

English Language Education

Key Learning Area

Literature in English

Curriculum and Assessment Guide

(Secondary 4 - 6)

Jointly prepared by the Curriculum Development Council and
the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority

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Preamble

This Curriculum and Assessment (C&A) Guide, jointly prepared by the Curriculum Development Council (CDC) and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) in 2023, is based on the goals of senior secondary education and on other official curriculum and assessment documents, including the *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 6)* and the *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (2017)* and its supplementary notes (2021). It is published for use in secondary schools and should be read in conjunction with all related documents.

The CDC is an advisory body that gives recommendations to the Government of the HKSAR on all matters relating to curriculum development for the school system from the kindergarten level to the senior secondary level. Its membership includes heads of schools, practising teachers, parents, employers, academics from tertiary institutions, professionals from related fields/bodies, representatives from the HKEAA and the Vocational Training Council, as well as officers from the Education Bureau.

The HKEAA is an independent statutory body responsible for the conduct of public assessment, including the assessment for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE). Its governing council includes members drawn from the school sector, tertiary institutions and government bodies, as well as professionals and members of the business community. The subject curriculum forms the basis of the assessment designed and administered by the HKEAA. In this connection, the HKEAA will issue a handbook to provide information on the rules and regulations of the HKDSE Examination as well as the structure and format of public assessment for each subject.

The CDC and HKEAA will keep the subject curriculum under constant review and evaluation in the light of classroom experiences, students' performance in the public assessment, and the changing needs of students and society. All comments and suggestions on this C&A Guide may be sent to:

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Acronym

AI	Artificial Intelligence
C&A	Curriculum and Assessment
CDC	Curriculum Development Council
EDB	Education Bureau
HKDSE	Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education
HKEAA	Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority
HKSAR	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region
IL	Information Literacy
IT	Information Technology
KLA	Key Learning Area
S1/2/3/4/5/6	Secondary 1/2/3/4/5/6
SBA	School-based Assessment
VTC	Vocational Training Council

Chapter 1 Introduction

This chapter provides the background, rationale and aims of Literature in English, as part of the English Language Education curriculum and an elective subject in the three-year senior secondary curriculum, and highlights how it articulates with the junior secondary curriculum, post-secondary education, and future career pathways.

1.1 Background

The *Literature in English Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4 – 6)* was first published in 2007. It was then updated in January 2014 and November 2015 in response to the recommendations made in the Short-term Review and the Medium-term Review in 2012 and 2014 respectively to fine-tune the senior secondary Literature in English curriculum and assessment.

In 2017, the *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 6)* and *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide* were released to provide further information and updates on the direction for the development of the English Language Education curriculum. In the same year, the Task Force on Review of School Curriculum (Task Force) was set up to holistically review the primary and secondary curricula. Upon completion of the review, recommendations were set out in the report entitled “Optimise the curriculum for the future, Foster whole-person development and diverse talents” for the relevant committees under the Curriculum Development Council and the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority to formulate measures to create space for students and cater for learner diversity. With the optimisation of the four senior secondary core subjects announced in Education Bureau Circular Memorandum No.39/2021 “Measures to Optimise the Four Senior Secondary Core Subjects”, the curriculum and assessment of the elective subjects, including Literature in English, were also reviewed along the same directions to formulate measures to create space for students and cater for learner diversity. This Guide was updated to incorporate the directions set out in the aforesaid curriculum guides, the review report and the optimising measures for Literature in English.

The *Literature in English Curriculum and Assessment Guide (Secondary 4 – 6)* (2023) delineates the aims, learning targets and objectives of the subject. It also provides guidelines, suggestions and examples to promote effective learning, teaching and assessment practices, and to help schools and teachers plan, develop and implement their school Literature in English curriculum. For a more comprehensive understanding of the English Language Education curriculum, this Guide could be read in conjunction with the *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 6)* (2017).

1.2 Rationale

The rationale for studying Literature in English as an elective subject at the senior secondary level is presented below:

- It helps students develop a humanistic outlook on life. Through a close interaction with literary or creative works which portray a diverse range of human thought, emotion and experience, students gain knowledge and understanding of the nature of human existence and of the world and the society in which they live.
- Representing the human situation through a creative use of language, literary or creative texts can offer students much aesthetic, intellectual and emotional pleasure.
- The study of Literature in English has many practical aspects.
 - It provides ample opportunities for students to develop their creativity, sharpen their critical and analytical skills, and enhance their language proficiency.
 - It broadens their awareness of the culture of different places where English is used, and enhances their appreciation and understanding of Hong Kong as a culturally diverse society.
 - The intellectual, aesthetic and emotional qualities, which students develop through studying Literature in English, prepare them for further study or work, particularly in areas such as publishing and the media, where creativity, critical thinking and intercultural understanding are highly valued.

1.3 Curriculum Aims

The aims of the Literature in English curriculum are to enable students to:

- appreciate and enjoy a wide range of literary or creative texts and other related cultural forms;
- develop their capacity for critical thinking, creativity, self-expression, personal growth, empathy and cultural understanding;
- enhance their awareness of the relationship between literature and society;
- develop a greater sensitivity to the nuances of the English language; and
- be adequately prepared for areas of further study or work, where qualities promoted in the study of literature, such as creativity, critical thinking and inter-cultural understanding, are highly valued.

1.4 Interface with the Junior Secondary Curriculum and Post-secondary Pathways

The senior secondary Literature in English curriculum aims to capitalise on students' learning of English at the junior secondary level to further enhance their language proficiency and develop their critical abilities, aesthetic sensitivity and cultural awareness. To enable students to effectively meet the challenges of the senior secondary Literature in English curriculum, a solid foundation of knowledge and skills in English Language has to be laid at the junior secondary level. Schools are encouraged to:

- promote a culture of reading among students, by exposing them to a wide spectrum of language arts materials, including imaginative or literary texts (e.g. poems, songs, plays, short stories, films); and
- enhance the learning of English in the Experience Strand through the use of language arts materials to help students develop a range of knowledge, skills and qualities critical for the study of Literature in English, including:
 - an enjoyment of reading;
 - increased awareness and appreciation of literature as a subject;
 - knowledge of the features of various literary genres such as prose, poetry and drama;
 - reasoning, analytical and critical skills;
 - sensitivity to the use of the English language; and
 - creativity and the power to express informed and imaginative views and responses.

By broadening and enriching students' knowledge, skills and experience, the senior secondary Literature in English curriculum also provides a firm foundation for further study, vocational training or work. It opens up a variety of post-secondary education and career pathways, particularly in the areas of media production, performing arts, teaching, law and social sciences. Literature in English teachers are encouraged to work with the career guidance team to help students explore further education and career pathways to inform their life planning.

1.5 Cross-curricular Links

Teachers need to foster coherence between Literature in English and English Language, as well as other subjects, through cross-curricular collaboration. Such a vision is rooted in the belief that students should explore knowledge and gain experience in a more integrated manner. When they are able to make connections among ideas and concepts, their motivation will be raised. Likewise, the knowledge they acquire, and the skills and positive attitudes they develop in each key learning area (KLA), will also be enhanced. For details about how cross-curricular collaboration can be achieved through curriculum planning and development in Literature in English, please refer to Sections 3.3.4 and 3.4.2.

Chapter 2 Curriculum Framework

The curriculum framework for Literature in English embodies the key knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that students should develop at the senior secondary level. It forms the basis on which schools and teachers can plan their school curriculum, and design appropriate learning, teaching and assessment activities.

2.1 Design Principles

The design of the senior secondary Literature in English curriculum is founded on the following principles, which are in line with those recommended in the *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide* (2017):

- Aligning with the Seven Learning Goals of Secondary Education, which covers “National and Global Identity”, “Breadth of Knowledge”, “Language Proficiency”, “Generic Skills”, “Information Literacy”, “Life Planning” and “Healthy Lifestyle” [For details, please refer to Booklet 2 of the *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide* (2017)];
- Building on the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes that students have developed through the English Language curriculum for basic education from P1 to S3;
- Achieving a balance between breadth and depth in the study of the subject to facilitate articulation to further study/vocational training, or entry into the workforce;
- Achieving a balance between theoretical and applied learning, by giving emphasis to students’ ability to demonstrate knowledge of literary texts and apply critical and analytical skills and creativity in literary appreciation and personal responses;
- Providing a balanced and flexible curriculum to cater for students’ diverse needs, interests and abilities;
- Promoting independent and lifelong learning through developing students’ learning how to learn skills and encouraging student-centred pedagogical approaches involving inquiry and problem-solving;
- Setting out a framework for progression to facilitate school curriculum planning;
- Fostering greater coherence between Literature in English and the other subjects through encouraging cross-curricular collaboration; and
- Ensuring close alignment between curriculum and assessment.

2.2 Curriculum Structure and Organisation

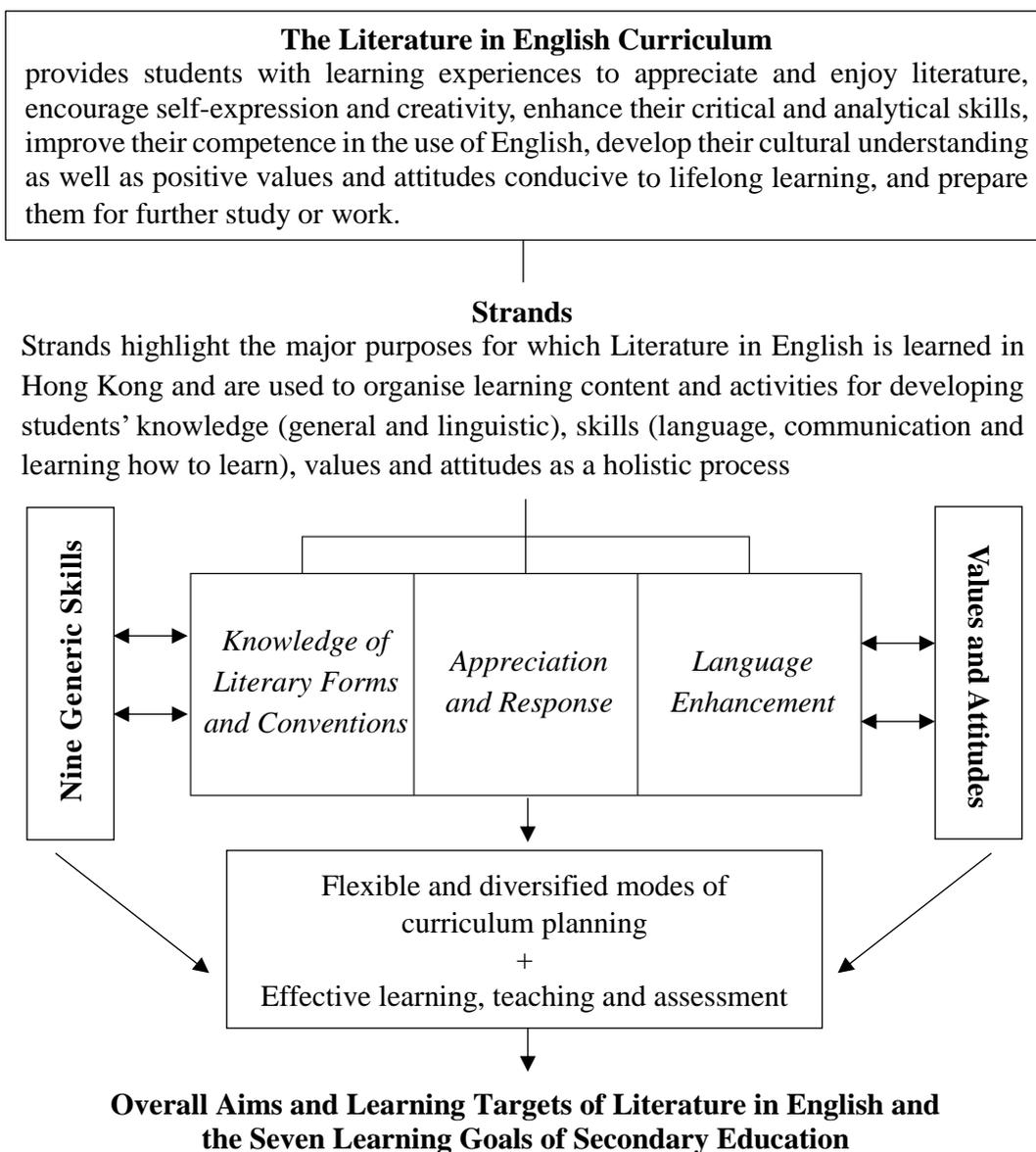
The curriculum framework for Literature in English provides the overall structure for organising learning and teaching for the subject. It comprises a set of interlocking components including:

- subject knowledge and skills, which are expressed in the form of learning targets in the Strands of Knowledge of Literary Forms and Conventions, Appreciation and Response, and Language Enhancement, as well as learning objectives;
- generic skills; and
- positive values and attitudes.

The framework sets out what students should know, value and be able to do in the study of Literature in English at the senior secondary level. It gives schools and teachers flexibility and ownership to plan and develop alternative curriculum modes to meet their varied needs.

Figure 2.1 on the following page is a diagrammatic representation highlighting the major components of the Literature in English curriculum framework.

Figure 2.1 Diagrammatic Representation of the Literature in English Curriculum Framework



Literature in English, as an elective subject, accounts for about 10% of the total lesson time* in the senior secondary curriculum. Lesson time should be allocated according to students’ needs with due consideration of their strengths and weaknesses. Equal emphasis should be placed on the various genres of prose, poetry, drama and film that students are required to study in the subject, and sufficient time should be allocated for initiating desired responses from students and providing advice and support on portfolio work and other related learning activities.

The following is a suggested time allocation for the Literature in English curriculum:

	Percentage of lesson time
• Study of Set Texts	55%
• Literary Appreciation	25%
• Portfolio (Group work/Individual tutorials)	20%

2.3 Strands and Learning Targets

Strands are categories for organising the curriculum. In Literature in English, three interrelated Strands – Knowledge of Literary Forms and Conventions, Appreciation and Response and Language Enhancement – are employed as content organisers. They define the major targets or purposes of studying literature, as listed below:

Knowledge of Literary Forms and Conventions

- To recognise the major features of literary or creative forms such as prose, poetry, drama and film
- To understand literary terms and concepts and to apply them appropriately in appreciating, discussing and evaluating literary or creative texts

Appreciation and Response

- To develop one’s critical and interpretative abilities through understanding and appreciating literary or creative texts

* Starting from Secondary 4 in the 2021/22 school year, the four senior secondary core subjects are optimised to release lesson time for flexible arrangements to cater for learner diversity. Under the optimising arrangements, it is recommended that the four senior secondary core subjects take up no more than half of the total lesson time, while the elective subjects (including Applied Learning and Other Languages) should take up no less than 20% of the total lesson time and Other Learning Experiences (OLE) no less than 10%. For more information, please refer to *the Supplementary Notes to the Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (2017)*.

As always, the amount of time spent in learning and teaching is governed by a variety of factors, including whole-school curriculum planning, students’ abilities and needs, students’ prior knowledge, teaching and assessment strategies, teaching styles and the number of subjects offered. Schools should exercise professional judgement and flexibility over time allocation to achieve specific curriculum aims and objectives as well as to suit students’ specific needs and the school context.

- To develop informed, personal response and judgement through interacting closely with literary or creative texts and relating them to one's own experience
- To enhance one's cultural understanding through appreciating the interconnections within and between texts and developing an increased awareness of the relationship between literature and society
- To develop creativity and powers of self-expression through producing works of different literary genres including prose, poetry and drama

Language Enhancement

- To enhance one's language skills as well as vocabulary through studying and viewing a wide range of literary or creative texts
- To develop awareness of subtleties of language and of register and appropriateness through close interaction with a variety of literary or creative texts
- To gain greater awareness of the phonological system of English through appreciation and use of literary sound devices

2.4 Learning Objectives

The Literature in English curriculum comprises learning objectives or focuses, which embody the essential content of learning for the subject. They include:

Subject Knowledge and Skills

Knowledge of Literary or Creative Works

The key learning objective or focus of the curriculum is to examine literary or creative works in the genres of prose, poetry, drama and film. Examples of the sort of texts that students of literature will engage with are provided in Appendix 1. Through exploring these texts, students are encouraged to achieve a range of other objectives, including the skills of literary comprehension and appreciation, and literary competence development strategies, as listed below.

Skills of Literary Comprehension and Appreciation

These include skills in:

- examining and discussing form and content, showing:
 - comprehension of the thoughts and feelings conveyed in the texts;
 - analytical and critical appreciation of the language, technique and style through which these thoughts and feelings are expressed (such as the use of tone and irony);
- comparing and contrasting literary or creative texts in terms of themes, characterisation, language, technique and style;

- expressing feelings and ideas in response to literary and creative texts freely and imaginatively;
- making connections between literary or creative texts and other cultural media (such as paintings, sculpture and photography) and/or issues of importance in society;
- applying some of the techniques learned to one's own creative work;
- developing an interest in following up references and allusions; and
- understanding that text interpretation is influenced by the dynamic interplay between text, context and the reader's background knowledge.

Literary Competence Development Strategies

To facilitate literary comprehension and appreciation, students are encouraged to develop the following sub-skills:

- Information skills
 - planning and using different sources, including electronic sources, to search for and select required information (e.g. on writers, contexts, and the cultural or social background of literary or creative texts)
 - exploring, developing and exchanging information to derive new ideas
 - presenting ideas or information, making use of different computer software and incorporating visuals/images to enhance effectiveness
- Working with others
 - communicating ideas about literary or creative texts clearly and precisely
 - negotiating the possible meanings of literary or creative texts
 - discussing and debating literary or creative works, expressing one's critical analyses, personal views or responses
 - planning and producing a group presentation/performance/creative work, agreeing on tasks, responsibilities and working arrangements
 - reviewing group or individual presentation/performance/creative work and reflecting on ways to enhance collaborative work or make improvements
- Developing reflective thinking and self-motivation
 - planning, managing and evaluating one's own learning
 - planning one's personal reading of texts, possibly beyond the set texts, prioritising actions and managing time effectively
 - seeking or creating opportunities to broaden and deepen one's own learning by soliciting feedback and support from various sources
 - reviewing progress and identifying actions for improving performance

Generic Skills

Generic skills enable students to learn how to learn. They include:

Basic Skills	Thinking Skills	Personal and Social Skills
Communication Skills	Critical Thinking Skills	Self-management Skills
Mathematical Skills	Creativity	Self-learning Skills
IT Skills	Problem Solving Skills	Collaboration Skills

These skills are to be developed through learning and teaching in all the KLAs. To a large extent, they are embedded in the curriculum content of Literature in English. Collaboration, communication, creativity, critical thinking, problem solving and self-learning skills are in particular nurtured through its delivery.

Values and Attitudes

Values underpin our conduct and decisions. Attitudes are personal dispositions, which may affect our behaviour positively or negatively. Students need to develop positive attitudes such as responsibility, open-mindedness and co-operativeness for healthy development. Among all values and attitudes, perseverance, respect for others, responsibility, national identity, commitment, integrity, care for others, law-abidingness, empathy and diligence have been identified as the ten priority values and attitudes.

Literature in English, in particular, aims to help students:

- gain pleasure and enjoyment from reading and viewing literary or creative works;
- develop a keen interest in reading and viewing literary or creative works and in responding to them through oral, written and performative means;
- appreciate the beauty, flexibility and play of language at its best;
- empathise with others;
- gain increased awareness of human relationships and the interaction between the individual and society;
- appreciate different cultures, attitudes and belief systems;
- develop respect for intellectual property through ethical and lawful use of copyright materials (e.g. films, books, music); and
- understand the value of academic integrity and honesty.

Information Literacy

As an important competency, information literacy (IL) helps students identify the need for information; locate, evaluate, extract, organise and present information; create new ideas; cope with the dynamics in our information world; use information ethically as well as refrain from immoral practices such as cyber bullying and infringing intellectual property rights. IL can be developed through the application of the generic skills in the context of handling information in different media in our information world. This also involves various knowledge contexts and has close linkage with Literature in English.

Schools can make reference to the “Information Literacy for Hong Kong Students” learning framework for suggestions on how to develop students’ knowledge, skills and attitudes to use information and information technology effectively, ethically and legally as responsible citizens and lifelong learners. Incorporation of IL in the Literature in English curriculum will provide an authentic context for students to apply the skills and benefit the learning of the subject. The framework can be accessed at <https://www.edb.gov.hk/attachment/en/edu-system/primary-secondary/applicable-to-primary-secondary/it-in-edu/Information-Literacy/IL20180516E.pdf>.

2.5 Broad Learning Outcomes

The following broad learning outcomes provide an overall picture of what students should be able to do in their study of Literature in English by the end of S6. They form the basis on which the assessment objectives for Literature in English at the senior secondary level presented in Chapter 5 – Assessment are built.

Knowledge of Literary Forms and Conventions

- demonstrate understanding of literary terms, techniques and concepts by using them appropriately in critical discussions or analyses
- demonstrate an awareness of the conventions of different genres in critical discussions and analyses

Appreciation and Response

- demonstrate a greater knowledge of the rich variety of literature in English through discussing the works they have read or viewed
- demonstrate understanding of the different aspects of literary and creative texts through critical analyses and projects done individually or in groups
- demonstrate an understanding that text interpretation is influenced by the interplay between text, context and the reader

- express personal responses to texts by articulating and elaborating feelings and emotions, or by other means such as producing imaginative expansions of texts
- express with confidence ideas and feelings through the production of short creative texts and participation in performance

Language Enhancement

- show a greater sensitivity to language by being able to comment on it in detail in critical discussions or analyses
- show a greater command of the phonology of English by being able to discuss how sound patterns are used to enhance literary effect, and to apply this knowledge in their own creative work
- gain an expanded vocabulary and deepened understanding of grammar by means of wide-ranging reading and viewing, and apply some of the literary language they have learned appropriately in critical and creative writing

Chapter 3 Curriculum Planning

This chapter provides guidelines to help schools and teachers develop a flexible and balanced curriculum that suits the needs, interests and abilities of their students and the context of their school, in accordance with the central framework provided in Chapter 2.

3.1 Guiding Principles

The Literature in English curriculum allows for flexibility and innovation in curriculum planning. The choice as to which skills and areas of the curriculum to highlight, and the freedom to choose very different types of text, allow for considerable diversity in the planning and development of school curricula tailored to different situations and groups of students. When planning and developing their own Literature in English curricula, schools and teachers are encouraged to:

- aim for a balanced and comprehensive coverage of the learning targets and objectives, ensuring that the learning activities offered to students help them develop equally in terms of Knowledge of Literary Forms and Conventions, Appreciation and Response, and Language Enhancement, rather than focus on any one of these strands at the expense of the others;
- address the Seven Learning Goals of Secondary Education and incorporate other curriculum initiatives (e.g. values education, Language across the curriculum), where appropriate, in the curriculum;
- plan and devise appropriate and stimulating learning materials, activities, tasks and projects to develop students' literary skills, creativity, language proficiency, critical thinking skills, strategies for learning how to learn, and positive values and attitudes conducive to lifelong learning;
- set and work on clear and manageable goals or focuses (e.g. aesthetic enjoyment, enhanced reading skills and improved communication skills) for those taking the subject at different levels over a specific period;
- work closely together as a team to plan the literature curriculum, to develop suitable learning materials and activities, and collaborate with teachers of other KLAs on cross-curricular projects;
- find literary texts of interest and value to students;
- make flexible use of time released from the optimisation to facilitate more focused learning and teaching, in-depth discussion of literary texts and self-expression through engaging students in creative writing;
- provide opportunities for students to extend learning beyond the classroom (e.g. students research and project work, participating in literary events and competitions) to make effective use of learning time and develop students' self-directed learning skills;
- collect and reflect on evidence of effective learning and teaching to inform curriculum development;

- make extensive use of formative assessment (drafts, projects, creative work and portfolios)
- to inform learning and teaching, and avoid over-reliance on formal tests; and
- review and plan the curriculum flexibly and make appropriate re-adjustments where necessary, taking into account the School-based Assessment (SBA) implementation arrangements as specified in Chapter 5 – Assessment.

3.2 Central Curriculum and School Curriculum Development

This C&A Guide sets the general direction for the learning and teaching of Literature in English from S4 to S6. It provides a flexible framework, supportive of the following key learning elements that schools are encouraged to include in their curriculum to help students achieve the Seven Learning Goals of Secondary Education and the subject goal of lifelong aesthetic enjoyment of literary texts and lifelong enhancement of language skills:

- subject knowledge and skills, as embodied in the learning targets in the Strands of Knowledge of Literary Forms and Conventions, Appreciation and Response, and Language Enhancement;
- generic skills; and
- positive values and attitudes.

Schools are encouraged to promote the study of Literature in English and do so in such a way as to stimulate creativity, and to make use of formative assessment to provide timely feedback which can be used to assist students and improve teaching strategies and text choices. Given the wide scope of the subject, the number of different possible focuses (e.g. thematic or stylistic) and the huge range of texts, covering centuries and continents, schools have plenty of scope for choice, including trying out innovative curriculum practices and experimenting with different approaches to the teaching of literature.

The Literature in English curriculum can be flexibly adapted to support the promotion of the Seven Learning Goals of Secondary Education. While the subject readily lends itself to the achievement of some of the goals, such as “Breadth of Knowledge”, “Language Proficiency” and “Generic Skills”, it can also be used to achieve the other Learning Goals, for example:

- For the goals of “National and Global Identity” and “Life Planning”, appropriate literary texts on themes such as “cultural identity”, “home and homeland”, “personal goals and aspirations” can be selected for discussion. Opportunities for creative writing on these themes can also be provided to deepen students’ understanding of and encourage reflections on them.
- For the goal of “Information Literacy”, students can be guided to use information and information technology ethically and effectively through portfolio work.
- For “Healthy Lifestyle”, aesthetic activities, such as visits to theatre productions, can be organised to provide opportunities for appreciation of the arts.

In fact, Literature in English can be used to promote different whole-school initiatives and enliven the school curriculum with its unique features. It is hoped that Literature in English will not be seen as a difficult body of knowledge, or an arcane skill, but as a means of providing direct engagement with language, symbol and story in order to explore the world and humanity with their infinite possibilities, and as a way of enriching our lives.

3.3 Curriculum Planning Strategies

3.3.1 Integrating Classroom Learning and Independent Learning

Learning is most effective when students play an active role in the learning process and take charge of their own learning. To encourage learner autonomy, teachers should:

- give students choices about what to read, watch and write as part of the course;
- encourage students to bring texts to the classroom to share;
- respect students' wishes in relation to project work;
- guide students to use IT legally, sensibly and responsibly;
- provide opportunities for students to critically review the accuracy and reliability of the information collected;
- allow students to express their likes and dislikes, teaching them how to articulate views sensibly;
- encourage self-assessment and peer feedback; and
- encourage self-expression.

3.3.2 Maximising Learning Opportunities

Learning should not be confined to the classroom. With the optimisation of the curriculum and assessment of this subject, schools should make the best use of the space created to maximise opportunities for pleasurable and meaningful learning and cater for learner diversity:

- encourage wide reading and organise reading clubs;
- provide opportunities for creative writing;
- arrange visits to libraries;
- invite writers to give talks;
- take students to the cinema;
- arrange visits to the theatre;
- stage plays;
- subscribe to film magazines and literary journals;
- participate in Speech Festivals and writing competitions;
- provide individual or small group consultation to better cater for individual needs; and
- join workshops on poetry, drama, etc. conducted by relevant organisations.

3.3.3 Catering for Learner Diversity

All students have ever-improving capabilities to learn and perform to the best of their abilities. In planning for the Literature in English curriculum, schools should be sensitive to different students' needs and make use of strategies that will enable them to learn better and fulfil their potential.

Schools may consider using a variety of learning materials, activities and instructional/grouping arrangements, and appropriately adapting the curriculum to suit their students' needs, interests and abilities. For more details about catering for learner diversity, please refer to Section 4.6.

3.3.4 Cross-curricular Planning

The senior secondary Literature in English curriculum recognises the value and importance of encouraging a cross-curricular approach to the study of the subject, as detailed in Section 1.5 "Cross-curricular Links". To develop cross-curricular learning modules, teachers can:

- collaborate with teachers of other KLAs to set realistic goals and draw up a plan or schedule of work, and to develop and evaluate the learning, teaching and assessment materials and activities;
- provide students with opportunities to develop a broad range of generic skills that they can apply in other KLAs, such as study skills and critical thinking skills; and
- reinforce students' learning experiences by encouraging them to read about and discuss topics they are working on in other KLAs as part of their Literature in English programme.

See also Section 3.4.2 "Collaboration with Other KLAs".

3.3.5 Building a Learning Community

Teachers should help establish a learning community where teachers and students work and learn together. Through maintaining a close and informal relationship with the students, displaying a personal interest and a caring attitude, teachers foster a trusting environment conducive to the free exchange of ideas – one in which students actively engage in learning, participation, collaboration, knowledge-building, problem-solving and shared decision-making.

3.3.6 Flexible Class Organisation

Teachers should exercise flexibility in organising the class for different learning activities. Depending on their nature and purpose, learning and teaching activities can be carried out in groups of varying sizes. It is preferable to have a flexible space for students to discuss points and share texts in small groups, research from books and the Internet, hold individual or group conferences

with the teacher on their latest projects, work on designs for plays, etc. Some students might work outside the classroom space, rehearsing scenes, practising recitations or filming. Where possible, literature lessons should be timetabled in special rooms using the range of resources and staff available to facilitate collaborative learning and the sharing of ideas among more people.

3.3.7 Flexible Use of Learning Time

As mentioned in Chapter 2, schools can allocate about 10% of the total lesson time to Literature in English at the senior secondary level. However, learning time include not only lesson time (teacher-student contact hours in classroom settings), but also time outside class at school (such as recess, lunch breaks, after-school time, open days, examination days) and time spent outside school including holidays. Schools should, therefore, holistically plan and arrange students' learning time so as to develop their self-directed learning skills. In addition to the time allocated for instructional lectures, discussions, group work, etc. to be conducted with the teacher and students together, a significant amount of studying and learning should also take place outside the classroom, e.g. reading texts, viewing films, and undertaking course work and other activities. Schools are strongly encouraged to make flexible use of the learning time during and outside school hours to facilitate learning and teaching. Schools can:

- arrange for double periods per week or cycle to allow continuous stretches of time for learning and assessment tasks, including those for SBA, discussions, projects, etc.;
- in addition to the regular Literature in English lessons, set aside a short, regular period of time per day for reading to help students develop lifelong reading skills; and
- plan their timetables and school calendars flexibly (e.g. adjust the number and arrangement of lessons in each term to cater for the special requirements of the learning programmes, and explore the use of after-school hours or holidays to encourage life-wide learning, such as watching a stage performance).

3.4 Collaboration within the English Language Education KLA and Cross KLA Links

3.4.1 Collaboration within the English Language Education KLA

It is desirable that the teachers of English Language and Literature in English are kept fully aware of what each other is doing to avoid duplication of effort and enable students to make use of what they have learned in one class to support their learning in another. For example, work on rhyme might occur at the same time as work on the language of advertising in the English lessons. Ideas and materials from literature classes can also be used in the English curriculum for those who are not studying Literature in English. The boundaries between the two subjects are porous.

