

FOR THE  
IB DIPLOMA

# English Literature

**DRAFT COPY**

Nic Amy  
Carolyn P. Henly  
Angela Stancar Johnson  
Kathleen Clare Waller  
Series editor: Carolyn P. Henly

The Publishers would like to thank the following for permission to reproduce copyright material.

#### Photo credits

#### Acknowledgements

Every effort has been made to trace all copyright holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked, the Publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangements at the first opportunity.

Although every effort has been made to ensure that website addresses are correct at time of going to press, Hodder Education cannot be held responsible for the content of any website mentioned in this book. It is sometimes possible to find a relocated web page by typing in the address of the home page for a website in the URL window of your browser.

Hachette UK's policy is to use papers that are natural, renewable and recyclable products and made from wood grown in well-managed forests and other controlled sources. The logging and manufacturing processes are expected to conform to the environmental regulations of the country of origin.

Orders: please contact Bookpoint Ltd, 130 Park Drive, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4SE. Telephone: +44 (0)1235 827827. Fax: +44 (0)1235 400401. Email [education@bookpoint.co.uk](mailto:education@bookpoint.co.uk) Lines are open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., Monday to Saturday, with a 24-hour message answering service. You can also order through our website: [www.hoddereducation.co.uk](http://www.hoddereducation.co.uk)

© Nic Amy, Carolyn P. Henly, Angela Stancar Johnson, Kathleen Clare Waller 2019

First published in 2019 by  
Hodder Education,  
An Hachette UK Company  
Carmelite House  
50 Victoria Embankment  
London EC4Y 0DZ

[www.hoddereducation.co.uk](http://www.hoddereducation.co.uk)

Impression number 10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

Year 2023 2022 2021 2020 2019

All rights reserved. Apart from any use permitted under UK copyright law, no part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying and recording, or held within any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher or under licence from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited. Further details of such licences (for reprographic reproduction) may be obtained from the Copyright Licensing Agency Limited, [www.cla.co.uk](http://www.cla.co.uk)

Cover photo ©rolffimages - stock.adobe.com

Illustrations by Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd., Pondicherry, India

Typeset in Integra Software Services Pvt. Ltd., Pondicherry, India

Printed in Italy

ISBN: 978 1 5104 6713 2

A catalogue record for this title is available from the British Library.



# Contents

## Introduction

### Section 1 Readers, writers and texts

- 1.1 Why and how do we study literature? 1
- 1.2 How are we affected by literary texts in various ways? 22
- 1.3 How does language use vary among literary forms? 42
- 1.4 How does the structure or style of a literary text affect meaning? 71
- 1.5 How do literary texts offer insights and challenges? 96
- 1.6 In what ways is meaning constructed, negotiated, expressed and interpreted? 115

### Section 2 Time and space

- 2.1 How important is cultural or historical context to the production and reception of a literary text? 135
- 2.2 How do we approach literary texts from different times and cultures to our own? 148
- 2.3 To what extent do literary texts offer insight into another culture? 162
- 2.4 How does the meaning and impact of a literary text change over time? 177
- 2.5 How do literary texts reflect, represent or form a part of cultural practices? 204
- 2.6 How does language represent social distinctions and identities? 231

### Section 3 Intertextuality: connecting texts

- 3.1 How do conventions and systems of reference evolve over time? 252
- 3.2 How do literary texts adhere to and deviate from conventions associated with literary forms? 268
- 3.3 In what ways can diverse literary texts share points of similarity? 283
- 3.4 How valid is the notion of a 'classic' literary text? 293
- 3.5 How can literary texts offer multiple perspectives of a single issue, topic or theme? 312
- 3.6 In what ways can comparison and interpretation be transformative? 332

Glossary 352

Notes on activities 357

Index 370

Acknowledgements 371

Notes 00

# Introduction

## OBJECTIVES OF CHAPTER

- To understand the role of the coursebook in the IB English Literature course
- To introduce the three areas of exploration and define them
- To introduce the seven course concepts and define them
- To introduce the concept of global issues and to define examples
- To define inquiry-based learning

## IB English Literature

You have probably been reading for just about as long as you can remember. Much of the reading you have done in your early life and through primary or elementary school was likely to have been quite easy to understand. Maybe you are familiar with this very famous poem:

Twinkle, twinkle, little star,  
How I wonder what you are!  
Up above the world so high,  
Like a diamond in the sky.

5 When the blazing sun is gone,  
When he nothing shines upon,  
Then you show your little light,  
Twinkle, twinkle, all the night.

Then the traveller in the dark  
10 Thanks you for your tiny spark,  
How could he see where to go,  
If you did not twinkle so?

In the dark blue sky you keep,  
Often through my curtains peep,  
15 For you never shut your eye,  
Till the sun is in the sky.

As your bright and tiny spark  
Lights the traveller in the dark,  
Though I know not what you are,  
20 Twinkle, twinkle, little star.

Even if you have not encountered this poem by Jane Taylor before, you can read this work very easily. Originally entitled 'The Star', 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star' has been beloved for more than 200 years since it was originally published in 1806 ('First Publication of 'Twinkle Twinkle Little Star'), even though the ideas are simple and the language is easy to understand.

As you get older, however, reading gets more and more difficult, and, for some people, less and less fun. Compare this next poem with the one above:

If the dull substance of my flesh were thought,  
 Injurious distance should not stop my way;  
 For then despite of space I would be brought,  
 From limits far remote where thou dost stay.  
 5 No matter then although my foot did stand  
 Upon the farthest earth removed from thee;  
 For nimble thought can jump both sea and land  
 As soon as think the place where he would be.  
 But ah! thought kills me that I am not thought,  
 To leap large lengths of miles when thou art gone,  
 But that so much of earth and water wrought  
 10 I must attend time's leisure with my moan,  
 Receiving nought by elements so slow  
 But heavy tears, badges of either's woe.

Obviously, this poem is much harder to read and understand than the first one. The sentence structure is unfamiliar, as is some of the vocabulary. Some of the words may be completely new to some readers; others will be familiar but used in unfamiliar ways. The content too is difficult, because it deals with sophisticated ideas. Like the first poem, however, it has stayed with us for hundreds of years and is still read and appreciated today.

The poem is William Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 44', the first half of a pair of sonnets that explore an idea about how the speaker's physical body is a barrier to their ability to be with the person they love. The two sonnets explore scientific ideas that were common in Shakespeare's day and which proposed that all matter was made up of four elements: earth, air, fire, and water. In these two sonnets, Shakespeare takes that belief and posits the imaginative alternative that thought is a fifth type of substance. The speaker wishes they were made of the same substance from which thoughts are made, because thoughts can be wherever they want instantaneously.

The content is actually quite intriguing. The idea that we might be able to transport through time and space as if we had no body appeals to anyone who would like to travel all around the world without needing time or transport. That idea is a staple of **science fiction**, from *Star Trek* to the 2017 novel *The Punch Escrow* by Tal M. Klein. If we can read the more difficult work, it gives our imaginations more with which to connect and explore than poems like 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'.

But first we have to be able to read it! Your IB English Literature course is all about learning to read the adult literature of the world, the stories, poems and plays that explore provocative and challenging ideas about what it means to be human, both in a physical and in a psychological sense. The course will instruct you on how to engage with any piece of literature as an independent work using your own skills as a reader. It will also teach you to explore the relationship of works to the time and place in which they were written, so that you can understand how the culture of a writer and the historical development of literary works within that culture contribute to the style, form and content of future works. Finally, the IB English Literature course will help you to explore the relationships between literary works, so that you can recognize the ways in which new works build from and dovetail with the ideas in other works, and how works from different times and places deal with similar themes.

The more skilled you become as a reader, the more you will get out of any given work of literature, and the more fun your reading will be.

Several elements of the course curriculum identify and guide you through the complexities – both of literature and your learning to interpret it. These elements are:

- areas of exploration
- concepts
- global issues.

This introductory chapter will take you through each of these elements, define them and explain their role in the course. Before you begin your studies, you will need to understand the nature and terminology of all the required elements of the course.

## Areas of exploration

The areas of exploration are broad topics, each one of which helps you to consider how to interpret literature from a different **perspective**. The three areas of exploration for the English Literature IB Diploma course are:

- readers, writers and texts
- time and space
- intertextuality: connecting texts.

This book contains one section on each area, and each area will be explored in detail.

The aim of these three areas is for you to consider your reading from the perspective of the **immanent**, the **contextual**, and the **comparative**. **Readers, writers, and texts** relies on the immanent perspective, **space and time** relies on the contextual perspective, and **intertextuality: connecting texts** relies on the comparative perspective.

### ■ Immanent perspective

To approach a work of literature from the perspective of the immanent means that you study the literature solely as a work of art, entire of itself. You engage with the work personally as a reader and, in trying to construct its meaning, you consider only its literary features, without concerning yourself with the time or place in which the work was written or how it might be like or different from other literary works.

### ■ Contextual analysis

To study the work from the perspective of the contextual means that you take into account the background information of where and when the work was written, so that you shape your understanding of its meaning in the context of its historical time and place. You also try to consider whether your understanding of the background against which a work was written influences your interpretation in a meaningful way.

### ■ Comparative/intertextual perspective

To approach a work of literature from the perspective of the intertextual means that you will consider the work in light of other works from the same time and place, but also in light of other works from different times and places. You will also consider how they are alike and how they are different in their view of the world.

Within each area of exploration, we will make connections to the other two important structural elements of the course: concepts and global issues.

## Course concepts

The word ‘concept’ comes from the study of cognition and how people come to understand the world. There is some disagreement among psychologists about the proper way to define ‘concept’ but, for our purposes, we can think of it as an idea that gets formed by generalizing

from experience, and people form concepts all the time to help them to organize that experience (Spitzer 36). The concepts included in your literature course are ideas that help to describe important aspects of the way in which readers create meanings from literary works. Here we will outline the seven concepts you are required to investigate during your IB English Literature course.

## CONCEPT CONNECTION

Concepts will be inside these feature boxes, so look out for this colour.

### ■ Identity

One of the great joys of reading literature is the discovery of the mind behind it. When you read a book and experience those moments of great insight about the world, or the realization that someone – the author – shares a world view with you, or feels passionately about something that you feel passionately about, or thinks the way you do about the way the world ought to be, you hopefully experience great satisfaction. These are the books you are most likely to love and remember and re-read. That connection to books comes from the connection to the author.

In order to experience that kind of connection to an author, you must, of course, build a conception of the author's **identity** – an understanding of what the author is like, at least as represented by that particular literary work. The concept of identity, then, is about the ways in which a reader develops an understanding of an author's identity through reading the work. The text of the work serves as the evidence that is available to the reader for learning about the author.

The process of discovering the author's identity through the work, however, is tricky. It is tempting to think that we can tell what the author thinks just by reading the work and accepting at face value the idea that the work directly represents what the author thinks, feels, and believes; however, this is seldom – if ever – the case. Authors create not just characters and situations, but also narrators (the voices that tell the story in a narrative) or speakers (the voices which speak poems, some of which are also narrative).

Because all of these 'people' are inventions, we have to be open to the fact that they can represent people with very different ideas and values from those of the author. Authors can create characters ranging from the virtuous and exemplary to the immoral and the downright wicked. They can create characters who represent people who are, in the author's view, exemplary human beings, or they can create characters who, in the author's view, are perfect examples of how not to live and behave. You cannot read a work of literature with a character who exhibits bad behaviour and values and attribute those values to the author. The author expects you to understand that the character deserves none of our admiration. Conversely, if you come across an admirable character or narrator, you don't assume that the character or narrator is the author; however, you can assume that a good character or narrator represents the author's idea of a good person. The process of interpretation, although complex, does still give us insight into the author's identity.

In *The Book Thief*, for example, Markus Zusak gives us Death as a narrator. Clearly Death, the narrator, is a creation. Death does not exist as a person walking around in the world, while Zusak himself is an award-winning writer from Australia. We know, therefore, that we cannot figure out anything about Zusak's identity by assuming that Death, the narrator, somehow **personifies** Zusak. Instead, we will have to see what we can work out indirectly. As you read *The Book Thief*, you will discover that this Death has been presented as a fairly sympathetic character who cares about the people he has to collect at the ends of their lives and who empathizes with them. From this idea, we can get a glimmer of insight into the kind of person Zusak might be, since he has chosen this version of Death rather than a more typical scary, vengeful hunter. Zusak, then, might be someone who sees death as inevitable, but not inevitably cruel or meaningless. Of course, this is one tiny idea out of the whole complex vision of the world and human experience that will for us reflect Zusak's identity when we read his novel.

Your understanding of the author's identity, then, is indirect. You can consider the characters and subsequently infer the author's ideas and attitudes. It will always be important for you to realize that whatever your understanding of who 'the author' is that you generate from your reading, it

is a construct, and not the actual author. You create the identity from your interpretation, and your understanding will inevitably fail to match the real person for many reasons – for one thing, what you can understand from one work will necessarily be limited. You might come closer to reality if you read everything that a particular author has written, but, just as your back yard looks different when viewed through a frosted window, your vision of the author will be different than the vision you could get if you knew him or her personally for many years.

When we accept the idea of our understanding of an author as a construct, we can appreciate that authors often serve as their own narrators. The communication is still indirect, though, and no single work can provide you with a fully realized portrait of the complex person that the author is in real life.

The primary reason that your understanding of the author must be deemed a construct is that *you* constructed it. One of the most important facts about trying to create meaning from any literary work is that every individual reader approaches the work through the filter of his or her own identity. Returning to *The Book Thief*, for example, if you were a person who could not, because of whatever experiences you had in your life, bring yourself to see Death as a sympathetic and, at times, humorous character, you would not interpret either his role as the narrator or what that role suggests about the author's identity in the same way that a different reader who could easily accept Death in this way could. This kind of understanding is what we mean by **interpretation**. You would not be wrong, nor would the other reader be wrong. You would simply be interpreting the work differently.

## ■ Culture

All works are written in a cultural context. The values and beliefs of that culture will have influenced the author in terms of how they see the world, what he or she wants to write, and the words, images, metaphors, and symbols that he or she will use to express their ideas. The more you learn about the culture in which the literary work was created, the better you will understand some of the nuances of that work.

A twenty-first-century student studying *Cyrano de Bergerac*, by Edmond Rostand, for example, might be quite perplexed at some of the behaviours they read about. To fully appreciate this play, which was written in 1897 but set in the seventeenth century, one must understand first that Cyrano de Bergerac chose to adhere to a code of chivalry which was the guideline of behaviour expected by a knight primarily in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. To the twenty-first-century student, the ideas that honour is more important than love, and self-sacrifice more important than happiness seem incomprehensible – maybe even a little mad. To appreciate Cyrano's behaviour and to see him as a sympathetic and admirable character, we have to apply the standards of his time and of the middle ages, when the knights were seen as the shining examples of virtuous behaviour – not ours. To fully appreciate Cyrano's **tragedy**, we must further understand that in his day, in the mid-seventeenth century, Cyrano was already something of an **anachronism**. The values he spent his life upholding would have seemed strange to his contemporaries. We can fully appreciate Rostand's purpose if we can both empathize with Cyrano and feel the pathos of the fact that the people around him, including his beloved Rosaline, would have wished fervently that he had not tried to live by those values. We have to understand both the culture of Cyrano's idealized world view and of the society in which he lived to be able to feel what Rostand wanted us to feel.

Another aspect of this concept of culture is the fact that all works of literature are written at a particular moment in that geographical place. Knowing the literary tradition of a particular time and place can help you, as the reader, to understand the ways in which a particular work of literature continues or breaks with a tradition. Students frequently want to know why Shakespeare wrote his plays in **iambic pentameter** and why he used such apparently convoluted sentence structures and strange vocabulary. Most English teachers have been asked whether people in Shakespeare's day talked the way so many characters in his plays talk, but of course they did not. Shakespeare was both adhering to and breaking the conventions of his day.

Shakespeare was writing plays mostly in blank verse, which means that the predominant **meter** was iambic pentameter (lines of 10 syllables with a stress on every other syllable) but without a



set rhyming pattern. The use of blank verse and of verse in general pre-dated Shakespeare by a long way, even back to the ancient Greeks. Here, for instance, are the opening lines of *Oedipus Rex* by Sophocles, written in the fifth century BCE:

My children, latest born to Cadmus old,  
 Why sit ye here as suppliants, in your hands  
 Branches of olive filleted with wool?  
 What means this reek of incense everywhere,  
 5 And everywhere laments and litanies?  
 Children, it were not meet that I should learn  
 From others, and am hither come, myself,  
 I, Oedipus, your world-renowned king.

This play has been translated from the original Greek, of course, but you can see that the translator has retained the verse form. Just as a quick check, you can count the syllables in every line; you will see that there are ten.

Blank verse was a standard form for plays for many hundreds of years. Blank verse was introduced into English playwriting in the sixteenth century. Shakespeare joined his contemporaries Thomas Sackville, Thomas Norton, Christopher Marlowe, Thomas Middleton and Ben Jonson, who adopted the form. However, Shakespeare took that tradition and transformed it by developing a looser form of blank verse in which he varied the stresses and used enjambment (the connecting of lines together by running sentences from one line onto the next) and in doing so created a kind of blank verse that no other playwright has mastered ('Blank Verse'). So we can see that Shakespeare's accomplishments arose from the writing tradition – the writing culture – in which he was writing.

Authors do not generate whole new forms out of nowhere; they build on existing conventions, and the body of work in any given culture changes gradually over time. Understanding the tradition from which an author's work arises helps us to understand the particular contributions to style, form and content that an author made.

The concept of culture applies particularly to the second area of exploration, **time and space**, which will help you explore in great detail the effects of time and place on a work of literature. Culture also applies to **readers, writers, and texts**, in that so many important literary strategies require specific cultural knowledge in order to be interpreted well, and also to **intertextuality**, as some of the most interesting comparisons and contrasts will come out of differences in the cultures in which the works you are comparing were written.

## ■ Creativity

Every literary work is the result of an act of creation: the author or poet or playwright created the work itself. If the work is fiction, the writer created the characters, the actions, the dialogue and the setting. If the work is non-fiction, the writer still had to create the shape and structure of the piece. He or she had to apply creativity in order to develop metaphors and symbols and other figures of speech. We talk about some writers or works as being particularly creative.

J.K. Rowling, for instance, is renowned for her creativity in imagining the fictional world of the *Harry Potter* stories, including such features of setting as the Whomping Willow, magic spells such as *wingardium leviosa* and *expect patronum*, and the characters, such as Professor McGonagall, who can transfigure into a cat. Colson Whitehead, in his novel *The Underground Railroad*, showed great creativity in making a living symbol – the railroad that is an actual railroad that runs underground. (For those who are not familiar with the term 'underground railroad', it is the name of the secret chain of people who helped slaves to escape from the American South to states where slavery was not legal.) Shakespeare is famous for the creativity of his language use. Consider, for example, some of his many insults:

- 'Would thou wert clean enough to spit upon!' (*Timon of Athens* 4.3.402)
- 'The rankest compound of villainous smell that ever offended nostril' (*Merry Wives of Windsor* 3.5.91)
- 'Poisonous bunch-backed toad' (*Richard III* 1.3.255)
- 'I do desire that we may be better strangers.' (*As You Like It* 3.2.263)
- 'There's no more faith in thee than in a stewed prune.' (*Henry IV Part 1* 3.3.119)

All of these are more lively and more humorous than the narrow range of rather mean-spirited insults we tend to rely on in English today.

So we are quite used to the idea that authors are creative. Perhaps less familiar is the idea that readers have to be creative as well. You have to be creative when you read works of literature because they communicate indirectly. We will investigate this fact in detail in Section 1 of this coursebook. For now, you can understand that authors of literature do not say directly what they mean: they convey ideas through myriad literary strategies, many of which you are no doubt familiar with. Consider this sentence, from the first line of TS Eliot's *The Waste Land*:

*April is the cruelest month*

Such a claim seems a little odd. April is the beginning of springtime, and we associate it with blooming flowers and spring sunshine. For Christians, Easter, the holiday celebrating the rebirth of Jesus Christ into the world after his crucifixion, almost always occurs in April. April, it would seem, ought to be a happy month. And yet Eliot has called it not just cruel, but 'the cruelest' of all twelve months of the year. What are we to do with such a claim?

We could just dismiss the poet as something of a crackpot (that would be easiest – we wouldn't have to do anything!) but, upon reflection, since this poet is TS Eliot, one of the giants of British literature, we have to accept that a great many people have appreciated his literary genius and so we probably have to also accept that he knew what he was doing when he gave us a claim about April that violates the stereotypical view. That in turn means that we now have to think creatively and use our imagination to figure out what he might have been thinking when he wrote that description.

Try it: before you read the next paragraph, imagine at least three possibilities for what Eliot might have meant with this **personification** of April and write them down.

Probably, once you thought about it, you realized that April, at least in the northern hemisphere where Eliot was writing, is an unpredictable month. Very often it is exactly what we think it is – the month that signifies rebirth. The soil warms, flowers bloom, trees blossom and birds build their nests. But, not infrequently, once that promise of warmth and approaching summer is delivered, snow and ice storms appear, killing the flowers and dragging us back into winter. The cruelty of April, then, lies in the fact that it so often breaks its promises, luring us into feeling hopeful and then smacking us with a powerful reminder that we cannot control nature or count on our expectations to be met.

This is the kind of creative thinking that you must do as a reader of any literary work. You must be alert for anything that might mean more than it seems, and then you must use your imagination to work on the possibilities.

### ■ TOK Links: The nature of creativity

When you study personal knowledge-making in your Theory of Knowledge class, you may consider the ways in which our cognitive tools (the features of our minds which help us make knowledge) work together to create new ideas. We think of imagination as being the particular cognitive tool we use in order to think up something that we haven't thought before, or which hasn't been thought before by anyone; however, imagination is the result of the interaction of several different cognitive tools. Certainly we need to be able to generate images and thoughts of possibilities, but for any creative act to be effective, the thoughts and images we generate have to be bounded by reason. There's no point, for example, in imagining that we could flap our arms and fly to the moon, because such an act is a physical impossibility in our universe.

Imagination also relies equally on memory. It is impossible to imagine something that is completely out of your realm of experience. Try it now: imagine a creature from outer space that has no feature that you have ever seen or experienced before. It is extremely difficult! Your alien creature as a whole will be something you have never seen or experienced, but it will be made up entirely of shapes and colours and physical parts of people and creatures and objects that you have encountered sometime during your life.

Creative thinking in literature works the same way. You will find that you have to imagine possibilities for what things mean, but your interpretation will have to be based on what you have experienced and it will have to be bounded by reason.

## ■ Communication

The concept of communication relates to the concept of identity in that we are considering the communication between the reader and the author. As we have noted above, this communication is indirect. Rather than you and the author meeting and talking face-to-face, the communication is through the medium of the work. Even then, the work will not state directly what the author is thinking. Instead, the author will employ a wide range of tools to communicate to you through images, symbols, elements of settings, a variety of characters and actions, the meaning of which must be interpreted. In order for you to be able to receive the author's communication effectively, you must know how to use the technology, as it were. Imagine that the work is a machine and you have to learn how to run it, just as you learned to run your computer, your cell phone or your car.

The literature that you will study in school has been chosen in part because the assumption is that you cannot, at the beginning, read it effectively by yourself. Your teachers understand that you need assistance in learning how to use the tools in these works; if you could read them on your own, you wouldn't need teaching. The most important thing you need to understand is that the knowledge and skills you lack when you begin studying a work of literature can be learned. You can take conscious steps to develop your abilities as a reader, and every work you study helps prepare you for the communication in the next work.

American poet Elizabeth Bishop wrote a poem called 'The Fish', which has in it some symbols that many students around the world would not necessarily recognize. In Christianity, the fish is a symbol of Jesus. You can read the poem without knowing that, and it will make sense as a story about a fisherman reflecting on the significance of catching a fish that many others before had failed to catch. However, you will miss a great deal of the author's message. If you read the poem as nothing more than a poem about a fish, you might be somewhat confused by the mention, near the end, of a rainbow, which seems to be the thing which makes the fisherman decide to let the fish go. The rainbow is another religious symbol from Christianity, and comes from the story of Noah's Ark, in which God destroyed all living creatures in a 40-day flood except those which were on the ark God commanded Noah to build. When the flood dries up, God sends the rainbow as a promise that he will never again send such a flood.

For readers who know the story, Bishop's message about the need for everyday people to remember God's mercy and to show mercy in our turn will be accessible. If some readers do not know that story, however, they can learn it in order to increase their understanding of the poem. They can do some research on the symbolism of fish and of rainbows. Any time you read any literary work, you can be alert to anything that might be a symbol and if you don't know what that object symbolizes, you can look it up. Symbolism is just one of the tools in a writer's toolbox; as you read more literary works, you will learn to recognize and interpret more and more tools. One of the great satisfactions of studying literature is the satisfaction you feel when you have solved the puzzle of an author's strategy and, in so doing, broadened your own knowledge of the world.

You will be working on the skill of how to understand the author's communication throughout your IB English Literature course, and all sections of this coursebook will help you to develop that skill. You will find it helpful to remember, as you work through the course, that the purpose of your study is ultimately communication from the author to you, and that your work is aimed at closing the gap between your knowledge of the world, of literature and its features and that of the author's.

## Perspective

When we discussed the concept of identity, we pointed out that one difficulty in interpreting an author's identity is the fact that the author creates characters, each with their own perspective, and those characters' perspectives may or may not line up with the author's. What this means for you as a reader is that you have to be aware, first of all, that multiple perspectives exist in every work and, secondly, that you must work to understand all of the perspectives and what they imply about what the author is trying to communicate. You must also work to be aware of your own perspective, and how your time and place and your personal knowledge influences what you are capable of understanding or how your assumptions and expectations might shape your interpretation of any given work.

A good example of a literary work with many different perspectives for which the modern reader might not be prepared is *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift. The book, published in 1726, is a satire on human nature. One of the most famous episodes in the book is Gulliver's visit to the land of the Houyhnhnms. The Houyhnhnms are a species of giant horse which is significantly more intelligent and cultured than humans, who are known in this land as Yahoos – creatures without any ability to reason. Gulliver describes Yahoos this way:

*... the Yahoos were a species of animals utterly incapable  
of amendment by precept or example ...*

(Swift ix)

As readers, we are not likely to be predisposed to accepting such a harsh judgment on human nature, so in order to understand Swift's perspective, we have to understand Gulliver's perspective, and we have to be open to the idea that human beings can sometimes behave in quite irrational ways, even in ways which work against their own best interests.

In other words, one of the most important skills in interpreting literature is open-mindedness. We have to be ready for characters to have motivations and values we don't expect. We must be ready for authors to push against stereotypical expectations and against easy understanding in an effort to make us think more deeply about something. Most works of literature require us to consider perspectives that are different from our own and potentially difficult to appreciate or respect.

### ■ TOK Links: Influence of perspective

The question of how your own perspective shapes your knowledge is an important one in your TOK class. Many factors shape your perspective, from the physical (do you have poor eyesight? Or extra sensitive hearing?) to the mental (what are your habits of mind? Are you quick to process or to jump to conclusions? Are you inclined to take in a lot of data and think slowly before you decide what it means?) to the cultural (do you live in a culture which admires and respects older people? Do you live in a culture in which independence is highly valued? Do you live in a culture which values the good of the community over the good of the individual?).

One famous example of the question of whether and how someone's perspective shaped their knowledge is the example of Werner Heisenberg, the physicist who developed the Heisenberg uncertainty principle. When Second World War broke out, Heisenberg chose to stay in Germany to work on Hitler's project to develop the atomic bomb. The Germans never did develop the bomb, and there has been speculation for many years about why not, given Heisenberg's undoubted genius as a physicist. Journalist Thomas Powers argued, in a 1993 book, that Heisenberg actually sabotaged the project so that Hitler would not build the bomb (Glanz). At the heart of the controversy is the question of Heisenberg's perspective. He was a German working for Germany during the war. He was also a scientist with full awareness of the implications of the power released by the split atom. People wonder whether Heisenberg's perspective as a scientist who might not want to give that power to any dictator was more important than his perspective as a German who would want to know whatever he needed to know in order to help his country.

## ■ Transformation

The concept of transformation refers to the variety of ways in which works are transformed from one thing into another. One widespread and important way in which this transformation takes place is in the development of intertextuality, the reference in one work to an earlier one. Sometimes that kind of intertextuality takes the shape of an **allusion**, an explicit reference to another work. Returning to Elizabeth Bishop's poem 'The Fish', for example, we saw an allusion to the Biblical story of Noah's Ark.

Another kind of intertextuality occurs when one work builds in a broader, deeper way on an earlier work. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is a retelling of an earlier English poem written in 1562 called *The Tragicall Historie of Romeus and Juliet* by Arthur Brooke. Brooke's work in turn was based on a 1554 Italian novella by Matteo Bandello called *Giulietta e Romeo* (Mabillard). Each author transformed his source into something quite different. Brooke took a novella and transformed it into a poem, while Shakespeare took that poem and transformed it into a play. At each transformation, the story changed to reflect the author's ideas.

A familiar kind of transformation of a literary work is from written text to film. This kind of change tends to be fairly substantial. For one thing, films typically last about two hours, while it might take 10 hours or more to read the book version. Much has to be cut. Screenwriters and directors make decisions about what bits of the book will not be included in the film, and they might choose to cut things that the original author and/or the readers felt were essential to the effective representation of the book. Another thing that happens when someone makes a movie out of a book has to do with characters' appearance. When characters are described in books, readers form ideas in their minds of what those characters are like. The movie version necessarily makes one choice out of many when the casting director chooses a particular actor. Such a choice will always disappoint – or even anger – some readers whose ideas were quite different from what the film portrays.

The 2013 film version of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* caused a certain amount of controversy due to the music that the director, Baz Luhrmann, chose to include. The novel is set in the 1920s, an era when jazz was flourishing. Luhrmann, however, instead of filling the score with period music, chose to use modern music by hip-hop artists such as Jay-Z, Beyonce, Andre 3000, and Kanye West. Such a choice displeases readers who prefer historical accuracy as being more true to the spirit of Fitzgerald's book, but pleases readers who feel that the modern songs create the kind of effect that Fitzgerald was going for. The point is that because the film director has made an interpretation, the effect of the medium is quite different than the effect of reading a book which requires the reader to do the interpreting. *The Great Gatsby* has been transformed. Whether the transformation is effective or not is a different question.

Think of some examples of films that you have seen which were made from books that you had read. Were you happy with the transformation? Why or why not? An important point to realize with regard to the concept of transformation is that the film version cannot be substituted for the reading of the book. As with Brooke rewriting Bandello and Shakespeare rewriting Brooke, the screenwriter transforms any novel or play into something new when he or she changes the form.

A final, very important kind of transformation is one that you will definitely encounter in your IB English Literature course: translation from one language to another. Translation presents many difficulties. Among the problems for the translator to wrestle with are:

- words that exist in the original language but do not exist in the language of translation
- words that exist but which have significantly different **connotations** in the two languages
- line length and stress patterns when trying to preserve meter in poetry or plays
- sentence word order differs from language to language
- symbols do not mean the same thing in different languages
- idioms are different in different languages.

There are other problems, but these will give you an idea of what the translator faces. Every translator must, therefore, settle for compromises. They must decide what is more important: the use of an exact word or the retention of implications? The number of syllables in a line or the number of lines? The rhyme scheme or the word choice?



One example of why word length and line length matter is the example of Boris Pasternak's translations of Shakespeare's plays into Russian. The average English word is 1.22 syllables long, while the average Russian word is 2.44 syllables long – double the length of an English word (France). That length difference matters when we consider that Shakespeare wrote predominantly in lines of 10 syllables. If Pasternak wished to retain the 10-syllable line, he would need roughly twice the number of lines for the same content. For *Hamlet*, that would have meant increasing the line length from just over 4000 lines (Open Source Shakespeare) to something over 8000 lines. Kenneth Branagh filmed a complete-text version of *Hamlet* in 1996; it runs 4 hours 2 minutes. That is already an extraordinary amount of time to expect an audience to sit still; imagine the effect of trying to stage an 8-hour performance.

The first line of Albert Camus' novel *L'Étranger* gives us an excellent example of the significance of the change in meaning that can occur when trying to translate the language of a literary work into English. Camus' novel was written in French, and the first line, in French, is 'Aujourd'hui, Maman est morte' (Bloom). In 1946, Stuart Gilbert made the first translation into English, and he translated that line as 'Mother died today' (Bloom). In 1988, Matthew Ward's translation rendered the line 'Maman died today' (Ward 3). In a 2012 *New Yorker* article, Ryan Bloom provides a fascinating discussion of the difference. The word 'Mother', he argues, conveys a colder, more distant relationship than the French word 'Maman' does. He suggests that the English equivalent would be 'Mommy', but that this word is childish, and so conveys yet another kind of relationship between the son and the parent (Bloom). You can see that the decision about which version of this word to use, especially in the first sentence of the novel, will shape the reader's understanding of the main character and so will colour our attitude towards him throughout. Bloom provides a further detailed argument about how the change in word order that happened when Gilbert decided to begin with the idea of the mother instead of the idea of 'today' eliminates a critical understanding of the character's relationship to time. You can read Bloom's insightful article about the analysis of the effect of translation on a literary work in full via the QR code in the margin.

Whenever you are reading a work in translation, you must remember that what you are reading is a transformation of the original. If you have access to the original and can read it in that language, you may be able to make judgments for yourself about how much the translated version differs from the original. However, most students will not have that opportunity, in which case you should understand that what you are deriving from your study of the work is different to what you would get from the work in its original form. Furthermore, you should remember that the communication you are having with the author and the author's identity is transformed.



## ■ Representation

The concept of representation focuses your attention on the relationship of a literary work to reality. Fiction, by definition, is not 'true' in that the events described never actually happened. The obvious question, then, is the question of how something that is not true can convey any truth. The answer, of course, is that some aspect of every literary work does indeed represent reality. At a minimum, the themes and ideas must convey some truth about human experience, human nature and/or human relationships. In fiction, the characters are not real people, but they **represent** real people. We can see in the behaviours and motivations of the characters in the work those that we believe could happen in the real world.

An interesting aspect of representation in literary works is that the degree of realism will vary wildly. Some works are highly realistic in their detail and descriptions. Consider, for example, this passage from the opening paragraph of *Middlemarch* by George Eliot:

Miss Brooke had that kind of beauty which seems to be thrown into relief by poor dress. Her hand and wrist were so finely formed that she could wear sleeves not less bare of style than those in which the Blessed Virgin appeared to Italian painters; and her profile as well as her stature and bearing seemed to gain the more dignity from her plain garments, which by the side of provincial fashion gave her the impressiveness of  
 5 a fine quotation from the Bible, – or from one of our elder poets, – in a paragraph of to-day's newspaper. She was usually spoken of as being remarkably clever, but with the addition that her sister Celia had more common-sense. Nevertheless, Celia wore scarcely more trimmings; and it was only to close observers that her dress differed from her sister's, and had a shade of coquetry in its arrangements; for Miss Brooke's plain dressing was due to mixed conditions, in most of which her sister shared. The pride of being ladies  
 10 had something to do with it: the Brooke connections, though not exactly aristocratic, were unquestionably 'good:' if you inquired backward for a generation or two, you would not find any yard-measuring or parcel-tying forefathers – anything lower than an admiral or a clergyman; and there was even an ancestor discernible as a Puritan gentleman who served under Cromwell, but afterwards conformed, and managed to come out of all political troubles as the proprietor of a respectable family estate. Young women of such  
 15 birth, living in a quiet country-house, and attending a village church hardly larger than a parlor, naturally regarded frippery as the ambition of a huckster's daughter. Then there was well-bred economy, which in those days made show in dress the first item to be deducted from, when any margin was required for expenses more distinctive of rank. Such reasons would have been enough to account for plain dress, quite apart from religious feeling; but in Miss Brooke's case, religion alone would have determined it; and Celia  
 20 mildly acquiesced in all her sister's sentiments, only infusing them with that common-sense which is able to accept momentous doctrines without any eccentric agitation.

(Eliot 4)

This passage is highly realistic. Despite having been published in 1871, it mentions objects of culture which are familiar even today to people familiar with Western culture: clothing with sleeves, Italian painters, the Virgin Mary, newspapers, parcels, clergymen and so on. The description of the young woman is detailed and believable. The setting – a quiet country house in a village – is also quite natural and realistic. This passage, then, is highly representational.

Other works of literature are much less realistic. The following description of the life of a different young woman, Persephone, from the Greek myth, comes from the Homeric 'Hymn to Demeter':

I begin to sing of rich-haired Demeter, awful goddess – of her and her trim-ankled daughter whom Aidoneus rapt away, given to him by all-seeing Zeus the loud-thunderer. Apart from Demeter, lady of the golden sword and glorious fruits, she was playing with the deep-bosomed daughters of Oceanus and gathering flowers over a soft meadow, roses and crocuses and beautiful violets, irises also and hyacinths and the narcissus,  
 5 which Earth made to grow at the will of Zeus and to please the Host of Many, to be a snare for the bloom-like girl – a marvellous, radiant flower. It was a thing of awe whether for deathless gods or mortal men to see: from its root grew a hundred blooms and it smelled most sweetly, so that all wide heaven above and the whole earth and the sea's salt swell laughed for joy. And the girl was amazed and reached out with both hands to take the lovely toy; but the wide-pathed earth yawned there in the plain of Nysa, and the lord, Host  
 10 of Many, with his immortal horses sprang out upon her – the Son of Cronos, He who has many names.

('Hymn 2 to Demeter')

Persephone is described in some realistic terms: she has trim ankles and she is capable of amazement. But much of the description is quite unrealistic. Her mother, Demeter, is described as being an 'awful goddess' and 'lady of the golden sword and glorious fruits'. The Earth makes flowers grow at the will of Zeus. There is a flower with a hundred blooms that smells so sweet that it causes the earth and heaven and the sea to laugh. None of this is like what we see when we look out the window on a spring morning. We would say that this passage, unlike the passage from *Middlemarch*, is not very representational.

