**Notes - Gut feeling – incarcerating human beings is cruel.**

**Ask: What is the central issue or concept? What idea/theme is constructed in relation to this concept?**

**Concept: imprisonment, crime and punishment; Idea: loss of freedom and privacy have a powerful impact on the human psyche**

**T-C Strategies** (choose only the most relevant to your reading)

1. **generic conventions** — How does the text conform to or challenge the conventions associated with its genre to communicate key ideas or themes? Short story – in medias res – flat/undulating narrative structure with shock ending
2. **binary oppositions** — Are there key binary oppositions that underpin and structure the text? Who or what is privileged and marginalized? How do these binary oppositions underpin representations and ideologies reinforced in the text? A binary opposition can be treated as a structuring principle that stabilizes meaning in the text, or as a false dichotomy whose instability undermines the unity of the text. free/imprisoned, dream/reality, outside/inside, privacy/exposure These stabilize the meaning of a text whose main purpose is to expose the mental harm caused by incarceration.
3. **narration —** How is the text narrated to position the audience? Consider how point of view (e.g. first person vs. third person), focalisation and voice position the reader in relation to perspectives, ideas and reliability of the characters or narrator in the text. Third person limited omniscient – the reader readily identifies with the prisoner
4. **symbols and metaphors** — What are some key symbols and/or metaphors that significantly contribute to meaning in the text? Consider symbols and metaphors that are repeated and/or developed in a text to shape representations and ideas in the text. The cell door symbolizes the finality of imprisonment, bars on the window symbolize imprisonment, metaphors and – “*an eye without a man attached to it*”, “*next voyage of discovery*” , metonymy – the “*eye”* represents the invasive guard,
5. **stylistic features and literary techniques** — How are stylistic features and literary techniques used to shape meaning? Consider how the author has used - dialogue

- imagery and figurative devices – verisimilitude – closeness to life – very detailed, unembellished descriptions

- characterization - anonymous, crime unknown – universality of character – everyman figure – *“according to his social status”,* could be any one of us, wears a suit so middle class? Political prisoner?

- text structures – some complications but structure a little flat – this reflects the tedium of the situation

- rhetorical devices. Lists, repetition for emphasis e.g. “*It falls – it rises – it falls – it rises.”*

**W-C-C Strategies** (choose only the most relevant to your reading)

1. representations — How does the text construct representations of people, groups, places or ideas?
2. ideology — What cultural beliefs, values and attitudes that reinforce particular power structures in society underpin the text? How does the text challenge or reinforce dominant worldviews?
3. cultural ideas — Consider how the text upholds or resists prevalent cultural ideas related to topics such as race, gender, class, sexuality, age and the environment.

**Theme statement**: Drastic and dramatic situations such as being imprisoned bring people face to face with fundamental issues of physical and mental survival.

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| --- | --- |
| **Introduction:** name text, name author, name genre, identify central idea, explain content | The **central idea** presented in **Arthur Koestler’s** short narrative “***The Cell*”** is that drastic and dramatic situations such as **being imprisoned bring human beings face to face with fundamental issues of physical and mental survival**. The narrative descriptively charts the thought processes of a newly incarcerated **everyman figure** as he navigates the dimensions and specifics of his cell. His experiences demonstrate that **loss of freedom and privacy have a powerful impact on the human psyche.** |
| **Para 1: Binary oppositions** | The **binary oppositions**, underpinning the meaning of the story, promote the **ideology** that man’s inhumanity to man, in the form of involuntary incarceration, **causes mankind untold suffering**. A man who has been **imprisoned** undoubtedly wishes he was **free**. The finality of his situation is emphasized through the description of a “*four inches thick*” handle less door “*which cannot be shut except by being slammed to*”. In addition, **exposure** to an all-seeing “*eye*” at the door deprives him of his **privacy**. Koestler uses **metonymy** to depict an eye which *“goggles at him glassily, its pupil unbelievably large”* makinghis “*heart stop beating”* from short-lived fear.This imprisoned solitude allows for an intensely **psychological perspective** to emerge.  |
| **Para 2: Narration** | Focus on the detailed thought processes of the newly arrived inmate emphasizes the degree of his **metal suffering**. This **internal focalisation** allows the reader to vicariously experience the man’s fluctuating mood and thus to identify and sympathize with his plight. The adoption of a **detached, third person point of view** allows the author to suggest that his anonymous *“newcomer*” could be any one of us. He makes “*worthy resolutions”* and “*pulls a humorous face*” only to fall into “*apathy and depression*”. His mood *“…falls – it rises – it falls – it rises.”* His crime is unknown, he reacts to his lack of paper “*according to his social status*” and he follows a “*stereotyped line of thought*.” This is a **universalized prisoner** whose thought processes are endlessly echoed across the globe. For any man**, loss of physical freedom is a psychological travesty.**  |
| **Para 3: Symbols, metaphors, stylistic devices and literary techniques.**  | The author aims for a high degree of **verisimilitude** in his description of the man’s **psychological fluctuations** in order to convey his **anguish**. Under the surveillance of the ghoulish eye, the “*prisoner takes a deep breath and presses his hand against the left side of his chest”* after his *“heart had stopped beating”* from naked **fear**.The **symbolic** door is described through **auditory imagery** and **simile**; it “*crashes shut as if a shot has been fired*”. The **evocative** statement that *“prison doors are echoless and bleak”* effectivelyreflects the despondent **mood** of the protagonist*.* Seconds later *“he grasps the full reality of being behind a door which is locked from the outside, grasps it in all its searing, devastating intensity”.* He momentarily deadens his anguish *“by pacing up and down, making plans*” and **metaphorically**, “*weaving illusions*”. He sporadically believes that “*everything will be alright once he is free*”. The author employs **a list** to iterate what he is missing from his normal life: he “*has neither wallet nor handkerchief, cigarettes nor matches in his pocket*”. The **metaphorical** “*barometer*” of his mood plummets again. The reader is **positioned** to empathize with the prisoner and to believe that this is how any man, including ourselves, would react to such a soul-destroying circumstance.  |
| **Para 4: Representation and Ideology** | The **representation** of the actual jail cell repulses the reader in its **level of deprivation**. It is extremely inhospitable, denying the inmate the basic necessities of civilized human comfort. He has no paper on which to write, there is a toilet chain “*which refuses to function*” and water which is turned off at “*certain times in the day*”. The bed is hard and the metal chair is welded to the table. When he tries to “*pull himself up by the iron bars of the window and look out”*, he fails. He is completely cut off from the outside world. The author seeks to expose the lack of basic human rights, of everyday necessities which those on the outside of a prison cell take for granted. The solitude of the cell enables the text to be all the more intensely psychological. The story challenges **commonly held worldviews** on crime and punishment, suggesting that such **a loss of liberty is dehumanizing**.  |
| **Conclusion** | Koestler **challenges a dominant world view** regarding crime and punishment, which values the punishment of the prisoner as a deterrent. His underpinning ideology is much more humane. He acknowledges, in minute detail, the psychological torture a prisoner undergoes in trying to adapt to the confines of a cell. He suggests that this traumatizing confinement is barbaric. He stresses the point by climactically noting that after quite a range of oscillating thoughts and emotions, the prisoner has only been in the cell for “*exactly three minutes*”.  |

Underline t-c strategies, circle w-c-c strategies. Check: does each topic sentence refer to the thesis statement? What improvements could be made to this essay?