

Readers, Writers, Students, Critics: Responding to Literature in sixth form/senior high school

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Workshop 1: Creative Criticism

How do our students understand what it means to be a critic? This workshop explores ways of helping students to think about what the study of English Literature is about, what literary criticism and literary theory are, and the various debates about value and purpose which lie behind such questions.

Workshop 2: Critical Creativity

How do our students understand what it means to be a literary writer? This workshop explores ways of helping students to think about what writers do and how and why they do it by getting into the writer's mind by exploring the writer's bag of tricks and techniques, and by experimenting with their own writing.

Data from Interviews with two students

Having established Matt's and Billy's general feelings about the module, I moved to a discussion of *The Waste Land*, the first set text of the module (studied in week three). I was curious to know what the students had made of the text, given that many had probably never encountered poetry of its kind before, and they had had to read the text completely independently. In particular, I was keen to find out what they felt they had learnt from or about the text in the context of this module, and if they were able to place it in a meaningful way in the framework of the course as a whole.

- R [...] OK. So tell me about *The Waste Land*. Have you done anything like *The Waste Land* before?
- B No, it seemed really scattered and sort of confusing.
- R What sort of poetry had you done at A Level?
- B First world war poetry, which I enjoyed...
- R So what did you think of what [the Head of Department] was saying in his lecture about Eliot having written *The Waste Land* shortly after the first world war poetry, but that it was obviously very different? Did you find that – his explanation of the relationship between the first world war poetry and what Eliot was writing interesting?
- B To be honest, I didn't really think about it very much – I mean I do remember that he said it was written after the first world war, but I didn't really... I mean the thing was that with the first world war poetry, you knew what was going on because there was only one subject, whereas TS Eliot was writing from his head... you know what I mean ... you could analyse the war poetry a lot easier...
- R What do you mean by 'he was writing from his head'?
- B I dunno really – I mean like Wilfred Owen wrote from what he saw, and what he believed this whole thing was, sort of, about... whereas TS Eliot's writing about his own thoughts, and subjects that it's harder to ...
- R Do you feel that you're expected to like the literature that's set?
- B Um, yeah, to a certain extent, I suppose...
- R Do you like it?
- B Well, I didn't really get into *The Waste Land*... Othello I've always enjoyed, I thought it was a really good play... that's it – what else are we doing? Oh I've read a bit of *Frankenstein* which seemed quite good... but I've seen the film first
- R And the first world war poetry that you did at A Level – you like that, did you?
- B Yeah
- R Can I ask you what 'liking literature' means to you? Does it mean that you would go away and read more of the same, or similar?
- B I would read more of the first world war poetry. I wouldn't really go out of my way to do it, but if I was looking for a book in the library and I came across one, I might read a couple out of interest – but I wouldn't go out of my way...
- R So, with a text like *The Waste Land*, I mean in the seminar, Julie [the lecturer] said something like that when she first read it, she thought it was really amazing and she'd never read anything like it, and she wanted to find out more about it, and really get into it.... Did you feel at all the same way about it?
- B No – it didn't really strike me like that – but I don't know if I read the first few lines and found it a bit confusing and my brain sort of went, well that's not that interesting – I don't sort of get it...
- R Do you feel –going back to the question of whether you're expected to like it ...
- B I just feel that they expect us to know it...As English uni students, they sort of expect us to understand it straight away...

It seems clear from this that Billy lacked a clear view of what he might learn from the text, and how he might learn it. This might be partially related to his lack of familiarity with this *type* of text, as well as his lack of familiarity with the text itself; certainly his comments suggest that he finds it easier to know what to do with more straightforward narrative or discursive texts. What he identifies as 'analysis' of these texts seems to be an account of the author's intentions or probable meanings (relatively accessible from a reading of Wilfred Owen, but not of T.S. Eliot) and he seems to have few resources for understanding textual production and interpretation in broader contexts. In asking about whether Billy liked the poetry, I was trying to approach his response to the text from a more aesthetic angle, in order to find out whether he could locate it in a different mode of reading, but his reluctance to engage with this question suggested that he might have difficulty in, for instance, seeing the ambiguity of the text as valuable or interesting in itself.

Matt, on the other hand, was highly receptive to the ambiguity of the poem, and understood that that might be part of its effect, and some of the implications for interpretation:

- R How did you feel about *The Waste Land* as a literary text and what was your reaction to it, and the way you covered it as well?
- M Um, I thought it was good that they didn't try and suggest any very specific ideas about it, that we weren't limited in our interpretation or told that we had to look at it in a certain way because it's so obscure really – it was interesting, but the things they focused on were different from the things I'd expected them to and

- perhaps the ones that struck me as more interesting, so I don't know if that was just because of differences in interpretation or what...
- R Just thinking about the text as a text that you read, rather than a text to study in class, how did you feel about it?
- M Well again it was just interesting really – you almost have to hold back when you're reading it so that you don't try and read too much into it, and go off in all sorts of fanciful ideas in all sorts of different directions – it's quite easy to do that, really. It was interesting reading the notes, too, and realising that they were quite obscure too, and reading it and thinking that maybe it wasn't meant to be interpreted in that sort of way at all. It just ... interests me, makes you think.
- R So you're drawing an opposition between reading something and reading things into it, and reading things just to see what effect it has on you... Do you think that's how it's meant to be read...? How is it meant to be read?
- M I really wouldn't like to say... just because so many people disagree. I mean there's the idea of authorial intent, and then there not being any intent, the intentional fallacy, so it just leaves it – you can't say either way. It's interesting that with the introduction of these theories we seem to understand less because nothing can be clear-cut.
- R That's interesting. Did you like *The Waste Land*?
- M I suppose so. I don't dislike it. I'm just trying to think of a situation in which I'd think to read it...

From here, I was able to engage him in a discussion about himself as reader and student in relation to the possible original audience for the poem, in an attempt to see to what extent he could conceptualise the various contexts of textual production and consumption:

- R Is it something that could be enjoyable as a pure read, that you might just pick up and read it and enjoy it?
- M I don't know – I don't think it's the sort of thing I'd read before bed, because you'd just sit there thinking, but what about that, what does he mean by that? - I suppose so, especially if you're in that kind of mood – you might even find solace in it!
- R Do you think anyone read it for pleasure or enjoyment – I mean, who would have read it when it was originally written?
- M I don't know – I suppose it could have embodied the spirit of the time, about the war and so on – disenchanted people, perhaps.
- R So do you think it would have made more 'sense' to people reading at the time?
- M Possibly – I mean maybe I'm just too optimistic – perhaps that adds several layers of obscurity to it, that we don't think the same way.
- R OK, and going back to the question of who do you think would have read it?
- M Um, specifically, I don't know – probably people who would have been revolutionaries if they'd lived in France in 1780 –
- R What do you mean?
- M Well, going back to disenchanted people, I think they must have felt that it was time for a regime change or something...
- R OK, so you're saying that it potentially has a great deal of political significance?
- M Possibly in that it's politicians that are responsible for the state of the affairs, and so if that's the state the world's in, it must be their fault. In that respect – I can't really think of anything which is specifically targeted but.
- R So sticking with this question of who read it, you say possibly people with revolutionary ideas. Can you be a bit more specific about who might come across such a poem, what kind of people might come across or pick up such a poem, how they might be exposed to it?
- M (Pause). It all depends on... what was the date... 20s / 30s ... I can just imagine flappers running round... surely that would be the audience? The wealthy and educated, and in their social activities they were against the authorities of the time – it's not something I know a lot about though.
- R What makes you feel that the people with access to it would be educated and wealthy?
- M Just because that's traditionally been the audience of poetry and high culture – that's who it appeals to.

Matt comes across as intellectually curious and motivated. Here we can perhaps see him mobilising a set of areas of knowledge to apply to his thinking about *The Waste Land* – especially knowledge about history and politics (in particular, perhaps, ideas from the course on European revolutions which he was also following during this term); we have already seen Matt's ability to transfer understandings in this way, as well as his preparedness to take risks in discussion in seminars. His comments about the intentional fallacy suggest that he has also been doing some background reading beyond the set texts (and indeed he comments later in the interview that he has found *The English Studies Book* useful as an accessible source for the assimilation of some complex ideas, and that he has been referring to a literary dictionary at home.)

Developing Student Response in Advanced Literature Courses

I. Plan opportunities to introduce students to a wide range of texts and ideas in literature, e.g.

- Introduce students to a range of texts and examples of language use from a range of contexts, forms and genres, and discuss what is learnt from these. *When teaching poetry, discuss what poetry is and how it originated, show students poetic language and forms from a variety of periods, get them to think about who reads poetry and why. Teach the elements of poetic and narrative form.*
- Look at the way literature is represented in the media. Discuss questions to do with the literary canon and literary value with them. Give them short critical essays or extracts from longer ones to read and discuss. Plan short 'literary topics' between set texts *Why is Shakespeare so important? Was he really a genius? Is the Da Vinci Code bad literature? Should all school students have to study Shakespeare?*
- Create connections between ideas about literature and ideas about language, culture, politics, art, etc. *What is literary language? How is it different from normal language? What is literature and how is it different from the non-literary? What are the connections between literature, art and music? Between high culture and popular culture?*
- Help students to understand the parameters and frameworks of literary study. *Build in independent exploration of the literature section of the library. What kinds of things count as literary study? How do references and bibliographies work? How do editions of literary works work? How can you tell whether material on the internet is authoritative?*
- Don't forget multi-cultural, international perspectives. *All A Level subjects should prepare students for a globalised, multi-cultural, post-colonial world. Use some literature from the post-colonial world, literature in translation, literature in dialect.*

2. Develop a sense of the student as critic, and the many different ways in which texts are created, understood, valued and interpreted, e.g.