3.4.2 Collaboration with Other KLAs

There are ample opportunities for co-operation with other subjects, which teachers are encouraged to explore. For instance, many of the literary techniques in Literature in English are transferable to the study of Chinese Language and Literature, and knowledge gained from the study of drama and film will facilitate the learning of filming and theatre arts in Applied Learning, as well as the discussion and critique of artworks in Visual Arts. Also, works of literature that relate to the topics being covered in the History classroom can easily be selected.

Literature may not mesh well with the technical side of the sciences, but there is a great body of work on the lives of scientists, achievement in science and the moral dilemmas presented by scientific work that can be exploited for critical analysis and interpretation (e.g. the films *Good Will Hunting*, directed by G. van Sant, 1997; *Gattaca*, directed by A. Niccol, 1997; *October Sky*, directed by J. Johnston, 1999; *A Beautiful Mind*, directed by R. Howard, 2001; *Proof*, directed by J. Madden, 2005).

Literature in English can work in collaboration with other subjects to support whole-school initiatives such as values education. Appropriate literary texts could be chosen to highlight selected values (e.g. empathy, care, respect), thereby deepening students' understanding and reflections on them. Literature in English can play a role in supporting cross-curricular learning, capitalising on the unique features of the subject (e.g. extensive reading and viewing, interaction with literary works and cultural texts).

3.5 Progression

Generally speaking, equal emphasis should be placed on the genres of prose, poetry, drama and film, and sufficient time should be allocated for developing skills in critical appreciation and for initiating personal responses from students.

In accordance with the recommendations in the *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide* (2017) that the curriculum should be designed to help students progress smoothly through the three years of senior secondary education, a teaching schedule is proposed below. In S4, students are introduced to the literary forms of short story, poetry and drama through examining selected set texts from each of these genres. In S5, while students may continue to explore some of these forms, they will also start reading the set novel and working on the portfolio, as well as doing literary appreciation of both seen and unseen passages of prose, poetry and drama. In S6, students will continue examining the set texts they have not yet completed in S5. In addition to literary appreciation, they will also work extensively on the film genre for the development of their portfolio work for the SBA. For details of the SBA, please refer to Section 5.5.4.

The following table provides suggestions on how the teaching of the subject could be done:

<i>Year</i>	<i>Contents</i>
S4	Set texts from short stories, poetry and drama
S5	Set poems, short stories and novel, literary appreciation and portfolio work on film
S6	Set novel, literary appreciation and portfolio work on film

The suggested schedule is developed on the basis that students are first introduced to the literary genres they are more familiar with (i.e. those which they have been exposed to at the junior secondary level, such as the short story, poetry and drama). Progressively they examine the “relatively less familiar” genres (such as film) and take on more challenging learning tasks of literary appreciation and developing an academic paper as part of the portfolio work. However, the suggested schedule is not a hard-and-fast rule to be rigidly followed. Important factors such as students’ interests and abilities, and teachers’ preferences and priorities, should be taken into consideration in working out the most appropriate arrangement for individual schools.

3.6 Managing the Curriculum

To manage the Literature in English curriculum effectively, the school head, the panel chairperson and the teachers of Literature in English need to collaborate. When doing so, they are encouraged to remember the importance of:

- keeping abreast of the latest developments and innovations in the secondary school curriculum and Literature in English curriculum, and aligning learning in Literature in English with the school vision and culture, the school curriculum and the central curriculum framework;
- developing a school policy for Literature in English in response to the Seven Learning Goals of Secondary Education as well as students’ needs and interests;
- encouraging team-building and collaboration between teachers of Literature in English, and between teachers of Literature in English and teachers of English Language and other KLAs;
- creating time for professional development;
- promoting flexible deployment and use of resources; and
- encouraging assessment for learning and using evidence to make informed changes to the curriculum.

School heads, panel chairpersons and teachers all share the responsibility of initiating appropriate curriculum changes, and their roles as curriculum leaders may vary depending on the school context. Below are some of the key roles they may play.

School Heads

School heads take the leading role in encouraging and supporting school Literature in English curriculum development. They need to:

- appreciate the need for adopting the subject and recognise its potential for broadening and improving the educational experience of students;
- help teachers involved get suitable professional development;
- deploy school resources appropriately (such as allowing use of special rooms) and encourage a flexible style of teaching; and
- create a school atmosphere in which creative self-expression is valued highly.

Panel Chairpersons

Sometimes Literature in English has a small independent panel, in which case the panel chairperson needs to:

- choose suitable set texts;
- make curriculum decisions to ensure students benefit from the subject;
- ensure that the school has a good selection of texts and reference materials;
- consider how the subject should best be timetabled;
- encourage literary activities in the school at large; and
- collaborate with the chairpersons of other panels.

If Literature in English is part of the English Panel, the chairperson needs to do all of the above and also ensure that the foundations are laid at the junior secondary level to pave the way for the study of the subject at the senior secondary level.

Teachers

Literature teachers need to:

- attend professional development programmes on the subject;
- adapt materials and teaching style to the ability of the students;
- show students the aspects of texts which literary critics look at, and the terms they use to describe and discuss them;
- lead/facilitate discussions on texts;
- be a sensitive recipient of creative work and ideas, praising achievement and pointing to ways to improve areas of weakness;
- be enthusiastic about writing and film and disseminate that enthusiasm;
- introduce students to a wide variety of texts and set guided questions on them;

- ensure that the students know and understand the set texts well;
- see students individually to discuss project work in detail and suggest how drafts can be improved; and
- listen as much as question and instruct.

Depending on the school context, the roles different key players assume may vary from school to school. For more information on the key roles they may play, please refer to Section 3.2.6 of the *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 6)* (2017).

Chapter 4 Learning and Teaching

This chapter provides guidelines for effective learning and teaching of the Literature in English curriculum. It is to be read in conjunction with Chapter 4 of the *English Language Education Key Learning Area Curriculum Guide (Primary 1 – Secondary 6)* (2017).

4.1 Knowledge and Learning

Widely different views are held on the teaching of literature. For example, while some espouse the “structural” approach focussing on close analysis of literary texts, others argue that the “reader response” approach aimed at contributing to the students’ personal development should be encouraged. Over the years, these and other approaches have brought together a wealth of insights into the study of literature. However, different though these approaches may be, they need not be incompatible or mutually exclusive. They can in fact be complementary. For example, structural analysis provides the terms and concepts that help students interpret and discuss literature, while a reader response approach emphasises the integrated experience an individual has with a text, with his or her response given primacy over formal analysis.

No one single approach to the study of literature is fully capable of developing students’ capacity to understand, appreciate and enjoy literary works. The teaching of literature should therefore involve not only the transmission of knowledge about literary texts but, more importantly, the development of students’ faculties for enjoying and appreciating literature critically. Reading and viewing literature becomes a genuine part of their learning experience when students ask themselves questions about texts and attempt to come up with answers themselves. It is only when students develop the ability to read critically and independently that they select and appreciate literature outside the classroom, and are able to develop a lifelong interest in reading. The emphasis in teaching literature should therefore be on providing students with opportunities that will help them develop the ability to both respond sensitively to texts with enjoyment and analyse them critically.

Based on this integrative view of literature study, the detailed learning and teaching suggestions provided in this chapter seek to help students develop the skills of critical understanding and appreciation, and approach literary texts in the following genres:

- Prose fiction (the short story and novel);
- Poetry;
- Drama; and
- Film.

Highlighted below are the important roles that the teacher and the students play in contributing to the effective study of literature:

Roles of teachers

Apart from being transmitters of knowledge, teachers play the key role of facilitating students' study of Literature in English and enhancing their independent learning capabilities. To enable students to enjoy and appreciate literary texts and develop their capacity for critical thinking, creativity and self-expression, teachers are encouraged to:

- negotiate learning goals and content with students;
- maintain a positive and harmonious learning atmosphere which supports students' active participation and expression of views and ideas;
- act as a role model as a learner of literature;
- adapt teaching to learner responses;
- enhance quality interaction in the classroom;
- provide appropriate scaffolding and quality feedback; and
- promote self-directed learning.

Roles of students

Literary criticism is more an ability to be developed than a body of knowledge to be taken in. The teacher is there to demonstrate this ability and to provide support and feedback, while students need to read and view texts themselves and ensure that they learn how to discuss them critically. They should then exercise their imagination, respond with emotion and produce their own texts. For clear explanations of opinions and ideas in group work, a critical vocabulary has to be developed and, while criticising texts, students need to be truthful and respectful and be ready to share their own original writing as well as that written by others.

4.2 Guiding Principles

The guiding principles for the learning and teaching of Literature in English are set out below:

- **An interactive process of literary knowledge building and development:** The study of Literature in English is a dynamic process in which the learner plays a key role in understanding and internalising the literary knowledge they have learned, and in critically applying it together with their world knowledge in interpreting texts. Any learning and teaching approaches or strategies that teachers are planning to adopt or develop should be rooted in this understanding, providing students with a diversity of learning contexts and activities to enable them to explore, develop and apply their literary knowledge and skills.

- **An open and flexible curriculum framework:** Schools should make use of the open and flexible central Literature in English curriculum framework to develop appropriate learning, teaching and assessment tasks and activities.
- **Building on strengths:** Schools should build on the strengths of their existing practices (e.g. the teaching of language arts in the subject of English Language at the junior secondary level) to allow for a smooth transition to the senior secondary Literature in English curriculum.
- **Understanding learning targets:** To ensure that students learn effectively and meaningfully, there must be a plan for them to work towards specific learning targets in and across the three Strands – Knowledge of Literary Forms and Conventions, Appreciation and Response, and Language Enhancement. The design and implementation of the school Literature in English curriculum should be geared towards helping students achieve the learning targets.
- **Using a wide range of learning and teaching approaches and strategies:** Helping students achieve the learning targets calls for the effective and flexible use of a wide range of approaches and strategies. Depending on the learning context, teachers should design, choose and use approaches and strategies that motivate students, and enhance their personal and intellectual development.
- **Catering for learner diversity:** Plenty of opportunities should be provided to enable students to enjoy literature, and to develop their capacity for critical thinking, creativity and sensitivity to language through a variety of texts and activities which cater for their diverse needs and interests, as well as preparing them for further academic study, vocational training or work.
- **Flexible and judicious use of resources:** Schools are encouraged to enhance learning in Literature in English, sustain students' interest and broaden their learning experiences through flexible use of a variety of resources, both print and non-print. Also, relevant community resources should be tapped to provide students with opportunities for life-wide learning. However, students should be made aware of the risks of using the information on the Internet, which may be incomplete, inaccurate or biased. Searching information on the Internet or using artificial intelligence (AI) generative tools is not a substitute for reading the original literary works, reference books and journal articles, which are more reliable sources of information.

4.3 Approaches and Strategies

As suggested in the *Secondary Education Curriculum Guide (2017)*, an extensive range of learning and teaching approaches should be employed to suit the content and focuses of learning and students' diverse needs.

Building on strengths in learning and teaching

The following section highlights some of the major strengths in learning and teaching in Hong Kong classrooms. Teachers are encouraged to further develop them to students' advantage:

- **Repetitive learning to consolidate knowledge:** Repetitive learning should be distinguished from rote-learning, the latter of which often involves memorising without understanding. Repetitive learning implies continuous learning with increasing variation, which ensures retention and leads to enhanced understanding. Hong Kong students are accustomed to this mode of learning, and teachers should capitalise on its strength, by encouraging reading and re-reading to gain new insights and to increase familiarity with key lines, important scenes and essential plot details, so that students can readily cite them to support their arguments where appropriate.
- **Motivated students:** Most Hong Kong students are motivated, co-operative, diligent and committed to the study of the subject. Appropriate learning materials and activities should be provided to maintain their interest and drive. However, teachers should also make effective use of these traits to develop students' potential by devising challenging tasks or projects which promote independent critical judgement and a lifelong interest in reading and viewing.
- **Conscientious teachers:** Teachers of literature in Hong Kong are keen, resourceful and conscientious professionals, with a firm knowledge of both the subject and their students' interests and abilities. While they should certainly continue to be proficient managers of class activities and disseminators of literary knowledge, they should also enhance their role as facilitators by promoting critical debate and discussion, encouraging free expression of personal responses, and offering guidance, support and timely feedback for the benefit of the students.

In choosing suitable learning and teaching approaches, teachers should be mindful that students may benefit from different ways of teaching, such as:

- **Teaching as direct instruction:** This is relevant to contexts where explanation, demonstration or modelling is required to enable students to gain knowledge and understanding of specific aspects of the subject, e.g. literary terms and concepts, and particular writing styles.
- **Teaching as inquiry:** This engages students in activities where they are required to exercise their critical abilities and creativity to examine and discuss matters such as themes, characters, events and technique and style, and to communicate ideas, views and feelings appropriately and convincingly.

- **Teaching as co-construction:** This view focusses on the class as a community of learners. The teacher facilitates the setting up of class networks in which students contribute collectively to the creation of knowledge and build up criteria for judging it. This is most obvious in activities (e.g. projects) in which members of the class negotiate areas of literary study with the teacher and then work collaboratively to conduct research and make presentations on topics of interest to them. In the process, the students are encouraged to contribute, apply their literary knowledge and skills, and tap the rich sources of literature in the world.

The suggested learning and teaching approaches or strategies set out in Sections 4.3.1 – 4.3.4 below seek to cater for these various modes of learning, and teachers are encouraged to use them, where appropriate. Each section focusses on a literary genre, and a list of commonly used literary terms or concepts which teachers are likely to employ in teaching the genre is also included. However, it is not possible to list all the terms teachers and students may want to use when discussing literary works and films, nor are the terms given here meant to be compulsory. Different texts have different salient features, and terms that are appropriate in one context may be unhelpful in another. The guidelines are therefore to be used flexibly. They seek to assist, not to prescribe.

4.3.1 Prose Fiction (the short story and novel)

Features of prose fiction

Underlying most of the literary works that students will study is the “story”, and teachers may wish to begin the course by asking students to think about what makes a “story” – whether it is something we tell a friend hurriedly in the morning or a multi-volume work such as J.R.R. Tolkien’s *The Lord of the Rings*, or even the history of the world. We are a story-telling species. From early on in our lives we are eager for stories, and it is almost regarded as the natural duty of a child’s care-giver to supply stories. Later on in life, almost everyone retains a desire to hear stories; they are the basis of conversation, the selling point of magazines and newspapers and the content of popular soap operas.

What, then, are the basics of a story? We need a place where the story happens, some people or animals who do something and some idea as to why the story matters. Extra details such as time or description are helpful, but not essential.

“A stone lay on the ground for a century” is not, on its own, a story: there is no action and stones do not normally interest us very much.

“A man ate his breakfast this morning” on its own is not a story. It seems pointless.

“A girl smiled at me on the bus this morning” reaches the level of the story and will gain meaning from its context. It might mean “So you see people are pleasant”, or “So you see I am attractive”, or “The worst is over now – people have started smiling again...”

Once the students have the basic concepts, they can be introduced to literary terms and told that a story has action/plot, characters, settings and themes. These are ideas they will keep on meeting during the course as they see how different storytellers tell different stories for different purposes.

A further point of entry to literary studies is the fact that we are also a symbol-using species. Colours represent things for us, we have flags, we wear school uniforms and badges, logos are all around us – and, of course, above all else we use the symbolic system of language. It is natural for us to use symbols to express our thoughts, e.g. Life is like a journey; God is a king, a shepherd, our Father; you can feel as hungry as a wolf; an angry man might roar at you; if we are truly enjoying ourselves, time flies by. We hardly notice all the symbols we use. In literature we are more conscious of the medium we are using (words or pictures on the screen) – so we have developed a special vocabulary to talk about symbols, images, metaphors and other figures of speech.

Stories and symbols lie behind much of what follows, where they are considered more technically, in more detail and in relation to slightly different types of texts.

The categories below can be overlapping, but will help teachers and students focus on the main features of prose fiction in the English tradition.

AUTHOR The Literature in English course is not intended to be a historical one, and not every text chosen is regarded to be a masterpiece. Frequently it is perfectly possible to study a story without detailed information about its writer. The relationship between a writer’s experience and his/her work can also be controversial. Sometimes, however, biographical information can be useful, for example, George Orwell’s life in relation to *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

CHARACTER The bulk of fiction tells stories about people, and students will want to study the characters in the texts they read. It is usual to discuss their motivation and development (if any). Some stories (e.g. the “coming of age” story about a young person growing up) are very much character-centred, others less so. Also, there are “stock characters” in some stories (e.g. the foil to a major character: Doctor Watson in relation to Sherlock Holmes). Stories may have heroes/heroines (e.g. Ralph in *Lord of the Flies* and Jane Eyre in *Jane Eyre*) and villains (e.g. Quilp in *The Old Curiosity Shop*), but flawed and conflicted central figures are even more common in more sophisticated texts (e.g. Winston in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Okonkwo in *Things Fall Apart* and Mr. Rochester in *Jane Eyre*).

Readers may like or dislike characters, and judge them to be good or bad – emotional engagement with characters is one of the pleasures of reading. Characters are created by means of the techniques of characterisation, which typically include description of the characters, their speech, their actions and the imagery associated with them (e.g. the rather unattractive, middle-aged Winston Smith of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* with his diffident speech, visits to working-class areas and varicose leg ulcer). Names can also be important clues to character (e.g. heroic Winston allied with the ordinary Smith).

CLOSING

Any piece of fictional prose has to end somewhere, and for many readers this is one of the most crucial features of a work of fiction. Some short stories exist primarily for the twist, the surprise reversal of expectations at the end, that can give so much pleasure (e.g. the destruction of the valuable piece of furniture at the end of Roald Dahl's "Parson's Pleasure"). Many readers enjoy a sense of poetic justice when the good are rewarded and the bad punished (e.g. "Parson's Pleasure"). Sometimes readers are not at all sure what is going to happen and the ending is suspenseful (e.g. will Ralph be killed in *Lord of the Flies*?). However, sometimes endings are neat and we know very clearly what happens (e.g. the detective story in which the crime is solved and the criminal caught). In opposition to these closed endings are more open ones where the writer leaves questions unanswered and judgements unsure (e.g. many Katherine Mansfield short stories).

CONFLICT and CONTRAST

These are two of the basic ingredients of stories. An initial situation suddenly turns into conflict and the story ends when it is resolved. Good fights evil, black fights white, police fight gangsters, young fight old, and so on (e.g. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*). Often the heroes and villains are mirror-images of one another (Robert Stevenson's *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* is an extreme example). Contrast operates at many levels in a text. For example, town contrasts with country, love with hate, appearance with reality, sophistication with naivety, and wealth with poverty.

CULTURAL BACKGROUND

The curriculum does not expect students to spend a lot of time on this, though some research into the history of the Belgian Congo would, for example, help illuminate Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.

DIALOGUE

Some writers place great emphasis on dialogue to move the plot forward and to assist with characterisation. Styles of speech are used as clues to personality. One character might swear, another be euphemistic and so on (e.g. Archibald's style of speech shows his class and mentality in P.G. Wodehouse's "The Reverent Wooing of Archibald").

GENRE

This word is used in a number of ways: to cover major categories like prose itself, to describe styles, or to denote types of fiction, e.g. the detective story (itself analysable into the classical style and the hard-

boiled), the romance, science-fiction, fantasy, the utopian novel, the dystopian novel, the historical novel and so on. Such genres create expectations in readers. Some authors abide by the rules, but others enjoy breaking the conventions. A parody mocks a genre.

IMAGERY

Metaphors, similes and symbols create a pattern of allusion around a character or place (e.g. Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is rich in references to water, damp, fire and redness) which helps build atmosphere. Sometimes such imagery has become formalised as in the Gothic style with its castles, darkness, storms, black birds, etc. (e.g. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*). Where an object maintains its meaning over the course of the story, it becomes symbolic. In William Golding's *Lord of the Flies*, for example, Piggy's glasses represent civilisation, scientific thought and rationality, and in the course of the story they become broken as these qualities are lost. Also, the conch shell in the same book symbolises joint decision-making and orderly discussion (possibly even democracy), and it is smashed as Jack becomes a dictator. A similar fate is met by the glass paperweight that comes to symbolise for Winston an earlier way of life (George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*).

A symbol can also be created when a detail suddenly springs to life as having a deeper potential meaning; for instance, in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, a native in the "grove of death" has a piece of white string round his neck – maybe mere decoration, or possibly the noose of the white man taking away his life.

IRONY

This means that something is going on beneath the surface level. Maybe the narrator does not mean what he/she is saying, or the reader feels he/she knows better. Unexpected consequences which are fitting are also ironic. Entire stories can be ironic in the sense that the truth is the reverse of the expected (e.g. in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, the greatest darkness lies not in the Inner Station itself, but in the heart of the supposedly civilised Kurtz).

MOOD

It is important to gauge the mood of a story. There is no need to be moralistic and heavy-handed about humour (e.g. Saki's sarcasm and Wodehouse's farce). Some short stories exist mainly to evoke a mood or recall a feeling (e.g. many stories by Virginia Woolf and Katherine Mansfield). Mood is created mainly by means of description, style and imagery.

MESSAGE* and THEME

It was pointed out in the introduction to this section that we normally expect to be able to understand why a story has been told: one does not simply say to someone out of the blue, "My sister's new shoes are green". Outside some absurdist works of literature, or works of "art for art's sake", we similarly expect a story to have a message. A fable tries to

* Sometimes also referred to as the moral of the story.

illustrate a clear point; it is a sort of lesson. Examples of works with clear messages are William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* about human nature, George Eliot's *Silas Marner* about the nature of true wealth and George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* about totalitarianism.

As a work of literature becomes more complex, we start talking about its themes. Authors do not always want to tell us what to think, and we are free, anyway, to disagree, but the work can still stimulate us to think about a topic. Examples of the themes in some works (and the lists are not intended to be exhaustive) are as follows:

- John Steinbeck's *Of Mice and Men*: friendship, prejudice, duty, justice, fantasy, racism, mental disability;
- J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*: loyalty, friendship, good versus evil, nostalgia, respect for nature, magic, greed, temptation, pride, bravery; and
- Ray Bradbury's *The Veldt*: child-parent relationships, the Oedipus Complex, technology, fantasy, anger.

It will be observed that some themes are more general (e.g. friendship), and others more closely tied to social and political contexts (e.g. marriage customs in the novels of Jane Austen, and colonialism and imperialism in much of the work of Rudyard Kipling).

Messages are fairly explicit, and themes rather more implicit. Assumptions can take more time to unearth. Feminist critics will want to explore what attitudes towards women are hidden in a text. Some assumptions will no longer be in accordance with modern thought. For example, Mark Twain's *Huckleberry Finn* offers many narrative pleasures, has a message about not living in a state of self-delusion, and has plenty to say on themes such as friendship and civilisation, but it is hard to avoid the judgement that it makes a lot of racist assumptions, obviously related to its socio-political background.

At this stage in their learning, students still striving to fashion their own identities and belief systems will be especially interested in exploring the messages and themes of literary works. They will need assistance not to simplify these, and encouragement to see that most works cover a variety of themes.

NARRATION

A story can be told in many ways, e.g. as a series of letters or a diary. Usually there is a narrator, possibly more than one in longer texts. One common choice is third-person omniscient narration. The narrator knows what is in everyone's heart and mind and addresses the reader directly on occasions (e.g. the narrator in George Eliot's *Silas Marner*). Ordinarily,

third-person narration involves someone with a limited view, possibly a minor character in the story, narrating events (e.g. the Sherlock Holmes stories or F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby*). The third common choice is first-person narration (e.g. Daphne du Maurier's *Rebecca*). Readers must naturally ask themselves how much they trust the narrator, who may be lying or simply imperceptive. Interior monologues represent the thoughts of a character in a stream of consciousness (e.g. James Thurber's "The Secret Life of Walter Mitty"). The question of narrative voice is very important, as is that of narrative order. Stories are not always told in chronological order, but by means of flashbacks and even flash forwards (e.g. classical detective stories are often a series of non-chronological flashbacks until the truth is found).

OPENING

The first words of a work of fiction are of great importance in attracting the reader's attention and arousing his/her expectations. Many stories begin in medias res, i.e. in the middle of the action. Some are framed (for example, many of P.G. Wodehouse's stories are told by old gentlemen in London clubs). The writer must choose what to concentrate on first, perhaps mood, perhaps characterisation, or perhaps some other feature of the storyteller's craft.

PLOT

Many novels and short stories are plot-centred. What happens is the main focus. Plots are sometimes described as having arcs. A novelist may seek to create a wave pattern of moments of calm interspersed with climaxes. Complex plots, as in the works of Charles Dickens, build slowly until the denouement (or unwinding) when readers start understanding past events and observing their final resolution. There may be sub-plots in addition to the main storyline. The plot may be full of suspense or the outcome may be known from the start and the enjoyment lies in seeing how events unfold. Some plots have become conventional (e.g. boy meets girl, a misunderstanding pulls them apart, clarification takes place, they are united; a young hero sets out on a quest, gains a special gift/weapon, meets adversity, is tempted, almost fails and finally triumphs).

SETTING

The place where the story happens is the setting. It can be chosen as a plot convenience (e.g. the isolated country house of so many ghost and crime stories), as part of the style (e.g. the Gothic and the Pastoral), to set the mood (e.g. the bleak moors of Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, and the devastated London of George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*), establish historical period (e.g. George Eliot's *Silas Marner*) or social class (Jane Austen's novels). In art, according to the pathetic fallacy, nature mirrors our moods (e.g. frequent instances in Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*) or can be symbolic (e.g. H.E. Bates' "The Waterfall" and Doris Lessing's "Through the Tunnel"). Some writers (e.g. Charles Dickens and George Orwell) contrast the good countryside with the evil city. Opening scenes can establish the mood through setting (e.g. the fog in Charles Dickens' *Bleak House*, and the graveyard in his *Great Expectations*). Setting can function at both the realist and symbolic level (e.g. the unpredictable river

snaking through the mist and dense dark vegetation in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*).

STYLE

Works of fiction can be sorted under general categories (sometimes called genres), such as a realist (trying to recreate life as we live it), magical realist (with sudden moments of the impossible inserted into the story, e.g. Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon*), fantasy (e.g. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings*), the fairy story, the fable, the Gothic romance, the pastoral and so on. Each has its own typical style. Some awareness of such categories would be helpful.

Style in the sense of language and register needs also to be considered. A writer can use colloquial English (e.g. J.D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*), dialect (e.g. parts of Thomas Hardy), formal English (e.g. Joseph Conrad), and archaic English (e.g. quite a lot of fantasy literature). Sentences can be rich and complex (e.g. Charles Dickens), simple and straightforward (e.g. George Orwell) or positively terse (e.g. Ernest Hemingway).

TONE

This relates closely to mood and style. The narrator can be ironic, cool and detached, kindly, mocking, puzzled, deeply engaged and so forth. The work itself also has a tone that may be different (e.g. Marlow is perhaps mainly saddened by what he has experienced and relates, but *Heart of Darkness* itself can be seen as an angry book).

At times the tone is misjudged and perhaps exaggerated. What is intended as serious and moving becomes unintentionally humorous. This can be observed particularly in genres such as romance and horror. The exaggeration can also be produced deliberately, and then constitutes parody.

When discussing the tone of a work, an effort is usually made to assess how optimistic or pessimistic it is. For example, P.G. Wodehouse's world is usually a sunny place of decent, if rather confused, people; R.S. Ballantyne's *Coral Island* is full of optimism about what young people left on a desert island could achieve; and William Golding retells the story in his *Lord of the Flies* in a much darker way. In J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings* good prevails, but magic and glamour go out of the world, leaving a gentle melancholy at the end.

Teaching suggestions for prose

Teaching prose fiction commences perhaps best with the reading of short stories. With the help of worksheets and teacher-led discussion, students can be introduced to the concepts and approaches listed under *Features of prose fiction*. They need to learn to look at a story in terms of both content, arguing about the story and its characters, and form.

Creative writing is a natural part of a literature course. Having read some short stories, students should be encouraged to produce their own. At first many are too ambitious and try to make use of elaborate plots that are not suitable for a few hundred words. A short story of such a length should probably aim only at creating a mood, introducing a character or developing a symbol. Students should be guided to reflect on the decisions they take in their writing with respect to, e.g.

- narrative voice;
- opening and closing;
- style;
- techniques of characterisation; and
- inclusion of imagery and other narrative techniques.

In these ways, students will gradually become conscious of the writer's craft, and learn to appreciate good writing. They will also be able to share their writing and critique the work of their classmates sensitively. The advantages of drafting, editing and polishing will become obvious, and students will be able to build up a collection of creative work over time.

As the students become familiar with the conventions of literary study and the terminology employed, they can be given a checklist like the one that follows to go through when they read a new story.

Reading a short story: questions to consider

1. Who are the main characters?
2. How are they characterised?
3. How does the story open?
4. How does the story end?
5. Is the ending open or closed?
6. What is the tone of the story?
7. What style of narration is used?
8. What are the themes?
9. Why did the writer write the story?
10. Are any of the names significant?
11. Is there anything noteworthy about the style?
12. Is the setting important?
13. Are there any symbols?
14. Is there anything I need to research?
15. Did I enjoy the story?

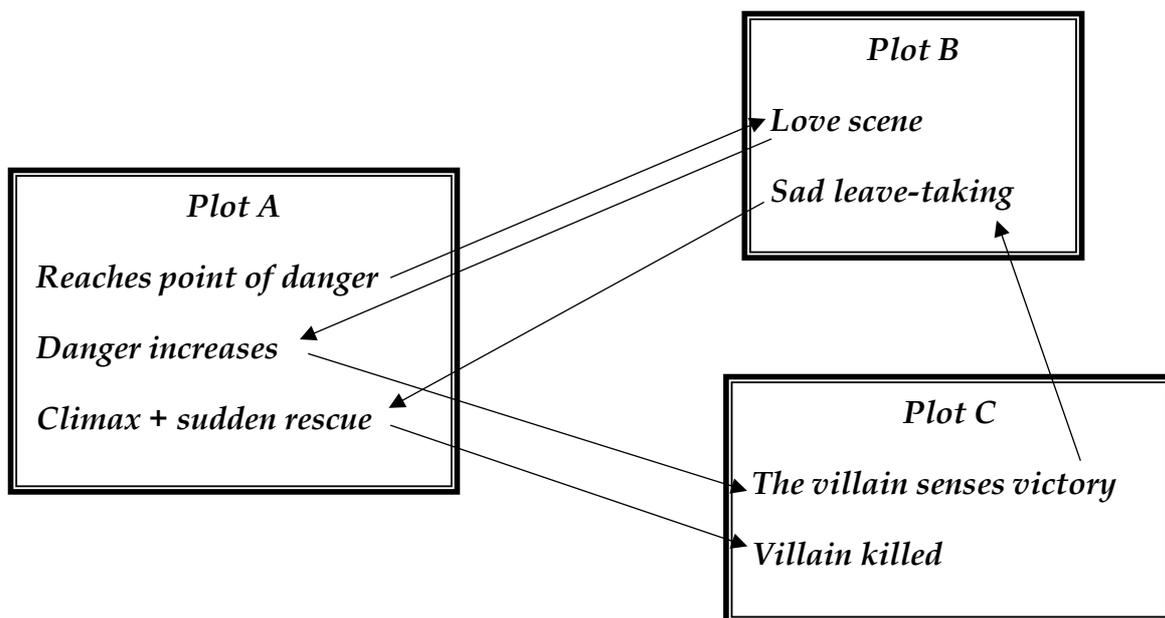
It may be fruitful for students to do this on their own, and then compare, discuss and refine their answers in class.

