



Quality Assessment Tasks

NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

## VCE® ENGLISH Written Practice Examination

**FOR ADJUSTED STUDY DESIGN (2020 ONLY)**

Reading time: 15 minutes

Writing time: 3 hours

<i>Section</i>	<i>Number of questions</i>	<i>Number of questions to be answered</i>	<i>Marks</i>
A – Analytical interpretation of a text	20	1	20
B – Comparative analysis of texts	8	1	20
C – Argument and persuasive language	1	1	20
			Total 60

- Students are to write in blue or black pen.
- Students are permitted to bring into the examination room: pens, pencils, highlighters, erasers, sharpeners, rulers and an English and/or bilingual printed dictionary.
- Students are NOT permitted to bring into the examination room: blank sheets of paper and/or correction fluid/tape.
- No calculator is allowed in this examination.

### Materials supplied

- Task book of 20 pages, including **assessment criteria** on page 20.
- Answer book or paper **provided by your teacher**.

### Instructions

- Write your student name on the front cover of the answer book.
- Complete each section in the correct part of the answer book.
- If you choose to write on a multimodal text in Section A, you must not write on a text pair that includes a multimodal text in Section B.
- You may ask the supervisor for extra answer books.
- All written responses must be in English.

### At the end of the examination

- Place all other used answer books inside the front cover of the first answer book.
- You may keep this task book.

**Students are NOT permitted to bring into the examination room mobile phones and/or any other unauthorised electronic devices.**

**SECTION A – Analytical interpretation of a text****Instructions for Section A**

Section A requires students to write an analytical interpretation of a selected text in response to one topic (either **i.** or **ii.**) on **one** text.

Your response should be supported by close reference to the selected text.

If your selected text is a collection of poetry or short stories, you may write on several poems or stories, or on **at least two** in close detail.

If you choose to write on a multimodal text in Section A, you must **not** write on a text pair that includes a multimodal text in Section B.

In the answer book, indicate which text you have chosen to write on and whether you have chosen to answer **i.** or **ii.**

Your response will be assessed according to the assessment criteria set out on page 20 of this book.

Section A is worth one-third of the total marks for the examination.

**Text**

1. *All the Light We Cannot See*..... Anthony Doerr
2. *After Darkness*..... Christine Piper
3. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity*..... Katherine Boo
4. *Extinction*..... Hannie Rayson
5. *In Cold Blood* ..... Truman Capote
6. *Like a House on Fire*..... Cate Kennedy
7. *Much Ado About Nothing*..... William Shakespeare
8. *Nine Days*..... Toni Jordan
9. *Old/New World: New & Selected Poems*..... Peter Skrzynecki
10. *Persepolis*..... Jonathan Cape
11. *Pride and Prejudice*..... Jane Austen
12. *Rear Window*..... Alfred Hitchcock (Director)
13. *Runaway*..... Alice Munro
14. *Stations Eleven*..... Emily St John Mandel
15. *Stories we Tell*..... Sarah Polly (Director)
16. *The Golden Age*..... Joan London
17. *The Lieutenant*..... Kate Grenville
18. *The Women of Troy*..... Euripides
19. *Things Fall Apart*..... Chinua Achebe
20. *William Wordsworth: Poems selected by Seamus Heaney*..... William Wordsworth

**SECTION A – continued**

**1. *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr**

- i. ‘Doerr’s characters demonstrate the destruction of innocence in times of war’.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. *All the Light We Cannot See* is more about darkness than light.

Do you agree?

**2. *After Darkness* by Christine Piper**

- i. ‘It wasn’t the Japanese who suffered the most at Loveday Camp, it was the half-Japanese, at the hands of the Japanese’.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. “Confidentiality is our number one priority”. How is the concept of confidentiality and its consequences explored in Christine Piper’s *After Darkness*?

**3. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity* by Katherine Boo**

- i. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* depicts the unbreakable cycle of poverty, inequality and powerlessness in Annawadi.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. ‘In Annawadi, the overbearing reality of life leads to short term survival prevailing over any real sustainable change’.

Do you agree?

**4. *Extinction* by Hannie Rayson**

- i. '*Extinction* is about how the human obsession with appearance compromises our integrity'.

Do you agree?

**OR**

- ii. 'In *Extinction* Hannie Rayson explores the tension that exists between emotion and logic'.

Discuss.

**5. *In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote**

- i. Truman Capote transforms the brutal murder of a family into an epic reflection on the broader truths about humanity.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. Truman Capote's non-fiction novel, *In Cold Blood*, is an exploration of the American Dream.

Discuss.

**6. *Like a House on Fire* by Cate Kennedy**

- i. Cate Kennedy's characters suffer from their inability to communicate with each other.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. 'It is easy for the reader to feel comfortable within the worlds created by Kennedy'.

To what extent do you agree?

**7. *Much Ado About Nothing* by William Shakespeare**

- i. In Shakespeare's play, *Much Ado About Nothing*, everyone is wearing a mask.  
Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. To what extent is *Much Ado About Nothing* a critique of honour?

**8. *Nine Days* by Toni Jordan**

- i. '*Nine Days* is about the conflict between individual desires and the expectations of others'.  
Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. Jordan's use of multiple narrative viewpoints is the most significant feature of the novel.  
Do you agree?

**9. *Old/New World: New & Selected Poems* by Peter Skrzynecki**

- i. "Somewhere, between the first breath and the last/you will pause in crowded light or in darkness".  
'Skrzynecki's poems explore the tension of life and its passing'.  
Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. 'Skrzynecki's poetry is a powerful mediation on the importance of family'.  
Discuss.

**10. *Persepolis* by Jonathan Cape**

- i. 'It is Satrapi's depiction of the impact of war on Marji and those she knows that gives the novel its power'.

Do you agree?

**OR**

- ii. How does *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* demonstrate that change is an inevitable part of life?

**11. *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen**

- i. 'In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen questions society's views of marriage'.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. To what extent is *Pride and Prejudice* a novel about power and choice?

**12. *Rear Window* by Alfred Hitchcock (Director)**

- i. In *Rear Window*, Alfred Hitchcock turns the lens back on to the audience.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* is less about a murder and more about human interaction.

Do you agree?

**13. Runaway by Alice Munro**

- i. ‘Munro’s stories feature characters challenged by separation and loss’.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. “No. He hadn’t hurt her physically. But he hated her. He despised her”.

‘*Runaway* reveals love to be fraught and destructive’.

Do you agree?

**14. *Stations Eleven* by Emily St John Mandel**

- i. Memories serve as both a gift and a burden for Mandel’s characters.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. *Station Eleven* proves that even in the midst of tragedy, it is possible to find hope.

Discuss.

**15. *Stories We Tell* by Sarah Polley (Director)**

- i. *Stories We Tell* explores what is real and what is not real.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. Why do the interviewees in *Stories We Tell* agree to talk to Sarah Polley?

**16. *The Golden Age* by Joan London**

- i. ‘Near Death experiences change people’s lives in different ways’.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. To what extent was time spent at The Golden Age Children’s Polio Convalescent Home a ‘golden age’ for characters?

**17. *The Lieutenant* by Kate Grenville**

- i. ‘Rooke is an observer rather than a participant’.

Do you agree?

**OR**

- ii. “What had passed between Taragan and himself had gone far beyond vocabulary or grammatical forms”.

‘*The Lieutenant* demonstrates both the power, and limitations, of language’.

Discuss.

**18. *The Women of Troy* by Euripides**

- i. *The Women of Troy* suggests that it is better to die and be free of suffering than to be captured and assigned to slavery.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. Should Helen take responsibility for her actions, or, is she, like the other humans, simply at the mercy of the gods?



**19. *Things Fall Apart* by Chinua Achebe**

- i. '*Things Falls Apart* explores the consequences of Okonkwo's uncompromising nature'.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. *Things Fall Apart* depicts a society torn between tradition and change.

