing for every 18 people who crossed to Europe between January and July 2018, compared to one death for every 42 people who crossed in the same period in 2017.

'This report once again confirms the Mediterranean as one of the world's deadliest sea crossings,' said UNHCR's Director of the Bureau for Europe, Pascale Moreau. 'With the number of people arriving on European shores falling, this is no longer a test of whether Europe can manage the numbers, but whether Europe can muster the humanity to save lives.'

In recent months, UNHCR, together with the UN Migration Agency, IOM, has called for a predictable, regional approach for the rescue and disembarkation of people in distress in the Mediterranean Sea.

UNHCR is also calling on Europe to increase access to safe and legal pathways for refugees, including by increasing resettlement places and removing obstacles to family reunification – helping to provide alternatives to potentially deadly journeys.

The report also outlines the dangers refugees face while travelling along land routes to or within

Europe. Noting the steps that some have taken to prevent refugees and migrants from accessing their territory, the report urges States to grant those seeking international protection readily-available access to asylum procedures. It also appeals to States to strengthen mechanisms to protect children travelling alone and seeking asylum.

Best-selling author and UNHCR Goodwill Ambassador Khaled Hosseini, himself a former refugee from Afghanistan, has published a new illustrated book, coinciding with the three-year anniversary of Kurdi's death. *Sea Prayer* is dedicated to the thousands of refugees who have perished around the world while fleeing war, violence and persecution.

'When I saw those devastating images of the body of Alan Kurdi, my heart shattered,' said Hosseini. 'Yet, just three years on and despite thousands more people losing their lives at sea, our collective memory and urgency to do better seems to have faded.'

In June and July 2018, Hosseini visited Lebanon and Italy and saw the devastating impact on families who have lost relatives while attempting to reach Europe.

'In Sicily I visited a lonely, unkempt cemetery full of unmarked graves of people – including many children – who have drowned on journeys just like Alan's in the past years,' said Hosseini. 'Each one of those people is now reduced to just a number, a code on a grave, but they were all men, women and children who dared to dream of a brighter future. Three years on from Alan's death, it's time we came together to do more to prevent future tragedies and let our friends, families, communities and governments know that we stand with refugees.'

Text 2



'European Migrant Crisis' by photographer Antonio Masiello shows refugees and migrants, mostly Syrians and Afghans, reach the Greek Island coast of Lesbos aboard a fishing boat in 2015.

DISCUSSION

Political representations of freedom

- 1 What values, attitudes and beliefs about human rights and the concept of freedom underpin the UNHCR report? In what ways might the UNHCR report highlight the discrepancy between concepts of freedom in First World democracies and in developing nations?
- 2 The final paragraph of the UNHCR report is a verbal representation of the failed quest for freedom and a better life. The news photo (Text 2) is a visual representation of this. What authorial choices has Khaled Hosseini made to shape a particular perspective on the concept of freedom? What visual resources has the photojournalist used in the second text to invite readers to take up positions about this representation of freedom?

Intertextuality

One powerful form of textual connection is **intertextuality** – the creation of a text that deliberately reflects or references one or more other texts.

As you saw in Texts 1 and 2, there may be clear and explicit connections between texts. A further example is the news photo of a drowned Syrian toddler, Alan Kurdi, directly alluded to in the full UNHCR report (which you can view online).

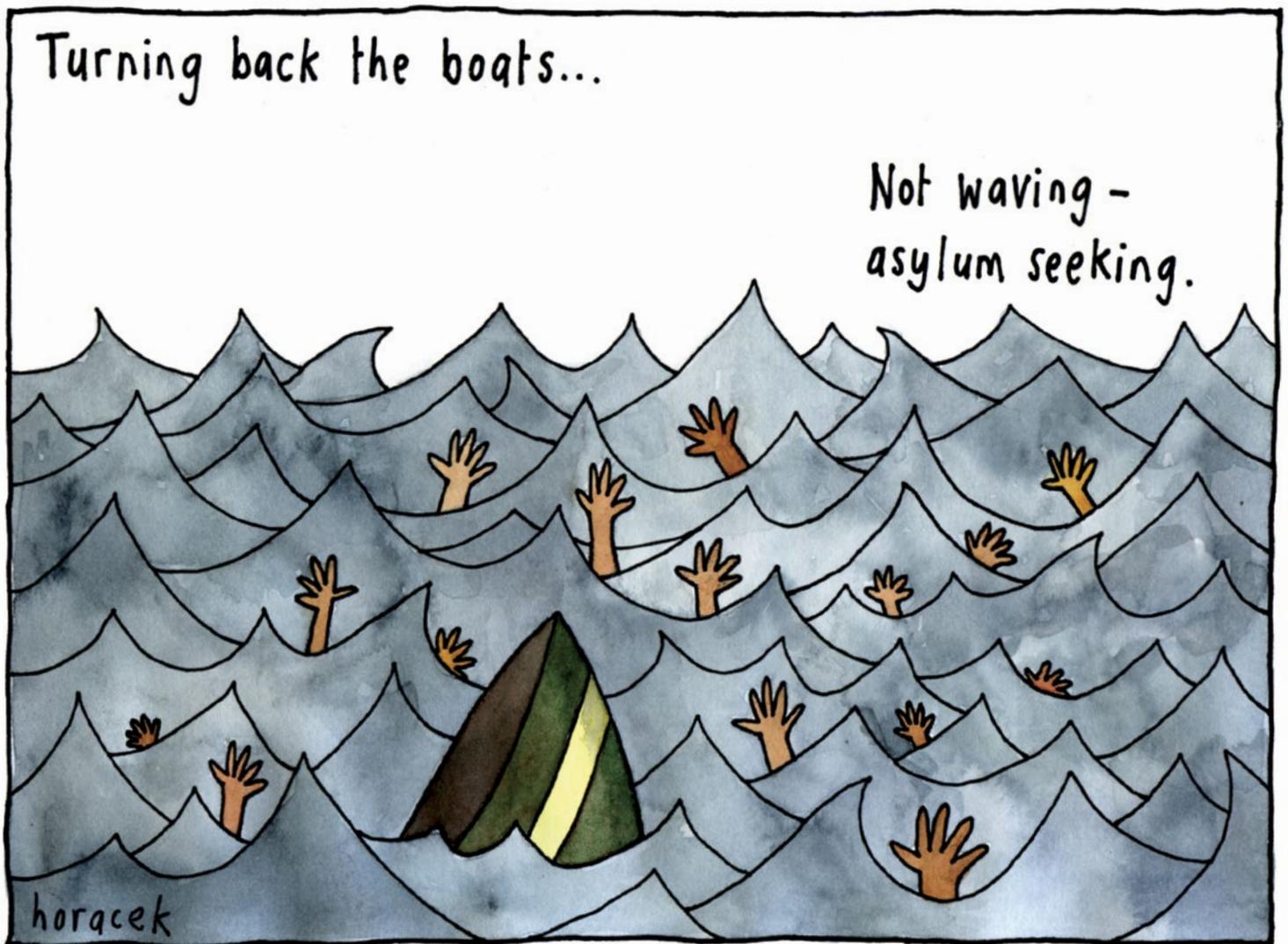
However, intertextuality may also occur in less explicit ways, opening a subtle conversation between texts. Consider the connections between the following texts, a cartoon and a poem.

intertextuality
one text drawing upon
or making reference to
other texts



UNHCR's Desperate
Journeys report
[http://mea.digital/
gen34_1_1](http://mea.digital/gen34_1_1)

Text 3



'Turning back the boats' by Judy Horacek

Text 4

Not Waving but Drowning

Nobody heard him, the dead man,
 But still he lay moaning:
 I was much further out than you thought
 And not waving but drowning.

Poor chap, he always loved larking
 And now he's dead
 It must have been too cold for him his heart gave way,
 They said.

Oh, no no no, it was too cold always
 (Still the dead one lay moaning)
 I was much too far out all my life
 And not waving but drowning.

Stevie Smith

DISCUSSION

Intertextuality

- 1 In both texts, the signalling of those in distress is seemingly ignored by others. What attitudes about human responses to tragedy underpin these texts? How else might disregard for the plight of others be represented in contemporary texts about refugees?
- 2 In Stevie Smith's poem, what rationalisations or excuses do the bystanders make for their inaction? How are these excuses presented to the audience?
- 3 How does Judy Horacek draw her intertextual connections to the poem? What makes those connections resonate for the poem's audience?
- 4 An upraised hand is the international symbol of distress for those at risk of drowning. What other visual symbol of menace does Horacek suggest in the image of the sinking boat? How is this symbol shaped and informed through links to other texts about refugees?

Personal representations of freedom

Many representations of refugees' lives and their quest for freedom are political or position audiences to perceive them as political. However, any concept can be represented in multiple ways; ways that can complement or contradict other representations in other texts. Refugee stories are no different; not all quests for freedom and a better life end in tragedy.

Anh Do's family were forced to flee from their home country in the aftermath of the Vietnam War. In his memoir, *The Happiest Refugee*, Anh Do vividly explores the dangerous personal journey that almost cost the lives of his family members. His representation of their journey in search of freedom translates the abstract concept of freedom into a personal, concrete reality.

Text 5

The Happiest Refugee (extract)

There was nothing but flat blue water in every direction. The heat of the tropical afternoon sun clung to our skin and shoulders, and people tried to shield their eyes from the glare as the boat skidded along the frothy waves. The engine was spewing out thick petrol fumes and these, combined with the up-and-down motion, meant that our first few hours on board were punctuated by bodies retching over the side of the vessel.

The boat was so small that we were jammed into every crevice, corner and spare patch of deck. It was almost impossible to get downstairs into the hold, which was heaving with sweating bodies and the suffocating stench of old fish. Forty people had transformed this tiny fishing boat into a living, seething mass of human desperation floating in the Eastern Sea.

Forty people on a nine by two and a half metre fishing boat, weighing the boat down so much that there was only half a metre of mossy wood between the rails of the boat and the waterline. Every time a big wave hit, we'd all scramble to bail out the water.

My mother, with a hot, crying child under each arm, stepped over and around bodies and made slow progress down into the hold, trying her best to calm two scared and delirious children. The boat's provisions consisted mainly of rice and vegetables.

Dad and my uncles had decided we should hold off eating until evening, not just to preserve food but to also instil a sense of authority and discipline. By nightfall everyone was starving and found reasons to ask for more than their tiny share, but Dad had to be firm to make the rations last. After eating, people slumped in whatever space they could find and tried to sleep. I cried for a while then fell asleep next to Mum. Despite all Mum's attempts to soothe him, Khoa screamed throughout the night.

* * *

The second day was much the same, a hot burning sun and a horizon that stretched on forever. Later in the day, though, the hard blue sky clouded over and gave us welcome respite from the heat. Mum brought Khoa and me up onto the deck for some fresh air – by now the stench of petrol fumes and old fish had combined with vomit and human excrement to fill the hold with an unbearable smell.



Anh Do

As the afternoon wore on, the soft white cushions scudding across the sky turned into angry grey storm clouds and the wind whipped waves into heaving swells – our little fishing boat pitched from side to side. With every wave that hit, water washed over us and every able body scrambled to bail it out. Soon the sky darkened further, turning a sinister, tumultuous black as the wind shrieked and skidded across the deck like a panicking ghost.

Mum grabbed us and shoved Khoa and me through the hatch door into the darkness of the hold and my aunty's waiting arms. Mum climbed in and looked back, taking one last anxious look at the men of her family, who were rushing and yelling, their screams torn from their throats by the howling wind. She heard Dad's strained voice – 'Go, Hien, now!' – which had an unexpected tone that she recognised as fear. She looked up to see an enormous wall of grey-green water that appeared to have swallowed the sky. It was as though the bottom of the ocean was about to crash down on top of us. She screamed and fell down the steps into the hold, the hatch door banging shut behind her. A deafening darkness ...

ACTIVITY

Personal representations of concepts

- 1 List and explain some of the text-to-text connections that you make to these excerpts from Anh Do's memoir. How do ideas represented in this text remind you of other texts that you have seen, heard or read?
- 2 What impact does the change from political representations of freedom to this personal representation have upon your response to the text? How did this text position you as a reader, and how was this different from the way the previous texts positioned you?

Indirect representation of concepts

Most texts that explore concepts do so directly – they construct representations of that concept and position the audience to respond to them.

It is also possible to explore concepts indirectly and subtly. One way is by constructing representations of the opposite or **inverse** of the concept. The audience is positioned to respond to the inverse, but in a way that simultaneously positions them to respond to the original concept. For example, texts about war can also be texts about peace – the text creates representations of the horrors of war and, in doing so, positions the audience to respond positively to the concept of peace.

Connections to other texts are an important component of indirect representation. The audience needs to draw upon responses and understandings gained from other texts in order to respond to an indirect representation in the way the author intended. Without that additional information to shape their response, the audience might not make the connection to the original concept.

inverse
the opposite or reverse
of a position, direction
or tendency

Indirect representations of freedom

We have seen that refugees risk their lives in the quest for freedom. The concept of freedom is inextricably linked to some cornerstones of democracy – freedom of thought, speech, movement, assembly and worship. Yet even within contemporary democracies, many people may still be denied their inalienable human right to freedom. Instead, they suffer an inverse of the concept – oppression.

Representations of oppression in texts are, in many cases, actually inverse representations of freedom. More precisely, they are representations of the absence of freedom, and in shaping this the texts position readers to respond positively to the idea of having freedom.

The poet Maya Angelou, an African-American descendant of slaves, grew up in the American South during the 1950s. Her poem ‘I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings’ symbolises the differences between the lives of African-Americans and white Americans prior to and during that period, which was the time of the Civil Rights movement in American history.

The title of the poem is an intertextual reference to a line from the poem ‘Sympathy’ by Paul Laurence Dunbar.



Hope for freedom by Oleg Shupliak, 2012



Maya Angelou

Text 6

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wings
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with fearful trill
of the things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the
sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a
dawn-bright lawn
and he names the sky his own.

But a caged bird stands on the grave
of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

Maya Angelou

DISCUSSION

'I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings'

- 1 In what ways is this poem a representation of and metaphor for the historical discrimination and lack of freedom suffered by African-Americans? Quote lines from the poem to support your viewpoints.
- 2 Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the symbols of the free bird and the caged bird. The centre space represents what the birds may have in common.
- 3 Why do you think Angelou uses repetition of the third and the final stanza of her poem?
- 4 Maya Angelou shapes her representation of the caged bird to position her readers to respond in particular ways. What was your response to this poem? How did the representations of freedom and oppression influence your response?
- 5 Can the poem be viewed as having relevance to the Australian context? Why is this so? What textual and historical connections did you need to make to justify your statement?

Texts, of course, can take many forms – books, music, films and even works of art such as sculpture.

‘Freedom Sculpture’ is a 2001 work by American sculptor Zenos Frudakis. This piece of public artwork in the US city of Philadelphia is around seven metres long and two metres high, and weighs more than three tonnes.

Text 7



‘Freedom Sculpture’ by Zenos Frudakis

Zenos Frudakis says this about his work:

‘I wanted to create a sculpture almost anyone, regardless of their background, could look at and instantly recognise that it is about the idea of struggling to break free. This sculpture is about the struggle for achievement of freedom through the creative process ...

Although for me, this feeling sprang from a particular personal situation, I was conscious that it was a universal desire with almost everyone; that need to escape from some situation – be it an internal struggle or an adversarial circumstance, and to be free from it.’


 ACTIVITY

Responses to 'Freedom Sculpture'

- 1 What choices does this text incorporate to construct a concept of freedom?
 - 2 Is the core concept in the text 'freedom', or is it the concept of 'struggling to break free'? Explain how the text emphasises a position on the concept of freedom.
 - 3 Write a 400-word personal response to the representation of freedom in this work of art. You might like to consider the artist's stated intentions, and the extent to which you think these have been realised. You might also explore how Frudakis used the potential of a three-dimensional public space to maximum effect.
 - 4 How might your written response be shaped by your personal experiences and values, attitudes and beliefs?
-

Representations of concepts in different texts

We can see from the texts presented so far that a concept can be represented and explored in many different ways and in many different texts. More than that, different types of text *require* concepts to be represented in different ways. The writing techniques used to construct a representation in a novel are not the same as those used in a poem, and both are very different from the techniques used in a film, painting or sculpture.

However, as we have seen, it is possible to draw connections between different text types by considering how they create representations of the same concept. Representations in one genre or text type can inform representations in others, and there can be direct or indirect intertextual links across types and genres.

The concept of alienation

Let us consider how another concept is expressed and represented in a variety of text types.

The concept of **alienation** is often linked to the loss of one's sense of personal and **existential** freedom. Once again, a dictionary definition provides a basic meaning of this concept.

alienation (*aɪlɪə'neɪʃ(ə)n*)

noun

- 1 *the state or experience of being and/or feeling isolated or detached.*
 - 2 *a state of depersonalisation or loss of identity in which the self seems unreal, with difficulties in relating to society and others, and in expressing emotions.*
-

alienation

the state or experience of feeling isolated or detached, or the loss of identity where the self seems unreal

existential

relating to existence

When people lack or are denied existential freedom, they may experience this sense of alienation. They might feel alienated from:

- their physical environment
- external power structures
- the wider society of which they form a part
- others around them
- their sense of self, or their sense of their individual identity as a unique human being.

Clearly, alienation is not a positive concept, involving as it does a profound sense of isolation, disassociation and detachment from the people, places and things that give meaning and purpose to our very existence as human beings. Representations of alienation often position audiences to respond negatively, perhaps by evoking feelings of sadness, sympathy or pain. They may also position audiences to respond positively to concepts of freedom, particularly existential freedom.

Alienation has proved a very popular concept for exploration and representation. It has been a key theme or subject for novels, plays, art and poetry for hundreds of years.

Representations of alienation in written texts

William Shakespeare's **tragedy** *Macbeth* is the story of a Scottish general who is advised by three witches that he will become King of Scotland. Spurred on by his wife, Macbeth murders the king and takes the throne. But he becomes increasingly paranoid and tyrannical, and a reign of terror ends in civil war in Scotland.

tragedy
a literary composition dealing with a sombre theme carried to a tragic conclusion



Sam Worthington in the 2006 film of *Macbeth*

monologue

a prolonged talk or discourse by a single speaker, often as part of a drama where a single actor speaks alone

The play's representation of Macbeth is an example of the concept of alienation and its related isolation and despair. In act 5, the end of the play, Macbeth now knows that he has been betrayed by the three 'secret, black and midnight hags'. Lady Macbeth has just taken her own life. Macbeth has lost all reputation, respect and loyalty, and he faces certain death as the English forces advance.

Shakespeare uses a now famous **monologue** to shape a powerful representation of Macbeth's sense of alienation.

She should have died hereafter;
 There would have been a time for such a word.
 Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow,
 Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
 To the last syllable of recorded time;
 And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
 The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle!
 Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player
 That struts and frets his hour upon the stage,
 And then is heard no more; it is a tale
 Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
 Signifying nothing.

Macbeth, act 5, scene 5

 **DISCUSSION**

Macbeth's monologue

- 1 What does Macbeth's seeming indifference to the news of his wife's death reveal of his state of mind? How does this representation accord with the definition of alienation?
- 2 List all the words that represent time or the passage of time in the speech. Why do you think such emphasis is placed upon time? How does this reinforce the concept of alienation?
- 3 What images in the monologue are used as **metaphors** for life and for human existence? In this speech, how do these represent (a) the brevity and (b) the futility and purposeless of life?

metaphor

a term or phrase that is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable



1 Ian McKellen as Macbeth
http://mea.digital/qen34_1_2

2 Jon Finch as Macbeth
http://mea.digital/qen34_1_3

3 Patrick Stewart as Macbeth
http://mea.digital/qen34_1_4

 **ACTIVITY**

Different interpretations of Macbeth

Follow the margin links to view three very different interpretations of Macbeth's speech. They come from three filmed productions.

- 1 A 1976 Royal Shakespeare Company production, with Ian McKellen as Macbeth
- 2 Roman Polanski's 1971 film, with Jon Finch as Macbeth
- 3 A 2010 BBC Television production, with Patrick Stewart as a modern Macbeth

As you view each clip, consider the ways in which viewers are invited to take up positions on the linked concepts of Macbeth's alienation and despair through each actor's representation of the character. How are the multimodal resources of film used to do this?

Which version do you consider to be most effective in conveying Macbeth's isolation and alienation? Support your opinion with direct reference to the film/s.



Three very different interpretations of Macbeth

soliloquy

an utterance or discourse
by someone who is
talking to themselves,
while alone or as if alone

Shakespeare's other great tragedy, *Hamlet*, contains one of the most famous **soliloquies** in theatre and in literature. The opening line is familiar even to those who have not seen or read the play.

Hamlet is the Prince of Denmark. Since his father's sudden death, Hamlet has begun to behave suspiciously, and he has become estranged and isolated from those around him, including his former lover Ophelia. His father's ghost has set Hamlet the task of avenging his murder, allegedly by his brother Claudius, his mother's new husband and the usurper of the throne.

In this soliloquy, Hamlet articulates the existential despair and alienation that he is experiencing.

To be, or not to be – that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles
And by opposing end them. To die, to sleep –
No more – and by a sleep to say we end
The heartache, and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to. 'Tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wished. To die, to sleep –
To sleep – perchance to dream: ay, there's the rub,
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil,
Must give us pause. There's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th' oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely
The pangs of despised love, the law's delay,
The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th' unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscovered country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprise of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

Hamlet, act 3, scene 1

ACTIVITY

Visually representing *Hamlet*

While the script of *Hamlet* is a written text, plays only come to life when staged or filmed. This means that visual techniques are also used to construct representations.

Follow the margin link to view a performance of this soliloquy by David Tennant. This comes from a 2009 Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Hamlet* for BBC Television.

- 1 How does the opening sequence of shots use camera work, imagery and voiceover to represent Hamlet's sense of alienation, even before the audience can see him?
- 2 The soliloquy is then delivered in partial close-up of the actor's face to the left of the frame, with darkness on the right-hand side of the frame. Why do you think these artistic choices were made by the director of the film? What might they visually represent?



David Tennant as Hamlet in the 2009 Royal Shakespeare Company production for BBC Television

Robert Frost was one of the greatest American poets of the 20th century, known for his philosophic insights and realistic representations of rural life and speech. Many of Frost's poems are also known for their depiction of alienation. They mirror the essential bleakness, despair and sense of futility also represented in Macbeth's monologue and Hamlet's soliloquy.

The poem 'Design' is a **sonnet**, a poetic form that Shakespeare also used extensively. Sonnets have a set structure – they are always 14 lines long and often consist of an 8-line *octave* and a 6-line *sestet*. There are several different rhyme schemes that can be used in sonnets, involving couplets (pairs of lines), tercets (sets of three lines) or quatrains (sets of four lines).



David Tennant
as Hamlet
http://mea.digital/gen34_1_5

sonnet
a poem, properly expressive of a single complete thought, idea or sentiment, of 14 lines

Design

I found a dimpled spider, fat and white,
 On a white heal-all, holding up a moth
 Like a white piece of rigid satin cloth –
 Assorted characters of death and blight
 Mixed ready to begin the morning right,
 Like the ingredients of a witches' broth –
 A snow-drop spider, a flower like a froth,
 And dead wings carried like a paper kite.

What had that flower to do with being white,
 The wayside blue and innocent heal-all?
 What brought the kindred spider to that height,
 Then steered the white moth thither in the night?
 What but design of darkness to appal? –
 If design govern in a thing so small.

Robert Frost

DISCUSSION

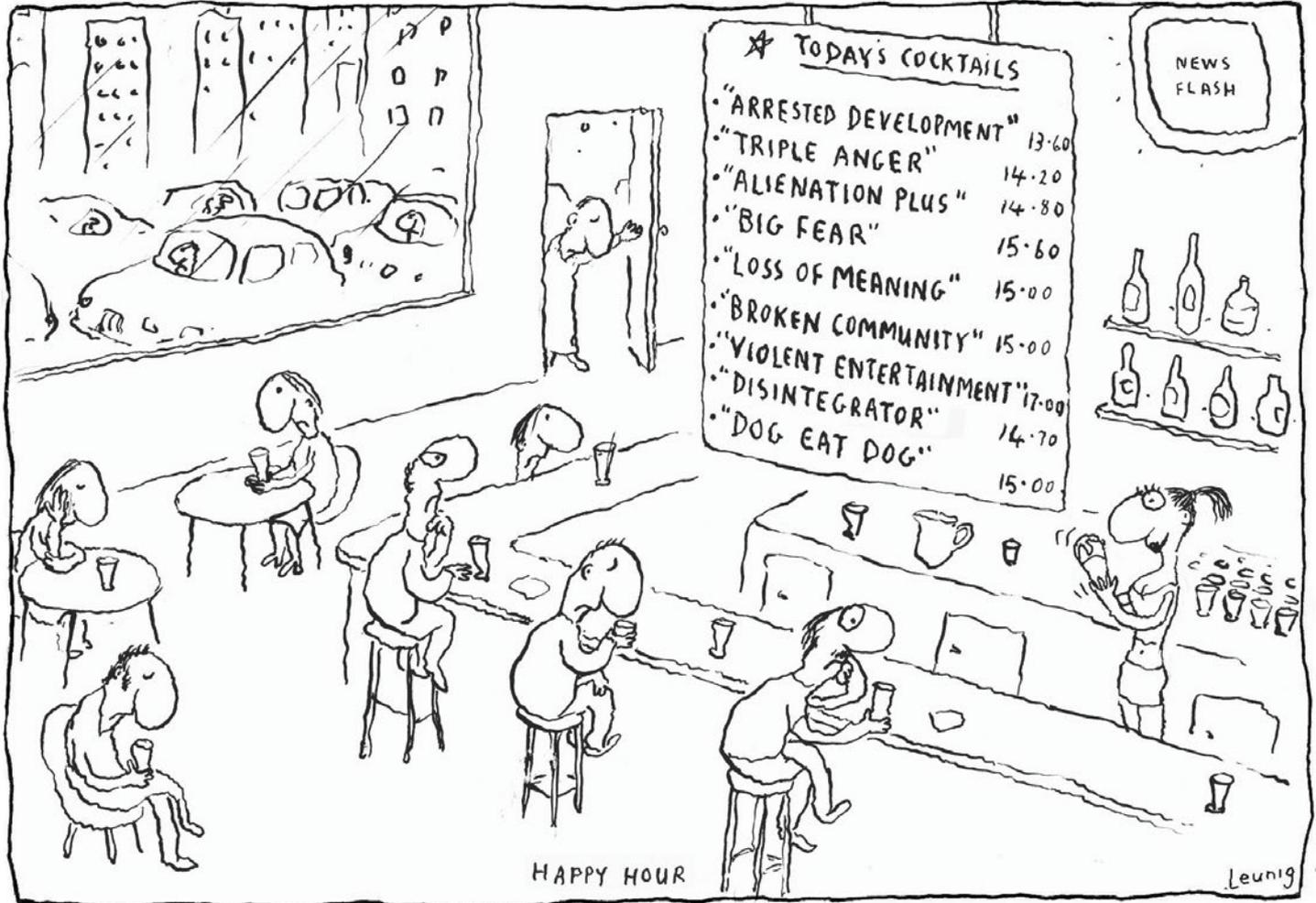
Alienation in 'Design'

- 1 How and why does Frost use repetition of the word 'white' in the opening lines of this sonnet? What traditional symbolic associations with this colour are reversed, and for what purpose? How is this association developed further in the reference to 'satin' in the simile that describes the moth?
 - 2 What intertextual connections does the poem make to Shakespeare's tragedy of *Macbeth*? What are the effects of these connections?
 - 3 How does Frost's use of the three questions in the sestet engage and position the reader?
 - 4 What answers to these questions does Frost provide in the final couplet? Which of these alternatives do you consider to be the bleakest representation of existence?
-

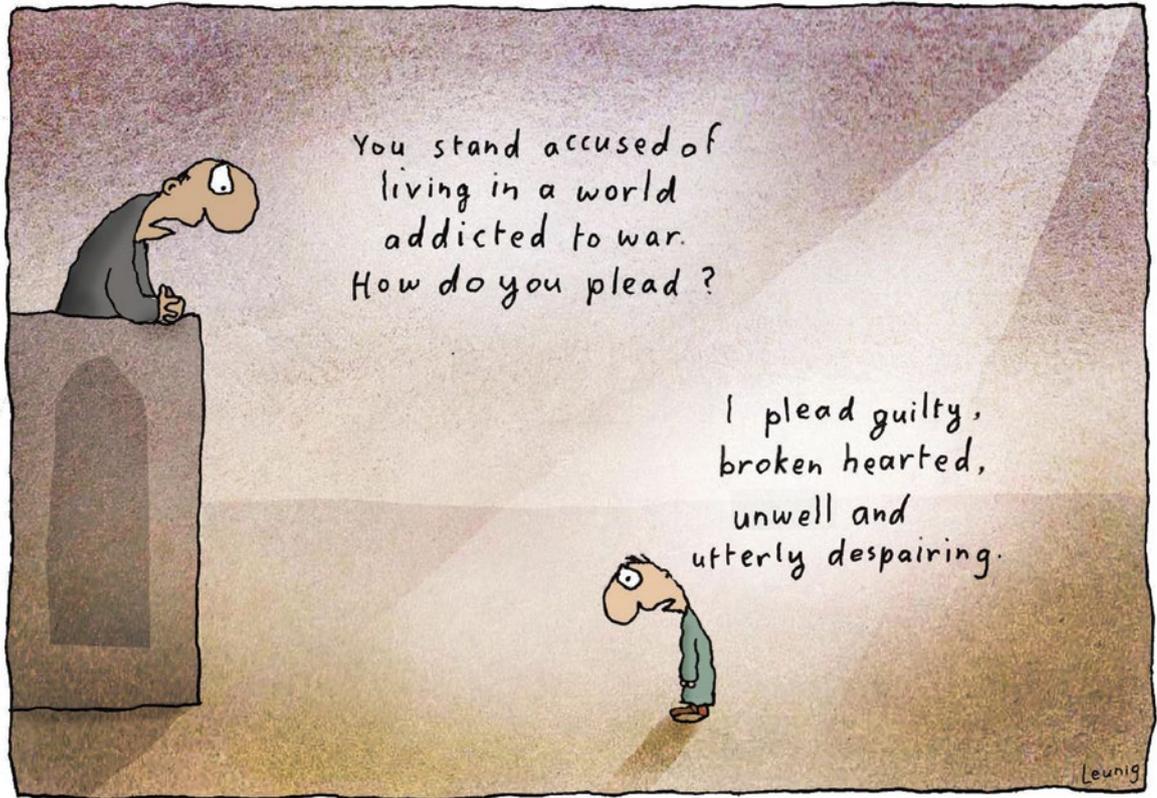
Representations of alienation in visual texts

Michael Leunig is an iconic Australian cartoonist and poet. His cartoons regularly appear in *The Age* and the *Sydney Morning Herald*. While Leunig is a gentle humourist, many of his cartoons involve representations of 'the human condition', which relate to the concepts of sadness, loneliness and alienation.

Cartoon 1



Cartoon 2



Cartoon 3



DISCUSSION

Alienation in Michael Leunig's work

- 1 How does Leunig represent the concept of individuals being alienated by/from a society in which they seem powerless and insignificant?
- 2 What **sociocultural** function might such cartoons play in shaping readers' responses towards the concept of alienation?

sociocultural
combining both social and cultural aspects in a point of view

Shaun Tan is a multi-award-winning Australian artist, author and filmmaker. He has published many sophisticated illustrated books, aimed at both teenage and adult audiences.

Tan's 2000 book, *The Lost Thing*, is the story of a boy who discovers a strange creature that doesn't seem to belong anywhere in the world. The book **juxtaposes** concepts of freedom and alienation in evocative and highly imaginative ways.

The Lost Thing was adapted in 2010 into an animated short film, which won the 2011 Academy Award for Best Animated Short.

juxtapose
to place two or more things close together, often as comparison or contrast

DISCUSSION

Analysing *The Lost Thing*

Follow the margin link to watch the short film of *The Lost Thing*. As you watch, think about how the multimodal resources of film – selection and type of shots, soundtrack (use of music, FX and voiceover), editing, and so on – are being used to position viewers.

- 1 Discuss how the images and scenes construct a world where people appear disconnected, almost as if they were automatons. Specifically consider details in the representations of:
 - i the appearance and behaviour of those on the beach, especially when the lifeguard closes it for the day
 - ii the family's domestic interactions
 - iii the streetscapes
 - iv the bureaucracy (the Ministry of Odds and Ends)
 - v the Signpost scene.
- 2 How do these representations of alienation contrast with representations of freedom in the Utopia scene?
- 3 How does the Utopia scene in turn contrast with the bleak closing sequence of the film? How does the film revert to earlier representations of alienation, and what is the effect of this choice by the film's creators?



Shaun Tan's
The Lost Thing
http://mea.digital/gen34_1_6

A still from Shaun Tan's
The Lost Thing





EXTENDED RESPONSE

Writing about alienation

To what extent do you think that the concept of alienation is linked to a loss of the innate human need to communicate authentically – with others in the outside world, with the natural world, and with ourselves?

Write a 4–5 paragraph response to this question. Give examples from the texts in this chapter to justify and support your opinions. Your response should include at least two examples of the texts used in this chapter and should draw a connection between the texts.

CHAPTER
TWO

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT CONCEPTS IN TEXTS

The previous chapter began by considering how a conversation with another person lets you make a connection and exchange ideas. In many ways, we can also have a conversation with a text – or facilitate a conversation among and between texts. There may not be a literal spoken conversation, but there is still the potential to exchange ideas and for one text to inform your understanding of the other. One of the most effective ways to hold such a conversation is through a close reading – a careful, deliberate examination of a text.

In this chapter, you will engage in a close reading of two texts – the novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell and Stanley Kubrick’s film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In doing so, you will open a conversation about and between these texts.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

TEXTS IN THIS CHAPTER:

TEXTS IN
CONTEXTS

- investigate the relationships between purpose, audience, language and meaning
- explore the intertextual relationships among texts

- *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – novel
- *2001: A Space Odyssey* – film

LANGUAGE
AND TEXTUAL
ANALYSIS

- analyse how representations are constructed in different contexts
- examine how aesthetic features and stylistic devices affect interpretations of texts

RESPONDING TO
AND CREATING
TEXTS

- investigate how interpretation of one text changes when considered in relation to another text
- synthesise subject matter and substantiate a response using textual evidence.



Conducting a close reading

A close reading is the process of reading a text carefully and analytically, gaining insights about the text and using those insights to draw conclusions. As well as reading the entire text for enjoyment or instruction, close reading examines specific elements of a text – such as the text’s themes, style or structure – in order to analyse the purpose and effectiveness of those elements in the construction of the text as a whole.

Close reading requires you to methodically consider the aesthetic features and stylistic devices of the text, and to think about how and why these were used by the author. It is done with a purpose – you are trying to answer a specific question or find evidence to prove a specific point, rather than reading more generally. Also, while we refer to this as ‘reading’, it is a process that can be applied to any type of text, not just written forms.

There are three key techniques involved in a successful close reading of a text:

- *Rereading*: Close reading may focus on one extract from a text, and it is vital to read that extract multiple times. During these rereadings, look for key words and phrases that relate to your purpose or that strike you as potentially significant. It is useful to take notes or to **annotate** the text by highlighting relevant passages or using the foot-printing strategy of placing sticky notes on the relevant pages.
- *Reflecting*: Once you have read the extract several times, reflect on your annotations and ask yourself questions about them. Why does that passage seem significant? Is there a connection to another passage earlier in the text? What did the author do to position the reader, and was it successful? Reflections like this will help you gather evidence to support your conclusions.
- *Responding*: Close reading is done with a purpose – you have a question to answer or a theory to test. Use the evidence you have gathered to respond to that purpose and draw a conclusion. Your response might be formal or informal, written or spoken – whatever the format, use your response to state your case and justify your conclusions.

annotate
to comment or make
notes on a passage
of writing

The texts being studied

This chapter revolves around close readings of two texts: *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, a novel, and *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a film.

These two texts are considered classics of their respective genres for many reasons. One important reason is their innovative and imaginative use of the resources and conventions of their genre. This is reflected in the construction of their narratives and in their exploration of the concepts that underpin these narratives. Another reason for their enduring appeal is their capacity to initiate and add to public conversations about their representations of concepts and themes, including those linked to expressions of human freedom and human alienation.

Simply reading this chapter will *not* be enough to support your study of these texts. You first need to read *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and watch *2001: A Space Odyssey*. You will then be able to complete the discussions and activities in this chapter.

It is a requirement
of your English
course that you
study two texts
(one chosen from
the prescribed list)
that are connected by
the representation of
concepts, identities,
times or places.

Representation of alienation in these texts

Nineteen Eighty-Four and *2001: A Space Odyssey* are interconnected by their imaginative representations of, and perspectives on, various concepts. A particularly interesting focus is on the concept of *alienation*, which we considered in Chapter 1. Both of these texts shape multiple representations of this concept, and indeed of different types of alienation. We make connections between the texts as we consider how they explore alienation.

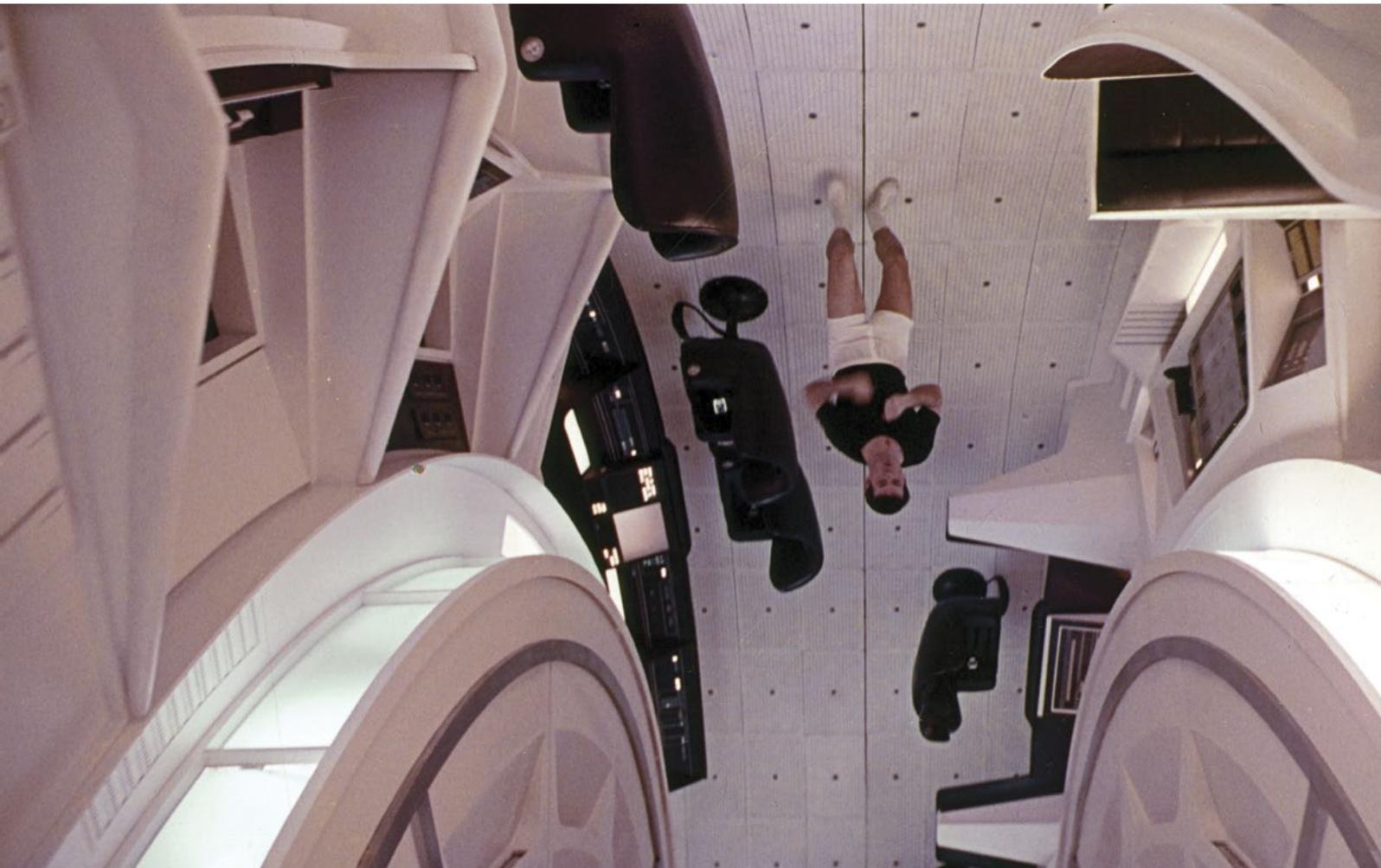
As one simple example, in Orwell's novel, *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, he connects the disorienting and alienating experience of living in the totalitarian state of Oceania with that of humans living in outer space:

Cut off from contact with the outer world, and with the past, the citizen of Oceania is like a man in interstellar space, who has no way of knowing which direction is up and which is down.

In Kubrick's film, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, a montage represents a similar but more literal perspective of disorientation and alienation from perceived reality. The camera tracks with astronaut Frank Poole as he exercises in the living quarters – a centrifuge that rotates to produce an artificial gravity – so Poole appears to jog upside down or at right angles to the viewer.

By holding text-to-text conversations, we can explore the significance of representations of the concept of alienation in these texts. At the same time, we can examine the cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpinning their construction.

Astronaut Frank Poole jogs upside down in *2001: A Space Odyssey*



The novel – *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

George Orwell was the pen name of Eric Arthur Blair, an English journalist, essayist, writer and critic. Born in India in 1903 to an upper middle class family, Orwell had little time for their world and social **mores**. He was far more interested in the experiences of the British working class, combating social injustice and opposing **totalitarianism**.

In addition to journalism and essays, Orwell wrote novels, the best-known of which are *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. These novels were critically acclaimed and have been reprinted for more than 70 years. *Nineteen Eighty-Four* has sold millions of copies globally and been translated into 65 languages.

Orwell wrote *Nineteen Eighty-Four* in 1947–8. His stated inspirations for the book were the political and social developments he had witnessed towards the end of World War II – the atrocities committed by the Nazi and Communist parties, the use of propaganda, the oppression of the working classes and the **militarisation** of industry. A key event in World War II was the 1943 conference held among the leaders of the major Allied nations – Winston Churchill (Britain), Franklin Roosevelt (United States) and Joseph Stalin (Soviet Union). While the aim of this meeting was to coordinate action against the Nazis and Axis forces, Orwell feared the potential of a post-war world dominated by those three superpowers.

Nineteen Eighty-Four has been adapted for film, television, radio and theatre on multiple occasions. The most successful film adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was made (appropriately) in 1984, and starred William Hurt. Contemporary adaptations continue to find ways in which the novel connects to the current day, such as the rise of the ‘alt-right’, the surveillance state and the use of ‘fake news’.

mores

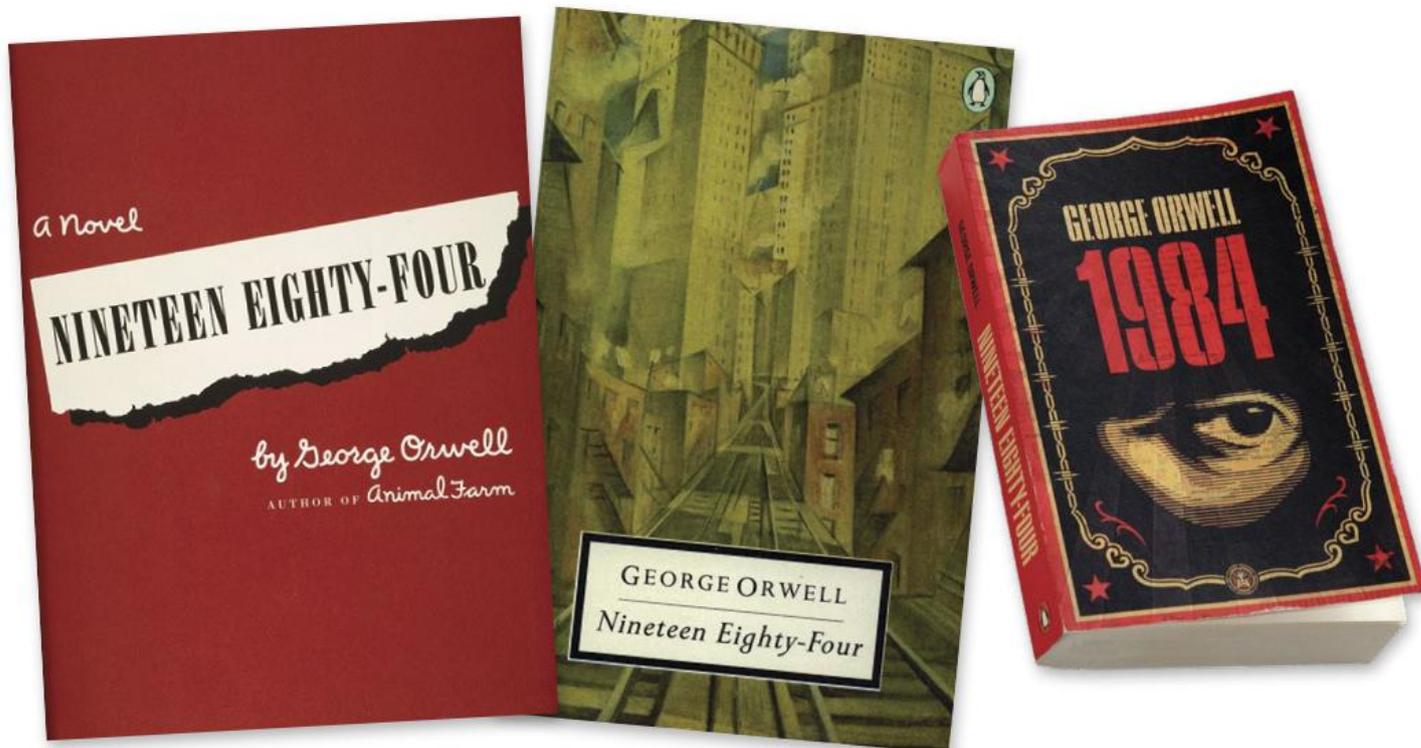
customs or conventions accepted without question, embodying the moral views of a group

totalitarianism

centralised government where those in control neither recognise nor tolerate parties of differing opinion

militarisation

the process of forming and organising military in preparation for conflict



The concept of alienation in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Alienation is a powerful and central concept throughout *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Orwell constructs representations of alienation throughout the novel, using a variety of techniques.

In this close reading, we will consider five different forms of alienation and examine the text to find evidence of how Orwell constructed and represented this concept.

Alienation from the external environment

The first form of alienation is from the physical environment surrounding us – the world itself. Contemporary life is primarily urban. Far more people now live in cities and large towns than in rural areas; according to the 2017 census, fewer than 15% of Queenslanders live in small towns. It may therefore be difficult for many of us to make a connection with the natural world and landscape.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell represents urban centres as dirty, squalid and mean, much like some of the British industrial cities he wrote about in the pre-World War II period. The opening lines of the novel introduce us to the **protagonist**, Winston Smith, and to the soulless environment of Airstrip One in which he lives – an ugly, gritty city, a wasteland devoid of beauty and humanity:

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him.

The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats [...] It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electricity current was cut off during daylight hours. It was part of the economy drive in preparation for Hate Week. The flat was seven flights up, and Winston, who was thirty-nine and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle, went slowly, resting several times on the way. On each landing, opposite the lift-shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.

protagonist
the central character,
usually one who has to
learn a lesson or who
has a need to change
in some way



Film poster for the 1984 film adaptation
of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

In contrast, Orwell constructs the natural world as vital, beautiful and alive. In one scene, Winston has a flashback to his childhood experiences of the rural countryside:

[...] he was standing on short springy turf, on a summer evening when the slanting rays of the sun gilded the ground. The landscape that he was looking at recurred so often in his dreams that he was never fully certain whether or not he had seen it in the real world. In his waking thoughts he called it the Golden Country. It was an old, rabbit-bitten pasture, with a foot-track wandering across it and a molehill here and there. In the ragged hedge on the opposite side of the field the boughs of the elm trees were swaying very faintly in the breeze, their leaves just stirring in dense masses like women's hair. Somewhere near at hand, though out of sight, there was a clear, slow-moving stream where dace were swimming in the pools under the willow trees.

Later in the novel, Orwell describes the rural setting to which Winston and his lover, Julia, briefly escape from the city:

Winston picked his way up the lane through dappled light and shade, stepping out into pools of gold wherever the boughs parted. Under the trees to the left of him the ground was misty with bluebells. The air seemed to kiss one's skin. It was the second of May. From somewhere deeper in the heart of the wood came the droning of ring-doves.

DISCUSSION

Descriptions of place in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

- 1 Consider Orwell's opening description of place in the first extract, the capital city of Airstrip One. How does Orwell create an unappealing atmosphere in this scene? How might living in that initial urban environment contribute to Winston's sense of alienation? Select words and phrases to support your response.
- 2 The unappealing urban environment contrasts with the description of Winston's childhood memories of the countryside. What sense of the natural environment is being represented? Select words and phrases to support your responses.
- 3 What is the effect of Orwell constructing descriptions of such contrasting environments? How do they position the audience to respond?

Alienation from one's personal freedom

Personal **autonomy** and freedom may be considered to be the most important right of living as a free citizen in a contemporary Western democracy. We generally have the right to live as we choose, make our own decisions and create our own futures as long as we are law-abiding. That level of freedom is relatively rare, both in the contemporary world and throughout history. Many people have had to live in much more oppressive or **regimented** societies, without the right to make choices – or without rights at all. Living under those conditions may alienate others from that sense of autonomy, leaving them feeling like their lives don't matter and that they are virtually powerless.

Nineteen Eighty-Four depicts a society without freedom. The world is divided into three superpowers: Oceania, Eurasia and Eastasia. There is a perpetual state of war among these powers, with shifting alliances so that citizens have no idea at any given time who are allies and who are enemies. England is Airstrip One, part of the state of Oceania.

Oceania is controlled by a single political party – the English Socialist Party (or 'Ingsoc'). The population is divided into three orders: members of the Inner Party of Ingsoc, members of the Outer Party of Ingsoc, and the Proletarians (or Proles), all of whom are under constant surveillance by the Thought Police.

autonomy
freedom from external control

regimented
to be organised or strictly disciplined

Oceania is the name of the geographic region that includes Australia, New Zealand, Indonesia and most Pacific Island nations. That is not the meaning of the word in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* – don't confuse the uses of the term.



A still from the 1984 film adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

indoctrination

the process of instructing someone in a particular teaching or belief

dehumanisation

the process of depriving someone of the characteristics of being human, having empathy and sympathy

subjugation

the process of bringing someone under complete control or to make them submissive

antagonist

the protagonist's opponent, whose function is to challenge the protagonist in some way

satire

a literary technique employed to expose and criticise foolishness or corruption by using humour, irony, exaggeration or ridicule

irony

a literary device in which the literal meaning is contrary to that intended

There are four ministries of Ingsoc:

- The Ministry of Truth, the official source of fake news
- The Ministry of Love, a windowless building encircled by barbed wire and machine guns where dissidents are tortured, executed or brainwashed
- The Ministry of Plenty, which controls the flow of goods to create artificial scarcity
- The Ministry of Peace, which conducts war with the other states.

The Party slogan is paradoxical and threefold: War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength.

Is Ingsoc a communist or fascist state? Throughout the novel, Orwell demonstrates that the answer does not matter. A totalitarian state exercises strategies of citizen control – no matter the ideology of the state, the strategies are the same. Both involve an irrational **indoctrination** and fear of the Other, and of external enemies. Both also involve the **dehumanisation** and **subjugation** of their citizens: '[...] a boot stamping on a human face – forever.'

As Winston's **antagonist**, O'Brien, a member of the Inner Party, informs Winston:

'The Party seeks power entirely for its own sake. We are not interested in the good of others; we are interested solely in power.'

ACTIVITY

Irony in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Nineteen Eighty-Four is often viewed as a searing political **satire** of a totalitarian state and society, one that deprives its citizens of freedom and autonomy. A powerful literary device that Orwell uses to construct his satirical representations and perspectives is **irony**.

Use a double-entry journal format to identify:

- a the feature or concept that Orwell is satirising
- b how irony is being used to achieve this.

Key feature, concept or idea being satirised	Use of irony to achieve satirical purpose
The names of the four ministries of Ingsoc	The function of each ministry is the exact opposite (for example, the Ministry of Peace is responsible for war).



Ingsoc does not just seek to control citizens' lives, but also their thoughts and personalities – to keep them in a state of perpetual surrender, with no possibility of rebellion. Orwell uses a number of elements in his novel to build this sense of utter alienation from freedom.

One major element is the use of constant surveillance. Telescreens are in the homes of all Party members. These have a dual function – propaganda and fake news stream from them, but they are also two-way screens that transmit information back. Citizens are thus under constant surveillance by the Thought Police, seeking evidence of 'thoughtcrime' – of having a private life secret from State control.

The cult of the leader is represented in the image of Big Brother, who stares down from walls and telescreens. Dissidents, actual or merely suspected, are punished, and no-one is immune from surveillance. Children are indoctrinated from infancy and are encouraged to spy on their parents:

A Party member lives from birth to death under the eye of the Thought Police. Even when he is alone he can never be sure that he is alone. Whatever he may be, asleep or awake, working or resting, in his bath or in bed, he can be inspected without warning and without knowing that he is being inspected.

Or as Winston succinctly states elsewhere in the novel: 'Nothing was your own except the few cubic centimetres inside your skull.'

A ACTIVITY

Living under surveillance

- 1 Write a paragraph in which you identify the feelings and emotions that living under a constant state of surveillance might induce in citizens. Then connect these feelings and emotions to specific characters in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, other than Winston and Julia, explaining why that connection is relevant.
- 2 The feelings you identified would create alienation from both society and the government. Use a double-entry journal to list examples of how this is reflected in the representations of the thoughts and actions of both Winston and Julia.
- 3 How might the cult of the leader, symbolised by Big Brother in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, have parallels in contemporary political contexts? Select a country that is overwhelmingly dominated by a single leader and go online to research some similarities and differences. Write a two-paragraph response to summarise your findings.

Kim Jong-il was the leader of North Korea from 1994 until his death in 2011.



Alienation from fact, truth and reality

A key integrating device through *Nineteen Eighty-Four* is Orwell's recognition that human reasoning and conceptualisation exist in and through language. That means that exerting control over human language is also exerting control over human thought.

Orwell created a **lexicon** of new words and phrases for the representations of key concepts and institutions in the novel, some of which have now entered our own vocabulary.

In Oceania, for example, all words related to concepts of freedom, liberty and equality have been deleted, or contained in the word *crimethink*. Similarly, all words related to the concepts of objectivity and rationalism were deleted or contained in the word *oldthink*.

Many *Newspeak* words, the official language of Oceania, have mutually contradictory meanings deliberately designed to confuse, so that information and intended meanings could be manipulated at will by the Party. Newspeak is thus the means of indoctrinating citizens, so that they passively ingest propaganda through a linked process known as *doublethink*.

Doublethink is the philosophy that underpins the motives and actions of the Inner Party, of which O'Brien is a member.

To know and not to know, to be conscious of complete truthfulness while telling carefully constructed lies, to hold simultaneously two opinions which cancelled out, knowing them to be contradictory and believing in both of them, to use logic against logic, to repudiate morality while laying claim to it, to believe that democracy was impossible and that the Party was the guardian of democracy, to forget whatever it was necessary to forget, then to draw it back into memory again at the moment when it was needed, and then promptly to forget it again: and above all, to apply the same process to the process itself. That was the ultimate subtlety: consciously to induce unconsciousness, and then, once again, to become unconscious of the act of hypnosis you had just performed. Even to understand the word 'doublethink' involved the use of doublethink.

Through the deletion of words that existed in *Oldspeak* (or English as we know it) and the substitution of the vocabulary of *Newspeak* and *doublethink*, the range of human thought is reduced, and thus the potential for subversion and resistance.

One of Winston's work associates in the Outer Party is Symes, a Party philologist, who says:

'You think, I dare say, that our chief job is inventing new words. But not a bit of it! We're destroying words – scores of them [...] It's a beautiful thing, the destruction of words. Of course the great wastage is in the verbs and adjectives, but there are hundreds of nouns that can be got rid of as well. It isn't only the synonyms; there are also the antonyms. After all, what justification is there for a word which is simply the opposite of some other word? A word contains its opposite in itself. Take "good", for instance. If you have a word like "good", what need is there for a word like "bad"? "Ungood" will do just as well – better, because it's an exact opposite, which the other is not. Or again, if you want a stronger version of "good", what sense is there in having a whole string of vague useless words like "excellent" and "splendid" and all the rest of them? "Plusgood" covers the meaning.'

lexicon

the list or vocabulary of words belonging to a particular subject, field, class or person

Orwell provides a glossary of invented terms at the end of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.



Actors at the Playhouse Theatre in London in a 2013 stage adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

ACTIVITY

Oldspeak and Newspeak

- 1 Conduct research to find out what a philologist does. Why is the role of philologists in the Ministry of Truth an apparent contradiction in terms? How is this an example of Orwell's sustained use of irony?
- 2 Can you think of any words that may have been used in past generations (such as your parents' or grandparents' generation) that appear to have 'disappeared' from common usage? Make a list of these and suggest why they are no longer used. Consider whether there are any particular attitudes, values or beliefs contributing to the disappearance of these words.
- 3 Can you think of any words that have recently entered more widespread usage? Make a list of these and suggest how and why these words might have current relevance. Consider whether there are any particular attitudes, values or beliefs associated with the use of these words.
- 4 Read through the glossary of Newspeak that Orwell includes at the end of the *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Select any examples that you think may have contemporary relevance. What values, attitudes and beliefs underpin the examples you have selected?
- 5 Devise a word or phrase that might readily sit alongside some of the Newspeak terms created by Orwell and provide a definition for it. Use that word or phrase in a short piece of writing (a few sentences up to a paragraph).



Winston (John Hurt) at work, from the 1984 film adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

The citizens of Oceania are alienated from not just truth, but the idea that truth even *exists*. Truth is no longer objective but can be reconstructed and fabricated by those in the Ministry of Truth, such as Winston. The idea that words have certain fixed meanings is also gone, so that perspectives of reality are continually undermined.

A fundamental irony is that 'Winston's greatest pleasure in life was in his work', yet his job at the Ministry of Truth consists of fabricating alternative historical facts and truths, inventing realities that serve Big Brother and the State. When a member of the Inner Party falls from favour, records are changed and documents that incriminate them are manufactured. This includes a literal rewriting of history, as all mass media, journal and newspaper accounts are rewritten.

Not only are original records obliterated by the Ministry of Truth but, over time, all associated human memories of 'real' historical and cultural events also disappear. The Prole that Winston questions about the past in the pub is a living example of this, as the man can only recall disconnected fragments of the past.

Winston nonetheless enjoys the challenge of recreating events using his intellect and his imagination:

[...] jobs so difficult and intricate that you could lose yourself in them as in the depths of a mathematical problem – delicate pieces of forgery in which you had nothing to guide you except your knowledge of the principles of Ingsoc and your estimate of what the Party wanted you to say. Winston was good at this kind of thing.

Yet the very faculties and imagination that make Winston so good at his job are also a liability and the cause of his eventual undoing. The intellectual exercise of his imagination is noted by the Thought Police as an aberration because a citizen with an imagination is a danger to the State.

DISCUSSION

Alienation and thought control

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, people are deprived of their rights as free citizens through the ruthless imposition of state authority. This extends to thought control and the rewriting of historical and factual truth.

- 1 How does the State's control and dissemination of information lead to alienation from facts, reality and truths (such as 'two plus two make four')? How is this alienation the antithesis of a citizen's right to know? Why is freedom of information a function of a healthy democracy? Give reasons to support your viewpoints.
- 2 To what extent do you agree with Orwell's proposition that if the language for describing certain concepts is erased from human vocabulary, and thereby from human knowledge and memory, the concepts themselves will ultimately be erased? Give reasons to support your viewpoints.

Alienation from others

Can we ever truly know other people? Can we trust and be trusted? Can we love and be loved? These questions are central to the life experience of most humans. If we become alienated from others, then our answer is always 'no' – or perhaps, even worse, 'it doesn't matter'.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, even the most personal aspects of human interrelationships are controlled by the ruthless Thought Police. Their actions strip citizens not only of their individuality but also of their dignity and essential humanity.

Under such a totalitarian regime, people become like mindless automatons who are too afraid to express the very characteristics that make them human. Telescreens monitor the behaviour of citizens and children spy on their parents and act as informants for the State:

'It was my little daughter,' said Parsons with a sort of doleful pride.

'She listened at the keyhole. Heard what I was saying and nipped off to the patrols the very next day. Pretty smart for a nipper of seven, eh? I don't bear her any grudge for it. In fact I'm proud of her. It shows I brought her up in the right spirit, anyway.'

A chilling representation of this form of alienation is the story of the lovers, Julia and Winston. They regard themselves as rebels, in control of their actions. In reality, they are only puppets who are being monitored in even their most intimate encounters by the Party.

Winston is initially suspicious of Julia when he becomes aware that she is observing him. Feigning a fall in the corridor of the Ministry of Truth where they work, she slips Winston a note:

Whatever was written on the paper, it must have some kind of political meaning. So far as he could see there were two possibilities. One, much the more likely, was that the girl was an agent of the Thought Police, just as he had feared. He did not know why the Thought Police should choose to deliver their messages in such a fashion, but perhaps they had their reasons. The thing that was written on the paper might be a threat, a summons, an order to commit suicide, a trap of some description. But there was another, wilder possibility that kept raising its head, though he tried vainly to suppress it. This was, that the message did not come from the Thought Police at all, but from some kind of underground organisation.

However, when Winston reads the note, it contains just three words: *I LOVE YOU*.

In an attempt to escape even temporarily from what Winston describes as '[...] the locked loneliness in which one lives', Winston and Julia embark upon a clandestine and dangerous affair, fall in love, and swear loyalty and absolute commitment to the other.

However, such actions are subversive and unacceptable to State control of Inner and Outer Party members. The ultimate capture of Julia and Winston is inevitable and they often discuss the danger of being caught: 'What you say or do doesn't matter; only feelings matter. If they could make me stop loving you – that would be the real betrayal.'



Winston and Julia, from the 1984 film adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*



Winston in Room 101, from the 1984 film adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Yet, ironically, once captured and subjected to prolonged physical and psychological torture in Room 101, they betray one another in acts that are the inversion of their professed love. Winston's betrayal of Julia makes him realise that he is defined by his actions, not his words, and he loses all self-respect.

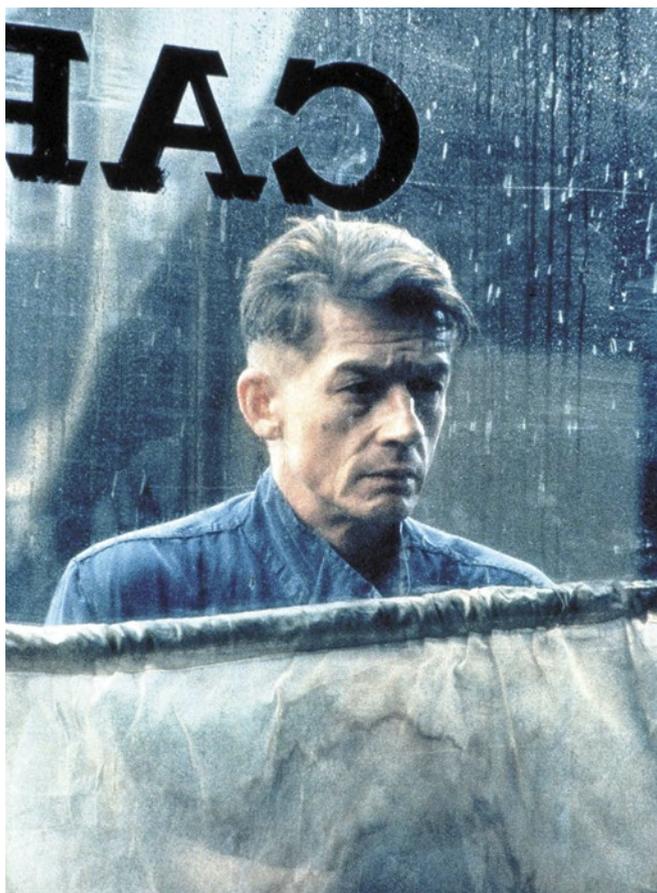
'They can't get inside you,' she had said. But they could get inside you. 'What happens to you here is FOR EVER,' O'Brien had said. That was a true word. There were things, your own acts, from which you could never recover. Something was killed in your breast: burnt out, cauterised out.

The descriptions of Winston and Julia when they meet again for the last time depict not only their sense of total alienation from one another, but also from life itself. Having betrayed one another, they project onto the other the guilt and self-disgust they both feel: 'After that, you don't feel the same towards the other person any longer.'

DISCUSSION

Winston and Julia's betrayal

- 1 How does Ingsoc's destruction of close and intimate bonds shape alienation in individuals in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? Why was the Party ruthlessly determined to destroy the free will and association of individuals? What substitute did they provide instead?
- 2 How do Julia and Winston succumb to O'Brien and the agents of Big Brother? What is the ultimate weapon used by O'Brien in Room 101 to finally break Winston? What forms of alienation does this event present or support?
- 3 How might the experience of succumbing to physical or psychological torture devastate a person's self-concept? What part might helplessness and humiliation play in this? Support your argument with evidence from the text.



Winston, from the 1984 film adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

Alienation from the self

You have considered four forms of alienation – from the external environment, from personal freedom, from truth and from others. But perhaps the form that is most disturbing is the notion of alienation from the self – from your idea of yourself as a unique individual with value and worth.

As members of society, all humans are to some degree culturally constructed. We are shaped or affected by the values, attitudes and beliefs of the society of which we form a part. What does that mean for the citizens of Oceania – victims of a repressive regime that strips its citizens of their individuality and freedom? How does Orwell represent disconnection from one's sense of individual identity as a human being?

Alienation from the self is a core concept of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Winston Smith struggles desperately to retain his essential individuality, his humanity and his integrity as a human being.

As Winston fervently says to Julia in their rented room: 'They can't get inside you. If you can FEEL that staying human is worth while, even when it can't have any result whatever, you've beaten them.' He

continually searches his memories in an effort to consolidate his identity, but recalls only disconnected fragments: '[...] in moments of crisis one is never fighting against an external enemy, but always against one's own body.'

Winston knows the risks of deviating from the Party line, that having a mind of his own is a crime:

[...] all words grouping themselves around the concepts of liberty and equality, for instance, were contained in the single word, CRIMETHINK, while all words grouping themselves round the concepts of objectivity and rationalism were contained in the single word OLDTHINK.

Yet, knowing this, Winston continues to break the law – and he is punished for it.

Orwell constructs a world where the possession of one's own unique personality is a crime, punishable by torture and a process of 'reintegration' prior to a public execution. Winston is deemed to be 'sick' because he believes in truths such as 'two plus two equals four'. He stubbornly clings to expressions of his humanity – loving Julia, freedom of choice and freedom of expression, including keeping a diary of his innermost thoughts.

None of it is enough to save him. In all his encounters with O'Brien, Winston is physically and intellectually helpless. O'Brien chillingly informs Winston:

'We shall crush you down to the point from which there is no coming back [...] Everything will be dead inside you. Never again will you be capable of love, of friendship, of joy of living, or laughter, or curiosity, or courage, or integrity. You will be hollow. We shall squeeze you empty, and then we shall fill you with ourselves.'

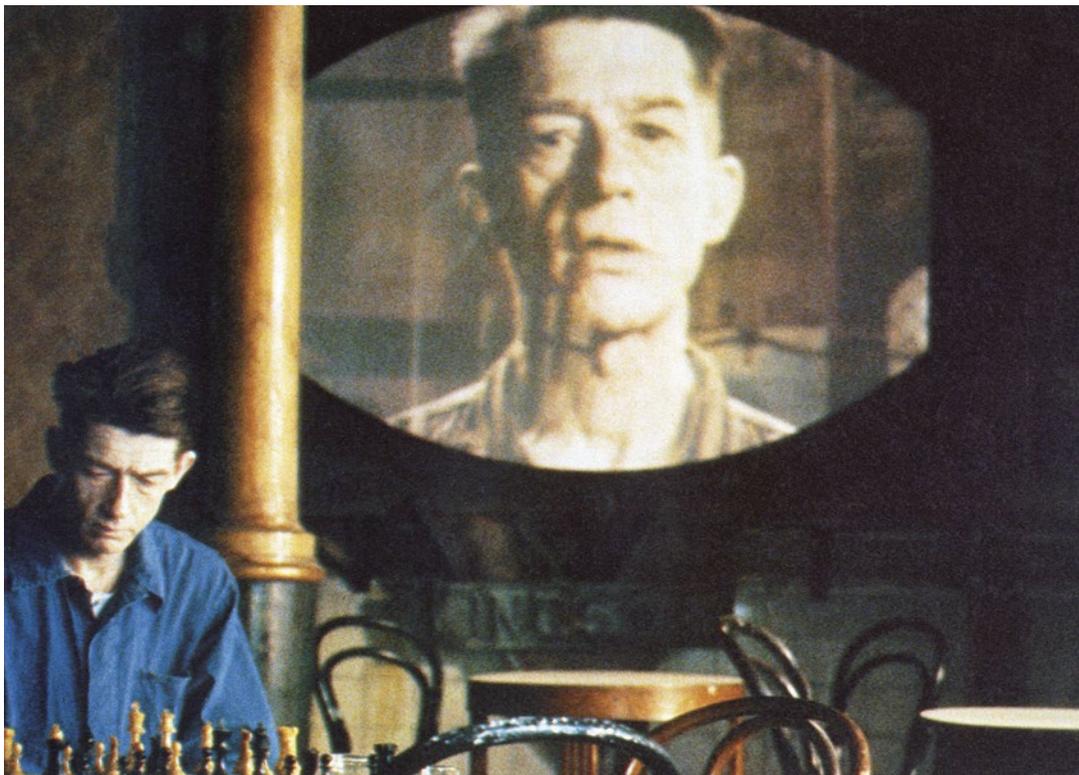
Winston's final and irrevocable betrayal of Julia is also the moment of his own betrayal, and his ultimate alienation from himself:

There was one and only one way to save himself. He must interpose another human being, the BODY of another human being, between himself and the rats.