One way in which students can develop imaginative engagement with a text is to elaborate it in a variety of ways. Students should be asked to create alternative endings, rewrite from the point of view of a different narrator, role-play a character justifying his/her behaviour, supply missing

documents mentioned in passing or implied in the story, and so forth. Some stories may be turned into plays or film-scripts. One form/style/genre can be transformed into another. To encourage students to see literary texts as relevant to their lives they can also be asked to re-imagine them in contemporary Hong Kong.

Novels obviously need more preparation and are more daunting to students. Prior exposure to short stories and films will provide some of the skills and awareness necessary to appreciate a longer text. The concepts of plot, characterisation, style and so on will already be familiar. When watching films, students can be made aware of the organisation of complex stories, possibly by means of diagrams which help them note the progress of the main plot and sub-plots, with their climaxes, romantic episodes, conversations, bursts of action and moments of grandeur.

Such a diagram would be rather like the storyboard of a film, but need not be so detailed. For example, in drawing up a plan of the film of *The Return of the King* (Jackson, 2003), one would show how the film follows Frodo for a while and then switches to what is happening to other members of the original fellowship. The various plots can be numbered for convenience, and comments made on their status at any given time.



The purpose is to think about how to organise a long story in such a way as to gain maximum impact.

This knowledge can then be transferred to the study of a novel. Background information of a cultural or historical nature may be needed in the preparatory stage.

Students need to have read the novel before it is taught in class. If it is divided into chapters, the teacher might give an analysis of, for example, the first two, supplying a model of how the alert reader should note salient features and enter into the world of the novel. Students can then take it

in turn to present chapters in the same way, so that all the major issues have in the end been covered.

Some classes will need to be given more help and guidance. Worksheets with cloze summaries of the storyline and guided questions will be necessary. For more famous works, study guides are usually available and may prove helpful. Some film versions of novels are extensively adapted and may not be good introductions to them, and so are best viewed at a later stage.

Once a novel has been read and discussed, students can, as mentioned earlier, play creatively with the text, producing a variety of by-texts.

The morale of the literature class is of importance when studying a novel as many students have not developed good reading habits and may find the vocabulary challenging. Teachers will need to take steps to counteract potential problems, by dividing up the text into manageable chunks and offering help in the form of chapter summaries and glossaries of any predictably difficult words. Filmed versions of novels, where available, are an invaluable support. Very long works are best avoided at this stage.

For suggestions on teaching appreciation of prose fiction, please refer to Section 4.3.5 “Literary Appreciation”.

4.3.2 Poetry

Features of poetry

Poetry has given enormous pleasure to men and women over the centuries. When producing verse, the poet is often more concerned than writers usually are with the language that he/she uses to express the ideas of the poem. Poetry makes use of patterned language, and students of literature need to be sensitive to these patterns. Students also need to be very aware of the sounds of language in poetry, and should note from the beginning that English orthography, particularly in relation to vowels, is not a reliable guide to pronunciation: for example, “so”, “sew” and “sow” all have the same sound, while the vowel of “few” is different. Thinking phonetically is essential to the enjoyment of poetry in English.

The following terms may be of use in the teaching and appreciation of poetry at the senior secondary level. Some of them may be only suited to taught set poems, and too difficult for students to use confidently when writing about unseen poems.

DICTION

Diction refers to the poet’s choice of words. Words do not simply have meaning; they have connotation, an atmosphere around them. Some words are simple, everyday ones; others are much rarer or bring to mind

special feelings. “I went up the big hill” means the same as “I ascended the mighty peak”, but the style is quite different with respect to connotation. “Blue” is the more common word; “azure” sounds much richer and stranger; and “lapis lazuli” seems positively exotic. When a critic assesses the diction of a poem he/she produces statements such as: “The diction is simple, almost childlike”, “The poet uses the diction associated with accountancy to express his love”, or “The poet considers the rabbit in different ways from verse to verse switching from everyday diction to scientific diction, the diction of cookery and strongly poetic diction. The effect is to make the reader reflect on our contradictory attitudes towards animals”.

To take an actual example, Owen in “Anthem for Doomed Youth” uses religious/church-going diction (and imagery) to bring out the horror of battle. The content of the poem and the connotations of the words are in stark contrast to each other and cause the reader discomfort, hence making the poem such a powerful one.

FORM/TYPE/ GENRE

These are common terms used to designate the categories into which literary works are grouped. There are numerous ways of categorising poetry. Students should be familiar with the differences between rhyming verse, blank verse and free verse. Some familiarity with shape/concrete poetry, and various experimental forms may prove stimulating. The common types of poems students can be exposed to are short lyrics, sonnets, ballads and possibly haikus.

IMAGERY

This refers to the use of figurative language in a poem (e.g. metaphors, similes, symbols, etc.). For instance, a poem about an old person might involve leaves falling from trees. The imagery of autumn helps express the theme. Love poetry is typically full of spring, flowers and sunshine. Religious imagery is frequent (e.g. the garden, snake, rainbow, lamb, cross, etc.). Images may be single, or create patterns that run throughout a poem. For example, Tennyson’s “Crossing the Bar” uses the imagery of sailing to express views on death and the afterlife.

INVERSION

This is a change in the standard word order. It can be used for emphasis or to create a slightly Biblical and solemn atmosphere (as was much more common in older English).

*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made;
Nine bean-rows will I have there...
[Yeats, The Lake Isle of Innisfree]*

Inversions sometimes make it easier to create a rhyme, but using it for this reason is regarded as a weakness. Any example is, of course, open to debate:

*The butterfly from flower to flower
The urchin chas'd: and when, at last
He caught it in my lady's bower,
He cried, "Ha ha!" and held it fast.
[Skipsey, The Butterfly]*

LINES

One of the things that make poetry work is the tension between grammar/syntax and the lineation of the poem. Students must try to distinguish very clearly the difference between a sentence and a line. When a line end coincides with a sentence end, the line is said to be end-stopped. If the sentence runs past and over the line end, the line is a run-on line or an enjambed line (enjambment being another name for the phenomenon). A sentence may even run on from the end of one verse to the beginning of another. Most lines also have a pause. A strong pause, breaking the flow of the line, can create a special effect, e.g. in Shelley's *Ozymandias*.

*And on the pedestal these words appear:
'My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings,
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!'
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.*

The full-stop and pause after "remains" signifies the end of the king's power and the isolation of his broken statue; and the following run-on lines represent the featureless desert lying all around.

PERSONA

The lyric "I" may, of course, represent the feelings of the poet directly – and in many cases probably does. Poems, however, are works of art, not autobiographical statements and frequently poets invent situations and speakers. To make this distinction clear, the word "persona" is used. At this level of study it is inadvisable to be too technical. Students may wish to use the term, but in the interests of good style, overuse is not recommended.

PERSONIFICATION

This term has fairly vague boundaries. The common sense refers to treating an abstract concept as embodying human characteristics. Liberty is personified in the famous New York statue. Talking animals or treating animals as if they think and feel like humans is sometimes called "personification", though there is an alternative term: to "anthropomorphise"/"anthropomorphism". The terms should not be overused. To refer to an animal as "she" or to say it feels frightened is not necessarily an example of personification or anthropomorphism.

REPETITION

This is a common feature of poetry mainly used for emphasis, but also for decoration and echo-effects.

*I love thee – I love thee!
'Tis all that I can say;
It is my vision in the night,
My dreaming in the day;
The very echo of my heart,
The blessing when I pray:
I love thee – I love thee!
Is all that I can say.
[Hood, I Love Thee]*

RHYME

A huge amount of poetry in English rhymes, and a lot of people enjoy the musical effect this creates. Some poems have fairly detailed traditional rhyming patterns (rhyming couplets, for example), and much simple lyric follows an a/b/a/b pattern. Some class time should be given to rhyme. Spelling is not a trustworthy guide (e.g. “Bough” rhymes with “cow”, not with “rough”). Some poets insist on full rhymes, but others use half-rhymes.

*The sea crosses the sea, the sea has hooves,
the power of rivers and the weir's curves
are moving in the wind-bent acts of waves.
[Oswald, Sea Sonnet]*

As pronunciation changes over the course of time, and as English is spoken differently in different areas, what was a good rhyme for the poet may not work for the reader. English has a great many vowels and diphthongs and the match must be exact for a rhyme to occur – “brick” and “break” do not rhyme (“brick” rhymes with “trick”, and “break” with “take”). The rhyme can be a final vowel on its own, that is an open syllable, as long as it is stressed: “igloo” and “you” rhyme; but “slippery” and “fishy” do not (the final sound is too weak); or it can be a final vowel with consonant, a closed syllable, (e.g. “decide” and “tied”). Weak final closed syllables cannot create rhyme: “hoping” does not rhyme with “singing”.

RHYTHM

This can be a difficult and highly technical matter with lots of complex terms relating to different metres. Students do not need to master these. Rhythm is, however, basic to poetry and students need to be shown how it works. This is simpler with traditional, formal verse. Students should examine some examples from a technical perspective, counting the syllables and noticing the beat (especially the iambic and trochaic rhythms).

*The **blackbird sang**, the **skies were clear and clean**
We **bowled along** a road that **curved a spine** ...
[Henley, At Queensferry]*

(ten syllables, five feet, iambic rhythm: stresses on the even numbered syllables).

*Plunged in night, I sit alone
Eyeless on this dungeon stone...
[Scott, Samson]*

(seven syllables, four feet, trochaic rhythm: stresses on the odd numbered syllables).

Poets use rhythm in many expressive ways, e.g.

*Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea.
[Tennyson, Break, Break, Break]*

Apart from “on”, “thy” and possibly “O”, every word needs a strong stress. The effect is like a funeral march, the heavy monosyllables creating the slow beats of a drum. Good recordings of poetry available in the market and on the Internet should help students appreciate rhythm, though it is undoubtedly difficult for a second language learner and no great expertise is to be expected at this stage.

SOUND

A number of technical terms are explained here.

Alliteration occurs when the initial consonant sounds of words close together are repeated. This can be strengthened by the use of the same sounds in the middle of words or at their ends. Older English poetry is very heavily alliterative and this remains one of the most commonly used techniques.

*Oh, ye wild waves, shoreward dashing,
What is your tale to day?
O'er the rocks your white foam splashing,
While the moaning wind your spray,
Whirls heavenwards away
In the mist.
[Sinnott, Song of Wild Storm Waves]*

The use of “w” and “s” + consonant (sh/sp/st) is obvious, and tries to mimic the sound of the wind at sea.

Assonance (and **consonance**) is a term whose precise usage varies from writer to writer. Assonance is either (i) similarity of word-internal vowel sounds, or (ii) a similarity of non-initial consonants.

It needs stressing again that this refers to phonetic similarity. Particular care needs to be taken in the case of vowels as the Roman alphabet has only five vowels, but English has many more vowel sounds.

Examples:

- (i) similarity of vowel sounds:

Where the sea meets the moon blanched land
[Arnold, *Dove Bench*]

The vowels of “sea” and “meets” are the same, as are those of “blanched” and “land”.

- (ii) similarity of consonants:

“O where are you going?” said reader to rider
[Auden, *O Where Are You Going?*]
I found a dimpled spider fat and white
[Frost, *Design*]

Note the “d”s in the Auden example, and the “d”s and “t”s in the Frost excerpt.

Consider this Tennyson example:

Break, break, break,
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea....
[*Break, Break, Break*]

There is alliteration of “b”, assonance of “k”, and consonance of “o” in “cold”, “stones” and “O” (the “o” of “on” is a different, though related, shorter sound), and of “a” in “break” and “gray”. (Note also the way “break” evokes “ache”.)

For the most part alliteration, assonance and consonance add a musical quality to the verse. These devices are used to emphasise important parts of a poem, rather than to create a precise special effect. There are, however, some sound tendencies in verse. A final “t”, “d” or “k” sounds energetic, even harsh; “l” and “r” are softer; and an initial “d” may be sad; “s” may sound like water, snakes, silence, etc.; and short vowels (as in “miniature” and “tiny”) suit small things, and long vowels (as in “huge”) larger ones. Students should try to see if they can relate sound patterns to the sense, but not worry if they cannot.

For an example of beautiful use of sound, take these lines from Keats:

And fill all fruit with ripeness to the core;
To swell the gourd, and plump the hazel shells,
With a sweet kernel; to set budding more
And still more, later flowers for the bees.
Until they think warm days will never cease;
For Summer has o’erbrimmed their clammy cells.
[*Ode to Autumn*]

The pattern involves “f”s, “l”s, the vowel sound “or” (all, core, gourd, more, warm, for, o’er), various “s” sounds (s, sw, sh, z [hazel/bees]),

“p”s and “b”s, and a run of “m”s. Many of these sounds involve rounding the mouth as if eating.

Also Tennyson’s famous

*...doves in immemorial trees
And murmuring of innumerable bees
[The Princess]*

is a very full example of the use of assonance of “m” to create the effect of the distant humming of a cloud of bees.

Onomatopoeia is when the sound of the words loosely imitates a natural sound. For example, “drip, drip” and “plip-plop” may sound like slowly falling water; “pitter-patter” the sound of rain, “miaou” the noise of a cat, and “howl” the cry of a wolf.

This terminology is useful, but not central. Being sensitive to sound patterns enormously enriches appreciation of poetry.

SUITING FORM TO MEANING

This entry sums up much that occurs in the others. The poet often tries to shape language to mirror as well as to present his/her content. As we have seen, this is done by means of rhythm, pause, the tension between the sentences and the lines and by the selection of sounds. Here are some further examples.

*We chanced in passing by that afternoon
To catch it in a sort of special picture
Among tar-banded ancient cherry trees,
Set well back from the road in rank lodged grass
The little cottage we were speaking of,
A front with just a door between two windows,
Fresh painted by the shower a velvet black.
We paused, the minister and I, to look.
[Frost, The Black Cottage]*

The “it” in line 2 is not explained until line 5. The main subject of the sentence is well set back, in the same way as the cottage is physically set back and obscured. When the “we” pause, the rhythm pauses as the pronoun’s reference is given. The act of stopping is expressed in a short sentence that comprises exactly a single line.

In the second example, the sentence with its multiple subordinate clauses winds around the lines like the creeper being described.

*Like a huge Python, winding round and round
The rugged trunk, indented deep with scars,
Up to its very summit near the stars,
A creeper climbs, in whose embraces bound
No other tree could live.
[Dutt, Our Casuarina Tree]*

Opportunities should be provided to engage students in recognising such effects.

TONE

A reader has not commented adequately on a poem if he/she has not referred to its tone and said what its prevailing mood is. Often this is clearly stated, though the reader must be on the look out for irony. It is useful to spend time thinking about adjectives that might be used to describe poems and poetic personas, e.g. angry, bitter, broken-hearted, defiant, ecstatic, nostalgic, puzzled, regretful, resigned, sad, thoughtful.

VERSES/STANZAS

Poems are written in lines that are often divided into verses/stanzas. These may all be the same length or variable. Poets often set up the standard so that they can then make a point by deviating from it. A sudden short line or verse could, for example, signify a death.

Teaching suggestions for poetry

At the preliminary stage, students may have varying degrees of knowledge and exposure to verse. If this has been limited, the first aim should be to get them interested in poetry, perhaps by asking them to share favourite song lyrics and through discussion of connotation (e.g. What do you think of when you hear the word apple/green/wolf/moon, etc.?) and symbol (e.g. What would you draw to express anger?). Sensitivity to rhyme needs to be developed by matching exercises, or by work on rhymed poems with one of the pairs of rhymes blanked out.

The Internet has a great many poetry sites and students can search through them and share discoveries with one another. Self-expression through poetry writing should be encouraged. Obviously, students are not going to produce perfect sonnets, but they can experiment with free verse and simplified forms, such as the haiku in English. The first draft of the poem can then be worked on to add sound effects, such as some alliteration.

In order to appreciate the sounds of poetry, students need oral/aural exercises. Schools can obtain recordings of poetry and introduce poetry websites with audio facilities to students. Teachers should model poems for students and teach them to read aloud in class. Participation in speech festivals can be advantageous, as can choral performances.

An interesting selection of poems with a variety of activities designed to focus on content, poetic technique and self-expression can be found in the EDB resource packages on the learning and teaching of poetry. (See “References”.)

In addition to discussing some poems at length, the class should read many others quickly so that they come to realise the enormous range of poetry in English. Different poems can be used to illustrate different features of verse. For instance, one poem might have a special image, another

interesting sound effects, and a third be rich in alliteration. Students may bring in poems they have found to share with their classmates, explaining why the poems impressed them emotionally or technically. A poetry notice board can provide a further opportunity to share, though, as noted above, it is also important to develop the habit of reading poetry aloud, and oral sharing sessions have a particular value.

The ability to write a critical analysis of a poem needs to be developed. At first, this can be achieved by questions which guide the reader towards special features. In relation to technical points, it needs to be stressed from the beginning that comment should be accompanied with suitable examples – not “There are many ngs and nks in verse four”, but “The many ngs and nks in verse four help express the feeling of being in prison and surrounded by metallic sounds”. There is no great point in referring to a technique if one has nothing much to say about it.

Gradually, the students should learn to function without questions at least some of the time and be able to write analyses of poems on their own.

Set poems are probably best taught in a lecture/discussion format, though individuals can be given prior research tasks (e.g. Please prepare to report to the class on the story of “Daedalus and Icarus”).

For suggestions on teaching appreciation of poetry, please refer to Section 4.3.5 “Literary Appreciation”. Examples of poetry analysis can also be found in Appendix 2.

4.3.3 Drama

Features of drama

Where possible, drama texts should be approached as theatre works. Before starting to read famous plays or a set text, students should get used to looking at dramatic scenes, discussing how dramatists work as they turn stories into plays with themes, and the conventions dramatists draw upon. Obviously, theatrical plays in performance are extremely artificial artefacts, yet by the audience’s willingness to suspend disbelief the illusion works and fascinates. Treating the story of *Macbeth* as a true recounting of history, or as a novel, is to miss an important dimension of the play. The learner of literature should be interested not only in content, rich as that can be, but also in how producers of literary works create them.

Many of the ideas and concepts referred to in the earlier sections of this document are directly relevant here also, though a play usually lacks a central narrator and this gives rise to a number of differences. A dramatist may comment by means of a prologue, epilogue or chorus, but this is far more limited than the interference of a narrator in a novel.

The most famous writer in English, William Shakespeare, is likely to be encountered by most students of literature in English. The advantages of this are that students can derive benefit from the quality of his work, its cultural importance, the vast array of critical support available and the large number of performances in the theatre or in recorded form that students have a chance to be exposed to. The disadvantages are the linguistic difficulty of the texts, which might well and truly frighten a second language learner, the volume of difficult references in them and the multiplicity of critical opinion available that may stifle personal reaction. In addition to considering the plot, characters, dramatic structure and scheme of the play, in the case of Shakespeare, students need to think about the verse and imagery. If asked to select a favourite scene, a learner would be expected to comment on its dramatic effectiveness, ideas and poetry. Students also need some acquaintance with the conditions and conventions of the Elizabethan stage, so that they can understand the need of the characters to tell us where they/we are and create atmosphere. Knowledge of the use of boy actors for female parts will also throw important light on many scenes.

The following items seem appropriate for students at the senior secondary level.

ACT Plays are normally divided into scenes and acts, a scene being a sub-division of an act. A scene is usually the action in one place at one time, while acts are major structural divisions of the play. The length and placement of these create the dramatic structure and flow of the play. They create rhythm and pace. After an intense scene, a more relaxed interlude might provide a useful contrast and allow the playwright time to build up to a new climax. Scenes may end on a “cliff-hanging” note, leaving the audience in suspense. Anti-climax may be used to undermine audience expectations or to make a thematic point. Thinking about such issues is part and parcel of studying a dramatic text.

**ASIDE/
SOLILOQUY** Most of the action of a conventional play takes place through the dialogue. Interior states can also be communicated through “asides”, brief comments by a character that would be thought rather than spoken in daily life, e.g. Polonius’ comment in *Hamlet*:

“*Though this be madness, yet there is method in ’t.*”

and Hamlet’s remark during *The Mousetrap*

“*That’s wormwood.*”

Soliloquies are speeches made by a character when alone and represent mental debates and inner struggles. *Hamlet* is, of course, also rich in these, e.g. “*To be or not to be....*”

CHARACTER Characters are likely to be at the centre of any drama that students encounter at this stage in their education, and attitudes towards the actions and viewpoints of the characters are central to the students’ reaction to a play. Techniques of characterisation should also be noted: the actions, speech, style of speech, and description of the character, as

well as the comments of other characters on him/her. Characters may have a chance to give us a further insight into their mental world by means of asides or soliloquies. The learner of a particular dramatic text should ask how he/she feels about a certain character, why, and how the dramatist has produced that reaction.

STAGING

A play is a script that needs to be brought alive through performance. Students should discuss what sort of actors they would choose for the different roles, styles of acting they think suitable for a play, and the costumes, props and scenery (if any) they would select if they were directing the play. Their attention should be drawn to such details as entrances and exits. All aspects of the staging can come together to create a unified atmosphere (e.g. in *Absurd Person Singular*, the small kitchen comes to symbolise the narrowness of suburban life, just as the references to lack of heating in later scenes reflect emotional deprivation).

SYMBOLISM

Dramatists may also avail themselves of symbolism. There may be patterns of imagery running through a text (e.g. of the graveyard in John Webster's *The Duchess of Malfi*), or central symbols (e.g. the glass animals of Tennessee Williams' *The Glass Menagerie*).

THEME

Plays, even more than works of prose fiction, tend to have a conscious message. Shaw's *Saint Joan* is as much about the rise of the nation state and the birth of modernity as it is about the dilemma of Joan of Arc and the rights and wrongs of her treatment. Shakespeare's intentions are usually more opaque and his plays more open to different interpretations, but *Othello* is certainly about jealousy, even if male violence, racism, class conflict, homosexuality and so on have also been identified as important themes by critics.

Teaching suggestions for drama

It would be advisable to take students to a theatrical performance early on in the course of study so that they can discuss how it worked, what decisions the director had taken and what alternative approaches might have worked well. Students can be asked to try to dramatise short stories they have read, so that they can become aware of the problems and enter sympathetically into the world of the playwright. Later on in the course, students might like to discuss how some major contemporary political story could be turned into drama, and what themes the play based on it might contain.

To improve awareness of how a character's lines have to suit personality, students can be given a list of character-types and asked to write suitable lines for them to be spoken in a similar situation.

For example,

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• <i>A poet (male)</i>• <i>A teenage boy</i>• <i>A lawyer (female)</i>• <i>A rather rough sailor (male)</i>• <i>A prince</i>• <i>A film star (female)</i>	Tells someone who is likely to be surprised by the news that he/she is in love with the other person.
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This exercise might also lead to a discussion of stereotyping and stock characters.

Another exercise would be to give students main plots for plays (or ask them to contribute these themselves and then redistribute them) and ask them to think of suitable sub-plots that might complement, contrast with, offer relief from or in some way comment on the main plot.

If a reasonably modern text is being read, it is probably good to read at least part of it aloud with appropriate dramatic emphasis. Everyone in class should have a chance to take part. The more artistically inclined can further contribute by sketching stage designs and costumes, and the musically gifted might like to think of suitable background tunes or songs that could be included in the reading performance.

Students, especially if they are studying a complex Shakespeare play, would be well advised to keep a journal of the experience, recording thoughts, interpretations, sketches, favourite quotes and actions. Watching different film versions in order to discuss diverse approaches to the play can help students realise that there is no one official reading of the text that they must adhere to.

Also, dramatising brief stories found in the press can be a stimulating exercise.

In order to keep an eye on the verse, some of the most highly regarded speeches should be studied as poetry in addition to their dramatic function in the play.

For suggestions on teaching appreciation of drama, please refer to Section 4.3.5 “Literary Appreciation”.

4.3.4 Film

Film, as the genre in focus for the SBA of the subject, is included for study because of the many characteristics it shares with other literary genres (drama and prose fiction, in particular) – e.g. the use of symbolism and foreshadowing, the effects of point of view, and plot and theme development. To these are added sound and vision, which distinguishes film from the other genres and makes it a unique and powerful medium capable of stimulating students’ senses and cognitive faculties, enlarging their cultural knowledge and understanding, and adding variety to the curriculum. The choice of films for discussion and SBA portfolio is not restricted to those based on literary works. Instead, films are selected on the principles of interest, depth and literary merit.

Aspects of film appreciation and criticism

Teaching film can be a joy as most students come to the subject with plenty of background experience and a very positive attitude towards the experience of film-watching. Film theory (and literary theory in general) is beyond the reach of students at this stage. The aim is to teach the rudiments of practical criticism, and even here the range of terminology is enormous. Teachers and students are encouraged to use the basic terms and those which they find useful for the discussion, understanding and critical estimation of the films they study. The literature curriculum does not advocate knowledge of technical terms as being meritorious in itself, or endorse the memorisation of long lists of them.

Film is a medium that can be used in a variety of ways. Some films can be regarded as similar to poetry in their fascination with mood and style, but overwhelmingly films have been used to tell stories; indeed, an original screenplay is probably rather less common than an adaptation of a novel. In terms of plot, characterisation, etc., most of what is said in the sections on prose fiction and drama could be repeated here; and, in fact, many of the points are probably best introduced in the consideration of films (e.g. “story arcs”), given students’ frequently greater familiarity with cinema than book culture. Films are usually less rich than books in the sense that narrative subtlety is difficult to achieve. Hinting, indirectness and elusiveness are easier to achieve in prose (though occasionally films like *The Sixth Sense*, dir. M. Night Shyamalan, 1999, manage tricks of this nature). Film, however, can visually dazzle us, overwhelm us with information and appeal in most cases to sound as well as sight. The advantages and disadvantages of the different media should be something students talk about frequently during the course, considering whether in fact it is wrong to think that a good book supplies the basis for a good film.

As before, a number of items are singled out for comment here as a means of orienting teachers and students to points they might wish to consider when discussing films.

ACTORS*

Many viewers choose which films to watch on the basis of which actors are in it. Hollywood has fostered the cult of stars, promoting them in the media and emphasising their looks and power by means of, for instance, close-up shots, beautiful costumes and lighting. To add attraction to a film, a star may even appear only briefly in a cameo role. The normal Hollywood style of acting is naturalistic (depending, of course, on the genre). Some important actors (e.g. Brando, De Niro) have adopted “method acting”, immersing themselves in their roles and letting them temporarily take over their private lives. In addition to the stars, the cast contains many supporting actors and extras. The British tradition of film-making is frequently more “theatrical” with famous stage-actors, such as Sir Ian McKellen and Dame Glenda Jackson, taking a rather different approach to their performances. Occasionally directors make a

* The document uses the term to refer to both males and females.

particular point of using non-professionals (e.g. films directed by Ken Loach and *In This World*, dir. Winterbottom, 2003).

DIRECTORS

Although in very commercial cinema, the director is a rather minor figure who simply delivers the desired product, in many cases directors have emerged as the central and controlling intelligence whose vision creates and unifies the film. Directors like Hitchcock have come to be seen as major artists. Some directors have a very personal style (e.g. Tim Burton); some specialise in a particular type of film (e.g. early Martin Scorsese); and others have a wide range, though common themes often emerge (e.g. Ridley Scott).

THE FILM INDUSTRY

One of the distinguishing characteristics of cinema is that a feature film involves tremendous effort and a huge outlay of money. As a result, marketing is very important and films are usually targeted at particular sectors of the population. The young, especially young males, are important consumers of entertainment; hence the frequency of action movies. To compete with television and video, studios have developed the concept of the blockbuster, a film that really deserves to be seen on the big screen, that is packed with special effects, that everyone talks about at the time of its release and that has many commercial tie-ins (e.g. *Titanic*, dir. J. Cameron, 1997; *Lord of the Rings*, dir. P. Jackson, completed 2003). Independent filmmakers try to maintain a more personal style, and art-house cinema caters for the highbrow. Film in English is dominated by Hollywood and the United States, but Britain, Australia and other English-speaking countries produce a number of new films each year.

GENRE

Films can be categorised in many ways and it would take pages to list all the possible genres. Story content is often the deciding factor: the Western, the coming-of-age story, the road movie, the buddy movie, science fiction, horror films, ghost stories and so on. Such categories have sub-categories: for instance, the crime film may appear as a detective story (classical or hard-boiled), a police film (maybe a buddy team, e.g. *Lethal Weapon*, dir. R. Donner, 1987), a gangster movie (e.g. many Scorsese films), a bank robbery story, and a film focussed on a con trick or con artist (e.g. *The Sting*, dir. G.R. Hill, 1973). Some categories refer to audience (e.g. the teen pic). For some films, the emotion evoked may be central (e.g. the weepy). Others are marked by a general style and pace (e.g. the action movie) or a more specific style (e.g. film noir). Biopics are based on true life stories. Animation (e.g. many Disney films) involves a completely different way of making a film. The categories are endless – some very loose and some with strict conventions – but trying to map the territory will help students in the analysis of particular films.

NARRATION

Films may contain point of view (POV) shots that show us the world from a character's particular perspective, but it is hard to maintain for long and most films only treat the camera as a neutral all-seeing narrator

which can go anywhere. Occasionally voiceover is used, but outside film noir the technique has not been regarded as a particularly satisfactory one. Narrative sequence is frequently disrupted with flashbacks, flash-forwards, reconstructions, interviews, and cutting from story to story, between different plots/sets of characters. Some films begin with all the characters together and then diverge to follow a number of different individuals and story lines (e.g. *The Godfather*, dir F.R. Coppola, 1972); others follow the opposite course and start with two or more stories that seem unrelated, but gradually converge (*The English Patient*, dir A. Minghella, 1996). Characterisation, climax and suspense are central as in other forms of narrative fiction.

SOUNDTRACK

This consists of the dialogue, very important in most films, though less central in, for example, a pure action movie. It can in some ways be treated in the same way as a drama script, but can afford to be much less explicit because of the amount of visual information available to the filmgoer. Secondly, there are diegetic sounds, sounds that are natural to the scene (e.g. the sounds of insects, doors shutting, footsteps). These can be emphasised or downplayed by the sound editor/director. Finally, there are the non-diegetic sounds, ones that would not occur in reality. This usually takes the form of music and helps create mood and establish connections across the film.