- Be realistic about **students' own cultural values and interests**. Allow themselves to distance themselves from the canon as presented in class and to understand the value of approaching those texts as a critic rather than necessarily as a 'lover of literature'. Ask *'why is this text in the classroom?' What can we learn from this text? How does this kind of text relate to students' own cultural interests?*
- Help students to understand that **texts have a life outside the classroom**, outside education. In order to understand a text, students **MUST** understand this. *Who / what kind of people read the text now / read the text when it was originally published? Why was it / has it continued to be considered important? What kinds of things have critics said about it? Under what conditions was it first read/performed? (NB particularly drama's life in the theatre.)*

- Help students to understand the **motivations and craft** of the writer (and actor / director / publisher etc) , and how writers work within a tradition and cultural milieu. Let them hear, see and read writers' voices: *Why do poets write poetry? What is the difference between poetry and pop music? What drives a playwright or novelist? Why do they write the kind of thing they write? Is the voice of the poem the same as the voice of the poet?*
- Help students to understand the **processes of interpretation**. *What is the role of the teacher in interpreting a text in the classroom? Does the teacher have all the answers? What kind of answers does the teacher have? What is the role of York notes? What kind of answers are acceptable?*
- Help students to focus on the **textuality** of texts by encouraging greater attention to language, style, structure, form, genre, narrative and the way these things *represent and manipulate* our sense of reality.

3. **Encourage independent learning habits, student choice, and the development of the student voice, e.g.**

- Sometimes set tasks that ask students to apply what they have learnt in a context where they have to work independently, or in groups: e.g. model essay-writing by using one whole-class example, but allow students to choose their own essay topics, and ensure that all students write on something different so that they have to apply what they've learnt independently.
- Sometimes allow students their own choice of texts, or to find texts to bring into class for a particular exercise. Encourage independent choice or exploration of critical texts or literary topics. Devote time to exploring ways forward with individual students in workshop sessions.
- Students can explore their own personal voices and gain understanding of the creativity of the writer through creative writing and performance tasks, and through preparing topics to present to the class. Writing commentaries on what they have done encourages them to reflect on their own learning processes and frameworks.
- It is often a good strategy to allow students to read whole texts independently before beginning to work through them in class. This enables students to experience the whole text as a work of art, and to engage in open discussion about the entirety of a text before the teacher begins to mould and shape their experience of it.
- Frequently withhold information from students until they have discussed their own responses and posed their own questions. It is vital that they should not see the teacher as the sole repository of meaning.

KNOWLEDGE ABOUT LITERATURE

NARRATIVE

- NB Narrative is **not** just an element of prose writing – also verse; and narrative structures are found in prose fiction, poetry and drama
 - Narrative is also found in prose non-fiction: compare with *argument*.

GENRE

A very slippery term, but needs exploring. Can refer to:

- Fiction, non-fiction
 - Poetry, the Novel, the Short Story, Drama
 - Cross-genre genres, eg Gothic, Pastoral
- Sub-genres within a genre: eg Tragedy / Comedy in Drama, Sci-fi etc in Fiction

FORM, STRUCTURE, STYLE, etc

Often best taught through exposure to a range of short texts and extracts within the main genres (Poetry, Drama, the Novel). Ideas can then be applied to and understood more firmly in set texts.

KEY CONCEPTS

- Narrative Voice, Narrative Viewpoint/Perspective (esp. prose)
- Narrative Structure, Narrative Time (drama, poetry, prose)
 - Poetic Form
- Dramatic Purpose, Dramatic Structure

LITERARY LANGUAGE

- NB Metaphor and simile are NOT only features of poetry
 - The definition of 'literary' language is highly problematic (as is the definition of literature) – cf the creativity of everyday language, and of non-literary language
- The definitions of prose and poetry are **not** straightforward. 'Poetic' language often used in prose, etc. This needs exploring
- NB The two main forms of writing are prose and verse. (Drama can be either). This needs discussing.

CONTEXT AND INTERPRETATION

Context does not only mean the specific historical background of a specific text.

It also means:

- Placing a text in terms of broad literary concepts such as narrative, genre, form, and the broad history of language and literature (e.g. the origins of poetry, the origins of drama, the rise of the novel, modernism.)
 - Understanding the craft and motivations of writers.
- Understanding the roles of reader, audience, student, teacher in consuming and interpreting texts
- Understanding some of the values implicit in literature and literary texts, and in literary study.
- Understanding some of the relationships between literature, politics, culture, language and society

All of this eventually leads to theory....

INTRODUCING LITERARY THEORY

‘Literary theory is a catch-all term for a huge range of new and different ways of reading and interpreting texts, reflecting the different concerns and ideas of a very wide range of people... [It] encourages us to think about how we interpret’ (Robert Eaglestone, 2000: *Doing English*)

I: Asking questions about literature

In groups, discuss the questions below. These questions represent some of the underlying issues of literary theory

A. WHAT IS LITERATURE AND WHAT IS IT FOR?

- What is the definition of ‘literature’?
- What is the difference between ‘literature’ and ‘fiction’ or ‘drama’?
- Is soap opera literature? Is Dan Brown literature?
- Is there a particular kind of language which is only found in literature?
- What is the purpose and/or value of literature?
- What view of literature does A Level give?

B. WHAT IS THE STUDY OF LITERATURE AND WHAT IS IT FOR?

- What does one learn from studying literature? What skills and knowledge does studying literature give you?
- How are those skills and knowledge similar or different to other subjects?
- Is it more important to study old texts or new?
- What benefit is there for society in the study of literature?
- What benefit is there for the individual in studying literature?
- What is literary criticism and what is it for?
- What might the study of literature have to do with the following areas of study: history, politics and sociology, media studies, linguistics, philosophy, gender studies, psychology?

C. HOW DO WE INTERPRET AND EVALUATE LITERARY TEXTS, AND WHY?

- What knowledge do you need to interpret a text?
- How important is it to know the author’s intention when interpreting a literary text?
- How do you evaluate whether a literary text is good or not?
- Is it possible to dislike or disapprove of a text but still think it is ‘good’ (or to like / enjoy a text but still think it is ‘bad’)?
- Why might interpretation and evaluation be important, both in studying texts and in society more generally?

2: Discussing statements about literature

In groups, discuss the following statements:

All pupils, including those of very limited attainments, need the civilising experience of contact with great literature, and can respond to its universality. (Newsom Report, 1963)

Any belief that the study of literature is the study of a stable, well-definable entity, as entomology is the study of insects, can be abandoned as a chimera. Some kinds of fiction are literature and some are not; some literature is fictional and some is not; some literature is verbally self-regarding, while some highly-wrought rhetoric is not literature. Literature, in the sense of a set of works of assured and unalterable value, distinguished by certain shared inherent properties, does not exist. (Prof Terry Eagleton, 1983)

Because it is such a profound and universal experience, Literature must be taught to school pupils, whereupon it becomes an instrument within the whole apparatus of filtering whereby schools adjust young people to an unjust social order. (Prof Alan Sinfield, 1985)

Is Literature an ideological instrument: a set of stories that seduce readers into accepting the hierarchical arrangements of society? ... Or is literature the place where ideology is exposed, revealed as something that can be questioned? Both claims are thoroughly plausible... (Prof Jonathan Culler, 1997)

English Literature is the best in the world – it is every child’s birthright and we should be proud to teach it in every school. (Michael Gove, 2010)

3: Examining attitudes to literature

Each group will be given some articles about literature from recent newspapers.

- In pairs, read and discuss two of the articles; then report back to the rest of the group on the articles you have read, explaining what they are about and what their arguments are. As a group, discuss the ideas in each article.*
- Each person in the group should take one article and prepare a short powerpoint presentation to the rest of the class, explaining the main ideas in the article, giving your response to the article, and suggesting what issues about literature the article raises.*

ARGUING ABOUT LITERATURE: Literature in the News

- What kind of debates about literature are taking place?
- What kinds of arguments are used?
- What are the underlying theoretical issues?

Developing the following skills:

- Explaining and constructing arguments about literature
 - Identifying theoretical issues in debates
 - Discussing ideas effectively in groups

1. WORK IN A PAIR

- Read one article each
- Explain your article to the other person
- Decide what the two articles have in common and how they are different.
- What issues do they raise?
- Discuss what you feel about the articles and/or the issues.

2. WORK IN A GROUP OF FOUR

- Each pair explain to the other pair what your articles are about.
- Decide what the four articles have in common and how they are different
- What issues do they raise?
- Discuss what you feel about the articles and/or the issues.
- How might these articles / issues relate to literary theory?

3. FINALLY – FEEDING BACK TO WHOLE CLASS

- Each person in the group should briefly explain what their article is about
- Be prepared to explain the issues you feel the articles raise and what your group thinks about them.

Group One: What about Dan Brown?

- *The Lost Symbol by Dan Brown:* Dan Brown's latest blockbuster is the literary equivalent of Coca-Cola and will no doubt sell as well (Peter Conrad, *The Observer*, 2009)
- *A Word of Mouth Success:* Why are people lining up to rubbish *The Da Vinci Code*? Simple – it's a bestseller that doesn't know its place. (Lucy Mangan, *The Guardian*, August 2004)
- *The Da Vinci Code is as Dickensian as Miriam Margolyes in a bonnet* (David Baddiel, *The Times*, July 2005)
- *Populist Prejudice:* Crime books easier to write than 'serious' novels? That attitude is frankly, cobblers. (Mark Lawson, *The Guardian*, January 2008)

Group Two: What about 'the Classics' ?

- *A Bit of Brontë Does You Good:* Victorian novels may be hard going, but they are a proper education in broadening the mind. (Libby Purves, *The Times*, May 2005)
- *Canon Fodder:* It's madness to force-feed the classics to teenagers –it could put them off reading for life. (Stephen Moss, *The Guardian*, August 2006)
 - *Reading ruined by Classroom Dissection* (Shereen Pandit, *TES*, December 2005)
- *Highly Literary and Deeply Vulgar:* If James Kelman's Booker novel is rude, it's a in good company. (Robert Winder, *The Independent*, October 1994)

Group Three: What about Shakespeare?

