

Introduction

Term 1

Booklet 1

Year 12 English Extension

**Catching up on the canon and developing an area of interest**

What kind of canonical literature do you think you might enjoy? You will need to do some reading in order to know what you might like to explore later in the course. You also need a little literary depth/sophistication to do really well. Besides, it’ll do you good.

I have loosely arranged texts into categories to assist you to choose some reading material between now and February. Challenge yourself to read more than one! **Bold = especially heavy going ….**

**1. 19th Century English Fiction**

Authors to look for: Emily (*Wuthering Heights*) and Charlotte Bronte (*Jane Eyre*), Jane Austen (*any*), Charles Dickens (*Great Expectations, David Copperfield*), George Elliot (*The Mill on the Floss*), Thomas Hardy (*Tess of the d’Urbervilles*); Joseph Conrad (***Heart of Darkness***), Henry James (*Turn of the Screw,* ***Portrait of a Lady***)

**2. 19th Century American Fiction**

Mark Twain (*Huckleberry Finn*); Nathaniel Hawthorne (*The Scarlett Letter*); Harriet Beecher Stowe (*Uncle Tom’s Cabin*); Herman Melville (***Moby Dick***); Louisa May Alcott (*Little Women*).

**3. Science Fiction/Dystopian Fiction/Satire**

George Orwell (*Animal Farm, Nineteen Eighty Four*); Aldoux Huxley (*Brave New World*); Evelyn Waugh (*The Loved One*); Margaret Atwood (*The Handmaid’s Tale*); Ray Bradbury (*Fahrenheit 451*), Ira Levin (*The Stepford Wives*); Mervyn Peake (***Gormanghast*)**

**4. Twentieth Century British Fiction**

D.H. Lawrence (*Sons and Lovers*); William Golding (*The Lord of the Flies*); HG Wells (*The War of the Worlds, The Time Machine*); Robert Louis Stevens (*Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*); Daphne du Maurier (*Rebecca, My Cousin Rachel*); Virginia Woolfe (*Mrs Dalloway*); F Scott Fitzgerald (*The Great Gatsby*); Stella Gibbons (*Cold Comfort Farm*)

**5. Twentieth Century American Fiction**

JD Salinger (*The Catcher in the Rye*); Ken Kesey (*One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*); Ernest Hemingway (*short stories; The Old Man and the Sea*); John Steinbeck (***The Grapes of Wrath****; Of Mice and Men*); Harper Lee (*To Kill a Mockingbird*); Annie Proulx (*The Shipping News*); Tony Morrison (*Beloved*); Pearl S Buck (*The Good Earth*); Thornton Wilder (*The Bridge of San Luis Rey*); Edith Wharton (*The Age of Innocence*), William Styron (*Sophie’s Choice*)

**6. 21st Century Fiction**

Geraldine Brooks (*March*) ties in with *Little Women*; Yann Martel (*The Life of Pi*); Audrey Niffenegger (*The Time Traveller’s Wife*); Alice Sebold (*The Lovely Bones*); Mark Haddon (*The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night*); Ian McEwan (*Atonement*)

**7. Poetry**

“The Wasteland” (T.S. Eliot); *The Poetry of Robert* Frost (Robert Frost); Keats; “The Rhyme of the Ancient Mariner” (Coleridge); *Life Studies* (Robert Lowell); Gerard Manley Hopkins; Wilfred Owen; Robert Browning; Ted Hughes; Sylvia Plath;

8. **Classic Detective Fiction**

Agatha Christies (*The Murder of Roger Ackroyd*, *And Then There Were None* )Raymond Chandler (*The Big Sleep*); Wilkie Collins (*The Moonstone*); Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (*The Hound of the Baskervilles*); Dashiell Hammett (*The Maltese Falcon*); Dorothy Sayers (*Murder Must Advertise*)

**9. Misc**

Tolstoy, Leo ( *Anna Karenina*); Truman Capote (*In Cold Blood* – non-fiction); John Hersey (*Hiroshima* – non-fiction); Gabriel Garcia Marquez (***One Hundred Years of Solitude***)