TECHNICAL ASPECTS

As film is a visual experience, naturally this aspect deserves plenty of attention. Films can be made in black-and-white or colour. The colour can be intense (e.g. *Far From Heaven*, dir. T. Haynes, 2002), or drab to create a gloomy atmosphere (e.g. *Alien 3*, dir. D. Fincher, 1992 and *Seven*, D. Fincher, 1995). Lighting also has a strong effect on the visual style of the film and is used, for instance, to accentuate the beauty of a star (e.g. many scenes in *Casablanca*, dir. M. Curtiz, 1942). A film consists of a series of shots. The length of shots, created by cutting, affects the pace of the film. Digital effects are commonly used nowadays to enhance the visual experience (e.g. *Gladiator*, dir. R. Scott, 2000). The movement of the camera and its lens, described by means of such terms as pan, tracking, crane and zoom, is important. Slow motion, speeded up motion, freeze-frame, and jump-cut are additional terms which might crop up in the analysis of a film.

VISUAL EFFECT

A film is something we above all go to see, and great attention is given to this aspect. It needs to be taken as a general principle that what we see on the screen is there as a result of deliberate choice and worth discussing.

- **Set** – Some settings belong to particular genres (e.g. Death Valley to westerns, the haunted house). Confined spaces can give a feeling of being trapped; while the open road and open countryside signify freedom (the contrast can be found in *Bonnie and Clyde*, dir. A. Penn, 1967 and the *Lord of the Rings* trilogy, dir. P. Jackson,

completed 2003). Details of decoration can be used as part of characterisation (e.g. the Sikh home in *Bend it Like Beckham*, dir. G. Chadha, 2002). Nature can also reflect theme (e.g. *On Golden Pond*, dir. M. Rydell, 1981).

- **Costume** – One genre of film is actually called the “costume drama”, historical films that lavish attention on the elaborate clothes of the past. In *The Breakfast Club* (dir. J. Hughes, 1985) the different types of students are indicated by their clothes. In this way clothes can be clichéd and reflect stereotypes with heroes often wearing lighter clothes than villains. Flamboyant costumes are a major source of characterisation and mood in *The Adventures of Priscilla, Queen of the Desert* (dir. S. Elliot, 1994). Teenagers may be drawn to films such as those featuring rap artists in order to see the latest street fashions.
- **Make-up, hair, etc.** – Every effort is made to ensure stars look as lovely as possible with perfect skin, shining eyes and so on. Make-up can be important to character (e.g. *Sunset Boulevard*, dir. B. Wilder, 1950) and even central to the story (e.g. *Elizabeth* [dir. S. Kapur, 1998], as the queen increasingly turns herself into an icon for the English people). Make-up plays a significant role in special effects also.
- **Lighting** (see “Technical aspects”).
- **Props** – Pairs of glasses are often, for example, significant, e.g. part of the outfit of a gangster, a sign of a brainy scientist or a symbol of shortsightedness. In one famous scene in *On the Waterfront* (dir. E. Kazan, 1954) gloves become briefly an important symbol of identity. The meals people eat can also be significant. In Bram Stoker’s *Dracula* (dir. F.F. Coppola 1992) a bloody steak is consumed, and in *Chinatown* (dir. R. Polanski, 1974) a fish, fitting in with a great deal of related imagery. Hitchcock’s films are rich in detail, e.g. the paintings on the wall in *Psycho* (1960). Good film spectators need to pay close attention to everything they are offered on the screen.

WRITING ABOUT FILM

Film writing takes many forms and there are different kinds of writing tasks teachers can assign to students as coursework. The film review can hardly be seen as a very firm genre, but the type published in newspapers and film magazines might be a useful model for students, though the style is frequently rather colloquial. The writers of these do not wish to spoil the enjoyment of their readers, who might watch the movie subsequent to reading the review, and consequently they are sparing of details of plot, especially if there are any surprises or twists. A film analysis, similar to the analytical study or essay required in the SBA of the subject, is usually longer and written in a more scholarly

style. Students may also wish to keep a viewing diary/journal with filmographical detail, comments on interesting aspects and personal reactions.

Teaching suggestions for film

Movie quizzes, informal chats about the week's new films, sharing of favourite films, advice and Internet sites and good film shops, group visits to the cinema, regular reading of film reviews, the provision of film magazines, interest in the Oscars and other film awards – all these can help generate, or harness, students' enthusiasm for film talk and film criticism. Teachers should not hesitate to make it clear that films are not for passive entertainment, but active study. Especially after the first viewing, students are expected to review key scenes, discuss and reflect on what they have been watching.

When a particular film is to be studied in depth, students can work in groups and each group can be given the task of exploring particular aspects of the film. Some groups may focus on the literary aspects, while others can work on the dramatic or the cinematic aspects. Students might choose for themselves, or be assigned, different elements to research or study.

Literary aspects:

- Narrative (the story/story line, what the story line is based on; any particular perspective used; narrative sequence disrupted by flashbacks or reconstructions)
- Characters (protagonists, villains, how characters and their action help the audience gain insight into the story)
- Setting (where the story happens, its significance)
- Theme (the general subject of the film, e.g. love, rivalry, fantasy)
- Genre (comedy, drama, science fiction, epic, horror, suspense, a mix of different genres)

Students may be given the following questions to work on.

Literary aspects: questions to consider

1. Who are the characters in the film?
2. What is the film's setting?
3. What are the main plot elements?
4. From whose point of view is the story told?
5. What is the theme of the film?
6. What is the mood of the film?
7. What symbols are used in the film?

Dramatic aspects:

- Acting (how the actors perform)
- Costume (how appropriate the clothes are to the characters or the setting of the story, and how they contribute to the overall effect of the film)
- Make-up (whether the style is exaggerated or plain, and what effect is achieved)

Students may be given the following questions to work on.

Dramatic aspects: questions to consider

1. Did the actors make you forget they were acting? How?
2. How important were the costumes/make-up to the success of the film?
3. Was any scene particularly difficult to act? Why?
4. How did the actors use their voice or body movement to achieve the desired effects?
5. Did the actors establish their characters more through dialogue or through movement and facial expression?
6. Was there anything about the acting, set or costumes that you particularly liked or disliked?
7. Do you recognise any particular style of the director?
8. How does this film compare to other films by the same director?

Cinematic aspects:

- Technical (camera angles, movements and positions and the effects they create, lighting)
- Sound and vision (sound effects, music, visual effects)

Students may be given the following questions to work on.

Cinematic aspects: questions to consider

1. What visual images impressed you most? What did they make you feel or think about?
2. What sounds or music do you remember? What did they make you feel or think about?
3. What scene(s) had very effective or unusual editing?
4. Were any special effects used in the film? Did they add to the overall success of the film or otherwise?

Many film scripts which are available on the Internet or in book form are useful in designing learning and teaching tasks. Film commentaries, discussions, interviews and documentary material on the making of the film can also be useful learning resources.

Excerpts of films can be selected for the purpose of appreciation and critical analysis. The following section provides further suggestions on teaching appreciation of films.

4.3.5 Literary Appreciation

While Sections 4.3.1 – 4.3.4 focus on approaches and strategies to help students understand and interpret literary texts by exploring the different aspects of the various genres, this section takes a closer look at how to help students develop the ability to write an appreciation or a critical analysis of a poem or an extract from a prose text, which the students may or may not have studied. If the extract comes from a work the students have not previously studied, in order to get them to concentrate on literary matters, it is advisable to gloss difficult words or allow a dictionary to be used while writing the analysis. Occasionally a few introductory sentences can accompany the passage to ensure that comprehending it becomes easier. Guided questions are desirable at this stage unless the passage is a particularly accessible one. Students need to be fully conscious that the piece of prose given to them has been extracted from a longer text and may have been shortened or otherwise tailored to fit its purpose. They must in all cases try to establish the purpose of the passage, its tone and style.

The following section provides suggestions for teaching literary appreciation of various genres. Further examples of critical analysis of extracts from prose texts are included in Appendix 3 to help teachers and students understand the sort of comments that may be expected in literary appreciation.

It should be noted that the sample analyses and suggested answers included in this chapter and the appendices are for illustration purposes. They are examples which aim to provide a comprehensive picture of what teachers may look for in the various texts. They are by no means representative of the kind of work students generally produce, though they should always be encouraged and helped produce work of a high quality.

Teaching suggestions

I. Extract from a novel

*The Old Curiosity Shop** Charles Dickens

For she was dead. There, upon her little bed, she lay at rest. The solemn stillness was no marvel now.

She was dead. No sleep so beautiful and calm, so free from trace of pain, so fair to look upon. She seemed a creature fresh from the hand of God, and waiting for the breath of life; not one who had lived and suffered death.

Her couch was dressed with here and there some winter berries and green leaves, gathered in a spot she had been used to favour. "When I die, put near me something that has loved the light, and had the sky above it always." Those were her words.

She was dead. Dear, gentle, patient, noble Nell was dead. Her little bird – a poor slight thing the pressure of a finger would have crushed – was stirring nimbly in its cage; and the strong heart of its child-mistress was mute and motionless for ever.

Where were the traces of her early cares, her sufferings, and fatigues? All gone. Sorrow was dead indeed in her, but peace and perfect happiness were born; imaged in her tranquil beauty and profound repose.

And still her former self lay there, unaltered in this change. Yes. The old fireside had smiled upon that same sweet face; it had passed like a dream through haunts of misery and care; at the door of the poor schoolmaster on the summer evening, before the furnace fire upon the cold wet night, at the still bedside of the dying boy, there had been the same mild lovely look. So shall we know the angels in their majesty, after death.

The old man held one languid arm in his, and had the small hand tight folded to his breast, for warmth. It was the hand she had stretched out to him with her last smile – the hand that had led him on, through all their wanderings. Ever and anon he pressed it to his lips; then hugged it to his breast again, murmuring that it was warmer now; and, as he said it, he looked, in agony, to those who stood around, as if imploring them to help her.

* From Ch. 7 from *The Old Curiosity Shop* (1998) by Dickens, Charles edited by Brennan, Elizabeth. By permission of Oxford University Press.

She was dead, and past all help, or need of it. The ancient rooms she had seemed to fill with life, even while her own was waning fast – the garden she had tended – the eyes she had gladdened – the noiseless haunts of many a thoughtful hour – the paths she had trodden as it were but yesterday – could know her never more.

“It is not,” said the schoolmaster, as he bent down to kiss her on the cheek, and gave his tears free vent, “it is not on earth that Heaven’s justice ends. Think what earth is, compared with the World to which her young spirit has winged its early flight; and say, if one deliberate wish expressed in solemn terms above this bed could call her back to life, which of us would utter it!”

Pre-reading activity

Let students know that they are going to read an extract from a 19th century novel: A young adolescent girl, an orphan, looked after by her grandfather, has, after a short, hard life, died. Some friends visit the house.

Ask students to consider the following questions:

- What do you expect the passage to be like?
- What tone will it have?
- What techniques does the writer use?
- What details of setting could be used and possibly given symbolic importance?
- How would you write the scene to create the right impression in readers?

Reading the passage

- Let students share their expectations – writing them on the board, making sure that they include aspects such as language and syntax.
- Read the passage in an appropriate tone.
- Explain any words that cause trouble.
- Ask the students to check how correct their predictions were.
- Cross out expectations that were not realised, and add newly discovered points.
- Handle questions.

Post-reading activity

Ask the students to write critical analyses of the extract.

Note: this lesson is not for beginners, but for students who are already familiar with the main techniques of prose writing. For the inexperienced/less able students, it would be possible to give a framework for the analysis, e.g.

- aim of the passage;
- narrative voice;

- style and its suitability;
- parts of speech preferences;
- tone;
- imagery; and
- linguistic features.

Later, let the class read the best analyses and benefit from the examples.

A sample analysis is provided here for illustrative purposes.

This extract aims to move the readers at the death of a young girl. The omniscient narrator addresses us directly, shows us Nell's body, reminds us of her life and presents the grief of her grandfather. The style, diction and syntax are all simple to reflect the innocence of this dear child. Adjectives abound, but they are nearly all positive: "solemn", "beautiful", "calm", "free", "fresh", "dear", "gentle", "patient", "noble", "perfect", "tranquil", "profound". There is a serene religious acceptance of Nell's death (Nell seems to be sleeping, and God, Heaven and angels are mentioned). Her end is a blessing (see the comment of the schoolmaster), but there's also pathos – Nell is cold, her grandfather cannot accept her death, and the schoolmaster weeps. The reader is expected to be moved.

Nell is associated with nature. We read of winter berries and green leaves (the green of youth and the winter of death?), the light, the sky and her little bird. The fragility of the bird parallels that of Nell. Was the cage her life? Certainly the schoolmaster talks of the flight of her spirit. The few details we are given of her life suggest it was not an easy one ("haunts of misery and care", etc.). Touches of alliteration help decorate and dignify the scene, e.g. "solemn stillness", "loved the light", "noble Nell" and "mute and motionless". Although Nell is dead, she remains very present; she and her belongings are the grammatical subject of many of the sentences.

Throughout the passage, like the sounding of a funeral bell, tolls the oft repeated "She was dead"

II. The short story

Through the Tunnel

Doris Lessing

Pre-reading activity

Tell the students that they are going to read a story about a boy growing up.

Before reading the story, they need to do some research and thinking. They have to work in groups and prepare short presentations on one of the following:

- male initiation rites and growing-up ceremonies;
- examples of young male growing-up stories (possibly films are easiest to think of);
- the Oedipus complex (and optionally, phallic symbols);
- the symbolism of tunnels, caves and underground places;
- parental possessiveness; and
- peer groups and adolescence.

Reading the story

Listen to the short presentations and answer questions.

While the story is being read, ask different students to monitor and take notes on various aspects, including:

- narration;
- language choice/diction;
- similes/imagery/symbols;
- syntax;
- plot development and suspense;
- setting;
- contrast;
- colour; and
- characters.

Ask for reports on these aspects, correct misunderstandings and lead the class through questioning and clarification towards an understanding of the story.

Possible examples of leading questions for discussion include:

- How is sexuality presented in the story?
- How is the mother-son relationship changed by the end of the story? What detail in particular reveals this change?
- What is the mood at the end of the story?
- Is the story sexist?

Post-reading activity

Ask the students to write a critical analysis of the story, or set them an essay on some aspect of it.

Below is a sample analysis of the story.

This is a “growing up” story. Children pass from childhood through adolescence to adulthood. Their relationships, feelings and bodies change as they grow and develop sexuality. This is the principal theme of this story. In many cultures, young men have to undergo initiation. These rituals often involve confinement in a small, dark space, pain and blood (in many cases, as a result of circumcision). All this is echoed in the story (possibly Doris Lessing’s African background is relevant in this respect). Initiation rituals lie behind many hero and quest stories, in which a young man sets out from home, undergoes an ordeal, often fighting with a monster, and then returns home victorious. The rocks in the story are duly described as being like monsters, octopuses are mentioned and there is a reference to chivalry, summoning up the image of the young knight’s quest. There is a sexual element to the story as this is obviously central to the experience of growing up. The older boys who inspire Jerry are naked. Some of the writing can be interpreted in sexual terms. For example, after his first encounter with the elder boys, Jerry “climbed back to the diving rock and sat down, feeling “the hot roughness of it under his thighs”. The following is another example:

...The great rock the big boys had swum through rose sheer out of the white sand, black, tufted lightly with greenish weed. He could see no gap in it. He swam down to its base.

Again and again he rose, took a big chestful of air, and went down. Again and again he groped over the surface of the rock, feeling it, almost hugging it in the desperate need to find the entrance....

The tunnel is also a birth canal through which Jerry symbolically swims to rebirth. This is also part of the Oedipal content of the story. Jerry starts the story as a little boy following his widowed mummy. To grow up he needs to break free from this intense attachment and become independent. This is the main story arc, and at the end there are signs of a subtle change in his relationship with his mother.

Other themes that could be discussed are parental possessiveness, our guilt at growing away from our parents, the importance of same-sex peer groups for adolescents, loneliness and the relationship of the tourist to the less sophisticated, but more “real”, native (a key element in, for example, the work of D.H. Lawrence and E.M. Forster). One can also see in the story the intense anxiety of the 1950s, caused by psychological theories in the United States, about the danger of mothers letting their sons become “mommy’s boys” who would probably develop into homosexuals.

The story style is fairly simple. There is an omniscient narrator who describes everything and takes us into the minds of the characters by means of commentary and free indirect speech; increasingly though as the story goes on it is Jerry's mind we enter and his point of view we take. It is right, then, that the language should not be too complex and elaborate for an 11-year-old boy. The style can be described as painterly. What there is to be seen is described in detail and with great attention to colour. Simple similes are used (e.g. "like a slice of orange peel", "like brown whales" and so on). There are a few passages of rich and poetic description (e.g. the paragraph beginning, "Under him, six or seven feet down..."). Adjectives do a lot of work, and the typical sentence tells us what Jerry did: he + verb. This indeed is the main focus of the story. Pace is also very important. Note particularly that the narration slows down to prepare readers for the climactic journey through the tunnel.

The characterisation is basically psychological. We are given insight into the minds of characters, as noted earlier, by means of free indirect speech (a good example for the mother is the paragraph beginning "She was thinking...", and for Jerry the one beginning "She gave him a patient, inquisitive look..."). Scenes such as the one in which Jerry clowns in front of the local boys are also important, giving us a glimpse into the personality of this rather intense and introspective boy. Dialogue also has a role, but we are given little idea as to how Jerry or his mother looks. The attention to the mother's whiteness and gradual reddening, and Jerry's final brownness, seems more symbolic than descriptive.

The setting is crucial to the story, with the contrast between the safe, crowded tourist beach, and the rocky wilder bay symbolising the changes in Jerry. There is a lovely moment when Jerry, swimming out to sea (a symbol of sexuality and femininity, according to Freud), sees his mother in the distance as just a dab of colour. This symbolises Jerry's changing relationship with his mother as her role in his life decreases. (The goggles he buys also reinforce the point of seeing things in a new way.) Thus setting and symbolism reinforce theme, and contrast helps structure the story.

The main feeling at the end of the story is that Jerry has undergone his initiation; the obstacle no longer concerns him once it has been passed. There is, however, a certain openness – is there also a sense of the emptiness of human achievement; how sometimes things we desperately wanted can suddenly seem trivial when we have them? Anyway, this is a fine and subtle story reflecting on a young man's development – though whether a feminist would find some of its assumptions highly questionable is another point...

III. Poem

A Daughter of Eve

*A fool I was to sleep at noon,
And wake when night is chilly
Beneath the comfortless cold moon;
A fool to pluck my rose too soon,
A fool to snap my lily.*

*My garden-plot I have not kept;
Faded and all-forsaken,
I weep as I have never wept:
Oh it was summer when I slept,
It's winter now I waken.*

*Talk what you please of future spring
And sun-warm'd sweet to-morrow:—
Stripp'd bare of hope and everything,
No more to laugh, no more to sing,
I sit alone with sorrow.*

Christina Rossetti

Pre-reading activity

Tell the class that later on they are going to read a 19th century poem about a girl who loses her virginity before marriage.

Ask various members of the class to do some research prior to reading the poem. Possible topics:

- The story of Adam and Eve;
- Traditional views on suitable behaviour for young women and premarital sex;
- The New Testament parable of the Foolish Virgins;
- The fable of the ant and the grasshopper;
- Flowers and their symbolic associations with young women and sexuality; and
- Moon symbolism.

Reading the poem

- Ask the groups to report on their findings.
- Read the poem.
- Ask for comment on the diction, tone, imagery and message.
- Ask for comment on the sounds in lines 4–5 and 15.

Post-reading activity

Ask students how they would illustrate the poem, or ask them to write a critical analysis.

Below is a sample analysis of the poem.

This beautiful little lyric, with its simple diction and skilful triple rhymes, is filled with sadness. The imagery comes from nature (times of the day, times of the year, the moon, flowers and gardens). The title explains the symbolism: just as Eve fell to temptation, so has the poetic persona. A number of other stories can be detected below the surface. Jesus told the parable of the careless virgins, who were asleep when the bridegroom came and so missed their chance of happiness. The fable of the ant which toiled all summer to prepare for winter, while the careless grasshopper played and then starved, seems relevant too. The lily is associated with the Virgin Mary and the plucking of flowers with a girl's loss of virginity. The poem is a solemn warning to young women to use their time well, be industrious and avoid sexual temptation (a modern feminist might, indeed, find a lot to argue with in the poem). The persona almost becomes a personification of regret as, at the end of the poem, she sits hopeless and alone.

The strong consonants of "pluck" and "snap" emphasise the force of these actions. Alliteration is used for decorative emphasis in lines 7, 8, 9, 10, 12 and 15. The assonance of "o" (-lone/-row) sounds like a sigh (Oh). The poem expresses the beauty of the woman, but shows how she has misused and wasted it.

IV. Extract from a play

*The Duchess of Malfi**

John Webster

BOSOLA *Most ambitiously: princes' images on their tombs do not lie, as they were wont¹, seeming to pray up to heaven; but with their hands under their cheeks, as if they died of the tooth-ache. They are not carved with their eyes fixed upon the stars, but as their minds were wholly bent upon the world, the selfsame way they seem to turn their faces.*

DUCHESS *Let me know fully therefore the effect
Of this thy dismal preparation,
This talk fit for a charnel².*

BOSOLA *Now I shall:--
[Enter EXECUTIONERS, with a coffin, cords, and a bell]
Here is a present from your princely brothers;*

* Act IV, scene ii "The Duchess of Malfi" from *The Duchess of Malfi and Other Plays* (1998) by Webster, J. By permission of Oxford University Press.

*And may it arrive welcome, for it brings
Last benefit, last sorrow.*

DUCHESS *Let me see it:
I have so much obedience in my blood,
I wish it in their veins to do them good.*

BOSOLA *This is your last presence-chamber.*

CARIOLA *O my sweet lady!*

DUCHESS *Peace; it affrights not me.*

BOSOLA *I am the common bellman
That usually is sent to condemned persons
The night before they suffer.*

DUCHESS *Even now thou said'st
Thou wast a tomb-maker.*

BOSOLA *'Twas to bring you
By degrees to mortification³. Listen.*

[Rings the bell.]

*Hark, now everything is still,
The screech-owl⁴ and the whistler shrill
Call upon our dame aloud,
And bid her quickly don⁵ her shroud!
Much you had of land and rent;
Your length in clay's now competent⁶:
A long war disturbed your mind;
Here your perfect peace is signed.
Of what is 't fools make such vain keeping?
Sin their conception, their birth weeping,
Their life a general mist of error,
Their death a hideous storm of terror.
Strew your hair with powders sweet,
Don clean linen, bathe your feet,
And (the foul fiend more to check)
A crucifix let bless your neck.
'Tis now full tide 'tween night and day;
End your groan, and come away.*

CARIOLA *Hence, villains, tyrants, murderers! Alas!
What will you do with my lady? – Call for help!*

DUCHESS *To whom? To our next neighbours? They are mad-folks.*

BOSOLA *Remove that noise.*

[EXECUTIONERS seize CARIOLA, who struggles.]

DUCHESS *Farewell, Cariola.
In my last will I have not much to give:
A many hungry guests have fed upon me;
Thine will be a poor reversion⁷.*

CARIOLA *I will die with her.*

DUCHESS *I pray thee, look thou giv'st my little boy
Some syrup for his cold, and let the girl
Say her prayers ere she sleep.*

[CARIOLA is forced out by the EXECUTIONERS.]

*Now what you please:
What death?*

BOSOLA *Strangling; here are your executioners.*

DUCHESS *I forgive them:
The apoplexy, catarrh, or cough o' th' lungs,
Would do as much as they do.*

BOSOLA *Doth not death fright you?*

DUCHESS *Who would be afraid on 't,
Knowing to meet such excellent company
In th' other world?*

BOSOLA *Yet, methinks,
The manner of your death should much afflict you:
This cord should terrify you.*

DUCHESS *Not a whit:
What would it pleasure me to have my throat cut
With diamonds? or to be smothered
With cassia? or to be shot to death with pearls⁸?
I know death hath ten thousand several doors
For men to take their exits; and 'tis found
They go on such strange geometrical hinges,
You may open them both ways: any way, for heaven-sake,
So I were out of your whispering. Tell my brothers
That I perceive death, now I am well awake,
Best gift is they can give or I can take.
I would fain put off my last woman's-fault⁹,
I'd not be tedious to you.*

FIRST EXECUTIONER We are ready.

*DUCHESS Dispose my breath how please you; but my body¹⁰
Bestow upon my women, will you?*

FIRST EXECUTIONER Yes.

*DUCHESS Pull, and pull strongly, for your able strength
Must pull down heaven upon me: –
Yet stay; heaven-gates are not so highly arched
As princes' palaces; they that enter there
Must go upon their knees [Kneels]. – Come, violent death, Serve
for mandragora¹¹ to make me sleep! –
Go tell my brothers, when I am laid out,
They then may feed in quiet.*

[They strangle her.]

*BOSOLA Where's the waiting-woman¹²?
Fetch her: some other strangle the children.
[Enter EXECUTIONERS. Enter one with CARIOLA]
Look you, there sleeps your mistress.*

*CARIOLA O, you are damned
Perpetually for this! My turn is next;
Is 't not so ordered?*

*BOSOLA Yes, and I am glad
You are so well prepared for 't.*

*CARIOLA You are deceived, sir,
I am not prepared for 't! I will not die!
I will first come to my answer; and know
How I have offended.*

*BOSOLA Come, despatch her. –
You kept her counsel; now you shall keep ours.*

*CARIOLA I will not die, I must not; I am contracted¹³
To a young gentleman.*

FIRST EXECUTIONER [Showing the noose] Here's your wedding-ring¹⁴.

*CARIOLA Let me but speak with the Duke. I'll discover
Treason to his person.*

BOSOLA Delays:– throttle her.

FIRST EXECUTIONER She bites and scratches!

*CARIOLA If you kill me now,
I am damned! I have not been at confession
This two years.*

BOSOLA [To EXECUTIONERS.] When?

CARIOLA I am quick with child¹⁵.

*BOSOLA Why, then,
Your credit's¹⁶ saved.*

[EXECUTIONERS strangle CARIOLA.]

*Bear her into the next room;
Let this lie still.*

[Exeunt the EXECUTIONERS with the body of CARIOLA.]

Glossary:

1. as they were wont = as they were accustomed to. To see the change in style in tombs, compare the classic tombs with the person lying on his/her back looking upwards: www.bbc.co.uk/history/state/church_reformation/church_gallery.shtml with the Jacobean style in which the figure leans on one elbow (as if the person had toothache), as in the tomb of St. John Leventhorpe and his wife Joan: www.englishchurch.org/Tour.htm. Bosola suggests the change of style mirrors a change of attitude.
2. charnel = bone store
3. mortification = repentance, with a pun on "death"
4. screech owl, associated with graveyards
5. don = put on
6. All you need now is enough earth to cover your body.
7. I can't leave you much money.
8. to be made unable to breathe with expensive perfume
9. Women are said to talk too much; I will be brief and not bore you.
10. i.e. give my body
11. mandragora = a poison
12. waiting-woman = a maid
13. i.e. engaged to be married
14. i.e. the rope around her neck
15. quick with child = pregnant
16. credit = good reputation

Pre-reading activity

Tell students that the extract they are going to read comes from a play, *The Duchess of Malfi* by John Webster, written around 1611.

In the early 17th century, there was a fashion for Revenge Drama – the plays are dark ones, involving cruel murder, ghosts and especially incest (Shakespeare’s *Hamlet* is part of the genre, and possibly also *Macbeth*). The works have some similarities with the modern thriller and horror genres.

The Duchess has had a secret marriage and children, against the wishes of her powerful brothers. When they find out the truth, they confine her to a madhouse and, unable to bear the thought of the dishonour they feel her behaviour has brought on them, they order her murder by their servant, Bosola.

Ask students to

1. Read the extract and the notes. Make sure that they understand what is being said.
2. Think about the effect the writer wants to create and the dramatic techniques he uses, i.e.
 - the diction (look for any word sets) and imagery
 - the action on the stage
 - the pace of the action
 - the characterisation of the Duchess
 - the characterisation of Bosola
 - the role of Cariola.
3. Be prepared to share their thoughts with the class.

Reading the play

- Have students read the extract aloud in class.
- Handle any questions.
- Discuss the points raised in the pre-reading activity.
- Discuss the four speeches:
 - Bosola’s “Most ambitiously...”;
 - Bosola’s “Hark, now everything is still...”;
 - the Duchess’ “Not a whit...”; and
 - the Duchess’ “Pull, and pull strongly...”.
- Concentrate especially on the style and imagery, and the atmosphere they create.

Post-reading activity

Ask students to write either an analysis bringing all these points together, or some production notes on the clothes/costumes, lighting, props, scenery, background noises, music, stage movement and style of speech they would recommend to bring out the full potential of the extract.

Below is a sample analysis.

This death scene is drawn out, moves from horror to horror, and almost takes pleasure in its exaggerated, decorative presentation of murder. The setting – a madhouse, possibly with screams and wild yells in the background – is bizarre enough. Bosola certainly does not simply kill the Duchess. He discusses tombs, brings in a parade of death (executioners with a coffin), delivers a speech/poem/song on death, discusses the mode of death, waits while the Duchess prepares herself, orders the execution, and when we think the horror might be over, commences killing the Duchess's children and maid, the last a slow affair with Cariola resisting her end, screaming and fighting to the last. There is plenty here for a director to work on and bring alive through lighting, sound and colour.

There are four remarkable speeches in this extract. First, Bosola's short prose speech at the beginning of the extract: Bosola uses the changing styles of tombs to suggest that the world and its rulers have become less spiritual. The reference to toothache strikes one as strange and slightly unsettling. Next, there is Bosola's death song, arguing the death should be welcomed, but at the same time making it hideous. The song creates effects by contrast – the carefully rhymed beauty of the poetry against the horror of the content. The effect runs throughout the extract: life against death, the beauty and calm of the Duchess against her violent murder.

The Duchess has two long speeches. "Not a whit..." adds to the strange atmosphere, with its bizarre, imaginary forms of death – having one's throat cut with diamonds, being suffocated with perfume, or being shot with pearls. Her final speech has grandeur and gives her a noble end.

In terms of characterisation, Bosola is calm and ironic in overseeing these foul murders (e.g. "Here is a present from your princely brothers" and "Why then your credit's saved"). His cruelty comes over in his comments to the Duchess on the manner of her death, gloating over her prospective suffering, and, most chillingly of all, when he reduces Cariola to a mere nothing: "Remove that noise".

The scene is designed to attract our sympathy for the Duchess. This is done by emphasising the cruelty of her killers, her dignity, the devotion of her servant to her, her concern for Cariola, her touching instructions about her children ("look thou giv'st my little boy some syrup for his cold") and her final religious humility. She shows the strength of her character in her sharp answers to Bosola, and in her own irony. Her crime has been to dare to be herself and take her own decisions, but she says she will try to avoid that other great fault of women – talking too much – so she cuts her speech short ("I'd not be tedious to you"). Her tone is neatly emphasised by the sudden rhyme awake/take in the same speech.

Cariola is a devoted servant, whose humanity is emphasised by her obvious fear of death. In this she contrasts with the Duchess, who shows her noble blood by accepting her fate. Although the scene seems to question gender stereotypes, it accepts ones about social class.