Discuss.

**20. *William Wordsworth: Poems selected by Seamus Heaney* by William Wordsworth**

- i. Wordsworth's poetry suggests that it is how we relate to nature that reveals our humanity.

Discuss.

**OR**

- ii. "The music in my heart I bore,/Long after it was heard no more".

Wordsworth's poetry is concerned with memory and imagination.

Discuss.

**END OF SECTION A**

**SECTION B – Comparative analysis of texts****Instructions for Section B**

Section B requires students to write a comparative analysis of a selected pair of texts in response to one topic (either **i.** or **ii.**) on **one** pair of texts.

Your response should analyse how the two texts present ideas and/or issues, and should be supported by close reference to **both** texts in the pair.

If you choose to write on a multimodal text in Section A, you must **not** write on a text pair that includes a multimodal text in Section B.

In the answer book, indicate which text pair you have chosen to write on and whether you have chosen to answer **i.** or **ii.**

Your response will be assessed according to the assessment criteria set out on page 19 of this book.

Section B is worth one-third of the total marks for the examination.

**SECTION B – continued**  
**TURN OVER**

**Pair 1 *Tracks* by Robyn Davidson and *Charlie's Country* by Rolf de Heer**

- i. Compare the ways *Tracks* and *Charlie's Country* explore issues of racial oppression.

**OR**

- ii. “Capacity for survival may be the ability to be changed by environment”. (*Tracks*)  
Compare the ways both texts explore the environment.

**Pair 2 *The Queen* directed by Stephen Frears and *Ransom* by David Malouf**

- i. Compare how both *Ransom* and *The Queen* explore the challenges which arise from grief and loss.

**OR**

- ii. ‘Once you lift the veil there will be trouble’. (Walter Bagehot - Victorian Era journalist and economist).

How do *Ransom* and *The Queen* demonstrate the conflict which occurs when our humanity is revealed?

**Pair 3 *Stasiland* by Anna Funder and *Never Let Me go* by Kazuo Ishiguro**

- i. Compare how both *Never Let Me Go* and *Stasiland* represent the effects of the misuse of power.

**OR**

- ii. “Even back when Hailsham was considered a shining beacon, an example of how we might move to a more humane and better way of doing things, even then, it wasn’t true”. (*Never Let Me Go*)

“In the GDR people were required to acknowledge an assortment of fictions as fact ... such as the idea that human nature is a work-in-progress which can be improved upon, and Communism is the way to do it”. (*Stasiland*)

Compare how both texts explore the idea of trust.

**SECTION B – continued  
TURN OVER**

**Pair 4 *Reckoning* by Magda Szubanski and *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri**

- i. Compare the ways Magda and Gogol both struggle to establish their own identities.

**OR**

- ii. ‘The challenges faced by the children of migrants can be just as difficult as the challenges faced by parents’.

Compare how the two texts explore this idea.

**Pair 5 *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller and *The Dressmaker* by Rosalie Ham**

- i. Compare the ways in which hysteria is explored in both texts.

**OR**

- ii. ‘*The Crucible* and *The Dressmaker* suggest that human nature is essentially dark’.

To what extent is this true?

**Pair 6 *Photograph* by Anna Ziegler and *The Penelopiad: The Myth of Penelope and Odysseus* by Margaret Atwood**

- i. Compare the ways in which women respond to misogyny in both texts.

**OR**

- ii. “It was my fault! I hadn’t told her of my scheme”. (*The Penelopiad*)

“Gosling: That night I slipped Wilkins the photograph. I did think it was his right to see it. I knew it was the best photograph we had”. (*Photograph* 51)

‘There is often a fine line between trust and betrayal.’ Discuss in reference to both texts.

**SECTION B – continued  
TURN OVER**

**Pair 7 *The 7 Stages of Grieving* by Wesley Enoch and Deborah Mailman and *The Longest Memory* by Fred D’Aguiar**

- i. “We’re not fighting, we’re grieving”. (*The 7 Stages of Grieving*).

Compare the way the two texts explore this idea.

**OR**

- ii. Compare how the two texts explore injustice.

**Pair 8 *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* by Malala Yousafzai with Christine Lamb and *Pride* by Matthew Warchus (director)**

- i. ‘There is power in a union’.

Compare how the texts *I Am Malala* and *Pride* explore the importance of powerful relationships.

**OR**

- ii. Compare how the texts *I Am Malala* and *Pride* explore the notion of courage in adversity.

**END OF SECTION B  
TURN OVER**

**THIS PAGE IS BLANK**

**SECTION C – Argument and persuasive language****Instructions for Section C**

Section C requires students to write an analysis of the ways in which argument and language are used to persuade others to share a point(s) of view.

Read the background information on this page and the material on pages 16 to 18 and write an analytical response to the task below.

For the purposes of this task, the term ‘language’ refers to written, spoken and visual language.

Your response will be assessed according to the assessment criteria set out on page 19 of this book.

Section C will be worth one-third of the total marks for the examination.

**Task**

Write an analysis of the ways in which argument and written and visual language are used in the material on pages 16 to 19 to try to persuade others to share the points of view presented.

**Background information**

The amount of time that is devoted to our working life is increasingly being questioned as factors such as increased travel times and modern technology ensure we can never switch off. This is seen by some commentators to be having an adverse effect on our personal lives and, in particular, our health.

The transcript of the keynote speech given by Professor Roman James at The Modern Workplace Conference 20220 held in Melbourne, from 25 to 27 March, is printed on pages 16 to 19.

The purpose of this conference was to establish the new ways governments, business and unions can work together to reimagine how the workplace may operate in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

**Big problems require radical solutions!**

Ladies and gentlemen,

It's 7.30 am on a typical Melbourne working weekday and you are in your car on Punt Road or the Princes Freeway, the Monash or the Ring Road for that matter.

Traffic flows freely as the pleasant sounds of the breakfast shift on your station of choice prepare you for the joyful working day ahead. You manage to park your car for a more than reasonable rate as the pleasant attendant greets you with the usual "good morning sir" and directs you to the most convenient available spot. From there it's just a short but pleasant stroll to your workplace. Isn't life a breeze!

What a golden age, what a time to be alive, what a time to live in the world's most liveable city!

Sadly, what a fantasy!

*The first slide appears*



Many of us in this room would be familiar with the sentiments expressed in this image because by 7.30 am you have probably already been sitting in your car for at least 30 minutes. Roads are at a standstill and you are hoping like hell that there hasn't been an accident ahead that will gridlock Melbourne for what seems to an eternity!

If the accident doesn't get you the ominous appearance of fluorescent vest clad road traffic management crews is enough to send most Melbourne commuters into a state of uncontrollable sobbing.

Of course, "you could take public transport" I hear you say. But the journey from your outer suburban debt-ridden dream home is a long haul of connecting buses and trains with a three-hour round trip crammed into a hot sardine can that leaves you utterly exhausted.



There's also the matter of the emails, text messages and phone calls that you continued to receive the night before and that began pinging on your mobile as soon as your journey had begun.

And then when you finally get to experience the privilege of arriving at work you are confronted by this!

*The second slide appears*



[https://www.taringa.net/+info/17-hechos-increibles-de-japon-que-nos-demuestran-lo-diferente\\_1c21pr](https://www.taringa.net/+info/17-hechos-increibles-de-japon-que-nos-demuestran-lo-diferente_1c21pr)

You see, this is not about the significant mobility issues our city faces, that's for another time.

But what the increasing traffic on our roads and rail services is exacerbating is just how shackled to our work we have become. We are a society that has become overworked, unable to switch off from our sense of duty and obligation and in many cases so drowning in debt that we can't afford to let go of it for fear of our lives falling apart. The increased traffic of a booming population in a city not designed or equipped to deal with it and the extended travel time that has been inflicted on many of us is further aggravating the sense of anxiety, stress and burn out we are all feeling.