- *Save us from a winter of discontent – ban the bard* (Miranda Sawyer, *The Guardian*, September 2005)
 - *Shakespeare: Time for a Moratorium?* (Dominic Dromgoole, Richard Bean, *Time Out*, April 2006)
- *Plays for Today:* If we do not adapt Shakespeare for our times, the richness of his work will be lost. (Michael Bogdanov, *The Guardian*, November 2003)
- *Bard Not That Hard To Follow:* Stop teaching the plays as literature; that is what they have become, but it is not what they were. (Paul Innes, *The Scotsman*, November 2009)

Lineage

In the beginning was Scream
Who begat Blood
Who begat Eye
Who begat Fear
Who begat Wing
Who begat Bone
Who begat Granite
Who begat Violet
Who begat Guitar
Who begat Sweat
Who begat Adam
Who begat Mary
Who begat God
Who begat Nothing
Who begat Never
Never Never Never

Who begat Crow

Screaming for Blood
Grubs, crusts

Anything

Trembling featherless elbows in the nest's filth

Ted Hughes

Discuss the paintings and poem above, and then discuss the statements below:

- *The sensual impact of poetry is as important as its meaning.*
- *Poetry is not intended to be studied in the classroom.*
- *There are good reasons for studying poetry in the classroom.*
- *Ambiguity in art is pleasurable.*
- *We can never know the meaning of a work of art.*
- *Just because we can never know the meaning of a work of art does not mean that any meaning will do.*
- *The job of the English teacher is to tell us the meaning of the poem.*

DEFINING POETRY AND POETIC LANGUAGE

Starter

Ask students to work in pairs to come up with a definition of poetry; it is in fact almost impossible to do so. Most offered descriptions – about self-expression, description etc – will be applicable to prose too; and many – about rhyme and metre, for instance – will not be applicable to all poetry. In fact, the only really workable definition of poetry is ‘writing in verse’, although of course even that might be disputed. The following exercises are designed to examine these issues further. Each exercise could be given to a different group in the class, or all the exercises to all groups.

1. Poetry v. Prose

Ask students to discuss the differences between poetry and prose. Then, introduce the idea of poetic language, and ask them to define or give examples of it. Show them examples of ‘found’ poems (see Abbs 1990 for instance) and/or William Carlos Williams’ poem ‘This is Just to Say’ – all of which play with the distinction between prose and poetry – to focus them on the nature of poetic and non-poetic language, and the differences between prose and poetry. Finally, prepare examples of poetry transformed into prose – i.e. laid out on the page as prose – and ask students to compare the original poem with the prose version. What difference does the different layout make? Is it possible to define the language as prosaic or poetic? Prose poetry (e.g. Heaney’s collection *Stations*) is useful here too.

2. Poetry v. Rhetoric

Show students the following text and a copy of Martin Luther King’s ‘I have a dream’ speech and ask them to discuss whether or not they are poetry:

*Born to reveal
the woman you’ve become.
Not just a perfume
A rite of passage.
Valentino.*

3. Poetry v. Song

Show students the lyrics of a number of pop-songs. Paul McCartney’s lyrics have been published as part of their poetry imprint by Faber, so one of his songs would be a good choice. As suggested in the introduction to this chapter, Amy Winehouse, Bob Dylan and Eminem are also good choices. Ask students to discuss whether these are poetry, and why they think the definition might be disputed. Are there any examples of lyrics that students think are definitely NOT poetry?

You may want to show students the notorious Cambridge Tripos question which asked students to compare ‘As you came from the holy land’, a lyric poem by Sir Walter Raleigh, with lyrics by Amy Winehouse (“Love is a Losing Game”), Billie Holiday (“Fine and Mellow”) and Bob Dylan (“Boots of Spanish Leather”). A Google search on ‘Winehouse’ and ‘Raleigh’ brings up some interesting commentary on the issue, which could be shared with students too.

4. Poetry v. Verse

(i) Show students a section of verse dialogue and a soliloquy from a Shakespeare play. Are these poetry? Are they poems? And/or are they verse?

(ii) Show students a selection of verses from greetings cards. Are they poetry? And/or verse?

Finally: Why Poetry?

Ask students to discuss the question ‘Why poetry?’ - What is it for? Why is it valued? What useful functions might it fulfil? Show them the following texts, and ask them to discuss the difference in function and effect between the two sets of words:

(i) The words ‘*War is bad*’ and the complete text of Wilfred Owen’s ‘Anthem for Doomed Youth’

(ii) The words ‘*The six hundred soldiers rode on bravely with gunshot all around them despite the danger that faced them*’ and the complete text of Tennyson’s ‘The Charge of the Light Brigade’

(iii) The words ‘Happy Birthday’ and the verse:

<i>I’m wishing you this birthday</i>	<i>I wish you all the very best,</i>
<i>All the joy in the world</i>	<i>As I have in other years.</i>
<i>Surprises, fun and laughter</i>	<i>Sharing with your happiness</i>
<i>As another year’s unfurled</i>	<i>Love and joyous tears.</i>

Understanding Poetry, Drama and The Novel

When did they start? Why did they start? What were they for? How did they develop?

A BRIEF HISTORY OF LITERATURE – **Modes of Representation**

- Origins of poetry and drama in social and religious ritual, celebration, entertainment – the oral tradition, pre-printing. Originally highly **stylised**, dominated by rhythm, music, dance, narrative; often very formulaic.

STYLISATION = very different from real language or patterns of behaviour, ‘artificial’ – e.g. speaking in rhyme and rhythm, moving in dance, using repeated patterns or formulae.

Stylisation was partly a response to big open spaces (ancient theatres), and also helped poets and musicians to learn words etc.

- Poetry was the most important means of presenting story and drama until the eighteenth century. Narrative drama and poetry were mostly written in iambic Pentameter.
- The rise of the novel (and story) in the eighteenth century coincided with the growth in mass literacy, industrial printing, and the rise of private reading. The novel became the dominant form of literature.
- Drama also lost its poetic nature. After the eighteenth century, plays are usually written in prose. Theatre moves indoors and becomes more intimate. Stage technology becomes more sophisticated.
- Literature becomes characterised by increasing levels of **realism**.

REALISM = imitating real language and behaviour, attempting to be ‘natural’ or realistic.

Realism was made possible by print technology which allowed more detail in storytelling, and less need for rhyme and metre in poetry and drama; also more intimate performance spaces and technology such as lighting, etc. which could give the impression of reality.

- Increasingly writers and artists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries experiment with breaking through the constraints of realism, and return to more stylised ways of representing things, or more shocking approaches to realism, in *expressionism* and *modernism*.

Modes of representation:

STYLISATION

Poetic language, music, dance
Formulae, patterns
Masks, stereotypes
Metaphor, symbolism
Traditional fables, myths

REALISM

Realistic language
Psychologically specific characterisation
Realistic costume
Individualism
Original stories about invented realistic characters

FEMINISM

What is feminism?

Feminism is a political and philosophical movement concerned with analysis of the way in which men and women relate in society. Its starting point is the idea that society is, and always has been, 'patriarchal' - that is, controlled by men, organised to a great extent for the benefit of men, and designed to maintain the dominance of men. (This kind of power structure – where one social group has profound dominance over another - is known as 'hegemony').

One of the key elements of feminist analysis is the idea that the hegemony of men is perpetuated, often on a subconscious / unconscious level through the operation of accepted social norms and conventions and ideas about deviance from these norms; these conventions are encoded in social, cultural and linguistic behaviours and discourses. By these means, women are persuaded to accept their own subjugation.

Feminism is in many respects similar and related to Marxism, which is also concerned with the operation of hegemony – the hegemony of the upper classes over the lower. Indeed, one key element of feminism is its analysis of the way in which women are economically disempowered in society.

The idea of **gender** is crucial to feminism; feminism argues that power structures are perpetuated through the perpetuation of certain gender roles assigned to men and women in society.

What is gender?

Whilst '**sex**' refers to the physical *sexual characteristics* we are born with (i.e., in the vast majority of cases, '**male**' or '**female**') '**gender**' refers to the *socio-cultural behaviours* which we display: '**masculine**' or '**feminine**'. Whilst sex is *biologically determined*, ideas about gender – in particular what behaviours are considered typical or appropriate for the different sexes, what is masculine and what is feminine – are unfixed and *culturally constructed*.

Nature v. nurture: whilst some aspects of gender roles might to some extent be related to sexual difference ('nature'), this can be overstated. The role of cultural construction and environmental factors ('nurture') is vital, most obviously in relation to the way men and women are expected to dress and look, but in many other aspects of behaviour too (including, for instance, elements of emotional and psychological character).

Gender and sexuality: the idea of gender is related to the idea of sexuality as well as sex. Ideas about masculinity and femininity are clearly linked with ideas about heterosexuality and homosexuality – though it is vital to note that there are no simple correspondences between gender and sexuality. 'Queer theory' – a branch of feminist / gender theory – suggests that ideas about sexuality, like ideas about gender, are often culturally constructed. But queer theory is not just about sexuality: it is a broader set of ideas about the functioning of social norms, and the ways in which 'deviant' or minority behaviour operate within society.

For discussion:

Construction of gender: some questions

- **What gender behaviours and characteristics does our society encourage/validate/discourage/invalidate for men and women/girls and boys?**
- **How does it encourage or discourage them?**

FEMINISM, GENDER AND LITERATURE

Feminist literary theories are concerned with analysis of the representation of women and gender roles in literature and culture, and the way gender is constructed through language and culture.

At a simple level, feminist approaches to literature are interested in:

- the balance of power between men and women in the literary world – e.g. equality of opportunity for women writers
- the representation of women's condition in literary texts

More complex approaches may look at the ways in which texts hide and reveal patriarchal power structures, e.g:

- through the use of male narrators, voices and viewpoints
- through the construction of gender through language patterns and imagery
- through representations of psycho-social and psycho-sexual behaviours

For discussion: representation of women and gender roles in literature

1. Folk and Fairy Tales: How have women traditionally been represented in popular narratives?

i) Brainstorm as many folk / fairy tales as you can.

