

Literature

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

YEARS
11&12

FOR THE ATAR LITERATURE COURSE

—
Emma Cattapan
Katie Fielding

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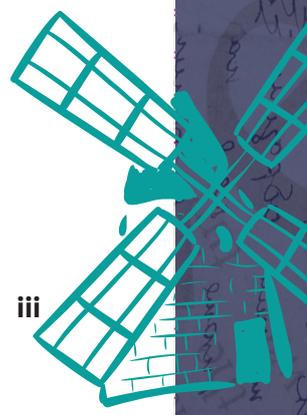
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About this book

Literature: Western Australia covers Units 1 to 4 of the ATAR Literature course. To guide you along the way we have included a number of practical features:

- ▶ Activities let you put theory into practice and invite you to investigate particular aspects of literature in more detail.
- ▶ Key metalanguage that is defined in the glossary (pages 177–9) is indicated like this: **privileged**.
- ▶ Worked examples that provide a model you can follow in your own work are indicated by the heading *For example ...*
- ▶ Comments and reflections by writers and teachers are included under the heading *A word from ...*
- ▶ A time line summarising the historical development of English literature is included on pages 172–6.



SECTION 1

Studying Literature

ATAR Literature is a subject that will impact you long after you've finished your secondary schooling. You will notice the skills associated with the study of literature everywhere. You'll start to see the ongoing perpetuation of cultural ideologies – that something written centuries ago is still being grappled with today; and that literature – in fact, *creativity* – is about humanity's need to be seen, to be heard and to be remembered. It will give you insight into the human experience then, now and beyond, because creativity has power:

- › the power to *express*
- › the power to *shape*
- › the power to *change*.

Why study Literature?

To be successful in this subject, you must be able to think ‘outside the box’ and consider the role of literature in our world. Why bother writing? Why create? Why do *these* texts or *these* writers stand the test of time?

This raises one of the fundamental questions of this course: what is literature? What makes one text ‘literary’ and another ‘non-literary’? Of course, the Literature prescribed text lists have made some of these decisions for you, and the syllabus provides us with a definition of what constitutes a ‘**literary text**’; however, as any astute Literature student knows, we need to read between the lines. To really get to the heart of what these texts have in common, or whose voices are being heard (or not heard), we must keep questioning the world around us and consider who is making the decisions.



Literature and the world

We often hear that literature ‘stands the test of time’. In other words, many literary texts remain with us for decades, centuries or even longer. So, what are the qualities that make one text or writer endure? Often, a text or writer manages to grapple with something that is timeless – a situation or an experience that is universal – or perhaps continues to relate to our contemporary world in some way.

Hold a literary debate

Read and refer to the definition of ‘literary texts’ in the ATAR Literature Year 11 syllabus.

Reflect on, and answer, the following questions. You might like to discuss them as a pair or in a group, then write your responses after you’ve had a chance to collate all thoughts and ideas.

- 1 Consider the words ‘valued’ and ‘recognised’. What do they mean? Who is doing the valuing and recognising? Whose voices are **privileged** or ignored?
- 2 What does the word ‘enduring’ mean and how might this add to your understanding of what constitutes a literary text?
- 3 What is your understanding of ‘artistic value’? How might we judge what is ‘artistic’?
- 4 List the qualities that you think give a text:
 - a personal value
 - b social value
 - c cultural value
 - d aesthetic value
 - e the ability to enrich your experience. (Spend a little more time on this one, unpacking what this means to you.)
- 5 For each specific value above, give an example of a text that exhibits this.
- 6 Discuss your ideas with others (either as a pair or a group). Which texts might be considered ‘non-literary’ and why? Are some groups, voices or writers privileged? Why might this occur?

Reflect on literary texts

At a particular time each week, dedicate between ten and twenty minutes to reflective writing. (See the section on reflective writing in Chapter 2, pages 14–16.)

Write reflectively on this ‘evolving’ and ‘**dynamic**’ (Literature Year 11 and 12 syllabuses) definition of what constitutes a literary text. Don’t forget to think about how privilege, **power**, education and access can impact what is considered literary or non-literary.

Explore enduring names

Identify some of the most recognisable names in literary studies. Some are suggested below. Research the ideas they wrote about and how we can connect these to our world today. What similarities do you notice between the ideas they explore? (This is the essence of ATAR Literature – how to link the study of your texts to your experiences, your values and your world.)

You may also like to look at your Literature course outline for the specific authors you will be focusing on this year. Some suggested names are Charles Dickens, George Orwell, Jane Austen and Maya Angelou.

The table below shows one way you could summarise your ideas.

Writer	Then	Now
William Shakespeare	<p>Much of his writing centred around power, powerful people and the problems that arise when humans challenge the world view determined by those powerful people.</p> <p>A lot of Shakespeare's writing also focused on 'human experience', e.g. what it means to love, to lose, to feel jealous or to be ambitious.</p>	<p>We continue to see the imbalance of power in our world, and the plight of those who are powerless. Despite hundreds of years passing, many of the conflicts and experiences Shakespeare wrote about are still relevant. We still grapple with feelings of love, loss, jealousy, powerlessness and so on, and the way we deal with those emotions continues to lead to conflict and pain (and sometimes joy and humour!).</p>

Literature in Western Australia (WACE)

This course is divided into four units, or two pairs – Units 1 and 2, then Units 3 and 4. A great way to understand these units is by thinking about their **key concepts** and **terminology**. For example, we can think about the units in the syllabus this way:

- ▶ **Unit 1:** Language, **context** and **audience** (the relationship between language, contexts and audiences to create meanings)
- ▶ **Unit 2:** Making connections between texts (the way literary texts connect with each other, our world and ourselves)
- ▶ **Unit 3:** Power, **culture** and **identity** (how language has the power to shape, define, silence or privilege cultures, identities and voices)
- ▶ **Unit 4:** Significance, shape and influence (the enduring role of literature to transform, evoke emotion and challenge).

Not only can Literature broaden your view of your world, it also has the ability to affect the way you interact with other subjects you are studying. It can become a foundation for further academic studies, and permeate all facets of your thought processes, which are so essential to human communication, connection and success.

Character's inner life	'Every feeling of displeasure against [Darcy] was so sharpened by immediate disappointment, that she could barely reply with tolerable civility to the polite inquiries which he directly afterwards approached to make – Attention, forbearance, patience with Darcy, was injury to Wickham. She was resolved against any sort of conversation with him, and turned away with a degree of ill humour ...' (Chapter 18)	Through the narrative point of view, we learn about Elizabeth's inner life, particularly her conflicting emotions towards Mr Darcy.
Interior monologue	'More than once did Elizabeth in her ramble within the park, unexpectedly meet Mr Darcy ... How it could occur a second time, therefore, was very odd! Yet it did, even a third ... it distressed her a little ...' (Chapter 33)	Via interior monologue, Austen reveals her protagonist's emotional arc, and, in turn, develops a well-rounded, dynamic character, giving an insight into the inner workings of a young lady of this era and status – perhaps something that was not so well documented in literary texts to this point!
<p>Summary: <i>Pride and Prejudice</i>, and in fact much of Austen's work, is distinctive due to her characterisation, the use of narrative point of view, authorial intrusion, and the identifiable narrative plot structure. Readers learn about Elizabeth Bennet (our hero), the inner workings of her mind, her thoughts on her society and, arguably, even the voice of Austen herself, through the relatively new medium of the novel.</p>		

Ways of writing

When we write, we are always doing so with a particular **purpose**, **audience** and **context** in mind. Each of these factors influences aspects such as the type of language we use, the complexity of the content we present, and the elements we include or omit in the piece we craft. In the ATAR Literature course, you will produce the following three distinct types of writing:

- ▶ analytical writing
- ▶ imaginative writing
- ▶ reflective writing.

Each genre of writing has its own conventions and expectations, though the lines between these can be blurry. For example, although reflective writing tends to be informal and personal in style, and analytical writing is usually formal and distanced, there are certainly times when it is appropriate for reflective writing to be formal and analytical writing to be personalised. The key is to consider the purpose, audience and context of the particular text you are producing.



- You can think of these details as the who, what, where and when; they often appear at the start of your paragraphs when you are discussing a specific example from your text. But there is a tipping point. Too much description and you end up retelling the text; too little and you may not provide enough of a lead-in to your analysis. A good general rule is this: if describing the who, what, where and when occupies more than half a paragraph before you move to analysis, then it's too much.
- ▶ **It can become superficial.** When descriptive writing takes up too much space, you don't leave enough time to get to the real job – the analysis! This is when you run the risk of writing a superficial textual response. You may also fall into the trap of making broad descriptive generalisations or overusing rhetorical, emotive language. Again, while it is acceptable to comment on the beauty or resonance of language, your job is to go further than that.
- ▶ **Analysis digs deeper.** Analysis can be thought of as the why, the how and the so what. This is when you actually start to deconstruct language and become evaluative, critical and questioning of a text and your own findings. This should form the bulk of your response: considering why you chose certain evidence, how it answers a question and – the big one – what the significance of all of this is.

Structuring an analytical piece

Analytical writing requires you to be quite structured in your approach. This is because you are trying to communicate with your reader to convince them that you have a clear understanding of an idea, a text or an issue. Your aim should be to step the reader through your analysis, using evidence and logic to convince them of your position or perspective. The most common structure is the analytical essay, with an introduction, a series of body paragraphs and a conclusion. While this is not the only way to write analytically, it tends to be favoured in the Literature course because it is an efficient way to communicate your understanding to your reader.

There are several approaches to structuring analytical paragraphs, though they share important similarities. You might have come across these common acronyms:

T Topic sentence	P Point	T Topic sentence
E Elaboration	E Evidence	E Elaboration
E Example	E Explanation	X eXample
E Explanation	L Link	A Analysis
T Tie back		S Summary

In earlier years, you might have thought of each part of the acronym as representing one sentence. As you continue to strengthen your writing skills, you'll find that your paragraphs become longer and more detailed. You might have several examples to support your point, and your explanation or analysis will be more developed. A paragraph doesn't have a set word count or sentence number – the key is that each paragraph will develop a single point that supports your thesis. Your teacher will likely have a particular method they recommend. But, whatever it is, the goal will be to lead your reader through a series of clear points that are each explained and supported, and that all build your response to the question or prompt.

Plan an analysis

ACTIVITY 2.1

Consider the following assessment-style question:

Drawing on your study of at least one literary text, consider the way literature enriches our understanding of times, places and/or events outside of our personal experience.

Plan four analytical paragraphs that could be used in a response to this question. You could use one of the frameworks mentioned, or another your teacher recommends.

Style and analytical writing

Analytical writing must be highly structured but not necessarily formal in its language use. This will depend on the audience and context of your writing. For example, you might write an analytical essay that will be presented to an audience of your peers in the form of a speech. For this, you might use less formal language and potentially even some 'in-jokes' that your audience will understand and appreciate. However, you will still need to have a very tight structure so that your analysis is strong while being entertaining.

Explore the continuum of language

ACTIVITY 2.2

Practise your ability to adjust the formality of your language by rewriting the following passage as colloquially as you can, and then as formally as possible. Think about the way slang, jargon and idiom might help you do this. Have some fun with it – how absurd can you get?

It was a dark and stormy night, and the children had already gone to bed. The babysitter sat on the couch with a book in hand. When they chose the book at the library the previous afternoon, a Stephen King horror novel had seemed fun and a little kitsch. Now, as the lightning cracked and the rain beat against the window panes, it seemed a poor choice.

'Stop it,' the babysitter said aloud. 'It's just a story. Don't be pathetic.'

The babysitter opened the novel, bending the spine forcefully to demonstrate their resolve to read it. They settled into the couch, feeling their body begin to relax. Suddenly, the loud opening chords to Taylor Swift's 'Shake It Off' blasted from their mobile phone, and the babysitter leapt involuntarily from their seat.

Metalanguage and analytical writing

Writing analytically requires you to use the appropriate **linguistic**, **stylistic** and **critical** terminology relevant to the Literature course. This is also known as **metalanguage**. This is a key element in all four units of ATAR Literature. It is strongly recommended that you begin to construct your own personal list of terminology as you start each unit of the course. A template you could use is given below.

For example ...

WACE Literature: Unit 1 terminology	
Word	Meaning
convention	The accepted way of doing something in a particular genre or text type. For example, it is a convention to write essays with an introduction, body paragraphs and a conclusion.

The words you include in this list will be drawn from a number of places but your syllabus is a great place to start. Go through the document and highlight the words that indicate content and concepts you need to understand. Some of these words will be defined in the syllabus glossary but others may require some input from your teacher. Make sure you write any definitions in your own words so that they make sense to you – there is no point in defining a term with words that you don't understand.

Begin your unit terminology list

ACTIVITY 2.3

Construct a terminology list, using the template above or your own version of it. This activity is ongoing: add to your list as often as you can. Examiners are always looking for evidence of students using the appropriate metalanguage of the course in their responses.

Be sure to ask your teacher to explain the terminology they are using in class so that you can include it in your list. Don't be shy – they will be thrilled that you are paying attention to the words they use and that you are keen to build your knowledge!

Tips for improving your analytical writing

- ▶ **Make a plan.** Make a habit of planning your analytical writing. Think through what you are trying to communicate to your reader, and the points you will raise to do so. The detail in your plan will depend on the context of your task: an in-class assessment plan might take you five minutes and be a quick summary of your thesis, key points and a key quote for each paragraph. A plan for an extended, take-home essay or presentation might take you an hour and be much more detailed. Time spent on making a plan is never wasted.

- **Edit it.** Being asked to produce an imaginative piece is not a licence to hand in any old thing! Think carefully about the words you use, remembering that nuances of language and expression are particularly important in imaginative writing. Check the spelling and grammar (think about how experimenting with these conventions might communicate meaning too), and think about how the structure can be adjusted to make the text more effective.

A word from children's author Kim Maslin ...

My creative writing process became more enjoyable and productive when I accepted that every first draft was going to be terrible. No matter what, it was going to be terrible – and that was OK! That terrible first draft is the only way to begin the process of crafting something readable.

Reflective writing

Due to its personal nature, it can be easy to assume that **reflective writing** is unstructured and without rules. This is not the case! Reflective writing can be considered on a continuum, where movement from left to right relates to the depth of thinking we are engaging in.



When we **critically reflect** we don't just describe; we think about why a text has been constructed in a particular way and how this might have been influenced by or in response to the social, historical and ideological context it exists within. We do not just accept things at face value. Instead, we look for the underlying assumptions and beliefs upon which the text has been constructed. We ask questions and ponder possibilities. Reflection is open-ended and often we do not come to clear conclusions or decisions.

When you are asked to reflect, it's useful to think about placing most of your focus on the right-hand side of the continuum (towards 'critical reflection'). It's fine to begin with a little description to orient yourself or the reader, but the bulk of your writing and thinking should be about the 'why' and the 'what if'.

The following table might help you to see the difference between thinking descriptively and thinking reflectively.

Descriptive (closed)	Reflective (open)
What steps did I take?	Why didn't the steps I took lead me to the product I was hoping to achieve?
What techniques were used by the author to construct the characters in this text?	How did the techniques used by the author subvert or confirm my expectations of characters in this genre?

Descriptive (closed)	Reflective (open)
What techniques did I use to construct my imaginative writing piece?	How were my choices of character traits influenced by my unconscious assumptions about this group of people?
Did I enjoy reading this text?	Why did I enjoy (or not enjoy) reading this text?
In what way was this text received by its audience when it was produced?	I wonder if we really know how this text was received by its audience, or if we are only hearing about the response of those with privilege?

You are most likely to be asked to write reflectively in class and as a part of your at-home study. Sometimes you might also be assessed using reflective writing pieces such as journals. While it may seem as if reflective writing isn't so important because it doesn't explicitly make up a lot of your marks, being able to reflect on texts and your own writing is a very important part of studying Literature – this course is not about creating automatons! It is also quite common for examination questions to ask you to 'reflect on' or 'consider' your studied texts in a particular way. When they write such questions, examiners are looking for you to demonstrate your ability to think deeply about texts, their place in society and what they bring to us personally.

As reflective writing is a demonstration of your personal insights and ways of thinking, it is expected that you will use the first person ('I' and 'my'). Don't be put off by this: reflection is about *you* so it is important to engage in this way. However, writing in the first person is not a licence to be colloquial. The level of formality required will depend on the task. For example, reflective writing that is for the purposes of your own study might be casual; writing reflectively in an examination would necessitate a formal tone and a structured approach.

Student writing – reflective writing

Below is a paragraph of reflective writing. Consider the way the writer has conveyed their personal thoughts and feelings while still using a formal tone and structure.

Question: How has the study of a particular literary text led you to reflect on your own assumptions or attitudes towards a particular group of people or past event?

I have always had strong opinions on the need for women to stand up for themselves and to make their voices heard. Due to this perspective, I have often judged women harshly when they have failed to assert themselves or when they seem to have accepted poor treatment at the hands of patriarchal structures. However, studying Shakespeare's *Othello* has led me to reflect on my attitudes, and the way I have been perhaps too critical of other women in situations that are different from my own. In the play, Desdemona is initially characterised as strong-willed. She marries Othello despite her father's misgivings and tells her father she is no longer bound to him. She tells him in Act 1, scene 3, '... and so much duty as my mother show'd to you, preferring you before her father, so much I challenge that I may profess due to the Moor ...' Although she may be simply transferring her domination from one man to another, she is at least able to assert this for herself. Later in the play, though, Desdemona fails to acknowledge she is being abused

The student has immediately highlighted the attitude they will be reflecting on in their response.

The way the character has been constructed is noted here, and an example is given to illustrate.

The significance of the evidence is highlighted.



The student transitions to another example that further supports their response to the text.

The student identifies their personal response.

Asking questions like this is appropriate in a reflective response. Notice the way the student suggests answers to their questions in the following sentences.

The student keeps their response grounded in the text, presenting further evidence that they have engaged deeply with it.

The student concludes the paragraph by returning to their assumption and how studying a literary text has prompted them to reflect.

and gaslit, telling Emilia that ‘my love doth so approve him, that even his stubbornness, his cheques, his frowns ... have grace and favour in them’ (A4, s3). My response to this was to be disdainful. I felt frustrated and angry that Desdemona seemed to be wilfully blind to the horrible way she was being treated. I found myself disliking her more and more. However, I was encouraged by others to think about the position Desdemona was in, and how this might have influenced her response. As a woman who has given up a lot to marry Othello, could her inability to acknowledge her abuse be grounded in shame and desperation? Perhaps it was cruel of me to be so judgemental of her when she was in such a difficult position. It also occurred to me, through discussion with my peers, that perhaps I was actually angry at the wrong person in this situation. Throughout the play, we see Othello’s decline from an honourable general in the military to a jealous, rage-filled man who overreacts to the unfounded suggestion that his wife has been unfaithful. It is possible that Shakespeare characterises Desdemona as so naive and trusting in order to highlight just how wrong Othello is. Though I cannot truthfully say that my beliefs about women’s responsibility to speak and stand up for themselves have entirely changed, studying *Othello* has made me consider that judging people harshly for not meeting my standards may be unfair.

Improve the paragraph

ACTIVITY 2.5

What are the strengths and weaknesses of the paragraph above? Individually or with a partner, make a list of the things you think need improving and the things you think have been done well. Then, write a paragraph responding to the same question using a text you have studied.

When you have written your paragraph, share your ideas and writing with your peers. Discuss your thoughts about writing in the first person, and how you might continue to develop your own authentic responses to texts.

Tips for improving your reflective writing

- ▶ **Avoid closed-off thinking.** Focus on asking yourself open-ended questions that begin with phrases such as ‘what if’ and ‘why’. When we ask closed questions, we invite a yes or no response that ends the conversation we’re having with ourselves.
- ▶ **Be prepared for ‘I don’t know (yet)’.** Reflection can be hard because sometimes we need to be able to sit with uncertainty or questions that make us uncomfortable. It’s okay to not know (yet) or to have several different perspectives on an issue or idea.

Responding with a personal voice

A common misconception is that academic writing should be impersonal or devoid of personality. While this may be the case for some analytical writing, in the ATAR Literature course, where the majority of your analysis *is* personal, you are encouraged to develop your own **personal voice**. Teachers and examiners want to hear what *you* think, not simply a regurgitation of information. Your personal voice is the sense of authenticity in your writing. It relates to how you use language and structure to communicate your perspective in a way that engages your reader.

However, there *is* a difference between an informed, academic personal voice and an informal, emotive rant. An informed personal voice includes thoughts, judgements and observations of a text by *consistently returning to the text itself* and provides *the evidence to back up claims*. We've all had an argument with someone who can't do the latter and simply shouts 'Because!' when they are pressed. This is the epitome of an emotive voice – a lack of evidence or understanding of self, of context and of the possibilities for different perspectives or meanings.

The following table outlines the main differences between using a personal voice and using an inappropriately emotive voice.

Personal voice	Emotive voice
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • is evidence-based • focuses on the text • understands and questions personal response • links text to contexts (the world of the text and the world of the reader) • makes justified judgements or observations that link to analysis • effectively uses first-person or collective pronouns 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • uses informal, abbreviated or colloquial language • describes or retells text • overuses adjectives, rhetoric or emotion when discussing text • lacks nuance or an ability to see layers of meaning in text, audience or self • loses sight of text or question • includes irrelevant personal details • makes judgements without evidence

Remember: Your critical personal response shows a deeper understanding of a text (and is arguably far more interesting). By forming a personal connection with a text you will have more to say about it.

Your teachers and markers are looking for sophisticated and varied language use, especially when it comes to the metalanguage of the course (linguistic, stylistic and critical; see Chapter 5, pages 66–7). However, you can run the risk of failing to communicate your meaning when you try too hard to use 'big words'. It is much better to retain meaning even if, for you, this means using straightforward language.

But this doesn't mean you can't improve! This is why reflective writing or journaling can be so important. If the first time you write about a text is your in-class assessment or exam, of course you're not going to sound as eloquent and coherent as you could. Refine your ideas continuously by writing and rewriting.

Check your own writing

ACTIVITY 2.6

Using an essay or other piece of writing you have recently completed, draw on the guide below to review your own writing. Highlight and make some notes in the margin of your essay. Consider the following questions:

- › Are you making plausible claims about your text?
- › Are your claims backed up with sufficient and relevant evidence from your text or wider reading/research?
- › Do you refer to yourself and/or the audience in terms of beliefs, values, attitudes and social or cultural contextual influences?
- › Do you use first-person or collective pronouns?
- › Are you using too many descriptive adjectives when discussing the text, rather than analysing its construction? (e.g. Tim Winton's *excellent* short story, the writer's *expert* use of imagery, the poem is *beautiful and sweet*.)
- › Are you considering contexts, different available readings or layers of meaning?

Use personal sentence stems

ACTIVITY 2.7

Below are some sentence stems to help you consider how you can effectively bring an informed personal voice to your writing. Complete these sentence stems by applying them to a studied text of your choice, considering how your response is shaped when you look through the lens of 'self'. You may be able to add even more!

- › As an Australian reader ...
- › Taking into account my context ...
- › When I read, my experience as a woman ...
- › As a young man ...
- › As a reader of colour ...
- › As a reader from a vastly different world ...
- › Now, in our contemporary world ...
- › We, as an audience unused to such events, may react to this text ...

Tips for improving your vocabulary

Apply these tips to improve your language use.

- › **READ!** Read anything and everything. This is the number one way to absorb new and interesting words.
- › **Examine an old essay.** Make a list of your most commonly used words and challenge yourself to find a range of synonyms.
- › **Practise using new words in conversation.** Doing this before using new words in your writing will help you to become comfortable with their meaning and usage.

- ▶ **Rewrite sections of your essays or reflective writing.** Replace tired, vague or overused terms with more interesting and precise ones.
- ▶ **Subscribe to a ‘word of the day’ app.** Better yet, ask your teacher to start each lesson by familiarising the class with a new word from the app!
- ▶ **Conduct an online search for ‘vocabulary for essay writing’.** Make a note of useful words and phrases, adding them to your word banks (see below).
- ▶ **Create word banks.** These might focus on, for example, verbs, conjunctions, transitional words and phrases, or words to show comparison, modality or evaluation. (See the example below.)

WORD BANK - VERBS	advocates	defends	exposes	proposes	specifies
	argues	defines	focuses	provokes	speculates
	asserts	depicts	highlights	questions	substantiates
	challenges	discredits	incites	reassures	symbolises
	considers	discusses	interrogates	refutes	synthesises
	contends	disputes	juxtaposes	represents	transforms
	contests	emphasises	manipulates	retaliates	transitions
	contrasts	epitomises	parodies	reveals	underlines
	corroborates	espouses	portrays	scrutinises	underscores
	creates	examines	presents	shows	upholds
	debates	explores	promotes	sparks	validates

Reflect on your writing style preferences

ACTIVITY 2.8

Which style of writing do you feel you are best at, and which do you enjoy the most? (They may not be the same.) Reflect on why this is. For example, perhaps having clear expectations and a conventional structure helps you to write with confidence. Maybe you have had some negative experiences with a particular writing style.

Share your responses with your teacher and the class, and discuss some of the fears you might have as well as what you’re looking forward to in the Literature course. This is a great opportunity to resolve any misconceptions, too!

Constructing a reading

A large part of the Literature course is about 'readings'. Whether you're applying a formal **reading practice**, reading texts to uncover meanings that are not immediately visible or exploring a text as part of your examinable content in order to 'present a **close reading**', the concept of 'readings' is embedded continuously throughout the Year 11 and 12 syllabuses. Therefore, it is helpful to have a clear idea of what a reading is and how you can put this into practice. In this chapter, we will first delve into understanding **reading strategies** and reading practices, then look at how you might actually go about making a reading.



Understanding reading practices and strategies

What is the difference between a reading practice and a reading strategy? You'll often see these terms lumped together as though they are one thing but it is important to break down the difference.

A reading practice is a particular way of decoding a text. When we apply a reading practice, we are looking at the text through a specific 'lens'. You could think of it as putting on a pair of tinted glasses. The colour of the lenses will influence the appearance of what we see and will emphasise particular aspects or colours. Similarly, the lens of a reading practice *will influence the things we notice, what is emphasised and how we interpret* those things.

A reading strategy is the way we approach a text in order to understand it. For example, we might begin by reading a text purely for pleasure. Then, on our second reading, we might decide to apply a specific reading practice in order to derive meaning from the text. Another strategy might be to learn a little about the author and the text's context before we begin reading. We might also seek out some reviews or commentaries to situate the text in a time and place. Only then might we actually read the text itself, with a view to understanding it.

You might simplify this description of reading strategies to being how we approach a text, and reading practices being the frames through which we interpret a text.

Although there are several common reading practices that are drawn upon when studying literature, it is important to remember that there is absolutely no requirement that you put a label on a reading practice, or that you even use a specific one when making a reading of a text. Reading practices are simply ways into a text – they are the journey, not the destination. You should never feel obliged to use any particular reading practice when you study a text. A text might have quite obvious synergy with a specific reading practice, but that doesn't mean you have to use it. Students often force a labelled reading practice (e.g. a Marxist or eco-critical reading) onto a text and then tie themselves in knots trying to actually apply that practice to help them arrive at a reading.

Remember: The reading practice is simply a lens you are using to understand a text. It is a way of seeing, rather than what you're looking for.



Consider reading strategies

ACTIVITY 3.1

Consider some of the strategies you use when you approach a text. What are some of the advantages and disadvantages of doing so? A table like the one below may help organise your ideas.

Strategy	Advantages	Disadvantages
Reading for pleasure before specifically looking for meaning		
Choosing a reading practice to apply or a concept to focus on before reading the text		
Learning about the author/context before beginning the text		
Learning about the author/context after reading the text		
Looking for connections to other texts or thinking about what you've learned when reading other texts		

Reading practices

Below is a brief outline of some commonly used reading practices. This list is neither prescriptive nor exhaustive. Consider which ones might or might not be useful in drawing attention to particular ideas in the texts you have read in the course so far.

Postcolonial readings

Applying a **postcolonial reading practice** to a text will highlight the ways that colonial structures empower some while disempowering others. You will be looking at the way First Nations cultures are represented and how they can be disenfranchised, and how dominant powers (i.e. the colonisers) benefit from perpetuating the disempowerment of those they have displaced.

Marxist readings

A **Marxist reading** is one in which the reader pays close attention to the ways people are valued for their ability to contribute to a society through their labour. In a Marxist reading, you will be considering how social structures are enacted that either empower or disempower the proletariat (the working class), and how class systems may be operating.

Eco-critical readings

When we make an **eco-critical reading** of a text, we are paying attention to the ways the environment and its treatment are represented. We might be considering ways in which people and nature are at odds with each other, and whether human beings' dominance of their world comes at a cost to the environment and themselves.

Aesthetic readings

When making an **aesthetic reading** of a text, we are paying close attention to the way that text makes us feel – not just emotionally but also physically. We may be looking at a text as a sensory experience and homing in on how the reading experience has impacted us on a personal, experiential level. An aesthetic reading may also look for the ways that a text has been constructed to adhere to or subvert traditional ideas of beauty and pleasure.

Feminist readings

In applying a feminist lens to a text, we are looking specifically at power structures and experiences that are shaped around gender. It is worth noting that a **feminist reading** lens is not simply about looking at the way women are mistreated (though this may be evident in some texts). Rather, it is about considering how social roles have been constructed, the underlying assumptions behind these, and the impact that ‘performing’ these roles has on the established social structure.

Tips for applying a reading practice

It is important to keep in mind that making use of a reading practice is *not* the same as making a reading. A reading practice will shine a light on certain features or point towards ways of interpreting a text. It will help you to notice particular elements, or remind you to be on the lookout for them. When you make a reading, identifying or selecting a reading practice will help you and your reader understand *why* you have focused on certain features or meanings and not others, or *why* you interpreted something in a particular way. Choosing to read a text through a particular reading practice can help you to filter and organise your ideas so that you can write about them logically and purposefully. Keep in mind the following.

- ▶ **Be discerning.** The most productive reading practices are often those that highlight ideas, tropes, symbols and so on that *are not already self-evident* in the text’s context or content. For example, when we read a text through a postcolonial lens, we are focusing on aspects of the text that can be illuminated or understood differently because we are aware of particular things (such as the treatment of First Nations cultures throughout the history of colonisation). If a text has been purposefully written to highlight these things already – for example, Kate Grenville’s *The Secret River* – then applying a postcolonial reading practice might not illuminate as many new insights as a different reading practice might.
- ▶ **Explain your reading practice.** Never just state your practice and assume the reader knows what you mean, and don’t give in to the temptation to create a fancy name for a reading practice. Give a brief explanation of the focus of the specific practice, and how applying it illuminates something in particular in the text you’re analysing.

Explore reading practices

ACTIVITY 3.2

In pairs or small groups, choose a reading practice and investigate it. Find out what theories or frameworks underpin the practice, and who the key thinkers were/are. Make a list of some of the **seminal** works related to the practice. If you have already begun studying a literary text, consider how (or if) the practice might relate to it.

Present your research to the class, with the purpose of building a shared library of reading practices.

Making a reading

Making a reading simply means reading for meaning. Another way of understanding it is as a search for significance. When we make a reading, we are thinking about *what* the text has communicated to us, and *how* it has been communicated. This may sound simple but the catch is *knowing how* you make meaning from what you read, and how you can *explain* this cohesively.

During the course, you will be making readings of both your studied texts and ones you have likely not seen before. The process for doing so is largely the same. However, the information you have about your studied texts will be much wider and deeper than the information you have about a text you have just been presented with. For this reason, your analyses of studied texts are expected to be more comprehensive and wide-reaching than those of **unseen texts** (ones not previously encountered). Even if you are fortunate enough to have already had experience with an ‘unseen’ text (sometimes you just get lucky!), it’s important that you focus your analysis and discussion only on the extract you’ve been provided with.

The most important thing to remember when making a reading is that it is *your* reading. It doesn’t matter what a writer intended – we don’t need to know this to find our own reading. You’ve been finding meaning, the main idea or themes of texts throughout your schooling history. This is nothing new. However, what a ‘reading’ asks is for you to actively explore how you arrived at the meaning you developed. How did you get there? What helped you? What clues did you discover in the text? Which words or structures conveyed meaning to you? Your job is to show how your analytical brain is working to make this meaning.

Steps for making a reading

We take a number of steps on our way to our meaning – an interrogation continuum. Although this book presents this process as a series of steps, in reality we don’t always follow them one by one. We go back and forth to add, adjust and remove ideas and evidence as we dig deeper into a text. Understanding these steps can help to organise your search for meaning, but don’t feel that you must follow them in a particular order.

→ **Step 3:** Which *technical aspects* of the text communicate meaning to you?

For example:

- ▶ Does the text's structure or form serve a particular purpose?
- ▶ Has punctuation been used in particular ways to convey meaning?
- ▶ How do the specific words employed by the writer shape your understanding?
- ▶ How has the text been constructed to adhere to, experiment with or subvert your expectations of the genre?

Step 4: What *evidence* can you find in the text to support your understanding? Highlight and annotate your text to connect the aspects you are noticing and interpreting to the meaning you're making.

Step 5: How does the *audience* of the text influence the meaning received? For example:

- ▶ Which elements of your context, values, attitudes or beliefs influence your response?
- ▶ How might other audiences respond to the text? Is there an invited or a dominant reading that is promoted by the text?

Step 6: How do the *course concepts* relate to the meaning you are taking from the text? Are there any particular syllabus points that could help guide your reading? Is there an opportunity to incorporate some of the course language into your response?

Step 7: How does this text relate to a broader **discourse** around an issue or a topic?

Step 8: What does the text mean to you? What is its *significance*? Taking all the previous steps into account, what does the text seem to be promoting, questioning, representing or reflecting?

You'll find a worked example using this process later in this chapter (see pages 29–32). Think about what works for you and any elements you would change. The way we study and think about texts is very individual – there is no one-size-fits-all approach!

Invited and dominant readings

Often a text will communicate a clear or obvious meaning. You may discover this during class discussions, when most of the people in your group come to a shared understanding. This can be thought of as a **dominant reading** – the meaning that most people, in a particular context, are likely to arrive at. An **invited reading** is one that we can deduce the author is deliberately leading us towards. Making both invited and dominant readings relies on us understanding our own, the text's and the author's contexts. Importantly, the fact that it is just the first or easiest meaning you discern does not automatically make it an invited or dominant reading. You need to be able to explain what makes it so.

Look for the signals the author gives you to indicate they are inviting you to come to a particular meaning. For example:

- ▶ How does the text end? Is there a resolution that makes it clear you are being led to a particular conclusion?

- › Do particular tropes lead you to view events or characters in specific ways?
- › Does the genre have an alignment with a particular purpose (e.g. the social commentary of 'slice of life' theatre)?
- › Does the text draw parallels with or make allusions to contemporary issues or events?

When you declare that a reading is a dominant one, you need to provide some detail. Why are most people in a particular time, place and circumstance likely to read the text in the same way?

Turning it around – subversive or resistant readings

If there is such a thing as a dominant or an invited reading, then there must also be **subversive** or **resistant readings**. A reading is subversive when it challenges the 'norm' or gives alternative, perhaps less palatable, ways of understanding a text. Understanding the invited reading can be a helpful way to structure the explanation of a subversive reading as it provides us with something to question or refute.

For example ...

An invited reading of *Othello* focuses on racial differences and intolerances as being at the root of the play's tragic ending. Although this is a defensible position to take, it relies on a very superficial reading of the text. Throughout the play, Othello is frequently referred to as 'the Moor', 'thicklips' and as 'black Othello', to ensure that the audience understands he is different and an outsider. Comparisons to animals, such as a 'black ram' and a 'Barbary horse' further reinforce this. When Othello begins to descend into madness, this is attributed to him reverting to his uncivilised, African roots. So much is made of Othello's race that it is clear the audience is being positioned to see this as the primary cause of his horrible actions. This makes sense in the context of Elizabethan England, where beliefs about civility and intelligence were often linked closely to a person's race.