Work in the modern urban jungle is destroying our sense of family and is a strain on our physical and mental well-being and the services we fund to address them.

Let me indulge in some history. The eight-hour day - down from an average of 14 hours per day - was established in Australia over 100 years ago, when most people would have worked close to where they lived and travel between the two points was relatively short. In fact, during the 20th century, there were predictions that technology, trade unions, rising educational standards and greater prosperity would see a further reduction in work hours.

Hands up how many people in this room work longer than 8 hours a day?

*Most of the room raise their hands.*

Hands up how many people have a pleasant commute to their workplace situated conveniently close to where they live?

*Very few in the room raise their hands.*

So, let us try and make sense of this all.

*The third slide appears*

- We are working longer hours.
- We are travelling for longer to get to and from work – despite new transport initiatives that are unlikely to have a significant impact on travel times.
- It is a known fact that long periods of travel time are having a detrimental effect on our physical and mental health as well as adversely affecting the environment.
- Wages are stagnating and the cost of living is rising.

So, what is the possible solution?

Well, I am not here to advocate for one particular approach to try and solve this problem. What I am suggesting is that all you here in this room today and across this conference need to work together to devise a plan that improves the quality of life for all our citizens.

Let me share a story about Blue Street Capital, a California-based finance company. When CEO David Rhoads was unable to find the time to indulge in his passion for surfing, he came up with an idea to test a five-hour day so that he and his employees could get their lives back. Even those who worked for him were sceptical.

I can sense the same scepticism in the room right now!

Rhoads promised that despite shifting to an 8am to 1pm workday that the company was not going under and there would be no wage reductions. If after a 90 day-trial productivity remained the same the change would be permanent. Well, productivity did not remain the same! Three years later revenues have gone up every year – 30% in each of the first and second years, wages have increased, and the company has grown from nine to 17 employees. David is happy and his employees are happy at work and have their lives back.

If that small example is not enough to sway you in August 2019 Microsoft Japan tested a four-day week and found that not only were employees happier but that they were significantly more productive. The entire 2300-person workforce was given five consecutive Fridays off without a decrease in pay. The shortened weeks led to more efficient meetings, happier workers and productivity increased by an amazing 40%.

Microsoft Japan president and CEO Takuya Hirano's response were to plan a subsidy of \$920 for each employees vacation and his philosophy was made clear in a statement to Microsoft Japan's website when he wrote, "Work a short time, rest well and learn a lot".

Whatever model or system is developed something has to be done to ensure that we all have a much better and healthier work-life balance. We have one life and one planet and it's time we started to value that above some sense of guilt and obligation that is literally working us to death!

*Points to the room*

It is up to all of you to work together to find a mutually beneficial solution that will take us into the rest of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond.

**END OF SECTION C  
TURN OVER**

**Assessment criteria**

**Section A** will be assessed against the following criteria:

- knowledge and understanding of the text, and the ideas and issues it explores
- development of a coherent analysis in response to the topic
- use of textual evidence to support the interpretation
- control and effectiveness of language use, as appropriate to the task.

**Section B** will be assessed against the following criteria:

- knowledge and understanding of both texts, and the ideas and issues they present
- discussion of meaningful connections, similarities or differences between the texts, in response to the topic
- use of textual evidence to support the comparative analysis
- control and effectiveness of language use, as appropriate to the task.

**Section C** will be assessed against the following criteria:

- understanding of the argument(s) presented and point(s) of view expressed
- analysis of ways in which language and visual features are used to present an argument and to persuade
- control and effectiveness of language use, as appropriate to the task.

**END OF TASK BOOK**



## Solution Pathway

**NOTE: This task is sold on condition that it is NOT placed on any school network or social media site (such as Facebook, Wikispaces etc.) at any time.**

**NOT FOR PRIVATE TUTOR USE.**

### SECTION A – Analytical interpretation of a text

#### *All the Light We Cannot See* by Anthony Doerr

- i. ‘Doerr’s characters demonstrate the destruction of innocence in times of war’.

Discuss.

*Clearly, students should approach this topic via an investigation of various characters, the most relevant being the characters who are children at the start of the novel – Marie-Laure and Werner – and their comparable journeys. It could be argued that their innocence is indeed corrupted. Clearly, students should approach this topic via an investigation of various characters, the most relevant being the characters by the experiences of war, but it might also be considered to what extent, and what aids or mitigates this destruction. Werner, desperate to escape his fate of ending up in the mines, is caught up in and eventually becomes part of “the ever-expanding machine that is Germany”, being “what everybody agrees is good”. The setting of Schulpforta where the “weakest” are weeded out is a microcosm of the new world the Nazis wish to create, and a test of values. Jutta is cognisant of what it will cost him, unlike Werner who reflects in the cellar, “How did Jutta understand so much more about how the world worked?” When he is at Schulpforta and witnesses Frederick’s beating, he asks himself the question “is this not wrong?” and finds his answer, “but here it is right”. He “shuts his eyes, his mind”, becoming a predator as he wages his war “through the air, invisibly”, not considering the blood he has on his hands, as Volkheimer is the one dispatched to “pluck out” the “thorns in the paw of the lion”. Finally, though, he is offered the chance of redemption when he saves Marie-Laure. Marie-Laure, on the other hand, finds her initial moral guidance in her father, who “made her feel as if every step she took was important”, then consequently Madame Manec and Uncle Etienne as she works for the Resistance. Her choices and her long life highlights how despite her initial innocence and vulnerability she is made more resilient by her experiences.*

*With the exception of seemingly evident villains such as Von Rumpel, students might also explore beyond these key characters to Etienne, for example; who since he returned from World War One is “a mouse in a trap”, seeing “dead people passing through the walls.” The character of*

*Frederick, too, is an obvious candidate for analysis, the tragedy of his destruction a clear example of innocence lost, although paradoxically he exists in a state of suspended childhood, free of the past that haunts other characters. Volkheimer, too, reflects “He was just a boy. They all were. Even the largest of them” furthering the view that it is children who are inevitably the greater victims of war. But a certain kind of person is perhaps more susceptible, as Jutta notes “what the war did to dreamers”. Overall, Doerr seems to offer the explanation that war forces the innocent to grow up – some do not survive whilst others do, although not intact.*

- ii.** *All the Light We Cannot See* is more about darkness than light.

Do you agree?

*This topic invites a focus on the use of literary techniques to develop key ideas, and clearly the meaning of the title is significant here. Students might explore light and dark imagery as metaphorical for the best and worst of human nature, and the potential for humanity to either create or destroy. They may also consider the idea of knowledge as ‘enlightenment’, but also as bringing potential for destruction. A more sophisticated reading might consider ‘darkness’ in relation to symbols such as the grotto and blindness, and what may flourish beyond the extent of what we can “see”, or what our immediate knowledge can reveal to us. Marie-Laure, of course, exemplifies this notion as she, despite her blindness, which is not “a curse” as others suggest, transcends the boundaries of ‘light’ or vision and continually surprises with her capability and endurance. As her father names her, she is his “emerveillement” – a wonder. Marie-Laure, like a snail, becomes “the Whelk”, concealing herself to survive and finding her strength in the darkness. Doerr suggests what might thrive in the dark, or beyond human knowledge, may be just as significant – but we are limited in our capacity to know this, much as we cannot foresee the future.*

*Students might build an argument that initially considers the destructive power of war, and the technology harnessed in its service. War is like a “shadow ... cruising above”. As the war marches on, Werner finds the initial clarity he found at Schulpforta, away from the industry and smoke of Zollverein, starts to wane – “strange things start happening with the electricity ... days of darkness ensue.” God becomes a “white cold eye, a quarter-moon poised above the smoke”.*

*They could also consider the ways in which the novel supports the potential for hope and renewal, or ‘light’. It is in the darkness of the cellar that Werner consider his “ten thousand small betrayals” and the “reparations to make”. Etienne observes Marie-Laure as they broadcast the concerto and he is reminded of the world outside, the “red pools of light” at sunset. Despite her inability to see, Marie-Laure comprehends instead through the sounds that “ribbon in shoals through the air”. Werner emerges from the cellar and considers “what light shines at night!” He thinks “day will blind him” as he finds his “purpose” and “clarity”. Ironically, it is the investigation a light that kills him, but only after he has fulfilled his purpose of ‘saving’ Marie-Laure.*

*Finally, a sophisticated response might consider how both darkness and light coexist as dualities of nature, they do not cancel each other out, and that seeking understanding of both what we can*

*and cannot see, is imperative. As Marie-Laure notes in the novel's conclusion, "We rise again in the grass. In the flowers. In songs" – not light alone.*

### **After Darkness by Christine Piper**

- i. 'It wasn't the Japanese who suffered the most at Loveday Camp, it was the half-Japanese, at the hands of the Japanese'.