Examples might include: Cinderella, Rapunzel, Hansel and Gretel, Tom Thumb, Sleeping Beauty, Beauty and the Beast, Snow White, The Ugly Duckling, The Three Little Pigs, Jack and the Beanstalk, Puss in Boots, Little Red Riding-Hood, The Gingerbread Man

ii) Now put them into groups under the following headings:

- Have a woman as victim who needs rescuing (by a man)
- Have evil female character
- Have no significant female characters at all

(A tale may appear in more than one group.)

Discuss: Would it work if you did it the other way round, substituting man for woman? What does this tell us?

iii) Now examine the women in each group:

- For group 1: describe the general characteristics of the woman who is a victim
- For group 2: describe the general characteristics of the evil woman
- For group 3: if there are any woman characters, what roles do they tend to play?
- Look at the men in these stories. Do they share any common characteristics?

2. Disney and James Bond: How do representations of women in popular narratives change during the 20th century?

(i) Write down the Disney cartoons and Bond films you can think of. Divide them into older and more modern ones

- How are men and women presented?
- Does it change as they get more modern?

3. Children's Literature: How are children introduced to gender roles in children's literature?

(i) What are the roles of men and women in:

- Robin Hood? King Arthur?
- Winnie-the-Pooh? Wind in the Willows?
- Treasure Island? Peter Pan?
- Alice in Wonderland? The Secret Garden?
- The Hobbit / The Lord of the Rings?
- Others?

4. Literary Classics and Contemporary Literature: How are gender roles represented in mainstream literary texts?

(i) What are the roles of men and women in the texts you have studied at A Level and GCSE? How are gender roles and variations treated? Can you see any patterns? Are there differences between books written by men and by women?

First, texts by men:

- Shakespeare Tragedy - Hamlet, Othello, Macbeth, Romeo and Juliet (and any others you know)
- Shakespeare Comedy: As You Like It (and others you know, e.g. Midsummer Night)
- Modern Tragedy: Mother Courage, All My Sons
- Poetry: Keats and Auden, Blake
- Classic Novel: Tess of the D'Urbervilles / Modern Novel: The Kite Runner, Enduring Love

Next, texts by women:

- Classic Novel: Pride and Prejudice
- Modern Novel: The Handmaid's Tale, Beloved, The Color Purple
- Poetry: Sylvia Plath

Representation of class and gender in Shakespeare

In your group, decide on one Shakespeare play you all know well (e.g. *Macbeth*, *Romeo and Juliet*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear*, *Much Ado*) and then discuss the following questions:

Class

Which characters would you classify as noble /aristocratic? Which would you classify as workers, servants, etc.? Which characters have money/land and therefore economic power?

How are the lower class characters portrayed? How much space or significance is given to the lower class characters? Are different types of language/dialogue given to lower and upper class characters?

What do you notice about the way that lower and upper class characters speak to and behave towards each other? What about the way they speak *about* each other?

How are power structures represented in the play? How would you describe the hierarchy? Where do you see social or economic power negotiated, challenged or threatened during the play?

Who performs work during the play? What kind of work? Where do you see the Marxist ideas of base (labour) and superstructure (culture and government) in action?

Do you think class roles are fairly and / or accurately represented? What might the play tell us about the way people have thought about class roles?

Gender

How many male characters and how many female characters are there? How significant are the male / female characters? How much space is given to each in the play?

How is the relationship between male and female characters presented? What do you notice about the way they speak to and behave towards each other, and what about the way they speak *about* each other?

To what extent can you see gender stereotypes at play in these characters and relationships? To what extent are women portrayed as 'feminine' and men as 'masculine'? What roles do men and women perform in the society represented in the play?

To what extent do women exercise social and/or economic power in the world of the play? How much of that power is inside the home and how much outside?

Do you think gender roles are fairly and / or accurately represented? What might the play tell us about the way people have thought about gender roles?

THE BIGGER PICTURE – A LEVEL and UNIVERSITY ENGLISH

- A Level English Literature – the in-depth study of 12 texts from English Literature
- University English – broad study of literature as a cultural form, and possibly other aspects of English too - English, English Studies, English Literature, Literary Studies, Literary and Cultural Studies, English and World Literature, English Literature and Language, etc...

Literary Studies may be seen as a hybrid of several different disciplines:

- **BECOMING AN EXPERT IN READING / INTERPRETING TEXTS...**
especially **literary** texts
- **BECOMING AN EXPERT IN UNDERSTANDING CULTURE...**
especially **literary** culture
- **BECOMING AN EXPERT IN USING / UNDERSTANDING LANGUAGE...**
especially **literary** language

I. Literature as part of ... Cultural Studies

University of Sussex:

‘The word culture is used to describe all manner of things: sometimes this means actual products like penicillin, yoghurt or garden produce. One of its most frequent meanings is when we talk of a people and their way of life. Often it is loosely used to mean the surroundings in which something comes to flourish and the characteristics associated with it - youth culture, music culture, urban culture, technological culture, heritage culture, car culture... It seems as if the word culture can be attached to almost anything.

Cultural Studies ... takes a deeper look at the meanings of culture in relation to certain key concepts: identity, history, globalisation, gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity. By the end of the programme, you will not only understand more about the topics you have covered in your degree- you will have acquired the skills to better understand new and unfamiliar cultures for yourself.’

Some applications to A Level and University English Literature:

- Understanding important cultural and social ideas expressed in literature – *contexts, themes, e.g. identity, gender, politics, war, etc.*
- Understanding the way literature functions as part of culture and society – *who reads it? who writes it? why is it valued? who values it? how does it relate to other forms of culture? how does it reflect and represent society? – contexts, literary theory*
- Understanding the *history* of literature as a cultural form and how it has changed over time

2. Literature as part of ... **Textual Studies**

University of Washington:

'At the centre of human culture and civilization stands a universe of texts. In their varied oral, written, printed, and electronic forms, they are fundamental to the expression, communication, and preservation of human thoughts and feelings, ideas and arguments; and their documentary records offer occasions for people in widely separated times and places to communicate with, and understand, one another.'

Textual Studies includes many disciplines in its investigation, study, and practice. They range from the study of alphabets and handwriting styles to the composition and compilation of manuscripts and books; from the principles of textual editing to the techniques of manuscript preservation; from the technology of papyrus production to that of modern computing; from regional practices in oral composition to features of page layout and the use of SGML mark-up of texts for electronic storage, retrieval, manipulation, and display.'

Some applications to A Level and University English Literature:

- Understanding how literary texts are structured, and how form, narrative and genre work to transmit meanings – aspects of textuality (how texts work)
- Understanding how literary texts are produced (written and published) and consumed (obtained, read and interpreted) in society
- Understanding the history of literary texts and how they have changed over time

3. Literature as part of ... **Linguistics**

University of Sussex:

'The subject matter of Linguistics is human language itself. Linguists investigate the nature of human language, the structures of particular languages, the acquisition and use of language by individuals, the role of language and languages in human societies, and the processes of historical change in language structure and function.'

Linguists are interested in questions like these: How do languages differ from other systems of communication? How do languages differ from one another in their grammatical structure, or in the way they make use of speech sounds? How is speech produced and perceived? How and why do children acquire language? What theories may account for the way languages are? What kinds of meaning are signalled in language behaviour, and how are they encoded? How and why do languages change over time? How are social differences reflected in linguistic differences such as dialect or accent?'

Some applications to A Level and University English Literature:

- Understanding how writers use language to create particular effects in literature
- Understanding what literary language is and how it is different from and/or similar to other forms of language
- Understanding the *history* of language in literature and how it has changed over time

THE WRITER IN CONTEXT – GENRE, STYLE, LANGUAGE

What is Modernism?

What came before it? Why did it develop? How did it change things? What was the Modernist writer reacting against and towards?

Thomas Hardy: *The Darkling Thrush* (1901)

I leant upon a coppice gate
When Frost was spectre-gray,
And Winter's dregs made desolate
The weakening eye of day.
The tangled bine-stems scored the sky
Like strings from broken lyres,
And all mankind that haunted night
Had sought their household fires.

The land's sharp features seemed to be
The Century's corpse outleant,
His crypt the cloudy canopy,
The wind his death-lament.
The ancient pulse of germ and birth
Was shrunken hard and dry,
And every spirit upon earth
Seemed fervourless as I.

At once a voice outburst among
The bleak twigs overhead
In a full-hearted evensong
Of joy illimited;
An aged thrush, frail, gaunt, and small,
In blast-beruffled plume,
Had chosen thus to fling his soul
Upon the growing gloom.

So little cause for carollings
Of such ecstatic sound
Was written on terrestrial things
Afar or nigh around,
That I could think there trembled through
His happy good-night air
Some blessed Hope, whereof he knew
And I was unaware.

W B Yeats: *The Second Coming* (1920)

TURNING and turning in the widening gyre
The falcon cannot hear the falconer;
Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned;
The best lack all conviction, while the worst
Are full of passionate intensity.

Surely some revelation is at hand;
Surely the Second Coming is at hand.
The Second Coming! Hardly are those words out
When a vast image out of Spiritus Mundi
Troubles my sight: somewhere in sands of the desert

A shape with lion body and the head of a man,
A gaze blank and pitiless as the sun,
Is moving its slow thighs, while all about it
Reel shadows of the indignant desert birds.
The darkness drops again; but now I know
That twenty centuries of stony sleep
Were vexed to nightmare by a rocking cradle,
And what rough beast, its hour come round at last,
Slouches towards Bethlehem to be born?

from **T S Eliot: The Four Quartets (1936-40)**

Time present and time past
Are both perhaps present in time future
And time future contained in time past.
If all time is eternally present
All time is unredeemable.
What might have been is an abstraction
Remaining a perpetual possibility
Only in a world of speculation.
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.
Footfalls echo in the memory
Down the passage which we did not take
Towards the door we never opened
Into the rose-garden. My words echo
Thus, in your mind.