However, an alternative interpretation of the text could view it as a comment on the way we often use differences such as race as an excuse to mask insidious human evil. Iago himself tells the audience, 'I am not what I am', that he is a liar and has a vendetta against Othello. Iago tells us that he believes 'twixt my sheets he has done my office', suggesting there are rumours that Emilia and Othello have had an affair. He reaffirms this as his primary motivation when he states he will take 'wife for wife'. He is jealous that Cassio has been promoted before him, and he is willing to take advantage of the pliant Roderigo to get what he wants. Emilia reminds us that Iago has asked her many times in the past to steal Desdemona's handkerchief, confirming that his plot is not a spur-of-the-moment new idea. None of these issues relate to Othello's race, suggesting that the heart of the problem is really Iago's inherent two-faced nature (he swears 'by Janus') and his jealousy, and that race is merely an excuse for Iago. While it is clear that Shakespeare has invited the audience to make connections between Othello's race and his actions, and that this makes sense contextually, doing so may in fact be leading us to display the same racial biases that the characters do. Reading the text to look beyond just this issue presents us with the alternative reading that jealousy is part of human nature rather than being linked to any particular group, and that it can be insidious and dangerous.

For example ...

Now that you have recorded and discussed your thoughts on the poem, consider the worked example below, which follows the process outlined on pages 25–6 to develop a reading.

The retrieval chart below captures student notes on the poem in Activity 3.4.

<p>1 Prior knowledge</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Author: Mark Lemon – unknown to me • When written: Unknown; author living in the 19th century • Title: ‘How To Make a Man of Consequence’ → Suggests a man ‘can be made’ – does this mean it’s a construct, or is this a poem about how to ‘make it’ in the sense of being successful?
<p>2 Reading strategy or practice</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The text seems focused on men and how they are perceived. Women are not mentioned at all. Approaching the text looking at how gender is constructed seems logical (invited reading). • A feminist reading could critique the lack of inclusion of women. • A Marxist reading could look at the way the ‘man’ being constructed seems to be part of the upper class or successful part of society (i.e. not a working man).
<p>3 Technical aspects</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • rhythm and rhyme – childlike, nursery rhyme style • sibilance – lots of ‘sss’ sounds • focus on breaking a person down into individual bits • visual and kinesthetic imagery • connotative language – negative, pointing to coldness and meanness
<p>4 Find evidence</p>	<p>A brow austere, a circumspective eye. A frequent shrug of the os humeri; A nod significant, a stately gait, A blustering manner, and a tone of weight, A smile sarcastic, an expressive stare: Adopt all these, as time and place will bear; Then rest assur’d that those of little sense Will deem you sure a man of consequence.</p>
<p>5 Audience</p>	<p>For me, as a woman, this text reinforces my perspective of masculinity; it’s almost like a recipe or armour that men must assume in order to be considered ‘men’. I think, in our contemporary world, we are starting to understand this idea of assuming masculinity in order to be taken seriously and how damaging this might be. Male audiences might respond differently, however, and be frustrated by the way the poet appears to mock this version of masculinity and suggest it might all be an act to fool ‘those of little sense’.</p>
<p>6 Link to course concepts</p>	<p>(Unit 1) how text structures, language features and stylistic elements shape meaning and create particular effects and nuances, including through allusions, paradoxes and ambiguities</p>



<p>7 Discourse</p>	<p>This text contributes to popular culture discussions around masculinity – the power and privileges we often associate with a person’s status or how they hold themselves, and whether this is truly how they feel or even see themselves. It points to a discussion of how men are told how to behave to be considered ‘masculine’ and that society is more concerned with appearances rather than the personal damage it may be doing to individuals.</p>
<p>8 Significance</p>	<p><i>I can now use my planning to write a reflective paragraph on my reading. This helps me to clarify my meaning, organise my thoughts and get to the heart of my reading. This reflective paragraph isn’t formal or structured – it’s simply a way for me to reflect on my reading and my ideas.</i></p> <p>The text appears to be mocking the social concept of masculinity and what it means to be a man. I love how so much of the imagery is about appearances and actions, as if that’s all it takes to be a man. Even though I am a female reader, I find it problematic that masculinity, in this sense, seems to be about what a man does or acts: how he appears to others. Like femininity, the social construct of masculinity seems to be about how we present ourselves to others. This text suggests that men should be ‘significant’ and ‘stately’. There is this connotation of power and status and, coupled with the title, it is almost reminiscent of a concoction, like a science experiment or recipe, even; like men are simply factory models made for the benefit of society’s happiness rather than their own. However, it’s the last two lines that seem to change the poem’s meaning for me, especially the phrase ‘those of little sense’. I love this! This subtle mockery, communicated through the use of the trite rhyming, of the whole concept of masculinity is very clever – the way that the poem suggests only fools would fall for this masculine act. And who created this construct? Society. So who are the fools? Society.</p>



Now that you have an outline of ideas and evidence, you can work this into a more formal close reading of this unseen poem.

Mark Lemon's poem 'How To Make a Man of Consequence' highlights the way that masculinity is socially constructed. By presenting instructions for how to be seen as 'a man', Lemon shows us how foolish we are to buy into such stereotypes. If being a man is achieved simply by following a series of superficial steps, as though we are baking a cake, then there would seem to be little value in such assumptions. Through the use of structural devices such as rhyme, the evoking of bleak connotations, and using trite language, Lemon shows how ludicrous our ingrained ideas of masculinity really are. However, he also subtly notes that such ideas are widespread and, in doing so, encourages us to reflect on whether or not we subconsciously believe these stereotypes ourselves. When read with a focus on how gender is constructed and viewed, Lemon seems to be suggesting that society broadly is foolish for buying into assumptions about being a man. From this perspective, the poem mocks the way that society has reinforced beliefs about what makes someone 'manly' and encourages us to be similarly disdainful.

The superficial, trite language used by the poet conveys a tone of mockery to the reader. Rather than presenting a vision of a man that is richly constructed through varied imagery, Lemon gives a rather basic and limited description. He nominates several features of the human body – the brow, the eye, the gait and so on – but only briefly describes them. The brow is 'austere', the nod is 'significant'. These descriptions are also quite trite in that they communicate little detail about these features and their significance. The reader is left to question how a brow might be austere, what that would look like, and how we could tell the difference between it and any other kind of brow. Such instructions are akin to some of the unhelpful measures given in poorly written recipes, which ask for a 'pinch' of salt or a 'generous handful' of flour. Lemon's poem suggests that the social constructs of masculinity are similarly unhelpful and that our assumptions about what it means to be a man are based on limited, historically unquestioned features.

The descriptions given by Lemon of what being a 'man of consequence' entails are concerning; when reading the poem with a focus on how it critiques gender norms, we can see that many of the traits suggested have negative connotations. Even those that could be seen as ambiguous take on a bleak tone when combined. For example, the important man is seen to have a 'sarcastic' smile and a 'blustering' manner; his general mien seems to be one of indifference, indicated by the 'frequent shrug'. While being austere and circumspect can be seen as generally positive traits, in combination they contribute to the man of consequence being seen as overly sensible, perhaps even unfeeling. Other descriptions,

This is a clear and concise beginning indicative of a close reading. While you are writing a formal response, there is no need for superfluous openings. The answer proceeds to state the student's interpretation and explain briefly how they came to this meaning.

Clear reference to language but with space to develop these later; a phrase like 'such as' gives you space to unpack your ideas. You don't have to name every feature like a shopping list. It is also exciting to see multiple or critical readings being considered, followed by specification of the reading strategy that helped shape the interpretation.

The topic sentence flags the 'what' (a tone of mockery) and the 'how' (use of language) to be discussed in the paragraph.

The point is elaborated upon, and specific examples given.

To reinforce the point, a link to a relatable, real-world instance is given.

The final sentence of the paragraph connects the idea back to the overall reading.

The reading strategy used has been briefly explained.

Examples are identified and explained.





Once again, the overall reading is reinforced in the final sentences of the paragraph.

The technique employed and its impact on the reader is explained.

This is a good example of reading for nuance. Words and phrases are being considered separately and together for how they communicate meaning.

Links to the language of a relevant course concept are made here by suggesting that the poet has incorporated paradox to shape meaning.

The first few sentences of the conclusion summarise the points made in the paragraphs.

The way the text works within a broader discourse of gender norms is highlighted here, demonstrating understanding of how texts work to reinforce and challenge ideologies.

such as having a 'significant' nod, become almost nonsensical. The poet seems to suggest that adhering to traditional or acceptable notions of masculinity requires people to be cold and perhaps even unkind. Furthermore, the use of descriptions that don't make much sense in terms of the trait they relate to suggests that such assumptions of masculinity may be impossible to attain.

The simplistic rhyming pattern of Lemon's poem adds to the sense of mockery of this social construct that he conveys. The AA/BB/CC/DD rhyme reads like a children's nursery rhyme. It invites the reader to adopt a 'singsong' voice and to feel a sense of carefree, childlike playfulness. It encourages us to feel that the content of the poem is trivial and to be poked fun at. However, like many nursery rhymes that feel playful and innocent at first reading, Lemon's poem communicates a serious message. He encourages us to see socially constructed ideals of masculinity and importance as something that can be harmful. While Lemon suggests that anyone who would believe such a ruse is 'of little sense', we know that such attitudes are in fact widespread. Indeed, Lemon tells readers to 'rest assur'd' that doing these superficial things will satisfy many people. By including this paradox, the poet invites readers to acknowledge that constructs of masculinity are perpetuated by society even when they make fools of us. Lemon subtly suggests that the reader themselves may be one of those with 'little sense'.

Mark Lemon's poem is short but impactful. Through the use of simplistic rhyming structure, a bleak tone constructed through negative connotations, and limited (sometimes nonsensical) descriptions of traits, the poem effectively communicates the foolishness of buying into such assumptions of what it means to be a man. However, although the poem pokes fun at this particular construct, it does not suggest an alternative. It also does not address other superficial, equally or more harmful constructions of 'manliness'. Arguably, Lemon focuses only on the domineering, self-important style of masculinity commonly associated with the upper class or very wealthy. He leaves out any mention of violence, 'blokishness' or heteronormativity, which are often associated with 'being a man' in today's Australian society. Despite this, Lemon's poem clearly conveys his disdain for this particular construct and encourages readers to respond similarly.



Constructing a reading of a studied text

When making a reading of a **studied text**, we may take into account things such as context or biographical information, because we will have had the opportunity to learn about these in detail. Readings of studied texts often move beyond the personal meaning we initially find and into more deep and nuanced understandings that may be informed by additional research and reading, such as literary commentary or alternative versions. As we do in all readings, we identify evidence that supports our interpretation.

When making a reading of a studied text, we might ask ourselves questions such as the following.

- ▶ How does the text reflect its context or relate to ours?
- ▶ Is the text challenging, naturalising or marginalising particular voices, groups or experiences?
- ▶ How does this text contribute to the ‘patchwork’ of literature presenting a particular view of the world?

When studying a text in depth, as you will with your prescribed texts, you will likely uncover many ideas and aspects of significance. These will all contribute to your **schema** of knowledge for that text. When presenting a reading of that text, the first step will be to narrow your focus to access the *relevant* knowledge you have – you can’t cover everything! The most common way to do this is by unpacking the topic or question you’ve been given so you know what you need to discuss (this is covered in Section 6: Exams and assessments).

When using the interrogation continuum to construct a reading of a studied text (see pages 25–6), you might find that the question you’ve been given emphasises one or more of the elements you are looking at. For example, you could be asked to focus on a specific set of techniques or a particular reading practice (or several), or you might be reflecting on how your knowledge of the author’s context helps you to arrive at meaning. Alternatively, you may have been asked to focus on a particular chapter or section of a text.

Remember: Authors don’t hide meaning in their texts, like a pirate burying treasure. There is no one ‘right answer’ when reading a text, and no one correct path to meaning. Your journey to finding meaning and significance in a text may be quite different from someone else’s, and that’s fine. In fact, it’s part of the beauty of studying Literature. The key is to be clear in your explanations and use evidence to support your reading.



Interrogate the opening of a text

ACTIVITY 3.5

Choose the opening few pages of a novel, the opening scene of a play, or a poem you are studying.

- 1 What is your reading of the text? How did you come to that reading?
- 2 Make some notes about your initial response and the particular elements that you noticed.
- 3 Next, use the same retrieval chart structure as the example given for the unseen text to organise your ideas (pages 29–30). As this is a studied text, you will be able to add more information to sections such as ‘Prior knowledge’.
- 4 Now write a reflective paragraph that starts to bring your ideas together in an informal way. When you do this, don’t be too fussy about your structure and language. This is just a way to organise your thoughts and become more comfortable with expressing your ideas.
- 5 Finally, spend time crafting a formal response. You could use this as a timed practice. Swap your essay with a partner and give each other feedback on the readings you have made.

SECTION 2

Unit 1

Unit summary

Unit 1: Language, context and audience (*the relationship between language, contexts and audiences to create meanings*)

Unit 1 should form the basis of all your thought processes, analysis and work around the texts you study in Literature. The units build on each other; what you learn in Unit 1 will be integral to Unit 2 and so forth. This doesn't mean you won't cover these concepts, skills or activities again after completing Unit 1; when they do arise again, you will be able to build on these foundations and develop your literary skills.

As you read through the unit description in the syllabus document, highlight key words and phrases and discuss with a friend what these might mean. For example:

- › *'different ways of reading literary texts'*
- › *'personal responses and more studied and complex responses'*
- › *'distinctive features in literary texts'*
- › *'individual viewpoints, experiences and contexts shape readings'*.

In Unit 1, you will be widening your thinking about how you approach and understand texts personally, and how context (your own, the author's and the text's) can influence responses. You will be starting to learn about how literature performs a social function by telling stories and sharing experiences from diverse perspectives.



CHAPTER

04

Storytelling traditions

Literature is about seeing through the eyes of the writer via the words they choose, the structures they employ, the characters they create and the worlds they construct. As readers, we also bring our own experiences, contexts, beliefs, values and attitudes that influence how we experience a text. Writers may have a purpose, and audiences may have similar reactions but, ultimately, a text's meaning is **subjective** – personal to each and every person who experiences it – and always will be, regardless of whether we know what a creator meant or not. When you think of it this way, this is what makes Literature so fun: *it belongs to you.*

As an ATAR Literature student you are encouraged to read 'literary texts drawn from a widening range of historical, social, cultural and personal contexts' (Unit 1 syllabus outline). So, what exactly *is* a literary text?



What is literature?

Earlier, in Chapter 1, you questioned the syllabus's definition of a literary text, and hopefully came to some sort of understanding about what it means for a text to be valued, enduring or artistic. (See Chapter 1, Activity 1.1.) The outline also uses the intriguing word 'widening' – in other words, you're not just reading about our world now, or one version of history from a privileged few; you will be challenged to consider texts, ideas and discourse from a range of sources.

The process of passing information from one generation to the next is an intrinsic human activity that facilitates survival, creative expression, the creation and coherence of a community or culture, the exercising and transmittal of power, and more. Consider the gravity of that for a moment: *it is distinctly human to share stories in order to express the nature of our existence*. Consider then: what 'stories' are essential to our survival? What do they teach us about who we are as humans? What do they reveal about our world? Do they challenge the status quo?

Some of the earliest narratives raise very human ideas about our identity, our survival, our emotions and our physicality. They also often grapple with that ultimate existential question: why are we here? At the heart of many literary texts are stories about these human experiences, and they have paved the way for many storytelling traditions. Some of the structures associated with texts that explore these fundamental ideas are so commonplace now that they have become embedded within our experience of literature and stories. (See 'Genre', pages 40–1.)

Furthermore, many of our accepted belief systems have been handed down through storytelling traditions. Ideas such as existence, survival, power, heroism, masculinity and femininity, religion and morality are often contained in these stories. Here we start to grapple with seemingly **dogmatic ideologies** and the relationship of storytelling and literature to audiences. This idea can be linked to the definition of 'discourse' in the syllabus glossary. Discourse includes all language – everything we hear, view or read – and tells us 'stories' about who we are, what we should believe and why we exist.

Therefore, it is an integral part of Unit 1 to understand where, how and why stories are told. They reflect their contexts, yes, but they also contribute to a bigger picture that includes the formation of beliefs, values, expectations, social norms, accepted **dogma** and hierarchical perspectives.



Research storytelling traditions

ACTIVITY 4.1

- 1 Research the following storytelling traditions:
 - › Dreamtime storytelling
 - › another oral tradition
 - › ancient Roman mythology
 - › Aesop’s fables
 - › epic poetry.
- 2 Make a table with your findings. List some of the main themes you find in the ‘summary’ column and try to make a link to our contemporary world in the third column.

3 Here is an example of what your table might look like.

Tradition	Summary - what were these stories about?	Connection to our world
ancient Greek narratives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • war and battle • power • heroism • ownership • voyages • masculinity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beliefs about masculinity and power • being one’s best • expansion and knowledge • displaying power and strength

- 4 Consider your findings. What are some of the shared **representations** of humanity? Think about how people, groups, societies and/or surroundings are represented.

Reflect on the bigger picture

ACTIVITY 4.2

In your allocated reflective writing time this week (see Chapter 2, pages 14–16), reflect on the ‘bigger picture’ of your Unit 1 texts. (Remember, there is no right or wrong answer. We are asking you to think deeply and critically about the ‘why’ – why was this text even written?)



Genre

In this course ‘genre’ is an umbrella term, as you can see from the definition in your syllabus glossary. Essentially, genre can refer to the *text type* or to the subgenres of *narrative / subject matter*. The text type is the macro genre or umbrella structure, while the micro genres can have distinctive details all of their own while still exhibiting (or subverting) parts of the macro.

MACRO Genre	MICRO Subgenre
Poetry <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • language • movement • sounds • structure 	e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ballad • beat poetry • ode • sonnet
Prose fiction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • character • narrative point of view • narrative structure • setting 	e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bildungsroman • detective fiction • historical fiction • speculative fiction
Drama <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • auditory elements • language • narrative elements • visual elements 	e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comedy of manners • epic theatre • realist theatre • tragedy

Consider genre expectations

ACTIVITY 4.4

1 While we won't go into detail in this textbook about the multitude of micro genres (as this could take a while!), consider the table below and discuss what you already know about or expect from these generic structures.

Poetry	Prose fiction	Drama
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ballad • elegy • epic poetry • narrative • ode • sonnet 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bildungsroman • crime • fantasy • Gothic horror • historical fiction • speculative fiction 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • absurdist • comedy • epic theatre • melodrama • tragedy • well-made play

2 Choose one from each column (or from your own ideas). What are the features you expect from this genre (e.g. narrative subject matter, types of personas or characters, conflicts or presentation of ideas)?

ATAR Literature and genre

In the ATAR Literature course, the three macro genres are:

- › poetry
- › prose fiction
- › drama.

Within these genres, there are expectations – that is, you will have preconceived notions of what to expect about the structures, language and style of texts that fall into these genres. For example, we expect poetry to be lyrical and somewhat abstract; we expect narratives to follow a predictable arc involving exposition, conflicts and resolution in prose fiction; and we expect drama to be a multimodal experience.

However, while there is some overlap, you must ensure you understand the differences between certain terms, namely **features**, **conventions** and **techniques**.

- › A feature is anything that helps create meaning for us. This can be as small as a punctuation mark, or it can be a larger specific element that helps to create the identifiable or recognisable structure or style associated with a certain writer or genre. ‘Feature’ is an umbrella term that encompasses anything you might notice about language, structure and genre in a text.
- › A convention is something that is typical or expected in a particular genre. Conventions are often the way we come to recognise a text type or genre. Conventions include, for example, the use of the deus ex machina in Greek tragedy; the line and syllable structure of a sonnet; and the story arc of a bildungsroman narrative.
- › Techniques are the specific devices that writers use to construct meaning in their writing.

Often students find that they can *identify* these elements, like figurative language or narrative point of view, but in Literature we also need to consider their *effect* and *symbolic functions*. Your teacher will help you unpack the distinctive features of your texts, and you should keep these texts in mind when you complete the activities in this chapter.

At the end of each genre summary, complete the activity and consider:

- › the effects these features have on a reader and why they may be used
- › the symbolic function the features serve
- › whether these features are used in your studied texts
- › how we can analyse these distinctive features to inform our reading.

Remember: All language communicates meaning. Just because we have expectations about the features of *one* genre, this doesn’t mean these features won’t appear in *other* genres.

Rhetoric

While ATAR Literature does not focus on genres that are typically considered to be persuasive texts, such as speeches or feature articles, rhetorical language, or **rhetoric**, is still a part of your literary reading because at the heart of rhetoric *is* language. The way language makes us feel, the way it empowers or disempowers people, and the way it influences or compels us to act is fundamental to literary study.

Examples of rhetoric found in ATAR Literature texts include:

- ▶ Hamlet’s ‘To be or not to be’ soliloquy
- ▶ TS Eliot’s ‘The Waste Land’
- ▶ Oodgeroo Noonuccal’s ‘Dark Unmarried Mothers’
- ▶ Maya Angelou’s ‘Still I Rise’.

In addition, much of Charles Dickens’ work is filled with rhetoric.

Features of rhetoric

Rhetoric is the manipulation of language, structures and figures of speech to entice and move an audience. When language targets our emotions, it seems to make sense and to be trustworthy; it connects with us. The three main types of rhetorical appeal are:

- ▶ pathos (emotional appeals)
- ▶ logos (logical appeals)
- ▶ ethos (ethical appeals).

Given that rhetorical language is often considered the basis of all communication, and many set texts are ones that have moved a great many audiences, it follows that you will find these features in your studied texts.

The word bank below provides some examples of rhetoric. Keep in mind, as we start to delve into the three ATAR Literature genres, that these rhetorical features are not exclusive to persuasive texts and will appear in all manner of texts.

WORD BANK - RHETORIC	anaphora	declarative sentences	inclusive language	polysyndeton
	anecdote	euphemism	irony	rhetorical questions
	antithesis	exclamation	metonymy	synecdoche
	asyndeton	hyperbole	parallelism	tricolon
	chiasmus	idiom	parataxis	zeugma

Find examples of rhetorical devices

ACTIVITY 4.5

Define each of the rhetorical devices in the word bank above, and find an example in one of your studied texts. Make a note of the impact of the device on how the text draws on your emotions, logic or ethics. If you haven’t come across an example yet, leave a space for it to be filled in as you continue your reading.

Poetry

Poetry, no matter the form, is a genre that is recognisable for its lyrical and figurative language and its use of structural techniques for effect. In fact, what makes poetry so distinctive is the sensory and physical effects created via these features. Of course, poetry also has a long history within the oral tradition. A poem should ideally be heard, be read aloud and make you *feel*, whether that is an emotional or a physical reaction, or both.

Historically, the word ‘poetry’ comes from the Greek word *poieo*, which translates to ‘I create’. Poetry is believed to predate literacy, as it was an oral tradition. It was a way of telling stories and relaying information. Particularly in religious incantations, such as chants or prayers, it was often accompanied by musical instruments or spoken by a group in unison, like a chorus.

When we take into account this ancient history of poetry, we can see it is a powerful genre, especially due to its sensory qualities. Humans are innately drawn to balance, symmetry and harmony in structures and sounds – architecture, music and garden design are other examples of disciplines that reveal this preference.

When moving beyond the initial experience of poetry and into its analysis, we need to be able to step back and consider *what* is creating the sensory responses we have. What are the specific choices the writer has made that are causing us to respond in certain ways?

Features of poetry

Poetry manipulates structure, language, movement and sound to evoke a sensory experience – these become the features of poetry. They are used, experimented with, or subverted by writers for a multitude of purposes. Of course, we may never know what their intended purpose is (and you aren’t required to know this); however, we can analyse their arrangement of structure, language, movement and sound, along with our own visceral, emotional and intellectual responses, to evaluate how they might have achieved this.

- ▶ **Structure** is the form, the length of lines, punctuation or lack thereof and the typography (i.e. fonts, size, layout).
- ▶ **Language** refers to the choice of words, the description, the way our senses are appealed to and the discourse of the subject matter.
- ▶ **Movement** encompasses the pace, rhythm and flow of poetry.
- ▶ **Sounds** are the elements of poetry that shape the way it is heard.

WORD BANK - POETRY	STRUCTURE	LANGUAGE	MOVEMENT	SOUNDS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • caesura • enjambment • form • shape • stanza 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • colloquialism • connotative • descriptive • emotive • figurative • jargon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ellipses • metre • rhyme • rhythm 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alliteration • assonance • consonance • dissonance • euphony • sibilance

Often we associate imagery or symbolism with poetry but these aspects of language are *constructed* from poetic features. For example, it might be the combination of rhythm, connotative language and use of personification that actually *creates and constructs* imagery. The deliberate choice of generic features can create:

- ▶ allusion
- ▶ cadence
- ▶ imagery (visual, gustatory, auditory, tactile, olfactory and kinaesthetic)
- ▶ mood
- ▶ pace
- ▶ symbolism
- ▶ tone
- ▶ voice.

Define poetic terms

ACTIVITY 4.6

1 Find definitions for each of the terms associated with the study of poetry shown in the table below.

alliteration	connotation	euphony	rhyme
allusion	consonance	free verse	rhythm
assonance	dissonance	imagery	sibilance
cacophony	end-stop	metaphor	simile
caesura	enjambment	metre	symbolism

Below is a definition of *dissonance* as an example.

Definition	Reader response	Example
Dissonance: a disruption of harmonic sounds or rhythm	Unpleasant, harsh sounds may have a jarring effect on a reader; dissonance may shock, unsettle or create an uncomfortable visceral response.	Walt Whitman, 'The Dalliance of the Eagles': 'Four beating wings, two beaks, a swirling mass tight grappling,/ In tumbling turning clustering loops, straight downward falling.' The combination of single and multisyllabic words, without clear punctuation to guide our reading, makes this feel unsettling and chaotic.

2 In your studied poems, locate one example of as many of the terms in the table as you can.

For example ...

Below is an example *annotation* and *reflective explanation* of a poem. The poem used here is 'The Garden of Love' by William Blake (1794).

When reading a text, a good method is to highlight features that naturally stand out to you as a reader (column 1), and make notes about your interpretation of the text, which you will refine into an explanation of what the text means to you, using the correct terminology (column 2).

I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had **seen**:
 A Chapel was built in the midst,
 Where I used to play on the **green**.
And the gates of this Chapel were **shut**,
And 'Thou shalt not' writ over the door;
 So I turn'd to the Garden of Love,
 That so many sweet flowers bore.
And I saw it was filled with **graves**,
 And **tomb-stones** where flowers should be:
And Priests in black gowns, were walking
their rounds,
And **binding with briars,** my joys & desires.

Blake's **rhythm, rhyme and anaphora** are childlike; the **assonance** might also suggest an openness of the persona. The voice sounds innocent at first, but this cadence is disrupted in the third stanza, symbolising a disruption of innocence.

Particularly in the second stanza, the **consonance** in words like 'shut' and 'not' can feel quite blunt or forceful; there is a connotation of power in the **auditory imagery** of the 't' sound, plus the **religious allusion** in the phraseology akin to that of the Ten Commandments also suggests rules or control. The words 'shut' and 'shalt' form an echo, reinforcing the closed and restrictive nature of the church.

The **visual imagery** in the third stanza has connotations of death – 'graves', 'tomb-stones', 'black'. However, 'walking the rounds' reminds me of soldiers patrolling. Coupled with the **alliteration and tactile imagery**, this connotation suggests that Blake sees religion as a form of policing 'joys & desires'.

Reflect on poetry

ACTIVITY 4.7

Poetry has the power to move us emotionally. How do the poems you have read so far make you feel?

To deepen your critical reflection and improve your vocabulary, search online for a 'feelings wheel'. This will help you to pinpoint and use exact language when describing your emotive reaction to the poems you are studying.

Make a list of the poems you have read. Consider your emotive response and how the poet's construction may have encouraged your response.

Prose fiction

The word ‘prose’ is derived from a Latin expression that roughly translates to ‘straightforward or direct speech’. In other words, and for our purposes, this genre is less about the abstract symbolism or figurative language associated with poetry, and more about the construction of a story. That is not to say that figurative language is not a part of this genre; however, whereas poetry may be focused on the beauty of language, prose fiction is much more concerned with narrative.

Despite the various narrative genres, at the heart of prose fiction is the story. Along with accepted narrative conventions, this genre has a plethora of distinctive features that can contribute to the meaning it conveys – particularly, specific language and structural choices and how these can affect us as readers, and the construction of narrative features such as dynamic and rounded characters. When we analyse prose fiction, we consider not only the story being told, but also *how* that story has been presented to us.

Consider how Mary Shelley draws us into *Frankenstein* with her frame narrative structure, or the power of Fred D’Aguiar’s *The Longest Memory*, with its circular, nonlinear structure and multitude of voices.

Think also about the effect that the bildungsroman style of Peter Goldsworthy’s *Maestro* has on you as a reader, or the lack of human characters in Ray Bradbury’s short story ‘The Pedestrian’.

Features of prose fiction

While your teacher will go into the nuances of narrative genres, and the prose texts you are studying will each have their own set of distinctive features, here are some things that almost all prose texts share (or disrupt).

WORD BANK - PROSE FICTION	NARRATIVE STRUCTURE	CONSTRUCTION	LANGUAGE
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • climax • complication • denouement • falling action • narrative arc • orientation • rising action 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • characterisation • conflict (internal, interpersonal, existential, external) • genre • narrative point of view • narrative voice • plot • setting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • descriptive • figurative • generic • structural • symbolic

Work with metalanguage for prose

ACTIVITY 4.8

Use your studied prose texts to find examples of the features listed above. Choose at least two from each column, making notes on how these are constructed in your texts, and through what specific choices.

Student writing – body paragraph

The following body paragraph is from an essay on Gail Jones' novel *Sorry*. The annotations indicate some strengths of the student's approach.

Question: How have distinctive narrative features been used to convey meaning in a text you have studied?

Sorry by Gail Jones switches between first- and third-person point of view in order to present different perspectives on trauma and the effect it has on the human experience. At the beginning of the novel, Perdita narrates, 'my throat is misshapen with all it now carries. My heart is a sour, indolent fruit. I think the muzzle of time has made me thus.' Visual metaphors such as 'misshapen' and 'muzzle' represent the extent to which Perdita's function has been disrupted by her trauma. The gustatory imagery of the unpleasant fruit allows readers to understand her experience as deeply undesirable. By expressing her silencing from a first-person perspective, Perdita allows readers to engage with her on a personal level, evoking a sense of sympathy. Conversely, Stella's struggles are narrated from a third-person perspective, alienating her from readers. The narrative states that, 'Stella was possessed by an unnerving silence. Words, Perdita thought, perhaps it was words she had lost.' Switching to a third-person narrator symbolises the marginalisation that can occur as a result of trauma. By expressing Perdita's assumptions regarding her mother's mental state, the text works to suggest the possibility that we can never fully understand the thoughts and feelings of those around us. Overall, Perdita's first-person narration offers readers an opportunity to connect with her emotions, while the third-person perspective encourages reflection on the impact trauma can have on our experiences and relationships with those around us.

The prose fiction feature is identified and linked to its purpose within the text.

Another feature of prose fiction is identified and explained briefly, demonstrating the student's engagement with the genre.

The student frequently connects the feature with the impact.

Voice

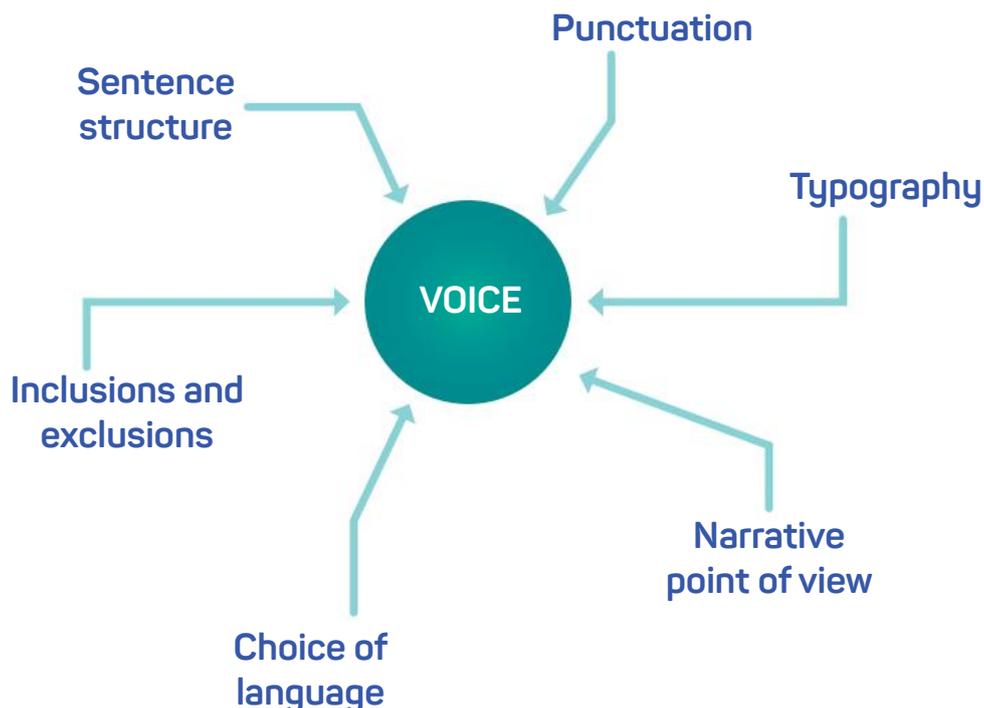
When we read texts, we 'hear' them in particular ways. We get a sense of the 'personality' of a text through the way the ideas are communicated. 'Voice' can refer to specific individual characters or constructs. For example, a poem's persona has a voice, and a character in a prose or drama text has a voice. Voice can also refer to the text itself (the **narrative voice**), or how the author speaks to us through that text (the **authorial voice**). For example, First Nations writer Oodgeroo Noonuccal might be described as a voice for reconciliation. The texts we read can have a number of voices; identifying and understanding them helps us to find meaning.



The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum by Heinrich Böll		
Voice	Examples	Interpretation
Narrative voice	<p>distanced, cold, matter-of-fact</p> <p>'... she rings the front door bell at the home of Walter Moeding, Crime Commissioner, who is at that moment engaged, for professional rather than private reasons, in disguising himself as a sheikh, and she declares to the startled Moeding that at about 12:15 noon that day she shot and killed Werner Tötges, reporter, in her apartment, and would the Commissioner kindly give instructions for her front door to be broken down and the reporter to be "removed" ...' (p.9)</p>	<p>Böll uses the third-person limited narrator to emphasise the detachment of the media. The choice of third person is important as, in the context of the plot, the narrator is also a character – the news media. Böll suggests that the media takes on a 'godlike' status in our society, providing us with information and commentary. That the narrator is a limited one highlights that we are never hearing the full story from the media, no matter how unbiased they claim to be. Böll critiques the media's supposed impartiality, which they use as a way of abdicating responsibility for the devastation they cause people. The inclusion of unnecessary and emotive details throughout the text reminds us that the media's focus on 'the facts' is only a facade.</p>
	<p>arrogant, condescending, obtuse</p> <p>'To speak of "sources" and "fluidity" is to preclude all possibility of composition, so perhaps we should instead introduce the concept of "bringing together," of "conduction," a concept that should be clear to anyone who as a child (or even as an adult) has ever played in, beside, or with puddles, draining them, linking them by channels, emptying, diverting, and rerouting them until the entire available puddlewater-potential is brought together in a collective channel to be diverted onto a different level or perhaps even duly rerouted in orderly fashion into the gutter or drain provided by the local authorities.' (p.8)</p>	<p>In Chapter 2, the narrator is speaking directly to the reader, explaining the necessity of their report being convoluted. The narrator's use of very long sentences and confusing metaphors allows Böll to criticise the way the media uses language to obfuscate and confuse, rather than to present people with clear information.</p>

Authorial voice	<p>harsh, critical, unflinching</p> <p>'On the back page he saw that the News had transformed his statement that Katharina was intelligent, cool, and level-headed into "ice-cold and calculating," and his general observations on crime now read that she was "entirely capable of committing a crime:" (p.37)</p> <p>suggestive, crude</p> <p>'Here we should inquire into a hotly disputed question put by Beizmenne, a question repeated by Hach, withdrawn, repeated again, and again withdrawn.' (p.19)</p>	<p>Böll's own experiences with biased and unethical journalism helps us to understand the point he is making through this text. Many of the characters are unpleasant, and many crude references to sexual activity are made. Even characters like Katharina are presented as cold and unsympathetic. Through this Böll shows us that the media is capable of turning any situation around to suit their desired angle, but also that it is our demand for salacious details that drives such practices.</p>
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Understanding voice is easier than you might expect. After all, you 'read' voice every day in your text messages, in emails and via social media posts. How do you know, for example, that someone is shouting at you in the written form? When we break down the concept of voice, we see it is constructed from smaller bits and pieces. When considering poetry, we saw that concepts like imagery or connotation are actually products of specific techniques. The concept of voice is very similar. Often students make the mistake of labelling voice as a technique, whereas it is a *result* of a combination of elements. In prose, we can think of voice being constructed like this:



WORD BANK - VOICE	By tone	critical	cynical	satirical	warm
	By register	colloquial	formal	neutral	vulgar
	By purpose	affirmative	condemnatory	critical	persuasive
	By sound	clear	distinct	loud	quiet
	By identity	child-like (age)	female (gender)	First Nations (cultural)	middle-class (class)
	By position or status	authoritarian	collegiate	dominant	marginal
	By credibility	artificial	authentic	feeble	subjective
	By response	amusing	engaging	impressive	objectionable

Remember: The author and the persona or narrator are not the same person! Although an author often injects some of their own beliefs and experience into the texts they create, the use of pronouns like ‘I’ and ‘my’ do not indicate that these are the author’s personal beliefs or perspectives. Avoid making the mistake of falsely attributing a persona or narrator’s experiences to the author by reminding yourself that *all* elements of a text, including the narrator or persona, are *constructions*.