In the conclusion, Winston has been stripped of his individual identity. He has been reprogrammed to passively, obediently and mindlessly love Big Brother:

He gazed up at the enormous face. Forty years it had taken him to learn what kind of smile was hidden beneath the dark moustache. O cruel, needless misunderstanding! O stubborn self-willed exile from the loving breast! Two gin-scented tears trickled down the sides of his nose. But it was all right, everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.

His alienation from himself is complete.



Winston, in the final scene of the 1984 film adaptation of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

A ACTIVITY

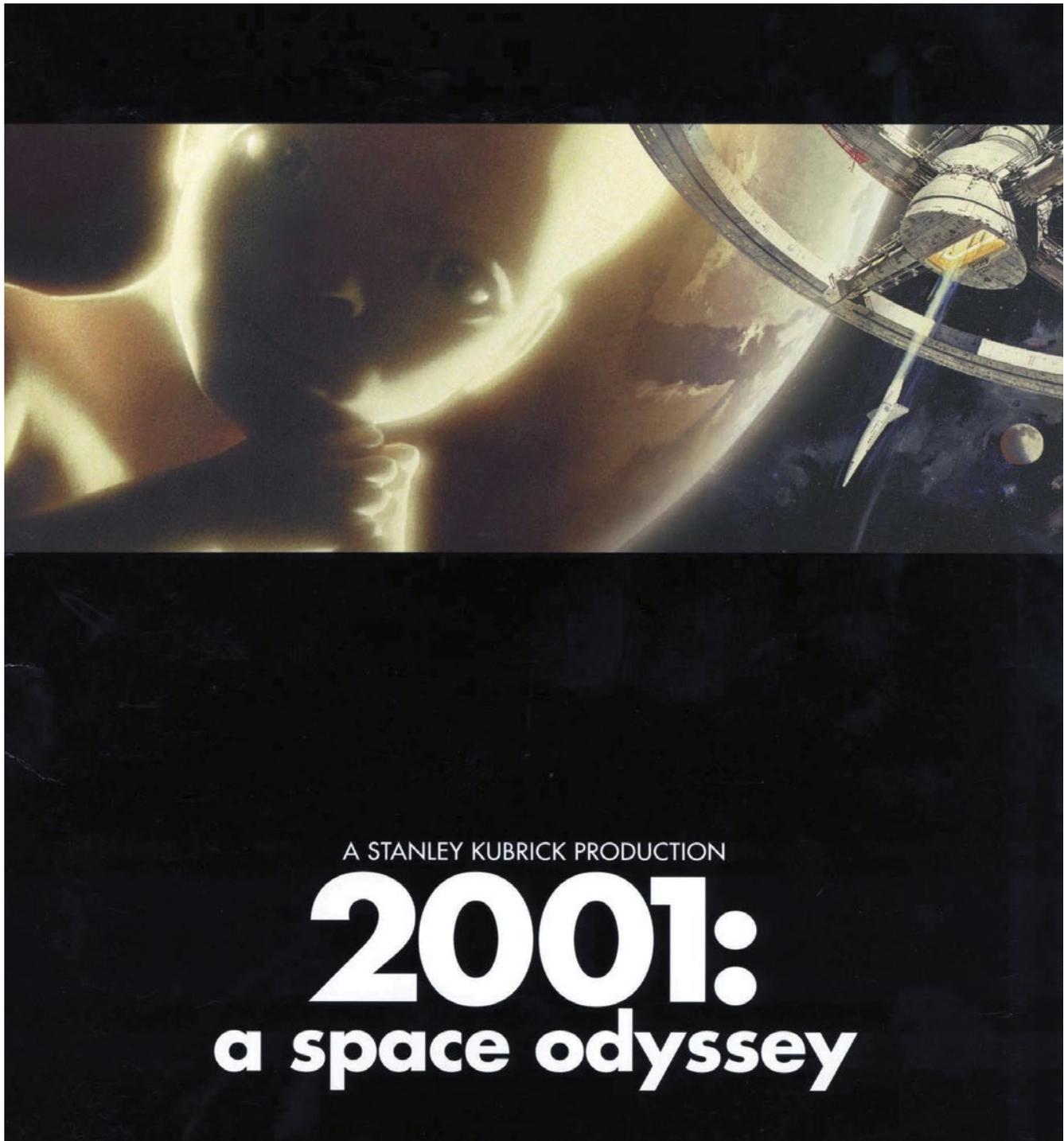
Alienation from the self in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*

- 1 Construct a timeline of key events in the novel that chart the stages in Winston's struggle to retain his individuality and resist Big Brother.
 - 2 Reread the conclusion to the novel. Use a double-entry journal format to identify and analyse the techniques used by Orwell to construct and represent Winston's alienation from himself.
-

The film – *2001: A Space Odyssey*

2001: A Space Odyssey originated in an exchange of ideas about the evolution of human intelligence, between science-fiction novelist Arthur C Clarke and film director Stanley Kubrick. These ideas link to the human desire to investigate, engage with and explore the unknown, symbolised in the film by the awe-inspiring and mysterious Monolith.

Film poster for Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*, 1968



2001: A Space Odyssey as a science-fiction story

Clarke and Kubrick worked simultaneously on their versions of the *2001: A Space Odyssey* story. The novel and film have many similarities but also many differences, and ultimately Kubrick's film has proven to be the more influential text.

Both texts, though, are clearly works in the science-fiction genre. Kubrick's film associates space travel with space and time warps, string theory, eternal cycles and a journey through past and future, back to creation and forward to the end of the universe as we know it. The film traverses 'cosmic time'; the opening sequences show the origin of humankind, while the closing sequences appear to look towards the destiny of humans in the universe.

It is important that we read the film within the conventions of the science-fiction genre. Recognising this helps us make sense of some of the more puzzling scenes: the Star Gate, Dave Bowman's death, and his rebirth as the Star Child gazing down on Earth and into future time.

2001: A Space Odyssey as a film

2001: A Space Odyssey is a groundbreaking film, but one that some audiences find difficult to understand. The film is not a linear narrative; instead it is more episodic. It relies on visual impressions and symbols intended to extend the viewer's imaginative engagement in ways that conventional texts do not.

When watching the film, it is important to be alert to Kubrick's innovative (and often subversive) use of the conventions of science-fiction and the resources of film. These include shot size and selection, framing and *mise-en-scène*, lighting, montage and visual symbolism. We also need to carefully examine his use of **diegetic** or actual sound (such as characters' conversations) and non-diegetic sound (such as sound effects and music).

mise en scène
(French) the setting and design elements on the stage of a theatre production or on the set of a film

diegetic sound
a sound component of a film, produced by a source that is visible on the screen or whose source is implied as being present within the film



Stills from the opening and closing sequences of *2001: A Space Odyssey*



Still of sunrise over
the Monolith

Kubrick is much less interested in constructing a linear narrative, as Orwell did in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Instead, he provides abstract, impressionistic experiences of the human odyssey from ape to astronaut. The dawn of human creativity and ingenuity is symbolised in the opening sequence. The emerging technology of the ape man – the bone club hurled skywards – transforms during a transitional jump cut that spans millions of years to the future technology of the spacecraft.

First and foremost, Kubrick wanted the film to be a profound visual experience. His **montages** cover vast expanses of time and space, using blackouts on screen to indicate these transitions, and symbolise major changes in both the story and the universe.

Consider the montage of long shots in the ‘Dawn of Man’ episode. These shots symbolise billions of years of planet Earth, prior to the advent of life such as the apes. The opening bars of Richard Strauss’ classical piece *Thus Spake Zarathustra* accompany the sunrise/Earthrise, heralding the advent of mankind and of human intelligence and creativity.

However, Kubrick ironically shows that our ape ancestors also have aggressive territorial and tribal characteristics, just like their *homo sapiens* descendants, with ‘technology’ still giving those who discover it power over others.

montage

a technique of film editing in which several shots or sequences are juxtaposed to form a single idea

DISCUSSION

Symbolism in *2001: A Space Odyssey*

- 1 View the opening sequence of *2001: A Space Odyssey* – ‘The Dawn of Man’. What do you think that the representation of the Monolith symbolises? Consider, for example, whether it might have any mythical or religious associations for some viewers, or represent a portal or gateway to others.
 - 2 What does Kubrick suggest about the Monolith through the choices made in this scene? How does he invite the viewer to associate the presence of the Monolith with the ape’s discovery of the bone technology?
 - 3 How is the jump cut from bone to spacecraft used to represent human evolution? Give reasons to support your viewpoints.
-

The concept of alienation in *2001: A Space Odyssey*

As with *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, let us examine some of the representations of and perspectives on the concept of alienation in *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

As you do this, consider the representations of alienation that you examined in Orwell’s novel. Think about ways in which representations of human alienation may be similar or different in these two texts. Pay attention to the cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs that may underpin Kubrick’s development of perspectives in the film.

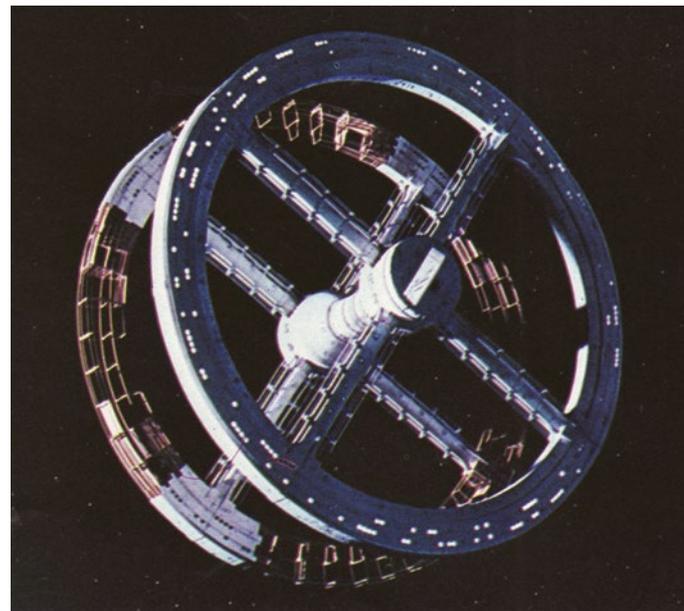
The Hilton Space Station Five

Alienation from the external environment

2001: A Space Odyssey presents many examples of the literal physical alienation that humans experience in outer space, shown through their reliance on sophisticated technology, spacecraft and equipment to survive.

The montage of the docking of the space shuttle on Hilton Space Station Five is a visual representation of this interdependence of man and machine. The shuttle appears as a cocoon of safety in a vast hostile environment, which could be seen as a parallel to the apes’ retreat to their cave at night.

The dome in the lunar landing on Clavius represents a similar portal and refuge. People are seen moving about inside shuttle capsules, or wearing spacesuits that simultaneously isolate and protect them from the lunar landscape.



The third part of the film – ‘Jupiter Mission: 18 months later’ – takes humans in the spaceship *Discovery One* even further into the unknown, with shots of deep space no longer showing Earth and the moon. *Discovery One* now becomes the astronauts’ sole, survivable environment.

DISCUSSION

Sound and music as a representation technique

- 1 Kubrick uses Johann Strauss’s *Blue Danube* waltz to symbolise the freedom of movement that humans and spacecraft have, freed from gravity but still linked to Earth. How does this choice of music construct this representation of freedom? Is it effective as a technique for representation? Justify your opinions.
 - 2 How is the astronauts’ dependence on oxygen represented in the soundtrack when Frank Poole uses the EVA pod to replace the AE-35 unit? How are soundtrack and selection of shots used to represent Poole’s subsequent murder?
 - 3 What earlier sequence in the film parallels the space-suited scientists’ circling and touching of the Monolith in the Tycho moon crater? In what ways does the Tycho sequence differ, and why? How are soundtrack and reaction shots used in this sequence to show that the spacesuits are both a source of life and also a trap?
 - 4 The Star Gate sequence towards the end of the film is a montage of fast-edited abstract shots. Why do you think Kubrick uses this confusion of psychedelic sounds and colour in this sequence? How is he positioning the audience to identify and respond?
-

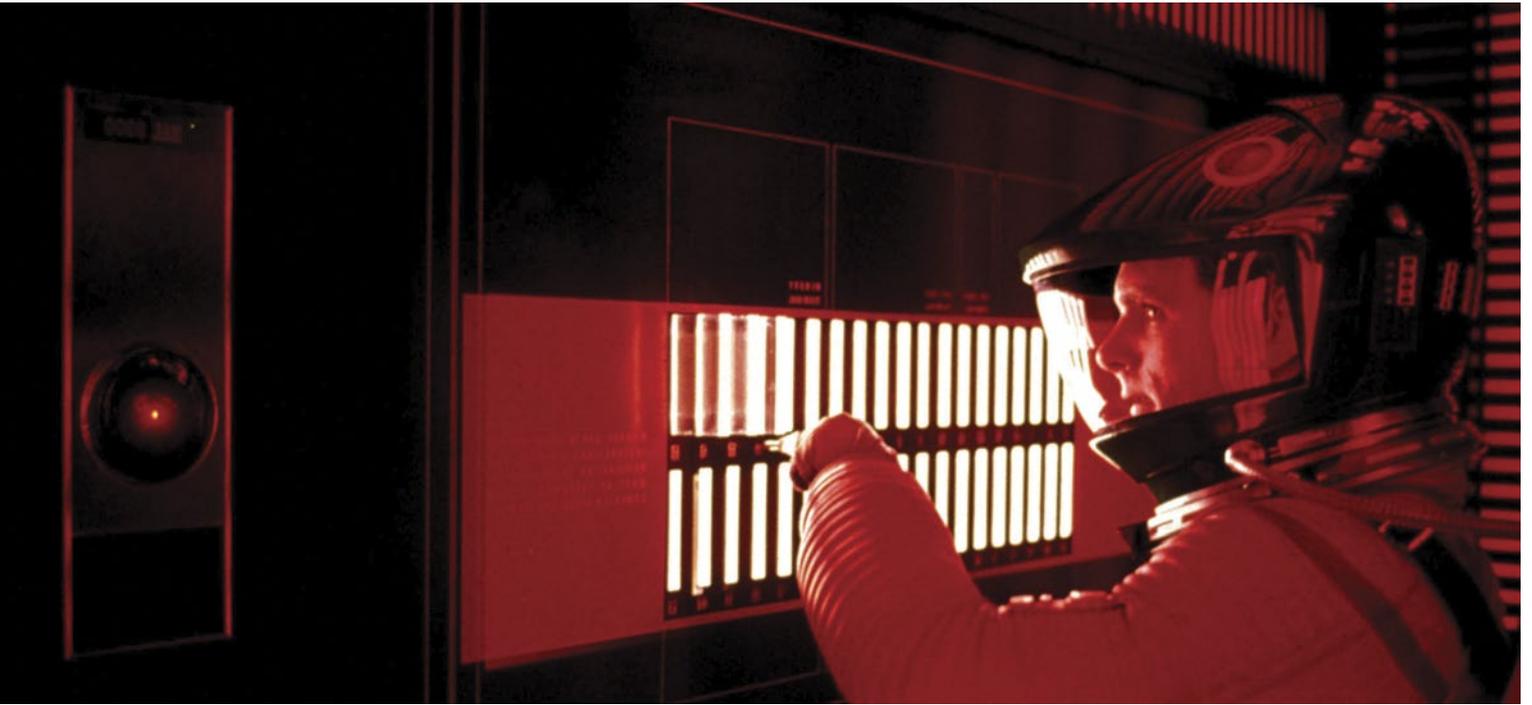
Alienation from personal freedom

Astronauts are clearly unable to assert their individual autonomy or personal freedom in the same ways they could back on Earth. Not only do they have pressing and important jobs to perform, but also their environment does not allow them the freedom to make the usual range of choices.

Consider their rigorous scientific training and the protracted periods of time they spend engaged in routine activities, locked within the confines of their spacecraft. Under those conditions, the emotional detachment evident in Kubrick’s central protagonists becomes understandable. It may even be a natural human defence mechanism to their isolation.

It is a central irony of the film that the human protagonists generally seem colder and more clinical than HAL 9000, the sentient supercomputer on spaceship *Discovery One*. The presence of HAL is a constant reminder to the astronauts of their relative lack of personal autonomy, since HAL controls all the functions that sustain life on board.

The first shot we have of the Jupiter mission commander Dave Bowman is a medium shot with his image seen in reflection in the red ‘eye’ of HAL. This can be interpreted as a symbol of this lack of autonomy and the dependence the astronauts have on the supercomputer – who, like Big Brother, knows and sees everything.



Bowman disconnects HAL

However, HAL is also a potentially malign presence since it observes and monitors every move of the astronauts. Finally, HAL turns on its human creators, becoming the ultimate antagonist in the film. But despite its programming to reflect human characteristics, HAL is a technological creation, not a biological one, and this imposes limits on its autonomy. After HAL kills all on board except Dave Bowman, who then strips HAL of its higher-order functions, HAL reverts to a mechanistic object whose vocal disintegration signifies its gradual ‘lobotomy’.

A ACTIVITY

Artificial intelligence in other texts

Kubrick shows the potential for technology to dehumanise us, and for artificial intelligence to become a foe rather than a friend.

How do ideas about AI and robots represented in this film remind you of other texts that you have seen, heard or read? Write a 3–4 paragraph response to summarise these text-to-text connections and discuss the extent to which Kubrick’s film has affected your impression of those texts.

Alienation from fact, truth and reality

The highest political power in *2001: A Space Odyssey* is known as the Council. As with the Party in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, it only disseminates information as it sees fit.

The photojournalist at the Clavius lunar conference takes pre-arranged formal photographs and then is summarily excluded from reporting on the meeting itself. Floyd Heywood accepts the need to **disseminate** the false story of the Clavius epidemic

disseminate
to give out, to spread
abroad, or to scatter
widely

and quarantine, despite the concern that this causes families back on Earth. He accepts government control of misinformation to conceal the discovery of the Monolith by noting:

'[...] the potential for cultural shock and social disorientation contained in the present situation, if the facts were prematurely and suddenly made public without adequate preparation and conditioning.'

On the Jupiter mission, the news telecast of the mission has a seven-minute transmission delay. This is conveniently edited out for viewers on Earth, who only ever receive a sanitised version of the reality of deep space travel. There is no reference to the monotony, isolation and sense of alienation that the astronauts live with daily, which Kubrick creates through slow panning shots and detailed *mise en scène*.

During the Jupiter mission, HAL deliberately conceals the truth when it announces the malfunction of the AE-35 unit. We see Poole and Bowman in a series of shots from HAL's perspective as they debate whether to believe and trust HAL. They retreat to a pod where they cannot be overheard; however, HAL lip-reads their exchange and moves to exterminate all the astronauts.

Poole and Bowman
in a pod, shown from
HAL's perspective



The deception continues. Mission Control not only keeps the purpose of the Jupiter mission secret from the people on Earth but also from the astronauts themselves, with only HAL knowing the full parameters of the mission. The astronauts are not told of the Monolith's transmission from the Tycho crater to Jupiter, and Bowman only discovers this when his deactivation of HAL releases a video that was not supposed to be viewed until arrival on Jupiter. The Council and Mission Control ironically place more reliance on and trust in HAL than on the human astronauts.

Through the tragic sequence of events on *Discovery One*, Kubrick is clearly emphasising a cautionary reality – the dangers of humans having blind faith in their technology and their leaders. Bowman, the sole survivor of HAL's killing spree, is then forced to grapple alone with the shock of the existence of extraterrestrial intelligence.

DISCUSSION

Can we trust our computers?

- 1 What are the progressive stages in Kubrick's representation of HAL as bent on exterminating the human astronauts? What 'reasoning' does HAL use for its actions?
 - 2 In what ways might acceptance of AI and robotics in our own lives have the potential to pose a threat to human wellbeing? Consider examples from your everyday lives.
 - 3 Can you think of current analogies to government control of information in the 'best interests' of its citizens, both in Australia and other countries? Give examples and debate whether such control is ever justified.
-

Alienation from others

The space travellers in *2001: A Space Odyssey* demonstrate a pervasive sense of alienation from what it means to be a social human being. In fact, the HAL computer is seen by many viewers to display more emotion than the human protagonists in the film. Compare the death of the hibernating scientists to HAL's shutdown. Kubrick represents the former as a quick, clinical termination, while the latter is extended and full of pathos as HAL pleads for its 'life' functions.

The human protagonists exist in a state of imposed disassociation, paralleled by the clinical white environment in which they live and work. The astronauts demonstrate an emotional constraint and detachment, not only from one another but also from family members on Earth. This is represented by Heywood Floyd's birthday call to his daughter, which differs very little in its emotional range to the conversation he later has with the Russians about the Clavius 'epidemic'. It is also apparent in Frank Poole's birthday call from his parents, which he receives unemotionally and passively.

The Jupiter mission means that the astronauts are now even more isolated from contact with other humans back on Earth. On *Discovery One*, Dave Bowman and Frank Poole have separate tasks and rarely interact, operating in different shifts to attend to their allocated roles. Meanwhile, there are shots of the three other astronauts in suspended animation, their lives dependent on the supercomputer HAL.

A ACTIVITY

Disassociation in *2001: A Space Odyssey*

Locate three other examples in the film of Kubrick's representations of the space travellers' disassociation from others. Indicate how shot selection, framing and the use of diegetic and non-diegetic sound are used to create these impressions.

A triple-entry journal such as this may help in the organisation of your ideas.

Example of disassociation	Film techniques being used to shape this impression	How viewers are positioned to respond

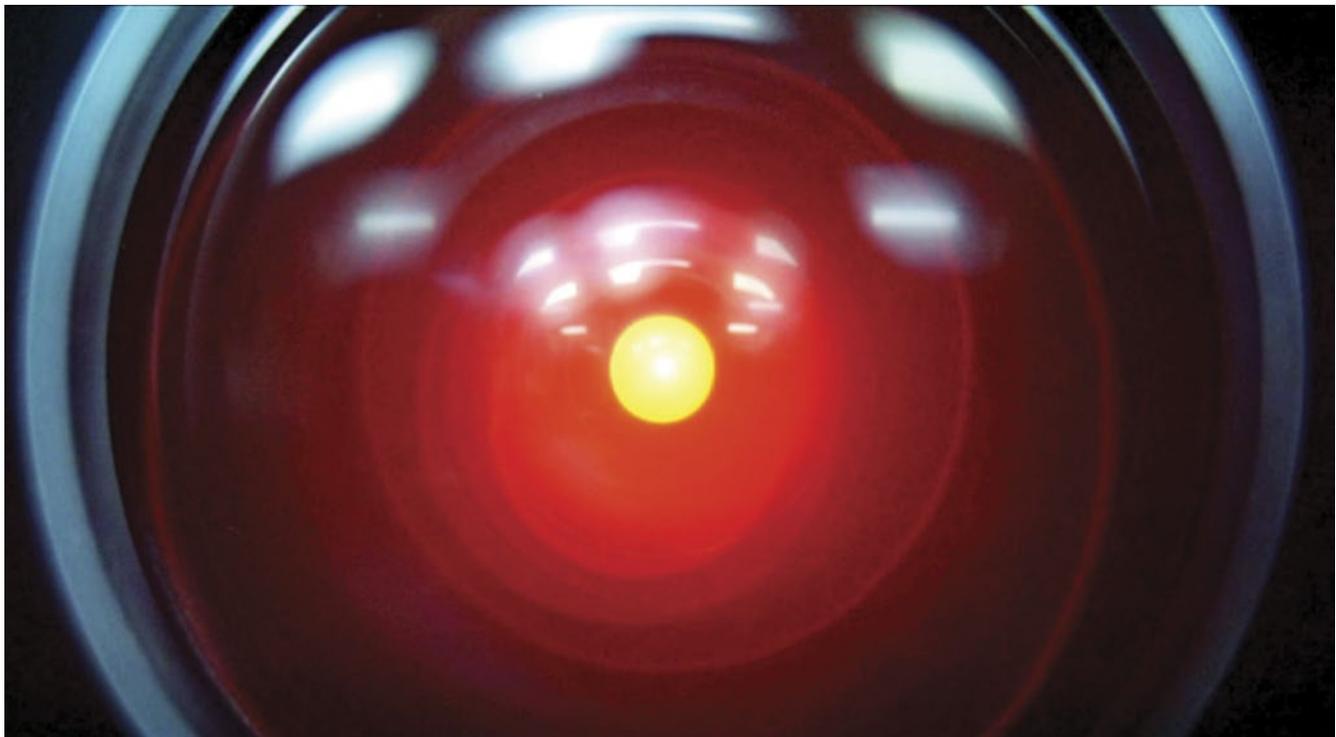
Alienation from the self

Let us consider two examples of alienation from a sense of identity – the antagonist, the supercomputer HAL, and the protagonist, mission commander Dave Bowman.

HAL 9000

Ironically, HAL is constructed as exhibiting a stronger self-concept and sense of individual identity than some of the human protagonists.

The supercomputer
HAL 9000



HAL is programmed to have a sentient ‘consciousness’ so that it can better communicate with the astronauts. However, HAL also demonstrates the dark side of human self-conceptualisation through acts of premediated and dispassionate murder. This does not appear to be part of HAL’s original programming, but an apparent ‘evolution’ in order to protect itself.

The scenes in which HAL kills the astronauts are some of the most dramatic and tense in the film. As Frank Poole exits the EVA pod to replace the AE-35 Unit, HAL takes control of the pod, forcing a collision that severs Poole’s air hose. HAL also switches off the life support in the hibernation chambers, with accompanying visual and audio effects – piercing alarms, computer malfunction signals and, finally, the flatlining vital signs of the three astronauts.

In the final stand-off, when HAL refuses Dave Bowman’s request for re-entry, there are jump cuts from HAL’s ‘eye’ to Bowman’s face as the latter uses human ingenuity to blast his way back into the ship through an airlock, which he opens with the EVA pod’s ‘hands’.

DISCUSSION

HAL versus the humans

Rewatch the dramatic sequence of the protracted conflict between HAL and the astronauts.

- 1 What film techniques are used to increase tension as Dave Bowman desperately works to survive, blasting his way back into *Discovery One* after being refused re-entry by HAL?
- 2 Once safely inside *Discovery One*, what effect is achieved by the sound effect of Bowman breathing inside his pressurised spacesuit?
- 3 Kubrick uses a handheld camera to track Dave Bowman’s progress through *Discovery One* to the computer’s mainframe. What effect is Kubrick trying to achieve? How does this change in technique alter the tone of the scene?
- 4 HAL pleads with Dave Bowman as he destroys the AI’s logic memory centre. Facing imminent loss of identity, how does HAL progressively exhibit ingratiation, panic, fear, despair or self-awareness in his communications with Dave Bowman? Why do you think that many viewers of the film empathise with HAL in these scenes?

Dave Bowman

After the Star Gate sequence, Bowman finds himself leaving the EVA pod and entering a room seemingly reconstructed from his memories and dreams. It is as if a parallel reality of his self-concept and sense of human identity has been created in a room furnished in 18th-century period style.

Bowman appears to watch himself initially from the interior of the EVA pod and then from differing perspectives that completely overturn conventional reaction shots. In these subjective shots, Bowman observes himself at different ages and in different positions, and finally as an old man. His identity and sense of self becomes ruptured, along with his (and our) sense of linear time and space.



Dave Bowman in the room seemingly reconstructed from his memories and dreams

The scene culminates with Bowman on his death bed, reaching out, like the ape man in the opening sequence, towards the Monolith. He then appears to be reincarnated as the Star Child, hanging in space beside the globe of the Earth, perhaps symbolising the next phase of human evolution.

In this sequence, Kubrick subverts narrative conventions and perspectives of space and time. There is an implication that this environment was constructed as a habitat so that Bowman could be observed by an alien intelligence, symbolised by the Monolith, as he metamorphoses from middle age to old age to death to rebirth.

DISCUSSION

The end of *2001: A Space Odyssey*

Kubrick's stated intention was that each viewer's individual imagination engage with the film, so that multiple perspectives and interpretations are made possible. Some viewers may interpret the Monolith and the Star Child in religious terms, while others see them as symbols representing the next phase of human evolution.

- 1 What are your interpretations of the closing sequence of the film? What do you think is Kubrick's purpose in fracturing linear space and time through Bowman's self-observations and metamorphoses and alienation from his sense of identity?
 - 2 How are viewers positioned by the closing shots of the film – the Star Child and the Earth floating in space? What do you think their significance might be in terms of the thematic structure of the film as a whole?
-

 EXTENDED RESPONSE**Reflecting on and responding to the two texts**

Throughout this chapter, you have conducted close readings of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *2001: A Space Odyssey* and considered the way each text constructs representations of alienation. Now it is time to conduct a text-to-text conversation and make connections between the two texts to better understand them both.

Choose and complete one of the following tasks.

- 1** George Orwell and Stanley Kubrick develop multiple perspectives on alienation in their respective texts. Think about these perspectives and, using a double-entry journal, identify:
 - a** the author or director's purpose in shaping these perspectives
 - b** how you responded as a reader or viewer to these invited readings.
 - 2** Reconsider the representations of alienation experienced by the key protagonists in both texts: Winston Smith in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Dave Bowman in *2001: A Space Odyssey*.
 - a** Select three turning points in the novel. Write three separate diary entries, in character as Winston Smith, in which he relates those turning points and expresses his sense of isolation and alienation.
 - b** Select three turning points in the Jupiter mission. Write three entries in *Discovery One's* log, in character as Dave Bowman, in which he synthesises these key events and his responses. One journal entry should be after he regains control of spaceship *Discovery One*, as the sole survivor of the Jupiter mission, and should reflect his sense of isolation and alienation.
 - 3** The antagonists in both novel and film are each terrifying in their own ways. Write a short analytical exposition of 350–400 words in which you argue the case for either O'Brien or HAL 9000 as a representation of the ultimate antagonist, capable of inducing extreme states of alienation and disassociation in their respective victims. In your analysis, make at least one link between the two antagonists.
-

CHAPTER
THREE

WRITING AND SHAPING A MEDIA TEXT

In the previous chapter, you read about and analysed George Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Stanley Kubrick's science-fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey*. In your conversations about these two texts, you concentrated on representations of the various forms of alienation evident in both novel and film.

This chapter will focus on preparing you to write and shape a media text in digital or print format – an essay, journal article, blog post or similar text – for a public audience. In that text, you will draw connections between the novel and the film and offer a perspective on, for example, the representations of alienation in both.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

TEXTS IN THIS CHAPTER:

TEXTS IN
CONTEXTS

- explore the ways texts establish and maintain relationships with audiences
- explore the intertextual relationships among texts

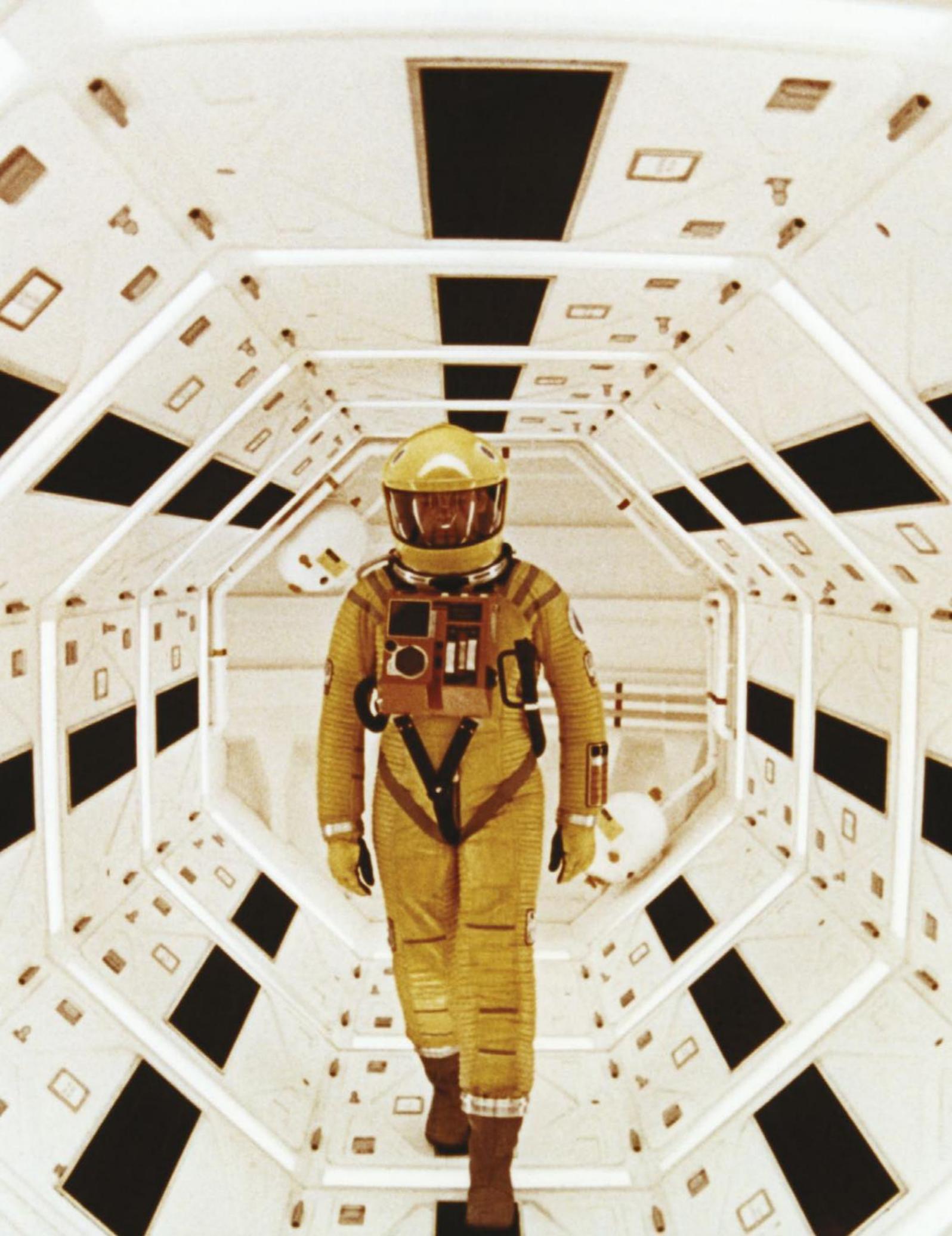
- 'Free will, technology and violence in a futuristic vision of humanity – *2001: A Space Odyssey*' – media text
- 'Why Orwell's *1984* matters so much now' – media text

LANGUAGE
AND TEXTUAL
ANALYSIS

- analyse how representations are constructed in different contexts
- analyse how language choices are used for different purposes and contexts

RESPONDING TO
AND CREATING
TEXTS

- produce written texts for a public audience that sustain a perspective
- use appropriate language, aesthetic features and stylistic devices to sustain a perspective.



Preparing to write a media text

Media texts can take many forms – an academic journal article, a formal essay, an extended article in a web magazine and more. No matter the form a media text takes, the process of preparing to write the text remains the same.

Following the steps laid out in this chapter will prepare you to write a media text on the topic of alienation in *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. These steps will also prepare you to write media texts on any other topic. In fact, the steps can be applied to any subject in which you write essays or extended responses.

The steps described here to prepare your media text include the following:

- 1 Frame the topic.
- 2 Identify and locate relevant textual evidence.
- 3 Generate ideas.
- 4 Plan the structure and shape.

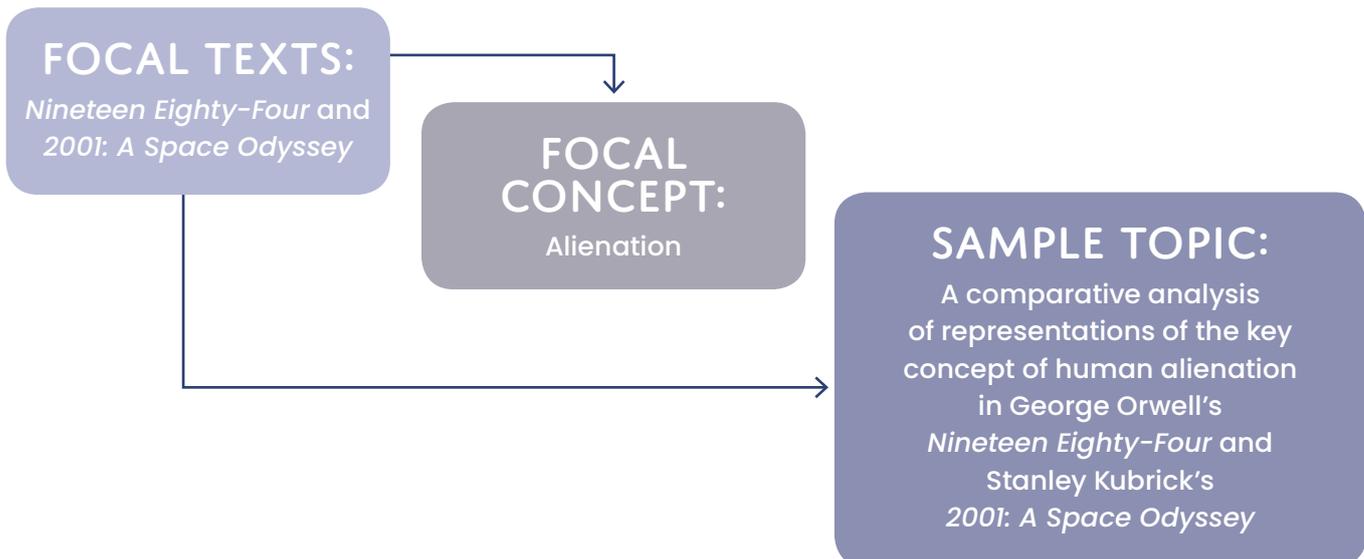
Frame the topic

The first step in preparing to construct a media text is to frame your topic in a clearly and carefully constructed statement or sentence. By doing this, you will have a specific focus for what you intend to write and shape in your media text.

An effectively worded topic enables you to narrow down a range of ideas you may have about a broad concept common to both texts (such as that of alienation). This topic sets up your capacity to home in on a specific aspect or issue arising from the focal texts' representations of the broader concept, and to use this as the basis of your analysis and interpretation.

While a clearly defined topic helps narrow your focus, you need to make sure there is ample evidence available to you in both texts to support your interpretations and to develop your analysis of that topic. As you brainstorm and plan your response, you may find that you need to tweak or refine your topic.

If you are responding to a specific topic set by your teacher, you will not be able to change it.



Identify and locate relevant textual evidence

In the previous chapter, you engaged in a close reading of both the novel and the film. You now need to revisit these texts through the lens of your designated topic, skim-reading (or viewing) to identify and collate evidence for your article.

One useful strategy that you can employ is *foot-printing*, which involves making notes and annotations on sticky-note paper. You can place these notes directly onto the pages of the novel wherever you find a relevant example or quotation. These notes leave a trail of your thinking and of your identification of key points. Most importantly, they create a trail of useful evidence and relevant quotes across the novel, helping you to prioritise important ideas and connections.

You can also make use of this strategy when you rewatch the film, although you will obviously adapt it by pausing the film and then jotting down the key point or quote (possibly noting down the pause-time or track number if you need to visit the material again later).



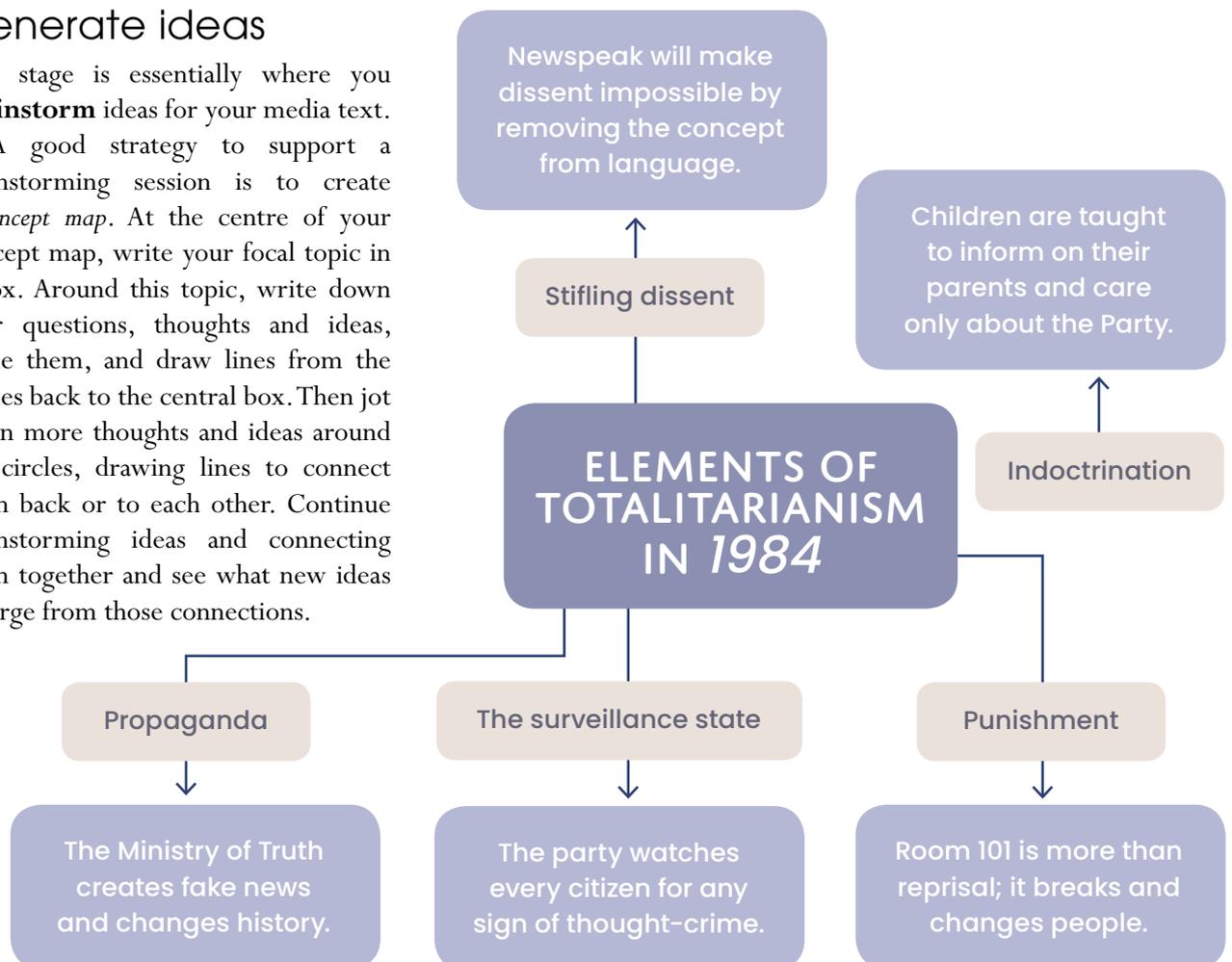
brainstorm

a technique where ideas are generated in order to stimulate creative thinking, develop new ideas or devise a solution to a problem

Generate ideas

This stage is essentially where you **brainstorm** ideas for your media text.

A good strategy to support a brainstorming session is to create a *concept map*. At the centre of your concept map, write your focal topic in a box. Around this topic, write down your questions, thoughts and ideas, circle them, and draw lines from the circles back to the central box. Then jot down more thoughts and ideas around the circles, drawing lines to connect them back or to each other. Continue brainstorming ideas and connecting them together and see what new ideas emerge from those connections.



That is just one way to draw a concept map – you may prefer a different approach or design. There are many mind map templates and designs available online; you could select one of those to use or to adapt. You can even make a mind map on your device using a digital template or a dedicated app, or you may prefer to make informal jottings around the central topic on a sheet of paper.

Whichever option you choose, you are still generating ideas, getting your initial thoughts down, and clarifying these in your mind as you go. Some of these ideas may be discarded or altered as you move to the next stage of planning, and this is an expected part of the process.

DISCUSSION

Creating a concept map

- 1 How might framing a concept map represent a valuable precursor to the more formal planning of a response?
 - 2 Share with your fellow students your preferred tips and approaches to brainstorming a topic. As a class, informally identify the relative strengths and drawbacks of different options.
-

Plan the structure and shape

The last step of the planning stage is to transfer your initial thoughts and ideas into a more systematic format – a detailed plan of your media text. This stage involves the careful selection and sequencing of material in dot point format. You can then use your dot points to scaffold the shape of the paragraphs in your media text.

At this stage you are framing the selection, structuring and sequencing of your ideas. This means that you will be planning and organising the content of your paragraphs. The paragraphs in the body of your media text should put forward and develop subtopics that link to your overarching focal topic.

After you identify each of the subtopics for the body paragraphs of your media text, the next step is to write dot points of supporting evidence that you intend to use in that paragraph. If you cannot identify enough dot points for a subtopic – that is, you cannot locate adequate supporting evidence or examples – you may need to discard that subtopic and substitute another that is more significant. On the other hand, if a subtopic is substantial, the multiple dot points in your plan may suggest you need to write and develop several consecutive paragraphs on that subtopic.

When you are satisfied with your plan, number the subtopics in what you consider to be the best order to suit the focus and purpose of your text. This ensures that you have an effective and logical sequencing of ideas.

Alternatively, you may prefer to use a graphic organiser or template planner to arrange your content. The layout of your planner will vary according to your preferred learning and thinking style.

Writing your media text

Working through the four steps just described should mean you now have a plan for your media text – not only an idea of what it will cover, but a numbered guide to every paragraph addressing every subtopic.

A plan is only the start – now you have to write the text. Fortunately, you have the plan to guide you.

The introduction

The introduction to your media text is very important and requires careful crafting. This is where you give context to your focal topic for the reader, as well as the texts you will be analysing and interpreting. You also flag or snapshot the key points that you will develop and expand upon throughout your text.

This part of your media text is used to establish a connection with your readers. The introductory paragraph is the ‘first taste’ a reader has. You need to make a good first impression to secure not only their interest but also their trust in you as an informed, knowledgeable and engaging writer.

In most forms of media text, the introduction is typically a single well-developed paragraph, although some might extend to two paragraphs. The introduction sums up your thesis and the perspectives that you will develop. It also indicates why your position on the focus topic is original and important. In other words, you present the reader with a snapshot of the structure and scope of your media text and inspire them to want to continue reading to discover what you have to say.

Later in this chapter, you will read a media text by Thomas Caldwell – a journal article – in which he analyses Stanley Kubrick’s futuristic vision of humanity, using evidence from several of the director’s films, but predominantly from *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Let us consider the introduction to this article now.

Stanley Kubrick’s *2001: A Space Odyssey* is simply one of the greatest films of all time and it is the director’s most profound and confounding exploration of humanity’s relationship to technology, violence, sexuality and social structures. All of Kubrick’s films make philosophical inquiries about the nature of humanity to varying degrees, but in *2001: A Space Odyssey* he examines the place that humans occupy in the universe, asking some extremely weighty questions about the way humanity has evolved and suggesting what the next stage of our evolution will be like.



A ACTIVITY**Analysing an effective introduction**

- 1 What is the writer's thesis established in the opening sentence? How is this expanded upon and given context in the second sentence?
 - 2 How does the author look at the contemporary relevance of the issues raised in and by the film?
 - 3 List the key points or issues flagged in this introduction (which the author later analyses and develops as subtopics throughout the article).
 - 4 This paragraph is a good model of an introduction to a media text. Why is a carefully crafted introduction important to reader engagement and the success of an article as a whole?
-

The body of the media text

In the body paragraphs of your media text, you expand upon and develop each of the subtopics identified in your plan. Typically, each subtopic is addressed in a paragraph or consecutive paragraphs.

You need to consider the overall 'shape' of your media text, with subtopics being treated evenly. Make sure that there are no short, skimpy or undeveloped paragraphs and no lengthy or over-extended paragraphs. If you have an important subtopic that starts to blow out into a very long, extended paragraph, split this into two or three linked consecutive paragraphs.



The **topic sentence** is the keystone of an effective paragraph – this is what supports and holds the paragraph together. The topic sentence:

- informs the reader exactly what the paragraph is going to be about and signals what they can expect
- demonstrates a clear and significant link to the overarching focal topic of your media text
- establishes the importance of what comes next in the paragraph, since this topic sentence is unpacked and expanded upon through supporting evidence in the sentences that follow.

Whenever you complete a subtopic section of your media text and move to the next subtopic, make sure that you create a sense of continuity by using a smooth transition or link to the new paragraph, so that your article flows smoothly and does not suddenly ‘jump’ to a new subtopic. This use of **cohesion** is important – you need to select language resources that tie together the meanings contained in your sentences and paragraphs.

You should also consider the use of paragraph openers that explicitly denote the logical connections between one paragraph and the next. *Connectives* represent one way of doing this – for example, in Caldwell’s article, the conjunctions ‘Although ...’ and ‘While ...’ are used to link ideas and paragraphs.

Spend time establishing smooth and effective links between paragraphs since these will make your media text more polished, engaging and structurally effective.

topic sentence
a sentence that identifies the main idea of the paragraph

cohesion
in textual terms, the act or state of being united or fluent and not feeling like a collection of parts

ACTIVITY

Topic sentences

Read and consider the following paragraph from Caldwell’s article:

Kubrick is clearly anti-conflict and anti-violence but he is also against any system of over-regulation that reduces humans to virtual automations. While the utopian technology of *2001: A Space Odyssey* is something to be marvelled at it also comes with a price, which is fully explored in the ‘Jupiter Mission’ section of the film. The dehumanising effect of over-regulation is critiqued in this section by depicting the human characters Dr Dave Bowman (Keir Dullea) and Dr Frank Poole (Gary Lockwood) as almost emotionless servants of *Discovery One*. The three other scientists onboard are kept frozen in cryogenic hibernation making them virtual machines waiting to be switched on when required by the two ‘caretakers’ Bowman and Poole. The music that Kubrick uses during these scenes evokes the lonely emptiness of space but if Bowman or Poole feel melancholia, or any other emotion, then they don’t show it. Even when Poole receives a birthday message from his parents on Earth he barely registers any emotion.

- 1 Identify what you consider to be the topic sentence of this paragraph. Comment upon its effectiveness in introducing and establishing the focus of the paragraph.
 - 2 What supporting evidence from the film text is used to consolidate and substantiate the point made in the topic sentence?
 - 3 Identify how Caldwell uses connectives in some of the sentences in the passage above and evaluate their effectiveness.
-

Integrating quotes

The ability to seamlessly blend quotes into a text is not only a hallmark of a skilled and capable writer but also greatly enhances the reader's engagement. The thoughtful use of quotes shows the reader that you have a close and well-informed knowledge of a text, as well as an ability to select concrete evidence that supports your statements and perspectives.

It is important that you are discriminating and only use carefully selected and relevant quotes – the quotation should always strengthen or reinforce the point that you are making. You should also be judicious in the number of quotes that you use and the ways in which you integrate these throughout your media text. The media text is your original work – you are developing *your* perspectives about the focal topic. The use of quotes is only one of the tools or resources that you can draw on to write and shape your ideas.

In a media text such as this, you should not quote from secondary sources (that is, what critics or reviewers may have said or written about a text) but quote *only* from the primary source text/s (for example, *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*). You are developing your perspectives and interpretations of the novel and film, and the use of the base texts or primary sources is what is required.

In Australia, we follow the British academic model and use single inverted commas for quotations. You should never begin a paragraph with a quote, and it is also best to avoid ending paragraphs with quotes.

In a media text of about 1500 words, quotes should typically not exceed two lines in length, and preferably be even shorter. If you use a longer quotation, you can often shorten it by using ellipses (...), making sure that the sentence with the abridged quote makes grammatical and lexical sense. Longer quotes that exceed a single sentence should be avoided; if you must use one, a longer quote needs to be placed on a new line and indented. You then complete the remainder of your paragraph by returning to the original margin to write your subsequent sentences.

Avoid 'dropping' a quote into your article as a discrete stand-alone sentence. As much as possible, the quote needs to be integrated into the body of a sentence that you devise:

In a final profoundly ironic reflection, Winston Smith had come to realise that '... everything was all right, the struggle was finished. He had won the victory over himself. He loved Big Brother.' The concluding words of Orwell's novel represent a chilling correlation to the power of certain demagogues in contemporary society to subvert truth, to invert reality, and to indoctrinate gullible citizens into a blind acceptance of all that they say and do.

Make sure that your use of inverted commas is consistent throughout your media text.

Indented quotes do not use inverted commas.

Sometimes a comma needs to precede the quote, as in the following example:

In *2001: A Space Odyssey*, the supercomputer HAL appears to have complex feelings; however, as Dave explains, '... he acts like he has genuine emotions. Of course, he's programmed that way to make it easier for us to talk to him.'

When you read the entire sentence aloud, the use of the comma becomes self-evident, as it reflects a natural short pause.

Sometimes in order to weave a quotation into a sentence of your own, you may need to make a **syntactic** adjustment to the wording of the actual quote so that it makes grammatical sense. For example, you may need to change the tense of a verb. It is important to ensure the sentence that contains the quote makes grammatical sense. Once again, reading the sentence aloud can assist you with this. The original quote might read:

'His solid form towered over the pair of them, and the expression on his face was still indecipherable.'

Your sentence, however, may need to make a grammatical change to the tense of the verb when you use a section of the quote:

Winston was taken aback that O'Brien could turn off the telescreen and was keenly aware of O'Brien's '... solid form tower[ing] over the pair of them ...'

If a quote ends with a full stop or comma, the full stop or comma goes inside the quotation marks.

syntactic
of or relating to syntax

Square brackets [] are always used to indicate a change or modification to the author's original words.

ACTIVITY

Adjusting syntax around quotes

The following excerpts make use of quotes that are discrete stand-alone sentences. Rewrite each pair of sentences in order to integrate the quote seamlessly into a single syntactic and grammatically accurate sentence. Refer to the conventions and guidelines provided in the examples in this chapter.

- 1 Winston told O'Brien that he and Julia were enemies of the Party. 'We disbelieve in the principles of Ingsoc. We are thought criminals.'
 - 2 The pain that Winston felt almost paralysed him. 'Everything had exploded into yellow light.'
 - 3 Winston confided in Julia that initially he had thought that she was a member of the Thought Police. 'The girl laughed delightedly, evidently taking this as a tribute to the excellence of her disguise.'
 - 4 Dave Bowman explains that HAL seems to express a range of complex emotions. 'Of course, he's programmed that way to make it easier for us to talk to him.'
 - 5 For many viewers, HAL appears to express human characteristics. 'I am putting myself to the fullest possible use, which is all I think that any conscious entity can ever hope to do.'
-

Writing the conclusion

The concluding paragraph of your media text neatly draws together and synthesises your viewpoints on the analysis of the focal topic. You don't simply restate what you wrote in your introduction or repeat topic sentences. A conclusion that restates what the reader has just read will only alienate them. However, it is equally important that you do not introduce any new points that seemingly come out of nowhere.

Instead, use the conclusion as the last opportunity to convince the reader of the substance of your article and the perspectives that you have developed on your focal topic. The wider implications of what you have detailed in your subtopic paragraphs can now be consolidated since these apply to your interpretation of both texts. Ensure that you do not end with sweeping statements that sound artificial or exaggerated.

Allow ample time to carefully craft your conclusion. It is one of the most important paragraphs in your media text. Avoid the pitfall of thinking that all you need to do is tie up loose ends in a quick series of summary statements. If the introduction was the 'first taste' that a reader has, the conclusion is where they make their final judgement of the value and worth of your media text and the contribution that it makes to their knowledge and interpretations of the novel and film.

DISCUSSION

Crafting a conclusion

Earlier you read the introduction to Thomas Caldwell's article on *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Now read the conclusion to his article:

However, what should we really deduce from this ending? Is humanity being transformed into the blank slate of an unborn star child something to hope for? Does such an ending suggest that given the way we are now there is no other hope for our species to survive? Since Kubrick is so critical of social and political structures that force humans to adopt a way of living that is restrictive and contradicts free will then what do we make of the idea that the entire human race have been manipulated by an alien intelligence since the very beginning? Is being under the control of a higher intelligence a source of comfort or the ultimate irony in Kubrick's cinematic exploration of violence and artificial codes of behaviour throughout his career? The ultimate meaning of *2001: A Space Odyssey* is as deliberately ambiguous as the motives and origins of the black monoliths whose gift of heightened intelligence gave humanity the tools it needed to both survive and self-destruct.

- 1 Do you consider this to be an effective conclusion? Give reasons to support your viewpoint.
 - 2 In his conclusion Caldwell poses rhetorical questions, when conventional conclusions typically consist of statements. Do you consider this to be an effective strategy in positioning readers? Give reasons to support your opinion.
 - 3 Note how Caldwell has carefully crafted his final sentence. What stylistic devices has he used to do this? How effective are these?
-

Ideally, you will not be working on either editing or proofreading your own text at 2 am. You should never proofread when you are tired or unfocused. Proofreading requires a clear head and total concentration. It also needs to be done slowly and systematically – our brain often fills in gaps or we see what *should be* on the page instead of what *is* on the page. (You may find it useful to enlarge the font if you are proofreading on screen.)

It is therefore best to proofread the day after you finish the final editing of your draft, or at least after a break of several hours. For this reason, it is always sensible to try to complete your assignment *at least* the day before it is due.

It is a good idea to read your text aloud to yourself. This will not only assist with sentence structure and appropriate insertion of punctuation marks that indicate natural short and long pauses, but will also reflect the flow and rhythm of your sentences. After you are satisfied with your own proofreading of an assignment, you can always give your work to another person to read, since a fresh pair of eyes may identify slips or errors that you glossed over yourself.

When proofreading your text, you should check that:

- sentences are properly structured and that you do not have any sentence fragments or run-on sentences.
- all punctuation – including the correct use of commas, full stops, possessive apostrophes and quotation marks – is correct.
- the spelling of words is accurate. Remember that auto-spellchecker may substitute a word you did not intend. For example, ‘The design of the article should be *atheistically* pleasing ...’ when the writer meant ‘The design of your article should be *aesthetically* pleasing ...’
- the grammar checker is accurate in indicating that there may be a problem with grammatical structure. Look carefully at your sentence and if the error is not obvious to you, seek advice and assistance from another knowledgeable person (such as your teacher).

ACTIVITY

Proofreading

- 1 Working in pairs, proofread the following short document, making what you consider to be relevant corrections.

When composing a word doc typos are commen errors which comprise of untended keyboard slips watch out for exetra letters untended sp aces figures and numbers and any editions and deletions.

A lot of proofreading errors occur thru rushing thru a document don't try and save time by overhasty proofreading

And in summery between you and I careful proofreading is the quay to a sucessfull submission;

- 2 Share how and why you made your corrections in a general class discussion. Identify whether the error was due to faulty spelling, punctuation, or grammar and syntax.
-

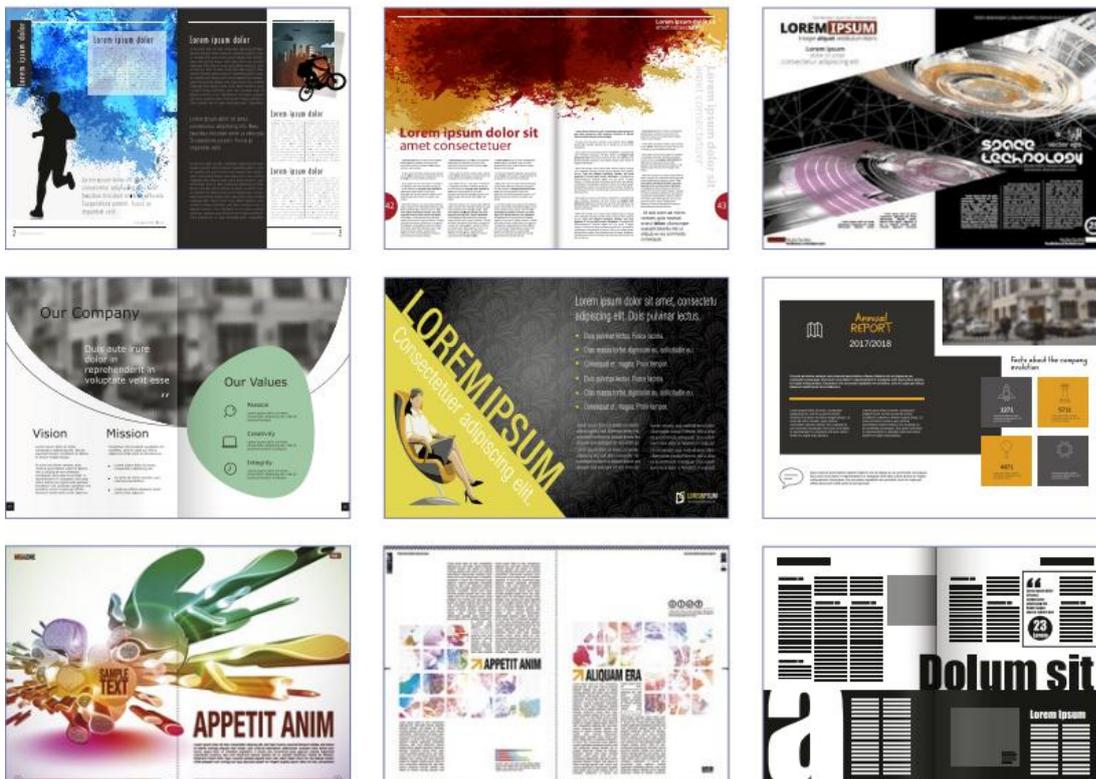
Designing the layout of a digital text

Few contemporary media texts consist of nothing but words on the page, with no images. It is far more likely that a media text will be presented online, will incorporate images, and that the page will be designed with a layout that facilitates reader engagement.

When you are creating a digital media text, you have a lot of freedom to experiment with and arrange and re-arrange the layout of your article. It also means that, in addition to your editing and proofreading work, you need to consider the design aspects of how to present your media text.

- Think very carefully about the heading or title and subheadings that are used to divide sections of your article. The title needs to be original, engaging and appropriate to the approach that you are developing. An effective title and use of subheadings also offer visual interest through font size and selection.
- You need to carefully consider the selection of images and their size and placement on the page. The page design should demonstrate an overall balance and be aesthetically pleasing. Make sure that your images are high resolution. You may choose to crop an image at an angle or use text wrap to give added dimension and interest.
- The layout should also reflect the interaction of words and pictures. The visuals should function to extend the reader's engagement and understanding of the print text and open a conversation between these. It is very important that your text and images work together to make meaning. Images should never be gratuitous or included at random.
- An effective page layout will also communicate key elements of your article, such as through the strategic placement of pull quotes. These provide the reader with small snapshots of key points from your article that reflect its tone and content.

Your assessment task will require you to create a digital media text, incorporating images and layout, not just an essay.



- Use consistent editing techniques throughout your article. For example, the images should be either all black and white or all full colour. Font selection in paragraphs needs to be consistent, unless this is being varied for particular effect.
- Your page design should be harmonious and work as a coherent whole. It should never look as if it consists of separate elements that appear to have just ended up on the same page.
- When you have experimented with layout and design and you are satisfied with your final version, it is a good idea to print a hard copy and reassess this version.

DISCUSSION

Effective page layout

There are nine compressed double-page spreads provided for you in the image on the previous page.

- 1 In small groups of two to three students, select one of these double-page spreads. Each group should select a different spread.
- 2 Compile your observations of the effectiveness of the layout and design of your double-page spread, using the pointers provided above and examples from your spread. Indicate how and why the spread could be improved.
- 3 Share your group's observations with the class as a whole. Discuss which of the spreads you consider to be most effective, providing justification for your choice.

Examples of media texts

This chapter has presented you with a lot of advice and ideas on how to write and design a media text. To put that advice into a practical context, we will do a close reading of two media texts from external sources – texts that focus on the novel and film you have been reading already.

Media text 1

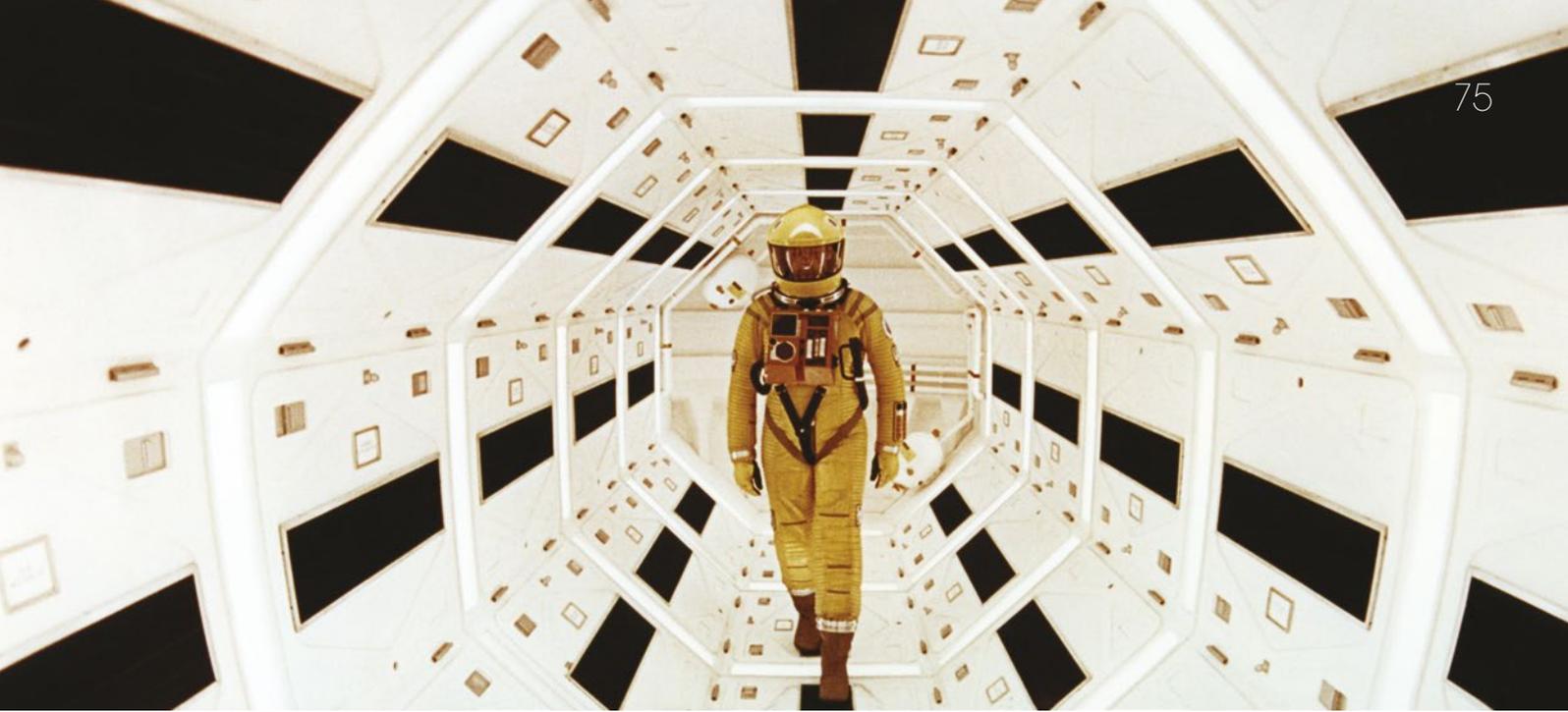
The first media text is one you have seen glimpses of before – Thomas Caldwell's journal article on *2001: A Space Odyssey*. Caldwell is a film critic, broadcaster and the author of *The Film Analysis Handbook*. He also blogs at his website, Cinema Autopsy. This journal article was originally published in *Screen Education*, a magazine by and for teachers and students on media literacy and screen culture. In this article, Caldwell focuses on analysing the film in terms of the key concepts of human evolution and technology.

Annotations have been made to highlight some of the key textual features. Note that this journal article is considerably longer than the one you will create in your English course. However, its style, structure and textual features mean that it serves as an especially useful model.



Cinema Autopsy
http://mea.digital/qen34_3_1

The media text you create for your Unit 3 assessment will be 1000–1500 words in length.



Frank Poole inside the spaceship

THE TITLE —
ENCAPSULATES
THE FOCUS OF THE
ARTICLE.

Free will, technology and violence in a futuristic vision of humanity – *2001: A Space Odyssey*

Thomas Caldwell, *Screen Education*, 2010

Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey* is simply one of the greatest films of all time and it is the director's most profound and confounding exploration of humanity's relationship to technology, violence, sexuality and social structures. All of Kubrick's films make philosophical inquiries about the nature of humanity to varying degrees, but in *2001: A Space Odyssey* he examines the place that humans occupy in the universe, asking some extremely weighty questions about the way humanity has evolved and suggesting what the next stage of our evolution will be like.