But to what purpose
Disturbing the dust on a bowl of rose-leaves
I do not know.

Other echoes
Inhabit the garden. Shall we follow?
Quick, said the bird, find them, find them,
Round the corner. Through the first gate,
Into our first world, shall we follow
The deception of the thrush? Into our first world.
There they were, dignified, invisible,
Moving without pressure, over the dead leaves,
In the autumn heat, through the vibrant air,
And the bird called, in response to
The unheard music hidden in the shrubbery,
And the unseen eyebeam crossed, for the roses
Had the look of flowers that are looked at.
There they were as our guests, accepted and accepting.
So we moved, and they, in a formal pattern,
Along the empty alley, into the box circle,
To look down into the drained pool.
Dry the pool, dry concrete, brown edged,
And the pool was filled with water out of sunlight,
And the lotos rose, quietly, quietly,
The surface glittered out of heart of light,
And they were behind us, reflected in the pool.
Then a cloud passed, and the pool was empty.
Go, said the bird, for the leaves were full of children,
Hidden excitedly, containing laughter.
Go, go, go, said the bird: human kind
Cannot bear very much reality.
Time past and time future
What might have been and what has been
Point to one end, which is always present.

Louis MacNiece: Prayer Before Birth (1944)

I am not yet born; O hear me.
Let not the bloodsucking bat or the rat or the stoat or the club-footed ghoul come near me.

I am not yet born, console me.
I fear that the human race may with tall walls wall me, with strong drugs dope me, with wise lies lure me, on black racks rack me, in blood-baths roll me.

I am not yet born; provide me
With water to dandle me, grass to grow for me, trees to talk to me, sky to sing to me, birds and a white light in the back of my mind to guide me.

I am not yet born; forgive me
For the sins that in me the world shall commit, my words when they speak me, my thoughts when they think me, my treason engendered by traitors beyond me, my life when they murder by means of my hands, my death when they live me.

I am not yet born; rehearse me
In the parts I must play and the cues I must take when old men lecture me, bureaucrats hector me, mountains frown at me, lovers laugh at me, the white waves call me to folly and the desert calls me to doom and the beggar refuses my gift and my children curse me.

I am not yet born; O hear me,
Let not the man who is beast or who thinks he is God come near me.
I am not yet born; O fill me
With strength against those who would freeze my humanity, would dragoon me into a lethal automaton, would make me a cog in a machine, a thing with one face, a thing, and against all those who would dissipate my entirety, would blow me like thistledown hither and thither or hither and thither like water held in the hands would spill me.

Let them not make me a stone and let them not spill me.
Otherwise kill me.

Dylan Thomas: Do Not Go Gentle (1952)

Do not go gentle into that good night,
Old age should burn and rave at close of day;
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Though wise men at their end know dark is right,
Because their words had forked no lightning they
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Good men, the last wave by, crying how bright
Their frail deeds might have danced in a green bay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

Wild men who caught and sang the sun in flight,
And learn, too late, they grieved it on its way,
Do not go gentle into that good night.

Grave men, near death, who see with blinding sight
Blind eyes could blaze like meteors and be gay,
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

And you, my father, there on the sad height,
Curse, bless me now with your fierce tears, I pray.
Do not go gentle into that good night.
Rage, rage against the dying of the light.

- *After reading these poems, make a list of some of the features of modernist poetry.*

Modernism

Movement towards modernism began in the 1880s (with Impressionism etc) but came to its peak from 1910 to 1930. It reflected fragmentation, uncertainty and complexity in society and politics – a reaction against the order and authoritarianism of 19th century society. It also reflected the fear and ultimately the experience of major conflagration – e.g. World War.

Modernism was a vast movement consisting of many smaller movements and groups, all experimenting in different ways. Characteristics of modernism in literature include:

- experimentation with new forms and ideas
- rejection of traditional and regular verse forms and metres, narrative structures such as stanzas and chapters, etc
- fragmentation of narrative voices and viewpoints and of chronological structures; in poetry, *free verse*; *stream of consciousness*, etc.
- juxtaposition of apparently incongruous voices, ideas and images
- preoccupation with images of disorder and chaos, and social disfunction and disintegration
- exploration of a wide range of ideas about nature and society, often reflecting in unconventional or on the failure of the conventional culture of the modern industrial world
- move towards the language of ordinary life and away from formal, 'artistic' poetic and literary diction
- complexity and ambiguity in meaning, and a rethinking of the relationship between author, narrator and reader
- resurgence of sound as important in poetry (e.g internal rhythms, alliteration and assonance)
- use of expressionism (language expressing emotion in unconventional ways through sound and shape and colour, etc.)

W.B. Yeats, T.S Eliot and Ezra Pound are the main names associated with modernist poetry in English in the 1910 – 1930 period. W.H Auden is the main name of the 1930s. Auden and many of the modernists of the 1930s had a greater concern with politics, and less interest in experimental forms – though his period was clearly modernist in many ways.

We are still in the period of modernism, though it has developed in many different ways. As at all times during the modernist period, many poets continue to write in relatively conventional ways: however, almost all poets' work reflects the basic modernist move towards the use of plain language in literature.

SHAKESPEARE'S ENGLISH

An Introduction

STARTER

- Ask the students whether Shakespeare wrote in Old English, Middle English or Modern English. Take a vote. Reveal the correct answer – Modern English.

OLD ENGLISH, ORIGINS OF POETRY

- Show students a passage of Old English. Get them to try and read it. Ask them if they can see any possible similarities with modern English, or any other languages. Play a recording of someone reading Old English (there are several YouTube clips and one or two sound files on other sites).
- Show students the translation of the passage. Get them to look again at the original and find similarities between the modern English and the original English. Take suggestions.
- Ask if they notice anything about the sound or layout of the original. Try to draw out:
 - Use of alliteration (Anglo-Saxons used alliterative metre – 4 beats per line, marked out by alliteration). Introduce the idea of metre and the oral tradition – metre as a mnemonic device before the printed word. Ask students about the origins of poetry. How did it come about? What was it used for? (Ritual, worship, song, dance, story-telling). Emphasise the idea that the novel is a very modern form. Telling stories through verse is more ancient.
 - Fewer words in the old than the new English (Anglo-Saxon was an inflected language, like modern German – fewer words, more compound words. Modern English is an uninflected language).

ORIGINS OF ENGLISH

- Ask students where Old English came from / which people brought it to England. (Denmark/Germany – Angles, Saxons, Jutes, arrived in Britain after the Romans left, c. 500 AD: Old English = Anglo-Saxon.)
- Ask them which people lived in Britain before the Anglo-Saxons invaded and what languages they spoke. (Celts; Celtic languages such as Gaelic, Welsh, Cornish, Manx, Breton (all still spoken)).
- Use Powerpoint maps of Britain and Europe to illustrate.
- *Digression: ask students where language came from. Show them the spread of language and people around the world, and introduce the idea of language families*
- Ask them who the next people to invade England were. (Normans, 1066 – though NB there were also Danes and Vikings before 1066, but they were closely related to the Anglo-Saxons and spoke similar languages.)
- Explain that the Normans spoke French and that their language gradually merged with Old English to form Modern English. The intervening 400 years (1066 – c. 1500) were known as Middle English.

MIDDLE ENGLISH

- Show students a passage from *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* (optional) and one from *The Canterbury Tales*. Get them to try and read it. Ask them how it compares with the Old English. Get them to spot possible meanings. Repeat the exercise as above – translation, comments, etc. (Optional: get them to draw the Miller from his description).
- Ask them what they notice about the form of the *Canterbury Tales*. (Iambic Pentameter, rhyming couplets – no more Anglo-Saxon alliterative verse).

MODERN ENGLISH

- Use a passage of Shakespeare to emphasise the modernity of Shakespeare's English.

THE IAMBIC PENTAMETER

- Use the Prologue of *Romeo and Juliet* to look at simple pentameter. Get students to write their own simple pentameters of ten syllables.
- Look at an extract of Shakespearean dialogue to see the way that Shakespeare splits pentameters between two speakers.
- Analyse the use of the pentameter in Shakespeare's more complex verse, e.g. 'To be or not to be'. Look at the way Shakespeare subverts the purity of the pentameter to introduce variety, etc.)
- Explain the significance of the influence of classical metres such as iambic pentameter – based on the ancient Greek and Roman metrical systems (Homer's *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, etc.). These came to influence English Literature after the Norman invasion. Shakespeare used iambic pentameter to tell stories rather than Old English alliterative verse. (Re-introduce the idea of the oral tradition, metre and rhyme.)

Blank iambic pentameter (*blank verse* = *unrhymed verse*) was the standard verse form of Renaissance drama, inspired by the blank pentameters of Latin and Greek poetry and drama.

In the **Renaissance**, the influence of Roman (Latin) and Greek language and culture on England was very strong – whereas in the middle ages, the dominant influence had been Anglo-Saxon culture and language. Many of the playwrights of the time (including Shakespeare) drew their inspirations – and often their plots – from Latin and Greek drama.

Iambic pentameter was generally felt to be appropriate for **narrative poetry** because the length of its lines and its rhythm are particularly close to those of **ordinary speech** in modern English. **Blank verse** was also more 'conversational' than rhymed verse.

Early blank verse (pre-Shakespeare), however, was very **regular**, and could be monotonous especially when performed in the theatre. The lines were almost all **end-stopped**, and the **stresses** usually fell on the same beats of the line. Most lines were 'pure' iambic pentameters with ten syllables and a regular rhythm of five regular stresses.

Shakespeare created **rhythmic variety** in blank verse by:

- reducing the number of end-stopped lines and increasing the number of run-on lines (*enjambement*)
- varying the position of stresses in each line
- varying the line lengths / number of syllables in each line
- varying the position of pauses in each line

One of the main effects of this was to make the verse less regular and more like **ordinary speech rhythms**.

Many **modern poets** still use these techniques to create variety and 'freedom' whilst retaining a traditional structure.