Discuss.

*Identity, race and belonging are central to Piper's After Darkness and this prompt asks students to analyse the impact of these (and the related concept of racism) on the experiences of groups and individuals at Loveday Camp. Specifically, students need to evaluate how race and racism impact on suffering in the context of internment in remote South Australia during the Second World War. Here, students will need to consider various forms of suffering - emotional and physical.*

*Students should avoid a simplistic response that examines the Japanese and half-Japanese ("haafu") as homogenous, opposing groups. Instead, students should analyse the ways in which war and internment either reinforced or challenged individual and group racial identity. So too, students should be wary of applying racial stereotypes in their analysis. Indeed, Piper presents a complex and nuanced view of the concept of race. For example, the Japanese internees are supercilious towards their captors but their sense of honour also obliges them to behave in a seemingly compliant manner at Loveday.*

*Undeniably, the suffering of Japanese Australian detainees was acute in that the country many of them had been born in, or lived in most of their lives, redefined them as "the enemy". The injustice of the internment of Japanese Australians is underscored by Stan Suzuki's service in the AIF before his internment and Johnny Chang's Australian Citizenship - neither of which saved them from "being collared". Both were taken from their homes and families and interned at Loveday. Their suffering was therefore inflicted by the Australian Government. That said, their suffering was amplified by the open hostility of many Japanese internees who saw them as racially impure "you haafu fools don't deserve the Japanese blood in you". As a result they were "outcasts in here" and in broader Australian society. This generated profoundly disturbing mental anguish for Japanese Australian internees and their families and Piper invites her readers to question what patriotism means in times of war and how war can radically reconfigure issues of identity and belonging.*

*Stan's beating, his suicide attempt and his death provide a complex insight into both the emotional and physical suffering of the 'half-Japanese'. Whilst Stan's assault was at the hands of the Japanese, he was shot by a "trigger happy" Australian guard during Johnny Chang's escape attempt. Arguably, his death and the resultant suffering of his family (which was exacerbated by the Inquest's biased finding that Stan was shot whilst trying to escape) was a result of much more than the actions of Yamada and Mori who ostracised him and arranged his*

*beating. Students should also consider the inflammatory behaviour and reckless actions of Johnny Change and evaluate his culpability.*

*Not all Japanese internees viewed the half-Japanese with contempt. Having spent time working in Unit 731, Ibaraki is increasingly driven by an internalised sense of honour and he not only sympathises with Japanese Australians, he also befriends them. His participation in their baseball league is a powerful metaphor for inclusion and Ibaraki, once a reluctant perpetrator of suffering (Unit 731) increasingly tries to not only alleviate the physical suffering of others through his work as a medical doctor, but also to alleviate their emotional suffering (and his own) by attempting to establish friendships with others - regardless of their race.*

- ii. “Confidentiality is our number one priority”. How is the concept of confidentiality and its consequences explored in Christine Piper’s *After Darkness*?

*Under the guise of “loyalty and discretion” Ibaraki commits himself to a regime of confidentiality when “filled with the utter hopelessness” of his work as a Hospital Intern, he accepts a junior research position in what would become the infamous Unit 731. Students should explore links between confidentiality and the concept of ‘honour’ within the context of war (Sino-Japanese War and World War Two) as the pervasive Japanese cultural norms of “duty, loyalty and prudence” instil in Ibaraki an abiding sense of secrecy and an habitual silence that compromises his very sense of self and undermines his ability to connect with others.*

*For Ibaraki, his commitment to confidentiality forces him to compromise his personal conscience and evokes a life-long sense of guilt and regret as symbolised by the tag he retains from one of Unit 731’s victims. He desperately wants to share the burden of his knowledge and actions with his wife Kayoko (“I wanted her to help shoulder the burden of my pain”) but increasingly his sense of shame (he was complicit in the actions of Unit 731) prevents him from confiding in her and ultimately their marriage crumbles as a result. This inability to speak up - “I tried to speak but no words came out” - is later mirrored in his friendship with Sister Bernice which is similarly marred by all that was unspoken.*

*Piper explores the compounding effects of ‘confidentiality’ by skilfully revealing the decades long toll it exacts on Ibaraki. Regardless of location, Ibaraki cannot escape his past and “memories disturb [his] unconscious, like the beating wings of a dove”. Students should consider the evolution of Ibaraki’s character through his relationship with Stan Suzuki. This is a seminal moment in the novel as Ibaraki accepts his “misguided loyalty” and incrementally attempts to speak up against injustice. Indeed, it is through the death of Stan that Ibaraki comes to the realisation that his “silence had been weak” and that he had “clung to the ideal of discretion when it was courage and forgiveness” that he needed all along.*

*Central to the novel is the idea that confronting the ills of the past is both a difficult and liberating process. It forces us to confront the dark side of humanity and the ways in which individuals (and nations) are complicit in allowing evil through their silence. Ultimately, Ibaraki comes to the conclusion that telling the truth is “worth the shame” and decides “there is something the Japanese people should know”.*



***Behind the Beautiful Forevers: Life, Death, and Hope in a Mumbai Undercity* by Katherine Boo**

- i. *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* depicts the unbreakable cycle of poverty, inequality and powerlessness in Annawadi.

Discuss.

*Annawadi is a rubbish-strewn slum by the Mumbai international airport, surrounded entirely by luxury hotels that reflect India's position as one of the fastest growing economy's on earth. Katherine Boo's work of narrative non-fiction recounts the story of the new India that is hidden behind these new buildings. She documents three years in the lives of the families' seemingly endless and futile struggle to survive in affluence's shadow, who call Annawadi their home.*

*Students could address Boo's work as creative non-fiction and discuss her use of a range of techniques that allow her to both create a factual portrait of life in Annawadi, but also allows for readers to engage with the text on a more personal level. Boo's use of figurative language – personification and similes/metaphors - allows for a more emotional connection with the text. The people are depicted as real and dynamic allowing them to rise above being statistics, but not over sentimentalising them either. Boo allows the reader to experience the sometimes harsh realities of slum life with intimacy and immediacy.*

*Students can contextualise their discussion by outlining how Boo portrays the day-to-day meaning of poverty by presenting intimate detailed portraits of individual lives. She observes how everyone in Annawadi is trying to elevate themselves from their circumstances and get out of the slum. Students could discuss how Boo frames her account around the work and life of central character Abdul Hakim Husain. She recounts his wrongful imprisonment by a brutal police force as well as showing how corruption in institutions such as public hospitals, charities and the educational system damages community life, rendering the situation hopeless for many of the inhabitants. Her extensive research and experience as a journalist allow her to create a detailed factual portrait of slum life.*

*Students could then discuss how simultaneously, the book explores in what way family relationships, deep friendships and private philosophies keep many young Annawadians optimistic in a time of large-scale global transformation. While Boo reveals the formidable obstacles to equality and social mobility in India, she also reveals the extraordinary courage and ingenuity of seemingly ordinary families who are trying to fight their way out of poverty in a fast-changing India. The author depicts how hope exhibits itself differently in different characters and she uses rich, figurative language to convey that. Karam's wish of a plot of land for him and his children is described as 'giddy with chickens' and her literal references to Sunil's physical growth also symbolises his improved financial situation due to his enterprising nature and thievery.*

*Ultimately, despite the disappointment and destruction they face in everyday life in the slum Boo is able to capture the depth of hope and ambition that many of the characters demonstrate as they try to break the cycle of poverty and inequality.*

- ii. 'In Annawadi, the overbearing reality of life leads to short term survival prevailing over any real sustainable change'.