**10. Australian Fiction**

Tim Winton (*Cloudstreet, Eyrie*); David Malouf (*The Great World*); Jean Bedford (*Sister Kate*); Peter Carey (*The True History of the Kelly Gang*);

**11. Graphic novels**

*Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* *and the Story of a Return*, by Marjane Satrapi; Watchmen by Allan Moore; *Maus* by [Art Spiegelman](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Art_Spiegelman); *Sandman* by Neil Gaiman

**12. Film**



Fritz Lang’s *Metropolis*, *Bladerunner*, Alfred Hitchcock movies, *Citizen Kane*

Also access Booker Prize and other award winning novels.

Which lane will you swim in?

**Preliminary Reading, Questions and Activities**

**Handy text for introductory work:** From Parker, Michael and Morrison, Fiona, (2006) *Masters in Pieces*, Cambridge,
Research terms ideology and discourse. Read and read until you understand. Construct Frayer Model for: ideology, discourse. Think: How do values attitudes and beliefs fit with these concepts? What is the difference between ideology and ideas? What discourses have shaped your values, attitudes and beliefs thus far?

Summarize information on ‘literary critical perspectives’ p 13 ff

Choose from one of the following: feminism, Marxism, post-colonialism; research the main tenets of the theory; draw (or find) a generational and relational family tree for the theorists who operate within that school of thought.

**Other:**

Read document entitled ‘Discourse’ – answer all questions.

Research the meaning of the terms ‘postmodernism’ and ‘post structuralism’



**Inductive Reasoning.**

**Read this response to Task 1 then answer the questions below. Be ready to discuss your answers in lesson 1. THIS IS A VERY GOOD WAY TO INTRODUCE IA1! Use your own model response if this one doesn’t appeal. (Student achieved VHA5 in old course)**

**Reader-centred Reading**

Before reading Richard Connell’s *“The Most Dangerous Game”,* I found myself expecting a typical adventure/terror story with ‘good’ predictably prevailing over ‘evil’. To a large extent, this preconception held true. I had read numerous adventure and terror stories, both for personal enjoyment and as a student. Because of this, I knew that my approach to reading may differ from someone who had little experience with, or who did not enjoy, this genre. I also anticipated that the story would not be intellectually stimulating, in that there would, inherently, be a lack of puzzling symbolism and mystery. Nonetheless, I knew I would enjoy the story despite its simplicity and predictability. What I did not expect however, was how closely the ideas about the sanctity of the human life in the story would resonate with my own.

The story follows the adventures of Sanger Rainsford, a big game hunter, who tumbles from his ship in the Caribbean Sea and is washed ashore on Ship-Trap Island, a mysterious place tainted with superstition and fear. On the island he finds General Zaroff, an obsessive hunter in a palatial chateau, along with his deaf mute servant, Ivan. Zaroff is a sadistic narcissist who has grown tired of hunting game, instead wishing to hunt the “*ideal animal*”. He had purchased the island in order to cunningly deceive ships into being washed ashore. The surviving sailors are taken into his care and are given a choice: be released into the jungle and be hunted, by Zaroff, or be beaten to death by Ivan. Rainsford is faced with this same dilemma. He sets off into the jungle to be hunted.

When Connell first introduced the danger of Rainsford being hunted by Zaroff, I began to formulate in my mind the sequence of events that would follow. I expected Rainsford to struggle with the adversities imposed upon him, but ultimately to triumph and, thus, to create an enjoyable conclusion. The use of ‘cliff-hanger’ situations also guided me to the predicted outcome, and ultimately the meaning. For example, *“Twenty feet below him the sea rumbled and hissed. Rainsford hesitated. He heard the hounds. Then he leaped out far into the sea....”* Statements such as this made me wonder what would happen next. I concluded that Rainsford survived the leap, and that he would inevitably triumph over Zaroff.