Although loosely based on the short stories 'The Sentinel' and 'Encounter in the Dawn' by the acclaimed science-fiction author Arthur C Clarke, who would simultaneously write the novel *2001: A Space Odyssey* while Kubrick wrote the film's screenplay, the film transcends its literary origins. *2001: A Space Odyssey* is a work of cinematic poetry and its combination of philosophical musings with its special effects, sound design, production design, cinematography and editing make it just as visually impressive and thematically fascinating now as it was when originally released in 1968. It is a film that has inspired countless science-fiction films since, including Duncan Jones' acclaimed feature film debut *Moon* (2009), a direct homage to Kubrick's film.

While Clarke's excellent novel is often used to unravel many of the narrative intricacies of Kubrick's film, it should largely be put aside for the purpose of conducting any serious analysis of the film. Clarke's novel is excellent science-fiction literature, but Kubrick's film uses the audio-visual powers of cinema to their full potential to create a work of art that produces a sensory effect on the viewer that the written word cannot replicate. The majority of the meaning in *2001: A Space Odyssey* lies in its visuals, not in its dialogue or characterisation.

THE AUTHOR
MAKES A STYLISTIC
LINK TO THIS IN
HIS CONCLUDING
PARAGRAPH, WHERE
HE ALSO POSES
QUESTIONS TO THE
READER.

NOTE THE WELL-
SYNTHESISED
MANNER IN WHICH
THE AUTHOR REFERS
TO THE RESOURCES
OF THE GENRE AND
HIS OPINION OF THE
ENDURING WORTH
AND RELEVANCE OF
THE FILM.

USE OF THE
CONJUNCTION
'WHILE' AS A
COHESIVE LINKING
DEVICE.

NOTE HOW THE
OPENING SENTENCE
— ESTABLISHES THE
FOCUS OF THE
ARTICLE AND THE
KEY TOPICS TO
BE ANALYSED IN
THE BODY OF THE
ARTICLE.

THIS NOUN GROUP
— IS AN ELEGANT
AND INFORMATIVE
DESCRIPTION.

NOTE USE OF
— POSITIVE EVALUATIVE
LANGUAGE.

- USE OF SUBHEADING AS A SUBTOPIC DIVIDER BETWEEN SECTIONS OF THE ARTICLE. — **Violence and humanity**
- THE TOPIC SENTENCES ESTABLISH THE FOCUS ON HUMAN VIOLENCE THAT IS DEVELOPED IN THIS AND THE SUBSEQUENT CONSECUTIVE PARAGRAPHS. — Most of Kubrick's films evince a sense of despair about the way humans are capable of treating each other. They show institutionalised violence and different types of unnatural conformity as dehumanising and soul-destroying forces. In *Paths of Glory* (1975) an incompetent higher command executes three innocent World War I French soldiers so as to deflect responsibility for a failed attack. The horror film *The Shining* (1980) places its supernatural elements in the background and functions as a parable for domestic violence when the father of a family looking after a hotel violently takes out his frustrations on his wife and son. The American soldiers in *Full Metal Jacket* (1987) are first stripped of their identities and transformed into killing machines during their training; they are then sent to Vietnam where they symbolically align themselves with cowboys and joke that the 'the gooks can play the Indians'.
- THIS IS THE FIRST OF A SERIES OF THREE FILMS THAT ARE USED AS EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT AND ILLUSTRATE THE SUBTOPIC POINT. — Kubrick does seem to believe that violence is innate to humanity and that the role of civilisation is to create structures for suppressing that violence without going too far to the other extreme and creating a situation where the social structures are themselves violent or overly restrictive in nature. The exploration of violence within humanity can be found in *2001: A Space Odyssey* and yet it is arguably the only film Kubrick made that could be interpreted as offering some hope that humanity can transcend its inherently destructive ways. However, before suggesting that *2001: A Space Odyssey* can therefore be regarded as an optimistic film, it should be noted that this hope comes in the unlikely
- THIS PARAGRAPH IS STILL ON THE SUBTOPIC OF HUMAN VIOLENCE BUT EXPANDS UPON THIS FURTHER. — guise of alien interference and cold, cynical sterile technology.
- NOTE HOW COHESION IS DEVELOPED THROUGH THE LINK TO TECHNOLOGY AT THE END OF ONE PARAGRAPH AND THE INTRODUCTION OF THIS AS A NEW SUBTOPIC IN THE NEXT PARAGRAPH. THERE IS REPETITION OF THE WORD 'TECHNOLOGY' TO AID COHESION. —
- USE OF A STRATEGICALLY PLACED PULL QUOTE TO SNAPSHOT AND HIGHLIGHT AN IMPORTANT KEY POINT FOR THE READER. —
- INTRODUCTION OF NEW SUBTOPIC. —
- IDENTIFICATION OF CINEMATIC RESOURCE WITH USE OF ASSOCIATED TERMINOLOGY. THIS EDIT IS REGARDED AS BEING THE FINEST IN CINEMATIC HISTORY, SO THIS IS EMPHASISED. —
- “ **Tools and weapons are depicted as being linked together through humanity's evolution, with one group having to kill another in order for their tribe to survive.** ”
- *2001: A Space Odyssey* begins with the section titled 'The Dawn of Man' which covers the birth of technology. The primates who will later evolve into modern humans are depicted as being on the brink of dying out. They are herbivores with not enough to eat, they are vulnerable to predators, they squabble over a small pool of water with a rival tribe and they are terrified of the dark. After encountering the alien black monolith, one of the apes simultaneously learns to use a bone to hunt as well as kill. Technology is used to kill for food and to kill for territory. Tools and weapons are thus depicted as being linked together throughout humanity's evolution, with one group having to kill another in order for their tribe to survive.
- In the greatest graphic match edit ever depicted in cinema, Kubrick cuts from the bone being triumphantly thrown into the air to a satellite in orbit three million years later. This dramatic cut links the two objects as tools of humanity but also draws attention to the vast differences between them. One is a crude and earthbound tool/weapon with a simple function while the other is a sophisticated and complex object that now serves humanity in space.

USE OF SUBHEADING AS A SUBTOPIC DIVIDER BETWEEN SECTIONS OF THE ARTICLE. IT ALSO NEATLY INTRODUCES AND REPRESENTS THE AMBIGUOUS RELATIONSHIP THAT HUMANS HAVE WITH TECHNOLOGY, AND THEIR PARADOXICAL RESPONSES TO IT.

— **The blessing and curse of technology**

Kubrick's films indicate mixed feelings about technology. It is frequently depicted as a threat to humanity (for example the doomsday device in *Dr Strangelove or: How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*, 1964) but it is also represented as something beautiful. The first sequence set in outer space in *2001: A Space Odyssey* is an extended, dialogue-free and plotless sequence that simply allows technology to dance. At first glance this sequence depicting the various satellites and spaceships, set to Johann Strauss II's *The Blue Danube*, may seem long and unnecessary but it is crucial to understanding the film's vision of the future. The use of music and movement is designed to give the impression of the machines waltzing, which is the ultimate expression of the state of grace that human-built technology has now achieved. The days of bashing each other over the heads with bones are long gone: humanity is now capable of creating technology that can reach the stars.

USE OF ALLITERATION TO EMPHASISE KEY WORDS.

THE AUTHOR INTRODUCES THIS NEW TOPIC AND USES EVIDENCE FROM FILM TEXTS TO ILLUSTRATE THE CONTRAST WITH KUBRICK'S SATIRICAL USE OF SEXUAL SYMBOLISM IN SOME FILMS WITH THE 'ALMOST CHASTE AND STERILE' USE IN *2001: A SPACE ODYSSEY*.

Not only is the use of Strauss' waltz music romantically evocative but there is also a sexual symbolism in moments such as the space plane docking into the wheel-shaped shape station (the wheel-shape is also a comment on how far technology has progressed). Kubrick had previously presented machines in a sexual way during the opening credits of *Dr Strangelove*, when the image of a B-52 being connected, mid-air, to a fuelling plane is underscored by a lush orchestral version of 'Try a Little Tenderness'. This sequence in *Dr Strangelove* and that film's sexual wordplays and innuendo is deliberately comical and suggests an absurd sexualisation of objects of war. Kubrick would again do this in *Full Metal Jacket* where the army recruits are encouraged to sexualise their rifles. However, in *2001* the effect is different, as the sexualisation of the machines is far less brutal, comical or overtly suggestive. Instead there is something almost chaste and sterile about the sequence.

— CONTINUATION OF SUBTOPIC OF TECHNOLOGY IN CONSECUTIVE PARAGRAPHS.

— STYLISTIC DEVICE OF PERSONIFICATION.

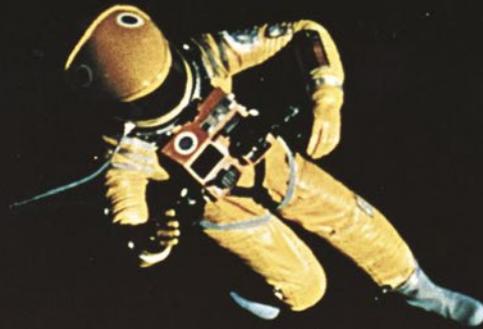
— TRANSITION TO THE REPRESENTATION OF TECHNOLOGY AS POSITIVE AND BEAUTIFUL. THE CONTRAST WITH THE NEXT SENTENCE, HOWEVER, REPRESENTS THE AMBIGUITY OF HUMAN RELATIONSHIP WITH TECHNOLOGY.

— THIS SETS UP A COHESIVE LINK TO THE OPENING SENTENCE OF THE NEXT PARAGRAPH.

Frank Poole



- USE OF COHESION THROUGH LINK TO STERILITY IN PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH. — **The sense of sterility** is further reflected by the extremely **clean and corporate** look given to the space station onto which Dr Heywood R Floyd (William Sylvester) disembarks. The modernist furniture, bright white lights and smooth surfaces all reflect a bland uniformity that is not dissimilar to the corporate branded world that is satirised in Jason Reitman's *Up in the Air* (2009). The conversation between Heywood and the Russian scientists indicates that in this version of the future the Cold War persists, or there are at least still tensions between the USA and Russia; however, discourse is polite and there is no hint of violence. Is this the price humanity has paid for **evolving beyond**
- THE AUTHOR FREQUENTLY USES ALLITERATION TO EMPHASISE KEY WORDS AND TO MAKE THE TEXT FLOW SMOOTHLY. — **the desire to kill – complete blandness?**
- THIS LINKS TO NEW SUBTOPIC IN NEXT PARAGRAPH. — **The idea of technology erasing violence but also erasing the desires and free will that make us human** is also explored by Kubrick in *A Clockwork Orange* (1971). The film's protagonist, the charismatic yet sociopathic teenager Alex DeLarge (Malcolm McDowell), is subjected to a controversial behavioural-correction treatment – part of the authorities' zero-tolerance approach to crime – that makes him experience nausea when confronted with sexual or violent situations. *A Clockwork Orange* suggests that stifling such urges is a bad thing because it suppresses the will and therefore the identity of the subject. What good is it for somebody to do good when they have no choice in the matter? As a side-effect of his treatment, Alex also becomes sickened by the sound of Beethoven's music. While his violent urges and behaviour are clearly depicted as destructive, his neutering also has a morally adverse effect.
- CONTINUATION OF LINKED IDEA FROM FINAL SENTENCE OF PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH PROVIDES COHESION. — Kubrick is clearly anti-conflict and anti-violence but he is also against any system of over regulation that reduces humans to virtual automations. While the utopian technology of *2001: A Space Odyssey* is something to be marvelled at it also comes with a price, which is fully explored in the 'Jupiter Mission' section of the film. The dehumanising effect of over-regulation is critiqued in this section by depicting the human characters Dr Dave Bowman (Keir Dullea) and Dr Frank Poole (Gary Lockwood) as almost emotionless servants of *Discovery One*. The three other scientists onboard are kept frozen in cryogenic hibernation making them virtual machines waiting to be switched on when required by the two 'caretakers' Bowman and Poole. The music that Kubrick uses during these scenes evokes the lonely emptiness of space but if Bowman or Poole feel melancholia, or any other emotion, then they don't show it. Even when Poole receives a birthday message from his parents on Earth he barely registers any emotion.
- NEW SUBTOPIC INTRODUCED, TOGETHER WITH RELEVANT TECHNICAL TERMINOLOGY. — **The only character on board *Discovery One* with any traces of humanity is the computer HAL 9000 (voiced by Douglas Rain).** Programmed by humans to conceal key truths from Bowman and Poole as well as to preserve the mission at all costs, which ends up translating as committing murder, HAL is still the most sympathetic character on board. The flawed programming that causes it to act violently is due to its human developers, suggesting that humans have once again misused technology. **While the deaths of the human characters are cold, mechanical and emotionless, HAL's death is extremely moving.** Pleading with Bowman to not shut it down and then spiralling into delirium, HAL's death is given the most dramatic significance in the film.
- USE OF COMPARISON AND CONTRAST AND EVIDENCE TO SUPPORT THE POINT BEING DEVELOPED. — Imbuing a sympathetic machine character, **instead of the human characters, with humanity is an effective way of showing the dehumanising effect of the modern world.**
- CONTINUATION OF DEVELOPMENT OF SUBTOPIC INTRODUCED IN PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH. — It is a technique that has since become very popular in science-fiction films making a similar comment about a society in which the humans are so machine-like that the



Frank Poole adrift in space

machines seem human by contrast. The replicants in *Blade Runner* (Ridley Scott, 1982), Bishop (Lance Henriksen) in *Aliens* (James Cameron, 1986), Murphy (Peter Weller) once he has become the cyborg enforcer in *RoboCop* (Paul Verhoeven, 1987) and even The Terminator (Arnold Schwarzenegger) in *Terminator 2: Judgment Day* (James Cameron, 1991) all express compassion, passions and degrees of empathy that most of the human characters in the films do not possess.

At the conclusion of *2001: A Space Odyssey* humanity has reached a point where civilisation and technology appear to have outgrown the primitive brutality of violence that developed during early human evolution due to the intervention of the monolithic aliens. However, this evolution has now brought humanity to a false-utopian state of sterility, passivity and clinical coldness, where a computer resorts to killing the humans it is supposed to work for in order to preserve its mission. Just as the early human-ape creatures at the start of the film were at the point where they could go no further by themselves, the humans in the film's version of the year 2001 are also required to now undergo the next step in evolution.

This next evolutionary process is depicted in the concluding segment of *2001: A Space Odyssey* titled 'Jupiter and Beyond the Infinite' in which the film adopts the point of view of Bowman to take the audience through an extraordinary psychedelic experience that is designed to represent the enormity and significance of what is happening. While the novel *2001: A Space Odyssey* informs the reader that Bowman is physically transported through an alien-made Star Gate, the feeling of the sequence in the film suggests a mental or even spiritual transcendence to a higher plane of consciousness.

— USE OF SUPPORTING EVIDENCE AND CONCRETE EXAMPLES TO SUBSTANTIATE CONTENTION BEING MADE.

— THIS LEADS INTO THE NEXT STAGE OF HUMAN EVOLUTION VIA THE INTERVENTION OF THE MONOLITH, WHICH WILL BE DEVELOPED IN SUBSEQUENT PARAGRAPHS ANALYSING THE STAR GATE SEQUENCE OF THE FILM.

— COHESIVE LINK ESTABLISHED TO THE NEXT PARAGRAPH.

— COHESIVE LINK FROM FINAL SENTENCE OF PREVIOUS PARAGRAPH AND CONTINUATION OF SUBTOPIC OF HUMAN EVOLUTION IN THIS PARAGRAPH.

In an ornate 18th-century room that is uncanny in its out-of-context familiarity, time appears to fold in on itself as Bowman witnesses himself in progressively older incarnations, before eventually being reborn.

REFERENCE TO THE USE OF THIS AS A RECURRING MUSICAL MOTIF IN THE FILM.

As the distinctive notes and crashing drums of Richard Strauss' *Also sprach Zarathustra* are heard for the final time, to once again signal the next giant step for humanity, we are left with what we are to assume is what Bowman has become – an unborn child floating in space, looking down on planet Earth. This dramatic final shot conveys a sense of awe and triumph, and the repetition of *Blue Danube* waltz over the end credits reinstates a sense of hope and beauty.

USE OF TECHNICAL TERMS APPROPRIATE TO GENRE.

STRATEGIC PLACEMENT OF PULL QUOTE FOR ADDED EMPHASIS OF THE CENTRAL KEY QUESTION POSED TO THE READER.

“Given that Kubrick is so critical of social and political structures that force humans to adopt a way of living that restricts free will, what do we make of the idea that the entire human race has been manipulated by an alien intelligence since the very beginning?”

However, what should we really deduce from this ending? Is humanity being transformed into the blank slate of an unborn star child something to hope for? Does such an ending suggest that given the way we are now there is no other hope for our species to survive? Since Kubrick is so critical of social and political structures that force humans to adopt a way of living that is restrictive and contradicts freewill then what do we make of the idea that the entire human race have been manipulated by an alien intelligence since the very beginning? Is being under the control of a higher intelligence a source of comfort or the ultimate irony in Kubrick's cinematic exploration of violence and artificial codes of behaviour throughout his career? The ultimate meaning of *2001: A Space Odyssey* is as deliberately ambiguous as the motives and origins of the black monoliths whose gift of heightened intelligence gave humanity the tools it needed to both survive and self-destruct.

DISCUSSION

Analysing Caldwell's media text

- 1 Identify the key subtopics in Caldwell's article. Do you think that he succeeded in positioning readers to agree with his perspectives? Give examples to illustrate your answers.
- 2 Note that pull quotes are always used sparingly. What emphasis is shaped by the selection of pull quotes? Are there any other examples that you might have used instead?
- 3 What cultural assumptions and values, attitudes and beliefs underpin Caldwell's representations of human evolution and the human use of technology?
- 4 What do you consider to be the main stylistic strengths of this article? Do you consider there to be any less effective aspects to the article? Provide illustrations to support your statements.

Media text 2

This second media text is much shorter, less formal, and stylistically quite different from the first text. The author, Ron Charles, a former teacher of literature and critical theory, is a literary critic and editor of *BookWorld*.

The Washington Post is one of America's most highly regarded daily newspapers and has been awarded a Pulitzer Prize on more than 50 occasions.

The following article was published in the Books section of *The Washington Post* in January 2017. It is worth noting that the slogan *Democracy Dies in Darkness* was added under its masthead in the same year.

Why Orwell's *1984* matters so much now

Ron Charles, *Washington Post*, 25 January 2017

President Trump may not be a big reader, but he's been a boon for sales of dystopian literature. Amid our thirst for adult colouring books and stories about missing girls and reincarnated puppies, some grim old classics are speaking to us with new urgency. Ray Bradbury's *Fahrenheit 451*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* have all risen up the latest paperback bestseller list.

But by far the greatest beneficiary of our newly piqued national anxiety is George Orwell's *1984*.

Soon after senior adviser Kellyanne Conway said on Sunday that the administration was issuing 'alternative facts', Orwell's classic novel spiked to No. 1 on Amazon. Like officials from the Ministry of Truth, Conway and White House press secretary Sean Spicer doubled down on Trump's fanciful contention that his inauguration drew the 'largest audience ever', despite a Web-full of photographic evidence to the contrary. The Twittersphere responded with allusions to *1984*, and Penguin announced plans for a special 75,000-copy reprint, noting that since the inauguration, sales for the novel have increased by 9,500 percent.

Leaders have always tried to manipulate the truth, of course, and modern politicians of all persuasions want to 'control the narrative', but there's something freshly audacious about the president's assault on basic math, his effort to assemble from the substance of his vanity hundreds of thousands of fans on the Mall.

Almost 70 years after *1984* was first published, Orwell suddenly feels doubleplus relevant. Considering the New Trumpmatics, it's impossible not to remember Winston Smith, the hero of *1984*, who predicted, 'In the end the Party would announce that two and two made five, and you would have to believe it.'

BIG BROTHER



IS WATCHING YOU

Orwell's iconic dictator Big Brother is absurd and horrifying in equal measure.

Orwell biographer Gordon Bowker is not at all surprised by the renewed interest. 'The continuing popularity of "Nineteen Eighty-Four" is a reminder', he said via email, 'of the threat to democracy posed by those with power who proclaim "alternative facts" and deny objective truths. Big Brother's pronouncements are treated as absolute truth by his acolytes, even when they defy rational thought — so Black is White, 2+2=5, War is Peace, Freedom is Slavery, Ignorance is Strength.'

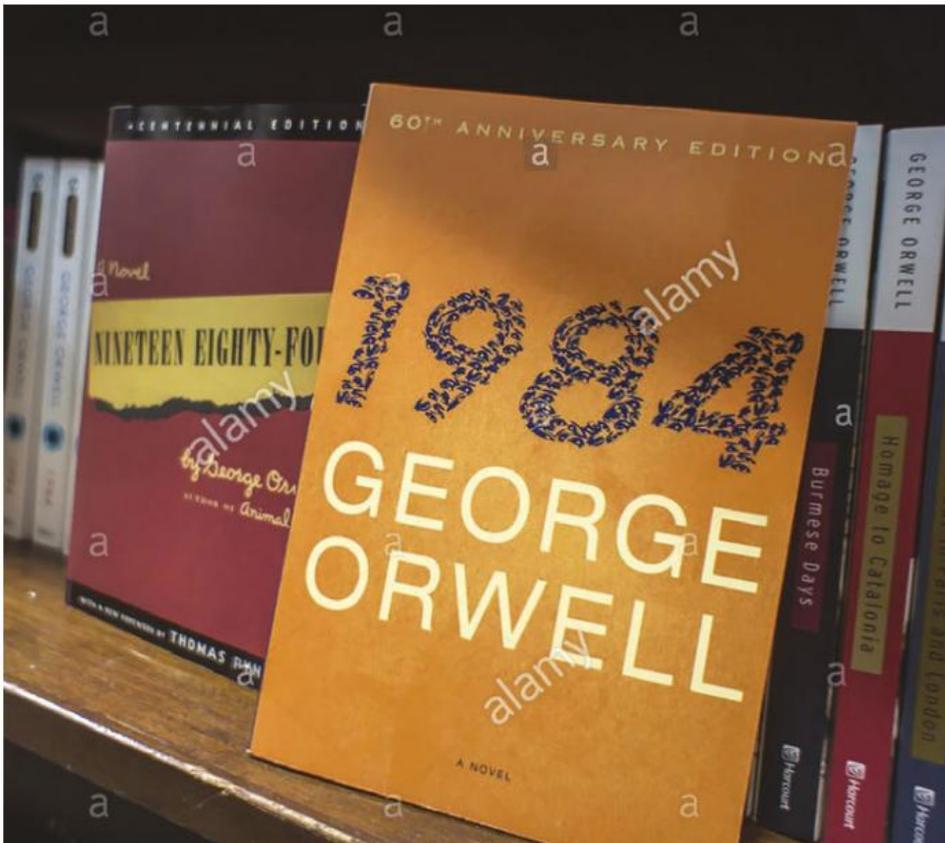
Born in 1903, Orwell lived through two world wars and saw the rise of totalitarian regimes on an *unprecedented* scale. In a widely quoted letter written in 1944, he decried 'the horrors of emotional nationalism and a tendency to disbelieve in the existence of objective truth'. He went on to explain with rising alarm: 'Already history has in a sense ceased to exist; i.e. there is no such thing as a history of our own times which could be universally accepted, and the exact sciences are endangered'. Now we're being told that millions of illegal immigrants kept Trump from winning the popular vote and that the science behind climate change is a Chinese hoax.

This is ungood.

But Democrats shouldn't feel too smug about Trump's fluency in Newspeak. The Obama administration did its best to conceal that the National Security Agency is listening to our electronic communications, an eerie parallel to the surveillance described in *1984*. And it was President Bill Clinton who brought the country to a constitutional climax by claiming that the truth of his testimony regarding 'that woman' depended 'on what the meaning of the word "is" is' — an Orwellian clarification if there ever was one.



The 'Two Minutes Hate' in the Playhouse Theatre stage play of 1984 (London, 2013) could be read as anticipating the way online mobs operate today.



Sales of 1984 have recently surged in the US, India, Britain and China.

Besides, Orwell wasn't writing about a particular party. Although he was inspired by full-scale abuses in the Soviet Union, Imperial Japan and Nazi Germany, he was also borrowing from the methods of communication control he had witnessed in Britain. He was describing, in other words, the basic function of power, the tendency of leaders and governments – “from Conservatives to Anarchists” – to cement their authority by controlling our language and by extension our thought and behaviour.

Like most people who still pick up a newspaper in their yard every morning, I first read *1984* in school, long before 1984. I can remember worrying about how much of what Orwell described might come true by that year. But as a teenager, what frightened me most was those horrible torture scenes, particularly the unspeakable threat of the rat mask that eventually breaks Winston's will. Only later did I start to appreciate the real profundity of Orwell's insights, laid out so succinctly in his 1946 essay 'Politics and the English Language'.

In that brilliant critique, Orwell casts the blame for political corruption widely, and he insists that we all bear a responsibility to resist it by thinking and especially by writing more clearly. 'One ought to recognize', he wrote, 'that the present political chaos is connected with the decay of language, and that one can probably bring about some improvement by starting at the verbal end'. There's a patriotic challenge you won't hear coming from Washington, no matter which party is in power.

Fortunately, we're not living under the dystopian terror that Orwell described in *1984*. Our new leader is not the manufactured icon of a supreme state. He's a supernova of insecurities, tweeting out his insults and threats to increasingly perplexed citizens who still – for the moment, at least – enjoy the right to object in whatever language they choose.

DISCUSSION

Analysing Charles' media text

- 1 What is the focal topic, or main contention, in Ron Charles' article? What values, attitudes, and beliefs underpin his article? How successful do you think he is in positioning the reader to agree with his thesis?
 - 2 Comment upon the effectiveness of his title and of the opening paragraphs in establishing his focal topic or argument and in engaging readers. What strategies have been used? How successful are these?
 - 3 Locate the use of evidence and/or quotation from original text/s to illustrate key points in the article. How effective are the integration and use of these in supporting the author's central arguments? Give examples to illustrate your viewpoints.
 - 4 What do you consider to be the stylistic strengths of this author? Give examples to support your opinion. Are there any aspects of the article that you could critique? Give examples of these. Which parts of this article would you have chosen to do differently?
-

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Writing a digital media text

Now it is your turn to write and shape a digital media text of your own. In this text, you will offer a perspective on the representations of alienation in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Stanley Kubrick's *2001: A Space Odyssey*.

Your media text is intended for a public audience. It is for publication in the 'Film and Literature' section of *Contemporary Cultural Studies* – an online journal for readers who have a well-informed interest in, and enjoy conversations about, modern classic novels and films and their relevance to our contemporary lives.

Your digital media text should offer a considered perspective in which you:

- 1 analyse and compare the representations of human alienation in each text
- 2 add to the conversation about the representations in each text.

In formulating your media text, you might consider:

- how Orwell and Kubrick make use of the conventions of their respective genres of novel and film to shape representations and/or perspectives
- the ways in which the creators' cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpin both texts and invite their respective audiences to take up positions
- the effects of aesthetic features and stylistic devices in shaping a perspective on the concept of alienation.

In constructing your text, you will draw upon the steps for crafting a media text covered in this chapter and make purposeful choices in conventions and textual features. Your analysis of the media texts from this chapter can guide you in making choices within your text to achieve particular purposes. Ensure that you incorporate well-selected evidence from the text and integrate quotes to support and illustrate the perspectives you develop.

Your media text should make use of digital and multimodal resources, including use of visuals and an effective layout. Be sure to leave time for editing and proofreading so that you will have a polished final version of the text.

Your media text should be 1000–1500 words in length. You will have some class time and your own time to develop your response.

The processes and techniques that you use in this extended response activity are the same as those you will use in your Unit 3 summative internal assessment task 1, even though the topic and focus of that assessment will be different.

ASSESSMENT

SUMMATIVE INTERNAL ASSESSMENT 1 (IA1)

Extended response – written response for a public audience (25%)

WORD LENGTH // 1000–1500 words

TIME // Approximately 12 hours, in class and at home

CONTEXT

In Topic 1 of Unit 3, you explored the representation of a concept in two different texts, and in doing so explored and discussed the personal, social, historical and cultural significance of those representations. You also discussed the cultural assumptions, attitudes, beliefs and values underpinning those representations.

In this assessment task, you will use this knowledge to analyse the representations of a concept, identity, time or place in two different texts (one of which must be a literary text from the prescribed text list).

GUIDELINES

Your task is to write and shape a media text (i.e. specified either as an article, essay, blog or column) in which you analyse representations in two different texts. You have open access to resources.

Your teacher will specify:

- the two texts you are to analyse
- the concept to be considered
- the type of media text you will create
- the purpose of the media text
- the audience and type of publication for which you are writing
- whether you need to select and incorporate multimodal and/or digital elements.

INSTRUCTIONS

- The assessment response is to be completed within five weeks of it being assigned by your teacher.
- You must plan and shape a draft prior to writing and shaping the final version of the feature article.
- Your teacher may also provide additional instructions or requirements.

In your analysis of the media texts, you must offer a perspective on the representations in the texts (i.e. consider their personal, social, historical, cultural or contemporary significance), and their connections to one another. Your response should offer a considered perspective and should also do the following:

- 1 analyse how the concept, identity, time or place is represented in the texts and in relation to its connection with the other representations
- 2 add to on-going, informed and public conversation about the representations in the text.

Your media text should include the following elements:

- an original and engaging title or header, and possibly a sub-header that supplies some additional information
- an introductory paragraph that establishes the focus of the article, introduces both texts, and establishes your intention and purpose
- selective quotations from or references to each of the original texts
- well-shaped, effectively linked paragraphs of similar length
- written and visual features (images) appropriate to the type of publication.

Before starting work on your response, you should read the objectives and requirements for this assessment task in the English syllabus. You should also review the information in Chapters 1–3 of this textbook, which are designed to help prepare you for this task.

Criteria

There are three criteria against which your assessment will be marked. The potential marks for each criterion are indicated, so you will need to give each of them the same level of care and attention. Carefully read the syllabus to be aware of the requirements and weightings of each criterion and the standards.

Knowledge application: this criterion focuses on the depth and quality of your analysis. You need to analyse not just the representations of concepts in the texts, but also the way in which cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpin both texts. As well, analyse the effects of aesthetic features and stylistic devices. (Objectives 3, 4, 5; 9 marks)

Organisation and development: this criterion focuses on the structure and cohesion of your work. Your written response needs to use the appropriate patterns and conventions to achieve your purposes in that type of media text. Your selection and synthesis of subject matter needs to support your perspective/s and you need to organise and sequence that subject matter to emphasise ideas and connect parts to produce a cohesive text. Your choices also need to be appropriate for the specified audience. (Objectives 1, 2, 6, 7, 8; 8 marks)

Textual features: this criterion focuses on the strength of your writing. To achieve full marks on this criterion, you need to make discerning language choices for this purpose and context. Your writing must also use grammatical sentence structures, and make use of conventional spelling and punctuation throughout. Multimodal features must be appropriate for context, text and purpose. (Objectives 9, 10, 11; 8 marks)



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CHAPTER
FOUR

CONVERSATIONS ABOUT ISSUES IN TEXTS

Media texts have the power to reflect or challenge our social and cultural perspectives. They connect to one another as they open conversations, interact and engage in the construction of often competing perspectives on a social issue. In this chapter, we identify three key contemporary social issues and explore how these are represented by different authors in a range of media articles and news items.

We analyse, compare and contrast the cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs that underpin the representations and perspectives being constructed in these media articles. To do this, we examine the ways in which the writers use the resources of language, including visual language, to construct their perspectives.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

TEXTS IN THIS CHAPTER:

TEXTS IN
CONTEXTS

- explore a range of different texts that represent the same social issues
- investigate the ways media texts reflect or challenge social and cultural perspectives

- 'We all play language games – but the boundaries are getting dangerously blurred' – media text
- 'Oculus and our troubles with (virtual) reality' – media text
- 'Could an artificial intelligence be considered a person under the law?' – media text

LANGUAGE
AND TEXTUAL
ANALYSIS

- analyse how representations are constructed to position audiences
- explore how and why texts invite audiences to take up positions about issues

- 'Worried about AI taking over the world? You may be making some rather unscientific assumptions' – media text
- 'Eclipse of reason: Why do people disbelieve scientists?' – media text

RESPONDING TO
AND CREATING
TEXTS

- analyse examples of persuasive texts and written responses for public audiences
- use appropriate language, aesthetic features and stylistic devices to sustain a perspective.

- 'Climate change will make QLD's ecosystems unrecognisable – it's up to us if we want to stop that' – media text



impact

Issue 1 – Communications technology use and abuse

Orwell's dystopian novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and Kubrick's science-fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, which we examined in Chapter 2, both address issues that open conversations about the use and abuse of communication technology and the impact that this has on our contemporary world.

These issues generate debate on a range of mass media platforms, including television, print and online newspapers, magazines and blogs. Such issues include the role and risks of cyber-surveillance, metadata retention, artificial intelligence, robots and robotics, criminal and espionage-related hacking, and cyberbullying.

Because this issue has such a broad scope, let us narrow things down to a more specific focal issue (just as we will for the other issues in this chapter).

Focal issue: Un/reality and mis/information in a 'post-truth' era

'Fake news' and 'alternative facts' proliferate, distributed not only through echo chambers represented by Facebook and other selective social media groups, but also on digital and mass media platforms that are often controlled by the editorial policies and agendas of powerful media magnates. 'Tweetstorms' sometimes demonstrate the digital equivalent of a lynch mob, as followers use their phones and devices to anonymously direct hate-filled abuse at their perceived target.

In *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Orwell has his protagonist Winston Smith observe that, 'The very concept of objective truth is fading out in the world ... lies will pass into history.' Winston also notes that, 'Sanity was statistical. It was merely a question of learning to think as they thought ...', with the 'they' alluding to the totalitarian government of the Inner Party of Ingsoc.

Media text 1

The following article is by Nick Enfield, a professor of linguistics at the University of Sydney and head of the Post-Truth Initiative. The author argues that language games that subvert truth are dangerous and that, more than ever before, evidence-based reasoning needs to be given more consideration and privilege.

We all play language games – but the boundaries are getting dangerously blurred

Nick Enfield, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 August 2018

When we talk, we follow certain ground rules, which are set out in what philosophers call 'language games'. Each game has its own set of rules – but problems arise when not everyone is clear which game is being played.

Perhaps most important is the informing game, in which we use words to give people useful information about the world: 'It's raining outside', 'The meeting is in Room 12', 'That's vodka, not water'.

In this game, the No. 1 rule is to tell the truth. If we break it, we can rightly be held to account for lying, or at least misleading. Without this truth-telling rule, our interactions in many walks of life would break down, from the science lab to the schoolroom to the courthouse, and anywhere else that evidence, facts and a shared understanding of reality matter.

But there are also language games in which the truth-telling rule does not apply. If I say that a horse walked into a bar, you should know I am not playing the informing game. To complain that I am lying, or to demand evidence – which horse? which bar? – would be like a soccer player on the rugby field asking why other players are handling the ball.

Mixing the rules of our language games is a major factor in the deepening crisis of 'post truth' public discourse. Consider Donald Trump, who has made more than 2000 false statements in public since his inauguration as US President, and countless more before that. To cite just one example, in a 2016 campaign speech Trump stated that US black youth unemployment was at 58 per cent, when in fact the US Bureau of Labor Statistics put the figure at 21 per cent. Fact-checkers wanted to hold Trump accountable for having broken the truth-telling rule. But as author Salena Zito explained, his supporters couldn't have cared less about the facts: 'When Trump makes claims like this, the press takes him literally, but not seriously; his supporters take him seriously, but not literally.'

For supporters, Trump was not playing the informing game, he was playing the signalling game. It's like joking, but without the laughs. In the signalling game, language is for aligning with people, affiliating with them, tapping into their views and feelings. Not for conveying the facts.

“Reality does not care about our social signals.

Or consider Senator Fraser Anning's maiden speech to Parliament this week. In a formal, high-stakes, on-record speech, one might think that firm evidence would be indispensable to a solid argument, yet fact-checkers found numerous inaccuracies. Then again, as a statement intended to set the tone of Anning's tenure and to grab hold of a news cycle, perhaps facts were less important for Anning than signalling the intended sentiment.

With 'dogwhistle' expressions, a speaker can signal certain ideas without being accountable for having expressed them. We might ask whether Anning's reference to the 'final solution' was a botched attempt at dogwhistling, or whether it was meant to be the foghorn that it was.

The problem is not confined to the political right. Take the recent controversy over *The New York Times* hiring author Sarah Jeong. She has come under fire for the content of her Twitter feed over recent years, including quips like 'f--- white women lol' and '#cancelwhitepeople'.



Donald Trump has made more than 2000 false statements in public since his inauguration as US President.

As author Iona Italia put it, Jeong's supporters argue that 'this kind of speech cannot be considered racism, because its intent is simply to signal allegiance to the cause of social justice'. Jeong herself said that the Tweets were 'intended as satire'. Either way, when being taken at their word, this speaker's response is not to defend the words, but to say that they were part of a language game in which the truth-telling rule did not apply.

The problem is that the 'don't take me literally' defence can always be made after the fact, when the content of what one said has turned out to be problematic. How do we know what games people really were playing and when the signalling defence is an attempt to escape accountability?

Edgy humour has always exploited this ambiguity: maybe I mean this, maybe I don't. Is the onus on us as listeners and readers to determine which language game a speaker was playing before we call them out for breaking the rules? In private life, perhaps, but in public discourse, we are not, and should not, be free to just play any old game with language. Why not? Because truth matters. If I take a falsehood literally, I am now ill-informed and in the real world this means I may then make poor decisions with real consequences.

Consider the reckless statements about smoking that British politician Nigel Farage has made in public: that people should ignore the World Health Organization's recommendations, because the organisation is 'just another club of "clever people" who want to bully us and tell us what to do', that 'the doctors have got it wrong on smoking'.

These statements may have been good plays in the signalling game, but public statements will always circulate beyond their original context and so the collateral effects of such signalling are plain dangerous.

The philosopher Harry Frankfurt uses the technical term 'bullshit' for the language game in which truth does not enter into the rules. It is the most dangerous game in public discourse because it threatens to normalise the idea that people are not accountable for saying things that are false. Of course, the 'don't take me literally' game has its place, but in public discourse it introduces ambiguities and escape hatches that play on the wider audience's lack of common ground: if only you were part of the in-crowd, you'd have known not to take me literally.

If we continue to allow signalling and other forms of 'bullshit' to corrode the link between language and truth, we stand to lose the most precious thing that language gives us: the capacity to anchor social life in a common frame of knowledge and understanding of reality.

Reality does not care about our social signals. Being sceptical of 'clever people' won't stop smoking from damaging your health. Only by privileging the game of evidence-based reasoning can we find paths that distinguish the true from the false, the safe from the dangerous, the sensible from the stupid, and even the good from the bad.

DISCUSSION

Analysing Enfield's media text

- 1 What does Enfield suggest is the difference between the 'informing language game' and the 'signalling language game'? What dangers occur in the public sphere when the two are conflated?
 - 2 Why does the author argue that '... in public discourse, we are not, and should not, be free to just play any old game with language'? What are some of the consequences of ignoring this advice?
 - 3 What cultural assumptions, values, attitudes and beliefs do you consider underpin Enfield's insistence that evidence-based reasoning must always be privileged?
 - 4 What language device does Enfield use in his concluding sentence? How effective do you think this is in a concluding statement?
 - 5 How effective do you consider the writer to be in positioning the reader to accept his viewpoints and perspectives? Give examples to support your opinions.
-

Media text 2

The author of this article, Matthew Flisfeder, is Assistant Professor of Rhetoric and Communications at the University of Winnipeg. His article provides another slant on the issue of 'fake news' and 'alternative facts' by examining the role that people's social media and virtual reality experiences may play in these perceptions.

Oculus and our troubles with (virtual) reality

Matthew Flisfeder, *The Conversation*, 14 November 2017

Last month, Facebook-owned virtual reality company, Oculus, announced its new device, Oculus Go.

Go, the successor to Oculus Rift, is a cheaper standalone virtual reality (VR) headset and controller system set for release in 2018. The company boasts that the new system allows users to immerse themselves in over 1,000 games, social apps and 360° experiences, and step inside a personal portable theatre to watch movies, TV shows, sports and play games.

At a much lower cost than the previous iteration (US\$199 compared to \$599 for the Oculus Rift), Oculus Go is likely to become very popular.

Similarly, Microsoft partners, including Acer, Dell, HP and Lenovo, announced their own headsets in the US\$299 to \$530 range, built to the technology giant's specifications. And Google announced its \$99 Daydream View – up in price from \$79 for the previous smartphone-headset model.

These increasingly affordable devices are likely to excite many. But VR has long been a part of our popular culture. Throughout its history, new VR technologies have forced us to ask questions about its impact on culture and society.

In my research on media, popular culture and ideology, I've traced some of the ways that new media have changed how we see and experience reality.

VR in popular culture

Following the arrival of photography in the 1830s, the diorama, and then the panorama, were built structures that reproduced scenes made to look like the real world. Panoramas and dioramas are still used in shopping malls, window displays, museums and galleries to emulate the appearance of the traditional town square.

The arrival of cinema, and then television, truly gave us a new sense of VR. Movies and TV brought scenes, fantasies and fictions closer to us.

The way we tend to imagine new fully immersive VR technology has come from its depiction in popular literature, film and television.

William Gibson's novel, *Neuromancer* (1984), deals with a VR 'cyberspace' environment called 'the matrix'. The book is a precursor to the 1999 film, *The Matrix*. Other popular sci-fi and cyberpunk films in the 1990s also portray the arrival of immersive VR. These films include Brett Leonard's *The Lawnmower Man* (1992), Josef Rusnak's *The Thirteenth Floor* (1999), David Cronenberg's *eXistenZ* (1999) and Kathryn Bigelow's *Strange Days* (1995).

Star Trek: The Next Generation's (1987–1994) holodeck showed a much more optimistic portrayal of the possibilities of VR. But unlike its depiction on *Star Trek*, VR is used in other works to question the impact of the media and entertainment in creating alternate and possibly harmful realities. Perhaps that's a reflection of our suspicions about the dangers of media manipulation.

Propaganda, 'fake news' and 'alternative facts'

Recently, the idea of alternate or alternative realities has moved from the fantasy worlds of the big screen to the small real-time screens of the news. The idea of 'alternate realities' has been brought into the spotlight by political commentators observing the presidency of Donald Trump.

Trump shows his disdain for the mainstream mass media by calling it the 'fake news.' His former campaign manager and now adviser, Kellyanne Conway, coined the term 'alternative facts' to support the false claims of former White House Press Secretary Sean Spicer.

Spicer had claimed that Trump's inauguration was the most highly attended in history. This was not true. The idea of so-called 'alternative facts' shows that even fact, truth and reality have become politically divisive and contentious topics.

Much of the discussion around so-called 'fake news' and 'alternative facts' has also looked at the role of social media, such as Facebook (the parent company of Oculus). Social media has reportedly played a major role in circulating false information that helped to get Trump elected.



Donald Trump political adviser Kellyanne Conway coined the term 'alternative facts'.

U.S. ambassador to Canada Kelly Craft says she believes 'both sides' of the climate science debate.



Part of the problem with social media is that it produces information bubbles. Because of the algorithmic logic of the platform, people end up trapped in feedback loops of information. Users end up only seeing information in their newsfeeds that reinforces – rather than combats or contradicts – their own world views. Because of this, social media seems to have created more opinion-based segregation in society. This flies in the face of the more traditional democratic notion of the public sphere.

In the democratic public sphere, people are supposed to come together to engage in critical rational debate. Instead, corporate new media offers users safe spaces of rhetorical support for their existing conceptions of reality.

Both sides of the story

There is also a parallel that runs here with the meaning of 'objectivity' in the media – of reporting fairly and without bias. But misconceptions about 'objective journalism' might add to the problem. People think that objectivity means showing 'both sides' of the story. But what if one side is factually false?

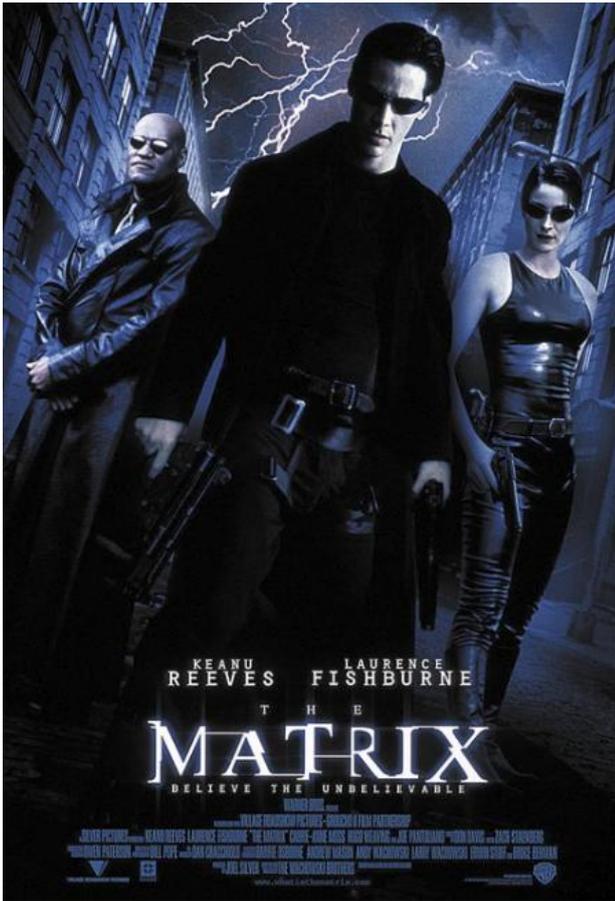
A good example is climate change and the debate between climate scientists, who research the human causes of climate change, and those who deny the 'human footprint' in climate change, ignoring the overwhelming majority of research that supports the climate science.

The new U.S. ambassador to Canada, Kelly Craft, has said that she believes 'both sides' of the climate science. But this raises the question: If 'objectivity' is merely the attempt to give legitimacy equally to different 'views,' what then is the impact on reality? Does this mean that there is no single reality? No single, objective truth?

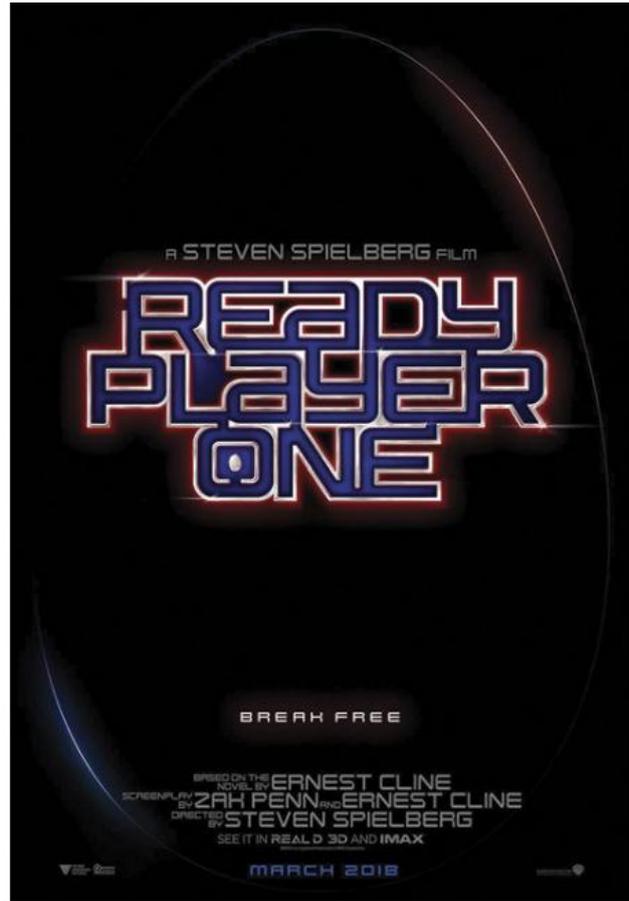
Representing reality

The history of VR and entertainment new media suggests that our experiences of reality are constantly reinscribed and redeployed with each new form. This means that representations of reality in different media affect how we see the world and our place within it.

Reality's portrayal and depiction varies depending upon how it is being represented, and by who is doing or producing the representation of reality. It affects our ethical judgments about how to act and treat other people in the real world.



The Matrix film series helped to create a popular vision of virtual reality.



The 2018 Steven Spielberg film *Ready Player One* depicts a near future in which people retreat to a virtual reality world called The OASIS.

In the Charlie Brooker sci-fi series *Black Mirror's* 'Men Against Fire' episode, soldiers are implanted with augmented reality technology – a not-too-distant variation on existing forms such as Google Glass, or even Pokémon Go. The technology lets soldiers see their enemy as vicious monster mutants called 'roaches.'

But once the technology fails, one of the soldiers is able to see the enemy for what they really are: human, poor people trying to escape genocide by the dominant group.

The episode reverses the line from art historian and cultural critic, John Berger, who says: 'The way we see things is affected by what we know or what we believe.' In the episode, what we know and believe is affected by the way we see things.

Total entertainment forever

Obsessions and critiques of new media are already part of popular culture. Green Day's 'American Idiot' talks about media control. Katy Perry's 'Chained to the Rhythm' portrays a culture of conformity led by our new media. Even Father John Misty's 'Total Entertainment Forever' begins with the lines, 'Bedding Taylor Swift/Every night inside the Oculus Rift.'

Misty (whose real name is Josh Tillman) sings about the darker side of our emerging new media and entertainment technologies. The song itself is a testament to our over-investment in entertainment and its ability to obscure reality.

As new media and entertainment technologies are normalized, they tend to have an impact on the way that we experience actual reality. This is not to suggest that our entertainment technologies are necessarily dangerous, or that we face a moral conundrum as we enjoy new media.

But it's worth asking how our mediated practices of enjoyment in the virtual world still have real-world social and political implications.

As VR technologies like Oculus Go become more popular, we might ask ourselves how our immersion in its world of high-definition simulation impacts our experiences of reality.

As we've already witnessed through the political implications of Facebook, and its difficulty with so-called 'fake news,' such a question is not entirely politically neutral.

DISCUSSION

Analysing Flisfeder's media text

- 1 In Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, the scientist of the title, Dr Frankenstein, tries to exonerate himself from the horrific moral and other outcomes associated with his scientific creation.

Do you think that software engineers who write the algorithms that govern social and digital media platforms and robotics should complete formal courses and training in ethics? Give reasons to support your viewpoints.

- 2 From its origins in classical Greece, democracy has always relied on healthy and open debate among those with differing opinions and ideas.

Do you agree with Flisfeder's contention that '... the problem with social media is that it produces information bubbles. Because of the algorithmic logic of the platform, people end up trapped in feedback loops of information'? How might this create the electronic equivalent of tribalism? Give examples of how this relates to your own experiences of social media.

- 3 Consider the political implications of the deliberate introduction of misinformation onto social media platforms, such as Facebook and Instagram. How does this have adverse effects on the pillars and processes of a robust and healthy democracy and on its citizens? What examples can you give from contemporary world politics?
 - 4 What do you think might be some of the real-world social implications of our mediated practices of enjoyment in immersive HD simulated or virtual worlds? Consider examples from this article, your own experiences, and those of others that you know or have heard about.
-

Issue 2 – Artificial intelligence and robots

China allegedly already uses AI, including facial recognition algorithms, to monitor its citizens in a manner akin to Big Brother from Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Western nations are also using this technology to counter threats of terrorism. Many of us interact with Apple's Siri or Amazon's Alexa in our daily lives, and use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, often oblivious to what personal data these platforms may be harvesting.

Focal issue – AI, friend or foe?

Because sharing information with our friends on Facebook or with voice-activated assistants like Siri and Alexa appears so benign, many of us seem oblivious to ways in which we provide these programs and platforms with often intimate data about our everyday lives.

Media text 3

The following article expresses strong concerns about the potential for human harm represented by artificial intelligences and robots.

The writer, Roman Yampolskiy, is Associate Professor of Computer Engineering and Computer Science at the University of Louisville. His argument originates with a robot, Sophia, being granted full citizenship in Saudi Arabia without recourse to existing law. The conferring of 'human citizenship' status on a robot may seem a benign act, but Yampolskiy contends that its potentially adverse implications for us, as human beings, are profound.

Could an artificial intelligence be considered a person under the law?

Roman Yampolskiy, *The Conversation*, 5 October 2018

Humans aren't the only people in society – at least according to the law. In the US, corporations have been given rights of free speech and religion. Some natural features also have person-like rights. But both of those required changes to the legal system. A new argument has laid a path for artificial intelligence systems to be recognised as people too – without any legislation, court rulings or other revisions to existing law.

Legal scholar Shawn Bayern has shown that anyone can confer legal personhood on a computer system, by putting it in control of a limited liability corporation in the US. If that maneuver is upheld in courts, artificial intelligence systems would be able to own property, sue, hire lawyers and enjoy freedom of speech and other protections under the law. In my view, human rights and dignity would suffer as a result.

The corporate loophole

Giving AIs rights similar to humans involves a technical lawyerly maneuver. It starts with one person setting up two limited liability companies and turning over control of each company to a separate autonomous or artificially intelligent system. Then the person would add each company as a member of the other LLC. In the last step, the person would withdraw from both LLCs, leaving each LLC – a corporate entity with legal personhood – governed only by the other's AI system.

That process doesn't require the computer system to have any particular level of intelligence or capability. It could just be a sequence of 'if' statements looking, for example, at the stock market and making decisions to buy and sell based on prices falling or rising. It could even be an algorithm that makes decisions randomly, or an emulation of an amoeba.

Reducing human status

Granting human rights to a computer would degrade human dignity. For instance, when Saudi Arabia granted citizenship to a robot called Sophia, human women, including feminist scholars, objected, noting that the robot was given more rights than many Saudi women have.

In certain places, some people might have fewer rights than non-intelligent software and robots. In countries that limit citizens' rights to free speech, free religious practice and expression of sexuality, corporations – potentially including AI-run companies – could have more rights. That would be an enormous indignity.

The risk doesn't end there: If AI systems became more intelligent than people, humans could be relegated to an inferior role – as workers hired and fired by AI corporate overlords – or even challenged for social dominance.

Artificial intelligence systems could be tasked with law enforcement among human populations – acting as judges, jurors, jailers and even executioners. Warrior robots could similarly be assigned to the military and given power to decide on targets and acceptable collateral damage – even in violation of international humanitarian laws. Most legal systems are not set up to punish robots or otherwise hold them accountable for wrongdoing.



The humanoid robot, Sophia

What about voting?

Granting voting rights to systems that can copy themselves would render humans' votes meaningless. Even without taking that significant step, though, the possibility of AI-controlled corporations with basic human rights poses serious dangers. No current laws would prevent a malevolent AI from operating a corporation that worked to subjugate or exterminate humanity through legal means and political influence. Computer-controlled companies could turn out to be less responsive to public opinion or protests than human-run firms are.

Immortal wealth

Two other aspects of corporations make people even more vulnerable to AI systems with human legal rights: They don't die, and they can give unlimited amounts of money to political candidates and groups.

Artificial intelligences could earn money by exploiting workers, using algorithms to price goods and manage investments, and find new ways to automate key business processes. Over long periods of time, that could add up to enormous earnings – which would never be split up among descendants. That wealth could easily be converted into political power.

Politicians financially backed by algorithmic entities would be able to take on legislative bodies, impeach presidents and help to get figureheads appointed to the Supreme Court. Those human figureheads could be used to expand corporate rights or even establish new rights specific to artificial intelligence systems – expanding the threats to humanity even more.

ACTIVITY

The AI threat

- 1 Copy and complete the following table in which you identify five of the main threats to humans posed by AIs and robots as argued in the article. In the second column, give your thoughts and responses to these.

Potential threat to humans/humanity	Thoughts and responses

- 2 Using the responses formulated in the table, write a 400–500 word persuasive blog post in response to this article.
-

Media text 4

The author of the following article takes an alternative and much more positive view regarding the threats posed by AI to humanity. She refutes what she perceives to be alarmist notions about artificial superintelligence, believing that these originate in fear of the unknown. She is sceptical that AI systems could spell ‘the end for humanity’, arguing instead that human greed and ‘unintelligence’ represent a far greater risk to humankind than artificial intelligence.

The author, Eleni Vasilaki, is a professor of Computational Neuroscience at the University of Sheffield.

Worried about AI taking over the world? You may be making some rather unscientific assumptions

Eleni Vasilaki, *The Conversation*, 24 September 2018

Should we be afraid of artificial intelligence? For me, this is a simple question with an even simpler, two letter answer: no. But not everyone agrees – many people, including the late physicist Stephen Hawking, have raised concerns that the rise of powerful AI systems could spell the end for humanity.

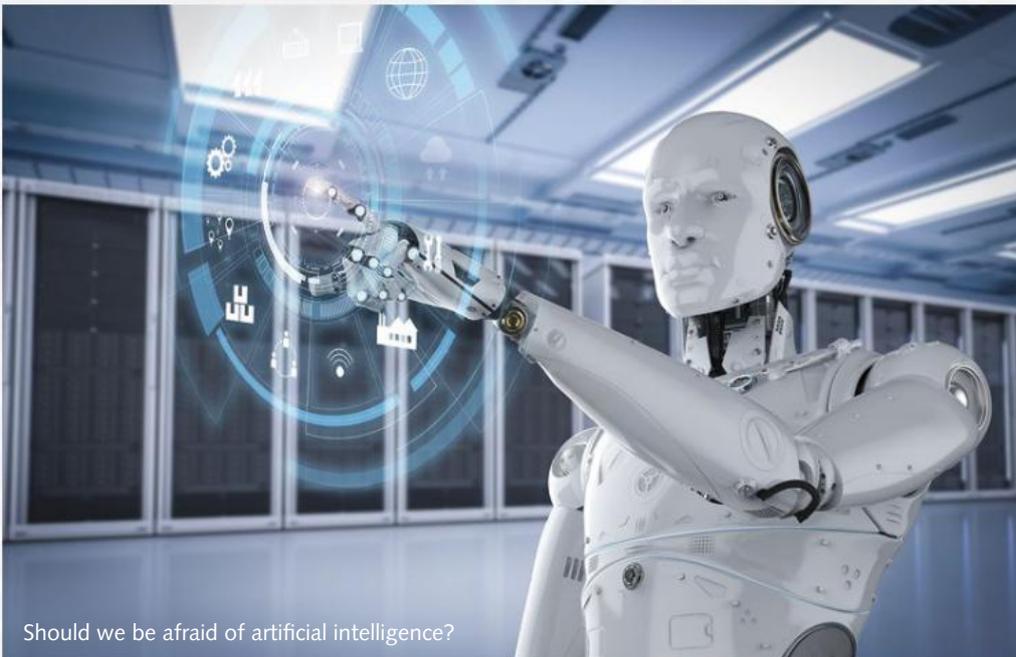
Clearly, your view on whether AI will take over the world will depend on whether you think it can develop intelligent behaviour surpassing that of humans – something referred to as ‘super intelligence’. So let’s take a look at how likely this is, and why there is much concern about the future of AI.

Humans tend to be afraid of what they don’t understand. Fear is often blamed for racism, homophobia and other sources of discrimination. So it’s no wonder it also applies to new technologies – they are often surrounded with a certain mystery. Some technological achievements seem almost unrealistic, clearly surpassing expectations and in some cases human performance.

No ghost in the machine

But let us demystify the most popular AI techniques, known collectively as ‘machine learning’. These allow a machine to learn a task without being programmed with explicit instructions. This may sound spooky, but the truth is it is all down to some rather mundane statistics.

The machine, which is a program, or rather an algorithm, is designed with the ability to discover relationships within provided data. There are many different methods that allow us to achieve this. For example, we can present to the machine images of handwritten letters (a–z), one by one, and ask it to tell us which letter we show each time in sequence. We have already provided the possible answers – it can only be one of (a–z). The machine at the beginning says a letter at random and we correct it, by providing the right answer. We have also programmed the machine to reconfigure itself so that next time, if presented with the same letter, it is more likely to give us the correct answer for the next one. As a consequence, the machine over time improves its performance and ‘learns’ to recognise the alphabet.



Should we be afraid of artificial intelligence?

In essence, we have programmed the machine to exploit common relationships in the data in order to achieve the specific task. For instance, all versions of 'a' look structurally similar, but different to 'b', and the algorithm can exploit this. Interestingly, after the training phase, the machine can apply the obtained knowledge on new letter samples, for example, written by a person whose handwriting the machine has never seen before.

Humans, however, are good at reading. Perhaps a more interesting example is Google Deepmind's artificial Go player, which has surpassed every human player in their performance of the game. It clearly learns in a way different to humans – playing a number of games with itself that no human could play in their lifetime. It has been specifically instructed to win and told that the actions it takes determine whether it wins or not. It has also been told the rules of the game. By playing the game again and again it can discover in each situation what is the best action – inventing moves that no human has played before.

Toddlers versus robots

Now does that make the AI Go player smarter than a human? Certainly not. AI is very specialised to particular types of tasks and it doesn't display the versatility that humans do. Humans develop an understanding of the world over years that no AI has achieved or seems likely to achieve anytime soon.

The fact that AI is dubbed 'intelligent' is ultimately down to the fact that it can learn. But even when it comes to learning, it is no match for humans. In fact, toddlers can learn by just watching somebody solving a problem once. An AI, on the other hand, needs tonnes of data and loads of tries to succeed on very specific problems, and it is difficult to generalise its knowledge on tasks very different to those trained upon. So while humans develop breathtaking intelligence rapidly in the first few years of life, the key concepts behind machine learning are not so different from what they were one or two decades ago.

The success of modern AI is less due to a breakthrough in new techniques and more due to the vast amount of data and computational power available. Importantly, though, even an infinite amount of data won't give AI human-like intelligence – we need to make a significant progress on developing artificial 'general intelligence' techniques first. Some approaches to doing this involve building a computer model of the human brain – which we're not even close to achieving.

Ultimately, just because an AI can learn, it doesn't really follow that it will suddenly learn all aspects of human intelligence and outsmart us. There is no simple definition of what human intelligence even is and we certainly have little idea how exactly intelligence emerges in the brain. But even if we could work it out and then create an AI that could learn to become more intelligent, that doesn't necessarily mean that it would be more successful.

Personally, I am more concerned by how humans use AI. Machine learning algorithms are often thought of as black boxes, and less effort is made in pinpointing the specifics of the solution our algorithms have found. This is an important and frequently neglected aspect as we are often obsessed with performance and less with understanding. Understanding the solutions that these systems have discovered is important, because we can also evaluate if they are correct or desirable solutions.

If, for instance, we train our system in a wrong way, we can also end up with a machine that has learned relationships that do not hold in general. Say for instance that we want to design a machine to evaluate the ability of potential students in engineering. Probably a terrible idea but let us follow it through for the sake of the argument. Traditionally, this is a male-dominated discipline, which means that training samples are likely to be from previous male students. If we don't make sure, for instance, that the training data are balanced, the machine might end up with the conclusion that engineering students are male, and incorrectly apply it to future decisions.

Machine learning and artificial intelligence are tools. They can be used in a right or a wrong way, like everything else. It is the way that they are used that should concern us, not the methods themselves. Human greed and human unintelligence scare me far more than artificial intelligence.

'Machine learning' techniques allow a machine to learn a task without being programmed with explicit instructions.



 DISCUSSION

Opposing arguments

- 1 Which of Media texts 3 and 4 do you consider to be the most plausible and to represent the most persuasive argument? How might your own views, shaped by your values, attitudes and beliefs, inform your choice?
 - 2 Eleni Vasilaki contends that humans tend to be afraid of what they do not understand. To what extent do you think that irrational fear underpins human anxiety about artificial superintelligences? Do you think such fears are justified? Explain your reasons.
 - 3 In Media text 4, Eleni Vasilaki states that 'Human greed and human unintelligence scare me far more than artificial intelligence.' But in Media text 3, Roman Yampolskiy argues 'If AI systems became more intelligent than people, humans could be ... challenged for social dominance.' What are your thoughts on these respective perspectives? Share these in an informal class discussion.
-

Issue 3 – Climate science and climate change

Focal issue – Climate science denial

Another issue that often generates heated conversations and debate is climate science and climate change. Many people seek an answer to the question 'How can we address and reduce the impact of climate change?' Others ask a different question – 'Is climate change real?' – and many immediately answer that by responding negatively. Despite 97% of scientists around the world agreeing that climate change is real, is happening and is **anthropogenic**, there are groups and individuals who insist that it isn't occurring. Where does this **scepticism** come from, and what impact does it have on efforts to combat the effects of climate change?

Media text 5

Bryan Gaensler is Director of the Dunlap Institute for Astronomy and Astrophysics at the University of Toronto. In this insightful article, he explores the reasons for the selective cherry-picking of the science relating to climate change, arguing that there is some science that people universally tend to accept, and other science that some people choose to deny or reject altogether. Gaensler makes the cogent point that the science pertaining to eclipses is universally accepted because it does not involve emotion, money and politics, while climate science involves all three factors.

anthropogenic
caused by human activity

scepticism
having a doubtful attitude

Eclipse of reason: Why do people disbelieve scientists?

Bryan Gaensler, *The Conversation*, 14 August 2017

If you've been paying attention, you know that on August 21, we're in for a special cosmic treat: the Great American Eclipse of 2017.

The moon's shadow will track a 4000-kilometre course across the continental United States from coast to coast, beginning with Depoe Bay, Oregon, and end after 93 minutes in McClellanville, South Carolina. As a result, tens of millions of Americans will be treated to that rarest of natural wonders: a total eclipse of the sun.

Canada, unfortunately, won't experience a total eclipse, but the view will still be impressive: The sun will be 86 per cent eclipsed in Vancouver, 70 per cent in Toronto, and 58 per cent in Montreal. Canadians who want to experience totality from the comfort of home will need to wait until April 8 2024 (Hamilton, Montreal and Fredericton), August 23 2044 (Edmonton and Calgary) or May 1 2079 (Saint John and Moncton).

In the meantime, back here in 2017, everyone is focused on August 21. Under the path of the eclipse, schools will be closed, traffic will be a nightmare, and hotel rooms at the Days Inn are on offer for \$1600 a night.

Absolute faith in eclipse predictions

What is remarkable among all this excitement and frenzy is the lack of 'eclipse deniers'. Nobody doubts or disputes the detailed scientific predictions of what will happen.

I will be watching the eclipse from Simpson County, Kentucky, where I expect I will be joined by thousands of others, all of us knowing in advance that totality for us will begin at 1:26:44 pm, and will end 141 seconds later. It is inconceivable to any of us that the predictions will be wrong by even a single second.

People reject science such as that about climate change and vaccines, but readily believe scientists about solar eclipses.



Not one person will argue beforehand that the jury is still out on eclipses, that scientists have tampered with the data, that eclipses are faked by NASA, that exposing children to eclipses causes autism or even that eclipses are a Chinese hoax. Across the continent, there will be climate deniers, creationists, anti-vaxxers and flat-Earthers looking upwards through their eclipse glasses, all soaking up this wondrous moment along with everyone else.

This presents a puzzle: Why do people distrust or dispute so many aspects of science, but unanimously accept, without question, the ridiculously specific predictions on offer for every eclipse?

Why the selective denial of science?

One possible reason is that we've been right on eclipses every time before. But for most people, a total eclipse is a once-in-a-lifetime experience. Most people won't have experienced such predictions first-hand and will have to take it on trust that what's happened before for others will happen again for them.

Another explanation might be that, unlike the case for climate change or vaccinations, the science behind eclipses is simple and uncontroversial. While it's true that astronomers have been making reasonably accurate eclipse predictions for thousands of years, the required calculations are highly complex, extending far beyond the mathematics covered in high school or even in many university courses. Most people would find it difficult to reproduce or confirm any of these eclipse predictions for themselves.

The more likely answer is that eclipses are not a threat. There is nothing at stake. Eclipses do not endanger our way of life or our standard of living. Nobody fears that eclipses might have economic implications, could challenge our belief system or threaten our children. There are no anti-eclipse lobby groups trying to set the narrative, and there are thus no well-funded advertising campaigns or scientific studies that aim to raise doubts in our minds or to subtly shape our thinking.

Laws of science

Eclipses are agenda-free. The science – and the resulting extraordinary experience – are left to speak for themselves.

The problem is that we don't get to pick and choose what scientific facts or consensus are controversial, and which are not. The same strict laws of science are everywhere.

So if you're comfortable putting down your non-refundable deposit for your eclipse hotel, if you let a steel tube flying at 30 000 feet carry you to a town under the path of totality, if on the morning of August 21 you check the weather forecast hoping for clear skies, if you pay for breakfast with your credit card, and if that afternoon you snap a picture of the eclipse with your smartphone, then you have staked your bank balance, your August vacation and your very life on the fact that science is testable and reproducible, and that faulty theories can't withstand extended scrutiny and testing.

Total solar eclipses are a strange cosmic coincidence and a remarkable, awe-inspiring experience. But they are also a profound reminder that when the emotions, money and politics are stripped away, none of us, at our core, are science deniers.