The lack of correspondence between the facts of a literary work and the real world we are used to can extend beyond the characters and setting. We have already seen in this chapter how unrealistic Shakespeare's use of language was in terms of the degree to which it sounds like everyday spoken English. The sonnet we examined is highly structured and the language formal and stylized. We have also seen, in the example of the *Harry Potter* books, that some stories contain actions which are not at all realistic in terms of whether they could actually happen in the real world.

The important thing for you to notice as you study the works in your IB English Literature course is the degree to which the authors use representational features in the work and, if they do not, even if the works are extremely unrealistic, how the authors nevertheless manage to convey some important idea about reality. Finally, you will be considering the author's choice to make the literature more representational or less so and what they have gained by making that choice for that particular work.

### ■ TOK Links: The relationship between art and realism

The arts as a whole, including all the other media besides literature, span the whole range from highly realistic to extremely abstract. One of the central questions about how we make meaning in art revolves around the question of the function of realism. Early art is highly realistic, but as the centuries have passed, the boundaries for what constitutes acceptable art have expanded dramatically, so that now we accept works that are so far removed from depicting the world in a representational way as to have virtually no connection at all. A good question for you to pursue is the question of what we gain either from clear representational techniques or from the rejection of those techniques and the adopting of such modes as Expressionism or Cubism or abstract art.

We will explore all of these concepts in all three sections of this book, so that you can see how various works of literature help you to see these processes at work and how these processes help you to understand the various works of literature. You may find it helpful to refer back to this section whenever you come across a concept connection, to help you understand the ways that the concepts relate to the works that you read.

## Global issues

### GLOBAL ISSUES

Global issues and ideas for further reading will be inside these boxes throughout.

The seven concepts that we have just identified for your IB English Literature course are mandated by the IB curriculum. The global issues, on the other hand, are not as specifically defined. You are required to consider the literary works you read in terms of what they might reveal about global issues, and one of your assessments will require you to discuss two works in terms of a global issue. You will have some freedom as to what global issue you choose, and it will not have to be one of those which are suggested in the curriculum guide.

The curriculum guide stipulates three characteristics which define a global issue:

- It has to be an issue which appears in multiple countries.
- It has to have wide-scale significance.
- The consequences of the issue have to be experienced by everyday people.



An abstract issue such as *primogeniture*, the practice of passing a monarchy along through the lines of sons, would not, therefore, count as a global issue. It might occur in several countries, but it is difficult to argue that this is a widespread problem, as it affects so few people, and it certainly does not affect everyday people in very significant ways.

The guide suggests the following examples of areas of inquiry from which you can formulate global issues:

- **Culture, identity and community:** this category might include investigation into the ways in which literary works depict gender, class, race, ethnicity or other cultural groups.
- **Beliefs, values and education:** this category could include consideration of how a work depicts the connection between education and values or beliefs, and the ways in which communities define and disseminate their beliefs and values.
- **Politics, power and justice:** this category includes all of the kinds of issues that arise in society – questions of equality, ruling classes, fair and unfair wielding of power, distribution of wealth, and the relationships between all of these. This category offers you the opportunity to think about what different societies consider to be the rights of citizens and how those rights are protected or undermined.
- **Arts, creativity and the imagination:** this category provides you with the opportunity to consider what works themselves have to say about the role of art in people's lives. Art, in this case, is content, not medium. When you consider the course's core concepts, you are considering the works as works of art themselves. When you are considering a work in the context of the global issue of art, you are noticing that the work is about art.
- **Science, technology and the natural world:** if a work explores questions of science and nature, you can consider it in the context of this global issue. Questions that might arise could be to do with the relationship between science and society or science and nature or nature and society. You could look at what the work suggests about the importance or effectiveness of scientific developments.

(*International Baccalaureate*, 55–56)

In all of these categories, it would be useful to consider how different viewpoints come into **conflict** with each other.

As you consider your literary works in the context of global issues, you may notice that more than one global issue might be relevant to any given work. Within each of these general headings, you have quite a bit of freedom to choose what to discuss with regard to the works you study. The descriptions above are suggestions and should not be considered definitive.

You are also free to develop a different global issue that is more relevant to the works you study than these. You may find, also, that many other topics you might think of which meet all three requirements for defining a global issue already come under one of these five umbrella headings. Poverty can be seen as an issue of politics, power, and justice, for example. Global warming could come under the heading of science, technology and the natural world. So long as you can clearly identify an issue as meeting all three of the requirements, you will be able to use that issue as the defining feature for your individual oral assessment.

Just as with the course concepts, this textbook will model connections between literary works and global issues in all three areas of exploration to help you see how the consideration of a work in the context of one or more global issues can give you new insights into the work.

## How to use this book

This book has been structured around the three areas of exploration in the IB English Literature curriculum. The IB curriculum guide takes each one of those areas of exploration and breaks it down into six questions to help you consider that area in detail. The coursebook mirrors this structure: each section of the book focuses on one of the three areas of exploration, and within each section, there is one chapter on each of the six questions.

Each chapter provides you with examples of how to use particular tools and concepts to interpret literary works. Each chapter also provides you with some activities to do in order to practise using the tools yourself. There are commentaries at the end of the book, but you should remember that the commentaries do not provide ‘correct’ answers. A variety of answers is possible, so if you did not think of the particular interpretation the notes provide, that does not necessarily mean that your interpretation is wrong. If you can justify your response using lines from the work of literature as support, then you can feel confident about your interpretation of the example. If your interpretation seems to have been way off, however, and you cannot really justify it using the language from the passage in support, then that simply means that you will need to keep practising! Learning to read literature effectively is a skill that takes time to develop; do not expect that you will necessarily get everything right on your very first try.

### ACTIVITY

Activities will be inside these boxes – look out for these to help you practise your skills.

### Author profile

Extra information about the authors under discussion is provided in these boxes.

You should note that some works included in this coursebook include sensitive content and offensive or derogatory language. It is the nature of the IB’s prescribed reading list to include texts that will challenge you intellectually, personally and culturally, and expose you to sensitive and mature topics. At times you or your classmates may find these works a challenge, but as readers it is up to us to consider not just how such language is used, but why. We invite you to reflect critically on various perspectives offered while bearing in mind the IB’s commitment to international-mindedness and intercultural respect.

In most cases, we have chosen to let the words remain as they originally appear, so you can consider for yourself the effects of how these words are used. This is central to understanding the themes of identity and human behaviour at the heart of this book. Any works that include such content will be prefixed with a sensitive-content box.

### SENSITIVE CONTENT

**Caution: this book contains extracts that use offensive and derogatory language.**

### Using QR codes

Extra reading is recommended via the QR codes throughout the book. They are placed in the margin alongside the text for quick scanning, and look like the one on the right.

To use the QR codes to access the weblinks you will need a QR code reader for your smartphone/tablet. There are many free readers available, depending on the device that you use. We have supplied some suggestions below, but this is not an exhaustive list and you should only download software compatible with your device and operating system. We do not endorse any of the third-party products listed below and downloading them is at your own risk.

- For iPhone/iPad, Qrafter – <https://apple.co/2Lx9H5l>
- For Android, QR Droid – <https://bit.ly/JKbRP0>
- For BlackBerry, QR Code Scanner – <https://blck.by/2DD51Jo>
- For Windows/Symbian, Upcode – <https://bit.ly/2UJe7dt>



## Organization of the course

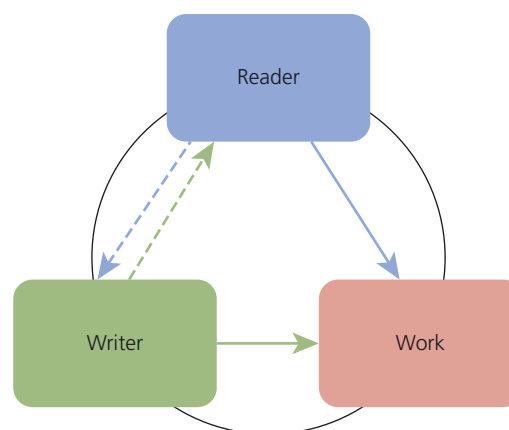
All three areas of exploration, along with the concepts and global issues, are required to be investigated over the course of your two-year programme, but the course curriculum does not dictate to teachers the order in which each element is to be presented. Since we cannot write a book and organize it in several different ways, we have had to choose, and we have chosen to use the three areas of exploration as a starting point. However, your teachers may not have chosen to organize the course using those areas of exploration, so it will be important for you to attend to your teacher's instructions about which chapters to read and in what order.

Even if your course is organized around the three areas of exploration, you will ideally be considering all of the literature you study from all three perspectives, so from time to time, each section will point out some connections between both of the other areas of exploration. You may find it useful, while studying any particular work of literature, to refer to different chapters in the book as a refresher on how to use those tools on whichever literary work you are studying.

Finally, you should be aware that because of the wide range of choices available to your teachers for selecting literary works for you to study, you are unlikely to encounter works in this book that you are studying in class. That means that you should not be reading this book with an eye towards taking what the book says and using it directly in your exams and other assessments by writing about the works you learn about here. Your IB assessments require you to use works that you have studied in your course. Instead, this book will help you to learn *how* to read any work of literature you are given, because it will show you from a conceptual stance what is required of any reader approaching any work.

This diagram shows the relationships that we will investigate over the course of this book. The writer creates the literary work with which you, the reader, engage. The dotted lines show that the purpose of the exercise is for you to engage with the writer, but you cannot do that directly; your means of communication is through the written work. Once you understand the nature of your relationship to authors, how it is possible for you to communicate in this indirect fashion, and how authors expect you to approach that communicative task, it will be much easier for you to engage with any literary work.

Once you understand the nature of literary works themselves, and once you have the tools to interpret them, you will be able to read any novel, short story, play, poem, or work of non-fiction you encounter equally well, because you will know what to look for and what to do with it when you find it. Reading this book will not help you to become experts at reading particular literary works; it will help you to become literary experts. Enjoy!



## Works cited

- 'Blank Verse.' *Ohio River - New World Encyclopedia*, New World Encyclopedia, 24 January, 2019. [www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Blank\\_Verse](http://www.newworldencyclopedia.org/entry/Blank_Verse).
- Bloom, R. 'Lost in Translation: What the First Line of 'The Stranger' Should Be.' *The New Yorker*, The New Yorker, 19 June 2017, 25 January, 2019. [www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/lost-in-translation-what-the-first-line-of-the-stranger-should-be](http://www.newyorker.com/books/page-turner/lost-in-translation-what-the-first-line-of-the-stranger-should-be).
- Branagh, K (dir.). *Hamlet*. Warner Home Video, 2007.
- Camus, A and Ward, M. *The Stranger*. Knopf, 1993.
- Eliot, G. *Middlemarch*. Digireads.com, 2016.
- Eliot, TS. 'The Waste Land'. *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, 24 January, 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47311/the-waste-land](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47311/the-waste-land).
- Folger Shakespeare Library. *Shakespeare's Plays* from Folger Digital Texts. Ed. Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Folger Shakespeare Library, 25 January, 2019. [www.folgerdigitaltexts.org](http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org).

- 'First Publication of 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star'' *The British Library*, The British Library, 6 Feb. 2014, 24 January, 2019. [www.bl.uk/collection-items/first-publication-of-twinkle-twinkle-little-star](http://www.bl.uk/collection-items/first-publication-of-twinkle-twinkle-little-star).
- France, AK. *Boris Pasternak's Translations of Shakespeare*. University of California Press, 1978.
- Glanz, J. 'Letter May Solve Nazi A-Bomb Mystery.' *The New York Times*, New York Times, 7 Jan. 2002, 25 January, 2019. [www.nytimes.com/2002/01/07/us/letter-may-solve-nazi-a-bomb-mystery.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2002/01/07/us/letter-may-solve-nazi-a-bomb-mystery.html).
- 'Hymn 2 to Demeter .' Edited by Hugh G. Evelyn-White, *Hymn 2 to Demeter*, Tufts University, 24 January, 2019. [www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0138:hymn=2:card=1](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus:text:1999.01.0138:hymn=2:card=1).
- International Baccalaureate Organization. *Language A: Literature Guide First Assessment 2021*. International Baccalaureate, 2019.
- Klein, TM. *The Punch Escrow*. San Francisco: Inkshares, Inc., 2017.
- Mabillard, A. 'Sources for Romeo and Juliet.' *Shakespeare Online*, 21 Nov. 2009, 24 January, 2019. [www.shakespeare-online.com/sources/romeosources.html](http://www.shakespeare-online.com/sources/romeosources.html).
- Shakespeare, William. 'Sonnet LXIV.' *Sonnet XLIV*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, [shakespeare.mit.edu/Poetry/sonnet.XLIV.html](http://shakespeare.mit.edu/Poetry/sonnet.XLIV.html).
- Sophocles. 'Oedipus the King.' Translated by F Storr, *The Internet Classics Archive | On Airs, Waters, and Places by Hippocrates*, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 25 January, 2019. [classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/oedipus.html](http://classics.mit.edu/Sophocles/oedipus.html).
- Spitzer, DR. 'What Is a Concept?' *Educational Technology*, vol.15, no.7, ser. 1975, July 1975, pp.36–39. 1975, [www.jstor.org/stable/44418021](http://www.jstor.org/stable/44418021).
- Swift, J. *Gullivers Travels*. Dover Publications, 1996.
- Taylor, J. 'Twinkle, Twinkle, Little Star by Jane Taylor.' *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, 24 January, 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43200/twinkle-twinkle-little-star](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43200/twinkle-twinkle-little-star).
- Various Artists. *Music From Baz Luhrmann's Film The Great Gatsby*. Water Tower Music/Interscope, 2013.

# 1.1

## Why and how do we study literature?

### OBJECTIVES OF CHAPTER

- To understand the nature of fiction
- To understand the relationship of fiction, drama and poetry to truth
- To demonstrate ways to apply course concepts to specific works of literature
- To demonstrate ways to understand specific works of literature in the context of global issues
- To recognize features of texts which make them literary texts as opposed to non-literary ones
- To provide an overview of *why* we read literature
- To provide an overview of *how* we read literature
- To understand the relationship between the implied author of a text and the implied reader of the text

## What is a literary text?

The Language A: Literature IB Diploma course identifies four forms of literary texts:

- prose fiction
- poetry
- drama
- non-fiction.

### ■ The nature of fiction

**Fiction** describes literary works that recount events that never happened and describe people and places which did not actually exist. Novels, short stories and novellas are fiction, as are many (if not most) plays. The range of things that never happened is, of course, virtually unlimited, and so we get an enormous variety of fictional works.

Authors have the freedom to imagine past events, present events, future events, realistic events, surrealistic events – any kind of event they like. As a result, we have numerous different genres of fiction: romantic fiction, **historical fiction**, tragedy, comedy, **fantasy**, crime fiction and dramatic fiction, to name a few. These genres vary greatly in style and content.

Science-fiction writers often explore ideas of what technologies might exist in the future, and then imagine the possibilities of what life would be like in a universe in which those technologies exist. Futuristic stories do not have to involve science and technology, however. *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood is set in a post-apocalyptic future, and thus tells of events that have never happened and which almost certainly never will happen in exactly the way Atwood has imagined.

Fantasy is another form of fiction, in a similar vein to science fiction. The *Harry Potter* series is fantasy, which involves magical beings and actions in a place that does not exist.

A good deal of fiction is much more realistic, however. 'An Astrologer's Day' by R.K. Narayan is set in an unnamed but realistic setting in India sometime prior to 1957. We can determine the time period because the monetary unit mentioned in the story, the anna, was demonetised in 1957 (Republic India Coinage). The story itself was published in 1947 in a collection of the same name, so one might be tempted to think that Narayan was writing from his own experience; however, we know that the story is fiction because it is identified as a short story and not as memoir. (Perhaps more saliently, we know it is fiction from the clever tidiness of the ironic twist in the ending. Real life seldom dishes up such deliciously clever turns of events!)

## R.K. Narayan

Rasipuram Krishnaswami Iyer Narayanaswami, known as R.K. Narayan, was an author from South India who wrote many novels and short stories, most prolifically between the 1930s and the 1980s. He was honoured for his work by both the Royal Society of Literature in England and the American Academy and Institute of Arts and Letters (Penguin India). He also won the Sahitya Academy Award in India ('R.K. Narayan'). Narayan wrote a number of novels and short stories set in a fictional town of Malgudi, exploring the lives of the characters who lived in that town ('R.K. Narayan'). He has been compared to the American writer William Faulkner, who also wrote many stories set in a fictional place called Yoknapatawpha County.

**Drama** also very often recounts events that have never happened to people and in places which do not exist – and might never exist. Like prose fiction, drama appears in many guises, ranging from the highly realistic to the highly unrealistic, and includes all the same subgenres that prose fictions includes. Shakespeare's plays, for example, range from the fantastic (see *Midsummer Night's Dream*) to the romantic and tragic (see *Romeo and Juliet*) to the historical (see *Julius Caesar* and the *Henry* plays).

Historical fiction, although featuring events that actually happened, very often takes us well beyond the factual. The author imagines how people might have felt, what their motivations might have been, and what they might have said to each other, among other things. Historical fiction includes works which feature purely fictional characters and events but are set in a real historical time and place and against a background of historically accurate events. Anthony Doerr's novel, *All the Light We Cannot See*, for instance, takes place in occupied France during Second World War. That setting and that war were very real, but the story, featuring a blind French girl and a German radio operator, is entirely fictional.

Even plays and novels which seem to be highly autobiographical must be understood to have been fictionalized in some way. Novelists and playwrights are artists, after all. They write plays to create an **aesthetic** response; hence, they distort, exaggerate, change facts, choose what to include and what to leave out, and in many other ways shape the story to create the effect that they want.

Athol Fugard's '*Master Harold*'... and the boys is an example of a highly realistic play, and one which is often seen to be in large part autobiographical. It is set in South Africa during apartheid, and it recreates to a large degree events from Fugard's own life. Fugard's family did have a Basuto servant named Sam Semela who worked for Fugard's mother at the Jubilee Boarding House and, later, in a tea shop in Port Elizabeth.

There was an encounter one afternoon between Fugard and Sam which ended with Fugard spitting in Sam's face (Jordan 462). So far, these facts which appear in the play do refer to real events in Fugard's life. What makes them fiction, however, is that Fugard expanded the basic autobiographical events to include a significant focus on the dreams and challenges of the two black characters, the deliberate use of symbolism to develop powerful social commentary, and a quite significant change to the ending of the story in the play, as contrasted to what happened in Fugard's life.

Events are no longer just events; events and actions take on symbolic significance. Literary critic John O. Jordan gives this example:

*If standing is the posture of servitude for Sam and Willie, we can better appreciate the significance of ballroom dancing in their lives. Since they are not permitted to sit down on the job, dancing and dance practice are a way not only of providing a welcome relief from the tedium of their work but also of transforming the enforced posture of subordination into a mode of creative and liberating movement. Hence the importance of the play's first significant action, when Willie rises from his knees, thinks for a moment, and then begins awkwardly to practice the quickstep. In a sense, the thematic pattern of the entire play is contained in this single non-verbal moment, not the least important aspect of which is Willie's short pause to reflect.*

(Jordan 466)



In real life, standing has no particular symbolic significance, and if we want to show someone a dance step while we are down on our knees cleaning the floor, we necessarily have to get up to do it. In literature, those same actions take on a quite different, and powerful significance. Fugard took a personal experience as the starting point of his play, but he then turned it into art to serve purposes quite different from simple autobiography.

Zitkala-Ša, a Dakota Sioux Native American writer from the early-twentieth century, wrote short stories which were also heavily autobiographical. Her work, like Fugard's, is considered to be fiction rather than straight autobiography because she, too, used her experiences to create art. Here is an excerpt from her story 'The Widespread Enigma Concerning Blue-Star Woman':

It was summer on the western plains. Fields of golden sunflowers facing eastward, greeting the rising sun. Blue-Star Woman, with windshorn braids of white hair over each ear, sat in the shade of her log hut before an open fire. Lonely but unmolested she dwelt here like the ground squirrel that took its abode nearby, – both through the easy tolerance of the land owner. The Indian woman held a skillet over the burning  
5 embers. A large round cake, with long slashes in its center, was baking and crowding the capacity of the frying pan.

In deep abstraction Blue-Star Woman prepared her morning meal. 'Who am I?' had become the obsessing riddle of her life. She was no longer a young woman, being in her fifty-third year. In the eyes of the white man's law, it was required of her to give proof of her membership in the Sioux tribe. The unwritten law of  
10 heart prompted her naturally to say, 'I am a being. I am Blue-Star Woman. A piece of earth is my birthright.'

It was taught, for reasons now forgot, that an Indian should never pronounce his or her name in answer to any inquiry. It was probably a means of protection in the days of black magic. Be this as it may, Blue-Star Woman lived in times when this teaching was disregarded. It gained her nothing, however, to pronounce her name to the government official to whom she applied for her share of tribal land. His persistent question was always, 'Who were your parents?'

(Zitkala-Ša 72)

Zitkala-Ša wrote stories which reflect her knowledge of life in the Sioux tribe on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in South Dakota, and her experience with white American culture from her days at a Quaker boarding school in Indiana and at college in Indiana and Pennsylvania ('Zitkala-Ša Native American Writer'). She wrote from her personal experience, but she also invented characters and events, so we cannot consider her work to be autobiographical.

### Zitkala-Ša

Zitkala-Ša, whose birth name was Gertrude Simmons, was born on the Yankton Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. She is the first Native American woman to write stories based on tribal legends which had been conveyed from generation to generation through an oral tradition. She was also a talented violinist and earned significant acclaim from white society. Eventually, however, Zitkala-Ša decided to return to her Native American roots and returned to South Dakota, but found it difficult to fit in with a society who felt that she had lost the traditions of the culture ('Zitkala-Ša Native American Writer'). Much of her work reflects this difficult cultural conflict.



■ A portrait of Zitkala-Ša by Gertrude Stanton Käsebier, 1898

## GLOBAL ISSUES

## CHOOSING FROM MULTIPLE POSSIBILITIES

Even in this short excerpt, we can see that the short story, 'The Widespread Enigma of Blue-Star Woman', is going to be related to two different global issues: **culture, identity, and community**, and **power, politics, and justice**.

Blue-Star Woman asks herself directly 'Who am I?' in line 8, and that is followed by a discussion of the significance of her name. The end of the extract raises the question of the rights of Blue-Star Woman in the context of the government officials to whom she must apply for the title to 'her share of the tribal land' (lines 16–18). Seeing the connection to those broad global issues will not be enough when the time comes to prepare for your individual oral, however. You would need to read the rest of the story in order to be able to identify the point that Zitkala-Ša makes about those issues. In this case, the whole story moves from the particular situation of Blue-Star Woman to the men in Washington who will settle her fate. The story shows that the interference of the white man in traditional Indian culture has destroyed the values and, therefore, the identity of the Indian people. It also shows an old idea: that power corrupts. The story shows how some Indian men have figured out a way to make a lot of money by 'helping' the Native Americans get their rights to the land – in exchange for half of everything they get. Either one of those ideas – culture clash leading to the destruction of one culture, or power corrupting those who wield it – could be the basis for an individual oral.

## ACTIVITY

Read the following extract from Alice Munro's short story, 'Queenie', and write a short explanation of how it reflects either one of the two global issues discussed above: **culture, identity and community**, or **power, politics and justice**. After you have made your own interpretation, you can read and compare it to the commentary at the end of the book (page XXX).

- Both Queenie and Mr Vorguilla had to go out to work in the evenings. Mr Vorguilla played the piano in a restaurant. He wore a tuxedo. And Queenie had a job selling tickets in a movie theatre. The theatre was just a few blocks away, so I walked there with her. And when I saw her sitting in the ticket-booth I understood that the make-up and the dyed puffed hair and the hoop earrings were not so strange after
- 5 all. Queenie looked like some of the girls passing on the street or going in to see the movie with their boyfriends. And she looked very much like some of the girls portrayed in the posters that surrounded her. She looked to be connected to the world of drama, of heated love affairs and dangers, that was being depicted inside on the screen.
- 10 She looked – in my father's words – as if she didn't have to take a back seat to anybody.
- 'Why don't you just wander around for a while?' she had said to me. But I felt conspicuous. I couldn't imagine sitting in a café drinking coffee and advertising to the world that I had nothing to do and no place to go. Or going into a store and trying on clothes that I had no hope of buying. I climbed the hill again. I waved hello to the
- 15 Greek woman calling out her window. I let myself in with Queenie's key.
- I sat on the cot in the sun porch. There was nowhere to hang up the clothes I had brought and I thought it might not be such a good idea to unpack, anyway. Mr Vorguilla might not like to see any sign that I was staying.
- 20 I thought that Mr Vorguilla's looks had changed, just as Queenie's had. But his had not changed, as hers had, in the direction of what seemed to me a hard foreign glamour and sophistication. His hair, which had been reddish-grey, was now quite grey, and



25

the expression of his face – always ready to flash with outrage at the possibility of disrespect or an inadequate performance or just at the fact of something in his house not being where it was supposed to be – seemed now to be one of more permanent grievance, as if some insult was being offered or bad behaviour going unpunished, all the time in front of his eyes.

I got up and walked around the apartment. You can never get a good look at the places people live in while they are there.

### Alice Munro

Canadian author Alice Munro was the winner of the 2013 Nobel Prize for Literature. Her fiction draws on the history of her family, including their emigration from Scotland and settlement in Ontario three generations ago. She lived most of her life in Huron County, and much of her work has been significantly shaped by the culture and geography of that area (Thacker). Munro has led a quiet life, staying away from the spotlight, but has worked publicly against the censorship of books in high schools. She has won a long list of prizes for her work – almost exclusively short stories. Her stories explore a variety of problems – relationships, moral failings, and the question of how well memory reflects reality (Thacker).

### The nature of poetry

The question of whether poetry is fiction is an interesting one. Some poems are very obviously fiction, because they have speakers who are clearly characters created by the poet to tell a story. These characters may not share the poet's world view – in such cases, the poet expects the reader to be able to examine the nature of the speaker objectively and to recognize flaws in that character's thinking. In the following sonnet by William Shakespeare, for example, the speaker tells a story about himself which the careful reader will realize is suspect.

#### Sonnet 30

When to the sessions of sweet silent thought  
 I summon up remembrance of things past,  
 I sigh the lack of many a thing I sought,  
 And with old woes new wail my dear time's waste:  
 5 Then can I drown an eye, unused to flow,  
 For precious friends hid in death's dateless night,  
 And weep afresh love's long since cancelled woe,  
 And moan the expense of many a vanished sight:  
 Then can I grieve at grievances foregone,  
 10 And heavily from woe to woe tell o'er  
 The sad account of fore-bemoanèd moan,  
 Which I new pay as if not paid before.  
 But if the while I think on thee, dear friend,  
 All losses are restored and sorrows end.

This speaker claims that when he sits, enjoying a quiet moment of happy reflection (the 'sweet silent thought' of line 1), he deliberately causes himself to remember and brood over past sorrows – failure to attain things he wanted (line 3), the death of friends (line 6), the loss of a lover (line 7). He claims to obsess on these past sorrows to the point that he feels the pain all over again (lines 9, 11 and 12). Even more surprisingly, the speaker tells us that this revisiting of past

pain happens over and over again – the ‘when’ in line 1 and the ‘then’ at the beginning of line 5 indicate that what he is describing is a repeated action. The speaker asks us to believe, then, that he is a person who on many occasions deliberately works himself into a sort of frenzy of self-pity. If this claim is true, then the speaker is probably not somebody we would want to be spending much time with. Self-pity – and deliberately instigated self-pity in this case – is not an endearing quality.

A skilled and creative reader, however, will recognize that the speaker’s claim is not really true. It is a **conceit**, a type of extended metaphor. The implication of the term ‘conceit’ is that the metaphor is one which is particularly fanciful or far-fetched. A conceit, therefore, is necessarily not a true description of reality. The conceit, in this case, is that the speaker is the kind of person who works himself up into an impassioned state of suffering, but who, in actuality, is not such a person. The point of the invention was to create contrast. The speaker wants to show that the ‘dear friend’ (line 13) has such a powerful effect on him that the mere thought of her can restore him from the depths of the deepest suffering and despair. The speaker wishes his audience (the lover, whom he addresses directly in line 13) to see herself as he sees her: someone with incredible power to affect his well-being. The poem is intended to flatter and to convey, through an imagined scenario, what it feels like to know this woman and what it feels like to love her. The dramatic contrast between his darkest of dark moods and his happiness when he thinks of her is a much more effective way to communicate the feeling than simply saying ‘I love you’ or ‘I’m glad that you love me’.

Notice that even though the events of this poem are not true in the sense that they actually happened in the real world, they convey an idea that does reveal something true about the real world: that love is a powerful feeling, capable of bringing us great joy that can sustain us in times of great sorrow. That is an experience which many people in the real world know something about. Shakespeare has used the conceit of the self-pitying narrator in order to portray a truth about human experience.

## CONCEPT CONNECTION

### PERSPECTIVES AND CREATIVITY

On the surface, the narrator of ‘Sonnet 30’ has a perspective which does not match Shakespeare’s. We aren’t being asked to think that William Shakespeare himself would admire a person who engaged in such an exaggerated kind of self-pity. We are expected, instead, to recognize the conceit and thus see past the surface perspective to the underlying perspective: that love has the power to relieve even that much suffering. In that sense, then, Shakespeare would seem to share the viewpoint of the speaker. In this short poem, Shakespeare has given us two perspectives to consider: one which he expects us to be able to discredit, and the other which he expects us to believe.

Our ability to recognize the fact that the narrator is using a conceit depends on a number of things, including our knowledge of what a conceit is and our knowledge that to dredge up one’s past sorrows so as to wallow in them over and over is a psychologically unhealthy action, so Shakespeare would not be likely to expect us to like and admire such a person. It requires creativity in readers to make the assessment of what perspectives are at work in this sonnet. Both creativity and perspective, therefore, are essential parts of the immanent experience with this text and, indeed, with all literary texts. We work towards a kind of personal meeting of the mind between ourselves and the writer through the text.

In other cases, poets might create a character but one who does share the poet’s world view, so that it seems as if the poet might be speaking directly to us, showing us the world as he or she sees it. In this poem by Chinese–New Zealander Alison Wong, for example, the speaker is highly reliable.

**Reflection on a Proposal of Marriage**

*after sharing a 2 for 1 voucher to an exhibition*

I was married once, briefly  
to a man I met at the ticketing desk  
of the Christchurch Art Gallery.

- 5 We kept falling  
into each other before  
the shadowy figures of  
Giacometti. 'Hello,'  
we said in thin voices—
- 10 a *Standing Woman*, a *Man*  
*Walking* away. We parted  
only to find each other at  
*The Glade*, *The Forest* and *City Square*.  
We were a *Group of Three Men*—
- 15 my husband and I and our  
marriage—each of us turning  
away. Before we finally  
separated, I offered  
my name. 'Graham,' he said.
- 20 'Thank you.' We shook hands.  
He never gave me a ring.

**Alison Wong**

Alison Wong was born in New Zealand and earned a bachelor's degree in mathematics from Victoria University of Wellington. Her interest in writing, however, goes back as far, and she has worked as both an information technology analyst and writer for many years (New Zealand Book Council). She has won a number of awards for her poetry, as well as the Janet Frame book prize and several others for her first novel, *As the Earth Turns Silver*.

01\_01\_02

The poet has indicated that this poem was based on a real experience that she had:

*I had a '2 for 1' voucher from The Press but no one to share it with, so at the ticketing desk I asked the first lone person in the queue whether he'd also like to get in for half-price. He replied that this must make us married. We went our separate ways but kept bumping into each other at various exhibits. There was something of the self-consciousness I imagine upon waking with a stranger in one's bed.*

(*'Alison Wong'*)

This, then, is an example of a poem with a highly reliable speaker who seems to speak directly for the poet. The story that she tells, about an event in an art museum, is factually true. In these cases, however, we must still remember that the speaker of the poem should not be considered to equate to the poet. The poem is still a work of art and, as we saw with the examples from Athol

Fugard and Zitkala-Ša above, we must not confuse art with purely factual or autobiographical information.

Sylvia Plath, often labelled a confessional poet (somebody writing purely autobiographical poetry) said this about her work:

*I think my poems immediately come out of the sensuous and emotional experiences I have, but I must say I cannot sympathize with these cries from the heart that are informed by nothing except a needle or a knife, or whatever it is. I believe that one should be able to control and manipulate experiences, even the most terrifying, like madness, being tortured, this sort of experience, and one should be able to manipulate these experiences with an informed and intelligent mind.*

(Uroff 105)

The manipulation of personal experience is what makes poetry art. This kind of poem is based on a true story, as it were, so it is not quite fiction, but the original experience has been moulded into something greater than it was, so it is not quite autobiography either.

Another type of poem, the **lyric poem**, doesn't tell a story but creates an effect. In this poem by early-twentieth century Australian poet, John Shaw Neilson, the speaker is not a developed character. Instead, the speaker is an omniscient, impersonal voice describing for us features of springtime:

O Heart of Spring  
O HEART of Spring!  
Spirit of light and love and joyous day,  
So soon to faint beneath the fiery Summer:  
5 Still smiles the Earth, eager for thee alway:  
Welcome art thou, soever short thy stay,  
Thou bold, thou blithe newcomer!  
Whither, O whither this thy journeying,  
O heart of Spring?

The speaker speaks to spring, as if it were a sentient being, in order to convey a feeling about springtime. This speaker sees the heart of spring as being light and joyous (line 2), but also as being fragile and short-lived (line 3). The image of spring fainting under the fire of summer evokes a feeling of alarm and even sadness. The second half of the poem asserts that the earth welcomes spring, despite its short life. In calling spring a bold, blithe newcomer (line 6), the speaker seems to admire spring as a courageous season, appearing even in the face of danger. The stanza ends with a sense of wonder and curiosity as the narrator asks spring where it goes on its seemingly endless journey before coming around again every year.

There is no story here; the poem is a lyric that evokes an array of feelings. It does not make any kind of statement about ethical or moral ideas, it does not have an underlying thesis that we are expected to work out. The poem is intended only to make us consider what springtime is like – both beautiful, fresh, poignant and, most notably, short-lived. The poem conveys a truth about human experience, but the truth is about feelings we experience when we really observe nature, rather than about our interactions with other people.

Poetry, therefore, is sometimes strictly fiction, and it is sometimes built upon facts that have been moulded and manipulated to suit the poet's purpose. The truth of all these kinds of poems – those with unreliable speakers, those with reliable speakers, and lyric poems – is a greater truth about human experience, however, than the simple factual recounting of events.

## John Shaw Neilson

John Shaw Neilson's father set out to try to make a go of a farm in Australia under the Victoria Land Act in the 1880s. John only had a few years at school before he left to work as a labourer for his father. The farm, unfortunately, went bankrupt after only one year, and the family took on a number of jobs for several different landowners over the next few years, trying to work their own land in between. They eventually lost the farm, however, and John and his father worked as farm-hands, timber-workers and road-workers (Anderson). The family, in other words, was quite poor through most of Neilson's childhood and young adulthood. Despite the long working hours, John Shaw Neilson found time to explore the natural environment, and this interest in nature became one of the major themes of his poetry. Neilson followed in his father's footsteps not only as a labourer, but also as a poet. His father wrote for local newspapers, was a member of the local literary society, and both Neilsons won prizes for poetry in the Australian Natives' Association competitions in 1893 (Anderson). Despite failing health and eyesight that was poor enough that he needed help to read and write, Shaw Neilson was renowned in his lifetime for the superior quality of his lyric poetry (Anderson).

## CONCEPT CONNECTION

### REPRESENTATION

The concept of representation concerns the degree to which the language of a text represents reality. You can probably understand this concept quite easily if you think about painting. The 2013 pencil drawing, *Sensazioni*, by Italian artist Diego Fazio is highly realistic; in fact it comes from a school of art called 'hyperrealism'. It represents reality very accurately, so we would say that this drawing is highly representational. (Take a look via the QR code in the margin.)



On the other hand, a painting such as *Le Chaste Joseph*, painted by German artist Max Ernst in 1923, is not representational – it does not portray the world in a highly realistic way. The figures in the painting are intended to be Mary and Joseph from the Christian Bible, along with the Holy Spirit (Sebbag). The Bible characters are represented as birds, which is, of course, already not a realistic representation of people in the real world, but even the birds are not a realistic portrayal of birds. (Have a look via the QR code in the margin.)



Writers can write texts with the same range of representational attitudes. So far, we have seen quite a variety: the sonnet by Shakespeare (page XXX) is highly structured with rhymes. Certainly, people do not speak that way. The poem does represent reality, however, in its portrayal of a man in love who wishes to honour and flatter his beloved. 'Reflection on a Proposal of Marriage', on the other hand, is a quite realistic poem. It uses accessible language and tells of real events. 'O Heart of Spring', finally, uses language of a particularly high style, much more formal than we would ever use in everyday speech.

## CAS Links: Activity

Organize a trip to the local art museum and study the paintings in terms of the degree to which they are representational. Contact museum personnel in advance to see if you can arrange for a speaker or guide to show you around the museum specifically in order to learn about differing degrees of representation in various schools of art.

## ACTIVITY

## 'Because I could not stop for Death' by Emily Dickinson

Now that you have seen several types of poems and considered the degree to which they might be considered fiction, read this poem by Emily Dickinson and try to determine for yourself.

Answer the questions that follow, referring to specific language in the poem to support your answers.

Because I could not stop for Death –  
He kindly stopped for me –  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –  
And Immortality.

5 We slowly drove – He knew no haste  
And I had put away  
My labor and my leisure too,  
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove  
10 At Recess – in the Ring –  
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –  
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –  
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –  
15 For only Gossamer, my Gown –  
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed  
A Swelling of the Ground –  
The Roof was scarcely visible –  
20 The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet  
Feels shorter than the Day  
I first surmised the Horses' Heads  
Were toward Eternity –

- 1 Is the narrator a created character or an omniscient voice?
- 2 Does the poem tell a story or is it a lyric, created for an effect?
- 3 In what sense is the content of the poem true?
- 4 What sort of perspective or perspectives are there in this poem which the poet expects you to recognize?
- 5 How closely does this poem relate to reality? Is it highly representational or not? What features make it so?

After you have answered these questions, you can read the notes about this poem on page XXX.