Because of the type of narrative, I found myself reflecting on previously read stories, particularly horror/terror novels such as Bram Stoker's *“Dracula”*. Because of his sadistic and cruel personality, I envisaged Zaroff to be similar to the manipulative and deceitful Count Dracula. Both Zaroff and Dracula convey cordiality while in actuality dominating others with power and violence. Furthermore, Connell’s use of imagery also enhanced my visualisation of the scene. For example, *“the massive door with a leering gargoyle for a knocker”* and *“cliffs dived down where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows”* created connotations of a dark, terrifying setting.

I sympathised with Rainsford and found myself becoming frustrated and angry with Zaroff. His arrogant, egotistical attitude is drastically different to my own attitude. For instance, Zaroff believes *“the weak of the world were put here to give the strong pleasure”.* He self righteously believes that hunting *“the scum of the earth: sailors from tramp ships”* is justified. I found myself reflecting on encounters I have had with personalities, who, whilst usually not murderous, were similar to Zaroff. These people cause me to feel animosity and frustration. For this reason, I was inclined to accept the values of Rainsford, who is in stark moral opposition to the idea of hunting humans. This was most likely Connell’s intention in creating two highly different characters. As an educated and, I hope, morally sound person I am predisposed to read the story in the way in which Connell intended. Ultimately, I find that I am in acceptance of Connell’s theme that all life is precious, and to place a higher value on one life over another is utterly wrong.

**Reader-centred Defence**

Historically, reliance had been placed on the ‘words on the page’ as the singular and indisputable source of meaning in literary texts. This New Critical, text-centred approach to reading argued that since the text’s literary structure was stable, the meaning thereby remained independent of *“changes in the social and cultural contexts of readers”* (QSA, 2010 p14). This approach was problematized by reader-centred theorists throughout the twentieth century, who believed that meaning is not solely fixed in the text; rather it is produced in what Louise Rosenblatt (1938) referred to as a ‘transaction’ between reader and text. “*The meaning 'happens' during the transaction between the reader and the signs on the page.”* (Rosenblatt, 1995, citied in Church 1997). That is, the reader brings to the text elements of their own textual, personal, psychological, social and cultural experiences, to create a meaning unique to themselves (Beach, 1993).

Reader-centred theorists also questioned the authority of the author in creating meaning. Historically, it was thought that the author’s intended meaning was locked within the text, and as such could not be misinterpreted by the reader. However, theorists such as Wimsatt and Breadsley challenged the authority the author held in the meaning making process, by deeming it the *“intentional fallacy”* (QSA 2010).

Whilst reader-centred theorists agree that the reader plays a central role in the interpretive process, there are variations in the relative emphasis they place on the textual and psychological aspects of the reader’s response. John Lye categorised theorists according to the extent to which the text or reader is emphasised in the meaning making process (Lye, 1996) His ‘position one’ stresses the importance that the texts holds in generating meaning. This position, however, differs from a purely text-centred approach as it does accept the ‘transactional’ relationship between reader and text. It is argued that the reader’s knowledge of text conventions such as symbols and narrative structures helps to create meaning but does not generate the meaning entirely. Lye’s ‘second position’ takes the stance that the text and the reader have equal importance in the interpretive process. Theorists within this category agree that the readers’ own psychological and social perspectives and knowledge of textual aspects influence the interpretive process equally. Lye’s ‘third position’ emphasises the reader as the most important component in the interpretive process. Here, the reader’s thoughts, beliefs and experiences are imposed upon the text, thus creating a meaning that is acceptable within their culture.