Do you agree?

*Behind the Beautiful Forevers is a non-fiction text that takes place in the Mumbai slum of Annawadi. It follows the lives of several people in the slum from 2007 to 2011. Living conditions in Annawadi are poor, with people living on top of each other, amenities like running water available for only two hours a day and a nearby "sewage lake" prone to flooding. In the slum, it is every man, woman and child for themselves and basic day-to-day survival instincts are required. Those who do not learn how to traverse the slum and play by its rules face starvation.*

*The residents hoard waste and engage in recyclable scavenging, metal thievery and for a lucky few, regular service jobs in the hotels. The nearby international airport is a source of some hopes for success, but a wall plastered with the words of an Italian tile company separates the prosperous area near the airport from its surrounding slums. Annawadi is a society that survives on the leftovers and castoffs from this affluence. It is a society with its own diversity and hierarchy where corruption for survival and immediate gain runs rampant. Residents must make payments to police officers and even to each other, as a sort of Annawadi insurance policy.*

*This idea of an inherent and inevitable corruption can be further explored through an important figure on the periphery of this central story, Asha Waghekar. She aspires to be the slumlord of Annawadi and has determined that her path to a better life can come through a corrupt system. She is capable of helping many in Annawadi but insists on taking payments from her neighbours for any assistance she can provide. Her regular affairs with politicians when she is married provide her with 'money and power' but raise questions about the morality of her actions.*

*Students should refer to the character of Subhash Sawant the Corporator (political representative) of the Shiv Sena party in Annawadi's ward. He pretends to be low-caste so that he can run in elections meant to help low-caste people earn a voice in government. The low-caste people of Annawadi know that Subhash lies and is corrupt, but they support him as he spends a small percentage of government funds on real improvements in Annawadi. However, Subhash is an example of the ways that government programs meant to improve the conditions and end discrimination against low-caste people rarely involve real long-term improvement for those in need.*

*However, another figure, Zehrunisa Husain, portrays the idea of hope for long-term improvement on a personal level. With her husband Karam left hopeless by his constant illnesses, she becomes the main authority figure in her family and is forced to take it upon herself to ensure her sons work hard to earn a living, her other children stay in school and her daughters are married. When her daughter and husband are jailed, she navigates the complex world of red tape and the cruel legal system quietly, singularly and without complaint.*

**Extinction by Hannie Rayson**

- i. 'Extinction is about how the human obsession with appearance compromises our integrity'.

Do you agree?

*Students should be able to demonstrate their understanding that despite the ideological convictions of the characters they display a lack of moral integrity. Identifying Rayson's conjecture that an innate human trait is to be so concerned with our façade that we let that override our sense of what is right and wrong is critical in responding to this question. Students could look at the characterisation of each of the characters and recognise that each of them is to some degree a stereotype recognisable to the audience.*

*Rayson's views of vanity infiltrates the sub-consciousness of both male and female protagonists. While environmental conservation concerns are the primary focus of much of the play, Rayson chooses to interweave a secondary story that captures the insecurities saturating the modern female experience. Rayson reveals that Professor Heather Dixon-Brown spends \$267 on hair removal every five weeks. Her brother Andy likens the hair removal process to 'getting a tree lopped'. The destructive imagery of chopping down a tree echoes the crippling pressure for Heather to 'sculpt' herself into a particular feminine ideal.*

*Furthermore, in her professional domain Professor Dixon-Brown is forced to make an ethical compromise by deleting a career tarnishing mass-email intimating an illicit romance between her and her newest collaborator, Harry Jewell. Concerned that revelations of an intimate fling could be seen to cast Dixon-Brown as a seducer and woman who is easily compromised, she rushes desperately to the IT servers at Lam to ensure that her image remains intact.*

*Students could discuss how Andy's actions act as a mirror of our own perceptions of ourselves and the superficially formed view we have of others. In Andy's case his antagonistic approach towards Harry, committed to saving the tiger quoll and the forest, undermines his own integrity. He refuses to engage with him as his judgement of Harry is fixed and based on pre-conceived ideas of him as a miner. Andy sees any possible yielding to Harry as an attack on how he and others see him. His prejudices overshadow the opportunity for any form of beneficial collaboration.*

*High scoring responses could identify how Rayson's realist approach could be seen to reveal the shiny facade of some conversation efforts. When Professor Dixon-Brown states that she is completely disengaged with 'charismatic fauna' push- making celebrities out of pandas and polar bears' Rayson is exposing that positive reactions towards such campaigns are grounded in societies superficial attraction to the aesthetically pleasing and reinforces her thematic point regarding humans and their fixation with appearance.*

- ii. 'In *Extinction* Hannie Rayson explores the tension that exists between emotion and logic'.

Discuss.

*High scoring responses should be able to demonstrate an understanding that it is part of the human condition to be guided by our emotions despite our abilities to reason. However, Rayson could be seen to be suggesting that while our emotions are central to who we are and in fact can be an element of strength it is also one of our greatest flaws that can lead us down the path of duplicity and the betrayal of our judgment and sense of reason.*

*The characters in Rayson's play each reveal a flaw that leads them to act based on emotion, rather than logic. Professor Heather Dixon-Brown, successful in her professional life is driven by her need for love and to be seen as desirable. Similarly, Harry Jewell a rich business man is motivated by the emotional need to seduce women to gain back some of his lost masculine pride after being cheated on by his wife. Piper needs to love and save at any cost. Andy, the apparent outlier, in the end is guided by his need to save Piper from the fate of taking care of him until his death by refusing to reveal his disease.*

*Rayson captures the universal struggle between emotions and the effect of yielding to it may have on your ability to make reasoned decisions. This is evident in Rayson's depiction of Dixon-Brown's gradual inclination towards the Tiger Quoll project funded by a coal company. Dixon-Brown claims that she is a pragmatist who uses her 'head and not her heart', yet, ironically is seduced by Harry Jewell and agrees to accept 'dirty money' from Harry to fund the quoll saving endeavour. Despite her clashing ideological perspective to Harry, Piper is also seduced by Harry, initially through his money and then in a physical sense. Students could explore how Rayson seems to be suggesting that we, as humans, are so fundamentally flawed that we allow our emotions get in the way of even noble pursuits.*

*High scoring responses could explore Harry's character and how he seems to be able to combine both pragmatism and ideological purity. He has the resources and acumen to manoeuvre a board of directors determined on exploring coal 'right on the edge of the national park'. However, 'Mr Evil' is also inspired by nostalgia and sentimentality over a childhood memory where a tiger quoll steals his drumstick. In the end even Harry is unable to avoid being sacked by the board of his company as Rayson showcases how difficult it can be to find the balance between emotion and logic.*

***In Cold Blood* by Truman Capote**

- i. Truman Capote transforms the brutal murder of a family into an epic reflection on the broader truths about humanity.

Discuss.