Define narrative elements of prose fiction

ACTIVITY 4.9

1 Define each of the terms in the table below.

archetype	flat characters	narrative approach	round characters
authorial intrusion	foil	narrative genre	stock characters
denouement	indirect characterisation	narrative point of view	types of conflict
dynamic characters	inner monologue	narrative structure	unreliable narrator
first-person address	multiple narrators	omniscient narrator	voice

Below is a definition of ‘indirect characterisation’ as an example.

Definition	Reader response	Example
Indirect characterisation: learning about characters indirectly; e.g. via their inner monologue, actions, dialogue, appearance or other characters’ points of view or perspectives	Builds emotional connection between reader and character; develops more dynamic, well-rounded characters as opposed to static, flat or stock characters.	Round characters learn, grow, change and can reflect human experience; they become a symbolic voice for our universal experiences.

2 Where you can, find an example of each of the terms in the table in your studied texts.

For example ...

Below is an example *annotation* and *reflective explanation* of a prose fiction extract, from the novel *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens (1854).

When reading a text, a good method is to highlight features that naturally stand out to you as a reader (column 1), and make notes about your interpretation of the text, which you will refine into an explanation of what the text means to you, using the correct terminology (column 2).

'Now, what I want is, **Facts**. Teach these boys and girls nothing but Facts. Facts alone are wanted in life. Plant nothing else, and root out everything else. You can only form the minds of reasoning animals upon Facts: nothing else will ever be of any service to them. This is the principle on which I bring up my own children, and this is the principle on which I bring up these children. Stick to **Facts, sir!**'

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a school-room, and the **speaker's square forefinger** emphasised his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's **square wall of a forehead**, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found **commodious cellarage in two dark caves**, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was **wide, thin, and hard set**. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was **inflexible, dry, and dictatorial**. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, **as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside**. The speaker's obstinate carriage, **square coat, square legs, square shoulders**,—nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was,—all helped the emphasis.

'In this life, we want nothing but **Facts**, sir; nothing but **Facts!**' The speaker, and the schoolmaster, and the third grown person present, all backed a little, and swept with their eyes the inclined plane of **little vessels** then and there arranged in order, **ready to have imperial gallons of facts poured into them until they were full to the brim**.

Dickens' **characterisation** suggests a rigid, inflexible man. The consistent reference to a square shape is symbolic of a person without curves, softness or nuance.

The **voice** of this character, heard through their **dialogue**, is constructed via **sentence length, punctuation and even typography**. The nominalisation of the common noun 'Facts' suggests emphasis and importance. The use of the exclamation point adds volume and stress. Furthermore, this character's dialogue is stilted – each sentence appears roughly the same length and structure, and this creates a stern voice.

Interestingly, the **omniscient narrator** almost appears to make a mockery of the character, creating a sarcastic tone by using the same words of the character in the description of his unattractive appearance.

Dickens' opening to his novel *Hard Times* creates an immediate setting and conflict and, in a way, perhaps even an immediate antagonist (the speaker). The **narrative structure** has effectively separated the speaker from the 'little vessels,' and this juxtaposition of characters appears to construct a story of inequity, of power and of control.

Reflect on layers of meaning in prose

ACTIVITY 4.10

At the heart of prose fiction texts is the story. What is the meaning *behind* the prose texts you are studying? Consider not only the actual story, but also the symbolic and inferential implications of the narrative. What might this story represent to us, or in its time, or to a specific audience? Or of whose voice, culture or society might this story be a part?

Drama

Drama texts manipulate both visual (what can be seen or not seen) and auditory (what can be heard or not heard) dramatic features to create meaning. The most important point to remember about drama texts is that they are written to be *performed*; therefore, the auditory and visual elements included in the script are just as important as the dialogue. As always, you can analyse the language of the dialogue (or even the stage directions), but what is so exciting about drama is the meaning constructed via something altogether unique – its multimodality.

A note about using productions

It is vital to remember that your analysis of a drama text is of the **written script** itself – not an interpretation of what it *might* look and sound like, but what is actually scripted. Sometimes, it can help to find a visual recording of the staged production (not a film), as this brings the text to life; however, remember that these productions are the directors' interpretation of a script.

For example, in the National Theatre of Britain's performance of Euripides' *Medea*, the use of space, staging, set design, music and lighting works beautifully to present a multilayered tragedy. Directed by Carrie Cracknell, the production uses a divided stage with staircases and a scaffolded bridge where we see Jason and his new wife, surrounded by people of the court, elevated above the main staging area, while Medea waits alone below. Behind her is the darkened backdrop of a forest setting where her children play. Without words, already this staging and set design offers so much of the director's interpretation of the meaning of this play. However, none of these stage directions are actually in Euripides' original text. While watching a version of your studied text may be helpful to understand characters, conflicts or ideas, as Literature students you must always refer to the *writer's* inclusion of visual and auditory elements in their text.

Many ancient texts have relatively few stage directions, or none at all. They were not commonly included until popularised around the eighteenth century. You might like to discuss as a class why this could be: what may have changed around this time that made it important or preferable to have more detailed stage directions? Better yet, act scenes out in class! Bring the characters and scenes to life, thinking about the visual and auditory elements included in the script.

Auditory features

Auditory features are everything that can be heard by the audience, and include aspects such as:

- ▶ prosody
- ▶ monologue or soliloquy
- ▶ soundscape
- ▶ music.

In dramatic texts it is important to look at language in terms of what a character says (dialogue), how they say it (tone) and the intended and unintended meanings of a character's words (literal meaning and subtext). However, in dramatic performance we can also analyse **prosody** – that is, the rhythm and intonation of the voice in speech, which is often highlighted in the stage directions. As with the visual aspects, you should consider how this adds to a performance, or perhaps reveals main ideas or themes.

Prosodic elements may include:

- ▶ pace
- ▶ pitch
- ▶ pause
- ▶ intonation
- ▶ projection
- ▶ stress
- ▶ phrasing.

For example, in Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*, in Act 1, stage directions tell us that Jack talks 'stiffly', while Algernon's speech is 'languid'. Via these directions, we can imagine the pitch these characters might use, their intonation, the stress they might apply (or not apply, in Algie's case!) to their dialogue; and, in turn, we can make assumptions about their characters.

A **monologue** denotes a character speaking alone, sometimes within the action of a play (such as *Cosi* by Louis Nowra, in which many of the characters, including Doug, have lengthy monologues as a means of character development and revelation) or outside of the narrative (e.g. in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, Puck's final speech cheekily telling the audience that if we have been offended by the play, we should pretend it was all just a dream).

In contrast, a **soliloquy** is a character speaking to themselves without an implied audience, such as when Hamlet grapples with his own sense of mortality in his 'to be or not to be' soliloquy in Shakespeare's *Hamlet*. Monologues and soliloquies both function to convey meaning to the audience and to progress the plot. However, soliloquies differ in that they often also build dramatic irony.

The **soundscape and music** can have a large impact on the visceral effect of drama – music in a pitch-black theatre, or the effect of a scream, a bell or thunder, for example, can add atmosphere, emotion and a complete sensory experience for audiences.

If written into stage directions, they suggest that you should pay close attention to what these specific auditory elements may add to the dramatic performance.

For example, in *Don's Party* by David Williamson, set during the 1969 Australian federal election, characters gather to celebrate election night. The stage directions state that 'the audience can't see the screen but can hear the soundtrack [of the TV]', and periodically throughout the opening scene, characters are directed to 'turn up [or down] the sound on the TV'. Not only does the constant noise of the election night telecast add to the chaotic atmosphere of Don's increasingly raucous party, but also the undercurrent of the political angst of 1970s Australia is ever-present, albeit in the background, creating a tense and almost suffocating experience for an audience.

Consider auditory and visual features of drama

- 1 Create a list of your ideas about the effect of the distinctive generic features of drama and how each may serve a symbolic function.
- 2 Find definitions for each of the following terms and, where you can, include an example from one of your studied texts. If you haven't come across an example of the feature yet, leave a space to come back to later.

articulation	exits and entrances	music	soliloquy
aside	fourth wall	physicality	soundscape
audience interaction	intonation	properties	special effects
costume	lighting	proxemics	tableaux
downstage	monologue	set design	upstage

Below is a definition of *prosody* as an example, drawing on Arthur Miller's *A View from the Bridge*.

Definition	Reader response	Example
<p>Prosody: In drama, an actor's vocal prosody, or their verbal delivery, includes aspects such as volume, rhythm, stress and intonation.</p>	<p>When included in the stage directions, this can establish meaning, character, emotion, tension and dramatic effect. This adds to the auditory experience of a dramatic text in performance; being able to 'hear' the timing, pace, tone, pause etc. contributes to the multimodality of drama.</p>	<p>Act 2 <i>'[Eddie] is incensing himself and little bits of laughter even escape him as his eyes are murderous and he cracks his knuckles in his hands with a strange sort of relaxation.'</i> Indicating that 'little bits of laughter' escape and that he is 'incensing himself' enhances the feeling of chaos and rising tension, as though Eddie is losing control. We can feel that a climax is building.</p>

For example ...

Below is an example annotation and reflective explanation of an extract from Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House* (1879).

When reading a text, a good method is to highlight features that naturally stand out to you as a reader (column 1), and make notes about your interpretation of the text, which you will refine into an explanation of what the text means to you, using the correct terminology (column 2).

[SCENE.—A room furnished comfortably and tastefully, but not extravagantly. At the back, a door to the right leads to the entrance-hall, another to the left leads to Helmer's study. Between the doors stands a piano. In the middle of the left-hand wall is a door, and beyond it a window. Near the window are a round table, arm-chairs and a small sofa. In the right-hand wall, at the farther end, another door; and on the same side, nearer the footlights, a stove, two easy chairs and a rocking-chair; between the stove and the door, a small table. Engravings on the walls; a cabinet with china and other small objects; a small book-case with well-bound books. The floors are carpeted, and a fire burns in the stove. It is winter.

A bell rings in the hall; shortly afterwards the door is heard to open. Enter NORA, humming a tune and in high spirits. She is in outdoor dress and carries a number of parcels; these she lays on the table to the right. She leaves the outer door open after her, and through it is seen a PORTER who is carrying a Christmas Tree and a basket, which he gives to the MAID who has opened the door.]

NORA. Hide the Christmas Tree carefully, Helen. Be sure the children do not see it until this evening, when it is dressed. [To the PORTER, taking out her purse.] How much?

PORTER. Sixpence.

NORA. There is a shilling. No, keep the change. [The PORTER thanks her, and goes out. NORA shuts the door. She is laughing to herself, as she takes off her hat and coat. She takes a packet of macaroons from her pocket and eats one or two; then goes cautiously to her husband's door and listens.] Yes, he is in. [Still humming, she goes to the table on the right.]

HELMER. [calls out from his room]. Is that my little lark twittering out there?

NORA. [busy opening some of the parcels]. Yes, it is!

HELMER. Is it my little squirrel bustling about?

NORA. Yes!

HELMER. When did my squirrel come home?

Ibsen's detailed stage directions regarding **set design** consistently refer to a space's size, the placement of props, indeed even the specifics of the clutter. Most notable, however, is the repeated use of the word 'small', which seems to match the text's title, and the connotation of the words 'doll's house'.

The stage directions that describe Nora's **physicality** and movements reveal her to be energetic, almost juvenile in her actions, in particular when she 'cautiously' goes to Helmer's door, or when she hides macaroons in her pocket. Throughout the scene she is 'humming' or 'laughing to herself'. Even the act of 'wiping' her mouth is reminiscent of a child's gesture.

The macaroons are **props**; Nora indulges in them and hides them, making them symbolic of her immaturity. Meanwhile, the stage directions instruct Helmer to have 'pen in hand', reinforcing his character as intellectual and hardworking, particularly as the **set design** directions specifically refer to 'Helmer's study', with emphasis on his ownership, denoting his work ethic.

NORA. Just now. [*Puts the bag of macaroons into her pocket and wipes her mouth.*] Come in here, Torvald, and see what I have bought.

HELMER. Don't disturb me. [*A little later, he opens the door and looks into the room, pen in hand.*] Bought, did you say? All these things? Has my little spendthrift been wasting money again?

Reflect on a scene

ACTIVITY 4.12

Drama is multimodal. That is, it communicates with us in different modes or media. Find a short extract or scene from a studied drama text online. Watch it twice, first with the sound *off*. Make notes on how the scene is constructing meaning. Now, watch it with the sound *on* and add detail to your notes.

How did the auditory, visual and language elements work together to heighten the meaning you made? Compare the production to the actual script: were the choices those of the director/production or were they actually scripted?

Student writing – introduction to an extended response

The following is a sample introduction and one body paragraph from an extended essay on the text *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams. Annotations identify some strengths and weaknesses of the writing.

Question: Discuss how a studied play has experimented with generic conventions to comment on human experiences specific to the writer's context.

The human experience has been extensively explored through literature and numerous other art forms. *The Glass Menagerie* by Tennessee Williams, written in 1937, is an example of a postmodern memory play set during the Great Depression, when economic instability impoverished the working and middle classes. The Wingfield family lives in these bleak socioeconomic conditions and the harsh reality of their impoverished life becomes increasingly difficult to endure. Thus, they constantly find themselves escaping into memories and illusions in which they live the life they desire. This play is also widely believed to convey biographical information about the playwright's own life. Hence, it is underpinned by numerous human experiences with which Williams was familiar, such as painful memories, familial relationships and aspirations. These themes are represented through Williams' experimentation with certain generic conventions such as monologue, proxemics, episodic structure and the inclusion of other unconventional metatheatrical devices that conform to the expressionist style of plastic theatre, a term used by Williams to denote the ways in which elements of staging, such as props, settings and sound, support the meaning of the script.

The student clearly links to the words of the essay topic, but the connection to the text is not explicitly linked to the next sentence.

The student includes a specific and complete precis of the text in the next few sentences. This is beautifully balanced: it gives a well-rounded introduction to the themes but doesn't simply retell the plot.

Here, the student ensures they are answering the second part of the essay topic, something students often forget under the pressure of timed assessments.

→ The student uses connectives in their paragraphs to enhance fluency and cohesion.

The student clearly signposts in the topic sentence their intention for this paragraph. Often students will choose to write either an idea-led paragraph or a technique(s)-led paragraph. While either is acceptable, there is a sophistication to leading with an idea. Here, the student successfully combines references to both techniques and an idea in a well-rounded topic sentence.

Students often ask: 'how many examples or techniques should I use in a paragraph?' The answer is: it depends. There is no absolute number. However, what this student does is clever – their example of body language is deconstructed further to look at proxemics, symbolic properties and the descriptive stage directions that construct the body language.

The student uses a citation to note the Act and page number here (i.e. '3|70' refers to Act 3, p.70). Check with your teacher how they would prefer you to cite quotes from texts.

Furthermore, Williams experiments with symbolic properties, body language and proxemics to provide an insight into the Wingfields' family dynamics, which represent universal experiences of power struggles within relationships. The volatile family unit in the play has a post-patriarchal family structure, as did Williams' own dysfunctional family and many other middle-class families, following war and recession. In the Wingfield family, tension derives from the conflicting interests of Tom, who seeks adventure, and Amanda, who wishes to domesticate him. These motives correspond with the stark contrast between Williams' own ambitions and his father's hopes for his son to be the 'All-American man' (Anon 2019). These opposing intents are evident in the quarrelling scene where 'violent voices of Tom and Amanda are heard' (Williams 3|70) and 'their gesticulating shadows are cast on the ceiling' (Williams 3|27). In this stage direction, the 'shadows ... cast on the ceiling' suggest that the conflict between Tom and Amanda encompasses the household to such an extent that it is almost consumed by constant turmoil. This demonstrates the way Williams imbues the characters' actions with symbolic properties, in keeping with the expressionist style characteristic of memory plays and plastic theatre. The playwright also conveys the power struggles associated with a dysfunctional family through proxemics when 'Tom crouches over Amanda, overtopping her tiny figure' (Williams 3|87). Unlike preceding scenes where Amanda is represented as the archetypal 'overbearing mother', this scene provides Tom with the authority in the domestic sphere. As asserted in Shaland's 'The Glass Menagerie' (*Theatre Journal* 42, 1990), this fluctuating power dynamic establishes the continuous tension between the two characters, who both require authority over one another to fulfil their conflicting desires. Williams incorporates symbolism and proxemics to mirror in the fictitious Wingfield family the dysfunctional relationship between him and his parents, representing the universal experience of familial relationships.

The relationship between language, text and context

Writers are artists and language is their tool of choice. When we think of literature as an art form, we can appreciate that every part of a text is the result of a decision made with regard to a specific effect. However, we may never know exactly why the author made each choice – we can only surmise.

We can think of a literary text as an artwork from a particular time and place. In fact, thinking about your texts as distinctly crafted art forms can be a productive way of exploring what a writer may have intended compared to how different audiences (in different time periods or cultures) may respond.

This might raise the question: why did they bother? If we agree that creative expression is a part of the human experience, then it makes sense that writers are often reflecting that experience, as well as reflecting the world around them.

As you read, reflect on and analyse your texts, keep in mind that writers are creating texts in a specific world to reflect particular experiences.



Student writing – introduction to a reflective piece

The following is a sample introduction using the text *Othello* by William Shakespeare. After reading the introduction and annotations, write your own improved introduction (if you have studied *Othello* yourself) or write an introduction for a text you have studied.

Question: Reflect on how focusing on context helped you to uncover ideas in a studied text.

During the reign of Queen Elizabeth I in the sixteenth century, England became a beacon for trade and foreign travellers, and saw an influx of various cultures. While this period of multiculturalism boosted England's economy and world status, with it came racial tensions caused by ingrained ideologies and an inherent distrust of those deemed the 'other'. As British historian Andrew Dickson (2016) noted, while the cosmopolitan nature of London brought wealth and the expansion of Elizabeth's stronghold, immigrants were warned to 'fly, fly and never return'. By focusing on this contextual information that surrounds his 1603 text, *Othello*, it can be argued that Shakespeare presents these significant contextual issues through his characters, most notably in the interaction between Iago and Othello. Shakespeare's use of Iago as the manipulative, entitled villain allows him to expose Othello's insecurities regarding his position, status and colour, as he function as a symbolic representation of the racial tensions of his epoch.

The global sentence quickly establishes context.

This part appears general or vague; while the student has attempted to back up their claim with reference to a credible source, they have failed to reference it adequately. For the record, this quote comes from the article by Dickson 'Multiculturalism in Shakespeare's Plays' and can be found on the British Library website.

The student directly uses the phraseology of the essay topic but then seems to misinterpret the second half of the topic. Rather than looking at how context 'helped you uncover ideas', the student attributes their understanding of ideas in *Othello* to Shakespeare's characterisation.

Despite misinterpreting the topic, this thesis does contain a clear argument about ideas in the text and signposts the student's intention to discuss generic conventions.



Get to know your texts

ACTIVITY 5.2

1 Examine your texts by using the prompts in the table below. Make detailed notes for each section.

Historical, social, cultural context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In what era was the text written? What contextual factors may have influenced this text or writer? Is the text part of a larger literary movement? (Refer to the 'Historical time line on pages 172–6.) Could the text be shaped by political or religious regimes, institutions or other powerful influences?
Personal context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the writer's age, gender, class, race? What is known about their childhood, education and experiences of the world?
Distinctive qualities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Why might this text be considered 'literature' or literary? What makes this text stand out in its genre?
Literary / generic features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pick the three strongest or most distinctive features of this text and explain why you chose them.
Relationship with audiences	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How was the text received in its original context? How about now? What are the characteristics of some of the different audiences who have experienced this text? Consider gender, age, culture, beliefs and any other possible relevant factors.
Significance of ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is at the heart of this text? What could this text symbolise about its context? What might it symbolise about humanity? How does it relate to our contemporary world?
Different ways of reading	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are there different ways of reading this text? Can you make a link with mass media, film, television or social media?

2 Spend some time reflecting on each of your Unit 1 texts – not as something you are studying, not as a textbook for your ATAR exams, but as a cultural artefact. Really consider why this text and writer are studied, why this is on the ATAR Literature prescribed text list, and why it was even written (in your justified opinion). Don't worry about structure, spelling or grammar – just write!



Context and language

It is important to remember that, although we may never be entirely sure what influenced a writer, or why a text was written, we can gather information or *contextual clues*. This becomes evidence for your interpretation. It is also vital to examine your own context (see Chapter 6: Reader response) and how this influences your response.

When looking for contextual clues, you can consider these factors:

Language

- › Why these specific words?
- › What specific features?
- › What structural influences?

Text

- › Why this form?
- › Why this mode?
- › Why this medium?
- › Why this genre?

Context

- › What do you know about the personal world and/or ideologies of the writer?
- › What do you know about the world they lived in?
- › How might these aspects have influenced this text?
- › Where do you see this in their choice of language or the text's creation?

In terms of language, you can deconstruct and find a great deal of meaning even in a single sentence (as the example on page 64 demonstrates). It is improbable that you will be able to do this level of analysis for every single word in all your texts; however, it is expected that you will create a bank of quotations for your texts. Ideally, you should try to pick 'all-purpose' quotations – ones that will work for a number of essay questions, syllabus concepts, textual themes and exams.

It is also a good idea to group or 'chunk' quotations, so you can embed them into your sentences. (See the student example on page 65.)

For example ...

Using the above questions as a guide, you can gather evidence to make readings of a text's construction, while understanding that language is a cultural medium so we can never escape the influence of context (not only the writer's personal and social contexts, but our own, too).

Let's use a short quote from Chapter 2 of Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* as an example. (Don't worry if you haven't studied or read this text: this is just a model for analysis.)

Quote: ‘For when I would account to myself for the birth of that passion, which afterwards ruled my destiny, I find it arise, like a mountain river, from ignoble and almost forgotten sources; but swelling as it proceeded, it became the torrent which, in its course, has swept away all my hopes and joys.’

	Evidence	My interpretation of meaning
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • connotative diction – ‘birth’ of passion • patterns – passion, destiny, swelling, torrent, swept away • simile – like a mountain river • metaphor – it became the torrent • visual/tactile imagery – swept away my hopes and joys • references to nature – mountain, river • references to intangible forces – passion, destiny, ignoble • sentence structure and punctuation 	<p>Victor’s character is allowing his humanity to be ‘ruled’ by ‘passion’; he ignored his moral code by following ‘ignoble ... sources’; his obsession with scientific discovery became a ‘torrent’ that ‘swept away [his] hopes and joys.’</p> <p>Punctuation and sentence structure creates an almost wave-like rhythm, as if we are being hypnotised.</p>
Text	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • written mode • novel medium • Gothic genre • narrative conventions (characterisation, setting, narrative structure and narrative point of view) • frame narrative (sometimes referred to as <i>mise en abyme</i> or a story within a story) • Victor’s perspective 	<p>A complete novel would appeal to a more literate and educated 19th-century audience, who may be questioning the world around them.</p> <p>The frame narrative suggests ideas around hidden meanings, uncovered truths, knowledge and respect for all sides of experiences, and the ramifications of humanity’s actions on the vulnerable.</p> <p>Victor’s perspective communicates his version of events – he is perhaps an unreliable narrator, supporting the idea that Shelley deliberately chose to write a frame narrative novel, to allow for the communication of multiple perspectives.</p>
Context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • published 1818 • Industrial Revolution • Romanticism • marriage to PB Shelley • personal experiences 	<p>Shelley was likely influenced not only by her father’s literary circle, but also by Percy Bysshe Shelley. Both men held progressive, critical views about the inequities compounded by industry, scientific progression, technology, politics and changes in the class system in England at the time. Shelley, through Dr Frankenstein’s obsession, highlights the dangers of the pursuit of knowledge and power in light of events in her world and the influences around her.</p>

Gather evidence to make meaning

Using the example above as a model, create and complete your own table, using a short quotation from one of your Unit 1 texts.

Student writing – body paragraph

The following is a body paragraph from an essay on *The Longest Memory* by Fred D’Aguiar. The annotations identify some of its strengths and weaknesses.

Question: Analyse how a distinctive narrative style helped shape your response to ideas within a text.

Mr Whitechapel’s internal conflict is continued in Chapter 6, simply titled ‘Plantation Owners’, and is written in a combination of first- and second-person narrative point of view. Once again, readers feel as though they are in the scene and, in fact, even become Mr Whitechapel as the narrative point of view tells us ‘you are split in two’, before changing into the first-person point of view with *italicised typography* stating, ‘I leave my plantation to face the ridicule of my peers’. D’Aguiar’s clever use of narrative point of view in this chapter positions readers not only to experience the perspective of Mr Whitechapel, but also to recognise the tragedy of white, privileged people in a position of power. This chapter exemplifies how those with the means and ability to enact change simply cannot move past tradition. ‘I am a Whitechapel,’ Mr Whitechapel says to himself, while the second-person narrative point of view reminds us, ‘you couldn’t live with the shame’ should you decide to ‘close the gates behind you’.

Here, Mr Whitechapel laments his own weakness – his societal position that chains him to tradition and convention. As readers we are allowed to witness, even experience, this internal struggle and watch as he succumbs to the power of his peers, too afraid to be a lone voice among the ‘lions’. Contemporary readers resent his inaction, his inability to make change, and yet this conflict and narrative structure humanises him. As such, this distinctive use of narrative point of view exposes us to an experience of white slave owners that is tragic in terms of missed opportunities and the extreme damage caused by them.

There is a direct reference to terminology related to narrative style and the elements that construct this distinct style.

It’s refreshing to see a student consider the visual aspect of writing – its shape or visual presentation and how this might impact a text’s style or meaning. It would be great if this student continued to link this idea, and the subsequent discussion of narrative point of view, back to the idea of style in the essay topic.

Throughout this paragraph, embedded quotations have been used effectively. The student uses the technique of building their sentences around multiple quotations.

Don’t underestimate the power of a good dash! It can be a useful punctuation mark to denote a more pointed pause than a comma or semicolon, and can be more formal than parentheses.

Writing about texts

So far we have focused on the language that a writer chooses and how we can examine – right down to the significance of a single word or punctuation mark – the way these choices affect meanings or inferences, in order to justify our interpretations. Similarly, the language *you choose* when analysing texts is just as significant.

Your syllabus and marking keys refer to linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology, which we discussed earlier, particularly in Chapter 2, in relation to your analytical writing. As you progress through Units 1 and 2 (and into Units 3 and 4), you should become increasingly familiar with using this terminology, or metalanguage, to express your ideas and show your understanding and mastery of concepts. It is important to remember that linguistic, stylistic and critical terminology are *not* three distinct sets. However, this description allows you to see language as multilayered, and to consider each of those layers while keeping in mind that they are all related.

Linguistic – language

Language is communication, and the essence of how we share meaning with each other and the world around us. Whether it be via written language, the spoken word or even body language, linguistic terminology is about using specific language to communicate precise meaning. This requires knowing the relevant terminology for each communication type: for example, specific figurative language terms.

Stylistic – style

Just like different styles of music, there are different styles of writers and texts. We can break down what makes, for example, folk music differ from heavy metal, by thinking about aspects such as the instruments, melody or vocals used to create their distinct styles. Similarly, we can unpack writers’ and texts’ styles by considering elements such as genre, the way they use language or structure, or the influence of their context or literary period. For example, we might describe Albert Camus’ style in *The Outsider* as nonchalant and blunt, and we would then use the terms associated with this stylistic construction to demonstrate our understanding, such as his detached narrative voice or the truncated, stilted sentencing. Another good example is playwright Bertolt Brecht, whose epic theatre style incorporates a multitude of different elements such as projections, indistinct dialogue or an acknowledgement of the audience.

Critical – interpretation and evaluation

Critical terminology is related to the concepts in your texts, their contexts and the vocabulary in your syllabus, and how you apply these to your analyses. However, it is also connected to those reading practices, strategies or terms we use as we start to uncover different meanings in texts. While it may seem a complex concept, you will naturally be using critical terminology when interpreting and evaluating texts. Below is an easy acronym to use as a ‘way in’ to the critical evaluation of texts. **CRAIG** helps you to consider, as a starting point, a range of critical observations, representations, syllabus concepts or ways of thinking about your texts.

Does the text seem to have a focus on ...				
Class?	Race?	Age?	Identity?	Gender?
Then you might be using terminology and concepts relating to ...				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • hierarchies • mobility • power • privilege • status • structures • wealth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • colour • culture • discrimination • disenfranchisement • equity • ethnicities • nationalities • place • power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • age groups • old age • expectations • generations • peers • respect • societal influence • stages of life • visibility • wisdom • youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • beliefs, values and attitudes • ideologies • personal identity • place • sense of self • social groups • spectrums of identities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • androgyny • dominant • female • femininity • male • masculinity • normativity • passive • spectrum of genders

Reader response

As we have alluded to throughout this book, a text does not stand in isolation. It is not only created via the writer's personal, social and cultural experiences, reflecting their world and its contextual environment, it also changes and evolves the minute the reader starts experiencing the world of the author – you receive the text through your own lens of personal, social and cultural influences.

This is why meanings are not fixed: what one person feels about a text is not the same as another, and texts go in and out of 'fashion'. Did you know that Romantic poet William Blake was only moderately successful during his lifetime? It wasn't until the 1950s and 1960s that his work had a renaissance – his poetry and paintings became synonymous with the hippie and beatnik countercultures. One of his loveliest lines, 'If the doors of perception were cleansed, everything would appear to man as it is, infinite', was the basis not only of the title of Aldous Huxley's novel *The Doors of Perception* (1954), but also the name of the infamously rebellious psychedelic 1960s band The Doors. Who knew that an eighteenth-century poet would **resonate** with a subset of 1960s youth culture?



Reader context

It is important to examine your personal response and context, and how these might link to the texts you study, as well as to unseen texts and extracts. An understanding of your personal beliefs, values and attitudes, where they have originated, how they have been influenced and how they inform the way you see the world can be invaluable when responding to texts, especially if those texts challenge your way of seeing the world.

However, a personal response or ‘personal reading’ is only one way of reading a text, which helps to form a foundation from which you can build more complex readings. So, part of your task as a Literature student is to examine your own set of beliefs, values and attitudes, and ask yourself: Why do I believe this? Value that? Have this attitude?

- ▶ A **belief** is something we hold to be true or have faith in (usually influenced by our culture, perspective and context).
- ▶ A **value** is an important or desirable quality, deemed as valuable or worthy.
- ▶ An **attitude** is a position or action towards people, ideas or events; our attitudes can change throughout our lives. For example: ‘I believe school is important, and I value education, I just hate it right now!’

We all have a set of core values that have originated from culture, family, experiences and social influences. However, while many of us will value the same things, we may not place as much importance on something as the next person. As Literature students, it’s important to consider why something makes you respond in a certain way. Which part of you is it speaking to, or perhaps challenging, making you feel uncomfortable?

As Literature students, you can also consider how others respond to texts, based on their *own* set of beliefs, values and attitudes, and, in turn, how this might produce meanings or readings of texts that differ from your own. Readers can respond to a multitude of aspects within a text; while we can’t speak for others, we can find *evidence* to support our own arguments and claims.

For example, following his incredible success and popularity throughout the 1890s, Oscar Wilde was arrested in 1895 for ‘gross indecency’. We might argue that nineteenth-century British audiences may have been influenced to reject his works due to their own Victorian values (homosexual behaviour was illegal at the time) and the prioritising of appearances in polite society. Even though *The Importance of Being Earnest* was performed at the peak of the playwright’s career and was playing in sold-out theatres, audiences may have shunned it because they valued their own social status over enjoyment (which, ironically, is the play’s entire premise). If this was your claim, you would need to provide evidence that this may indeed have been how audiences responded. Based on contextual knowledge and study of this text, this claim is not implausible, so it is likely that, with a little research, you could find evidence to support this hypothesis.

Whatever our background, we bring a set of beliefs, values and attitudes to any text – what a text has in common with us, how it might resonate with our cultural beliefs, or how it might challenge our way of thinking.

Reflect on personal values

ACTIVITY 6.1

1 Highlight the values that resonate with you in the list below. You can add to the list if you think of more values.

- | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|--------------|
| › choice | › freedom | › intelligence | › resilience |
| › commitment | › friendship | › justice | › stability |
| › conservation | › honesty | › obedience | › status |
| › creativity | › humour | › order | › strength |
| › diversity | › hygiene | › patriotism | › tradition |
| › education | › independence | › peace | › unity |
| › equality | › innovation | › power | › wealth |
| › family | › integrity | › reputation | › work ethic |

2 List your top five most important values. Spend some time reflecting on where these values may have originated and their influence on how you respond to texts. (Perhaps think of a specific text you are studying, especially if you have a strong reaction to it.)

3 Write reflectively for ten minutes: think about how a text you are studying might reinforce or challenge your sense of self.

Discuss group attitudes, beliefs and values

ACTIVITY 6.2

Discuss points 1 to 4 as a group, then reflect and write in response to points 5 and 6.

- As a group, rank the values listed in Activity 6.1, Question 1 in order of importance. Debate these until you (at least broadly) agree.
- Compare this list to your personal one created in Activity 6.1, Question 2. Are there any that are strikingly different or in conflict, or that you find it difficult to let go or include?
- Discuss attitudes within the group. How would you describe your collective attitudes to common concepts such as power, immigration, gender or class differences? What might influence these attitudes? Compare these answers to your personal attitudes about the same concepts.
- Discuss where your group's values and attitudes may have originated. Consider the evolution of beliefs, as well as whose perspectives they might reflect and whose they might exclude.
- Finally, examine the origin of your own values and attitudes – what has influenced your beliefs, what you deem worthy, or how you act or speak about the world and the people in it?
- Write reflectively for ten minutes: using the discussion activities above, think about where you agreed and disagreed, and how this might reflect wider discourse on these issues in society. How does this relate to making readings of texts?

Student writing – introduction

The following is a sample introduction from an essay using the text *The Importance of Being Earnest* by Oscar Wilde. Read it, making notes of any observations. For example, does the student answer the question, explore a clear claim and write cohesively? Then, using the same essay question, write a practice introduction using a studied play of your own.

Question: The way in which playwrights employ dramatic devices can foster intellectual and physical responses in an audience. Discuss with reference to one play you have studied.

Societal progression towards an integration of different identities is driven by literature that challenges current beliefs, values and attitudes in an attempt to broaden the spectrum of acceptance. Oscar Wilde's work serves as a manifesto of these challenges confronted, as he was living as a celebrated playwright while privately maintaining his identity both as the patriarch of a conventional household and as a homosexual within a conservative Victorian society. His play, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, written in 1894 and first performed in 1895, acts as a vehicle to expose the hypocrisy and irony of his society, in particular the double identities of the upper class. In this way it can also be seen as a reflection of Wilde's own reality; however, his controversial criticism is cleverly disguised via exaggerated and hyperbolic performance aspects, to produce humour and therefore, arguably, hide his true disdain. The implementation of visual features, such as purposeful movements of characters and the use of specific props, in conjunction with auditory devices, dialogue and tone, are sensationalised to create a satirical social commentary. As such, the play invites both an intellectual and a physical response, with a closer examination of social expectations or etiquette under the guise of humour. Wilde's views on marriage, duty and religion in Victorian England are also reinforced by the nineteenth-century aesthetic movement, a rebellious youth culture and the position of the Church in society.