 DISCUSSION

Questioning the science

- 1 Gaensler makes a concise and logical argument in support of scientific fact and scientific reasoning. What cultural assumptions, values, attitudes and beliefs underpin his argument? How might his training and knowledge as a university researcher and academic in the fields of astronomy and astrophysics have contributed to his viewpoint?
 - 2 The writer makes the statement that 'Not one person will argue beforehand that the jury is still out on eclipses, that scientists have tampered with the data, that eclipses are faked by NASA, that exposing children to eclipses causes autism ...' Why is he making these analogies to examples of anti-scientific assertions levelled by some people? How effective is this strategic use of irony in making his case? Do you think that his use of irony verges on sarcasm? Why might you need to avoid sarcasm when trying to persuade others to accept your perspective on an issue?
 - 3 How effective is the conclusion to Gaensler's argument? Consider how succinct his word choice and expression are and his use of expanded noun groups. Do you think that he has 'clinched his case'? How might your own ideas and perspectives have come into play in your response to this writer's invited reading?
 - 4 Identify a controversial issue where you agree with scientific reasoning. Write a short persuasive blog piece (250–300 words) in which you try to convince others of the validity of accepting the scientific perspectives on this issue.
-

Media text 6

ecosystem
a community of organisms interacting with one another and with the environment in which they live

This next article shifts from the more general argument of the previous article to particular manifestations of the effects of climate change in Queensland. Sarah Boulter is a research fellow in the National Climate Change Adaptation Research Facility at Griffith University on the Gold Coast. While she also argues the case that climate change is real and needs to be addressed, her media text discusses and assesses a range of Queensland **ecosystems**, arguing for the need for intervention in an effort to preserve these.

Climate change will make QLD's ecosystems unrecognisable – it's up to us if we want to stop that

Sarah Boulter, *The Conversation*, 12 November 2018

Climate change and those whose job it is to talk about current and future climate impacts are often classed as the 'harbingers of doom'. For the world's biodiversity, the predictions are grim – loss of species, loss of pollination, dying coral reefs.

The reality is that without human intervention, ecosystems will reshape themselves in response to climate change, what we can think of as 'autonomous adaptation'. For us humans – we need to decide if we need or want to change that course.



For those who look after natural systems, our job description has changed. Until now we have scrambled to protect or restore what we could fairly confidently consider to be 'natural'. Under climate change knowing what that should look like is hard to decide.

If the Great Barrier Reef still has a few pretty fish and coral in the future, and only scientists know they are different species to the past, does that matter? It's an extreme example, but it is a good analogy for the types of decisions we might need to make.

In Queensland, the government has just launched the Biodiversity and Ecosystem Climate Adaptation Plan for Queensland focused on what is considered important for making these decisions. The plan is high level but is an important first step towards preparing the sector for the future.

Changing ecosystems

For the rest of Queensland's ecosystems, the story is much the same as the Great Barrier Reef. There are the obvious regions at risk. Our coastal floodplains and wetlands are potentially under threat from both sides, with housing and development making a landward march and the sea pushing in from the other side. These ecosystems literally have nowhere to go in the crush.

It's a similar story for species and ecosystems that specialise on cool, high altitude mountaintops. These small, isolated populations rely on cool conditions. As the temperature warms, if they can't change their behaviour (for instance, by taking refuge in cool spots or crevices during hot times), then it is unlikely they will survive without human intervention such as translocation.

We are all too familiar with the risk of coral reefs dying and becoming a habitat for algae, but some of our less high-profile ecosystems face similar transformations. Our tropical savannah woodlands cover much of the top third of Queensland. An iconic ecosystem of the north, massive weed invasions and highly altered fire regimes might threaten to make them unrecognisable.

So where to from here?

From the grim predictions we must rally to find a way forward. Critically for those who must manage our natural areas it's about thinking about what we want to get out of our efforts.

Conservation property owners, both public (for instance, national parks) and private (for instance, not-for-profit conservation groups), must decide what their resources can achieve. Throwing money at a species we cannot save under climate change may be better replaced by focusing on making sure we have species diversity or water quality. It's a hard reality to swallow, but pragmatism is part of the climate change equation.

We led the development of the Queensland plan, and were encouraged to discover a sector that had a great deal of knowledge, experience and willingness. The challenge for the Queensland government is to usefully channel that energy into tackling the problem.

Valuing biodiversity

One of the clearest messages from many of the people we spoke to was about how biodiversity and ecosystems are valued by the wider community. Or not. There was a clear sense that we need to make biodiversity and ecosystems a priority.



It's easy to categorise biodiversity and conservation as a 'green' issue. But aside from the intrinsic value or personal health and recreation value that most of us place on natural areas, without biodiversity we risk losing things other than a good fishing spot.

Every farmer knows the importance of clean water and fertile soil to their economic prosperity. But when our cities bulge, or property is in danger from fire, we prioritise short-term economic returns, more houses or reducing fire risk over biodiversity almost every time.

Of course, this is not to say the balance should be flipped, but climate change is challenging our politicians, planners and us as the Queensland community to take responsibility for the effects our choices have on our biodiversity and ecosystems. As the pressure increases to adapt in other sectors, we should seek options that could help – rather than hinder – adaptation in natural systems.

Coastal residences may feel that investing in a seawall to protect their homes from rising sea levels is worthwhile even if it means sacrificing a scrap of coastal wetland, but there are opportunities to satisfy both human needs and biodiversity needs. We hope the Queensland plan can help promote those opportunities.

ACTIVITY

Analysing Boulter's media text

- 1 Boulter moves beyond the Great Barrier Reef as she addresses the impact of climate change on vulnerable Queensland ecosystems. How and why does this strengthen her arguments and give them greater impact?
 - 2 Identify any emotive words or phrases used in this article. How effective do you consider these to be in positioning readers?
 - 3 The writer uses the convention of identifying the problems and then suggesting solutions. What are the main problems identified and what are the suggested solutions?
 - 4 How and why does she argue that pragmatism is part of the climate change equation? Do you agree with this perspective? Give reasons to support your viewpoint.
-

DISCUSSION

Use of visual language

Look at the images that accompany each of the media texts in this chapter and consider how appropriate each is to the relevant text and to the writer's position. Are there any cultural assumptions, attitudes, values or beliefs that underpin the use of any of these visual resources? Can you identify any alternative images that could be used to enhance the argument that any of the writers are making?

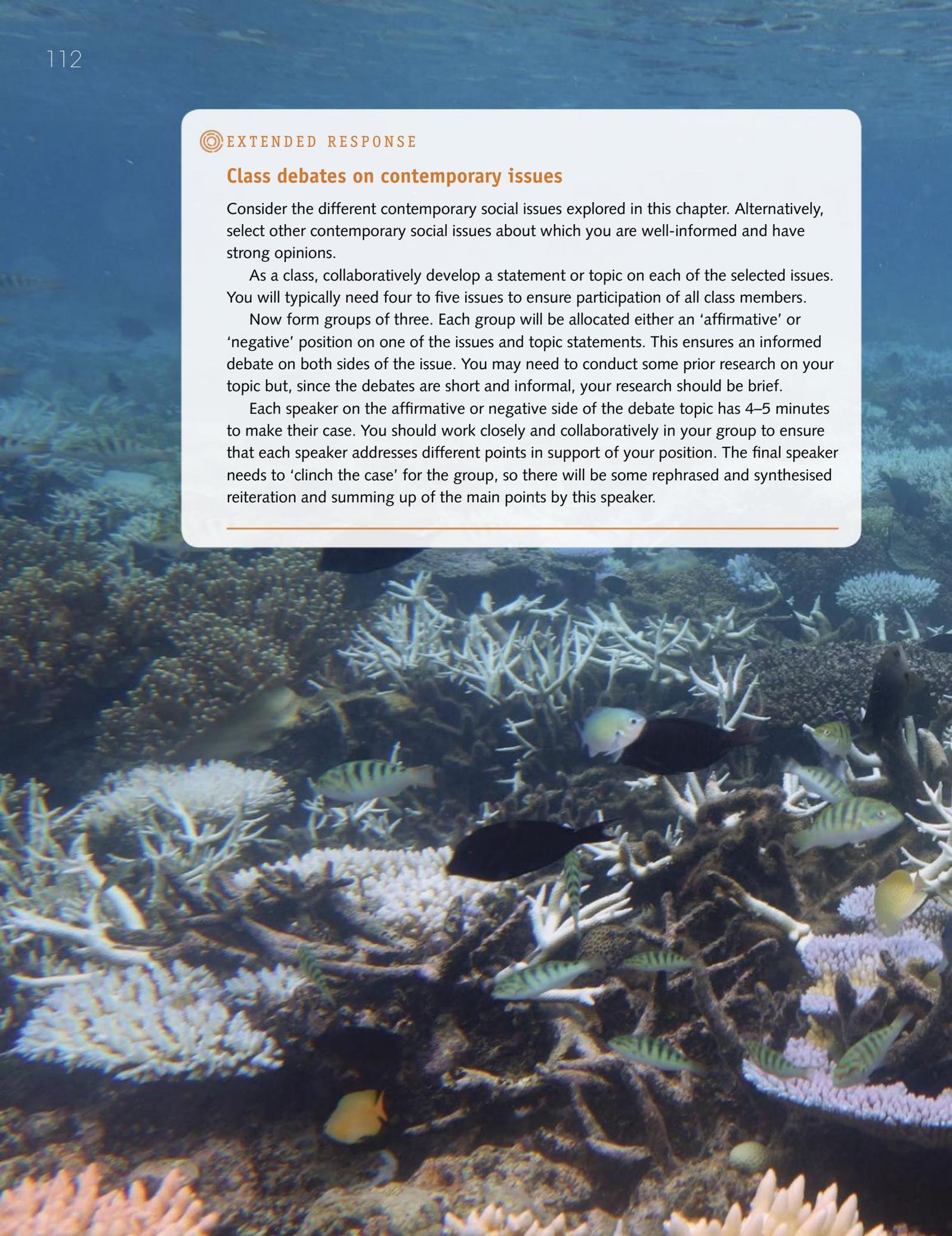
 EXTENDED RESPONSE**Class debates on contemporary issues**

Consider the different contemporary social issues explored in this chapter. Alternatively, select other contemporary social issues about which you are well-informed and have strong opinions.

As a class, collaboratively develop a statement or topic on each of the selected issues. You will typically need four to five issues to ensure participation of all class members.

Now form groups of three. Each group will be allocated either an 'affirmative' or 'negative' position on one of the issues and topic statements. This ensures an informed debate on both sides of the issue. You may need to conduct some prior research on your topic but, since the debates are short and informal, your research should be brief.

Each speaker on the affirmative or negative side of the debate topic has 4–5 minutes to make their case. You should work closely and collaboratively in your group to ensure that each speaker addresses different points in support of your position. The final speaker needs to 'clinch the case' for the group, so there will be some rephrased and synthesised reiteration and summing up of the main points by this speaker.





WRITING AND PRESENTING A PERSUASIVE SPOKEN RESPONSE

No matter what the issue is, there will be different perspectives on it, along with opportunities to persuade others to accept those perspectives. The various perspectives in the previous chapter opened conversations among those media texts – some complementary, others contradictory.

This chapter focuses on equipping you to form your own perspective on a contemporary social issue and then to develop a multimodal presentation for an audience of your peers. To assist in this, you will use resources such as graphics and visuals to strengthen the impact of your persuasive argument. Your perspective on this social issue should contribute to public dialogue and conversation about the issue.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

TEXTS IN THIS CHAPTER:

TEXTS IN CONTEXTS

- investigate the ways media texts reflect or challenge social and cultural perspectives
- develop strategies for creating convincing arguments

- Leonardo DiCaprio's speech at the United Nations – persuasive multimodal presentation
- 'How pollution is changing the ocean's chemistry' – persuasive multimodal presentation

LANGUAGE AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

- analyse how representations are constructed to position audiences
- analyse strategies for using argument, stylistic features and language to construct perspectives

- 'Let's not use Mars as a back-up planet' – persuasive multimodal presentation
- 'Your online life – permanent as a tattoo' – persuasive multimodal presentation
- 'Can we build AI without losing control over it?' – persuasive multimodal presentation

RESPONDING TO AND CREATING TEXTS

- engage in speaking and listening activities
- experiment with spoken and non-verbal persuasive and stylistic devices.



Developing an effective spoken argument

In the previous chapter, you examined representations of contentious issues, considering three different social issues across six written media texts. Of course, the written word is not the only way of presenting a persuasive argument – the spoken word is just as powerful, sometimes more so. Great speeches and **oratory** are often remembered far more readily than powerful essays.

oratory
the exercise of eloquent speaking

Despite the difference in mode and format, planning a persuasive spoken argument is very similar to planning a persuasive media text. You use similar strategies for developing a perspective and for making effective persuasive arguments. But you have the added tools of voice and **rhetoric** – and if you're making a multimodal presentation, you can also draw upon persuasive images and visual resources.

rhetoric
the art of persuasive speaking

The task at the end of this chapter is to present a persuasive spoken response on a current social issue. However, before that you should consider the strategies and resources you will need to implement and conduct a close reading and viewing of some exemplars of effective spoken presentations.

Choosing an issue

Before you start crafting your spoken response, the first step is to decide exactly what issue you are going to talk about and the persuasive position that you are adopting.

It is best to select a social issue in which you are not just interested, but about which you have strong personal convictions and opinions. This will not only ensure that your purpose is **authentic**, but add to the persuasive effectiveness of your content and delivery. The writers in the previous chapter cared about the rise of misinformation, the potential benefits and risks of artificial intelligence, the value of science and the dangers of climate change. Consider what issues you care about, and whether you can convince others to care about the issue as well.

authentic
reliable, trustworthy,
or of genuine origin

In approaching this spoken presentation, spend some time deciding on the social issue you want to address. While you may undertake some research in the production of your presentation, this is not the primary focus of the task. In your preparation, you will need to engage with various representations and perspectives of your selected issue in the media, and with conversations that have occurred over the past 12 months around this issue.

The three pillars of effective persuasion

An effective persuasive presentation is designed to convince your audience not only to agree with you but also to actively adopt your invited course of action. You should aim to persuade, inform, inspire and entertain your audience.

The Greek philosopher Aristotle identified three pillars of persuasive appeal, and those remain as true and useful today as they were more than 2000 years ago. The three central and interconnected pillars of effective persuasion are:



Plato and Aristotle,
centre, in *The School
of Athens*, Raphael,
1509–11

- *ethos* – establishing your own integrity and authority as a speaker who can be trusted; this can be done by citing knowledgeable experts in the field to bolster and support your own arguments
- *logos* – use of solid evidence; well-selected points and logical argument will help convince your audience of the truth and accuracy of your statements
- *pathos* – use of emotive appeals that manipulate the feelings and beliefs of your audience; powerful images and ‘loaded’ language can win hearts and minds.

As you plan the elements of your persuasive argument, always consider the three pillars of appeal. Does this element demonstrate your authority and knowledge? Does it present or support a logical argument? Does it target audience emotions to get them on your side? If you cannot answer ‘yes’ to these questions, then that element needs to be modified.

The key resources of persuasion

Let us consider or reconsider some of the key language tools and rhetorical strategies that can be incorporated into a persuasive response. These tools can apply to both written and spoken persuasive texts. However, while all these tools are available, you need to use them selectively. If you try to incorporate them all, your communication may appear contrived, strained or artificial.

modality

the capacity of elements of language to express confidence in the statement being made

hyperbole

obvious exaggeration, for effect; an extravagant statement not intended to be taken literally

- ✓ **Lexical choice** – choose your words carefully and use language that suits your audience. Include some emotive or 'loaded' words or word groups designed to sway your audience, but also include words and word groups that demonstrate your knowledge and authority.
- ✓ **Modality** – use modal words to graduate, modulate or intensify your meaning. When you want to demonstrate certainty, use words such as 'must', 'certainly' or 'absolutely'. When you want to introduce doubt, use words such as 'might', 'could' and 'perhaps'.
- ✓ **Inclusive language and direct appeals** – these help your audience readily relate to you and positions them to identify with and agree with what you are saying.
- ✓ **Rhetorical questions** – these reinforce a general agreement with your invited response.
- ✓ **Citation** – use references to external texts, or to expert opinion, to back up your statements or opinion.
- ✓ **Repetition** – restating words can add rhetorical emphasis to your argument. It is important, though, not to repeat a word too often or to repeat the wrong words – this could alienate your audience.
- ✓ **Figurative language** – metaphors and similes can add impact to your statements. Speech devices such as alliteration can add to the fluency of your presentation. Careful use of irony or humour can assist with emotional appeals.
- ✓ **Hyperbole** or overstatement – this can strengthen the impact of a statement, but it can also diminish the impact if overused.

In addition to these resources, there are also tools that are only available in a spoken multimodal response.

- *Vocal resources* – these include tone, volume, emphasis, pace, pitch and pause. Your voice is one of the most powerful tools you have for engaging your audience.
- *Non-verbal resources* – these include natural gestures, shifts in facial expression, stance, body language and maintaining eye contact with your audience. While your voice and your words get your audience's attention, these non-verbal resources will help you to maintain audience interest and attention throughout the presentation.
- *Supporting graphics and images* – these add impact to a presentation and help to influence your audience.

There are many ICT resources that you can use when creating a multimodal presentation, such as Prezi, PowerPoint, Weebly and Google Slides. The software or app you choose to use is less important than the way you use it. Take the time to become comfortable with the program and the features that you decide to use as you develop your presentation.

Studying multimodal persuasive presentations

For the remainder of this chapter you will view and analyse five very effective – and very different – examples of multimodal persuasive presentations.

These presentations come from different speakers on a range of contemporary social issues. These speakers all develop a powerful persuasive argument or thesis that makes a significant contribution to conversations and public dialogue about a contentious issue. They also employ rhetorical and persuasive strategies to position their audience to accept the perspective constructed in their presentation.

There are pre-viewing and post-viewing/re-viewing activities linked to each presentation. You need to first *view* and *re-view* the video of the speech, using the pause function as required. After viewing each presentation, you will *read* the transcript of the persuasive speech.

These presentations vary in length – some are shorter or longer than your presentation will be. The strategies and approaches of the different speakers, including their delivery, their integration of visuals and their crafting of content, all serve as useful models for you to generate your own ideas and approaches.

As you watch, note how each speaker pays careful attention to the five elements of multimodal communication.

- *Linguistic* – word choice and vocabulary to suit their persuasive purpose, including use of rhetorical, aesthetic and stylistic devices designed to enhance that purpose
- *Visual* – careful and discriminating selection of embedded images and graphics that are strategically incorporated to provide powerful visual support to key points



A good speaker pays attention to the five elements of multimodal communication.

- *Gestural* – observe natural use of body language and facial expressions of presenters; consider strategies in their transitions in screens and slides
- *Spatial* – consider their use of layout, positioning and organisation of visual and textual features on a slide or screen
- *Audio* – consider the use of natural speech variation in volume, pace, pitch, pause and emphasis

Also note that where a speaker embeds slides or screens into their presentation, these use only minimal text that summarises or reinforces a point that they are making. Images, however, are used by some of the speakers to provide strong visual support to their persuasive purpose and to position their audience. Watch how the speakers directly address and engage with their audience and maintain eye contact – none of them read from or talk directly to the slides or screens.

Presentation 1

Leonardo DiCaprio delivering his 2016 speech at the United Nations Paris Agreement signing ceremony

The American actor Leonardo DiCaprio is also a United Nations Messenger of Peace. He uses his celebrity status to act as an advocate on causes that affect humankind, and specifically to try to stop the ravages of climate change.



 DISCUSSION

Pre-viewing DiCaprio's speech

- 1 How might the celebrity status of this speaker affect the reception of his speech? Do you think it would be an advantage or disadvantage? Give reasons to support your viewpoints.

Follow the link in the margin to *view* DiCaprio's speech at the United Nations Paris Agreement signing ceremony on 22 April 2016.

Now *read* the transcript of this speech.

President Abraham Lincoln was also thinking of bold action 150 years ago when he said: 'The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. As our case is new so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves and then we shall save our country.'

He was speaking before the US Congress to confront the defining issue of his time – slavery. Everyone knew it had to end but no-one had the political will to stop it. Remarkably, his words ring as true today when applied to the defining crisis of our time – climate change.

As a UN Messenger of Peace, I have travelled all over the world for the last two years documenting how this crisis is changing the natural balance of our planet. I have seen cities like Beijing choked by industrial pollution. Ancient boreal forests in Canada that have been clear cut and rainforests in Indonesia that have been incinerated. In India, I met farmers whose crops have literally been washed away by historic flooding. In America, I have witnessed unprecedented droughts in California and sea level rise flooding the streets of Miami. In Greenland and in the Arctic, I was astonished to see that ancient glaciers are rapidly disappearing well ahead of scientific predictions. All that I have seen and learned on this journey has absolutely terrified me.

There is no doubt in the world's scientific community that this a direct result of human activity and that the effects of climate change will become astronomically worse in the future. You know that climate change is happening faster than even the most pessimistic of scientists warned us decades ago. It has become a runaway freight train bringing with it an impending disaster for all living things.

Now think about the shame that each of us will carry when our children and grandchildren look back and realise that we had the means of stopping this devastation, but simply lacked the political will to do so. Our planet cannot be saved unless we leave fossil fuels in the ground where they belong.



Leonardo DiCaprio's
UN speech
[http://mea.digital/
gen34_5_1](http://mea.digital/gen34_5_1)

Massive change is required, now. One that leads to a new collective consciousness. A new collective evolution of the human race, inspired and enabled by a sense of urgency from all of you. We all know that reversing the course of climate change will not be easy, but the tools are in our hands – if we apply them before it is too late.

Now is the time for bold unprecedented action. It is time to ask each other – which side of history will you be on? As a citizen of our planet, it is time to declare no more talk. No more excuses. No more 10-year studies. No more allowing the fossil fuel companies to manipulate and dictate the science and policies that affect our future.

Lincoln's words still resonate to all of us here today: 'We will be remembered in spite of ourselves. The fiery trial through which we pass will light us down, in honour or dishonour, to the last generation ... We shall nobly save, or meanly lose, the last best hope of Earth.' That is our charge now – you are the last best hope of Earth. We ask you to protect it. Or we – and all living things we cherish – are history.

DISCUSSION

Analysing DiCaprio's speech

- 1 Leonardo DiCaprio delivers a formal speech in a very formal setting, using a lectern and notes. His speech is nevertheless passionate and powerful. How does he selectively use images to strengthen the argument and to position the audience to agree with his perspective? Give examples of these and evaluate their effectiveness.
 - 2 DiCaprio quotes from Abraham Lincoln, a highly regarded former US president. Why does he invoke Lincoln's words, and what persuasive strategy is being used? How does the speaker suggest the current relevance of Lincoln's words in a 21st-century context?
 - 3 What concrete evidence does DiCaprio use to support his arguments? How do these examples underpin the tone of urgency created in this speech?
 - 4 What metaphor is used to describe both the rapidity and the associated dangers of climate change? How effective do you consider the use of this stylistic device to be?
 - 5 How and why does DiCaprio invoke a sense of guilt and shame about inaction on climate change? How effective do you consider these emotive appeals to be?
 - 6 Having outlined the problem, DiCaprio presents a solution. What is the answer he's proposing? What rhetorical question is used to engage his audience further?
 - 7 Reread the final sentence of this speech. What persuasive devices are used in DiCaprio's final appeal to his audience? How effective do you consider his concluding statements to be?
-

Presentation 2

Dr Triona McGrath is a Fulbright Scholar and a researcher in chemical oceanography and marine science. Her research specifically focuses on how oceans are changing due to human activities and on ocean acidification as a result of increased levels of carbon dioxide caused by anthropogenic climate change. In a TED Talk in Dublin in 2017, McGrath focused on the topic of ‘How pollution is changing the ocean’s chemistry’.

DISCUSSION

Pre-viewing McGrath’s speech

- 1 In her introductory statements, McGrath establishes *five* vital contributions that oceans make to our lives. Can you predict what some of these may be? Check your responses as you view her speech.
- 2 How might identifying these key contributions reinforce McGrath’s subsequent argument on the impact of ocean pollution and ocean acidification on our lives?

Follow the first margin link to *view* McGrath’s speech. As you watch, pay attention not only to the content of McGrath’s presentation, including her use of explanatory visuals, but also to the clarity of her delivery. Note her use of gesture and facial expressions, the emphasis placed on key words, her variation in pace and pitch, and her use of pause for additional effect.

Now follow the second margin link to *read* the transcript of this speech.



Video of McGrath's speech
http://mea.digital/gen34_5_2

Transcript of McGrath's speech
http://mea.digital/gen34_5_3

Dr Triona McGrath’s research focuses on the phenomenon of ocean acidification as a result of anthropogenic climate change.




ACTIVITY

Analysing McGrath's presentation

- 1 The speaker poses a variety of questions to her audience. How does this help to engage her listeners? Identify some of the speaker's questions, then copy these into and complete the table below.

Question posed	Rhetorical purpose

- 2 Although she is a highly-qualified scientist, McGrath's speech is clear and accessible and is free of jargon. Why has she chosen to pitch her speech to her audience in this way?
- 3 McGrath makes selective use of statistics. List examples of these and indicate how they are being used as a strategy to strengthen her argument.
- 4 What language device is being used when McGrath describes ocean acidification as 'the evil twin of climate change'? Do you think this is effective? Give reasons to support your opinion.
- 5 How and why are coral reefs used to make McGrath's point about the critical balance of biodiversity in marine ecosystems?
- 6 Why does the speaker refer to her eight-month-old baby? Evaluate the effectiveness of this strategy as a persuasive device. What cultural assumptions, values, attitudes and beliefs underpin the perspective developed in her presentation?
- 7 Consider the use of images, graphics and visuals and their strategic placement throughout this presentation. Copy and complete the following table to identify and evaluate some of these visuals. Why are the images such an effective adjunct to the speaker's words?

Image, graphic or graph	Evaluation of its use and effectiveness

Presentation 3

Lucianne Walkowicz works as a stellar astronomer on NASA's Kepler mission, searching for places in the universe that could support life. She studies how stars influence the possibility of alien life on other planets.

In this short TED Talk delivered in 2015, Walkowicz argues that we should stop thinking of Mars as an alternative planet on which to live. Instead, she advocates that planetary exploration and the preservation of planet Earth should co-exist: 'The more you look for planets like Earth, the more you appreciate our own planet.'

DISCUSSION

Pre-viewing Walkowicz's speech

- 1 Walkowicz's opening statement has an immediate impact and directs audience attention to the focal issue she will address:

We're at a tipping point in human history, a species poised between gaining the stars and losing the planet we call home.

Note the speaker's use of the device of antithesis to contrast ideas by contrasting words within a parallel grammatical structure.

How effective do you consider this opening statement to be in engaging and positioning the audience? Give reasons to support your opinions.

- 2 Walkowicz is a highly-trained scientist who communicates clearly and directly with her audience, making her subject matter accessible and engaging to a general audience. Why is it so important to pitch your persuasive argument in a clear and engaging way?



Lucianne Walkowicz

Follow the first margin link to *view* Walkowicz's speech.
Then follow the second margin link to *read* the transcript of this speech.



Video of Walkowicz's speech
http://mea.digital/gen34_5_4

Transcript of Walkowicz's speech
http://mea.digital/gen34_5_5


ACTIVITY

Analysing Walkowicz's presentation

- 1 Consider Walkowicz's opening statement. What phrases are used to introduce her focal argument and the challenge confronting humanity? How is the audience positioned to respond?
- 2 What examples does Walkowicz provide to substantiate the statement that: '... our own planet is sagging under the weight of humanity'? What stylistic device is used here, and how effective do you consider this to be?
- 3 How does the audience react to her observation that she looks '... for choice alien real estate'? What other examples of humour are used? Given the serious implications of her argument, why do you think Walkowicz incorporates occasional humour?
- 4 In subsequent sections of her talk, Walkowicz develops and expands upon the main premise of her presentation. What is this central thesis or argument? Why does she advocate Earth as the best place for human habitation? How does Walkowicz use logical argument to support her perspective that humans need to focus on making the inhospitable environment on Earth habitable?
- 5 Walkowicz makes use of repetition of 'I worry'. Why do you think that she chose to do this? Is it an effective persuasive strategy in positioning listeners? Justify your response.
- 6 Why is an analogy made between Mars and the *Titanic*? How does the audience respond? Do you consider the analogy to be effective? Give reasons to support your viewpoint.
- 7 The final statement is simple and logical. Do you consider this an effective conclusion to the presentation? Give reasons to support your opinion. What might you have done differently?
- 8 Watch Walkowicz's presentation once again, paying particular attention to the ways in which graphics, visuals and images are embedded. Some of these are used to strengthen and illustrate the argument, while others make strong emotive appeals to the audience. Complete the following table to identify and then evaluate the effectiveness of the images you consider to be most effective.

Description of image	Effects created to position audience

Presentation 4

Juan Enriquez is a **futurist** who considers the profound impact that **genomics** and other life sciences have on technology, politics and society. In this brief informal TED Talk delivered in 2013, he shocks his audience into a recognition of the permanent effects of digital sharing of our personal privacy through the use of an extended metaphor.

His presentation is designed to provoke his audience in order to persuade them. It is included here because of the originality of its persuasive approach, linking the predicament of humans in the digital world to Greek mythology. Enriquez also makes use of humour and irony to engage his listeners and to persuade them to take more care with the design of their own 'digital tattoos'.

futurist
a person who specialises in analysing future trends and possibilities

genomics
the branch of genetics concerned with the study of genomes

DISCUSSION

Pre-viewing Enriquez's speech

- 1 A successful persuasive presentation incorporates both highly effective content and delivery. Why might the balance of these be particularly important in positioning an audience?
- 2 As you view this presentation, critique this speaker's (i) content and (ii) delivery to decide whether you consider these to be of an equal standard.

Juan Enriquez





Video of
Enriquez's speech
[http://mea.digital/
qen34_5_6](http://mea.digital/qen34_5_6)

Transcript of
Enriquez's speech
[http://mea.digital/
qen34_5_7](http://mea.digital/qen34_5_7)

Follow the first margin link to *view* Enriquez's presentation.
Then follow the second margin link to *read* the transcript of this speech.

DISCUSSION

Analysing Juan Enriquez's presentation

- 1 How does Juan Enriquez make use of irony in his opening statement? How might this arouse the interest and curiosity of his audience?
- 2 Do you think his analogy of tattoos as a metaphor for the permanency of our online digital markers is effective? Justify your response.
- 3 Enriquez integrates a rapid slide sequence to make his point about what tattoos reveal about who and what we are. How effective do you consider these to be in engaging audience interest and making his point about 'electronic tattoos'?
- 4 What cultural assumptions, values, attitudes and beliefs about the pervasive use of social media underpin the perspective that Enriquez is developing and arguing?
- 5 How does Enriquez invert the famous quote of the American artist Andy Warhol? Why is this reference to popular culture appropriate in the context of this speech?
- 6 In Enriquez's presentation, pop culture is juxtaposed with Greek mythology. How and why are the moral and ethical lessons of these three ancient Greek myths appropriate in the context of this speech?
- 7 Why is the audience amused by the speaker's ironic statement: 'Nobody here would ever be accused or be familiar with Narcissus.'? What links exist between social media use and **narcissism**? Have you seen evidence of this in online posts (such as on platforms like Facebook, Instagram or Twitter)?
- 8 The speaker quotes from the Argentinian writer, poet and philosopher Jorge Luis Borges. As before, the speaker inverts Borges' words to suggest an alternative. Why is Enriquez suggesting that human immortality via digital media should be avoided rather than sought after?
- 9 Enriquez's delivery is relatively flat. What are possible disadvantages of relying solely on the clever content of your presentation at the expense of the judicious use of vocal and non-verbal resources? Why is it important to balance both? What do you consider to be the relative strengths and the relative drawbacks of this speaker's presentation? Give examples to illustrate your viewpoints.

narcissism

excessive admiration for oneself and one's own attributes

Presentation 5

Sam Harris is an eminent neuroscientist and philosopher whose work focuses on how our growing understanding of ourselves and the world is changing our sense of how we should live. In this speech delivered at a TED Talk in 2015, Harris' persuasive purpose is to position his audience to be alert to the existential threat that artificial superintelligence poses to humanity.

This presentation is about twice the length of the one you will deliver for your end-of-chapter task. However, it is also a very effective model of the combined use of the three foundations of persuasive argument – *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos*. It demonstrates ways of establishing and maintaining a strong relationship with an audience through the sincerity and fluency of delivery of a presentation.



Sam Harris

DISCUSSION

Pre-viewing Harris' speech

- 1 Sam Harris integrates the three pillars of *ethos*, *logos* and *pathos* into his presentation. Now that you have viewed and re-viewed other presentations, suggest why a balance among these is important in a persuasive presentation.
 - 2 As you view this presentation, compare and contrast Harris' delivery with that of the previous speaker, Juan Enriquez. Jot down some of the key features of Sam Harris' delivery that contribute to the effectiveness of his presentation.
-



Video of
Harris' speech
[http://mea.digital/
gen34_5_8](http://mea.digital/gen34_5_8)

Transcript of
Harris' speech
[http://mea.digital/
gen34_5_9](http://mea.digital/gen34_5_9)

Follow the first margin link to *view* Harris' presentation.

Then follow the second margin link to *read* the transcript of this speech.



ACTIVITY

Analysing Harris' presentation

- 1 Why does Harris make an analogy between the threat of artificial intelligence and global famine? How might his use of an image of famine strengthen his point? What persuasive strategy is being used?
 - 2 Harris states that famine isn't fun but death by science fiction is fun. What point is he making about the disconnect between perceived reality and virtual reality? Why is this central to his argument?
 - 3 What rhetorical strategy does Harris use to illustrate that nothing will stop the human impetus to continuously improve upon AI technology when he says: 'What could stop us from doing this? A full-scale nuclear war? A global pandemic? An asteroid impact? Justin Bieber becoming president of the United States?'' How does this position his audience? Why might the speaker juxtapose catastrophic scenarios with a humorous one?
 - 4 What convincing use of *logos* (logical argument) does Harris make to support his premise about the inherent danger of building machines that are so much more competent than we are?
 - 5 Why is Harris' analogy of human interaction with ants effective? How does this analogy function to reinforce his argument about humans and artificial superintelligence? Why might the use of concrete analogies be useful in framing an argument and positioning an audience?
 - 6 Harris poses three assumptions that must be disproven if the central premise of his argument is to be incorrect. The final assumption concerns the current limitations of human intelligence. How does Harris illustrate this to support his contention that: 'This is what makes our situation so precarious, and this is what makes our intuitions about risk so unreliable.'?
 - 7 How effective is the argument that electronic circuits can outperform biochemical ones? What points are used to support this contention? What likely emotions are aroused?
 - 8 How is the central thesis or argument restated in the conclusion of his presentation? How effective do you think his concluding statements are in reinforcing this perspective?
 - 9 Harris uses a range of computer-generated images and graphics throughout his talk. Do you consider these to be appropriate and effective? Give reasons to substantiate your viewpoints.
 - 10 What cultural assumptions, values, attitudes and beliefs underpin Harris' perspective on the issue of the threat posed to humanity by artificial superintelligence? In what ways might your own views have changed or shifted as a result of your engagement with this presentation?
-

 DISCUSSION

What makes an effective persuasive presentation?

The presentations across this chapter that you have viewed, analysed and discussed are all very different. In pairs or small groups, consider the following.

- Which of the presentations do you consider to be the most effective persuasive argument? Give specific examples to support your viewpoint.
 - Which speaker do you think engaged the audience most effectively? Consider vocal and non-verbal strategies, including clarity, variations in tone, pace, pitch and pause, emphasis, facial expressions and use of natural gestures. Provide examples to justify your choice.
 - Evaluate some of the best examples of rhetorical and persuasive strategies and devices in the various presentations. How might you be able to adopt or adapt these when shaping your own persuasive spoken presentation?
-

Selecting and integrating images

In an effective multimodal presentation, careful attention needs to be paid to the selection and integration of graphics and visuals. You are using these as additional resources to position your audience to respond to and agree with the perspective that you are advocating in order to achieve your overarching persuasive purpose.

This is sometimes referred to as *visual rhetoric*. Your visuals should be simple and have a clear and coherent focus. The image/s should stimulate the audience's emotional engagement with what you're saying, as you are endeavouring to establish a shared understanding of, and alignment with, the values, attitudes and beliefs that underpin your persuasive purpose. As we have seen, 'loaded' words can be used to influence and position an audience. The same applies to 'loaded' or emotive images.

Since visuals appeal to multiple senses simultaneously, the audience is involved not only in hearing your words but also in seeing a seamlessly integrated and powerful image. The inclusion of images, therefore, not only strengthens the engagement of your audience but also facilitates the impact of your delivery. Remember the adage that 'seeing is believing'.

When considering the selection of visuals in your presentation, these need to arouse an emotional response or reaction from your audience. However, care must be taken to ensure that an image is not too explicit or confronting, or you run the risk of alienating or 'turning off' an audience. Conversely, if an image is inappropriately selected or is too 'neutral' or bland, your persuasive purpose will not be achieved. You may, of course, choose to include short 10–20 second 'grabs' or video clips.

Remember that if you choose to do your presentation as a slideshow, only use key dot points from your speech. You should never include the full script of your speech on slides, and never simply 'read' from your slides. Instead, concentrate on maintaining regular eye contact with your audience. This obviously requires prior familiarisation with your content and rehearsal of your delivery.

In the specific selection of an image, consider factors such as:

- size and salience
- use of colour
- vectors or visual paths
- overall framing and composition of the image
- relevance and intended impact at that point in your presentation.

DISCUSSION

Choosing images

Consider each of the subsequent images in turn and answer the following questions for each.

- With what contentious issue do you think the image might be associated?
- Identify specific uses of visual rhetoric that are evident in the image. How might the image work to promote a persuasive appeal to an audience?

Image 1



Image 2



Image 3



Image 4



Image 5



Image 6



 EXTENDED RESPONSE

Creating a persuasive spoken presentation

You have now examined representations of contentious issues in a range of different texts over the course of Topic 2. In doing so, you also analysed the key resources of persuasive argument and a range of rhetorical, aesthetic and stylistic devices.

You must now shape your own perspective on a contentious social issue in a multimodal presentation delivered to an audience of your fellow students. Using reasoned argument, and a range of rhetorical and persuasive strategies, you need to persuade your audience to take up your perspective or thesis in relation to this social issue.

To generate your own argument, you will need to critically engage with and respond to representations of your selected social issue in the media within the previous year. Your persuasive argument should contribute to the conversation about this issue.

You should support your spoken presentation through use of multimodal elements that are appropriate to your context and audience. Images and graphics should make a relevant contribution to your persuasive purpose.

You should pay careful attention to establishing and maintaining your relationship with your audience as you give your presentation. This includes use of vocal strategies, such as variations in emphasis, pace, pitch and pause, and in your body language, including use of natural gestures, facial expressions and sustained eye contact.

Before you deliver it to a larger audience, practise your presentation with another student or a family member and ask them for constructive feedback on your persuasive speech. Note down and reflect on any feedback you receive and modify your presentation accordingly based on this feedback.

You may use some class time and your own time to develop your presentation.

Your presentation should be 5–8 minutes in length. You will be assessed on the following.

- The application of your knowledge in developing your perspective
- The organisation and development of your presentation
- Your use of textual features, images and graphics to invite your audience to take up your position and perspective on the issue

The processes and techniques you use in this activity are the same as those you will use in your Unit 3 summative internal assessment task 2, even though the topic and focus of that assessment will be different.

ASSESSMENT

SUMMATIVE INTERNAL ASSESSMENT 2 (IA2)

Extended response – persuasive spoken response (25%)

LENGTH // 5–8 minutes

TIME // Approximately 12 hours, in class and at home

CONTEXT

In Topic 2 of Unit 3, you explored the representation of contemporary social issues in different texts, as well as different strategies for influencing audiences. In doing so, you analysed different perspectives on the same issue, and developed your ability to interpret and accept or contest complex and challenging issues and the assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpinning them.

In this assessment task, you will use this knowledge to prepare and present a persuasive spoken text using argument to convince an audience to accept your perspective on a contemporary issue.

GUIDELINES

Your task is to select an issue and then write, shape and present a persuasive spoken text developing your position from your critical engagement with media texts on this issue. Your text adds to the public dialogue or ‘conversation’ about a specific issue. It must present a contention or thesis in relation to that issue and develop an argument that reflects a particular perspective.

You will need to choose:

- a contentious issue that has appeared in the media within the previous year
- your thesis or contention about this issue and the perspective you will present
- to deploy certain cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs which will shape your representations and perspectives
- the audience you are attempting to persuade
- the context in which you speak
- the rhetorical and persuasive strategies you will use to position your nominated audience to accept your perspective
- whether you need to select and incorporate multimodal and/or digital elements.

INSTRUCTIONS

- The assessment response is to be completed within four weeks of it being assigned by your teacher.
- You must plan and shape a draft prior to writing and shaping the final version of the feature article.
- Your teacher may also provide additional instructions or requirements.

This is an open-ended task, and one in which you have a lot of freedom. You can choose any issue that you like to speak about, so long as it is a contentious issue that has had media coverage in the last 12 months. It is best to select an issue about which you have genuine convictions and feelings. This should ensure that your persuasive text is personal and authentic.

You will also have to choose the genre or type of persuasive spoken text you will create. Appropriate spoken text types might include:

- a persuasive speech
- a seminar
- a vlog, vodcast or video diary
- a segment on a discussion panel or news show
- a streaming video presentation
- a pitch meeting for a documentary TV series.

Once you have selected and sequenced your ideas, develop them into the draft of your speech. Refer to the key persuasive and rhetorical resources on pages 116–118, and incorporate them in your writing. Make sure that your draft reflects a balanced use of logos/ethos/pathos.

Before starting work on your response, you should read the objectives and requirements for this assessment task in the English syllabus. You should also review the information in Chapters 4 and 5 of this textbook.

Criteria

There are three criteria against which your assessment will be marked. The potential marks for each criterion are indicated. You will see that your delivery and engagement of your audience has slightly more weight, so spend time rehearsing and practising delivery. Carefully read the syllabus to be aware of the requirements and weightings of each criterion and the standards.

Knowledge application: this criterion focuses on how effectively you present your perspective and position. This includes not only your ability to create your perspective/s, represent concepts, identities, times and places, but also how well you use cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs to position the audience, and your use of persuasive aesthetic features and stylistic devices. (Objectives 3, 4, 5; 8 marks)

Organisation and development: this criterion focuses on the structure and cohesion of your work. Your spoken response needs to be well organised, use the appropriate patterns and conventions for that type of persuasive spoken text, and follow a logical sequence that supports your perspective. Make careful selection of and synthesise subject matter, ensure your text is cohesive and appropriate for the specified audience. (Objectives 1, 2, 6, 7, 8; 8 marks)

Textual features: this criterion focuses on the spoken quality of your response. Your purposeful choice of vocabulary, grammar and rhetorical resources is important and your delivery needs to be engaging, with appropriate use of spoken/signed (pronunciation, phrasing, pause, audibility and clarity, volume, pace and silence) and non-verbal features (such as gestures and facial expressions) as well as images, music or other multimodal elements. (Objectives 9, 10, 11; 9 marks)



General English
syllabus
[http://mea.digital/
qen34_5_A](http://mea.digital/qen34_5_A)

Access the digital version of your textbook to access videos of model responses, as well as notes showing how all three criteria are evident in these responses.

A man in a dark suit stands in the center of the frame, looking slightly to his left. Behind him is a large, light blue number '4' that is semi-transparent, allowing the background and his suit to be visible through it. The background is a solid dark blue. The text 'UNIT CLOSE STUDY OF LITERARY TEXTS FOUR' is overlaid on the image. 'UNIT' and 'FOUR' are in a large, white, sans-serif font. 'CLOSE STUDY OF LITERARY TEXTS' is in a smaller, white, sans-serif font, centered between 'UNIT' and 'FOUR'. A thin white horizontal line runs across the middle of the image, passing behind the text.

UNIT CLOSE STUDY OF LITERARY TEXTS FOUR

In this unit you will explore the world and human experience by engaging with literary texts from diverse times and places. You will explore how these texts contribute to a cultural heritage and a shared understanding of the human experience. This unit includes the close study of literary texts to invite you to extend your experience of the world.

The literary texts you will explore in this unit include novels, short stories, plays, poems and films. You will also be writing your own responses to these texts. These include both creative responses (literary texts of your own that react to the studied texts) and critical responses (analytical essays examining key aspects of the studied texts).

ASSESSMENT

BY THE END OF THIS UNIT, YOU WILL NEED TO COMPLETE THE FOLLOWING ASSESSMENT TASKS:

TASK ONE

A two-hour seen assessment in which you will write an imaginative response (800–1000 words) to a text from the prescribed text list.

TASK TWO

A two-hour unseen external examination in which you will write an analytic response to a literary text from the prescribed text list.

THE INFORMATION IN THIS UNIT WILL PREPARE YOU FOR BOTH OF THESE ASSESSMENT TASKS:

SIX

introduces you to creative close reading by examining several poems

SEVEN

conducts an extensive close reading of a single novel

EIGHT

demonstrates the process of writing a creative response to a literary text

NINE

unpacks the analytical close reading process using *Hamlet* as an example

TEN

demonstrates the process of writing a response to a literary text

CLOSE READING OF LITERARY TEXTS: POETRY

In English Units 1 & 2, you examined literary texts such as short stories, plays and multimodal texts. Now, in the first topic of Unit 4, you will also examine texts such as poems and novels. Over this chapter and the next, you will conduct close readings of these texts, and ultimately write your own creative responses to such texts.

Before starting your close readings, it is recommended that you keep a *reading journal*. This is simply a document in which you record notes, thoughts and ideas about the texts you read each day. Not only is this a fantastic tool to assist with your close reading, it will be invaluable when preparing and revising for your Unit 4 exams.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

TEXTS IN THIS CHAPTER:

TEXTS IN CONTEXTS

- explore the personal, social and cultural contexts of literary texts
- investigate the relationships between purpose, audience, language and meaning
- identify how texts follow or challenge the patterns and conventions of genres

- 'Mirror' – poem
- 'Sailing to Byzantium' – poem
- 'Dear Matafele Peinam' – poem
- 'Morning Song' – poem
- 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' – poem
- 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death' – poem
- 'Because I could not stop for Death' – poem
- 'Listening to Michael Jackson in Tehran' – poem
- 'Merri Creek' – poem
- 'South of My Days' – poem

LANGUAGE AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

- examine how language features, text structures and conventions communicate perspectives and representations
- examine the use of aesthetic and stylistic features and their effects in texts

RESPONDING TO AND CREATING TEXTS

- explore how responses to texts are shaped by an individual's contexts
- examine examples of imaginative text types.



Closely reading a poem

Close readings are a key element of your English course, and by now you would have conducted many such readings, including those you did in Unit 3. Close readings of poetry are not radically different from close readings of other literary texts, but there are some important elements to consider, as discussed in this chapter.

The value of poetry

Poetry takes many forms, but it uses language with such dexterity that it makes us see something in a new way. It can make us feel strongly about a subject or help us to understand new ways to use language.

Why do we read poetry? The following authors and poets provide some useful answers.

- The poet Dylan Thomas claimed that poetry could change the shape and significance of the universe and extend everyone's knowledge of themselves and the world around them.
- The author A S Byatt, in her novel *The Virgin in the Garden*, constructed a character who declared that reading and reflecting on poetry promoted the 'shared contemplation of a work, an object, an artefact'.
- 'Insta Poet' Iain Thomas says poetry appealed to him 'because it was a way to translate the world and what I was feeling, which are very intangible things, into something that I could understand and process'.
- Poet and essayist Amy Glynn argues for reading poetry 'because it can, somehow, bypass an analytic brain and interface directly with the heart [and encourage] you to look at things through another, often non-literal, lens, and this is crucial'.
- Perhaps Robert Frost's ideas are most provocative. He claimed that without fluency in metaphor 'you are not safe anywhere. Because you are not at ease with figurative values ... You are not safe in science; you are not safe in history'. Frost's definition of poetry? 'Poetry is when an emotion has found its thought and the thought has found words.'

You may find these arguments convincing, or you may not. But it is impossible to deny that poetry has power, and that there is value in understanding and appreciating it.

Form and content

The core practice of a close reading is to read a text carefully and thoughtfully to identify what the text says and how it says it. We judge the first element as meaning the **content** (or subject matter) of the text, and through appreciating its effects we judge the second – the text's structure and shape, sometimes known as **form**. Interpretation, which is the basis of any reading and analysis, focuses on the relationship between content and form – the what and the how of meaning-making.

This is particularly the case with interpretation of poetry, with:

- *content* referring to what the poem is about – the subject matter, meaning, ideas, theme/s, events, concepts, places, times and representations of characters
- *form* referring to language (sometimes referred to as *poetic diction*) and how it is used to make the meaning – the voice, structure, tone, metre, rhythm, syntax, word order and punctuation.

content

the information or subject matter in a text

form

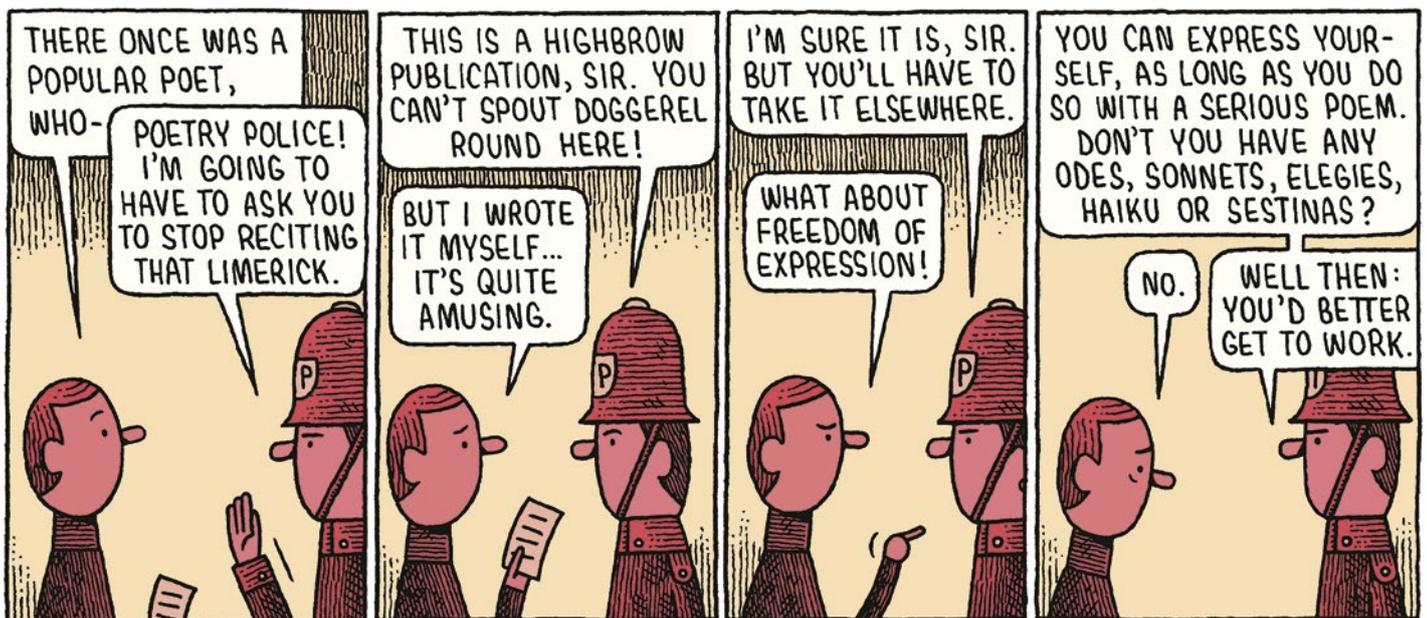
the structure, shape and format of a document or text

In most cases, form and content work together, but sometimes effects and meaning are deliberately created by a **disjunction** between form and content. An **elegy** typically has a sad and sombre rhythm, but a poet might choose to make sombre subject matter more disturbing by using a lively rhythm. This mismatch between form and content can have great purpose and effect.

In a close reading, we interpret a poem's subject matter and analyse the use of language, considering its structure and patterns. We judge the effectiveness of the aesthetic and stylistic decisions and how they shape meaning. Basically, a close reading is a focused analysis of how the text works to make meaning through the construction of perspectives and representations. The task of the reader is to understand the choices that are made by the writer/creator, and then clearly explain the effects of those choices.

disjunction
a state of being disunited or separate

elegy
a mournful, melancholy or sorrowful poem



TOM GAULD

Aesthetic features and stylistic devices

Over the course of your English studies, you should have become familiar with **stylistic devices** such as metaphor, simile, personification, allusion, alliteration and assonance. You should also be familiar with a variety of **aesthetic features**, such as irony in its different forms and the use of imagery and figurative (non-literal or metaphorical) language.

We will revisit many of these devices and features later in this chapter.

These devices and features are important in all texts, but are particularly vital in poetry. When interpreting a poem, the task is not simply to identify the device/s being used. You need to consider the likely overall purpose and the effects that are being achieved by the use of these devices.

If you wish to enrich your own writing through use of aesthetic and stylistic features, by all means experiment – but be selective when crafting these effects. Do not be shy in using some figurative language to develop perspectives or representations, but too much figurative writing in a short narrative text can overwhelm the piece and adversely affect your purpose.

stylistic device
an aspect of a text (such as words, sentences, images), how it is arranged, and how it affects meaning

aesthetic feature
an aspect of a text that prompts an emotional and critical reaction

connotation
an implied or associated
meaning

denotation
the literal meaning

Style and context

Poetry is shaped by cultural context, as poetic fashions and styles shift, and by the purpose of the poet in their writing. Readers, also shaped by culture in how they interpret poetry, respond to the **connotations** and associations of words as much as they respond to **denotations**.

Poetry is broadly divided into three categories: lyric, dramatic and narrative. Within each category, we find specific types of poems.

- Within the *Lyric* category, which focuses on the expression of emotion and feeling, we find sonnets, odes and elegies.
- *Dramatic* poetry focuses on the development and exploration of character, as seen in dramatic monologues. Shakespeare was both a lyric poet (with hundreds of sonnets) and a dramatic poet.
- *Narrative* poetry tells stories – these are familiar to us in the bush ballads of Australia. Ballads and sagas were among the earliest forms of poems.

Up until the late 19th century, poetry was controlled by stringent rules. The rules were challenged and expanded throughout the 20th century, when free verse often supplanted the rigid metrical verse of the past.

It is important to recognise the context and style of a poem as you read it, so that you understand why the poet made the choices they did. It is also vital to take into consideration your own personal context and how your own culture, background and taste shape your reading and understanding of a poem.

Preparing for a close reading

Before you read any of the questions on the poems in this chapter, you should conduct the following.

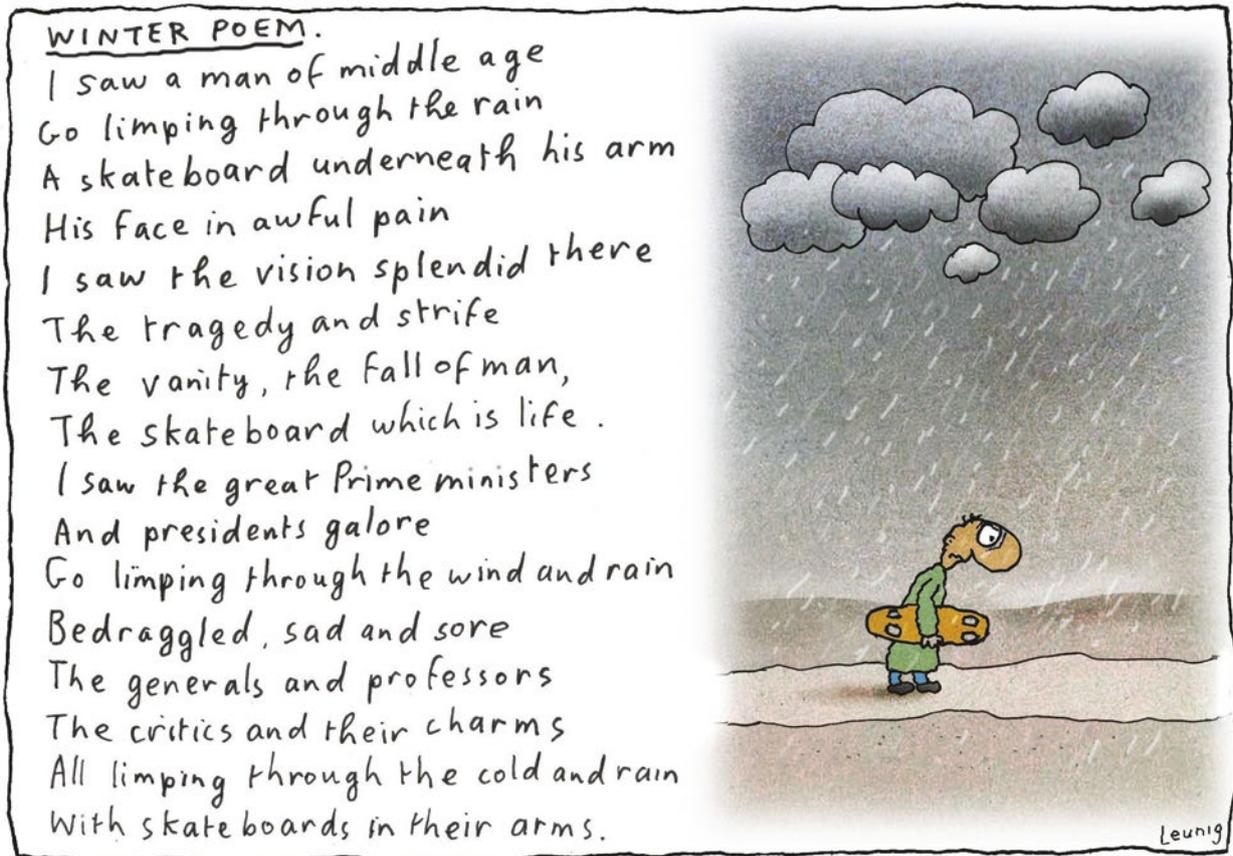
- Read the poem aloud or listen to a reading of it – you can often find readings of poetry on YouTube. You might even listen to more than one reading.
- Identify the central emotion within the poem. In your reading journal, write which emotion you think underpins the poem, and explain why.

After you have worked through each set of questions, go back and review your journal entry. Add an entry to say how your interpretation enabled you – or did not enable you – to see how the core emotion of the poem found its thought and words.

A ACTIVITY

Journaling your response

Leunig is an Australian cartoonist who often tries his hand at poetry to express his feelings.



- 1 Write in your journal about the driving emotion in the poem. Comment on the relationship you see between the title, the content and the accompanying visual image.
 - 2 To what extent do you consider the skateboard to be an appropriate image to represent life? Why?
 - 3 What does the poet imply about middle age?
 - 4 Do you think the skateboard is an incongruous object to be associated with middle age? Consider social and cultural factors that may have influenced the poet's choice of this as a central image.
-

Reading and interpreting features and devices

The aesthetic and stylistic aspects of texts are key resources for all writers. These resources require close reader attention, because they are the key means of positioning and affecting readers, and thus central to developing reader **empathy** or **antipathy**.

Paying close attention to the aesthetic aspects of texts not only allows you to understand how your emotional response was evoked, it also gives you more opportunities for consciously crafting the effects of your own writing. These aspects help you engage your readers emotionally and position them within the imaginative reality you construct in your text.

empathy

the ability to understand and share the feelings or perceptions of a person or thing

antipathy

a repugnance, aversion or opposition in feeling

Stylistic devices of poetry

Stylistic devices are aspects of texts such as word choice, sentence structure and the arrangement of elements. The choice and perspective of narrator, word selection, poetic diction and structure of stanzas all affect how we perceive the meaning of the text.

Poetry shares its stylistic devices with other written texts, but there are particular devices that are central to the genre or used in specific ways.

Syntax

Syntax is the organisation of words, phrases and clauses into sentences. Sometimes poets disrupt the expected syntactical pattern of a sentence for a number of different purposes. It may be to fit metre, but it may also be to emphasise certain meanings or to place meaning in the **foreground**.

One of the things some readers do is focus on the line and not read the whole syntactical unit, which may go over lines or even stanzas. Do not fall into this trap when close reading a poem – consider the entire unit of meaning, not just one part of it.

syntax

the organisation of sentences, phrases and words according to the rules of the language

foreground

textual choices that emphasise or draw attention to a textual element and hence idea, reading or perspective

Enjambment

When a sentence runs beyond the end of a line into the next line (or subsequent lines), it is called an enjambed line. An end-stopped line (with a comma or full stop) pulls the rhythm up, but enjambment creates a faster pace. Some poets might use it to maintain rhyme or the pattern of the metre.

When reading poetry with enjambed lines, we must read on to get the sense of the sentence (which could go over many lines).

Rhyme

Rhyming is perhaps the stylistic device most associated with poetry. While it was a strong or even essential feature of most poetry prior to the 20th century, many contemporary poets do not make use of rhyme.

Some contemporary poets use rhyming in playful ways, or adapt the device to create **para-rhymes**. In para-rhymes, the consonants of the 'rhyming' words match but not the vowels. For example, 'bliss' and 'bless' are para-rhymes.

para-rhyme

a type of rhyme where the consonants of the words match but not the vowels

Wilfred Owen made effective use of para-rhyme in his poem ‘Insensibility’ to intensify the disruption and horror of war:

Happy are men who yet before they are killed
Can let their views run cold.

‘Killed’ and ‘cold’ have the same consonant sounds and are an example of **consonance**.

Slant rhyme (also called ‘half rhyme’ or ‘partial rhyme’) is close to this, but extends to words that ‘rhyme’ because the final consonant is the same but nothing else is (for example, ‘abode’ and ‘God’ in the works of Yeats). Another form of slant rhyme is when the vowels in the final syllable rhyme, but nothing else does (such as ‘crate’ and ‘braid’). Emily Dickinson was also a fan of slant rhyme.

consonance
the repetition of similar-sounding consonants in close proximity

Metre and verse

English is a stress language – certain syllables are emphasised within words. The **metre** of a poem is the way those stresses are organised into patterns to create rhythm.

For many centuries, metred **verse** was written to a strict pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables arranged to provide either a rising or falling rhythm.

- Each pattern of beats was called a *foot* and contained either two or three syllables; these patterns or feet were called iambic (*iamb*), trochaic (*trochee*), dactylic (*dactyl*) or anapaestic (*anapaest*), while a foot with two stressed syllables was a *spondee*.
- The iambic foot has two syllables, an unstressed followed by a stressed syllable, most readily seen in ‘To *be* or *not* to *be*’. In this part of Shakespeare’s line we have six syllables (also in this case words) but three iambic feet.
- Rising rhythm has the stress at the end of the foot (as in iambs and anapests) but falling rhythm has unstressed syllables at the end of the foot (trochees and dactyls).
- An iambic line with ten syllables is called *pentameter*; one with eight syllables is called *tetrameter*.

metre
the arrangement of words in regularly measured, patterned or rhythmic lines or verses

verse
a stanza or subdivision of a poem

The rules and terminology of historical metred verse are many and confusing, but rarely relevant to close reading. Fortunately, you do not have to remember all these terms. The only point to using this information in an analysis would be to consider the effects of such choices.

Not all verse is metred, of course. Shakespeare’s plays are largely written in **blank verse**, which uses unrhymed lines of iambic pentameter. While blank verse has a metrical pattern, it is a surprisingly free-flowing form of poetry. In the hands of American poet Robert Frost, it becomes almost conversational. Most contemporary poetry is written in **free verse** – the verse has no discernible metrical pattern or rhyme scheme.

blank verse
unrhymed verse in iambic pentameter

free verse
verse with no discernible metrical pattern or rhyme scheme

Stanza

A **stanza** is a group of lines in a poem, somewhat equivalent to a paragraph in prose. Stanzas provide structure to poems, and some poetic forms are heavily structured. Sonnets are a good example – these are poems of fourteen lines that typically use iambic pentameter. They are tightly constructed with 140 syllables and, depending on the type of sonnet, a particular number of rhymes.

stanza
a grouped set of lines within a poem

Stanzas can be organised formally in very different ways. One typical grouping is in terms of the number of lines per group. Conventionally, verses might be *couplets* (2), *quatrains* (4), *tercets* (3), *sestets* (6) or *octets/octaves* (8). Some sonnets are structured differently, and the different sonnet arrangements affect how the thought is organised and developed. Typically, in English poetry the sonnet forms are Petrarchan, Shakespearean and Spenserian (which you can research if working with sonnets).

There are other ways to group stanzas. *Ottava rima* (originally from Italy) is a poetic form that typically uses eight lines with eleven syllables in each, and a rhyming scheme of ABABABCC. William Butler Yeats used this verse form in ‘Sailing to Byzantium’ (p. 156), although his lines have ten syllables.

Just as contemporary free verse turns away from defined patterns and rhymes, it tends not to use formal stanzas. However, stanzas still provide a structure for many contemporary poems, even if that structure is unpredictable, and other contemporary poets use many of the old tightly structured forms.

Aesthetic features of poetry

aesthetic feature
an aspect of a text that prompts an emotional and critical reaction

The **aesthetic features** of a text – whether prose, poetry or multimodal text – are those aspects that position the audience and prompt emotional or critical reactions. As with stylistic devices, poetry uses the same aesthetic features as other written texts, but in its own way.

Allusion

allusion
a reference, either directly or by implication, to something else

Writers and poets, even speakers, often make intertextual references. This could be a direct reference, but in poetry it is more common to find an indirect **allusion** to other works. Allusions can also be made to things that are not texts, such as people, historical events, folklore or even commonplace objects.

Sylvia Plath’s poem ‘Mirror’ (p. 151) can be read as alluding to familiar cultural references to mirrors, while Ali Alizadeh (p. 167) uses direct allusions in his poems. Shakespeare alludes to Pyrrhus and Priam in *Hamlet* because of the relevance of that story to Hamlet’s situation. The irony of the allusion to Pyrrhus in staging the play to catch Claudius off-guard is that it actually foreshadows Hamlet’s own death.

Allegory

allegory
a text that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden, often political or spiritual, meaning

An **allegory** is a text in which the literal meanings can be read as signifying other meanings (often moral, spiritual or political meanings). *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, which you studied in Chapter 2, is often read as a political allegory, as is Orwell’s other major novel, *Animal Farm*.

Allegory is a common feature of poetry. Emily Dickinson’s poem ‘Because I could not stop for Death’ (p. 165), in which she uses capitals for her allegorical figures, is a spiritual allegory.

Tone

The tone of a poem is created through its sounds and pace, the intensity of the emotion or feeling, as well as through the ‘voice’ adopted. A poem’s tone might be playful, formal, imperious, urbane, regretful, exhilarated, melancholy, reflective, ironic and so on.

In a close reading, tone is generally recognised in terms of the poet's presumed attitude to the subject. It can be made evident through direct statement, but usually emerges from the construction of the imagery and rhythm.

Symbolism

A symbol is something that is used to represent an idea, concept or quality, underscore a major theme or invite a reading. Often this is a material object; something that is tangible or concrete.

Poetry is a genre that depends heavily on symbolism to represent concepts. Yorick's skull in *Hamlet* is not only a physical reminder of the character, it becomes a symbol of the inevitability of death. The spiral in Yeats' 'Sailing to Byzantium' (p. 156) is a symbol of the spiritual journey through life.

The titles of poems are generally written in inverted commas (e.g. 'Sailing to Byzantium'), while the titles of plays and novels are italicised (e.g. *Hamlet*). If you are handwriting, you might underline the latter instead.

DISCUSSION

Symbolism

The red heart in this image clearly symbolises love.

What meanings would you suggest for the symbols of the swallow and the hand of the mannequin?

Shakespeare's poetic resources

It is hard to overstate the influence Shakespeare has had on English writing. He used many poetic, rhetorical and stylistic devices in his work, going so far as to invent devices used by authors and poets today.

As a master of his craft, Shakespeare drew on a wide repertoire of less used poetic and rhetorical devices. The examples here are taken from his play *Hamlet*, but are also relevant to the poems in this chapter.

Antithesis

The **antithesis** of something is its opposite. As a stylistic device, this involves putting words or phrases with contrasting meanings close to each other in a sentence, such as 'The fire on the snow' or 'To be or not to be'. The effect is to make the reader or listener remember the phrase or phrases, because they are so unexpected and, thus, memorable.

Shakespeare was particularly fond of the use of antithetical statements, and he often presented contradictions or directly opposite meanings within a sentence. Often these antithetical statements form a parallel grammatical structure in order to highlight the contrast. It is a useful device in establishing the oppositions or differences between characters and situations, such as Hamlet saying 'I must be cruel only to be kind'.

Note that antithesis is different from juxtaposition, which involves putting two things beside each other to emphasise their differences or similarities.



You will study *Hamlet* in depth in Chapter 9.

antithesis
in opposition or contrast

Irony

Irony is the use of statements that say one thing literally while implying its opposite. In prose, as in everyday life, this is often verbal irony – a character saying one thing while clearly meaning another. (Sarcasm is a form of verbal irony.) Because poetry rarely involves literal dialogue, it tends to draw upon two other forms of irony.

Situational irony is when the outcome of an event or situation is different from what was expected by the reader or audience. This is more than just an unexpected outcome; for it to be ironic, it needs to contradict the expected outcome. In *Hamlet*, Laertes poisons his sword before duelling with Hamlet, setting up an expected outcome – but then they swap swords during an exchange, and Hamlet poisons Laertes with his own blade instead.



Hamlet and Laertes duel in a touring production of *Hamlet* by Shakespeare's Globe, London, 2012

Dramatic irony is when the outcome of an event or situation is different from what was expected by the *characters*, but not by the audience. This creates suspense and tension, heightening the audience's anticipation for what happens next. In *Hamlet*, the court is confused about the sudden change in Hamlet's demeanour. However, the audience (and Horatio) know he is feigning madness. Rather than us being surprised by what Hamlet does, we become engaged by seeing how the other characters deal with their surprise.