## ■ The nature of literary non-fiction

Of course, non-fiction is not fiction. Non-fiction writers choose actual experiences, events, and observations from the real world as their subjects. There is an array of informational non-fiction including biography, news writing and sports writing, but literary non-fiction employs many of the techniques of literary fiction, which we will investigate in more detail in the rest of this chapter. The important point to remember is that in literary non-fiction, the facts have been manipulated in order to create an effect, similar to some of the poetry above. That is not to say that the facts have been changed to the degree that what the author wrote is no longer true – if that were the case, the piece would have to be labelled fiction. Instead, the facts that are chosen have been carefully selected and ordered in such a way as to create an effect that most people would not notice if they were present in the real-life situation.

Consider this excerpt from Mark Twain's essay 'That Awful German Language':

Surely there is not another language that is so slipshod and systemless, and so slippery and elusive to the grasp. One is washed about in it, hither and thither, in the most helpless way; and when at last he thinks he has captured a rule which offers firm ground to take a rest on amid the general rage and turmoil of the ten parts of speech, he turns over the page and reads, 'Let the pupil make careful note of the following  
5 exceptions.' He runs his eye down and finds that there are more exceptions to the rule than instances of it. So overboard he goes again, to hunt for another Ararat and find another quicksand. Such has been, and continues to be, my experience. Every time I think I have got one of these four confusing 'cases' where I am master of it, a seemingly insignificant preposition intrudes itself into my sentence, clothed with an awful and unsuspected power, and crumbles the ground from under me. For instance, my book inquires after a certain  
10 bird – (it is always inquiring after things which are of no sort of consequence to anybody): 'Where is the bird?' Now the answer to this question – according to the book – is that the bird is waiting in the blacksmith shop on account of the rain. Of course no bird would do that, but then you must stick to the book. Very well, I begin to cipher out the German for that answer. I begin at the wrong end, necessarily, for that is the German idea. I say to myself, 'Regen (rain) is masculine – or maybe it is feminine – or possibly neuter – it is  
15 too much trouble to look now. Therefore, it is either der (the) Regen, or die (the) Regen, or das (the) Regen, according to which gender it may turn out to be when I look. In the interest of science, I will cipher it out on the hypothesis that it is masculine. Very well – then the rain is der Regen, if it is simply in the quiescent state of being mentioned, without enlargement or discussion – Nominative case; but if this rain is lying around, in a kind of a general way on the ground, it is then definitely located, it is doing something – that is, resting  
20 (which is one of the German grammar's ideas of doing something), and this throws the rain into the Dative case, and makes it dem Regen. However, this rain is not resting, but is doing something actively, – it is falling – to interfere with the bird, likely – and this indicates movement, which has the effect of sliding it into the Accusative case and changing dem Regen into den Regen.' Having completed the grammatical horoscope of this matter, I answer up confidently and state in German that the bird is staying in the blacksmith shop  
25 'wegen (on account of) den Regen.' Then the teacher lets me softly down with the remark that whenever the word 'wegen' drops into a sentence, it always throws that subject into the Genitive case, regardless of consequences – and that therefore this bird stayed in the blacksmith shop 'wegen des Regens.'

N. B. – I was informed, later, by a higher authority, that there was an 'exception' which permits one to say 'wegen den Regen' in certain peculiar and complex circumstances, but that this exception is not extended to  
30 anything but rain.

(Twain 64–5)



Twain is writing about an experience he has had. German does have all of those cases and rules and, very probably, Twain's German text did have a sentence about a bird waiting in the blacksmith shop. What he has written here, then, is not fiction. He has, however, presented the facts about German and his experience with it in order to create an effect – primarily a comedic one. He has used several techniques in order to create the humour: the religious allusion in lines 7–8 to the search for Ararat (the mountain on which Noah's ark is traditionally believed to have come to rest) creates humour because the search for Noah's ark is a vastly more significant search, culturally and historically, than the search for the proper phrasing about rain. The suggestion that the latter is as difficult a task as the former is funny. The stringing together of those long sentences about how to decide which case to use (lines 22–32) is also humorous because it puts us right inside the mind of someone trying to work that out, and we can experience the confusion that arises from all of those possibilities. The humour and the perspective helps readers to connect to the situation and to empathize with his struggle. Although Twain is writing non-fiction – a text about events that did happen to him in the real world – he has done it in a way that highlights a universal struggle among people trying to learn German as adults.

### ■ TOK Links: Learning language

Language is a major means by which we make knowledge. What we are capable of communicating and understanding depends on our fluency with language – whether it is our native language or one we learned later. What Twain has highlighted here is a universal feature of trying to learn a foreign language. When you learn a language as a native speaker, you absorb it from context; you are immersed in language all the time, in many forms, for thousands of hours at a time when your brain is particularly suited to language learning. Native speakers of German do not have to grapple, as Twain does, with the apparently random rules of the language because they simply internalize them over time. Adults trying to learn second languages by studying grammar are faced with all the strange inconsistencies present in every language, and the job of trying to memorize them one by one is a massive undertaking. For people who learn a language later in life and never attain native-like fluency, the knowledge that they can obtain and contribute in that language is limited by the level of their proficiency.

Although Twain here is poking fun at the oddities of the German language, English is equally unpredictable. Consider, as just one example, the different pronunciations of the following words: 'cough', 'rough', 'plough' and 'dough.' Another example is a rule that many children are taught when they are young: 'I before E except after C, or sounding as A, as in 'neighbour' or 'weigh'.' The only problem with that rule is that there are many exceptions to it as well. How about 'either' and 'neither', for instance? See if you can come up with a few more examples of contradictions that exist in the 'rules' of your native language.

### ■ EE Links: Comparing non-fiction to fiction

You could develop an extended essay topic in which you compare and contrast the use of literary devices in a non-fiction work, such as 'That Awful German Language' and a work of literary fiction, such as Alice Munro's short story 'Queenie'.



## ACTIVITY

### Excerpt from *Out of Africa* by Isak Dinesen

Isak Dinesen (whose real name was Karen Blixen) was a Danish writer who lived in Africa for some time. While there, she met Englishman Denys Finch Hatton and fell in love with him. She took to telling him stories to win his attention. Much of her published work was written in English, which she learned because it was Finch Hatton's native tongue.

Before you read the excerpt from her most famous work, a memoir of the farm on which she lived, write a paragraph describing a place that you know very well – preferably one which you love (or loved) but which you do not have access to right now, so that you are writing from memory, as Dinesen did in her memoir.

Now that you have written your paragraph, read the following extract from *Out of Africa*. How does Dinesen's description differ from yours? Obviously she is writing about Africa and you are unlikely to have done so, but probably your description seems to be less 'literary' than hers. Consider the techniques that she uses as compared and contrasted to the techniques you used. What do you think accounts for the difference in effect?

- I had a farm in Africa at the foot of the Ngong Hills. The Equator runs across these highlands, a hundred miles to the North, and the farm lay at an altitude of over six thousand feet. In the day-time you felt that you had got high up, near to the sun, but the early mornings and evenings were limpid and restful, and the nights were cold.
- 5 The geographical position, and the height of the land combined to create a landscape that had not its like in all the world. There was no fat on it and no luxuriance anywhere; it was Africa distilled up through six thousand feet, like the strong and refined essence of a continent. The colours were dry and burnt, like the colours in pottery. The trees had a light delicate foliage, the structure of which was different from
- 10 that of the trees in Europe; it did not grow in bows or cupolas, but in horizontal layers, and the formation gave to the tall solitary trees a likeness to the palms, or a heroic and romantic air like fullrigged ships with their sails clewed up, and to the edge of a wood a strange appearance as if the whole wood were faintly vibrating. Upon the grass of the great plains the crooked bare old thorn-trees were scattered, and the grass was spiced
- 15 like thyme and bog-myrtle; in some places the scent was so strong, that it smarted in the nostrils. All the flowers that you found on the plains, or upon the creepers and liana in the native forest, were diminutive like flowers of the downs,—only just in the beginning of the long rains a number of big, massive heavy-scented lilies sprang out on the plains. The views were immensely wide. Everything that you saw made for greatness and
- 20 freedom, and unequalled nobility.

(Dinesen 3)

## What makes a text literary?

So far, we have seen that the relationship between literary texts and real-world events is complex and wide-ranging. The same might also be said, however, of less literary texts. Many novels are considered to be of value for entertainment purposes only and would not ever be considered as texts in your IB English Literature course. Romance novels, westerns, and murder mysteries are examples of books that generally come under the heading of entertainment rather than literature. Many non-fiction texts are informative in nature and would not be considered literary. Newspaper articles, most letters and emails, tweets, cooking instructions and many other types of text are not literary (though they might appear in the Language and Literature course, as they do indeed rely on language!). What, then, accounts for the difference?

Methodology accounts for some of the difference. Literary texts include a vast array of techniques that are either not found in other types of texts or which are not used in a

sophisticated way. These include such things as metaphor, symbol, allusion, and imagery (we will explore many of these in detail throughout the book).

Sophistication of the content also contributes to the literary nature of many texts. In literature, we expect characters to change in some significant way. They could become more self-aware, become better people, or fail to change in a way in which they needed. The latter situation often results in a tragedy. Think of Jay Gatsby, for example, in *The Great Gatsby*. His whole desire is to move backward in time and live the last five years of his life in a different way. This desire is not possible, and his inability to understand that or to change his dream results in tragedy. Works in which the characters don't change, but don't need to, or change only in superficial ways – romance stories, for instance, which often end with the heroine changing from poor and single to rich and married – are not literary.

In addition to giving us simplistic character portrayals, non-literary fiction tends to give us simplistic stories. Love stories always work out in the end and everyone is happy. Murder mysteries are always solved and the bad guy always punished – Sherlock Holmes famously solved every case using reason and observation. In general, literary works are less predictable, the outcomes are less simplistic and the relationships are more complicated. In Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing*, for example, we get two weddings at the end, but one of them follows on the groom's having believed, on very slim evidence, that his wife-to-be cheated on him the night before the wedding (not the best basis for a solid marriage), and the Prince, who wanted to marry Beatrice, has lost her to Benedick.

Most important, however, is the feature that we have seen in our investigation of the nature of poetry and non-fiction: in writing literature, the author manipulates reality to a purpose. Instead of giving us the story or the facts just for their own sake, authors of literature use the story or the facts to make a larger point; he or she takes an idea or a story and elevates it. Writers of fiction do the same thing that poets and writers of literary non-fiction do, but they do it with stories they invent out of their knowledge of the world and the people in it. Writers of literature construct meaning out of events that, left in their everyday form, would not seem to most people to be meaningful. In so doing, they are able to communicate richer truths about what it is like to be human and about what being human means. What makes a text literature is the fact that literature inevitably elevates experience to the universal.

## Why do we study literature?

Literature is an art form. Art is that which exists for its own sake, and not to fulfil other, pragmatic functions. The function of art is aesthetic. 'Aesthetic' is commonly considered to be a word to describe our sense of the beautiful; however, art is not necessarily an appeal to the aesthetic in the sense that beauty refers to something which is visually or aurally pleasing. Much art is not, strictly speaking, beautiful.

You may be familiar, for example, with paintings by Anselm Kiefer, a German painter who frequently turned for his subject to the Holocaust and Kristallnacht, such as in this work, called *The Breaking of the Vessels*. The books represent holy books and the broken glass recalls Kristallnacht, the night in 1938 when Nazis smashed windows in synagogues, Jewish homes and businesses and killed nearly 100 Jews (Kiefer, 'Breaking of the Vessels').

The sculpture is not visually attractive. The glass is broken and the books have been burned, and are blackened and charred. Similarly, much literature is not beautiful in the sense of being physically pleasing. Consider a great tragedy such as Shakespeare's *King Lear*: the play is fraught with divisiveness and violence. In one scene, a man's eyes are gouged out. Numerous characters die before the end of the play. Artworks such as these are powerful but not, strictly speaking, beautiful. When we talk about the aesthetic appeal of a work of art, then, we are talking about the beauty that derives from our experiencing a powerful response to that work of art. Anselm Kiefer's sculpture and Shakespeare's tragedy are beautiful in the sense that they have the power

01\_01\_03

■ *The Breaking of the Vessels* by Anselm Kiefer

to touch us deeply – to help us feel the sufferings of others and to activate our sense of empathy. When we say that art (including literature) appeals to our sense of the aesthetic, therefore, we are talking about the fact that art is that which specifically aims to touch us in ways beyond the purely rational.

In his essay, ‘What is Art and If We Know What Art Is, What is Politics?’, Tom Robbins defines art as that which has been created for the express purpose of appealing to our sensory receptors (Robbins 200). He says:

*That is not to say that a work of art can't convey other, additional values, values with intellectual and/or emotional heft. However, if it's really art, then those values will play a secondary role. To be sure, we may praise a piece for its cultural insights, for the progressive statement it makes and the courageous stand it takes, but to honor it as 'art' when its aesthetic impact is not its dominant feature is to fall into a philistine trap of shoddy semantics and false emphasis.*

(Robbins 199)

In other words, art exists, primarily if not exclusively, from the desire to share our perceptual experiences with each other, to find out how the world seems to be to other people, and to determine whether what we experience is like what others experience or how it might be different. The work of art is the medium for this communication, and the perceptions it endeavours to convey are hard to pin down in direct, assertive statements. Try, for example, to explain exactly how it feels to be absolutely enraged over an injustice. To use direct statements – such as ‘I was absolutely enraged over the injustice!’ – does not convey the intensity or the nuance of the feelings. The reader of that statement will know, intellectually, that you were enraged, because you said so, but he or she will not experience that moment perceptually. The best way to ensure that the reader truly gets the experience is for you to provide a scenario or a metaphor or some other indirect means by which the reader can experience vicariously some of the same rage that you experienced. We connect through story and through empathy to perceptual experience rather than through straight discourse.

Consider this sonnet by Carol Ann Duffy, for example:

Where I lived – winter and hard earth.  
I sat in my cold stone room  
choosing tough words, granite, flint,

to break the ice. My broken heart –  
5 I tried that, but it skimmed,  
flat, over the frozen lake.

She came from a long, long way,  
but I saw her at last, walking,  
my daughter, my girl, across the fields,

10 in bare feet, bringing all spring's flowers  
to her mother's house. I swear  
the air softened and warmed as she moved,

the blue sky smiling, none too soon,  
with the small shy mouth of a new moon.

We could say that the speaker of the poem suffers greatly due to the loss of her daughter, and that she is much happier when her daughter returns, but to state the case baldly like that really reduces the impact of our understanding. Duffy has given us a poem, however, in which she gives us a striking contrast in imagery and metaphor between the first two stanzas and the final three. The idea that the speaker's broken heart is like a frozen lake, and that the ice cannot be shattered even by granite or flint gives us a much better sense of just how sad the speaker is – much more than the bare fact that she is sad. The idea in the final eight lines that the daughter brings with her flowers and warming air – in fact, the return of spring – conveys the actual emotional experience of the speaker much more powerfully than 'I was happy again'. Duffy has given us a story complete with metaphors and images to help us understand in a personal, visceral sense what it feels like to be a mother whose daughter has gone away from her and then comes back.

As opposed to other kinds of texts – such as newspaper articles, blogs, letters, instructional manuals and travel writing – therefore, literature does not communicate facts and ideas directly from the writer to the reader. The purpose of literature is not to convey information; rather, it is to convey an individual world view in such a way that we come as close as possible to knowing what it feels like to have that world view. From reading literature, we get access to the mind and insights of the writer. In reading a work of literature, we are exposed to one person's vision of human experience and human nature, and we have the opportunity to test our own world view against that other one.

The goal of literature means that the author's ideas are not conveyed directly, in assertions. Because the ideas are not conveyed in assertions, the reader of a work of literature must interpret the characters, events and setting in order to construct an understanding of what the author was trying to convey. The art of writing and the art of reading function together to create a meeting of the minds between the two parties engaged in the act of communication through literature.

## CONCEPT CONNECTION

### CREATIVITY

As we have now seen, the act of reading is a creative act. Readers have to engage with texts imaginatively in order to experience the text as more than a basic communication of information.

## ■ TOK Links: Art and the aesthetic

In TOK, you will study art as an area of knowledge. You will consider many art forms (not just literature), but in English class you are considering the nature of one specific kind of art. When you learn how to interpret works of literature, you are learning how knowledge is made in literature, and so you are engaged directly in answering a TOK question: how do we make knowledge in the arts?

The question of what 'aesthetic' means also requires an understanding about the ways of knowing that is directly related to your work in Theory of Knowledge. When Tom Robbins talks about art being something created specifically to appeal to the senses, he shows an understanding of how our senses and our emotions are related. William James, a nineteenth-century philosopher, first defined the connection between sense perception and emotions:

*If we fancy some strong emotion and then try to abstract from our consciousness of it all the feelings of its bodily symptoms, we find we have nothing left behind, no 'mind-stuff' out of which the emotion can be constituted, and that a cold and neutral state of intellectual perception is all that remains.*

(Damasio 129)

James explained that in order to experience any emotions we must first have a physical response to some stimulus. The brain translates that physical response into an emotion. Robbins was correct, therefore, because the emotional response that we experience – empathy, revulsion, horror, joy, **suspense** – when we read a literary text has its roots in a perceptual reaction to stimulus. We read and we see the words, but we also experience physiological responses when we are fully engaged in reading. We might get goose bumps, or our heart might start to race a little, or some of our muscles might tense up. Sometimes we might be moved to tears. Our brains translate those responses into emotions seamlessly, and what we generally notice is the emotional feeling, not the physical feeling.

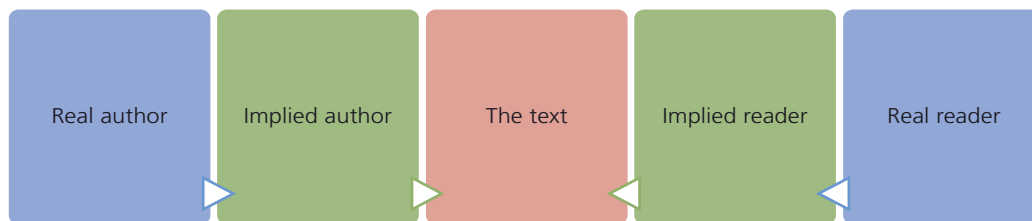
If you understand the nature of an aesthetic response, you also understand something significant about how sense perception and emotion work to help us make knowledge in the arts. Other ways of knowing are also involved in that process, so it would be wise not to think that you only use your senses and your emotions in interpreting a work of art, as we shall see.

## How do we study literature?

We saw earlier in this chapter that one feature of literary texts is their sophistication; literary texts are often harder to read than non-literary texts, as a general rule. They are, as we saw in the last section, works of art that do not communicate directly, but rather through a series of implications which require the reader to be able to recognize and interpret.

In a direct conversation, words and ideas are transferred directly from speaker to listener. Written communication, however, works through a medium. Writer and reader do not speak directly to each other, nor do they share the same space or even time. They are connected through the text. The writer writes the text with an idea in mind of a person who will read it. That ‘person’ is the ‘implied reader’. The reader reads the text and gets an idea of what kind of person wrote it. That ‘person’ is the ‘implied author’.

The implied author is a person who knows all the words in the text, who cares about all the ideas, who has the kind of imagination needed to create the text, who knows the history, literature, religion and culture needed to create the metaphors, symbols, imagery and so on. The implied reader of the text is someone who can perfectly understand all that the author intended; therefore, the implied reader is someone who knows all the words, history, literature, religion and culture implied by the text. He or she is someone who can understand all the nuances that the author intended. Neither the implied reader nor the implied author is a perfect representation of the real reader or author, however; they are ideal forms which the text suggests. The diagram of the communication, the reader–writer transaction, then, looks something like this:



Your job as the reader is to become as near as possible to the implied reader for that text. For any given text, you will start out lacking some of the knowledge, language or interpretive skills that the implied reader (the ideal reader of that text) would have. As you work on the text, you shape yourself more and more into that ideal reader. That means you may have to learn new words, look up cultural references or religious or historical allusions, and consciously wonder what any word or phrase might have buried in it. A lot of the joy of reading comes from engaging in the process, from being surprised and delighted by the way in which an author puts words together and by the way that he or she makes you understand the implications of objects, myths, religious stories or historical events in a way you had never considered before.

## ACTIVITY

## 'What is the German's Fatherland?' by Ernst Arndt

Now that you have almost finished this chapter, let's review the key ideas in it and practice the several skills it introduced. Read the poem below and answer the questions that follow. When you have finished, you can read the accompanying notes at the end of the book (page XXX).

What is the German's fatherland?  
Is it Prussia, or the Swabian's land?  
Is it where the grape glows on the Rhine?  
Where sea-gulls skim the Baltic's brine?

5 Oh no! more grand  
Must be the German's fatherland!

What is the German's fatherland?  
Bavaria, or the Styrian's land?  
Is it where the Master's cattle graze?  
10 Is it the Mark where forges blaze?  
Oh no! more grand  
Must be the German's fatherland!

What is the German's fatherland?  
Westphalia? Pomerania's strand?  
15 Where the sand drifts along the shore?  
Or where the Danube's surges roar?  
Oh no! more grand  
Must be the German's fatherland!

What is the German's fatherland?  
20 Now name for me that mighty land!  
Is it Switzerland? or Tyrols, tell;—  
The land and people pleased me well!  
Oh no! more grand  
Must be the German's fatherland!

25 What is the German's fatherland?  
Now name for me that mighty land!  
Ah! Austria surely it must be,  
So rich in fame and victory.  
Oh no! more grand  
30 Must be the German's fatherland!

What is the German's fatherland?  
Tell me the name of that great land!  
Is it the land which princely hate  
Tore from the Emperor and the State?

35 Oh no! more grand  
 Must be the German's fatherland!  
 What is the German's fatherland?  
 Now name at last that mighty land!  
 'Where'er resounds the German tongue,  
 40 Where'er its hymns to God are sung!'  
 That is the land,  
 Brave German, that thy fatherland!

That is the German's fatherland!  
 Where binds like oak the clasped hand,  
 45 Where truth shines clearly from the eyes,  
 And in the heart affection lies.  
 Be this the land,  
 Brave German, this thy fatherland!

That is the German's fatherland!  
 50 Where scorn shall foreign triflers brand,  
 Where all are foes whose deeds offend,  
 Where every noble soul's a friend:  
 Be this the land,  
 All Germany shall be the land!

55 All Germany that land shall be:  
 Watch o'er it, God, and grant that we,  
 With German hearts, in deed and thought,  
 May love it truly as we ought.  
 Be this the land,  
 60 All Germany shall be the land!

- 1 Consider the relationship of this poem to truth. Would you say this poem is fiction? Does it have a reliable narrator (that is, one who accurately reflects the author's thoughts, feelings, and values)? Use evidence from the poem to justify your answer.
- 2 Thinking about the concept of representation (which we explored on page XXX of this chapter), would you say that this poem is highly representative or not? Why or why not? Provide text to support your answer.
- 3 Review the definition of the global issue of culture, identity, and community from the Introduction (page XXX) and in the example we used in this chapter (page XXX). What do you think Arndt's poem suggests about this global issue? Provide text to support your interpretation.
- 4 Review the section on what makes a text literary (page XXX) and identify two or three features of Arndt's poem that make it literary. (Do not worry about trying to develop an exhaustive list.)
- 5 Identify two features of the poem which reveal the characteristics of the ideal reader of this text. Justify your choices. Did you find that you had difficulty in reading the poem because you do not match the ideal implied reader of this text? What things, if any, did you not know that made the text hard to read?
- 6 Finally, consider the text as a work of art. What features of this poem appeal to the aesthetic? Provide text to support your answers.



## Ernst Moritz Arndt

Ernst Arndt was born in 1769 and educated as a clergyman. He rejected that calling at the age of 28, and began to travel instead. As a result of what he saw of the damage done by the French to German castles during several wars in the eighteenth century, he became embittered against the French and embarked on a long career of patriotic writing for his country, Germany (The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica). Much of his poetry is deeply patriotic–nationalistic in its promotion of Germany as a nation. He also wrote non-fiction, including an autobiography, and some of his poetry reflects his commitment to his religion.

## Conclusion

We have seen that the process of interpreting a text involves a conscious and conscientious effort to discover what there is in the text, as well as what it means. As we noted at the beginning of the chapter, the IB English Literature course asks you to consider three different ways of doing this: the **immanent**, the **contextual**, and the **comparative**. The remainder of the section on **readers, writers, and texts** will explore in details the ways in which an individual reader can work on a text to discover the meaning on his or her own – the immanent approach to analyzing literature that we mentioned in the introduction – without considering external factors such as the time period or the geographical place in which the text was written, and without comparing or contrasting it to other texts.

## Works cited

- 'Alison Wong'. *New Zealand Electronic Text Collection*, International Institute of Modern Letters, 20 January 2019. [nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/iiml/bestnzpoems/BNZP07/t1-g1-t25-body1-d2.html](http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/iiml/bestnzpoems/BNZP07/t1-g1-t25-body1-d2.html).
- Anderson, H. 'Neilson, John Shaw (1872–1942).' *Biography – Orry George (Jack) Kelly - Australian Dictionary of Biography*, Australian Dictionary of Biography, 1986, [adb.anu.edu.au/biography/neilson-john-shaw-764](http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/neilson-john-shaw-764). Hugh Anderson, 'Neilson, John Shaw (1872–1942)', Australian Dictionary of Biography, National Centre of Biography, Australian National University, 20 January 2019. <http://adb.anu.edu.au/biography/neilson-john-shaw-764/text13553>, published first in hardcopy 1986, accessed online 21 January 2019.
- Arndt, E. 'What Is the German's Fatherland?' *Ernst Moritz Arndt (1769–1860 / Germany)*, PoemHunter, 19 January 2019. [www.poemhunter.com/poem/what-is-the-german-s-fatherland/#content](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/what-is-the-german-s-fatherland/#content).
- Damasio, AR. *Descartes Error Emotion, Reason and the Human Brain*. Penguin Books, 2005. Chapter 7 'Emotions and Feelings'.
- Dickinson, E. 'Because I Could Not Stop for Death – (479) by Emily Dickinson.' *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, 14 December 2018. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47652/because-i-could-not-stop-for-death-479](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/47652/because-i-could-not-stop-for-death-479)
- Dinesen, I. *Out of Africa and Shadows on the Grass*. Vintage Books, 1989.
- Duffy, CA. 'Demeter.' *New Selected Poems 1984–2004*, Picador, 2004, p.200.
- Ernst, M. 'Le Chaste Joseph.' *Max Ernst Loan Exhibition at Sotheby's*, Antiquesandartirelandcom, 9 Feb. 2017, 8 December 2018. [antiquesandartireland.com/2017/02/art-ernst-sothebys](http://antiquesandartireland.com/2017/02/art-ernst-sothebys).
- Fazio, D. 'Sensazioni.' *FineArtAmerica*, FineArtAmerica, 29 April 2019. <https://fineartamerica.com/featured/sensazioni-diegokoi.html>.
- Jordan, JO. 'Life in the Theatre: Autobiography, Politics, and Romance in 'Master Harold'... and the Boys.' *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol.39, no.4, 1993, pp.461–472., doi:10.2307/441580.
- Kiefer, A. 'Breaking of the Vessels.' – *Works – Saint Louis Art Museum*, Saint Louis Art Museum, 1 Jan. 1990, 9 December 2018. [emuseum.slam.org/objects/16397/breaking-of-the-vessels;jsessionid=14C07A3FDDE35EAB2F8A3E5A0F35F7AB?ctx=9096c7dd-89b6-4ed5-be4a-13107b1bbdf&idx=1](http://emuseum.slam.org/objects/16397/breaking-of-the-vessels;jsessionid=14C07A3FDDE35EAB2F8A3E5A0F35F7AB?ctx=9096c7dd-89b6-4ed5-be4a-13107b1bbdf&idx=1).
- Munro, A. 'Queenie.' *London Review of Books*, LRB Limited, 30 July 1998, 20 January 2019. [www.lrb.co.uk/v20/n15/alice-munro/queenie](http://www.lrb.co.uk/v20/n15/alice-munro/queenie). vol.20, no.15, pp.11–16.
- Neilson, JS, et al. *Collected Poems of John Shaw Neilson*. Sydney University Press, 2013.



- New Zealand Book Council. 'Writer's Files: Wong, Alison.' *New Zealand Book Council*, New Zealand Book Council, Jan. 2017, 20 January 2019. [www.bookcouncil.org.nz/writer/wong-alison](http://www.bookcouncil.org.nz/writer/wong-alison).
- Penguin India. 'R K Narayan.' *The Penguin Digest*, Penguin Random House, [penguin.co.in/author/r-k-narayan](http://penguin.co.in/author/r-k-narayan). 20 January 2019.
- 'R K Narayan.' *The Telegraph*, Telegraph Media Group, 14 May 2001, 20 Jan 2019. [www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1330139/R-K-Narayan.html](http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/obituaries/1330139/R-K-Narayan.html).
- 'Republic India Coinage.' *RBI Monetary Museum*, Reserve Bank of India, [www.rbi.org.in/currency/museum/c-rep.html](http://www.rbi.org.in/currency/museum/c-rep.html). 4 December 2018.
- Rivera, J. *Marisol and Other Plays*. Theatre Communications Group, 2000.
- Robbins, T. 'What Is Art and If We Know What Art Is, What is Politics?' *Wild Ducks Flying Backwards: The Short Writings of Tom Robbins*, Bantam Books, 2006, pp.198–203.
- Shakespeare, W. 'Sonnet 30.' Edited by Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Folger Shakespeare Library, 8 December 2018. [www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Son&loc=Son-030](http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Son&loc=Son-030).
- Thacker, R. 'Alice Munro Biographical.' *The Nobel Prize in Literature 2013*, Nobel Media, 2013, [www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2013/munro/biographical](http://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2013/munro/biographical). MLA style: Alice Munro – Biographical. NobelPrize.org. Nobel Media AB 2019. 20 Jan 2019. [www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2013/munro/biographical](http://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/2013/munro/biographical).
- The Editors of Encyclopaedia Britannica. 'Ernst Moritz Arndt German Writer.' *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, Encyclopaedia Britannica, Inc, 12 Dec 2018, [www.britannica.com/biography/Ernst-Moritz-Arndt](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Ernst-Moritz-Arndt).
- Thomas, S. 'What Did Bowdler Bowdlerize?' *OxfordWords Blog*, OxfordWords Blog, 1 Sept. 2016, 12 December 2018. [blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2016/07/11/bowdlerize](http://blog.oxforddictionaries.com/2016/07/11/bowdlerize).
- Twain, M and Neider, C. 'That Awful German Language.' *A Tramp Abroad*, Harper and Row Publishers, 1977, pp.63–83.
- Uroff, MD. 'Sylvia Plath and Confessional Poetry: A Reconsideration.' *The Iowa Review*, vol.8, no.1, 1977, pp.104–115, doi:10.17077/0021-065x.2172.
- Wong, A. 'Reflection on a Proposal of Marriage.' *New Zealand Electronic Text Collection*, International Institute of Modern Letters, 12 December 2018. [nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/iiml/bestnzpoems/BNZP07/t1-g1-t25-body1-d1.html](http://nzetc.victoria.ac.nz/iiml/bestnzpoems/BNZP07/t1-g1-t25-body1-d1.html).
- 'Yehuda Amichai.' *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, [www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/yehuda-amichai](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/yehuda-amichai). 20 January 2019.
- 'Zitkala-Ša Native American Writer.' *Early Native American Literature*, [nativeamericanwriters.com/zitkala-sa.html](http://nativeamericanwriters.com/zitkala-sa.html).
- Zitkala-Ša. *American Indian Stories*. Univ. of Nebraska Press, 1985.

## 1.2

## How are we affected by literary texts in various ways?

## OBJECTIVES OF CHAPTER

- Texts provide us with insights into particular times and places
- Texts provide us with insights into human nature
- Texts give us an appreciation of the beauty of language
- Texts give us an appreciation of the artist's craft
- Texts give us an appreciation of a writer's courage
- Texts give us a way to connect to other human minds

## Introduction

We study literature for the same reasons that we engage in the study of any art form: we are entertained, touched, made to think, and given a variety of insights. One simple reason for engaging with literature is to be entertained. As we saw in the excerpt from 'That Awful German Language' in Chapter 1.1 (page XX), literature can be very funny, and we are entertained by well-written humour. Entertainment, however, is never the sole function of literary texts. We read literature for the insight that it gives us into the world around us, for an appreciation of the power of language and imagination, and for a connection to other people (authors) who think in ways that resonate with us.

## Insight into particular times and places

You will read in much greater detail about how literature affects us by giving us insight into particular times and places in the section on **time and space** (page XXX), so for now, we will just take a brief look at some examples.

The excerpt from 'The Widespread Enigma of Blue-Star Woman' (page XXX) showed us something about what it was like to be an aging Native American woman in the time when white people were just beginning to force the tribes onto reservations and were controlling their lands. The excerpt from *Out of Africa* (page XXX) gives us some insight into a place that most of us have probably never been – the foot of the Ngong Hills. It was also written about life in the 1920s, so even if we were to go there today, we would likely find it to be much changed.

## CONCEPT CONNECTION


## PERSPECTIVES

In each of the cases mentioned above, the particular insight we are capable of getting about a time and place different from ours is shaped by the perspective which portrays that time and place for us. In the case of 'Blue-Star Woman', the author was herself a Dakota Sioux who was educated in the white man's world and so had experiences, both positive and negative, of the way in which those two cultures interacted. This story is given to us through the eyes of two different Native American characters: Blue-Star Woman, whom we met in the excerpt, and an elderly Native American Chieftain, who appears later in the story. Their version of events would be quite different from a version given to us by the white superintendents of the land or the government officials in Washington. In the case of Isak Dinesen's description of her farm in Kenya, her perspective is that of a person speaking of a place that she loved deeply and had to leave. She views the farm through a lens of nostalgia which helps her create the effect that she wants, focused entirely on the beauty of the place. We may have got a different version had she written about the farm while she was still living there, struggling to grow coffee. We will never know.

Other literary works can give us insight into places and times much nearer to ours. In *We Need New Names*, Zimbabwean writer NoViolet Bulawayo writes a twenty-first-century story about the immigrant's experience.

NoViolet Bulawayo

NoViolet Bulawayo is the pen name of Elizabeth Tshele. The first name means ‘with Violet’, and is a tribute to the author’s mother, who died when Tshele was an infant. ‘Bulawayo’ is for her hometown (Smith). Bulawayo lived in Zimbabwe until she was 18 and then emigrated to the United States. She has recently revisited Bulawayo after more than a decade away, and was distressed to see the dramatic changes that have taken place. She cares about questions of identity and transformation and the way her personal experience has shaped her as a person. Her novel, *We Need New Names* (a significant choice of title given her renaming of herself) is the first by a Zimbabwean to be listed for the Man Booker Prize for the best original novel written in English and published in the United Kingdom (Smith).

A portrait of NoViolet Bulawayo, a Black woman with short dark hair, wearing a dark blazer over a patterned top. She is sitting at a green table, looking directly at the camera. The letters 'FPO' are overlaid on the image.

In this excerpt from *We Need New Names*, the narrator, Darling, describes her transition from her home in Zimbabwe to her new place in America. The title of the chapter is ‘Destroyedmichygen’, a new name for Detroit, Michigan, which expresses the narrator’s experience of it.

A few days before I left, Mother took me to Vodloza who made me smoke from a gourd, and I sneezed and sneezed and he smiled and said, The ancestors are your angels, they will bear you to America. Then he spilled tobacco on the earth and said to someone I could not see: Open the way for your wandering calf, you, Vusamazulu, pave the skies, summon your fathers, Mpabanga and Nqabayezwe and Mahlathini, and

5 draw your mighty spears to clear the paths and protect the child from dark spirits on her journey. Deliver her well to that strange land where you and those before you never dreamed of setting foot.

Finally he tied a bone attached to a rainbow-colored string around my waist and said, This is your weapon, it will fight off all evil in that America, never ever take it off, you hear? But then when I got to America the airport dog barked and barked and sniffed me, and the woman in the uniform took me aside and waved

10 the stick around me and the stick made a *nting-nting* sound and the woman said, Are you carrying any weapons? And I nodded and showed my weapon from Vodloza, and Aunt Fostalina said, What is this crap/ and she took it off and threw it in a bin. Now I have no weapon to fight evil with in America.

With all this snow, with the sun not there, with the cold and dreariness, this place doesn’t look like my America, doesn’t even look real. It’s like we are in a terrible story, like we’re in the crazy parts of the Bible,

15 there where God is busy punishing people for their sins and is making them miserable with all the weather. The sky, for example, has stayed white all this time I have been here, which tells you that something is not right. Even the stones know that a sky is supposed to be blue, like our sky back home, which is blue, so blue you can spray Clorox on it and wipe it with a paper towel and it wouldn’t even come off.

(Bulawayo 152–3)

This passage contains some elements which are probably quite foreign to most readers: the portrayal of the ceremony to call upon ancestors to serve as guardian angels on a journey and the gift of the bone weapon to fight off evil is the portrayal of a culture quite different from twenty-first-century Western technological civilization. Many readers, however, will be quite

familiar with the experience of being searched at an airport, and seeing the process through Darling's eyes helps us to understand how strange it is to someone who has no idea about airline security policies. By seeing her lack of understanding, we can better empathize with her fear about having to face the evils of America without any weapon from home to aide her. The symbolism of the snow and the allusion to God's punishment in the Bible also help us to see this new world through Darling's eyes. Even if Zimbabwe is completely unfamiliar to us, we can understand the longing for home experienced by someone trapped in an environment which is completely alien to what we have always known.

## GLOBAL ISSUE

### IMMIGRATION

Immigration is not one of the global issues included on the list of suggestions in your IB course curriculum guide. However, it does meet all of the three requirements needed for it to qualify as a global issue: it has significance on a wide scale, it is transnational, and its impact is felt in everyday contexts. Bulawayo's novel investigates the impact of immigration on a child for whom the chance to move from a shanty town in Zimbabwe to the United States ought to be a positive thing, but who discovers that it is not so easy for immigrants to gain access to all of the advantages that America is supposed to offer. You would, of course, have to read the whole book in order to develop a thesis about what Bulawayo has to say about the immigrant experience, but if you were studying this text, you might investigate the possibilities of what this novel has to say about the immigrant experience as a potential global issue for your individual oral.