Writing about the reader's context

When writing about the influence of reader context, it is important to be able to break down how it works to shape our perspective. For example, it is common to see responses including sentences such as, 'As a female reader in the twenty-first century, I was disappointed by the depiction of Winton's female characters as downtrodden and powerless'; or, 'Conrad's one-dimensional depiction of race might be offensive to some readers.'

Although these examples go some way to demonstrate an understanding of reader context, they don't explain *why* being from a particular background or of a specific gender would make a difference. When writing, try to avoid making sweeping generalisations about how context and readings are connected. Instead, provide detail about how your (or another reader's) context is active in making you notice or respond to elements of the text.

For example ...

Throughout my education in a single-sex girls' school, it has always been drilled into me that women are capable of anything but that we need to be active in seeking out opportunities and making use of them when they arise. Therefore, I was dismayed that many of the female characters in Winton's short story seemed to take a very passive and pessimistic view of their ability to make change.

or

Conrad's depiction of the Congolese as a single group without individual thoughts or feelings is at odds with people's heterogeneity of experience. Someone being of a particular culture or ethnicity does not mean that they have the same values, attitudes and beliefs as everyone else in that group. Such depictions can make people feel devalued and 'pigeon-holed', despite Conrad's intention to criticise European treatment of First Nations peoples and cultures.

Brainstorm factors influencing reader responses >>>>

With a friend, brainstorm factors that might produce different reader responses.

Contextual factors	What might these be? How might they influence audience responses to texts?
Personal influences (individuals)	e.g. age
Social influences (groups of people)	e.g. where you live
Cultural influences (shared beliefs, values and attitudes of groups)	e.g. religion

ACTIVITY 6.3

Ideology

Often an ideology is equated with a belief. However, an ideology is more collective than a single belief. That is, ideologies belong to structures or groups. Ideological structures are made up of beliefs, values, attitudes, social, cultural and contextual influences, perspectives and representations.

These structures can sometimes clash with our personal context, even though they may form systems within the world we live in. For example, an individual may have conservative political beliefs but live in a country with a left-wing government.



You can think of ideology as being broken up into two pillars: collectivist and individualistic. The following table explores these ideological types in more depth.

Collectivist	Individualistic
<p>We can think of collectivist ideologies as structures that govern societies – systems put in place to ensure societies function in certain ways, that underpin people’s behaviours and cooperation, and are usually a motivational force for communal harmony (in theory!).</p> <p>For example: political social ethical</p> <p>It is also interesting to consider where these structures originate, or who had a hand in constructing these ideologies. Therefore, at the heart of collectivist ideologies we have notions of power, hierarchy, privilege or traditionalism.</p>	<p>Individualistic ideologies are more aligned with cultural groups than social groups. Cultural groups form within societies from a commonality of values, beliefs, identities or perspectives. These ideological systems are more about the individual – rights and freedoms, decision-making, or ways of thinking and living.</p> <p>For example: philosophical cultural contextual</p> <p>Often, but not always, individualistic ideologies are born out of a reaction or response to collectivism – where groups have become aligned due to their differences from, or critique of, society’s norms.</p>

Brainstorm ideological structures

ACTIVITY 6.4

Individually or with a classmate, brainstorm some ideological structures or systems. You could use online or library research to help you identify specific examples. This would be great preparation for a class discussion, where you can learn from each other’s ideas. Consider:

- › political structures or systems – related to governance of environments, institutions and economics
- › social structures – regarding position, status, identity or place
- › ethical structures – related to behaviours, principles and thought processes
- › philosophical systems – questioning existence, rules, ideas and knowledge
- › cultural systems – groups within society that share commonalities
- › contextual movements – events or movements that may challenge or differ from traditional ways of living or thinking.



Finding ideologies

How do you go about finding ideologies that are embedded within your texts? Or perhaps a better way of thinking about this is: how can you *argue* that, in your analysis, a text contains or *represents* an ideological perspective?

The following example shows how one student identified and analysed ideologies evident in the first stanza of Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem 'Kubla Khan' (1797).

<p>In Xanadu did Kubla Khan A stately pleasure-dome decreed: Where Alph, the sacred river, ran Through caverns measureless to man Down to a sunless sea. So twice five miles of fertile ground With walls and towers were girdled round: And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills, Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree; And here were forests ancient as the hills, Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.</p>	<p>Without even knowing who Kubla Khan is, the words 'stately' and 'decreed' are clues: they are suggestive of power and governance. Therefore, I read Khan as someone who has the power to command the construction of 'walls and towers'.</p> <p>However, it is the verb 'girdled' that appears to criticise Khan's 'decreed', as this verb has connotations of constriction or destruction.</p> <p>Furthermore, the religious discourse peppered throughout the poem in words such as 'sacred' and 'incense-bearing' seems at odds with Khan's proclamation, as the action of 'girdling' appears to be destroying something 'sacred'. Similarly, the imagery constructed through the alliterative 'measureless to man' and the simile 'ancient as the hills' appears to solidify the reverence of this setting.</p> <p>Finally, the adjective 'fertile', which we often associate with motherhood, appears to almost personify the 'forests' as alive.</p>
<p>I can argue that Coleridge has embedded both a political ideology and an individualistic ideological perspective, namely Romanticism, in his poem. I can even argue that I see environmental ideologies present within this poem.</p> <p>My thought process went like this:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Who is the persona (or character if prose/drama)? The persona represents a larger group in society. Kubla Khan = a political leader = a government What is happening or what is the conflict? What might this represent? Khan 'girdles' the forest = government destruction of land; sacred land leads me to the question: sacred to whom? What contextual factors may influence the representations? 1797 – Industrial Revolution Coleridge as one of the founders of British Romanticism via <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> (with William Wordsworth; published in 1798) Romanticism opposed capitalistic industry and believed in the spirituality of and reverence for the natural world. How do I know this? I look for words and structures to support my knowledge and findings. <p>What would make my analysis even more exciting is being able to link Coleridge's text with ideological structures within my contemporary context. How might this text be linked to ideologies present in our world?</p>	

Explore ideologies in your texts

ACTIVITY 6.5

Taking into account the above guide, write reflectively for twenty minutes about a text of your choice. What ideologies do you see reflected in the characters, conflicts, or perhaps even in the contextual factors that may have influenced the text itself?

Be prepared to argue your ideas using evidence from the text. Below is a word bank to help articulate your ideas (or use some of the ideas you came up with in Activity 6.4).

WORD BANK - IDEOLOGIES	capitalism	environmental	postmodern
	class structure	existentialism	progressive
	colonial	feminism	religious
	conservatism	Marxism	Romantic
	democratic	nationalism	socialism

Unit 1 sample assessments

The following activities will provide helpful practice for your assessment tasks in Unit 1.

Extended written response

Examine how the distinctive style of a studied text works to shape your interpretation of its meaning.

Short written response

Write three reflective journal entries of approximately 500 words each, in which you consider how a studied text may be read in three different ways by using specified reading practices or strategies.

Creative production

Emulate and creatively experiment with the style and form of the work of a studied poet, through writing an original poem of your own. You will also write a short reflection on how you emulated the poet's style and attempted to achieve particular effects for specific audiences.

Oral response

Conduct a group panel discussion about a studied narrative. Each panellist should take on a specific persona, such as a character, an audience member or an author. Your group should aim to analyse at least three specific turning points or conflicts, structuring arguments with relevant and pertinent textual evidence while taking on the perspective of each of your personae.

SECTION 3

Unit 2

Unit summary

Unit 2: Making connections between texts (*the way literary texts connect with each other, our world and ourselves*)

The focus of Unit 2 is on making connections between your texts. We look at the ways texts, and our interpretations of them, are influenced by our experiences. As we note throughout this book, the understandings and skills you build during each unit are drawn upon and reinforced throughout the course. Begin this unit by first making a list of the concepts you engaged with in Unit 1; then, read your Unit 2 syllabus document carefully. What do you notice? What do you think is the biggest difference in the learning outcomes?

Highlight or make a list of the keywords from the Unit 2 syllabus. For example:

- › *'multiple readings of a text are possible'*
- › *'the relationships between ...'*
- › *'audiences' expectations, responses and interpretations'.*

As you work through Unit 2, you will find that you make more and more connections between your studied texts. Even if your teacher doesn't specifically ask, always try to draw comparisons, make links and build on ideas between your texts. This will help you to develop your understanding of the ways in which literary texts exist as a 'patchwork' rather than in isolation.

Making connections

Although we focus on specific texts and interrogate them extensively in this course, studying Literature is about learning to make connections between all the texts you come into contact with every day. You will get to know a small number of texts intimately, but the aim of the course is to help you to develop the skills to deconstruct and analyse any text, and to connect it to other texts, our world and ourselves.



Intertextuality

Intertextuality relates to the connections between texts. They may be connected by their mutual existence in a broad literary history and storytelling tradition. We may also make connections because our personal reading of one text influences our understanding and appreciation of others. When we analyse a text intertextually, we are looking at the way it relates to other texts. The text itself may make direct references to other texts, or our appreciation of it might be enhanced by comparisons we personally make.

We look for threads that connect texts and consider what is different, what is similar, and how they might influence or be influenced by other texts. However, these links do not have to be deliberately made by the author – an intertextual analysis focuses on how we make connections between texts. For example, you could think about how two texts have treated the same topic, such as experiences of war. You might interrogate the ways in which several texts have constructed similar characters or groups. Perhaps you could look at how a particular form has been used for specific purposes. The point of an intertextual analysis is not to determine ‘who wore it better’; it is to consider how texts work together and against each other to convey meaning.

Begin to think intertextually

ACTIVITY 7.1

Think about the texts you have encountered today (advertisements, songs, magazine or newspaper articles, news stories, TikTok videos and so on). What influences or references can you identify? How did your knowledge or understanding of one text shape the way you responded to another?

Compare texts

ACTIVITY 7.2

Consider two poems you have read that address similar issues, make use of the same forms or conventions, construct particular groups, or are connected in some other way.

Some examples you could use:

- › Judith Wright’s poems ‘Eve to her Daughters’ and ‘Woman to Man’
- › Oodgeroo Noonuccal’s ‘Dark Unmarried Mothers’ and Seamus Heaney’s ‘Limbo’
- › William Shakespeare’s ‘Sonnet 18’ and Gwen Harwood’s ‘Suburban Sonnet’
- › Mary Oliver’s ‘Learning about the Indians’ and Samuel Wagan Watson’s ‘Cheap White-Goods at the Dreamtime Sale’

- 1 How have the texts dealt with these things in similar or different ways? How has this influenced your understanding or acceptance of the text’s meaning?
- 2 Which approach did you prefer, and why do you think this is?

Allusion

Allusion is a particular, deliberate type of intertextual link. An allusion is made when one text directly or implicitly references another text or well-known event. This may be done through drawing on cultural knowledge, parody and satire or pastiche, or by delving into the **gaps and silences** left open by other texts.

Avoid thinking about allusions as a ‘treasure hunt’ or ‘Easter eggs’ left by authors for you to discover just for fun. Understanding the allusions in a text helps to add further layers to our understanding. Always consider how your awareness of the links to another text or real-world situation adds something to the meaning *you* take from a text. When analysing a text, it’s never enough to just say an allusion is made – you need to explain what it adds to your reading.

Cultural knowledge

It is common for authors to draw upon elements of cultural knowledge to deepen or reinforce the meaning they are trying to convey to their readers. Sometimes this can be overt and hard to ignore, in the form of direct references to other texts or events. At other times, it will be more subtle and readers lacking the relevant cultural knowledge might overlook the reference entirely. Allegorical texts such as George Orwell’s *Animal Farm* and Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible* rely on readers having underlying knowledge of the political context in which they were written to truly understand their meaning. While the texts can still be read and enjoyed without this knowledge, our understanding is deepened immensely when we are able to understand their role as a critique of their society.

Mythology is another common element of cultural knowledge utilised by authors. By understanding the message or ‘moral’ of the myth, readers are able to think about how it might apply to the text they are reading. The full title of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein, or The Modern Prometheus* provides us with clues to the meaning of the text. In Greek mythology, the Titan Prometheus steals fire from the gods and gives it to humankind in the form of knowledge and civilisation. In some versions of the myth, Prometheus also moulds humans from clay. Zeus punishes Prometheus for defying the gods by having him chained to a rock where a bird descends to eat his liver. Overnight, the organ regrows for the bird to eat again the next day, dooming Prometheus to eternal torment. The reference to this never-ending punishment for transgressing the will of the gods foreshadows that Victor Frankenstein will similarly make errors of judgement for which there will be grave and lasting consequences.

Parody and satire

Parody occurs when an author deliberately exaggerates the features of a character or situation to create comedy. A parody often highlights the trivial or ridiculous nature of a particular person or issue to directly criticise them. Satire is also usually humorous, though not always. Satirical texts commonly use irony and sarcasm to critique structures or groups of people, particularly in relation to politics and topical issues, rather than individuals. Oscar Wilde’s *The Importance of Being Earnest* uses exaggerated and comical characters as satire to critique the class structures of Victorian English society. The manner in which Gwendolen and Cecily fall in love with

New stories for real people

Authors will sometimes depict well-known people in their texts. This may be simply an entertaining reimagining, or its purpose may be to critique their actions or the groups they represent. It's important to always remember that these characters are *fictional*, although they share their names and some of their history with real people. As readers, we make intertextual links to the real-life individuals and consider what knowledge the author is drawing on and how those characters represent their times or their social structures. However, we must be mindful that we cannot assume these depictions are accurate.

For example, the play *Amadeus* by Peter Shaffer creates a story for Salieri, a contemporary of Mozart. Salieri was a significant composer and musician in his time but, due perhaps to unfortunate timing, he is often forgotten by history. Shaffer has created a new story that is highly fictionalised and often contentious. As audiences often have little or no prior knowledge of Salieri (and other minor characters such as Mozart's wife, Constanze), it is easy to assume – incorrectly – that this work of historical fiction is an accurate depiction.

Identifying intertextual features

Understanding the intertextual links in your studied texts can be tricky. How do we know what we don't know? Reviewing some of the commentaries written about the text can help you to make connections you would otherwise have missed. It's also worth doing a little research on any text you're reading. Texts often refer to ideas, events, people and issues that were considered common knowledge at the time the text was created, but which might not be so obvious now.

The table below presents some productive questions to ask yourself in order to better understand intertextual links in your texts.

Genre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the features of the genre(s) of the text? • Have these features been subverted or highlighted? • Does the text adhere strongly to a specific genre, or does it borrow from several? • Does the text critique through parody or satire, or revere through pastiche?
Textual features	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is the text dedicated to a specific person? What can you find out about them or their relationship to the author? • Are the names of any characters significant? Do any relate to people from history or other well-known texts? Are there any obvious or subtle similarities between them? • Do the chapter titles relate to significant events or make direct references to other texts? • Does the narrative arc of the text mirror another well-known work or series of events?
Direct references	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does the text refer to specific titles of other works, or other authors? • Are historical events or people referred to? What do you know about these events/people and how are they represented in the text? • What significant knowledge or understandings are linked to these events/people?

<p>Contextual knowledge</p>	<p>The Enlightenment – The text is set and was published around the turn of the 19th century, at the end of the Enlightenment period. Enlightenment thinkers privileged science, logic and reason. The period saw a rapid expansion of European power throughout the globe.</p> <p>Romanticism – Shelley and her contemporaries (including her husband Percy Bysshe Shelley) were proponents of Romanticism. Romantics emphasised the importance of nature and the way humans interact with it. They felt that we should respect nature and are arrogant to think we can tame it. The novel portrays the dangers of privileging scientific thinking and achievement over respect for the natural order. Romantic texts often included elements of the uncanny, a focus on individual emotion, and a concern with notions of guilt, innocence and who is really ‘to blame.’ Other texts from this period include the poetry of John Keats and Samuel Taylor Coleridge, <i>The Scarlet Letter</i> by Nathaniel Hawthorne, and novels by Jane Austen. Musicians and artists inspired by Romanticism are said to include Chopin, Beethoven, Gainsborough and Turner.</p> <p>Shelley’s mother and father – Her mother Mary Wollstonecraft (a feminist philosopher) died soon after Shelley’s birth and she is said to have had a difficult relationship with her stepmother. Her father, William Godwin, was a journalist and novelist. Her family was well-educated though not always financially secure. The writings of Shelley’s parents were significant in their own right, and elements of their philosophy and world views can be seen in Shelley’s own life and writing.</p> <p>Galvanism – Before she wrote <i>Frankenstein</i>, Shelley read about Luigi Galvani’s famous experiment of using electricity to ‘reanimate’ a dead frog. Victor studied galvanism, suggesting that he might have used a similar method to animate the Creation. Such links reinforce the connection between the Creation and the potential dangers of unchecked scientific advancement.</p>
<p>Post-production links</p>	<p>A ‘Frankenstein’s monster’ has come to be known as something that destroys its creator, and the prefix ‘franken...’ is used to describe something produced by unnatural methods, such as genetic engineering (e.g. frankenfood).</p> <p>There have been numerous film versions of the novel; many add features never referred to in the original (e.g. the Creation’s bolts in his neck or green skin).</p> <p>‘Frankenstein’ is often misunderstood to refer to the Creation rather than Victor, suggesting that, over time, people have lost connection to the actual story and forgotten about Victor’s role.</p>

Map intertextuality

ACTIVITY 7.3

Following the example on pages 83–4, interrogate the intertextual links you can see in one of your studied texts. This example uses a simple table structure, but you might like to create a mind map or other visual representation of connections.

Student writing – introduction

Read the introduction, below, to an essay on Arthur Miller's play *The Crucible*, and consider its strengths and weaknesses. Can you identify the following features?

- ▶ a global statement
- ▶ relevant contextual information
- ▶ an outline of the key points the essay will make
- ▶ a clear thesis statement

The essay's first body paragraph is also included. How successfully does this convey the student's first main point?

Question: How has the use of allusion allowed you to find deeper meaning in a text?

Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* is a play that relies heavily on the audience's awareness of political unrest in the time and place in which it was written. The play can be enjoyed purely as a fictionalised depiction of the Salem witch trials; however, knowing about Miller's own context makes further layers of meaning available. The play draws on the widely (if superficially) known history of the witch trials in Massachusetts (1692–93) when many people were unjustly persecuted for their supposed consorting with the devil and dabbling in witchcraft. However, by knowing a little about Miller's experiences, connections between the hysteria and hypocrisy of 1690s Salem and 1950s USA can be made.

At the time the text was written, the 'Reds under the bed' scare was at its peak. Due to the Cold War between the USA and Russia, Americans were encouraged to see Communist threats everywhere. Politicians like Joseph McCarthy actively stoked hatred and fear, leading to the arrest and imprisonment of hundreds of people accused of being Communists. Writers were particularly targeted by McCarthy's 'witch hunts' and Miller himself was one of those labelled a Communist sympathiser. People who were accused were dragged before courts to testify and pressured to 'name names' of other Communists. The characters in Miller's play can be seen as representations of the key people and events of this time. Judge Danforth convicts many of the townsfolk on spurious grounds, and his zealous, unfounded hunting of witches mirrors the actions of McCarthy and others like him. The way that the young girls start to make false accusations represents the way that Americans who were accused of being Communists were pressured to make false confessions and tell lies, in the hope that telling their captors what they wanted to hear would mean they were released. Stage directions build tension and suspense, and help convey the hysteria and paranoia that was present in America in Miller's time. Audiences who have some understanding of the issues relevant in 1950s USA are able to see *The Crucible* as much more than a depiction of the Salem witch trials. This allows us to see additional layers of meaning in the text, in particular the way that people's irrational fears and jealousies can lead to unjust consequences. Through alluding to a well-known historical issue, Miller is able to convey his disgust and concern at the way the 'Communist threat' was being exaggerated and how this was pitting Americans against each other, without explicitly saying so. In a time when writers were being actively targeted by McCarthy and his followers, this protection was important.

Multiple readings

Back in Section 2, we looked at the way that we, as readers, are influenced through our context to make particular readings of a text. You might have inferred from this that a reader makes a single reading of the text and moves along. However, this couldn't be further from the truth.

Consider a text you read or viewed as a young child. What meaning did you derive from it then? It would be safe to say that, as you grew older and (hopefully) wiser, your understanding of that text's meaning changed. Perhaps you learned something about the context of the text that changed your interpretation of a plot point or theme; you may have had an experience that led you to empathise with or understand a character differently; or something may have happened in the world that made you consider the themes in a new way. It may even be that you simply missed something in that first interaction with the text that you picked up when you re-read it later. In other words, your reading of a text can change over time, and with re-reading.



Different interpretations

If we accept that we can personally take different meanings from a text, then it follows that each individual's understanding of a single text can differ from that of other people. There is no 'right' way to interpret a text. An individual's personal circumstances, experiences, beliefs, values and attitudes will influence the reading they make.

Literature students are often nervous about sharing their interpretation of a text with others for fear that they will be 'wrong'. They might ask their teacher in an exasperated tone, 'Can't you just tell me what the right answer is? Can't the author just tell us what they meant?' But this is part of the beauty of Literature study: everyone can be right. Although it can be interesting to know what the author meant, it doesn't necessarily matter. French literary theorist Roland Barthes summed this up when he wrote 'The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the author.' (You can read Barthes' seminal 1967 work, 'The Death of the Author', in many places online. It is not a long essay but can be a challenging read; you can find some great commentaries that will help you break it down.)

While we can all have a legitimate reading of a text, teachers and examiners will want to know how you arrived at that reading. In Chapter 4 we looked at features of text construction and language use that influence our understanding. We also do this by paying attention to the reading practices and strategies we use (see Chapter 3).

Look at changing interpretations over time

ACTIVITY 8.1

Consider a text you viewed or read when you were young, and compare your first impressions to your interpretation of it as you grew older. An example, focused on interpreting the movie *Grease* (1978) over time, is given below.

As a child in primary school	I loved the songs and saw the movie as a celebration of being a teenager. Everyone seemed so grown up and cool. I interpreted the movie as saying that being a teenager had ups and downs but was basically a really fun time.
As a young teen	I noticed there were characters who were cool and some who were 'nerds'. I realised the main characters, whom I automatically felt connected to, were actually quite mean to some people. I was a bit uncomfortable with the way Sandy was teased about her conservative clothes and attitudes by the people who were supposedly her friends. I was starting to ask questions about why some of the characters were in conflict with themselves (e.g. Rizzo and Frenchy) but I didn't really understand it fully. I still thought it was a positive view of being a teenager.
As a Year 11 or 12 student	The movie makes me really angry now. I see it as saying the only way you will be accepted by your peers is to change yourself to fit in. The film implies that Danny fell for Sandy as she was (conservative, sweet, 'virtuous') but then he speaks cruelly about her when his friends don't approve. Sandy's friends encourage her to completely change herself to fit in with him and she does it, rather than having respect for herself and her beliefs. I realise that the sad song Rizzo sings is about her being hurt by being 'slut-shamed' by others. The whole movie just feels wrong to me now. It's like the plot and songs are the same but I question it now instead of accepting it.

Representations

All texts, even factual ones, offer representations of the world. They do not show us *the* truth, only *a* truth. Consider a photograph of an event. We might assume that it simply captures a moment in time and is therefore the truth. However, choices about the camera angle, lighting, what is included and not included, and which specific moment is recorded will shape the impression the photo gives of the event.

Written texts do this too. The use of language and structures will shape the reader’s impressions. Consider the representation of a particular group in one of your studied texts, and how this image has been curated or shaped by the author.



For example ...

The following example looks at the representation of women in Arthur Miller’s *The Crucible*.

Character	Representation	Example
Abigail Williams	duplicious, deceitful, cunning, vindictive	Abigail’s lies and accusations lead to many innocent people being persecuted. Rather than facing the consequences of her behaviour, she flees while others are harshly punished.
Elizabeth Proctor	virtuous, loyal (to a fault), foolish	When asked about her husband’s infidelity, Elizabeth lies to the court, to protect his (and her) honour, and in a futile attempt to save him. She does this out of loyalty but it plays into the court’s hands and ultimately seals John Proctor’s fate.
Other women of Salem	hysterical, easily manipulated, weak	Rather than telling the truth, the girls and women of the town continue Abigail’s fantasy and begin to denounce others as witches too. Some characters, such as Tituba, become overwrought. This perpetuates stereotypes of women being prone to hysteria.

Identify expectations regarding poetic form and style

ACTIVITY 8.3

Consider the following poetic styles or forms, and identify the subject matter, features and techniques associated with each.

- › aubade
- › ballad
- › elegy
- › limerick
- › ode
- › sonnet

What other poetic styles and forms have you encountered in your studies so far? Add as many as you can to your list.

Consider how authors play with our expectations of genre

ACTIVITY 8.4

How might the following unusual or out-of-place elements impact your experience and understanding of a text?

- › In Jack Davis' *No Sugar*, audience members are required to get out of their seats and move around the theatre rather than being passive consumers of the play.
- › Gwen Harwood's 'Suburban Sonnet' depicts the experience of a suburban Australian mother in less than glowing terms.
- › *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*, by Heinrich Böll, begins by describing the climax of the story to readers.
- › The short stories that make up Tim Winton's *The Turning* contain many recurring and intersecting characters and their experiences at different points of their lives.

Unit 2 sample assessments

The following activities will provide helpful practice for your assessment tasks in Unit 2.

Extended written response

Discuss how a text you are studying has created a diverse or nuanced representation of a particular group or event. Alternatively, consider how a studied text has done the opposite, by representing a group or an event in a homogenous, one-dimensional manner.

Short written response

Keep a journal for a few days, in which you observe the connections between your studied text(s) and aspects of popular culture that you see around you (e.g. a television series, social media or other mass media, a political movement or event, technology, or perhaps a specific personality or celebrity). Identify whether they are direct allusions, or more broadly intertextual. After three or four days, summarise what you have observed, such as links that you see frequently, or text types that seem to incorporate allusions more heavily than others.

Creative production

Craft a short creative text (a chapter or section of prose fiction, a poem or a drama script) that draws on the imagined experience of a minor character or persona in a studied text. (For some inspiration, you might like to read the short monologue 'The Stepsister Speaks Out', by Peg Kehret.)

Oral response

In a group, plan and perform an excerpt from a studied play where choices in delivery (e.g. tone of voice, actions, proxemics, costume etc.) change the way characters are represented to the audience. After performing the scene, explain your choices to the class.

SECTION 4

Unit 3

Unit summary

Unit 3: Power, culture and identity (*how language has the power to shape, define, silence or privilege cultures, identities and voices*)

Congratulations, you've made it to Unit 3! Just because Units 1 and 2 are complete does not mean that you can ignore all the previous content. Unit 3 and Unit 4 build on these concepts, and ask you to take these ideas even further.

As always, ensure you read through the unit description closely, highlighting key words and phrases. For example:

- › *'relationship between language, culture and identity'*
- › *'the power of language to represent ideas, events and people'*
- › *'a range of texts, contexts, modes and forms'*
- › *'experiment with language, adapt forms and challenge conventions and ideas'.*

What we can take from these key words and phrases is that this unit is all about power – not only the power of language to represent, challenge or shape (and reshape) ideas, but also the conceptual notion of power within texts, voices and structures, and our own relationship and response to these. By Unit 3, ATAR Literature is now asking you not just to examine and respond to texts, but to formulate opinions, evaluate purpose, make innovative connections, construct original findings, and experiment with your own language use.

Language, culture and identity

In Unit 1 we talked about reader response and personal context: that is, how we can examine our own beliefs, values and attitudes and the ways in which we respond to texts. We also considered how audiences who are different from us may respond. In Unit 2, we discussed how, as readers, our experience of literature is heightened when we start making connections between texts and contexts, and begin to see how meaning is formed, developed and widened by intertextual experiences and applying other ways of reading.

Now, in Unit 3, we take this one step further. We continue to examine our own ideologies, the ideologies we may see embedded within a text, and others that we find via our own analyses, but we also consider how literary texts can contribute to the formation and definition of identity in various contexts. That is, we go beyond values, attitudes or contextual influences to evaluate the ramifications of language that defines, sets and perhaps even enforces how we see ourselves and others.



Identity

Our identity is often described as who we are: our character, personality and sense of self. To discover our identity, we might consider our beliefs, our sense of belonging or the people around us – that is, what makes up our values, attitudes and behaviours. Of course, identity can be about more than an individual. We also have collective identities where, socially, we have similar beliefs, values and attitudes. It makes sense that we would want to spend time in groups made up of people with whom we identify. These can help us both define and feel more like ourselves. But is group affiliation always a choice? Often identities are thrust upon us, as we are born into certain cultures, contexts and ideological frameworks.

As Literature students, when analysing identity you can ask: who belongs and who decides?

Power and privilege play a crucial role in the construction of identities. The more we see, hear, read or write about a particular way of being, the more normalised it becomes. When certain groups or elements of a society have the power or position to influence which texts are consumed, they are able to influence our concept of what is intrinsic to being part of that group. This power might be expressed through influences on legislation or justice, constructing prescribed text lists for curricula, or having parental control over children.

Privilege also plays a role in the texts we are able to access. The literacy, financial capability and access to publishing avenues required to disseminate one's thoughts are not equally available to everyone in society. Therefore, people whose 'invisible knapsack' of social capital does not include these items might be unable to create and distribute texts that highlight their experiences and identity. Similarly, others do not have the privileges that enable them to access and consume such texts. (To read more about ideas of privilege and what it means in terms of an individual's understanding and place in the world, you might like to start with Peggy McIntosh's excellent essay 'White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack'.)

Below is a word bank of ideas related to influences on our identity. What others can you add?

WORD BANK - IDENTITY	age	culture	nationality
	attitudes	education	peers
	background	ethnicity	race
	class	family	religion
	context	gender	values



Explore identity in your texts

ACTIVITY 9.1

No matter the text, people will be represented through its characters and personas. Work with a partner to find at least one quote per character/persona that showcases how language is being used to formulate or construct identities. You may like to do this with one text or multiple texts. For example:

In Shakespeare's *Othello*, Iago refers to Othello as a 'Barbary horse' and tells Desdemona's father, Brabantio, that his 'nephews will neigh to him' if he accepts the interracial relationship between his daughter and Othello.

From here, we can evaluate a number of aspects:

- › Iago's character and therefore his identity (i.e. what is influencing his attitudes)
- › how others in this context perceive people of colour and different ethnicities
- › the specific use of language and its effect on the construction of meaning
- › how this meaning can contribute to reinforcing or challenging ideologies in our world.

Reflect on identity and texts

ACTIVITY 9.2

Once you have collated some good quotes illustrating how people (and therefore identities) are represented in your texts, consider the following statements and write reflectively for ten to twenty minutes on each.

- › Some identities are set so far in stone that they become dogma.
- › Identities are ever-changing and continue to evolve with each new generation.
- › We recognise ourselves in texts and realise our identities have, in some ways, been created for us.
- › Identities of characters and personas can live outside of a text and become symbolic beyond the text. In fact, often personal identities *are* representations of greater social or cultural identities.

Australian identity

As you learned in Chapter 8: Representations, texts present a *version* of the truth. Much like a documentary or reality TV show, identities are a construct. However, the more they are seen and heard, the more they are accepted as truth. For example, let's take Australian identity. A simple place to start is to ask: how would I describe Australian identity? Next we might ask: how has this come to be? Who belongs and who decided this?

Arguably, Australia's national identity is often associated with being white, middle-aged and male, and only a certain type of masculinity. Therefore, as critical readers, we should consider why the commonly accepted Australian identity has an age, a gender and, perhaps most importantly, a colour, and what language is being used to assert or challenge this representation. By critically examining the way that identity is represented through the construction of characters, personas or voices in the texts we study, we become more astute, evaluative and discerning readers.

Consider this quote from Lawson's short story. What does the language suggest about the Australian identity, in particular the Australian male?

- 2 Now well established, the **stockman** or 'Aussie battler' archetype continues to have currency, even to the point of idolisation. Two texts that depict this image are the poems 'The Stockman' by David Campbell (1943) and 'Bullocky' by Judith Wright (1946).

'His horse stood still, His cattle-dog / tongued in the shadow of the tree / and for a moment on the plain / Time waited for the three ...' ('The Stockman')

What might be the significance of the personification of 'Time' waiting for the Australian male?

'Beside his heavy-shouldered team / thirsty with drought and chilled with rain / he weathered all the striding years ...' ('Bullocky')

What image is created through the juxtaposition of 'drought' and 'rain', and a man who 'weathered all'? In what ways does Wright's language solidify a particular conception of Australian identity?

- 3 Arguably, the Australian **larrikin** is a law unto himself. He is revered and respected despite his actions. Bob Hawke (Australian Prime Minister from 1983 to 1991) might be viewed as embodying this spirit. He openly admitted his marital infidelities and heavy drinking but this did little to damage his public image. In fact, it could be argued that it worked in his favour! Two texts that include representations of the Australian larrikin are the plays *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* by Ray Lawler (1955) and *Don's Party* by David Williamson (1971).

'These are men – not the sort we see rolling home to their wives every night – but men ...' (Olive, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*)

In what ways does Lawler's play convey a representation of Australian identity similar to Lawson's in 'A Drover's Wife'? What does Lawler suggest is 'unmanly'?

- 4 By the mid-twentieth century, **criticisms** of this cultural identity start to emerge through representations of characters, voices or personas in literary texts – a seeming condemnation of the Australian male's pride and privilege. Three texts that critique traditional conceptions of Australian identity are 'Time is Running Out', a poem by Oodgeroo Noonuccal (1964), 'The Altar of the Family', a short story by Michael Wilding (1970) and the novel *Remembering Babylon* by David Malouf (1993).

'The miner rapes / the heart of the earth / with his violent spade ...' ('Time is Running Out')

Taking into account the previous examples, how does Noonuccal use language to reframe the Australian male identity?

'Janet McIvor, who had also been there and seen all that occurred, though no one seemed interested in her version, was surprised that he was allowed to get away with it ... "Me and Meg found him, just as much as Lachlan," Janet McIvor put in, seizing her opportunity, but no one paid heed ...' (*Remembering Babylon*)

What might Malouf be suggesting about Australian identity in this quote?

9.4

ACTIVITY

- 5 It is interesting to consider the ramifications of **continual representations** – do we as a society take pride in outdated portrayals, or perhaps question how identities have shifted or evolved? Two texts that raise this idea are the novels *The Turning* by Tim Winton (2004) and *Jasper Jones* by Craig Silvey (2009).

“Go home!” my father explodes. He stands up, tall and intimidating. He glares with real anger. And I can’t help but feel a blush of pride, seeing it. I’ve been wrong about him.’ (*Jasper Jones*)

Reflect on conceptions of identity

9.5

ACTIVITY

- 1 Drawing on your answers to the previous activity, write reflectively for ten minutes on what has influenced the creation of each facet of Australian identity, who is heard and unheard, and what implications this might have for how Australians see themselves in modern society.
- 2 Take some time to consider another aspect of Australian identity that you have identified during previous discussions with your classmates. Consider how the texts you’ve studied have reinforced or challenged this particular aspect of identity.

Student writing – comparing introductions

Below are two introductions using different texts and responding to different questions, but tackling similar syllabus concepts of identity and culture. Read both introductions and the notes about the strengths and weaknesses of their structure, sentence construction, vocabulary and cohesion.

The following is a sample introduction to an essay on *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen.

Question: Explore how the writing of a text can be interpreted as an act of rebellion and/or empowerment.

Jane Austen’s name has become synonymous with romantic comedy and she can therefore often be dismissed by modern readers as trite and shallow. However, Austen’s novel *Northanger Abbey*, published posthumously in 1817, can be read as a testament to her intellect and wit when commenting on the nuances of Regency England, in particular gender-related expectations and judgements in the middle- and upper-class echelons of the society to which Austen belonged. In this satirical parody of the Gothic romances popular among young female readers in the late eighteenth century, Austen’s protagonist, Catherine, transforms and matures throughout the course of the novel, exposing both the rigid social structures of the time and the restrictions

This is an interesting claim. While we can perhaps see what this student means, they need to be clearer that the romantic comedy genre is often considered frivolous and silly, ergo so are its readers.