*Truman Capote's nonfiction novel In Cold Blood takes events from the contemporary world and lifts them to epic storytelling proportions, in the process allowing them to move beyond their specific historical moment and focus on broader truths about humanity.*

*Students should identify and explain how Capote crafts In Cold Blood into a modern-day tragedy, comparable to the classical Greek dramas that deal with many of the same universal themes of murder, vengeance and the pursuit of justice. Gathering the unrelated truths and views about the Clutter case, Capote creates a narrative that ponders the nature of human life and death.*

*The initial discovery of the murders sees an elevation of the as yet unknown killers into almost mythical monster status. They are seen as bringing a senseless evil with the sole intention of destroying the idyllic American lifestyle of Holcomb's residents. The Clutter killings are a turning point for the citizens of Holcomb and Garden City as the strange and treacherous outside world threatens to shatter their peaceful existence.*

*Furthermore, students could discuss how leading up to the murders of the Clutter family, Capote portrays Holcomb, Kansas as a type of Eden before the fall. In fact, Capote uses biblical references to make it known that something terrible is about to happen when early in the novel Herb Clutter says, "an inch more of rain and this country would be paradise, Eden on Earth". Further connecting to this biblical reference as Herb could additionally be seen to be creating his own version of Eden. Students could connect the orchard to Eve eating the apple in the bible, destroying Eden and suggesting that the what is about to occur to the town and specifically the six individuals, is somehow fated.*

*However, Capote moves beyond this somewhat convenient view of evil and delves into the complex psychological and environmental circumstances that lead two generally ordinary human beings to commit an appallingly hideous act. By the end of the book Perry Smith and Dick Hickock are transformed from cold-blooded monsters and humanised into anxious and pathetic individuals and the crime itself can be seen as a basic set of emotional responses. Capote shows how ordinary feelings of frustration and despair can by sheer circumstance and chance manifest into an act of evil and leaves the reader to consider what evil lurks within us all.*

- ii. Truman Capote's non-fiction novel, *In Cold Blood*, is an exploration of the American Dream.

Discuss.

*In Cold Blood* sees Truman Capote place the American Dream as a pivotal concept in his non-fiction depiction of the murder of the Clutter family. Capote chooses to portray the Clutters as an embodiment of the ideal achievement of the American Dream. Herb Clutter, married with two children and engaged with his community is a self-made man who pulled himself up off the floor to become a very comfortable farmer and rancher. Students may comment upon the apple pie representation of the Clutter family in the hours before their murders. Capote portrays a prosperous family through detailed descriptions of the family home; 'the handsome white house, standing on an ample lawn of groomed Bermuda grass, impressed Holcomb; ... was a place people pointed out.' Capote draws the reader into this idyllic setting by concentrating on seemingly trivial details such as Mr. Clutter drinking milk and eating apples as he inspects his vast estate while his daughter Nancy teaches a young girl how to cook the quintessential American cherry pie.

However, a high-level response should be able to recognise how Capote presents elements of ambiguity that draw attention to the failure of the Clutter's life of 'plain virtue' and casting doubt on the iconic image of wholesome American values that emerged after the murder. Capote's observations, amongst others, of the unexplained lingering scent of smoke in an 'abstemious' household, the uneasiness created by Mrs. Clutter's 'nervous' spells serve to undermine the solidity of the Clutter's family life. Higher scoring responses could identify how Capote fictionalises the family in a 'non-fiction novel'.

The murder of the Clutter family could be seen to be the result of murderers Perry Smith and Dick Hickock's failure to achieve the American Dream. For example, Smith, crippled by a motorcycle accident and plagued by memories of a childhood ruined by poverty and abuse finds the American Dream elusive despite his hard work and intelligence. Capote could be seen to be suggesting his and many others hope of achieving the dream is far beyond reach.

On the other hand, Hickock, a product of a stable lower-middle-class childhood, is frustrated by the conventional methods by which he might achieve the American Dream. He turns to a life of crime, in an effort to take a short-cut to the life he dreams of.

Broadly, the Clutter killings are a seminal moment for the citizens of Holcomb and Garden City as the dangerous wider world arrived for the first time. According to Capote, it is the first time the citizens of this part of Kansas have had to endure the "unique experience of distrusting each other" (p. 88). The murders of the Clutters undermine their sense of safety, security, and their ability for self-determination. Suddenly, a poor, resentful and "rootless" person, for whom the American dream is unattainable is part of their psyche.

**Like a House on Fire by Cate Kennedy**

- i. Cate Kennedy's characters suffer from their inability to communicate with each other. Discuss.

*This topic's diversity allows for each student to showcase the breadth of their interpretation of the text. At its foundation students need to consider their perception of what is implied by the key vocabulary of 'suffer' and also 'inability to communicate'. Students will most certainly identify those characters who are unable to communicate but may also discuss those who do not wish to do so. A more complex response would offer a counter argument which discusses other ways in which characters can suffer and/or that a lack of communication can be a positive thing. In this vein students could discuss the impact of reflection and possible transformation.*

*Better responses will offer a range of ideas and frame each paragraph around these rather than focusing on a single story or offering characters from a different story for each paragraph. Students could discuss elements such as implicit tensions between people who are supposed to be close, unspoken hurt, unspoken truths, facades of respectability which hide wounds which lie beneath the surface and so on. Further, the identification of the raft of individuals from whom characters may feel disconnected from can vary from family members, to loved ones to colleagues.*

*Kennedy's realist fiction provides a wealth of characters, events and small moments which allow for discussion relating to moments of disconnection. Title story, Like a House on Fire explores the complications of a couple being disconnected and the associated flow on effect for their children. Students could discuss the veiled animosity felt by Claire who is resentful of the consequences of her unnamed husband's back injury upon her working and private life; she lacks the time to prepare adequately for Christmas and resents his observations about the cleanliness of their home. Likewise, her husband who spends most of his time recumbent on the floor, acknowledges his inability to communicate effectively with his children and worries about the resulting lack of control he feels. In Little Plastic Shipwreck, Roley is unable to communicate his pain about the death of Oceanworld's last remaining dolphin, Samson, to his wife who he sees as "empty, passive" following an accident from which she has not psychologically recovered.*

*In Flexion, the Slovak's marriage is crafted by Kennedy as a model of minimal communication and built on Frank's direction to keep things to themselves. He directs his wife to "not talk about" their miscarriage, to the extent he drives his wife to the next town, so locals don't know she has lost her baby. This relationship is one which appears to be filled with "silent" resentment, as the protagonist, or narrative perspective of Mrs Slovak allows readers to share the pain, as well as her disconnection from her husband. It is also interesting that Mrs Slovak appears to be very disconnected from their neighbours who find her quiet and self-effacing in comparison to 'good old Frank' who has orchestrated it.*

*In terms of the portrayal of characters during moments of reflection regarding past trauma or dramatic life changing moments, students could identify situations that involve the concept of*

*change. Flexion ends with a moment of shared understanding between the Slovaks as a result of his tractor accident and Frank's resulting dependence on his wife; communication is re-established through physical "flexion" exercises and Mrs Slovak's ability to not just empathise with her husband's pain, but also her realisation that the power shift in the relationship does not have to be one where she now dominates in the way Frank used to. In Ashes, when Chris finally moves beyond pettiness to empathise with both his mother's and his own loss. In both of these stories, disconnection comes about because of difficulty communicating with loved ones, but the stories are resolved with moments of shared empathy, leaving readers with a sense that disconnection in families does not have to be permanent. Likewise, Cake ends with Liz's decision to go back home to her son rather than remain physically disconnected due to her return to work.*

- ii. 'It is easy for the reader to feel comfortable within the worlds created by Kennedy'.

To what extent do you agree?