### ■ CAS Links: Immigration

Do some research into immigration in your area and find out how many immigrants come into your community, who they are and what they might need by way of assistance in settling into the community. Organize an event in which you raise funds to assist local immigrants, or organize a social event or a school presentation in which the native-born community can learn something about the immigrant experience in your town.

## ACTIVITY

### Letter from Abigail Adams to John Adams

Read the following letter written by Abigail Adams to her husband, John Adams, in 1776. John Adams was away fighting in the American Revolution. After you read the letter, answer the questions to consider what it can reveal to you about a time and place different from your own. Read the notes at the end of the book (page XXX) and compare them to your own observations.

### BRAINTREE MARCH 31, 1776

I wish you would ever write me a Letter half as long as I write you; and tell me if you may where your Fleet are gone? What sort of Defence Virginia can make against our common Enemy? Whether it is so situated as to make an able Defence? Are not the Gentry Lords and the common people vassals, are they not like the

5 uncivilized Natives Brittain represents us to be? I hope their Riffel Men who have shewen themselves very savage and even Blood thirsty; are not a specimen of the Generality of the people.

I [illegible] am willing to allow the Colony great merriit for having produced a Washington but they have been shamefully duped by a Dunmore.

10 I have sometimes been ready to think that the passion for Liberty cannot be Equally Strong in the Breasts of those who have been accustomed to deprive their fellow Creatures of theirs. Of this I am certain that it is not founded upon that generous and Christian principal of doing to others as we would that others should do unto us.

15 Do not you want to see Boston; I am fearfull of the small pox, or I should have been in before this time. I got Mr Crane to go to our House and see what state it was in. I find it has been occupied by one of the Doctors of a Regiment, very dirty, but no other damage has been done to it. The few things which were left in it are all gone. Cranch has the key which he never deliverd up. I have wrote to him for it and am determined to get it cleand as soon as possible and shut it up. I look upon it  
20 a new acquisition of property, a property which one month ago I did not value at a single Shilling, and could with pleasure have seen it in flames.

The Town in General is left in a better state than we expected, more oweing to a percipitate flight than any Regard to the inhabitants, tho some individuals discovered a sense of honour and justice and have left the rent of the Houses in which they were,  
25 for the owners and the furniture unhurt, or if damaged sufficent to make it good.

Others have committed abominable Ravages. The Mansion House of your **President** is safe and the furniture unhurt while both the House and Furniture of the **Solisiter General** have fallen a prey to their own merciless party. Surely the very Fiends feel a Reverential awe for Virtue and patriotism, while they Detest the paricide and traitor.

30 I feel very differently at the approach of spring to what I did a month ago. We knew not then whether we could plant or sow with safety, whether when we had toild we could reap the fruits of our own industry, whether we could rest in our own Cottages, or whether we should not be driven from the sea coasts to seek shelter in the wilderness, but now we feel as if we might sit under our own vine and eat the good of the land.

35 I feel a gaieti de Coar to which before I was a stranger. I think the Sun looks brighter, the Birds sing more melodiously, and Nature puts on a more chearfull countenance. We feel a temporary peace, and the poor fugitives are returning to their deserted habitations.

Tho we felicitate ourselves, we sympathize with those who are trembling least the Lot of Boston should be theirs. But they cannot be in similar circumstances unless pusillanimity and cowardise should take possession of them. They have time and warning given them  
40 to see the Evil and shun it. – I long to hear that you have declared an independency – and by the way in the new Code of Laws which I suppose it will be necessary for you to make I desire you would Remember the Ladies, and be more generous and favourable to them than your ancestors. Do not put such unlimited power into the hands of the  
45 Husbands. Remember all Men would be tyrants if they could. If perticular care and attention is not paid to the Laidies we are determined to foment a Rebellion, and will not hold ourselves bound by any Laws in which we have no voice, or Representation.

That your Sex are Naturally Tyrannical is a Truth so thoroughly established as to admit of no dispute, but such of you as wish to be happy willingly give up the harsh title of  
50 Master for the more tender and endearing one of Friend. Why then, not put it out of the power of the vicious and the Lawless to use us with cruelty and indignity with impunity. Men of Sense in all Ages abhor those customs which treat us only as the vassals of your Sex. Regard us then as Beings placed by providence under your protection and in imitation of the Supream Being make use of that power only for our happiness.

- 1 Are there elements of this letter that you find surprising given the time period in which the letter was written? What are they and why are they surprising?
- 2 Identify the elements of daily life that Adams reveals in her letter. How does her life then differ from yours now?
- 3 How does Adams' plea to her husband to 'remember the ladies' resonate in a twenty-first-century world?



## Abigail Adams

Abigail Adams was the wife of one American president and the mother of another. The Adamses are renowned for their extraordinarily strong marriage, which was tested by a great many circumstances, including the American war for independence from England. John Adams was an unusual man: he gained notoriety when, in 1770, he defended the British officers after the infamous Boston Massacre ('Abigail Adams Biography'). Adams felt that it was crucial for the young nation to show that it was not a land of tyranny and anarchy and that Americans operated under the rule of law ('Abigail Adams Biography'). Abigail supported her husband through this experience, and all others, including his presidency. The couple were often apart, as he travelled around for his professional obligations, and they produced a huge correspondence which reveals a great deal about their relationship and the time in which they lived. Abigail Adams was notable for her time in her forward thinking about the role that women could play in a self-governing nation.

## Insight into human nature

Not all texts can, or are intended to, give us insight into particular times and places, however. Think of texts that are set in completely imaginary times or places long ago or well into the future. The effect on us as readers, in those cases, is something different altogether.

## José Rivera

Puerto Rican born playwright José Rivera came to the United States with his family when he was five. In an interview with the *New York Times*, Rivera said that when he was a child he aspired to be a bus driver, because he wanted to do better than his father, a taxi driver, had been able to do (McElroy). After seeing a production of *Rumpelstiltskin* performed at his school, Rivera's career plans changed ('José Rivera'), and he is now the author of a dozen plays ('José Rivera Goodman Theatre'). Rivera has also turned to screenwriting, and his screenplay for *The Motorcycle Diaries*, a story about Ernest 'Che' Guevara and a motorcycle trip he took in his youth, was nominated for an Oscar, making Rivera the first Puerto Rican to be so nominated ('José Rivera'). Rivera's work in **magical realism** stems from his time studying with Gabriel García Márquez at the Sundance Institute (McElroy).



Consider this excerpt from Puerto Rican playwright José Rivera's play *Marisol*, a play which uses magical realism and features an angel as an important character.

Angel: Now the bad news.

(The Angel goes to the window. She's silent a moment as she contemplates the devastated Bronx landscape.)

Marisol: (Worried) What?

5 (The Angel finds it very hard to tell Marisol what's on her mind.)

Angel: I can't expect you to understand the political ins and outs of what's going on. But you have eyes. You asked me questions about children and water and the moon: the same questions I've been asking myself for a thousand years.

(We hear distant explosions. Marisol's body responds with a jerk.)



- 10 Marisol: (Quiet) What's that noise?
- Angel: The universal body is sick, Marisol. Constellations are wasting away, the nauseous stars are full of blisters and sores, the infected earth is running a temperature, and everywhere the universal mind is wracked with amnesia, boredom, and neurotic obsessions.
- Marisol: (Frightened) Why?
- 15 Angel: Because God is old and dying and taking the rest of us with Him. And for too long, much too long, I've been looking the other way. Trying to stop the massive hemorrhage with my little hands. With my prayers. But it didn't work and I knew if I didn't do something soon, it would be too late.
- Marisol: (Frightened) What did you do?
- 20 Angel: I called a meeting. And I urged the Heavenly Heirarchies – the Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones, Dominions, Principalities, Powers, Virtues, Archangels and Angels – to vote to stop the universal ruin ... by slaughtering our senile God. And they did. Listen well, Marisol: Angels are going to kill the King of Heaven and restore the vitality of the universe with His blood. And I'm going to lead them.
- 25 (Marisol takes this in silently – then suddenly erupts – her body shaking with fear and energy.)
- Marisol: Okay, I wanna wake up now!
- Angel: There's going to be a war. A revolution of Angels.
- Marisol: GOD IS GREAT! GOD IS GOOD! THANK YOU FOR OUR NEIGHBORHOOD!
- Angel: Soon we're going to send out spies, draft able-bodied celestial beings, raise taxes ...
- 30 Marisol: THANK YOU GOD FOR THE BIRDS THAT SING! THANK YOU GOD FOR EVERYTHING!
- Angel: Soon we're going to take off our wings of peace, Marisol, and put on our wings of war. Then we're going to spread blood and vigor across the sky and reawaken the dwindling stars!

(Rivera 15–16)

We can see how this extract is not very representational. Clearly angels do not walk the streets of New York City, nor has there ever been (or do we expect there to be) a revolution in heaven which spills over on Earth and causes the apocalypse. The events imagined for this play make it fantastic, rather than realistic, so we aren't going to gain insight into a particular time or place from the plot or setting. Instead, we are being asked to explore truths about human nature, truths about religious faith, about what kind of characteristics it takes to survive in difficult – even extraordinary – circumstances, and truths about what it means to be a good person.

It is worth noting, however, that we might still gain some insight into present-day culture through seeing and reading a play such as *Marisol*. The events are not realistic, but they can be seen as symbolic. This passage suggests that Rivera might be making a satire on warfare as waged by humans right here on Earth. He might also be making a comment about changing religious values in a modern era in which mankind has developed weapons of mass destruction and in which we could see the negative effects of human-induced climate change not too far in the future. Faced with evil injustices on Earth like mass shootings, raging tsunamis, and genocide, some people question the relevance of the traditional vision of God, and that challenge to long-standing values might be seen as a kind of revolution in heaven, and the play can give us insight into why some people might feel that way.

### ■ EE Links: Literary investigation

Rivera's play could be the subject of an extended essay with the focus of investigation being absurdism. 'How does José Rivera use absurdist elements to create meaning in his play *Marisol*?' could be a potential research question.

### ■ TOK Links: The nature of faith as a means of underpinning knowledge

One of the topics you might study in Theory of Knowledge is religious knowledge. Religious knowledge relies on authority and tradition, and people sustain their religious faith on the belief that the nature of the supernatural world is what it has always been said to be. We see in this excerpt from *Marisol* that Marisol is driven to defend her faith – by reciting some of the doctrines that she has been taught – when the Angel presents her with a version of heaven that contrasts dramatically with what Marisol has been accustomed to believing. A good TOK question arising from this excerpt is the question of whether faith alone is sufficient to sustain belief when that faith is challenged by evidence from direct experience.

One reason that some literary works survive and thrive for hundreds of years is that they portray universal human experiences and characteristics. William Shakespeare is widely considered to be the greatest writer in the English language, and he wrote at the turn of the seventeenth century, 400 years ago. Many of his plays were not a whole lot more realistic than *Marisol* is. Consider the compressed relationship between Romeo and Juliet who meet, marry, and die all in less than four days, or the mad jealousy of King Leontes in *A Winter's Tale*, who in a single, unprovoked moment decides that his pregnant wife has been unfaithful and that the baby is that of Leontes' oldest friend. In *All's Well That Ends Well*, we have a woman, Helena, who is content to marry a man who quite openly hates her! Some of his plays also involve straightforward magical elements: In *The Tempest*, Prospero is a magician and in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, spells are cast causing humans to turn into part-animals and people to fall in love with the next creature they see, whether human or animal. Many of Shakespeare's plays, then, do not consist of the kind of realism that might give us insight into a particular time and place – most are not set in his own time period, for example. Rather, watching and reading Shakespeare's work is gratifying because in doing so we see that people have held the same kinds of values, experienced the same kinds of feelings, and exhibited the same kinds of character flaws for hundreds of years.

Often, we get our insights about human nature through examining a character who is far from admirable. Flannery O'Connor was an American writer living in and writing about the Deep South in the mid-twentieth century. Much of her fiction focuses on ignorance and on its resulting bigotry.

### Flannery O'Connor

Flannery O'Connor was born in 1925 in Georgia, where she would spend most of her life. She began her writing career in college, where she was known as a cartoonist, but also published some essays, short stories, and poems (Gordon). She travelled to Iowa for graduate school where she earned a master's degree from the now-famous Iowa writer's program, and where she met people who would be influential on her career for the rest of her relatively short life, before she died, at age 39, of the same disease that had killed her father 24 years earlier (Gordon). Her literary career was marked by numerous awards, and she is renowned for writing fiction that reflects her deep commitment to her religion and the belief that mankind is inherently flawed and in need of redemption (Gordon).



**SENSITIVE CONTENT**

**Caution: this extract includes sensitive content and dehumanizing language.** The author includes the word 'nigger' to illustrate the society she writes about. We have chosen to let the word remain as it originally appeared, so you can consider for yourself the dehumanizing power of this term and how O'Connor has used it to describe her fellow human beings. This is central to understanding the themes of identity and human behaviour at the heart of this short story. Furthermore, the IB recommends that your studies in Language A: Literature should challenge you intellectually, personally and culturally, and expose you to sensitive and mature topics. We invite you to reflect critically on various perspectives offered while bearing in mind the IB's commitment to international-mindedness and intercultural respect.

One of her stories, 'Revelation', published shortly after O'Connor's death in 1964, gives us a character named Mrs Turpin who believes herself to be one of God's chosen people, and who is assured in her own mind that all of her actions, attitudes and beliefs carry with them God's approval and blessing. When she encounters a young woman who, in response to Mrs Turpin's self-important judgments of other people, throws a book at her and calls her a 'warthog from hell', Mrs Turpin is forced to see herself for at least a moment as some other people see her. In the following extract, we get a feeling for her quite un-Christian attitude towards others:

Next to the ugly girl was the child, still in exactly the same position, and next to him was a thin leathery old woman in a cotton print dress. She and Claud had three sacks of chicken feed in their pump house that was in the same print. She had seen from the first that the child belonged with the old woman. She could tell by the way they sat – kind of vacant and white-trashy, as if they would sit there until Doomsday if  
 5 nobody called and told them to get up. And at right angles but next to the well-dressed pleasant lady was a lank- faced woman who was certainly the child's mother. She had on a yellow sweatshirt and wine-colored slacks, both gritty-looking, and the rims of her lips were stained with snuff. Her dirty yellow hair was tied behind with a little piece of red paper ribbon. Worse than niggers any day, Mrs Turpin thought.

The gospel hymn playing was, 'When I looked up and He looked down', and Mrs Turpin, who knew it,  
 10 supplied the last line mentally, 'And wona these days I know I'll we-eara crown'.

Without appearing to, Mrs Turpin always noticed people's feet. The well-dressed lady had on red and grey suede shoes to match her dress. Mrs Turpin had on her good black patent-leather pumps. The ugly girl had on Girl Scout shoes and heavy socks. The old woman had on tennis shoes and the white-trashy mother had on what appeared to be bedroom slippers, black straw with gold braid threaded through them – exactly  
 15 what you would have expected her to have on.

Sometimes at night when she couldn't go to sleep, Mrs Turpin would occupy herself with the question of who she would have chosen to be if she couldn't have been herself. If Jesus had said to her before he made her, 'There's only two places available for you. You can either be a nigger or white trash,' what would she have said? 'Please, Jesus, please,' she would have said, 'Just let me wait until there's another place available,'  
 20 and he would have said, 'No, you have to go right now, and I have only those two places so make up your mind.' She would have wiggled and squirmed and begged and pleaded but it would have been no use and finally she would have said, 'All right, make me a nigger then – but that don't mean a trashy one.' And he would have made her a near clean respectable Negro woman, herself but black.

(O'Connor 194–195)

In this story, the narrative perspective is third person; however, it is focused on giving us the world as Mrs Turpin sees it. The effect of that perspective is that we are privy to Mrs Turpin's thoughts, which show her to feel herself superior to those around her. Mrs Turpin is both judgmental and a bigot, and she reveals that through her thoughts about the other people around her. We see in the first paragraph that Mrs Turpin judges all the other people in the room to be inferior to her, calling them, in her own mind 'ugly', 'white-trashy', 'lank-faced', and 'dirty'. In the very next paragraph, however, we see Mrs Turpin singing along with the gospel hymn, evidently smugly reassuring herself that one day she will wear the crown of Jesus' blessing. The effect of the **juxtaposition** is highly ironic, as we can see from knowing her thoughts that Mrs Turpin is not a person who lives by the principles of Christianity. The author also spelled out the words of the hymn the way that Mrs Turpin pronounces them, and we can see that her English is not the English of the upper classes. Others listening to Mrs Turpin might be inclined to judge her, on the basis of her language, in similar ways to how she judges others.

In the final two paragraphs of the excerpt, we see Mrs Turpin comparing herself to other people and establishing hierarchies of people at which she would be the top. O'Connor is making a powerful point about humankind's capacity for hypocrisy and self-delusion.

### ■ TOK Links: Taboo words and the ethics of art

Language both helps us communicate and reveals us for what kinds of people we are. We have seen how O'Connor called upon prejudices about language use to help create a character who is not well educated or classy. She has also put into Mrs Turpin's mouth language that is taboo, but which we strongly suspect Mrs Turpin does not know she should not use. Nowadays, the 'n-word' is taboo to use. The word is so taboo, in fact, that in most cases, if someone needs to talk about the word, he or she will say 'the n-word' instead. The taboo is so strong that the reaction to the 'n-word' can cause some people to forget the context, which is how we often judge the use of words.

O'Connor has chosen to use the 'n-word' numerous times. In every case it is spoken by someone who is particularly self-satisfied and superior – none realizes that it is offensive to the people to whom they apply it. The story was published in 1965, just after the Civil Rights Act of 1964 was passed. That Act ended public segregation and made it illegal for employers to discriminate on the basis of race, colour, religion, sex, or national origin. The people in the story complain in a number of places about how different things are now and how people of colour have new ideas about 'their place in the world'. O'Connor chose to use the 'n-word' as a means of illustrating character. You could argue that O'Connor, as the author of this story, is using this taboo word to show the failure of the main character – and the other characters in the story – to live up to basic principles of humanity. What do you think? You might consider whether a white author writing today, over 50 years after 'Revelation' was originally published, could use the word at all.

### Ethics

In recent years, some publishers have begun expunging this particular taboo word from texts, even in cases in which the use was – as in 'Revelation' – suspected to reveal the ignorance and bigotry of a particular character. In 2011, Alan Gribben, a professor of English at Auburn University in Montgomery, Alabama (a Deep South state), created an edition of *Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain which replaced the 'n-word' with 'slave' (Kakutani). Clearly those two words do not share the same connotation and so, just as clearly, Twain's intention is significantly undermined in that edition. Here is a case in which ethical value systems clash. To make knowledge ethically in the arts, or in any area of knowledge, the processes have to be true to the aims of that area of knowledge. To alter an artist's work, therefore, violates the significant aim of the arts which we discussed on page XXX above: it hijacks the personal world-view of the artist.

Another ethical constraint on people trying to make knowledge, however, is societal values. There are many experiments that natural or human scientists cannot run, simply because to do so would violate more general human ethical codes. In the case of the Gribben edition of *Huckleberry Finn*, we appear to have a clash between two ethical systems: the ethics of making knowledge in art and the ethics of society. One can argue, however, that the censorship of works such as *Huckleberry Finn* misses the point entirely. One high school teacher wrote a column in *The Seattle Post-Intelligencer* in which he argued that books such as *Huckleberry Finn*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *Of Mice and Men* ought to be removed from high school curricula:

*The time has arrived to update the literature we use in high school classrooms. Barack Obama is president-elect of the United States, and novels that use the 'N-word' repeatedly need to go*

(Foley)

Such a position seems to ignore the fact that the authors of those works were putting this particular slur in the mouths of characters that they most probably expected their readers to recognize as ignorant, unkind, or downright cruel. You could argue they used the term precisely to reveal its ugliness. The **bowdlerization**\* of *Huckleberry Finn* reveals one difficulty in knowledge-making: how to reconcile conflicting ethical systems without undermining the purpose of art.

\*Bowdlerize is a verb that takes its name from Thomas Bowdler, an eighteenth-century doctor who became famous for editing out of Shakespeare's works anything he found to be offensive (Thomas). Over time, his name has become synonymous for the defacing of literature based on personal values. The term 'bowdlerize' has a negative connotation; it suggests that the person saying it disapproves of what has been done.

## CONCEPT CONNECTION

### COMMUNICATION

The problem with the use or banning of taboo language from works of literature gets right to the heart of the concept of communication via literature. As the IB curriculum guide says, 'The concept of communication revolves around the question of the relationship that is established between a writer and a reader by means of a text.' We do not communicate directly with the author; we must figure out the author's intentions by reading and interpreting the text. All interpretations of text necessarily rest on an unacknowledged assumption: the author is a reasonable, moral, intelligent person. Authors count on our making that assumption when they write about characters who are immoral, foolish, or wicked. When we read a text such as 'Revelation' or *Huckleberry Finn*, then, the author assumes that we will understand that it is the character, not the author, who holds the bigoted view of the world and is ignorant or cruel. If we do not recognize the indirectness of the mechanism of communication through a text, we run the risk of misunderstanding the author's intention altogether and ascribing him or her with the undesirable character traits that he or she has given to the characters in order to make a point.

## ACTIVITY

### 'The Amen Stone' by Yehuda Amichai

Poetry too can give us insight into human nature. In the following poem, Israeli poet Yehuda Amichai, gives us a description of a piece of a gravestone and thinks about what it represents in terms of our memory of the person to whom it belonged. Read the poem and then answer the following questions. There are notes about the activity at the end of the book (page XXX).

#### The Amen Stone

On my desk there is a stone with the word 'Amen' on it,  
a triangular fragment of stone from a Jewish graveyard destroyed  
many generations ago. The other fragments, hundreds upon hundreds,  
were scattered helter-skelter, and a great yearning,  
5 a longing without end, fills them all:  
first name in search of family name, date of death seeks  
dead man's birthplace, son's name wishes to locate  
name of father, date of birth seeks reunion with soul  
that wishes to rest in peace. And until they have found  
10 one another, they will not find a perfect rest.  
Only this stone lies calmly on my desk and says 'Amen'.  
But now the fragments are gathered up in loving kindness  
by a sad good man. He cleanses them of every blemish,  
photographs them one by one, arranges them on the floor  
15 in the great hall, makes each gravestone whole again,  
one again: fragment to fragment,  
like the resurrection of the dead, a mosaic,  
a jigsaw puzzle. Child's play.

Consider that Amichai lived in Israel and fought with the Israeli Defence Forces in 1948 ('Yehuda Amichai'). The poem was published in 2000 but is about a Jewish gravestone that was 'destroyed many generations ago' (lines 2–3).

- 1 What insights does this poem give you into the time and place in which it was written?
- 2 What insights does this poem give you into human nature?

### Yehuda Amichai

Yehuda Amichai was born in Germany in 1924, but moved with his family to Palestine in 1936. Over the course of his lifetime, he served as a soldier in the British army, and as a guerrilla fighter against the British in the dispute over the formation of Israel (The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica). He later fought with the Israeli Defence Forces ('Yehuda Amichai'). He wrote in Hebrew, but his work was translated into more than 40 languages. Much of his writing focused on his Jewish faith, his commitment to Israel, and the nature of war, all derived from his personal experiences. He once said in an interview that all poetry is political: 'This is because real poems deal with a human response to reality, and politics is part of reality, history in the making,' he said. 'Even if a poet writes about sitting in a glass house drinking tea, it reflects politics' ('Yehuda Amichai').



## CONCEPT CONNECTION

### COMMUNICATION

Poets intend to communicate with readers just as all other authors do. Successful communication depends on the reader's ability to understand all the nuances of the words and images and other literary devices that the author has employed. In the case of a work such as this, which you read in translation, communication becomes significantly more difficult. Amichai's native language was German, but he was fluent in Hebrew and wrote in Hebrew ('Yehuda Amichai'). This poem was translated into English by poet Chana Bloch, who wrote her own poetry in English (Bloch). As you work at trying to understand what Amichai was trying to communicate, then, you are at a disadvantage, because no work ever translates perfectly into another language.

Amichai's work has been translated into 40 languages, but translator Robert Alter has claimed that Amichai's poetry is much more complex in the original Hebrew than it is in any translation ('Yehuda Amichai'). Alter describes the problem this way:

*Perhaps the most subtle manifestation of the indigenously Hebrew character of Amichai's style [is] its frequent shifts in levels of diction. These are usually invisible in translation because the scale of diction operates rather differently in English, having more to do with social hierarchies and less to do with the historical stratification of the language.*

(Alter)

Readers must always recognize that they are missing something of the author's intentions when they read a literary text in translation.

So far in this chapter, we have seen that works of literature affect us in ways that have to do with increasing our understanding of others and of human nature, and by increasing our ability to empathize by giving us a chance to experience events indirectly, through the lives of others. Another kind of effect of literary texts has to do with our appreciation of the skill that creating a work of art entails.

## Appreciation of literature as art

As we saw in Chapter 1.1, art appeals to the aesthetic. While our sense of the aesthetically compelling is not the same thing as an emotional reaction (see page XXX), very often our reaction to something which is aesthetically powerful takes the shape of an emotional response – especially when the art is aesthetically pleasing. In this section, we will look at the ways in which literature affects readers by activating an emotional response.

## Appreciation of the beauty of language

One of the most obvious ways in which literature reveals itself as an art form is through the power and eloquence of the language the author uses. Beautiful language stirs in the listener or reader an aesthetic and then an emotional response.

We might be most familiar with the idea that one of the author's goals is to create beautiful language in the realm of poetry. Not all poetry is beautiful, of course; some is deliberately jarring or upsetting, depending on what the poet wishes to accomplish. Alan Ginsberg's very famous poem 'Howl', for example, offended so many people when it was first published that copies were seized by US customs officials on entering the country (it was printed in London) and a bookseller, poet Lawrence Ferlinghetti, was arrested and tried for selling obscene materials (Kaplan). In the former case, the US Attorney General declined to prosecute, and in the latter, Ferlinghetti was found not guilty on the grounds that the work had social value (Kaplan).

You can listen to a recording of Allen Ginsberg's first public reading of the poem via the QR code provided. A lot of poetry, however, does give us beautiful language, either because of the content and images or the sound of the lines, or both.

In this example, the final stanza of 'Fern Hill' by Dylan Thomas, we get both. Thomas' poem is a deeply nostalgic reminiscence of a childhood in which all the days seemed to the speaker to be long and happy. In this final stanza, the speaker comments on his regret over the fact that when he was young, he did not realize that he would inevitably grow up, and that his experience of life as a kind of carefree Eden would come to an end, never to be experienced again.



Nothing I cared, in the lamb white days, that time would take me

Up to the swallow thronged loft by the shadow of my hand,

In the moon that is always rising,

Nor that riding to sleep

5 I should hear him fly with the high fields

And wake to the farm forever fled from the childless land.

Oh as I was young and easy in the mercy of his means,

Time held me green and dying

Though I sang in my chains like the sea.

(Thomas 225)

The first six lines of this stanza give us the speaker's retrospective realization that time took him away from the sunlight of his childhood into a darker place. The last three lines, however, are considered some of the most beautiful in the English language. The rhythm is like that of the sea of which the speaker states, and the lyrical sounds of the soft continents make the end of the stanza sound like a lullaby. The regret and the nostalgia are depicted in equal parts, so that we are left at the end of the poem with a powerful sense of both wonder and loss.

### Dylan Thomas

Dylan Thomas was born in Wales in 1914. He began writing poetry early, and his first book of poetry was published when he was only 20 (Poetry Foundation). One attitude which characterizes Thomas' approach to poetry is his love of words: 'Like James Joyce before him, Dylan Thomas was obsessed with words – with their sound and rhythm and especially with their possibilities for multiple meanings' (Poetry Foundation). Although his poetry was published to much acclaim early in his career, Thomas struggled throughout his life with drink and poverty (Johnson, 'The Life of Dylan Thomas'). His marriage, though it lasted until his death, was always contentious. Later in his life and after his death, at the age of 39, Thomas' drinking and bad behaviour became so well-known that it coloured the way that people saw his poetry (Poetry Foundation). Nowadays, however, he is viewed as one of the finest poets to come out of the United Kingdom.

Poetry is not the only literary form, however, that can provide us with beautiful language. In Chapter 1.1 (page XXX), we looked at Isak Dinesen's passage from *Out of Africa* in the context of exploring how language makes some non-fiction writing literary. At that time, we focused on a variety of literary techniques, included the detailed description which reveals the narrator as a careful and close observer and which also reveals her attachment to the place about which she is writing. We did not consider, at that time, the beauty of the language which, like Thomas' poem, also evokes a strong sense of nostalgia. In the passage from *Out of Africa*, Dinesen has used meter to great effect. We usually think of meter as being an important element of poetry,

but it can function equally strongly and purposefully in prose. Try reading the opening sentences from Dinesen's description out loud. The bold-faced words emphasise the patterns of stresses that occur in the passage. You will hear the rhythmic nature of the sentences. Similar to the way that Thomas used stresses in 'Fern Hill', Dinesen uses them here to make her language musical, like a lullaby, especially in the final sentence:

I had a **farm** in **Africa** at the **foot** of the **Ngong Hills**. The **Equator runs across** these **highlands**, a **hundred miles** to the **North**, and the **farm lay** at an **altitude** of **over six thousand feet**. In the **day-time** you **felt** that you had got **high up**, **near** to the **sun**, but the **early mornings** and **evenings** were **limpid** and **restful**, and the **nights** were **cold**.

The musical nature of the prose makes it sound beautiful to the reader who listens to the sounds of the words. The gentle musical rhythm carries with it the sense of nostalgia. We may never have been to Africa – and we may never go – but we can relate to the love that the author has for this place, and so we are moved by her feelings about her farm at the foot of the Ngong Hills. In Chapter 1.4, we will explore in detail the ways in which writers use language to create meaning in various literary forms.

## Admiration of the author's courage

One important influence on works of literature is an author's desire to help change the world for the better, by shining a light on things that are wrong. This can require a great deal of courage when the wrong in question runs deeply through a culture, and people are reluctant to look at it closely for fear that it will make them look at themselves and see something they don't like. One example of a book that made a sharp and painful criticism of the society from which it came is F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*. That novel revealed a kind of greed and selfishness that was rampant among the wealthy people of Europe and America in the early 1920s, and the book, which Fitzgerald felt was his great masterpiece, failed to sell in its day. There were copies left in the warehouse from the original printing when Fitzgerald died in 1940 (Fresh Air). It was only 25 years later that critics began praising the novel and its author (Lucey). We might surmise that by then the reading public was made up of people who could appreciate the honesty with which Fitzgerald portrayed a certain segment of society and the courage with which he called for a higher standard of behaviour.

That kind of courage is common among artists of all sorts, including writers. The example of Allen Ginsberg mentioned on page XXX is the example of someone who challenged societal values to such an extent that it led to arrests. We saw earlier in this chapter Flannery O'Connor's honest portrayal of the racism that was common in her part of the country in the first years following the passage of civil rights legislation. Harper Lee's novel, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, famously created a heroic figure in Atticus Finch, a white lawyer who defends a black man falsely accused of raping a white woman. The portrayal condemns the kind of gross miscarriage of justice in the treatment of anyone who is not white that prevailed in the United States during the time of its publication.

In South Africa, long-standing bigotry and the policy of apartheid, which lasted 50 years, created equally deep and damaging problems. Athol Fugard, a playwright born in South Africa, challenged the policy in his work, first in *Blood Brothers* and later in *'Master Harold'... and the boys*. By examining the consequences of racism on a personal level, both plays depict the tragedies that apartheid caused. In *'Master Harold'... and the boys*, the heroic figure is Sam Samela, a black servant to a white family. Sam emerges as a truly magnificent human being who manages to rise above the kind of hatred engendered by apartheid, and who nonetheless suffers for his trouble. Readers and viewers of the play are asked to look at their own levels of courage for standing up for what is right against what is socially acceptable, and Fugard accomplishes that by commanding our empathy and admiration for Sam. Telling stories like these – which require the author's courage – are the depictions of human behaviour that have the capacity to inspire people to do better. These are the stories that have the power to change the world. In such a way does literature affect us.

## ■ The power of the direct appeal

One final way that authors use language to influence readers' emotional reactions is by writing a piece that reflects a deeply passionate perspective on a subject through a direct appeal to the reader or listener. There are famous examples of this kind of writing that you will not study in your literature class: Martin Luther King Jr.'s 'I Have a Dream' speech, for example, or King George VI's speech upon England's entry into the Second World War, or the letter that Private Sullivan Ballou wrote to his wife on the eve of his first battle in the American Civil War to tell her why he felt so strongly that he had to help fight, despite his deep love for her. All of these texts are moving in large part because the authors or speakers are so obviously deeply committed to what they are saying and they believe that what they are saying is something that matters in the course of their lives. The approach is directly from the speaker to the audience with no persona or character making the communication indirect. The fact that there is no mediating speaker is one of the reasons you will not study this kind of text in your literature course.

We do, however, see the same kind of powerful appeal in literary works. The following example is from *The Merchant of Venice*. One main storyline in the play is the story of Antonio, who borrows money from Shylock, a Jewish moneylender. According to the contract they agreed on, should Antonio be unable to pay back the money, he will owe Shylock a pound of flesh. As it happens, Antonio cannot pay back the money, and the day comes when the parties all report to the court where Antonio is to pay the forfeit he owes. A woman named Portia appears in disguise as a lawyer and she makes this speech as a plea to Shylock to let Antonio out of the agreement.

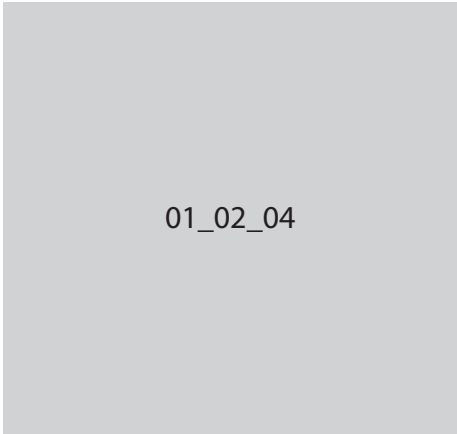
### PORTIA, as Balthazar

- The quality of mercy is not strained.  
 It droppeth as the gentle rain from heaven  
 Upon the place beneath. It is twice blest:  
 It blesseth him that gives and him that takes.  
 5 'Tis mightiest in the mightiest; it becomes  
 The thronèd monarch better than his crown.  
 His scepter shows the force of temporal power,  
 The attribute to awe and majesty  
 Wherein doth sit the dread and fear of kings;  
 10 But mercy is above this sceptered sway.  
 It is enthronèd in the hearts of kings;  
 It is an attribute to God Himself;  
 And earthly power doth then show likest God's  
 When mercy seasons justice. Therefore, Jew,  
 15 Though justice be thy plea, consider this:  
 That in the course of justice none of us  
 Should see salvation. We do pray for mercy,  
 And that same prayer doth teach us all to render  
 The deeds of mercy.

(Shakespeare, *The Merchant of Venice* 4.1.190–208)

The speech is among the most famous of Shakespeare’s **monologues** and **soliloquys**. The passionate call for mercy is made directly to Shylock (Portia, of course, has no knowledge of any play or any audience reading or watching the play), but through Portia’s appeal to Shylock, Shakespeare speaks to all of us and reminds us of one of the foundational principles of Christianity: ‘Do unto others as you would have them do unto you’. This principle, in fact, appears in one form or another in virtually every known religion.

The fame of this speech, then, arises from the fact that it speaks to so many people about important matters which appeal to readers’ empathy, and it does so in beautiful, eloquent language. The image of the rain is a powerful one suggesting that mercy spreads far, and the reminder that everyone, including kings, is called upon to show mercy reminds us of our common humanity.



■ The ‘golden rule’ of religion

CONCEPT CONNECTION

COMMUNICATION

The speech in the context of the play is actually quite ironic, as Portia shows herself to be merciless to Shylock just a few lines later, but Portia’s hypocrisy only highlights the power of Shakespeare’s writing, because we are struck more strongly by the truth of the speech when we see her failing to live up to it.

This monologue on the quality of mercy, therefore, provides us with an excellent example of how readers communicate with authors through the text. We are led to be impressed by Portia’s values when we hear the words she delivers so passionately, and then our admiration of her is almost immediately undermined. But when we see Portia fail to live up to our expectations, we don’t then jettison the speech altogether: we realize that Shakespeare is showing us what should be, and it is Portia, not he, who fails to live up to that.

ACTIVITY

You and your reading

Think back on the reading you have done. Can you think of some works that are memorable to you personally because of the power of the language, either in whole or in part? Recall some sentences or phrases that struck you powerfully, either because you were moved in some way or because you admired the writer’s skill or passion.

## ACTIVITY

## 'Dulce et Decorum Est' By Wilfred Owen

Read the following poem and then answer the questions that follow. The Latin phrase at the end of the poem is an allusion to Horace and translates to: 'Sweet and fitting it is to die for one's country' (Owen, Poetry Foundation). You will find suggested answers at the end of the book (page XXX).

Bent double, like old beggars under sacks,  
 Knock-kneed, coughing like hags, we cursed through sludge,  
 Till on the haunting flares we turned our backs,  
 And towards our distant rest began to trudge.  
 5 Men marched asleep. Many had lost their boots,  
 But limped on, blood-shod. All went lame; all blind;  
 Drunk with fatigue; deaf even to the hoots  
 Of gas-shells dropping softly behind.

Gas! GAS! Quick, boys!—An ecstasy of fumbling  
 10 Fitting the clumsy helmets just in time,  
 But someone still was yelling out and stumbling  
 And flound'ring like a man in fire or lime.—  
 Dim through the misty panes and thick green light,  
 As under a green sea, I saw him drowning.

15 In all my dreams before my helpless sight,  
 He plunges at me, guttering, choking, drowning.

If in some smothering dreams, you too could pace  
 Behind the wagon that we flung him in,  
 And watch the white eyes writhing in his face,  
 20 His hanging face, like a devil's sick of sin;  
 If you could hear, at every jolt, the blood  
 Come gargling from the froth-corrupted lungs,  
 Obscene as cancer, bitter as the cud  
 Of vile, incurable sores on innocent tongues,—  
 25 My friend, you would not tell with such high zest  
 To children ardent for some desperate glory,  
 The old Lie: Dulce et decorum est  
 Pro patria mori.