Having read Richard Connell’s “*The Most Dangerous Game*” self-reflexively, I realise that I initially placed a strong emphasis on the textual elements of the story, in what may be described as a *“structuralist approach”* to reading (Lye, 1996).The textual elements within the story *“guided my predicted outcome, and ultimately the meaning I created”* in what Saussure calls the *“scientific approach to reading”* (Saussure, as citied in Manji, 2005) whereby the story is analysed by the reader for common textual elements such as “*imagery*”. Depictions such as, *“cliffs dived down where the sea licked greedy lips in the shadows”,* allowed me to visualise a dark and mysterious setting and thus to predict the mood and atmosphere of the story. Also, the *“stark”* differences between the two central characters create what Saussure recognises as a binary opposition. Connell emphasises the humanistic ideologies held by Rainsford over the cruel ideologies held by Zaroff. Therefore, one side of the opposition is privileged over the other (Moon, 2001). Thus I was *“inclined to accept the ideologies and values of Rainsford”* over Zaroff.

As the story is what Umberto Echo would describe as a “closed” text (Radford, 2001), in that it is ‘closed’ to a multitude of alternative readings and allows for only a small field of creative interpretation, there was a significant lack in “*puzzling symbolism and mystery*” thereby creating an unsatisfying text in terms of intellectual stimulation. This affected what Rosenblatt calls my *“aesthetic”* enjoyment of the text (Rosenblatt, 1938), in that it created little hermeneutical challenge. Unlike a “*closed”* text, an *“open”* text challenges the reader to fill gaps thus creating a more fulfilling interpretive experience. Therefore, while a structuralist approach was somewhat beneficial in helping me to determine meaning, it was limited by the scope of such a *“closed”* text.

As a result, throughout the reflective review, I mainly adopted Lye’s middle ground in that I utilised knowledge of textual elements, and my own psychological and social perspectives to illuminate meaning. Consequently, I realise that, because “*I had read numerous adventure and terror stories”*, I relied heavily on what Jauss calls the “horizons of expectations” in that I held strong preconceptions about the sequence of events which would occur throughout the text (QSA, 2010, page). I anticipated, based on my knowledge of what the genre should entail, a *“typical adventure/terror story”* that would follow a generic structure and conclude in a predicable ending.

Towards the end of my reflective review, I utilised Lye’s “psychological and social perspective” by applying what Norman Holland’s calls *“Identity Theory”*, a theory which suggests the reader actively transacts with the text to re-create their own identities by imposing their ideas and values upon the text. This theory became evident when I “*sympathised with Rainsford”* and found myself *“becoming frustrated and angry at Zaroff”*. “*As an educated and, I hope, morally sound person*” in a Judaic Christian society my *“identity”* aligned more closely with ideologies conveyed by Rainsford than Zaroff. I felt *“animosity and frustration”* towards Zaroff as his personality contradicted by own identity. As such, I created a meaning unique to my own personality and psychology. I concluded my reflective review by stating that I was in “*acceptance of Connell’s theme*”. Therefore, by accepting the ideologies of Rainsford, and rejecting those of Zaroff I am in agreement with the humanistic sentiment that values the equality of human life. I have thereby become what Iser describes as the “implied reader” (QSA 2010 p16) in that the ideologies emphasised by Connell coincide with my own.

In conclusion, whilst the textual elements of the story illuminated some meaning, the lack of a hermeneutical challenge limited the interpretive process. Thus, I found a middle ground, reader-centred approach to be the most useful as this incorporated my knowledge of the textual elements of the story, limited as they may be, but also allowed for my own psychology and social experiences to influence the meaning created.

1. **Length 1725 (1,000- 1500 allowed, quotes excluded)**

**Comments: Long intro; not quite enough on own reading style; not enough evaluation of relative merits of approaches in allowing you to make meaning i.e. usefulness and limitations of approaches; writing style a little stilted.**

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**Questions (answer before you read Task 1):**

* **Predict:** From your reading of this response, what might Task 1 be asking you to do i.e. What might the task instructions say? What might be the purpose of the task? What might the word ‘defence’ mean?
* Where might you find a text like this (context)?
* Who might the intended audience be?
* What knowledge would you need to build in order to complete the task on your own chosen story?
* What kinds of writing skills will you need to develop?