*Kennedy's anthology of short stories provides an insight into the microcosm of family worlds, the dynamics of relationships, human frailties, the gap between our perceptions and understanding, the challenges presented by pivotal moments of decision making, vulnerability and the notion of the learning of which we are all capable: learning to respect, to appreciate others, to survive and to love. On one level, Kennedy's intimate, domestic close-ups explore undercurrents of grief, regret, disconnection and imperfection that form a core of our human existence, yet they also offer opportunities for the reader to glimpse resilience, hope and optimism. As such it can be argued that these stories resonate with the 'ordinary' things which make up life.*

*Students answering this question need to clarify their interpretation of the implications of the word 'comfortable' and also their understanding of the notion of 'worlds created by Kennedy'. Comfortable could imply that sense of familiarity with the often domestic, family scenes presented but also, our ability as readers to recognise the behaviours and ideas of others as realistic and readily transferable. Whilst the notion of 'worlds,' could apply to Kennedy's use of setting: suburbia, rural life, a neighbourhood, life at the office or the internal thinking of the narrative voice.*

*In approaching the question students may identify characters and events which are readily relatable or understandable for many readers, such as surfing the net for information about an ex-partner as depicted in Cross Country, the desire to have a perfect home which is perfectly furnished as in Static; they may even make note of the familiarity of some aspects for an Australian audience such as hot Christmas Days, the closeness of rural communities, games played in a backyard swimming pool and Derwent pencils. Likewise, readers can readily associate with emotional responses such as anger and depression, satisfaction and joy and the consequences of events such as the devastating impact of physical injury upon the major breadwinner in Like a House on Fire and the impact of incapacitation demonstrated through Kennedy's use of simile to describe Frank Slovak's mouth as a "black hole of terror" in Flexion.*



*More complex responses might also discuss the benefits of recognising one's self, situation or moment of conflict with Kennedy's realist, contemporary fiction, taking comfort in the realisation that families and human beings are seldom perfect and the messages of our capacity to make decisions and reach for new beginnings such as Michelle's realisation that she does not need the useless Des to have a family and that her baby has "everything she needs now" in Five Dollar Family, Rebecca's closure of Windows in Cross Country, the value of relationships between disparate personalities such as the Scholar and Mr Moreton in Laminex and Mirrors, the Slovak's ability to make a fresh start as exemplified through touch, "she places her hand...over his heart, and holds it there," and the almost mystical escape from damage of the baby Jesus figure in Like a House on Fire.*

*The command words of the question, "To what extent do you agree?" invites a counter argument. Here students might consider the possible impact for the reader when the reality of a text is too close for comfort such as the domestic violence identified in Seventy-Two Derwents, the break-up of a relationship in Cross Country, the feeling of being in the wrong place, "these endless, extended moments where you're left in limbo," like our narrator in Cake and a world beset with financial concerns such as in Sleepers. Similarly, Tyler's articulation of fear, "sometimes I feel like I have a stone in my stomach" and the notion of waiting for the results of medical tests in Tender could resonate a little too closely.*

### **Much Ado About Nothing by William Shakespeare**

- i. In Shakespeare's play, *Much Ado About Nothing*, everyone is wearing a mask.

Discuss.

*The idea of wearing masks, deceit and self-protection can be applied in a number of ways to Shakespeare's play *Much Ado About Nothing*. The play explores a number of dimensions relating to the wearing of MASKS – both as facades for male deceit, and as self-preservation against the conformist expectations which would otherwise break a woman's spirit. Students could engage initially with the ideas of MEN wearing masks for their own motivations and gains – whether that be a mask of submission in public to hide deceit, revenge, and malicious plotting in the form of Don John, a 'plain-dealing villain'. Ironically shaped by society's prejudice against his illegitimate birthright, or the more weighty investigation of men's masks of respectability when threatened with the age-old presumption of women cuckolding men and therefore humiliating their name and honour. These dimensions are particularly connoted in the behaviours and treachery of Don Pedro, Claudio and even Leonato, protecting their self-interest and chauvinistic honour against the stain of association with an accused 'wanton' in the form of Hero. There is the opportunity to discuss whether Shakespeare endorses or critiques the views and values of men siding with and protecting men against the supposed treachery of women, as seen in Claudio and Don Pedro's blinkered belief in Don John protecting their reputations, despite all previous indications that there is nothing reputable about him.*

*High level responses will also analyse the deeper notions of characters needing masks to protect themselves against social ridicule, male oppression and dictated conformity. Initially, this is seen in the ‘merry war’ between Beatrice and Benedick who both scoff and flout the romantic conventions of wooing. Careful readers of the play will recognise that such masks are worn to guard against past rejection, unrequited romantic interest or worse – laying oneself open to public mocking and ridicule for exposing any kind of vulnerability when choosing to adhere to personal principles and integrity, rather than blindly conform. Only Benedick can get away with his contrary stance when he declares ‘for Man is a giddy thing, and this is my conclusion...’ – because a woman could not admit such changeability without condemnation. There are deeper discussions to be had regarding Shakespeare’s views and values when masks of ‘counterfeit’ are used for apparent ‘good’, richly examined via Don Pedro’s scheme when tricking the warring Benedick and Beatrice ‘into a mountain of affection’. In both cases, women and men are called upon to wear deceitful masks, in order to manipulate recalcitrant characters to conform to societal norms of matrimony, such must be the outcome for Benedick and Beatrice.*

*Conversely, high level responses might also discuss which characters are not prepared to wear a mask. In her struggle to retain some semblance of self-determination, Beatrice is attacked from all sides – the ‘jolting wit’ and torment of Benedick, the social judgement of her guardian Leonato who labels her ‘curst’ and her own quiet expression of longing in “I may... cry ‘Heigh-ho for a husband’. Yet, to her credit, unlike her cousin Hero or conformist Claudio, she will defend her own power of choosing a husband for herself. In rejecting Don Pedro’s offer of ‘Will you have me, lady?’, Beatrice rejects the Prince’s proposal, because she is not prepared to alter herself, nor wear a mask of submission to suit the burdens and duties his position would require – and therefore asserts a strength of female character that will not be broken under the weight of female submission depicted in Hero.*

**ii.** To what extent is *Much Ado About Nothing* a critique of honour?

*From the outset, a good response will explore the question of WHOSE HONOUR, where it can be argued that Shakespeare sets out to examine endorsed integral honour or righteous, flawed honour. The latter can be examined in Don Pedro who is held up in the world of the play, as a figure of superior honour and right – yet he uses his righteous power to interfere in the match-making of Beatrice and Benedick, in his conceited proclamation of ‘...we are the only love gods’. In his machinations, there is an assumed moral ‘honour’ if coercing the lovers to conform. Therefore, a worthy discussion could be had as to whether Shakespeare questions that the only kind of honour is one which facilitates societal conformity, not an honour which defends individual codes of integrity and principle.*

*Linked to this investigation would be the discussion of male honour and reputation, in need of protection against the treachery of women. Male honour, it would seem, is far more important than female virtue or reputation, and should be protected at all costs. Students could examine the behaviours of men who side with men against women, particularly played out via Don Pedro and Claudio’s gullible acceptance of Don John’s accusations, rather than question his motives. By appealing to their preservation of honour, which automatically blinds them to any other nefarious agenda, there is an implied trust in male values – that men protect the standing of*

*other men against women, even played out in Leonato's siding with the Prince and Claudio who must be beyond 'lies(s)' due to their social positions and unquestioned honour.*

*There is also the opportunity to discuss FEMALE HONOUR – based on beauty, submission, conformity, and acquiescence to the will of men – even if wrongly treated. Here, strong students would examine the character of Hero, identified as lacking self-honour because she buckles to her father's dictatorship in accepting either Don Pedro or Claudio, while she has no power or say in her own marital fate, for to do so would be to place female personal fulfilment and honour above the more important considerations of men. This idea of women's inferior honour is furthered, when a woman's virtue and sexual fidelity is called into question. In the flawed view of men, women must be suspected for fear they will cuckold men – bringing shame and disrepute to men's standing and honour.*

*High level responses will engage with the sophisticated notion of SELF HONOUR; – that is, to adhere to your own integrity and morality, borne out by Benedick when he sides against Don Pedro and Claudio in the shaming of Hero, where his instinct, not corrupted by righteous male honour, is proved correct in his assertion that 'the (deceitful) practise of it lives in John the bastard'. Similarly, the defence of self-honour is explored via Beatrice, who*

*will not conform, be lessened or lessened regarding the social expectations of female submission and inferiority of intellect or wit. Therefore, she not only rejects Don Pedro's spurious proposal, because she is not prepared to submit herself to the social expectations and inequality such a union would require, but she fights, teases, rebukes and tests Benedick until sure that her self-honour will not be demeaned or ridiculed in the surety of their union. That they pledge to marry without loss or denigration of self-honour is one of the key lessons endorsed in the play. Strong responses will examine Shakespeare's notions of honour: that male honour is exposed as vain self-interest, duplicitous and weak, and that individual honour is endorsed as courageous, earnest and resolute.*

### **Nine Days by Toni Jordan**

- i. 'Nine Days is about the conflict between individual desires and the expectations of others.'

