**Text-centred Reading of “Worth the Wait” – developing a central idea**

**Possible introductory paragraph:**

A central theme running through the short horror fiction text, “Worth the Wait”, is the simple idea that justified revenge can be sweet. The ghostly narrator fulfils one of the key conventions of the horror fiction genre that often involve supernatural beings who observe their enemies from the afterlife in order to plot retaliation. In this text, it is implied that the female murder victim has a moral right to exact revenge given the heinous crime committed against her. She is, however, stuck in the ‘waiting room’ and it is unclear if and when she will be able to seek redress for the crime.

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**Use synonyms** rather than repeat the same word over and over when developing a central idea.

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**A brief reading of “Worth the Wait” using text-centred approaches**

Justified revenge is sweet – ‘*revenge is a dish best served cold’*. It is clear that this well-known saying is the **meaning** that the reader is **invited** to accept in this **‘supernatural’ narrative** whose **purpose** is predominantly to thrill and to entertain. The narrative begins in **medias res** with a **climactic** murder; the victim of the crime is the unlikely **first person narrator** who recounts the **series of events** from the perspective of death. The **focalization** on the victim, together with the stable good/evil **binary,** increases the **reader’s identification** with, and sympathy, for the girl. She is a seemingly innocent victim who has been cold-bloodedly murdered by her boyfriend in an **isolated forest setting.** He pumps “*his leg up and down”* and vigorously *“shakes”* a fallen tree she is balanced precariously on, despite her screams. The audience is **positioned** to abhor the perpetrator who only “*smirks*” while sending her to smash her head “*on the boulders strewn haphazardly around the stream”*. The continued use of negatively connoted **figurative language** further constructs the idea of his villainy. For example, **two similes**, “*He crawled like a spider down the side of the gully*”, abandoning the dead girl “*like an unwanted pet*” **position the reader** to be repulsed by the crime and its perpetrator. After stowing the body under a tree, he “*proceeded to wash the incriminating blood off his hands and from the rocks*” in a **symbolic attempt** to wash away his guilt. This may be a Biblical **allusion** to Pilate washing the blood from his hands after his decision to have Jesus crucified. The reader is heartened to discover that the victim still has some agency, that she is biding her time, with other ‘ghosts’, in “*the waiting room”* before taking her revenge. The story’s title, “*Worth the Wait*” supports this **invited reading**.

This is a very compact reading. You could extend this to 800-1000 words by devoting a paragraph to each text-centred reading strategy (generic conventions, binary oppositions, method of narration, symbols and metaphor, stylistic features and literary techniques) though an integrated approach is preferred. **TIP – begin first body paragraph with thorough analysis of binaries. This analysis should help you construct meaning.**

You could further extend your response by applying world-context-centred methodology to the narrative.

**World-context-centred reading:**

• **representations — How does the text construct representations of people, groups, places or ideas?**

*How is evaluative language, imagery and figurative language used to represent the male?*

The reader is positioned to abhor the actions of the murderous male. Is this mythologizing of toxic masculinity a fair representation? *How are language features used to represent the anonymous woman? Is she depicted as merely a helpless victim? Does this perpetuate the idea of women as being passive and submissive?*  *The story also represents ideas about the nature of violence in heterosexual relationships, suggesting that it is usually the man who is at fault. Note the way that the characters are unnamed, suggesting that they representations of mythologized norms.*

• **ideology — What cultural beliefs, values and attitudes that reinforce particular power structures in society underpin the text?**

*This story perpetuates the belief that men are predatory and that women are innocent victims.* How does the text **challenge or reinforce** dominant worldviews? *The narrative reinforces dominant worldviews about the toxic nature of masculinity.*

• **cultural ideas — Consider how the text upholds or resists prevalent cultural ideas related to topics such as - race - gender - class - sexuality - age - the environment.**

*The narrative is underpinned by simple good/evil, male/female binaries, criminal/victim binaries. These uphold the idea that men are a threat to women*. *A resistant reader might view the binary as a violent hierarchy or as a false dichotomy whose instability undermines the unity of the text; that is, the binary privileges the woman and good to the detriment of man and evil. If the binary is reversed, the resistant reader might challenge the negative stereotyping of the male as being unjust.*

**A unified Reading of Worth the Wait – supported by text structures and language features**

Justified revenge is sweet – ‘*revenge is a dish best served cold’*. It is clear that this well-known saying is the **meaning** that the reader is **invited** to accept in this **‘supernatural’ narrative** whose **purpose** is predominantly to thrill and to entertain. The narrative describes an horrific and cold blooded murder perpetrated by a ‘boyfriend’ on his innocent and unsuspecting girlfriend. The narrative begins **in medias res** with the **climax** occurring early in the story when the victim plunges to her death from a rotten log suspended in the isolated forest setting over a rocky stream. The unexpected **denouement** reveals that the victim has assumed a ghostly form which is intent upon revenge. The reader is **invited** to reject the usual moral and legal i**deology** related to taking personal revenge for murder, in order to side with the victim’s perspective.