Overall, the scene is dark and frightening with various bizarre details creating an unsettling, slightly weird effect.

Notes:

This is for a fairly advanced stage in the course after reading easier and more modern plays. It might be interesting to relate the dark world of Jacobean drama to Mannerist art in Europe and look at paintings such as Caravaggio's *Martyrdom of St Matthew* for the same exaggerated and sadistic world.

(See www.phespirit.info/pictures/caravaggio/p030.htm)

V. Film

(1) *The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers*

Peter Jackson (2002)

In this example, a film based on a well-known text is used to help students see the sort of decisions directors take.

Pre-viewing activity

Ask students to read two extracts from J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Lord of the Rings, The Two Towers*:

- Book III, chapter IV, from the beginning to "He ended, and strode on silently, and in all the wood, as far as the ear could reach, there was not a sound."; and
- Book IV, chapter III.

Viewing the film

Students watch Chapters 14 and 15, "Fangorn Forest" and "The Black Gate is Closed" from Peter Jackson's film of the book (the sections that show Merry and Pippin being carried along by Treebeard the Ent, and Frodo, Sam and Gollum at the Black Gate).

Students may view the sections a number of times and discuss the following:

- the changes/differences between the book and film;
- the setting and camera work;
- the actors/characters;
- the sound;
- plot tension; and
- the relationship between the two scenes.

Post-viewing activity

Students write a critical analysis in the form of a commentary on the extract from the film. They may work in groups if they prefer.

Below is a sample analysis.

The scene opens with three people in a lifeless, stony landscape, confronting danger. Frodo, Sam and Gollum are seen climbing slate-like blue rocks. Strong dissonant music plays as we reach the top and get our first look at the Black Gate in the sort of Gothic style associated with horror stories. It stands among barren mountains with a threatening sky, tinged blood red. Frodo, as befits the hero, is the more handsome with curly hair and piercing blue eyes. Sam, as suits the hero's companion, is a more ordinary figure. Gollum is a fascinating blend of the pitiable and vulnerable (almost a naked child) and the evil (like a grub or a moving corpse).

The camera shows us the battlements. Everything is grey and spiky. Then we look down on marching columns of soldiers. Orders are shouted, drums beaten and a horn sounded, so horrible it seems to hurt Gollum. The viewer is reminded of the parades loved by dictators and totalitarian states. Trolls labour to open the Black Gate. A view along the battlements makes them look like a shark's jaws, consistent with the image of Mordor as some all-consuming beast.

We return to the three travellers. Sam moves forward, the rock suddenly gives way, and he falls. The camera cuts between the mishap and the marching men. Two of the men hear something and run to investigate. Frodo rushes to help Sam. The suspense is derived from the expectation that they will be found, but the surprise is that, thanks to Frodo's quick action, they are rendered invisible beneath Frodo's cape. A point of view shot shows what they see as the soldiers approach with spears. There is a tense moment and then they turn away and drums, shouts, the tramp of marching feet and heavy music take over.

Gollum dramatically pulls the hobbits back from trying to enter the gates and a conversation follows, portrayed by means of cuts and close-ups. Gollum begs, but his sideways-slanting eyes make him seem untrustworthy; Sam's eyes look down showing his distrust and unease, and Frodo gives Sam a sidelong glance, knowing he is not trusted. This increases the suspense generated by the characters' relationship, embodying as it does the potential for betrayal. The gates clang shut.

(2) *Gladiator*

Ridley Scott (2000)

This second example illustrates how a film extract can be used without relying on knowledge of the story's source or the rest of the film. The extract is taken from the end of the film *Gladiator*, from the emergence of Commodus in the arena to the final credits.

Pre-viewing activity

- Ask students to watch the extract. The film gives a fictional account of a lifelong rivalry between the real-life Roman Emperor Commodus and a heroic figure named Maximus. The part of the film students will watch shows their final confrontation, fighting as

gladiators in the Colosseum at Rome.

- To prepare for the viewing, students need to do some research into the Roman circus, gladiators and the emperor Commodus.

Viewing the extract

- Ask some members of the class to explain what they have found out about the topics set.
- Let the class share their opinions and insights and ask questions.

Post-viewing activity

Ask students to write a critical analysis of what they have seen.

Below is a sample analysis.

Grand music plays as the black-clad soldiers move aside to reveal the emperor Commodus, as in some old Hollywood musical, in ornate white armour, ready to fight his foe Maximus (in black) in an arena littered with red rose petals. Commodus is portrayed as a showman, very determined to project himself as the hero of the show. Maximus' simple ceremony of touching the earth, although not explained here, seems far more genuine than the hollow gestures of the Emperor.

Close-ups between the foes show this will be a fight to the death. The fight is shown realistically with fast camerawork and swirling dust. The excitement of the crowd, the cries of the combatants and the clang of the swords add to the atmosphere. The battle goes to and fro. Maximus is obviously seriously injured, but then Commodus loses his sword. We see shock in his eyes. This arrogant man has never considered that he might lose. He demands a sword but his days of power are over and he is disobeyed.

Maximus is dying. This is conveyed by shots of another place, shown half drained of colour, and obviously visionary. The speed of the film slows as we look at a wall with a door. Then Commodus leaps at Maximus; Maximus refocusses and fights, but honourably takes no advantage of his sword and fights with his fists. Commodus draws a dagger and tries to stab Maximus, but with beautiful irony, his face symbolically covered with blood, the emperor dies impaled on his own blade.

As he sinks, we cut to a long shot and silence reigns as low music starts. The emperor's death is not the key moment of this scene – that is yet to come. We are now approaching the epic ending. Maximus gives a little bow, but his life is ebbing away. We return to the vision as a solo voice joins the music. Then a close-up of Maximus as he speaks his last noble words, "Free my men," and "There was a dream that was Rome. It shall be realised." He falls. The film cuts to the visionary world. He enters the door and finds open fields. Cutting back to the arena, the screen shows a noblewoman coming and kneeling over him with a startling blue sky behind her head. The camera looks down at the dying Maximus, and the woman weeps. Maximus's death is realised cinematically as a strange floating movement over the rose-petalled ground. His wife and son prepared to greet him among the fields in that other world.

Serious, slow orchestral music prepares for the grand finale. The noble lady speaks: “He was a soldier of Rome. Honour him.” And people move forward to carry him aloft out of the arena, leaving the dead emperor forgotten and unmourned.

The short scene of an African laying two little clay figures to rest in the earth follows. There is a sense of closure in his gesture. He also talks of freedom and of rejoining Maximus, but “not yet”. The final feeling is not one of despair – life has its sadness, but its joy also. The camera returns to a misty Colosseum, and rises. We see, beyond the top of the walls, Roman splendour with a red sun above it. Given the events, this is probably sun-set: Commodus and Maximus have died, and the Empire is entering a period of decline; but there is room for the opposite view – after all, Maximus has finally defeated the tyrant. The music climaxes, creating a final mood of epic dignity.

4.3.6 Schools of Literary Criticism

Students at this stage are not expected to learn about literary theories or the tenets of the various schools of criticism. They should, however, be aware that there are different views of famous texts and controversies over the best ways to interpret them (e.g. disputes over the status of Satan in *Paradise Lost*, or Achebe’s famous criticism of *Heart of Darkness* for racism).

In discussing set texts, teachers may wish to draw on the insights of various critical schools. A few general notes are offered here on those believed likely to be most relevant.

Humanistic criticism

Here the main interest is in discussing the moral issues raised by a work of literature. Characters and motivation receive careful scrutiny, and literature is used as a means to discuss life. This is the style of criticism students usually find most appealing at this stage.

Formalist and language-based criticism

This approach concentrates on style, the manipulation of language, the structure of a text, its relation to other texts and the conventions of genre.

Biographical criticism

The critic relates the literary work to the life of its author. This can be more illuminating with some writers than others, e.g. Sylvia Plath’s life story is helpful in approaching her verse. Followers of the New Criticism, however, prefer to look at a poem as an independent artefact to be studied in isolation (see “New Criticism” below).

Marxist-influenced criticism

This is concerned with the rise and fall of different classes and the economic circumstances that

texts emerge from. Literary texts are seen as the product of societies rather than of autonomous individuals.

Feminist criticism

This is closely related to Marxist criticism. The most prominent form it takes is an exploration of the ways in which men have portrayed women in their writing, stereotyping and marginalising them. It is also interested in the growth of writing by women, and the question as to whether women can/should use the same literary forms and language as men, or need to develop their own literature.

Post-colonial criticism

Various critics have explored the ways in which colonialism and imperialism have been reflected in literature and continue to affect cultures which have been subjected to them. Such critics might, for example, approach *The Tempest* as a play about Prospero's colonisation of the island and enslavement of the aboriginal population (Ariel and Caliban). Edward Said's work on "orientalism" has opened up study of the ways in which cultures have viewed one another, and more particularly the ways in which dominant cultures regard foreign ones and justify their exploitation.

New criticism

Critics of this school view a literary work as an independent and self-sufficient object, and argue for close reading and analysis of its formal properties, rather than having recourse to the biography and *psychology* of the author and to literary history.

New historical criticism

This moves beyond the traditional history of literature, to a consideration of the historical circumstances behind a given text (e.g. *Macbeth* is written for the court of James I, the first of the Scottish Stuart *kings* of England, and the author of a book on witchcraft as well as being a strong defender of the divine right of kings).

Psychoanalytic criticism

Critics of this school use the theories of Freud and Jung. The writer or the characters in a work of literature may be psychoanalysed. Maybe the most famous example of this type of criticism is the reading of *Hamlet* as a play about Hamlet's Oedipal feelings about Hamlet the elder, Claudius and Gertrude. The work of Lacan has created interest in the development of the Self through concepts of the Other.

The more ways in which students are encouraged to look at texts, the richer their experience of literature will be.

4.3.7 Assessment for Learning

Assessment is an integral part of the learning and teaching process. Therefore, while teachers are using any of the pedagogical approaches or strategies suggested in this chapter, they should consider using, where appropriate, formative and summative assessment to further promote and enhance student learning. Fundamentally, assessment involves both teachers and students reflecting on assessment data: on the one hand, it should provide students with appraisal and feedback on their performance in relation to the learning objectives to help them improve; and on the other, it offers teachers information for effective planning and intervention. Chapter 5 considers in more detail how assessment is approached in the Literature in English curriculum.

4.4 Quality Interaction

Section 4.3 has offered a range of learning and teaching approaches and strategies that teachers might like to consider to achieve specific learning targets and objectives suited to students' needs and abilities. Whatever approaches or strategies they choose, however, teachers are encouraged to build in quality interaction to ensure effective learning. The following example, which focusses on the use of short stories to develop skills of literary comprehension and appreciation, illustrates how such an interactive process can be brought about:

Scaffolding

Before students approach a particular story, the teacher should provide scaffolds or means of support to assist comprehension. For example, he/she may help build students' vocabulary by explaining, or asking them to look up, key words or phrases that are crucial to understanding the text. He/she may also help increase students' world knowledge by encouraging them to find information about a certain topic, issue, historical event or cultural practice that is related to the central theme or even presented in the story. Similarly, prompting students to reflect on their own experience, and to project themselves into situations similar to those which occur in the text, are good ways of ensuring that students approach it with the right mental set.

Questioning

To foster a close interaction with the text and develop higher-order thinking skills, open-ended questioning is strongly encouraged. Whether they are involved in a group discussion or an individual task, students should not just be engaged with questions which aim at eliciting information-based responses. They should also be provided with questions that stimulate reasoned interpretation and personal response. For example, they may be asked to discuss the motive of a certain character who has opted for a particular course of action, and give justifications for their interpretation; or they can be asked to imagine that they are that character, disclosing their feelings in a letter to an intimate friend after reflecting on the incident. Engaging students in this way will enable them to explore their own feelings, develop their own responses and make their own

judgements – crucial skills which they can apply to the understanding and appreciation of a wider range of literary texts.

Feedback

Constructive feedback or advice should be provided during and/or after each learning activity to let students know how well they have done and how they can make improvement. For example, students can be asked to write a critical essay on the story they have read, and the teacher may provide comments on their drafts in terms of content, organisation and language, based on which students will make revisions to produce texts of better quality. The teacher need not be the sole source of quality feedback. This can come through students' direct involvement in assessing their own and others' work. Peer and self feedback, based on clear criteria, enhance audience awareness and encourage a critical response to texts.

4.5 A Learning Community

As suggested in Section 3.3.5, teachers and students are encouraged to work closely together as a learning community that is characterised by mutual trust, and which fosters active learning, co-operation and teamwork. A learning community that is conducive to increasing students' involvement and motivation easily fosters a strong sense of membership, as teachers and students become partners/joint investigators in the process of developing knowledge. Further, a learning community enables students to develop their capacity to be responsible for their own learning and to care about the learning of their peers.

Such a community can be created in the study of Literature in English through giving students plenty of opportunities to discuss and share ideas and feelings about the texts they have read or viewed, to collaborate on projects or performances, and to support each other through peer feedback. The sense of membership that students share enables them to experiment with the literary knowledge and skills they have developed. Moreover, through engaging in self-directed learning, a strong sense of empowerment can be generated, as students set their own learning goals and monitor their own progress through individual or team effort.

Apart from promoting partnership between students in learning, an effective learning community also involves a close partnership between the teacher and students. Far from being a mere manager of class activities and transmitter of knowledge, the teacher learns and works together with the students, forming a mentoring relationship with them. Strategies for building active learning which teachers are encouraged to promote include:

- **Collaborative learning** – This provides students with the opportunity to learn actively, to negotiate with each other to discover meaning, and to develop and share understanding of the literary texts.

- **Problem-solving** – This allows students to work, often in small groups, on tasks or projects to strengthen their critical and collaborative abilities through analysing closely various aspects of literary texts, discussing possible readings, and working out or justifying their own interpretations.
- **Experiential learning** – This involves the use of a variety of life-wide learning activities that enable students to connect theory with practice, and to apply the literary knowledge and skills they have developed in authentic and purposeful contexts (e.g. writing a review of a theatre performance).
- **Ongoing reflection** – Such practice is critical to the success of a learning community. Reflective students who are able to draw consciously on their experiences are more motivated, confident and effective as students, because they constantly examine what they have learned, how they have learned it, and how they could further improve their learning.
- **Peer and self feedback** – Used appropriately, these are powerful evaluative tools for improving students' learning. While the former facilitates enhanced interaction and mutual support amongst students and allows them insights into others' points of view, the latter encourages self-directed learning and critical self-reflection, key enabling skills in the development of learner autonomy.

4.6 Catering for Learner Diversity

4.6.1 General Considerations

Every class is composed of individuals who differ from each other in terms of maturity, motivation, ability, learning styles, aspirations and interests. Catering for learner diversity is a significant and challenging consideration in determining learning and teaching content, level and methods.

To enhance curriculum planning as well as learning and teaching in a way that will help different students learn effectively, teachers are encouraged to:

- be sensitive to the needs of different students and appreciate their capacity to learn and improve;
- make use of materials and activities which will arouse different students' interests, and are relevant to students' ability levels;
- create situations and select suitable questioning strategies that will provoke thinking as well as encourage experimentation and creativity; and
- respond to students who require extra help and those who are ready to take on greater challenges.

4.6.2 Working with Students of Different Levels

Most students have considerable experience of fiction in various forms, have seen plenty of films, and through songs have some familiarity with verse. This gives teachers a place to start from and a basis on which to build. The skills needed for appreciating films, novels and stories have much in common, and are mutually reinforcing. As students learn to focus on form, they will be able to transfer appreciation and form-focussed skills to the reading of prose and verse. Classes can start at different points, concentrate on different initial texts and proceed at different speeds according to learner needs.

If the class contains students of very different standards, there are a number of potential solutions.

Case 1

One group in the class contains students much less advanced as students of English. In this case, it might be necessary for them to study different written texts. This will involve creating two groups in the class. In some lessons, the teacher can spend part of the time with one group, explaining ideas and encouraging discussion, and the rest of the time with the other group. When the teacher is not with a group, its members can prepare presentations, work on projects, rehearse performances and complete worksheets. It may be possible for both groups to work on the same films, even if the tasks set are rather different. Teachers might like to note that:

- Song lyrics may be more approachable than poems; short stories are easier to handle than novels; modern plays are simpler than Shakespeare's.
- Less "literary" texts may be more attractive to beginners, e.g. J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*, the works of science fiction writers like Arthur C. Clarke and Ursula le Guin, R. Cormier's *Chocolate War* and various detective stories.
- Chinua Achebe, Ford Madox Ford, Graham Greene, Ernest Hemingway, Susan Hill, R.K. Narayan, George Orwell and H.G. Wells often write rather simpler English than some of the other authors listed as suitable.

Case 2

Here the problem is not one of language, but of standard in more general terms (or even motivation). Everyone in the class can work on the same texts, but different types and levels of task can be set. Students can write their own critical appreciations of a poem, or can answer a series of guided questions. In allocating tasks to different people when watching a film, more straightforward ones can be given to those who find the subject challenging. There can also be more emphasis on work outside the class, with students able to choose their own texts and focus their studies on aspects that interest them. Those who are practically-minded might find making a film, staging a drama, or designing a set more exciting. These are all valid activities in terms of literary study and ultimately draw on the same skills.

<i>Less challenging</i>	<i>More challenging</i>
Writing a plot summary	Analysing symbolism
Doing background research	Working on rhythm
Finding a song to present and analyse	Finding a sonnet to present and analyse
Writing a fable	Writing a dramatic monologue
Discussing a character	Examining characterisation
Answering questions on a text	Writing an unaided critical analysis of a text

Literature in English allows teachers a great deal of freedom and flexibility, which should make the task of responding to the challenges of learner differences relatively less daunting.

4.7 Meaningful Assignments

Quality assignments help develop and reinforce learning. Such assignments may include:

- reading set texts;
- watching films;
- creative writing, such as writing poems or short stories;
- performing practical tasks, such as film editing and performing a selected scene;
- doing research and preparing presentations on it;
- doing projects; and
- writing journals.

Schools should vary the modes of assignments as suggested above to check students' understanding and track their progress. Teachers are encouraged to set original assignments/questions that challenge students to argue a case or to think creatively. To complete the assignments, students need to respond to or discuss ideas **with supporting evidence quoted or cited from reliable sources based on their own research**. Such assignments require evaluative and analytical skills, creativity and reflection, which makes it difficult for students to merely regurgitate other people's ideas without analysis.

From time to time, teachers can set in-class tasks based on research notes (including quotations and bibliography) that students have prepared beforehand. The question itself is unknown, but students have been informed of the areas to research and the nature of the task. By doing so, teachers can have a better understanding of how well students, without the support of technology, can perform and monitor their progress.

Feedback can be given by teachers or peers, and students presenting their assignment can learn from the reactions of the rest of the class and from self-reflection. While projects are underway, verbal comments should suffice, but a larger piece of completed work merits a detailed written response, recognising achievement and pointing to areas where improvement could be made.

Chapter 5 Assessment

This chapter discusses the role of assessment in learning and teaching Literature in English, the principles that should guide assessment of the subject and the need for both formative and summative assessment. It also provides guidance on internal assessment and details of the public assessment of Literature in English. Finally, information is given on how standards are established and maintained, and on how results are reported with reference to these standards.

5.1 The Roles of Assessment

Assessment is the practice of collecting evidence of student learning. It is a vital and integral part of classroom instruction, and serves several purposes and audiences.

First and foremost, it gives feedback to students, teachers, schools and parents on the effectiveness of teaching and on students' strengths and weaknesses in learning.

Secondly, it provides information to schools, school systems, government, tertiary institutions and employers to enable them to monitor standards and to facilitate selection decisions.

The most important role of assessment is in promoting learning and monitoring students' progress. However, in the senior secondary years, the more public roles of assessment for certification and selection come to the fore. Inevitably, these imply high-stakes uses of assessment since the results are typically used to make critical decisions about individuals.

The Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE) provides a common end-of-school credential that gives access to university study, work and further education and training. It summarises student performance in the four core subjects and in various discipline-oriented subjects (including Literature in English) and the Applied Learning courses. It needs to be interpreted in conjunction with other information about students as shown in the Student Learning Profile.

5.2 Formative and Summative Assessment

In the context of the Literature in English curriculum, assessment serves the principal aim of promoting learning by providing information about students' achievements in relation to the learning targets and objectives. Assessment helps students, their teachers and parents understand the learning performance and progress, facilitating planning for further improvement. To match the learning targets, objectives and outcomes, different modes of assessment serving formative and/or summative purposes are encouraged in the Literature in English curriculum.

Formative assessment focuses on the ongoing evaluation of students’ performance and abilities. It is often informal and carried out during the learning process. Formative assessment, which typically involves close attention to small “chunks” of learning, may take place on a daily basis.

The main aim of formative assessment is to improve learning and teaching through:

- diagnosing students’ strengths and learning problems or difficulties;
- providing quick guidance, quality feedback, timely support and enrichment for students; and
- reviewing and improving teaching plans and strategies.

Summative assessment focuses on determining progress in learning and evaluating students’ performance and abilities. It is normally undertaken at the end of a period of instruction (e.g. end of a school term, a school year or a key stage of schooling) and reviews much larger “chunks” of learning. Its main purposes are to:

- provide a comprehensive summary of students’ learning achievements during the period and their performance at that particular point of time; and
- help teachers check whether the major aspects of the learning targets and objectives have been achieved.

Assessment of, for and as Learning

Summative assessment is closely related to “assessment of learning”, while formative assessment comprises “assessment *for* learning” and “assessment *as* learning”. The table below explains the three complementary assessment concepts, their relationship and the different purposes they serve.

Summative	Assessment <i>of</i> Learning (AoL)	AoL describes the level students have attained in learning and shows what they know and can do over a period of time. It gives an overview of the previous learning of students and is mainly used for reporting purposes.
Formative	Assessment <i>for</i> Learning (AfL)	AfL integrates assessment into learning and teaching. It assists students to understand what they are learning, what they have attained, and what is expected of them, and helps teachers collect evidence of students’ learning so that teachers can provide students with timely feedback and refine their teaching strategies.
	Assessment <i>as</i> Learning (AaL)	AaL engages students in reflecting on and monitoring their progress of learning through strengthening their roles and responsibilities in relation to their learning. Students are actively involved in regulating the learning process, evaluating their own performance against the learning goals, and planning for the next step in learning.

Schools are encouraged to extend formative assessment from “assessment *for* learning” to “assessment *as* learning”, which empowers students to reflect on their own learning and develop their habit of mind and skills to monitor and evaluate their own progress. Teachers are also advised to adopt more diversified modes of assessment and make the best use of assessment data to inform learning and teaching.

Internal and Public Assessment

Another distinction to be made is between internal assessment and public assessment. Internal assessment refers to the assessment practices that teachers and schools employ as part of the ongoing learning and teaching process during the three years of senior secondary studies. In contrast, public assessment refers to the assessment conducted as part of the assessment process in place for all schools. Within the context of the HKDSE, this means both the public examinations and the moderated SBAs conducted or supervised by the HKEAA. On balance, internal assessment should be more formative, whereas public assessment tends to be more summative. Nevertheless, this need not be seen as a simple dichotomy. The inclusion of SBA in public assessment is an attempt to enhance formative assessment or assessment *for* learning within the context of the HKDSE.

5.3 Assessment Objectives

The assessment objectives are closely aligned with the curriculum framework and the broad learning outcomes which are presented in Chapter 2 of this Guide.

5.4 Internal Assessment

This section presents the guiding principles that can be used as the basis for designing internal assessment and some common assessment practices for Literature in English for use in schools. Some of these principles are common to both internal and public assessment.

5.4.1 Guiding Principles

Internal assessment practices should be aligned with curriculum planning, teaching progression, student abilities and local school contexts. The information collected will help motivate, promote and monitor student learning, and will also help teachers find ways of promoting more effective learning and teaching.

(a) *Alignment with the Learning Objectives*

A range of assessment practices should be used to assess the achievement of different learning objectives for whole-person development. These include teacher assessment, self-assessment and

peer assessment and involve the use of discussions, presentations, performances, essays, projects, portfolios and written classwork. The weighting given to different areas in assessment should be discussed and agreed among teachers. The assessment purposes and criteria should also be made known to students so that they have a full understanding of what is expected of them.

(b) *Catering for the Range of Student Ability*

Assessment practices incorporating different levels of difficulty and diverse modes should be used to cater for learners with different aptitudes and abilities. This helps ensure that the more able students are challenged to develop their full potential and the less able ones are encouraged to sustain their interest and succeed in learning.

(c) *Tracking Progress over Time*

As internal assessment should not be a one-off exercise, schools are encouraged to use practices that can track learning progress over time (e.g. portfolios). Assessment practices of this kind allow students to set their own learning goals and manage their own pace of learning, which will have a positive impact on their commitment to learning.

(d) *Timely and Encouraging Feedback*

Teachers should provide timely and encouraging feedback, through a variety of means such as constructive verbal comments during classroom activities and written remarks on assignments. Such feedback helps learners sustain their momentum in learning, and to identify their strengths and weaknesses.

(e) *Making Reference to the School's Context*

As learning is more meaningful when the content or process is linked to a setting which is familiar to students, schools are encouraged to design assessment tasks that make reference to the school's own context (e.g. its location, relationship with the community, and mission).

(f) *Making Reference to Current Progress in Student Learning*

Internal assessment tasks should be designed with reference to students' current progress, as this helps overcome obstacles that may have a cumulative negative impact on learning. Teachers should be mindful in particular of concepts and skills which form the basis for further development in learning.

(g) *Encouraging Peer Assessment and Self-assessment*

In addition to giving their feedback, teachers should also provide opportunities for peer assessment and self-assessment in student learning. The former enables students to learn among themselves, and the latter promotes reflective thinking which is vital for students' lifelong learning.

(h) *Appropriate Use of Assessment Information to Provide Feedback*

Internal assessment provides a rich source of data for providing evidence-based feedback on learning in a formative manner.

5.4.2 Internal Assessment Practices

A range of assessment practices suited to the Literature in English subject, such as discussions, presentations, performances, essays, projects, portfolios and written classwork, should be used to promote the attainment of the various learning outcomes. However, teachers should note that these practices should be an integral part of learning and teaching, not “add-on” activities.

Discussions

After reading/viewing a text, students can discuss any aspects suggested by the teacher or the students themselves (e.g. how the theme of racial discrimination is presented in *To Kill a Mockingbird*). Occasionally such discussions can be formal, timed and assessed. An alternative way of conducting discussions is to ask students to role-play characters or authors and answer classmates’ questions – but this can be used for assessment only if everyone gets a chance to do so during the year.

Presentations

These usually involve a learner, or a group of students, explaining a poem or talking about some aspects of a text, etc. to the rest of the class.

Performances

These can take a variety of forms, and students may be given a choice of, for example: reciting a poem, giving a dramatic reading of a scene from a short story or novel, or performing a short extract from a play.

Essays

These are usually done as homework, but can also be written under time restrictions in class or in an examination.

Projects

These are extended pieces of work, which may include conventional written work as well as work presented in video/audio or artwork form. Students should consult the teacher on the length and choice of topic for the work they intend to produce and on the mode of presentation.

Collections of students' work

These comprise the work that students have done throughout the three years of literature study, and may include creative work, critical appreciations or essays (or a mixture of these). Students may be asked to select their own favourite pieces of work for internal assessment. Teachers may wish to see drafts as well as finished pieces in the collections. Apart from participating in the selection of work for the collections, students should be encouraged to reflect on their learning progress, evaluate their own strengths and weaknesses, and identify ways of improving.

Written classwork

Students may, for instance, answer questions about a poem, compare two pieces of writing, write a critical appreciation, comment on an extract from a set text, or provide imaginative expansions of a text – for example, by adapting part of a set text for a different medium, or writing an alternative ending or additional scenes.

Portfolio work for the School-based Assessment

Despite being a component of the public assessment, the SBA of the subject, which engages students in conducting independent literary research to write a film analysis over a period of time, lends itself to promoting assessment *for* and *as* learning. In developing the portfolio work for the SBA, students can decide on the topic, scope and texts of their study based on their ability levels and interests. They can also set goals and milestones on task completion, reflect on the effectiveness of the research methods adopted and make adjustments where necessary, as well as improve their writing over drafts with the feedback and guidance from teachers. Students' autonomy, ownership of learning and metacognitive strategies are developed in the process.

5.5 Public Assessment

5.5.1 Guiding Principles

Some principles guiding public assessment are outlined below for teachers' reference.

(a) *Alignment with the Curriculum*

The outcomes that are assessed and examined through the HKDSE Examination should be aligned with the aims, objectives and intended learning outcomes of the three-year senior secondary curriculum. To enhance the validity of public assessment, the assessment procedures should address the range of valued learning outcomes, and not just those that are assessable through external written examinations.

The public assessment for Literature in English centres on the comprehension and appreciation of literary texts and the ability to write essays based on the set texts. It also includes a school-based assessment component, which aims to cover a more extensive range of learning outcomes than is possible in external examination settings, as well as to encourage independent study.

(b) *Fairness, Objectivity and Reliability*

Students should be assessed in ways that are fair and that are not biased against particular groups of students. A characteristic of fair assessment is that it is objective and under the control of an independent examining authority that is impartial and open to public scrutiny. Fairness also implies that assessments provide a reliable measure of each student’s performance in a given subject so that, if they were to be repeated, very similar results would be obtained. These issues are addressed in Literature in English by such means as the provision of detailed marking criteria, marker training, and scrutiny by the Chief Examiner.

(c) *Inclusiveness*

The assessments and examinations in the HKDSE need to accommodate the full spectrum of student aptitude and ability.

The questions in the Literature in English examination papers range from straightforward, guided analysis of short extracts of prose, drama or poetry to more demanding essay-type questions on a single text or multiple short stories requiring sophisticated skills of comparison. Please refer to Sections 5.5.2 and 5.5.3, and Appendix 4 for details.

(d) *Standards-referencing*

The reporting system is “standards-referenced”, i.e. student performance is matched against standards which indicate what students have to know and be able to do to merit a certain level of performance. An overall level for the subject, inclusive of both the examination papers and the SBA component, is reported, accompanied by a set of level descriptors.

(e) *Informativeness*

The HKDSE qualification and the associated assessment and examinations system provides useful information to all parties. Firstly, it provides feedback to students on their performance and to teachers and schools on the quality of the teaching provided. Secondly, it communicates to parents, tertiary institutions, employers and the public at large what it is that students know and are able to do, in terms of how their performance matches the standards. Thirdly, it facilitates selection decisions that are fair and defensible.

5.5.2 Assessment Design

The table below shows the assessment design of the subject with effect from the 2026 HKDSE Examination. The assessment is subject to continual refinement in the light of feedback from live

examinations. Full details are provided in the Regulations and Assessment Frameworks for the year of the examination and other supplementary documents, which are available on the HKEAA website (www.hkeaa.edu.hk/en/hkdse/assessment/assessment_framework/).

Component		Weighting	Duration
Public examination	Paper 1 Essay writing	50%	3 hours
	Paper 2 Appreciation	30%	2 hours
School-based Assessment		20%	

5.5.3 Public Examinations

Details of the papers are given below.