(Owen 55)

- 1 Give an example of a powerful use of language from the text and explain why it is powerful.
- 2 Find an example of the poet using his craft masterfully and explain how he has done so.
- 3 What social commentary does this poem make? What is the poet's passion?
- 4 This speaker makes a direct appeal to someone – the 'you' of line 25. Who might that person be in the world of the speaker?



## ■ CAS Links: Civic action inspired by literature

After reading a work which functions as social commentary, you could create a CAS project to help address the problem that the literature highlighted. After reading Owen's poem, for example, you could decide to raise money for veterans suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder. It is by inspiring people to take action that the arts, including literature, can be a driving force for change in the world.

## Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter some of the many ways in which literature has the power to affect readers. We cannot possibly identify them all, as the ways that a text can affect a reader are as varied as the number of readers who might read it. What we have tried to do here is to highlight some of the common reasons that we find literature affecting and, we hope, to help you to remember texts that have affected you in meaningful ways.

Later in this book, we will explore the ways in which literature, like all art, can have significant effects on events in the real world. In this chapter, however, we have investigated the ways in which literature affects individuals personally. This is very much a matter of the immanent approach to the study of literature, focusing as it does on our individual interactions with literary texts.

Perhaps the greatest effect a work of literature can have on an individual reader is that it allows for connection with another human mind, whether of our time or another. A great work of literature helps us to discover the identity of an author. This might reveal that author to be one who sees the world the same way that we do, or one who challenges us in ways that we hadn't thought before, but which we recognize as being true. Such a connection helps us to recognize how, despite changes that do occur over time, we share a deep thread of commonality over barriers of time and place – we are not alone in our experiences.

## Works cited

- 'Abigail Adams Biography.' *National Parks Service*. U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d. Web. [www.nps.gov/adam/abigailbio.htm](http://www.nps.gov/adam/abigailbio.htm).
- Adams, A. 'Letter to John Adams 31 March – 5 April 1776.' *Adams Family Papers: An Electronic Archive*. Massachusetts Historical Society, n.d. Web. 29 January 2019. [www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/doc?id=L17760331aa](http://www.masshist.org/digitaladams/archive/doc?id=L17760331aa).
- Alter, R. 'The Untranslatable Amichai.' *Yale University Library*, Yale University, [www.library.yale.edu/judaica/site/conferences/Amichai/AmichaiBio.htm](http://www.library.yale.edu/judaica/site/conferences/Amichai/AmichaiBio.htm). This site reproduces an article from *Modern Hebrew Literature*, Volume 13, 1994.
- Amichai, Y and Bloch, C. 'The Amen Stone.' *Open Closed Open*, Harcourt, Inc., 2000.
- Bloch, C. 'Chana Bloch.' *Chana Bloch: Translations: Yehuda Amichai, The Selected Poetry*, 30 January 2019. [www.chanabloch.com/bio.html](http://www.chanabloch.com/bio.html).
- Bulawayo, N. *We Need New Names*. Vintage, 2014.
- Coates, T. *Between the World and Me*. CNIB, 2016.
- Dinesen, I. *Out of Africa and Shadows on the Grass*. Vintage Books, 1989.
- Doig, I. *Last Bus to Wisdom*. Riverhead Books, 2016.
- Fitzgerald, FS. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, 2018.
- Foley, J. 'Guest Columnist: Time to Update Schools' Reading Lists.' *Seattlepi.com*, Associated Press, 25 Mar. 2011, 14 December 2018. [www.seattlepi.com/local/opinion/article/Guest-Columnist-Time-to-update-schools-reading-1296681.php](http://www.seattlepi.com/local/opinion/article/Guest-Columnist-Time-to-update-schools-reading-1296681.php).
- Fresh Air. 'How 'Gatsby' Went From A Moldering Flop To A Great American Novel.' *NPR*. NPR, 8 Sept. 2014. Web. 31 Jan. 2019. [www.npr.org/2014/09/08/346346588/how-gatsby-went-from-a-moldering-flop-to-a-great-american-novel](http://www.npr.org/2014/09/08/346346588/how-gatsby-went-from-a-moldering-flop-to-a-great-american-novel).
- Ginsberg, A. *Howl: and Other Poems*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 2010.
- Gooch, B. 'Flannery O'Connor.' *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 2 Sept. 2016. Web. 1 Feb. 2019. [www.nytimes.com/topic/person/flannery-oconnor?8qa](http://www.nytimes.com/topic/person/flannery-oconnor?8qa).

- Gordon, S. 'Flannery O'Connor (1925–1964).' *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. N.p., 10 July 2002. Web. 1 Feb. 2019. [www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/flannery-oconnor-1925-1964](http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/flannery-oconnor-1925-1964).
- Johnson, B. 'The King's Speech Transcript for King George VI.' *Historic UK*. N.p., n.d. Web. [www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-Kings-Speech](http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofBritain/The-Kings-Speech).
- Johnson, B. 'The Life of Dylan Thomas, the Famous Welsh Poet.' *Historic UK*. N.p., n.d. Web. 31 Jan. 2019. [www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofWales/The-Life-of-Dylan-Thomas](http://www.historic-uk.com/HistoryUK/HistoryofWales/The-Life-of-Dylan-Thomas).
- Jordan, JO. 'Life in the Theatre: Autobiography, Politics, and Romance in 'Master Harold'... and the Boys.' *Twentieth Century Literature*, vol.39, no.4, 1993, pp.461–472, doi:10.2307/441580.
- 'Jose Rivera.' *IMDb*. IMDb.com, n.d. Web. [www.imdb.com/name/nm1433580/?ref\\_=nv\\_sr\\_1](http://www.imdb.com/name/nm1433580/?ref_=nv_sr_1)
- 'Jose Rivera: Goodman Theatre.' *Kenneth Sawyer Goodman Exhibit | Goodman Theatre | 90 Years*. Goodman Theatre, n.d. Web. 28 January 2019. [www.goodmantheatre.org/artists-archive/creative-partners/playwrights/jose-rivera](http://www.goodmantheatre.org/artists-archive/creative-partners/playwrights/jose-rivera).
- Kakutani, M. 'New 'Huckleberry Finn' Edition Does Diservice to a Classic.' *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 6 Jan. 2011, 14 December 2018. [www.nytimes.com/2011/01/07/books/07huck.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/07/books/07huck.html).
- Kaplan, F. 'How 'Howl' Changed the World.' *Slate Magazine*. Slate, 24 Sept. 2010. Web. 31 Jan. 2019. <https://slate.com/news-and-politics/2010/09/how-howl-changed-the-world.html>.
- King, ML. "'I Have a Dream', Address Delivered at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom.' *Birmingham Campaign | The Martin Luther King, Jr., Research and Education Institute*. n.p., 28 Aug. 1963. Web. 29 January 2019. <https://kinginstitute.stanford.edu/king-papers/documents/i-have-dream-address-delivered-march-washington-jobs-and-freedom>.
- Latham, VL. 'First Recording of 'Howl' Read by Allen Ginsberg, 1956.' *YouTube*. YouTube, 6 May 2015. Web. 31 Jan. 2019. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-P2fILsLH8](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x-P2fILsLH8).
- Lee, H. *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Perennial, 1961.
- Lucey, B. 'Why It Took So Long For "The Great Gatsby" to Be Considered A Literary Classic?' *NewspaperAlum*. TypePad, 3 May 2013. Web. 31 Jan. 2019. [www.newspaperalum.com/2013/05/why-it-took-so-long-for-the-great-gatsby-to-be-considered-a-literary-classic.html](http://www.newspaperalum.com/2013/05/why-it-took-so-long-for-the-great-gatsby-to-be-considered-a-literary-classic.html).
- McElroy, S. 'José Rivera.' *The New York Times*. The New York Times, 26 Feb. 2006. Web. 28 January 2019. [www.nytimes.com/2006/02/26/theater/newsandfeatures/jose-rivera.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2006/02/26/theater/newsandfeatures/jose-rivera.html).
- O'Connor, F. *Everything That Rises Must Converge*. HarperCollins, 2000.
- Owen, W. 'Dulce Et Decorum Est by Wilfred Owen.' *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 29 January 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46560/dulce-et-decorum-est](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/46560/dulce-et-decorum-est).
- Owen, W. *The Collected Poems of Wilfred Owen*. Ed. C. Day Lewis and Edmund Blunden. A New Directions Book, 1965.
- Poetry Foundation. 'Dylan Thomas.' *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 31 Jan. 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/dylan-thomas](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/dylan-thomas).
- Rivera, J. *Marisol and Other Plays*. Theatre Communications Group, 2000.
- Shakespeare, W. 'Sonnet 30.' Edited by Barbara Mowat and Paul Werstine, *Shakespeare's Sonnets*, Folger Shakespeare Library, 28 January 2019. [www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Son&loc=Son-030](http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Son&loc=Son-030).
- Shakespeare, W. *A Midsummer Night's Dream*. Edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Folger Shakespeare Library, 29 January, 2019. [www.folgerdigitaltexts.org](http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org).
- Shakespeare, W. *Romeo and Juliet*. Edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Folger Shakespeare Library, 29 January, 2019. [www.folgerdigitaltexts.org](http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org).
- Shakespeare, W. *The Merchant of Venice*. Edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Folger Shakespeare Library, 29 January, 2019. [www.folgerdigitaltexts.org](http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org).
- Shakespeare, W. *The Tempest*. Edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Folger Shakespeare Library, 29 January, 2019. [www.folgerdigitaltexts.org](http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org).
- Shakespeare, W. *The Winter's Tale*. Edited by Barbara Mowat, Paul Werstine, Michael Poston, and Rebecca Niles. Folger Shakespeare Library, 29 January, 2019. [www.folgerdigitaltexts.org](http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org).
- Smith, D. 'NoViolet Bulawayo Tells of Heartbreak of Homecoming in Mugabe's Zimbabwe.' *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 4 Sept. 2013. Web. 28 January 2019. [www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/04/noviolet-bulawayo-homecoming-mugabe-zimbabwe](http://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/sep/04/noviolet-bulawayo-homecoming-mugabe-zimbabwe)

- Steinbeck, J. *Of Mice and Men*. Ed. Martin Stephen. Longman, 2010.
- 'Sullivan Ballou Letter.' *PBS The Civil War*. Public Broadcasting Service, n.d. Web. 28 January 2019. [www.pbs.org/kenburns/civil-war/war/historical-documents/sullivan-ballou-letter](http://www.pbs.org/kenburns/civil-war/war/historical-documents/sullivan-ballou-letter).
- The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. 'Yehuda Amichai.' *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 18 Sept. 2018. Web. 28 January 2019. [www.britannica.com/biography/Yehuda-Amichai](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Yehuda-Amichai).
- 'The Motorcycle Diaries.' *IMDb*. IMDb.com, 6 Feb. 2004. Web. 28 January 2019. [www.imdb.com/title/tt0318462/?ref\\_=nm\\_flmg\\_wr\\_8](http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0318462/?ref_=nm_flmg_wr_8).
- Thomas, D. *The Poems of Dylan Thomas*. Ed. John Goodby. New Directions, 2017.
- Twain, M and Neider, C. 'That Awful German Language.' *A Tramp Abroad*, Harper and Row Publishers, 1977, pp.63–83.
- Twain, M. *Huckleberry Finn*. Ed. Frank Giacoia and Andrew Jay. Hoffman. Acclaim Books, 1997.
- UpClosed. 'About José Rivera (Playwright) | Biography| Screenwriter, Writer | United States of America.' *UpClosed*. UpClosed, n.d. Web. 28 January 2019. <https://upclosed.com/people/jose-rivera-1>.
- Uroff, MD. 'Sylvia Plath and Confessional Poetry: A Reconsideration.' *The Iowa Review*, vol.8, no.1, 1977, pp.104–115, doi:10.17077/0021-065x.2172.
- Warren, RP. *All the Kings Men*. Harcourt, 2002.
- 'Yehuda Amichai.' *Poetry Foundation*, Poetry Foundation, 28 January 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/yehuda-amichai](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/yehuda-amichai).

## 1.3

## How does language use vary among literary forms?

## OBJECTIVES OF CHAPTER

- Poetry uses language as a means of creating art
- Poetry uses language to help characterize the speaker and any characters
- Narrative fiction uses language primarily for characterization
- Narrative fiction, like poetry, uses language for artistic purposes
- Literary non-fiction uses language in the same ways that fiction does
- Drama uses language in place of narration to deliver plot and characterization

## Introduction

Literature is an art form for which the tool of construction is words. Where other artists can use a wide variety of materials – painters can use oil paint, watercolours or acrylic, for example – writers all work using the same tool. They can, however, mould the material into quite distinct styles which function almost as different materials. In Chapter 1.4, we will take a closer look at how authors develop individual styles. In this chapter, we will look at how language use varies from one literary form to another.

## Language use in poetry

There are two main functions of language use in poetry: the primary function is artistic. Language in poetry is particularly compressed. Because there are so few words, every word is significant. Poetry communicates through figures of speech such as symbols and metaphors, so the language used almost always has two or more meanings. Professor Thomas C. Foster, author of several excellent books about how to read literature, describes the use of language in poetry this way:

*Poetry uses language to take us to a place beyond language. I could say that it is the place where one soul meets with another, but that's a little mystical for this discussion. Perhaps that's what alarms readers, whichever way we describe it. Both the meeting of souls and the inherent self-contradiction of language going to a place beyond itself can sound pretentious, at best. But they are also what makes poetry so exciting, allowing us to go to intellectual or psychic spaces that we can't ordinarily access.*

(Foster 7)

What Foster is talking about is the way that language is used in poetry as an art form. We will explore this function of language in detail in the next section of this chapter. Foster refers mostly to lyric poetry, rather than **narrative poetry** (poetry that tells a story), but narrative poets also use language as a tool for making art.

The second function of language in poetry is to convey character. That function is at work in poems in which there is someone with a conspicuous voice, either the narrator or a character. We will explore this function of language in poetry as well, later in this chapter.

## ■ Language as the mechanism of art

One way in which the language of poetry is made artistic is by the employment of a variety of strategies, including rhythm, rhyme, word choice and use of literary figures. Your ability to recognize and appreciate all of these strategies will help to define your ability as a reader. The tradition of shaping poetry via rhythm and rhyme goes back to the earliest days of English literature. We can see, in this fourteenth-century ballad from Geoffrey Chaucer, the function that both play:

### To Rosemounde: A Balade

Madame, ye ben of al beaute shryne	A
As fer as cerclid is the mapamounde,	B
For as the cristal glorious ye shyne,	A
And lyke ruby ben your chekes rounde.	B
5 Therwith ye ben so mery and so jocounde	B
That at a revel whan that I see you daunce,	C
It is an oynement unto my wounde,	B
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.	C
For thogh I wepe of teres ful a tyne,	A
10 Yet may that wo myn herte nat confounde;	B
Your semy voys that ye so smal out twyne	A
Maketh my thoght in joy and blis habounde.	B
So curtaysly I go with love bounde	B
That to myself I sey in my penaunce,	C
15 'Suffyseth me to love you, Rosemounde,	B
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.'	C
Nas neuer pyk walwed in galauntyne	A
As I in love am walwed and ywounde,	B
For which ful ofte I of myself devyne	A
20 That I am trew Tristam the secounde.	B
My love may not refreyde nor affounde,	B
I brenne ay in an amorous plesaunce.	C
Do what you lyst, I wyl your thral be founde,	B
Thogh ye to me ne do no daliaunce.	C

Even though the language is difficult for us to follow nowadays, we can easily see that the lines are very similar in length throughout the poem, which suggests that the number of syllables, and therefore the rhythm, is similar or the same. We can also see the rhymes, even if we don't know exactly how they should be pronounced. The rhyme scheme is indicated above, and you can see how regular it is. The rhyme scheme here is, in fact, the normal rhyme scheme for ballads. You can listen to Jay Ruud, English professor at the University of Central Arkansas in the United States, reading the poem aloud via the QR code provided. If you play the video, you will be able to hear the regular rhythm and the rhyme.

If you listen to the reading, you will also hear that the language sounds quite natural. It is not singsong, and there are no hard stops at the ends of lines where the rhymes occur. The effect of the rhythm and rhyme, then, is to create a melody. This use of language is tighter and more direct than everyday speech. The musicality of the poem is suitable to it being a ballade – a form that we associate with songs. The original ballads were dance songs ('Ballad Examples and Definition'). In this case, as with many ballads, the melodic nature of the language helps convey the meaning. This is a love poem, and the musicality of the language supports the feelings that the speaker has for Rosemounde.



Here is the poem translated from the Middle English to Modern English, by Chaucer scholar A.S. Kline:

	Madame, you are of all beauty the shrine	A
	Within the circle of the mappamund;*	B
	For as the crystal glorious you shine,	A
	And like ruby are your cheeks round.	B
5	And therewith you're so merry and jocund	B
	That at a revel when I see you dance,	C
	It is a salve for my every wound,	B
	Though you with me suffer no dalliance.	C
	For though I fill a cask with tears of mine,	A
10	Yet that woe may my heart not confound;	B
	Your demi-voice that so small you twine	A
	Makes my thought with joy and bliss abound.	B
	So courteously I go with love bound,	B
	That to myself I say, in penance,	C
15	It suffices me to love you, Rosamund,	B
	Though you with me suffer no dalliance.	C
	Never did pike so wallow in galantine	A
	As I in love do wallow, and am wound,	B
	For which full oft I of myself divine	A
20	That I am truly Tristan the second.	B
	My love will not grow cold or be unsound;	B
	I burn with amorous pleasure, at every chance.	C
	Do what you will, I will your thrall be found,	B
	Though you with me suffer no dalliance.	C

\*‘Mappamund’ or ‘mapamounde’, as Chaucer spelled it, means ‘map of the world’ (Oxford Reference).

In the modern script, we can see more easily the romantic nature of the poem, in which the speaker declares himself forever at the service of Rosamund, despite the fact that she does not wish to involve herself with him. The repetition of the last line of each stanza may be easier to see in the Modern English as well, but it is retained from the original. Repetition is another of the features of the language of this poem which helps convey meaning; it serves, here, to reiterate the speaker’s devotion to his love and, possibly, also his frustration with her determination to reject him.

■ CAS Links

Because you are essentially studying a work in translation when you read a modern version of Chaucer’s work, an interesting CAS activity would be to arrange for a local expert on Chaucer to do some reading of his work in Middle English and to speak to students about the differences between Middle English and Modern English.



## Geoffrey Chaucer

Chaucer was born sometime between 1340 and 1344. Early in his life, he was a soldier in the Hundred Years' War and was taken prisoner during the English invasion of France. He had to be ransomed by King Edward III, and afterward he served as a sort of ambassador for the king, traveling through Europe on diplomatic missions ('Geoffrey Chaucer'). It was through his travels that he became familiar with the influential writers of his time, people such as Dante, author of *The Inferno*, and Petrarch ('Geoffrey Chaucer – Poet'), famous for creating the sonnet form that Shakespeare would later reinvent into the English sonnet. Chaucer later served as justice of the peace and a member of parliament ('Geoffrey Chaucer – Poet'). He seems to have begun writing in the mid-to-late 1380s, and is most famous for writing *The Canterbury Tales*.

You can see the same kind of structured use of language in much more modern poems. Here is Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 116', written 200 years after Chaucer. The sonnet form is somewhat different from the ballad form, but it shares the features of tightly structured rhythm and rhyme.

Let me not to the marriage of true minds	A
Admit impediments. Love is not love	B
Which alters when it alteration finds	A
Or bends with the remover to remove.	B
5 O, no, it is an ever-fixèd mark	C
That looks on tempests and is never shaken;	D
It is the star to every wand'ring bark,	C
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.	D
Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks	E
10 Within his bending sickle's compass come;	F
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,	E
But bears it out even to the edge of doom.	F
If this be error, and upon me proved,	G
I never writ, nor no man ever loved.	G

Like Chaucer's ballad, this poem is a love poem. This one is not directed to a particular person, however; it is a testament to the nature of true love. The central idea of the poem is that true love never alters but remains true no matter what obstacles it encounters. The regular rhythm and the regular rhyme reflect that constancy. Notice that Shakespeare, like Chaucer before him, also used repetition to reiterate an important idea; in this sonnet, the repetition is of the word 'Love', personified. Over and over the speaker makes bold declarative statements about what Love is or is not. That repetition underlines the certainty that the speaker and, by extension, Shakespeare, feels about his knowledge of the nature of love.

Even in the present day, poets often rely on heavily structured language to help convey their meaning. The following poem, by American poet Bruce Snider, is number seven in a series of eight sonnets, called 'Devotions', about a gay couple waiting to hear from an adoption agency. The sonnets explore the question of motherhood, including considering the speaker's relationship to a puppy he and his partner adopted, as well as his observations of a neighbour who treats his son harshly.

A nuthatch bargains from its split branch.	A
Our neighbor stops by, complains our fence	A
breaks his field. It must be moved eight inches.	B
The puppy – <i>Annie</i> , we call her – pushes	B
5 her nose in everything, the front yard, the garden,	C
finds, across the road, the neighbor's trash –	D
drags stripped wire, eggshells that harden	C
like the bones she buries off his porch.	D
I want to say we are consoled by her,	E
10 but each day John jumps when he hears the phone.	F
We walk over and over down the worn	F
path to the empty mailbox: <i>Maybe soon</i> .	F
Some nights we make love. We sleep arm to arm.	G
We wake to our neighbor yelling at his son.	G

Notice the rhyme scheme: it is present, but it is not nearly as well defined as the rhyme patterns we saw in Chaucer's work, or Shakespeare's. Here, most of the rhymes are **slant rhymes** (sometimes also referred to as imperfect rhymes or half rhymes), words that almost rhyme, but not quite. If you say 'branch' and 'fence' from lines 1 and 2 aloud, for instance, you will hear a strong similarity in the words, but not nearly so strong as you hear in the full rhyme in lines 5 and 7 of 'garden' and 'harden.' In a sonnet, the lines are normally 10 syllables long. At least half the lines here contain more or fewer – the most common is 9 syllables. That structure seems to suit the meaning of the poem: the two men are in a state of uncertainty, waiting to hear from the adoption agency. Their lives are not quite as full as they would like – the rhythms and rhymes of their experience are just slightly out of sync.

Snider, too, used repetition, but in quite a different way from the way that Chaucer and Shakespeare used it: Snider used the repetition of ideas to connect the last line of each sonnet with the first line of the next one. The last line of the sonnet preceding this one, for example, is 'a nuthatch bargaining from its split branch', and the first line of the sonnet following this one is 'Again we wake, our neighbor yelling at his son'. Each of the poets chose the way to use repetition to create the effect that he wanted. That is the essence of artistic work and the essence of how language is used in poetry.

### Bruce Snider

Bruce Snider was born and raised in rural Indiana. Much of his poetry draws heavily on his personal memories and depicts the experience of growing up gay in a small rural community ('Bruce Snider'). He is the winner of numerous awards, including a James A. Michener fellowship to the University of Texas at Austin, a fellowship to the Bread Loaf Writer's Conference, and the Lena-Miles Wever Todd poetry prize, which he won for his first collection of poems, *Paradise, Indiana* (Snider). He has taught at several universities and is currently an assistant professor at the University of San Francisco.

## GLOBAL ISSUE

### CULTURE, IDENTITY AND COMMUNICATION

A global issue you could investigate is the role of literature in challenging perceptions about culture and identity. Bruce Snider's work may pose a challenge for some readers, because he is gay and writing about wanting to raise children. You might pair Snider's work with the work of an author who is challenging other perceptions – about race, for example – and develop a global issue statement that focuses on the means by which the two authors do attempt to challenge people's perceptions.

Naturally many poems are not characterized by rigid structure or rhythm or rhyme; nevertheless, you can nearly always recognize a poem by how it looks on the page. Language ordered in lines and, often, stanzas is one feature of the way language is used in poetry, even without those more formal features. Here is a poem by American poet Lucille Clifton:

#### **blessing the boats (at St. Mary's)**

may the tide  
that is entering even now  
the lip of our understanding  
carry you out  
5 beyond the face of fear  
may you kiss  
the wind then turn from it  
certain that it will  
love your back may you  
10 open your eyes to water  
water waving forever  
and may you in your innocence  
sail through this to that

You see right away that this is a poem. The short overall length and the short lines signal the genre immediately. This poem doesn't have any of the kinds of rhythm and rhyme that we have been looking at with the previous three poems, but there are several features of the language use which are distinctly poetic: the non-standard grammar, the lack of punctuation and the lack of capital letters are poetic elements that have come into use in the twentieth and twenty-first century.

More importantly, the rich metaphorical use of language here marks this out as poetry rather than prose or some other literary form. Other literary forms do, of course, use metaphor and other figures of speech, but those elements do not comprise so much of the work as they do in a poem. In 'blessing the boats', Clifton used only 58 words, but they contain all of the following literary elements:

■ Table 1.3.1

Element	Lines	Explanation
Religious reference	Title	A blessing is a formal religious ceremony.
Repetition	1, 6, 9, and 12	The repeated phrases 'may the' and 'may you' call a formal blessing immediately to mind.
Allusion	3	The phrase 'the lip of our understanding' carries an echo of verse from the Christian Bible: 'And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus' (Philippians 4:7).
Metaphor	3	'lip' is used metaphorically; as it is used here, it means 'edge', but the suggestion of lips is also the suggestion of a kiss which conveys ideas of both love and of religious blessing.
Face	5	'face' is used as personification to give 'fear' the status of a person. The blessing is intended to carry the listener out past the place where fear might be a danger.
Kiss	6	Here the word 'kiss' recalls the idea of the 'lip' in line 3, only this time it is the listener who is to give the blessing. The idea of kissing the wind is a suggestion that the sailor can embrace the wind as a blessing.
Personification	9	The wind, in response to the kiss from the sailor, will love 'your back'. That suggests that the wind will work in the sailor's favour.
Pun	9	The phrase 'your back' literally refers to the sailor's back, because the wind will be pushing the sailor onward. But it also suggests 'you back', as in 'the wind will love you back', returning the love the sailor gave the wind.
Allusion	9	The phrase 'your back' in association with the wind recalls an old Irish blessing: 'May the wind be always at your back'. Wind at the back of a sailor is always desirable because it pushes the boat onward.
Symbolism	1, 10 and 11	References to water ('tide' in line 1): water is a traditional western symbol for rebirth. It can also be a symbol for drowning, and of course this poem is a blessing to keep the sailor from drowning, that he might return safely home again.
Personification	11	The water is depicted as waving – a gesture associated with goodbyes. If the water is waving goodbye, it is sending the sailor onward.

If we studied the poem longer, we might find even more literary elements at play. We might, for instance, explore the effect of the lack of capitalization and the absence of punctuation. We could explore the nature of this speaker – whoever it might be – and the speaker's relationship with the audience. Despite the lack of obvious rhythm and rhyme in formalized structures, we can still explore the use of rhythm and rhyme in this poem. If you read the poem aloud, you will hear that it does have a rhythmic pattern, and although there are not obvious end rhymes in this poem, there are other elements of sound such as assonance. Fifteen literary strategies in a 58-word, 13-line poem may seem like a lot, but it is not at all surprising to find that kind of rich density of literary elements in a poem. That kind of density is what we meant, at the beginning of this section, when we said that the language of poetry is compressed.

### Lucille Clifton

Lucille Clifton was born in Depew, New York, outside of Buffalo, in 1936. Neither of her parents was educated, but they instilled in their children a love of books and Clifton herself went to college at Howard University, majoring in drama (Moody). While at Howard, Clifton met people who later took the forefront of African-American academics, including Chloe Wofford, now known as Toni Morrison (Moody). Clifton's first book of poetry was published after she won a poetry contest in 1969. Over the course of her career, until her death in 2010, Clifton won several important awards, including the National Book Award for poetry for *Blessing the Boats: New and Selected Poems 1988–2000*. She was twice nominated for the Pulitzer Prize, once for *Good Woman: Poems and a Memoir 1969–1980* and once for *Two-Headed Woman* ('Lucille Clifton – Poet'). She served as Poet Laureate of Maryland from 1979–1985 and was the first African American to serve in that role. Among numerous other awards for her work, she also won an Emmy Award from the American Academy of Television Arts and Sciences for writing for the 1976 television special *Free to Be You and Me* ('Lucille Clifton').

We have seen how all of these poets have used the same literary strategies in creating their poetry, but we have also seen how each strategy was used to a different purpose. That variation in the way that poets use their tools is what make them artists. Steven Foster (whose definition of the use of language in poetry we considered on page XXX) has this to say about the way that poets use the language available to them:

*A poem is an experiment with and in language, an attempt to discover  
how best to capture its subject and make readers see it anew ...*

(Foster 33)

One of the great pleasures of studying poetry is to discover how each poet decides to use language and for what purpose. One of the joys of reading poetry is to be surprised by originality, not just of ideas, but also of method.

## CONCEPT CONNECTION

### CREATIVITY

Part of your job as a skilled reader of literary texts – and not just poetry – is to notice and appreciate places where the author has revealed his or her creativity. To do that, you have to be on the lookout for any new perspective that the author gives you on his or her subject, but you also have to be on the lookout for ways in which the author uses words creatively. This means more than just noticing a fresh turn of phrase; it means thinking hard about what that usage contributes to your understanding of the meaning. In the case of the Bruce Snider sonnets, for example, we first have to notice that there is always a tight connection between the sonnets created out of repetition, but then we have to think about *why* that was necessary. One possibility is that one of the main subjects of the poem is the relationships – the connections – between people and particularly the relationship between a father and his child, and whether that relationship can perform the role of mothering. The fact that all of the sonnets are connected, regardless of the specific content in each, suggests a solid structure as a collection that offers hope for the establishment of effective connections in relationships, despite worries – or maybe even because of the awareness of the potential problems that will need to be dealt with. No such idea is stated in the poem, nor is this a common, recurring example that you can easily recognize from other poems. The poet thought creatively about how to convey his ideas. The interpretation of poetry and other literary works requires you to think creatively about what the strategy of repetition could mean.

## ACTIVITY

## 'Bread' by Kamau Brathwaite

Read the following poem by Barbadian poet Kamau Braithwaite. Identify as many poetic uses of language as you can. Consider the formal elements we have discussed here as well as other standard literary strategies. You can read the notes at the end of the book (page XXX) for comparison when you have finished.

Slowly the white dream wrestle(s) to life  
hands shaping the salt and the foreign cornfields  
the cold flesh kneaded by fingers  
is ready for the charcoal for the black wife

- 5 of heat the years of green sleeping in the volcano.  
the dream becomes tougher. settling into its shape  
like a bullfrog. suns rise and electrons  
touch it. walls melt into brown. moving to crisp and crackle

- breathing edge of the knife of the oven.  
10 noise of the shop. noise of the farmer. market.  
on this slab of lord. on this table w/ its oil-skin cloth  
on this altar of the bone. this sacrifice

- of isaac. warm dead. warm merchandise. more than worn merchandise  
life  
15 itself. the dream of the soil itself  
flesh of the god you break. peace to your lips. strife

- of the multitudes who howl all day for its saviour  
who need its crumbs as fish. flickering through their green element  
need a wide glassy wisdom  
20 to keep their groans alive

and this loaf here. life  
now halted. more and more water additive.  
the dream less clear. the soil more distant  
its prayer of table. bless of lips. more hard to reach w/ pennies.

- 25 the knife  
that should have cut it. the hands that should have broken open its victory  
of crusts at your throat. balaam watching w/ red leak  
-ing eyes. the rats

- finding only this young empty husk  
30 sharp-



ening their ratchets. your wife  
going out on the streets. searching searching

her feet tapping. the lights of the motor-  
cars watching watching round-  
35 ing the shape of her girdle. her back naked

rolled into night into night w/out morning  
rolled into dead into dead w/out vision  
rolled into life into life w/out dream

### Kamau Brathwaite

Kamau Brathwaite was born Lawson Edward Brathwaite in Bridgetown, Barbados, in 1930. Unlike many other scholars from the Caribbean, Brathwaite has maintained a lifelong connection with his home country, living and working there throughout his life ('Writers of the Caribbean – Kamau Brathwaite'). He was educated at Harrison College in Barbados, Pembroke College in England, and the University of Sussex, also in England. He returned to Caribbean, however, to teach at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica, where he taught for 30 years (The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica). Over the course of his career, he published numerous volumes of poetry. A central interest in his work is the study of the roots of Caribbean culture in the cultures and history of Africa and the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean (The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica). He has won many awards over the course of his career, including the Casa de las Americas Prize for Literary Criticism, the Neustadt International Prize for Literature, the Bussa Award, and the Charity Randall Prize for Performance and Written Poetry, and he has won fellowships from both the Fulbright and the Guggenheim foundations ('Kamau Brathwaite').

### Poetic language used to characterize speaker or characters

A second major use of language in poetry is to convey to the reader a sense of what kind of person the speaker is. This function is particularly important in narrative poetry in which the reliability of the speaker must be considered, but it can come into play in other kinds of poems as well. In all of the poems that we have examined in this chapter so far, the speakers are reliable. Even so, we can get a sense of how they are different from each other, just from the way that they use language.

- In Chaucer's 'To Rosemounde: A Balade', we have a speaker who uses quite formal and even florid language – his words and phrases are extravagant.
- In Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 116', we have a speaker who is very certain of himself, who makes bold claims in strong declarative sentences.
- In the extract from Snider's sonnet sequence, we have a speaker who relies heavily on description. He notices details of the world around him and uses them to create images. (This is the most strongly narrative poem so far in this chapter, especially if you look at the whole sequence.)
- In 'blessing the boats', we have a speaker who speaks in the formalized rhythms of ceremony.
- And in 'Bread' we have a speaker who gives us pieces of images. He uses language in such a way as to create an impression of the scene, and he demands of the reader the effort of filling in.

You would not think, from reading this set of poems, that the speaker of any one was the same as the speaker of any other – or indeed, any had been written by the author of any of the others. Even though these are strongly lyrical poems, we can definitely see distinctive differences in the way language is used.

There are poems, however, in which the speaker is much more strongly featured. In narrative poems, the speaker is someone who has clearly been depicted as an individual with a strong

personal connection to the story that he or she is telling. Sometimes, it becomes clear that the speaker is not reliable – he or she is telling the story wrong, though without intending to do so. Wayne C. Booth, who was a professor at the University of Chicago, defined the term ‘unreliable narrator’ in his important work *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, published in 1961, which is still an important book today for anyone wishing to understand how literature is constructed and interpreted. Booth discusses the relationships between authors and narrators in terms of the distance between them. Here is what he had to say about unreliable narrators:

*For practical criticism probably the most important of these kinds of distance is that between the fallible or unreliable narrator and the implied author who carries the reader with him in judging the narrator. If the reason for discussing point of view is to find out how it relates to literary effects, then surely the moral and intellectual qualities of the narrator are more important to our judgment than whether he is referred to as ‘I’ or ‘he’, or whether he is privileged or limited. If he is discovered to be untrustworthy, then the total effect of the work he relays to us is transformed.*

(Booth 158–9)

Booth goes on to say that a narrator who lies is not ‘unreliable’, because that narrator knows the truth, though he or she chooses not to tell it for their own reasons (159).

Whether the speaker is reliable or not, whenever we have a speaker with a personal stake in the story, the language the speaker uses is our clue to the speaker’s nature and to his or her reliability or lack thereof.

The following poem by Robert Browning is renowned for the speaker’s perspective. The speaker is not unreliable – he does tell the truth about what has happened – but he is rather shockingly wicked.

### My Last Duchess

FERRARA

That’s my last Duchess painted on the wall,

Looking as if she were alive. I call

That piece a wonder, now; Fra Pandolf’s hands

Worked busily a day, and there she stands.

5 Will’t please you sit and look at her? I said

‘Fra Pandolf’ by design, for never read

Strangers like you that pictured countenance,

The depth and passion of its earnest glance,

But to myself they turned (since none puts by

10 The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)

And seemed as they would ask me, if they durst,

How such a glance came there; so, not the first

Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, ‘twas not

Her husband’s presence only, called that spot

15 Of joy into the Duchess’ cheek; perhaps

Fra Pandolf chanced to say, ‘Her mantle laps

Over my lady’s wrist too much’, or ‘Paint

Must never hope to reproduce the faint

Half-flush that dies along her throat.’ Such stuff

20 Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough

- For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
 A heart—how shall I say?—too soon made glad,  
 Too easily impressed; she liked whate'er  
 She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.
- 25 Sir, 'twas all one! My favour at her breast,  
 The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
 The bough of cherries some officious fool  
 Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
 She rode with round the terrace—all and each
- 30 Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
 Or blush, at least. She thanked men—good! but thanked  
 Somehow—I know not how—as if she ranked  
 My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
 With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame
- 35 This sort of trifling? Even had you skill  
 In speech—which I have not—to make your will  
 Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this  
 Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
 Or there exceed the mark'—and if she let
- 40 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
 —E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
 Never to stoop. Oh, sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without
- 45 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
 The company below, then. I repeat,  
 The Count your master's known munificence
- 50 Is ample warrant that no just pretense  
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
 At starting, is my object. Nay, we'll go  
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,
- 55 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

### ■ TOK Links: Language and deception

How do authors use language to create characters who deceive others as to their true intentions? How do we uncover those deceptions so that we know that the author has created an unreliable narrator or speaker or an unreliable character?

We can see from lines 45 and 46 that this speaker has had his wife killed. Not only does he feel no remorse, but he also feels completely justified in his actions – to the point where he is bragging about them to his listener, the person standing there looking at the painting with him. This speaker uses language in such a way as to reveal his complete arrogance. The rhetorical questions in lines 35 and 45, for example, show that he knows that there is only one possible answer to his questions – and that that answer justifies his actions. He makes accusations in lines 25 to 34 which are designed to validate his appraisal of his wife as having been a woman of no judgment. His references to his own greatness, such as his ‘nine-hundred-years-old name’ in line 33, also reveal the conceit that underlies his actions with regard to his last wife. Perhaps the most striking way that he uses language arises in lines 49–53, where it becomes clear that the person to whom the speaker is talking is an emissary for a Count who is the father of this Duke’s potential next wife. The arrogance of his making such a direct point of telling a story about how he had his last wife killed to a man who has the power to arrange a marriage to a new wife reveals to us not only the speaker’s self-importance but also his blindness to how others might perceive him. Browning has crafted the speaker’s words masterfully to reveal to the reader the kind of man that the speaker is.