**Now read the task sheet.**

**Pre-reading: The Problem of Meaning in Literature**

Meaning is a difficult issue - how do we know what a work of literature is ‘supposed’ to mean or what its ‘real’ meaning is? There are several ways to approach this:

1. The meaning is created by the reader (reader-centred reading)
2. The meaning is created by and contained in the text itself (text-centred reading)
3. The meaning is what is **intended by the author** (author-centred reading)
4. **Discourses** construct the reader and the text (world-context centred reading)

**1. The Reader**

In the late 1960’s a school of thought emerged, based on the theories of the French philosopher Jacques Derrida, that **the text has not one true meaning but rather multiple meanings depending on the cultural perspectives of each reader**. So in reality a text’s meaning exists in the reader’s mind.

Does the meaning exist in the reader’s response, their processing or reception of the text? (Reception Theory) In a sense this is inescapable as texts are composed in order to elicit responses in the reader but:

1. Meaning is social. Language and conventions work only as shared meaning and our way of viewing the world is shared. When we read a text we are participating in social or cultural meaning making. Response is not merely an individual thing but is part of culture and history.
2. Meaning is contextual - change the context and you often change the meaning.
3. Literary texts have their own codes and practices and the more we know of them the more we can decode the text. Here reader competency plays an important role. Sophisticated responses only arise out of experience and knowledge of texts and the way they work.

**2. The Text**

Does the meaning exist in the text **(‘the words on the page’**)? There is an argument that the formal properties of the text - the grammar, the language, the imagery and so forth - contain and produce the meaning, so that any educated competent reader will inevitably come to essentially the same interpretation as any other. (**New Criticism**)

Are the same interpretations arrived at because the formal properties of the text securely encode the meaning or because all the educated readers were taught to read the formal properties in much the same way?

As a text is in a sense only ink marks on a page and as all meaning is culturally created and transferred, the argument that the meaning is in the text is not a particularly persuasive one.

The meaning is more likely in the conventions of meaning, the traditions, the cultural codes, which have been handed down so that in so far as we and other readers might be said to agree on meaning in a text that agreement would be created by common traditions and conventions of usage, practice and interpretation.

In different time periods, with different cultural perspectives (including class, gender, ethnicity, belief and world view) or with different purposes for reading, **readers can arrive at different readings of texts.**

As on the one hand a text is an historical document and on the other the meaning derived is cultural and contextual the question of whether the text ‘really means’ what it means to a particular reader can be a complex one.

**3. Authorial intention**

Does a work of literature mean **what the author intended** it to mean and if so, how can we tell? How can we gain insight into authorial intention? We could:

1. Read other works by the same author
2. Learn more about the kind of meaning found in works from that particular tradition, time and genre
3. Learn about the economic, social, religious and political contexts of the text
4. Learn about the cultural values and symbols of the time

Any text can only ‘mean’ within a set of pre-existing, socially supported ideas, symbols, images, ways of thinking and values (discourse). Texts are written and interpreted according to social norms and cultural meanings.

Why is it not always reliable to rely on authorial intention as a sole source of meaning?

1. The author’s work may have taken them in directions they did not originally foresee and developed meanings they did not intend and indeed may not recognize.
2. The works may embody cultural or symbolic meanings which are not fully clear to the author themselves
3. Authors may not be fully conscious of the motives that attend their work **(Intentional Fallacy)**

However, for our purposes knowledge of time, genre, literary movement and text context are very useful for informing our understanding of the meaning in a text but they must be used in conjunction with the evidence in the text itself, critical responses and our own response to it, to be fully effective.

**4. Discourses**

Here, the general theory is that texts are constructed within **historical, social, cultural, economic and discursive contexts** that govern what can be said and how it can be said. Text is seen as a vehicle for, and a repository of, cultural assumptions, values and preoccupations to be maintained or challenged. The reader’s role is to understand the cultural assumptions and to focus on ‘whose interest is served’. This approach to reading, which we will label the **world-context-centred approach**, encompasses, for example, Marxist, feminist and post-colonialist criticism.

Therefore, in order to understand how we ‘read’ texts, we need to consider the role of the author, the text, the reader and the context in the meaning making process.