This is an excellent ‘precis’ sentence: this student has included title, author and year, and does not fall into the trap of generalising about notions of gender – not all eighteenth-century women shared Austen’s experiences. She belonged to a distinct social class and created narratives and characters that embodied her own experiences.





The student uses the language of the essay topic to signpost that they are now answering the question. The words 'it can be argued' are a way of showcasing your claim to your marker.

While this student has a strong claim, Jane Austen might not typically be considered 'rebellious' in the truest sense of the word. This is a good reminder about text choice; some texts will work better with certain syllabus concepts.

In this final sentence, the student truly captures syllabus ideas about the power of language, representations and identity.

placed on female experience and knowledge. As such, it can be argued that Austen's text can be seen as an act of both rebellion and empowerment in this epoch – as an author, Austen could be seen to be gently mocking her own gender but, in doing so, she is actually condemning the society in which these roles are allowed to fester. Austen rebels against the clichés of typical Gothic romances with her ridicule of setting, her characterisation and her use of familiar literary tropes and, in doing so, creates a novel in *Northanger Abbey* that empowers readers everywhere, no matter their era, to see beyond their social definition and find their true identity.

The following is a sample introduction to an essay on the short story 'Neighbours' by Tim Winton.

Question: Reflect on the way that one or more texts can be read for their representations of gender, class, race/ethnicity and/or cultural identity.

Many students start essays in this broad way but ask yourself, do these opening two sentences really say anything? While a global sentence is an excellent starting point, this is a little too vague.

However, the student now focuses their attention and provides a clear summary of the text.

It is important to know how to express your reading of a text – a 'cultural-identity focused reading practice' is a bit clunky. It would have been better for this student to simply write 'by focusing on the representation of cultural identity,' for example.

Similarly, be wary of phrases like 'it is clear' or '[the author] aims.' Remember, if an essay topic asks about how a text can be 'read,' this is about how you have done so. This student could have written something like, 'Through my focus on cultural identity, I interpret Winton's aim to be to explore ...'

This is a good link to the relevant syllabus concepts, and demonstrates the student's understanding that identity is not always fixed or clear-cut.

What are we resisting? Be careful of using this phrase, or phrases like 'dominant readings,' without fully explaining what you mean. See if you can think of a clearer way to express this idea.

Texts consist of complex webs of attitudes, values and beliefs which can be difficult to interpret. However, through the application of a reading practice, these meanings are made clearer and one can gain deeper knowledge and understanding of the text. This is nowhere truer than for the text 'Neighbours', an Australian short story written by Tim Winton in 1985, detailing the life challenges of a newlywed 'Australian' (British-European) couple living in multicultural and multilingual suburban Australia. Through the application of a cultural-identity focused reading practice, it is clear that Winton aims to explore the complicated dynamics of the relationship between multiculturalism and Australian national identity. Specifically, he suggests that, even though acceptance is a commonly accepted core value of Australian culture, this is not necessarily the case in practice. By applying a cultural reading practice, it also becomes clear that it is not the 'Australians' who typically uphold the core values of acceptance and multiculturalism, but the immigrants. However, by applying a resistant cultural reading practice one can also see that such values are not necessarily supported by the text, due to its lack of representation of cultures other than European.

Culture

Often we hear the words ‘society’ and ‘culture’ together. But, while a society can have a culture, and particular cultural characteristics or practices can be associated with particular societies, they are not exactly the same concept. Art and literature are often referred to as mirrors of society, and so, as critical students of Literature, you can examine how societies and cultures are depicted and shaped or, in many texts, how social or cultural behaviours are judged, exposed or criticised.

In fact, you will notice that a key verb repeated throughout Unit 3 is ‘**evaluate**’. This verb requires you to *carefully consider* how concepts are represented in texts. To carefully consider the representations of a particular society or a certain culture, you need to have a clear understanding of the differences and overlaps. For example, you may find that literary texts often deal with culture clashes *within* societies, or with how the cultural practices of a particular society have changed or endured over time.

We are all influenced by our social and cultural groups and, as you have discovered, sometimes these overlap. Some cultural practices have become broadly accepted – for example, having public holidays on Christmas and New Year’s Day – while others, such as the food eaten on festive occasions, are restricted to particular ethnicities, nations or religions. As a society changes in its make-up, and cultural practices from other groups become more visible and accepted, social practices also begin to change. For Literature students, the focus is mostly on interrogating *language* – how it is used, how we interpret it and how it represents certain cultures or aspects of culture.

Remember: Culture drives our belief systems and the behaviours that stem from these. This won’t always be obvious in your studied texts. You will have to analyse characters, conflict and representations, and make claims supported by textual evidence. Thinking about how people (including ourselves) respond to others and the world around them is a great place to start.

While culture is ever-evolving and the ways we think, speak and act are continually changing, you can examine representations in texts by considering:

- › what is influencing behaviour and ideologies
- › how to remain objectively critical (it can be hard to not be influenced by our own biases!)
- › linking your analysis to your studied texts and beyond.

Tips for evaluation

- › **It’s okay to disagree.** Often students feel a text is ‘right’ or they must agree with the representations or assertions in a text, but this need not be the case! In fact, by Unit 3, you are encouraged to become more critical in your analyses of texts.
- › **Weigh it up.** Since Unit 1, you have been asked to consider how language constructs meaning. Now we start to question and judge who ‘owns’ that language. What are the power structures in this world that frame the meanings we have been led to accept?



- **Question everything.** Formulate your own set of ‘evaluation questions’ that you can apply to any text. For instance, questions about representation might include:
- » Who is represented?
 - » What influenced this representation?
 - » Where do these ideologies stem from?
 - » When do I see this in the text?
 - » How can I see this from different angles?
 - » Why does this still matter in my context?

Consider similarities and differences between society and culture

ACTIVITY 9.6

Brainstorm with a partner: what are the similarities and differences between society and culture? Below are some ideas to get you started; a Venn diagram may be a useful way to show the overlap of concepts.

For example, we live in an Australian society and many of us may share similar cultural practices (e.g. the celebration of Christmas). However, not everyone who lives in this society shares this culture, so what drives such differences?

Society	Culture
large group/community	behaviours
location	practices
organised or structured	belief systems
commonality	values and attitudes

Reflect on *Blackrock*

ACTIVITY 9.7

In this opening scene from Nick Enright’s 1996 play *Blackrock*, Jared and his cousin Cherie are discussing surfing when local legend Ricko returns to town. Through this extract, we can interpret so much about Australian culture, surfing culture and the culture of masculinity, just through the language. Read it, then complete the questions that follow.

- CHERIE You know what I wish? Jared?
- JARED Girls can’t do it. Wrong centre of gravity.
- CHERIE Tell that to Wendy Botha. She’s a legend.
- JARED Yeah, and built like a guy.
- CHERIE Tracy’s up. She’s out the back now. See? She’s getting a six-one for Christmas. I can use it, if you help me get out there.

JARED Give me one good reason.

CHERIE Cause I'm your favourite cousin and you love me to death.

JARED Cause any other guy'd smack you in the mouth. Okay I'll give you ten minutes ...

He follows her gaze. A van pulls up.

CHERIE Thought he'd gone for good.

JARED No way. He's a Blacko boy.

CHERIE When do I get ten minutes?

JARED Later. Tomorrow. Go on, move!

CHERIE The whole world's got to move for Ricko.

She goes as RICKO approaches.

- 1 'Girls can't do it.' Explore how this quote from Jared might exemplify certain cultural beliefs. Be specific about who these beliefs belong to and where they may originate. Try to pinpoint the exact word in this quote that led to your answer.
- 2 What does the use of the phrase 'like a guy' suggest about surfing culture in Australia? Are these beliefs *only* seen in surfing cultures?
- 3 'Any other guy'd smack you in the mouth.' Consider the gaps and silences in this quote. Who do we **not** hear? What does this suggest about Australian culture? Pick out the specific word in this quote that stood out to you and explain how it links to your ideas.
- 4 Consider the voice and mood that the ellipsis creates after 'Okay, I'll give you ten minutes ...' How might this punctuation represent aspects of Australian culture?
- 5 Furthermore, look at the short phrases in Jared's later line: 'Later. Tomorrow. Go on, move!' Coupled with the exclamation mark, how does this solidify or extend your answer to Question 4?
- 6 'The whole world's got to move for Ricko.' How do you imagine Cherie vocalising this line? What might her exaggeration about power suggest about certain aspects of Australian cultural beliefs? Also take into account the stage directions of '*she goes*'. What might this suggest about Australian culture as represented in Enright's play?
- 7 Find a short section from one of your studied texts and highlight specific words used to describe behaviours, characters or events. Similar to this activity with *Blackrock*, make notes on your interpretation of culture represented via the use of language, including word choices, structural elements such as punctuation, and specific language techniques.

Think critically about cultural behaviours and beliefs

ACTIVITY 9.8

For each of the types of cultures given on page 105, use the following headings to delve into the way they are represented in literature.

- › **Reflection:** Write reflectively, defining this culture, its behaviours, beliefs and/or values in your own words.
- › **Criticism:** Consider this culture from a critical perspective.
- › **Context:** Consider the role of context in how this culture may be represented or received.
- › **Literary texts:** How is a particular type of culture represented in the texts you are studying? You can also refer to specific textual examples, characters or authors, time periods or literary movements.
- › **Intertextuality:** Do your ideas remind you of other texts or ideas you have encountered elsewhere?

Below, an example focusing on global culture has been done for you.

EXAMPLE: GLOBAL CULTURE

In Australia, much of the way society works is influenced by a dominant *Western* culture – a collection of historic, religious, power-related and political traditions. What are some commonly accepted Western cultural beliefs, values or behaviours?

Reflection: Western culture is closely linked to power, wealth, education and expansion; values associated with Western culture, such as freedom, individuality and progress, may be privileged.

Criticism: The sphere of Western influence is so great, those who are part of it are often blinded to their own privilege and the impact of their behaviour on others.

Context: Arguably, Western culture has dominated literature and art for centuries. Therefore, Western behaviours and ideologies have been privileged and seen as the ideal. For instance, Edith Wharton's *The Age of Innocence* is a text that was successful in its era as an examination of the morality of nineteenth-century New York high society and in evoking sympathy for its protagonist, the successful young lawyer Newland Archer. However, it can also be read through a lens critical of a culture that foregrounded money, status and reputation above all else, and of a man privileged by this focus.

Literary texts: Representations of Western belief systems might focus on privilege, access, power, class systems, wealth, social status, progress, colonisation and/or imperialism. An example is *No Sugar* by Jack Davis, a play that examines the devastating impact of Western cultural beliefs and practices on Australian First Nations peoples. (Davis uses the setting of the 1930s as an allegory for the 1980s context in which he wrote the play.)

Intertextuality: It seems that, at its core, Western culture is about power. This is not to say that power is always inherently bad. Often hero narratives, or even those about characters searching for individuality or power, are about the individual: their strength, struggles and admirable qualities. However, the adage that ‘power corrupts’ is generally accepted, and many literary texts depict Western cultural behaviours as unwanted interference, sometimes under the misguided belief that they are ‘saving’ or ‘helping’ less fortunate or able groups; or abusive, driven by a desire for wealth or increased power. Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* and Kingsolver’s *The Poisonwood Bible* are good examples of texts that explore this impulse.

1 National culture

- a Each nation has its own unique sense of identity, enacted through its culture. What is the culture of Australia? What do you think Australians generally believe and value, or how do they behave? What structures may influence this culture? (You might like to draw on your answers to Activity 9.3.)
- b How are nations or nationalities represented in texts you have studied?

2 Race and ethnicity: Many races or ethnicities have distinct and important or ingrained cultural traditions, beliefs or practices. What are some cultural practices or beliefs associated with specific races or ethnicities? How are different races or ethnicities and their cultures represented in texts you have studied?

3 Religion: What are some common religious practices or ideologies? (Be specific about *which* religion they belong to.) How are religious beliefs, religious institutions or religion in general represented in your studied texts? In what ways might they have influenced the texts’ creation?

4 Age and peer groups: Age groups and peer groups might also be considered social groups with their own cultures. What are some commonly accepted behaviours or practices associated with groups linked by age? Are these reflected in any of your studied texts?

5 Media: Arguably, multimedia communications have had the greatest influence on societies and cultures in the modern era, as well as being a significant way in which social and cultural ideas and behaviours are reflected and disseminated. How might the culture of ‘media’ be understood? Explore how ideas of this type of culture might be present in classic literary texts (as opposed to contemporary texts).

6 Others: Are there other cultural groups that might inform, influence or define how we see ourselves and others in the world? How are these reflected in texts you are studying?

Student writing – body paragraph

The following is a sample body paragraph from an essay on the text *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. Read the paragraph, making notes of any observations. Then, using the same essay question, write a practice paragraph about a studied text of your own.

Question: Evaluate the representation of real or imagined cultures that resonate with your values, attitudes, beliefs or experiences.

Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale* can be read like most speculative fiction: as a warning, in this case about the entrenchment of male dominance in the very fabric of cultural practices – its rules and norms, and every aspect of the lives of women. Atwood constructs this best in the section 'Household' when June recounts, through intimate first-person narration, the ritual of reading from the Bible before the 'ceremony'. In Gilead, women only exist to serve men, from Handmaids, wives and Marthas (a reference to a servant of Jesus) to even the Jezebels, who serve the sexual desires of men. Atwood constructs this absolute power of men over women through her sentence structures and specific word choices, and the connotations of these, particularly surrounding the action of the Commander and the inaction of the others present. While June is 'kneeling', Serena Joy 'doesn't make a sound', Nick 'takes his place' and Rita 'scowls', showing the complete control by the dominant man in this cultural practice June refers to as the 'bedtime story'. Atwood's use of metaphor here highlights the utter depravity of this culture; her imagery conjures up something innocent, even though all in the room are complicit in June's eventual assault. Everyone is at the mercy of this power, even Nick, who, as a powerless man, falls under the Commander's control. Atwood's construction of this scene, with its rhythmic, short sentences such as 'we wait, the clock in the hall ticks', creates a suffocating mood, and the connotations of 'he steps forward anyway ... deliberate' suggest that men, powerful men, define and control the culture around us. For me as a female reader, this experience very much resonates with my own experiences. We are constantly, consistently told that our lives only matter due to who we are in relation to men: as mothers, wives or objects of desire. We seem to have been fed a diet of masculine cultural discourse that tells us women only exist to serve men.

Habitual ways of thinking

It isn't often that we slow down our thinking processes in order to consider and interrogate our natural responses to the world around us. These responses happen in the blink of an eye, so it makes sense that we don't generally unpack reactions to people or events in real time. However, as Literature students, this is exactly your job when analysing texts and the responses to them that you and other audiences may have. This is why re-reading your texts (or even just key parts of them) is so important. Your readings can change from your first reaction as your natural self, to your reaction as a critical reader, to your response when taking into account contexts, audiences, lenses etc.

The word 'natural' can be misleading. As we have discovered in this chapter, so much about our society, culture and identity is a melange of what has come before us. What might seem to be inevitable or obvious ideas, behaviours and practices represent an amalgamation of values, attitudes, ideologies and ways of thinking that become automatic and *habitual*: we don't even think about them.

Conservative

(Synonyms include established, orthodox, traditional)

Radical

(Synonyms include innovative, progressive, revolutionary)

Use CRAIG to analyse discourse

In Chapter 5 we introduced you to the CRAIG acronym. Here is a reminder:

ACTIVITY 9.9

Class	Race	Age	Identity	Gender
Consider representations of:				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> hierarchies mobility power privilege status structures wealth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> colour culture discrimination disenfranchisement equity ethnicities nationalities place power 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> age groups old age expectations generations peers respect societal influence stages of life visibility wisdom youth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> beliefs, values and attitudes ideologies personal identity place sense of self social groups spectrums of identities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> androgyny dominant female femininity male masculinity normativity passive spectrum of genders

- 1 Create a blank CRAIG chart and write down any words or phrases you might associate with these groups. Discuss with your classmates the way that those words convey particular ways of thinking about groups.
- 2 Consider how the words you've identified are reinforced or supported by behaviours and institutions. For instance, you might think about how particular workplaces or jobs become associated with particular genders and thus language, e.g. feminised professions tend to be associated with the term 'vocation' whereas masculinised ones are often spoken about as 'trades' or 'professions'.
- 3 Using a studied text of your choice, analyse its discourse. What language is being used to represent any of these groups? Are there any examples where the text works to *dismantle* a particular discourse?



Use CRAIG to analyse language in your studied texts

ACTIVITY 9.10

- 1 Choose one of your studied texts and, using the word bank below, write about the thoughts, behaviours and/or speech of one of the main characters or personas. How do they act, think or speak about some or all of the CRAIG concepts?

WORD BANK - CHARACTER	children	environment	gender roles	marriage	relationships
	class	etiquette	groups	politics	religion
	colonialism	existence	immigration	power	science
	death	family structure	industry	race	sexuality

Remember, you must back up your ideas with evidence. So next, find quotations that support your claim. Careful selection of evidence will help you to show that this is *your* evaluation and argument.

- 2 Using the quotations you have found, consider how *language* is being used to represent these concepts. Highlight specific word choices and discuss with a partner where you would place this language on the spectrum of discourse (see page 108).
- 3 The way we talk about ideas, groups and situations is constantly changing. Compare the language your text uses in relation to particular concepts to how *you* would talk about these same ideas. Initially, texts, characters or personas might either irk you or fill you with hope – because of, for example, the way a character speaks about minorities, or because the text reflects exactly how you feel about the environment. This is a great way to grapple with your natural, instinctual responses before moving to a more critical evaluation of language in texts.
- 4 Now that you've found evidence and considered specific language use as well as your own personal response, move from emotive to evaluative. Write analytically about what this text might be suggesting symbolically, or even inadvertently. How does its language contribute to ways of thinking and being in our world? Is this text adding to, reflecting or critiquing a discourse?

Student writing – reflective writing

The following is a sample of reflective writing from a study journal about the short story 'The Lottery' (1943) by Marjorie Barnard. Read the paragraph, making notes of any observations. Then, using the same question, write reflectively about a studied text of your choice.

Question: Explore how close analysis of language can reveal a societal discourse in a text you have studied.

My analysis of Barnard's use of language – not only the words she uses, but the structure of her short story, and therefore narrative conventions – helps to reveal a societal discourse about roles within a marriage in a 1930s and 1940s context.

→ The first thing that struck me was the narrative point of view, being Ted Bilborough's third-person limited point of view, meaning that we (as readers) only ever see or hear the events through his experiences. For me as a modern reader, this narrative decision reveals a masculine discourse; that is, every aspect of this story is presented through the male gaze (how he feels/thinks). This is supported by Barnard's language choices when Ted feels 'threatened' by and 'uncomfortable' with the news that his wife has won the lottery. The connotation of this language, to me, suggests an inherent discourse that (especially in that era) a man should be in control. Similarly, Barnard's visual description of Ted as 'flourishing the perambulator' or 'always cheerful, with a joke for everyone' highlights to me a discourse about how men are more concerned with how they appear in public than with what is actually happening at home. This is juxtaposed with Ted's mind starting to 'dart' and having a 'knot'; this kinesthetic and tactile imagery used by Barnard again communicates a societal discourse about masculine fragility when their role as the provider is threatened.

I find it interesting that even though Ted and Grace had been married 'ten years', he immediately thinks the worst: that 'there was something secretive' about his wife. Later, when he returns home, Barnard writes that '[Grace] was evidently feeling something ... but Ted didn't know what'. These descriptive details about their marriage suggest two things: firstly, that men believe women can't be trusted, and secondly, that men generally do not bother to get to know their wives. This latter discourse is strengthened through the repetition in the story – the short sentence 'she might have let him know' is repeated twice, but when he arrives home 'late' he offers no explanation. This symbolises to me that women must explain their behaviour to men, but men do not have to do the same.

The societal discourse of masculine ownership, control and power is solidified in Barnard's use of the male pronouns – 'he could do almost anything he could think of with five thousand pounds' – suggesting Ted retains individuality and independence despite his role as a husband, and has the freedom to do what he likes.



Responding to texts

So many texts are considered worthy of study because they can induce intense reactions from audiences. They might be polarising, uplifting, shocking or reaffirming – literature has the power to shake us to the core. This is due to how a text aligns (or doesn't align) with an audience's beliefs, values and attitudes. Your job as ATAR Literature students is to identify the language that achieves this and analyse how it does so.



Reinforcing and naturalising

Texts have the power to hold a mirror up to us and our world, sometimes in a deliberate attempt to make us think but also simply because of the way that our environment and experiences influence our perceptions and opinions. Texts are very much products of their time, reflecting dominant attitudes and values, and commenting on contemporary events and beliefs. For this reason, texts can be seen as more than just sources of entertainment. They might also be viewed as historical records, not because they are factual and unbiased but because they have been constructed in a social and political environment that will necessarily, in some way, influence that construction. By analysing the way texts **reinforce** and **naturalise** ways of thinking and being, we can begin to understand something about the societies in which they were created.

Texts might reinforce what we or society already think or believe, solidifying those views further. Texts can reinforce, or uphold, societal beliefs, values and attitudes, or common ways of thinking or behaving at the time they are created. Depending on who we are as readers, this reinforcement may or may not align with our own beliefs. Often we can see how the beliefs and values of a particular context are reflected and reinforced by the popular texts of the time, and how texts have played a role in shaping those ways of thinking.

Texts can also naturalise particular ways of thinking, making those processes invisible. Language has the power to shape how we think and feel. When that discourse is consistently used, it becomes natural or 'normal' to talk and think about someone or something in certain ways. Texts that naturalise inherently suggest that there is one appropriate or accurate way of thinking or being, while other perspectives or experiences are ignored, marginalised or seen as abnormal.

The word bank below shows some words or phrases you can use when analysing how texts reinforce and naturalise ways of understanding the world.

WORD BANK - REINFORCING AND NATURALISING	REINFORCE		NATURALISE	
	SYNONYMS	ANTONYMS	SYNONYMS	ANTONYMS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> bolster emphasise solidify strengthen 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> destabilise question subvert unsettle weaken 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> condition empower establish habituate make invisible make unconscious normalise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> become aware disempower elucidate highlight reveal uncover

Reflect on naturalised ways of thinking and being

ACTIVITY 10.1

- 1 What are some of the behaviours or beliefs that have become naturalised in our society? Conversely, what has become 'othered' or seen as abnormal?
- 2 What are some of the consequences of this invisible way of determining acceptability?

Reinforcing

The texts that support the status quo and perpetuate existing power structures are often the ones that become part of the **literary canon**. These texts tend to reinforce dominant attitudes about gender roles, racial stereotypes and social class systems. Even when writers seek to illuminate or challenge such structures (see Chapter 11), they are often doing so in ways that still reinforce other dominant ways of thinking and being.

For example, we might consider Jane Austen's construction of Elizabeth Bennet in *Pride and Prejudice* to be forward-thinking and subversive: Elizabeth is forthright, independent and intelligent. However, although Elizabeth resists the advances of Mr Darcy and other suitors, when she eventually falls in love and marries him the narrative reinforces expectations of heteronormative relationships and behaviour in contemporary middle/upper-class English society. Being able to write and read indicates a certain level of education, wealth and opportunity, and this is often reflected in the way experiences, beliefs and perspectives are communicated to readers.

Student writing – body paragraph

The following body paragraph is from an essay on Judith Wright's poem 'Australia 1970'. Read the paragraph and make notes on its strengths and possible areas for improvement.

Question: How has a text reinforced dominant or convenient ways of thinking or behaving?

Judith Wright's poem 'Australia 1970' is often seen as a poem that shines a light on how humans have taken advantage of our natural environment in ways that have been destructive and short-sighted. However, an alternative reading of the text might see it as a poem that reinforces problematic attitudes and behaviours regarding humankind's relationship with the Earth. Wright instructs the land to 'die' using various similes related to flora and fauna, which are strong and violent. She encourages the land to be 'obstinate' and 'dangerous', to not let us forget the damage humans have wrought. Although this is powerful imagery that forces the reader to imagine horrific scenes resulting from our behaviour, Wright does not really encourage us to change. Her poem reinforces the attitude that we humans have already caused the damage and that there is no way back now. Rather than being a call to action to make changes, it is instead an exhortation. Such poems could be seen as giving people permission to do nothing and accept that the damage has already been done. Such attitudes lead to inaction and laziness because we don't feel that there is any point in changing our behaviour. For many, this could be seen as a very convenient stance, as it allows us to take the easy path of blaming others and not seeing our own part in any solution. As such, Wright's poem 'Australia 1970' reinforces thinking about climate change and environmental damage that was (and is) expedient rather than helpful, and sadly widespread in Australia.

Reflect on privilege

ACTIVITY 10.2

Spend ten minutes writing a reflection on how the ability to produce and consume literature could be seen as requiring a position of privilege. What are the social and economic factors relevant to someone being able to read, write and distribute texts? How might these requirements influence the way that those texts reinforce dominant modes of thinking and being?

Naturalising

When texts portray particular ideas or behaviours in ways that seem unremarkable or normal, without any implicit or explicit commentary, they can be understood to be naturalising those ways of being. By maintaining the dominant discourse surrounding our thoughts, actions or feelings, a text can help these ideas to become further and more deeply ingrained. For example, in Mary Shelley's novel *Frankenstein*, there is never a doubt that Victor will leave to pursue his education in Ingolstadt – he simply does it. When Blanche in Tennessee Williams' *A Streetcar Named Desire* descends into mental turmoil, this is seen as a natural and logical result of the abuse she has endured and the social pressures that weigh her down, even if it is heartbreaking to witness.

For example ...

We can argue that Euripides' ancient text *Medea* naturalises the idea that women are irrational, manipulative and selfish. More specifically, this is depicted as the way that *foreign* women are expected to behave. Not only does Medea murder, seduce and deceive, she displays wild mood swings and emotional dysregulation when confronted with her husband Jason's infidelity and his plans to remarry.

It is important to consider the contextual and cultural ramifications of this representation of women. In that era, it was considered a 'natural' part of a woman's physiology for her to display uncontrollable emotion. Find out for yourself: look up the ancient Greek beliefs about 'hysteria' and the etymology of this word. Culturally, a woman had virtually no political, economic or individual rights, so while Jason's new match would secure his son's (and his own) power and position in society, Medea knew she would have nothing. There was a cultural expectation that Medea should just accept Jason's infidelity as he presents his decision as a rational argument.

Euripides' play also appears to suggest that Medea is otherworldly, such as when her grandfather, the sun god Helios, saves her at the end of the text. In many other iterations of her mythical character, such as in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, Medea appears magical, ritualistic and bewitching to those around her. Perhaps we can argue that Medea, as an emotional woman, is a danger to human (male) society and must be controlled.

Isn't it interesting, then, that it has become culturally acceptable to assume that women are more emotional – *'it's in her nature'* – and that angry, emotional women are dangerous? Which groups might this naturalisation of a woman's character serve? For what purposes? Where and how does this belief or representation of women still show up in our contemporary world?

Consider who benefits

ACTIVITY 10.3

Individually consider, or discuss as a class, who is promoting the naturalisation of certain ways of thinking or behaving. Might this benefit one group over another? Consider the idea that naturalising one mode of thinking suggests that others are 'unnatural' – what could this lead to?

Binary oppositions

You know by now that language is a cultural medium – it is shaped by, and changes constantly according to, a particular culture's common beliefs, values, attitudes or behaviours. In turn, it also influences cultural norms, beliefs and practices. However, what appears to transcend time is the notion that there are opposites in the world – things that sit in contrast to each other in a natural and inevitable way; for example, good and evil, peace and war, and powerful and weak. This can lead us to see the world as 'black and white', where there are only two possibilities.

According to one of the key figures in the development of the theories of structuralism, French anthropologist Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908–2009), stories often revolve around some sort of **binary** opposition. After all, this is a driving force for conflict, which is an essential element of most stories.

Problematically, from the concept of binary opposites comes the idea that there are only ever two 'sides'. This can lead to stereotypes and formulaic narrative structures, and perhaps to certain stories not being told at all. What makes literature so exciting is the exploration of the grey areas. For example, can a person be both good and bad? Mary Shelley explored this idea in *Frankenstein*, as did Robert Louis Stevenson in *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Some writers do this intentionally, so that audiences are forced to face and critically examine societal binaries. It can also be a reading strategy we choose to adopt, in which we analyse how language might construct binary opposites, as a way to see what is not being said, who is being othered, or which powerful group might be served by the perpetuation of this opposition.

The role of literary critics and theories

Let us dismiss, as irrelevant to the poem, per se, the circumstance – or say the necessity – which, in the first place, gave rise to the intention of composing a poem that should suit at once the popular and critical taste.

Edgar Allan Poe, *The Philosophy of Composition*, 1846

While teachers and examiners are interested in what *you* think, and not in a regurgitation of other people's ideas, researching 'around' your texts is a great way to become more confident about your own thinking. The ability to find, cite and connect relevant literary criticism or specific quotations to your studied text can add depth to your own interpretation. For example, the above quotation from Poe might lend itself to a discussion about the difference between aesthetic and ideological responses to

poetry, or the availability of multiple readings of a text, depending on who you are as a reader. This can provide a unique way of elevating your analysis.

Part of being an astute literary critic (which is what you are) is reading, using and responding to existing literary criticism and theories about your studied texts, and applying other schools of thought to the world of literary studies (for example, drawing on Freud's psychoanalytic theory when analysing characters).

Using primary and secondary texts

First and foremost, whenever you are writing, your studied text (from the prescribed text lists) must be the *primary* focus. However, bringing in intertextual links to other *secondary* sources can support and enrich your analysis. Keep in mind that these secondary sources, especially if they are not on the prescribed text lists, should never overshadow the primary text or form the bulk of your essay. It is also important to think about the credibility of your sources, how or if you should cite them, and whether you even agree with them.

It is also important to remember, especially in exams, that the genre of your primary text *must* form the bulk of your analysis.

The following section presents five ways to access secondary sources to add to your research of your studied texts.

1 Published literary criticism

Accessing collections of published literary criticism, like books of essays or chapters from expository texts, can be a great way to find critical readings of your texts. Texts like these are written by well-respected academics who have conducted countless hours of research and you can benefit from their insights in order to formulate your own analysis.

Some examples are shown in the table below.

Primary text	Secondary source
William Blake's poetry	<i>Fearful Symmetry</i> by Northrop Frye (1947)
<i>Jane Eyre</i> by Charlotte Brontë	<i>The Madwoman in the Attic</i> by Sandra M Gilbert and Susan Gubar (1979)
<i>Macbeth</i> by William Shakespeare	<i>Tyrant: Shakespeare on Politics</i> by Stephen Greenblatt (2018)
<i>To the Lighthouse</i> by Virginia Woolf	<i>In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics</i> by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1987)

In Chapter 7 we discussed the importance of making connections and intertextuality, and many of the writers on the prescribed text lists are also respected literary critics. These include the following.

- ▶ Chinua Achebe
- ▶ Margaret Atwood
- ▶ Bertolt Brecht
- ▶ Albert Camus
- ▶ TS Eliot
- ▶ George Orwell
- ▶ Edgar Allan Poe
- ▶ Kim Scott
- ▶ Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Examine an introduction

ACTIVITY 10.5

Choose a play, novel or short story/poetry anthology and turn to the front matter. Then answer the following questions.

- 1 Who wrote this introductory text?
- 2 What information does it provide to readers?
- 3 In what ways is this section of text attempting to frame your reading experience?
- 4 Does it reinforce, challenge or reshape your own reading experience of this writer/text?
- 5 How can you use the information from this front matter to support your ideas about this writer/text?

3 Theories as reading practices

Perhaps the most exciting research is the application of academic thought and theory to your studied texts. This is a reading practice, in which your research leads you to some specific theories and theorists whose ideas you can apply to and evaluate against your own interpretation of texts. However, the more you research, the more you will discover thinkers, historical movements or events, and religious, political or scientific ideologies that can provide interesting routes to new ways of thinking about your texts. (See the list on pages 119–22 for some ideas.)

4 Online sources

Almost anything can be found online, and when you have a seeming treasure trove of information at your fingertips it can be overwhelming. You also can't believe everything you read. Therefore, you must become a discerning researcher. Stick to reputable online sources and websites such as recognised literary journals, literary magazines, libraries, and well-known social media academics, podcasts or channels. *Check your sources.* Who is writing or speaking? Are they an expert in this field? Have they provided evidence? Is their work respected by others in the field? Can you cite their work in your own writing?

You may find online study guides, unpublished student theses, critical articles and perhaps even blog entries about your texts. While these can be great to add to your repertoire of research, *be discerning.* If in doubt, ask a trusted or more experienced person.

5 Your teacher and classmates

You are surrounded by literary critics each day: conversations with your ATAR Literature class and teacher can be a fantastic way to reinforce, challenge or reshape your own and others' ways of thinking. You can share, respond to and evaluate ideas via class debates, arguments, discussions, surveys or online forums – be creative! As always, challenge your classmates to back up their claims. Do they have the evidence to support their arguments? Do you?

→ **John Locke** (1632–1704) was an English philosopher. He had a great influence on a number of thinkers, primarily in the fields of epistemology (the nature and scope of knowledge, truth, belief and justification) and empiricism (based on the idea that knowledge arises from experience).

Voltaire (1694–1778) was a French Enlightenment writer and philosopher. With wit and satire he argued against tyranny, bigotry and cruelty; his beliefs included reason, freedom of religion and free trade. However, interestingly, Voltaire is said to have been sceptical about the everyday human ability to self-govern.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778) was a Swiss writer and philosopher whose works influenced the leaders of the French Revolution, Romanticism and the development of modern political thought, particularly notions of freedom, social equity and morality.

Immanuel Kant (1724–1804) was a German philosopher of the Enlightenment era. He wrote on religion, law, history and, most interestingly, the limits and structures of reason. He attacked concepts of metaphysics and epistemology, and the idea that there are limits to knowledge and therefore limits to existence. Kant raised the questions: if we don't know it exists, does it? Can it be known?

Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797) was an English writer and advocate of women's rights, best known for her publication *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, in which she argues that women are not born inferior to men but only appear so due to lack of access to education, travel or employment. Wollstonecraft was the mother of writer Mary Shelley.

Søren Kierkegaard (1813–1855) was a Danish philosopher and theologian. Many of his works focused on religion, Christian ethics, theology and the emotions of individuals when making decisions. He coined the phrase 'leap of faith'. He also wrote on the importance of introspection, free will and self-expression. He is often considered an existentialist and humanist thinker.

Karl Marx (1818–1883) was a German philosopher, political theorist and economist, among other things. He is credited with the founding and development of Communism (the establishment of a classless, stateless society based on common ownership).

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900) was a German philosopher; his writing criticised traditional European morality, religion and ideas, and he is associated with nihilism and existentialism, famously declaring that 'God is dead', indicating that modern society had lost its faith and that life has no meaning. He is also known for his conception of the *Übermensch* (superman), a notion that is still debated by critics, but can be understood as an improved human being, formed through qualities such as self-determination, self-mastery, creativity and courage.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939) was an Austrian neurologist who developed the school of psychoanalysis. He is best known for his theories on the unconscious mind and the idea of repression. He developed the notion of the human psyche being divided into the ego, the superego and the id.

Carl Jung (1875–1961) was a Swiss psychologist and founder of analytical psychology. He believed that the human psyche – a word from ancient Greek referring to the idea of a soul or ‘self’, including thoughts, actions and personality – should be a combination of both logic and spirituality. He believed that the interpretation and appreciation of dreams, art, mythology, religion and philosophy influences who we are as humans.

Martin Heidegger (1889–1976) was an influential German philosopher who examined ideas of being and existence. His fundamental question was ‘what is being?’ and, even more than this, ‘what does it mean to be?’ For Heidegger, our existence, and therefore what existence means to us, is inseparable from our experiences.

Jean-Paul Sartre (1905–1980) was a French existential philosopher. He dealt with ideas of being, morality, choices and the notion that man is ‘condemned to be free’. His philosophy encompasses ‘authenticity’ and the quest to find what is important to us, free from outside forces.

Simone de Beauvoir (1908–1986) was a French writer, existentialist and feminist. She was interested in metaphysics and her 1949 treatise *The Second Sex* is seen as one of the bases of contemporary feminism. In this tome, de Beauvoir discusses how women have been relegated to ‘the Other’ and denied equality with men.