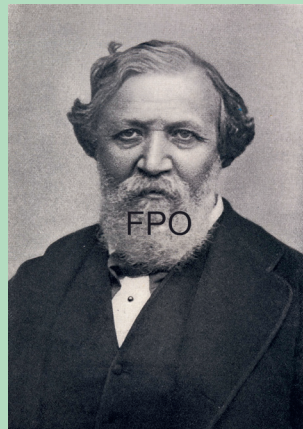
## CONCEPT CONNECTION

### COMMUNICATION

This poem is another example of the kind of communication that gets established between an author and a reader through the medium of a work that we saw when we considered the excerpt from ‘Revelation’ by Flannery O’Connor in Chapter 1.2. Even though this narrator is not strictly unreliable, because he is telling exactly what happened, there is a definite distance between him and the poet. Browning does not condone the narrator’s actions; he wishes his readers to look at the narrator and be appalled both by his actions and by his lack of concern over them.

### Robert Browning

Robert Browning was born in 1812 to very educated parents who raised him to love books and to speak several languages. He wrote poetry at a very young age, and by the age of 13, was such a fan of Percy Bysshe Shelley that he became both a vegetarian and an atheist in honour of his hero (‘Robert Browning – Poet’). Thereafter, there was a gap of many years in which Browning did not write any poetry. He wrote a number of plays which were unsuccessful. He married Elizabeth Barrett after reading a volume of her poetry, and for a long time he was known only as Elizabeth Barrett’s husband (‘Robert Browning – Poet’). He did, however, begin writing poetry again and had books published in the years after his marriage. His experience in writing drama gave him a particular gift for the dramatic monologue (‘Robert Browning – Poet’), of which ‘My Last Duchess’ is an example. He did not become widely respected until the publication of *The Ring and the Book*, poems based on a seventeenth-century murder trial (‘Robert Browning – Poet’).



Conversely, Carol Ann Duffy’s poem ‘Head of English’ gives us a fully unreliable narrator, one who does not know that the story she is telling is not true.

- Today we have a poet in the class.  
 A real live poet with a published book.  
 Notice the inkstained fingers, girls. Perhaps  
 we're going to witness verse hot from the press.  
 5 Who knows. Please show your appreciation  
 by clapping. Not too loud. Now
- sit up straight and listen. Remember  
 the lesson on assonance, for not all poems,  
 sadly, rhyme these days. Still. Never mind.  
 10 Whispering's, as always, out of bounds –  
 but do feel free to raise some questions.  
 After all, we're paying forty pounds.
- Those of you with English Second Language,  
 see me after break. We're fortunate  
 15 to have this person in our midst.  
 Season of mists and so on and so forth.  
 I've written quite a bit of poetry myself,  
 am doing Kipling with the Lower Fourth.
- Right. That's enough from me. On with the Muse.  
 20 Open a window at the back. We don't  
 Want winds of change about the place.  
 Take notes, but don't write reams. Just an essay  
 on the poet's themes. Fine. Off we go.  
 Convince us that there's something we don't know.
- 25 Well. Really. Run along now girls. I'm sure  
 that gave an insight to an outside view.  
 Applause will do. Thank you  
 very much for coming here today. Lunch  
 in the hall? Do hang about. Unfortunately  
 30 I have to dash. Tracey will show you out.

(Duffy 8–9)

Here Duffy has used language to reveal this speaker both as being self-centred and completely lacking self-awareness. The speaker, the titular 'Head of English', is introducing a guest speaker to her class, but the guest speaker never gets a single word in edgewise. Instead, the speaker rushes on, pouring out words in a kind of **stream-of consciousness** rush, commenting on everything from the speaker's fingernails to the window pole. She thinks of herself as a poet, as she says in line 17; however, her language use shows up her lack of skill with words – not only can she not control the flow of words, but she also cannot control tone. First she makes a sarcastic comment about the poet's 'inkstained fingers' (line 3), and then she talks about her guest as 'this person'

(line 15), which is actually pretty insulting – either she does not know the guest speaker’s name or she refuses to grant the dignity of using it – and she criticizes poetry which does not rhyme (line 9). Presumably the guest poet’s poetry is of that sort. None of these verbal acts constitutes an appropriate way to treat a guest. Her own poem here, furthermore, also does not use rhyme very well. She manages ‘bounds’ and ‘pounds’, but the rhyme of ‘forth’ with ‘Fourth’ does not demonstrate any particular prowess with language. The use of language is doubly clever on Duffy’s part, then, because not only does it reveal to us a speaker who is rude, unwelcoming, and self-important, but it also shows us that that speaker is either ignorant or hypocritical or both, since she proclaims herself to be gifted with language when she patently is not.

### Carol Ann Duffy

Carol Ann Duffy is the current Poet Laureate of Britain, and she is the first woman to hold the position in the 400-year history of its existence. She is also the first Scot to do so (Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica – ‘Poets Laureate of the United Kingdom’). The honour was amply earned: her career as a poet has been spectacular. She has published more than 50 volumes of poetry (for children and for adults), drama and fiction (‘Carol Ann Duffy – Literature’) and she has won a large number of major awards, including the Somerset Maugham Award, the Whitbread Poetry Award, Forward Poetry Prize (Best Poetry Collection of the Year), the 2005 T. S. Eliot Prize, the 2011 Costa Poetry, and the PEN/Pinter Prize, all for her poetry. She was awarded an OBE in 1995, a CBE in 2001 and became a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature in 1999 (‘Carol Ann Duffy – Literature’). In her role as Poet Laureate, Duffy is recognized for her generosity to other poets in giving them important opportunities to have their work shown in public. She has pointed out that when she first started writing poetry, women poets were called ‘poetesses’, and she has been instrumental in changing that image of women writers (The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica).



We can see the important role in defining character that language has to play in the two examples from Robert Browning and Carol Ann Duffy. That role is central to the way that language functions in fictional works, as we shall see in the next section.

## Language use in narrative fiction

The most significant difference between the way that language is used in prose fiction and the way that it is used in poetry is that the language of prose does not exhibit that dense compression that poetry does. With prose, there is always a narrator, and the narrator always has plenty of time to tell the story with all the details he or she wants filled in. The communication between author and reader is still indirect, in the sense that it is mediated by the narrator in the text, but the readers are not required to make the kind of creative imaginative leaps that poetry demands of them.

That said, language does play similar roles in narrative to those it plays in poetry: it is the artist’s tool, and it does help characterize both the narrator and characters in the stories. It also has a great deal to do with setting tone through descriptions of a kind that do not generally appear in poetry.

### ■ Language as a means of characterization

We just saw that language is often used in poetry as a means of revealing to the reader the kind of person a speaker is. The same is true in prose fiction, only to a greater degree, because novels and short stories mostly tend to have many characters rather than just one, and so the requirement the author faces in using language for this purpose is a great deal more complex.



Jane Austen, in *Pride and Prejudice*, used language masterfully to reveal the dramatic differences among her characters. In this excerpt from Chapter 2, we already get very clear portraits of both Mr and Mrs Bennet. The below exchange takes place on the evening of a day in which Mrs Bennet has begged her husband to go and introduce himself to Mr Bingley, a wealthy young man who has just moved into the neighbourhood. Mr Bennet, although he roundly denied any intention of doing so at the time, did indeed go and visit Mr Bingley that afternoon. This is the scene in which he chooses to reveal that fact to his wife and daughters:

- 'We are not in a way to know what Mr Bingley likes,' said her mother resentfully, 'since we are not to visit.'
- 'But you forget, mamma,' said Elizabeth, 'that we shall meet him at the assemblies, and that Mrs Long promised to introduce him.'
- 'I do not believe Mrs Long will do any such thing. She has two nieces of her own. She is a selfish, hypocritical woman, and I have no opinion of her.'
- 'No more have I,' said Mr Bennet; 'and I am glad to find that you do not depend on her serving you.'
- Mrs Bennet deigned not to make any reply, but, unable to contain herself, began scolding one of her daughters. 'Don't keep coughing so, Kitty, for Heaven's sake! Have a little compassion on my nerves. You tear them to pieces.'
- 'Kitty has no discretion in her coughs,' said her father; 'she times them ill.'
- 10 'I do not cough for my own amusement,' replied Kitty fretfully. 'When is your next ball to be, Lizzy?' 'To-morrow fortnight.'
- 'Aye, so it is,' cried her mother, 'and Mrs Long does not come back till the day before; so it will be impossible for her to introduce him, for she will not know him herself.'
- 'Then, my dear, you may have the advantage of your friend, and introduce Mr Bingley to her.'
- 15 'Impossible, Mr Bennet, impossible, when I am not acquainted with him myself; how can you be so teasing?' 'I honour your circumspection. A fortnight's acquaintance is certainly very little. One cannot know what a man really is by the end of a fortnight. But if we do not venture somebody else will; and after all, Mrs Long and her nieces must stand their chance; and, therefore, as she will think it an act of kindness, if you decline the office, I will take it on myself.'
- 20 The girls stared at their father. Mrs Bennet said only, 'Nonsense, nonsense!'
- 'What can be the meaning of that emphatic exclamation?' cried he. 'Do you consider the forms of introduction, and the stress that is laid on them, as nonsense? I cannot quite agree with you there. What say you, Mary? For you are a young lady of deep reflection, I know, and read great books and make extracts.'
- Mary wished to say something sensible, but knew not how.
- 25 'While Mary is adjusting her ideas,' he continued, 'let us return to Mr Bingley.'
- 'I am sick of Mr Bingley,' cried his wife.
- 'I am sorry to hear that; but why did not you tell me that before? If I had known as much this morning I certainly would not have called on him. It is very unlucky; but as I have actually paid the visit, we cannot escape the acquaintance now.'
- 30 The astonishment of the ladies was just what he wished; that of Mrs Bennet perhaps surpassing the rest; though, when the first tumult of joy was over, she began to declare that it was what she had expected all the while.
- 'How good it was in you, my dear Mr Bennet! But I knew I should persuade you at last. I was sure you loved your girls too well to neglect such an acquaintance. Well, how pleased I am! and it is such a good joke, too, that you should have gone this morning and never said a word about it till now.'
- 35 'Now, Kitty, you may cough as much as you choose,' said Mr Bennet; and, as he spoke, he left the room, fatigued with the raptures of his wife.

'What an excellent father you have, girls!' said she, when the door was shut. 'I do not know how you will ever make him amends for his kindness; or me, either, for that matter. At our time of life it is not so pleasant, I can tell you, to be making new acquaintances every day; but for your sakes, we would do anything. Lydia, 40 my love, though you are the youngest, I dare say Mr Bingley will dance with you at the next ball.'

(Austen 8–12)

## ■ EE Links

The topic of how a writer uses language to create particular kinds of characters can form an interesting investigation for an extended essay. You could write about this novel from the perspective of trying to answer the question: 'How does the author's use of language relate to the formation of character traits in the characters and narrator of *Pride and Prejudice*?' A similar question could, of course, be asked about any other novel.

We find out, from this conversation, that Mr Bennet is a person who enjoys creating a ruckus. In his speeches beginning on lines 7, 19, and 22, we see that Mr Bennet speaks to his wife as if she knows that he already made the visit to Mr Bingley. We know, however, that Mrs Bingley does not know, so we see that Mr Bennet is toying with her understanding. He waits until his wife declares that she wants nothing to do with Mr Bingley (line 35) before he reveals that he has made the acquaintance she desired. He obviously set her up for this trap: he knew that if he provoked her long enough, she would get fed up and make some such foolish declaration. We see, from the way that Mr Bennet uses his language to manipulate his wife, that he understands his wife's mind perfectly, and he plays with her for his own amusement. He is not downright cruel, but only because she is too foolish to understand what he is doing. Austen has shown us that Mr Bennet is a man who does not take his relationship with his wife very seriously, and that he resorts to amusing himself at her expense.

At the same time, Austen generates some sympathy for Mr Bennet's position by showing us, through Mrs Bennet's speech, how very foolish a person she is. For one thing, she shows by her responses to her husband's remarks that she does not understand what he is getting at. When he tells her, at line 22, that she will have had a fortnight's acquaintance with Mr Bingley by the time of the dance, Mrs Bennet does not pick up on the hint – instead she just declares 'Nonsense!' It is only nonsense to her because she does not understand her husband. We see right away that Mrs Bennet is not a person of very great intelligence. We also see, from her dramatic turnaround between lines 35 and 42, that Mrs Bennet is not someone who is capable of holding any position on a principle. Instead, she changes her mind in a moment. At line 35, she declares that she is sick of Mr Bingley, but on line 42, she is completely overjoyed at the prospect of knowing him. She herself does not recognize the complete turnaround she has made in her position. Austen has shown us that Mrs Bennet only means what she says in the very moment that she says it. We cannot trust her to tell us anything that truly means something to her in a meaningful way.

One final example of characterization that we can get from this scene is the characterization of the narrator of this novel. It requires careful reading to pick it up, but the narrator of this novel is herself extremely witty and not a little sarcastic – a bit like Mr Bennet. We get a hint, here, of what she is like when she comments, at line 33, about Mary that: 'Mary wished to say something sensible, but knew not how'. The narrator is telling us, subtly, that Mary, like her mother, does not have a mind which is capable of rapid processing or even of making sense. The narrator makes a further similar observation when she describes Mr Bennet's departure from the room at line 47, when she remarks that Mr Bennet is 'fatigued with the raptures of his wife.' We understand from this gently sarcastic comment that Mrs Bennet is tiresome; that her means of expressing her happiness is to ramble on and on, repeating herself and saying nothing of consequence. There is no substance in Mrs Bennet's discourse, and Mr Bennet cannot, therefore, conduct a meaningful conversation with her. The narrator reveals to us, through her

use of language, that she is on Mr Bennet’s side here, and that having to listen to a wife who can talk incessantly without saying anything significant makes for a less than successful marriage.

### Jane Austen

Jane Austen was born at the end of 1775 in a rural town in England, where her father was the rector of the local church. Hers was a family of readers, and Jane began writing in her childhood. She also participated in the family tradition of putting on plays for their friends and extended family members (Warren). She never married, and she did not herself ever travel out of England – the French Revolution was going on during much of her life – but she had rich exposure to what was going on in other parts of the world via her brothers. Henry was a Lieutenant in the Militia (Byrne 124) and two of her brothers, Francis and Charles, were in the British Navy (Byrne 4–5). Through her cousin Eliza, whose first marriage was to a French count who was guillotined in 1794 (‘Jane Austen’s Family Tree’), and who eventually married Jane’s brother Henry, Austen had knowledge of the French Revolution. Through her brother Edward, Austen had a connection to Lord Mansfield, who was the presiding judge on a famous trial in which the ruling was that escaped slaves could not be forcibly removed from England (Byrne 215). Austen thus had knowledge of the slave trade in the Caribbean. Due to all these connections, her novels make frequent and accurate reference to events that were going on in the larger world outside of her small town. Austen found it difficult to get her works published, and, indeed, had to pay for some of the publication costs herself. The total fee she earned from *Pride and Prejudice*, one of the most famous novels in English literature, was £110 (Byrne 282) or roughly £7,000 in today’s money (‘Inflation Rate’).

01\_03\_03

### ACTIVITY

#### *Their Eyes Were Watching God* by Zora Neale Hurston

Having seen how Jane Austen uses language as a means of characterizing both the narrator and two different characters from *Pride and Prejudice*, see if you can notice the way in which Zora Neale Hurston does the same thing in her novel, *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. Read the following passage and focus on the character of Janie. What are the prominent features of the way she uses language? What do those features suggest to you about her character and about how Hurston wants us to view her? When you have made your own conclusions, you can compare them to the notes on page XXX.

This scene appears at the end of the book, after Janie has finished telling her friend, Phoeby, the story of her life and several marriages, culminating with the story of her marriage to a man named Tea Cake. The marriage was a very happy one, but ended tragically.

Janie stirred her strong feet in the pan of water. The tiredness was gone so she dried them off on the towel.

‘Now, dat’s how everything wuz, Phoeby, jus’lak Ah told yuh. So Ah’m back home again and Ah’m satisfied tuh be hear. Ah done been tuh de horizon and back and now Ah kin

5 set heah in mah house and live by comparisons. Dis house ain’t so absent of things lak it used tuh be befo’ Tea Cake came along. It’s full uh thoughts, ‘specially dat bedroom.

Ah know all dem sitters-and-talkers gointuh worry they guts into fiddle strings till dey findout whut we been talkin’ ‘bout. Dat’s all right, Phoeby, tell ‘em. Dey gointuh make

‘miration ‘cause mah love didn’t work lak they love, if dey ever had any. Then you must

10 tell ‘em dat love ain’t somethin’ lak uh grindstone dat’s de same thing everywhere and do de same thing tuh everything it touch. Love is lak de sea. It’s uh movin’ thing, but still and all, it takes its shape from de shore it meets, and it’s different with every shore.

(Hurston 191)

## ■ TOK Links: Artist's choices

In her time, some prominent African-American figures criticized Hurston's choice to use the dialect transcription that we see in the passage above. Richard Wright denounced the choice, calling it a 'minstrel technique' ('Zora Neale Hurston'). He felt that she was deliberately trying to appeal to white audiences. An interesting question to pursue here is whether we can tell, from a novel or other artistic work, whether the artist was trying to appeal to a particular audience and, if so, whether the decisions made in order to appeal to that intended audience affects the value of the work to society at large. We could also question the nature of language use: how would that same passage appear to today's readers if the novel had been written by a white author?

### Zora Neale Hurston

Zora Neale Hurston was born in Alabama in 1891, the daughter of two former slaves. She did not have an easy life. Her mother died when she was only 13 (The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica). She was falsely accused of molesting a 10-year-old boy and she was the subject of more negative publicity for criticizing the Supreme Court decision which ordered the desegregation of schools. She was able, however, to attend first Howard University and then, after winning a scholarship, Barnard College where she earned a degree in Anthropology (The Editors of the Encyclopaedia Britannica). She was able to do research into oral histories in her home state, and she went to Haiti to study voodoo (History.com editors). She published two novels, a history from her research into folklore, and a memoir, but, despite being a recognized figure of the Harlem Renaissance, did not earn much money from her writing. She worked as a maid toward the end of her life (History.com editors) and she eventually died in poverty in a welfare home in 1960 ('Zora Neale Hurston').

### Words contribute to artistry

Although the language used in prose is not as compressed as it is in poetry, fiction writers nevertheless use many of the same techniques in their work, and so the language they use also has the effect of shaping stories into art – language which takes us, as Foster put it, beyond language. Here is an example from Argentinian writer Jorge Luis Borges' short story 'The Garden of Forking Paths':

I went up to my bedroom. Absurd though the gesture was, I closed and locked the door. I threw myself down on my narrow iron bed, and waited on my back. The never changing rooftops filled the window, and the hazy six o'clock sun hung in the sky. It seemed incredible that this day, a day without warnings or omens, might be that of my implacable death. In despite of my dead father, in despite of having been a child in one  
5 of the symmetrical gardens of Hai Feng, was I to die now? Then I reflected that all things happen, happen to one, precisely now. Century follows century, and things happen only in the present. There are countless men in the air, on land and at sea, and all that really happens happens to me ... The almost unbearable memory of Madden's long horseface put an end to these wandering thoughts. In the midst of my hatred and terror (now that it no longer matters to me to speak of terror, now that I have outwitted Richard Madden, now that  
10 my neck hankers for the hangman's noose), I knew that the fast-moving and doubtless happy soldier did not suspect that I possessed the Secret – the name of the exact site of the new British artillery park on the Ancre. A bird streaked across the misty sky and, absently, I turned it into an airplane and then that airplane into many in the skies of France, shattering the artillery park under a rain of bombs. If only my mouth, before it should be silenced by a bullet, could shout this name in such a way that it could be heard in Germany ... My voice,  
15 my human voice, was weak. How could it reach the ear of the Chief? The ear of that sick and hateful man who knew nothing of Runeberg or of me except that we were in Staffordshire. A man who, sitting in his arid Berlin office, leafed infinitely through newspapers, looking in vain for news from us. I said aloud, 'I must flee.'

(Borges 120)

This is a much longer passage than ‘blessing the boats’ is; it has 350 words and 23 full lines, but includes fewer literary elements. A first reading reveals these literary elements at work:

■ Table 1.3.2

Element	Lines	Explanation
Symbol of a locked door	1–2	A locked door is a classic symbol of entrapment or a barrier keeping someone from a desired goal. In this case, the narrator locks the door himself, suggesting that he is trying to keep some danger outside. The fact that he is trapped inside out of this fear means that his situation is bad – escape is not likely.
Symbol of a window	3	A window is normally a symbol of freedom and escape, especially when the window is open, but here rooftops fill the window, blocking his way. This image increases the sense of entrapment.
Symbol of the Sun	3	The Sun is normally a symbol of life, but here the Sun is hazy and it is six o’clock – evening draws near. The suggestion, then, is that life is coming to an end – or at least the potential for death is present.
Reference to a garden	6	Any reference to a garden could be an allusion to the Biblical Garden of Eden – a paradise of immortality. That reference makes sense in this context, as the garden is a memory contrasted to the narrator’s present situation. The reference to Hai Feng and symmetry, however, suggests that this garden is one of Eastern origin. The narrator’s name, as we learned in the story’s introduction, is Dr Yu Tsun. The element of symmetry suggests a certain rightness which, as we see, the narrator has been counting on to keep him safe.
<b>Irony</b>	6	Benjamin Lytal, writing for <i>The New York Sun</i> , points out the contradiction inherent in the idea that just because his father died and he had an association with a particular place, the narrator should somehow be immortal (Lytal). This irrational belief could be the kind of flaw that leads to <b>tragedy</b> in the traditional Aristotelian sense.
Symbol of a bird	16	A bird, especially a flying bird, is another traditional symbol of freedom. This bird has replaced the rooftops that the narrator was noticing before.
Contrast	1–3 versus 6	The change in focus from rooftops to bird suggests that there is now potentially a way out of the trap in which our narrator finds himself.
Allusion to the title	Title	This passage reflects the idea in the title of a labyrinth, or a path with many choices. In this one paragraph we are given two possible outcomes for this narrator: death and escape.

We could examine the passage more deeply and consider the effects of such elements – the allusions to the First World War and the references to the passing of time surely also contribute important ideas to any interpretation of this passage. The density of literary strategies and the compression of language is not as striking as it is in Clifton’s poem (there we found approximately 0.26 strategies per word; here we have found 0.03, about nine times fewer), but those strategies have a definite role here, and the passage conveys meaning in a much more artistic way than a bald statement about the fear of the soldier would do.

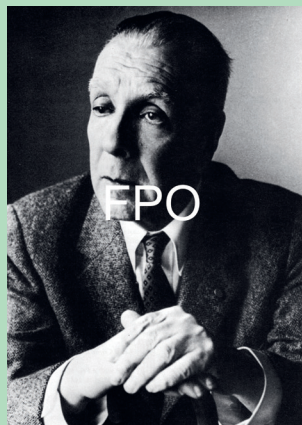
A final thing to remember about this excerpt is that it has been translated from the original Spanish, which means that the language use here is at least very strongly influenced by the work of the translator, Andrew Hurley. You are reading a work which has been **transformed** from its original form, and that transformation will necessarily have affected our understanding of the work.

## Jorge Luis Borges

Jorge Luis Borges was born in Argentina in 1899. His parents were well-to-do and his father had an enormous library, and Borges himself called the library the major event of his life ('Jorge Luis Borges'). His English-speaking grandmother lived with the family when Borges was young and he read English before he read Spanish. Thus began a lifetime of developing erudition. He became famous for his wide-ranging knowledge of the literature of the world; he regularly drew on literary references to works in English, French, Spanish and German ('Jorge Luis Borges'). Borges said that:

*From the time I was a boy, when blindness came to him [his father] it was tacitly understood that I had to fulfill the literary destiny that circumstances had denied my father. This was something that was taken for granted (and such things are far more important than things that are merely said) ... I was expected to be a writer.*

(Reid 143)



Ironically, Borges himself would eventually go blind and have to dictate his work to others who could set it down for him ('Jorge Luis Borges Biography'). Borges became famous worldwide for breaking new ground in fiction, moving away from realism and inspiring a generation of new writers. His style was so innovative that a new name had to be created for it: 'Borgesian' ('Jorge Luis Borges').

## Language used to create atmosphere

Language can be used to create atmosphere in poetry as well as in prose fiction; however, in prose, where the author has the freedom to write a kind of description that a poet does not have the space to write, we more often find passages dedicated to evoking the scene and the mood. Canadian author Margaret Atwood wrote a very famous novel, *The Handmaid's Tale*, in which she imagines a dystopian future where many women are unable to bear children and so those who are fertile are effectively enslaved as child-bearing 'handmaidens' to the wealthy men who can afford to keep one in his house to bear a child on behalf of his wife. The following passage is a description of the room which the narrator, Offred ('of Fred' – her master), has been given to live in.

A chair, a table, a lamp. Above, on the white ceiling, a relief ornament in the shape of a wreath, and in the center of it a blank space, plastered over, like the place in a face where the eye has been taken out. There must have been a chandelier, once. They've removed anything you could tie a rope to.

A window, two white curtains. Under the window, a window seat with a little cushion. When the window  
5 is partly open—it only opens partly—the air can come in and make the curtains move. I can sit in the chair, or on the window seat, hands folded, and watch this. Sunlight comes in through the window too, and falls on the floor, which is made of wood, in narrow strips, highly polished. I can smell the polish. There's a rug on the floor, oval, of braided rags. This is the kind of touch they like: folk art, archaic, made by women, in their spare time, from things that have no further use. A return to traditional values. Waste not want not. I am not  
10 being wasted. Why do I want?

On the wall above the chair, a picture, framed but with no glass: a print of flowers, blue irises, watercolor. Flowers are still allowed. Does each of us have the same print, the same chair, the same white curtains, I wonder? Government issue?

Think of it as being in the army, said Aunt Lydia.

(Atwood)



The description in this passage is sparse. It contains a good many phrases and fragments instead of complete sentences, as in lines 1–3 and 5. This kind of description, which is itself incomplete, gives us the sense that the room itself is incomplete. The stark description mimics the starkness of the sparsely furnished room. We are told in line 8 that there is sunlight, but that sunlight falls on the floor, rather than on the speaker. We are also told that ‘they’ have chosen the furnishings and that those choices consist of old objects recycled from useless things. Since this is the room in which the narrator is going to live, we get the sense that she, too, is useless, or that she is being recycled. The final line gives us a clear understanding of the life that Offred is going to lead: she is not going to be comfortable or happy; the events are not even about her personal comfort or happiness. She is a member of an army fighting a war against the barrenness of the upper classes and against the gradual extermination of the human race. She, like a soldier, is a tool and a tool does not need luxurious surroundings.

It is tempting sometimes to skim through what appear to be long passages of nothing but description, but the description is an important tool available to the fiction writer, and a careful reading will reward the careful reader!

### Margaret Atwood

Margaret Atwood was born in 1939 in Ottawa, Canada. She has had a long career as a prolific writer, with more than 40 works to her name in a wide variety of genres, including poetry, novels, plays, non-fiction and a series of graphic novels with fellow Canadian Johnny Christmas (‘Biography’). She published her first book in 1961 but did not become widely known until the publication of *The Handmaid’s Tale* in 1985. In the early days, she took buses to various locations to give readings and sell books (Biography.com editors). She won the Booker Prize for *The Blind Assassin*, a story that contains a second story embedded in it, and yet another story embedded into that. In recent years, Atwood’s work has garnered renewed attention due to the highly successful television **adaptation** of *The Handmaid’s Tale*.

## Language use in literary non-fiction

Language use in non-fiction differs very little from language use in realistic prose fiction. The difference between prose fiction and non-fiction is that the events related in prose never happened; they are made up, or significant portions of them are made up. You can review these literary forms in Chapter 1.1 on pages XX–XX. Non-fiction recounts events that *did* happen. Because non-fiction must necessarily be realistic, non-fiction writers cannot use language to create unrealistic or fantastic situations or settings; however, they can use language to help readers understand characters, and they can use language that incorporates artistic elements into the work.

### ACTIVITY

#### ‘Crimes Against Dog’ by Alice Walker

In this essay, American writer Alice Walker tells the story of her adoption of a Labrador retriever and of the relationship that developed between them. Read the extract and, drawing on what you have learned about the ways in which language functions in fictional works, see if you can identify language which characterizes, language which contributes to the work as an art form, and language which sets a tone. When you have made your own observations, you can look at the notes on page XXX and compare your response to those.

My first thoughts are always about enslavement on entering a place where animals are bred. Force. Captivity. I looked at the black and the chocolate Labs who were Marley’s parents and felt sad for them. They looked healthy enough, but who knew whether, left to themselves, they would choose to have litter after litter of offspring? I wondered how  
 5 painful it was to part with each litter. I spoke to both parents, let them sniff my hand. Take in the quality of my being. I asked permission to look at their young. The mother moved a little away from her brood, all crawling over her blindly feeling for a teat; the father actually looked rather proud. My friend joked about offering him a cigar.

I was proud of myself, too, standing there preparing to choose. In the old days of up to  
 10 several months before, if I were going to choose an animal from a litter I would have  
 been drawn to the one that seemed the most bumbling, the most clueless, the most  
 un-amused. I saw a couple like that. But on this day, that old switch was not thrown: I  
 realized I was sick of my attraction to the confused. My eyes moved on. They all looked  
 15 much alike, to tell the truth. From a chocolate mother and a black father there were  
 twelve puppies, six chocolate, six black. I'll never get over this. Why were there none  
 with spots?

I asked the woman selling them, whom I tried not to have Slave Trader thoughts about.  
 She shrugged. They never spot, she said. That's the nature of the purebred Lab. Well, I  
 thought. Mother. Once again doing it just any old way you like. Mother is my favorite  
 20 name for Nature, God, All-ness.

I settled on a frisky black puppy who seemed to know where she was going – toward a  
 plump middle teat! – and was small enough to fit into my hand. I sometimes wish I had  
 chosen a chocolate puppy; in the Northern California summers the dust wouldn't show as  
 25 much, but I think about this mostly when Marley rolls in the dirt in an effort to get cool.

After seven weeks I returned alone to pick her up, bereft that my friend had already  
 gone on the road. It didn't feel right to pay money for a living being; I would have  
 been happier working out some sort of exchange. I paid, though, and put Marley in my  
 colorful African market basket before stroking the faces of her wistful-looking parents  
 30 one last time. In the car, I placed the basket in the front seat next to me. I put on Bob  
 Marley's *Exodus* CD and baby Marley and I sped away from Babylon.

(Walker 81–83)

### Alice Walker

Alice Walker is probably best known for her novel *The Color Purple*, for which she won both the Pulitzer Prize and the National Book Award, but she has also published poetry, essays and full-length non-fiction. She was born in 1944 as the youngest daughter of poor share-croppers in Georgia. When she was 8 years old, she was accidentally shot in the eye when her brothers were playing with a BB gun. The injury, which she writes about in an essay called 'Beauty: When the Other Dancer is the Self', led to extreme self-consciousness and extreme shyness ('Alice Walker'). She nevertheless excelled in school, graduating as the valedictorian of her high school class, and went to Spellman College in Atlanta, Georgia, on a scholarship. She eventually moved to Sarah Lawrence College in New York, and while in New York she became active in the Civil Rights Movement ('Alice Walker'). She eventually met and married another activist, Jewish lawyer Melvyn Leventhal. They became the first legally married interracial couple in Mississippi. She has continued her activism to the present day, and many of her published works have arisen from that work.

## Function of language in graphic novels

Language is used for still a different purpose in graphic works. Graphic novels or non-fiction works use language in conjunction with images to convey meaning. Often the images convey more than the words do directly, and the words either support or help to interpret the images. The following image is an early page from Alison Bechdel's autobiographical work *Fun Home*. The focus of this chapter is on her father, and it is called 'Old Father, Old Artificer'. The word 'artificer' relates to the word 'art', and can be taken at least two ways. The chapter is about how Bechdel's father worked for years renovating an old Victorian house, turning it into a showpiece. The house made people think that the family was rich, which they were not. The beauty of the house was the result of her father's work, planning and careful reusing of materials, and its appearance created an artificial impression. The house becomes a symbol for her father and their family in general; appearances were deceptive, and the word 'artificer' means just that – a person who deceives.

The words in the following image help us to understand Bechdel's point about her father, but only because they support the images.

The top row of pictures shows Alison and her father talking about the wallpaper for her room. She does not want flowered paper, but her father clearly does not care. The crassness of his response to his young daughter – 'tough titty' – is a bit shocking, but it shows the real father that others do not see. The words above the first frame are allusions to myths about a father whose grandiose dream of flying led to the death of his son, and who also built a magnificent labyrinth that housed a monster who ate young men and women. The allusions comment indirectly on the nature of the man in the story, and they support the message we get from the image below them.

The center panel has very few words. The image shows the father at his actual job, but the book that the father is holding shows that he isn't really doing his job: he's reading about architecture, his hobby and his passion. The father only appears to be a teacher.

The image in the bottom panel is a mythological allusion. The image of the man holding the huge beam on his bare shoulders is reminiscent of the image of Atlas carrying the world on his shoulders.

The image suggests that this is how Bechdel's father sees himself and his labour – fixing up the house is all the world to him, and the value of the house outweighs the value of his family. For this panel, too, words are used minimally, and here they help us interpret the idea that the image the father has of himself and his work is not what the family experiences. They see his commitment to the house not as a noble effort equivalent to holding up the world, but rather as a deeply self-indulgent passion, one which is even not very healthy.

The words in a graphic work, then, are used differently from the way they are used in all other types of literary works, because in this type of work the images are primary and the words help us to understand how the author wishes us to interpret the images.

01\_03\_05

■ *Fun Home*, p.XX, by Alison Bechdel



### Alison Bechdel

Alison Bechdel came to international attention when her graphic novel, the story of her father's extremely troubled life and its effect on the family, was published in the UK upon making it to the *New York Times*' bestseller list (Burkeman). Bechdel was not expecting that level of acclaim or attention; she was accustomed to a small subcultural audience for her comic strip, *Dykes to Look Out For*, and was expecting the same audience for her graphic novel (Burkeman). Despite the expectations, the graphic novel was a huge hit and became a Broadway musical which won five Tony Awards (Cooke). Bechdel says that she learned a lot about her family from writing *Fun Home* and from watching it being transformed into a musical. She has a new perspective now on her childhood experiences:

*In some ways, it [the new information] would have made it a less interesting book. Not knowing everything is sometimes a good thing in a memoir: a mystery or quest is better than laying out all the facts ...*

(Cooke)

Following the publication of *Fun Home*, Bechdel went on to win a MacArthur Genius Grant and write a second memoir, this one about her mother, who died shortly before the musical version of *Fun Home* opened (Cooke).



## CONCEPT CONNECTION

## IDENTITY

The graphic novel *Fun Home* reveals a great deal about author Alison Bechdel's identity; however, she herself reminds us that the book cannot be seen as being a straight line to the real her. The book is a representation of her memories of her family and, as noted above, the writing of the book led her to view her memories differently. The impression that we get of an author from any literary work is only the impression which that particular work implies. An author's identity is more than any one work can convey and, even when a work is non-fiction, we cannot consider it to be one hundred per cent representational.

## Function of language in drama

Language use in drama is quite strikingly different in one major way from the way language is used in poetry and fiction or non-fiction prose: the language of drama is entirely comprised of dialogue. While language in drama does all the things that language does in the other literary forms we have investigated, the fact that the language is all dialogue means that not only are characters revealed for who they are, but the dialogue also has to drive the plot. This is quite different from a narrative in which the narrator can keep the reader apprised of where the story is going.

The following excerpt from Act 1, Scene 3 of August Wilson's play, *Fences*, demonstrates how language is used in drama.

Troy: Your mama told me you done got recruited by a college football team? Is that right?

Cory: Yeah, coach Zellman say the recruiter gonna be coming by to talk to you. Get you to sign the permission papers.

Troy: I thought you supposed to be working down at there at the A&P. Ain't you supposed to be working  
5 down there after school?

Cory: Mr Stawicki say he gonna hold my job for me until after the football season. Say starting next week I can work weekends.

Troy: I thought we had an understanding about this football stuff? You supposed to keep up with your chores and hold that job down at the A&P. Ain't been around here all Saturday. Ain't none of your chores  
10 done ... now you telling me you done quit your job.

Cory: I'm gonna be working weekends.

Troy: You damn right you are! And ain't no need for nobody coming around here to talk to me about signing for nothing.

Cory: Hey Pop ... you can't do that. He coming all the way from North Carolina.

15 Troy: I don't care where he coming from. The white man ain't gonna let you nowhere with that football noway. You go on and get your book-learning so you can work yourself up in that A&P or learn how to fix cars or build houses or something, get you a trade. That way you have something can't nobody take away from you. You go on and learn how to put your hands to some good use. Besides hauling people's garbage.

Cory: I get good grades, Pop. That's why the recruiter wants to talk with you. You got to keep up your  
20 grades to get recruited. This way I'll be going to college. I'll get a chance.

Troy: First you gonna get your butt down there to the A&P and get your job back.

(Wilson 37–39)

One obvious way that language is used in this passage is that it is spelled in such a way as to suggest a particular dialect. We saw this technique earlier in this chapter in the excerpt from *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. In this case, the function is slightly different, because this is a playscript, and the words are meant to be spoken. The nonstandard **orthography** provides actors with information about where the characters are from and how they should sound on stage.