THE CRAFT OF THE WRITER

Wind

This house has been far out at sea all night,
The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills,
Winds stampeding the fields under the window
Floundering black astride and blinding wet

Till day rose; then under an orange sky
The hills had new places, and wind wielded
Blade-light, luminous black and emerald,
Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.

At noon I scaled along the house-side as far as
The coal-house door. Once I looked up -
Through the brunt wind that dented the balls of my eyes
The tent of the hills drummed and strained its guyrope,

The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace,
At any second to bang and vanish with a flap;
The wind flung a magpie away and a black-
Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly. The house

Rang like some fine green goblet in the note
That any second would shatter it. Now deep
In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip
Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought,

Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,
And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,
Seeing the window tremble to come in,
Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.

Ted Hughes

a) Poetic Form

How does Hughes use the following in this poem:

Rhyme and other sound effects?

Metre and rhythm?

Line lengths, end-stopping and enjambement?

How might his methods relate to the meaning of the poem?

b) Imagery

Look at Hughes's use of imagery in this poem.

What kind of images does he use to convey the wind's powers? What do the images have in common?

1. The snail pushes through a green night, for the grass is heavy with water and meets over the bright path he makes, where rain has darkened the earth's dark. He moves in a wood of desire, pale antlers barely stirring as he hunts. I cannot tell what power is at work, drenched there with purpose, knowing nothing. What is a snail's fury? All I think is that if later I parted the blades above the tunnel and saw the thin trail of broken white across litter, I would never have imagined the slow passion to that deliberate progress.

2. The snail pushes through a green night,
for the grass is heavy with water
and meets over the bright path he makes,
where rain has darkened the earth's dark.

He moves in a wood of desire,
pale antlers barely stirring as he hunts.
I cannot tell what power is at work,
drenched there with purpose,
knowing nothing.

What is a snail's fury?
All I think is that if later
I parted the blades above the tunnel
and saw the thin trail of broken white across litter,
I would never have imagined
the slow passion to that deliberate progress.

4. The snail pushes through a green
night, for the grass is heavy
with water and meets over
the bright path he makes, where rain
has darkened the earth's dark. He
moves in a wood of desire,

pale antlers barely stirring
as he hunts. I cannot tell
what power is at work, drenched there
with purpose, knowing nothing.
What is a snail's fury? All
I think is that if later

I parted the blades above
the tunnel and saw the thin
trail of broken white across
litter, I would never have
imagined the slow passion
to that deliberate progress.

3. The snail pushes
through a green night,
for the grass is heavy
with water
and meets over the bright
path he makes,
where rain has darkened
the earth's dark.

He moves
in a wood of desire,
pale antlers barely
stirring as he hunts.
I cannot tell what
power is at work,
drenched there
with purpose,
knowing nothing.

What is
a snail's fury?
All I think is that
if later I parted the blades
above the tunnel
and saw the thin trail
of broken white
across litter,
I would never have imagined
the slow passion
to that deliberate progress.

The Bee Meeting

Who are these people at the bridge to meet me? They are the villagers-
The rector, the midwife, the sexton, the agent for bees.
In my sleeveless summery dress I have no protection,
And they are all gloved and covered, why did nobody tell me?
They are smiling and taking out veils tacked to ancient hats.

I am nude as a chicken neck, does nobody love me?
Yes, here is the secretary of bees with her white shop smock,
Buttoning the cuffs at my wrists and the slit from my neck to my knees.
Now I am milkweed silk, the bees will not notice.
They will not smell my fear, my fear, my fear.

Which is the rector now, is it that man in black?
Which is the midwife, is that her blue coat?
Everybody is nodding a square black head, they are knights in visors,
Breastplates of cheesecloth knotted under the armpits.
Their smiles and their voices are changing. I am led through a beanfield.

Strips of tinfoil winking like people,
Feather dusters fanning their hands in a sea of bean flowers,
Creamy bean flowers with black eyes and leaves like bored hearts.
Is it blood clots the tendrils are dragging up that string?
No, no, it is scarlet flowers that will one day be edible.

Now they are giving me a fashionable white straw Italian hat
And a black veil that molds to my face, they are making me one of them.
They are leading me to the shorn grove, the circle of hives.
Is it the hawthorn that smells so sick?
The barren body of hawthorn, etherizing its children.

Is it some operation that is taking place?
It is the surgeon my neighbors are waiting for,
This apparition in a green helmet,
Shining gloves and white suit.
Is it the butcher, the grocer, the postman, someone I know?

I cannot run, I am rooted, and the gorse hurts me
With its yellow purses, its spiky armory.
I could not run without having to run forever.
The white hive is snug as a virgin,
Sealing off her brood cells, her honey, and quietly humming.

Smoke rolls and scarves in the grove.
The mind of the hive thinks this is the end of everything.
Here they come, the outriders, on their hysterical elastics.
If I stand very still, they will think I am cow-parsley,
A gullible head untouched by their animosity,

Not even nodding, a personage in a hedgerow.
The villagers open the chambers, they are hunting the queen.
Is she hiding, is she eating honey? She is very clever.
She is old, old, old, she must live another year, and she knows it.
While in their fingerjoint cells the new virgins

Dream of a duel they will win inevitably,
A curtain of wax dividing them from the bride flight,
The uplift of the murderess into a heaven that loves her.
The villagers are moving the virgins, there will be no killing.
The old queen does not show herself, is she so ungrateful?

I am exhausted, I am exhausted -
Pillar of white in a blackout of knives.
I am the magician's girl who does not flinch.
The villagers are untying their disguises, they are shaking hands.
Whose is that long white box in the grove, what have they accomplished,
why am I cold.

Plath's diary, June 7 1962

The midwife stopped up to see Ted at noon to remind him that the Devon beekeepers were having a meeting at 6 at Charlie Pollard's. We were interested in starting a hive, so dumped the babies in bed and jumped in the car and dashed down the hill past the old factory to Mill Lane, a row of pale orange stucco cottages on the Taw, which gets flooded whenever the river rises. We drove into the dusty, ugly paved parking lot under the grey peaks of the factory buildings, unused since 1928 and now only used for wool storage. We felt very new and shy, I hugging my bare arms in the cool of the evening for I had not thought to bring a sweater. We crossed a little bridge to the yard above where a group of miscellaneous Devonians were standing – an assortment of shapeless men in brown speckled bulgy tweeds, Mr Pollard in white shirtsleeves, with his dark, nice brown eyes and oddly Jewy head, tan balding, dark-haired. I saw two women, one very large, tall, stout, in a glistening aqua-blue raincoat, the other cadaverous as a librarian in a dun raincoat. Mr Pollard glided toward us and stood for a moment on the bridge-end, talking. He indicated a pile of hives, like white and green blocks of wood with little gables and said we could have one if we would like to fix it up. A small pale blue car pulled through the yard: the midwife. Her moony beam came at us through the windscreen. Then the rector came pontificating across the bridge and there was a silence that grew round him. He carried a curious contraption – a dark felt hat with a screen box built on under it, and cloth for a neckpiece under that. I thought the hat a clerical bee-keeping hat, and that he must have made it for himself. Then I saw on the grass, and in hands, everyone was holding a bee-hat, some with netting of nylon, most with box screening, some with khaki round hats. I felt barer and barer. People became concerned. Have you no hat? Have you no coat? Then a dry little woman came up, Mrs P, the secretary of the society, with tired, short blonde hair. 'I have a boiler suit'. She went to her car and came back with a small, white silk button-down smock, the sort pharmacist's assistants use. I put it on and buttoned it and felt more protected. Last year, said the midwife, Charlie Pollard's bees were bad-tempered and made everybody run. Everyone seemed to be waiting for someone. But then we all slowly filed after Charlie Pollard to his beehives. We threaded our way through neatly weeded allotment gardens, one with bits of tinfoil and a fan of black and white feathers on a string, very decorative, to scare the birds, and twiggy lean-tos over the plants. Black-eyed sweetpea-like blooms: broadbeans, somebody said. Then we came to a clearing, roughly-scythed, with one hive, a double-brood hive, two layers. From this hive Charlie Pollard wanted to make three hives. I understood very little. The men gathered round the hive. Charlie Pollard started squirting smoke from a little funnel with a hand-bellows attached to it round the entry at the bottom of the hive. 'Too much smoke' hissed the large blue-raincoated woman next to me. 'What do you do if they sting?' I whispered, as the bees, now Charlie had lifted the top of the hive, were zinging out and dancing round as at the end of long elastics. (Charlie had produced a fashionable white straw Italian hat for me with a black nylon veil that collapsed perilously into my face in the least wind. The rector had tucked it into my collar, much to my surprise. 'Bees always crawl up, never down,' he said. I had drawn it down loose over my shoulders.) The woman said: 'Stand behind me. I'll protect you'. I did.