Paper 1 Essay Writing (3 hours) (50%)

This paper will comprise three sections, A – C. Candidates must answer one question on one of two novels in Section A; one question on one of two plays in Section B; and one question comparing two or more short stories in Section C. In each of the three sections, there will be a choice of two questions on each text. All questions require essay-type answers, with some inviting imaginative expansion of texts.

Paper 2 Appreciation (2 hours) (30%)

This paper is divided into 3 sections. Candidates must choose one question from a choice of four in Section A; one question from a choice of two in Section B and one question in Section C. Multi-part questions will invite critical analyses of a single passage from either of the prescribed novels or the prescribed plays in Section A (10% of the subject mark), two or three set poems either by the same or different poets in Section B (12% of the subject mark), and one unseen poem in Section C (8% of the subject mark). For the Unseen Poetry section, candidates should study a broad range of modern poetry, including themes such as love, nature, war, death and animals. Candidates are expected to show an ability to understand the thought and feeling in the poetry, and the ways in which these are conveyed. Copies of the set and unseen poems will be included in the question paper.

5.5.4 School-based Assessment (SBA)

In the context of public assessment, SBA refers to assessments administered in schools and marked by the students' own teachers. The primary rationale for SBA in Literature in English is to enhance the validity of the overall assessment and extend it to include a more extensive range of learning

outcomes through employing assessment modes that are not all possible in external examination settings.

SBA involves tasks which require students to demonstrate a range of skills related to the study of literature and the arts in the world beyond the classroom, to develop the ability to work independently and to adapt and improve on successive drafts as a result of teachers' feedback. SBA may also help prepare students for the other components of the public examination.

There are, however, some additional reasons for SBA in Literature in English. For example, it reduces dependence on the results of the examinations, which are not set to assess extended pieces of writing or research skills. Assessments based on student performance over an extended period of time and developed by those who know the students best – their subject teachers – provide a more *reliable* assessment of each student.

Another reason for including SBA is to promote a *positive “backwash effect” on students, teachers and school staff*. Within Literature in English, SBA can serve to motivate students by requiring them to engage in meaningful activities that lead to a more comprehensive assessment of their performance; and for teachers, it can reinforce curriculum aims and good teaching practice, and provide structure and significance to an activity they are in any case involved in on a daily basis, namely assessing their own students.

The SBA component of Literature in English constitutes 20% of the total weighting for the subject. It involves the preparation of an analytical study of at least one film/filmmaker/film genre OR an essay on a topic related to at least one film/filmmaker/film genre of around 2000 to 2500 words.

Work for the SBA should not be exclusively or extensively based on the films in the List of Set Texts. Similarly, work for the SBA should not be exclusively or extensively based on film adaptations of the written texts in the List of Set Texts. Candidates can use the texts they study as an inspiration for their SBA work, but they should not include detailed analysis of those works.

The main film(s) chosen for study should have been made originally in English. Candidates should be encouraged to take the opportunity to explore in depth areas such as the content, filmic techniques and socio-cultural background underpinning the production of the film(s). Extended essays which deal exclusively with such subjects as history, sociology, psychology or science are not appropriate.

In the process of guiding students to develop their piece of writing for the SBA, teacher-assessors should:

- advise students on the choice of film(s) and topic for the analytical study or essay;
- provide guidance to students on the responsible, ethical and legal use of research tools and reference materials, as well as the proper citation of sources of information, including AI

generated sources, to avoid plagiarism, which the HKEAA has cautioned candidates against and would cause grave consequences;

- teach students how to approach a research task and evaluate the usefulness, relevance and accuracy of material they have found;
- track students' progress over time, check their understanding of their work regularly, provide timely feedback for students to review and improve their writing over drafts; and
- keep students' SBA work and learning records for inspection and authentication purposes until the release of the HKDSE results.

The detailed requirements, regulations, assessment criteria and guidelines are provided in the *SBA Handbook for HKDSE Literature in English* published by the Hong Kong Examinations and Assessment Authority.

5.5.5 Standards and Reporting of Results

Standards-referenced reporting is adopted for the HKDSE. What this means is that candidates' levels of performance are reported with reference to a set of standards as defined by cut scores on the mark scale for a given subject. Standards-referencing relates to the way in which results are reported and does not involve any changes in how teachers or examiners mark students' work. The set of standards for a given subject can be represented diagrammatically as shown in Figure 5.1.

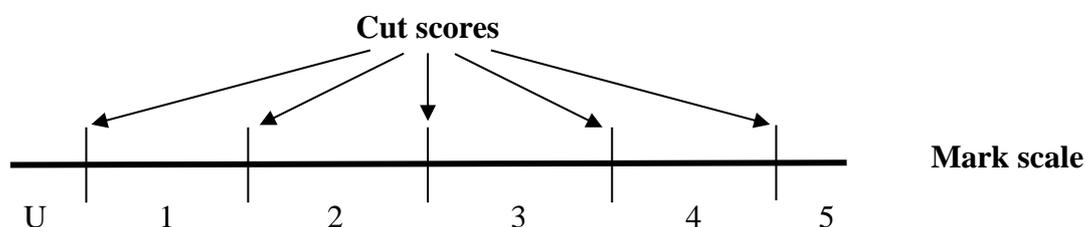


Figure 5.1 *Defining levels of performance via cut scores on the mark scale for a given subject*

Within the context of the HKDSE there are five cut scores, which are used to distinguish five levels of performance (1–5), with 5 being the highest. A performance below the cut score for Level 1 is labelled as “Unclassified” (U).

For each of the five levels, a set of written descriptors has been developed to describe what the typical candidate performing at this level is able to do. The principle behind these descriptors is that they describe what typical candidates *can* do, not what they *cannot* do. In other words, they describe performance in positive rather than negative terms. These descriptors represent “on-average” statements and may not apply precisely to individuals, whose performance within a subject may be variable and span two or more levels. Samples of students' work at various levels of attainment are provided to illustrate the standards expected of them. These samples, when used together with the level descriptors, will clarify the standards expected at the various levels of attainment.

In setting standards for the HKDSE, Levels 4 and 5 are set with reference to the standards achieved by students awarded grades A–D in the HKALE. It needs to be stressed, however, that the intention is that the standards will remain constant over time – not the percentages awarded different levels, as these are free to vary in line with variations in overall student performance. Referencing Levels 4 and 5 to the standards associated with the old grades A–D is important for ensuring a degree of continuity with past practice, for facilitating tertiary selection and for maintaining international recognition.

The overall level awarded to each candidate will be made up of results in both the public examination and the SBA. SBA results for Literature in English will be moderated based on the judgement of panels of external moderators through the inspection of samples of students' work.

To provide finer discrimination for selection purposes, the Level 5 candidates with the best performance have their results annotated with the symbols ** and the next top group with the symbol *. The HKDSE certificate itself records the Level awarded to each candidate.

Chapter 6 Effective Use of Learning and Teaching Resources

This chapter discusses the importance of selecting and making effective use of learning and teaching resources, including the set texts, to enhance student learning. Schools need to adapt and, where appropriate, develop the relevant resources to support student learning.

6.1 Purpose and Function of Learning and Teaching Resources

Appropriate learning and teaching materials help students develop their literary knowledge and skills, generic skills, and positive values and attitudes. They also help broaden students' learning experience and enlarge their perspectives and cultural understanding. The learning and teaching materials that function most effectively are those that suit the students' needs, interests and abilities.

6.2 Guiding Principles

When selecting set texts, teachers should take into account:

- students' interests and abilities;
- the appropriateness of the content;
- the length of the work; and
- the difficulty of the language.

6.3 Types of Resources

6.3.1 Set Texts

Teachers should consider the following when using set texts:

- Design useful and appropriate learning tasks and activities to
 - ensure a balanced coverage of the learning targets and objectives; and
 - cater for the students' needs, interests and abilities.
- Design extended tasks or projects to encourage wider and independent reading/viewing, and critical exploration of literary texts.

A list of works is provided in Appendix 5. Teachers might like to refer to it when selecting and using supplementary materials to increase students' literary exposure and their skills of literary comprehension and appreciation.

6.3.2 Other Resource Materials

Apart from the set texts, teachers should make use of other resource materials to enhance learning. There is a wealth of readily available material that can be adapted to facilitate the learning and teaching of Literature in English, e.g.

- Film and book reviews in newspapers;
- Literary and film magazines;
- Television programming (films, critics, discussions, etc.);
- The BBC World Service (www.bbc.co.uk/worldservice – mainly drama productions), and BBC Radio 3 (www.bbc.co.uk/radio3 – poetry, talks and drama);
- Short story competitions sponsored by various organisations;
- Cultural activities organised by such bodies as the Hong Kong Arts Centre, the Hong Kong Film Archive, the Academy for Performing Arts, and the Leisure and Cultural Services Department;
- Commercial cinema, and resource materials in public libraries and bookshops; and
- Learning and teaching resource materials produced by the Education Bureau.

The school library should be encouraged to develop a collection of poetry, short story anthologies, novels and plays as a resource for teachers and students. The acquisition of relevant published study notes/guides and works of literary criticism can commence as soon as the librarian has the titles of the set texts. Consideration should be given to the establishment of a literature corner where all the materials can be assembled for ease of reference. Also, students can be encouraged to deposit copies of their creative writing, projects and portfolios in the library. If school resources allow, the annual publication of a literary magazine may be another way of sharing and celebrating the students' achievements.

6.3.3 EDB Resource Materials in Support of the Curriculum Development

A variety of print and electronic resource materials have been developed by the Education Bureau to support the implementation of the Literature in English curriculum at the senior secondary level, including:

- Learning and teaching resources (e.g. *The Learning and Teaching of Poetry (Senior Secondary): A Resource Package, A Guide to Writing and Referencing for Literature in English School-based Assessment, Resource Materials on the Learning and Teaching of Poetry and Film*)
- EDB Educational MultiMedia (EMM) videos and resources (e.g. *Between the Lines: Hong Kong Poetry in English*)
- Resources in support of student activities and competitions (e.g. Poetry Remake Competition)

More information about the resource materials to support the implementation of the Literature in English curriculum at the senior secondary level can be accessed at the English Language Education Section website (<https://www.edb.gov.hk/ele>).

In addition to the above, the One-stop Portal for Learning and Teaching Resources (www.hkedcity.net/edbosp/) also provides diversified resources to enhance learning and teaching effectiveness. These resources include curriculum documents, learning and teaching resource packages, classroom activities and e-resources.

6.3.4 The Internet and Other Technologies

Informational technology (IT) is an effective tool for enhancing the study of literature. The Internet, for instance, is a powerful resource that can be exploited for searching for information for a project, accessing online literature resources, and visiting interactive websites and virtual classrooms for pleasurable self-directed learning. Teachers may also consider using multi-media resources and IT tools such as e-books and apps to enhance students' motivation and extend their learning experience. However, given their range in terms of quality and accessibility, care should be exercised in the choice of these materials. Good multi-media and IT resources should:

- involve good models of English use;
- be designed in a user-friendly way, with graphics, sound and animation designed to increase students' motivation and support learning; and
- promote interactive learning by encouraging learner contributions, allowing students to work at their own pace and providing feedback to them.

While Chatbots and AI text generation tools may help students generate ideas on literary texts, including the films students may work on in the SBA, the use of such tools for literary analysis and research should also be treated with caution. Efforts should be made to guide and remind students to:

- verify and critically assess the accuracy and reliability of information;
- identify and cite the source of ideas and information;
- avoid over-reliance on the AI generated content; and
- develop original responses to the texts by close reading of the original literary works, critically analysing all information collected and expressing ideas in their own words.

6.3.5 Community Resources

Many parties in the community can facilitate life-wide learning by providing students with authentic learning experiences, professional services and facilities. Teachers are encouraged to

explore learning opportunities available in the community and work in partnership with the following parties:

Community Organisations, government departments and non-government organisations

These organisations and departments offer a wide range of programmes, services and activities that provide opportunities for life-wide learning. Schools should encourage students to visit museums, libraries, film archives and resource centres, watch shows and performances, read extensively and browse websites to enrich their learning experience and enhance their study of Literature in English.

Parents

Parental involvement in their children's education contributes greatly to their academic, social and emotional growth. Schools should establish regular communication with parents to solicit their support for their children's study of Literature in English as well as to invite them to become volunteer partners in organising related activities.

Alumni

Schools are encouraged to utilise their alumni's expertise and resources in supporting learning and teaching by inviting them to share their learning experiences or provide services and resources.

Employers

Employers' support may be sought for sponsoring learning activities or funding award and scholarship schemes related to Literature in English. Students should be encouraged to make use of these opportunities and participate in activities which enhance their study of the subject.

6.4 Flexible Use of Learning and Teaching Resources

Learning and teaching resources should be used flexibly in order to cater for students' diverse needs, interests and abilities. Through careful selection, adaptation and development of materials, teachers can provide many opportunities for learning in which the more able students are challenged and the less able ones are supported and guided. For instance, opportunities for independent inquiry can be increased for the more able students, while the less able ones can be given supplementary background information or language input for completing learning tasks and activities.

Teachers are encouraged to exercise their professional judgement in deciding how best to make use of learning and teaching resources to suit students' interests and learning styles. Teachers can, for instance, adjust the input or output of learning tasks to enable students to learn more effectively. For more specific examples of how learning and teaching resources can be used flexibly, please refer to Section 4.6

6.5 Resource Management

Sound resource management is one of the key factors for effective implementation of the three-year senior secondary Literature in English curriculum. To achieve this, teachers are encouraged to work closely with the school librarian to:

- produce strategic plans for the procurement and development of resource materials based on the needs of the school;
- accumulate resource materials over time and develop an efficient storage system that allows easy access and retrieval;
- establish an inventory system that ensures easy expansion and writing-off of resource materials; and
- devise a review mechanism for evaluating existing resources to further support learning, teaching and curriculum development.

Appendices

Appendix 1

A Sample List of Set Texts

Novels: *The Prime of Miss Jean Brodie*, Muriel Spark **OR** *Rebecca*, Daphne du Maurier

Plays: *The Merchant of Venice*, William Shakespeare **OR** *Educating Rita*, Willy Russell

Short stories:

Anita Desai:	Games at Twilight
Ray Bradbury:	The Veldt
Roald Dahl:	Parson's Pleasure
Kate Chopin:	The Story of an Hour
Shirley Jackson:	The Daemon Lover
Ken Liu:	The Paper Menagerie
Langston Hughes:	Thank You, M'am
George Saunders:	I Can Speak! TM

Poetry:

Thomas Hardy:	'Afterwards', 'Bags of Meat', 'Weathers'
e. e. cummings:	'Buffalo Bill's', 'maggie and milly and molly and may', 'nobody loses all the time'
Emily Dickinson:	'Like Rain it sounded till it curved', 'There came a Wind like a Bugle', 'There's a certain Slant of light'
Imtiaz Dharker:	'Number 106', 'Speech Balloon', 'It Doesn't Matter'
Ted Hughes:	'Thrushes', 'Crow and the Birds', 'Full Moon and Little Frieda'

Films*:
Vertigo (1958) Dir: Alfred Hitchcock
Chinatown (1974) Dir: Roman Polanski
The Remains of the Day (1993) Dir: James Ivory
The Painted Veil (2006) Dir: John Curran
Life of Pi (2012) Dir: Ang Lee

*One or more of these films can be used as a means of preparation for the SBA component but should not form its main focus.

Examples of Poetry Analysis

Example 1 (simple)

Dreams by Langston Hughes

(It has not been possible to reproduce the text here, although every effort has been made to seek copyright permission. Teachers might like to access the poem at the website: www.poets.org)

In this simple lyric the poet tells us not to lose our dreams. It is a common experience that the hopes we have when young – the perfect marriage, the life devoted to good, being able to make a difference to the world – often end in disappointment and disillusion. The poet advises us not to give in to this. As long as we keep our dreams, to use the metaphors of the poem, we can fly and something of worth can grow from our lives.

The poem consists of two verses of four lines each, comprising one sentence, and rhyming a/b/c/b. The lines have four syllables, except for the third line of each verse. These lines warn us of the negative effects of letting our dreams die and are, accordingly, unmetrical. One can almost feel the bird running along dragging its useless wing on the ground. The rhyme and alliteration (“dreams die”, “field frozen”) show the beauty of the dreams, though they are as fragile and easily disrupted as the poem. The ending of the poem on the image of winter and the rhyme “snow” add sadness. It suggests it is not easy to keep the dreams alive; it is perhaps easier to despair.

Example 2 (simple)

Blessing the Boats (at St. Mary's) by Lucille Clifton

(It has not been possible to reproduce the text here, although every effort has been made to seek copyright permission. Teachers might like to access the poem at the website: www.poets.org)

The poem is in the form of a wish or prayer (given the religious connotations of “blessing” and even the name of the place “St Mary’s”). The poet keeps everything very simple, with everyday words, mainly monosyllabic, and no punctuation marks perhaps to stress the flow of the water, without roughness, and the “innocence” the poet wishes for the addressee/subject of the prayer. The main image (detailed enough to be thought of as a symbol) is of a boat setting sail. The poem makes it clear that this represents a relationship (“the lip of our understanding”). This then gives the words “kiss” and “love” double force as both sailing metaphors and descriptions of emotions.

In sailing terms, the tide is enabling the boat to go out to sea smoothly, so there need be no fear. The wind has to blow from behind to fill the sails. The sailor should trust the wind and accept the service, just looking ahead across the sea. When we are with people we trust we do not have to “watch our back”. In emotional terms, the poem is about love and trust helping us progress through life (from “this to that” without rocks or shoals/painful experiences).

The poem is decorated with alliteration (“face of fear”, “water, water waving” and “through this to that”), the lovely pattern of “entering even”, and body imagery (lip, face, kiss, back, eyes). It is interesting that the poet chooses not to repeat the pattern

may the tide

may you kiss

but moves the next two “may”s further into the line. Possibly she feels the pattern would become too rigid and harm the graceful flow of the poem.

Example 3 (more advanced)

Dusting (from Magnificat) by Marilyn Nelson

(Permission to reproduce the poem has been obtained for the print version of this Guide only. Teachers might like to access the poem at the website: www.poets.org)

The *Magnificat* is an ancient hymn of praise to God for all the wonders of creation. Here the poet finds glory even in dust. The title and the third stanza give us the situation of the poem: the simple act of dusting as part of the housework. The sunlight catches the motes of dust in a “ladder of light”, like a biblical vision of angels ascending to and descending from Heaven. The movement of the poet’s arms becomes a gesture of worship.

The associations of dust are negative: dirt, dryness, neglect and death, yet the poet sees it in a quite different light. In the first stanza, the poet brings a knowledge of modern science to bear on dust. We see it and its constituents as it might appear under a microscope. The connotations of viruses are also highly negative, but here we are reminded of their beauty (like a pearl necklace). Dust does not only have beauty, but it is part of the biosphere, the web of life, an essential part of Earth’s ecology (stanza 2). Ironically, this symbol of dryness is essential to the production of rain; it is a seed of life (stanza 3).

Suitably, the poem has short lines and short stanzas, though there are plenty of long words. The individual particles of dust may be highly complex. The diction is in fact rather technical and scientific, to help us consider dust in a new way. Small “i” sounds of various types dominate the first verse, and can be found scattered through the other two. As part of this, one can note the choice of “in-” words: infinite, intricate, inseparable, infernal. To add to the sense of delicate beauty, the first two stanzas are rich in “p” sounds: particles, pearl, protozoans, shapes, sub-microscopic, spores (twice), cooperation, spreading, inseparable and pole. The extra long line “mutual genetic cooperation” (11 syllables) mimics the act of working together. The final stanza stresses “l” sounds: circles, climbs, ladder of light, infernal, endless and eternal (the phonetically closely connected “r” sound is also involved in this effect). The poem ends neatly in a two-syllable, two-word phrase: For dust.

Example 4 (more advanced)

The Garden of Love

*I went to the Garden of Love,
And saw what I never had seen:
A Chapel was built in the midst,
Where I used to play on the green.*

*And the gates of this Chapel were shut,
And "Thou shalt not" writ over the door;
So I turn'd to the Garden of Love
That so many sweet flowers bore.*

*And I saw it was filled with graves,
And tomb-stones where flowers should be:
And Priests in black-gowns, were walking their rounds,
And binding with briars, my joys and desires.*

William Blake

The poem is in a simple song-like form. It tells a simple story that turns out to be highly symbolic. It is built on a series of contrasts: the garden/a graveyard; open/closed; flowers/briars; green/black, and implicitly childhood, innocence and freedom/age, morality and rules. The move from the one to the other is seen very negatively and the poem seems to be hostile to organised religion as represented by the Chapel and the priests, who are associated with death. The sense of being shut out is emphasised in lines five and six by the series of strong final t sounds. The poet almost seems to be experiencing a nightmare: the Garden of Love appears to change into a graveyard before the poet's very eyes. The Garden of Love might suggest the story of Adam and Eve's loss of Paradise and the fall of man, though here told with a very different emphasis. "Thou shalt not" obviously recalls the Ten Commandments. The diction is very simple and nearly monosyllabic. The lines of the second stanza get longer than those in the first, and the final two lines of the poem are longer again. This disruption of the poem's structure mirrors the feelings of the poet, and is also reflected in the change in the rhyme scheme: a/b/c/b in the first two stanzas, but a/b/c/d in the third with an internal half-rhyme (gowns/rounds – this may have been a full rhyme to Blake) and a full internal rhyme in the final line (briars/desires). The further importance of these lines is stressed by the use of alliteration (w and b).

Example 5 (advanced)

*To a Poor Old Woman**

*munching a plum
on the street a paper bag
of them in her hand*

*They taste good to her
They taste good
to her. They taste good
to her.*

*You can see it by
the way she gives herself
to the one half
sucked out in her hand*

*Comforted
a solace of ripe plums
seeming to fill the air
They taste good to her*

William Carlos Williams

The content is quite straightforward: a woman is enjoying eating a plum. The emphasis lies on her pleasure, as shown by the fourfold repetition of “they taste good to her”. Maybe the title hints at a contrast: the poor old woman is unlike the well-to-do rather younger male poet, but she is getting intense sensual pleasure from a piece of fruit. Is this a warning to people, particularly the educated, in our complex world with our minds on a million matters, not to forget the simple (animal) joys of life? Seen this way, the title may be ironic. This old woman is far from poor in the sense that counts. The poem stresses her concentration on the plum she is eating. She gives herself to it; more commonly one gives oneself to a lover. The plum seems to take over and the reference to “fills the air” hints at the fragrance of plums. The way “solace” is used it almost becomes a collective noun for plums – a solace of plums like a bunch of bananas. And note that there is no danger of pleasure coming to an end too soon – the old woman has an entire bag of plums in her hand waiting to be consumed.

The title seems to run into the first verse, but formally they are separate and there would certainly be a pause in any recitation of the poem, so we start in medias res; the old lady is in the middle of her feast. The poem has to be read aloud. The vowels forced the reader to purse the lips as

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consonants “m”, “p” and “b” are labials – in other words, reading the first few lines forces the lips to imitate the act of eating a plum! “They taste good to her” needs to be spoken differently each time, possibly more ecstatically (maybe that is why the poet lays out the sentence in different ways on its different appearances). Then the lips are back to work with “sucked”, “comforted”, “solace” (almost saliva-producing), “plums” and “seeming”. This is a truly delicious poem.

[Note: use of phonetic terms such as labial, dental and sibilant is useful but by no means necessary – observing the phenomenon is what counts, not the technical term. Teachers should use their own discretion and knowledge of their students when deciding whether these terms would interest and assist their students or merely dampen their interest.]

Examples of Analysis of Prose Texts

Example 1

Extract from “The Tell-Tale Heart” by Edgar Allan Poe

A servant has murdered his employer. Neighbours have reported suspicious noises and the police are investigating. The police have found nothing suspicious and sit chatting with the servant.

No doubt I now grew very pale; – but I talked more fluently, and with a heightened voice. Yet the sound increased – and what could I do? It was a low, dull, quick sound – much such a sound as a watch makes when enveloped in cotton. I gasped for breath – and yet the officers heard it not. I talked more quickly – more vehemently; but the noise steadily increased. I arose and argued about trifles, in a high key and with violent gesticulations; but the noise steadily increased. Why would they not be gone? I paced the floor to and fro with heavy strides, as if excited to fury by the observations of the men – but the noise steadily increased. Oh God! what could I do? I foamed – I raved – I swore! I swung the chair upon which I had been sitting, and grated it upon the boards, but the noise arose over all and continually increased. It grew louder – louder – louder! And still the men chatted pleasantly, and smiled. Was it possible they heard not? Almighty God! – no, no! They heard! – they suspected – they knew! – they were making a mockery of my horror! – this I thought, and this I think. But anything was better than this agony! Anything was more tolerable than this derision! I could bear those hypocritical smiles no longer! I felt that I must scream or die! and now – again! – hark! louder! louder! louder!

“Villains!” I shrieked, “dissemble no more! I admit the deed! – tear up the planks! here, here! – it is the beating of his hideous heart!”

Sample analysis

This climactic passage is narrated in the first person by the servant, who, it seems, has indeed killed his employer. It is interesting for the reader to reconstruct what the police observe. They are satisfied with whatever the servant has told them and are talking pleasantly to him while he becomes more and more agitated, making more and more noise to cover the sound of the dead man’s heart, which to him is frighteningly audible. He insists the police must also have been able to hear it, but that only adds to the irony of the piece. Obviously, dead men’s hearts do not beat and no man’s heartbeat makes a deafening sound. Although the narrator does not realise it, he has

gone out of his mind and quite unnecessarily gives away his crime. We can only assume that his guilt and panic (made very clear by the ever increasing number of exclamation marks) lead him to imagine he can hear the heart. The police officers' growing puzzlement, concern, suspicion and then final realisation of the truth are not presented directly, but are easy to reconstruct. Having to view the situation through the eyes of a madman is what gives this passage power and interest.

The principal techniques used are repetition ("the noise steadily increased"; "louder, louder..."), rhetorical questions ("and what could I do?", etc.), a rapid sequence of verbs ("I talked/I paced/I foamed – I raved – I swore!/I swung", etc.) and a choice of monosyllables ("low, dull, quick sound"). The repetition adds to the sense of hysteria, and along with the monosyllables echoes the heart beat that is central to the story. The rhetorical questions help create the effect of hearing the thoughts of the narrator, and the verbs mirror his restlessness and increasing agitation. The contrast between the policemen's calm and the speaker's panic and mental breakdown is also important to the overall effect.

The way in which the speaker's guilty conscience leads directly to the discovery of his crime makes the message of the story quite clear: crime does not pay and sin will be punished.

Further notes

The following points could be referred to in the guided questions:

- What is the state of mind of the speaker?
- Do you think the policemen see and hear the same as the servant?
- What is the effect of the repetition used in the extract?

The words that might be glossed are:

- | | | |
|------------------|----------|-------------|
| • vehemently | • fury | • derision |
| • trifles | • foamed | • hark |
| • gesticulations | • raved | • dissemble |
| • strides | • grated | • planks |

Example 2

Extract from *Mrs Dalloway* by Virginia Woolf*

Mrs. DALLOWAY said she would buy the flowers herself.

For Lucy had her work cut out for her. The doors would be taken off their hinges; Rumpelmayer's men were coming. And then, thought Clarissa Dalloway, what a morning – fresh as if issued to children on a beach.

What a lark! What a plunge! For so it had always seemed to her, when, with a little squeak of the hinges, which she could hear now, she had burst open the French windows and plunged at Bourton into the open air. How fresh, how calm, stiller than this of course, the air was in the early morning; like the flap of a wave; the kiss of a wave; chill and sharp and yet (for a girl of eighteen as she then was) solemn, feeling as she did, standing there at the open window, that something awful was about to happen; looking at the flowers, at the trees with the smoke winding off them and the rooks rising, falling; standing and looking until Peter Walsh said, "Musing among the vegetables?" – was that it? – "I prefer men to cauliflowers" – was that it? He must have said it at breakfast one morning when she had gone out on to the terrace – Peter Walsh. He would be back from India one of these days, June or July, she forgot which, for his letters were awfully dull; it was his sayings one remembered; his eyes, his pocket-knife, his smile, his grumpiness and, when millions of things had utterly vanished – how strange it was! – a few sayings like this about cabbages.

Sample analysis

This passage cleverly mimics the way the mind works as it moves from link to link. The thought of workmen taking doors off hinges brings the sound of hinges to Mrs Dalloway's mind, and thus she recalls a particular morning in the past. We move from reported speech to reported thought to deeper memory (starting in the second paragraph). Mrs Dalloway's own simile associating the morning with a beach sets up another series of links – from "beach" to two "plunges" and two "waves". "Fresh" leads to another "fresh" and to "chill". The memories take Mrs Dalloway to the subject of Peter Walsh, whom she had obviously once found rather attractive ("his eyes...his smile"). Is it possible that "kiss" is also a link leading to his name? Mrs Dalloway struggles to remember something amusing he once said, but can't quite locate it and ends up associating Peter with vegetables, perhaps reflecting on the dullness of his letters and obvious loss of glamour in her eyes, compared to when she was a solemn girl setting out on the start of her life (symbolised by the open windows).

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Mrs Dalloway seems to come from an affluent background. Lucy usually buys the flowers, but needs to deal with workmen this morning; she seems to be the maid. The house in Mrs Dalloway's memory seems large with its terrace and lovely view. We catch a little of her character in her thoughtfulness for Lucy, her excitement and pleasure at going out on a fresh morning and the lightness of her stream of consciousness with a hint of vagueness thrown in. The diction is everyday, but has a certain charm and naturalness.

Further notes

Note that it is acceptable to make tentative suggestions in the form of a question or by using words like "possibly". Few, if any, glosses would be necessary.

Example 3

Extract from *The Lagoon* by Joseph Conrad

(It has not been possible to reproduce the text here, although every effort has been made to seek copyright permission. Teachers might like to access the text at the website: www.readprint.com

“The narrow creek was like a ditch: ...with a suggestion of sad tenderness and care in the droop of their leafy and soaring heads.”)

Sample analysis

This descriptive passage seeks to create in the reader an experience of the tropical rainforest. It does this partly by means of adjectives. These are as luxuriant as the vegetation being described. From one short paragraph we can select: tortuous, immense, invisible, festooned, glistening, writhing, sombre, tangled, fantastic, mysterious, invincible and impenetrable. The diction is polysyllabic, literary and Latinate. Another technique involves syntax. The sentence “Darkness oozed...forests” is itself a tangle of clauses and phrases. The creek seems almost mirrored in the organisation of the first sentence with a small section between two banks. The third method is to make us move slowly away from the forest and carry us on to a contrasting open lagoon with a small human habitation there.

The tone is menacing. One suspects that something unpleasant is going to happen. The words “tortuous”, “twisted”, and “writhing” all suggest pain. There is frequent reference to darkness and gloom. (“Darkness oozed” is particularly strong.) There are many negative formations (“immense”, “impenetrable”, etc.). The third sentence, curling round like its content, reminds us of snakes; later on comes the word “poisonous”. The lagoon is stagnant, suggesting a threat to health. Although the grass, pink cloud, lotus and little house lighten the picture slightly, the palms hanging over it do so “with a suggestion of sad tenderness.” Movement is kept to a minimum also: oozing is slow, the leaves are unstirring, the men only pole along, the water is stagnant, the cloud drifts, and the palms droop. Life here seems almost arrested. The scene seems set for sadness or even horror.