The **binaries** good/evil, innocent/guilty and victim/perpetrator privilege the first term and obviously position the reader to sympathize with the vengeful deceased. The boyfriend displays vicious cunning when he entices the girl with a one year anniversary “*romantic idea for a bushwalk*” which was “*strangely uncharacteristic of him”.* As the victim *“saw no reason to tell anyone*” where she was going, “*no-one suspected a thing*.” The evil boyfriend is **represented as being** a premeditated killer who laughs in response to the girl’s screams and continues “*to vigorously shake the fallen log”* until she falls to her death. The isolated forest **setting** contributes to the **tension** in the narrative. The reader **suspends moral judgement** in order to side with the victim even though her revenge, if taken, will be unlawful.

The victim of the crime is the unlikely **first person narrator** who recounts the **series of events** from the perspective of death. The **focalization** on the victim, together with the **binaries,** increases the **reader’s identification** with, and sympathy, for the girl. She is a seemingly innocent victim who has been cold-bloodedly murdered by her boyfriend where she is far from any possible assistance**.** The reader is particularly shocked and **positioned** to align with the victim’s perspective at the moment before her death when she “*heard the loud CRACK of the log”* and “*felt it through the soles”* of her feet. Here **auditory and tactile imagery** are used in order to enhance this visceral experience for the reader in what, after all, is a story of horror and the supernatural. The reader is encouraged to accept the unlawful desire of the wraith-like girlfriend for revenge. The further gut-felt **image** of the “*violent thud of*” her “*skull dashing itself on the boulders”* cements the reader’s antipathy towards the perpetrator of the heinous crime.

The continued use of negatively connoted **figurative language** further constructs the idea of the boyfriend’s villainy and justifies the girl’s desire for retribution. For example, **two similes**, “*He crawled like a spider down the side of the gully*”, abandoning the dead girl “*like an unwanted pet*” **position the reader** to be repulsed by the crime and its perpetrator. After stowing the body under a tree, he “*proceeded to wash the incriminating blood off his hands and from the rocks*” in a **symbolic attempt** to wash away his guilt. This may be a Biblical **allusion** to Pilate washing the blood from his hands after his decision to have Jesus crucified. The reader’s repulsion is enhanced by this widely known Biblical reference.

Various rhetorical devices also contribute to positioning the reader to agree with the girl’s righteous ideology. The application of the rule of three in **the complication phase** of the rapidly moving narrative enhances hostility of the reader towards the culprit in that he “*pushed, and teased, and laughed”* forcing the girl toback “*out onto the trembling remnant of a forest giant”.* The hyperbolic description of the accident, “…*my skull dashing itself on the boulders”* causes a shocked reaction while the use of short, emphatic sentences as in “*But there was me. I knew.*” point to the resolute nature of the victim. The use of rhetorical questions like, “*What do you think someone would do if they were in that situation*?” provokes thought in the reader regarding the moral actions the offender failed to take.

This narrative obviously exposes power imbalances within **gender discourse**. The narrative is underpinned by **an ideology** related to the nature of violence in heterosexual relationships, suggesting that it is the man who is usually at fault. The **characters are unnamed** suggesting that they are representative of **mythologized norms.** The reader is positioned to abhor the actions of the murderous male who is a **mythologized** version of extreme masculine toxicity. In this **male archetype**, the male is cruelly active while the female is a passive onlooker. The narrative perpetuates the belief that men are predatory and that women are innocent victims*.* The reader is heartened to discover that the victim still has some agency, that she is biding her time, with other ‘ghosts’, in “*the waiting room”* before taking her revenge. This disrupts the normalized view of woman as being passive and submissive. The story’s title, “*Worth the Wait*” supports this **invited reading**.

The narrative is thus **underpinned by the idea** that men are a threat to women. A resistant reader might view the male/female **binary as a violent hierarchy** or as **a false dichotomy** whose instability undermines the unity of the text; that is, the **binary privileges** the woman to the detriment of the man. If the binary is reversed, the resistant reader might challenge the **negative stereotyping** of the male as being unjust. This reader, however, would find it difficult to deny the atrocious nature of a crime in which the criminal’s face was flooded with relief when he realized that *“no-one had witnessed what he had done”*. This is despite the fact that “*his girlfriend lay on the forest floor, lifeless, blood pooling around her crumpled form.”* Revenge seems justified.

940 words

**Can you identify the sections in which world-context-centred reading strategies were applied?**