Another important feature of the way language is used here is that it gives us a good sense of what kind of person Troy is. He is a man who expects to be the boss in his family, and who is used to giving commands. His language is characterized by very strong declarative statements – the kind of statement that does not allow for any arguing back. His first few speeches suggest that he is asking questions, but he is actually phrasing his opinions about the way things are – or ought to be – as questions. When he asks, at lines 5–6, for example, ‘Ain’t you supposed to be working down there after school?’ we know that he really means: ‘You are supposed to be working down there after school’. He does not expect Cory to say no, and, in fact, if Cory were to say no, we would expect Troy to react very badly. By line 10, Troy has given up the pretence of questioning and is issuing his orders.

The speech beginning at line 15 gives us insight into Troy’s belief system; he wants better for his son than what he has himself (Troy works hauling garbage), but he does not believe that education alone will achieve that. He believes in trades – in working with one’s hands – and that is what he wants for his son. Working up to a management job at the A&P would be, for Troy, success enough for Cory. We also see that Troy has learned, over the course of his life, not to trust white men. He associates the football recruiter with the power structure of white culture, and that alone is reason enough to keep his son away from that world.

The last line of this excerpt is a good example of how the dialogue moves the action. Troy’s command to his son to go and get his job back sets up a conflict in which one or the other of the two characters is going to lose. Cory is either going to try to get his job back or he is not. If he does, he will be sacrificing his dream of going to college to play football. If he does not, he will be defying his father and drawing his anger. The words, phrased as an absolute command without any options, have created a situation in which either Troy has to back down – which seems unlikely given what we have learned of him from this exchange – or the relationship is going to be irrevocably damaged. This function of moving the action on is integral to the way drama works, and it is a use of language that does not occur in the same form in the other types of literature we have studied in this chapter.

### August Wilson

August Wilson was born in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, in 1945. His mother was a cleaner and his father was a baker, though his father was not around much during Wilson’s childhood. The family was not well-to-do (they lived in a two-room flat without hot water), and Wilson was picked on at school (‘August Wilson: the Ground on Which I Stand’). He dropped out of school but taught himself thereafter by reading books in the public library. He began his writing career as a poet and eventually won a fellowship to the Minnesota Playwrights’ Center which led to his being accepted into the National Playwrights Conference in Connecticut. (‘August Wilson: the Ground on Which I Stand’). His experience in Connecticut was the one which secured his future as a playwright. While there, he met famed director Lloyd Richards, a man who was especially influential in African-American theatre. Richards became a father figure to Wilson and they worked together from then on (‘August Wilson: the Ground on Which I Stand’). Wilson’s great achievement was a 10-play cycle, each one depicting one decade in the twentieth century. His work was powerfully influenced by the histories and voices of the people in his childhood neighbourhood and by his love for Blues music (‘August Wilson: the Ground on Which I Stand’). A 2016 movie version of *Fences*, perhaps his most famous play, starring Denzel Washington and Viola Davis brought renewed attention to Wilson and his career.



## CONCEPT CONNECTION

## TRANSFORMATION

The recent film version of August Wilson's play, *Fences*, gives you a wonderful opportunity to consider what the transformation of a work from one form to another does to the original. This question always exists for a playscript: the play on the page is not the same as on-stage in a theatre. A film is also not the same thing as a play – either in its written form or in its performed form. If you have the opportunity to see the film, read the play first and then evaluate how well you think the film represents the play, and what you gained from seeing the film that you did not get from reading the work, or what was lost.

## Conclusion

We have seen in this chapter that language is used in similar ways in all four literary forms as the mechanism for making literature into art. We have also seen that anywhere there are characters (including narrators or speakers with a stake in the content of the poem) the language that the author gives them to speak reveals to the reader the kind of person that character is. We have also seen, however, that there are differences in the ways in which language is used in the four forms, and that those differences contribute to the fundamental differences among the forms.

## Works cited

- 'Alice Walker.' *Biography.com*. A&E Networks Television, 16 Jan. 2019. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [www.biography.com/people/alice-walker-9521939](http://www.biography.com/people/alice-walker-9521939).
- Atwood, M. 'Excerpt from *The Handmaid's Tale* (TV Tie-in Edition).' *Penguin Random House Canada*. Penguin Random House, n.d. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/6125/the-handmaids-tale-tv-tie-in-edition-by-margaret-atwood/9780735253308/excerpt](http://www.penguinrandomhouse.ca/books/6125/the-handmaids-tale-tv-tie-in-edition-by-margaret-atwood/9780735253308/excerpt).
- 'August Wilson: the Ground on Which I Stand.' PBS. Public Broadcasting Service, 28 Jan. 2015. Web. 5 Feb. 2019. [www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-august-wilsonbiography-and-career-timeline/3683](http://www.pbs.org/wnet/americanmasters/august-wilson-the-ground-on-which-i-stand-august-wilsonbiography-and-career-timeline/3683).
- Austen, J. *The Annotated Pride and Prejudice*. Ed. David M. Shapard. Anchor Books: New York, 2012.
- 'Ballad Examples and Definition.' *Literary Devices*. N.p., 31 Oct. 2015. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.literarydevices.com/ballad](http://www.literarydevices.com/ballad).
- 'Biography.' *Margaret Atwood*. Margaret Atwood, n.d. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [margaretatwood.ca/biography](http://margaretatwood.ca/biography).
- Biography.com editors. 'Margaret Atwood.' *Biography.com*. A&E Networks Television, 27 Feb. 2018. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [www.biography.com/people/margaret-atwood-9191928](http://www.biography.com/people/margaret-atwood-9191928).
- Booth, WC. *The Rhetoric of Fiction*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Pr., 2008.
- Borges, JL. *Collected Fictions*. Trans. Andrew Hurley. New York: Penguin Books, 1999.
- Brathwaite, K. 'Bread.' *PoemHunter.com*. PoemHunter, 21 Sept. 2017. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.poemhunter.com/poem/bread-20](http://www.poemhunter.com/poem/bread-20).
- Browning, R. 'My Last Duchess.' *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 3 Feb. 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43768/my-last-duchess](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/43768/my-last-duchess).
- 'Bruce Snider.' *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/bruce-snider](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/bruce-snider).
- Burkeman, O. 'Interview: Alison Bechdel on Her Graphic Novel Family Memoir, *Fun Home*.' *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 16 Oct. 2006. Web. 5 Feb. 2019. [www.theguardian.com/books/2006/oct/16/biography.oliverburkeman](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2006/oct/16/biography.oliverburkeman).
- 'Carol Ann Duffy – Literature.' *Literature*. British Council, 1 Jan. 1970. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/carol-ann-duffy>.
- Chaucer, G. 'To Rosemounde: A Balade by Geoffrey Chaucer.' *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45694/to-rosemounde-a-balade](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/45694/to-rosemounde-a-balade).



- Cooke, R. 'Fun Home Creator Alison Bechdel on Turning a Tragic Childhood into a Hit Musical.' *The Guardian*. Guardian News and Media, 5 Nov. 2017. Web. 5 Feb. 2019. [www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/05/alison-bechdel-interview-cartoonist-fun-home](http://www.theguardian.com/books/2017/nov/05/alison-bechdel-interview-cartoonist-fun-home).
- Duffy, CA. *Selected Poems*. London: Penguin Books, 2009.
- Foster, TC. *How to Read Poetry like a Professor: a Quippy and Sonorous Guide to Verse*. New York, NY: HarperLuxe, an imprint of HarperCollins Publishers, 2018.
- 'Geoffrey Chaucer.' *Biography.com*. A&E Networks Television, 16 Jan. 2019. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.biography.com/people/geoffrey-chaucer-9245691](http://www.biography.com/people/geoffrey-chaucer-9245691).
- 'Geoffrey Chaucer – Poet.' *Poets.org*. Academy of American Poets, 27 July 2015. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/geoffrey-chaucer](http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/geoffrey-chaucer).
- History.com Editors. 'Zora Neale Hurston Is Born.' *History.com*. A&E Television Networks, 13 Nov. 2009. Web. 3 Feb. 2019. [www.history.com/this-day-in-history/zora-neale-hurston-is-born](http://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/zora-neale-hurston-is-born).
- Hurston, ZN. *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. New York: Perennial Classics, 1998.
- 'Inflation Rate between 1812-2019 | UK Inflation Calculator.' \$2 in 1890 → 2018 | *Inflation Calculator*. Official Data: Economy, Inflation, and More, n.d. Web. 18 Feb. 2019. [www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1812?amount=100](http://www.in2013dollars.com/uk/inflation/1812?amount=100).
- 'Jane Austen's Family Tree.' *The Genealogy Corner*. N.p., 29 Mar. 2014. Web. 18 Feb. 2019. <https://thegenealogycorner.wordpress.com/2014/03/29/jane-austens-family-tree>.
- 'Jorge Luis Borges.' *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/jorge-luis-borges](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/jorge-luis-borges).
- 'Jorge Luis Borges Biography.' *Famous Authors*. FamousAuthors.org, n.d. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [www.famousauthors.org/jorge-luis-borges](http://www.famousauthors.org/jorge-luis-borges).
- 'Kamau Brathwaite.' *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 3 Feb. 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/kamau-brathwaite](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/kamau-brathwaite).
- Kline, AS. 'Geoffrey Chaucer.' *Poetry in Translation*. Poetry in Translation, 2008. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/ChaucerPoems.php#anchor\\_Toc186960472](http://www.poetryintranslation.com/PITBR/English/ChaucerPoems.php#anchor_Toc186960472).
- 'Lucille Clifton.' *Amazon*. Amazon, n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.amazon.com/Lucille-Clifton/e/B000APA7YO/ref=as\\_li\\_ss\\_tl?qid=1500918518&sr=1-2-ent&linkCode=sl2&tag=rachzuck-20&linkId=eb279a2433fa75330a33ffb968ed753c](http://www.amazon.com/Lucille-Clifton/e/B000APA7YO/ref=as_li_ss_tl?qid=1500918518&sr=1-2-ent&linkCode=sl2&tag=rachzuck-20&linkId=eb279a2433fa75330a33ffb968ed753c).
- 'Lucille Clifton, 1936–2010: Award-Winning Poet Was First African-American Laureate of Maryland.' VOA. VOA, 17 Apr. 2010. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. <https://learningenglish.voanews.com/a/article-lucille-clifton-1936-2010-the-award-winning-poet-was-the-first-african-american-poet-laureate-of-maryland-91243924/115570.html>.
- 'Lucille Clifton – Poet.' *Poets.org*. Academy of American Poets, 26 June 2018. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/lucille-clifton](http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/lucille-clifton).
- Lytal, B. 'Jorge Luis Borges's Pendulum.' *The New York Sun*. Two SL LLC, 27 June 2007. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [www.nysun.com/arts/jorge-luis-borgess-pendulum/57432](http://www.nysun.com/arts/jorge-luis-borgess-pendulum/57432).
- Moody, JK. 'Lucille Clifton.' *Modern American Poetry*. University of Illinois, n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a\\_f/clifton/about.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/a_f/clifton/about.htm).
- Mullan, J. *What Matters in Jane Austen?: Twenty Crucial Puzzles Solved*. New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2014.
- Oxford Reference. 'Mapamounde, Mappemounde, ' *Oxford Companion to Chaucer*. Oxford University Press, 27 Sept. 2013. Web. 3 Feb. 2019. [www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198117650.001.0001/acref-9780198117650-e-1126](http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780198117650.001.0001/acref-9780198117650-e-1126).
- 'Philippians 4:7.' *BibleHub*. Bible Hub, n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. <https://biblehub.com/philippians/4-7.htm>.
- Reid, A. 'Jorge Luis Borges: Mapmaker of Imaginary Worlds.' *The Wilson Quarterly* 10.5 (1986): 142–147. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [www.jstor.org/stable/40257111](http://www.jstor.org/stable/40257111).
- Rimmon-Kenan, S. 'Doubles and Counterparts: Patterns of Interchangeability in Borges "The Garden of Forking Paths."' *Critical Inquiry* 6.4 (1980): 639–647. Web.
- 'Robert Browning – Poet.' *Poets.org*. Academy of American Poets, 1 Apr. 2014. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/robert-browning](http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/robert-browning).
- Ruud, J. 'Jay Ruud Biography.' *Jay Ruud*. Jay Ruud, 2014. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. <http://jayruud.com/jay-ruud-biography>.

- Ruud, J. 'Chaucer's "To Rosemounde."' *YouTube*. YouTube, 17 Nov. 2015. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQZvw-YcmC0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQZvw-YcmC0).
- Shakespeare, W. 'Sonnet 116.' *Folger Digital Texts*. Folger Shakespeare Library, n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Son&loc=Son-116](http://www.folgerdigitaltexts.org/?chapter=5&play=Son&loc=Son-116).
- Snider, B. 'Devotions by Bruce Snider.' *Poetry Foundation*. Poetry Foundation, n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. [www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/56104/devotions](http://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/56104/devotions).
- Snider, B. 'Bruce Snider.' *Bruce Snider - About*. Bruce Snider, n.d. Web. 2 Feb. 2019. <http://brucesnider.com/about>.
- Straus, P. 'Carol Ann Duffy | Poet.' *Scottish Poetry Library*. Scottish Poetry Library, n.d. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poet/carol-ann-duffy](http://www.scottishpoetrylibrary.org.uk/poet/carol-ann-duffy).
- The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. 'List of Poets Laureate of Britain.' *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 9 Sept. 2014. Web. 4 Feb. 2019. [www.britannica.com/topic/list-of-poets-laureate-of-Britain-1789231](http://www.britannica.com/topic/list-of-poets-laureate-of-Britain-1789231).
- The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. 'Kamau Brathwaite.' *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 7 May 2018. Web. 3 Feb. 2019. [www.britannica.com/biography/Kamau-Brathwaite](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Kamau-Brathwaite).
- The Editors of Encyclopædia Britannica. 'Zora Neale Hurston.' *Encyclopædia Britannica*. Encyclopædia Britannica, inc., 24 Jan. 2019. Web. 3 Feb. 2019. [www.britannica.com/biography/Zora-Neale-Hurston](http://www.britannica.com/biography/Zora-Neale-Hurston).
- Walker, A. *We Are the Ones We Have Been Waiting for: Inner Light in a Time of Darkness: Meditations*. New York: New Press, 2007.
- Warren, R. 'Jane Austen Biography.' *Life and Works of English Author Jane Austen*. JaneAusten.org, 16 Apr. 2018. Web. 3 Feb. 2019. [www.janeausten.org/jane-austen-biography.asp](http://www.janeausten.org/jane-austen-biography.asp).
- Wilson, A. *Fences. A Play (in Two Acts)*. New York: New American Library, 1986.
- 'Writers of the Caribbean – Kamau Brathwaite.' *Writers of the Caribbean*. East Carolina University, n.d. Web. 3 Feb. 2019. <http://core.ecu.edu/engl/deenas/caribbean/brathwaite.htm>.
- 'Zora Neale Hurston.' *Biography.com*. A&E Networks Television, 14 May 2018. Web. 3 Feb. 2019. [www.biography.com/people/zora-neale-hurston-9347659](http://www.biography.com/people/zora-neale-hurston-9347659).

# 1.4

## How does the structure or style of a literary text affect meaning?

### OBJECTIVES OF CHAPTER

- Style refers to the kind of language that a writer uses, including such elements as sentence structure and vocabulary.
- Understanding an author's style can help us recognize important elements in all of his or her works.
- Being able to recognize style in local instances can help us see the relationship between form and function.
- Structure in poetry can refer to a variety of formal structures in addition to the kind of language used.
- Structure in poetry can also refer to such elements as stanza construction, meter and rhyme.
- Narrative can employ a variety of common structures that relate to cause and effect among events.
- Playwrights manipulate a standard dramatic structure to achieve particular effects.

## Introduction

We saw in the last chapter that language use varies in literary forms in terms of the function that the language plays – the effects that it has on a reader – but that there are many commonalities among all forms. Another way to consider the language use in a literary text is to consider the style that an author uses and the effects of that choice. In this chapter, we will look at some examples of different styles and then try to come to a general conclusion about how to identify various styles and what role style plays in the construction of meaning.

We will also be investigating the role that structure plays in contributing to the meaning of a text. Structure plays a particularly prominent role in the interpretation of poetry, but can also be helpful to a reader in trying to analyze other literary forms.

## What is style?

Style is a feature of language use which plays the same role in all literary forms. You will not find that poetry has one style and drama or non-fiction another; instead, you will find that very often a particular author will have a distinctive style. The ability to recognize a writer's style helps you as a reader to approach any new work by an author you have studied with some knowledge about how that author tends to write. You must be careful, of course, because any author can surprise you at any time, but it can be an advantage to be aware of the features that a particular author tends to favour.

Style relates to the sounds and rhythms of the language an author uses, as well as to the kind of vocabulary that appears in a particular text. If you read each of the following three texts, for instance, you will instantly recognize that they could not have been written by the same person.

Here is Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 116', which we examined in the last chapter:

Let me not to the marriage of true minds  
Admit impediments. Love is not love  
Which alters when it alteration finds  
Or bends with the remover to remove.  
5 O, no, it is an ever-fixed mark

That looks on tempests and is never shaken;  
 It is the star to every wand'ring bark,  
 Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.  
 Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks  
 10 Within his bending sickle's compass come;  
 Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,  
 But bears it out even to the edge of doom.  
 If this be error, and upon me proved,  
 I never writ, nor no man ever loved.

Here is a poem published in 1931 by American poet EE Cummings:

somewhere i have never travelled,gladly beyond  
 any experience,your eyes have their silence:  
 in your most frail gesture are things which enclose me,  
 or which i cannot touch because they are too near

5 your slightest look easily will unclothe me  
 though i have closed myself as fingers,  
 you open always petal by petal myself as Spring opens  
 (touching skilfully,mysteriously)her first rose

or if your wish be to close me,i and  
 10 my life will shut very beautifully,suddenly,  
 as when the heart of this flower imagines  
 the snow carefully everywhere descending;

nothing which we are to perceive in this world equals  
 the power of your intense fragility:whose texture  
 15 compels me with the colour of its countries,  
 rendering death and forever with each breathing

(i do not know what it is about you that closes  
 and opens;only something in me understands  
 the voice of your eyes is deeper than all roses)  
 20 nobody,not even the rain,has such small hands

## EE Cummings

EE Cummings was born Edward Estlin Cummings in Massachusetts in the United States in 1894. His poetry, which reflects elements of **romanticism** (primarily a profound respect for nature) and **modernism** (a deliberate effort to overturn conventions) also reflects the many varied experiences that he had over the course of his life. He graduated from Harvard in 1915 and joined the Norton-Harjes Ambulance Corps, but was arrested after five months, falsely accused of espionage (Kennedy). He published a biography based on these experiences which was very well received. Although we know him primarily as a poet, he was also a painter, and his work in Cubism had a direct influence on his poetry, which is highly imagistic. He was married three times; only the third marriage was happy, and the influence of that happiness can be seen in his later work (Kennedy). Cummings won a number of accolades in his lifetime, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Bollingen Prize, and a grant from the Ford Foundation (Kennedy).

## CONCEPT CONNECTION

### REPRESENTATION

EE Cummings' poem is an example of a non-representational piece. Although he is concerned with features of the real world, and although he notices the natural world in great detail, his presentation of those details is highly impressionistic. The reader has to work to construct the images rather than getting them straight from description in the text. Think, for instance, of what he means in the very last line when he says 'nobody,not even the rain,has such small hands'. The rain does not have hands – in a representational work, it would not be described as such; however, we can think of how rain falling on a flower gently works the flower petals open, almost as if it were prising them apart with tiny, gentle hands. So the image does portray something that the author has observed in the real world, but that observation has been transformed into an artistic image for the purposes of the poem.

Follow the QR code and read a few stanzas of 'The Greatest', written by twenty-first-century hip-hop artist Kendrick Lamar in collaboration with Sia Furler, Greg Kursten and Blair MacKichen. The third verse is the one which was performed solo by Lamar in their collaborative recording.



## Kendrick Lamar

Kendrick Lamar has been described as 'indisputably the most acclaimed rap artist of his generation' (Kellman). That claim is validated by Lamar's many accomplishments, which include twelve Grammy Awards and a Pulitzer Prize. The latter was awarded in April 2018 for his album *Damn*. Lamar is not only the only rap artist ever to win a Pulitzer Prize for music, he is also the only musician working outside of classical or jazz to do so ('Kendrick Lamar'). Lamar was born Kendrick Lamar Duckworth in Compton, California, in 1987. His parents had moved there to escape the gang culture of Chicago, but Lamar nevertheless grew up surrounded by gang culture. He was not, however, drawn into it; instead, he became a close and thoughtful observer of it, and what he witnessed has become the subject of much of his music ('Kendrick Lamar'). He was a good student who started writing young; when he was 16, he released the first of several mix tapes – self-released compilations for free download – that brought him to the attention of the music industry and launched his highly successful career.



Each of these texts has a style strikingly different from all the others, and you would never confuse any one as having been written by any of the others.

Shakespeare's sonnet is characterized not only by the sonnet form, including the highly structured end rhymes, but also by inverted sentence structure and formal vocabulary. In lines 2–3, for example, Shakespeare writes: 'Love is not love which alters when it alteration finds'. He has inverted the verb and noun in the second half of the sentence; we would normally expect to see 'Love is not love which alters when it finds alteration'. That kind of inversion is typical of Shakespeare's style; you will find it throughout his sonnets and plays.

EE Cummings' style is characterized by the lack of punctuation and capital letters, and by the fact that he relies heavily on unexpected inversions, not only of grammar, but of our expectations of how the world works. For instance, we don't normally think of eyes as having voices, nor do we think of roses being 'deep', as he describes them in lines 19–20. Cummings' style is impressionistic, rather than realistic, and it demands of the reader a committed engagement with figures of speech. We have to read with a great deal of creativity and imagination in order to understand what he means. Cummings' vocabulary is also entirely different from Shakespeare's. Where Shakespeare uses a formal and sophisticated vocabulary – such as 'impediment' (which comes from the marriage ceremony), 'alteration', 'ever-fixèd' and 'tempests' – Cummings uses very simple, everyday vocabulary, such as 'gesture', 'flower', 'fragility' and 'voice'. The differing vocabularies reflect the differing topics: Shakespeare's poem is about the universal, transcendent nature of love, while Cummings' is about one particular love between two people.

Kendrick Lamar's style is completely different from either of the others. Like Shakespeare, Lamar relies on strong rhymes but, unlike Shakespeare or Cummings, 'The Greatest' relies on extensive repetition and the use of fragments. The beat is strongly rhythmic with many stressed beats, rather than the alternating beats of iambic pentameter that Shakespeare uses. Lamar's vocabulary is neither formal, like Shakespeare's, nor intimate, like Cummings'. Instead Lamar's **diction** gets its power from the repetitions and the plays on sounds, as in the **homonyms** 'Ay' and 'I' which, repeated as they are in four of the first five lines of the verse, give the listener (rather than the reader) the sense that 'I' has been repeated nine times. Since 'I' is a word which is always stressed (as is 'ay'), the verse opens with many strongly stressed beats – pounding the point home.

If you were to study more of each person's writing, you would find that these characteristics recur in many of their works.

## ACTIVITY

### Identify the author

Here are three excerpts from works by Shakespeare, Cummings and Lamar. Which one was written by which author? How do you know?

#### Excerpt A

When the lights shut off  
And it's my turn to settle down  
My main concern  
Promise that you will sing about me  
5 Promise that you will sing about me

I said when the lights shut off  
And it's my turn to settle down  
My main concern  
Promise that you will sing about me  
10 Promise that you will sing about me



I woke up this morning and figured I'd call you  
 In case I'm not here tomorrow  
 I'm hoping that I can borrow a piece of mind  
 I'm behind on what's really important

15 My mind is really distorted  
 I find nothing but trouble in my life  
 I'm fortunate you believe in a dream

#### Excerpt B

anyone lived in a pretty how town  
 (with up so floating many bells down)  
 20 spring summer autumn winter  
 he sang his didn't he danced his did.

Women and men(both little and small)  
 cared for anyone not at all  
 they sowed their isn't they reaped their same  
 25 sun moon stars rain

#### Excerpt C

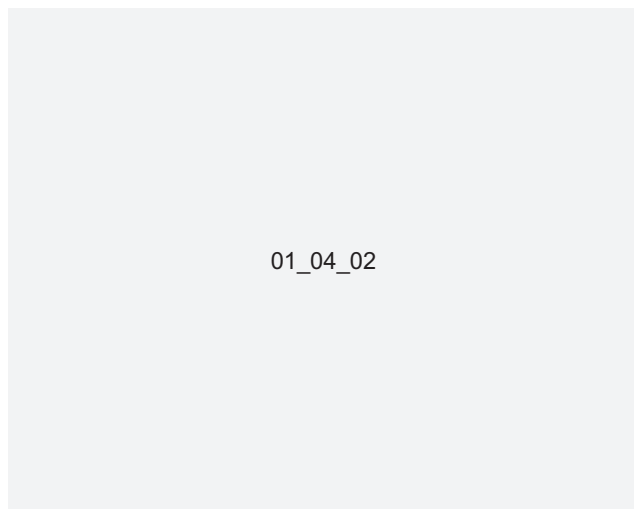
And every fair from fair sometime declines,  
 By chance or nature's changing course untrimmed.  
 But thy eternal summer shall not fade  
 Nor lose possession of that fair thou ow'st,  
 30 Nor shall Death brag thou wand'rest in his shade,  
 When in eternal lines to time thou grow'st.

You can check your answers against the notes on page XXX. Did you have any trouble identifying the authors? Why, or why not?

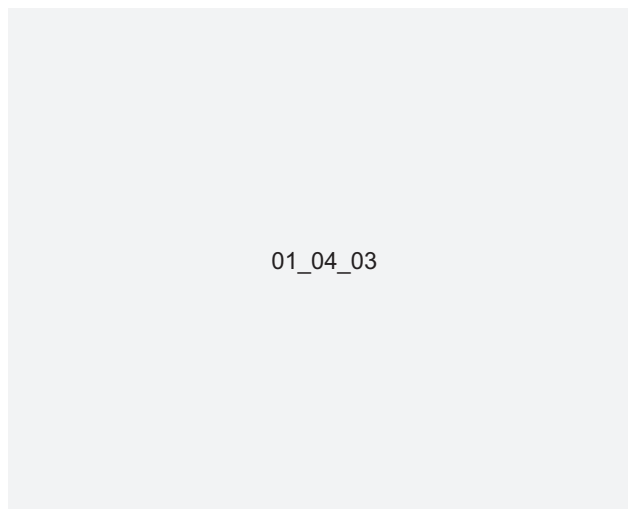
Style is made up of many elements. We saw in the examples above that style includes the use of rhyme, the order of subjects and verbs in sentences, the level of diction, and the use of repetition. A writer's style is also reflected in his or her sentence construction in terms of the length and type of sentence, and in the vocabulary in terms of the average number of syllables per word. These features are easier to quantify in prose works because there are many more words than there are in a poem or song, as a rule. The features of style are so strongly characteristic of a particular writer that modern mathematics and computer science can now identify the author of previously unidentified works by running an algorithm that checks for those features.

In April 2013, a new author, Robert Galbraith, published a detective novel called *The Cuckoo's Calling* to wide praise. In July of the same year, the *Sunday Times* in England broke the story that 'Robert Galbraith' was a pseudonym for J.K. Rowling (Mostrous). Before they published the claim, they consulted with two experts in linguistics, each of whom had developed a computer program for making comparisons of various features of multiple texts for the purposes of determining whether or not the authorship is the same (Hughes). The software compares features of texts such as word length, sentence length, frequency of the usage of letters, paragraph length and punctuation. It turns out that the combination of these features is highly individualistic – almost like a fingerprint. Here, for example, are the graphs generated by one of these programs, *Signature*, developed by Peter Millican at Oxford University (Millican, *et al*), comparing an early draft of Chapter 1.3 of this book, written in January of 2019, with a sample Language A written commentary which was written 15 years earlier, in 2004, by the same author as a model for her students.

This graph shows the comparison between the two works in terms of word lengths. Despite the completely different focuses of the two texts, you can see that the two graphs are nearly identical in terms of the percentage of words of varying numbers of syllables that are used.



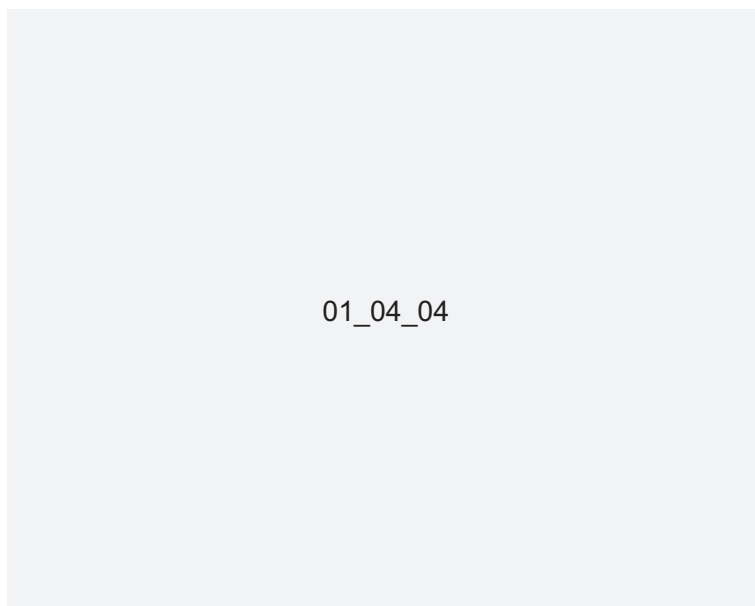
■ © Peter Millican



■ © Peter Millican


This graph shows sentence length comparison and, in this particular case, the graphs are quite different. The green line is for the sample written commentary, and it has somewhat longer paragraphs in general. That might be because the text of Chapter 1.3 is a draft which includes a lot of material that will eventually become boxed features in the finished book, rather than part of the main text. It might be interesting to run the comparison with the finished text and see if the match is higher.

The following graph shows the comparison between paragraph lengths. Like the comparison of word lengths, this graph shows very strong similarity between the texts.



■ © Peter Millican

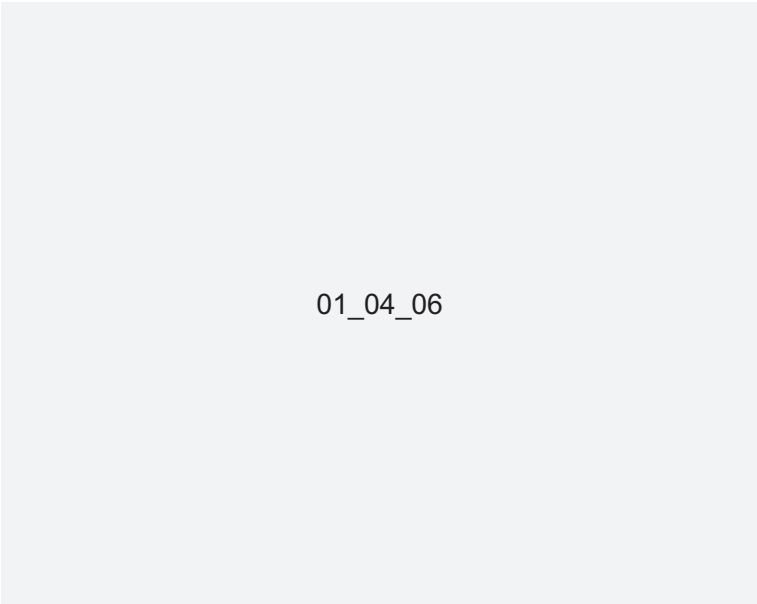
The graph below compares the frequency of use of all 26 letters of the alphabet. As you can see, the two graphs are almost completely identical. The odds of such a match being coincidental between two authors are extremely low.



01\_04\_05

■ © Peter Millican

The final graph, which shows punctuation use, is below.



01\_04\_06

■ © Peter Millican

Once again, we get a similar graph. The differences are probably accounted for to some degree by the length of the two works: the draft chapter was a total of 40 single-spaced typed pages, and the sample essay comprised five double-spaced pages. You can see for yourself that the probability that those two documents were written by the same person is extremely high. We must remember, of course, that this is a comparison between only two documents, but we can already predict that if we ran more, we would more likely see a stronger correlation than a weaker one.

An interesting thing to notice about the graph of the relative use of punctuation is that it reveals something about the way a writer constructs sentences. This writer, for example, seldom uses question marks at all. On the other hand, she uses as many – and in one of the texts more – commas in place of full stops, which suggests a fairly large number of **compound sentences**

(sentences that are constructed of two or more **independent clauses**, connected by that comma and a conjunction). This graph also reveals a fairly idiosyncratic pattern of the use of colons and dashes, which again suggests that she tends to write fairly complex sentences.

CONCEPT CONNECTION

IDENTITY

When we think about what a text reveals about the identity of the author, we are usually thinking of what we can learn from studying the content – the ideas contained in the text. What the linguistic analysis shows us is that we can also learn something about an author’s identity from his or her style. Does the writer think in long, complicated sentences? In short, pithy thoughts? Does the author develop long, intricate paragraphs or short, punchy ones? We get a little glimpse of how a writer’s mind works when we consider the structural elements of his or her writing style.

For an example that takes into account a lot more text, below are two graphs showing the similarities among Jane Austen’s six novels, in this case the word length comparison and the letter usage comparison.



■ © Peter Millican



■ © Peter Millican

The similarities of these two features across six novels is quite astonishing. No one could reasonably believe that these works were written by different people.

No one graph by itself could be fully convincing; surely, for example, the frequency of the use of letters must have something to do with the frequency in which those letters occur in the English language in general. But when we take into account the data on all five graphs, we can see that coincidence alone cannot account for the overall signature (hence the name of the program). To give one example of the dramatic difference between two writers, below is a comparison of the Language A written commentary (used previously) with *Pride and Prejudice* in terms of sentence length:

01\_04\_09

■ © Peter Millican

This aspect of style is not in any way constrained by the nature of the language itself. It is purely a matter of an author's personal preference, and you can see how dramatically different the use of sentences is between these two writers.

The fact that authors have such highly individualized writing styles is of value to readers because they can learn to recognize a writer's style. The more familiar you are with any one writer's style, the more easily you can interpret any future work you read by that author. You can also compare and contrast styles in different works that you study, which will help you to appreciate the endless flexibility of the English language, as well as the vast array of effects that authors can create.

### ACTIVITY

If you would like to try some textual comparisons yourself, you can download the software for free from the following website (or via the QR code in the margin):

<http://www.philocomp.net/humanities/signature.htm>

Project Gutenberg has over 58,000 texts in the public domain that you can use to try this exercise, if you wish. Try running works from two authors you think have quite different or similar styles and see how the graphs come out.



### ■ TOK Links: Mathematics and the arts

It is easy to think that the knowledge-making processes in mathematics and in the arts are so different that they cannot have anything to do with each other, but we have seen here that, in the past decade or so, a need has arisen for the mathematical analysis of literary texts. Looking at the charts above can be fun, but this kind of analysis can also be used very seriously.

Shortly before Barack Obama was elected as president of the United States in 2008, someone floated a claim that terrorist Bill Ayers was the real author of Obama's memoir, *Dreams of my Father*. Millican, the same man who worked on the J.K. Rowling question, ran the analysis and proved that that claim was not true (Hughes). The other person who worked on the Rowling case, Patrick Juola at Duquesne University in Pittsburgh, was once involved in a court case that involved establishing the authorship of some anonymous newspaper articles. The reason the authorship became important is that the articles were critical of a foreign government, and the man who wrote them was about to be deported back to that country with the police waiting on his arrival. Juola was able to establish it was not his authorship to the satisfaction of the judge and the man was not deported (Hughes). Possibly that linguistic analysis saved his life.

### ■ EE Links: The linguistic analysis of text

Comparing and contrasting the linguistic analyses of two texts with an eye to identifying the specific differences in style would make for an interesting study for the extended essay.

### ■ How style contributes to meaning

So far, we have looked at the fact that authors have a distinctive style, like a fingerprint, but that also applies on a larger scale to works as a whole. At any given moment in a book, an author can choose to write something in a particular style in order to create a specific effect. The next passage is the opening paragraph from the Pulitzer Prize-winning novel *All the King's Men*, by Robert Penn Warren, former poet laureate of the United States.

#### MASON CITY

To get there you follow Highway 58, going northeast out of the city, and it is a good highway and new. Or was new, that day we went up it. You look up the highway and it is straight for miles, coming at you, with the black line down the center coming at and at you, black and slick and tarry-shining against the white of the slab, and the heat dazzles up from the white slab so that only the black line is clear, coming at you  
 5 with the whine of the tires, and if you don't quit staring at that line and don't take a few deep breaths and slap yourself hard on the back of the neck you'll hypnotize yourself and you'll come to just at the moment when the right front wheel hooks over into the black dirt shoulder off the slab, and you'll try to jerk her back on but you can't because the slab is high like a curb, and maybe you'll try to reach to turn off the ignition just as she starts the dive. But you won't make it, of course.

(Warren 3)



This is a remarkable piece of writing, if only for the tremendous length of that second sentence. The first sentence is 21 words long, but the second is 160 words. The truly amazing thing is that it is not a run-on sentence (a sentence which got away from the writer); instead, the sentence has been carefully crafted to accomplish at least two things.

First, the sentence recreates for the reader the experience of being in the car on a long straight highway in the sun with the road ahead of you without any end in sight. The sentence, too, comes at you without any end in sight; it was constructed in such a way as to mimic the sensation that it describes, with clauses strung together one after the other, creating the impression that it will keep going forever. The style of the sentence helps us to understand the meaning that the author wanted us to get – that feeling of driving on an endlessly straight road for a long time and becoming mesmerized without any apparent end. It is a beautiful example of **form fitting function**; the form of the sentence reflects its meaning.

Secondly, that long sentence reveals a great deal to us about the narrator and how his mind works. You will find, if you read the entire novel, that the story is ultimately more about the narrator, Jack Burden, than it is about the people he seems to focus on, and it becomes essential for us to understand the narrator's character. Here, in the very first paragraph of the novel, we know nothing at all about Jack, his life or his history, but right away we get a striking portrayal of his powers of observation, his vibrant imagination and his deep sense of fatalism. He begins by describing one particular car journey (line 2), but he immediately universalises the description with the present tense – the road was that way on that day, but it is always that way. By line 7, however, Jack has shifted his description into the realm of the hypothetical – he describes what could (and would) happen if the driver allowed himself to become hypnotized. The crash, as he imagines it, is inevitable and fatal.