Example 4

Extract from *Women In Love* by D.H. Lawrence

(It has not been possible to reproduce the text here, although every effort has been made to seek copyright permission. Teachers might like to access the text at the website: www.nt.armstrong.edu/Lawrence.htm

“*“The fool!” cried Ursula loudly. “Why doesn’t he ride away till it’s gone by?” ... It made Gudrun faint with poignant dizziness, which seemed to penetrate to her heart.*”)

Sample analysis

This passage seems to be important for character and may represent a moment of great emotional importance. Ursula and Gudrun watch a man riding a horse which has been thrown into a panic by a passing train. The man resists the horse’s fear and, despite the danger of being thrown off and badly injured, forces it to stay and obey him. Ursula’s reaction of impatience seems a normal one. Gudrun’s reaction is far more complex. She is excited (dilated eyes, “spellbound”, “faint with dizziness”) and possibly falls in love with and under the power of the horse rider (“spellbound” and “penetrate to her heart” suggest this). The man is shown to be “obstinate”; he has a powerful will, shows “fixed amusement” when in danger and exerts strong compulsion on the horse. He seems a very stereotyped macho man. In fact, one can’t help noticing that it is stressed throughout the passage that the horse is female (as well as telling us it’s a mare, the narrator uses she/her in the many references to the animal). One wonders if the whole incident is not intended to be symbolic of a man mastering a woman, making this an extract that could infuriate a feminist. (Note also the detail of the nervous women clinging together rather helplessly.)

The sentences attempt to model their content. The second sentence seems to wheel around like the horse, and mimic the noise of the locomotive (the effects being strengthened by alliteration – wheeling, wind, will; spun and swerved; heavily, horrifying – and various sound echoes – nor/clamour/terror and one/other/one/other/over).

The sentence about the locomotive also mimics the action of the brakes and uses sound to give the effect of the frightening metallic sounds the mare fears so much (BraKes/BaCK/truCKs/reBouncing/Buffer/triKing/cymBals/lashIng/rIghtful/strIdent/ConCussions/: b/k/i). Inversion is used (“back came the trucks” and “Back she went”) to match the action being described. Many similar comments could be made about the sentence “But...whirlwind”. Perhaps the whirlwind reflects also Gudrun’s emotions.

It seems possible that the passage may describe the opening of a stormy relationship.

A final point is the strange way in which the locomotive seems to have the will of its own and puts on its own brakes. Possibly this suggests that we live in a world where “will” is a force almost beyond understanding that determines destiny. The locomotive is in a sense a symbol of the horse rider.

Example 5

Extract from *Mr Sampath: The Printer of Malgudi* by R.K. Narayan

(Permission to reproduce the extract has been obtained for the print version of this Guide only. Teachers might like to use the following details to locate the text:

Narayan, R.K. (1993). *Mr Sampath – The Printer of Malgudi*. London: Minerva Paperback. Chapter 1, pp. 5-6, “*Unless you had an expert knowledge of the locality you would not reach the offices of The Banner ... he had not made such a fool of himself as his well-wishers had feared, although the enterprise meant almost nothing to him financially.*”)

Sample analysis

This appears to be an opening passage that plays the same role as an establishing shot in a film. We travel down some streets to a building, go up some stairs and stop in a newspaper office. The stage is set for the story to begin.

Of course, a lot more is going on than this. The omniscient narrator establishes a gentle, amused, slightly cynical and ironic, but kindly tone. This is achieved in a number of ways. First, there is the idea of the rather troublesome road with a mind and personality of its own (as we learn later, very much like the people of this town, especially the editor of the Banner). Second, there is the ironic contrast between the grand abstractions of truth and vision, and the obviously ramshackle and symbolically blinded offices of the Banner – even the stairs are actually more like a ladder. The contrast, however, is not pointed out bitterly, and in fact, the fourth paragraph states that the newspaper does indeed play a responsible social role (the details given also help us start building up a picture of the town of Malgudi). Third, there are many light touches – the idea of someone posting themselves on the table, the editor’s riposte to his neighbours that no one could possibly want to observe them, and the eccentric name of the “Open Window” feature. Even the diction is lighthearted. The world’s evil is presented as pig-headedness (though it is the tenants of the pig-headed landlords who have to live in the pig-sties!) rather than any more terrible sin. The quotations from the Banner begin to introduce us to its style – grand, again in contrast to its humble format (ironically printed on **foolscap** paper/F4) and the mind of its editor, whose characterisation is getting underway as the extract ends: an idealist, a man who likes to be independent, who is sensitive to being laughed at, stubborn and with the self-image of a man of principle, rather than of business. The passage sets the scene well for a story to commence.

Preparing for the Public Examination

Paper 1: Essay Writing

A. Some notes on writing literary essays

It is conventional to use the historic present when writing about literary works, e.g.

- “Hamlet decides he can no longer trust Ophelia.”
- “Marlow almost suffers a nervous breakdown as a result of what he has experienced.”

Common student errors are to include long plot summaries rather than short references to the text in support of their argument, to branch off into irrelevance, to fail to give a direct answer to the question, to misspell critical terms, to concentrate on content at the cost of form, to fail to define and clarify terms, to oversimplify, to be unwillingly to see faults in set texts, and to be highly repetitious.

Candidates are recommended to examine questions for vague/ambiguous words and to settle their meaning early on (though not in an arbitrary way). Answers to questions 9 and 10 below would, for example, have to pay careful attention to the words “hero” and “failure”.

A clear statement of the view the candidate wishes to argue is desirable, and paragraphs with strong initial topic sentences make for easy reading.

Quotation is expected in essays on set texts.

Examples of typical questions on a single text

1. Does George Orwell see any hope for humanity in *Nineteen Eighty-Four*?
2. What role does Dr Watson play in the Sherlock Holmes stories?
3. What is the significance of fire in *Lord of the Flies*?
4. “Joseph Conrad’s view of woman is a very narrow one.” Discuss this view.
5. “In *Dead Poets’ Society* Mr Keating’s students have to pay dearly for his egotism.” Do you agree?
6. Do you think Shakespeare’s *King Lear* has anything to say of relevance to modern readers?
7. What genre of film does *The African Queen* belong to?
8. How does Hitchcock create suspense in *Psycho*?
9. Does *The Death of a Salesman* have a hero?

10. “Ultimately *Blade Runner* has to be judged a failure.” How far do you agree with this statement?

Notes on the questions

1. Part of the art of answering such questions is to make distinctions. Possibly there is little political hope, but some hope for and from the working class. “Humanity” is ambiguous – it means the human race, and the essential qualities of being human. The first might survive without the second. Where should the emphasis lie in the story of Winston: that he rebels, or that he fails? Does power have to have an Other to exert its authority over? These are all ways into the question that are more interesting than a blanket yes or no. It is possible that the book itself is not consistent and that contradictory messages are present. Perhaps Orwell himself wasn’t sure.
2. An answer to this might be organised in terms of a number of different roles played by Dr Watson: the foil, the buddy, a conversational partner, a plot convenience, a figure of fun, a figure of identification, etc. The candidate could select four or five of these and produce a paragraph on each with analysis and examples. A poor answer would simply try to recount Dr Watson’s actions in a number of stories.
3. The candidate could summarise briefly a few major occurrences of fire in the novel, analysing its symbolic importance; or the essay could be organised into paragraphs on different types of significance – the fire as safety, as hope of rescue, as destroyer, as centre of the power struggle, as savagery and as weapon. Or an overall argument could be developed about fire as human energy with some potential for good when under control, but even greater for evil when unleashed.
4. With questions like this, there is no pressure on candidates to be on one side or the other – in fact, the candidate might even decide that discussing the point in terms of breadth and narrowness may not be a helpful one. An essay on this topic could be organised as some points supporting the statement, followed by some against it, and a final decision; or as a clear statement followed by a strong argument on one side: “It seems clear to this reader that Conrad’s view of woman was indeed a narrow one, and I have five points to make in support of my view.”
5. The question relates to Keating’s character (do you agree he is an egotist?), and where the blame lies for Niel’s suicide (with his father, himself, the school, Keating...?). The careful candidates might like to distinguish between his/her view and the film’s – i.e. that morally Keating must take a lot of the blame, but that Peter Weir and Robin Williams draw our attention away from this.

6. This would probably be best approached as a question on theme. The candidate could identify major themes and show they are still applicable. An alternative would be to attack the question's implication/assumption that works of art ought to be "relevant".
7. Questions of categorisation often arise. As film genres are not rigid, the answer will probably be that it is a mixture of genres. The candidate could look at the film as an adventure story, a love story, a patriotic war story, a travel story, even an African or a boat story. Probably in the last analysis the love story prevails because of the star-casting.
8. This is a technique question and candidates would be expected to discuss plot, music, setting, dialogue and so on.
9. This question involves character analysis and a discussion about what makes a hero. Many different answers could be produced: the play is about the impossibility of heroism in the modern world; Mrs Loman is the true hero; Arthur is a hero, full of failings, but the centre of our attention and sympathy; Biff has elements of heroism; or, no, the men in the play are despicable.
10. Here the candidate is asked to develop some basic principles. What exactly is a successful film? This can be analysed at different levels:
 - is the storyline clear and coherent?
 - does everything in the film cohere?
 - is the film visually beautiful?
 - is the acting good?
 - has the film been influential? ... and many more.

B. Questions asking for a comparison of texts

Comparing ideas and experiences is intended to help us clarify our thoughts and establish general principles on which judgements can be based. Sometimes the issues which need to be discussed are referred to directly in the question, but sometimes candidates have to search for them themselves. Comparisons often involve the expression of taste. Candidates need to develop the ability to explain and justify their preferences. Careful consideration must also be given to the structure of a comparison essay. Will the essay cover one topic/set text, and then move on to the next, or will each paragraph follow this structure as various points of comparison are discussed in turn?

Candidates should be made aware that an examination question provides an opportunity for a student to display his/her ability and knowledge. A perfunctory response may in a sense answer a question, but the answer itself is not as important here as the discussion that leads to it.

Examples of typical comparison questions

1. Compare and contrast two short stories in terms of how they use narrative structure.
2. *Araby* tells the story of a young man's powerful desire. Compare and contrast the theme of desire in *Araby* and one other short story.
3. A good story requires a clearly defined closing. Discuss this view with reference to at least two of the short stories.
4. Discuss how women are presented in any two of the short stories.

Notes on the questions

1. The question asks for a comparison of the techniques and craft of storytelling in two short stories. It is necessary to discuss the two stories in parallel rather than dealing with each in isolation. Different focuses and aspects can be identified for a meaningful comparison, such as the plot development, the opening and ending, the use of narrative techniques and sequences like flashbacks and flash-forwards. The impact created by the use of such techniques should also be discussed.
2. The question requires a comparison at the thematic level. Different approaches can be adopted and the theme could be discussed in relation to age, gender, plot, mood, characters and so on. Whether the desires are fulfilled and how they impact on the main characters and plot development can also be discussed. Where appropriate, how the desires are presented (e.g. with the use of symbolism) can also be part of the analysis.
3. This question involves the comparison of different types of endings (e.g. close vs. open or ambiguous endings, resolved vs. unresolved endings) and suitable stories have to be selected to highlight the difference and support the arguments. It could be argued that not all good stories require a clearly defined closing. Then, other factors and criteria for evaluating the overall effectiveness of a short story have to be suggested. For a meaningful discussion and comparison to happen, it may be necessary to define what "a good story" is at the beginning of the essay and lay down some criteria for evaluation.
4. This question asks for a comparison of the presentation of women in two short stories. It may be important to identify two stories in which women characters play a prominent role, though minor and supporting characters in stories can also be discussed. The presentation of women can be compared in terms of their family, gender and social roles, their qualities and attributes, their conflicts with other characters and society, how they cope with the conflicts and their overall image in the texts (e.g. heroine or victim). The hidden messages and purposes of creating such female characters (e.g. to subvert gender stereotypes, to critique male dominance in a patriarchal society) can also be discussed in the essay.

C. Question involving an imaginative expansion on a text

Often such questions involve the assumption of a role (possibly one of the characters of the work or an imagined onlooker or friend). The candidates must think themselves into the role demanded and present thoughts, attitudes and ideas that can be justified for that person. Sometimes supplying such a justification is actually the second part of these questions. The form to be adopted is likely to be stipulated in the question (e.g. a letter). The style should suit the speaker/writer. If the character has a certain style of speech in the work itself, an attempt to imitate it should be made. No one expects, however, this to be taken to extremes. Friar Lawrence of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, being interviewed later, does not need to speak in iambic pentameter, but he should speak as a priest with religious references and might be allowed some archaisms. Similarly, Jay Gatsby and a Jane Austen character would be expected to speak rather differently.

Candidates should avoid story summary. Even if two characters meeting years later or in the afterlife might be expected to relate the events of their lives to each other, this should not be allowed to take over the piece of writing as it will not gain marks for the candidate.

Examples of typical questions on a single text

1. After the end of *Lord of the Flies* an inquiry is held into what happened on the island. Write Jack's statement for the inquiry.
2. Bonnie after the end of *Bonnie and Clyde* enters the afterlife. She is asked to reflect on her life. Write her reflections.
3. During a search of the house after the end of *Psycho*, a letter written by Mrs Bates in the last days of her life, relating to events at the motel, was found. Write the letter.
4. Suggests some alternative endings to *Othello* and discuss their merits and demerits.
5. Say how you would update one of the Sherlock Holmes short stories to make it credible in contemporary Hong Kong, and say how you would make it into a successful short movie.
6. Imagine you could meet the author of *Beowulf* (assuming such a person existed). You interview him/her and then use the interview as the basis of a magazine article. Write the article.
7. Some time after the end of the novel Max de Winter has a dream in which he talks to Rebecca about his present life. Write their dialogue.
8. Write the front page of the "Glamis Daily Post" for the day following the end of the play *Macbeth*.
9. Give a speech to the assembled people of San Piedro after the end of the events of *Snow Falling on Cedars* and tell them what you feel they should have learned from the events.
10. Imagine you were one of Sal's community in *The Beach*. What would you have done in the final days as things went sour?

Comments on the questions

1. A good answer depends on an understanding of Jack's psychology. Would he lie and try to blacken Ralph, or push the blame on to some of his followers (all the conveniently dead Piggy), or be defiant and justify his actions? It seems unlikely he would suddenly repent. Jack's style would need attention. If the candidate decided Jack would probably make a lot of spelling mistakes, this could be signalled to the marker as a conscious decision, e.g. [Note: this statement appears as Jack wrote it, including his unreliable spelling. Editor].
2. The temptation to retell the story would need to be resisted. The central point is whether Bonnie's experiences change her. With hindsight, would she have done things differently? What are her happiest moments? Does she regret anything? How did she feel towards her killers? A feeling for Bonnie's sense of style would also be needed for a good response.
3. This question asks us to consider events from the point of view of a character to whose thoughts the film does not make us privy – but presumably Mrs Bates was aware of Norman's increasing oddity and might have begun to worry about where it was leading. Possibly she is also a strange person with an idiosyncratic style.
4. The candidate is asked to consider whether it would work to save Desdemona at the last moment, or whether Othello's suicide is appropriate. Would it be satisfactory if Othello at the last moment could not bear to hurt Desdemona and killed himself in despair instead? There would be more justice in this, but would it contradict the rest of the play, go against character and generally reduce the drama?
5. This question should not be too difficult. Hong Kong is a great city with its share of crime. Some social customs have changed, but others have altered little. Where would Baker Street be situated? Are there any actors particularly suited to playing a great and learned detective? There is plenty to exercise the imagination on.
6. Sometimes after reading/viewing a text, our head is full of questions. Dead authors are not available to us, but we can try to imagine their responses, and if they are far back in time, their wonderment at the things we focus on, that may have been peripheral to them. (The same approach can be used with a rather impenetrable/silent character.)
7. The question asks us to judge how happy Max is and at peace with himself. Would Rebecca find his situation worthy of mockery or would she seethe with hate that he had avoided punishment? The dialogue form gives plenty of opportunity for inquiring about reasons for attitudes. An attempt would have to be made to imitate the aristocratic tone of Max and Rebecca.

8. This highly anachronistic task gives scope for headlines, interviews and enjoyable imaginative tidbits (e.g. more omens, special weather, a sighting of the weird sisters, the reaction from London, even advertisements).
9. This question allows the candidates to show knowledge of the main themes and messages of the novel. Probably the speaker would want to castigate racism, and address some special words Kabuo and other major figures used in the story, saying how they should now change.
10. Similarly, this question gives an opportunity to make moral judgements, but also to be empathetic (e.g. “I would probably have been torn between a desire to help Christo and a wish for him to die. I think I would have kept my head and realised humanity had to be put before our selfish convenience.”)

It is clear that questions 9 and 10 both offer occasions for plot summary. Candidates can only be successful if they learn to resist this.

Paper 2 Appreciation

SECTION A PROSE/DRAMA ANALYSIS

Example 1

Read the extract below and answer the questions which follow it.

The Old Man and the Sea - E. Hemingway

(Permission to use the extract has been obtained for the print version of this Guide only. Teachers might like to use the following to locate the text:

Hemingway, Ernest. (1966). *The Old Man and the Sea*. Middlesex: Penguin. pp. 91-92, “*The old man’s head was clear and good now and he was full of resolution but he had little hope ... he thought, and now my fish bleeds again and there will be others.*”

- (i) Show how Hemingway’s philosophy of life as set forth in *The Old Man and the Sea* is reflected in this extract.
- (ii) Discuss the use of language in the extract in detail and show some of the special effects Hemingway creates.

A possible marking scheme

Candidates may make the following points:

- (i) – The old man is the hero of the book and offered as a model; he is an Everyman, nameless but an individual.
 - The old man was determined to catch the marlin and in this extract is determined to defend it; he is stubborn and full of fight.
 - He recognises there are many sharks and he is fighting a losing battle, but this does not deter him.
 - He hates the shark as his enemy, but we see the shark also has “resolution”; it won’t die easily – it makes a commotion before it sinks into the depths.
 - Life is a struggle we rarely win, but a man should never stop fighting.
- (ii) – Simple diction/simple man
 - Long first two sentences of second paragraph lack punctuation, representing the speed and flow of the action.
 - The shark is “he”, a worthy opponent.
 - We see the shark as though through the sights of the harpoon.
 - The three participles bring the jaws into focus.

- Short, sharp “He hit it”, repeated.
- “The shark swung over...” mirrors the action.
- “The rope came taut, shivered and then snapped” mirrors the action.

Sample analysis

(i) This extract comes at a critical moment in Hemingway’s fable of human dreams and achievement. After waiting almost a lifetime, the old fisherman catches the most wonderful marlin. He lashes it to his simple boat and begins the voyage home, but the tropical waters of the Gulf of Mexico are full of sharks, which will be attracted by the scent of blood and may destroy the marlin’s carcass. The old man has had to spend hours out at sea to catch the marlin and he has been weakened by the ordeal, but his spirit and sheer stubbornness remain strong. The extract opens with the old man’s sad, realistic but unbowed assessment of the situation. The omniscient narrator, using a fairly simple diction suitable to the lifestyle of the old fisherman, keeps us closely in touch with the old man’s thoughts. The old man both is and is not an individual – the narrator does not use his name, but we are, for example, reminded of his ethnicity by the Spanish expression. The old man is representative of a type of human, one who will not accept defeat easily.

Life in *The Old Man and the Sea* is obstinate. It took a long time to defeat, tire and reel in the marlin – both the old man and the great fish have “resolution” – now it is the shark’s turn to refuse to give in. It makes a commotion as it dies, and then sinks into the deep. The old man has won, but he knows his victory will be very short-lived. Such is existence.

(ii) The long first two sentences of the second paragraph with their lack of punctuation show the speed and flow of the action. The shark is dignified with a “he” – he is a worthy opponent. Almost as if it is a film, for a moment we look through the imaginary sights of the harpoon. Then, the jaws come into focus with the three participles. This is followed by a short, sharp sentence just like the blow itself. “He hit it... He hit it...” creates the feeling of the harpoon being driven home. There is no false glamour here: the narrator openly refers to the old man’s “malignancy”. The old man hates the shark utterly.

Other sentences that mirror the action could be “The shark swung over...”, and the last part of “The water was white...”.

Example 2

Read the extract below and answer the questions which follow it.

The Two Towers - J.R.R. Tolkien*

Before the next day dawned their journey to Mordor was over. The marshes and the desert were behind them. Before them, darkling against a pallid sky, the great mountains reared their threatening heads.

Upon the west of Mordor marched the gloomy range of Ephel Duáth, the Mountains of Shadow, and upon the north the broken peaks and barren ridges of Ered Lithui, grey as ash. But as these ranges approached one another, being indeed but parts of one great wall about the mournful plains of Lithlad and of Gorgoroth, and the bitter inland sea of Núren amidmost, they swung out long arms northward; and between these arms there was a deep defile. This was Cirith Gorgor, the Haunted Pass, the entrance to the land of the Enemy. High cliffs lowered upon either side, and thrust forward from its mouth were two sheer hills, black-boned and bare. Upon them stood the Teeth of Mordor, two towers strong and tall. In days long past they were built by the Men of Gondor in their pride and power, after the overthrow of Sauron and his flight, lest he should seek to return to his old realm. But the strength of Gondor failed, and men slept, and for long years the towers stood empty. Then Sauron returned. Now the watch-towers, which had fallen into decay, were repaired, and filled with arms, and garrisoned with ceaseless vigilance. Stony-faced they were, with dark window-holes staring north and east and west, and each window was full of sleepless eyes.

Across the mouth of the pass, from cliff to cliff, the Dark Lord had built a rampart of stone. In it there was a single gate of iron, and upon its battlement sentinels paced unceasingly. Beneath the hills on either side the rock was bored into a hundred caves and maggot-holes; there a host of orcs lurked, ready at a signal to issue forth like black ants going to war. None could pass the Teeth of Mordor and not feel their bite; unless they were summoned by Sauron, or knew the secret passwords that would open the Morannon, the black gate of his land.

Discuss how the language is used to create the style.

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A possible marking scheme

Candidates may make the following points:

Style: the work as a whole is epic, drawing on Norse, Celtic and Germanic myth. This is a dramatic moment in the story where style becomes especially grand.

- Archaic vocabulary: “darkling”, “amidmost” and “lest” is used.
- The style is very rich in adjectives, some doubled and even reinforced with alliteration, e.g. “black-boned and bare”.
- There is a liking for doublets, e.g. “broken peaks and barren ridges”, “strong and tall”, “pride and power”.
- There is a frequent, though restrained, use of inversion: “thrust forward from its mouth were two sheer hills, black-boned and bare”, “two towers strong and tall”, “Stony-faced they were ...”.
- One or two similes add to the effect, e.g. “grey as ash” and “like black ants going to war”.
- There is also the use of an extra “and” in lists (see the sentences “But the strength...” and “Now the watch-towers...”). This creates a slightly Biblical feel to the passage and adds to the solemnity.
- Tolkien also uses names for this purpose, e.g. the mysterious Gaelic-sounding Ephel Duáth and Ered Lithui, and the menacing-sounding Mordor (obviously echoing “murder”, also Latin “mors” = “death”) Gorgoroth (echoing gorgon) and Sauron Greek for “lizard”). Other names are even more direct, e.g. the Teeth of Mordor.
- The talk of teeth leads on to a comment on their “bite”. The whole landscape comes dangerously alive in this passage. Geographical features are the grammatical subjects of the majority of the sentences in the first twelve paragraphs and the verbs, metaphorical as they are, begin to turn them into dangerous creatures:
 - “the great mountains reared their threatening heads”;
 - “they swung out long arms northward”; and
 - “High cliffs lowered ...”.
- We read later also of a mouth.
- There is a stress on the absence of colour, e.g. “darkling”, “pallid”, “Shadow”, “grey”, “black-boned”.
- The imagery is of death, e.g. “black-boned”, “decay”, “stony-faced”, “maggot-holes”.

Sample analysis

Menaced by the growing power of Sauron with his forces of evil in Mordor, the Fellowship of the Ring, made up of representatives of some of the different races of Middle Earth, forms to resist him. Their prime task is to prevent the One Ring in the possession of Frodo the hobbit, from falling into Sauron’s hands, while at the same time carrying it deep

into his kingdom to destroy it in the Mountain of Fire. The companions become divided and Frodo and Sam have to travel on alone with the help of the unreliable Gollum. At this point in the story they reach a milestone in their journey, the Black Gate, well-guarded entrance to Mordor.

Tolkien's work is an epic, drawing on the traditions of Norse, Celtic and Germanic myth, as well as British fantasy literature. For his descriptive passages, he writes in a rather grand style, as here. Some of the vocabulary is slightly archaic: "darkling", "amidmost" and "lest". The style is very rich in adjectives, some doubled and even reinforced with alliteration, e.g. "black-boned and bare". There is a liking for doublets, e.g. "broken peaks and barren ridges", "strong and tall", "pride and power". There is a frequent, though restrained, use of inversion: "thrust forward from its mouth were two sheer hills, black-boned and bare", "two towers strong and tall", "Stony-faced they were ...". One or two similes add to the effect, e.g. "grey as ash" and "like black ants going to war". There is also the use of an extra "and" in lists (see the sentences "But the strength..." and "Now the watch-towers..."). This creates a slightly Biblical feel to the passage and adds to the solemnity. Tolkien also uses names for this purpose, e.g. the mysterious Gaelic-sounding Ephel Duáth and Ered Lithui, and the menacing-sounding Mordor (mors = death in Latin) Gorgoroth (echoing gorgon) and Sauron (Greek for "lizard"). Other names are even more direct, e.g. the Teeth of Mordor.

The talk of teeth leads on to a comment on their "bite". The whole landscape comes dangerously alive in this passage. Geographical features are the grammatical subjects of the majority of the sentences in the first twelve paragraphs and the verbs, metaphorical as they are, begin to turn them into dangerous creatures:

"the great mountains reared their threatening heads";

"they swung out long arms northward"; and

"High cliffs lowered ...".

We read later also of a mouth.

There is a stress on the absence of colour, e.g. "darkling", "pallid", "Shadow", "grey" and "black-boned". The imagery is of death, e.g. "black-boned", "decay", "stony-faced", "maggot-holes". Tolkien, indeed, musters all his art to create this grim picture to emphasise the difficulty of the hobbits' task and increase the suspense.

Example 3

Read the extract below and answer the questions which follow it.

The Diary of a Nobody - George and Weedon Grossmith*

November 16 – Woke about twenty times during the night, with terrible thirst. Finished off all the water in the bottle, as well as half that in the jug. Kept dreaming also, that last night's party was a failure, and that a lot of low people came without invitation, and kept chaffing and throwing things at Mr. Perkkup, till at last I was obliged to hide him in the box-room (which we had just discovered), with a bath-towel over him. It seems absurd now, but it was painfully real in the dream. I had the same dream about a dozen times.

Carrie annoyed me by saying: "You know champagne never agrees with you." I told her I had only a couple of glasses of it, having kept myself entirely to port. I added that good champagne hurt nobody, and Lupin told me he had only got it from a traveller as a favour, as that particular brand had been entirely bought up by a West-end club.

I think I ate too heartily of the "side dishes", as the waiter called them. I said to Carrie: "I wish I had put those 'side dishes' ASIDE." I repeated this, but Carrie was busy, packing up the teaspoons we had borrowed of Mrs. Cummings for the party. It was just half-past eleven, and I was starting for the office, when Lupin appeared, with a yellow complexion, and said: "Hulloh! Guv., what priced head have you this morning?" I told him he might just as well speak to me in Dutch. He added: "When I woke this morning, my head was as big as Baldwin's balloon." On the spur of the moment I said the cleverest thing I think I have ever said; viz.: "Perhaps that accounts for the paraSHOOTING pains." We all three roared.

- (i) What aspects of Mr Pooter's character are evident in this extract?
- (ii) What comic techniques does the author make use of?

A possible marking scheme

Candidates may make the following points:

- (i) – social anxiety (the dream)
- class aspirations (the party)
- lack of self-knowledge (equivocations about his drunkenness)
- naivety (confidence in sales talk)

* From Ch. 10 from *The Diary of a Nobody* (1998) edited by Grossmith, G. & W. By permission of Oxford University Press.

- pride (dislike of criticism from his wife)
- self-satisfaction (pride in his puns)

(ii) Comic techniques

- names
- ridiculous detail (the bath towel)
- serious tone, ironic effect as reader laughs at Pooter’s actions
- Pooter’s puns, his self-congratulation, use of capitals
- language snobbery (dislike of Lupin’s slang)
- the genre of the published diary, usually reserved for important people

Sample analysis

(i) Mr Pooter has held a party. Mr Pooter is an aspiring member of the bourgeoisie, always trying to behave like the upper class; hence the party with all its effort and expense. His dream reveals all his insecurities and fear of social failure, with ‘low people’ instead of refined ones coming to the party and attacking his immediate superior at work, Mr Perkkup. Mr Pooter, as usual, takes his own anxieties very seriously.

Pooter equivocates over his drinking. It is obvious from the first paragraph that he had far too much to drink, but he tries to blame the food for his feeling ill. He contradicts himself about the champagne:

he kept entirely to port;
he had only a couple of glasses of champagne;
good champagne does not cause hangovers.

(Pooter’s naivety comes over in his faith in the sales talk of the supplier, and his dislike of criticism in his annoyance with his wife, Carrie.)

(ii) The names in this book are chosen for their comic effect: Pooter reflects “footling” and “poodle”; Mr Perkkup sounds like an instruction to sit up straight; Lupin is related to flowers and walls, and is rather too “poetic” for the son of the family.

We encounter two of Pooter’s terrible puns, which he admires so wholeheartedly and in such a self-congratulatory way he even uses capitals in his diary to ensure nobody could possibly miss them. It is hard though to credit Pooter’s explanation of Carrie’s missing the first pun – it seems clear she chose to ignore it. Lupin’s slang, as usual, annoys his father, but he carefully records his appreciation of the second pun.

As we find throughout the book, a lot of the humour comes from the diarist’s meticulous detail. For example, the mention of the bath-towels adds the touch of humour so typical of this gentle satire of lower middle-class pretentiousness. Generally, published diaries have more traditionally dealt with the doings of great statesmen rather than the daily lives of clerks. The bourgeois interest in material possessions is well-caught in this way.

Example 4

Read the extract below and answer the questions which follow it.

*Androcles and the Lion - G.B. Shaw**

The Emperor (majestically): What ho, there! All who are within hearing, return without fear. Caesar has tamed the lion. (All the fugitives steal cautiously in. The menagerie keeper comes from the passage with other keepers armed with iron bars and tridents). Take those things away. I have subdued the beast. (He places his foot on it).

Ferrovius (timidly approaching the Emperor and looking down with awe on the lion): It is strange that I, who fear no man, should fear a lion.

The Captain: Every man fears something, Ferrovius.