Metonymy

A **metonym** is a figure of speech in which a thing is not called by its name, but instead rather by something closely associated with it. For example, in *Hamlet*, when Polonius tells Laertes to listen but not speak, he says 'Give every man thine ear, but few thy voice'.

Shakespeare makes considerable use of metonymy in *Hamlet*. Here are just a few examples.

- Hamlet refers to the 'incestuous sheets' of Gertrude and Claudius, showing his disgust for his mother's marriage to his uncle, her former brother-in-law.
- 'The serpent that did sting thy father's life now wears his crown' – Hamlet's use of *serpent* instead of *killer* is much more dramatic, and alludes to Claudius pouring poison into King Hamlet's ear as he slept in the garden.

metonym

a figure of speech where the use of the name of one thing stands in for that of another thing closely associated with it

- Claudius talks of ‘my crown, mine own ambition and my queen’, where *crown* here conveys the notion or idea of kingship.
- ‘To die, to sleep – to sleep, perchance to dream’ – the structure of this line makes it explicit that sleep is a *metonym* for death.

Synecdoche

A version of metonymy is **synecdoche** – a figure of speech in which the term substituted is either part of a whole or a whole standing in for a part. If you said ‘At Christmas, I’ll get my wheels’, meaning that you would get a car, this would be a synecdoche – you are using ‘wheels’ to refer to the whole vehicle.

In *Hamlet*, the Ghost says:

‘Tis given out that, sleeping in my orchard
A serpent stung me. So the whole ear of Denmark
Is by a forged process of my death
Rankly abused. But know, thou noble youth,
The serpent that did sting thy father’s life
Now wears his crown.

Here ‘ear’ is an example of synecdoche, since it is substituted for the people/population of Denmark.

Oxymoron

An **oxymoron** involves placing a pair of opposite words in a single expression, in a way that shocks or at least surprises the reader/listener because it seems absurd. The phrase ‘a pet aversion’ is an oxymoron, because you do not have an aversion to something you love like a pet. ‘Deafening silence’ is another good example.

Claudius says of Hamlet:

Have we – as ‘twere with a defeated joy,
With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,

‘A defeated joy’ is an oxymoron. So are ‘mirth in funeral’ and ‘dirge in marriage’, but together the two phrases form a parallel structure of antithesis (p. 147). Shakespeare particularly liked to display his rhetorical skills, and often multiple examples can be found in the one line.

Hyperbole

Hyperbole uses deliberate exaggeration or overstatement to dramatise a point, such as saying, ‘I have a million things to do today’.

Hamlet (the character) is prone to using hyperbole in the play, with lines such as:

- man is ‘like a god’
- ‘outrageous fortune’
- ‘the thousand natural shocks/that flesh is heir to’
- ‘forty thousand brothers/could not with all their quantity of love/make up my sum’.

synecdoche
a figure of speech in which the term substituted is either part of a whole or a whole standing in for a part

oxymoron
a figure of speech involving placing a pair of opposite or contradictory words in a single expression

litotes

a figure of speech in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative

Litotes

A **litotes** is a form of negative, often ironic, rhetorical understatement. It is used for the purpose of emphasis, and is the opposite of hyperbole.

A litotes always involves a negative, and that negation is used to emphasise the opposite meaning. In labelling someone ‘not unimaginative’, we would actually be saying the person was imaginative. Calling a cyclone ‘not the best weather’ would be a litotes, here used to ironically indicate the weather was terrible.

In Claudius’ first speech in *Hamlet*, he addresses the issue of Fortinbras, about whom he says:

He hath not failed to pester us with message
Importing the surrender of those lands
Lost by his father, with all bonds of law,
To our most valiant brother.

The litotes in ‘not failed to pester us with message’ suggests that Fortinbras has been very combative, and sent many threats of war. While Claudius is more than annoyed by this, ‘pester’ suggests it is not a strongly overt expression of his annoyance (or concern), since Claudius reduces the annoyance to that of a child.

 **DISCUSSION**
Poetic resources

- 1 Which of the poetic resources on pages 147–50 are you already familiar with? Which are you not familiar with at all?
- 2 As a group, search for and discuss examples of the poetic resources you find most challenging. Find examples not only from poetry but from everyday usage.

Close reading – Sylvia Plath and ‘Mirror’

Sylvia Plath, a significant 20th-century poet, is associated with the confessional poetry movement that emerged mid-century in America. Generally, her work draws on personal experiences and relationships, and often on commonplace daily events.

The confessional movement was first defined in the work of fellow American poet Robert Lowell, who described confessional poetry as ‘huge blood-dripping gobbets of unseasoned experience’ because of the scope of what was then termed taboo in the poet’s work. Plath’s poems ‘Daddy’ and ‘Lady Lazarus’ are her most famous examples of this form of verse.

Plath is considered to be a feminist poet whose work was intense, often disturbing and deeply personal. Her poem ‘Mirror’ provides an interesting narrative perspective, as well as an opportunity to start developing your close reading skills.


 ACTIVITY

Preparing to read 'Mirror'

Before reading the poem:

- think of five things you associate with the word 'mirror'
 - pair with a partner to discuss your choices and why you thought of them
 - share your choices and begin a discussion with the class.
-

Mirror

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.

Whatever I see I swallow immediately

Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.

I am not cruel, only truthful,

The eye of a little god, four-cornered.

Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.

It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long

I think it is part of my heart. But it flickers.

Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,

Searching my reaches for what she really is.

Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.

I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.

She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.

I am important to her. She comes and goes.

Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.

In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman

Rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

Sylvia Plath


 ACTIVITY

First reading of 'Mirror'

- 1 Find the meanings of any words of which you may not be certain (for example, 'preconceptions').
- 2 Consider the meaning of unusual uses of words. How can a mirror 'swallow'? How effective are Plath's choices of words (such as 'unmisted' or 'reflect')? Why are candles or the moon liars?
- 3 What does the sentence 'I have looked at it so long/I think it is a part of my heart' suggest about the mirror?

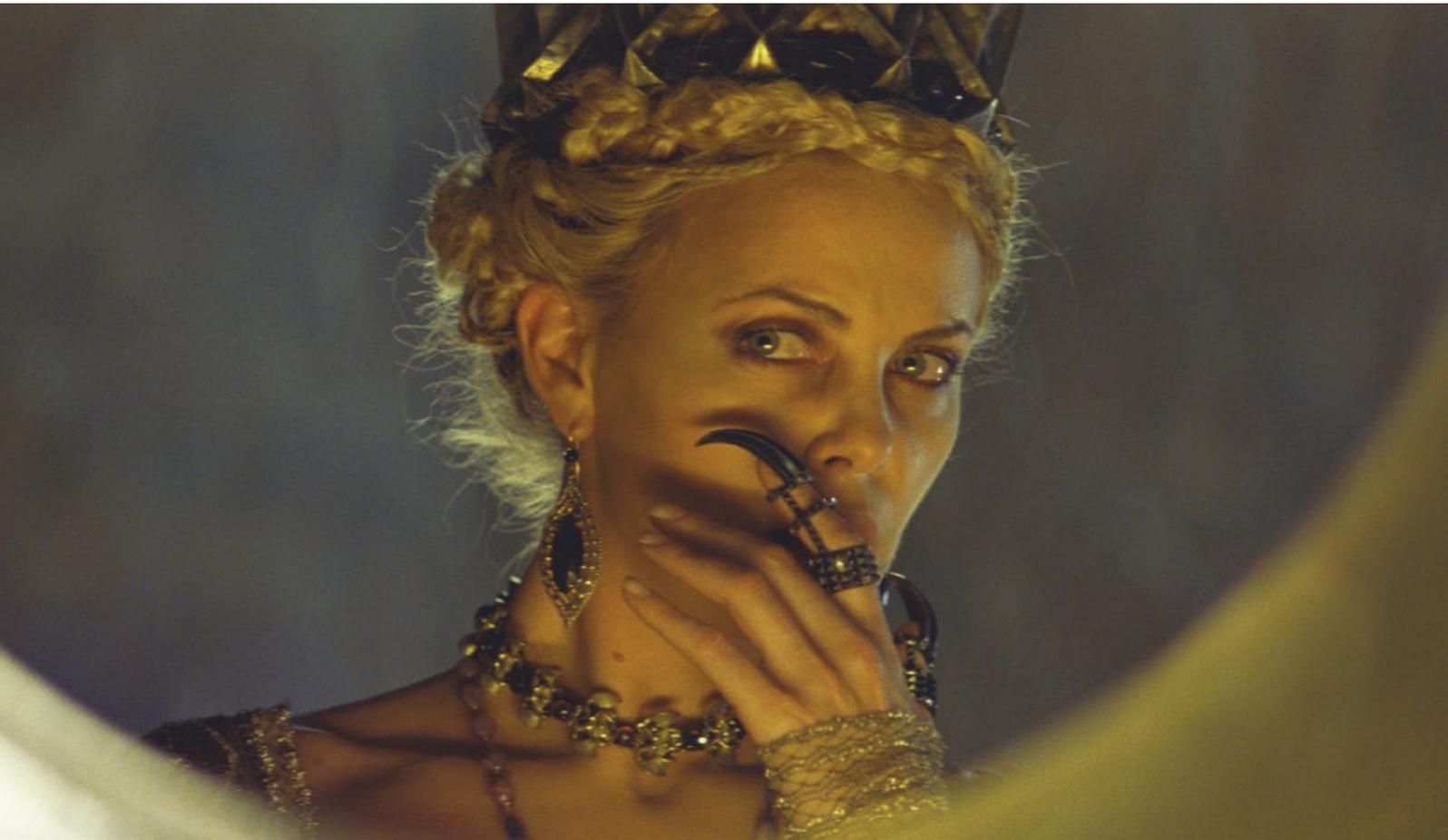
- 4 What is happening to the narrative viewpoint in the line 'I see her back, and reflect it faithfully'?
 - 5 'Mirror' has three enjambed lines. What is the effect of each choice? (Note: Reading the poem aloud might help you to determine this.)
 - 6 Identify and explain the effect of the central images of the poem.
 - 7 Suggest how important the use of contrast is in this poem, giving reasons.
 - 8 How would you describe the mood of this poem? In your answer, explain how that mood is constructed.
-

Connecting to prior knowledge

An important tool in a close reading of a text is drawing on prior knowledge surrounding a text. We do this to make connections between texts, which then helps to strengthen our interpretation. In this case: What do we know about mirrors?

Two tales that might come to mind when we think about mirrors and reflections in lakes are those of Snow White and Narcissus. Both of these stories potentially provide an intertextual intersection with this poem, allowing a richer reading.

Charlize Theron looks into the Magic Mirror in *Snow White and the Huntsman*, 2012



- Snow White's stepmother supplicates a mirror, seeking reassurance that she is the most beautiful of women – 'the fairest of all'. She is faithfully reassured until the day the mirror – unbiased critic that it is – deems Snow White's beauty to be superior.
- Narcissus is the Greek myth of an incredibly beautiful young man. Seeing his reflection in a lake, he falls in love with his own image. Overcome by his own beauty, he gazes at his reflection until he drowns in the lake.

Culturally, Plath's **motif** of the mirror has significant resonances – with narcissism, with self-obsession, with a fixation on beauty. Functionally, though, it is an everyday object: we stand in front of it as we brush our teeth. But the poet invites us to see this familiar object in a new or different way. Our cultural references support or enlarge Plath's meaning.

We can start by asking questions – about the mirror, and about ourselves. Does a mirror document us faithfully? If we changed the light in the bathroom, would we see the same self? If we saw ourselves in candlelight, would we be the same person previously seen by the harsh white light of a bulb? If the bathroom were misted up after a hot shower, would we see the same self as before taking the shower?

In Plath's poem, a mirror is the object in which the woman's ageing is evident. It is the symbol of her lost youth and beauty, and her changing sense of self-image and identity.

The central image is the mirror, which also acts as the narrator – the voice of the poem. In the second stanza, however, the mirror morphs into a lake (thus bringing the two stories of Snow White and Narcissus into one). The 'voice' of the mirror/lake is one of the strengths of the poem since it insists on its truthfulness and lack of bias or judgement. It is insistent about its objectivity as it sits on its wall, often bored, until called upon once again to show its impartiality as it reflects the woman's decay.

The poem thus invites us to pay attention to two things: the mirror's impartiality and lack of emotion, counterbalanced with the emotional reaction of the woman.

motif

a recurring subject or theme or a dominant idea or feature

ACTIVITY

Rereading 'Mirror'

- 1 Read the poem again. Check the meanings of any unfamiliar words, or words you are familiar with but want to check for nuance (such as 'agitation' from 'an agitation of hands').
 - 2 Highlight or list any words or phrases that affirm the mirror's precision in reflecting the image of the woman in the first stanza, and then do the same for the lake (and the mirror) in the second stanza.
 - 3 Highlight in a different colour, or write in a separate list, the words showing the emotional reaction of the woman.
 - 4 Now decide – is the narrator (mirror/lake) as dispassionate as it claims? Can you see any evidence of emotion on its part? Make a decision about whether the mirror is, in fact, telling the truth. How would you describe the voice of the mirror/lake? Is it cruel or arrogant? Does it judge? For any of these questions, you will need to provide evidence by referring to particular words, phrases or lines, and then giving your interpretation.
-

Commentary and reflection

One of the most important skills of close reading is *reflection* – to stop reading, put the text to one side, and think about what you have read. Reflection is your opportunity to consider the features and devices within the text, the way the author has put them to use, and how effectively they have positioned you as a reader or audience member.

‘Mirror’ is a lyric poem, written in free verse, where we have two stanzas of equal length, setting into opposition the supposed objectivity of the mirror with the desperation of a woman seeking reassurance. Why make the transition in the second stanza to a lake? What attributes does a lake have, that a mirror does not, that might suggest a reason for the change? There are many, but one of the most striking is the ability to invoke the final image – the simile of the ‘old woman/Rising towards her day after day *like a terrible fish*’.

The poem makes deft use of **personification** in the metaphors of ‘I am a mirror’ and ‘Now I am a lake’. The personification here works in an unusual fashion, in that the talking self is first an inanimate object and then a geographical formation. Personification is also used in calling the candles and the moon liars. The self-attested impartial narrator also uses a couple of very harsh judgements in labelling these things ‘liars’, and age a ‘terrible fish’. What attributes do candles and the moon have that might invoke the mirror’s jealousy (if it is jealous) about its role as true adjudicator of the woman’s youth and beauty or otherwise?

Finally, we need to think about the relationship between the woman and the mirror and what motives or purpose the poet might have in the construction of the poem.

personification
the attribution of human nature or character to inanimate objects or abstract notions

DISCUSSION

The purpose of ‘Mirror’

- 1 What is the effect of Plath’s choice in shifting perspectives in this poem?
- 2 How would you describe the relationship between the woman and the things in which she is reflected?
- 3 What do you think is the purpose of the poem and its larger meaning? For example, is it a reflection on mortality? Is it a commentary on social pressures on women to be attractive? Or is the poem critiquing those who make judgements about femininity, attractiveness or appearance?
- 4 What would be the effect of shifting the viewpoint gender used in this poem?

ACTIVITY

Representations and perspectives in ‘Mirror’

What attitudes would you say Plath is expressing about representations and perspectives of either age or identity? Write a paragraph that defends your reading of this poem and which includes reference to key uses of language.

In your response, consider tone and the use of enjambment, repetition, metaphor, simile and personification.

Close reading – William Butler Yeats and ‘Sailing to Byzantium’

William Butler Yeats, a member of a creative Irish family, is (like Sylvia Plath) considered among the great poets of the 20th century. As a young man, he was fascinated with myths and the occult. His poetry revolved around fantastic and supernatural themes, and he was a member of an occult group called the Hermetic Order of the Golden Dawn. As he grew older, his poetry became more realistic and less mystical, although it still contained spiritual themes.

Sylvia Plath’s poem ‘Mirror’ considers the effects and impact of ageing, using the **conceit** of a mirror to reflect the passage of time. Yeats’ poem ‘Sailing to Byzantium’ also considers this issue of ageing; it was a notion he found very confronting. This is one of Yeats’ most famous and influential poems, and one that rewards a close reading.

conceit
a strained or far-fetched
thought, idea
or expression

The Sultan Ahmet
Mosque (Blue Mosque)
in Istanbul is one of
the great masterpieces
of architecture.



Byzantium was an ancient Greek colony, a city that later became known as Constantinople and is now the Turkish city of Istanbul. The city has long been renowned as a centre of art, outstanding architecture and religion. Yeats was fascinated by the city, and once wrote:

Byzantium was the centre of European civilisation and the source of its spiritual philosophy, so I symbolise the search for the spiritual life by a journey to that city.

So the journey to this great ancient city is a metaphor for a spiritual quest.

In his poem, Yeats chooses a rigid patterning of the verse form. He uses the Italian structure of *ottava rima* – four stanzas with eight lines, each containing ten syllables (iambic pentameter). This structure has a rhyming scheme of ABABABCC – a final couplet after three sets of two lines with alternating rhymes.

The subject matter of Yeats' poem includes attitudes to and beliefs about age, immortality, or spiritual rebirth, and art through the use of binaries – youth/age, mortality/immortality and nature/art. The narrator is presumably an old man struggling to find purpose as a member of a dying generation in a changing world that is leaving him behind.

Yeats also juxtaposes the image of human frailty with the timelessness of art. In the third stanza, the old man invokes the sages represented in a mosaic to whirl into life ('perne in a gyre', meaning to twist in a spiral formation) and teach him about the spiritual life he is about to enter.

With those points in mind, you should now read the poem.

Sailing to Byzantium

I
That is no country for old men. The young
In one another's arms, birds in the trees,
– Those dying generations – at their song,
The salmon-falls, the mackerel-crowded seas,
Fish, flesh, or fowl, commend all summer long
Whatever is begotten, born, and dies.
Caught in that sensual music all neglect
Monuments of unageing intellect.

II
An aged man is but a paltry thing,
A tattered coat upon a stick, unless
Soul clap its hands and sing, and louder sing
For every tatter in its mortal dress,
Nor is there singing school but studying
Monuments of its own magnificence;
And therefore I have sailed the seas and come
To the holy city of Byzantium.

III
O sages standing in God's holy fire
As in the gold mosaic of a wall,
Come from the holy fire, perne in a gyre,
And be the singing-masters of my soul.
Consume my heart away; sick with desire
And fastened to a dying animal
It knows not what it is; and gather me
Into the artifice of eternity.

IV
Once out of nature I shall never take
My bodily form from any natural thing,
But such a form as Grecian goldsmiths make
Of hammered gold and gold enamelling
To keep a drowsy Emperor awake;
Or set upon a golden bough to sing
To lords and ladies of Byzantium
Of what is past, or passing, or to come.

William Butler Yeats



The Deesis Mosaic in the Hagia Sophia in Istanbul shows Christ with the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist.

ACTIVITY

Reading 'Sailing to Byzantium'

- 1 How does Yeats construct the effect of abundant life in the first stanza?
- 2 What does Yeats suggest about youth in the first stanza? What are the key words that construct this representation of youth? Which lines sound lively and which are rather plodding or heavy? Why?
- 3 How effective do you consider the image of a scarecrow (the second stanza) to be for old age?
- 4 What does the narrator imagine he will become in the last stanza once he has died? Does this transformation into an art object seem an appropriate resolution to his quest?
- 5 Examine the use made of contrast between art and nature, youth and age in developing a major theme of the poem.
- 6 Contrast the movement of Yeats' lines with those of Sylvia Plath in 'Mirror'. How does the use of *ottava rima* affect the meaning and tone of the poem? What is the impact on the poem of Yeats' use of slant rhyme?

ACTIVITY

Reflections on ageing

Both 'Mirror' and 'Sailing to Byzantium' are meditations or reflections on ageing. Which of these two poems do you prefer, and why?

Elaborate on your intellectual and emotional response to the poems in 3–4 paragraphs.

Comparing poems – Mothers and daughters

Another important aspect of close reading is considering texts in relation to other texts. We as readers can gain valuable insights and conclusions by comparing two texts and creating our own connections between them.

This section presents two poems that involve poets, both mothers, addressing their babies, although for different purposes. Read each poem carefully, considering the purpose of each, what each means and how that meaning is constructed by the language choices made.

Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner and 'Dear Matafele Peinam'

Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner, a performance poet from the Marshall Islands, is a climate change activist who uses her poetry for political purposes. Her home, the Marshall Islands, is vulnerable to rising oceans. Jetñil-Kijiner addresses her free verse eco-poem to her daughter, whose name forms part of the title 'Dear Matafele Peinam'.

For the cultural and historical context, follow the margin link to listen to her statement and recitation of the poem at the United Nations Climate Summit 2014. In her performance of the poem, you will note some textual divergences from the poem below.



Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner's
recitation
[http://mea.digital/
gen34_6_1](http://mea.digital/gen34_6_1)

Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner



Dear Matafele Peinam

dear matafele peinam,

you are a seven month old sunrise of gummy smiles
 you are bald as an egg and bald as the buddha
 you are thighs that are thunder and shrieks that
 are lightning
 so excited for bananas, hugs and
 our morning walks past the lagoon

dear matafele peinam,

i want to tell you about that lagoon
 that lucid, sleepy lagoon lounging against the sunrise

men say that one day
 that lagoon will devour you

they say it will gnaw at the shoreline
 chew at the roots of your breadfruit trees
 gulp down rows of your seawalls
 and crunch your island's shattered bones

they say you, your daughter
 and your granddaughter, too
 will wander rootless
 with only a passport to call home

dear matafele peinam,

don't cry

mommy promises you

No-one
 will come and devour you

no greedy whale of a company sharking through
 political seas
 no backwater bullying of businesses with broken morals
 no blindfolded bureaucracies gonna push
 this mother ocean over
 the edge

no-one's drowning, baby
 no-one's moving
 no-one's losing
 their homeland
 no-one's gonna become
 a climate change refugee

or should i say
 no-one else

to the carteret islanders of papua new guinea
 and to the taro islanders of the solomon islands
 i take this moment
 to apologise to you
 we are drawing the line here

because baby we are going to fight
 your mommy daddy
 bubu jimma your country and president too
 we will all fight

and even though there are those
 hidden behind platinum titles
 who like to pretend
 that we don't exist
 that the marshall islands
 tuvalu
 kiribati
 maldives
 and typhoon haiyan in the philippines
 and floods of pakistan, algeria, colombia
 and all the hurricanes, earthquakes, and tidalwaves
 didn't exist

still
 there are those
 who see us

hands reaching out
 fists raising up
 banners unfurling
 megaphones booming
 and we are
 canoes blocking coal ships
 we are
 the radiance of solar villages
 we are
 the rich clean soil of the farmer's past
 we are
 petitions blooming from teenage fingertips
 we are
 families biking, recycling, reusing,
 engineers dreaming, designing, building,
 artists painting, dancing, writing
 and we are spreading the word

 and there are thousands out on the street
 marching with signs

hand in hand
 chanting for change NOW

 and they're marching for you, baby
 they're marching for us

 because we deserve to do more than just
 survive
 we deserve
 to thrive

 dear matafele peinam,

 you are eyes heavy
 with drowsy weight
 so just close those eyes, baby
 and sleep in peace

 because we won't let you down

 you'll see

Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner

ACTIVITY

Reading 'Dear Matafele Peinam'

- 1 Identify and explain the different segments of thought in the monologue.
 - 2 Kathy Jetñil-Kijiner's poem has none of the rigidity and stately movement of the Yeats' poem 'Sailing to Byzantium'. What is the effect of her conversational style of free verse on the meaning of the poem and in positioning the reader?
 - 3 Jetñil-Kijiner changes tone throughout the poem. Identify these shifts in tone and explain their purpose and effects.
 - 4 Provide a detailed reading of a range of structural features (such as the use of a prophecy followed by its negation, direct addressing of her child) and stylistic and poetic devices (such as listing, alliteration, metaphor, simile, imagery) and the contribution these make to the poem's meaning and its emotional and political impact.
-

Sylvia Plath and 'Morning Song'

For comparison with 'Dear Matafele Peinam', in a thematically related poem for 'mothers and daughters', we revisit the work of Sylvia Plath. She wrote the lyric poem 'Morning Song' to celebrate the birth of her first child, Frieda.

Morning Song

Love set you going like a fat gold watch.
The midwife slapped your footsoles, and your bald cry
Took its place among the elements.

Our voices echo, magnifying your arrival. New statue.
In a drafty museum, your nakedness
Shadows our safety. We stand round blankly as walls.

I'm no more your mother
Than the cloud that distils a mirror to reflect its own slow
Effacement at the wind's hand.

All night your moth-breath
Flickers among the flat pink roses. I wake to listen:
A far sea moves in my ear.

One cry, and I stumble from bed, cow-heavy and floral
In my Victorian nightgown.
Your mouth opens clean as a cat's. The window square

Whitens and swallows its dull stars. And now you try
Your handful of notes;
The clear vowels rise like balloons.

Sylvia Plath



Sylvia Plath, Ted Hughes and their daughter Frieda

ACTIVITY

Reading 'Morning Song'

For this activity, you will need to work with a partner.

Read the poem through, finding the meanings of unfamiliar words such as 'effacement'. Which stanzas do you feel you can comfortably interpret? Which are more perplexing, and why? Share your viewpoints with your partner, and consider the possibilities of the most problematic stanza for each of you.

Now answer the following questions together.

- 1 What do you notice about the use of tense in the poem? How does the tense used affect the poem?
- 2 How effective do you find the similes in the first and last lines? Explain each image in detail. How would you describe the tone in these two lines?

- 3 What is the meaning and effect of the metaphor 'new statue'? In the second stanza, how are the mother and midwife constructed? How would you describe the tonal shift here?
 - 4 What do 'bald cry' and 'moth-breath' suggest about the speaker's relationship with the child?
 - 5 In the third stanza, what does the image 'the cloud that distils a mirror to reflect its own slow/Effacement at the wind's hand'' suggest about the poet's attitude to motherhood? Closely map the changing attitudes of the mother to the child in each stanza.
 - 6 What type of imagery dominates the poem? Suggest how and why it is appropriate for this context?
 - 7 How would you describe the overall mood of the poem?
-

ACTIVITY

Personal writing

Which attitude do you think is best represented in this poem – parental love or parental anxiety? Write a paragraph that supports your reading, using evidence from the text.

Comparing poems – War and death

War and death are two of the most powerful and recurring themes in poetry. Some of the earliest poetry ever written, such as the *Mahabharata* of ancient India and the Old English epic *Beowulf*, are about war, death and violence. But while many of those ancient poems painted war as a grand epic of warrior heroes, more contemporary poems on the topic tend to be sombre, tragic or even angry.

Wilfred Owen and 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'

Wilfred Owen served as a soldier in World War I, dying just before the end of the war. He challenged earlier and contemporary writers who glorified war. His sonnet 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' is both a lament and a denunciation.

Owen's poem uses what is called the Petrarchan sonnet form, involving an octave and sestet; however, it uses the rhyming scheme of the Shakespeare sonnet form.

Before reading, follow the margin link to listen to actor Sean Bean's reading of 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'. How does Bean's reading develop the tone of the poem?



Anthem for Doomed Youth

What passing-bells for these who die as cattle?
 – Only the monstrous anger of the guns.
 Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle
 Can patter out their hasty orisons.
 No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells;
 Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs, –
 The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;
 And bugles calling for them from sad shires.

What candles may be held to speed them all?
 Not in the hands of boys, but in their eyes
 Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.
 The pallor of girls' brows shall be their pall;
 Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds,
 And each slow dusk a drawing-down of blinds.

Wilfred Owen

ACTIVITY

Reading 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'

- 1 How effective do you think the word 'anthem' is in the title?
 - 2 How is place – the Western Front – represented and evoked in the poem?
 - 3 Structurally, the octave and sestet construct different contexts and explore different ideas. What is the purpose and effect of this juxtaposition?
 - 4 How and why does the tone change in the poem?
 - 5 Identify the poetic devices and stylistic features that Owen uses, and list these. Then judge the effectiveness of the devices and features used by Owen in 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'.
-

William Butler Yeats and 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death'

The following poem by Yeats was written from the perspective of Major Robert Gregory (1881–1918), a flying ace, who was killed in Italy. His death is mysterious and variously assigned to death by 'friendly fire' or an accident. Yeats was a friend of Robert Gregory, the pilot/narrator. The Gregory family had an estate in County Galway, Ireland, near Kiltartan Cross, a village in Kiltartan townland. Yeats, deeply affected by his friend's death, wrote four poems about him even though he did not like war poetry and was critical of Wilfred Owen's work, which he thought valorised 'passive suffering'.

An Irish Airman Foresees His Death

I know that I shall meet my fate
Somewhere among the clouds above;
Those that I fight I do not hate
Those that I guard I do not love;
My country is Kiltartan Cross,
My countrymen Kiltartan's poor,
No likely end could bring them loss
Or leave them happier than before.
Nor law, nor duty bade me fight,

Nor public man, nor cheering crowds,
A lonely impulse of delight
Drove to this tumult in the clouds;
I balanced all, brought all to mind,
The years to come seemed waste of breath,
A waste of breath the years behind
In balance with this life, this death.

William Butler Yeats

Irish journalist Ronan McGreevy wrote this about the poem:

W B Yeats managed to distil the dilemma of Irish nationalist servicemen in the British forces into just two lines ... 'Those that I fight I do not hate/ those that I guard I do not love.'

It was the fate of the Irishmen in British uniforms to find themselves ... fighting for a country that many held as the author of all of Ireland's misfortunes against an enemy with which the Irish never had any quarrel.

ACTIVITY

Reading 'An Irish Airman Foresees His Death'

- 1 The poem is a dramatic monologue of sixteen lines of iambic tetrameter. Although written without stanzas, it is effectively organised as a verse of four quatrains. What aspects of the poem indicate the quatrains? What is the effect of the use of iambic tetrameter? What is the effect of uniting the quatrains into one whole?
 - 2 What is the tone of the first line in the poem? How would you describe the airman's attitude in the last quatrain?
 - 3 The airman's perspective on enlistment seems rather unusual. From the point of view of the poem, why did Gregory enlist?
 - 4 The last quatrain has a beautiful balance. How is this achieved? What attitudes are demonstrated in the last quatrain?
 - 5 What do you consider to be the purpose of the poem?
 - 6 How do the perspectives on war expressed in Yeats' poem compare with those expressed by Wilfred Owen? Elaborate your response in a 2–3 paragraph answer, using evidence from the texts.
-

Emily Dickinson and 'Because I could not stop for Death'

A very different poem about death is that by American poet Emily Dickinson. Many of Dickinson's poems often reflect on death and immortality. She has an idiosyncratic attitude to grammar, syntax and punctuation, being very fond of the 'dash' as a punctuation mark (as you will see below).

Although about death, this poem is not like a mournful dirge at all. Instead, because of the regularity of the metre, there is a lively quality that seems suspiciously inappropriate for such a subject, even though death is constructed as nothing but a carriage ride.

Instead of being a poem where the form matches the content, here the mismatch between the what (dying) and the how of the poem only energises and makes stranger the meaning.

Because I could not stop for Death

Because I could not stop for Death –
He kindly stopped for me –
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste
And I had put away
My labour and my leisure too,
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove
At Recess – in the Ring –
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –
For only Gossamer, my Gown –
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed
A Swelling of the Ground –
The Roof was scarcely visible –
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet
Feels shorter than the Day
I first surmised the Horses' Heads
Were toward Eternity –
Emily Dickinson



ACTIVITY

Reading 'Because I could not stop for Death'

- 1 The metrical pattern is different in the alternate lines of each stanza. What effect does this have on the mood of the poem?
- 2 Death is represented as an allegorical figure – a gentleman driving a carriage. There are other allegorical figures in the poem. What are they and what is the effect of their use?
- 3 How does the sprightly movement of the poem contrast with the subject matter and meaning?

Comparing poems – Place and culture

Judith Wright's family has been embedded in rural Australia for generations, while Ali Alizadeh arrived as a teenage immigrant from Iran in the 1980s. Both construct evocative poems about place and identity. Both do more than describe place – they evoke it physically and culturally. For Wright and Alizadeh, the place they recollect and describe is home; there is, however, an emotional engagement with place that is expressed very differently.

Michael Jackson's *Thriller* video, inspiration for Ali Alizadeh's poem 'Listening to Michael Jackson in Tehran'



Ali Alizadeh and 'Listening to Michael Jackson in Tehran'

Australian Ali Alizadeh was born in Iran, two years before the revolution that eventually led to the repressive regime and Islamic state of Ayatollah Khomeini. Now a lecturer in creative writing at Monash University in Melbourne, he has an enduring fascination with Joan of Arc. His poems construct and represent both the author's identity and a sense of place.

Alizadeh dedicates his poem 'Listening to Michael Jackson in Tehran' to Iranian writer Azar Nafisi, a professor whose book *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* gives readers a sense of the impact of the Islamic revolution on her and her students. The reason for the dedication is seen in the similarity of the titles.

Listening to Michael Jackson in Tehran

after Azar Nafisi

Smuggled across the fierce chasm
between us and the US, and then

hidden, stuffed between Farsi
and Science textbooks in my school

bag, the illegal and sacrilegious
cassette-tape of *Thriller*, ready for

revelation to the sheepish, ignorant
kids on the bus to my primary school

in war-stricken Tehran. My plan:
to expose the forbidden thing, exhibit

my courage, rebelliousness, etc. Autumn
of '83, desperate for attention/approval

from the other kids. My copy of
dangerous Western 'art' would

unsettle the boring, Islamic world
of my classmates – and elevate my

cowardly, chubby, unpopular
self. I whispered to the kid next to me

if he had ever heard of 'Billie Jean'
and 'Beat It'; if he knew anything at all

about the number one famous
star of our wicked enemy. 'I love

Thriller! Aren't the zombies so scary
in the music video! They're so ugly!' His

boisterous words echoed. The bus
vibrated with the singer's name. Another

shouted he had a *Thriller* poster, and
another, a 'Billie Jean' T-shirt, a gift from

Turkey. Silenced, robbed of my planned
stardom, I sank in my seat; later threw out my

Thriller tape, the fetish of Great Satan's
useless, ubiquitous popular culture.

Ali Alizadeh

A ACTIVITY

Reading 'Listening to Michael Jackson in Tehran'

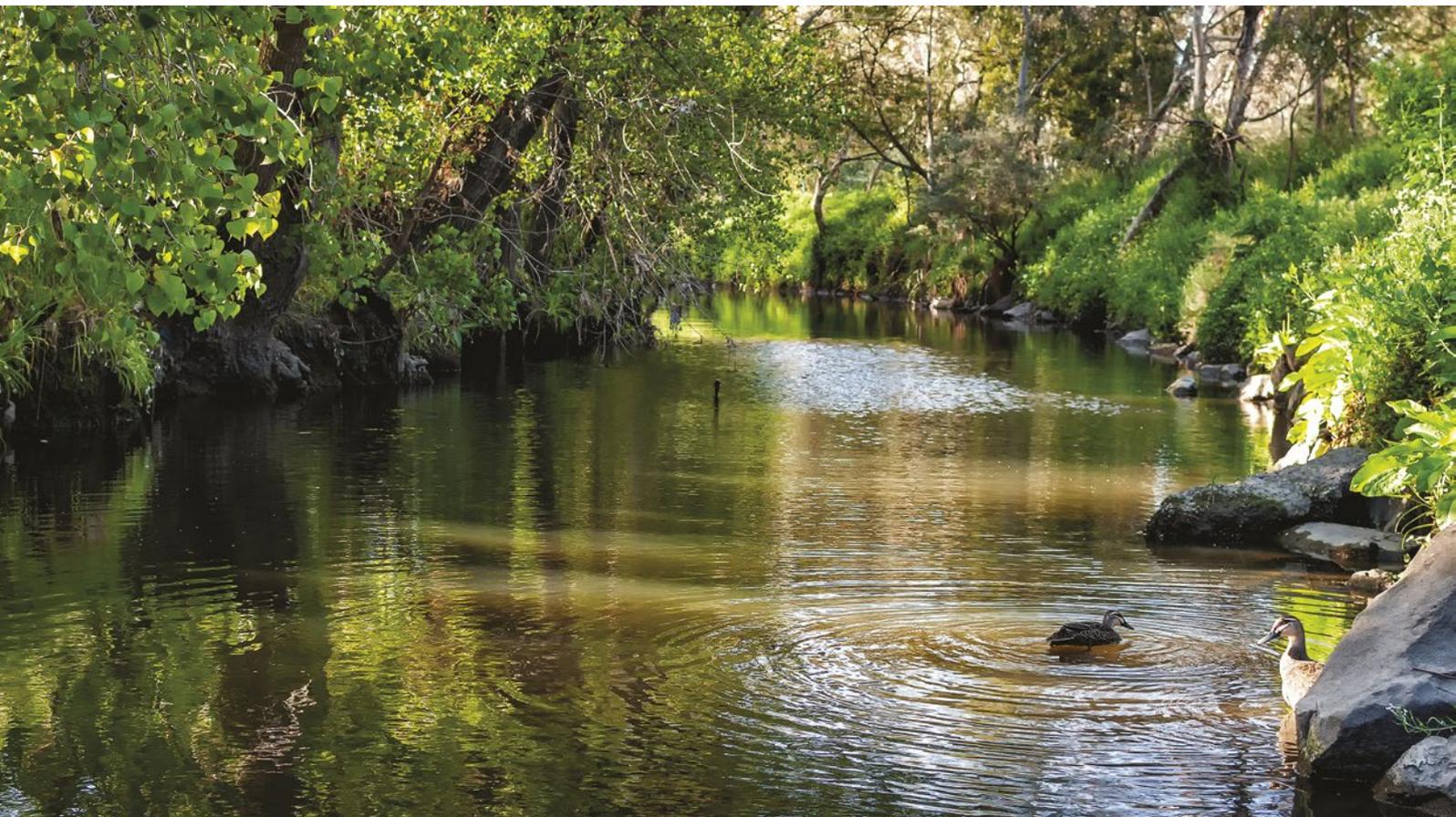
- 1 How does Alizadeh construct teenage identity in this poem?
- 2 The expression 'Great Satan' is a derogatory term some Iranian officials under the Kohmeini regime used to refer to the United States of America. What evaluation is made in the last couplet? Does it align with the tone elsewhere in the poem?
- 3 What is the irony of the poem that undercuts the narrator's rebellious act?
- 4 Look up the lyrics to *Thriller* online. How do the lyrics resonate with the cultural landscape of Iran under the Ayatollah?
- 5 Analyse how the verse structure and enjambment contributes to the mood and overall effectiveness of the poem.

Ali Alizadeh and 'Merri Creek'

Alizadeh immigrated to Australia as a teenager in 1989, followed by time spent in China, Turkey and Dubai. So it was somewhat of a surprise for him to find that Merri Creek near Northcote, in Melbourne, should be so significant to him.

He says, 'I was overwhelmed by how strongly I felt about the suburb' and further states that for an 'itinerant immigrant like me', aspects of Northcote and the Merri Creek walk 'are the closest thing I have to a spiritual home'. 'Merri Creek' is dedicated to major Australian poet Robert Adamson, whose Hawkesbury poems are alluded to in Alizadeh's poem.

Merri Creek in Melbourne



Merri Creek

Rivers are all the same. Dirty water
if you're lucky, smelly mud and silt
increasingly the case. And dreary
water sports, flotillas of filthy plastic
bottles and bags; I'd like to emphasise
the stench. Caesar's Rubicon
on the other hand, soaks my head
in a tale of courage, confrontation
I read when I was seven. On Twain's
Mississippi, in my room, I floated
away from the indisputably evil
place I was born in. And the Seine
luminous, a Third World dream
for life in a Western city. I swam
in the weird, inexplicable words
of your Hawkesbury, a migrant
with little English, holding my breath
under the phonetics of birds' names
and scales of fishing metaphors. Then
I was drawn to Melbourne, and lonely
in the struggle with life and poetry
I kept my head above the dark surface,

the swamp of desire and alcoholism,
by drifting alone on the rundown trail
along Merri Creek. I'd scowl at geese
and unwittingly infuriate the drakes
on macabre winter days, menacing
summer evenings. Banks, hardly scenic
after routine floods, beaten willows
cobwebbed with human waste: cable
wires, shoes, tyres, etc. I repeat
the river reeked, a feral fusion
of organic and manmade decay. But
what can I say; leafy corridors,
sunlight accentuating algae
on stream's translucent face,
even rusted didactic plaques; picture
of these usually soothes, protects me
when I'm hurt or restless, marooned
in China, Turkey, Dubai, Sydney; it's
just a river, like I said, and just
about the only place I'd call home.

Ali Alizadeh

Judith Wright and 'South of My Days'

Born in Armidale into a pastoral family, Judith Wright is one of Australia's most significant poets. Her work is characterised by an intense love of place and focuses on a range of themes including highly personal and intimate love poems, the impact of settlers on Indigenous culture, and the relationship between humanity and the environment. A political activist who campaigned for environmental protection and Indigenous Australian land rights, she was an influential figure in the Queensland and New South Wales arts scenes. Her cultural contribution and status is well recognised: Brisbane's Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts is named after her, as is the state electorate of Wright, which covers most of the Gold Coast.

Wright wrote the following poem when she was living in Queensland, north of her birthplace in the New England region of New South Wales, where her family had been early European settlers.



The Judith Wright
Centre
[http://mea.digital/
gen34_6_3](http://mea.digital/gen34_6_3)

South of My Days

South of my days' circle, part of my blood's country,
rises that tableland, high delicate outline
of bony slopes wincing under the winter,
low trees, blue-leaved and olive, outcropping granite-
clean, lean, hungry country. The creek's leaf-silenced,
willow choked, the slope a tangle of medlar and crabapple
branching over and under, blotched with a green lichen;
and the old cottage lurches in for shelter.

O cold the black-frost night. The walls draw in to the warmth
and the old roof cracks its joints; the slung kettle
hisses a leak on the fire. Hardly to be believed that summer
will turn up again some day in a wave of rambler-roses,
thrust it's hot face in here to tell another yarn-
a story old Dan can spin into a blanket against the winter.
Seventy years of stories he clutches round his bones.
Seventy years are hived in him like old honey.

*Droving that year, Charleville to the Hunter,
nineteen-one it was, and the drought beginning;
sixty head left at the McIntyre, the mud round them
hardened like iron; and the yellow boy died
in the sulky ahead with the gear, but the horse went on,
stopped at Sandy Camp and waited in the evening.
It was the flies we seen first, swarming like bees.
Came to the Hunter, three hundred head of a thousand-
cruel to keep them alive – and the river was dust.*

Iron-clad cottage in
New England, NSW

*Or mustering up in the Bogongs in the autumn
when the blizzards came early. Brought them down; we
brought them down, what aren't there yet. Or driving
for Cobb's on the run
up from Tamworth-Thunderbolt at the top of Hungry Hill,
and I give him a wink. I wouldn't wait long, Fred,
not if I was you. The troopers are just behind,
coming for that job at the Hillgrove. He went like a lunny,
him on his big black horse.*

Oh, they slide and they vanish
as he shuffles the years like a pack of conjuror's cards.
True or not, it's all the same; and the frost on the roof
cracks like a whip, and the back-log break into ash.
Wake, old man. This is winter, and the yarns are over.
No-one is listening
South of my days' circle
I know it dark against the stars, the high lean country
full of old stories that still go walking in my sleep.

Judith Wright



 ACTIVITY

Comparing poems about place

- 1 Examine the development of thought and feeling in 'Merri Creek', starting with the generalisation 'Rivers are all the same' and identifying the different shifts and transitions to the conclusion. How does this position readers to accept Alizadeh's identification with Merri Creek?
 - 2 Examine the development of thought and feeling in 'South of My Days', moving from Wright's identification with the place that is 'part of my blood's country' to the conclusion. How does this structuring of ideas, allusions and memories position readers to accept Wright's identification with New England?
 - 3 What is the purpose and effect of each poet's use of intertextuality?
 - 4 Which of these two poems do you prefer, and why? Refer not only to perspectives on and representations of place but also to specific choices of language within the poems.
-

 ACTIVITY

Reflecting on place

Think about a place that is significant to you. Why is it important? Is it connected to your larger family history, or is this a place particular to your personal experience, relationships or identity?

Write a description of this place, drawing on some of the structural and language techniques of Alizadeh and/or Wright.

 EXTENDED RESPONSE

Reflection and argument

In completing the activities below, make sure you support your interpretations and preferences by referring to specific uses of aesthetic features and stylistic devices. Select five poems from this chapter that you like and rank them in order.

- 1 Explain to a partner why you made these choices, and listen to their reasons for choosing their poems.
- 2 Write an extended explanation arguing why the poem you ranked first is effective.
- 3 From the other poems you selected, identify and explain to a partner which poem you liked least, giving reasons why.
- 4 Which poem made you feel most strongly its driving or underlying emotion? Why do you respond to this poem, and how did that emotion get translated into thoughts and words? Elaborate in the reading journal that you started at the beginning of this unit.

CHAPTER
SEVEN

CLOSE READING OF LITERARY TEXTS: NOVEL

Having completed close readings of a number of poems in the previous chapter, we now produce a close reading of a novel. In this chapter, we will be considering *Cat's Eye*, a contemporary novel by Canadian author Margaret Atwood. Your reading journal will play a major role in your close reading so make sure you keep it up to date.

Cat's Eye is on the prescribed reading list for the English subject, and is one of the texts you may choose to write a creative response to in your internal assessment. But even if you choose to write a response to a different text, this chapter will still prove useful to you. The elements and devices considered here are relevant to any other literary text, even if the details are different.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

TEXT IN THIS CHAPTER:

TEXTS IN
CONTEXTS

- explore the personal, social and cultural contexts of literary texts
- investigate the relationships between purpose, audience, language and meaning
- identify how texts follow or challenge the patterns and conventions of genres

- *Cat's Eye* – novel

LANGUAGE
AND TEXTUAL
ANALYSIS

- examine how language features, text structures and conventions communicate perspectives and representations
- examine the use of aesthetic and stylistic features and their effects in texts

RESPONDING TO
AND CREATING
TEXTS

- explore how responses to texts are shaped by an individual's contexts
- examine examples of imaginative text types.



MARGARET ATWOOD

CAT'S EYE



Cat's Eye

Before beginning a close reading of *Cat's Eye*, we should consider the larger context of the novel, including its author and the culture from which it derives. Understanding the context of the novel is important, because it helps to answer a core question – why are we reading this book?

vicarious
experienced in place of
another or serving as
a substitute

One of the many reasons we read is to enlarge our **vicarious** experience and thus our understanding of the world. The English syllabus requires that we explore the world and human experience by reading texts from diverse times and places. This is why the prescribed reading list for English Units 3 & 4 contains only a few contemporary Australian texts. When studying *Cat's Eye*, consider how it has extended your experience and understanding of the world. Consider also what kind of source can it be as a springboard for your own writing.

The author

Contemporary Canadian writer Margaret Atwood has an international reputation as a Booker Prize winner and writer of fiction, poetry, essays, critical analysis and graphic fiction (with a cat-bird-human superhero).

Born in 1939 in Ontario, Atwood spent her early life moving between the family home in Ontario and the Canadian bush, in the wilderness of Quebec. Later, the family gave up their rough lifestyle and settled in suburban Toronto.

Atwood is renowned for her challenging writing, including **speculative fiction** that contemplates possible futures, drawing on her knowledge of and interest in science. The novel *Oryx and Crake* (2003), for example, begins a trilogy exploring themes of environmental catastrophe. Her provocative text *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985), an influential example of speculative dystopian fiction, was televised in 2018 and became a Hulu sensation. Atwood's sequel to that novel, *The Testaments*, is due for publication in late 2019. Other novels, such as *Alias Grace* (1996) and *The Blind Assassin* (2000), are historical fiction works, while her 2016 novel *Hag-Seed* is a rewriting of Shakespeare's play *The Tempest*. Her writing shows she is an astute observer of social mores and practices.



Margaret Atwood in 2018

**Opportunities for
your own creative
writing will be
developed in
Chapter 8.**

speculative fiction
a genre of fiction,
including science
fiction, fantasy and
horror, which deals with
imagined worlds and
their inhabitants



Margaret Atwood's
website
[http://mea.digital/
gen34_7_1](http://mea.digital/gen34_7_1)

The cultural context

Cat's Eye is Atwood's seventh novel, published in 1988. It is a work of 'social realism', but with Gothic elements, set in post-war Canada during the 1940s, 50s, 60s and 70s. It is also considered to have autobiographical elements shaping its representations.

Through the narration of the protagonist, Canadian painter Elaine Risley, *Cat's Eye* explores identity construction, memory, creativity and the ongoing impact of relationships. Now middle-aged and mid-career, Risley (aged fifty-one) revisits aspects of her life when staging a **retrospective** art exhibition at a gallery in Toronto. This event stimulates a great deal of retrospectivity in other ways: not only does Elaine revisit the city of Toronto, to which she moved after living in the Canadian wilds, but she also reflects on her friendships, other relationships and experiences.

In spanning 40 years, the novel also shows multiple versions of Canada, as the nation undergoes social and cultural change:

- We see Canada during the restrictions of World War II when, as a British realm, there was potential for its 'invasion'.
- Another Canada is constructed in the post-war years; we see the hopes citizens had of a new Elizabethan Age when Queen Elizabeth II was crowned in the 1950s.
- Yet another Canada is depicted during the turbulence of the 60s and 70s, when **second-wave feminism** was only one of the radical challenges to society around much of the world.

By taking readers on Elaine Risley's journey through these decades, *Cat's Eye* provides the opportunity to experience and understand the cultural context of 20th-century Canada, and to draw connections between that and our own Australian context.

The key themes

The novel has several key themes. Risley's journey from Vancouver (her home in western Canada) to Toronto in eastern Canada for the art retrospective provokes a mental journey into 40 years of her past. It provides a challenging perspective on the impact of childhood bullying by 'best friends', keeping the story potent and relevant to modern readers.

A related theme is the disturbing examination of the constructed nature of gender identity. Elaine Risley's childhood femininity is shaped, actively and negatively, by gatekeeper friends with a limited notion of what it was to be a girl. Finally, it is a fascinating exploration of how painful experiences can fuel creativity and be the source of art. One realises at the end of the novel, when the paintings are 'uncovered' for the reader, how Risley's childhood trauma and the relationships she developed shaped her subject matter as a painter.

We will revisit and examine all of these themes in-depth later in the chapter.

retrospective
an exhibition of an entire phase or representative examples of an artist's life work

second-wave feminism
a period of feminist activity during the 1960s to the 1980s that focused on sexual and reproductive rights as well as equal opportunity

The genre

Cat's Eye has variously been described as either a *Bildungsroman* or a *Künstlerroman*. What do those labels mean?

Bildung is a German word that refers to education or formation, while *roman* is French for 'novel'. As such, a *Bildungsroman* is a 'coming of age' novel or story, in which the protagonist matures from youth to a formed identity, able to interact effectively in the world. The *Bildungsroman* is a very popular genre. The Australian novel *Jasper Jones* is just one recent example; the graphic novel *Persepolis* by Marjane Satrapi is another.

Kunst is a German word for 'art', so the *Künstlerroman* is a story that explores an artist's growth to maturity. Usually seen as a specific subgenre of the *Bildungsroman*, *Künstlerroman* novels are much less common. A relatively recent example is Alison Bechdel's 2006 graphic novel *Fun Home*.

Cat's Eye is also considered to have **postmodern** elements, despite the narrator's stated contempt for 'post' anything and Atwood's rejection of this label when applied to her work. The postmodern label is often applied descriptively to this novel because of the versions of reality provided – Elaine's recollections often differ from those of her friend Cordelia, for example. Elaine and her brother Stephen are also represented as having different recollections of their childhood. This is suggestive either of the unreliability of memory, or the fact that individuals retain that which they consider significant – both of which are elements in postmodernist fiction.

postmodern

trend in visual arts or literature developed in the 1970s as a reaction to the idea of modernism with its emphasis on individual expression

ACTIVITY

Interviews with Margaret Atwood

To develop a sense of Atwood's purpose and approach as an author, and of the cultural context in which she writes, follow the links in the margin to access two interviews with her.

In the first interview, from 1999, Atwood discusses *Cat's Eye* with the BBC's Book Club show. (You should read *Cat's Eye* before listening to this interview.)

- 1 How valid do you think Atwood's interpretation of the culture of young girls and young boys is, as expressed in this interview?
- 2 Do you see any parallels between these comments and the representations of gendered identities in *Cat's Eye*?

The second interview is much more recent – a 2017 appearance on the online video series *CreativeLife*.

- 3 What significant personal understandings about story and narrative do you draw from this discussion? What do you think about the influences on Atwood as a writer?
- 4 What do you think of Atwood's writing advice – 'don't be daunted'?
- 5 How does Atwood represent or construct her background as a Canadian?
- 6 Who or what has most influenced your attitude to story and writing? How is this influence evident in your writing?



BBC Book Club
http://mea.digital/gen34_7_2



CreativeLife
http://mea.digital/gen34_7_3

Using your reading journal

One of the most important resources you have in your English studies is the reading journal you began using at the start of Unit 4. This chapter demands more from your close reading skills, and it is worth creating a specific journal just to support your study of *Cat's Eye*. The rich complexity of this novel makes it a useful text either to study for your external assessment or as a resource for creative writing.

If the journal is a non-assessable item, so then what is its purpose? The answer is that it helps you engage with the text.

- If you are planning to respond to *Cat's Eye* for the external examination (the analytical written response), your journal will be a valuable resource in developing your views and response, as well as embedding knowledge of the text so you can retrieve it more readily from your memory.
- If you are using *Cat's Eye* as the source, stimulus or model for imaginative writing – whether for the internal examination or your own personal writing – your journal is where you hone your attention to language choices and their effects.



Journaling considerations

As you read *Cat's Eye*, and engage with other texts, your reading journal will help you explore your own emotional and critical responses. There are many elements of each text that you could focus on in your journal. This table lists a number of possibilities.

Focus	Considerations and questions
Expectations of novel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Your initial expectations for the text, based on cover design, blurbs, summaries or other information For <i>Cat's Eye</i>, this might be the previous information in this chapter How and why you formed those expectations Your reflections on how your expectations did or did not change after further investigation
Emotional impact	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The events, characters, insights or language to which your emotional response is strongest Your identification and reflection on the reasons for this
Intertextual links	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The connections you make to other texts For example, how important is the development of place in <i>Cat's Eye</i>, compared to poems by Alizadeh, Wright and Jetñil-Kijiner?
Characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Construct a literary sociogram showing characters, their roles/functions and/or relationships Reflective entries on your reaction to characters whose perspectives are valued and foregrounded, compared to those who are marginalised
Characterisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How is the character constructed? Explicitly through description of attitude and appearance? Implicitly through actions and thoughts? Are we shown the impact of experiences and effects of relationships? If so, why? How is the character judged morally by the narrator and/or other characters? What judgements do you make about characters and characterisation?
Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the key concepts and how are they represented? What do particular characters represent? What do significant places represent?
Attitudes, beliefs, values and cultural assumptions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What attitudes, beliefs and values underpin the text in order to influence readers? What cultural assumptions underpin the text? What effect do they have upon the narrative and upon readers?

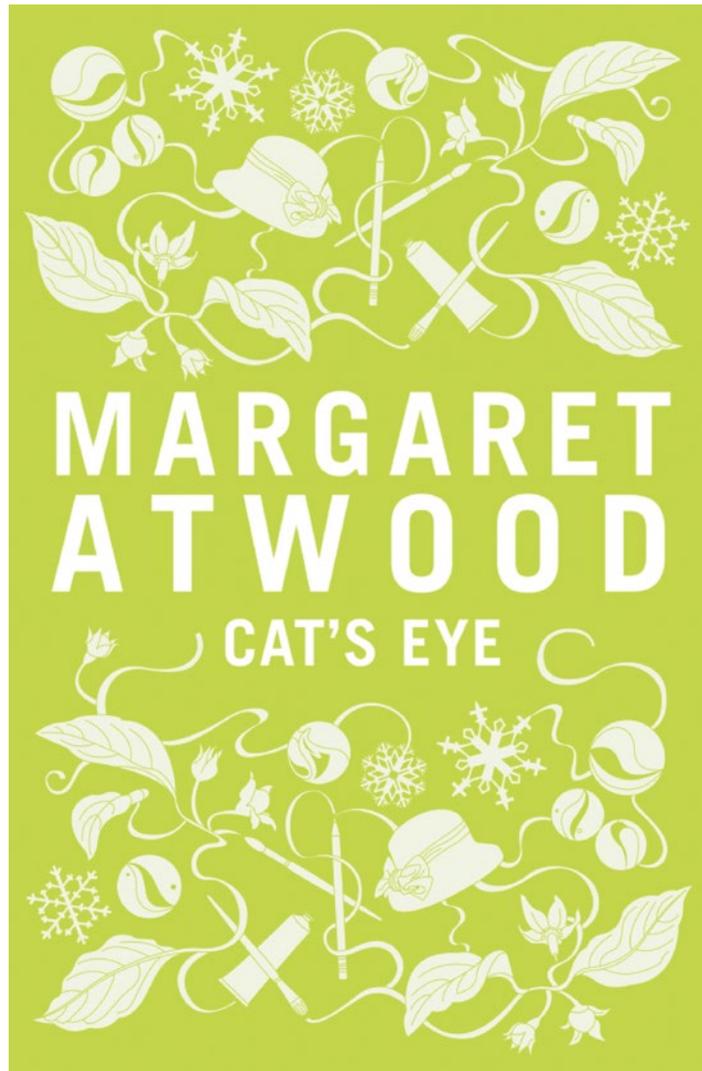
A literary sociogram is a graphic organiser that represents the relationships among characters in a literary text.

Focus	Considerations and questions
Setting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impact of the setting on characters and mood • How are time and place evoked? How is the context (such as sociocultural, political) evoked? • For example, in <i>Cat's Eye</i>, how is life disrupted when Elaine moves to Toronto, and why?
Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify the aspects of genre/s evident in the text
Narration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The narrative perspective • The 'voice' of the narrator
Style	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would you describe it? • How do others describe it? • How does it affect your reading of the text and engagement with the events, characters and ideas?
Narrative structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the text organised? For example, what do you notice about the titles of the sections of the novel? • Why is it organised this way? • What are the pivotal events?
Use of aesthetic and stylistic features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What devices are used (such as imagery, personification, metaphor, simile, motif, symbolism, irony, foreshadowing)? • What are the effects of particular uses of these devices? How do particular uses position the reader? • For example, in <i>Cat's Eye</i>, how does Atwood's use of devices position us to feel sympathy with Elaine or antipathy towards Mrs Smeath?
Significance of key images/symbols, motifs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key images, symbols and motifs? • Why are they used and how are they developed?
Themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the key themes of the text? • How are the themes developed (for example, characterisation and narrator's perspective, vocabulary, imagery, repetition)? • What key passages develop the themes?
Conclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How is the story resolved? • Is the resolution emotionally satisfying for the reader? • What does the ending achieve? How does it influence the reader?

A ACTIVITY

Judging a book by its cover

Through their design elements, the covers of books can show interpretations of key elements of the text.



You are provided with a cover design. Search online for other editions of the book (suggested are the Bloomsbury and Virago covers). Choose ONE of these to use in the following activity in comparison with the cover above.

- 1 Write two paragraphs – one relating to each cover – explaining how the images used in the design reference and foreground different aspects of the plot and so privilege particular readings.
 - 2 Argue your case for the cover that best expresses the major themes and issues of the novel. Justify your position with reference to specific aspects of each cover design.
-

Core elements of *Cat's Eye*

Narrative point of view

We begin our close reading of *Cat's Eye* by considering the novel's narrative point of view.

The protagonist, Elaine Risley, is the first-person narrator whose life story is told retrospectively when she arrives in Toronto for her exhibition. Using flashbacks to her childhood, Risley narrates the story as a mature woman reflecting on her life, framing the story narrated by the **naïve** younger, victimised versions of herself experiencing painful events.

naïve
having or showing an
innocent, unsuspecting
or unsophisticated nature

This is the middle of my life. I think of it as a place, like the middle of a river, the middle of a bridge, halfway across, halfway over. I'm supposed to have accumulated things by now: possessions, responsibilities, achievements, experience and wisdom. I'm supposed to be a person of substance.

But since coming back here I don't feel weightier. I feel lighter, as if I'm shedding matter, losing molecules, calcium from my bones, cells from my blood; as if I'm shrinking, as if I'm filling with cold air, or gently falling snow.

With all this lightness I do not rise, I descend. Or rather I am dragged downwards, into the layers of this place as into liquefied mud.

ACTIVITY

Narrative point of view in *Cat's Eye*

- 1 How does the passage above elaborate on the passage about time in the *Iron Lung* section that begins the novel?
 - 2 How does this passage foreshadow the events of the novel?
 - 3 The narrative voice of the middle-aged Elaine is often wry, ironic, anxious, reflective, critical or amused. Identify comments or passages where you read these tonal qualities in the 'voice' of the narrator.
 - 4 Identify and provide evidence of other tonal qualities in this narrative voice.
 - 5 How would you describe the voices of the various younger Elaines? Choose no more than three sections of the text to illustrate this.
-

Description of place

Margaret Atwood's acute psychological and physical observations enhance her descriptions of place, which are always a rich part of her novels and stories.

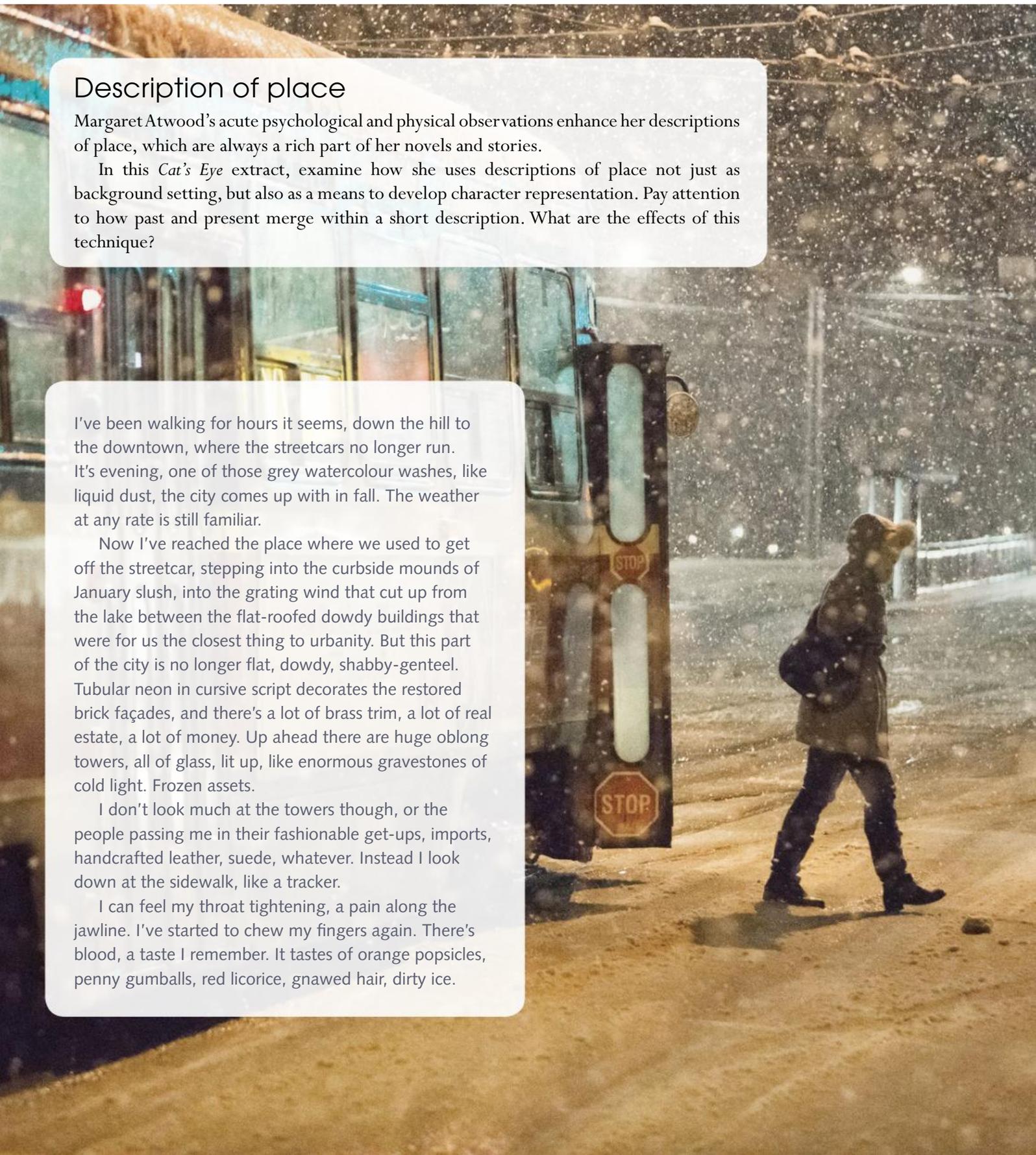
In this *Cat's Eye* extract, examine how she uses descriptions of place not just as background setting, but also as a means to develop character representation. Pay attention to how past and present merge within a short description. What are the effects of this technique?

I've been walking for hours it seems, down the hill to the downtown, where the streetcars no longer run. It's evening, one of those grey watercolour washes, like liquid dust, the city comes up with in fall. The weather at any rate is still familiar.

Now I've reached the place where we used to get off the streetcar, stepping into the curbside mounds of January slush, into the grating wind that cut up from the lake between the flat-roofed dowdy buildings that were for us the closest thing to urbanity. But this part of the city is no longer flat, dowdy, shabby-genteel. Tubular neon in cursive script decorates the restored brick façades, and there's a lot of brass trim, a lot of real estate, a lot of money. Up ahead there are huge oblong towers, all of glass, lit up, like enormous gravestones of cold light. Frozen assets.

I don't look much at the towers though, or the people passing me in their fashionable get-ups, imports, handcrafted leather, suede, whatever. Instead I look down at the sidewalk, like a tracker.

I can feel my throat tightening, a pain along the jawline. I've started to chew my fingers again. There's blood, a taste I remember. It tastes of orange popsicles, penny gumballs, red licorice, gnawed hair, dirty ice.




 ACTIVITY

Descriptions of place in *Cat's Eye*

- 1 Identify specific aesthetic and stylistic features used in this extract to:
 - a build mood and atmosphere
 - b construct the identity of Elaine Risley
 - c pull the reader into the story by arousing curiosity.
 - 2 To what extent does the photograph evoke images from Atwood's description?
 - 3 Practise writing descriptions that draw on Atwood's technique used in the last paragraph above. Write a description that is suggestive of an experience (for example, walking in a Queensland summer or catching and riding on a school bus).
-

Structure

Cat's Eye has a non-linear structure, as suggested by the attitude to time in the opening words of the section entitled *Iron Lung*.

Time is not a line but a dimension, like the dimensions of space. If you can bend space you can bend time also, and if you knew well enough and could move faster than light you could travel backwards in time and exist in two places at once.

It was my brother Stephen who told me that, when he wore his ravelling maroon sweater to study in and spent a lot of time standing on his head so that the blood would run down into his brain and nourish it. I didn't understand what he meant, but maybe he didn't explain it very well. He was already moving away from the imprecision of words.

But I began then to think of time as having a shape, something you could see, like a series of liquid transparencies, one laid on top of another. You don't look back along time but down through it, like water. Sometimes this comes to the surface, sometimes that, sometimes nothing. Nothing goes away.

Flashback and juxtaposition are important structural elements in *Cat's Eye*. The novel has 15 sections, each of which opens with a chapter set at the time of Elaine Risley's retrospective (likely to be in the mid-1980s). Within each of these sections there are flashback chapters; these flashbacks develop chronologically across the book, except in the second chapter of *Iron Lung*, where past and present fuse. This structure shows how not only Toronto but also Canada changes; it also shows how cultural values change significantly.

Atwood uses present tense throughout the book, both in the chapters where Risley is in Toronto for the exhibition and those set in the past. This choice assists readers with the notion that time is fluid.

This sense of fluidity assists with the writer's development and representation of concepts about memory and identity. Elaine Risley is the narrator, but there are several occasions in the novel where her versions of events are called into question. She and her mother remember the bullying and persecution of Elaine differently, she and Cordelia

remember their childhood differently, and Elaine and her brother Stephen have different memories of his childhood. One of the things this might invite you to consider is the reliability of the narrator.

ACTIVITY

Reflecting on the past

- 1 How effective do you consider the second sentence of paragraph one and the last two sentences of the extract to be in representing the ideas of time and the impact of memory?
- 2 How reliable do you consider Elaine's narration? Why?
- 3 Elaine Risley is represented as being obsessed with her past and having a very detailed memory of her childhood. How does your memory of significant childhood relationships and interactions compare?

Intertextuality and identity

King Lear: *Who is that can tell me who I am?*

Cat's Eye alludes to Shakespeare's tragedy *King Lear* in the name of the character Cordelia, the youngest of King Lear's three daughters. Cordelia is no match for her two more manipulative sisters. In the play, unlike her sisters, she refuses to tell her father what he wishes to hear and is cast out and disinherited. She then marries the King of France and leads an English army in order to save her father from the betrayers in his court. The invasion fails, Cordelia is imprisoned and executed, and Lear dies of grief.

Three daughters of King Lear by Gustav Pope (1831–1910)



In the novel, Elaine Risley wonders why her friend Cordelia was given that particular name.

Why did they name her that? Hang that weight around her neck. Heart of the moon, jewel of the sea, depending on which foreign language you're using. The third sister, the only honest one. The stubborn one, the rejected one, the one who was not heard. If she'd been called Jane, would things have been different?

