

What is a Complex Transformation?



**Tips (read – re-read – re-write – re-read)**

**The defence is persuasive: you had to intervene in the nasty base text and this is why….this is how… and this is the result.**

1. You will mainly be using **text-centred and world-context centred approaches** in this task but there is no actual need to mention those terms.
2. You could choose to transform a text with visual elements like a comic or a picture book. If you do this, you will need to deconstruct discourses and ideology of visuals as well as written text.
3. The base text just starts the whole process. It is not the main concern of the defence **so do not spend too long on invited reading** of it.
4. Also, **transformation need not be too long** – you need just enough material to refer to in your defence (where you will be explaining how you transformed the base text on microlinguistic and macrolinguistic levels). Ensure there are clear links between base text and transformed text e.g. names, plot elements, characters, behaviour. Make links obvious.
5. Make each move in the whole staged process explicit. Convince your audience about why they must be repositioned. You must clearly explain what factors motivated you to intervene. Why did you change text structures and features on macrolinguistic and microlinguistic levels? Quote from your transformed text to provide examples of changes made. Explicitly evaluate how the newly written text offers an alternative perspective.
6. Consider different ways of discussing ‘contested discursive positions’ e.g. What is **unsettling** in the text? What is there to **object to** in the text? What kind of **social injustice** is evident? What **gaps, silences, marginalization** reveal this injustice/unfairness? You are finding the ideological center of the base text and then re-centering it. What are the **ideological ‘hot spots’** in the base text? Pinpoint the **significant ideological moments**/events/characters within the base text in order to problematize its invited reading.
7. Find the specific point at which to intervene in the base text and pin it down. Don’t try to deconstruct too much of the text.
8. **Change the genre** of initializing text. Make your new genre authentic. E.g. if it is a newspaper article layout, headline, pictures etc. must be realistic. Clearly explain why you changed the genre! Justify how the textual elements of the selected genre are well-chosen by explaining the way they support the transformed text’s invited reading.
9. Make the changes in your text clearly visible – not too subtle.
10. Specifically explain how your chosen theoretical approach (feminism, Marxism, post colonialism) supports your re-writing. Quote from theorists. DO NOT run through a shopping list of theorists! 2-3 at most.

**Some useful insights and quotes from: “Balancing Reader Response and Cultural Theory and Practice” by Bill Corcoran at** <http://www.ed.psu.edu/englishpds/Articles/LiteratureStudy/Balancing%20Reader%20Response.htm> (site seems to be unavailable)

Why should we trouble ourselves about literary theory? (Raymond Selden 1985)

(1985, 2) asks; "*Can't we simply wait for the fuss to die down?"* Selden's answers point immediately to the major concerns of this chapter. First, he says, "*an emphasis on theory tends to undermine reading as an innocent activity.*" Only when notion's like the "realism" of a novel, or the "sincerity" of a poem are challenged, or when the very category of literature itself is, problematized, will readers' encounters with texts become both more responsive and more responsible. For without engaging in a reflective critique of alternative positions, teacher‑readers will fail to recognize how their most deeply held beliefs are coded in existing discourses, in particular ways of talking about the world, that they have long since naturalized.

Selden explains the problem this way:

Alternatively, readers may believe that theories and concepts will only deaden the spontaneity of their response to literary works. They may forget that 'spontaneous' discourse about literature is unconsciously dependent on the theorizing of older generations. Their talk of 'feeling', 'imagination', 'genius', 'sincerity', and 'reality' is full of dead theory which is sanctified by time and has become part of the language (lie) of common sense. (3)

Read the full essay or similar for insights into the theorists’ justification for wishing to subvert ideologies in texts and reasons for courses such as this being taught in schools. **What is a COMPLEX TRANSFORMATION?**

**This is a university course outline from Griffith University**. Note that this is pretty much your IA2 (Greer Johnson was the lecturer) except that their transformed text has to be multimedia. There may be some clearer explanations and good quotes in this. See if it helps you understand better. I have bolded sections of interest. (Isn’t it interesting that what you are doing here is also a university course and theirs is actually easier …..) If you want a better looking version, go to the website.

<http://www.griffith.edu.au/courseoutlines/OLD/cls/2006/s1/1043CLS_3061_CO.pdf>

**Assignment Item 2:**

Narrative Transformation In Hypertext

Part (i): You are required to produce a narrative transformation of a scene from an Enid Blyton novel of your choice. The scene from the novel will constitute the base text from which you will produce your transformation ~~in the form of a web page using multimedia and hypermedia~~.

Your transformation must demonstrate a shift in discourses and reader positioning away from an invited reading of the base text. **For example:**

* **you might shift from a patriarchal discourse that you read in your selected text to a feminist discourse, in your transformed text, through the inclusion of alternative characters (male/female, young/old), settings, sounds, music, pictures and dialogue.**
* **you might shift from a discriminatory discourse to an acceptance of racial differences and cultural diversity, such as that evident in post-colonial texts.**

Of course, you could make a number of discursive shifts at once. In producing the transformation you can change the base text (e.g. from a novel to a play) and add a range of genres (letters, newspaper or feature article, telephone conversations, text messages, emails), as means of repositioning the reader within another discourse.