Albert Camus (1913–1960) was a French author and philosopher (whose work appears on the prescribed text lists). He was committed to the idea of individual moral freedom and is known as both an existentialist and an absurdist. Absurdism sees absurdity in humans’ need to find meaning in life when, this philosophy proposes, there is none, or none they can ever know, an idea elucidated in his essay, ‘The Myth of Sisyphus’.

Jacques Derrida (1930–2004) was an Algerian-born French philosopher who was known as the founder of deconstruction. This is essentially what we do in Literature – breaking down the meaning of a text in ways that allow us to potentially justify a completely different interpretation from that which might have initially seemed apparent.

Luce Irigaray (1930–) is a Belgian-French feminist and philosopher. Many of her ideas stem from the notion of gaps and silences; she posits that these are essentially feminine because the female is not heard or seen. Her inspirations include Freud, Jacques Lacan and Derrida. She argues that much of philosophical thought is dominated by masculine ideas and therefore cannot truly represent women. She aims for equality and rejects the idea of two genders.

Kwasi Wiredu (1931–2022) was a Ghanaian African philosopher who taught at universities in Africa and the US. He argued for an understanding of and respect for African concepts as genuine alternatives to Western ones and was highly regarded for his ‘conceptual decolonization’ project to improve and preserve African philosophical thinking. Essentially he asserted that Africans had the opportunity to scrutinise colonial belief systems and Western philosophies through the lens of traditional African languages.



- **Julia Kristeva** (1941–) is a Bulgarian-French philosopher, literary critic, psychoanalyst and feminist. She is often considered a post-structuralist (a theory derived from, but critical of, structuralism) who promotes ways of deconstructing the seemingly rigid structures associated with the ways things are and challenging why we simply accept the world around us.

Tips for using literary criticism

The following tips will help you to effectively incorporate literary criticism into your writing about texts.

- ▶ **Always include details of the source.** You should provide some contextualising information for any critical quotations you use in your response or analysis.
- ▶ **Clearly show the relevance of quotations.** Link the quotation in some way to your response and the text, such as in terms of subject matter, characters, themes or ideologies, a particular reading practice, or capturing the spirit of your analytical argument. Avoid leaving these quotes ‘hanging’ – explain their significance to your argument for your reader.
- ▶ **Use your own wording.** Don’t simply regurgitate what others say or write.
- ▶ **Build on (and cite) others’ ideas.** When you are forming your own ideas, interpretations and claims, you can use critics’ perspectives as your foundation or as a springboard.
- ▶ **Don’t simply agree.** Many literary critics are renowned and revered, even to the point of idolisation, but you (the most important literary critic in the context of your own work) have the right to disagree, as long as you can support your opinion with textual evidence. There are always opposing ideologies and arguments. No one way of thinking is ‘right’.
- ▶ **Figure out where you stand.** Think about what you find exciting, interesting and worthwhile, and what you find concerning, challenging or just plain confusing in your texts.
- ▶ **Analyse the analyser.** Works of literary criticism, like your studied texts, are composed within their own contexts and should be critically considered in terms of all that that implies.
- ▶ **Consider critics’ ideological frameworks.** What has influenced their work? Do they have a hidden or unintentional theoretical agenda?
- ▶ **Consider perspectives from a range of critics.** Don’t become fixated on one way of thinking or analysing a text.
- ▶ **Read widely.** Remember that researching around your texts is a way to uncover multiple readings, a range of reading practices and different ways of thinking about your texts, which can help you to develop your own interpretation or evaluation.

Incorporating quotations from literary criticism

Depending on the type of assessment, you should always cite the texts you reference, especially when using quotations or established literary criticism in your argument.

Always follow your teacher's advice, but the following is a general guide.

Timed tasks/exams (e.g. in-class essay, close readings)	Untimed tasks (e.g. extended/research essays)
<p>In-text citation – parenthetical or narrative: Usually in a timed assessment, these are all that is required when referencing external sources, such as literary critics.</p> <p><i>Parenthetical</i> citations are placed in parentheses with the author's surname, year of publication and page number, if possible (when using a direct quote).</p> <p><i>Narrative</i> citations are embedded within your sentence structure and should include the same information as above.</p>	<p>In-text citation: see left column.</p> <p>References: Your reference list, located at the end of your essay and presented in alphabetical order, is a list of all the sources you explicitly referenced in your essay. Generally you should include the author's surname and first name initial, year of publication, title and publisher or URL.</p> <p>Bibliography: Your bibliography, which comes after your reference list, includes all reading materials and sources that helped in the formation of your research, even if not explicitly cited. The layout and included information is the same as for a reference list.</p>

Regardless of whether you are using citations only, or citations along with a reference list, make sure you explain (briefly) why you're referring to that source; for example, 'Renowned scholar of the English language David Crystal (2010) suggests that ...'

Remember that referring to outside sources in this way is designed to add weight and credibility to your own arguments and ideas, so you need to show that they have relevance and gravitas.



Incorporating quotations from your studied texts

In the previous section we discussed citing external sources. The same guidelines can apply to your studied texts within reason. In *timed* assessments and reflective writing, you probably don't need to remember every single page number, nor do you need to write the author's name in brackets after every quote – this is just a waste of time and space. However, in *untimed, researched* essays, you will probably be expected to refer more specifically to the place in a text that a quotation appears.

When referring to a specific part of the text or quoting from it, you can use the following as a guide.

Poetry	Prose	Drama
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> stanza (if available) section (e.g. opening, middle, ending) line number (if available) slash (solidus) to denote line end-stop <p>e.g.</p> <p><i>In the opening stanza, 'When all at once I saw / A host of golden daffodils' (lines 3–4) ...</i></p> <p><i>The rhythm changes in the middle of the poem ...</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> chapter title or number narrative section (e.g. orientation, rising action, denouement) page number <p>e.g.</p> <p><i>By the denouement ...</i></p> <p><i>In chapter 23 ...</i></p> <p><i>'Jasper Jones has a terrible reputation in Corrigan. He's a Thief, a Liar, a Thug, a Truant.'</i> (p.6)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> act scene line number (if available) narrative section slash (solidus) to denote line end-stop <p>e.g.</p> <p><i>In Act 1, scene 4 ...</i></p> <p><i>In Lady Macbeth's Act 3 soliloquy, lines 44–58, ...</i></p> <p><i>'Little peasant ... my father was a peasant, it's true, but here I am ...'</i> (Act 1)</p>

Student writing – body paragraph

The following is a sample paragraph from an essay on the 2003 novel *Brick Lane* by Monica Ali. Read this and make some notes about whether it is successful in its use of a researched theory as literary criticism.

Question: Justify how multiple readings of the same text are possible.

Ali foregrounds Nazneen's childhood encounters with her mother, Rupban, throughout the novel, demonstrating that Rupban's imposition of her strict beliefs regarding fate on her daughter has led to Nazneen developing an unassertive attitude. The significant impact that Rupban imposes on Nazneen loosely aligns with the traits attributed to schizoid personality disorder (Janca 1993). Such psychological obstacles to Nazneen's evolution ultimately contribute to the text's interesting narrative arc, atypical of a bildungsroman. Schizoid personality disorder 'may emerge if a child is frequently faced with apathy from their caretakers; such personalities become exploited because they tend to conform to others' wishes' (Çakmaktepe 2010, p.71). Ali begins the novel with the birth of Nazneen, emphasising that she was 'left to her own fate' by her mother. The foregrounding of Rupban's definitive belief in 'God's grace' within the first chapter of the novel demonstrates to readers that she is willing to sacrifice her premature daughter to satisfy her own ideals. Such a representation of Rupban highlights her emotional withdrawnness and indifference to Nazneen's life, which is consistent with Bleuler's description of the precursors of schizoid

personality disorder within a child. The profound limitations imposed on Nazneen as a result of her mother's stoic belief in fate are evident when she contemplates the fact that 'it is her place to sit and wait ... there was nothing else that God wanted to be done'. This statement represents how Nazneen continues to base her belief in fate on the religious institutions that surround her, which causes her to assume that 'God' wants her to remain unassertive. Here, Nazneen's assumption of a divine, metaphysical force preventing her from taking action reflects Rupban's advice earlier in the novel to accept the 'grace of God'. This idea thus represents the way Rupban has subconsciously inflicted her disillusioned perception of the world onto her daughter. The burden that Nazneen feels due to Rupban's beliefs continues to manifest in her dreams years later when she envisions her mother 'pulling her down' to the underworld to give an answer to 'God's test'. Within this fragment of Nazneen's dream, Rupban's teeth become 'sharper and wider', with 'red spurting out from between them'. Here, Ali incorporates vivid visual imagery that metaphorically constructs a parallel between Rupban's appearance and the threat of blood-sucking vampirism. Considering that Rupban functions as the embodiment of indifference and a firm belief in fate, this nightmare represents the almost lethal subconscious impact such beliefs have on Nazneen's psychological state. Therefore, Ali focalises the relationship between Nazneen and Rupban in *Brick Lane*, emphasising to readers that Nazneen's delayed development, unconventional for a bildungsroman, is consistent with the schizoid theory of personality.

References

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Unit 3 sample assessments

The following activities will provide helpful practice for your assessment tasks in Unit 3.

Extended written response

Evaluate how a text you have studied uses language to represent national or cultural identity in ways you found challenging.

Short written response

Write a short research discussion paper based on your analysis of ideologies you found in a studied text, and how contemporary contexts/audiences might respond to them. This should take the form of an informal discursive essay. (This is sometimes called a personal essay. Use of personal voice, rhetoric and/or opinionative language is encouraged, while you should still follow the usual structure of introduction, body and conclusion.)

Creative production

In pairs or trios, choose a character or persona from one of your studied texts who embodies a particular way of thinking or behaving. Create a video in which you transform their physical, behavioural and verbal characteristics to represent a different way of being. For example, how might Desdemona (from *Othello*) look, behave and sound if she didn't adhere to desirable social traits? How might Professor Eisenbart (from Gwen Harwood's 'Eisenbart' poems) be transformed to shed his egotistical and arrogant outlook?

Oral response

In pairs, conduct a tutorial for your class about a studied text, during which you examine how researched literary criticism influenced your own independent interpretation of a text, and how this has led to new ways of thinking about themes, ideas, representations or voices within it.

SECTION 5

Unit 4

Unit summary

Unit 4: Significance, shape and influence (*the enduring role of literature to transform, evoke emotion and challenge*)

Welcome to Unit 4! You've come a long way since beginning the course: you have learned about the importance of context for meaning, you've developed your analytical skills, and you've honed your ability to write formally, creatively and reflectively. Now you're ready to take it a step further, to think about why these skills are important in understanding the place and influence of literature in the wider world. And, as those final Year 12 and ATAR exams loom, you'll be thinking about how best to showcase all you've learned throughout the course.

Your first task is, as always, to read through the unit description closely and highlight the key words and phrases. For example:

- › *'appreciation of the significance of literary study'*
- › *'creative use of language'*
- › *'dynamic nature of literary interpretation'*
- › *'aesthetic appeal'*.

Unit 4 encourages you to think about the appreciation of literature as an evolving and dynamic process. The way texts are interpreted and valued is not the same in every time and place: while the words stay the same, their significance and appeal changes with every audience they reach.

The significance of literary study

A word from author Craig Silvey ...

The purpose of a story is to shine a light on a place that was previously dark. It invites you, the willing tourist, to journey somewhere unexpected. It shows you what the world is like for other people. Sometimes that world is painful, challenging, dangerous, traumatic – and a story shows you what that might feel like. You take a share of it, a safe dose of it, like a vaccine. And it makes you stronger, more appreciative, wiser, richer.

Reading critically allows us to sift through the fiction to divine the fact. It allows us to stay under the spell of the incantations, with an ear to understanding how the trick is being performed. To be cynical, but not hardened. To be both vulnerable and suspicious.



Illuminating

Literature has the power to show us perspectives and experiences outside of our own. It can open our eyes to ideas that would otherwise be hidden, perhaps deliberately. When the Gutenberg printing press became available around 1450, critics feared that its ability to produce books in quantity and at a cost that would make them accessible to the masses would lead to revolution – some people were not terribly keen on the idea that just anyone could read the ‘dangerous’ ideas that might be in those books! The technology to print and distribute books widely led in part to the democratisation of knowledge: the ability for anyone to access information and ideas for themselves rather than relying on memory or oral communication.

The depiction of reading as a forbidden or restricted activity can be seen in a number of dystopian texts, such as Margaret Atwood’s *The Handmaid’s Tale* and Aldous Huxley’s *Brave New World*. In such novels, the works of Shakespeare and Dickens, and even mundane texts such as the magazines *Offred* in *The Handmaid’s Tale* is surreptitiously given by the Commander Fred, are forbidden because they do not align with the values of the government. The ideas contained within these texts are considered dangerous.

However, it is not just literature’s ability to communicate ideas and perspectives that gives it power. It is also its ability to make us *think* and *feel*, and to express those thoughts and feelings. In his poem ‘Digging’, Seamus Heaney muses that, while he doesn’t have the physical strength or resilience to contribute to his family and community like his father and grandfather do, he is a writer and he will contribute in a different way:

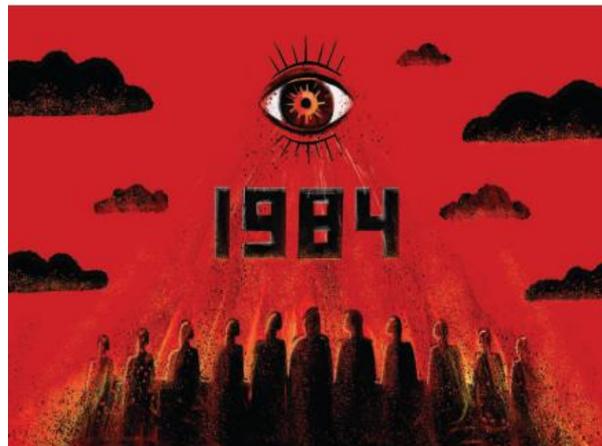
*Between my finger and my thumb
The squat pen rests.
I’ll dig with it.*

(‘Digging’, from *Death of a Naturalist*)

Heaney succinctly communicates that writing – literature – is an act of importance and power. Writing about our experiences allows others to understand the perspectives of those from sometimes very distant times and places. Using language, both written and spoken, is itself a powerful act. In *1984*, George Orwell explores this through ‘Newspeak’:

Don’t you see that the whole aim of Newspeak is to narrow the range of thought? In the end we shall make thoughtcrime literally impossible, because there will be no words in which to express it.

(*1984*, Chapter 5)



Find connections

ACTIVITY 11.1

1 What do all of these books have in common? (See page 180 for the answer.)

All Quiet on the Western Front by Erich Maria Remarque

Animal Farm by George Orwell

Brave New World by Aldous Huxley

Fahrenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury

Jane Eyre by Charlotte Brontë

Lady Chatterley's Lover by DH Lawrence

Naked Lunch by William Burroughs

Oliver Twist by Charles Dickens

The Grapes of Wrath by John Steinbeck

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

To Kill A Mockingbird by Harper Lee

2 Once you have the answer, why do you think this is? What do these novels include that may have led to them being placed in this special group? You may also like to investigate other books that have once been a part of this category. Are you surprised by any that appear?

Recognise literature as dangerous

ACTIVITY 11.2

‘Where they burn books, they will ultimately also burn people.’

Reflect on this quote attributed to German author Heinrich Heine (1797–1856). What is the connection Heine is making? What is he warning us about?

(Heine’s statement turned out to be prophetic: his own literary works were among the literature burned by Nazis during the 1930s.)

Research book-banning

ACTIVITY 11.3

Take some time to read about the banning, restricting and destruction of literature throughout history. What ideas are the groups who do this trying to suppress? How do they link to wider ideologies present in the times and places in which they are operating? What message are these groups sending to their communities through the act of restricting literature?

Student writing – body paragraph

The following is a sample paragraph from an essay on the 2004 collection of short stories *The Turning* by Tim Winton. This paragraph is about the text ‘Long, Clear View’. Read this paragraph and make some notes about how a text you have studied has enabled you to think or feel about experiences outside of your own.

Question: Explore the extent to which a studied text illuminates the experience of others through its use of language.

The second-person narrative point of view used in the short story compounds the irony that young men in Australia are expected to be strong and dominant, yet this only creates isolation and inner turmoil. This allows us to see how toxic masculinity, which can go largely unnoticed in our patriarchal society, is something that forces young men, like Vic, to be something they aren’t, simply to fulfil society’s expectations. Due to this point of view we, as readers, feel what Vic feels: alone and frustrated. ‘You can’t sleep at night’, ‘you never show up for basketball’ and ‘you declare that you’re not going to school’ are all examples that show how Winton’s use of second-person point of view allows readers to ‘become’ Vic and to recognise how he is attempting to take on the typical male trait of desiring control, power and authority. However, this is juxtaposed with the only time Vic feels ‘familiar’: when he forgets to ‘keep watch’. When he is truly allowed to be himself, Vic feels ‘normal’, ‘falls in love’ and ‘learns to play basketball even though [he’s] rubbish’. Furthermore, Winton’s use of soldier-like language resembles that of a sentry who needs to be on ‘watch’ and this connotation heightens the tension Vic feels in these moments, while highlighting how carefree he feels when he isn’t on ‘watch’. In this way, Winton highlights the dangers of toxic masculinity for Australian society and for the individuals who live in it. He shows that, for Vic and for many young men like him, there is a vast divide between what is expected of him and what truly makes him happy.

Identify pseudonyms

- 1 Match the writers to their more familiar pseudonyms. (See page 180 for the answers.)

Real name	Pseudonym
Gloria Jean Watkins	George Eliot
Charlotte Brontë	Lewis Carroll
Marguerite Annie Johnson	Joseph Conrad
Alisa Zinov'yevna Rosenbaum	Currer Bell
Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski	bell hooks
Charles Lutwidge Dodgson	Mark Twain
Mary Ann Evans	Walter Lehmann
Samuel Langhorne Clemens	Maya Angelou
Gwen Harwood	George Orwell
Eric Arthur Blair	Ayn Rand

- 2 Why do you think writers sometimes choose to hide their identities behind a pseudonym? Using what you know about the texts written by the authors above, what protection or freedom might a pseudonym have given them?

Discuss taboo ideas

ACTIVITY 11.5

What are some of the taboo or hidden parts of culture or human experience that are illuminated by the texts you've read? How has their inclusion in poetry, prose fiction or drama been important to the people whose experience they bring to light?

Discuss these questions in pairs or small groups.

Literature and hope

When we study literature, there can be a tendency to focus on the negative aspects of humanity, the world and our history. Certainly, many of the texts we read do depict suffering and sadness. This makes sense; as we've just been considering, literature is a way to share experiences that are sometimes deliberately kept hidden or made taboo. It can be a way for people to express things that they feel have been 'swept under the rug' or which need to be brought to light, to be acknowledged and reconciled. Having a medium through which we can express our pain and worry is important to enable us to process those feelings.

However, focusing only on the harsh and grim aspects of texts can make us forget about the glimmers of hope and beauty that so often appear. Often, when authors present us with sad, confronting or horrifying depictions, they also show us characters resisting, hoping and experiencing joy. This, in turn, can make literature a source of hope and joy for readers.



Search for hope and joy

ACTIVITY 11.6

Choose one of the texts you've been studying in your course. What aspects of joy, beauty or hope has the author included? This might be evident in a short section, a scene or a stanza. It may even be a single image of something joyful or beautiful. Consider the following questions.

- › How has the author used language to construct the image?
- › How does the image contribute to the meaning of the text? For example, perhaps it suggests a possibility, or provides a glimpse into the future or past.
- › What do you notice about the way the scene, stanza or section is placed within the text? How does this placement impact upon the meaning you take from it?

Student writing – introduction

The following is an introduction for an essay on Margaret Atwood's novel *The Handmaid's Tale*. After reading it, plan out your own essay on this question.

Question: Discuss the way that a text you have studied offers some hope, joy or beauty.

Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* is undisputedly a grim depiction of an all-too-possible future. Considering recent events that have taken place in the world, such as the overturning of the *Roe vs. Wade* ruling in North America and the reinstatement of the Taliban in Afghanistan, the dystopia Atwood depicts in her novel does not seem so far-fetched anymore. However, despite the state-sanctioned, systematic rape of fertile women, the twisting of religious doctrine as a weapon, and the forcible removal of children from their mothers, the novel does present glimpses of hope and resistance. The handmaids are described as finding ways to communicate with each other, such as through lip-reading, in defiance of the rules of Gilead. By learning and remembering each other's names, they take back some of their power from the Gileadean regime. Even in captivity and bound by strict rules about what she can do and how she must behave, Offred resists by recording her story. She finds a way to prevail even in the direst circumstances. Atwood reminds us that we can, and must, always resist oppression. The ending of the novel, where it is revealed that Offred's story is from the past and is being analysed by Professor Pieixoto in the novel's present, can be interpreted as being quite distressing as he seems to gloss over Offred in order to focus on the Commander. However, it can also be seen in a small way as hopeful: Gilead no longer exists. Offred's story becomes one of warning, and reminds us that we need to work against the forces in our world that could lead us to become like Gilead. While there is no doubt that *The Handmaid's Tale* offers us a horrifying glimpse of what our world could become if we allow hatred and intolerance to take hold, there are moments when Atwood reminds us that there is still hope wherever people resist.

Resonating

In Chapter 10, you looked at how we respond to texts and the importance of developing a personal voice to write or speak about them. This is because when you study literature, you are really studying how these texts speak to you personally. You may or may not like the text, you may be irrevocably changed by it, or you may not feel anything much about it at all. Regardless of the particulars of your response, it is your own. One way to describe the depth of connection we feel with a text is how it resonates with us. From a physics point of view, resonance happens when something vibrating at a particular frequency causes the vibrations of another nearby object to increase in amplitude. When these vibrations are interpreted by our brain as sound, we hear humming or throbbing. You might have experienced this when you've heard someone 'playing' crystal glasses by rubbing a moistened finger around the rim, or when using a tuning fork. The vibrations increase in intensity because when they are at the right frequency they build on each other. In literature, when a text speaks to us at just the right 'frequency', our emotional or intellectual response builds in much the same way.

We dig into the ways in which all texts convey their meaning throughout the Literature course. However, not all texts will *resonate* with you and those that do will do so to varying degrees. For something to resonate, it has to be meaningful to you personally.

Discuss texts that resonate

ACTIVITY 11.7

- 1 First, reflect individually. Have you ever felt very connected to or 'touched' by a text? What was it that caused that reaction? Did you enjoy the feeling or did it make you feel uncomfortable? Why do you think that was?
- 2 Next, with a partner, discuss the texts you've identified as resonating with you, and why. Are there any patterns or similarities (e.g. the medium, the genre, the message, the types of characters)?
- 3 As a class, discuss some of these similarities and differences. Consider texts that have resonated with groups throughout history. For example, which texts have become seminal? Which stories or messages come up again and again over centuries? Think about what this might tell us about the human condition, or what societies have considered important over time.

Student writing – body paragraph

The following is a paragraph drawing on examples from poetry written by Gwen Harwood. Annotations identify significant aspects of the student's approach.

Question: Discuss how at least one text you have read has resonated with you.

Here the student contextualises their response, identifying the 'note' the text is striking that resonates with their own experiences.

Notice the way that examples from the text are integrated into the sentences.

Remember that your response, even a personal one, should always demonstrate your ability to analyse and draw meaning from a text.

The student ties their analysis back to the topic: how the text has resonated with them.

These final sentences deepen and enrich the response, conveying the significance of this resonance for the student.

As a young woman reading Harwood's poetry, I have been constantly struck by the way in which she has captured the experience of women in Australian society. The way in which she depicted their lives as being dominated by the expectations of others, particularly men, really resonated with me. In her poem 'Prize-Giving', the subject 'with Titian hair' is called on stage to play piano for the assembled students and dignitaries, including Harwood's recurring character Professor Eisenbart. His inappropriate attraction to the schoolgirl becomes the focus of the poem. He views her through a lens of physicality and sexuality. He notes that she 'hitched at a stocking, winked at near-by friends' and he has to '[tease] his gown' to hide his arousal, all the while largely ignoring her musical talent. In 'Suburban Sonnet', the subject who 'once played for Rubenstein' is now relegated to playing the piano to an audience of screeching children in suburban doldrums. The women in these poems have their personal identities and abilities overshadowed by the expectations heaped on them by their society: the young girl is valued by Eisenbart, a representation of 'older' Australian attitudes towards women, only for her attractiveness, and the woman in 'Suburban Sonnet' must focus on making 'tasty dishes from stale bread' at home, rather than following her own dreams and talents. The way these women have been assigned roles that do not allow them to be anything more than what their patriarchal society deems acceptable resonates with me. Despite much progress in this area since Harwood wrote her poems, young women still find themselves put into a box and told 'girls don't play sport' or 'that's not very ladylike'. I can appreciate these poems for the way they have been crafted and the insight they give us into 1950s Australian society. However, that they resonate with me so strongly because of the way they reflect my own reality is actually quite disappointing.

Challenging and reshaping

A key outcome of studying Literature is the development of your critical thinking skills. These are the skills you need to be able to evaluate the impact of context, audience and purpose on the meaning conveyed by and made of any text. When you analyse texts during the course, you are not doing so just for the sake of it (though this can be pleasurable in itself). Instead, you are learning about how texts are constructed and how they are understood in order to be able to apply those same skills in other situations.

Texts that *challenge* an audience can make them uncomfortable. A text may be considered challenging due to its subject matter. Perhaps it contains new, unconventional or controversial ideas or characters; however, this is more about the audience than the text itself. When a text challenges us, it is usually because it sits at odds with our accepted individual, societal or cultural experiences and ideologies. We can also challenge the way a text represents aspects of the world.

Texts that *reshape* are actually shifting how we think, or allowing new ways of thinking to emerge. Sometimes, a text can be divisive or come at a time of cultural change. It may embody a new spirit, movement or generation, and it at once challenges *and* reinforces current thinking. Texts like this open up conversations about values and ideologies, and encourage audiences to rethink, re-evaluate and review the world around them.

The word bank below presents some useful vocabulary for talking and writing about texts that challenge and reshape.

WORD BANK - CHALLENGING AND RESHAPING	CHALLENGE		RESHAPE	
	SYNONYMS	ANTONYMS	SYNONYMS	ANTONYMS
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> confront discomfort dispute provoke stir 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> endorse perpetuate reinforce sustain uphold 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> change redefine reimagine revolutionise shift up-end 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> carry on conserve maintain preserve reinforce

Texts that challenge

Texts can prompt us to question the systems and structures that we have come to take for granted. By constructing representations that are uncomfortable or unexpected, authors can guide us towards asking questions that we might otherwise have ignored. The text does not have to be directly related to the situation we find ourselves questioning. For example, readers might respond to texts with questions like the following.

- ▶ *What parallels can be seen between the racism evident in Othello's Venice and Australia today? Can I really say that we have progressed?*



- > How does my own social media use mirror the public's thirst for 'juicy' news in *The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum*? Am I complicit in a similar cycle of violence?

The discomfort we feel when reading a text is often closely related to the way language is used and how forms are disrupted or subverted. We will delve further into this in Chapter 12.

Grapple with uncomfortable truths

ACTIVITY 11.8

Consider one of the texts you have been studying this year. What questions has it prompted you to ask? What uncomfortable 'truths' has it uncovered for you?

Student writing – body paragraph

Read the following paragraph of reflective student writing, and the annotations that identify significant aspects of the student's work.

Question: How has a text you have studied challenged you to question your attitudes or rethink your actions?

As humans, the thirst for knowledge and a desire to discover has arguably been the driving force of our civilisation. We celebrate people who innovate and come up with inventions and ways to improve our lifestyles. As consumers of these innovations, we often forget about the work that went into making those discoveries available to us and focus only on getting the end-product. I have been guilty of this myself: I have deliberately chosen not to think much about the people who work for long hours to make clothing I can buy cheaply, or the people who do dangerous work to mine the resources needed to make my smartphone. *Joseph Conrad's Heart of Darkness* forced me to consider how my consumption comes at a cost to other human beings. In the novel, Conrad constructs the character of Marlow to be a representative of people just like me. Written in the first person, the text provides very little description of the character. The lack of distinguishing features or back story makes him relatable to almost anyone, and the use of 'we' and 'our' as Marlow's story unfolds aboard *The Nellie* helps to make the reader feel part of the narrative. Marlow willingly joins the Company because he is fascinated by 'the blank spaces' on the map and wants to be part of the exciting discoveries being made in the nineteenth century. He only pays attention to the positive and exciting parts of those discoveries, just as I have enthusiastically torn open the box of my latest gadget without a single thought to the people who worked to make that happen. In the same way that I only think about the rich figureheads like Elon Musk or Jeff Bezos in relation to these

The student sets the scene by outlining the attitude or behaviour they will examine.

Even a personal response needs to relate closely to the text.

Quotes are effectively integrated into the sentence.

The student makes connections between the text and their own attitudes and behaviours.

new technologies, the various men Marlow meets on his journey to Central Station only think of Kurtz, whom they see as 'remarkable' and 'a prodigy'. They make throwaway, privileged remarks about the African people they are exploiting. The chief accountant at Outer Station even appears irritated that the woman he had forced into doing laundry for him 'had a distaste for the work', as though she should instead be grateful for the opportunity. When Marlow travels down the Congo river and sees the suffering caused by the greed and ambition of men like him – the people who were now 'nothing but black shadows of disease and starvation' – he is horrified. At the end of his life, even Kurtz is eaten away by the destruction he has caused, calling out, 'the horror, the horror' at the realisation of the damage he has wrought. Reading *Heart of Darkness* did not make me think about issues I had no knowledge of. Instead, it forced me to think about the issues I do know about but willingly ignore because they are inconvenient to me. However, like Marlow, who refuses to speak the truth to Kurtz's Intended, perhaps I also continue to sweep these inconvenient truths out of sight.

Again, the student identifies the wider and ongoing significance of the issues explored in the text.

The student avoids making grandiose concluding claims and instead keeps their response authentic.

Texts that reshape

The way people relate to each other and the world changes over time. Sometimes this might be the result of increased access to information or knowledge that changes our understanding of people, groups, situations or ideas. It may also be the result of previously marginalised voices becoming increasingly heard, counteracting others' ignorance or lack of empathy. As the world around us changes, so too does our perception of it.

Texts themselves have the power to reshape our thinking, too. Some texts are so inspirational or confronting that they have an almost immediate transformational impact. Others influence people's thinking over time and often become relevant and important well beyond their time and place of production. Some examples of texts that have had a profound impact, particularly on Western thought, include the following.

On the Origin of Species, in which Charles Darwin presented his scientific theory of evolution, was greeted with great interest at the time of its publication (1859). Darwin was already a well-recognised scientific thinker, which gave credibility to his work. While his explanation of the importance of natural selection was not accepted by all at the time, and is still rejected by some groups (creationists in particular), it led to the concept of biological evolution that is at the heart of natural science today. Darwin's theory was transformative – and controversial – because it challenged the idea that God created everything as it is and 'nature' has a specific purpose. It also fed the idea of eugenics: that people who were disabled, poor or of a particular race should be prevented from reproducing, to 'improve' the population. Darwin did *not* support this application of his theory!

The Communist Manifesto by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels presents Marx and Engels' definitions of the 'bourgeoisie' and the 'proletariat' and criticises the way that capitalism allows some to profit and flourish at the expense of others. They predicted that, if members of the proletariat realised their oppression and were to unite and rise up, the bourgeoisie would be overthrown. Marx and Engels advocated for various social

changes, such as free public education, the abolition of child labour and reforms that would abolish private property. Although this text is most commonly associated with Communism as a political movement, many aspects of Western society are based on similar socialist principles (Australia’s Medicare system is an example).

The Handmaid’s Tale by Margaret Atwood has arguably become only more relevant and thought-provoking over time. In the context of recent decisions about reproductive rights in the US, and the eroding of women’s rights in other countries around the world, the depictions of women’s treatment in the novel have become increasingly recognisable in the real world. The text and its recent adaptation for television are often referred to in discussions about these issues, demonstrating the way the text continues to reshape our thinking by depicting a future world that seems all too possible.

Reflect on changing times

ACTIVITY 11.9

- 1 Consider the following events. How have they precipitated shifts in our world view? How did they make people at the time re-evaluate their place in the world and the opportunities they might have?
 - › The Earth is first circumnavigated by sea (c. 1522).
 - › The right for women to vote in federal elections in Australia is enshrined in law (1902).
 - › Atomic weapons are used on the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (1945).
 - › Neil Armstrong, Buzz Aldrin and Michael Collins land on the Moon (1969).
 - › The Higgs boson particle is discovered (2012) and confirmed (2013) at the Large Hadron Collider at the European Council for Nuclear Research (CERN).
 - › The ‘Uluru Statement from the Heart’ is issued (2017).
- 2 How have other discoveries or events shaped the way your studied texts were constructed and understood?

Analyse revolutionary and transformative texts

ACTIVITY 11.10

Consider one of the texts or writers you’ve been studying in the course so far. In what ways might it, or they, be considered transformative or capable of reshaping thinking? Does a text contain subject matter or representations that could be considered revolutionary, or is it the medium or style of presentation that is noteworthy? You could focus on a text that is already recognised as revolutionary, or you might like to predict how a text might become considered so in the future, based on recent events.

The creative use of language

At its most basic level, language is a system of sounds or symbols that we use to communicate our thoughts, ideas and emotions. Over time, we have developed rules and structures such as grammar, punctuation and syntax, to organise those sounds and symbols so that we can understand each other. Language is fundamental to human cultures because it allows us to connect with each other and to share our experiences.

At times, the language we have available to us doesn't feel adequate to describe or capture how we feel. When this happens, sometimes we use language in creative or experimental ways in an attempt to capture what we're trying to communicate. We make connections and comparisons, we play with structures, and sometimes we make up entirely new words or forms. Language is always evolving because our experiences and the ways we interact with our world are dynamic.



Style

Often, it is a text’s style that influences an audience’s response – its defiance of contextual or societal norms might challenge readers; the construction of characters or voices can reinforce or naturalise ingrained ideologies; as a product of its time or part of a movement, it may illuminate certain ways of thinking; or the way it plays with generic structure to reshape beliefs, values and attitudes might intrigue or capture the imagination of an audience. When we analyse style or unpack the stylistic features used to create that style, we are far more informed and able to make critical and exciting evaluations of a text.

For example ...

Below is an example of student notes on George Orwell’s novel *1984*, published in 1949. The notes reflect on the ways in which language and stylistic features shape the reader’s response.

Chapter 1	Notes
<p>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 with him.</p> <p>The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats. At one end of it a coloured poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked to the wall. It depicted simply an enormous face, more than a metre wide: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features. Winston made for the stairs. It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electric 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. One each landing, opposite the life 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.</p>	<p>Style: bleak, gloomy</p> <p>Stylistic features: How is this style achieved?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ♦ Generic narrative characterisation third-person POV setting ♦ Linguistic imagery – grotesque, olfactory, visual, tactile description choice of words connotation allusion tone ♦ Structural sentence structure capital letters juxtaposition ♦ Contextual influences links to WW2 post-WW2 fears influences of Stalinism, Nazism, totalitarianism political discourse

Reflection

Orwell's style is bleak, depressing and almost visceral in its grotesque sensory imagery and characterisation. Despite the reader following Winston into his apartment building, there is no inner monologue, no exploration of his emotions, no narration of his thoughts to make us feel connected to our protagonist. This distanced narrative style enhances the oppression readers feel in this opening paragraph. Winston's character at 'thirty-nine' with a 'varicose ulcer' appears much older than his age, while Orwell's description of the setting – the 'cold', 'glass', 'dust', 'boiled cabbages' and 'rag mats' – relies on an array of tactile, visual and olfactory imagery that furthers his bleak style. The only thing that seems to have life is the 'coloured poster' of the 'enormous face' with 'eyes [that] follow you'. This juxtaposition creates a tense mood, furthered by short sentences such as 'it was no use trying the lift', adding to Orwell's negative, suffocating style, and thus strained tone, as if the only thing worth living for is that poster. Given its context, we can assume Orwell's allusion to tyrants like Stalin or Hitler in his description of Big Brother points to a critique of certain political regimes and the horrendous impact these had on their citizens. The connotation of 'Hate Week', even if readers aren't aware of what this is yet, at the start of the narrative, appears jarring, giving a reproving tone to the narrative voice. Consequently, in this short opening Orwell's language choices may reinforce Western readers' beliefs about life under oppressive political regimes: that it is bleak, depressing, controlled and wearying.