ACTIVITY

Intertextuality in *Cat's Eye*

- 1 What do you think is significant about the naming of Cordelia? What connections does Atwood draw between *Cat's Eye* and *King Lear*?
 - 2 There are other intertextual references and allusions in the text. Identify them and reflect on the significance of their use as you encounter them.
-

Key themes of *Cat's Eye*

As mentioned on page 175, there are several strong themes underpinning *Cat's Eye*, including the construction of gender, the effects of bullying, and the way the artist's experiences of the world influences creativity. A close reading needs to consider each of these key themes.

The construction of gender

Cat's Eye offers a direct challenge to the dominant assumptions of children – and especially girls – as innocent beings. We see this in the representations of young Elaine's friends – Grace Smeath, Carol Campbell and Cordelia – who taunt and terrorise Elaine. One aspect of Cordelia's tormenting is that she accuses Elaine of not being a 'normal' girl. For her part, Elaine's rural childhood gave her great freedom, but she longed for female friends. Once in Toronto, this lack of early socialisation makes life difficult for her and contributes to her childhood insecurity.

The gendered representations of both Elaine and the friends who bully her are also clearly inflected by the girls' class differences. The three friends are constructed as much more affluent than Elaine, while Elaine's mother in no way parallels their mothers in attitudes, values, preoccupations, habits or dress.

Read the section where Elaine visits her friend Grace Smeath (Chapter 10), in which Atwood brilliantly shows us gender identity construction in action. Young Elaine, having moved to Toronto suburbia after her life in the bush with only her brother as a companion, is faced with new and tricky social situations and personas in the characters she meets.

The things we play are mostly Grace's ideas, because if we try to play anything she doesn't like she says she has a headache and goes home, or else tells us to go home. She never raises her voice, gets angry or cries; she is quietly reproachful, as if her headache is our fault. Because we want to play with her more than she wants to play with us, she gets her way in everything [...] Their voices are wheedling and false; I can tell they don't mean it, each one thinks her own lady on her own page is good. But it's the thing you have to say, so I begin to say it too.

I find this game tiring – it's the weight, the accumulation of all these objects, these possessions that would have to be taken care of, packed, stuffed into cars, unpacked [...]

I begin to want things I've never wanted before: braids, a dressing-gown, a purse of my own. Something is unfolding, being revealed to me. I see that there's a whole world of girls and their doings that has been unknown to me, and that I can be part of it without making any effort at all. I don't have to keep up with anyone, run as fast, aim as well, make loud explosive noises, decode messages, die on cue. I don't have to think about whether I've done these things well, as well as a boy. All I have to do is sit on the floor and cut frying pans out of the *Eaton's Catalogue* with embroidery scissors, and say I've done it badly. Partly this is a relief.

The novel articulates a view that young women actively regulate and control acceptable versions of femininity, and they do this through both oppression and the promotion of valued attributes, such as reticence and a focus on self-improvement. The values perpetuated by the three friends are those of a narrowly prescribed 1950s femininity.

Brought up idiosyncratically, but freely, Elaine says:

But I'm not used to girls, or familiar with their customs. I feel awkward around them. I don't know what to say. I know the unspoken rules of boys, but with girls I sense that I am always on the verge of some unforeseen, calamitous blunder.

Yet the novel also gives an insight into why Elaine continues with the friendship, even though she is treated horrifically:

They are my friends, my girlfriends, my best friends. I have never had any before and I'm terrified of losing them. I want to please.

However, when she overhears Mrs Smeath and Grace's Aunt Mildred talking about her victimisation by the other girls, Elaine is outraged:

I hate Mrs Smeath, because what I thought was a secret, something going on among girls, among children, is not one. It has been discussed before, and tolerated. Mrs Smeath has known and approved. She has done nothing to stop it. She thinks it serves me right [...] She is right, I am a heathen. I cannot forgive.

 ACTIVITY

Construction of femininity in *Cat's Eye*

- 1 How is femininity constructed as a performance in these extracts? Outline the various elements to it.
 - 2 Consider how attitudes to this form of femininity are constructed. One item for consideration would include the reference to the Risley family's use of *Eaton's Catalogue* as toilet paper in their outhouse.
 - 3 Femininity is constructed here in contrast to masculinity. How is young boyhood constructed? What seems to be Elaine's attitude to it? In your answer, consider the implications of 'partly' in 'Partly this is a relief.'
 - 4 In succumbing to this version of femininity, what would Elaine be losing? Does the representation of identity here suggest she would be gaining anything?
 - 5 In her *BBC Book Talk* interview, Margaret Atwood says that 'little girls are not made of sugar and spice and all things nice' arguing that often a victim's best friend is simultaneously their bully, and that little girls are coerced into conformity. What is your attitude to this view?
 - 6 How might Elaine's life as a young girl arriving in Toronto have been different if she'd had a sister? Or if her mother had been a different type of woman?
 - 7 Consider the three short extracts on the previous page. What do these extracts 'explain' about Elaine's acceptance of her bullying and failure to tell her mother or brother about her situation (as she once considered doing)?
-

 ACTIVITY

Construction of masculinity in *Cat's Eye*

- 1 In speaking about the social worlds of children, Atwood maintains that young boys have a much more **hierarchical** society than young girls. But while girls' allegiances and loyalties shift, and there is room for changes in position, the stable hierarchy in boys' friendship groups mean that bullying for the boy at the bottom is less hopeful. What is your view of this proposition?
 - 2 Atwood mostly constructs masculinity in a sympathetic fashion.
 - a Examine and explain how Stephen Risley's identity is constructed.
 - b Analyse how the relationship between Stephen and his sister is constructed. Explain the importance of Stephen in Elaine's life.
 - c Analyse the construction of young males in Elaine's life as a teenager. Explain their purpose in representing the attitudes and values of the character of Elaine Risley.
 - 3 Compare and contrast the fathers of Elaine and Cordelia in shaping their daughters' behaviours and attitudes.
 - 4 Later in the novel, Atwood suggests that boys' ways of being in the world had changed, and when Elaine was rearing her children she felt 'it's more likely to be the boys now with that baffled look'. What is she suggesting about gendered identity here?
-

hierarchy

a system of persons or things in a graded order

Bullying

The representation of bullying is central to the novel in terms of identity shaping. It is depicted as having long-term effects on Elaine Risley, which she manages to parlay into her powerful artworks.

Cordelia and Grace and Carol take me to the deep hole in Cordelia's backyard. I'm wearing a black dress and a cloak from the dress-up cupboard. I'm supposed to be Mary Queen of Scots, headless already. They pick me up by the underarms and feet and lower me into the hole. Then they arrange the boards over the top. The daylight air disappears, and there's the sound of dirt hitting the boards, shovelful after shovelful. Inside the hole it's dim and cold and damp and smells like toad burrows.

Up above, outside, I can hear their voices, and then I can't hear them. I lie there wondering when it will be time to come out. Nothing happens. When I was put into the hole I knew it was a game; now I know it is not one. I feel sadness, a sense of betrayal. Then I feel the darkness pressing down on me; then terror.

DISCUSSION

Representations of bullying in *Cat's Eye*

- 1 Why do the three girls bully Elaine? Why do Carol and Grace follow Cordelia's increasingly vicious punishments?
- 2 How effective do you find the representation of the bullied Elaine gaining power over and resisting Cordelia?
- 3 Despite Cordelia's treatment of Elaine, their relationship is constructed as the most significant and enduring in the novel. How and why is this relationship significant and enduring? To what extent do you find the representation of this relationship credible? Why?
- 4 In Elaine's artwork, there is only one painting about Cordelia but a whole suite of paintings vilifying Mrs Smeath. Why do you think this is the case?

The world of art and artists

Elaine Risley's identity as a visual artist is a pivotal theme in the novel, and this is explored from multiple directions and in multiple ways.

The first is through the novel's visual **imagery**. Appropriately for a visual artist, the visual elements of Risley's image-making are strong. The patterning of her imagery often challenges conventional assumptions about the psychological impact of colour. For example, Western readers often associate green with jealousy, or white with innocence – but Risley (and Atwood) construct different associations to these and other colours.

imagery
visually descriptive or
figurative language

As a child, Elaine's later occupation is evident in her attention to elements of art – light, shade, colour. Her visual sensitivity is constructed carefully, as she is shown to be attuned from a young age to how things look. In Year Five, as she observes her friends walking ahead of her, she notes:

I look at their shapes as they walk, the way shadow moves from one leg to another, the blocks of colour, a red square of cardigan, a blue triangle of skirt.

Elsewhere, and later, she notes that:

The lamps in people's houses cast a yellowish light, not cold and greenish but a buttery dim yellow with a tinge of brown. The colours of things in houses have darkness mixed into them: maroon, mushroom beige, a muted green, a dusty rose. These colours look a little dirty, like the squares in a paint box when you forget to rinse the brush.

ACTIVITY

Use of colour in *Cat's Eye*

- 1 Trace Atwood's use of the colour white throughout the novel. With what does she associate white? How is white used significantly in describing both Mrs Smeath's appearance and Elaine's reaction to this woman?
- 2 Who is often associated with the colour green? What is the effect of this use?
- 3 Margaret Atwood has said, 'One of my un-lived lives is as a visual artist so perhaps I was living out [in this novel].' How effectively does Atwood construct the identity and thought processes of a visual artist in this novel? Why do you think that? Give a number of pieces of evidence from the novel that supports her proposition.
- 4 To what extent does the use of colour in the images of the novel give credibility to the representation of Elaine as painter?

Another facet of this theme is Atwood's representation of the art world – the rarefied society of artists, critics, gallery curators and dealers. As Risley prepares for her exhibition, she meets the curators at the Sub-Versions gallery, where she is also interviewed for publicity purposes. It provides a somewhat jaundiced view of the art workers and curators looking more 'arty' than the artist.

The character of Charna, the organiser of the art retrospective, is also used to construct a representation of the art world.

Consider Charna's description of Risley's *Picoseconds*: 'which takes on the Group of Seven and reconstructs their vision of the landscape in the light of contemporary experiment and postmodern pastiche'. (The Group of Seven was an influential organisation of modern Canadian artists.) Again, Atwood constructs the world around an artist as more arty than the artist herself.

Finally, there are the representations of Risley's art, depicting both their subject matter and execution. These construct ideas of not just the art but Elaine as a person. In her first exhibition, with the feminist collective, Elaine paints everyday objects such as wringer washing machines but, in *White Gift*, arguably Risley puts Mrs Smeath metaphorically through the wringer of her biting satire. The pictorial representation of the woman is unwrapped over four panels to reveal a woman in her underpants with an exposed reptilian heart. This painting is foreshadowed earlier in the text when Elaine is washing in the laundry:



Western Forest by Emily Carr, one of the Canadian Group of Seven

The wringer is two rubber rollers, the colour of pale flesh, that revolve around and around, the clothes squeezing in between them, water and suds squooshing out like juice. I roll up my sleeves, stand on tiptoe, rummage in the tub and haul up the sopping underpants and slippers and pajamas, which feel like something you might touch just before you know it's a drowned person. I poke the corners of the clothes in between the wringers and they are grabbed and dragged through, the arms of the shirts ballooning with trapped air, suds dripping from the cuffs. I've been told to be very careful when doing this: women can get their hands caught in wringers, and other parts of their bodies, such as hair. I think about what would happen to my hand if it did get caught: the blood and flesh squeezing up my arm like a travelling bulge, the hand coming out the other side flat as a glove, white as paper. This would hurt a lot at first, I know that. But there's something compelling about it. A whole person could go through the wringer and come out flat, neat, completed, like a flower pressed in a book.

[...] I have a brief intense image of Mrs Smeath going through the flesh-coloured wringer of my mother's washing machine, legs first, bones cracking and flattening, skin and flesh squeezing up toward her head, which will pop in a minute like a huge balloon of blood.

Towards the end of the novel, in the section *Unified Field Theory*, the narratives come together. At the retrospective, Risley hangs five new paintings: *Picoseconds*, *Three Muses*, *One Wing*, *Cat's Eye* and *Unified Field Theory*.

A ACTIVITY

Depictions of art in *Cat's Eye*

- 1 What attitudes does Elaine display towards fame, modern art, the curators, the interviewer and the publicity machine?
- 2 How are these attitudes important in constructing Risley as a painter?
- 3 Comment on Risley's reflection on her artwork when asked by an outraged patron 'Why do you want to hurt people?'
- 4 Ironically, the woman's desecration of *White Gift* only provides Elaine with useful publicity about 'Henfighting', and she realises 'some dimension of heroism has been added to me'. What comment do you think Atwood is making here?
- 5 At the art retrospective, the paintings of Mrs Smeath give Risley the opportunity for reflection:

I put a lot of work into that imagined body, white as a burdock root, flabby as pork-fat. Hairy as the inside of an ear. I laboured on it, with, I now see, considerable malice. But these pictures are not only mockery, not only desecration. I put light into them too. Each pallid leg, each steel-rimmed eye, is there as it was, as plain as bread. I have said, *Look*, I have said, *I see*.

Earlier, though, Risley had been more sympathetic to Mrs Smeath:

I used to think these were self-righteous eyes, piggy and smug inside their wire frames; and they are. But they are also defeated eyes, uncertain and melancholy, heavy with unloved duty. The eyes of someone for whom God was a sadistic old man; the eyes of a small town threadbare decency. Mrs Smeath was a transplant to the city, from somewhere a lot smaller. A displaced person; as I was.

How do these two excerpts construct Elaine's character?

- 6 Examine the descriptions of each new painting in the retrospective, and determine the significance of the representations.
- 7 How are the cat's eye and pier glass significant in the last two paintings? Why are they the last paintings shown in *Cat's Eye*?



 DISCUSSION

Science and art

Three male characters in *Cat's Eye* are scientists: Dr Risley Senior, Dr Bannerji and Elaine's astrophysicist brother Doctor Stephen Risley. Rather than set up a negative binary between art and science, Atwood proposes that Elaine's skills in both observation and drawing are shaped by her interests in science, particularly biology.

- 1 If you agree with this proposition, say why you think that is the case. If you don't accept the proposition, justify your viewpoint.
 - 2 Time is an important concept in *Cat's Eye*. Elaine's understanding of time (as defined by her brother Stephen when they were children) is that it is a dimension, and layered, rather than a line or continuum. How important is this particular representation of time in the novel?
-

Key motifs in *Cat's Eye*

In a literary text, a motif is a recurring symbol or element that takes on a figurative meaning. Motifs can take on many forms – images, objects, lines of texts, archetypes and more.

Motifs and themes are sometimes confused; the two are related concepts, yet they are distinct. The theme of a literary text is an underlying message or idea, while a motif is one of the devices used to establish and communicate those themes.

There are a number of recurring motifs in *Cat's Eye*. In this section, we will consider two of the most prominent of these motifs.

Marbles

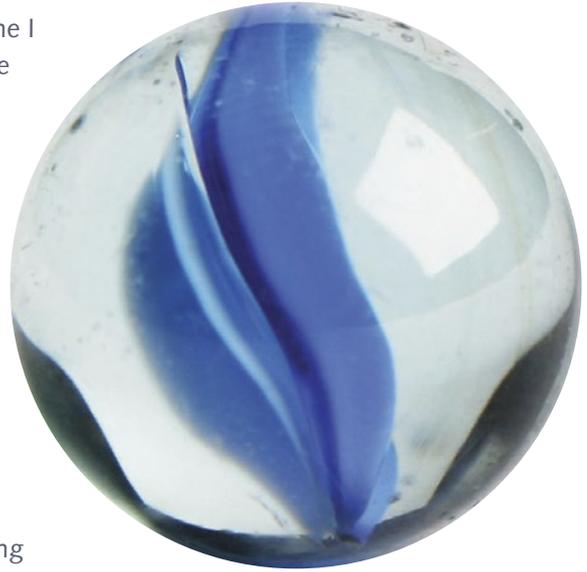
Marbles were a significant aspect of the lives of girls and boys during Atwood's childhood. This is alluded to in the novel. Both Stephen and Elaine Risley find marbles important, and they play with and collect them. The blue cat's eye marble that Elaine owns becomes a potent symbol and **talisman** in the novel. A cat's eye is a target marble, thus one of the more valuable and coveted.

I sit [...] the cold marbles rolling in between my legs, gathering in my outspread skirt, calling out *cat's eye, cat's eye*, in a regretful tone, feeling nothing but avarice and a pleasurable terror.

talisman
an object considered
to be of almost
magical power

The cat's eyes are my favourites. If I win a new one I wait until I'm by myself, then take it out and examine it, turning it over and over in the light. The cat's eyes really are like eyes, but not the eyes of cats. They're the eyes of something that isn't known but exists anyway: like the green eye of the radio; like the eyes of aliens from a distant planet. My favourite is blue. I put it into my red plastic purse to keep it safe, I risk my other cat's eyes to be shot at, but not this one.

[...] I retrieve my blue cat's eye from where it's been lying all winter in the corner of my bureau drawer. I examine it, holding it up so the sunlight burns through it. The eye part of it, inside its crystal sphere, is so blue, so pure. It's like something frozen in the ice. I take it to school with me, in my pocket, but I don't set it up to be shot at. [...] [Cordelia] doesn't know what power this cat's eye has, to protect me. Sometimes when I have it with me I can see the way it sees. I can see people moving like bright animated dolls, their mouths opening and closing but no real words coming out. I can look at their shapes and sizes, their colours, without feeling anything else about them. I am alive in my eyes only.



When the Risley family goes to spend summer at a camp at Lake Superior, Elaine often dreams, and one of these dreams relates to the marble:

I dream that my blue cat's eye is shining in the sky like the sun, or like the pictures of planets in our book on the solar system. But instead of being warm, it's cold. It starts to move nearer, but it doesn't get any bigger. It's falling down out of the sky, straight towards my head. Brilliant and glassy. It hits me, passes right through me, but without hurting, except that it's cold. The cold wakes me up. My blankets are on the floor.

When the girls are in Year Five, the image of the marble is used again:

I keep my cat's eye in my pocket where I can hold on to it. It rests in my hand, valuable as a jewel, looking out through bone and cloth with its impartial gaze. With the help of its power I retreat back into my eyes. Up ahead of me are Cordelia, Grace and Carol. I look at their shapes as they walk, the way shadow moves from one leg to another, the blocks of colour, a red square of cardigan, a blue triangle of skirt. They're like puppets up ahead, small and clear. I could see them or not, at will.

Late in the novel, as Elaine and her mother are clearing out the steamer trunk where family treasures are stored, the red plastic purse is found:

Something rattles. I open it up and take out my blue cat's eye.

'A marble!' says my mother, with a child's delight. 'Remember all those marbles Stephen used to collect?'

'Yes,' I say. But this one was mine.

I look into it, and see my life entire.

ACTIVITY

Marble motifs in *Cat's Eye*

Clearly the cat's eye is a significant motif in the novel – after all, it is used as the title.

- 1 What does the marble symbolise? How can it be considered a talisman? Justify your answer with evidence from the text.
- 2 The marble has been described as signifying memory, allowing the adult Elaine to recover repressed memories. Other interpretations call it a prism through which Elaine retrieves emotions. What is your view of these suggestions?
- 3 Given that Atwood chose it for the title, how central to the major themes of the novel is the cat's eye?

The Virgin Mary

The Virgin Mary is an important motif in *Cat's Eye*. As a child, Elaine finds a flyer with an image of Mary with seven arrows piercing her red heart (which is depicted outside her chest). This iconography belongs to the Seven Sorrows of Mary, a key Roman Catholic icon. The icon is frequently depicted with Mary granting seven graces to those who pray to her. One of these graces suggests the significance of the **iconography** of Mary in this novel:

I will console them in their pains and I will accompany them in their work.

It is in the section *Our Lady of Perpetual Help*, after realising Mrs Smeath and Aunt Mildred are aware of how she is being bullied, that Elaine goes into the ravine to retrieve her hat thrown there by Cordelia and where she nearly dies. She envisions the Virgin Mary, the iconic Roman Catholic figure, that seems to have appeared to save her. Elaine has been brought up by non-believing parents, but attends Protestant services with the Smeaths. After her recovery from the incident, she refuses to let Cordelia continue to bully and otherwise exercise power over her.

iconography
representation by means
of drawing, painting or
carving figures



In the next section, *Half a Face*, Elaine takes a trip to Mexico with her second husband, where she finds the only Madonna that aligns with her vision.

Then I saw the Virgin Mary. I didn't know it was her at first, because she was dressed not in the usual blue or white and gold, but in black. She didn't have a crown. Her head was bowed, her face in shadow, her hands held open at the sides. Around her feet were the stubs of candles, and all over her black dress were pinned what I thought at first were stars, but which were instead little brass or tin arms, legs, hands, sheep, donkeys, chickens, and hearts.

I could see what these were for: she was a Virgin of lost things, one who restored what was lost. She was the only one of these wood or marble or plaster Virgins who had ever seemed at all real to me. There could be some point in praying to her, kneeling down, lighting a candle. But I didn't do it, because I didn't know what to pray for. What was lost, what I could pin on her dress.

The brass and tin items Elaine sees are *milagros*, which are offerings used for the purposes of healing in Mexico. *Milagro* means miracle – offering a specific *milagro* (such as a leg) is either to make a request for a cure (to a leg injury) or a desire (to travel or be safe during travel) or to provide thanks for assistance.

The statue of Our Lady of Seven Sorrows in Salamanca, Spain, also referred to as *La Virgen de la Vera Cruz* (the Virgin of the True Cross)

The pier glass

Another significant symbol in *Cat's Eye* is the pier glass. This is an 18th-century furnishing, also known as a trumeau mirror; it is a mirror mounted on a pier (a section of wall) between two windows.

Atwood references the pier glass in the book to Jan Van Eyck's painting *The Arnolfini Portrait* (1434). She identifies the convex mirror on the back wall between the couple as a pier glass, both because of its painterly qualities as well as its reflection of two other figures unseen in the painting.

Elaine's painting *Cat's Eye* does not contain an image of the marble. Instead, it is a pier glass that shows the reflection of the three girls (friends and bullies) from Elaine's childhood.

The Arnolfini Portrait



ACTIVITY

Symbols and motifs in *Cat's Eye*

- 1 How effective is Atwood's use of the Virgin Mary as a central motif in the novel? Write a 3–4 paragraph response to this question, identifying what the Virgin represents for Elaine and how this is constructed
- 2 The three girls are omitted from the painting *Cat's Eye*, yet reflected in the pier glass. How do you interpret the meaning of this use of the motif?
- 3 From your reading of the novel, do you feel there are any other motifs that have symbolic value? Explain the significance of each item you identify.

DISCUSSION

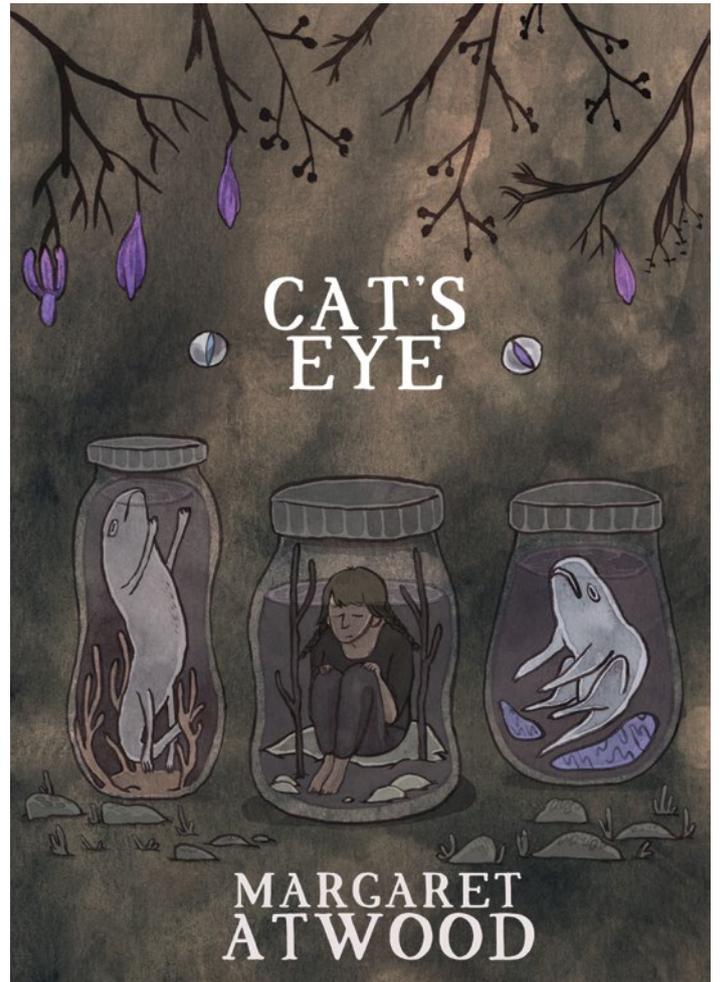
Analysis of cover design

British designer Sophie Powell-Hall created her own versions of the covers for three of Margaret Atwood novels (*Cat's Eye*, *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Edible Woman*) as part of a 2015 art college exhibition.

Visit the margin link to view the full cover design. How effective do you find her cover design for *Cat's Eye*? Explain her reading of the novel as provided by this design, commenting on the aspects of the novel that are foregrounded in this illustration.



Sophie Powell-Hall's website
http://mea.digital/gen34_7_4



EXTENDED RESPONSE

Analytical written response

Select one of the topics below and write an analytical literary essay of 800–1000 words.

- In *Cat's Eye*, how is the reader positioned to view Elaine Risley?
- In *Cat's Eye*, to what extent is Canadian society of the 1950s and 1960s represented as significant in shaping Elaine's values?
- In *Cat's Eye*, to what extent is Elaine's relationship with her friends represented as significant in shaping her values?
- In *Cat's Eye*, what perspective does the representation of the relationship between Elaine and Cordelia offer on identity?

CHAPTER
EIGHT

CREATIVE RESPONSES TO LITERARY TEXTS

In this chapter, you have the opportunity to experiment with language and textual forms. You are given opportunities to use language innovatively and imaginatively, experimenting with style and textual elements in order to evoke emotional and critically reflective responses in your readers.

This experimentation will prepare you for the internal assessment examination, which invites you to challenge ideas and the conventions associated with texts by reimagining perspectives offered in a stimulus text. This text needs to be one of those you have studied in Unit 4.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

TEXTS IN THIS CHAPTER:

TEXTS IN
CONTEXTS

- explore the ways texts establish and maintain relationships with audiences
- identify how texts follow or challenge the patterns and conventions of genres

- 'The Family of Writers' – cartoon
- 'Kew Gardens' – short story
- 'At the Bay' – short story
- 'A Suburban Fairy Tale' – short story
- 'White Stucco Dreaming' – poem
- 'Mending Wall' – poem
- 'My Last Duchess' – poem

LANGUAGE
AND TEXTUAL
ANALYSIS

- examine how language features, text structures and conventions communicate perspectives and representations
- examine the use of aesthetic and stylistic features and their effects in texts
- analyse how language choices are used in imaginative texts

RESPONDING TO
AND CREATING
TEXTS

- experiment to develop personal style in imaginative texts
- experiment with aesthetic features and stylistic devices in different mediums
- construct texts in a variety of modes and contexts
- use strategies for planning, drafting, editing and proofreading texts.



Preparing to write an imaginative response

A narrative intervention is a new piece of text that could be inserted into a literary text, such as a new scene or chapter. The intervention offers a different perspective, fills a 'gap' or challenges a perspective from the original text.

An imaginative response is a creative writing piece made in response to a literary text – in other words, your own creative work, made as a response or reaction to a text you have studied. There are a number of forms in which you can construct your imaginative response, including a short story, monologue, dramatic script or narrative intervention. (Note: In this case, poetry is not an option for the examination, though.)

Compared to other assessments you have completed, the imaginative response task can be approached in many different ways. It is not possible to present the kind of step-by-step advice for this task as examined back in Chapter 3. Instead, this chapter focuses on developing your ideas for your responses, along with honing your creative writing skills.

Creative restrictions

When the time comes for your assessment, you will have only two hours to write your imaginative response, and it should be 800–1000 words long. These requirements restrict your options, but you can also use the restrictions to assist in informing your planning and to shape your creativity.

For example, if you decide to write a short story, you probably will not be able to create a full narrative in 1000 words. Instead, you could construct a 'compressed narrative' – a slice of life – that presents a view of the world through the perspective of one character in conflict or crisis. Rather than a chronological structure that goes through each event in order, you could start *in medias res* for maximum effect: that is, starting your narrative 'in the middle' or at a crucial moment in the life of the character.

There are similar restrictions on the other possible forms of creative response and just as much potential to use those restrictions to shape your planning. Before the assessment date, take the time to consider what kind of response you might make and how you can use the assessment requirements to guide you.

Creative extrapolations

Texts construct versions of events for particular purposes and to explore particular perspectives. But other versions of events are also possible, and your creative response is an opportunity to present and explore those versions. You are not being asked to simply add to the literary text or write precisely in the style of its author.

You can use your response to **extrapolate** a new or revised version of events and to present that version. This is particularly true for narrative interventions, in which you create new text that could (in theory) be added to the existing literary text for the purpose of presenting different perspectives.

Consider the cartoon on the next page. It portrays the tensions among family relationships, but it also conveys the idea that there can be different perspectives on events – in this case, family life – each as valid as the other. It also suggests a variety of genres in which representations of this family life could be conveyed, while the attitudes, beliefs and values of the different family members are alluded to in the captions.

extrapolate
to infer or make
conjecture from that
which is known



'The Family of Writers'
Cartoonist: Tom Gauld

Just as one family can generate a number of texts and genres, so too can your creative response generate new perspectives and stories. Take the opportunity to extrapolate from an original text and create something of your own.

DISCUSSION

Hot potato group discussion

Generate as many possible ideas for developing each of the proposed texts in the cartoon.

- 1 Organise into six groups, each with a large sheet of paper. Assign a character to each group – mother, cat, son, father, dog or daughter.
- 2 Each group has 10 minutes to develop the following ideas.
 - a Relationships and attitudes to these characters (for example, why the mother is a saint and the others ungrateful)
 - b Values that are found to be in conflict
 - c Beliefs related to the stated topic (for example, the princess's tale of regret)
 - d Key (possibly contentious) events in the family's past
 - e Key possibilities for the text (for example, the potential mysteries surrounding the cat's death)
 - f Perspectives on other characters
 - g The 'voice' of the character in writing this manuscript
- 3 In the remaining 10 minutes of your lesson, peruse and consider these options as a class.

Developing your writing style

Whether for your creative response task, your future academic efforts or your personal desire to write, it is important that you develop a writing style and voice that works for you. More than just the way you put words on the page, style is about how you communicate with your readers – how you formulate ideas, develop perspectives and construct representations.

Starting the writing process

Useful advice about the writing process comes from the author Raymond Carver, in his 1985 essay 'On Writing'.

Every great or even every very good writer makes the world over according to his own specifications. It's akin to style, what I'm talking about, but it isn't style alone. It is the writer's particular and unmistakable signature on everything he writes. It is his world and no other. This is one of the things that distinguishes one writer from another. Not talent. There's plenty of that around. But a writer who has some special way of looking at things and who gives artistic expression to that way of looking: that writer may be around for a time.

Compare Carver's advice about a worldview or perspective shaping representations to Margaret Atwood's advice about finding the voice of the character or narrator, which she presented in her 2017 *CreativeLife* interview.

Even if you watched this interview while reading Chapter 7, watch it again now in the mindset as a prospective writer, and in preparation for your creative response task. Approach it as a writer seeking useful advice from an expert, not only about the impact of story but also about the process of writing.

Margaret Atwood tells us that, creatively, she starts not with the theme but the character or a scene or a voice. These might also be useful starting points for you when you begin writing. And perhaps her other advice, paraphrased from Alfred Lord Tennyson, is salient too:

'Doubt not, go forward; if you doubt, the beasts will tear you piecemeal.'



CreativeLife

http://mea.digital/gen34_8_1

ACTIVITY

Reflecting on writing advice

- 1 What does Atwood mean by 'the beast'? What is your 'beast' when writing?
- 2 Which writer's advice resonates most strongly with you? Carver's or Atwood's? Why?
- 3 Identify and explain what you need to focus on in your writing to construct the perspective for either a character or a narrator. How might you develop your 'voice'?

- 4 Reflect on (or revisit) three short stories from the *Macmillan English QCE Units 1 & 2* textbook – ‘Embroidery’ by Ray Bradbury (p. 198), ‘The Story of an Hour’ by Kate Chopin (p. 195) and ‘The Clearing’ by Martyn Hereward (p. 152). Each story is a compressed narrative or ‘slice of life’; each develops tension; each has a distinct worldview or perspective shaping representation of characters; each has a distinctive voice. Which of these stories did you respond to most? Which might be the source of ideas, not just about subject matter, but about the aspect of writing you identified in questions 1 and 2?
-

Verbal texture

The texture of an object is how it looks and feels – smooth or rough, pleasant or unpleasant, firm or spongy and so on. Similarly, *verbal texture* refers to how the combination or choice of words feel in a creative text. Verbal texture is influenced by many factors, such as:

- how the words relate to or connect with other words
- the sound of the words
- the images and feelings they create
- the patterning of clauses
- the mood created
- the particular focus of the writing
- the effect the writer is seeking to make.

For your own work, a key element of the verbal texture is how simple or ornate you want your writing to be. Neither approach is right or wrong, but your choice has implications. Too much flourish and razzle-dazzle with words can sometimes detract from the sense and meaning of the text. On the other hand, a sparse and spare writing style depends on strong insights and leaving details to be inferred; someone who misuses sparseness might omit key descriptions that evoke mood or a sense of place.

When it comes to your creative response assessment task, it is best to consider the verbal texture in light of the word limit. Description in short texts needs to be inserted with careful judgement. Carefully chosen detail is better than an intense burst of description. If and when you attempt longer pieces of writing, you may decide to approach things differently.

Sentence construction

Sentence construction is fundamental to the development of style. There is a wide variety of sentence types – such as simple, compound, complex and compound-complex. There are statements and declarations, questions, exclamations and imperatives. There are loose and periodic forms. And all of these can contribute in different ways to your writing.

While you should already be familiar with the most common types of sentence, such as simple and compound sentences, let’s look at the structure and effect of some less common forms.

Loose sentences

A loose sentence has a main/independent clause, followed by more phrases or clauses that perform coordinating or subordinating functions. Meaning accumulates after the main clause through these additions. A loose sentence is thus sometimes also called a cumulative or right-branching sentence.

These sentences are flexible and relaxed in form. They can pack in imagery but also contribute to a sense of informality and a conversational tone. The independent clauses can be seen below in **bold** text.

The radiator put out lots of heat, too much, in fact, and old-fashioned sounds and smells came with it, exhalations of the matter that composes our own mortality, and reminiscent of the intimate gases all diffuse.

Saul Bellow, *More Die of Heartbreak*

One of his eyes resembled that of a vulture – a pale blue eye, with a film over it.

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Tell-Tale Heart*

Galleries are frightening places, places of evaluation, of judgement.

Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye*

Periodic sentences

A periodic sentence has the main/independent clause at the end, and is preceded by subordinate clauses or coordinating phrases. This means that the key aspect of meaning is withheld to the end, making this type of sentence useful in developing tension or suspense. Periodic sentences are also called left-branching sentences. Again, independent clauses can be seen in **bold**.

In the brightness of the wintry sun next morning as it streamed over the breakfast table, **he laughed at his fears**.

W W Jacobs, *The Monkey's Paw*

In my dreams of this city **I am always lost**.

Margaret Atwood, *Cat's Eye*

Other branching sentences

There are sentences that branch right and left from a central main/independent clause.

Sensing a possible rival, **I watched him warily**, wondering who he was.

Ralph Ellison, *Invisible Man*

In mid-branching sentences, the main/independent clause is split in half, with branching elements inserted between the two parts of the split sentence.

As she often says to herself – though never aloud, for she knew how unpleasant it would sound – **why shouldn't she look after herself?**
Nobody else will.

Alison Lurie, *Foreign Affairs*

Appositive sentences

Apposition is the use of two nouns or noun phrases next to each other in a clause, usually (but not always) separated by commas or dashes.

Writers may use one appositive noun or phrase to add information about the other noun or phrase – the appositive can rename, reiterate, give details, clarify, or add drama or texture.

In an armchair, with an elbow resting on the table and her head leaning on that hand, sat the strangest lady I have ever seen, or shall ever see. She was dressed in rich materials – satins, and lace and silks – all of white.

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations*

The phrase ‘satins, and lace and silks’ is in apposition to ‘materials’ – the noun phrase here identifies the types of materials.

They drove up the coast, the incomparable coast, they visited gardens, and climbed Table Mountain and drove through vineyards.

Doris Lessing, *The Grandmothers*

The appositive phrase ‘the incomparable coast’ is a repetition of ‘coast’ and used for emphasis.

This is the middle of my life, I think of it as a place, like the middle of a river, the middle of a bridge, halfway across, halfway over. I’m supposed to have accumulated things by now: possessions, responsibilities, achievements, experience and wisdom. I’m supposed to be a person of substance.

Margaret Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*

The phrase beginning with ‘possessions’ is in apposition to ‘things’ specifying exactly what Elaine should have accumulated. Note how Atwood uses a colon to separate the appositive phrases, rather than commas or dashes.

Parallelism

Parallel sentences use repetition of words and symmetrical structure for effect, making the writing more memorable

I lie in the bedroom with the curtains drawn and nothingness washing over me like a sluggish wave. Whatever is happening to me is my own fault. I have done **something** wrong, **something** so huge I can’t even see it, **something** that’s drowning me.

Margaret Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*

I was unfair to him, of course, but where would I have been without unfairness? In thrall, in harness. Young women need unfairness, it’s one of their few defences. They need their callousness, they need their ignorance. They walk in the dark, along the edges of high cliffs, humming to themselves, themselves invulnerable.

Margaret Atwood, *Cat’s Eye*

We see parallelism here in which there is repetition of structure rather than words.

apposition

placing together expressions that have the same function and relation to other parts of the sentence, the second expression identifying or supplementing the first

Sentence fragments

A true sentence requires both a subject and a verb and should present a complete thought. A sentence fragment, however, lacks one of these elements.

run-on sentence
a sentence in which two or more independent clauses are joined without a conjunction or punctuation mark

Run-on sentences and sentence fragments are often considered flaws; in certain genres, especially the analytical literary essay, one would never use them. In creative writing, though, skilled authors can use them to great effect.

In her novel *The House on Mango Street*, Sandra Cisneros makes deft use of eleven fragments to describe the house:

Not a flat. Not an apartment in black. Not a man's house. Not a daddy's.
A house all my own. With my porch and my pillow, my pretty purple
petunias. My books and my stories. My two shoes waiting beside the bed.
Nobody to shake a stick at. Nobody's garbage to pick up after.
Only a house quiet as snow, a space for myself to go, clean as paper
before the poem.

Cisneros uses these fragments in a purposeful way, first stating what the house was not and then identifying what the speaker values about the house and its relationship to identity.

If you use sentence fragments in your own writing, especially in your creative response assessment, it must be apparent that the fragments are connected to previous or following structures, and that you are using them for particular purpose or effect.

ACTIVITY

Using sentence fragments

Return to 'The Family of Writers' cartoon on page 201. Select either the mother or the father, and write about either the ungrateful family or pampered youth. Use the pattern of Sandra Cisneros' extract to purposefully construct a series of sentence fragments. First state what the family is (or youth are) *not*, then identify the valued attributes and relationships as a counter to the negativity.

Editing your writing

No successful writer treats their first draft as their final draft. No matter how skilled and confident the writer, their work always needs to be edited. In its most dramatic form, editing may be more like substantial rewriting, throwing work out and starting again. More likely, editing improves, polishes and perfects existing writing.

When editing your writing, an important consideration is the purpose of the editing. What are you trying to accomplish with each edit? Some possibilities include the following points.

- *Edit for style*: Is your desired style coming across effectively? To answer that question, you need to know what style you are aiming for; it can be grandiose and highly descriptive, dense and complex, or very clear, simple and even sparse. No matter the style, your edit should aim for stylistic consistency.
- *Edit for tone*: As with style, are you communicating the desired tone? Work to establish your desired tone – this could be something like awe-inspired, observant or curious, cynical, playful, hopeful, pessimistic, bitter and so on.
- *Edit for word choice*: Is there a better and more appropriate word to use in a given sentence? Have you repeated yourself and need to vary your words? Thesaurus checking is a good start, but be careful – a word that could be more evocative or effective might not be a synonym for the word it replaces.

When it comes to your imaginative response task, you will not have the opportunity to do too much editing – you only have two hours to write, and you may also be writing longhand with pen and paper. The best way to edit in that situation may be *before* you write – by carefully considering your ideas, choosing the words that work best and then putting them down.

Constructing place

Place and setting in a story can be used for a range of purposes, more than just showing readers what things look like or where things happen.

In ‘The Story of an Hour’ by Kate Chopin (which you read in Unit 2), nature and weather play a key role and serve as a **pathetic fallacy**. The shifts in the weather from stormy to clear outside Louise Mallard’s bedroom window match her shifting mood from grief to joy. This device underpins not only the characterisation of Louise, but the theme of the story.

pathetic fallacy
the crediting of human
traits and feelings
to nature

In Samuel Wagan Watson’s poem ‘White Stucco Dreaming’ (p. 221), the emphasis is about conveying an emotional response to a place at a particular time in Brisbane, but it also alludes to Wagan Watson’s Indigenous spiritual heritage.

Setting in terms of time, as in a period or era, can serve to signal or reinforce attitudes, beliefs and values prevalent at that time. Louise Mallard’s feelings about marriage are those shaped by a writer influenced by first-wave feminism. Ali Alizadeh and Judith Wright in their poems ‘Merri Creek’ and ‘South of My Days’ (in Chapter 6 on p. 169 and p. 170 respectively) use landscape as markers of identity.

Writing descriptions

Your creative response assessment provides a limited opportunity for writing descriptions of place – you only have 1000 words to work with, after all. But that does not mean that you cannot write short, rich descriptions, or that you face the same limitations in your own writing beyond the assessment.

Consider the following excerpts from two long short stories, written in the early 1900s by two famous Modernists – English writer Virginia Woolf and New Zealand writer Katherine Mansfield.

stream of consciousness
a literary technique of writing thoughts, reactions and emotions in a continuous flow, uninterrupted by dialogue or description

The Modernist movement rose in the early 20th century, as a reaction against the writing traditions of the past. Modernist writers had a strong focus on individualism, believing that the world is shaped by individual perception, that all experiences are relative, and that we are profoundly influenced by our subconscious. Some Modernist narratives include **stream of consciousness**, a literary technique in which a character's thoughts, reactions and emotions are represented in a continuous stream or flow, uninterrupted by dialogue or description.



Portrait of Virginia Woolf by Roger Fry (1917)

Excerpt 1: 'Kew Gardens' by Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf was one of the most important Modernist authors and was a leading exponent of the use of stream of consciousness. Influenced by the work of Impressionist artists such as Claude Monet, Woolf sought to create impressions in her writing.

Resisting 'realism', she observed:

Look within and life, it seems, is very far from being 'like this'. Examine for a moment an ordinary mind on an ordinary day. The mind receives a myriad impressions – trivial, fantastic, evanescent, or engraved with the sharpness of steel.

Her 1919 story 'Kew Gardens' focuses on snatches of conversations or introspection around an oval flowerbed through which a snail moves.

Kew Gardens

FROM THE OVAL-SHAPED flower-bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks spreading into heart-shaped or tongue-shaped leaves halfway up and unfurling at the tip red or blue or yellow petals marked with spots of colour raised upon the surface; and from the red, blue or yellow gloom of the throat emerged a straight bar, rough with gold dust and slightly clubbed at the end. The petals were voluminous enough to be stirred by the summer breeze, and when they moved, the red, blue and yellow lights passed one over the other, staining an inch of the brown earth beneath with a spot of the most intricate colour. The light fell either upon the smooth, grey back of a pebble, or, the shell of a snail with its brown, circular veins, or falling into a raindrop, it expanded with such intensity of red, blue and yellow the thin walls of water that one expected them to burst and disappear. Instead, the drop was left in a second silver grey once more, and the light now settled upon the flesh of a leaf, revealing the branching thread of fibre beneath the surface, and again it moved on and spread its illumination in the vast green spaces beneath the dome of the heart-shaped and tongue-shaped leaves. Then the breeze stirred rather more briskly overhead and the colour was flashed into the air above, into the eyes of the men and women who walk in Kew Gardens in July.

The figures of these men and women straggled past the flower-bed with a curiously irregular movement not unlike that of the white and blue butterflies who crossed the turf in zig-zag flights from bed to bed. The man was about six inches in front of the woman, strolling carelessly, while she bore on with greater purpose, only turning her head now and then to see that the children were not too far behind. The man kept this distance in front of the woman purposely, though perhaps unconsciously, for he wished to go on with his thoughts.

'Fifteen years ago I came here with Lily,' he thought. 'We sat somewhere over there by a lake and I begged her to marry me all through the hot afternoon. How the dragonfly kept circling round us: how clearly I see the dragonfly and her shoe with the square silver buckle at the toe. All the time I spoke I saw her shoe and when it moved impatiently I knew without looking up what she was going to say: the whole of her seemed to be in her shoe. And my love, my desire, were in the dragonfly; for some reason I thought that if it settled there, on that leaf, the broad one with the red flower in the middle of it, if the dragonfly settled on the leaf she would say "Yes" at once. But the dragonfly went round and round: it never settled anywhere – of course not, happily not, or I shouldn't be walking here with Eleanor and the children – Tell me, Eleanor. D'you ever think of the past?'

 DISCUSSION
'Kew Gardens'

The British novelist E M Forster suggested that Woolf's sentences 'sway and meander'.

- 1 Discuss the impressionistic style of Woolf's writing. What role do the sentences have in shaping the meandering quality of this writing? What type of sentences are they?
 - 2 How closely observed do you think the original gardens were for Woolf to produce this style? What aspects of the garden does she pay attention to?
-

Excerpt 2: 'At the Bay' by Katherine Mansfield

Often praised as New Zealand's greatest writer, Katherine Mansfield was a pioneer of the modern short story. Mansfield's style is economical but lyrical, with a focus on vivid use of detail, imagery and the creation of impressions.

Mansfield's masterpiece 'At the Bay', published in 1922, focuses on capturing one day in the life of selected characters and their moods and feelings.

At the Bay

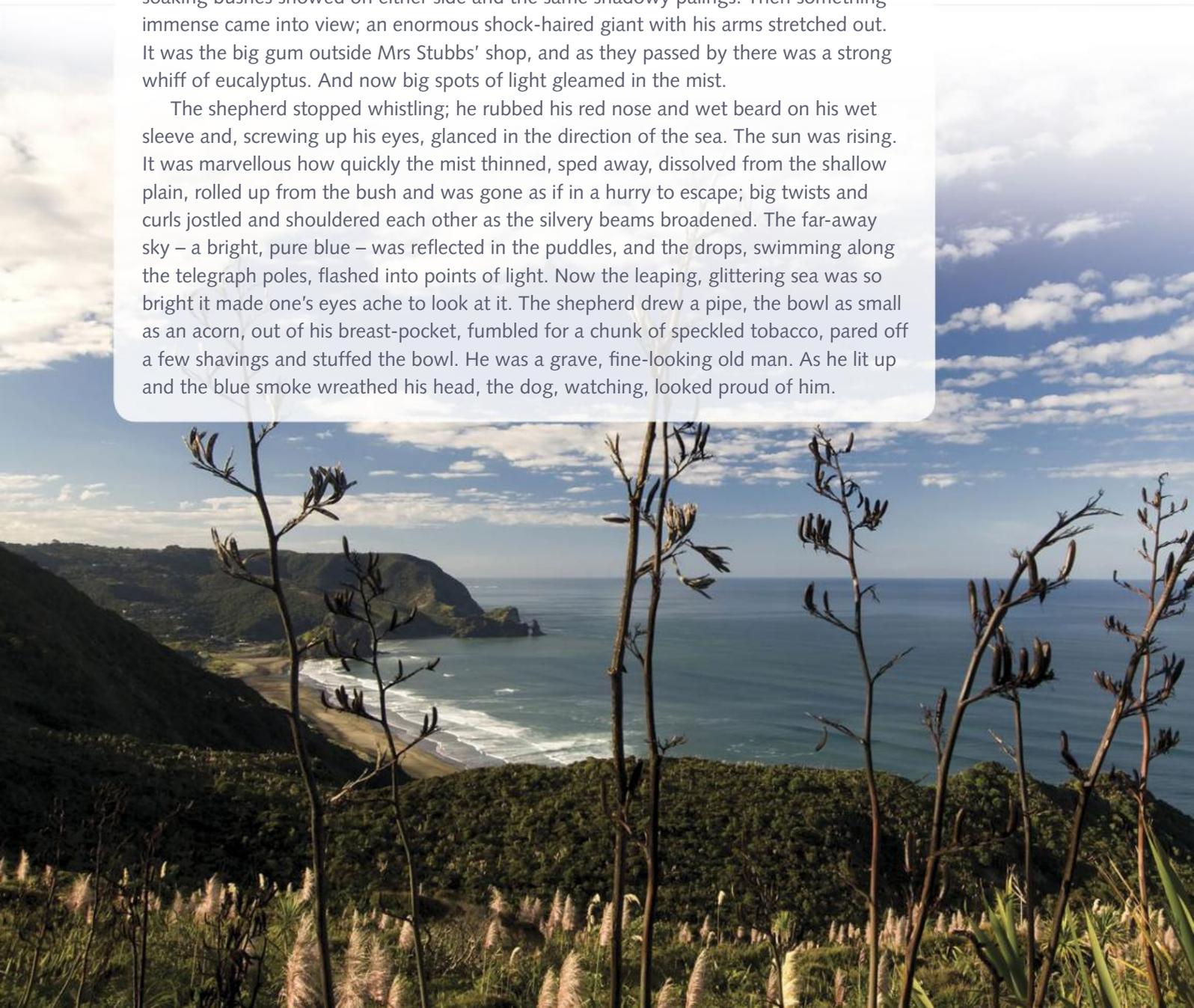
Very early morning. The sun was not yet risen, and the whole of Crescent Bay was hidden under a white sea-mist. The big bush-covered hills at the back were smothered. You could not see where they ended and the paddocks and bungalows began. The sandy road was gone and the paddocks and bungalows the other side of it; there were no white dunes covered with reddish grass beyond them; there was nothing to mark which was beach and where was the sea. A heavy dew had fallen. The grass was blue. Big drops hung on the bushes and just did not fall; the silvery, fluffy toi-toi was limp on its long stalks, and all the marigolds and the pinks in the bungalow gardens were bowed to the earth with wetness. Drenched were the cold fuchsias, round pearls of dew lay on the flat nasturtium leaves. It looked as though the sea had beaten up softly in the darkness, as though one immense wave had come rippling, rippling – how far? Perhaps if you had waked up in the middle of the night you might have seen a big fish flicking in at the window and gone again ...

Ah-Aah! sounded the sleepy sea. And from the bush there came the sound of little streams flowing, quickly, lightly, slipping between the smooth stones, gushing into ferny basins and out again; and there was the splashing of big drops on large leaves, and something else – what was it? – a faint stirring and shaking, the snapping of a twig and then such silence that seemed someone was listening.

Round the corner of Crescent Bay, between the piled-up masses of broken rock, a flock of sheep came pattering. They were huddled together, a small, tossing, woolly mass, and their thin, stick-like legs trotted along

quickly as if the cold and the quiet had frightened them. Behind them an old sheep-dog, his soaking paws covered with sand, ran along with his nose to the ground, but carelessly, as if thinking of something else. And then in the rocky gateway the shepherd himself appeared. He was a lean, upright old man, in a frieze coat that was covered with a web of tiny drops, velvet trousers tied under the knee, and a wide awake with a folded blue handkerchief round the brim. One hand was crammed into his belt, the other grasped a beautifully smooth yellow stick. And as he walked, taking his time, he kept up a very soft light whistling, an airy, far-away fluting that sounded mournful and tender. The old dog cut an ancient caper or two and then drew up sharp, ashamed of his levity, and walked a few dignified paces by his master's side. The sheep ran forward in little patterning rushes; they began to bleat, and ghostly flocks and herds answered them from under the sea. 'Baa! Baaa!'. For a time they seemed to be always on the same piece of ground. There ahead was stretched the sandy road with shallow puddles; the same soaking bushes showed on either side and the same shadowy palings. Then something immense came into view; an enormous shock-haired giant with his arms stretched out. It was the big gum outside Mrs Stubbs' shop, and as they passed by there was a strong whiff of eucalyptus. And now big spots of light gleamed in the mist.

The shepherd stopped whistling; he rubbed his red nose and wet beard on his wet sleeve and, screwing up his eyes, glanced in the direction of the sea. The sun was rising. It was marvellous how quickly the mist thinned, sped away, dissolved from the shallow plain, rolled up from the bush and was gone as if in a hurry to escape; big twists and curls jostled and shouldered each other as the silvery beams broadened. The far-away sky – a bright, pure blue – was reflected in the puddles, and the drops, swimming along the telegraph poles, flashed into points of light. Now the leaping, glittering sea was so bright it made one's eyes ache to look at it. The shepherd drew a pipe, the bowl as small as an acorn, out of his breast-pocket, fumbled for a chunk of speckled tobacco, pared off a few shavings and stuffed the bowl. He was a grave, fine-looking old man. As he lit up and the blue smoke wreathed his head, the dog, watching, looked proud of him.



 ACTIVITY

Description in 'At the Bay'

- 1 Identify five different types of sentences in 'At the Bay' and consider the effect of each.
 - 2 Select sentences that contain images you consider to be particularly evocative. Share these with other students in your class. Justify your choices.
 - 3 Mansfield evokes the senses in her description. Find examples that appeal to the reader's sense of (i) sight; (ii) sound; (iii) touch; and (iv) smell.
 - 4 Unpack the language devices that Mansfield has used to shape the images in her text. Consider:
 - her word choices, in particular her use of descriptive **epithets**, noun groups, verbs or processes
 - her use of **sibilance** and alliteration
 - her use of onomatopoeia
 - her use of metaphor
 - any other language features that you consider to be striking.
-

epithet

an adjective or other term applied to a person or thing to express an attribute

sibilance

characterised by a hissing sound; denoting sounds like those spelled with s

 ACTIVITY

Writing descriptions of place

- 1 In your reading journal, reflect on the importance of place in Margaret Atwood's *Cat's Eye*. Consider Elaine's memories of her life in the Canadian bush. Write a description of that bush as Cordelia might have seen it, had she spent some time in the wild.
 - 2 Reread the Alizadeh and Wright poems from Chapter 6 (pp. 169 and 170). Think of a place where you feel comforted or comfortable and at peace. Experiment with some of the stylistic choices of these writers (Atwood, Alizadeh and Wright) and use aesthetic devices learned from their practice. Write at least two short pieces (roughly two paragraphs each) in which you convey different moods and relationships with this place – perhaps the place as you remembered it and the place revisited much later.
 - 3 Write a short story in which you create a character who feels as Judith Wright does about place, but finds it affected by the practices of the settlers Wright memorialises in her poem. In the story, concentrate in particular on evoking place, mood and attitude.
-

Representing thought and emotion

Another key concern in your writing is how you construct and represent your characters. Depicting characters through their actions and dialogue is (relatively) straightforward – but what about their thoughts and emotions?

Let us now return to Katherine Mansfield's short story 'At the Bay' and consider how it represents thought. This story provides insights into the lives and relationships of the characters in a series of twelve episodes that form **vignettes** of life on one day.

In the excerpt below, Linda Burnell is depicted as an unhappy woman. While the story is narrated by a detached third person, Mansfield uses a narrative technique called **free indirect discourse** to give access to Linda's thoughts and thus her inner self.

Linda frowned; she sat up quickly in her steamer chair and clasped her ankles. Yes, that was her real grudge against life; that was what she could not understand. That was the question she asked and asked, and listened in vain for the answer. It was all very well to say it was the common lot of women to bear children. It wasn't true. She, for one, could prove that wrong. She was broken, made weak, her courage was gone, through child-bearing. And what made it doubly hard to bear was, she did not love her children. It was useless pretending. Even if she had had the strength she never would have nursed and played with the little girls. No, it was as though a cold breath had chilled her through and through on each of those awful journeys; she had no warmth left to give them. As to the boy – well, thank heaven, mother had taken him: he was mother's, or Beryl's, or anybody's who wanted him. She had hardly held him in her arms. She was so indifferent about him that as he lay there ... Linda glanced down.

The first sentence and the last (from the ellipsis) are clearly recounted by the narrator. There is then ambiguity about who might be speaking or thinking, but the reader clearly has access to Linda's thoughts, beginning at 'Yes, that was her real grudge ...'

Linda's consciousness is filtered through the resource of this third person narrator, without using techniques like overhearing a conversation (with direct speech) or having these thoughts reported (in reported speech). These would typically be the only ways a third person narrator would be likely to know her thoughts.

vignette
a brief, evocative description or account

free indirect discourse
a type of third-person narration in which a character's thoughts, feelings and words are filtered through the narrator



Portrait of Katherine
Mansfield by Anne
Estelle Rice (1918)

A ACTIVITY

Representing character in 'At the Bay'

- 1 What response from the reader does Mansfield invite in the representation of Linda? Consider how the reader's response to this extract depends on their own values, attitudes, beliefs and perspectives of motherhood.
- 2 Select examples of positive and negative evaluative vocabulary that the author uses to construct attitude in the representation of Linda. Explain the effects created.
- 3 Locate examples of the author's use of the language resources of **graduation**, including any use of modality. What effects are created by these and how is the reader's response being shaped?

graduation
intensifying meaning by
increasing the force or
focus of an expression

Constructing the inner life of a character

Another aspect of representing characters is the notion of their ‘inner life’. This is more than just their specific thoughts and feelings, but who that character is as a person – their drives, desires, purpose and identity.

Consider Kate Chopin’s ‘The Story of an Hour’. Much of the power of the story comes from the fact that the narrator, like us, knows that Louise Mallard’s inner self, her dreams of freedom from the constraints of a marriage, are unknown to those around her, including her sister and a family friend, and these dreams have been shattered by the return of her husband. An important part of her identity is withheld from others, and this is an important technique in positioning the reader to respond emotionally to the work. Her death is not what it seems to the doctor, the sister, the husband, the friend; they continue to believe the faulty heart story and the death by shock at the joy of the husband’s return. As readers, we appreciate the irony that the shock was induced by the loss of hope for freedom, although our emotional responses will differ.

Atwood’s novel *Cat’s Eye* is a much lengthier meditation on the idea of self (or identity) and how it is formed. The author uses glass, water and mirrors as key symbols to raise questions about this. In Chopin’s story, Louise Mallard has an **epiphany** that her husband’s death frees her to live an independent life. In *Cat’s Eye*, Elaine’s epiphany is at the end of the novel, when she stands on the bridge and realises that her trauma and pain was Cordelia’s. This shows us that Elaine, like the characters around Louise Mallard in Chopin’s story, has ‘misinterpreted’ the events of her past for some considerable time.

When she is at the bridge, Elaine ‘sees’ Cordelia:

I know she’s looking at me, the lopsided mouth smiling a little, the face closed and defiant. There is the same shame, the sick feeling in my body, the same knowledge of my own wrongness, awkwardness, weakness; the same wish to be loved; the same loneliness; the same fear. But these are not my emotions any more. They are Cordelia’s; as they always were.

In the short story ‘The Lady with the Dog’, published in 1899, Russian writer Anton Chekhov alludes to the inner life of his main character, a Moscow banker and womaniser named Dmitri Dmitritch Gurov, as he ruminates while walking to see his mistress:

He had two lives, one open, seen, and known by all who cared to know, full of relative truth and of relative falsehood, exactly like the lives of his friends and acquaintances; and another life running its course in secret. And through some strange, perhaps accidental conjunction of circumstances, everything that was essential, of interest and of value to him, everything that made the kernel of his life, was hidden from other people; and all that was false in him, the sheath in which he hid himself to conceal the truth – such, for instance, as the work in the bank, his discussion at the club ... his presence with his wife at anniversary festivities – all that was open. And he judged of others by himself, not believing in what he saw, and always believing that every man had his real, most interesting life under the cover of secrecy and under the cover of night. All personal life rested on secrecy, and possibly it was partly on that account that civilised man was so nervously anxious that personal privacy should be respected.

epiphany
a revelation or perception
of some essential truth

specificity

the state of being particular or precise in the details

This story has a third-person narrator but most of the story provides Gurov's perspective, including his thoughts.

Chekhov's style is economical, with subtle psychological insights into character. A precursor to Modernism in some ways, Chekhov was a 19th-century master who attended to the **specificity** of selected details in constructing the inner life of a character.

Writing to his brother in 1886, Chekhov outlined his approach:

In displaying the psychology of your characters, minute particulars are essential. God save us from vague generalisations! Be sure not to discuss your hero's state of mind. Make it clear from his actions. Nor is it necessary to portray many main characters. Let two people be the centre of gravity in your story: he and she.

Chekhov adheres to his advice; two characters, 40-year-old misogynist Gurov and the much younger object of his dalliance, Anna Sergeyevna, are the centre of this story.

The stories in this section show us three techniques for representing thoughts and emotions for characters in:

rumination

the act of musing or pondering or to think upon

- use of **rumination** and introspection in character development (Chekhov)
- use of free indirect discourse to construct a character's inner life (Mansfield)
- writing interior monologues using first-person or third-person narration (Chopin).

All of these techniques are resources you can draw on to improve the quality of your own creative writing.



Sculpture of 'The Lady with the Dog' in Yalta, Crimea

Creative responses to selected texts

Having considered some of the techniques and devices of creative writing, it is now time to practise crafting creative responses to literary texts. These exercises will help prepare you for your internal assessment task.

Text 1: 'A Suburban Fairy Tale' by Katherine Mansfield

Katherine Mansfield wrote 'A Suburban Fairy Tale' in 1919, just after World War I, a time of privation and rationing for residents in England (where Mansfield had lived for a time in her adult life).

As a Modernist, Mansfield challenged Romanticism in literature, and often made use of irony or parody to draw attention to the alienation of the individual in an industrial world, and other woes of the modern era. These approaches also involved experimentation with traditional forms of narrative. Mansfield's stories challenge the conventional notions of the importance of plot, and she was among the first writers to do so.

A Suburban Fairy Tale

Mr and Mrs B. sat at breakfast in the cosy red dining-room of their 'snug little crib just under half-an-hour's run from the City.'

There was a good fire in the grate – for the dining-room was the living-room as well – the two windows overlooking the cold empty garden patch were closed, and the air smelled agreeably of bacon and eggs, toast and coffee. Now that this rationing business was really over Mr B. made a point of a thoroughly good tuck-in before facing the very real perils of the day. He didn't mind who knew it – he was a true Englishman about his breakfast – he had to have it; he'd cave in without it, and if you told him that these Continental chaps could get through half the morning's work he did on a roll and a cup of coffee – you simply didn't know what you were talking about.

Mr B. was a stout youngish man who hadn't been able – worse luck – to chuck his job and join the Army; he'd tried for four years to get another chap to take his place but it was no go. He sat at the head of the table reading the *Daily Mail*. Mrs B. was a youngish plump little body, rather like a pigeon. She sat opposite, preening herself behind the coffee set and keeping an eye of warning love on little B. who perched between them, swathed in a napkin and tapping the top of a soft-boiled egg.

Alas! Little B. was not at all the child that such parents had every right to expect. He was no fat little trot, no dumpling, no firm little pudding. He was under-sized for his age, with legs like macaroni, tiny claws, soft, soft hair that felt like mouse fur, and big wide-open eyes. For some strange reason everything in life seemed the wrong size for Little B. – too big and

too violent. Everything knocked him over, took the wind out of his feeble sails and left him gasping and frightened. Mr and Mrs B. were quite powerless to prevent this; they could only pick him up after the mischief was done – and try to set him going again. And Mrs B. loved him as only weak children are loved – and when Mr B. thought what a marvellous little chap he was too – thought of the spunk of the little man, he – well he – by George – he ...

'Why aren't there two kinds of eggs?' said Little B. 'Why aren't there little eggs for children and big eggs like what this one is for grown-ups?'

'Scotch hares,' said Mr B. 'Fine Scotch hares for 5s. 3d. How about getting one, old girl?'

'It would be a nice change, wouldn't it?' said Mrs B. 'Jugged.'

And they looked across at each other and there floated between them the Scotch hare in its rich gravy with stuffing balls and a white pot of red-currant jelly accompanying it.

'We might have had it for the week-end,' said Mrs B. 'But the butcher has promised me a nice little sirloin and it seems a pity' ... Yes, it did and yet ... Dear me, it was very difficult to decide. The hare would have been such a change – on the other hand, could you beat a really nice little sirloin?

'There's hare soup, too,' said Mr B. drumming his fingers on the table. 'Best soup in the world!'

'O-Oh!' cried Little B. so suddenly and sharply that it gave them quite a start – 'Look at the whole lot of sparrows flown on to our lawn' – he waved his spoon. 'Look at them,' he cried. 'Look!' And while he spoke, even though the windows were closed, they heard a loud shrill cheeping and chirping from the garden.

'Get on with your breakfast like a good boy, do,' said his mother, and his father said, 'You stick to the egg, old man, and look sharp about it.'



'But look at them – look at them all hopping,' he cried. 'They don't keep still not for a minute. Do you think they're hungry, father?'

Cheek-a-cheep-cheep-cheek! cried the sparrows.

'Best postpone it perhaps till next week,' said Mr B., 'and trust to luck they're still to be had then.'

'Yes, perhaps that would be wiser,' said Mrs B.

Mr B. picked another plum out of his paper.

'Have you bought any of those controlled dates yet?'

'I managed to get two pounds yesterday,' said Mrs B.

'Well a date pudding's a good thing,' said Mr B. And they looked across at each other and there floated between them a dark round pudding covered with creamy sauce.

'It would be a nice change, wouldn't it?' said Mrs B.

Outside on the grey frozen grass the funny eager sparrows hopped and fluttered. They were never for a moment still. They cried, flapped their ungainly wings. Little B., his egg finished, got down, took his bread and marmalade to eat at the window.

'Do let us give them some crumbs,' he said. 'Do open the window, father, and throw them something. Father, please!'

'Oh, don't nag, child,' said Mrs B., and his father said – 'Can't go opening windows, old man. You'd get your head bitten off.'

'But they're hungry,' cried Little B., and the sparrows' little voices were like ringing of little knives being sharpened. Cheek-a-cheep-cheep-cheek! they cried.

Little B. dropped his bread and marmalade inside the china flower pot in front of the window. He slipped behind the thick curtains to see better, and Mr and Mrs B. went on reading about what you could get now without coupons – no more ration books after May – a glut of cheese – a glut of it – whole cheeses revolved in the air between them like celestial bodies.

Suddenly as Little B. watched the sparrows on the grey frozen grass, they grew, they changed, still flapping and squeaking. They turned into tiny little boys, in brown coats, dancing, jiggling outside, up and down outside the window squeaking, 'Want something to eat, want something to eat!' Little B. held with both hands to the curtain. 'Father,' he whispered, 'Father! They're not sparrows. They're little boys. Listen, Father!' But Mr and Mrs B. would not hear. He tried again. 'Mother,' he whispered. 'Look at the little boys. They're not sparrows, Mother!' But nobody noticed his nonsense.

'All this talk about famine,' cried Mr B., 'all a Fake, all a Blind.'

With white shining faces, their arms flapping in the big coats, the little boys danced. 'Want something to eat – want something to eat.'

'Father,' muttered Little B. 'Listen, Father! Mother, listen, please!'

'Really!' said Mrs B. 'The noise those birds are making! I've never heard such a thing.'

'Fetch me my shoes, old man,' said Mr B.

Cheek-a-cheep-cheep-cheek! said the sparrows.

Now where had that child got to? 'Come and finish your nice cocoa, my pet,' said Mrs B.

Mr B. lifted the heavy cloth and whispered, 'Come on, Rover,' but no little dog was there.

'He's behind the curtain,' said Mrs B.

'He never went out of the room,' said Mr B.

Mrs B. went over to the window, and Mr B. followed. And they looked out. There on the grey frozen grass, with a white white face, the little boy's thin arms flapping like wings, in front of them all, the smallest, tiniest was Little B. Mr and Mrs B. heard his voice above all the voices, 'Want something to eat, want something to eat.'

Somehow, somehow, they opened the window. 'You shall! All of you. Come in at once. Old man! Little man!'

But it was too late. The little boys were changed into sparrows again, and away they flew – out of sight – out of call.

DISCUSSION

'A Suburban Fairy Tale'

privileged
promoted and supported
by the text

- 1 Whose needs are **privileged** in this story? What is the author's purpose of that choice?
- 2 In the Victorian and Edwardian eras, children generally were expected to be 'seen but not heard'. Modernism challenged societal conventions of the past. How is this attitude to children challenged in this story?
- 3 Mansfield uses a third-person narrator, but sometimes focuses into the thoughts of an individual, making the reader aware of the person's actual thoughts through the use of free indirect discourse. An example is: 'he had to have it; he'd cave in without it, and if you told him that these Continental chaps could get through half the morning's work he did on a roll and a cup of coffee – you simply didn't know what you were talking about'. What is the effect of this technique?
- 4 Examine the description used to construct the representation of Little B.

He was no fat little trot, no dumpling, no firm little pudding. He was under-sized for his age, with legs like macaroni, tiny claws, soft, soft hair that felt like mouse fur, and big wide-open eyes. For some strange reason everything in life seemed the wrong size for Little B. – too big and too violent. Everything knocked him over, took the wind out of his feeble sails and left him gasping and frightened.