The Emperor: How about the Pretorian Guard now?

Ferrovius: In my youth I worshipped Mars, the God of War. I turned from him to serve the Christian god; but today the Christian god forsook me; and Mars overcame me and took back his own. The Christian god is not yet. He will come when Mars and I are dust; but meanwhile I must serve the gods that are, not the God that will be. Until then I accept service in the Guard, Caesar.

The Emperor: Very wisely said. All really sensible men agree that the prudent course is to be neither bigoted in our attachment to the old nor rash and unpractical in keeping an open mind for the new, but to make the best of both dispensations.

The Captain: What do you say, Lavinia? Will you too be prudent?

Lavinia (on the stair): No: I'll strive for the coming of the God who is not yet.

The Captain: May I come and argue with you occasionally?

Lavinia: Yes, handsome Captain: you may. (He kisses her hands).

The Emperor: And now, my friends, though I do not, as you see, fear this lion, yet the strain of his presence is considerable; for none of us can feel quite sure what he will do next.

The Menagerie Keeper: Caesar: give us this Greek sorcerer to be a slave in the menagerie. He has a way with the beasts.

Androcles (distressed): Not if they are in cages. They should not be kept in cages.

* Reprinted by permission of The Society of Authors, on behalf of the Estate of Bernard Shaw.

They must all be let out.

The Emperor: I give the sorcerer to be a slave to the first man who lays hands on him. (The menagerie keepers and the gladiators rush for Androcles. The lion starts up and faces them. They surge back). You see how magnanimous we Romans are, Androcles. We suffer you to go in peace.

Androcles: I thank your worship. I thank you all, ladies and gentlemen. Come, Tommy. Whilst we stand together, no cage for you: no slavery for me. (He goes out with the lion, everybody crowding away to give him as wide a berth as possible).

- (i) With close reference to the passage, describe the concluding thoughts of the characters.
- (ii) What does the conclusion tell us about Shaw's view of religion?
- (iii) How effectively does the play deliver its concluding message?

A possible marking scheme

Candidates may make the following points:

- (i) – The Emperor is cynical and pragmatic, flexible enough to turn any situation to his advantage.
 - No belief system means much to him (it is not prudent to be “bigoted”, he says), and his inability to handle the lion is repackaged by him as “magnanimity”.
 - Ferrovius deserts the peaceful teachings of Christianity and accepts an offer to join the Imperial guards.
- (ii) – Shaw's view is that Christians filled with war-fever are a contradiction in terms and should choose one side or the other.
 - Though the story is originally about the miraculous saving of a Christian and the glories of martyrdom, it is emptied of religious significance in the play.
 - None of the characters needs a religion; it is simply an expression for them of their deeper feelings.
- (iii) – Shaw's failure to confront true fanaticism or to give the characters any historical credibility weakens the play's impact.
 - The play's lightness of tone also makes it unable to deliver its message convincingly.

Sample analysis

(i) These are the concluding lines of play and bring it to a close on a comic note (not only in the sense that the seemingly inevitable deaths of the Christian prisoners are avoided, but in the actual humour of Androcles wandering off with a ferocious lion called Tommy!). The emperor, after his initial panic, boastfully postures as the all-conquering hero. His release of Androcles and the Lion is also an acceptance of the situation. The Emperor is simply cynical and pragmatic, flexible enough to turn almost any situation to his own advantage. No belief system means much to him; as he comments, it is not prudent to be “bigoted”. Inability to handle the lion is repackaged by him as “magnanimity”. Ferrovius (the name recalls the metal iron, here associated with swords and violence) deserts the peaceful teachings of Christianity and accepts an offer to join the Imperial guards. Pacifism, he says, is an idea whose time has not yet come (“the God that will be”).

(ii) As Shaw notes, Christians filled with war-fever (and he saw plenty of those at the time of the First World War) are a contradiction in terms, and should choose one side or the other. Lavinia is happy to live and devote herself to the struggle for freedom (and possibly to the Captain, whose love for her is obvious throughout the play). Androcles is an animal activist who befriends all animals and cannot bear to think of them in cages (Shaw was himself a determined vegetarian). The point is that this story, originally about the miraculous saving of a Christian and the glories of martyrdom is emptied of religious significance. None of the characters actually needs a religion – religion is simply an expression for them of their deeper feelings.

(iii) The rationalist Shaw is satirising hard-line religious positions, but somehow the failure to confront true fanaticism or to make any attempt to give the characters any historical credibility weakens the play’s impact. Its lightness of tone makes it unable to deliver its message convincingly.

Example 5

Read the extract below and answer the questions which follow it.

King Lear - William Shakespeare

[Enter Albany]

*Lear: Woe, that too late repents – O, sir, are you come?
Is it your will? Speak, sir. Prepare my horses.
Ingratitude! thou marble-hearted Fiend,
More hideous when thou show'st thee in a child,
Than the sea-monster.*

Albany: Pray sir be patient.

*Lear: Detested kite, thou liest.
My train are men of choice, and rarest parts,
That all particulars of duty know,
And in the most exact regard, support
The worships of their name. O most small fault,
How ugly didst thou in Cordelia show?
Which like an engine, wrench'd my frame of Nature
From the fix'd place: drew from my heart all love.
And added to the gall. O Lear, Lear, Lear!
Beat at this gate that let thy folly in,
And thy dear judgement out. Go, go, my people.
*[Exeunt Kent and Attendants]**

*Albany: My Lord, I am guiltless, as I am ignorant
Of what hath moved you.*

*Lear: It may be so, my Lord.
Hear Nature, hear dear Goddess, hear:
Suspend thy purpose, if thou didst intend
To make this creature fruitful:
Into her womb convey sterility,
Dry up in her the organs of increase,
And from her derogate body never spring A
babe to honour her. If she must teem,
Create her child of spleen, that it may live
And be a thwart disnatur'd torment to her.
Let its stamp wrinkles in her brow of youth,
With cadent fears fret channels in her cheeks,
Turn all her mother's pains and benefits
To laughter, and content: that she may feel,
How sharper than a serpent's tooth it is,
To have a thankless child. Away, away.*

[Exit]

- (i) With close reference to the passage, describe the concluding thoughts of the characters.
- (ii) What does the conclusion tell us about Shaw's view of religion?
- (iii) How effectively does the play deliver its concluding message?

A possible marking scheme

Candidates may make the following points:

- (i) – Scene portrays Lear's reaction when Goneril tries to lay down rules for him and reduce the size of his retinue.
 - He curses Goneril (who remains silent and affected by Lear's rantings) for failing to treat him as he expects.
 - Lear's reaction might be disproportionate to what has happened in the play so far but it also anticipates the real depths of Goneril's evil.
 - Lear begins to realise that he has wronged Cordelia.
- (ii) – Shows Lear's misery which is going to tip into madness
 - His passionate complaint about lack of gratitude reveals his lack of understanding and his self-delusion (that he regarded the flattery he received as king as sincere).
- (iii) – Ingratitude is personified and presented as a devil with a heart of stone.
 - Lear's lines contain examples of animal imagery (which runs throughout the play) and a number of references to body parts.

Sample analysis

(i) This passage occurs when Lear storms out of Goneril's castle because she tries to lay down rules for him and reduce the size of his retinue. Albany, her husband, enters to find out what is happening, and, very much in character as being basically a decent man, tries to calm everyone. Lear, as usual, is too headstrong to listen. Goneril remains silent, too cold to be affected by her father's rantings, which she ascribes to his "dotage". The actress taking her part will have to decide how to show this – possibly by turning her back on Lear.

Lear insists that children should be grateful to their parents, and curses Goneril for failing to treat him as he expects. He hopes she will never have the child, or have one who will bring her nothing but pain. Lear's reaction to Goneril's behaviour is disproportionate to what has actually happened so far, but it also anticipates the real depths of Goneril's evil. Lear's defence of his followers is also exaggerated. He is a man of extremes. The pendulum which swung so firmly against Cordelia at the beginning of the play is now on the move again. Lear begins to realise that he has wronged Cordelia ("O most small fault"). This will soon be reinforced by Regan's lack of sympathy when her father arrives on her doorstep.

(ii) Lear shows both his misery, which is going to tip over into madness, when he addresses himself (“O Lear, Lear, Lear!”) and also his self-dramatisation. Lear’s fault is that he puts the expression of feeling before the actual feeling. His lack of understanding is revealed in his passionate complaints about lack of gratitude. Was he so self-deluded that he ever regarded the flattery he received as king as sincere? It seems so. This is an issue that lies at the heart of the play.

(iii) Lear calls up an image of a personified Ingratitude, a devil with a heart of stone. His lines contain examples of the animal imagery that runs throughout the play, e.g. “sea-monster”, “kite” and “serpent”. There are also a number of references to body parts, e.g. the “heart”, “gall”, “wound”, “organs of increase” and “spleen”.

SECTION B POETRY

An example

With reference to *Boy at the Window* and *The Bystander* answer the following questions.

- (i) Compare the way in which the boy feels about the snowman in poem (A) with how the bystander in poem (B) feels about the events he witnesses.
- (ii) Explain the references to the Bible in both of the poems and say what effect you think they have.
- (iii) In line 16 of poem (A) what is the boy's fear?

(A) *Boy at the Window*

Seeing the snowman standing all alone
In dusk and cold is more than he can bear.
The small boy weeps to hear the wind prepare
A night of gnashings and enormous moan. 4
His tearful sight can hardly reach to where
The pale-faced figure with bitumen eyes
Returns him such a god-forsaken stare
As outcast Adam gave to Paradise. 8

The man of snow is, nonetheless, content,
Having no wish to go inside and die.
Still, he is moved to see the youngster cry.
Though frozen water is his element, 12
He melts enough to drop from one soft eye
A trickle of the purest rain, a tear
For the child at the bright pane surrounded by
Such warmth, such light, such love, and so much fear. 16

Richard Wilbur

(B) *The Bystander*

I am the one who looks the other way,
In any painting you may see me stand
Rapt at the sky, a bird, an angel's wing,
While others kneel, present the myrrh, receive
The benediction from the radiant hand. 5

I hold the horses while the knights dismount
And draw their swords to fight the battle out;
Or else in dim perspective you may see
My distant figure on the mountain road
When in the plains the hosts are put to rout. 10

I am the silly soul who looks too late,
 The dullard dreaming, second from the right.
 I hang upon the crowd, but do not mark
 (Cap over eyes) the slaughtered Innocents,
 or Icarus, his downward-plunging flight. 15

Once in a Garden – back view only there –
 How well the painter placed me, stroke on stroke,
 Yet scarcely seen among the flowers and grass –
 I heard a voice say, ‘Eat,’ and would have turned –
 I often wonder who it was that spoke. 20

Rosemary Dobson

A possible marking scheme

Candidates may make the following points:

(i) *The boy*

- feels sad that the snowman is alone and without shelter from the cold and wind
- projects his fears of growing up and leaving home onto the snowman, and sympathises with him

The bystander

- shows no feelings about the events he witnesses
- is indifferent, and unaware of the significance of what he sees

(ii) *Boy at the Window*

Line 8 – The Expulsion of Adam and Eve from Paradise

The Bystander

line 4 – The Adoration of the Magi/ Birth of Christ – the three Kings

line 14 – The Massacre of the Innocents/Herod’s slaughter of all male babies

line 16–20 – The Fall/The Garden of Eden – the temptation of Adam

- the biblical allusions make the poems more solemn, serious
- in *Boy at the Window* the reference to Adam’s expulsion from Eden adds depth to the poem – it helps explain what the boy is feeling and why. The boy is afraid of having to leave the warmth and security of home. The poem associates these feelings with how Adam must have felt when expelled from Eden. The boy’s loss of innocence is analogous to Adam’s Fall.
- in *The Bystander* the allusions intensify by contrast the indifference of the bystander

(iii) The boy’s fear is of growing up and leaving home – of having to make his own way in a hostile world. It is a fear of his own mortality.

SECTION C UNSEEN POETRY

Example 1

Read the poem below and answer the questions which follow it.

Remember Me When I Am Gone Away

*REMEMBER me when I am gone away,
Gone far away into the silent land;
When you can no more hold me by the hand,
Nor I half turn to go, yet turning stay.
Remember me when no more day by day
You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
Only remember me; you understand
It will be late to counsel then or pray.
Yet if you should forget me for a while
And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
For if the darkness and corruption leave
A vestige of the thoughts once I had,
Better by far you should forget and smile
Than that you should remember and be sad.*

Christina Rossetti

- (i) Comment on the diction of the poem.
- (ii) How does the poet make use of the sonnet form?
- (iii) Give your views on whether the poem is too sentimental or not. Justify your opinion.
- (iv) Discuss the poetic techniques used in line 4.

A possible marking scheme

Candidates may make the following points:

- (i) Everyday diction
 - monosyllables (making “remember” stand out)
 - an effect of calm and ordinariness
- (ii) – A regular Petrarchan sonnet
 - Octave: Please remember
 - Sestet: Maybe you will sometimes forget
 - Separate rhyming patterns
 - Effect of regularity and calmness

- (iii) The topic of dying and being forgotten is potentially sentimental and the poet's resignation may not appeal to some. Line 3 is fairly emotional. Yet no religious hope is suggested (Death is a "silent land" of "darkness and corruption"). The overall tone is calm and realistic.
- (iv) – The pause in the middle of the line represents a moment of hesitation and delayed departure, disappointment.
 - The half-lines on either side of the comma are nearly symmetrical, but there is slightly more weight on the side of going (seven syllables to five).

Suggested answers

- (i) The diction consists of very common everyday words; only three or four (e.g. "vestige") would not occur high in a list of the most common words in English. "Remember" with its three syllables stands out among all the monosyllables. An ordinary person is speaking simply and trying not to dramatise a difficult situation.
- (ii) The poem is a carefully crafted Petrarchan sonnet. The first eight lines beg the addressee to remember the speaker, and the final six allow that a little forgetting may be allowed: the speaker certainly does not want to cause pain to the other person. The octave and sestet as normal rhyme separately. The calm progression of the form and the regular pentameter lines reflect the calmness of the speaker.
- (iii) No, not to me. The poem is certainly sad, as it is about death and the way in which we are gradually forgotten. No religious hope is suggested. Death is a "silent land" of "darkness and corruption". The poem, however, does not try to make us cry – it is full of gentle resignation. The nearest the poem comes to sentimentality is the third line, but holding hands is actually natural enough for this not to be too strong or sentimental.
- (iv) The pause in the middle of the line represents a moment of hesitation and delayed departure. The half-lines on either side of the comma are nearly symmetrical, but there is slightly more weight on the side of going (seven syllables to five).

Example 2

Read the poem below and answer the questions which follow it.

The Death-bed

*WE watch 'd her breathing thro' the night,
Her breathing soft and low,
As in her breast the wave of life
Kept heaving to and fro.*

*So silently we seem 'd to speak,
So slowly moved about,
As we had lent her half our powers
To eke her living out.*

*Our very hopes belied our fears,
Our fears our hopes belied –
We thought her dying when she slept,
And sleeping when she died.*

*For when the morn came dim and sad,
And chill with early showers,
Her quiet eyelids closed – she had
Another morn than ours.*

Thomas Hood

- (i) Describe the techniques used in the third stanza. How successful do you think they are?
- (ii) How suitable is the timing of the death? Give reasons for your opinion.
- (iii) What images does the poet use?
- (iv) Discuss the overall tone of the poem.

A possible marking scheme

Candidates may make the following points:

- (i) Use of contrast and contradiction
 - line 10 reverses line 9, and line 12 reverses line 11, creating an effect of disappointment
 - this may reflect the confused emotions of those around the death-bed, but its cleverness may detract from the sincerity of the poem.
- (ii) Dawn: a beginning, not an end; reflects the religious view that she has entered a new life with “another morn” – or may also be ironic.

- (iii) – Lines 2-4: life and breathing are related to a rather rough sea
 - Nature is made to reflect the sadness of her death (“chill with early showers”).
 - Her new life beyond death is a new morn.

- (iv) – Suitably sad; death and unpleasant new day
 - Hopeful: quiet death followed by entry to another day elsewhere
 - Grieving, but religious

Suggested answers

- (i) The stanza is built around contrasts and contradictions. In both couplets, the second line reverses the first, and disappointment wins. This is, indeed, clever and may reflect the confused emotions of those around the death-bed, but possibly its cleverness reduces its sincerity, and does not increase the effectiveness of the poem.

- (ii) The death takes place at dawn on a cold, wet day. Dawn is the start of something new. From the usual point of view, the time of the death might be seen as ironic, that from a religious point of view she has entered a new life “with another morn”. Probably both views work at the same time.

- (iii) Between lines 2 and 4 life/breathing are related to a rather rough sea. Nature is made to reflect sadness of her death in the fourth verse (“chill with early showers”). Her life beyond death is a new morn.

- (iv) The poem is suitably sad. The woman is very ill all night and dies as an unattractive day starts. But there is a note of hope at the end. Her final death seems quiet and she enters another day elsewhere. Christian hope seems to counteract the grief.

Example 3

Read the poem below and answer the questions which follow it.

*Done With**

*My house is torn down –
Plaster sifting, the pillars broken,
Beams jagged, the wall crushed by the bulldozer.
The whole roof has fallen
On the hall and the kitchen
The bedrooms, the parlor.*

*They are trampling the garden –
My mother's lilac, my father's grapevine,
The freesias, the jonquils, the grasses.
Hot asphalt goes down
Over the torn stems, and hardens.*

*What will they do in springtime
Those bulbs and stems groping upward
That drown in earth under the paving,
Thick with sap, pale in the dark
As they try the unrolling of green.*

*May they double themselves
Pushing together up to the sunlight,
May they break through the seal stretched above them
Open and flower and cry we are living.*

Ann Stanford

- (i) What contrasts are used in the poem?
- (ii) How effective is the image in line 14? Explain your answer.
- (iii) How might we relate the demolition of the house and the fate of the bulbs with the life of the poet?

A possible marking scheme

Candidates may make the following points:

- (i) – Between solid house and ruins
- Between garden and asphalt
- Between new life and growth and the inability to break through to the surface
- Between life and death

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- (ii) On the one hand, to drown is to be deprived of air, trapped in an alien medium. This roughly fits the problem of the plants, though lack of light is even more important. On the other hand, the idea of the earth and garden under the hard surface being liquid does not seem appropriate or enlightening.
- (iii) – There seems to be a need for a connection or the poem is very loosely structured.
- The poet seems to deplore what has happened; in some way something important to the poet has been killed and covered over.
 - The poet identifies with the living repressed bulbs and wants to shout out “we are living”.
 - There is a possibility that the poem is a protest against redevelopment for commercial purposes (car park?).

Suggested answers

- (i) There is a contrast between the solid house and the ruin it turns into. There is a stronger contrast in the second verse between the garden, lovingly described, and the barren surface of asphalt that replaces it and makes the soft earth hard. (Note the near rhyme of “garden” and “hardens”). In the third verse there is a contrast between the new life in spring and the paving that will prevent its growth. This contrast between life and death is further underlined at the end of the poem.
- (ii) “That drown in earth”. To drown is to be deprived of air, trapped in an alien medium. This roughly fits the problem of the plants, though lack of light is even more important. The idea of the earth and garden under the hard surface being liquid does not, however, seem appropriate or enlightening. The image is not a very good one.
- (iii) It does seem that there must be a connection or else the poem is a very loosely constructed one. It seems that the loss of the old home leaves the poet, to use a similar metaphor, rather rootless. Something in the poet’s past has been killed and covered over. It will find it harder to express itself in the new situation. Possibly there is a protest against redevelopment for commercial purposes: has the house made way for a car park? Certainly the poet seems to feel repressed and wants to shout out with the bulbs “we are living”.

Choosing Works to Encourage Wider Reading and Viewing

The range is so enormous that any list immediately becomes more notable for its omissions than its inclusions. Thought has to be given to the suitability of the content for students at the senior secondary level, the relevance and accessibility of the material, the length of the work, the difficulty of its language, and their connection with the texts that students are studying.

Novelists

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• Austen, Jane	• Hughes, Richard
• Alcott, Louisa M.	• Hemingway, Ernest
• Atwood, Margaret	• Hill, Susan
• Bronte, Charlotte	• Huxley, Aldous
• Bronte, Emily	• Ishiguro, Kazuo
• Byatt, A.S.	• James, Henry
• Cather, Willa	• Jhabvala, Ruth Praver
• Chandler, Raymond	• Lawrence, D.H.
• Coetzee, J.M.	• Harper, Lee
• Conrad, Joseph	• McCullers, Carson
• Crane, Stephen	• Morrison, Toni
• Desai, Anita	• Naipaul, V.S.
• Dickens, Charles	• Narayan, R.K.
• Du Maurier, Daphne	• Orwell, George
• Eliot, George	• Rhys, Jean
• Ellison, Ralph	• Salinger, J.D.
• Faulkner, William	• Shelley, Mary
• Fitzgerald, F. Scott	• Sinclair, Upton
• Ford, Ford Madox	• Spark, Muriel
• Forster, E.M.	• Steinbeck, John
• Golding, William	• Tan, Amy
• Graves, Robert	• Twain, Mark
• Greene, Graham	• Walker, Alice
• Grossmith, George	• Waugh, Evelyn
• Guterson, David	• Wells, H.G.
• Hammett, Dashiell	• Woolf, Virginia
• Hardy, Thomas	
• Hawthorne, Nathaniel	

Short story writers

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auster, Paul • Ballard, J.G. • Bates, H.E. • Bowen, Elizabeth • Bradbury, Ray • Carver, Raymond • Cheever, John • Chesterton, G.K. • Dahl, Roald • Doyle, Arthur Conan • Fitzgerald, F. Scott • Greene, Graham • Hardy, Thomas • Hawthorne, Nathaniel • Hemingway, Ernest • James, Henry • James, M.R. • Joyce, James 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lawrence, D.H. • Lessing, Doris • London, Jack • Mansfield, Katherine • Maugham, W. Somerset • Oates, Joyce Carol • O'Connor, Flannery • O'Connor, Frank • Parker, Dorothy • Pritchett, V.S. • Saki • Saroyan, William • Stevenson, Robert Louis • Thurber, James • Trevor, W. • Wodehouse, P.G. • Woolf, Virginia
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Playwrights

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albee, Edward • Ayckborn, Alan • Beckett, Samuel • Bennett, Alan • Bond, Edward • Eliot, T.S. • Frayn, Michael • Mamet, David • Marlowe, Christopher • Miller, Arthur • O'Casey, Sean • O'Neill, Eugene 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pinter, Harold • Potter, D. • Russell, Willy • Shakespeare, William • Shaw, Bernard • Soyinka, Wole • Stoppard, Tom • Synge, J.M. • Thomas, Dylan • Wilde, Oscar • Williams, Tennessee
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Poets

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Auden, W.H.• Bishop, Elizabeth• Blake, William• Browning, E.B.• Clare, John• Cope, Wendy• Cummings, E.E.• Day-Lewis, C.• Dickinson, Emily• Dunn, Douglas• Eliot, T.S.• Frost, Robert• Gunn, Thom• Hardy, Thomas• Heaney, Seamus• Hopkins, Gerald Manley• Herbert, George• Hughes, Langston• Hughes, Ted• Jennings, Elizabeth• Keats, John• Larkin, Philip• Lawrence, D.H.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Levertov, Denise• Lindsay, Vachel• Lowell, Robert• McGough, Roger• McNeice, Louis• Mew, Charlotte• Moore, Marianne• Owen, Wilfred• Plath, Sylvia• Roethke, Theodore• Rossetti, Christina• Sandburg, Carl• Sassoon, Siegfried• Smith, Stevie• Stevens, Wallace• Tennyson, Alfred Lord• Thomas, Dylan• Thomas, Edward• Thomas, R.S.• Walcott, Derek• Whitman, Walt• Williams, William Carlos• Yeats, W.B.
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Films

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alien (Scott) • All that Heaven Allows (Sirk) • Apocalypse Now (Coppola) • Back to the Future (Zemeckis) • Basketball Diaries (Kalvert) • The Beach (Boyle) • Bend it like Beckham (Chadha) • Billy Elliot (Daldry) • Blade Runner (Scott) • Bonnie and Clyde (Penn) • Boys Don't Cry (Pierce) • The Breakfast Club (Hughes) • Casablanca (Curtiz) • Cast Away (Zemeckis) • Chinatown (Polanski) • Citizen Kane (Welles) • Dead Man Walking (Robbins) • The Dead Poets' Society (Weir) • Don Juan de Marco (Leven) • Edward Scissorhands (Burton) • Finding Forrester (van Sant) • Forrest Gump (Zemeckis) • Four Weddings and a Funeral (Newell) • Freaky Friday (Waters) • Francis Ford Coppola's Dracula (Coppola) • The Full Monty (Cattaneo) • Gone with the Wind (Fleming) • High Noon (Zinnemann) • How to Make an American Quilt (Moorhouse) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Icestorm (Lee) • In the Heat of the Night (Jewison) • It's a Wonderful Life (Capra) • Jurassic Park (Spielberg) • The Legend of 1900 (Tornatore) • Life of Pi (Lee) • Mr Holland's Opus (Herek) • Moulin Rouge (Luhrman) • The Namesake (Nair) • On the Waterfront (Kazan) • The Painted Veil (Curran) • Pleasantville (Ross) • Psycho (Hitchcock) • The Purple Rose of Cairo (Allan) • Rear Window (Hitchcock) • Rebel Without a Cause (Ray) • The Remains of the Day (Ivory) • Road to Perdition (Mendes) • Saving Private Ryan (Spielberg) • Shakespeare in Love (Madden) • The Sixth Sense (Shyamalan) • Sliding Doors (Howitt) • Slingblade (Thornton) • Straight Story (Lynch) • The Terminator (Cameron) • The Third Man (Reed) • This Boy's Life (Caton-Jones) • The Truman Show (Weir) • 2001 – a Space Odyssey (Kubrick) • Vertigo (Hitchcock) • White Squall (Scott) • The World of Suzie Wong (Quine)
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Glossary

<u>Term</u>	<u>Description</u>
Assessment objectives	The outcomes of the curriculum to be assessed in the public assessments.
Co-construction	Different from the direct instruction and construction approaches to learning and teaching, the co-construction approach emphasises the class as a community of students who contribute collectively to the creation of knowledge and the building of criteria for judging such knowledge.
Curriculum and Assessment (C&A) Guide	A guide prepared by the CDC-HKEAA Committee. It comprises curriculum aims/objectives/contents, learning outcomes, and assessment guidelines.
Generic skills	Generic skills are skills, abilities and attributes which are fundamental in helping students acquire, construct and apply knowledge. They are developed through the learning and teaching of different subjects or key learning areas and participation in diversified learning experiences, and are transferable to different learning situations. Nine types of generic skills are identified in the Hong Kong school curriculum, i.e. collaboration skills, communication skills, creativity, critical thinking skills, information technology skills, mathematical skills, problem solving skills, self-management skills and self-learning skills.
Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education (HKDSE)	The qualification to be awarded to students after completing the three-year senior secondary education and taking the public assessment.
Internal assessment	This refers to the assessment activities that are conducted regularly in school to assess students' performance in learning. Internal assessment is an inseparable part of the learning and teaching process, and it aims to make learning more effective. With the information that internal assessment provides, teachers will be able to understand students' progress in learning, provide them with appropriate feedback and make any adjustments to the learning objectives and teaching strategies they deem necessary.

<u>Term</u>	<u>Description</u>
Key learning area (KLA)	A way of organising the school curriculum around fundamental concepts of major knowledge domains. It aims at providing a broad, balanced and coherent curriculum for all students through engaging them in a variety of essential learning experiences. The Hong Kong curriculum has eight KLAs, namely, Chinese Language Education, English Language Education, Mathematics Education, Personal, Social and Humanities Education, Science Education, Technology Education, Arts Education and Physical Education.
Knowledge construction	This refers to the process of learning in which students are involved not only in acquiring new knowledge, but also in actively relating it to their prior knowledge and experience so as to create and form their own knowledge.
Learner diversity	Students are individuals with varied family, social, economic and cultural backgrounds and learning experience. They have different talents, personalities, intelligence and interests. Their learning abilities, interests and styles are, therefore, diverse.
Learning community	A learning community refers to a group of people who have shared values and goals, and who work closely together to generate knowledge and create new ways of learning through active participation, collaboration and reflection. Such a learning community may involve not only students and teachers, but also parents and other parties in the community.
Learning outcomes	Learning outcomes refer to what students should be able to do by the end of a particular stage of learning. Learning outcomes are developed based on the learning targets and objectives of the curriculum for the purpose of evaluating learning effectiveness. Learning outcomes also describe the levels of performance that students should attain after completing a particular key stage of learning and serve as a tool for promoting learning and teaching.

Learning targets and learning objectives	<p>Learning targets set out broadly the knowledge/concepts, skills, values and attitudes that students need to learn and develop.</p> <p>Learning objectives define specifically what students should know, value and be able to do in each strand of the subject in accordance with the broad subject targets at each key stage of schooling. They are to be used by teachers as a source list for curriculum, lesson and activity planning.</p>
Level descriptors	A set of written descriptions that describe what the typical candidates performing at a certain level is able to do in public assessments.
Public assessment	The associated assessment and examination system for the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education.
School-based Assessment (SBA)	Assessments administered in schools as part of the learning and teaching process, with students being assessed by their subject teachers. Marks awarded will count towards students' public assessment results.
School curriculum	Schools and teachers are encouraged to adapt the central curriculum to develop their school curriculum to help their students achieve the subject targets and overall aims of education. Measures may include readjusting the learning targets, varying the organisation of contents, adding optional studies and adapting learning, teaching and assessment strategies. A school curriculum is therefore the outcome of a balance between official recommendations and the autonomy of the schools and teachers.
Standards-referenced Reporting	Candidates' performance in public assessment is reported in terms of levels of performance matched against a set of standards.
Student Learning Profile	Its purpose is to provide supplementary information on the secondary school leavers' participation and specialties during senior secondary years, in addition to their academic performance as reported in the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education, including the assessment results for Applied Learning courses, thus giving a fuller picture of the student's whole-person development.

Values and attitudes

Values constitute the foundation of the attitudes and beliefs that influence one's behaviour and way of life. They help form principles underlying human conduct and critical judgement, and are qualities that students should develop. Some examples of values are rights and responsibilities, commitment, honesty and national identity. Closely associated with values are attitudes. The latter supports motivation and cognitive functioning, and affects one's way of reacting to events or situations. Since both values and attitudes significantly affect the way a student learns, they form an important part of the school curriculum.

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www.ibo.org

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www.moviescriptsandscreenplays.com

Script Crawler

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The British Film Institute

www.bfi.org.uk

The Daily Script

www.dailyscript.com

The Internet Movie Database

www.imdb.com

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Membership of the CDC-HKEAA Committee on Literature in English

(From September 2021 – August 2023)

Chairperson:	Dr Jeffrey Michael CLAPP	
Members:	Mr Aaron CHAN	
	Dr Anjuli Ishani GUNARATNE	(from October 2022)
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	Ms Jennifer HORGOS	(until August 2022)
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	Dr Jessica VALDEZ	(until August 2022)
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