**Resources**

Lye, John. (1996) *The Problem of Meaning in Literature*, Brock University from [www.brocku.ca/english/jlye/meaning.html](http://www.brocku.ca/english/jlye/meaning.html) (unavailable)

**View PPT ‘Problem of meaning in literature’**

**The Four Reading Approaches: Introductory Activity**

Examine the cartoon below.

**How do you interpret this cartoon? What thought processes led you to construct meaning in this way? Draw a flow chart showing the thought processes. These questions may assist.**

**Role 1 - Reader-centred:** When I look at this cartoon, what previous knowledge and experiences come to mind? Do I identify or sympathise with one character more than the other? Why? What are my expectations of this cartoon style/genre? How does this cartoon affect me emotionally?

**Role 2 -** **Text-centred:** What is each character’s motivation for saying what they do? What role do visual literacy elements such as colours, facial expression, gaze, play in your interpretation? What are some of the conventions of the satirical cartoon genre? E.g. Have irony, deadpan humour or word play been used? What elements of the representations contribute most to your understanding of the cartoon? What are the invited readings (most common) of the cartoon?

**Role 3 - Author centred:** Does the cartoonist sympathise more with the woman or the man? How do you know? Who do you think drew the illustrations? E.g. gender of cartoonist. Is the illustrator well-known? Do they have a reputation? What does the cartoon tell you about the person who designed it? What does the cartoon tell you about the values and attitudes of the society the author was writing in? How might other texts from the time reflect discourses in this text?

**Role 4 – World-context centred:** What kind of discourse is used? What kind of attitudes, values and beliefs underpin this discourse? **Whose interests** does this ideology serve? How might you read the cartoon **resistantly?**



Access teachers’ resource booklet online at QSA website.

**English Extension Literature: Introductory Thoughts**

*There’s a critical lens I’d like you to peer through. Let’s see what we encounter. (Deborah Appleman, Critical Encounters in High School English)*

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*Often literary theories change our views of a work of literature by proposing new distinctions or new categories for looking at the work. This is a bit like putting on a new set of glasses: suddenly you see things more clearly. (Stephen Bonnycastle, In Search of Authority.)*

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*Literary theory provides lenses designed to bring out what is already there but what we often miss with unaided vision. Contemporary theories highlight particular features of texts that were always there, in our line of vision, but it brings them into sharper relief. Sometimes, these are the things that we can’t afford not to see. (Deborah Appleman, Critical Encounters in High School English)*

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*The assumption is that the direct teaching of literary theory in English classes will better prepare adolescent readers to respond reflectively and analytically to literary texts, both canonical and multicultural. Contemporary literary theory allows students to read and interpret not only literary texts but their lives. As we view the dynamic world around us, literary theories can become critical lenses to guide, inform, and instruct us. (Deborah Appleman, Critical Encounters in High School English)*

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*In the past few decades, the relatively stable and predictable practice of teaching literature has undergone changes from a myriad of directions. At the prompting of scholars, practitioners, and, perhaps most important, the changing nature of students, teachers have considered and reconsidered texts, contexts, and pedagogical approaches that constitute the teaching of literature. Our canons are loose, our pedagogy is shifting, and the teaching profession seems to be challenging every assumption we have made about the teaching of literature since 1920. For example, we have considered the relationship of texts to readers, of readers to authors, of texts to theories and teachers to their students. Our profession is challenging its assumptions about our literary heritage….we also challenge the notion of a single theory, perspective or ‘truth’ about what literature we read together and how we teach it. (Deborah Appleman, Critical Encounters in High School English)*

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*Literary theory ….asks questions about how the institution of great literature works…….What makes ‘a great work’ great? Who makes the decisions about what will be taught? Why are authors grouped into certain historical periods? The answers to fundamental questions like these are often unarticulated assumptions on the part of both the professor and the students…..Literary theory is at its best when it helps us realize what we are really doing when we study literature. (Stephen Bonnycastle, In Search of Authority.)*

   