The first paragraph of a longer article in The Westminster Review (1856) by George Eliot, published under her pen name, Mary Ann Evans

Silly Novels by Lady Novelists are a genus with many species, determined by the particular quality of silliness that predominates in them – the frothy, the prosy, the pious, or the pedantic. But it is a mixture of all these – a composite order of feminine fatuity, that produces the largest class of such novels, which we shall distinguish as the mind-and-millinery species. The heroine is usually an heiress, probably a peeress in her own right, with perhaps a vicious baronet, an amiable duke, and an irresistible younger son of a marquis as lovers in the foreground, a clergyman and a poet sighing for her in the middle distance, and a crowd of undefined adorers dimly indicated beyond. Her eyes and her wit are both dazzling; her nose and her morals are alike free from any tendency to irregularity; she has a superb contralto and a superb intellect; she is perfectly well-dressed and perfectly religious; she dances like a sylph, and reads the Bible in the original tongues. Or it may be that the heroine is not an heiress – that rank and wealth are the only things in which she is deficient; but she infallibly gets into high society, she has the triumph of refusing many matches and securing the best, and she wears some family jewels or other as a sort of crown of righteousness at the end. Rakish men either bite their lips in impotent confusion at her repartees, or are touched to penitence by her reproofs, which, on appropriate occasions, rise to a lofty strain of rhetoric; indeed, there is a general propensity in her to make speeches, and to rhapsodize at some length when she retires to her bedroom. In her recorded conversations she is amazingly eloquent, and in her unrecorded conversations, amazingly witty. She is understood to have a depth of insight that looks through and through the shallow theories of philosophers, and her superior instincts are a sort of dial by which men have only to set their clocks and watches, and all will go well. The men play a very subordinate part by her side. You are consoled now and then by a hint that they have affairs, which keeps you in mind that the working-day business of the world is somehow being carried on, but ostensibly the final cause of their existence is that they may accompany the heroine on her "starring" expedition through life. They see her at a ball, and are dazzled; at a flower-show, and they are fascinated; on a riding excursion, and they are witched by her noble horsemanship; at church, and they are awed by the sweet solemnity of her demeanour. She is the ideal woman in feelings, faculties, and flounces. For all this, she as often as not marries the wrong person to begin with, and she suffers terribly from the plots and intrigues of the vicious baronet; but even death has a soft place in his heart for such a paragon, and remedies all mistakes for her just at the right moment. The vicious baronet is sure to be killed in a duel, and the tedious husband dies in his bed requesting his wife, as a particular favour to him, to marry the man she loves best, and having already dispatched a note to the lover informing him of the comfortable arrangement. Before matters arrive at this desirable issue our feelings are tried by seeing the noble, lovely, and gifted heroine pass through many *mauvais moments*, but we have the satisfaction of knowing that her sorrows are wept into embroidered pocket-handkerchiefs, that her fainting form reclines on the very best upholstery, and that whatever vicissitudes she may undergo, from being dashed out of her carriage to having her head shaved in a fever, she comes out of them all with a complexion more blooming and locks more redundant than ever.

PROSE: Literary features and devices

Paragraph and sentence length

These can determine the **pace, mood or tone** of a piece of writing.

- **Juxtapositions** of long and short paragraphs or sentences can be used to create particular effects,
- Many short paragraphs or sentences together often have a very noticeable effect, often indicating fast pace, irony and/or humour.
- Many long paragraphs or sentences together usually result in dense writing, perhaps strongly descriptive, or perhaps very intellectual.
- However, the effects of these things can only be judged in the context of the whole piece of writing.

Sentence structure

- Sentences may follow conventional structures approximate to ordinary simple speech, or they may use more complex, unusual or artificial structures.
- There may be **symmetry or balance** in the structure of a sentence. Does the sentence fall into two or three deliberately balanced parts? (Some sentences can be described as *bipartite* or *tripartite*, for instance)
- The word order in the sentence may be conventional or unusual.
- Punctuation may be used deliberately to create interest, surprise, etc.

Rhetorical devices

Rhetorical devices are methods of arranging words in speech for particular effect. they are particularly associated with speech-making, but are often used in written prose (and poetry). They may include such things as:

- Rhetorical questions
- Exclamations
- Repetition
- Metaphor or simile (figures of speech)
- Sound effects (alliteration, assonance, rhyme, etc.)
- Symmetrical or balanced sentences (see above)
- Paradox, juxtaposition, oxymoron, enumeration
- Allusion

Note that all these features of prose are also often used in poetry.

Experimenting with Texts 1: Creative Re-writing / Re-creative Writing

Such activities are central to progressive models of teaching literature in primary and lower secondary schools. Writing the diary of a character, part of a screenplay for an adaptation of a novel, an alternative or predicted ending, and so on, have been widely and successfully used as means of encouraging response to literature since the important developments which took place in English teaching in the 1960s and 70s. There has also been a powerful movement towards such strategies in university English, for instance through the work of Rob Pope on 'Textual Intervention' (1995) and Ben Knights and Chris Thurgar-Dawson on 'Active Reading' (2006). Adoption of these strategies in 16-19 literature courses, however, has been less consistent, often as a result of the need to teach towards high-stakes assessment in the form of critical essays under examination conditions.

Increasingly, 16-19 syllabuses include options which allow students to offer creative exercises (sometimes referred to as 'creative re-writing', 're-creative writing' or 'textual transformation') as part of their final assessment. We would like to suggest, however, that such work can be hugely beneficial whether or not it is part of the course assessment.

A variety of textual interactions is possible. Some such approaches may emerge directly from and in response to literary texts; students may, for example, be asked to:

- add scenes or stanzas in the style and form of the original text.
- predict possible dramatic or narrative developments within the text;
- imagine and construct in writing certain key locations, settings, people, objects, etc. from the text;
- construct events that have happened prior to or alongside the events included in the text;
- write empathic responses or monologues to capture characters' responses to the events of the text;
- write into a scene from the text exploring not what *is* said, but what *is not* said, and then to consider why this is significant;
- write into a scene imagining what is present but not described and how this may play a significant role;
- attribute and explore emotions, motives, etc. to characters/events;
- rewrite a particular 'moment' from the point of view of a different character;
- rewrite a first-person narrative in the third person, and vice versa.

Where creative writing experiences are carefully structured and given autonomous value, students focus not only on the literary work in question but also reflect on their own creative processes as writers. This leads to significant insights into both critical and creative dimensions of their writing.

Experimenting with Texts 2: Creative Writing

Whereas the strategies described above relate directly to the reading of specific texts and aim primarily to increase and illuminate students' understandings of the texts and of the writers' methods, we deal here with a freer, more general approach to creative writing.

Creative writing is a regular part of pupils' experience of English pre-16, and increasingly it is a formal element of some courses in post-16 English studies. Indeed, Newlyn & Lewis (2003, 2004) have written about the creative writing workshops they have run with undergraduates at the University of Oxford: their accounts of the methods they used, and the work that resulted, offer fascinating reading for anyone wanting to undertake similar work with their own students. Whilst many teachers will feel that there is simply no time available for this approach in 16-19 literary studies, it can be a very stimulating and enjoyable way of encouraging students to relate creatively to the literary texts they are studying and in developing their more general abilities as writers.

A range of exercises can be used to help students with finding ways into writing. The exercises in Panel 3 can also provide excellent starter activities for any lesson where students will be writing, warming up the creative and verbal muscles and simply getting students thinking about language. Such activities, as well as encouraging students' creative development and enhancing their sense of the potentials of language, also feed into their development as readers. Similar activities have been used effectively, with appropriate levels of support and intervention, with pupils from primary age right up to postgraduate level.

From: Teaching English Literature 16-19, Routledge 2013: Atherton, Green, Snapper

A View From The Bridge coursework – re-creative writing

Some ideas:

- A monologue by Catherine before Eddie's betrayal, reflecting her thoughts about Eddie's behaviour and accusations and Rodolpho's motives
- A letter from Marco, before Eddie's betrayal, to his wife presenting his thoughts about events in the Carbone household
- Catherine and Rodolpho have married and gone to stay with a relative in Boston for a honeymoon. Write a letter from Beatrice to Catherine.
- A monologue by Beatrice after the events of the play.
- After the events of the play, Catherine and Rodolpho **OR** Beatrice go to Alfieri for advice and reassurance. Write part of the scene between them.

When you write your text, you should think about how it might enable you, in your commentary, to reflect on aspects of tragedy – for instance drawing attention to some of the ways in which Miller used the conventions of classical tragedy and the concerns of modern tragedy, e.g:

- The role of the tragic hero and/or victims
- The narrative structure and unfolding of the tragedy
- The roles of women in relation to the tragic hero
- The role of jealousy and sexual tension in the tragedy
- The role of the chorus and/or fate/prophecy
- The use of unity of time, place and action
- The idea of domestic tragedy - the tragedy of the common man
- The conflicts of values which leads to the tragedy

Some key points for the re-creative piece:

- The re-creative piece should reflect on the actual events which took place in the play and should not focus on imagined events which did not.
- Make sure language is appropriate for the characters, and don't have them speaking in literary criticism! If their style of speaking is different from in the original, comment on this in your commentary. You do not have to use American dialect.
- If you are writing a monologue or scene, use stage directions, if appropriate, in the way that Miller does
- Include 'echoes' of the original play, but not actual quotes – refs to things that happened or that people said
- Include references to details of setting and minor characters – e.g Vinnie Bolzano, Longshoremen, Sicily, Red Hook, Mr and Mrs Dondero, etc.
- Include characters' reflections on some of the themes – e.g. gender roles (role of women, masculinity, homosexuality); pride; immigration; fate; revenge; conflict between values – but NB in characters' language and thoughts – keep your critical comments for the commentary.

A View From the Bridge: Writing the Commentary for the Re-creative Work

In the commentary, you have the opportunity to explain the thinking behind what you have written.