**This approach to textual analysis constitutes a complex transformation in that it aims to change the way a reader has been positioned by a part of the base text (this means taking a world-context approach to reading/writing). It is important that you do not merely invert the discourses, for example, taking a feminist text and turning it simply into an anti-feminist text. Any changes to the language of the base text (practical shifts), or new language or literary features introduced, must reposition readers to re-read the base text in a way that encourages them to support the shift in discourses you present in your transformation** (see \*Hourihan, M.,1997, pp. 203-235).

To help get started on your transformation you might use the following steps as a guide:

(i)

Re-read “Understanding textual intervention: From reading practices to writing practices”, by Johnson

(2001) in your Course Guide, making sure you are familiar with the concepts reading with, across and against the text and how these operate in different reading approaches;

(ii)

Read the whole of the base text and make notes about how you are being positioned to read with the text and accept the position it offers you “naturally”. Think of this as the path of least resistance that the text positions you to take in making meaning of the text;

(iii)

Choose a section of the text (a chapter or event) that you wish to transform. Your choice here will probably be instigated by something in the text that you wish to resist;

(iv)

Using the concept of hypertext, offer the reader a different reading pathway that reads against the base text. This will mean adding a section that hyperlinks out from the base text. Your additional text could be hyperlinked first, for example, to a picture or word in the chosen section of the base text so that when the reader clicks onto it s/he is taken along the different, resistant reading path. An early example of non-linear reading patterns is demonstrated in “choose your own adventure” novels and Cool School by John Marsden. Examples of different endings that exist in the film genre are available in Sliding Doors, Memento and Run Lola Run. These examples encourage the reader to read the text differently but it is up to you as reader of your own transformation to explain if and how you read resistantly because of this change;

(v)

Your new sections of text must position the reader differently, inviting the reader to resist the reading position offered in the base text. The sections of additional text must include a mixture of genres (e.g., letters, telephone calls and reports). Any changes in language that you make to the original text must be done to effect a change in the positioning of the reader.

Part (ii) In a separate section called a defense you are now required to justify/argue how your transformation invites the reader to take up a resistant reading of the base text. This section of the work must be written as an argumentative essay in a maximum of 1500 words.

Your defense is a critical analysis that discusses carefully how you transformed the base text/s in a complex manner and must explain the following interrelated points:

* The specific reading practices that enable you to direct the reader to different ways of thinking about the topic/s and themes that are available when reading your selected texts (you need to discuss how you have read with the text first);
* The shift/s in particular discourses that you have made (from the base text/s) in order to produce a complex rather than a simple transformation. These shifts are related to your understanding of how you wish to encourage the reader to move from accepting an invited reading of the base text to taking up a resistant reading of the base text;
* The practical shifts (e.g., subject matter, relationship between the reader and the writer/s, mode, visual and verbal language and literary devices, multi-generic and structural changes) that you have used to encourage a reader to take up a different position.

You will be given specific assistance in the latter part of the course regarding the construction of a webpage. Models of this task will be demonstrated. You should also plan to learn how to construct a webpage from your own resources e.g. Internet sites.

Your transformation or re-writing of sections of a base text should demonstrate your abilities as a reader and writer of literature for children and/or young adults. Even though you have borrowed ideas from other writers in the field, you must not simply construct a piece of writing by using sections of the unacknowledged work of other writers. This constitutes plagiarism.

Remember, this is a university assignment but it is very like IA2.

So – to re-cap:

You need to make a discursive shift; that is, change the dominant discourse in which characters are operating which you feel is underpinned by socially unjust ideology (the world view, cultural assumptions, beliefs and values that the text promotes and invites the reader to endorse). Discourses are ways of being mobilized by the characters in thought, speech and action. The discourses of the focal character (e.g. Cinderella) are generally privileged in the world of the text. The competing discourses of the other characters may be marginalized (ugly sisters).

The discursive construction of character is the tool which promotes the text’s ideology (reading of the world). Textual ideologies are promoted by inviting the reader to endorse the discursive positioning of the focal character (e.g. Cinderella is valued for her beauty and passivity; ugliness is depicted in mean characters. The invited reading suggests that it is only natural that the Prince desires Cinderella solely based on her beauty). To subvert the textual ideology of the base text, you will need to consider how you will construct the discourses of your focal character so that an oppositional reading of your base text occurs. (E.g. What characteristics would a feminist like to see developed in the focal character, Cinderella, which make her more of a woman and less of a damaging beauty myth stereotype? Alternatively, it could be the ugly sisters who are transformed.)

It is a good idea to change the genre and setting at the same time as changing the discourse. This is because modern readers have great familiarity with the fairy tale and comic book genres you are likely to transform and have developed well-established predictive, conventional reading strategies with regard to them. You need to disrupt these expectations in order to generate a new invited reading. Also, fairy tales and comic books are closed texts, often ending with a clear ‘happy ever after’ resolution, in which readers are not invited to question the ideological assumptions of the text. You need to unsettle the reader’s routine and familiar expectations.