Explore evolving language

Each year, Oxford Languages (publishers of many dictionaries) release their Word of the Year. This word encapsulates the mood and experience of the previous twelve months. The word is often a neologism or portmanteau that has been recently created or widely used in ways not seen before.

What do these Oxford Languages Words of the Year suggest about events during the year they were recognised, and how people were relating to the world?

2023 – rizz

2022 – goblin mode

2021 – vax

2020 – This year, the committee could not choose a single word and instead released the Words of an Unprecedented Year report.

2019 – climate emergency

2018 – toxic

2017 – youthquake

2016 – post-truth

2015 – 🤔 (You might like to discuss whether or why emojis count as language!)

Scan the code or click [here](#) to read more about the Word of the Year and how it is selected, as well as the runners up, at Oxford Languages' website.



Analyse stylistic features

ACTIVITY 12.2

Choose a short extract from a studied text – a scene, a paragraph, a poem (even just a stanza). Drawing on the example on pages 140–1, make notes on style – that is, the generic, linguistic, structural and contextual factors that give a piece of writing a certain *feel*. Reflect on how the style, and therefore the stylistic features that make up that style, might influence the way particular audiences respond to the text.

Aesthetics

Aesthetics is a branch of philosophy focused on the nature of beauty and ‘taste’, and the way that art is created and appreciated. During the late nineteenth century, a group of artists and writers known as the Aesthetes were well known for their dedication to ‘art for art’s sake’ and their belief that artistic merit and beauty were just as important as political or social messages (if not more so). This group included writers such as Oscar Wilde and Walter Pater, and artists such as James McNeill Whistler and William Morris. The belief that art, including literature, could be appreciated simply for its inherent pleasure challenged Victorian notions that it ought to serve a moral purpose.

In the context of studying literature, aesthetics relates to the way texts are constructed to be pleasing or artistically meaningful to the reader. Concentrating on the aesthetic elements of a text highlights the way it ‘feels’, and how it is experienced. Sensuality (how a text stimulates our senses) and the pleasure we derive from engaging with a text are core features of an aesthetic analysis.

The aesthetics of a text can make it pleasurable (or unpleasant) to experience in its own right. Its imagery can make us want to re-read or remember a text, or it might prompt us to develop a deep dislike of it; and, in terms of our experience of a text, such feelings can be enough. However, the aesthetic qualities of a text can also be used by a writer to convey ideas or to critique certain institutions, experiences or people.

For example, in his poem ‘Limbo’, Seamus Heaney uses language with particularly harsh ‘t’, ‘ss’ and ‘st’ sounds, such as ‘illegitimate spawning’, ‘frozen knobs of her wrists’ and ‘with hooks / tearing her open’, which *feels* unpleasant to read. We associate these sorts of sounds with harshness and violence. Thus Heaney connects these nasty feelings with the horror of what the unmarried mother is doing. He contrasts this unpleasant aesthetic experience with his description of the woman ‘ducking him tenderly’ – a phrase given its own line and therefore significance – highlighting the contrast between her love for the child and the desperation and trauma of what she is doing.



Reflect on aesthetic qualities

ACTIVITY 12.3

How have the aesthetic qualities of a text you've studied been used to comment on or critique a particular event, person or institution? Take this further: how has an ideology or cultural viewpoint been promoted or denigrated through being associated with particular aesthetic qualities?

Imagery

Imagery is related to aesthetics because of the way it connects to how we feel when we engage with a text. When we think about imagery, it's easy to focus on how we are stimulated visually and forget about our other senses. This seems reasonable – a lot of the processing of our environment comes from visual input. The word itself can lead to confusion too. 'Imagery' makes us think about 'images'. However, by thinking about our experiences only in terms of visual information, we would miss out on a huge amount of information available to us, or that we can convey to others. When the imagery created by a writer is rich, it is easier to become deeply immersed in the text.

It has been said that some of our senses are particularly connected to memory formation and access. In particular, our sense of smell is often linked closely to strong memories. There is some evidence that this might be because the structures of our brain that are important in memory and in smell are located very close together, or because olfactory input bypasses some of the 'intermediary' systems and goes straight to where it is processed. It may also be because smell helps us make important survival judgements: if something smells bad, it probably isn't good to eat or touch.

By creating imagery through the way language is used, writers can evoke a reader's own memories, which can help us to connect with their characters and stories. Texts that resonate deeply tend to be the ones that stimulate us in a whole-body way. Through rich descriptions, figurative language and other techniques, they help us imagine what something looks like, how it smells, how it tastes, what it feels like and how it sounds.

Remember: Imagery is the result of the use of techniques, not a technique in itself. When discussing imagery, always explain how the writer has created the imagery by referring to generic techniques.

Stimulate the senses

ACTIVITY 12.4

Choose a poem containing rich imagery. Some examples are Mary Oliver's 'Black River', TS Eliot's 'Preludes' and Adrienne Rich's 'Living in Sin', but you will no doubt know others you have come across in your studies. Analyse the poem for its sensory imagery – how does it evoke your senses of smell, taste, touch, hearing and vision?

Transforming texts

Increasingly, texts originally produced in written form are being transformed into other media. One way to think about this is to consider the degree of fidelity to the original. Sometimes the transformations are quite similar to the original and follow the narrative closely (*literal*). Some may take the original story and transfer it to another time or place, often changing details to suit the new context but still staying quite true to the original text (*faithful*). Others may be ‘inspired by’ the original text or make reference to it without being particularly closely linked (*loose*).

<p>Transformations mostly of just the medium (literal)</p>	<p><i>Frankenstein</i> (1818), Mary Shelley (novel) → <i>Frankenstein</i> (1994), dir. Kenneth Branagh (film)</p> <p><i>Cloudstreet</i> (1991), Tim Winton (novel) → <i>Cloudstreet</i> (1996), Paige Gibbs (radio play) and <i>Cloudstreet</i> (1998), Nick Enright (drama)</p> <p>Shakespeare’s plays → various graphic novels</p>
<p>Transformations of the medium and context (faithful)</p>	<p><i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (1597), William Shakespeare (play) → <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> (1996), dir. Baz Luhrmann (film)</p> <p>‘So Much Water So Close to Home’ (1981), Raymond Carver (short story) → ‘Everything’s Turning to White’ (1989), Paul Kelly (song) → <i>Jindabyne</i> (2006), dir. Ray Lawrence (film)</p>
<p>Transformations resulting in passing references or allusions (loose)</p>	<p><i>Henry IV Part 1</i> (1597), <i>Henry IV Part 2</i> (1599) and <i>Henry V</i> (1599), William Shakespeare (plays) → <i>My Own Private Idaho</i> (1991), dir. Gus van Sant (film)</p> <p><i>World War Z</i> (2006), Max Brooks (novel) → <i>World War Z</i> (2013), dir. Marc Forster (film)</p> <p>‘Girl with a Pearl Earring’ (~1665), Johannes Vermeer (painting) → <i>Girl with a Pearl Earring</i> (1999), Tracy Chevalier (novel)</p>

There is quite a lot of variation when texts are transformed from one medium to another, or when their context is changed. What is relevant to Literature students is how those changes impact upon the meaning we take from a text.

In 2011, the National Theatre in London filmed two performances of a stage version of Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*. While the script, written by Nick Dear, remained the same for both performances, the actors playing Victor Frankenstein and the ‘Monster’, Benedict Cumberbatch and Johnny Lee Miller, switched roles each time. The audience was thus encouraged to see the way these two characters are intrinsically connected. Shelley’s comments about nature versus nurture, and about where our humanity lies, are presented to us in a very visual way, prompting us to reflect. Scan the code or click [here](#) to view a short discussion of this process.



Remember: When thinking and writing about transformed texts, always focus on how the meaning has been altered through the changes made. Avoid a simple ‘compare and contrast’; instead, look deeper. What layers of meaning have been added or lost by changing the form, context or style of the original text?

A word from author AJ Betts ...

When a book is altered in some way – such as *Zac & Mia*, which was adapted for TV in America – your private story is taken out of your hands completely. You have to be okay with it not being ‘yours’ anymore, but a shared thing, loud and surprising and often incompatible with the story you once had in your head. With *Zac & Mia*, I had to let go of the original feeling of it, and embrace the ways it was changing, from the appearance of the characters to the language use, and the introduction of new characters. Even the setting was changed, from Perth to Los Angeles. It’s a great privilege for a story to continue, in different iterations. I hope my stories continue to do so.

Consider a transformed text

ACTIVITY 12.5

Consider a text that has been transformed with some deliberate changes to language, structure, visual symbolism or something else not present in the original. What meaning do you derive from these changes?

Here are some examples to get you started:

- › the costumes worn by Romeo, Benvolio, Mercutio and the other characters at the Capulet party in Baz Luhrmann’s *Romeo + Juliet*
- › the ‘colour-blind’ casting of actors in *The Personal History of David Copperfield*, based on Charles Dickens’ novel *David Copperfield*
- › the shifting of context from nineteenth-century England to twentieth-century US in Amy Heckerling’s *Clueless*, an adaptation of Jane Austen’s *Emma*
- › the live capture and use of video footage and screens presenting multiple camera angles in Kip Williams’ stage adaptation of *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*.

Student writing – extended essay

The following is a sample essay using poems from the anthology *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (1794) by William Blake. Read the essay and the notes about syllabus concepts, essay structure, the addressing of the question, and the essay’s strengths and weaknesses. You may like to write comments on other ideas, too.

Question: Making reference to at least one literary text, discuss how experimentation with language and/or form reflects, or can contribute to, new ways of thinking.



→ (Note that this student refers to the 2017 illustrated edition of Blake's anthology published by Penguin Random House and suggests that the use of illuminated pages and copper-plate etchings it contains relate to form. This may have been better discussed in terms of multimodality, or transformation of texts.)

An excellent global statement! The student may have also specified that Romanticism was an artistic movement.

This information demonstrates knowledge of the movements, providing important context.

The student is attempting to signpost to the marker that they are answering the question by using the words of the topic.

Although this is well written, we don't yet see how this is experimental, or what the new ways of thinking are. This thesis needs some more development.

This is a clear, succinct explanation of what makes this form experimental.

The student uses the metalanguage of poetry well here.

The student seems to gloss over a specific argument or answer. However, they do imply that this is coming; although, after an introduction and one body paragraph, this may be getting too late.

Romanticism was a profound ideological response to the rise of industry, economic change and the espousal of the values of the Enlightenment developing throughout the eighteenth century. Where the Enlightenment valued reason, knowledge, order and human progress, the Romantics, namely the first wave of British Romantic poets, rejected this in favour of fervent emotion, political rebellion, unbridled passion in art, celebration of nature and the innocence of children. Perhaps no other poet embodies this Romantic sentiment more than William Blake, and in particular his anthology *Songs of Innocence and Experience* (the first part published in 1789, and completed in 1794). This unique anthology was not only an embodiment of Romantic ideology, but was also experimental in artistic form, allowing Blake's poems to be seen as more than simply poetry. By combining the appeal of the intellectual and the aesthetic, through his use of simple language and the truly original form of illuminated copper-plate prints, Blake's work reflects the new ways of thinking about the Enlightenment and the state of the eighteenth-century industrialised world.

Along with his deceptively simple yet symbolic language and the illuminated etchings, Blake also experiments with what he calls the 'contrary states of the human soul'. For each poem in 'Innocence', a 'contrary' or partner poem can be found in 'Experience'. This experimentation of form, which involves using poems less as standalone artistic pieces and more as a means of presenting intertwined ideological perspectives, can be seen in his poem 'The Lamb' (SOI) and its contrary 'The Tyger' (SOE). 'The Lamb' uses a jaunty, childlike trochaic tetrameter, instantly giving the poem an air of innocence. Its persona and subsequent voice are amplified by the highly simplistic language: not one word is more than two syllables. Coupled with this metre and childlike rhythm is the illuminated plate depicting a lone child surrounded by sheep. The faces of both the child and a lamb appear serene and happy and, when compared to the repeated lines, 'Little Lamb, who made thee', we assume the voice is that of the child talking to the lamb. Further, the persona states, 'I am a child and thou a lamb', literally showing both human and animal in infancy. By using such simplistic language and metre, combined with his etchings and knowing there is an 'answer' in 'The Tyger', Blake used his art to reflect new ways of thinking about the Enlightenment that become apparent when analysing both the partner poems and their language.

Despite its simplicity, 'The Lamb' can be read as having elements of darkness or a sinister tone lurking beneath the surface. Not only does the artwork depict shadows at the edge of the idyllic rural

scene that aesthetically create a sense of unease, also the persona's blatant repetition of religious beliefs may seem suspicious to an adult, contemporary audience. If we believe the voice of the poem is that of a child, then this child explains that 'I'll tell thee' and 'he is called by thy name'. This biblical allusion to Jesus, who was referred to as the 'Lamb of God', and the alliteration of 'meek and mild' creates a melodic tone, as if the child persona is repeating something they have learned, memorised or heard multiple times. In fact, this religious dogma may have been published in deceptively simplistic religious hymns and 'chapbooks' given to children of this era. Interestingly, Blake published his anthologies in small books designed to replicate these religious publications, and we can argue that Blake's experimental use of simplistic language and form reflects Romantic ideology and creates new ways of thinking – in particular that Enlightenment values espousing order, faith and ambition were, ironically, being used to control, brainwash and diminish the imagination, artistry and freedom of minority groups, particularly the poor, young and uneducated, who simply believed the Church and State knew best.

This is a great angle that addresses the topic. However, this should have come earlier in the essay.

This was indeed a new way of thinking about the Enlightenment, and Blake's poetry encourages readers to see things differently and to not always accept what we are taught is the truth. For example, in 'The Lamb's' partner poem 'The Tyger' (SOE), Blake appears to continue to condemn the eighteenth-century religious dogma as seen in 'The Lamb' with his references to the 'immortal', 'heaven' and 'did he smile his work to see'. However, in 'The Tyger' the questioning tone constructed by the use of rhetoric appears to challenge the dogma of this epoch. Rather than the nominalisation of the pronoun 'He', as appears in 'The Lamb', Blake uses the lower-case 'he' and adds 'what' prior to 'immortal'. This questioning tone and use of ironic, industrial discourse in 'hammer, chain, furnace' suggests that Blake is reflecting new ways of thinking about accepted beliefs in his world – that what society simply accepts is not always what it seems, in particular the accepted belief that faith, hard work, industry and progress are always beneficial for humanity. Blake encourages us to see the world in different ways and to consider that perhaps the 'tyger' can actually be understood as something other than 'evil' or 'fearful', even, in fact, beautiful. Through this, Blake appears to question the absolute power and governance of one God as proclaimed by the Christian faith prevalent in England at this time. Furthermore, despite 'The Tyger' being published in SOE, and perhaps showing the more intellectual realm of the human soul, Blake's etchings contain a combination of gold, greens and blues, colours that symbolically suggest that, even in the midst of progress, industry and darkness, there is always the presence of 'good'. This binary opposition that acknowledges that humans have the capacity for both good and evil creates an aesthetically pleasing visual, and can be considered experimental in both its form and language, reflecting the epoch's questioning of the absolute dogma of the State and Church.

Try to avoid using 'this'. Instead, tell your reader exactly what you are referring to.

The student embeds quotations well and uses the language of the course to explain their ideas. Throughout this paragraph their critical terminology is apparent.

Further detail as to what makes this experimental is needed.

→ This student was on the verge of exploring the interpretation of Blake's experimentation with form; however, they seem to have been sidetracked, suggesting they may not have planned their argument out fully.

William Blake is considered a visionary artist who was questioning the world around him in varied and experimental ways. Blake, more than any other Romantic poet of his time, used his poems and artworks, as well as the structure of his anthologies, even down to their physical size and look, to reflect new ways of thinking and therefore critique the Enlightenment and the state of eighteenth-century England. While his work was not greatly appreciated in his lifetime, Blake's originality and willingness to see things differently has become celebrated in our modern world. Now, perhaps thanks to artists like Blake, we are more likely to question the accepted truths of our world, to attempt to see things from multiple perspectives, and to appreciate all parts of intellect and creativity as one of the blessings of being human.

Unit 4 sample assessments

The following activities will provide helpful practice for your assessment tasks in Unit 4.

Extended written response

Drawing on at least one text you've studied in Literature so far, consider how writing or reading is shown to be an act of power, defiance or resistance. You might consider a fictional character's writing or reading, or the actual author's use of their writing as such an act.

Short written response

Identify at least three social or cultural groups who are represented in a text you have read. For each, consider the ways that they have been empowered or disenfranchised. This may be in how they have been represented in the text, or even by their inclusion or exclusion from it. Ensure you draw on specific evidence to support your analysis.

Creative production

Choose an artwork by an Australian artist and imagine a narrative for it. Drawing on generic conventions and language devices, create a short story, a poem or an extract from a novel or drama that encapsulates the emotions or experiences depicted in the artwork.

If you don't know where to start, you might consider works by artists such as Ben Quilty, Emily Kame Kngwarreye, Clarice Beckett, Tom Roberts, Albert Namatjira, Frederick McCubbin, Grace Cossington Smith, Kumantje Jagamara, Brett Whiteley, Sidney Nolan, Russell Drysdale and Del Kathryn Barton.

Oral response

In pairs, conduct a debate using opposing readings of a studied text. Your task is to present your reading, drawing on supporting evidence, as well as to critically judge and evaluate the findings of your partner.

SECTION 6

Exams and assessments

While your study of Literature should not revolve around individual assessments and examinations, we recognise that these will play a large part in your experience of the course. All assessments in ATAR courses can feel ‘high stakes’ but it’s important to remember that your performance on one task is not a reflection of you as a person. There are many ways to achieve your goals. *Your marks do not define you.* Keep assessments in perspective; if you begin to feel overwhelmed, it’s time to reach out for help.



Assessment types

At the beginning of a year or unit, your teacher will provide you with a clear outline of all the assessments you will be undertaking. This can be a confronting experience – seeing all those tasks and their associated marks laid out in black and white can be scary! However, another way to look at this is as an opportunity to plan, get organised and recognise that it's just a series of steps towards your end goal. Remember that assessments are a learning opportunity too. No matter what the result, take time to reflect on what you've done well, which areas need work and how you might be able to improve. The end of this chapter provides some ideas for using your assessments as ways to plan your next steps towards improvement.



Written assessments

The majority of your assessments in Literature will be written work. They will likely be mostly short- or long-form essays, along with other text types such as reflections, short answers, poems and scripts. As noted in Chapter 1, there is no right or wrong way to structure your paragraphs or texts; the key is to lead your reader through a coherent, well-structured argument or discussion, drawing on relevant evidence and concepts.

Having said this, there are some general conventions for writing that your markers (including your teacher) are likely to expect. Keep in mind the following guidelines.

Introduction: state your position and how you'll proceed

A strong introduction will orientate your reader to the way you will be addressing the topic or question, and act as a map for the journey you are about to take them on. Remember that your essay should never be a 'mystery box' – your reader should know where you're going from the very beginning.

Begin with a global statement. This is a sentence that 'sets the scene' of your topic in a general sense. For example, a global statement may relate to the context, writer, genre, themes or subject matter.

Give a precis. This is a *brief* summary of your text. It may include text title, year of publication, writer, main plot or ideas, context and audience.

State your thesis. Clearly state the argument or analysis you will be making, drawing on the key words in the question.

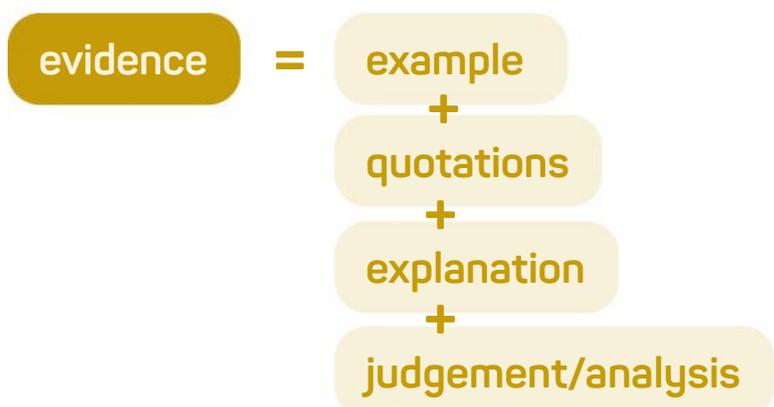
Outline your points. For each point you will be making, aim to include a full sentence in the introduction.

Tips for writing effective introductions

- ▶ **Don't list a million devices.** Group or signpost your identified techniques in more general, umbrella terms, giving yourself space to unpack these later.
- ▶ **Don't start by rewording the essay question.** Gain your reader's interest with a compelling idea or reflection, then link this to the essay question.
- ▶ **Be original and bold in your claim.** You want your essay to stand out for its unique point of view, but ensure you have the evidence to back it up.

Body: deconstruct to reconstruct

The body of your essay should detail the *evidence* that supports the claim or thesis presented in your introduction. This is not just a matter of regurgitating quotations.



Find some good examples and quotations that exemplify the main ideas in your text and relate to the concepts the question targets. Aim to find *at least* one quotation for each body paragraph. However, there really isn't a set number of quotes per paragraph that you should include. In general, shorter quotes that are integrated into your sentences are more desirable than longer, standalone ones.

In an essay, using evidence means:

- ▶ discussing an event or example from the text *briefly*; a little retelling is okay and probably warranted before you move on to your analysis, but always remember that a summary of a text is not analysis
- ▶ explaining, using appropriate metalanguage, how this event or example is constructed in the text
- ▶ evaluating this event or example's significance, what it symbolises or represents in the text, in a specific context, and its influence on readers
- ▶ making a judgement, evaluation, analysis or claim that answers the essay question
- ▶ using quotations to support your ideas.

Tips for writing effective body paragraphs

- ▶ **Apply the rules flexibly.** While at least three paragraphs are usually expected for a formal essay, it's better to have two detailed, well-crafted paragraphs than three rushed, superficial ones. However, if you find you're consistently writing short essays, ask your teacher for some help with developing your writing skills so that you can better convey your understanding of the question and the text.
- ▶ **Practise embedding your quotations into the structure of your sentences.** This can be through sentence tags – for example, 'We see this in the text where [insert quote here]'. Or you can incorporate short quotes in small 'chunks' that make up part of your sentence, such as 'with his references to [insert quoted word here] and [insert another quoted word here]'.
 This can be through sentence tags – for example, 'We see this in the text where [insert quote here]'. Or you can incorporate short quotes in small 'chunks' that make up part of your sentence, such as 'with his references to [insert quoted word here] and [insert another quoted word here]'.
- ▶ **Don't obsess over TEEEL or other paragraph formulas.** Remember, these are just templates to help give your writing greater fluency and cohesion, and to assist you in teasing out your ideas.

Conclusion: pull it all together

A good conclusion can be the most exciting part of an essay – this is where you can express your personal voice, your findings and your critical thinking. Avoid adding anything new in the conclusion, though. Everything in this paragraph should have been signposted within the body of your essay. In your conclusion you should do the following.

Restate your thesis. Reiterate your original claim or position *briefly* in one or two sentences.

Identify the main ideas of your analysis. One sentence per point should be enough for this. The marker of your essay has already read it.

Explain the significance. The bulk of your conclusion should be spent explaining the ‘so what’ of your argument or response. Draw your points together and state how they work in conjunction to relate to your world, ideologies and discourse.

Student writing – conclusion

The following is a sample conclusion discussing the 1949 poem ‘Woman to Man’ by Australian poet Judith Wright. Read this conclusion and make some notes about whether it is successful. How might it be improved?

Question: Reflect on the way in which at least one literary text has resonated with you because of your own cultural assumptions, social position and/or gender.

Despite Wright being one of Australia’s most recognisable poets and activists, this poem, written towards the start of her career, and while perhaps a product of its time, is to me problematic, due to my gender and contemporary context. In short, it seems to intimate that a person’s, especially a woman’s, only worth, in fact their only desire, lies in the ability to have and want children – that this is an expected and primal role all women must want to fulfil. Critically, as a female reader, I begin to question why we have been led to believe that we must reach certain benchmarks by certain ages, and how poems like Wright’s contribute to this discourse that challenges whether these decisions are actually even our own. In this way, this poem resonated with me as a female reader, as it echoes decades and decades of patriarchal discourse about the desirability of and natural progression towards motherhood for women. However, critically, I find it enlightening to consider where these desires originated and what happens if we do not fulfil expected roles, but instead challenge our assumed purpose as women.

Handwriting

You won’t like us reminding you, but it must be said: your handwriting counts! Although much of your writing will be in digital form, while final examinations continue to be written by hand you will need to plan and prepare for the demands of such a task. If you go through the course relying on typing for speed and legibility, you could find that you can’t produce the same quality or quantity of content when handwriting in a timed context.

Tips for improving your handwriting

- ▶ **Make it a priority.** If you wanted to improve your fitness you would make time to exercise; if you wanted to become a better flute player, you would make time to practise. Handwriting is no different – if you want or need to improve it, you will need to spend time doing drills and focusing on the skills. Don’t underestimate the importance of handwriting. Your hands and your pen are arguably two of your most important tools as a Literature student!
- ▶ **Ask for feedback.** Make a point of asking your teacher for feedback on your handwriting, particularly any aspects they find difficult or time-consuming to read. Take their advice on board – sometimes even handwriting that superficially appears to be neat can actually be difficult to decipher, particularly very loopy or slanted styles.



- > **Consider the tools.** Choose a pen that is appropriately fine, with ink that does not leak or spread. If you are left-handed or have a style that involves your hand brushing across your writing, consider a pen with quick-drying ink.

Oral assessments

The Literature course requires students to be assessed in oral format. For some, this is a fantastic opportunity to earn marks through oratory skills, and many students appreciate the chance to be assessed without having to worry about their spelling and handwriting! For others, though, oral assessments can be terrifying. Even people who have spent many years speaking in front of groups find it a nerve-racking experience, so if public speaking is not on your list of favourite experiences, you are not alone.

Tips for excellent oral presentations

- > **Be prepared.** Never assume you can ‘wing it’. Being prepared is the best way to overcome nerves. Knowing what you have to say, and having a back-up plan in case something goes wrong, will help you to feel calm and in control of the situation.
- > **Practise.** There’s no replacement for it. Practice doesn’t necessarily make perfect, but it definitely helps! Find somewhere private and speak your presentation aloud – record it, if possible. Listening to this will help you to recognise issues that you need to work on, and give you a clear idea of how long your presentation actually takes.
- > **Find the ‘nodder’ in the audience.** Every audience has someone in it who will smile and nod at all your points, regardless of what they are. These magical people have been placed on this Earth to ease the nerves of people presenting in public (even if they don’t know it). As you begin your presentation, quickly scan the faces in your audience and you’ll find them. It might be your teacher or another student; whoever they are, they will be smiling at you in an encouraging way. Whenever you feel nervous, look at them for a boost.
- > **Consider volunteering to go first.** Yes, this sounds crazy! However, getting your presentation out of the way can save you spending the next three days fretting over it: it’s done. In all likelihood, the rest of your class will be so grateful to you that they will think whatever you say is brilliant. And who remembers the first person in a class of twenty anyway?
- > **Slow down, and breathe.** When we’re nervous we tend to speed through what we’re trying to say. No matter what you think your speed is, slow it down. Pause. Breathe.

Oral presentations can be an opportunity to inject a little more of yourself into your Literature assessments. While there is usually an expectation that they be formally structured and, of course, they still need to communicate your understanding of the concepts, the nature of oral presentations often means that including a joke or humour is possible. Oral presentations can also be accompanied by multimedia presentations that allow you to draw in visual and audio material. Perhaps you might even think about interesting ways to include smells, tastes and tactile objects too!

Incorporate varied media into your presentations

ACTIVITY 13.1

Think about the texts you have studied this year and some of the multimedia (or multisensory) items that might be relevant in an oral presentation about them. Some examples are given below – be creative!

Text	Object	Response
Franz Kafka's <i>Metamorphosis</i>	cockroaches (check with your teacher first!)	disgust and surprise, just like Gregor's reaction to his transformation
Heinrich Böll's <i>The Lost Honour of Katharina Blum</i>	newspapers; outlandish or 'clickbait' headlines	shock at the extent to which the media manipulates the truth; sympathy for Katharina as a victim of the media
Peter Shaffer's <i>Amadeus</i>	music composed by Mozart; comparative images or headlines about people whose behaviour is at odds with their creations (e.g. Elon Musk, Thomas Edison)	transportation into the time of the play; understanding how Salieri must have felt when discovering Mozart's genius, which was so at odds with his personality
Brian Friel's <i>Translations</i>	using another language you know, to deliver some of your oral presentation or for the text on your slides	frustration and disconnection, or a feeling of community and solidarity among people who can understand each other

Creative production

When you are asked to write or perform creatively in Literature, you are being assessed on your application of the course concepts. In other words, you are not being marked on your natural ability to be an author, poet or playwright (though you may have such talents); you are being judged on how well you can use your understanding of the course concepts in an authentic way. It's also worth remembering that very few writers will publish their first attempt. Most spend days, weeks or months (if not longer) thinking extensively about how to use language and techniques to communicate their meaning to the reader.



For example ...

When you ...	you can ...
understand that language has the power to shape our impressions and understandings	choose specific words with particular connotations or connections for a purpose
know the features of a genre, form or style	begin to experiment with making adjustments to subvert or reinforce expectations
have knowledge about a particular context or movement	allude to or make intertextual links that add layers of meaning to your writing
have an awareness of an author's oeuvre	draw on similar forms and styles to emulate or transform their work
can reflect on your own and others' place in the world	construct texts that communicate your experiences and feelings to particular audiences in ways that will speak to them
understand that all texts are constructed for particular purposes, audience and contexts	explain how your own texts have been constructed

You will often find that your creative production assessments include a requirement for you to reflect on or justify the choices you've made in constructing your text. This justification is your opportunity to explain why you did what you did and perhaps even to consider whether it had the effect you'd hoped. Don't be afraid to be honest in your assessment of your own creation.

Student writing – creative production

The following is a sample creative production: Original poem and Student rationale and reflection.

Question: Using your recent study of an Australian poem as inspiration, write a creative text aimed at an audience for a specific purpose.

Barren Brains Breathe

Breathe you imbeciles, breathe.
 All your rotten, dried, dead
 Rain-devoid lumps,
 Remnants of a once fertile land
 Evolved into stretches of sparse bush,
 Nothing will bloom on you now, nothing.

Cross! Cross! Lost another two,
 Another drought strikes as the mind quivers in fear.

Breathe, you guys, breathe,
 Riddled with bullets of expectations
 And suffocated by that devil's hands,
 In your heads there lies ...
 Nothing, but the flesh and bones of
 Suppressed, subdued, sparks, ideas.

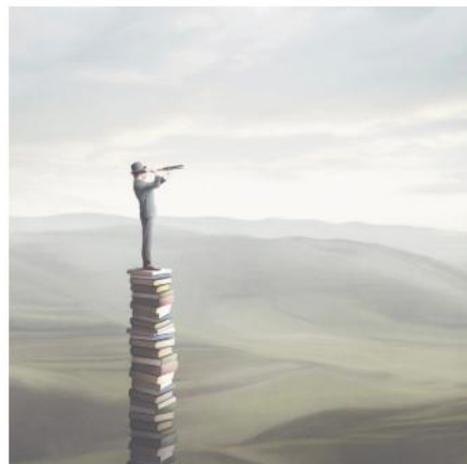
Examinations

Love them or hate them, examinations will make up a significant portion of your grade in the Literature course. At the time of writing, the ATAR examination still requires you to handwrite your response so it is likely that this will be the case in your school-based examinations too. Therefore, make sure you are prepared for this: you will need to practise writing for an extended period of time, and you must ensure your writing can be easily read by your markers. (See pages 153–4 for some tips on improving your handwriting.)

Some people find the pressures of examinations difficult to cope with. Without necessarily meaning to, teachers, parents and even other students often talk about examinations with such reverence and fear that they seem nightmarish. It's important to put examinations into perspective. Prepare for them and respect them, but don't allow exams to dominate your thoughts.

Tips for dealing with exams

- ▶ **Put them into perspective.** Have a look at your assessment outline. Your examinations can only be weighted at thirty per cent of your school-based assessments. While they make a significant contribution, they are not more important than your other assessments.
- ▶ **Study from day one.** Your examinations are designed to assess you on the content you have learned throughout your course. If you have spent time revising and reviewing the concepts and texts you've studied during each unit, you will have the knowledge you need for the exams. Studying for your exams is something you should be doing right from the start of the course (not just in the few days before!).
- ▶ **Develop study strategies that work for you.** Everyone is different when it comes to the study strategies that work for them. Some people love music while others need silence; some use sticky notes and study cards while their classmates use digital organisers. There is no 'right' way to study. Experiment to find the strategies best for you, then go for it!
- ▶ **Consider some meditation or positive self-talk strategies.** We can be our own worst enemy when it comes to exams. It's easy to fall into a mire of negativity, telling ourselves that it's impossible, that we're not smart enough and that we're going to fail. Developing strategies to be calm and mindful can really help in preparing for the pressure of exam time. Placing written affirmations around your study space can also help to put you in a mindset focused on positivity.



Studying for exams and assessments

A common complaint from students is that they don't know how to study for Literature. We can encourage you to practise close readings or use old exam questions, but it isn't as easy as flicking to the back of a textbook for answers. Your teacher is your ultimate source of feedback, but becoming self-critical is also important for improvement. Your teacher will be able to give you much more helpful, targeted advice if you can do some self-reflection first.

As a starting point, you could try something as simple as the following self-assessment checklist, which looks at the structure rather than the content of a piece of written work. Award yourself one point for each question (out of 15, or out of 20 for a timed practice). This checklist can help you scrutinise your own writing before giving it to your teacher.

Introduction

- › Do I have a global statement?
- › Have I introduced the text and writer?
- › Have I used the key words of the question?
- › Have I given some context on the text/my analysis of the concepts?
- › Do I have a thesis statement that addresses the question?

Body

- › Do I have clear topic sentences?
- › Have I used evidence or references to examples in the text?
- › Have I embedded quotations and then explained them?
- › Have I used appropriate metalanguage?
- › Have I linked evidence back to the question?
- › Have I attempted some sort of analysis of the question, unpacked my interpretation and discussed the relevance of context?

Conclusion

- › Do I have a conclusion?
- › Does my conclusion address the question?
- › Does my conclusion present a review of each of my points?
- › Do I have an attempt at a discussion about the power or significance of the text or question?

(If timed practice)

- › Did I brainstorm and reword the essay question quickly in my own words before writing?
- › Did I budget my time (e.g. 10 minutes per paragraph) and then stick to that plan?



- - ▶ Have I written three or four paragraphs, plus an introduction and conclusion in 60 minutes?
 - ▶ Did I have time to edit my work within the 60 minutes?
 - ▶ Did I feel confident of my ability to complete the task in the time allowed?

After you have completed the checklist, re-read your practice essay and make a list of your strengths and weaknesses. This will be helpful for your conference with your teacher as it will alert them to the areas that you feel need the most attention.

Better yet, make your own checklist. Try to keep your self-assessment criteria straightforward and unconditional, so you can assign marks easily. Keep in mind that a self-assessment like this is generic and doesn't cover many of the areas in which you will earn marks in an authentic task. However, it will help you ensure you are getting the basics right.

14

The WACE Literature examination

When the Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) examining panel writes the paper each year, it is required to follow the **examination design brief**. This sets out how many questions may be included, which aspects of the course are being examined and the structure of the paper. You will find it in your Literature syllabus documents. Don't forget that the focus of the exam will be on all the concepts you've learned during the course – that means Unit 1, Unit 2, Unit 3 and Unit 4. Make sure you revise them all!

Your exam will consist of two sections:

- Section One: Response – close reading
- Section Two: Extended response.

The purpose of the exam is to assess all the skills you have honed throughout your Literature course: in particular, your analytical skills in responding to an unseen text, in the close reading section; and your ability to discuss your studied texts through the filter of specific course content, in the extended response section. Both sections assess your ability to communicate clearly, to use appropriate terminology, to apply the discourse of literature study, and to draw on relevant textual and contextual details to support your discussion.