### Robert Penn Warren

Robert Penn Warren was born in Kentucky in 1905 and grew up in the shadow of the American Civil War; both his grandfathers had fought in it on the side of the Confederacy. That very strong sense of Southern heritage remained with him all his life and coloured his work (Bohner). Warren was set to enter the US Naval Academy when he was victim of a freak accident: he was hit by a stone thrown by his brother and permanently lost the sight in his right eye. This loss devastated him and changed the direction in which he had been intending to go. He ended up at Vanderbilt University, where he met some young literary talents who encouraged his writing, ultimately leading to his determination to embark on a career as a writer (Bohner). This decision turned out to be a good one, not only for him personally, but also for the world of letters. He wrote poetry, novels, essays, biography, literary criticism and textbooks. He won more than 30 different honours over the course of his 60-year career, including the Pulitzer Prize twice – once for fiction and once for poetry, the only author to be so recognized ('Robert Penn Warren') – as well as the National Medal of Arts.

Now let's contrast this paragraph to another paragraph about a car journey. This excerpt comes from Kathleen Jamie's essay 'The Woman in the Field', from her collection *Sightlines: A Conversation With the Natural World*.

Then one day in May 1979, it may even have been my seventeenth birthday, I sat my last, lacklustre exam and left school without much ceremony or much notion of a personal future. A day or two later, my mother drove me the thirty miles from our house into rural Perthshire. She had suggested librarianship, which was the stock idea for a kid who read books. I did read books: the paperback stuffed into my haversack on the back seat was by Tom Wolfe – *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. She suggested secretarial college. When she said these things, tears of belligerent dismay pricked at my eyes. No one suggested university.

The route we followed in the family VW Passat was almost the same, I now realise, to that which separates the sites where the two decorated food vessels were found. We, too, travelled by river valley and hill-pass. We followed the motorway upriver to Stirling, skirted the edge of the Ochil Hills, dipped into Strathallan and  
 10 crossed the Allan Water, and continued through farmland and old villages. It was an alien land. We drove narrow roads shaded by huge trees, passing the driveways and gates to secluded private houses larger than either of us had ever entered. Blue election posters were still nailed to roadside trees, but they would soon be removed. They'd done their work – ten days before, Margaret Thatcher had been voted into office.

There must have been an exchange of letters and directions. I must have seen an advert recruiting  
 15 volunteers, applied, and been told to turn up at this mid-May date. I remember nothing of that except that I had to bring a trowel, 'cast not welded'. I had no idea what that meant, except that it seemed suggestive of the ancient magic of metalwork. It meant only that cast trowels were stronger, and there would be a lot of trowel work.

We crossed the Earn by a lovely old four-arched bridge, then took the right turn under a road lined with tall  
 20 pines. On the right, the river; on the left, after half a mile, an unremarkable farm track began. We turned in, the track at once sloped uphill, and led quickly onto a level terrace of farmland. Suddenly, when we crested the rise, there appeared the long ridge of the Ochils, five miles away and blocking any view further south. This low but determined range of hills formed the entire horizon. To the north, more hills, higher and jagged, the beginning of the Highlands. All of this – the crossing of rivers, the terrace of land, the encircling  
 25 raised horizon was relevant, but I didn't know it then.

(Jamie 46–7)

The style here is quite different from what Warren did in *All the King's Men*. Instead of the long sentence suggesting the road coming towards you, and inevitably destroying you, Jamie's style relies on much shorter sentences, with ideas connected by commas, rather than by 'and.' The effect of the commas is to suggest an interconnection between the ideas, rather than the sequential arrival of separate things, which is what the repeated 'and' does in Warren's work.

Rather than moving from the personal to the universal to the imaginary, as Jack does, Jamie's description of the road remains anchored in one time, but her description of the events in her life moves back and forth in time from her immediate past to her anticipated immediate future. At the very end of the excerpt, Jamie foreshadows an idea that she would learn much later and, in so doing, she alerts us to the symbolic significance of the elements of the journey she has been describing. Jack's description was literal. The road and the car will, as the novel goes on, take on some symbolic significance, but it has not done so yet.

Jamie's essay digresses from talking about the actual road she was on to the scenery around her and the various events in her life that have brought her to this road. The digressions from the actual journey are central to the meaning in the passage, however. By interpolating bits of the story of her finishing school and starting the volunteer work which will require her to use a trowel (an archaeological dig) into the detailed description of the ride in the car, Jamie makes the two kinds of journeys parallel: the car journey and the journey into adulthood from the end of school.

So we can see, from looking at these two descriptions of journeys, that the key stylistic differences have to do with the length and structure of sentences, the use of description for different purposes, and the attitude towards time. In Warren's novel, the style of the paragraph

helps the reader to experience the events being described in a much more visceral way; in Jamie’s essay, the style of the excerpt helps the reader to see the interconnectedness and the symbolism of the things she is describing.

### Kathleen Jamie

Born in Renfrewshire, Scotland, Kathleen Jamie studied Philosophy in college at Edinburgh University. She describes her background as having been ordinary, Scottish, and non-literary ('About Kathleen Jamie'). She has a deep connection to the world of nature and interest in archaeology, art, and medical humanities, all of which inform her work ('About Kathleen Jamie'). She has written both poetry and non-fiction; her non-fiction includes a travel book called *Among Muslims*, about a journey she took to Northern Pakistan. She has won a number of literary prizes, including the Somerset Maugham Award, a Forward Poetry Prize (which she won twice: once for best poem and once for best poetry collection) and the Scottish Arts Council Best Book of the Year Award in 2005. She says of herself:

*'Do you consider yourself a woman writer or a Scottish writer?' is a question I can no longer answer politely. Just last week, in a tiny magazine, I read a description of my work which delighted me. It said 'Kathleen Jamie – somewhere between the Presbyterian and the Tao'.*

*(‘Kathleen Jamie’)*

## GLOBAL ISSUE

### SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND THE NATURAL WORLD

The passages from both Kathleen Jamie’s essay and Robert Penn Warren’s novel show people in the context of human technologies that have allowed them to conquer the land. The vision of those technologies is rather different, however; in Warren’s novel, the road poses a danger to humans, while in Jamie’s essay, it offers opportunities. If you were studying these works in their entirety, you might be able to develop a global issue about man’s relationship to nature and whether the technologies we build have alienated us from nature in ways that are harmful to ourselves, or whether they have allowed us to get closer to nature.

In Chapter 1.3, we looked at how authors use language in order to create characters. That, too, is an aspect of style, but it is style which is deployed deliberately for a particular effect, rather than the author’s more personal style. Here, we have considered some additional elements of style, including the level of vocabulary that an author uses, as well as the kinds of sentences he or she favours. Sentence structure is also an element of our next topic: the ways in which the structure of a literary text affects its meaning.

## Structure in literary texts

Structure refers to the way a literary text is organized. The term also reminds us of the kind of supporting element of a building or bridge: the structure must be a good one if the building is going to hold together so that people can live and work in it safely. The same is true of the structure of a literary work. The structure isn’t just random, nor is it incidental; the structure must hold the text together so that it can do its job effectively. Quite a variety of textual elements can contribute to the structure of a text: the order in which events or topics are presented, formal structural elements such as stanzas and chapters, sentence structure, the use

of time (including flashbacks and foreshadowing), even rhyme and meter can be important elements of structure. At a minimum, the structure of a literary work guides the reader through the work. At its most sophisticated, the structure of a work contributes directly to its meaning.

## ■ Structure in poetry

Poetry is unique among the four literary forms you will study in that there are several formal, recognizable forms that poets can choose from when planning their work. These include the:

- sonnet
- villanelle
- ballad
- sestina
- lyric
- ode
- elegy.

But there are many more. Poems can also be written in blank verse (as we saw with Shakespeare) or **free verse**, which is poetry without any rules about rhythm or meter. We do not have the space, in this chapter, to go over all the forms in any depth. You should be aware, however, that any poem you approach might have been written in a recognized form and, if so, you will need to find out what the standards are for that form, so that you can understand how that particular poet has chosen to use it – especially if there are deviations away from the standard. In this chapter, we will look at sonnet form, specifically, to demonstrate how poets start with the standard form and then manipulate it to suit their purposes. It is very often in the changes made to the formal structure that the clues to the poet's meaning lie.

Earlier in this chapter we looked at Shakespeare's 'Sonnet 116', but we did not discuss its structure. The sonnet was first developed in Italy and was a well-known poetic form by the thirteenth century, made famous by a poet named Petrarch, whose version of the 14-line poem consisted of an octet (an 8-line stanza) followed by a sestet (a 6-line stanza). Petrarch also established a rhyme scheme of ABBA ABBA CDE CDE. Shakespeare took that sonnet and transformed it into what is now known as the English (or Shakespearean) sonnet: three **quatrains** (4-line stanzas) followed by a couplet (a rhyming pair of lines) using the rhyme scheme ABAB CDCD EFEF GG.

The following sonnet by Carol Ann Duffy uses the sonnet form for a specific purpose, and the changes that she made to the Shakespearean sonnet for this poem reveal some of the important ideas in the poem. The context of the poem is given in the **epigraph** – the short quotation before the poem starts. An epigraph is not part of the actual poem, but it does provide information that the poet wants us to think of as we read. In this particular case, Duffy wants us to remember that Shakespeare famously did not mention his wife, Anne Hathaway, in his will, except in this one short line at the end. Reams have been written about what that act suggests: some people say that it shows that Shakespeare and his wife did not get on, and some people have argued that the second-best bed would have been the marriage bed and, as such, was a gift of great sentimental value. In this poem, Duffy is going to take a side in the argument by creating Anne Hathaway herself as the speaker of this sonnet.

### Anne Hathaway

'Item I gyve unto my wief my second best bed...'

(from Shakespeare's will)

The bed we loved in was a spinning world	A
of forests, castles, torchlight, cliff-tops, seas	B
5 where he would dive for pearls. My lover's words	A
were shooting stars which fell to earth as kisses	B
on these lips; my body now a softer rhyme	C
to his, now echo, assonance; his touch	D
a verb dancing in the centre of a noun.	E
10 Some nights I dreamed he'd written me, the bed	F
a page beneath his writer's hands. Romance	G
and drama played by touch, by scent, by taste.	H
In the other bed, the best, our guests dozed on,	E
dribbling their prose. My living laughing love –	I
15 I hold him in the casket of my widow's head	F
as he held me upon that next best bed.	F

(Duffy 30)

Duffy's imaginary Anne Hathaway tells us that the bed was a precious gift, symbolic of all that was wonderful about their marriage. The language of the poem makes her life with Shakespeare, and especially their love life, into a wondrous adventure full of romance and poetry. The beautiful contrast that the imagined Hathaway makes by describing their guests in the best bed as 'dribbling their prose' (line 12) underlines the fact that she experienced her marriage as something extraordinary, well beyond the bounds of what most people get out of a marriage.

### ■ TOK Links: History and the arts

What does this poem reveal to us about the different goals of history and the arts, and what does it suggest about the different methods used in each area of knowledge?

The structure of the poem supports this idea. It is a Shakespearean sonnet; there are 14 lines and some of them, such as line 2, are perfect iambic pentameter. As you will know, this is a rhythm consisting of 10 syllables per line, with every other syllable stressed. (For a much more detailed investigation into iambic pentameter and other formal systems of meter, you may wish to read *Literary Analysis for English Literature for the IB Diploma: Skills for Success* by Carolyn P. Henly and Angela Stancar Johnson, also published by Hodder Education.)

We can see that line 2 fits the pattern of iambic pentameter perfectly (see below: the **U** indicates an unstressed syllable and the **/** indicates a stressed one).

U / U / U / U / U /

of forests, castles, torchlight, cliff-tops, seas

Some of the lines in the poem, however, do not fit that meter. Line 1, for instance, scans this way:

U / U / U U U / U /

The bed we loved in was a spinning world

Other lines which are not fully iambic are lines 4, 5, 7, 11 and 12.

Another way in which Duffy has changed the sonnet form is that the rhyme scheme does not follow the pattern we expect. We have indicated the rhyme scheme of this sonnet in the full extract above, and you can see clearly that there are only four rhyming sounds instead of seven, and even those are presented as slant rhymes (words which almost rhyme). ‘World’ and ‘words’, ‘seas’ and ‘kisses’, and ‘noun’ and ‘on’ do not really rhyme with each other, though the sounds are close. Only the words ‘bed’ and ‘head’ have a full rhyme, which in total appear on three lines, including the rhymed couplet at the end.

The question for the curious reader then becomes: ‘Why did Duffy make these changes to the traditional sonnet structure?’ We have to assume that Duffy knows perfectly well what the traditional form is and that she could write a perfectly formed sonnet if she wanted to. We also have to consider that in this poem, the speaker is not a generic voice narrating essentially for Duffy; the speaker is Anne Hathaway, the wife of the world’s most famous sonneteer, but not someone who was known to be a poet. She says, at line 8, that she thinks Shakespeare has written her – that is, to some degree, she is his creation. Anne has been shaped by her association with him. Because she lived with him and loved him, she has become something of a poet herself, though not nearly as good a one as Shakespeare was. She has tried to write a sonnet and she has gotten quite a few of the bits right, but not all of them. Significantly, she did get the couplet at the end right. That rhyme is a full rhyme, and so the couplet becomes a symbol for the way that this couple got along together in marriage.

Duffy, then, has used the sonnet structure very carefully. She has not written a bad sonnet; she has instead created a narrator who has written the best sonnet that she can because she wanted to pay tribute to her husband. Through the structure of the poem, we see the love that, according to Duffy, Anne Hathaway had for her husband.

## CONCEPT CONNECTION

### TRANSFORMATION

In this poem, Duffy has created a perspective which is not her own, but which achieves the goal of generating empathy in the reader. She has transformed not only the Shakespearean sonnet form, but also all the negative speculation about Anne Hathaway’s relationship with her very famous husband. This poem is not history; it is art. Duffy imagines a possible reality for Anne Hathaway and William Shakespeare. Since we have virtually no historical evidence to help us know what their relationship was actually like, beyond that one line in Shakespeare’s will, this possibility is no more or less likely than other possibilities. Art allows for this kind of transformation because art does not try to give us the reality of historical fact; it gives us imagined universes that *could* be true.



### ■ CAS Links: Creativity

Having studied Duffy's poem, you could create a film which would transform the poem into a modern form such as a vlog or a newscast. You could then consider how this further transformation – from history to poetry to video – affects the ideas that are portrayed in the new medium.

Duffy's poem, 'Anne Hathaway', is a great example of how we can enrich our understanding of a literary text by paying careful attention to the structure. However, the structure of a poem does not always play as integral a role in conveying meaning. In this next poem, by Boris Pasternak, we can see that there are several elements of structure in play, but that while understanding structure can help us to appreciate some aspects of Pasternak's meaning, the structure does not reveal as much as it does in the previous poem.

#### Garden

The drowsy garden scatters insects	9
Bronze as the ash from braziers blown.	8
Level with me and with my candle,	9
Hang flowering worlds, their leaves full-grown.	8
5 As into some unheard-of dogma	9
I move across into this night,	8
Where a worn poplar age has grizzled	9
Screens the moon's strip of fallow light,	8
Where the pond lies, an open secret,	9
10 Where apple-bloom is surf and sigh,	8
And where the garden, a lake-dwelling,	9
Holds out in front of it the sky.	8

This is a lyric poem. The speaker is not telling a story; he is recreating the experience of walking in the garden at night. He gives us the sensory detail of what he sees and hears so that we can imagine what it is like to be there with him. We can analyze elements of structure to see what role they play in helping the speaker convey that sense of being out in the dark, among the flowers, trees and insects – in this case, we will focus on stanza structure, rhyme scheme and meter.

We can see right away that this poem is not a sonnet, although it has some similarities. The poem's structure is divided evenly into three quatrains. In addition, it consist of only 12 lines instead of the 14 that a sonnet should have.

The rhyme scheme only involves half of the lines of the poem; the second and fourth lines of each stanza rhyme with each other.

The poem is not written in iambic pentameter; the number of syllables in each line has been shown to the right of the poem. We see that none of the lines have 10 syllables, but the number of syllables per line is very regular throughout each stanza. However, you do have to pronounce 'flowering' as 'flow'ring' to get the 8-syllable line at the end of the first stanza. 'Flow'ring' is a

very natural pronunciation, though, so we do not find it awkward. The meter (the pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables) is not regular, as we can see when we mark the stressed (/) and unstressed (U) syllables below:

U / U / U / U / U  
 The drowsy garden scatters insects  
 / U U / U / U /  
 Bronze as the ash from braziers blown.  
 5 / U U / U / U / U  
 Level with me and with my candle,  
 // U / U ///  
 Hang flowering worlds, their leaves full-grown.

U / U U U / U / U  
 10 As into some unheard-of dogma  
 // U / U / U /  
 I move across into this night,  
 U U // U / U / U  
 Where a worn poplar age has grizzled  
 15 / U // U / U /  
 Screens the moon's strip of fallow light,

/ U // U / U / U  
 Where the pond lies, an open secret,  
 // U / U / U /  
 20 Where apple-bloom is surf and sigh,  
 U / U / U U // U  
 And where the garden, a lake-dwelling,  
 // U / U U U /  
 Holds out in front of it the sky.

When you don't have a regular meter (such as iambic pentameter) to work with, you have to approach the analysis by considering the effect of having certain words and lines stressed and certain ones unstressed, and by looking for any pattern that gets broken. In the case of 'Garden', we see that there is no obvious repeated pattern of syllables from one line to the next, or from one stanza to the next. We will have to look more closely to see if we can discover any patterns.

The poem opens with a perfectly metrical line: four iambs followed by an unstressed syllable. An extra unstressed syllable at the end of a line is called a **feminine ending**. In this poem, all the nine-syllable lines – the first and third lines in each stanza – have an extra syllable at the end, after four two-syllable **feet**. You can see that in each case that syllable is unstressed, so all the nine-syllable lines have feminine endings. We can also see that, regardless of what pattern of stresses the lines have – and they vary quite a bit – all the eight-syllable lines end with a stressed syllable. The poem, then, not only alternates unrhymed lines with rhymed ones, it alternates feminine endings with stressed endings.

If the meter were iambic (unstressed syllables alternating with stressed syllables) or **trochaic** (stressed syllables alternating with unstressed syllables), we would get an even number of each type in every line – except for the feminine endings. Only one line has that pattern: the very first, which is made up of iambs. After that, all the lines vary. Some lines, however, have more stressed syllables than we would expect (lines 4, 6, 8, 9 and 10).

Now that we have noticed all of these features, we can try to assess what they might mean in terms of our understanding of the poem.

All three stanzas are the same length, which suggests that, even though the focus of the poet's attention might change, something remains stable. The first stanza focuses on things in the garden providing the action, while the speaker stays still. First the garden 'scatters' insects, then flowering worlds 'hang'. In the second stanza, the speaker moves, but the garden is still taking action – it screens the light of the moon. We have had the contrast between the speaker's candle and the Moon in the first two stanzas. So what stays the same is that the speaker is out in the garden with a small light, trying to see, but the garden is the thing which has power. Based on the events in these two stanzas, we can give them descriptive titles like 'the garden universe' and 'casting shadows'. Those titles are not official, of course, but giving sections of a work a title can help you understand clearly how the piece is developing.

The rhyme words, which are all single-syllable, stressed words are 'blown' and 'grown', and 'night' and 'light.' The stress on those words helps us to notice the important elements of the stanzas – things which are more powerful, or more alive, perhaps, than the speaker. The first three lines of the first stanza each have four stresses, but the last line has five. That pattern makes the last line stand out a little more than the others, and so our attention is focused on the 'flowering worlds' which are 'full-grown'. The garden has been made larger than we normally think of gardens as being. This one contains whole worlds, fully developed. The stresses in that last line points to the fact that this garden is much larger than the speaker, and therefore much more significant.

In the second stanza, the first line has only three stresses, but the second line has five. That is an interesting observation, because that is the line in which the speaker moves out into the garden – his one and only action. The stresses signal this rather bold step on the part of the speaker. In the third line, however, we find four stresses and, in the last line, five. It is as if the pattern of stresses (in line 7) reveals that the speaker's one move fades away. By the last line of this stanza (line 8) the garden has taken charge again. The tree screens the light, so that the speaker is left in shadow.

## ACTIVITY

### Analyzing the final stanza

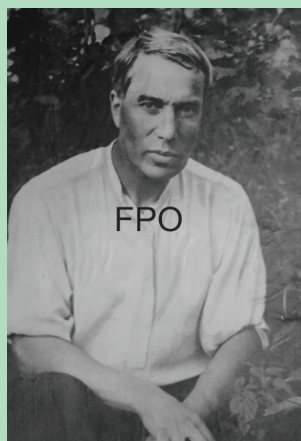
Now that we have worked through the first two stanzas, try analyzing the role of structure in the final stanza of Pasternak's poem, and answer these questions:

- 1 This final stanza, too, has four lines. What do you think that suggests about its relationship to the first two stanzas? What remains the same? What sort of descriptive title might you give this last stanza?
- 2 Do you notice anything significant about the rhymed words?
- 3 In the last stanza, the pattern of stresses by line is 5–5–4–4. What do the extra stresses indicate in terms of what is happening in the poem?

When you have answered the questions, you can compare your answers to the notes on page XXX.

## Boris Pasternak

Boris Leonidovich Pasternak was born in Moscow in 1890. His parents were both artists – his father a painter and his mother a concert pianist ('Boris Pasternak'). Like many young people, Pasternak had some difficulty deciding what to do with his life. He studied music for six years ('Boris Pasternak – Biographical'), but by the time he was 22 he had decided not to pursue that any longer and went to Germany to study philosophy. That endeavour only lasted a few months before he returned to Russia and dedicated himself to literature. It took about a decade before his work attracted critical acclaim ('Boris Pasternak – Biographical'), but after that, he published a long string of successes in various genres, including poetry, essay, memoir and, in 1957, his most famous work, *Doctor Zhivago*. He is also famous as a translator of works into Russian – perhaps most notably the entire works of William Shakespeare. Pasternak's life was affected in significant ways by the Bolshevik Revolution: in 1922, his family escaped to Germany and, except for a short visit that year, Pasternak never saw them again, although he tried every year to get permission to go to Germany ('Boris Pasternak'). After Stalin came to power, the government took control over all the arts and decided what would and would not be published. Pasternak was able to publish poetry, but not prose; *Doctor Zhivago*, which glorified the freedom and independence which had been lost in Russia, was subsequently smuggled out of the country and published in Italy ('Boris Pasternak'). Pasternak won the Nobel Prize for Literature the year after *Doctor Zhivago* was published. He initially agreed to accept the prize, but then changed his mind and turned it down amid negative reactions (including expulsion) from the Union of Soviet Writers (Shapiro). The Nobel Committee nevertheless officially awarded the prize to Pasternak, without holding a ceremony.



## Structure in prose

Neither prose fiction nor non-fiction has any kind of standard formal structures that writers can call on in the same way that poets can call on sonnet or villanelle structures. There are, nevertheless, some elements of structure that recur in many prose works and which you can look for to help you interpret a text. We cannot, in the space available in this chapter, work through a structural analysis of a whole novel or short story, or even a non-fiction essay. We can, however, name some of the most common elements of structure to help you know what to look for.

### Chronological order

A story which is told in chronological order is one which is told, as the saying goes, by starting at the beginning and going on until the end, and then stopping. This structure is not very commonly used, and so it is useful to the reader to look for where this basic story structure is altered.

### Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is a fairly common technique, used to alert the readers to something that is coming later. Sometimes foreshadowing is given to the reader in a very obvious way – perhaps the narrator will say something along the lines of 'I came to realize later that this was the moment when I should have known what was going to happen'. Such an announcement alerts the reader to go back and re-read whatever just happened to see if you can pick up the clue that the narrator, when the events actually happened, missed. Sometimes, though, foreshadowing is much more subtle than that. In the passage from Kathleen Jamie's essay 'The Woman in the Field', above, we see in lines 20–23 that she uses the mention of the trowel to foreshadow something that will come later in the essay. When she says that there would be a lot of work with a trowel, we are alerted to keep an eye out for what that work might be and why it is important enough to the essay that we are given early warning of its presence.

## Flashback

Flashback is a very common device for organizing the sequence of events in a work of prose. In F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*, for example, we know from the beginning that the whole story is going to be a flashback, because the narrator, Nick Carraway, tells us immediately that he is going to recall the story of events that happened before he came back home, a year ago. Even within the story of that past we get more flashbacks, to a time five years earlier still, when Jay Gatsby first met Daisy Buchanan. When you, as a reader, notice that the structural device of a flashback is being used, you know that you are being shown some event that was part of the cause of what is happening in the narrator's present day – or at least in the main part of his or her story – so you need to be on the lookout for what the connection is between the old events and the new.

## A frame story

Some works, especially novels, will use a frame story as a structural device. This is a story that appears at the beginning and end of a book, but which is not directly part of the main story. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* are great examples of novels with frame stories. In each case, the main story that appears in the middle influences the events in the frame. In Shelley's book, Dr Frankenstein, who has been chasing his monster all over the world, ends up on a ship which, while trying to find the northwest passage, has become frozen in ice. Dr Frankenstein tells the captain and crew the whole story of his experience in creating the monster and watching it turn to evil. The story serves as a model for the captain of the ship, who has to make a decision about whether to forge ahead when the ice melts or whether to turn back. His decision is influenced by what he hears from Dr Frankenstein. That is a very typical use of a frame story, so whenever you encounter one, you should be looking for ways in which the main story parallels the events of the frame, and then look to see if and how the events of the frame are influenced by the central story.

## A journey

If you encounter a narrative in which a journey takes place, then you should be asking yourself whether the journey is in fact a quest. In a quest, the person making the journey ventures out thinking that he or she is trying to achieve one thing, but ends up achieving (or failing to achieve, if the story is a tragedy) something else. The character will encounter obstacles along the way, and he or she will end up changed in some fundamental way. Any time you encounter any journey – such as the car journeys we looked at earlier in the chapter – you should be asking yourself if that structural device is meant to alert you to some major changes in the character's situation. If you want to learn more about the quest structure, you can read Joseph Campbell's work, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.

You can also investigate the structure of a full-length prose work by looking at the chapter titles and considering what they suggest about any important ideas that are in that chapter. If there aren't chapter titles, or if you are working with a short story or an essay, you can do what we did with Pasternak's poem and figure out where sections of the piece begin and end. Then give them a name for yourself to use as a means of identifying what important ideas are in each section and consider how they develop throughout the whole work.

## ■ Structure in drama

Unlike prose, drama does have a recognized structure – at least, many playwrights begin with a recognized structure and then manipulate it to their own needs. The elements of dramatic structure are as follows.

### Opening balance

This is the situation in the fictional world at the beginning of the play. People might not be happy, but there is a status quo to which the characters have been accustomed. In Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*, for example, the opening balance is a situation in which the best friend of King Leontes, Polixenes, has been visiting Leontes's kingdom, Sicilia, for the better part of a year.

## Disturbance

This is something that happens to upset the balance and force the characters to deal with an unexpected problem. In *The Winter's Tale*, King Leontes decides, for pretty much no reason at all, that Polixenes must be the father of Queen Hermione's baby, and Leontes turns hysterical, planning murder and locking up his wife in prison.

## Protagonist

This is the character who creates the plan for dealing with the disturbance. The plan:

- contains an objective which is the resolution to the problem, and
- contains steps to be taken.

Interestingly, given that he is the source of the problem, Leontes is also the protagonist here: his objective is to rid himself of all who he believes have betrayed him. The steps he decides to take are that he will have Polixenes murdered and he will lock his wife up in prison. When the baby is born, he tries to have the baby killed as well, but he settles for having it abandoned in a foreign land. He sends for word from the Oracle at Delphi to justify all of his actions by proclaiming that Leontes is in the right.

## Antagonist

Not every play has an antagonist, but many do. Where there is an antagonist, this is the character who is working consciously to stop the protagonist from implementing his or her plan. In *The Winter's Tale*, the antagonist is, rather surprisingly, Paulina, one of Queen Hermione's ladies in waiting. None of the men will stand up to Leontes while he's in his tyrannical rage, but Paulina does.

## Obstacles

An obstacle is something which already exists in the fictional situation (the **fabula**) which interferes with the protagonist's ability to implement the plan. There might be one or more obstacles. The significant obstacle to Leontes' plan is that his suspicions are quite false. The Oracle will not send the message that he wishes for, because the Oracle always tells the truth, and people will come forward to help Polixenes escape. Leontes' son and heir dies, presumably from grief over his mother, and Hermione herself dies when she finds out what has happened to her children. This obstacle, with all its subsequent consequences, turns the direction of the play, because when the Oracle reveals that Hermione is innocent, Paulina takes on the job of punishing Leontes for the death of his wife and children herself and, in doing so, she becomes the new protagonist.

## Complications

A complication is something that arises as a result of the protagonist's effort to implement the plan and which interferes with the ability to employ the plan effectively. A complication that arises in *The Winter's Tale* occurs when Leontes sends the ship to abandon the baby in a foreign land. While one man, Antigonus, is ashore with the baby, completing this task, a storm rises up and sinks the ship they were on; subsequently, a bear kills and eats Antigonus, so the baby is left alive.

## Climax

The climax is the final complication which tips the balance in terms of whether the plan is going to be successful or not. If the climax can be dealt with effectively, the plan will succeed. If it cannot, the plan will fail. There is an interesting question with *The Winter's Tale* as to what we might call the climax. The puzzle for the audience arises because Shakespeare deftly weaves the second plot – the story of the daughter growing up in a shepherd's home in Bohemia, the kingdom over which Polixenes rules – into the first one. We might wish to call the sinking of the ship and the death of Antigonus the climax because, at that point, Leontes' attempt to rid himself of all the results of the 'betrayal' fails. On the other hand, a great many complications



arise out of the daughter's being alive – she falls in love with Polixenes' son and they have to flee together to Sicilia to escape Polixenes' wrath. The daughter has no idea, of course, that she was born there. A climactic scene occurs at the end, which ultimately brings to a close all of the different plot lines.

## Resolution

The resolution is the outcome of the plan and results in a new balance. If the plan ultimately succeeds in solving the problem, then we are likely to have a happy ending. If the plan did not solve the problem, we are likely to have an unhappy ending. It is a good idea to keep in mind, however, that the protagonist might have had a bad plan and, in that case, even if the plan succeeded, the ending might (ironically) be unhappy. Given that the initial disturbance was Leontes' jealousy, we know that we have a final resolution (apparently) with the restoration of Leontes' daughter to him, as well as the restoration of his friendship with Polixenes. There are a few clues right at the end, though, that suggest that this peaceful ending is only temporary, as Leontes, despite sixteen years of penance, seems inclined to return to his tyrannical decision-making.

## Conflict

Conflict can arise almost anywhere: it might be conflict between the protagonist and the antagonist, or it might be part of the complications that arise from the effort to implement the plan, or a major conflict might even provide the climax. The conflict might be internal to the protagonist as well; it does not have to be a conflict between two different characters. In *The Winter's Tale*, we have all different kinds of conflicts: we have the conflicts between Leontes and Hermione, between Leontes and Polixenes, and between Paulina and Polixenes. Later, in Bohemia, we have conflicts between Perdita, the daughter, and her father (her foster father, though only he knows that) and between Florizel, Polixenes' son, and his father. We also have the people versus nature conflicts of the storm and the bear attacking the people who brought the baby intending leave it to die.

## Suspense

Suspense arises when the playwright keeps the audience waiting to see what will happen next and, like conflict, it can occur at various places throughout a play. Every time a problem arises, whether it be the disturbance, an obstacle, or a complication, and we don't know that the outcome is inevitable, we have suspense. One important moment of suspense in *The Winter's Tale* comes when we see Perdita and Florizel fleeing Bohemia. We know (what they do not know) that Perdita is Leontes' daughter and a perfectly acceptable bride for a king's son, but we don't know how it is all going to work out.

The structure of drama is most interesting when the playwright has manipulated it to his or her own purpose. We have seen in *The Winter's Tale* that Leontes functions both as the disturbance and as the protagonist, but when he causes new problems, his antagonist, Paulina, becomes a protagonist for solving those problems. We have seen that Shakespeare has woven two different – but parallel – storylines together and given them one single resolution. When you are studying a play, it will be helpful for you to identify the elements of the structure of drama, but it will be more helpful for you to identify the places where the playwright has done something surprising with them.

For a detailed case study of how a playwright can alter the basic dramatic structure for his own purposes, you may wish to read *Literary Analysis for English Literature for the IB Diploma: Skills for Success* by Carolyn Henly and Angela Stancar Johnson, also published by Hodder Education.

## Conclusion

In this chapter, we have investigated how being able to recognize two major features of literary texts – style and structure – can help you to improve your ability to interpret those texts. We have seen that style works on a grand scale, each author developing his or her own personal style which is as individual as a fingerprint, and which can be identified across boundaries of

works. We have also seen, however, that style applies on a local scale, where certain stylistic features have been employed for specific purposes. We have investigated some formal and informal structures of poetry, and we have seen several ways in which structure can contribute to meaning. For prose and drama, we have identified common elements of structure for you to be on the lookout for as you study works in those two literary forms.

## Works cited

- Austen, J. 'Emma.' *Emma by Jane Austen*. Project Gutenberg, 1 Aug. 1994. Web. 6 Feb. 2019. [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/158](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/158).
- Austen, J. 'Persuasion.' *Persuasion by Jane Austen*. Project Gutenberg, 1 Feb. 1994. Web. 6 Feb. 2019. [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/105](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/105).
- Austen, J. 'Mansfield Park.' *Mansfield Park by Jane Austen*. Project Gutenberg, 1 June 1994. Web. 6 Feb. 2019. [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/141](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/141).
- Austen, J. 'Sense and Sensibility.' *Sense and Sensibility by Jane Austen*. Project Gutenberg, 1 Sept. 1994. Web. 6 Feb. 2019. [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/161](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/161).
- Austen, J. 'Northanger Abbey.' *Northanger Abbey by Jane Austen*. Project Gutenberg, 1 Apr. 1994. Web. 6 Feb. 2019. [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/121](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/121).
- Austen, J. 'Pride and Prejudice.' *Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen*. Project Gutenberg, 1 June 1998. Web. 6 Feb. 2019. [www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1342](http://www.gutenberg.org/ebooks/1342).
- Bohner, C. 'Robert Penn Warren's Life and Career.' *Modern American Poetry*. University of Illinois, n.d. Web. 7 Feb. 2019. [www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/s\\_z/warren/life.htm](http://www.english.illinois.edu/maps/poets/s_z/warren/life.htm).
- 'Boris Pasternak.' *Poets.org*. Academy of American Poets, 2 Apr. 2014. Web. 8 Feb. 2019. [www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/boris-pasternak](http://www.poets.org/poetsorg/poet/boris-pasternak).
- 'Boris Pasternak – Biographical.' *NobelPrize.org*. Nobel Media AB 2019. 8 Feb 2019. [www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1958/pasternak/facts](http://www.nobelprize.org/prizes/literature/1958/pasternak/facts).
- Campbell, J. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. Novato, CA: New World Library, 2008.
- Conrad, J. *Heart of Darkness*. Ware, Hertfordshire: Wordsworth Editions Limited, 1999.
- Cummings, EE. 'anyone lived in a pretty how town.' *Selected Poems*. Richard S. Kennedy, Ed. W.W. Norton and Company, New York, 1994. p.109.
- Cummings, E. 'somewhere i have never travelled gladly beyond.' *Selected Poems*. Richard S. Duffy, CA. 'Ann Hathaway.' *The World's Wife*. New York: Faber and Faber, 1999.
- Fitzgerald, FS. *The Great Gatsby*. New York: Scribner Paperback Fiction, 2018.
- Furler, S, Kursten, G, Lamar, K and MacKichen, B. 'The Greatest.' *This is Acting*. Monkey Puzzle RCA, 2016. CD.
- Henly, CP and Johnson, AS. *Literary Analysis for English Literature for the IB Diploma: Skills for Success*. London: Hodder Education, 2019.
- Hughes, V. 'How Forensic Linguistics Outed J.K. Rowling (Not to Mention James Madison, Barack Obama, and the Rest of Us).' *National Geographic*. National Geographic, 19 July 2013. Web. 6 Feb. 2019. [www.nationalgeographic.com/science/phenomena/2013/07/19/how-forensic-linguistics-outed-j-k-rowling-not-to-mention-james-madison-barack-obama-and-the-rest-of-us](http://www.nationalgeographic.com/science/phenomena/2013/07/19/how-forensic-linguistics-outed-j-k-rowling-not-to-mention-james-madison-barack-obama-and-the-rest-of-us).
- Jamie, K. *Sightlines: A Conversation with the Natural World*. New York: The Experiment, LLC, 2013.
- Jamie, K. 'About Kathleen Jamie.' *Kathleen Jamie*. Word Press, 29 Aug. 2013. Web. 7 Feb. 2019. [www.kathleenjamie.com/about](http://www.kathleenjamie.com/about).
- Jones, QD, Bergman, A, Bergman, M and Lamar, K. 'Sing About Me I'm Dying of Thirst.' *good kid m.A.A.d city*. UMG, 2013. CD.
- Juola, P. 'How a Computer Program Helped Reveal J. K. Rowling as Author of A Cuckoo's Calling.' *Scientific American*. N.p., 20 Aug. 2013. Web. 29 January 2019. [www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-a-computer-program-helped-show-jk-rowling-write-a-cuckoos-calling](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/how-a-computer-program-helped-show-jk-rowling-write-a-cuckoos-calling).
- 'Kathleen Jamie.' *Kathleen Jamie Literature*. British Council, 1 Jan. 1970. Web. 7 Feb. 2019. <https://literature.britishcouncil.org/writer/kathleen-jamie>.
- Kellman, A. 'Kendrick Lamar | Biography & History.' *AllMusic*. AllMusic of the RhythmOne Group, n.d. Web. 7 Feb. 2019. [www.allmusic.com/artist/kendrick-lamar-mn0002709646/biography](http://www.allmusic.com/artist/kendrick-lamar-mn0002709646/biography).