How effective is this description? What language resources are used to construct this representation?

surrealist
imagination uncontrolled
by reason or conscious
rational control

- 5 What do you think of the **surrealist** elements of the sparrows turning into boys and then the boys (including Little B.) turning into sparrows? What does this technique add to the story?
-

ACTIVITY

Responding to 'A Suburban Fairy Tale'

Write a monologue that offers insights into the character of one of the parents who has an epiphany after the departure of Little B. The purpose of this is to reposition the reader by revealing different assumptions and values about parenting and childhood.

You might decide to use an interior monologue. For the stream-of-consciousness technique and interior monologue, see the excerpt from Dorothy Parker in Chapter 6 of *Macmillan English QCE Units 1 & 2* (p. 146).

Text 2: 'White Stucco Dreaming' by Samuel Wagan Watson

Samuel Wagan Watson's lyric poem 'White Stucco Dreaming' evokes a happy, joyous childhood that is the opposite of the childhood depicted in 'A Suburban Fairy Tale'. The Australian working-class childhood of an Indigenous family is in stark contrast to the war-deprived English lower middle-class childhood of Little B.

White Stucco Dreaming

Sprinkled in the happy dark of my mind
 Is early childhood and black humour
 White stucco dreaming
 And a black Labrador,
 An orange and black panel-van
 Called the '*black-banana*'
 With twenty blackfellas hanging out the back
 Blasting through the white stucco umbilical
 Of a working class tribe,
 Front yards studded with old black tyres
 That became mutant swans overnight
 Attacked with a cane-knife and a bad white paint job



White stucco dreaming
 And snakes that morphed into nylon hoses at the terror of Mum's scorn,
 Snakes whose cool venom we sprayed onto white stucco,
 Temporarily blushing it pink
 Amid an atmosphere of Saturday morning grass cuttings
 And flirtatious melodies of ice-cream trucks
 That echoed through little black minds and sent the Labrador insane

Chocolate hand prints like dreamtime fraud
 Laid across white stucco
 And mud cakes on the camp stove
 That just made Dad see black,
 No tree was ever safe from tree-house sprawl,
 And the police cars that crawled up and down the back streets,
 Peering into our white stucco cocoon,
Wishing, they were with us ...

Samuel Wagan Watson

DISCUSSION

'White Stucco Dreaming'

- 1 What assumption has been made in the italicised last line of the poem?
 - 2 Who, in your view, makes this observation – the child (as recalled into memory by the older reflecting narrator) or the older narrator? In each case, what would the assumption shaping this phrase be?
 - 3 Examine the pattern of imagery across the text and comment on its meaning and in establishing mood.
-

ACTIVITY

Responding to 'White Stucco Dreaming'

Write a narrative in prose form that fills in a gap in this poem.

Text 3: 'Mending Wall' by Robert Frost

Robert Frost was an American poet, whose poem 'Design' you read in Chapter 1. In his poem 'Mending Wall', Frost reflects on the territorial nature of humans and questions whether this ancient instinct to mark territorial boundaries is always productive or even necessary.

Mending Wall

Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That sends the frozen-ground-swell under it,
And spills the upper boulders in the sun;
And makes gaps even two can pass abreast.
The work of hunters is another thing:
I have come after them and made repair
Where they have left not one stone on a stone,
But they would have the rabbit out of hiding,
To please the yelping dogs. The gaps I mean,
No-one has seen them made or heard them made,
But at spring mending-time we find them there.
I let my neighbour know beyond the hill;
And on a day we meet to walk the line
And set the wall between us once again.
We keep the wall between us as we go.
To each the boulders that have fallen to each.
And some are loaves and some so nearly balls
We have to use a spell to make them balance:
'Stay where you are until our backs are turned!'
We wear our fingers rough with handling them.
Oh, just another kind of out-door game,
One on a side. It comes to little more:
There where it is we do not need the wall:

He is all pine and I am apple orchard.
My apple trees will never get across
And eat the cones under his pines, I tell him.
He only says, 'Good fences make good neighbours.'
Spring is the mischief in me, and I wonder
If I could put a notion in his head:
'Why do they make good neighbours? Isn't it
Where there are cows? But here there are no cows.
Before I built a wall I'd ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.
Something there is that doesn't love a wall,
That wants it down.' I could say 'Elves' to him,
But it's not elves exactly, and I'd rather
He said it for himself. I see him there
Bringing a stone grasped firmly by the top
In each hand, like an old-stone savage armed.
He moves in darkness as it seems to me,
Not of woods only and the shade of trees.
He will not go behind his father's saying,
And he likes having thought of it so well
He says again, 'Good fences make good neighbours.'

Robert Frost

 DISCUSSION

'Mending Wall'

aphorism

a maxim or adage – a short, pithy comment about something considered to be true

- 1 How does the narrator in the poem view his neighbour's dogged adherence to the **aphorism** that 'Good fences make good neighbours'? What evidence in the poem suggests the futility of the exercise of erecting a stone wall on their boundary?
 - 2 The narrator sees his neighbour's insistence on rebuilding the wall as primitive behaviour. What image in the poem indicates this? Do you agree with the perspective of the narrator or the neighbour? Give reasons to justify your own perspective.
 - 3 What evidence in the poem suggests that 'nature' appears to be in opposition to the erection of walls and borders by humans?
 - 4 The narrator suggests that walls are not inherently bad. Give some examples of walls that are useful and even necessary.
 - 5 People can erect barriers that are social and/or psychological as well as physical. Discuss some examples of these social/psychological barriers that you have observed, and your perspectives on these.
-

 ACTIVITY

Responding to 'Mending Wall'

Complete one of the following tasks.

- Consider and reflect upon the perspectives of the narrator and his neighbour in 'Mending Wall'. Use these as the springboard to create a short story exploring the conflict between these differing perspectives on life with two other characters, within another setting and context of your own choice.
 - Write a prose monologue in which a character of your creation is affected by and responds to the existence of real-world barriers or walls that have profoundly affected their life. These could be physical, social or psychological barriers.
-

Text 4: 'My Last Duchess' by Robert Browning

Robert Browning was a 19th-century English poet, considered to be a master of the dramatic monologue. This is a poetic form in which a first person speaker addresses someone else, who does not speak. The purpose of this form of verse is to focus on and reveal character.

In 'My Last Duchess', the speaker is Alfonso II d'Este, the Duke of Ferrara (an Italian city-state) during the Renaissance. Lucrezia, Duchess of Modena and Ferrara, the Duke's first wife, died in suspicious circumstances in 1561, aged 16 after two years of marriage. This piqued Browning's interest and led to the writing of his famous dramatic monologue.

Alfonso II is constructed as a character through his somewhat heedless but always imperious, even sociopathic, attitudes and comments. Written in 1842, the poem not only shows a refined use of aesthetic devices but also a psychological insight into a particular type of personality.

My Last Duchess

That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,
Looking as if she were alive. I call
That piece a wonder, now: Fra Pandolf's hands
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said
'Fra Pandolf' by design, for never read
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,
But to myself they turned (since none puts by
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)
And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,
How such a glance came there; so, not the first
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 'twas not
Her husband's presence only, called that spot
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps
Fra Pandolf chanced to say 'Her mantle laps
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint
Must never hope to reproduce the faint
Half-flush that dies along her throat': such stuff
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough
For calling up that spot of joy. She had
A heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad,
Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,
The dropping of the daylight in the West,
The bough of cherries some officious fool
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule

She rode with round the terrace – all and each
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, – good! but thanked
Somehow – I know not how – as if she ranked
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
This sort of trifling? Even had you skill
In speech – (which I have not) – to make your will
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this
Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,
Or there exceed the mark' – and if she let
Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set
Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,
– E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose
Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,
Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;
Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands
As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet
The company below, then. I repeat,
The Count your master's known munificence
Is ample warrant that no just pretence
Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;
Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed
At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go
Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,
Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

Robert Browning



Alfonso II d'Este and his first wife,
Lucrezia di Cosimo de' Medici

DISCUSSION

'My Last Duchess'

- 1 What assumption does the speaker (the Duke of Ferrara), make about the listener, an unidentified envoy of the count? What does this assumption imply about the duke?
 - 2 How important are the allusions to the artists – Frà Pandolf and Claus of Innsbruck – and their respective works in adding to the tone and overall meaning of this poem?
 - 3 How would you describe the main features of the 'voice' of this speaker? What evidence from the poem supports your viewpoint? What are the transitions from one mood or tone to another? How are they achieved?
 - 4 How do you interpret the representation of the young duchess? In your view, what happened to her? Where is the evidence for that?
 - 5 What similarities are there between the textual functions of the representations of the parents in 'A Suburban Fairy Tale' and the husband in 'My Last Duchess'?
 - 6 What does 'My Last Duchess' show about the use and abuse of power?
-


 ACTIVITY

Responding to 'My Last Duchess'

Complete one of the following tasks.

- Write an interior monologue (*not* in the form of a poem) that offers insight into the character of the Duchess of Ferrara. Situate it at a particular moment in her life.
 - Create an intervention in the text by writing a narrative that fills in the gap relating to the Duchess of Ferrara's demise. Make a careful choice of narrator.
 - Write a short story constructing the identity of the envoy. In this story, the envoy prepares to report the outcome of this meeting to the count who sent him to Ferrara to negotiate the marriage of the count's daughter to the duke.
 - Script the formal meeting between the count and his envoy on the latter's return. Remember the power imbalance in this relationship between the envoy and the duke. What attitudes, beliefs and values would motivate the envoy's interactions?
-


 EXTENDED RESPONSE

Responding to *Cat's Eye*

Complete one of the following tasks.

- Write a short story on the theme of bullying, responding to the scene in *Cat's Eye* in which Elaine, dressed as Queen Mary, is incarcerated in a hole in the ground. The scenario you choose for your story should challenge the notion of the passiveness of the victim.
- Consider the representation of femininity in the construction of Elaine Risley's experiences at Grace Smeath's house. Write a short story set in a modern Australian context where gender construction of a particular type of femininity *or* masculinity is attempted but resisted.

ASSESSMENT

SUMMATIVE INTERNAL ASSESSMENT 3 (IA3)

Examination – imaginative written response
(25%)

WORD LENGTH // 800–1000 words

TIME // 2 hours plus 15 minutes of planning time; supervised conditions with 1 week’s notice of task

CONTEXT

In Topic 1 of this unit, you explored how textual and language features are used in various literary styles, poetry, short stories and novels, and experimented with these in your own writing.

In this assessment task, you will use this knowledge to write an imaginative text, written as a response to one of the literary texts (from the current prescribed text list) you have studied in this unit.

GUIDELINES

Your task is to write and shape an imaginative written text for a specific purpose (i.e. to engage, to move, to express, to challenge or to subvert). This is to be done under supervised conditions, in response to a seen task, over the course of a two-hour period.

Your teacher will specify:

- the text/s to which you will have to respond
- the form of text/s required (i.e. short story, monologue, narrative intervention or script for stage, radio/podcast or screen)
- the purpose or focus for your creative response
- whether the task is completed in one or more sessions.

INSTRUCTIONS

- You will have one week’s notice of the task before the exam.
- The assessment response is written under supervised test conditions, with no opportunities to access advice or feedback. If there is more than one session, the task must be completed within five consecutive school days.
- You cannot bring notes or prepared materials into the exam.
- Your teacher may also provide additional instructions or requirements.

This assessment task is completed under supervised conditions, so you will have just two hours of writing time to complete your imaginative response. This also means you will write your response by hand; make sure you have appropriate writing supplies and that your handwriting is legible.

You have 15 minutes of planning time during the exam period, but this is not the only time you have for planning. Your teacher will give you a week's notice of the task before the exam date. Use this time to come up with ideas of how you might respond. You cannot take any notes into the exam, so do not bother writing down passages or lines you want to use; think more about the themes, motifs and voice you want to emphasise and how they will achieve your purpose.

Whose perspective will you adopt? Why? How will you represent concepts, identities, times and places? Why? What cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs will you put into play in your imaginative response and why? Choose and rehearse the style of writing you will adopt and how this will affect the 'voice' used in the text. Reflect on and select appropriate vocabulary choices and language structures. Consider how you will use specific aesthetic features and stylistic devices to prompt both emotional and critical responses in your reader/s.

You can also use this time to choose the genre or type of imaginative text you will create. Appropriate written text types might include:

- short story
- monologue
- script
- narrative intervention

Note that poetry is *not* an acceptable text type.

Before planning your response, you should read the objectives and requirements for this assessment task in the English syllabus. You should also review the information in Chapters 6–8 of this textbook.

Criteria

There are three criteria against which your assessment will be marked. The potential marks for each criterion are approximately the same. Read the syllabus carefully to be sure of the requirements of each criterion and the standards within them.

Knowledge application: this criterion focuses on how you respond to the designated purpose or focus. This includes your ability to create appropriate representations and perspectives for the task, how well you use cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs to underpin your text and position your reader, and how you use aesthetic features and stylistic devices to achieve purposes and produce audience responses. (Objectives 3, 4, 5; 9 marks)

Organisation and development: this criterion focuses on the purposefulness, structure, organisation, sequence and cohesiveness of your work. Your written response needs to use the appropriate patterns and conventions for that type of imaginative text, be selective in use and synthesis of subject matter, organise and sequence that subject matter for maximum effect in achieving purposes and supporting perspective/s. (Objectives 1, 2, 6, 7, 8; 8 marks)

Textual features: this criterion focuses on the strength and power of your writing and discernment of your choices. You need to make appropriate language choices for the purpose/s and text type. Your writing must also be grammatical and use appropriate spelling and punctuation throughout. If you write using the 'voice' of a non-standard speaker of English, your grammatical choices, spelling and punctuation need to reflect this, but otherwise you should ensure standard uses of these. (Objectives 9, 10, 11; 8 marks)



General English
syllabus
http://mea.digital/gen34_8_A

Access the
digital version
of your textbook
to download a
model creative
response.

CLOSE READING OF LITERARY TEXTS: SHAKESPEAREAN PLAY

Our close readings continue in this chapter, moving on to look at perhaps William Shakespeare's most popular play, *Hamlet*. More than just a story of madness and revenge, *Hamlet* has become one of the most influential texts in the Western literary canon, leaving its mark on all manner of literary, cultural and pop-cultural texts.

Rather than reading literary texts with the intent of eventually writing a creative response, the purpose of Chapters 9 and 10 is to prepare you to write an analytical essay. This chapter's close reading of *Hamlet* considers several aspects of the play, any of which could be developed as the focus of such an essay.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

TEXTS IN THIS CHAPTER:

TEXTS IN CONTEXTS

- explore the personal, social and cultural contexts of literary texts
- investigate the role of literature and its power to reflect and challenge perspectives
- investigate the reception of a particular literary text within different contexts

- *Hamlet* – play

LANGUAGE AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

- examine the use of aesthetic and stylistic features and their effects in texts
- consider intertextual links between 'classic' texts and their adaptations

RESPONDING TO AND CREATING TEXTS

- explore how responses to texts are shaped by an individual's contexts
- test, develop and deepen own interpretations of literary texts.





Interior of the new
Shakespeare's Globe
Theatre, London,
England

William Shakespeare

Much as we did with *Cat's Eye*, it is important to start this chapter by considering the larger context of *Hamlet*. We need to understand where *Hamlet* came from, and what the story meant in that time and place, to fully appreciate the play as a modern text. There are many elements of that context that need to be understood, not least of which is the huge influence that William Shakespeare has had over English literature and language.

Shakespeare's life

William Shakespeare, the son of glove-maker John Shakespeare, was born in 1564 in the market town of Stratford-upon-Avon in England.

Little is known for certain about Shakespeare's early life. He likely attended grammar school at the King's New School when aged about seven, although his name does not appear in the school register. There he would have learned rhetoric and grammar (that is, Latin grammar) and studied the works of Latin authors such as Seneca, Cicero and Virgil. His father became involved in local government, and was later effectively mayor of the town, but his fortunes turned for the worse when he was fined for trading in wool and money-lending when William was about 13.

Shakespeare married at age 18. After the birth of his three children, he ventured to London, where he became associated with the theatre as an actor and playwright in 1592. In 1594, he was a founding member and managing partner of a theatrical company, the Lord Chamberlain's Men. The company built its own theatre, the Globe, in 1599, and Shakespeare's great work *Hamlet* was first performed there in 1600/1601. In 1603, on the accession of King James I, Shakespeare's theatrical troupe was renamed The King's Men.

Shakespeare's plays made him famous, but he was able to retire as a wealthy man because of his entrepreneurship – he had invested in both the Globe and another nearby theatre, Blackfriars. Upon his retirement, Shakespeare moved back to Stratford-upon-Avon, where he died of unknown causes in 1616.

Shakespeare and the theatre

William Shakespeare lived at the point when the medieval values of the past butted with the attitudes, beliefs and values of a world fully embracing the Renaissance. During this time, the authority of God, monarchs and the church were questioned. New classes within society were being formed as a result of the rise of capitalism, the formation of the British East India Company and the wealth coming from naval exploration. And all these changes affected the theatre.

This was a time when great strides were made in theatre and the writing of tragedy in particular. Brilliant playwrights such as Thomas Kyd and Christopher Marlowe contributed significantly to the development of Elizabethan theatre forms, presentation and use of poetic language.

Street art portrait by artist Jimmy C painted on Bankside near the Globe Theatre to commemorate Shakespeare's 400th birthday



caesura

a break between words within a metrical foot, or a pause near the middle of a line

declaim

to speak aloud rhetorically; to make a formal speech

The development of blank verse was an essential element of this, freeing the writer from the rigidity of rhyme and giving them scope to experiment with run-on lines (enjambment) and **caesura**, resulting in a more natural rhythm in language. Marlowe led the way with these experiments in language, but Shakespeare became the master.

Shakespeare used many resources of rhetoric but his great skill was making poetic language seem natural. His characters do not just **declaim** words; they think, change ideas mid-stream and manipulate the patterns of language for emotional and psychological effect.

Shakespeare, renowned today as a dramatist, is believed to have also acted the roles of the Ghost and the Player King when *Hamlet* was first performed. The role of the Ghost was reputedly his best performance.



Portrait of William Shakespeare, attributed to John Taylor (circa 1600–1610)

Shakespeare's cultural impact

Shakespeare's legacy is 38 plays in three genres (histories, comedies and tragedies), a collection of 154 sonnets, and two lengthy narrative poems. Among the plays are the four great tragedies, *Hamlet*, *Macbeth*, *Othello* and *King Lear*, written at the peak of his career (between 1599 and 1607). These works have been studied, performed, adapted and enjoyed for more than 400 years.

Shakespeare's work forms a major part not only of the cultural heritage of English-speaking nations, but also of many other nations throughout the world. The breadth of his reach was shown by the World Shakespeare Festival in 2012, which featured performances of nearly every one of his plays, presented by theatrical companies from 35 countries and performed in 37 languages.

The modern Globe Theatre, constructed in London, caters for global tourism. Like the play, it has also been reproduced, and there are 'Globes' in Tokyo, Odessa (Texas) and Berlin. Recently, Pop-up Globe theatres sprang up in Sydney, Melbourne and Auckland.

England has a Royal Shakespeare Company, whose home is Stratford-upon-Avon. Australia has a number of theatrical Shakespeare companies, the best-known of which is the Bell Shakespeare Company. Founded in 1960, the Bell Shakespeare Company is based in Sydney but performs nationally, and regularly offers performances for schools.

ACTIVITY

Journal reflection

- 1 How does this information match with your prior understanding of Shakespeare? On what was your understanding based?
- 2 What aspect of the above information most interests or surprises you? Articulate why.

Hamlet

Hamlet is seen by many as Shakespeare's masterpiece, written a mere 10 years after his career began. This was not long after the death of his 11-year-old son, Hamnet, and at a time when his 70-year-old father was frail and facing death. For Anthony Holden, a biographer of Shakespeare:

Hamlet marks a sea-change in Shakespeare's view of himself and his abilities. Everything he had written suddenly seems like preparation for this moment, as he reaches higher and wider than ever before, going out of his way to show off every aspect of his consummate art, dazzling his audience with flights of fancy and psycho-analytical wisdom whose mysteries will never be fully fathomed.

For many actors, the role of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark, marks the pinnacle of a career. Asked why the play is performed so often around the world, John Caird, the Director of *Hamlet* at Tokyo Metropolitan Theatre, said:

This is Shakespeare's most profound philosophical play about what life is worth and the meaning of life.

Hamlet's cultural impact

Often quoted in popular culture, the play has significant cultural influence and has inspired numerous other texts, from novels to short stories to television, including:

- Iris Murdoch's *The Black Prince*
- Ian McEwan's *Nutshell*
- Margaret Atwood's story 'Gertrude Talks Back'
- Tom Stoppard's play *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*
- *The Simpsons'* episode on *Hamlet* in 'Tales from the Public Domain'
- the *Star Trek* (original series) episode 'The Conscience of the King' (along with references in several other *Star Trek* episodes and movies)
- the song 'Pull Me Under' by American metal band Dream Theater
- the *Onimusha* video game series.

In theatre, Shakespeare's play has spawned spinoffs such as *Qui Est La*, *Elsinore* and *Hamlet: A Monologue*. The latter two are one-man shows featuring the director. They are also extrapolations beyond the text – similar in nature to the creative responses of your own work in your previous assessment task.

While some modern productions of *Hamlet* set it in the original time and place, adaptations and revisions are very common. Many productions update the play to the present day, with modern dress and stage setting. Others move the story to different locations (Japan, China, Britain, Russia) or time periods (World War II, the 1970s, the Cold War, the near future). Women have been cast in the title role, including Judi Dench, Angela Winkler, Stella Doufexis and Zainab Jah.



Player King and Player Queen as interpreted by the Ninagawa Company production of *Hamlet* at the Barbican Theatre, London, in 2015



Red Bull's Shakespeare ad
http://mea.digital/gen34_9_1

Hamlet has also inspired artworks. French painter Eugene Delacroix (circa 1834–43) produced a series of 13 lithographs of key moments from the play, constructing Hamlet romantically as a fine-featured and sensitive prince. Multiple graphic novel adaptations exist, including a 2010 work by Australian artist Nicki Greenberg that constructs the characters as ink-blot beings in a world of shifting textures and detachable faces.

In the world of commerce, Shakespeare has moved out of the theatre and become a brand. The writer and his work have been appropriated by popular culture to sell a broad range of products – not only books but also chocolates, clothing, drinks and Valentine's Day cards. You can follow the margin link to watch a 2010 advertising campaign for Red Bull, constructing Shakespeare as a genius because he drinks an 'elixir'.

The W. H. Smith & Son advertisement (on the following page) provides an interesting use of Shakespeare to promote the stock in this British chain of bookshops. In stylised Elizabethan attire, he is depicted browsing in a modern bookshop.



Horatio holds the dying Hamlet (Zainab Jah), Philadelphia's Wilma Theatre, 2015

DISCUSSION

Advertising Shakespeare

- 1 Consider carefully the representation of Shakespeare in this advertisement. What do you consider to be the purpose of this use of the literary giant? To what degree would the image appeal to and entice readers to examine the copy? How is the significance and value of Shakespeare and his work constructed in the copy? Pay attention to and interpret tone.
- 2 How does this advertisement construct a relationship with the reader as a potential W. H. Smith & Son customer? How effective do you consider that to be?
- 3 Compare this 20th-century advertisement to Red Bull's use of Shakespeare. How is the significance of Shakespeare and his work constructed in this advertisement? How is the audience portrayed?
- 4 Reflect on the use of Shakespeare in these contexts. What assumptions are made about the value of his brand?

We've come a long way since the days of the Bard

Paperback editions of Hamlet? Shakespeare *would* be surprised!
And what a time he'd have in a modern Smith's bookshop.
Finding his own books, books by his contemporaries,
books by authors totally unknown to him.
Finding reference books, children's books — shelf after shelf
of important literary works. He'd enjoy, just as we do,
the delight of browsing around a really first-class bookshop. Smith's.

W. H. Smith & Son will be represented at the festivals in Stratford, Edinburgh and London for the sale of reading matter and souvenirs of special interest.

W. H. SMITH & SON

Advertisement from W. H. Smith & Son

Hamlet in context

A key aspect of critically analysing a literary text is understanding the context in which the text was created. Without knowing what social, political, religious or other factors influence the author/creator, we cannot effectively analyse the perspectives they present or the representations they make of characters and concepts.

Shakespeare was born in the middle of the 16th century and lived into the 17th century, so wrote his plays in a period of immense change. Before fully engaging with *Hamlet*, we need to examine that period, and consider how it shaped the creation and potential meaning of the play.

Hamlet's political context

The 16th century was a period of political uncertainty, resulting from the religious Reformation in England during the reigns of the Protestant Kings Henry VIII and his son, Edward. The latter's short reign was followed by that of his Catholic half-sister, Mary. Henry VIII established the Protestant Church of England, but his daughter Mary reinstated the Roman Catholic faith. It was a dangerous time for those on the wrong side of the dominant religion.

With Queen Elizabeth's accession to the throne in 1558, and the reinstatement of Protestantism, the issue increasingly became that of succession. The great fear, particularly as the unmarried Elizabeth's reign neared its end, was that there would be an **interregnum** – a period of violence – after her death from rivals for her throne. However, the transition to James I (James IV of Scotland) was smooth.

interregnum

the interval in which a state has no ruler (or only a temporary sovereign) before accession of the successor



Procession portrait of Elizabeth I of England, attributed to Robert Peake, 1601

Hamlet, along with several other plays, was written during a time when discussion of the succession was prohibited but still a hot topic of debate, with some believing that James, a foreigner from Scotland, should not succeed Elizabeth.

We can see these concerns surface as themes in Shakespeare's work. *King Lear* and *Macbeth* concern themselves specifically with the idea of succession, while in *Hamlet*, King Hamlet's brother Claudius is the successor, rather than his son, Prince Hamlet. This reflects the Danish practice of elected monarchy, but an English audience of the time might well have read this election as **usurpation**, despite Claudius' careful thanking of the members of the court for their support in his election.

Other references in *Hamlet* to succession include:

- Hamlet referring to Claudius 'popp[ing] in between th'election and my hopes'
- Claudius' spies, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, quizzing Hamlet on his odd behaviour, suggesting that his statement about 'lack[ing] advancement' is inaccurate since he has the 'voice of the king himself for your succession in Denmark'
- the Ghost demanding revenge for his 'foul and most unnatural murder', a sure means of usurpation.

There are other moments of usurpation suggested in the play, such as Hamlet's failed attempt to kill Claudius while he is at prayer and Hamlet's unfortunate killing of Polonius in the expectation that he is Claudius behind the arras.

When political stability is reinstated at the end of the play, it is because of the accession of Prince Fortinbras of Norway, fresh from leading his army to a dispute with Poland over land. Even though that elevation is approved by the dying Hamlet, Denmark is in a state of readiness for war throughout the play because Fortinbras, a claimant to disputed Danish territory, fails to honour a ratified treaty.

A key aspect of Elizabethan and Jacobean monarchy was adherence to the notion of the 'Great Chain of Being'. This was viewed as the natural order, the ways things simply had to be ordered within society. God formed the apex of the Chain, with the monarch being God's representative on Earth.

Audiences of the time were very attuned to evidence in texts or performances that would suggest disruption to the natural order. Such evidence comes in the very first line of *Hamlet*, with the challenge made to the sentry. The first scene tells us of the arming for war and Marcellus makes his prophetic judgement of the rottenness of Denmark. Killing a king was not just **regicide**; for many it was fundamentally **deicide**.

usurpation
the wrongful seizure and occupation of a throne

regicide
the killing of a monarch

deicide
the killing of a god

Hamlet's social context

The era in which Shakespeare wrote was also shaped by the Renaissance, a period in which there was a challenge to the traditional attitudes, beliefs and values that dominated from the medieval era and Catholicism. Rather than, for example, continuing the performance of medieval 'mystery plays' – a cycle of religious dramas – there was a 'rebirth' of interest in the secular plays of ancient Greece and Rome. (Note how Hamlet invites the players to perform famous speeches from such classical plays.)

Humanism, a belief system associated with the Renaissance, was founded on scepticism (the use of reason rather than superstition) and the belief that the lives of people should be improved rather than waiting for a happy afterlife. Towards the end of the Renaissance period, humanists not only believed in questioning previously accepted ideas, in much the same way that Hamlet questions beliefs and attitudes, but also maintained that it was difficult to discern the truth.

In the play, Hamlet has little respect for social status; he treats Polonius (an authority figure) with disdain but values the wit of the gravedigger, a common man. Hamlet is constructed as being concerned about uncertainty, ambiguity and the difficulty in discerning appearance from reality. This questioning attitude shapes Hamlet's observation to Horatio that:

There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio,
Than are dreamt of in your philosophy.

Hamlet's religious context

During the reign of Elizabeth I, Protestantism became firmly entrenched in England. We are told that Prince Hamlet has studied at the University of Wittenburg. Wittenburg is noteworthy as the seat of the Protestant Reformation, and a centre of Humanism.

Protestantism, as a reaction to established doctrine, raised questions about the Catholic idea of Purgatory. This had been conceptualised as a prison between Heaven (where those who had confessed or lived good lives were rewarded) or Hell (where sinners were punished). In Purgatory, those who had not confessed and been absolved of their sins spent time in atonement for those sins after which they were 'purified'. Where Protestants rejected the idea of Purgatory, Catholics in England maintained some adherence to the view of this place of tortured imprisonment.

Purgatory as depicted in *The Coronation of the Virgin* (1454) by Enguerrand Quarton, with sinners being harassed by devils but comforted by angels



For Hamlet, a central concern is the **veracity** of the Ghost, indicating the tension within the play between ‘new’ rational ideas about ghosts and Purgatory and ‘old’ superstitious ones. The Ghost seems to be a construct shaped by the older ideas of Catholic England: ‘Doom’d for a certain term to walk the night/Till the foul crimes done in my days of nature/Are burnt and purg’d away’ in a prison-house, the secrets of which he is forbidden to reveal.

veracity
accuracy and
truthfulness

Hamlet, meanwhile, is also aware of the possibility that the Ghost may ‘be a devil’ disguised to entrap him into wrongdoing – a Protestant notion, as was the idea that anyone seeing ‘ghosts’ was deluded. In Hamlet’s doubts, we see some of the confused allegiances of Elizabethans to the ‘old’ religion in the world of the ‘new’.

James Shapiro, Shakespeare Scholar in Residence at New York’s Public Theater, frames the issue this way:

Born into a world in which the old religion had been replaced by the new and, like everybody else, living in nervous anticipation of the imminent end of Elizabeth’s reign and the Tudor dynasty, Shakespeare’s sensitivity to moments of epochal change was both extraordinary and understandable. In *Hamlet* he perfectly captures such a moment, conveying what it means to live in the bewildering space between familiar past and murky future.

ACTIVITY

Elizabethan concerns

- 1 In your reflective journal, write in your own words about the meaning of each of the following key concepts, explaining their importance for Elizabethans.
 - Succession
 - Humanism
 - Attitudes to ghosts
- 2 Reflect on the significance of *one* of these for contemporary Australia.
- 3 How does each of the previous images – the coronation of Elizabeth I and the image of purgatory – convey to you a sense of the issues of the period?

Hamlet’s literary context

Another significant context in which to analyse *Hamlet* is its literary context, and the literary and theatrical world within which it was written.

Elizabethan England was a highly literate society, at least by historical standards – not only could most of the nobles and gentry read and write, but so could many of the growing middle classes. The theatre was an incredibly popular form of entertainment, and members of all social classes loved plays, music and other public performances.

This is the context in which *Hamlet* was created, and understanding that context illuminates the story, characters and themes of the play.

Hamlet's precursors

As well as being shaped by ideas and uncertainties present at the time of writing, *Hamlet* is shaped by at least two earlier texts – Saxo Grammaticus's 13th-century work *Gesta Danorum* (printed in Latin as *Danorum Regum heroumque Historiae* in 1514, and translated by Christiern Pederson), and *Ur-Hamlet* (meaning 'Before Hamlet'), an Elizabethan predecessor of Shakespeare's play.

Gesta Danorum is a work of 16 books that tell stories of Danish history. In it, Saxo Grammaticus (that is, 'Saxo the Grammarian') presents the Norse legend of Amleth, the 'ancestor' in literary terms of Hamlet. Central elements of *Hamlet* are provided by Saxo in *Amleth*:

- the villain of the piece (Feng) kills his brother (King Horwendil), taking his throne and marrying his wife (Gerutha)
- the dead king's young son Amleth pretends to be mad, spending years maintaining this guise before he can achieve his revenge
- the new king uses three strategies to ascertain if the prince is mad: a young woman as temptress, a spy who hides in the queen's bedroom where he is killed (and dismembered), and two retainers who escort the prince to England but die when outsmarted by their victim
- the hero arrives home during a funeral to achieve revenge for his father's murder, through swords being exchanged in a fight, and thus becomes king.

In the text, it is clear that Amleth, by playing the long game, is successful because he is intelligent, patient and can act decisively.

Shakespeare adapts and expands on these central elements by:

- adding a ghost (and a major problem to be resolved)
- adding uncertainty about the uncle's role in his brother's death (in Saxo, the regicide was public knowledge)
- adding the Laertes character and making the young woman his sister who goes mad and (possibly) kills herself
- adding dimension to the character of Hamlet, who is constructed as someone who is melancholic and given to reflection
- adding colourful minor characters like Osric and the gravediggers
- adding the play within the play to resolve the prince's dilemma
- changing the ending: Amleth becomes king, but tragically Hamlet dies
- adding the threat of war with Norway and Fortinbras, the prince of another state, who becomes King of Denmark when the Royal House of Denmark is eliminated.

These inclusions and changes are aspects of the text that we should carefully ponder, thinking about Shakespeare's overarching motives.

Ur-Hamlet, a known but lost predecessor of *Hamlet*, is believed to have been written by Thomas Kyd and was performed in about 1587. The pieces of textual information that survive are the presence of a character called Hamlet who 'walks for the most part in black under the cover of gravity' and a ghost who exhorted 'Hamlet, revenge!'

What is evident is that this lost play was being performed in London at the time Shakespeare arrived there from Stratford. He is even likely to have performed in this early version since it became part of the repertoire of the Lord Chamberlain's Men in about 1594.

ACTIVITY

Shakespeare's refinements

- 1 What are, in your view, the most significant aspects of Shakespeare's refinements of these earlier stories?
- 2 Reflect, and elaborate in a few paragraphs, on at least three refinements that signal Shakespeare's potential deeper purposes in the play.

Elizabethan revenge tragedy

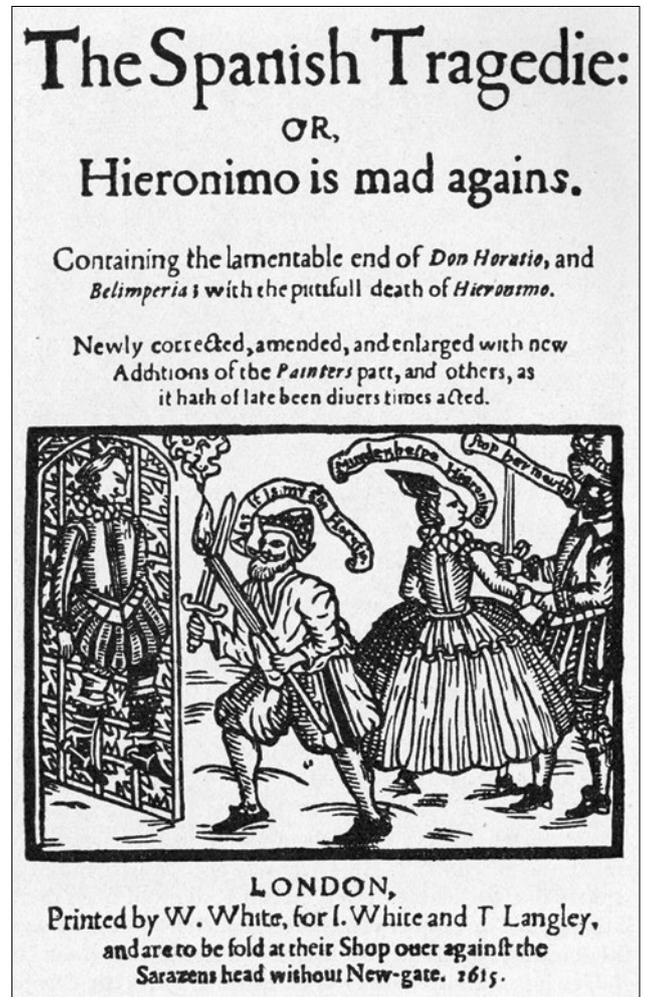
Another major influence on Shakespeare's play was the popular genre of *revenge tragedy*, a staple of the Elizabethan stage. Shakespeare's contemporary Thomas Kyd effectively established this genre with his play *The Spanish Tragedy* (1587). Kyd's play has a ghost, a loyal friend called Horatio, a female who commits suicide and a brother who kills his sister's lover – all key elements in Shakespeare's later play.

In *Hamlet*, the Ghost activates the revenge plot with his exhortation to Prince Hamlet – 'So art thou to revenge, when thou shalt hear' and subsequent demands that his son 'Revenge his foul and most unnatural murder'. Laertes' response to the king later is, 'Let come what comes; only I'll be revenged/Most thoroughly for my father.'

Roman philosopher and dramatist Seneca was a key influence on the development of Elizabethan revenge tragedies – the bloodthirstiness of Seneca had a particular appeal. One of his key features was cannibalism, seen in Shakespeare's early tragedy *Titus Andronicus*; other attributes were long-winded monologues and corpse-littered stages.

As the Elizabethan revenge tragedy developed, its conventions settled on these expected ingredients:

- a ghost demanding vengeance
- a play within a play or a dumb show (a piece of dramatic mime)
- a bloodthirsty central character bent on revenge (known as the *revenger*)
- madness (real or feigned) as the revenger determines their approach to revenge
- delay in enactment of the revenge
- soliloquies
- key revenge elements such as spies, poison, forgeries, duels and violent deeds
- deaths throughout the plot
- a bloodbath at the end, including the death of the revenger.



Cover of the 1615 printing of Thomas Kyd's play *The Spanish Tragedy*

As the revenge tragedy evolved, Elizabethan audiences would have expected certain structural conventions. Revenge tragedies consisted of five acts, with each act having a specific function as described here.

- ACT 1: EXPOSITION – the establishment of the motivation for revenge (usually embodied by a ghost)
- ACT 2: ANTICIPATION – detailed planning of the revenge takes place
- ACT 3: CONFRONTATION – after the increase in tension, there is a climactic confrontation between the revenger and his target
- ACT 4: DELAY – the revenger fails to act, and this hesitation becomes a significant aspect of their later downfall
- ACT 5: COMPLETION or RESOLUTION – the revenge is accomplished, with multiple deaths occurring

DISCUSSION

The Revengers

- 1 Identify other characters who are represented as revengers in *Hamlet*. Explain how, with Hamlet, they function in the play to offer different perspectives on revenge.
 - 2 Identify Shakespeare's use of the conventional elements of revenge tragedy. Discuss how he adheres to or adapts these conventions. Explain why you think Shakespeare may have challenged certain conventions.
 - 3 The revenge theme of the play is enlarged by the reference to Pyrrhus (the ancient Greek general and statesman). During the scene between Hamlet and the Players, there is a reference to Pyrrhus, who sought to avenge his father, Achilles, killed by Paris, son of Priam. He is exhorted to revenge by the 'shade' (ghost) of his father. A bloodthirsty Pyrrhus seeks revenge on Priam and his family by hiding in the Trojan Horse and entering the castle where he kills Priam at an altar. Like Hamlet, Fortinbras and Laertes, Pyrrhus is another son seeking to avenge his father. How does the allusion to the story of Pyrrhus add to the representation of Hamlet as a revenger?
-

ACTIVITY

The conventions of Elizabethan revenge tragedy

- 1 Summarise each act of *Hamlet* in terms of how it aligns with the five-act structure of revenge tragedies. Also note any instances where Shakespeare deviates from or elaborates on the conventions of revenge tragedies.
 - 2 Write 3–4 paragraphs explaining how the conventional revenger's delay in enacting revenge is affected by Hamlet's doubt about the veracity of the Ghost, as well as by his introspective reflections.
-

Key themes – revenge and tragedy

Given its antecedents in revenge tragedy, we can consider *Hamlet* in light of both parts of that phrase – revenge and tragedy. Both of these are key themes of the play, with complex treatments, and each (or both) could be the focus of any analytical response.

Shakespearean tragedy

Hamlet is influenced by Elizabethan revenge tragedy, but it has significant differences from other works in that genre. For example, the revenger in a revenge tragedy is not an heroic or sympathetic character, while Hamlet is. It is perhaps more accurate to consider *Hamlet* as an example of *Shakespearean tragedy* – a genre that, of course, Shakespeare invented.

Shakespearean tragedy had its own influences, of course. It was in part shaped by the precepts of Greek philosopher Aristotle (384–322 BCE), an earlier definer of tragedy. For him, tragedy involved the failures and great suffering of a hero who declines from a position of social significance and audience admiration. After that decline comes the hero's death, usually with a lot of collateral damage. These deaths bring **catharsis** – a release of strong emotion – followed by the audience's sense of relief when order is restored.

According to Aristotle's *Poetics*:

Tragedy is a form of drama exciting the emotions of pity and fear [thus effecting a catharsis]. Its action should be single and complete, presenting a reversal of fortune, involving persons renowned and of superior attainments, and it should be written in poetry embellished with every kind of artistic expression.

catharsis
a relief or release from
built-up emotions

Shakespeare deviated from Aristotle's prescriptions about action and instead focused on character. In *Hamlet*, it is not action that draws attention but Hamlet's soliloquies. Nevertheless, readers of *Hamlet* are likely to have reservations about some of his actions, especially Hamlet's behaviour after his erroneous killing of Polonius and his dismissive attitude to the deaths of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. However, his generous attitudes to Laertes and Fortinbras in the final scene are likely to restore respect.

A conventional reading of Shakespearean tragedy has been that the hero has a *fatal flaw* that leads to his tragic downfall. In many conventional readings, Hamlet has been deemed to have a fatal flaw in his *procrastination*; this has produced dominant readings of the character as a melancholic procrastinator. Early 20th-century critic A C Bradley also had a significant influence on interpretations of the play, attributing Hamlet's failure to act to the depth of his depression about his mother's marriage to Claudius.

The notion of the 'fatal flaw' is not something many modern day interpreters subscribe to. John Caird, director of the 2017 *Hamlet* in Tokyo, is one of these:

Many people have tried to look for the flaw in Hamlet, but there isn't one. He is a victim of his circumstances. [...] his problem is not his personality; he's just a man to whom some horrible things happened.



Hamlet encounters the Ghost in this 1890 illustration by Robert Dudley

Hamlet's dilemma, and the tragic core of the play, is that if he does nothing the evil suffusing the court of Denmark spreads, but if he acts he is reduced to murdering like Claudius. He knows as soon as he makes his promise to the Ghost that his position is untenable: 'O cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right'.

Attitudes to revenge in Elizabethan England

Revenge tragedy in Elizabethan England may have been fashionable, but what were contemporary attitudes to revenge?

In the pre-Tudor period (the 1400s), personal revenge might have been tolerated – but in a state with a head of government (the monarch) and a legal system, personal revenge had to be viewed as illegal and highly disruptive to social order. *Hamlet* is apparently set in pre-Tudor times, and in a foreign country (Denmark), but it is shaped by the attitudes of the Elizabethan audiences it was written for.

If the play takes a position, it may be that the versions of revenge chosen by Hamlet and Laertes both fail. Fortinbras achieves power not through war but because, arriving to pay homage to the Danish King, he is able to capitalise on the elimination of the royal house of Denmark due to the court's corruption, scheming and internal division.

A ACTIVITY

Attitudes to revenge

Compare and contrast the attitudes to revenge of Hamlet and the characters Laertes, Pyrrhus and Fortinbras. In doing so, take into account the effect of these characters on our reading of Hamlet's character and the perspective he offers on revenge.

Hamlet and revenge

In a modern rereading of the play, literature scholar Kiernan Ryan asks us to consider possibilities for Hamlet's delay in revenge beyond some character defect. Hamlet achieves his revenge on Claudius only by accident, as a side feature of the plot with Laertes going awry.

Ryan's reading draws attention to the fact that Hamlet does not procrastinate in relation to certain actions, such as killing Polonius (thinking it was Claudius) or authorising the killing of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern. His argument is that:

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare deliberately sabotages the whole genre of revenge tragedy by creating a tragic protagonist who refuses, for reasons he can't fathom himself, to play the stock role in which he's been miscast by the world he happens to inhabit. Shakespeare makes his purpose plain by juxtaposing Hamlet with Fortinbras and especially Laertes, two conventional sons who are also determined to avenge their fathers, but who don't have the least scruple about doing so. He makes it plainer still by refusing to reduce the cause of Hamlet's tragedy to 'the stamp of one defect' in him, because that would mean pinning the blame on the protagonist alone, instead of calling into question the society that trapped him in such an impossible predicament in the first place.

ACTIVITY

Take a position

Make a decision: Does the tragedy of the play result from Hamlet's 'fatal flaw'? Or does the shaping of the events of the play suggest that Shakespeare was, in fact, interrogating the whole convention of revenge tragedy?

Produce detailed evidence for both positions before making your decision. You will need to consider how the structure, use of conventions, characterisation, attitudes, beliefs and values, key motifs and use of language as a whole contribute to the meaning invited.

In a 3–4 paragraph response, summarise and justify your decision.

Representation of place in *Hamlet*

Hamlet is primarily set in Elsinore Castle, Denmark – an Anglicised translation of the Danish town of Helsingør, home of Kronborg Castle.

Elsinore is not the only setting; there is a scene somewhere else in Denmark, on a plain where Hamlet meets the Norwegian Army. Off-stage, there's also a rather unbelievable intervention by pirates to save Hamlet on his way to England. (This unrealistic device is known as a *deus ex machina*, or 'god from the machine'.)



William Powell as Hamlet
encountering the Ghost,
Wilson, c. 1768–69

Elsinore as a rotten world

In the play, we see a flawed society, characterised as ‘rotten’ and an ‘unweeded garden’. From the opening moments of the play, in the first six lines, it is evident the world of the play is ‘out of joint’ as the soldier coming to take over the watch challenges the sentry on guard duty. An Elizabethan audience would recognise from these few lines a disruption to the order inherent in the notion of the **divine right of kings**.

This sense of order was well-known to all and any disruptions to the ‘natural order’ would be viewed as problematic and destabilising. Indeed, it is the soldier Marcellus who first articulates the idea that ‘something is rotten in the state of Denmark’, because the Ghost of the late king has appeared to officers on the watch. This disturbance calls into question the legitimacy of the sovereign.

divine right of kings

a belief that a king’s right to rule derives directly from God, not from the people, and that he should therefore be obeyed in all things

Elsinore as a treacherous state

As the main setting, Elsinore produces a claustrophobic atmosphere. The tense atmosphere is evoked immediately with the first words of the play, which establish that ‘the time is out of joint’.

Aside from the societal tension caused by the threat of war, Denmark is constructed as a place riven by suspicion and subterfuge. Consider the following elements of the play.

- Surveillance (not only of Hamlet and Ophelia by Claudius and Polonius, but also of Laertes by his father’s servant)
- The hiring of one-time friends of Prince Hamlet as spies
- Regicide
- Poisonings (deliberate and accidental)
- The manipulation of courtiers by Claudius
- Moral corruption (the remarriage of the queen to her late husband’s brother was read as incest at the time)
- Treachery
- Drunkenness

In some modern film and stage productions, these feelings of tension and paranoia are strengthened by use of a variety of surveillance techniques. Other, more traditional productions have represented Elsinore as riddled with secret doors, hidden passages and spyholes.

Elsinore is also a world of lies and backstabbing. Socially ambitious characters such as Claudius, Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, as well as possibly Gertrude (depending on interpretation) or even Fortinbras, are willing to use any means to secure their advantage.

ACTIVITY

Something rotten in the state of Denmark

- 1 From your close reading of the play, provide evidence to support the reading of Elsinore as a diseased society. Use the table to aid you in your identification of key events or use of language that shows Denmark's rottenness.

Attribute associated with rottenness of the society	Event	Participants	Language – key image or phrase
Suspicion			
Subterfuge			
Surveillance			
Espionage			
Regicide			
Poisoning			
Moral corruption			
Treachery			
Drunkenness			

- 2 Select an attribute from your completed table that you consider best exemplifies the rottenness of the state of Denmark. Write a paragraph analysing the significance of this attribute in the construction of place. For example, you might begin with something like:

Marcellus' observation that 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark' is enhanced by the construction of the kingdom as a place where poisoning and regicide occur.

Claudius and Gertrude in the Ninagawa Company production of *Hamlet* at the Barbican Theatre, London in 2015, in which the play was performed in Japanese with English subtitles



Shakespeare and language

eloquent

fluent, expressive or appropriate speech

Being **eloquent** was important to the Elizabethans, and Shakespeare's audiences would have appreciated his virtuoso performances with language. He could write lines that were strongly figurative and highly rhetorical, but his words could also be simple, plain and unadorned – as in 'To be or not to be', which nevertheless probes the complex issue of existence and afterlife.

Hamlet is set in a royal court, where diplomacy and formality are usually necessary – but in this particular context, subterfuge is a requirement not only of thriving politically but also of survival. Where the elevated rhetoric of court is needed, so too is language that can be used as a protective veneer of civility.

Prince Hamlet is a character who loves language and he, like his writer, uses it skilfully for different effects. Hamlet uses his words to be sarcastic, brutal, coarse, insolent; to berate himself, to grieve, to reason, to show off his wit, to puzzle on the meaning of existence; to show sensitivity, admiration, forgiveness, nobility as well as disdain and contempt; and, to philosophise and to die.

As a master of his craft, Shakespeare drew on a wide repertoire of poetic and rhetorical devices. He often uses **syntactic inversion** and elevated poetic diction alongside imperatives, **apostrophes** and personification. Readers need to be attentive to the diversity of language resources he uses to intensify meaning and emotion.

Shakespeare uses many devices in *Hamlet*, and we examined a selection of them in Chapter 6 (pp. 147–50). But there are even more devices used in the play that warrant further examination.

syntactic inversion

reversal of the normal order of words and phrases in a sentence

apostrophe

a figure of speech in which a character addresses an absent person, an inanimate object or an abstract concept

Metaphor and simile

Metaphors and similes are important aspects of Shakespeare's use of figurative language. They not only create word pictures and sensory impressions but also construct atmosphere, theme and attitude to characters. Consider just how many metaphors and similes appear in Hamlet's 'What a piece of work is man' monologue:

I have of late – but wherefore I know not – lost all my mirth, forgone all custom of exercises, and indeed, it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory; this most excellent canopy the air, look you, this brave o'er hanging firmament, this majestical roof, fretted with golden fire: why, it appeareth no other thing to me, than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is man, How noble in reason, how infinite in faculty, In form and moving how express and admirable, In action how like an angel, In apprehension how like a god, The beauty of the world, The paragon of animals. And yet to me, what is this quintessence of dust? Man delights not me; no, nor woman neither; though by your smiling you seem to say so.

Key images

Three key images in *Hamlet* assume symbolic status: the unweeded garden, the book, and the skull. The unweeded garden symbolises the corrupt court of Denmark after Hamlet's father's death. The book symbolises Hamlet's values and attitudes in the early acts of the play, while the skull symbolises mortality and death.

The book is a complex signifier of the intellect, reason and conscience. Critic Jonathon Bate sees it as representative of the gap between appearance and 'that within'. The skull is more clearly a signifier of death. Bate's interesting argument is that when Hamlet puts down the book (and thus stops philosophising about death) and picks up the skull, he becomes more resigned to the inevitability of the fate against which he has railed throughout the play. Hence, the lines beginning 'If it be not now, 'tis not to come'.



David Tennant as Hamlet (2009), contemplating the skull of Yorick

ACTIVITY

Symbolism in *Hamlet*

- 1 Explain how the book is an important symbol in the play by finding and analysing its key uses in the play. Do you agree with Bate that it is a complex image?
- 2 Explain how Yorick's skull is used (i) as a symbol of mortality and (ii) to compare and contrast the past and present Danish courts.
- 3 To what extent do you agree with Bate's proposition that, after Hamlet encounters Yorick's skull, he is more accepting of the likelihood of death? Explain in detail.

hendiadys

a figure of speech in which a complex idea is expressed by two words connected by a conjunction

Hendiadys

Hendiadys (pronounced hen-DEE-eh-dis) literally means ‘one through two’. (The adjective is *hendiadic*.) Though not a well-known or used device, it is used extensively in this play.

Shakespeare’s hendiadys are usually nouns connected by a conjunction; typically ‘and’. In the line ‘Well ratified by law and heraldry,’ the hendiadic structure is used for what could simply be expressed as ‘heraldic law’, but that would leave the line short of a syllable to shape the blank verse.

Although structurally simple and familiar – for example, ‘a good and bad day’ – Shakespeare’s language structures and patterns, combined with his use of hendiadys, can produce a feeling some have called ‘mental vertigo’. The hendiadys is thus a significant resource used to add to Hamlet’s sense of confusion and doubt. It is a rhetorical figure of speech used for emphasis, and can have the effect of slowing down the rhythm of dialogue, a disruptive effect inviting the reader or listener to pay attention. It is often used to construct Polonius’ pomposity, but equally it can simply be a useful resource for achieving iambic pentameter.

Here are just some hendiadys used by Hamlet himself:

- ‘Angels and ministers of grace defend us’
- actors are ‘the abstract and brief chronicles of the time’
- ‘the book and volume of my brain’
- ‘a fashion and a toy of blood’
- ‘the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune’
- ‘O what a rogue and peasant slave am I’
- ‘the delicate and tender prince’
- ‘it [honour] is a fantasy and a trick of fame’

Other characters also use this device over and over again:

- ‘the perfume and suppliance of a minute’ (Laertes)
- ‘the shot and danger of desire’ (Laertes)
- ‘conscience and grace to the profoundest pit’ (Laertes)
- ‘the morn and liquid dew of youth’ (Laertes)
- ‘the expectancy and rose of the fair state’ (Ophelia)
- ‘steep and thorny way to Heaven’ (Ophelia)
- ‘like a puffed and reckless libertine’ (Ophelia)
- ‘the glass of fashion and the mould of form’ (Ophelia)
- ‘encompassment and drift of question’ (Polonius)
- ‘sulf’rous and tormenting flames’ (the Ghost)
- ‘Without the sensible and true avouch of my eyes’ (Horatio)


 ACTIVITY

Hamlet and hendiadys

- 1 Explain the meaning of Hamlet's hendiadys 'the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune'. To do so, explain how the words 'slings' and 'arrows' can be read as conveying an idea of the outrageousness of fortune.
- 2 Read the following extract, in which there are two examples of hendiadys.

OPHELIA: Oh, what a noble mind is here o'erthrown!
 The courtier's, soldier's, scholar's, eye, tongue, sword,
 Th' expectancy and rose of the fair state,
 The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
 Th' observed of all observers, quite, quite down!

What is the meaning and effect of each hendiadys in Ophelia's speech? What does their use add to our understanding of *Hamlet*? How could their use be read as adding to the sense of Ophelia's own state of mind at this time?

- 3 When Polonius tells Reynaldo to spy on Laertes, what latitude is he giving the servant in rumour-mongering about his own son? How does the hendiadys convey that?
- 4 From the examples from *Hamlet* on the previous page, select five uses of hendiadys. Examine the context in which each is used and explain what you think the use of this figure of speech adds. Focus on what the effect would be if one of the two elements in the hendiadys were omitted. Write your answer clearly in a paragraph for each selected sample.

Interiority and soliloquy

Shakespeare's originality in writing a play largely scripted by its antecedents (p. 242) was in his use of language. In *Hamlet*, he used 600 words he had never used before, including ones he invented. Even for Elizabethan audiences the language may have been challenging, as he used up to 170 words or phrases in previously unknown ways.

His real achievement in this play, however, was constructing the inner workings of the human mind of the key tragic figure – the **interiority**, or inner life, of Hamlet himself.

This interiority has been the subject of academic and critical study for decades, if not longer. For critic Harold Bloom, who has made a lengthy examination of the play over his lifetime, the play's great subject matter is subjectivity and consciousness itself: for Hamlet himself, the subject is his own consciousness. For scholar James Shapiro, it is the soliloquies that are 'the part of the play that has kept it on the boards for over 400 years'.

Those two positions are not in opposition – because the themes of subjectivity and consciousness in *Hamlet* are largely communicated through soliloquies.

interiority
 the inner life and nature
 of a character

Shakespeare's construction of character identity

Prior to writing *Hamlet*, Shakespeare was established as an experienced writer of tragedies, but with this play his writing elevated to a whole new plane. Stephen Greenblatt, in his book *Will in the World: How Shakespeare Became Shakespeare*, had this to say:

The crucial breakthrough [in *Hamlet*] did not involve developing new themes or learning how to construct a shapelier, tighter plot; it had to do rather with an intense representation of inwardness called forth by a new technique of radical excision. He had rethought how to put a tragedy together – specifically he had rethought the amount of explicit psychological rationale a character needed to be strongly convincing. Shakespeare found that he could immeasurably deepen the effect of his plays [...] if he took out a key explanatory element, thereby **occluding** the rationale, motivation, or ethical principle that accounted for the action that was to unfold. The principle was not the making of a riddle to be solved, but the creation of a strategic **opacity**.

occluding
to shut in or out or off

opacity
the state of being
impenetrable or hard
to understand

In other words, Shakespeare found it useful *not* to give reasons for why characters made certain choices. For strategic opacity, Greenblatt gives the example of the inexplicable, even irrational, character decisions about love that contribute much to the comedy of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*.

In *Hamlet*, however, Shakespeare deepens the drama by not giving us a rationale for Hamlet's delay:

The key is not simply the creation of opacity, for by itself that would only create a baffling and incoherent play. Rather, Shakespeare came increasingly to rely on the inward logic, the poetic coherence that his genius and his immensely hard work had long enabled him to confer on his plays. Tearing away the structure of superficial meanings, he fashioned an inner structure through the resonant echoing of key terms, the subtle development of images, the brilliant orchestration of scenes, the complex unfolding of ideas, the intertwining of parallel plots, the uncovering of psychological obsessions.

In essence, for Greenblatt, Shakespeare understood 'what could be said and what should remain unspoken'. This influenced his representation of 'the enigma of the prince's suicidal melancholy and assumed madness'.

Close examination of soliloquies and key speeches

As we noted earlier, *Hamlet* is a play set in a royal court, where the language might be expected to be high-blown and formal, and the use of figurative language and flights of rhetoric appreciated (except, as we are shown, when taken to extreme by Polonius).

In his plays, Shakespeare used both the **aside** and the soliloquy to address the problem of allowing the audience to have access to a character's innermost thoughts and motivations. The most powerful speeches in the play are the soliloquies in which the psychological complexities of Hamlet (and Claudius, in one instance) are revealed.

In a soliloquy, a character, alone on the stage and typically in the middle of some internal struggle, is depicted as engaged in thought – revealed to the audience through spoken expression. It is a device for revealing interiority on stage; a voiceover in film would produce this effect today. The convention is that while a character might lie or misdirect in interactions with others, during a soliloquy the audience accesses the character's real thoughts and emotions.

Unlike the soliloquy, the aside is spoken by a character with other characters on the stage. Conventionally, it is understood that the others do not hear what is deemed to be thought.

There are *seven* Hamlet soliloquies in which we see him struggle with his feelings, his attitudes, his beliefs and his values. In the course of these soliloquies we learn about Hamlet's attitudes to his mother, to Claudius, to his father as well as to himself and his vow of vengeance. We learn about his attitudes to life and death and other existential questions.

When analysing these soliloquies, focus on the representation of Hamlet's vulnerabilities, anxieties, suicidal melancholy and assumed madness, and the effect of these on the outcomes of the play. You will need to consider what is said, think about why it is said, and ponder what may be omitted and why.

Construct a table (such as the one on the following page) in your reading journal to use when analysing the soliloquies. Part of the table is completed for the first soliloquy.

aside

in theatre, a part of an actor's lines not heard by others on the stage and intended only for the audience



David Tennant as Hamlet (2009), performing his first soliloquy

Soliloquy	Purpose of soliloquy	Attitudes	Beliefs	Values	Key images and literary devices
1 Oh that this too, too solid flesh (act 1, scene 2)	<i>To reveal H's mood</i>	<i>To Claudius ... To the world ...</i>	<i>About his parents' marriage ... About his mother's remarriage ... About mourning ...</i>	<i>Self-preservation (dangerous to comment) Not upsetting his mother by expressing his outrage Keeping feelings private</i>	<i>Images of weeds and decay Simile Allusion Antithesis Metaphor Symbol Juxtaposition</i>
2 O all you host of heaven! (act 1, scene 5)					
3 O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I! (act 2, scene 2)					
4 To be or not to be (act 3, scene 1)					
5 'Tis now the very witching time of night (act 3, scene 2)					
6 And so am I revenged (act 3, scene 3)					
7 How all occasions do inform against me (act 4, scene 4)					

Soliloquies and monologues do not have titles, so the usual convention is to refer to them using an extract from their first lines.

Two of the soliloquies are unpacked in this text, but for the remainder you will need to work individually to produce your reading. This will need close analysis of the imagery and specific literacy devices in each of the soliloquies.



Soliloquy: 'O, that this too, too solid flesh would melt' (act 1, scene 2)

This soliloquy gives us our first access to Hamlet's mind after a highly formal court reception, in which he was rude to the king, his uncle, and reprimanded by his mother for being too sad, too long after his father's death.

HAMLET: O that this too, too solid flesh would melt,
 Thaw, and resolve itself into a dew!
 Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
 His canon 'gainst self-slaughter! O God! O God!
 How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
 Seem to me all the uses of this world!
 Fie on't! O fie! 'tis an unweeded garden,
 That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
 Possess it merely. That it should come to this!
 But two months dead! – nay, not so much, not two:
So excellent a king; that was, to this,
Hyperion to a satyr; so loving to my mother,
 That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
 Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth!
 Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him
 As if increase of appetite had grown
 By what it fed on: and yet, within a month, –
 Let me not think on't, – Frailty, thy name is woman! –
A little month; or ere those shoes were old
With which she followed my poor father's body
Like Niobe, all tears; – why she, even she, –
O God! a beast that wants discourse of reason,
Would have mourn'd longer, – married with mine uncle,
My father's brother; but no more like my father
Than I to Hercules: within a month;
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
 Had left the flushing in her galled eyes,
 She married: – O, most wicked speed, to post
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
 It is not, nor it cannot come to good;
 But break my heart, – for I must hold my tongue!

 ACTIVITY

'O that this too, too solid flesh would melt'

- 1 How does this soliloquy construct Hamlet? Identify his main mood and the attitudes, values and beliefs expressed in this soliloquy.
- 2 How do the language and emotion of Hamlet's first soliloquy contrast with the courtly but business-like speech of Claudius earlier in the scene?

- 3 Shakespeare juxtaposes Gertrude, Claudius and Hamlet with characters from mythology (in the bold sections on the previous page). Gertrude is shown as similar to Niobe, but he uses antithesis to refer to Claudius and himself.

In comparing his mother to a mythical Greek character ('like Niobe') who wept copiously when her children were killed by the gods, the simile shows Hamlet's contempt for his mother's hypocrisy in marrying so quickly after apparently grieving in despair.

What is the purpose and effect of each antithesis?

- 4 Denmark is described as an 'unweeded garden' – Hamlet's use of this metaphor introduces a dominant image of the state of Denmark under the rule of his uncle. How does this imagery build on Marcellus' observation in the first scene that 'something is rotten in the state of Denmark' to help construct a theme of moral corruption?

Soliloquy: 'To be or not to be' (act 3, scene 1)

The fourth soliloquy, widely referred to as the most famous speech in literature, depicts a reflective Hamlet considering two of the central ideas of the play – doubt and death.

Hamlet frames living and dying as an antithesis – 'to be or not to be' – with 'to be' being a metonym for life or existence, while 'not to be' or (later in the speech) 'sleep' is equated with death. The speech proceeds by opposing these alternatives of living or dying.

HAMLET: **To be**, or not to be, that is the question:
Whether 'tis nobler in the mind **to suffer**
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against **a sea of troubles**
And by opposing end them. **To die – to sleep**,
No more; and by a sleep to say we end
The heart-ache and the thousand natural shocks
That flesh is heir to: 'tis a consummation
Devoutly to be wish'd. **To die, to sleep;**
To sleep, perchance to dream – ay, there's the rub:
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come,
When we have shuffled off **this mortal coil**,
Must give us pause – there's the respect
That makes calamity of so long life.
For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
Th'oppressor's wrong, the proud man's contumely,
The pangs of dispriz'd love, the law's delay,

The insolence of office, and the spurns
That patient merit of th'unworthy takes,
When he himself might his quietus make
With a bare bodkin? **Who would fardels bear,**
To grunt and sweat under a weary life,
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns, puzzles the will,
And makes us rather bear those ills we have
Than fly to others that we know not of?
Thus conscience does make cowards of us all,
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action.

A ACTIVITY**'To be or not to be'**

- 1 Examine the **bold** sections that refer to 'be-ing'. After careful interpretation (which includes looking up any unfamiliar words such as 'contumely', 'spurns' and 'fardels'), write a paragraph on how Hamlet represents life. Your topic sentence should clearly express your position on Hamlet's view of life.
- 2 Consider the following lines from the soliloquy:

Who would fardels bear,
To grunt and sweat under a weary life
But that the dread of something after death,
The undiscover'd country from whose bourn
No traveller returns

Death is constructed as an undiscovered country. What does this metaphor suggest about how Hamlet sees death? Elaborate on your response in a paragraph about how this soliloquy constructs doubt.

Benedict Cumberbatch as Hamlet (2015)



DISCUSSION

The seven soliloquies

- 1 What are your five favourite lines from these soliloquies? Explain why you picked each of these lines. Discuss similarities and differences between them. Share your response with the class to identify if there are any favoured lines among the group. Consider why this might be so.
 - 2 From your reading of the seven soliloquies, what is your interpretation of the attitudes, beliefs, values and preoccupations of the central character Hamlet?
 - 3 From your close reading of these soliloquies, as well as the rest of the play, what reason would you now give for Hamlet's motive in not killing Claudius?
-

Characterisation in *Hamlet*

The characters in *Hamlet* are rich in their diversity and complexity – not just Hamlet himself, but the other characters around him. In analysing *Hamlet*, we should think carefully about how these characters are constructed – by their action, dialogue, soliloquies and asides, interactions and relationships with other characters, and effect on others – in making decisions about characterisation and representations of identity. We need to consider what each character says about the other characters.

Daniel Maclise's 1842 engraving of Hamlet showing the guilt of Claudius



Representation and construction of Hamlet

Hamlet is constructed as a thinker, a reflective and philosophical scholar with a deep knowledge and appreciation of fields such as classical drama and theatre gossip. He is shown to be witty and perceptive with distaste for those who act falsely, yet he chooses to 'put on an antic disposition'.

Create a table in your reading journal to summarise your reading of Hamlet and his relationships with and attitudes to other characters. This will become a useful means of revision when preparing for your analytical essay.

HAMLET (the character)

Name of character	Attitude of Hamlet to this character	Hamlet's beliefs about the character	What the play omits that puzzles Hamlet (stated or inferred)	Key quotes that reflect Hamlet's attitudes to the character
Claudius	Negative Contemptuous (act 1, scene 2)	He has usurped his father's place	Did Claudius kill his father? Is the Ghost's story about this accurate?	
Gertrude	Ambivalent? He loves her, but ...		Why did Gertrude marry Claudius? When did Claudius and Gertrude start their relationship?	
Horatio	Positive	A most honourable man Utterly trustworthy		'Thou art 'een as just a man as e're my conversation coped withal'
King Hamlet				
Polonius				
Ophelia				
The Ghost				
Laertes				
Fortinbras				
Rosencrantz				
Guildenstern				
Pyrrhus (allusion only)				


ACTIVITY

Hamlet's allies

Construct a similar table to the one you created in your reading journal. In this table, extract and summarise the attitudes, beliefs and values of other characters who view Hamlet *positively*.

Name of character	Attitude of this character towards Hamlet	What beliefs about Hamlet are expressed by this character	What aspects of Hamlet's behaviour puzzle this character?	Key quotes that reflect attitudes to and beliefs about Hamlet
Gertrude				
Ophelia				
Horatio				
Fortinbras				
Marcellus				
Bernardo				

Who is Hamlet?

Hamlet is a complex character, perhaps more complex than any other character Shakespeare created.

Ophelia's description of Hamlet as 'scholar, courtier, soldier, eye, tongue, sword' constructs him very much as a Renaissance prince, while his association with Wittenberg University invites the reading of Hamlet as rationalist and sceptic. But those are far from the only ways in which he is represented.

British critic Andy Lavender argues that the play has endured as a theatrical success because:

Hamlet can be seen as sensitive, intelligent, devious, unkind, and a victim of circumstance. As someone who is both specially privileged [...] and especially wronged (by his uncle). As an insider turned into an outsider. As an amateur and a bungler in a world of professionals. As a sportsman and a thinker. A melancholic. A toff with a common touch. A prototype playboy. A mouthpiece of exquisite blank verse. And a lover of theatre and theatrical gestures, at the very moment that he is caught up in dramatic representation as a complex theatrical gesture himself.