The marking of the Literature examination is criterion-referenced. This means that each criterion is assessed independently of the others. The criteria represent skills you have been building throughout your course.



Close reading

When we read texts, we are using our understanding of the way they are constructed to develop an understanding of what they mean. On a superficial level, we are looking for their literal meaning. However, when we make a *close reading* of a text, we focus on the way the text has been constructed in particular ways to communicate significance to us. We are looking at how this extract or this individual poem is working to communicate something to us, or to make us feel something in particular. (See Chapter 3 for more on making a reading of an unseen text.)

Something that distinguishes a great reading is being able to communicate to the marker that you understand the generic conventions and features of the text type you have chosen. In other words, your marker should know, from the genre-specific language you are using, that you are discussing a poem, a prose fiction extract or a piece of drama.

Using the contextual information

The focus of a close reading is on the text itself, rather than on external information such as the author or the time period. Avoid getting bogged down in the context of your unseen texts. The information provided will be deliberately minimal because you are being assessed on your close reading of the given text, not on your knowledge of an author or a time period.

Generally, you will be told who wrote the text, when it was written and, sometimes, where it was first performed or published. This information can help shape your response by alerting you to whether this text is situated in a time and place similar to your own. This may help you in considering how audiences might receive the text, and how your own knowledge could be helpful in developing a reading. It might also prompt you to think about some of the events or issues relevant to the time and place of production. However, these things are only relevant if you can relate them directly to the text itself. Never make guesses about an author's intentions, and avoid assumptions about their presence in the text. Respond to what is in front of you.

Use the contextual information

Consider the following contextual information for the drama *The Return* and the poem 'We Real Cool'.

The Return was written by Australian playwright Reg Cribb. It was first performed in 2001 at the Stables Theatre in Sydney. It was later adapted for screen with the title *Last Train to Freo*.

'We Real Cool' was written by African American poet Gwendolyn Brooks (1917–2000). The poem was published in the anthology *The Bean Eaters* in 1960.

How might the information you have been given here help you develop an understanding of each text?

Student writing – introduction

Below is the introduction to a close reading of the short story ‘A Girl is Sitting on a Unicorn in the Middle of a Shopping Centre’, by Perth-based author Elizabeth Tan. What are the strengths and weaknesses of this introduction? How would you adjust this introduction to make it a stronger opening to a close reading response?

The need to spend is a dominant force in our lives; however, our increasing reliance on this for fulfilment will have many consequences in the future. This notion is evident in Elizabeth Tan’s 2017 short story ‘A Girl is Sitting on a Unicorn in the Middle of a Shopping Centre’, which details an average Australian shopping trip, characterised by pedal-operated ‘unicorns’, blaring advertisements and ‘stocktake sales’ throughout all department stores in a desperate attempt to lure customers. Through the perspective of a reader who values the environment and sustainable spending practices, the text can be read as a critique of the hypnotic nature of capitalism, which works to destroy our environment and the fulfilment that can be found within nature. It also laments the loss of the innocence of childhood, which is increasingly becoming commodified with the noisy level of advertisements and capitalist techniques directed at children. Overall, the text may be seen as an overarching critique of our reliance on monetary purchases for satisfaction, especially in an Australian context, where much of our population is wealthy and fuelled by such acquisitive drives.

Process for practising a timed, unseen close reading

The most common trap students fall into when writing their close reading response is retelling the narrative or describing the text. Remember that your *analytical* skills are being assessed in this section. Always focus on the *meaning* that is being conveyed to you, and *how* that is achieved.

It is a good idea to consistently practise the skill of reading closely. You will need a range of extracts: some poetry, some prose and some drama texts. The key to getting better at timed unseen analysis is to mimic the timing constraints. Don’t read a poem and think about it all day, mentally formulating a reading in your head. That’s unrealistic and you will feel frustrated when you can’t reproduce that style of analysis in a timed situation. Try the following process.

Preparation

1. Source an unseen prose fiction or drama extract, or a poem. (Your teacher will be able to help you with this.) Try not to read a text too closely before you practise. Keep it as unseen as possible until you start the practice analysis.
2. Set a timer for 60 minutes, to reflect one of the hours of a three-hour exam. Have lined paper, highlighters and pens ready to go. Handwrite rather than type – this is about practising for the real thing.

Planning (approx. 10–15 minutes)

3. Once you start the timer, start reading the text. Don’t rush this part.
4. Next is annotation. As you start highlighting anything that stands out to you, make notes about ideas, themes, techniques or conventions. Often this is where students become stuck. Your mind starts to race with thoughts, like ‘I have no idea what this text is about! This text doesn’t even make sense to me!’ Remind yourself of CRAIG (see page 66). What do you see represented in the text? →

-
5. Next, identify the meaning and impact of this representation in the text. Consider audience, purpose and context *if relevant and accessible*. Try to identify something *significant* about the text's meaning – what is it trying to make you think, feel, understand or question?
 6. Make a plan. This can take any shape you like. It might be a quick mind map or an essay skeleton. Do this in whatever form works for you, but always make a plan.

Writing (approx. 40–45 minutes)

7. Begin writing your response. Ensure your handwriting is legible and that you set out your response clearly. Avoid using lots of asterisks referring to other areas of your writing, and don't write in the margins. Remember, your WACE marker cannot rotate your page, so writing in odd places or vertically makes your response very difficult to read!

Proofreading and editing (5–10 minutes)

8. Make sure you leave yourself time to read through your response from start to finish at least once. Check for:
 - » any places you've crossed or painted out a word but forgotten to fill it back in
 - » any words you cannot quickly and easily read (rewrite them neatly)
 - » spelling and punctuation errors
 - » use of appropriate metalanguage.

Afterwards

9. Evaluate your own work after the 60 minutes, using a marking key. Your teacher will be able to provide you with one. Reflect on your performance using the following questions.
 - » Did you write a complete response in the time you had?
 - » Were there areas that you needed more time for (e.g. did reading and understanding the text take longer than 10–15 minutes)?
 - » Are there concepts or skills that you need help with? Where can you access this help (e.g. study notes, teacher conference)?
10. Plan to swap your response with a study partner so you can provide each other with *honest* feedback. What did your partner do well and where could they improve? What can you learn from their approach to the text?



Extended response

In the extended response section of the exam, you'll be asked to write two responses using the two genres you *didn't* use for the close reading section. Penalties can be imposed in terms of your marks if you ignore this requirement.

- ▶ If you used **prose fiction** for Section One, you must use **drama** and **poetry** in Section Two.
- ▶ If you used **drama** for Section One, you must use **prose fiction** and **poetry** in Section Two.
- ▶ If you used **poetry** for Section One, you must use **drama** and **prose fiction** in Section Two.

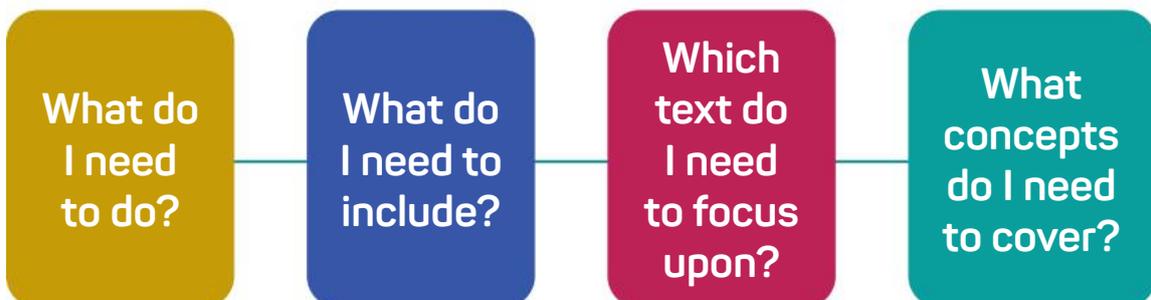
As these are formal responses, you will be expected to adhere to the conventions of long-form essays as outlined in Chapter 13 ('Written assessments', pages 151–4). While there are no specific rules that say you *must* write in this way in the exam, marks will be awarded for your ability to express yourself in a clear, sophisticated and well-structured manner. In general, using the essay form will help you to do this. Certainly there are arguments to be made for the potential benefits or pitfalls of other forms; however, our advice is that your WACE examination is probably not the best place to push that particular limit. If you are interested in experimenting with other ways to convey your understanding in alternative written forms, we suggest speaking to your teacher about opportunities to do this outside the exam context.

Each question in this section of the exam will focus on a small number of specific syllabus points (usually one or two). In order to address the question, it is important to quickly break it down into relevant key words and concepts. This should be something you practise consistently. The aim is for this to become second nature, and to elevate the efficiency and precision of your planning.

Breaking down the question

In order to be able to craft a response that addresses the question you have been asked, you will need to understand the components that make up that question.

In general, any question you are given will consist of words that will help you determine answers to the following questions.



What do I need to do?

This part of the question will tell you *the way* in which you need to respond. Common instructions include ‘reflect’, ‘explore’, ‘discuss’, ‘argue’ and ‘consider’. This part of the question might also give you some further information about the specific manner in which you’re expected to respond. For example, you might be asked to ‘consider *the extent to which*’, which would imply that rather than agreeing or disagreeing with the proposal, you need to explore its significance or relevance.

What do I need to include?

Next, identify the component in your question that tells you *what* you need to include in your response. Most questions will ask you for ‘the ways’ or ‘how’ something is done or seen, so don’t place too much emphasis on this part of the instruction – you will always need to show ‘how’ something has been constructed or demonstrated, or ‘the ways’ that something can be seen in a text. Instead, focus on the words that ask you about how your response or understanding of a text was shaped or influenced. This might include words and phrases such as ‘challenged you’, ‘impacted upon’, ‘led to a deeper appreciation for’ or ‘the importance of’.

Which text do I need to focus on?

In your Literature examination you will usually be asked to focus on ‘at least one literary text’ or ‘at least one text you have studied’. For any question in this section, the text must be from your set text list. You are able to discuss texts that are not on that list, but the *main focus* (i.e. more than half) of your response must relate directly to the text on the list. Penalties can be imposed if you ignore this requirement.

Additionally, some questions in the exam will relate to a specific genre. That is, the question will state that you must focus on ‘at least one prose fiction text’, ‘at least one drama text’ or ‘at least one poem’. When responding to these questions, your answer *must* relate to the appropriate genre.

When you choose the text you will use to illustrate your argument, be thoughtful about whether or not it is the best fit for the question. Avoid walking into your exams with decisions already made about which text types you will use in each section, or which specific texts you will use in your responses. Be open-minded and adaptable.

What concepts do I need to cover?

All the questions posed in this section must relate to *syllabus content*. Sometimes the content is referred to quite directly, using the same language you will see in the syllabus documents. For example:

- ▶ Consider the ways in which representations of the past allow a nation or culture to recognise itself in at least one literary text. ← *Language direct from the syllabus*

At other times, the reference to syllabus content may be implied, or the question might use different language. Sometimes, you will be asked to focus on a specific aspect of a wider concept. For example, to address the syllabus point of ‘the impact of the use of literary conventions and stylistic techniques’, the question could be:

Explore key words used in questions

ACTIVITY 14.2

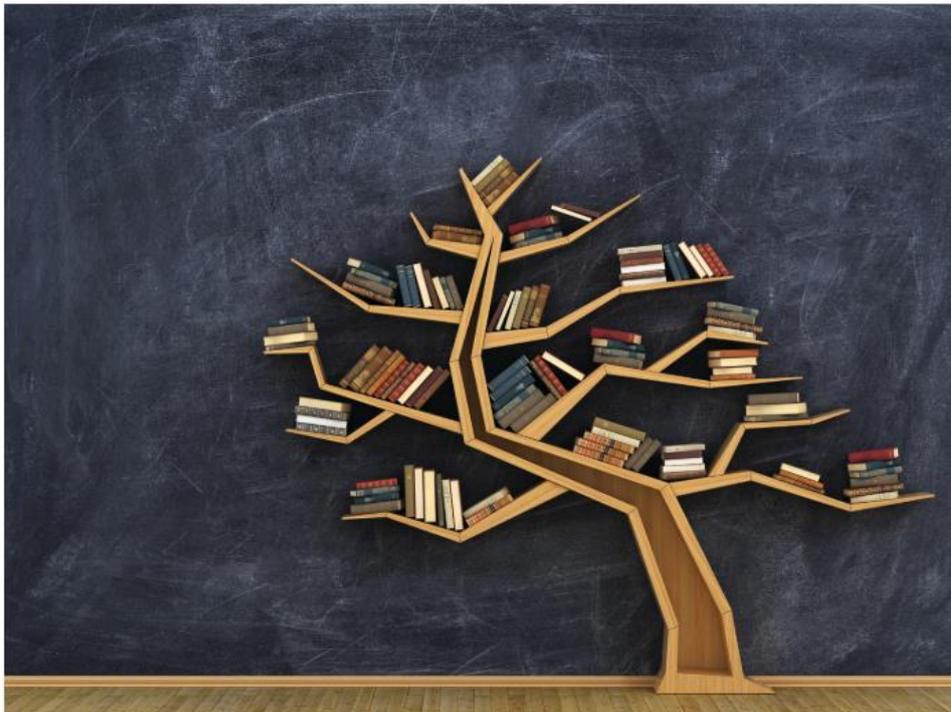
Scan the code or click [here](#) to see the ‘Glossary of key words used in the formulation of questions’ on the SCSA website. You will notice that it includes words relevant to all the WACE examinations. Highlight each of the words that you could expect to see in a Literature exam. Are there any you are unsure of? What are the core differences between each one?



Break down questions

ACTIVITY 14.3

- Following the example on page 167, break each of the following questions down to find the elements shown in the example.
 - Discuss the way in which at least one poem has used specific language to convey or critique contemporary values and/or attitudes.
 - How has your own cultural experience shaped the way you have responded to at least one literary text you have studied?
 - Explore the way that at least one literary text has been significant across multiple times and/or places.
 - Explain how at least one drama text you have studied has drawn on specific dramatic conventions to engage the audience in thinking about controversial or unpalatable topics.
- Share your breakdowns with a partner or your class. Did you each read the questions in the same way? Did you choose the same syllabus concepts?



The BRACS process

Once you have an understanding of what the question is asking you to focus upon, you can choose a text to suit its demands. Not all questions will be suitable for every text you've studied. Sometimes, one of your texts will seem like a great fit initially but turn out to be of limited use once you start your response. For this reason, it's important that you *plan* your response before you begin. The BRACS process outlined below is just one way to do this. Your teacher may give you other ideas, or you might come up with your own. Whatever specific steps you take, the main thing is that you begin writing your response with a clear sense of what the question is asking, how you are planning to answer it and how the text you've chosen can be used to illustrate your ideas.

The following are the five steps of the BRACS process.

1. **Break down** the question – what is it asking you to answer or to do? What are the key terms? What are the syllabus concept words?
2. **Rewrite** the question quickly in your own words.
3. **Annotate** the question. This can take any form you like (e.g. mind maps, skeleton plan, textual examples). Consider your text choice, how to apply the key words and syllabus concepts, and what textual evidence is the best for this answer.
4. **Collate** the planning into a structure and argument. What is your claim in relation to this question and your chosen text? From your claim you should start planning out three or four supporting ideas.
5. **Shape** a thesis. Using your planning, what is your one-sentence answer to the question?

Plan an answer

ACTIVITY 14.4

Using the BRACS process above, or one that works for you, plan a response to each of the questions given in 14.3. Make sure you choose a text that is relevant to the question, and plot out the specific quotes or evidence you could use in your response. Be disciplined here – practise this as though you were in the exam room.

A word from Literature teacher Jodie ...

Find your own evidence. When reading and re-reading your studied texts, make a note of interesting quotes that support your understanding and interpretation of them. This will ensure you can write about your examples with knowledge and personal insight. Unique evidence will also make your response stand out from those that use familiar lines from study guides.



SECTION 7

Historical time line, glossary and answers

This section presents a historical time line of literature from Ancient Greek and Roman times to the present day. It also includes a glossary of key terms, as well as answers to the activities in Chapter 11.



Historical time line

When	Who	Literary forms and ideas	Events and social movements
1000 BC	Ancient Greek and Roman civilisations	Poetry Homer (Greek), <i>The Odyssey</i> , <i>The Iliad</i> Virgil (Roman), <i>The Aeneid</i>	The Greek civilisation 800–300 BCE: a collection of city-states linked by a common language and artistic heritage Roman Empire roughly 300 BCE until 400s CE
		Drama Sophocles (Greek), <i>Oedipus Rex</i> , <i>Antigone</i> Euripides (Greek), <i>Medea</i> , <i>Women of Troy</i>	
450 CE	Middle Ages / Medieval period	<i>Beowulf</i> (anon.), written in Old English possibly during the 8th century Geoffrey Chaucer, <i>The Canterbury Tales</i> : sequence of narrative poems, written in Middle English in the late 14th century Thomas Wyatt, poetry, especially love poetry, including sonnets	Norman conquest of England 1066 Printing with movable metal type used in Europe from 1450s Columbus landed in the Bahamas ('discovering' America) 1492 Henry VIII established the Church of England in 1534
1550	Elizabethan period	Poetry Edmund Spenser, <i>The Faerie Queene</i> William Shakespeare, sequence of 154 sonnets John Donne	Queen Elizabeth I reigned 1558–1603 Consolidation of the (Protestant) Church of England English military and trade strength increased Defeat of the Spanish Armada in 1588 displayed English naval strength Cultural activity flourished
		Drama Christopher Marlowe, <i>Tamberlaine</i> , <i>Dr Faustus</i> William Shakespeare, <i>Romeo and Juliet</i> , <i>Hamlet</i>	
1603	Jacobean period / Restoration	Shakespeare, <i>King Lear</i> , <i>Macbeth</i> , <i>The Tempest</i> Ben Jonson, <i>Volpone</i> John Webster, <i>The Duchess of Malfi</i> John Milton, <i>Paradise Lost</i> (epic narrative poem)	James I reigned 1603–25 English Civil War 1642–51 Theatres closed 1642–60 Charles I beheaded 1649 Restoration of the monarchy 1660
1700	18th century	Daniel Defoe, <i>Robinson Crusoe</i> Jonathan Swift, <i>Gulliver's Travels</i> Henry Fielding, <i>Tom Jones</i> Samuel Johnson, <i>Rasselas</i> Alexander Pope, poetry and translations Mary Wollstonecraft, <i>A Vindication of the Rights of Woman</i>	American Declaration of Independence 4 July 1776 French Revolution 1789 overthrew the monarchy/aristocracy First Fleet arrived at Botany Bay 1788, beginning the colonisation of Australia

When	Who	Literary forms and ideas	Events and social movements	
late 1700s	Romanticism / Regency period	Poetry William Wordsworth Samuel Taylor Coleridge Lord (George) Byron Percy Bysshe Shelley John Keats William Blake	Forms such as the ode and the lyric Emphasis on the expression of feeling and an appreciation of beauty, especially of nature Rejection of urban, industrialised society	Regency period 1811–20 The Industrial Revolution led to population movements from the country to the city Slavery abolished in the British Empire 1834 Rise in nationalism across Europe
		Novels Mary Shelley, <i>Frankenstein</i> Jane Austen, <i>Pride and Prejudice</i> , <i>Emma</i> , <i>Sense and Sensibility</i> Sir Walter Scott, <i>Rob Roy</i> , <i>Ivanhoe</i>	<i>Frankenstein</i> reflects the concerns of Romanticism: love of nature, scepticism towards science and technology Austen's novels reflect middle- and upper-middle-class lives and concerns Scott established the historical novel	In Australia: colonies of Tasmania (1856) and South Australia (1836) established; Port Phillip District (1836) later became Victoria (1851) Convict transportation to NSW ceased 1842; to Tasmania ceased 1853
1837	Victorian period	Novels Charles Dickens, <i>Bleak House</i> , <i>David Copperfield</i> Elizabeth Gaskell, <i>Cranford</i> , <i>North and South</i> Charlotte Brontë, <i>Jane Eyre</i> Emily Brontë, <i>Wuthering Heights</i> George Eliot, <i>Middlemarch</i> Thomas Hardy, <i>Tess of the D'Urbervilles</i> Leo Tolstoy (Russia), <i>Anna Karenina</i> Henry James (US/UK), <i>Portrait of a Lady</i>	More critical than previously of social aspects, e.g. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> poverty and exploitation of working classes restrictions on women's lives Publication in serial and multi-volume formats led to wide readerships Later novelists in this period (Hardy, James) anticipated modernism	Queen Victoria reigned 1837–1901 Great Exhibition 1851 held in London at Crystal Palace: each nation displayed machines and inventions Mass production replaced 'cottage' industries Common land broken up into privately owned blocks Education became universally available and compulsory in England and Wales after the 1870 Education Act American Civil War 1861–65; slavery abolished 1865
		Poetry Robert Browning Elizabeth Barrett Browning Alfred, Lord Tennyson Christina Rossetti Emily Dickinson (US)	Dramatic monologue developed by Browning and Tennyson Formal structures, rhyming and conventional rhythms remained important	In Australia: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Marcus Clarke published <i>His Natural Life</i> in serial form 1870–72 Heidelberg School of landscape painters in 1880s and 1890s, inc. Tom Roberts and Arthur Streeton, established a distinctly Australian style of art
		Drama Henrik Ibsen (Norway), <i>A Doll's House</i> , <i>Hedda Gabler</i> Anton Chekhov (Russia), <i>Three Sisters</i> , <i>The Cherry Orchard</i> , <i>Uncle Vanya</i> Oscar Wilde, <i>The Importance of Being Earnest</i>	More naturalistic forms were developed by Ibsen and Chekhov to represent ordinary people and situations Wilde perfected the 'comedy of manners'	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Henry Lawson and Barbara Baynton published stories in late 1890s and early 1900s Poetry by Lawson and 'Banjo' Paterson celebrated the bush lifestyle
1900				

20th century		Who	Literary forms and ideas	Events and social movements
literary movements	Modernism	<p>Joseph Conrad, <i>Heart of Darkness</i></p> <p>James Joyce (Ireland), <i>Ulysses</i></p> <p>F Scott Fitzgerald (US), <i>The Great Gatsby</i></p> <p>DH Lawrence, <i>Lady Chatterley's Lover</i></p> <p>Virginia Woolf, <i>Mrs Dalloway</i></p> <p>Gertrude Stein (US), <i>The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas</i></p> <p>Marcel Proust (France), <i>In Search of Lost Time</i></p>	<p>Much experimentation with form and a breaking down of older ideas and conventions</p> <p>WWI had a major impact on writers, undermining confidence in authority figures and in traditional social structures and institutions</p> <p>Novels used 'stream of consciousness', unreliable narrators; addressed 'taboo' subjects such as sexuality</p>	<p>World War I 1914–18</p> <p>Spanish Civil War 1936–39</p> <p>World War II 1939–45</p> <p>Suffragettes campaigned for women to have the right to vote:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> achieved in Australia in 1902 achieved in England for women over 30 in 1918 <p>Expressionism: artistic movement; advocated the strong expression of emotion in distorted or grotesque forms</p> <p>Surrealism: artistic movement; combined objects in unlikely ways and contexts</p>
		<p>TS Eliot (US/UK), <i>The Waste Land</i></p> <p>WB Yeats (Ireland)</p> <p>WH Auden (UK/US)</p> <p>Amy Lowell (US)</p>	<p>Poetry used free verse (no systematic rhyming or rhythmic scheme)</p> <p>Drama broke down conventions for representing people in a realistic fashion</p>	
		<p>Luigi Pirandello (Italy), <i>Six Characters in Search of an Author</i></p> <p>Bertolt Brecht (Germany), <i>Mother Courage, The Caucasian Chalk Circle</i></p>		
literary movements	Postmodernism	<p>around 1950</p> <p>Vladimir Nabokov (Russia/US), <i>Lolita</i></p> <p>Kurt Vonnegut (US), <i>Slaughterhouse-Five</i></p> <p>Doris Lessing, <i>The Golden Notebook</i></p> <p>Gabriel García Márquez (Colombia), <i>One Hundred Years of Solitude</i></p> <p>Jorge Luis Borges (Argentina), <i>Ficciones</i></p> <p>Italo Calvino (Italy), <i>If on a Winter's Night a Traveller</i></p>	<p>Continued experimentation with form, often in a more playful way than in modernist writing</p> <p>Novels: use of multiple narrators, fragmented forms, ambiguity and lack of closure</p> <p>Poetry: much experimentation with form, style and content, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> free verse playful arrangement of words (and sometimes punctuation) on the page informal and colloquial speech patterns allusions to popular culture anti-conservative and overtly political content <p>Drama: Beckett and absurdist theatre abandoned traditional plot and character conventions</p> <p>More interest in working-class identities and concerns</p> <p>Use of everyday speech in dialogue</p>	<p>Cold War from 1945: massive build-up of nuclear weapons by US and USSR followed by the collapse of the USSR in 1991</p> <p>Vietnam War 1959–75</p> <p>Electronic media (radio, television) became much more prominent compared to print media</p> <p>Internet developed during the 1970s with rapid expansion throughout 1990s</p> <p>In Australia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> immigration from Europe (esp. in 1950s and 1960s) and Southeast Asia (esp. in 1970s) Whitlam government (1972–75) improved women's rights; recognised Aboriginal land rights; funded the arts and education (removed university tuition fees) Australia Council for the Arts founded in 1967; Australian Film Commission in 1975
		<p>'Beat' poets (US): Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac</p> <p>Frank O'Hara (US)</p> <p>Carol Ann Duffy</p> <p>Jennifer Maiden (Australia)</p> <p>John Forbes (Australia)</p>		
		<p>Arthur Miller (US), <i>Death of a Salesman, The Crucible</i></p> <p>Samuel Beckett (Ireland), <i>Waiting for Godot, Endgame</i></p> <p>Eugène Ionesco (Romania/France), <i>Rhinoceros</i></p> <p>Caryl Churchill, <i>Serious Money</i></p>		

20th century	Who	Literary forms and ideas	Events and social movements
literary movements	Postcolonialism	<p>Writers from colonies or former colonies of European nations became more prominent, often strongly critical of colonial powers and their exploitation of First Nations peoples</p> <p>Salman Rushdie coined the expression 'The empire writes back'</p> <p>The English language became an instrument for 'writing back' (expressing the experiences of the dispossessed in the language of the coloniser)</p>	<p>Australian colonies federated in 1901; Aboriginal people counted in census from 1967</p> <p>Indonesia independent of Dutch rule from 1945</p> <p>India independent of British rule from 1947</p> <p>Vietnam independent of French rule from 1954</p> <p>East Timor independent of Indonesian rule from 2002</p>
	Feminism/second wave feminism	<p>Writing by women became increasingly prominent post-WWII</p> <p>Experimentation with narrative point of view and style to develop a feminist or feminine writing style</p> <p>Feminist writers used nonfiction as well as novels, poetry and drama</p> <p>Feminist concerns also entered into literary texts without being obviously politicised</p>	<p>Following WWII, women increasingly moved into professions traditionally dominated by men, e.g. medicine, law, politics</p> <p>Women gained more control over reproduction through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • introduction of the birth control pill (early 1960s) • liberalisation of abortion laws (from 1967 in UK)
	Other fiction (popular, mainstream)	<p>Novels: traditional forms continued to be used, generally receiving wider readerships than experimental forms</p> <p>Poetry became less widely read and known</p> <p>Drama: mainstream forms continued within national dramatic traditions, e.g. in the US (Tennessee Williams, Arthur Miller); Australia (David Williamson, Hanne Rayson)</p> <p>The musical became the dominant form of theatre, e.g. Rodgers and Hammerstein (<i>Oklahoma!</i>, <i>The Sound of Music</i>); Andrew Lloyd Webber (<i>Cats</i>, <i>The Phantom of the Opera</i>)</p>	<p>Hollywood cinema globally dominant in terms of distribution</p> <p>Indian film industry became the largest in the world</p> <p>In Australia:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australian literature began to be recognised in universities from the 1960s • Patrick White won the 1973 Nobel Prize in Literature • rise of Australian film industry in 1970s, including early films directed by Peter Weir (<i>Picnic at Hanging Rock</i>), Fred Schepisi (<i>The Chant of Jimmie Blacksmith</i>), Bruce Beresford (<i>Breaker Morant</i>) and Gillian Armstrong (<i>My Brilliant Career</i>)

21st century	Who	Literary forms and ideas	Events and social movements
Novels (popular and literary)	JK Rowling, the <i>Harry Potter</i> series	Breakdown of clear distinctions between literary and other genres of writing	India and China became global powers with huge labour forces; India moved to the forefront of the IT industry
	Stephanie Meyer (US), the <i>Twilight</i> novels	Many crossovers into film	Terrorists flew hijacked planes into the World Trade Center, New York in 2001; start of the 'war on terror'
	Dan Brown (US), <i>The Da Vinci Code</i>	Film still a dominant form but DVDs and online streaming services provide alternatives to cinemas	US invaded Iraq in 2003 with the UK and Australia as allies
	Stieg Larsson (Sweden), the <i>Millennium</i> trilogy	Increasing interest in nonfiction	Climate change began to be recognised as a major global challenge
	Suzanne Collins, the <i>Hunger Games</i> trilogy	Growth of online publishing and blogs	Global financial crisis (GFC) of 2007–8 caused a severe financial downturn
	Jonathan Franzen (US), <i>The Corrections</i>	Development of multimodal texts, including graphic novels and digital books	The Arab Spring beginning in 2010 led to popular uprisings and overthrow of dictatorships in Libya, Egypt, Tunisia and Yemen
	Hilary Mantel, <i>Wolf Hall</i> , <i>Bring Up the Bodies</i>		Me Too global protest movement (from 2017) against sexual harassment and assault, particularly in the workplace, through the use of the hashtag #MeToo on social media
	Peter Carey (Australia/US), <i>True History of the Kelly Gang</i>		Many Western countries legalised same-sex marriage, beginning with the Netherlands in 2001, and including Australia (2017)
	Kate Grenville (Australia), the <i>Secret River</i> trilogy		
	Richard Flanagan (Australia), <i>The Narrow Road to the Deep North</i>		
Alexis Wright (Australia), <i>Carpentaria</i>			
Tara June Winch (Australia), <i>The Yield</i>			



Glossary

This glossary is designed to be read in conjunction with the glossary found in the ATAR Literature syllabus documents.

Attitude

A way of thinking or feeling about society, people, events or ideas indirectly expressed through actions or speech.

Audience

A group of people who read and experience a text.

Belief

Something we hold to be true or in existence (usually influenced by our culture, perspective and context).

Close reading

Focusing on the way a text has been constructed in particular ways to communicate significance to us.

Context

The environment in which something takes place; in Literature, this refers to the world when a text was first produced and the world of the audience when a text is experienced.

Culture

Shared beliefs, values, attitudes, traditions or behaviours of particular groups.

Discourse

The way language reflects, contributes to, and constructs meanings of ways of thinking or behaviours.

Dogma

A belief or set of beliefs that are presented as truth or irrefutable.

Dogmatic ideologies

A framework of beliefs, or a structure or system, that is presented as truth or irrefutable.

Dynamic

Ever-changing and evolving; for example, in Literature, this can refer to the use of language, meanings, interpretations, or a text's relationship with audiences.

Gaps and silences

A gap invites readers to make connections or fill in details using their broader contextual knowledge, beliefs, values and attitudes. Gaps may be intentional. A silence is where certain voices are marginalised, hidden, excluded or erased within a text.

Identity

A distinct personality or the character of a person.

Ideology

A framework for collective belief systems, often associated with politics, economics, philosophy or religion.

Interpretation

In Literature, an explanation of the analysis you conducted to find meaning in a text. There can be multiple, valid interpretations of a text.

Literary canon

A collective that represents influential, enduring or well-respected texts; recognisable and well-known texts that are considered to have literary value, merit or significance.

Metalanguage

Specific terminology or language associated with a subject, genre or field of analysis.

Personal voice

The personality of your academic writing; developing evidence-based claims, arguments and evaluations of texts through a consideration of self.

Power

The ability to influence others' thoughts or behaviours, or exert control over others in positive or negative ways.

Privilege

Entitlement to rights, powers or advantages over other groups.

Purpose

The role a text may play in society based on a reader's interpretation of a writer's intent. As readers we can never truly know a writer or text's purpose, only what we surmise and discover through analysis, interpretation and use of evidence.

Reading practice

Specific ideological lenses or frames through which we interpret a text.

Reading strategy

How we approach a text to find layers of meaning.

Representation

A portrayal or embodiment of a group, person, place or concept that can be symbolic of a greater whole.

Resonates

Describes the depth of personal connection – physical and/or ideological – we feel with a text.

Schema

A schema (pl. schemata) is the way we mentally organise and access knowledge. When we read texts, we categorise, deconstruct and connect our new knowledge with the understandings we already have. We draw on our schemata (our systems of background knowledge and experiences) to help us interpret new information and to present what we know.

Seminal

In literature, texts or writers that have great influence or are considered groundbreaking.

Society

A large group of people who are located in a particular place who share a way of life in a structured and organised system.

Answers

This section contains answers to Activities 11.1 and 11.4.

Find connections

ACTIVITY 11.1

1 What do all of these books have in common?

THEY HAVE ALL BEEN BANNED AT SOME STAGE.

Identify pseudonyms

ACTIVITY 11.4

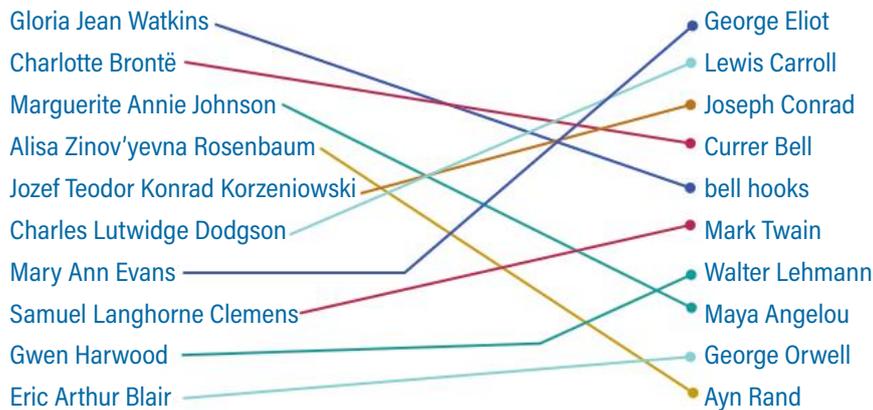
1 Match the writers to their more familiar pseudonyms.

Real names

- Gloria Jean Watkins
- Charlotte Brontë
- Marguerite Annie Johnson
- Alisa Zinov'yevna Rosenbaum
- Jozef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski
- Charles Lutwidge Dodgson
- Mary Ann Evans
- Samuel Langhorne Clemens
- Gwen Harwood
- Eric Arthur Blair

Pseudonyms

- George Eliot
- Lewis Carroll
- Joseph Conrad
- Currer Bell
- bell hooks
- Mark Twain
- Walter Lehmann
- Maya Angelou
- George Orwell
- Ayn Rand



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About the authors

Emma Cattapan grew up in an Irish-Italian household with parents who had a penchant for telling tall tales, conducting singalongs and reciting poetry at the drop of a hat, and two older sisters who filled her childhood with intricate, imaginative games and the dissection of song lyrics. As she was always reading, listening to music or writing, it made sense that Emma would go on to study the power of language and communication. She has been teaching since 2000, beginning her career in London, UK. Since then, Emma has worked in various educational settings and loves building staff camaraderie and collaboration, as well as promoting a love of literature throughout her schools. Emma is still fascinated by language, music and storytelling, and you can often catch her humming along to Taylor Swift with her students in her classroom.

Katie Fielding has always been a reader. Having a mum who has worked in libraries for more than thirty years enabled her to have near-constant access to books since childhood. It is one of the joys of her life that her own children are now equally enamoured with literature, and she was quietly pleased to catch her ten-year-old trying to read in the shower! Correcting a brief misstep that involved thinking she ought to become a surgeon, Katie studied to become a teacher and spent many years blissfully discussing English and literature with her students before shifting her focus to tertiary education, where she has worked with hundreds of first-year university students to develop their academic writing skills and with pre-service teachers as they embark on their own journeys to becoming educators.

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Literature

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