In order to satisfy the assessment objectives, your commentary must be written well and use appropriate literary terminology (AO1), and contain some reflection on:

- the way you (and Miller) have used language, form and structure (AO2)
- the way your piece highlights possible interpretations of the play (AO3)
- the way your piece shows awareness of contexts such as the play's setting, period, style, genre (AO4)
- the ways all these are connected with the idea of tragedy

You can:

- explain why you have chosen to write the particular episode you have written – and why you have chosen the form of a letter / diary / speech / scene, etc
- explain how your piece highlights some of the issues, debates, ambiguities, etc., in the original play, and/or enables us to reflect on Miller's ideas
- explain how your piece conveys an interpretation or suggests alternative interpretations of the original play, and/or how it enabled you to explore certain aspects of the play
- explain how your piece reflects some of the dramatic and linguistic elements of the original play (e.g. Miller's use of stage directions, characterisation, word choice, style, imagery). *(If you have chosen a non-dramatic form like a letter or a narrative, you will nevertheless want to show how this contains some dramatic or linguistic elements similar to the original)*

As you do this, you should ensure that you show how your piece relates to the concept of tragedy and the way the tragedy is enacted in the play. For instance:

- you could explain how your portrayal of a character highlights their role as tragic hero, victim, chorus, etc; or how it emphasizes the pathos of a character or situation
- you could reflect on the way you have echoed Miller's modern interpretation of the idea of tragedy and the tragic hero, (as he describes it in 'Tragedy and the Common Man')
- you could reflect on the way your piece echoes Miller's portrayal of tragic conflict in a modern setting, and/or his adaptation of the style of ancient tragedy in a modern setting

LITERATURE, PERFORMANCE, CREATIVITY, CRITICISM

Drama

- Historical separation between the study of drama texts and the study of drama in the theatre – and yet the theatre is a crucial part of the realisation of drama in society and culture.
- Media Studies looks at tv, Film Studies looks at film, Theatre Studies looks at theatre – but all of these also have a central focus on drama which overlaps with literature.
- The physicality of theatre is also a crucial part of the craft of the playwright: concepts such as dramatic purpose, dramatic irony, stage directions, etc., only make full sense when we consider the relationship between stage, actors and audience.
- The realisation of language and interpretation in performance is also crucial in considering these aspects.
- All students who study drama should see and discuss theatre productions and experiences if possible. Now also high quality DVDs of live productions are beginning to appear (especially from the **RSC and Shakespeare's Globe and Digital Theatre**) which can be used in class alongside the text so that the text can be studied both as text and performance.
- Students can also work on simulations of directing, designing, adapting play texts for the stage or screen – as well as rehearsing readings/performances in class. Follow this activity with reflections on how this activity has helped them to understand aspects of the text, its effect on stage, and the craft of the playwright.
- See National Theatre Discover website and Digital Theatre Plus for some useful resources, and RSC/ Shakespeare's Globe for Shakespeare.

Poetry

- Poetry – historically deeply linked with song and music – started as a performance art and continues to thrive as a performance art. The sort of poetry literature courses cover tends not to be intended for performance but poetry readings have always been linked even with literary poetry, and thrive now more than ever. There is clearly a strong cultural appetite for live poetry in many forms.
- Whether intended for performance or not, hearing/reading poetry aloud can help readers/students to engage with the shape, effects and overall impact of poetry, as well as to access and understand its aesthetic pleasures in a very direct way.
- See **The Poetry Archive, Poetry By Heart, The Poetry Channel**, etc., as well as live readings locally. Get poets to come and read or perform in schools – e.g – see **Apples and Snakes**.
- Students can work on adapting poems for stage, screen or radio, as well as performing them themselves: e.g. ask groups to work out multi-reader readings where the division of voices highlights the form and/or structure of the poem, and/or to use beats or background rhythms to emphasise the rhythmic nature of a poem.

The Novel

- In some senses, the novel is the least performance-oriented of all the literary forms. But NB Dickens was in huge demand for readings of his novels, and reading novels and short stories aloud continues to be a huge cultural demand – from parents reading to children to writers reading from their works to readings on radio.
- Further the adaptation of novels to the screen and stage is one of the most prolific of modern cultural industries.
- Again, students can be engaged in performing and / or reading parts of novel, and encouraged to reflect on how they have interpreted the text, or used the language of the text, to make decisions about their readings. And simulations of adapting the text for stage or screen offer similar opportunities for reflection and engagement.

A LEVEL ENGLISH LITERATURE: PLAGIARISM AND COURSEWORK

When you submit your coursework, you will have to sign a declaration that your work is all your own, and you will have to declare if you have received help other than that which is available as standard through your teacher and general advice available from friends and family. You are also required to declare any sources you have used in a bibliography.

It is vital that you understand what this means.

I. COURSEWORK REGULATIONS

Coursework **must** be your own work. Your teacher will help you with planning and give you advice on **ONE** draft (perhaps two if the first one needs completely re-working from scratch). When you hand in your first draft, your teacher will give you **general advice** on how the essay might be improved and **point out examples** of issues that need to be addressed, but is **not** allowed to **mark** the draft – i.e. will not comprehensively mark every error or mistake in the draft. So, for instance, if you have made a lot of spelling or punctuation errors, your teacher will give examples of these but will not highlight them all. It is your responsibility to apply the advice you have been given.

If you receive help from friends or family, that is fine as long as it is general, informal advice or guidance. **It is not acceptable for anyone to formally mark or give you comprehensive instruction on re-writing your work.** Any changes made to the work must be independently done by you as a result of general advice rather than comprehensive instruction.

As a result of the work you have done in class, your teacher will know what you are capable of. If you suddenly produce work that is much better than that standard, your teacher will want to know what help you have received. If you have received any help beyond what is acceptable, you will have to declare this, and it will affect your mark.

2. QUOTING, REFERENCING AND PLAGIARISM

When you are planning and drafting, you may – indeed you should – read about the topic you are writing about to find out what others have said about it. Your essential ideas about the topic should already have been formed by the work you have done in class, but you may well develop your ideas through the extra reading you do. In your bibliography, you must acknowledge any sources of ideas that have influenced your work. This includes books, websites, films, or any other medium. In particular, **you must include any works that you have quoted from directly, or from which you have directly taken ideas.** That is all fine and above board and you will not be penalised for references of this kind.

Quotes. If you have quoted from a critical text, you must say where the quotation is taken from in the main text of the essay (e.g. put 'Eaglestone, 2000' in brackets next to the quote), and then list the text, with its date, in your bibliography.

References. If you have taken an idea directly from a critical text, but not quoted from it, you should acknowledge this in the text by means of a reference. You can do this by saying something like 'Eaglestone (2000) suggests that....', and then again listing the text in your bibliography.

Good and Bad Sources. Acceptable texts for referencing are generally **authored texts** – i.e. texts that have the name of an author attached to them, and written by established critics or writers. Websites can pose a problem. Some websites (for instance the RSC, or Shakespeare’s Globe) may contain writing which is unattributed to an individual, but may be attributed to a respectable institution. Wikipedia, however, is an un-authored text and the information contained on it is not always reliable – although it can be a very useful starting point for further investigation. Nevertheless, if you do find important ideas here which you use directly, you should reference them. A greater problem is the many websites now offering student essays, many of which are un-authored. Even where they are authored, they are not generally considered good sources. We advise you strongly not to consult such websites. However, if you do, it is of course essential that you include the source in your bibliography.

Plagiarism. If you copy words from another text without acknowledging them, this is plagiarism. Of course just one or two odd words may not matter, but if you take a sequence of words from the same sentence and paragraph, even if you change one or two of them, this could still count as plagiarism. You must *either* rewrite in your own words and give a reference *or* quote.

Assimilating ideas. However, please note that you should not be rewriting other people’s ideas extensively in your essay. The ideas should be essentially yours, emerging from the classwork you have done – although it is fine to incorporate and use others’ ideas where they are relevant and helpful in developing your argument. We call this the ‘assimilation’ of ideas – where others’ ideas become an organic part of your own. This is fine, as long as you acknowledge the sources of important ideas.

Alternative interpretations. One of the assessment objectives for the course involves showing awareness of different or alternative interpretations. This is an important skill in itself, but it is also a safeguard against plagiarism. Your work should show that you are aware of and have thought through a number of alternative ways of interpreting texts, not just taken one idea from one source and followed that.

Investigating plagiarism. Since the proliferation of the internet, plagiarism has become a major problem (although it was of course previously also a problem in relation to books and essays.) Students wishing to take short cuts can succumb to temptation easily. However, it is important to remember the following:

- teachers and examiners have as good access to internet sources as you do, and can easily check for plagiarism by simply typing groups of words in to Google. Google has now digitised vast numbers of standard critical texts, too, so it is possible to search for words from books as well as websites
- teachers are highly experienced readers, and in particular highly experienced readers of critical writing and students’ writing, who will quickly spot if there is a possibility that you have engaged in plagiarism

If your teacher suspects there is some plagiarism, they will investigate. If anything is found, you will be penalised. At worst, your work could be disqualified. You should also note that examiners see a great deal more work than individual teachers, and are if anything **MORE** likely to spot and check for plagiarism.

Safeguards. As you work, make a note of all sources you have consulted, and especially any you have used directly. Also, ensure that you keep copies of the different drafts you have written, in case they are needed later for any reason. **DO NOT** redraft directly onto a previous Word document. Retain the original document and start a new document for your re-draft.

SOME RESOURCES

I. CRITICISM

TEXT BOOKS FOR UNDERGRADUATES

The English Studies Book, Rob Pope, *Routledge*
Ways of Reading, Montgomery et al, *Routledge*
Doing English, Robert Eaglestone, *Routledge*
Thinking about Texts, Chris Hopkins, *Palgrave*

SOME CONTROVERSIAL TEXTS FOR SELECTIVE USE

Literary Theory, *Terry Eagleton*
Politics and Shakespeare, *Alan Sinfield*

SOURCES OF LITERARY CRITICISM / RECEPTION

Cambridge Companions to Literature
Routledge: Guides to Literature, Literary Sourcebooks
Continuum: Bedside, Bath tub and Armchair Companions, Readers' Guides, Character Studies, Contemporaries, Modern Theatre Guides
Palgrave: Case Studies in Contemporary Criticism, New British Fiction, Readers' Guides to Essential Criticism, Analysing Texts, New Casebooks

SOME ACCESSIBLE TEXTS ON SPECIFIC TOPICS

Shakespeare: the Basics, *Sean McEvoy*,
Poetry: the Basics, *Jeffrey Wainwright*
How Novels Work, *John Mullan*,
How to Write A Poem, *John Redmond*
Meter and Meaning, *Carper and Attridge*,
Routledge History of Literature in English
Routledge Guide to Modern English Writing

2. THE WEB

Poetry Archive, Stagework, Designing Shakespeare, Geoffrey Chaucer Hath a Blog, Converse, Literature Online, English Subject Centre *and many others*

3. FOR A LEVEL

NATE: *English Drama Media* journal, *Critical Reading* series, etc

English and Media Centre: Excellent A Level publications, *E-Magazine* for students, etc.

CUP/OCR: *Cambridge Contexts in Literature*

Philip Allan Updates: *The English Review*, A Level resources

And don't forget – theatres, bookshops, publishers, literary prizes, competitions, etc.