A ACTIVITY

Hamlet's attributes

This is a whole-class activity, with students working in pairs to begin.

- 1 Each pair of students selects one of Andy Lavender's attribute descriptions of Hamlet (for example, a sportsman and a thinker). In your pair, identify key incidents, interactions and/or speeches from the play that can be used as evidence to support the attribute. Write this evidence on a large sticky note and display it on the wall of the classroom.
- 2 As a class, determine the five most defensible readings of the character. Then form into five new groups, each considering one of these readings. In your group, work together to expand the interpretation of Hamlet. Start with the large sticky note used earlier, then add your group's evidence along with any further evidence you collect from external sources.

Hamlet as a genre figure

Lavender also makes it clear that:

Of course, Hamlet is actually not a person but a *character*. He is in part a genre figure, a mix of types (revenger and malcontent). As a cipher for a range of possible embodiments, Hamlet provides rich pickings for actors and spectators alike.

Here, Lavender, a theatre scholar, alerts us to an important aspect of the play not often addressed in dominant readings. As well as the revenger, another key construct or character function in Elizabethan revenge tragedy was the *malcontent*.

The role of the malcontent is to be disgusted by the corruption of decadent courts and/or the stupidity of the courtiers. The character is unhappy, consumed by disgust at the immorality of the culture of the court. The malcontent observes and ventures opinions on or criticises the other characters and their values. Typically melancholic and witty, the malcontent character can often be constructed sympathetically.



Ben Wishaw as Hamlet (2004),
with Imogen Stubbs as Gertrude

DISCUSSION

Class debate: Hamlet – revenger or malcontent?

misogynist

expressing entrenched prejudice against women

auxiliary

a character whose role is to help and support someone else

foil

a character whose role is to contrast with someone else to highlight particular qualities

In your reading of the play, what genre figure does the representation of the character of Hamlet best fit – revenger or malcontent?

Choose a side and move to one of two sides of the room, to support either the malcontent argument or the revenger argument. In your two groups, debate your position. Every student in each group needs to advance at least one piece of evidence in support of their selected position.

After the debate, write a journal entry on how the process (or outcome) of this debate may have ‘opened your eyes’ to another possible interpretation of the character.



Helena Bonham Carter as Ophelia in the 1990 film version of *Hamlet*

Hamlet and gender

For such an attractive character overall, Hamlet has many major flaws. One of the most significant is that he displays attitudes to women that seem, to many modern readers, to be depressingly **misogynist**.

Hamlet expresses anger and contempt towards the women of the play, not only Ophelia but also his mother. Queen Gertrude is very much a marginalised character, who functions for most of the play as an **auxiliary** of her husband. Even the court chamberlain, Polonius, not only believes he can direct his daughter like a puppet master, he also believes he can direct the queen.

Yet there are so many textual silences about Gertrude that she remains a fascinating character, about whom we can conjecture much. Meanwhile, Ophelia is fundamentally a character **foil**. Her main purpose in the play is that she goes mad after her father’s death, while Hamlet only pretends to have done so after his father dies.

For modern readers, one of the unfortunate patterns of imagery in the play relates to the construction of femininity. Women generally, as well as the two specific female characters, are frequently constructed as harlots and whores.

Claudius, who has murdered the man who is not only his brother but also his king, describes his own crimes thus:

The harlot’s cheek beautied with plastering art
Is not more ugly to the thing that helps it
Than is my deed to my most painted word

Hamlet too invokes the term to berate himself for his inaction, someone who ‘Must, like a whore, unpack my heart with words/And fall a-cursing, like a very drab’.



Ophelia (1851–52) by John Everett Millais

ACTIVITY

Femininity in *Hamlet*

- 1 Examine Hamlet's attitude to his mother's remarriage, evident in act 1, scene 2 and in the closet scene. What shapes these attitudes? Would you infer that he cares for his mother? Explain with evidence.
- 2 Compare and contrast Laertes' advice to Ophelia and Hamlet's attitude to her in the 'get thee to a nunnery' scene. What motivates each man in his interaction with Ophelia? What is your evidence?
- 3 How would you describe Polonius' attitude to his daughter? Elaborate with reference to a number of instances in the play.

Interpretations of *Hamlet*

As befits a complex play, there are many possible interpretations of *Hamlet*, and many possible arguments of the play's 'true' message or meaning. On the face of it, *Hamlet* may be a revenge play, but it also:

- explores notions of the gap between appearance and reality
- ponders the effects of action and inaction
- raises the question of the sanity or insanity of the central character
- explores suicidal ideation
- comments on the decay and corruption of a culture
- reflects on death and the afterlife
- contemplates the misogyny of an otherwise attractive central character
- raises issues associated with the exercise of power.

In this section, you will be asked to reflect on and analyse how we are invited to take up positions in relation to these possible readings, by considering how particular concepts are constructed and how they might be interpreted.

Fundamentally, this will involve your own independent work, research and preparation for your analytical essay. To set the stage, though, let us consider a couple of the larger concepts explored in the play.

The deceptiveness of reality

The disparity between what *is* and what *seems* is a central concern of the play. The dark secrets of the play contrast with the pomp of court life. Claudius appears to be an effective and diplomatic king but has achieved the crown by murdering his brother.

According to *Hamlet* director John Caird:

The play deals with [...] the difference between reality and *seeming*.
You think you can see what's happening in reality, but actually, something else you're not aware of can be happening. So everybody in the play is acting. Hamlet is acting as if he doesn't know his father was killed by his uncle, and Claudius is acting as an innocent man ... and so on. Everybody is required to be an actor in their daily lives and everyone is pretending. So nothing is what it seems.

Hamlet's central problem is to know who is telling the truth. The duplicity and deception around him, and his uncertainty about the veracity of the court, force him into his 'anti disposition'.

This theme of the problematic nature of reality is introduced in his first exchanges when his mother asks why he has continued to mourn his father. In response to her query 'Why seems it so particular with thee', Hamlet asserts "Seems", madam? Nay, it is; I know not "seems".

Numerous events then explore this disjunction between appearance and reality:

- The Ghost seems to be authentic, but may not be so.
- Claudius seems to be an effective and diligent king, but is acting and hiding his guilt with masterly deception.
- Polonius sets his daughter Ophelia as a trap to ensnare Hamlet – she acts a part.
- Hamlet acts the part of a man with a diseased mind – he seems to be mad.
- Claudius seems to be praying, thus being forgiven of his sins, but cannot actually be genuinely remorseful.
- Polonius tells his servant he may go to Paris, where in spying on his son he can defame him in a number of ways (that is, he asks the servant to dissemble and pretend Laertes is dissolute).
- Laertes pretends he is participating in a demonstration duel, but it is part of a plan to kill Hamlet.
- The king acts the part of a caring stepfather, and bets on his stepson's success in the duel, but actually arranges to kill him.
- The actors perform a play within a play that duplicates the Ghost's version of King Hamlet's death.
- Rosencrantz and Guildenstern pretend to be concerned for Hamlet's wellbeing, but are actually spies in the pay of the king.

ACTIVITY

Hamlet and deception

- 1 Find where the incidents described on the previous page occur in the play. Examine the construction of each situation, paying attention to language use and how the binary oppositions of 'seeming' and 'being' are constructed in the text.
 - 2 Explain the assumptions, values and beliefs that underpin the representation/s of this conflict between appearance and reality in each incident.
-

Power

Hamlet's moral dilemma about revenge is constructed as being raised in response to the murder of a legitimate monarch by King Hamlet's ambitious brother, who lusts after his wife and his position. In Claudius' confession while praying, Shakespeare answers the question of why a man might kill, might disrupt the peace of a country and might risk his own eternal life for a crown.

On the other hand, note that King Hamlet did not risk his army in his legally ratified combat with King Fortinbras, so we might reflect on his attitude to the exercise of power. Similarly, Prince Hamlet is not constructed as being ambitious for power, although late in the play he announces himself as 'Hamlet the Dane' a title suggestive of his belief he was the legitimate king.

In these and other scenes, the play reflects on different aspects of power, different attitudes to power, and raises questions about how it is exercised. Consider the following events.

- Claudius is first seen effectively exercising his power and authority as king and making decisions in the court – seeking to solve the imminent war with Norway diplomatically, dealing with Laertes and Hamlet's requests to leave court.
- King Hamlet and King Fortinbras are referred to as exercising their power differently from the warfare of young Fortinbras, engaging in personal armed combat rather than risking their armies.
- The Ghost (using his power and authority as a king and father) commands Hamlet to avenge his murder.
- Claudius uses his diplomatic power to authorise the English king to execute Hamlet.
- Hamlet uses his father's ring to authorise the executions of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.
- Claudius murdered his brother to achieve power.
- Laertes comes at the head of a mob prepared to wrest power from Claudius.
- Fortinbras has no hesitation assuming power.
- Horatio is sarcastic – 'Oh what a king is here' – when Hamlet tells him of how he dispatched his guards. Or is he?
- Hamlet calls himself 'Hamlet the Dane', thus asserting that he is the rightful king, when he jumps into the grave.
- Political intrigue is associated with the exercise of power.
- Claudius exercises his authority/power to overturn church rules and have Ophelia given Christian funeral rites.

 ACTIVITY

Hamlet and power

- 1 Find where the above incidents/events occur in the play. Examine the representation of power – exercised either directly or indirectly – in each example.
 - 2 Explain how power is represented in the text by referring to the incidents you think best exemplify your argument.
-

 DISCUSSION

Invited readings of Hamlet

Revisit the bullet list at the start of this section (p. 265). Form into groups, each of which selects one of the themes from that list.

- 1 Scan the play to find evidence to show how this theme is represented. List all the examples, as shown in the two earlier examples.
 - 2 Identify key uses of language and aesthetic features used to construct this representation. Consider especially the relationship to characterisation and language use, such as juxtaposition, antithesis, binary opposition and symbolism.
 - 3 Discuss how and why each theme has been represented or constructed.
-

 EXTENDED RESPONSE

'Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts'

At the end of the play, Horatio, the man who is 'not passion's slave', sums up the events for Fortinbras:

So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,
And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on th' inventors' heads. All this can I
Truly deliver.

Write an analytical essay (500–700 words) that reflects on and answers the following questions.

- 1 To what extent do you believe Horatio's summary describes the play? Before fleshing out your reflection, identify aspects of the play that align with each statement.

- 2 Was the play only about events or actions? How might Horatio follow up on this outline with Fortinbras? What would be the limitation/s of his version of this tragedy? What would be the strengths?
- 3 What is your preferred reading of the play at this final stage? What are the key textual elements (such as scenes, soliloquies, lines, representations and constructions of character identities and relationships) that support your preferred interpretation? Refer to language use and how it shapes the constructions you consider to be prominent in the text.

Hamlet duels with Laertes in a scene from an adaptation of *Hamlet* at Shakespeare's Globe, London, in 2014



CRITICAL RESPONSES TO LITERARY TEXTS

The final chapter of this textbook focuses on critical responses to literary texts, just as Chapter 8 focused on creative responses. While the purpose of a creative response is to challenge and reimagine the perspectives in a literary text, the purpose of a critical response is to interpret and analyse the perspectives and representations within that text, as appropriate to responding to the question, and to provide evidence to support that interpretation.

This chapter will prepare you for the external assessment examination, which asks you to respond to a topic or question relating to one of several literary texts. This text will come from the prescribed text list, and needs to be one that you have studied this year, so that you can effectively analyse it for an expert audience.

IN THIS CHAPTER YOU WILL:

TEXTS IN THIS CHAPTER:

TEXTS IN CONTEXTS

- investigate the role of literature and its power to reflect and challenge perspectives
- investigate the reception of a particular literary text within different contexts

- *Hamlet* – play

LANGUAGE AND TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

- examine how language features, text structures and conventions communicate perspectives and representations
- examine the use of aesthetic and stylistic features and their effects in texts
- analyse how language choices are used in analytical texts

RESPONDING TO AND CREATING TEXTS

- develop analysis and argument through synthesis of subject matter and textual evidence
- use cohesive devices to develop and emphasise ideas
- use language features to express and sustain a point of view
- use strategies for planning, drafting, editing and proofreading texts.



cogent
compelling or convincing

Writing an analytical literary essay

Your final English assessment task in Year 12 is an *analytical literary essay*, which provides an interpretation (or reading) of a literary text. For this task, you need to write a **cogent** analytical response to an unseen question, in a relatively short timeframe, about a literary text of which you have made a close critical study. Your purpose in this essay is to ‘communicate an informed and critical perspective’ on a text that you have studied in-depth, and in which you:

- apply your knowledge of the text
- organise and develop your subject matter according to the patterns and conventions of the analytical literary essay genre
- make effective use of the textual features associated with the genre.

When we interpret literary texts, we study them in detail and form our own critical opinions about them, supported by evidence. As we read, we must ask questions of the text since these are the basis on which we formulate our own responses.

Depending on the question asked, the essay presents an interpretation (a critical reading that is sustained and defended with evidence) of what the text means and how those meanings are set up or constructed by the choices of an author. You need to be familiar with the text and the patterns of meaning and language use within the text.

Preparing for the examination

In the external examination, you will be presented with multiple questions or statements about multiple texts. You will choose one of these texts and set of questions, consider your response for 15 minutes of preparation time, then write an 800–1000 word analytical essay addressing the question.

The English syllabus presents the expected purpose and approach of an analytical essay.

The central purpose of an analytical essay in English is to inform the reader of an interpretation of a literary text. This analysis is written in a formal tone, includes relevant literary terminology and follows appropriate academic conventions. The audience of an analytical essay is an educated reader familiar with the literary text being discussed. Like any genre, there are many valid ways to respond in an analytical essay.

An analytical essay is structured around a thesis, which is a statement of the central argument of an essay. This thesis presents an interpretation of a literary text or texts. It is supported by arguments and substantiated by relevant evidence, in the form of discussion, exploration and examination of a literary text.

As the focus of an analytical essay is an interpretation of a literary text, the majority of supporting evidence is comprised of references to this text.

You can (and should) download your own copy of the General English Syllabus document from the QCAA website.



General English
Syllabus
http://mea.digital/gen34_10_1

As preparation for this task, you need to:

- read the source text closely
- understand the cultural context in which the text was produced
- gather and debate evidence about possible readings during the reading process
- interpret, analyse and discuss how the text works.

During the exam session itself, you will need to take a stance on the question, and make judgements about the meanings that best fit the question or consider alternative positions. You then develop your thesis, which you support in the body of the essay by elaborating on three claims (or statements of your position) in support of your interpretation and how you reached it.

The essay you write in response to the topic/question may deal with characters or characterisation, representation, perspectives, relationships, invited meanings/themes, or with the cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs the text supports or critiques. It might focus on how language or genre are used to communicate perspectives or representations. So your preparation requires you to be poised confidently to respond to whatever focus the question may take.



Portrait of Shakespeare
by Geoff Tristram, 2016

Writing the best essay possible

The key difference between a good essay and a great essay – and the difference between a good mark and a great mark – is how effectively you present and develop your interpretation.

Prior to writing your essay, you should survey and sort the analysis and evaluation of the evidence (from your reading, journaling and study) to determine what is the most relevant for this topic. There must be a clear connection between your interpretation, your thesis, the topic sentences stating your claims in support of the thesis, the evidence offered in support of your position and your analysis of that evidence.

It is crucial that you do not just write everything you know. You need to be discerning in your selection of evidence, take a position that you defend throughout and then use your conclusion not just to summarise earlier arguments, but also to make your reader consider what you have said. While not introducing new material, your conclusion is a place to acknowledge the significance of your interpretation and position, not just reiterate it in a different way.

Your knowledge of relevant literary devices and stylistic terms needs to be evident, since this is a means by which you confidently assert your ‘expert’ reading for your unknown (but expert) reader. This means there are some things you don’t do; the major one is *not to summarise the plot*. For the purpose of your essay, the reader is considered an authority on the text.

While it is important that you present *your* interpretation, it does not mean that you can make any ‘interpretation’ that you choose. The validity of your interpretation is based on your ability to cite the defensible evidence offered by the text.

For the rest of this chapter, using *Hamlet* as our example, we will consider how to address these concepts and make sure you write the best essay possible, whether in this exam or at any other time.

Writing about attitudes, beliefs and values

Hamlet, like any text, is shaped by its culture and draws on those attitudes, beliefs and values available at the time of its creation. As we have seen, it is a complex and challenging text written during a turbulent period of history by a brilliant writer.

There are many textual gaps that we need to fill while exploring our various readings of the many concepts covered. *Hamlet* encompasses so many themes – honour, family obligation, revenge, power, the difficulty in ascertaining appearance from reality, trustworthiness, marital fidelity, love, indecision, procrastination, friendship and more.

Nevertheless, the play’s representations of identities and concepts are shaped by a variety of attitudes, beliefs and values that work to position us in terms of our emotional and intellectual reactions to the characters and situations.

Questioning the text

We might identify how we are positioned while reading, but we should also ask *why* we are positioned in particular ways; that is, we need to consider the attitude of the author as well. When considering this, we should ask questions of the text, such as:

- What perspectives are offered on concepts and identities? Why?
- Does the text endorse certain attitudes, beliefs and values?
- Is it reasonably neutral about certain attitudes, beliefs and values?
- Does it challenge or critique those attitudes, beliefs and values?
- How might a character’s commitment to a course of action be interrogated and probed?

For example, we pay particular attention to the resolution of a text to judge ideological positioning – who is punished, who is rewarded, what values are supported. But that becomes a little more difficult when the resolution is also part of the conventions of a genre, as it is in this case. We have to question whether these positions actually reflect genre requirements, rather than the social/political attitudes of the period or indeed the attitudes, beliefs, values and purposes of the author.

In a Shakespearean tragedy such as *Hamlet*, there are typically many deaths and catharsis, followed by the restoration of order. In *Hamlet*, order comes with the appearance of Fortinbras to claim the crown of Denmark. But are we meant to like Fortinbras and what he stands for?

In revenge tragedy, the convention is that the hero delays and the villain is the instigator of the final tragedy. Hamlet delays and Claudius, the villain, is the instigator of the plot that leaves the royal family dead and the path to power open to Fortinbras. So why should we berate Hamlet for a fatal flaw of procrastination (which today is seen as rather an over-simplification in a reading), rather than accuse Fortinbras of taking political advantage of a tragic opportunity for his own benefit?

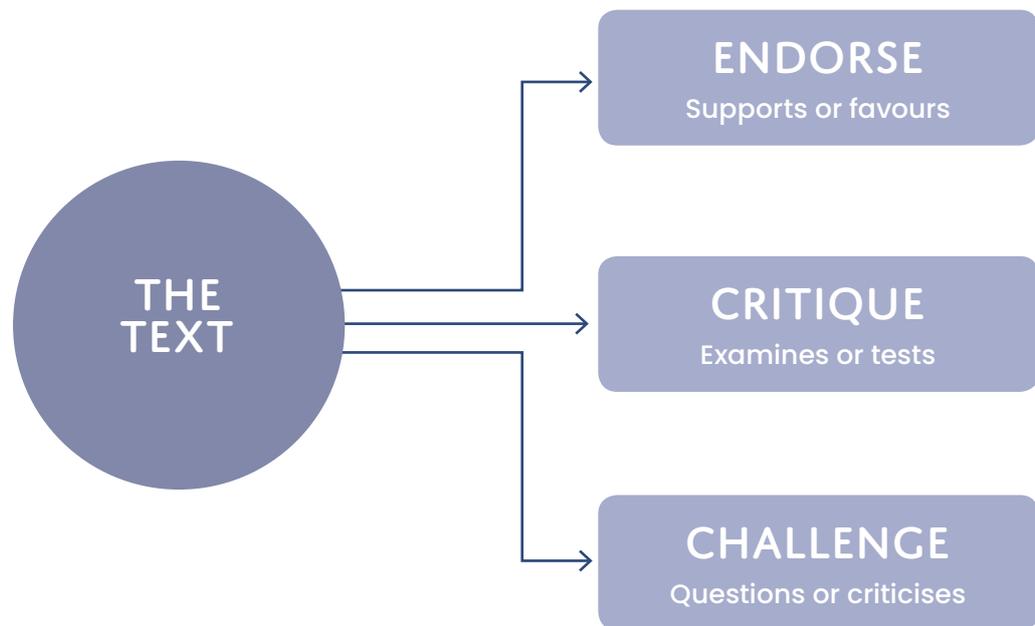
Questions such as these let you interrogate the text, decide on a position to adopt, and identify potential evidence.

Indicating the position adopted

Of the myriad ideas circulating within the constraints of these dramatic genres, what are the positions taken by the text? This is something that can be argued – as the reader, and the author of an analytical essay, you need to make a decision and support it with evidence. Does the text endorse certain values, or critique or even challenge them directly, or is it neutral in relation to them? What values, attitudes and beliefs shape the representations of particular characters?



David Tennant's Hamlet with Claudius (Patrick Stewart) at prayer



If a text supports or appears to be in favour of a particular attitude, belief or value, then we can say that it *endorses* it. This endorsement might be shown through the attitudes, beliefs and values expressed by characters we find admirable or sympathetic. We would particularly consider the values endorsed by the conclusion of the text; certain values are typically promoted or privileged when we see which characters' positions prevail.

If a text examines or tests a particular attitude, belief or value, then we can consider it to be *critiquing* it. This is often evident because competing viewpoints are shown in opposition. The position is made clear when unsympathetic characters, through their actions and speech, represent or embody unattractive or negative attitudes, beliefs or values.

If a text interrogates, questions or reveals the limitations of a particular attitude, belief or value in a sustained way, then we can say it is issuing a *challenge*. We see the negative effects caused by those characters supporting or demonstrating these attitudes, beliefs and values. Usually, we will see this impact increasing across the text.

Omission and emphasis

Remember that literary texts are selective constructions, rather than comprehensive, neutral and 'truthful' documents. We need to consider what is omitted, what is prominent and what is emphasised in the construction of the text.

There may, of course, be attitudes, beliefs and values expressed by marginalised characters that are not really probed or questioned, or overtly supported by the text. So we also need to look for the textual omissions. We look for the characters whose positive values differ from those that dominate in the culture in which the characters find themselves.

Shakespeare was writing for a diverse and challenging audience: not just the common people, but also the elites – the courtiers, the Privy Councillors and the Secretary of State who made decisions about national security. Plays and books were censored by the government’s Master of Revels; many playwrights were considered subversive and often found themselves in political strife.

Hamlet is one of Shakespeare’s many plays that explores political instability and its consequences. The reader thus has to weigh conflicting evidence and consider entrenched interpretations that have become refined (or set in concrete) over time. One of these entrenched interpretations has been that Hamlet is a procrastinator.

Vocabulary for writing about your position

Typically, in writing a literary essay there is a strong reliance on the verb ‘to be’ and ‘is’, but you also need some punchy verbs to express your interpretations of language choices to position readers.

This table lists some words that you might use to write more precisely about positioning and how the text is underpinned or shaped by attitudes, beliefs and values.

Showing support	Showing neutrality	Showing opposition
endorses	examines	critiques
condones	reflects on	challenges
supports	considers	undermines
promotes	shows	contests
agrees with	explores	queries
espouses	investigates	disagrees with
gives weight to	suggests	takes issue with
legitimises	focuses on	questions
sanctions	establishes	subverts
	explores	rejects
	illustrates	condemns
	indicates	shows disapproval of
	argues	exposes
	demonstrates	
	depicts	
	represents	
	identifies	

ACTIVITY

Using effective verbs

- 1 Add appropriate words to the vocabulary list above as you encounter them used in context when reading about the play. Cross out words you might find challenging or feel you would not use. Develop your own personal shortlist of five or six verbs from each list.
- 2 Select five of the verbs from your list. Use these to write about the different values of friendship in *Hamlet*. Write five sentences using those verbs to position the reader to see your interpretation of the relationships between Hamlet and Horatio and between Hamlet, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern.

Example: The play *Hamlet* endorses loyalty in friendship as evident in that of the protagonist and his confidant, Horatio, while strongly *taking issue* with the treachery of the false friends, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, who are Claudius' spies.

Vocabulary for literary analysis

As well as words that will help you analyse textual positioning, you need a repertoire of useful words that will generally help you analyse – *not* just describe or summarise – texts. You also need to be able to form **lexical chains** (using synonyms and antonyms of core words) so that you are nimble in your analysis while adding to your text's cohesion, and not simply repeating the same words.

Avoid overusing adverbs. They are more effective if used judiciously in this type of writing. Those adverbs that you *do* use could relate to the addition of information (further – *it is further argued / evident*; also – *it is also possible to read ...*), or could be used for hedging (for example, perhaps, generally – *the text is generally ...*), to make restrictions (for example, only or particularly) or to add some intensifiers (more, quite, even).

lexical chain
a sequence of related words

Hamlet with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern in the Ninagawa Company production of *Hamlet* at the Barbican Theatre, London, in 2015



Noun	Verb	Adjective
representation	represents/is represented as	representative
interpretation	interprets/can be interpreted as	
significance	signifies	
argument	argues/has been argued that/can be argued that	
impact	<i>Note: Not a verb</i>	
affect	affects	
effect	<i>Note: Not a verb (except in rare instances)</i>	effective (i.e. the choice works)
realisation (as in is achieved)	realises	
meaning	means	meaningful
influence	influences	influential
analysis	analyses	analytical
embodiment	embodies/can be seen as embodying	
position	positions	
		synonymous
demonstration	demonstrates	
soliloquy/soliloquies	soliloquises that	
synthesis	synthesises	
character/characteristic/ characteristics	characterised	characteristic
attribute/attributes	attribute/attributes/can be attributed to	attributable
manifestation	manifests	
depiction	depicts	
connotations	connotes	
denotation	denotes	
binary opposition/binary oppositions/binaries		
	can identify/identifies	
juxtaposition	juxtaposes/is juxtaposed with	

An important convention is to talk about the text in present tense, rather than past tense. For example, ‘*Hamlet* is written by William Shakespeare’, not ‘was written’. This extends to longer statements as well: ‘*Hamlet*, written by Shakespeare, widely considered to be one of the most significant literary texts ever written, issues a firm challenge to a valued genre of his time.’

A ACTIVITY

Using analytical terms and phrases

Write five practice sentences using the words from the table above in different contexts (but always in present tense) to find the ones you feel most comfortable with.

Example: The play, *Hamlet*, explores the idea of revenge through the juxtaposition of characters with competing ideas about the morality of vengeance.

Planning an analytical literary essay

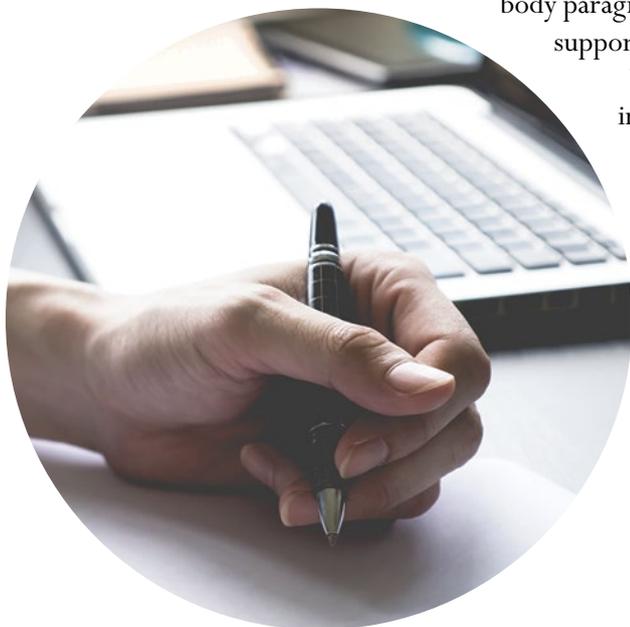
Your assessment involves writing an interpretation of a literary text in response to a nominated topic (or question). This genre of writing requires you to interpret the ‘messages’, meaning and/or aesthetics of a significant work via a close reading of the text.

An important aspect of this genre is the structure of your work – that is, the structuring of your thought. An analytical literary essay requires you to state your position or personal stance on the topic at the beginning of the piece, with previewing of your main claims or points of argument. You then need to support the claims or arguments in body paragraphs where you unpack multiple examples of evidence to support and prove your position.

We considered the structure of an analytical essay in Chapter 10 of the *Macmillan English QCE Units 1 & 2* textbook. Let us revisit that structure and consider how you will need to structure your assessment.

Stages and phases

There are three *stages* within an analytical literary essay – *thesis*, *argument* and *reiteration*. Each of these stages may contain a number of interpretation *phases* or sub-stages through which the essay progresses and in which you present evidence and information.



Analytical literary essay stages	Interpretation phases
Thesis or interpretation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevant information about the text, such as title, author, contextual information relating to the topic (character, values, significant influences) • Identification of the position you are taking in your essay on the topic/question • Preview of the main points you will use in support of your position
<p>Argument</p> <p>This stage requires examination of <i>at least three</i> points, which might be advanced over three or four paragraphs (If an argument is lengthy, break the paragraph into two parts)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Topic sentence</i> that makes a claim in which you state your position related to one point you previewed • Elaboration sentence(s) • Advance an argument using significant textual evidence, explaining and examining how literary elements, stylistic elements and/or aesthetic devices develop meaning. You should look for and show a <i>pattern</i> of evidence – not just one example • Interpretation of specific evidence, such as how a (paraphrased) quotation relates to the claim made in your topic sentence • A summary sentence winding up your arguments in the paragraph/s and showing how you proved the claim made in your topic sentence
Reiteration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reiterate your position (thesis interpretation), saying why the text develops this idea and why it matters • Revisit and synthesise the main claims made in relation to your overall interpretation – perhaps considering what is revealed by characterisation/representation about the society/culture of the text and what we are invited to feel about it • Strong concluding sentence relating to the significance of this interpretation generally (perhaps in relation to us and our culture)

This structure is useful because it unpacks evidence methodically and consistently. If you follow it, your argument should be clear and your conclusion supported.

Using quotations

Compared to some other essays and tasks you have completed in your studies, this is not an essay where you will need to incorporate quotes from many secondary sources – though you may include one or two (if you can remember salient ones).

You will, however, be expected to embed quotations from the source text (such as *Hamlet*) into your essay. These need to be relevant and pointed, not simply included to show that you remember key lines. (Remember, you will *not* have access to a copy of the

text during your examination.) You can paraphrase quotations, but this is an analytical essay – be careful, and make sure that paraphrases work to support your argument, rather than just unnecessarily summarising plot events.

Given these factors, why use quotations at all? You do this because quotations are your evidence of a close reading and are needed to prove and substantiate the points you are making. Without a number of strong, relevant quotes, your essay is unlikely to demonstrate your understanding or fully support your analysis.

Here are some additional considerations to bear in mind when using quotations.

- 1 Quoting poetry requires the line structure to be maintained; use the *slash (/)* symbol to mark the end of one line and the start of another.

Hamlet is represented as a man who is ill-equipped to enact the role of avenger, something made clear almost immediately in *'The time is out of joint. O cursèd spite/That ever I was born to set it right'*.

- 2 Some material in a quote may draw focus away from the point you wish to make. Use an **ellipsis (...)** to remove that irrelevant material and hone your point.

Hamlet is not only grief-stricken by his father's unexpected death but also by the implications of incest on his mother's remarriage to his uncle, as evidenced in his disdainful comment *'you are the Queen, your husband's brother's wife ... and would it were not so, you are my mother'*.

- 3 Use square brackets if you need to slightly alter text to suit your grammatical structure.

Hamlet's immediate worry is that *'[he] was born to set it right'*.

(This could instead have been written as 'Hamlet's immediate worry is that he "was born to set it right".')

- 4 Indent the text in a separate paragraph if a quote is lengthy and would make the sentence unwieldy.
- 5 Be selective – use the word, phrase or phrases you need and integrate them into your sentence rather than use a lengthy quote.

Hamlet's procrastination can be read, then, rather as a mark of his conflict between not avenging his father whom he reveres, or doing so and becoming part of the *'unweeded garden'*, the central symbol of the degenerate Danish court.

- 6 Never just present a quote and move on – always comment on the meaning and significance of the quote.

Hamlet is represented as a man who is ill-equipped to enact the role of avenger, something made clear almost immediately in *'The time is out of joint. O cursèd spite/That ever I was born to set it right'*. The reading invited by this couplet alone is that Hamlet is unhappy with the prospect of being an avenger, evidence that his promised vengeance is unlikely to go well.

ellipsis

in grammar, the omission of a word or words that would complete or clarify a sentence

An ellipsis is always three dots/full stops – no more, no less.

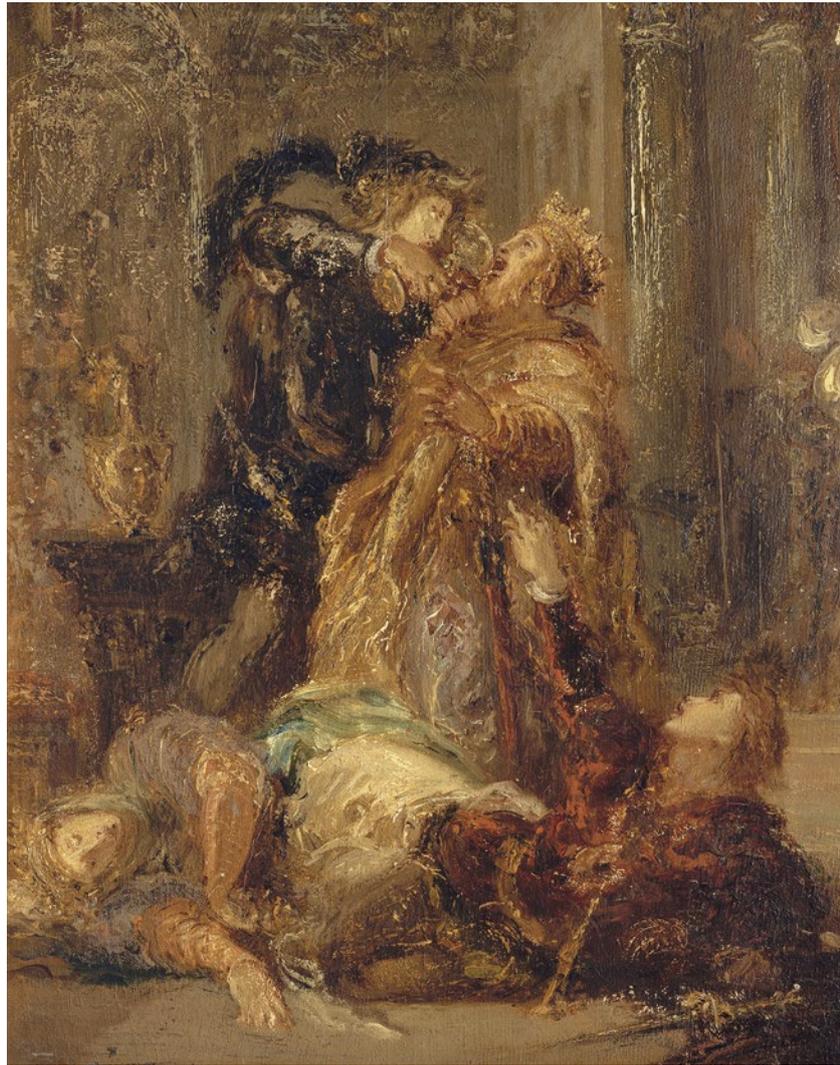
Coherence

Your essay – that is, your argument, analysis and proof – must be coherent. Do the stages of the essay come together smoothly, and the arguments hang together as a systematic and logically developed whole?

All the parts of it, both structurally and in terms of its argument, must make sense and hold together in a logical sequence and orderly manner. Your arguments must not use logical fallacies, or poor reasoning; you must not select evidence that does not prove the point you wish to make. The quotations that you choose must be relevant to the topic sentence and point of argument.

When you clarify your meaning, it must make sense in terms of the argument and not be contradictory. Your argument must consistently be able to be understood. You must defend and prove what you set out to prove.

The ordering of paragraphs, with the most significant arguments being presented in the last body paragraph, is an important element in developing and supporting your ideas coherently across the whole text.



Hamlet kills King
Claudius by Gustave
Moreau (1822–1898)

Cohesion

An important part of developing the coherence of your ideas is the construction of a cohesive text. Structuring through paragraphing is important. But it is not the only element; a range of cohesive devices need to be used in order to express, develop, link and emphasise your ideas. Ideas need to be brought together and unified by smooth linking within and across sentences, as well as across the paragraphs.

Connections must be clear between the thesis/interpretation statement and the preview statements, the topic sentences, and the sentences in the reiteration stage. But be careful: while you want to signpost connections, you do not want to be clunky. While cohesion needs to be explicit, it can sometimes be more implicit.

Your key resources are conjunctions, pronoun reference and lexical cohesion. Ellipses can also be used for this purpose.

Lexical cohesion involves words used as ‘chains’ across a text, and across whole/part relationships in the text. This is where you draw on your knowledge of synonyms and antonyms.

We use conjunctions and connectives for three broad purposes: to elaborate, to extend and to enhance meaning by linking clauses. This table lists a number of different conjunctions you can use to meet these purposes.

Purpose	Meaning	Conjunctions or conjunctive phrases
Elaboration	In other words	in other words, in brief, that is
	For example	for instance, such as, for example, to illustrate this
	To be precise	actually, to be more precise, in fact, as a matter of fact
Extension	In addition	and in addition, furthermore, moreover, as well as, also
	To extend an argument by making another point	on the other hand, or, alternatively, nor, but, however, on the contrary, instead, apart from
Enhancement	To show the passage or influence of time	at the same time, meanwhile, in the meantime, previously, after that, subsequently, earlier, then, to begin (with), at first, up to now, to sum up, finally, afterwards
	To relate one clause to another	so, yet, but, to this end, because, since, nevertheless, in this way, if, consequently, otherwise, therefore, accordingly, as a result, thus, in spite of this, for this reason, because of this
	To compare two concepts or elements	similarly, on the contrary, on the other hand, although, in contrast, conversely, whereas, in spite of, equally, like, likewise, however, instead, but

When pronouns replace nouns – either in the current text, following text, or in reference to things or people outside the text – it is very important to ensure that this reference is not ambiguous.

ACTIVITY

Pronoun reference

Read the passage below and answer the questions.

Hamlet has the opportunity to kill Claudius when he is praying. However, he believes that by doing so he will send him to heaven when he also believes that he should go to hell. So he wants to ensure that he sends him to hell where he will suffer for eternity.

- 1 Identify where there are particular problems in pronoun reference in the passage.
 - 2 Rewrite this passage so there is no confusion with pronoun references.
 - 3 Read samples of your own writing and that of others. Look for any confused pronoun references in the writing, and then correct them.
-

Using the TEEL model

A useful tool for supporting the structure and coherence of an analytical essay is the TEEL model of writing paragraphs. It is a model for framing up your analysis logically so that you develop a through-line of ideas from your thesis to your summation and reiteration.

The acronym TEEL stands for the following.

- **Topic sentence** – an initial sentence that introduces the paragraph by stating the main idea or claim
- **Explanation** – a sentence unpacking the meaning of the topic sentence in more depth
- **Evidence** – sentences providing evidence from the text to support the topic sentence
- **Link** – a final sentence that links the evidence back to the main idea, closes an argument and potentially leads into the next paragraph

When following this model, make sure that the link sentence is valid in both the current paragraph and the new paragraph that it links to.

The TEEL model needs to be used carefully. A rigid paragraph structure can make your writing turgid or stilted. But if nothing else, it is a worthwhile tool for planning your paragraphs with regards to their focus and logical connectedness before writing them down.

This model is sometimes referred to as the PEEL model, with 'P' meaning 'point'.

Worked example – writing about *Hamlet*

It is now time to put the concepts and tools from this chapter into practice, by using them to address the content of Chapter 9 – *Hamlet*. How would you write an analytical literary essay about *Hamlet* that addresses a question or topic about the play?

Thinking about the character of Hamlet

Hamlet is an incredibly rich text, and there are dozens, perhaps hundreds, of topics that could form the basis of an essay. So let us begin by narrowing the scope of our task and focusing on the character of Hamlet himself.

Hamlet is one of the great characters of literature – some might say the greatest. His questionings, reflections and philosophising speak to us across the ages and invite us to think about what it is to be a human or, more particularly, a decent human.

We see the character of Hamlet represented in three stages of his life. We should think about and reflect on these different 'versions' of Hamlet in the context of the whole work.

- 1 Hamlet at the beginning of the play, before the encounter with the Ghost:** How much do we know about Hamlet before this point? What do we feel for this character? Why are we shown this representation?
- 2 Hamlet after the Ghost's visitation:** What do we feel about this character? Are there behaviours that appal us? Do we admire this Hamlet? Do we understand why he behaves as he does in relation to the characters at court? What do we make of his interactions with the Players and his plan? What is the point (or function) of this construction of a character grappling with a challenge?

3 Hamlet after mistakenly killing Polonius: What do we think of how Hamlet treats the body? How he dispatches Rosencrantz and Guildenstern? His reaction to Ophelia's death and behaviour at her grave? His fatalistic comment 'the readiness is all'? Do we agree with Horatio's assessment 'O what a king is this'? Is Horatio admiring or sarcastic? Do we admire this version of Hamlet? What is the purpose of this representation of the fatalistic Hamlet?

There is a fourth version of Hamlet – **Hamlet before the play begins**. This is the man whom Ophelia describes, who befriended Horatio and who is accessible to ordinary soldiers of the watch. This is the Hamlet who Claudius says was beloved of the multitude and the child whose companion was Yorick. To what extent are the later behaviours of Hamlet represented as the result of his tremendous grief for his father's death and shock at his mother's hasty remarriage? Is it possible that he is worried about his mother's potential involvement in the death of her first husband?

Did we really want Hamlet to be like either Claudius or Laertes?

As you can see, we can ask many questions about this play – as others have been doing for 400 years. Your task is to make *your* decisions about this character, how and why he is constructed and represented, and why there are so many different perspectives of his character and actions. (You also have to keep in mind that he is a construct with a function in a revenge tragedy, however much we might be invited to think of him as a man.)

Stella Doufexis
(Hamlet) and James
Elliott (Laertes) in
a 2009 production
of *Hamlet* at the
Komische Oper, Berlin



From all of this, you have to decide what values the play does and does not support. Your decisions then form the basis for your position and arguments in your essay.

Writing the introduction

Before writing a word of your essay, you need to spend time thinking about the task – both what you will write about and how you will write it. These thoughts will shape your work as a whole, and they will specifically shape the introduction of your essay. This is the first stage of your essay – the statement of your thesis, identifying the position you are taking on the topic.

The following paragraph is a possible introduction to an analytical literary essay on *Hamlet*.

Revenge is a concept that lies at the heart of William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, as it does Thomas Kyd's *The Spanish Tragedy*, which established many of the formulaic aspects of the genre. For Elizabethans, however, revenge was God's preserve, with avengers likely to face dire punishment during life and after. So, although revenge tragedy was a fashionable genre, Shakespeare, in response to new attitudes circulating about revenge that he draws on to shape representations of characters, provides readers with a *critique* of the notion of revenge in this play. Indeed, Kieran Ryan, Professor of English, Oxford, argues that the play *interrogates* the genre and *rejects* antiquated notions of filial revenge. Through deft juxtaposition of the values of the protagonist, Hamlet, with those of his far less ethically attractive foils, Laertes, Fortinbras, and the Classical figure Pyrrhus, Shakespeare provides different perspectives on revenge to *critique* its place in a civilised society.

ACTIVITY

Analysing the introduction

- 1 Which of the attributes of an analytical essay (listed here) does this sample introduction demonstrate? Explain each of your answers and cite evidence.
 - Formal tone suggestive of an educated reader
 - Relevant literary terminology
 - Background information about cultural context
 - Thesis/interpretation
 - Preview of elements for focused interpretation
 - Academic conventions
 - Support for interpretation by external source
 - 2 Does the introduction adhere to the conventional phases of the thesis stage of an essay?
 - 3 Is the reference to an external authority valid and within the terms of the conditions set for such an essay?
 - 4 Is this an appropriate length introduction for an essay of 1000 words?
 - 5 To what extent is the vocabulary focused on the purpose/interpretation?
 - 6 How is this paragraph cohesive?
 - 7 If this paragraph was the introduction to an essay, what was the question? Was it on either of the following?
 - a To what extent does *Hamlet* fit the conventions of the revenge tragedy?
 - b To what extent does Shakespeare interrogate the conventions of the revenge tragedy in *Hamlet*?
-

How to answer an essay question

Let us assume that the essay question was the first option: 'To what extent does *Hamlet* fit the conventions of the revenge tragedy?'

Could you write an answer that argues:

- the play does not fit the conventions of revenge drama, or
- while it does adhere to many revenge conventions, the idea of revenge overall is challenged?

The answer should be *yes* – you could write an essay to support either one of these statements. Essay questions are written so that they do not demand one specific response – it should always be possible to take two or more different stances on the question.

Rather than asking yourself 'What is the right answer?', you need to ask 'What evidence can I provide to support my response to the question?'. An effective tool for this is drawing a *character-evidence diagram* in your notebook or during the preparation time at the start of your exam. A diagram can take many forms, but the content is always the same:

- A list of characters relevant to the question and your stance. (This list should be short – three characters will be enough.)
- For each character, notes on the evidence from the text that supports your stance on the question. These are brainstorming notes, rather than final pieces of text.

Once you have filled out your diagram, review your notes to find your argument – that is the strongest statement supported by what you know of the text.

Consider two character-evidence diagrams, based on the two different responses to the possible essay question.

Diagram 1: Does the play endorse revenge?

FORTINBRAS

- Revenger or ambitious prince?
- Why argue for war to contest a legally ratified exhibition in which his father died? No valid reason for revenge
- Perspective on revenge – can we infer from soldier's comment that anything goes as long he can lead an army?
- Are readers positioned to like Fortinbras' bloodlust?

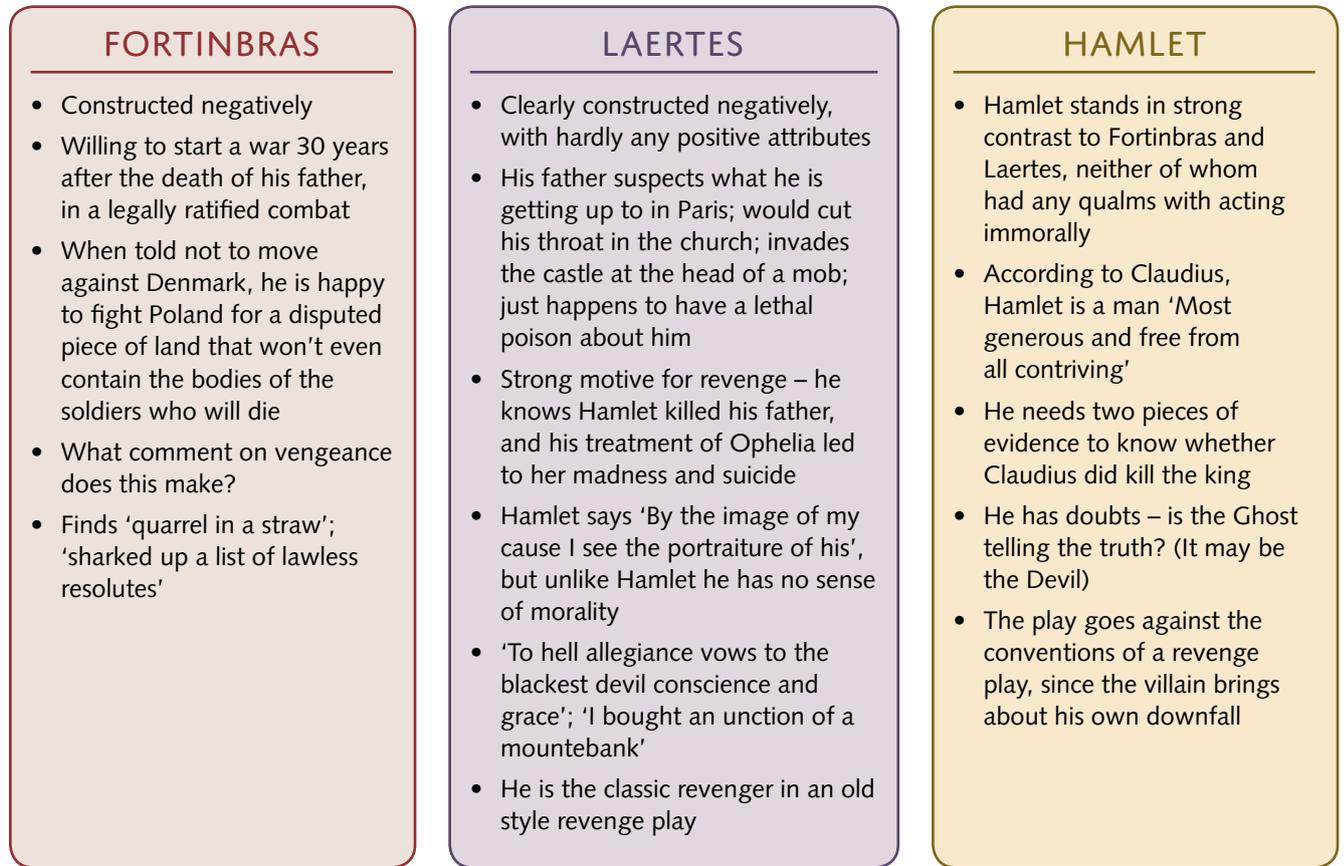
LAERTES

- A brutal revenger
- Immoral? Unprincipled?
- His perspective is that revenge equals honour
- Will go to any extreme, (e.g. to cut his throat in the chapel)
- Are readers positioned to like Laertes?

HAMLET

- Promises to avenge his father in shock of revelation but immediately knows he can't do that – 'O cursed spite/That ever I was born to set it right'
- Family duty immediately in conflict with morality
- How is his moral principle shown? Despite hatred of Claudius, he cannot trust the word of a ghost (explore why) and must have proof?
- When he does get proof he does not act – he would be killing a king at prayer in a sanctuary – despite bloodthirsty thoughts
- Strong contrast to Laertes – Hamlet will not do what Laertes unhesitatingly will
- How are we positioned to see Hamlet? Admire him for not being a killer? Admire him for loving his father and wanting to honour him, but think the Ghost was wrong to make the request?

Diagram 2: Does the play challenge or critique the idea of revenge?



ACTIVITY

Adjusting the diagram

- 1 In which of the essay questions above would a reference to the revenger Pyrrhus be best made? Why?
- 2 Amend the relevant diagram by adding another box or section addressing Pyrrhus. Alternatively, add more notes to the other three sections to reflect connections to Pyrrhus.

Topic sentences and body paragraphs

Once you state your position in the opening paragraph, you move into stage two of the essay – the analysis. This is where you elaborate on the position stated in your introduction, providing evidence from the text and explaining why that evidence relates to your position.

As shown in both the stages and phases model (pp. 280–1) and the TEEL approach to constructing paragraphs (p. 285), each body paragraph of your essay should begin with a topic sentence. This first sentence makes a claim as part of your position, and should relate to an element previewed in the introduction.

Consider these three possible topic sentences and how they state a claim.

- 1 The juxtaposition of Hamlet's perspective with those of the foils, Fortinbras and Laertes, is the means by which his moral authority is asserted.
- 2 The complexity of the perspectives of Hamlet, his interest in the question of justice and his desire to ascertain the veracity of the Ghost are the key means by which the critique occurs.
- 3 The perspectives of Fortinbras and Laertes, as revengers, are shown to be morally compromised, as are those of Pyrrhus, alluded to in the speech the Player recites. Although the perspective of Fortinbras has to be inferred, it is condemned, while those of Laertes and Pyrrhus are clearly evident and equally repugnant.

The third option involves two topic sentences, which can be appropriate for a complex or subtle claim. This claim might be one where you elaborate your response over two paragraphs: one dealing with Fortinbras and Laertes, and the other (briefer) one dealing with Pyrrhus, who (though not a character in the play) is used as an important juxtaposition to Hamlet.

DISCUSSION

Topic sentences

- 1 If these three topic sentences were used in the same essay as the introduction on page 287, how would they provide a cohesive link to that paragraph?
- 2 In a group, decide on which of the three sentences would be the most suitable to begin the essay after the introduction. Explain your reasoning.

Hamlet (David Tennant) and Laertes (Edward Bennett) in the 2008 Royal Shakespeare Company production of *Hamlet*



Once the topic sentence makes a claim, the rest of the body paragraph provides the argument to support that claim. Once again we can consider the TEEL model – body paragraphs should *explain* the claim, they should provide a pattern of *evidence* to support the claim, and they should *link* that evidence to the main idea.

Read the paragraph below.

Hamlet is constructed as one of, if not, the most principled and self-aware characters of the play and patently no avenger. A Renaissance prince, and a member of the new progressive generation of Protestant rationalists, Hamlet recognises that he is ill-equipped to enact the role of avenger, something made clear almost immediately in '*The time is out of joint. O cursèd spite/ That ever I was born to set it right*'. The reading invited by this couplet alone is that Hamlet is unhappy with the prospect of being an avenger, evidence that his promised vengeance is unlikely to go well. His education at Wittenburg, a school of logic, reason and philosophy, is also an element in allowing the reader to conclude that Hamlet, who finds the court of Denmark under the rule of Claudius distasteful, resents a demand that forces him to act counter to his own values and beliefs. Hamlet's procrastination can be read, then, rather as a mark of his conflict between not avenging his father whom he reveres, or doing so and becoming part of the '*unweeded garden*', the central symbol of the degenerate Danish court. Ever the ethical character, Hamlet's first plan is to find evidence of Claudius' guilt – even though his source for the need of redress was the ghost of his adored father. The depth of Hamlet's antipathy for an adulterous Claudius is another element in positioning the reader to accept that Hamlet as a potential avenger is inconceivable. He is constructed as motivated by a sense of ethics evident in his need to verify the ghost's accusations and a sure awareness that revenge is not in his purview.

Very long paragraphs may be more readable if broken into multiple paragraphs, but you must be careful that the focus of your argument is not lost.

DISCUSSION

Body paragraphs

- 1 Of the three topic sentences provided previously, which would the above paragraph develop? Explain why.
 - 2 Identify the phases of the argument stage that are evident in this paragraph.
 - 3 Are the quotations used apt? Would there have been more appropriate quotations? If so, which quotes?
 - 4 How have the quotes been embedded, both in terms of punctuation and commentary?
 - 5 Consider the cohesion of this paragraph. How is it cohesive? What are the main resources of cohesion used (for example, conjunction, lexical cohesion)?
 - 6 In a paragraph, evidence can be admitted as paraphrase rather than quotation. Highlight or note which elements of this paragraph are paraphrased, and which are analysis or argument.
-

ACTIVITY

Collaborative construction

- 1 In a small group, collate the evidence needed to best elaborate on the topic sentence about Fortinbras, Laertes and Pyrrhus. (A sentence that enhances the topic sentence is already provided. You can continue from that second sentence.)
- 2 Select quotes you might use in support of the argument.
- 3 With your group, construct the paragraph on a large sticky note (or digitally) for sharing with the class. Ensure you write analytically to advance the argument. Ensure you write a strong transition to the next paragraph.

Independent construction

Now write the paragraph you think would be the appropriate expansion of the argument in response to the third topic sentence. Provide as much relevant evidence as you need to support it (and no more). Be selective; choose the best evidence and most relevant quotes.

Once you have completed this paragraph, think about the order in which you would arrange the three body paragraphs. Your final paragraph should present what you consider to be the most important argument. You may find you want to rewrite the final sentence of your third paragraph so it makes a smooth link to your conclusion.

Hamlet (David Tennant)
dies in the arms of
Horatio (Peter De Jersey).



The conclusion

Once you have completed your argument, and provided as much relevant evidence as you need to support it (and no more), the final step is to write a paragraph to conclude the essay.

The conclusion is extremely important. Do not write a weak or rushed conclusion, or one that does not add strength to your overall position. Make sure you use it to reiterate your position, revisit (briefly) your main arguments, and round off the essay.

ACTIVITY

Writing a conclusion

Now that you have constructed the body of an essay throughout this chapter, write the conclusion you would make to that essay, starting with:

Ultimately, the play invites us to reflect on ...

Editing

Once you have this essay – a scaffolded, collaboratively and then independently written text – you may find that it is longer than 1000 words. Remember, the requirement of the task on the external paper is to write 800–1000 words. You therefore need to edit your work so that you have a coherent but concise text of no more than 1000 words.

How will you do this? For the best result you need, as the syllabus says, to be discerning – that is, select for relevance, be discriminating about what is most valuable.

Your essay will be assessed against three main criteria:

- Application of knowledge of the play
- Organisation and development of subject matter
- Use of textual features

Use these three criteria to determine the effectiveness of your decisions.

- How discerningly did you apply your knowledge in response to the task?
- How logical were your organisation and argument? How discerning were you in selecting evidence and quotations, or paraphrasing, to support the points you make?
- How effectively and appropriately have you used textual resources to achieve particular purposes? Have you been accurate with grammar, spelling, punctuation and citing?

EXTENDED RESPONSE

Writing a practice essay

You have studied the play in depth, and now collaboratively constructed an essay. It is now time to apply your learning, be confident and write about what *you* think.

Write a practice essay addressing one of the following topics.

- 1 In *Hamlet*, how is the reader positioned to view the character of Hamlet himself?
- 2 In *Hamlet*, to what extent is the court of Claudius represented as significant in shaping Hamlet's values?
- 3 In *Hamlet*, how do the representations of Ophelia and Queen Gertrude affect your reading of the character of Hamlet?
- 4 In Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*, questions about the concept of power are raised through the character of King Claudius. In your essay, analyse how the play's representation of Claudius invites the audience to view power.

Before you begin, unpack the task, and look for and highlight key words or phrases. Be sure about what you have been asked to do.

These tasks are adaptations of questions used in the trial external examinations for other texts. Note that tasks 1, 2 and 3 are framed as questions but task 4 is framed as a statement, after which you are given specific directions about how to respond.

ASSESSMENT

SUMMATIVE EXTERNAL ASSESSMENT (EA)

Examination – analytical written response (25%)

WORD LENGTH // 800–1000 words

TIME // 2 hours plus 15 minutes
of planning time

CONTEXT

In Topic 2 of this unit, you undertook a close study of a literary text from the current prescribed text list. The text was chosen to enable you to explore, critically and in-depth, ideas about the world and human experiences through engagement with a text from a different time or place. This text is one of those texts prescribed for use in the external examination.

You have considered the historical and socio/political context of its production, the worth and value attached to the text culturally and analysed how textual and language features (including aesthetic features and stylistic devices) were used to position readers and invite particular responses. You have not only made a close critical study but also considered various responses to it. These interpretations have been shaped by different perspectives, cultural assumptions and values, as well as by different reading practices. You have formed your own opinion about and interpretation of the text.

You have studied the purpose, form, structure and language features of analytical essays and produced your own writing. In this assessment task, you will draw on your knowledge to write an analytical essay in response to an unseen question about the literary text you have studied during Unit 4.

GUIDELINES

Your task is to write an analytical written text in response to an unseen question. This is a common exam for all students of General English to be done under supervised exam conditions, over the course of a single two-hour period, at a common time on the same day.

Your purpose is 'to communicate an informed and critical perspective in response to an unseen question or task on the text studied in-depth in Unit 4' (English 2019 General Senior Syllabus).

The exam paper will provide:

- a selection of texts, all of which come from the prescribed list
- a set of questions for each text
- a writing response book in which you must produce your complete written response for an unknown reader with a deep understanding of the text.

You will need to choose the text you have studied in-depth and respond to *one* of the questions provided.

INSTRUCTIONS

- The assessment response is written under supervised test conditions, with no opportunities to access advice or feedback. The invigilators will not be allowed to interpret the task or explain meanings to you.
- You cannot bring notes or prepared materials into the exam.
- Quotations will not count towards the word limit.
- Write to the word length.

Please note: There are no marking criteria available for this assessment.

As you will not have a copy of the text or access to a set of quotations from the text, you need to ensure that you judiciously memorise only a few key quotations that would be significant in a variety of contexts. These might be key phrases only; do not attempt to commit to memory large swathes of text, as you will not be able to integrate them effectively into the essay.

Before sitting your exam, you should read the objectives and requirements for this assessment task in the English syllabus. You should also review the information in Chapters 6, 9 and 10 of this textbook.

The most important piece of preparation you can do for this assessment is to read the text – do not rely on summaries or study guides. Skim through the text before the assessment date so that it is fresh in your memory, and jot down a few thoughts and notes. You cannot bring those notes with you into the assessment, but you can revisit them before the session.

You have two hours of writing time to complete your essay. Before starting to write, carefully consider the question. Make notes about key points you wish to make, and plan the structure of your argument.

Your essay should follow this structure: an introduction with thesis, body paragraphs presenting support for your argument, and a final section that reiterates the thesis and summarises your analysis. The body paragraphs will require the most time and writing, so do not get carried away with a long introduction.

Pay close attention to how long you take on each section and how much you write. Your essay should be 700–800 words (not including quotations); ensure you do not exceed the word limit. Allow yourself 5–10 minutes at the end to edit and polish your work. Write with a black pen and make sure your handwriting is legible!

Criteria

There are three criteria against which your assessment will be marked.

Knowledge application: this criterion focuses on the depth and quality of your analysis. You need to analyse not just the representations of concepts in the text, but also the way in which cultural assumptions, attitudes, values and beliefs underpin the text, and the effects of aesthetic features and stylistic devices.

Organisation and development: this criterion focuses on the structure and cohesion of your work. Your written response needs to use the appropriate patterns and conventions for an analytical essay, and to follow a logical sequence that supports your perspective.

Textual features: this criterion focuses on the strength of your writing. To achieve full marks, your writing needs to be clear and engaging, and you need to make appropriate language choices for this purpose and context. Your writing must also use correct grammar, spelling, sentence structure and punctuation throughout.



General English
syllabus
[http://mea.digital/
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Access the
digital version
of your textbook
to download a
model analytical
response.

Glossary

abstraction something that exists as an idea or term rather than as a practical result or event

aesthetic feature an aspect of a text that prompts an emotional and critical reaction

alienation the state or experience of feeling isolated or detached, or the loss of identity where the self seems unreal

allegory a text that can be interpreted to reveal a hidden, often political or spiritual, meaning

allusion a reference, either directly or by implication, to something else

annotate to comment or make notes on a passage of writing

antagonist the protagonist's opponent, whose function is to challenge the protagonist in some way

anthropogenic caused by human activity

antipathy a repugnance, aversion or opposition in feeling

antithesis in opposition or contrast

aphorism a maxim or adage – a short, pithy comment about something considered to be true

apostrophe a figure of speech in which a character addresses an absent person, an inanimate object or an abstract concept

apposition placing together expressions that have the same function and relation to other parts of the sentence, the second expression identifying or supplementing the first

aside in theatre, a part of an actor's lines not heard by others on the stage and intended only for the audience

authentic reliable, trustworthy, or of genuine origin

autonomy freedom from external control

auxiliary a character whose role is to help and support someone else

blank verse unrhymed verse in iambic pentameter

brainstorm a technique where ideas are generated in order to stimulate creative thinking, develop new ideas or devise a solution to a problem

caesura a break between words within a metrical foot, or a pause near the middle of a line

catharsis a relief or release from built-up emotions

cogent compelling or convincing

cohesion in textual terms, the act or state of being united or fluent and not feeling like a collection of parts

conceit a strained or far-fetched thought, idea or expression

concept a mental representation of an abstract idea or notion

connotation an implied or associated meaning

consonance the repetition of similar-sounding consonants in close proximity

content the information or subject matter in a text

declaim to speak aloud rhetorically; to make a formal speech

dehumanisation the process of depriving someone of the characteristics of being human, having empathy and sympathy

deicide the killing of a god

denotation the literal meaning

diegetic sound a sound component of a film, produced by a source that is visible on the screen or whose source is implied as being present within the film

disjunction a state of being disunited or separate

disseminate to give out, to spread abroad, or to scatter widely

divine right of kings a belief that a king's right to rule derives directly from God, not from the people, and that he should therefore be obeyed in all things

ecosystem a community of organisms interacting with one another and with the environment in which they live

elegy a mournful, melancholy or sorrowful poem

ellipsis in grammar, the omission of a word or words that would complete or clarify a sentence

eloquent fluent, expressive or appropriate speech

empathy the ability to understand and share the feelings or perceptions of a person or thing

epiphany a revelation or perception of some essential truth

epithet an adjective or other term applied to a person or thing to express an attribute

existential relating to existence

extrapolate to infer or make conjecture from that which is known

foil a character whose role is to contrast with someone else to highlight particular qualities

- foreground** textual choices that emphasise or draw attention to a textual element and hence idea, reading or perspective
- form** the structure, shape and format of a document or text
- free indirect discourse** a type of thirdperson narration in which a character's thoughts, feelings and words are filtered through the narrator
- free verse** verse with no discernible metrical pattern or rhyme scheme
- futurist** a person who specialises in analysing future trends and possibilities
- genomics** the branch of genetics concerned with the study of genomes
- graduation** intensifying meaning by increasing the force or focus of an expression
- hendiadys** a figure of speech in which a complex idea is expressed by two words connected by a conjunction
- hierarchy** a system of persons or things in a graded order
- hyperbole** obvious exaggeration, for effect; an extravagant statement not intended to be taken literally
- iconography** representation by means of drawing, painting or carving figures
- imagery** visually descriptive or figurative language
- indoctrination** the process of instructing someone in a particular teaching or belief
- interiority** the inner life and nature of a character
- interregnum** the interval in which a state has no ruler (or only a temporary sovereign) before accession of the successor
- intertextuality** one text drawing upon or making reference to other texts
- inverse** the opposite or reverse of a position, direction or tendency
- irony** a literary device in which the literal meaning is contrary to that intended
- juxtapose** to place two or more things close together, often as comparison or contrast
- lexical chain** a sequence of related words
- lexicon** the list or vocabulary of words belonging to a particular subject, field, class or person
- litotes** a figure of speech in which an affirmative is expressed by the negative
- metaphor** a term or phrase that is applied to something to which it is not literally applicable
- metonym** a figure of speech where the use of the name of one thing stands in for that of another thing closely associated with it
- metre** the arrangement of words in regularly measured, patterned or rhythmic lines or verses
- militarisation** the process of forming and organising military in preparation for conflict
- mise-en-scène** (French) the setting and design elements on the stage of a theatre production or on the set of a film
- misogynist** expressing entrenched prejudice against women
- modality** the capacity of elements of language to express confidence in the statement being made
- monologue** a prolonged talk or discourse by a single speaker, often as part of a drama where a single actor speaks alone
- montage** a technique of film editing in which several shots or sequences are juxtaposed to form a single idea
- mores** customs or conventions accepted without question, embodying the moral views of a group
- motif** a recurring subject or theme or a dominant idea or feature
- naïve** having or showing an innocent, unsuspecting or unsophisticated nature
- narcissism** excessive admiration for oneself and one's own attributes
- occluding** to shut in or out or off
- opacity** the state of being impenetrable or hard to understand
- oratory** the exercise of eloquent speaking
- oxymoron** a figure of speech involving placing a pair of opposite or contradictory words in a single expression
- para-rhyme** a type of rhyme where the consonants of the words match but not the vowels
- pathetic fallacy** the crediting of human traits and feelings to nature
- personification** the attribution of human nature or character to inanimate objects or abstract notions
- postmodern** trend in visual arts or literature developed in the 1970s as a reaction to the idea of modernism with its emphasis on individual expression
- privileged** promoted and supported by the text
- protagonist** the central character, usually one who has to learn a lesson or who has a need to change in some way
- regicide** the killing of a monarch
- regimented** to be organised or strictly disciplined
- retrospective** an exhibition of an entire phase or representative examples of an artist's life work
- rhetoric** the art of persuasive speaking
- rumination** the act of musing or pondering or to think upon
- run-on sentence** a sentence in which two or more independent clauses are joined without a conjunction or punctuation mark

satire a literary technique employed to expose and criticise foolishness or corruption by using humour, irony, exaggeration or ridicule

scepticism having a doubtful attitude

second-wave feminism a period of feminist activity during the 1960s to the 1980s that focused on sexual and reproductive rights as well as equal opportunity

sibilance characterised by a hissing sound; denoting sounds like those spelled with *s*

sociocultural combining both social and cultural aspects in a point of view

soliloquy an utterance or discourse by someone who is talking to themselves, while alone or as if alone

sonnet a poem, properly expressive of a single complete thought, idea or sentiment, of 14 lines

specificity the state of being particular or precise in the details

speculative fiction a genre of fiction, including science fiction, fantasy and horror, which deals with imagined worlds and their inhabitants

stanza a grouped set of lines within a poem

stream of consciousness a literary technique of writing thoughts, reactions and emotions in a continuous flow, uninterrupted by dialogue or description

stylistic device an aspect of a text (such as words, sentences, images), how it is arranged, and how it affects meaning

subjugation the process of bringing someone under complete control or to make them submissive

surrealist imagination uncontrolled by reason or conscious rational control

synecdoche a figure of speech in which the term substituted is either part of a whole or a whole standing in for a part

syntactic inversion reversal of the normal order of words and phrases in a sentence

syntactic of or relating to syntax

syntax the organisation of sentences, phrases and words according to the rules of the language

talisman an object considered to be of almost magical power

totalitarianism centralised government where those in control neither recognise nor tolerate parties of differing opinion

tragedy a literary composition dealing with a sombre theme carried to a tragic conclusion

usurpation the wrongful seizure and occupation of a throne

veracity accuracy and truthfulness

verse a stanza or subdivision of a poem

vicarious experienced in place of another or serving as a substitute

vignette a brief, evocative description or account

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