Discuss.

*This question invites students to analyse the hopes, dreams and narrative arcs of various characters in the novel and how their fate is shaped by societal and familial expectations. It also invites an exploration of the pressures experienced when these expectations are at odds with the characters' own needs, as is so often the case. Finally, this conflict often becomes a catalyst for the pursuit of their own desires, for better or worse.*

*The novel begins with a reminder of Dickens' Great Expectations, or as Pike puts it "Grape Hexpectations" as Kip is torn between his own desire to break free of the established order of the adult world, thinking "I could leave and never come back, live like Huckleberry Finn, wild and without grownups." His maturing, in the sense of the bildungsroman genre, can be traced*

*over the course of the novel via the varying narrative perspectives. We see through the key lesson he has learned and passes on, “every time you see someone, you never know if you’re seeing them for the last time” is that our choices are not always simple and may have unintended consequences. Overall, though, it becomes a matter of making the ‘right’ choice of maintaining one’s personal integrity, rather than capitulating to outside pressures. This is evident, for example, when he provides an honest answer as to why he “took his time” to join up, and Annabel’s admiring tone as she considers it is “not the sort of thing you talk about in mixed company”, but does not condemn him for it.*

*Jordan allows her readers to compare and contrast how some societal norms change over time, reducing their hold over individuals; for example, when Charlotte decides to go through with her pregnancy. This serves to further highlight the tragedy of Connie’s eventual capitulation to her mother’s arguments, that “she’ll be the one dragging us down to (the bottom of the hill)”. But even in the contemporary setting, characters face challenges to their sense of self-worth. Charlotte initially seems free of care, thinking “you can’t control the whole world”, yet still compares herself to Stanzi who is “going places”.*

*Students might consider the overall structure of the novel in shaping these key ideas. It begins with a strong emphasis on the Westaway family’s predicament, exacerbated by Ma’s exhortations to her children to fall in line with social expectations. As she says to Connie, “I begged your father to find you a good government job. It’d be more useful than drawing”; and to Kip, “respectable people keep their children on at school” when he offers to find a job. We see the eventual outcome of her misguided values. The novel concludes with perspectives far apart in time, with drastically different consequences for the characters, yet aligned in their core message. Alec’s decision to do what he knows is right, resisting the expectations of his peers, saves his life. Connie’s decision to be with Jack provides her, someone who has “given up having desires at all”, with a blinding moment of happiness neither of them may have experienced otherwise, and leads to Kip’s photo and the moment that made him “decide to spend the rest of his life” in capturing such moments of true desire.*

- ii. Jordan’s use of multiple narrative viewpoints is the most significant feature of the novel.

Do you agree?

*This topic initially invites students to agree and thus analyse the impact of the multiple narrative perspectives, which provide readers with insight into the interior life of each narrator, highlighting both the personal and historical significance of each ‘day’ in the narrative. As the events unfold in non-chronological order, students might also explore the impact of dramatic irony. There is also the opportunity to consider the use of language in characterisation with each chapter. They could examine the lies and secrets that are revealed, and the differing versions of key events, as well as the influence of seemingly insignificant decisions on character’s lives. A key idea developed through this is that people’s lives are inevitably connected, whether we are aware of it or not, in the sense that ‘no man is an island’, but rather that all our lives matter in some way.*

*Students could further examine the topic by adding to the proposition. For example, they might also examine the use of treasured objects as recurring motifs, to connect the narrative perspectives. This would allow a more sophisticated approach in analysing how key ideas are developed through techniques that operate interdependently. For example, the amethyst pendant, upon which Charlotte reflects, “My mother gave it to me and my father gave it to her. It is my connection with all those who have gone before me.” The photograph of Connie and Jack, despite being hidden for all those years, also serves as a reminder that connections do not have to be visible to exist. The multiple narrative viewpoints, together with the objects, also serve to develop the idea of love denied or lost, versus love fulfilled. The differing perspectives suggest that romantic love can lead characters to a more joyful life. Whilst their relationship does not ultimately end as happily as Kip and Annabel’s, the connection between Connie and Jack highlights the power of a romantic connection with another and the impact this has on other characters, too. Both couples’ romantic connection, which readers can compare through the varying narrative viewpoints, shows how all humans strive for connection with another and how this can elevate one to feel, even just for a moment that the “world is mine” and that they have finally found the “secret to happiness”. This can be contrasted with Francis/Uncle Frank, who appears to have ultimately led a less fulfilling life; and Jean, whose perspective indicates her dissatisfaction as her life did not turn out “how she imagined it to be.” As noted, “maybe love is ... like a coin: moving between people all around us, all the time”. Some characters will find it, some will not, but it can be passed on and its value learned.*

*Overall, this feature develops the notion of continuity as well as change, providing readers with a sense of greater significance than just individual lives in its omniscient, generation-spanning narration.*

### **Old/New World: New & Selected Poems by Peter Skrzynecki**

- i. “Somewhere, between the first breath and the last/you will pause in crowded light or in darkness”.

‘Skrzynecki’s poems explore the tension of life and its passing’.

Discuss.

*To address this question students will need to identify and analyse the central theme of mortality and memory as they occur across Skrzynecki’s poetry. At stake in the question is how the poems both give account to the various struggles and joys of being alive, while at the same time do this in the context of human finitude and the past as revealed (and distorted) by memory. The term ‘tension’ can be seen as a general feature of many of his poems where the struggles of life are counterposed against an ever-present mortality. This is seen in the Polish soil kept for Skrzynecki’s father’s funeral about which he “never once made reference to me” (Polish Soil). In this sense the term ‘passing’ can be taken to suggest both the movement of time – of moments caught then lost in expression – as well as a synonym for death – “how cold was the darkness that shrouded you” (Still Born). An effective answer will, through judicious selection of poems, be able to show how these two aspects of Skrzynecki’s play off each other.*

*Much of Skrzynecki's poems explore prosaic aspects of ordinary life and imbue them with the luminescence of his language. Students are directed to ensure that they use this aspect of his work – the quotidian conveyed in poetic expression – to illustrate their understanding of how poetry transforms its subjects. In many poems an ordinary moment, such as gardening (Flower Garden, Picking Mulberries) or bureaucratic process (Small School Inspection) is shown to conceal more than first apparent, a depth that hides in the very blandness of their appearance. In certain poems the connection between being alive as a vantage point from which to encounter both the past and death is made explicit. In By Graveyard Creek, an early poem, a languid exploration of the coastline is suddenly jolted by the poet's realisation that he stood on an Aboriginal burial ground or The Farmer whose 'strong voice comes back/like a soft rainstorm moving in the brain'. Students could explore how poems like A Drive To The Country demonstrate a disorientation that occurs to the poet in the midst of his experience of time – where the past appears as a hallucination within the present as seen in the child's swing that transforms in the mind of the poet to a "gallows to which dead men return/at noon or in darkness/to wait for a crowd". The poet is left caught and bewildered like a "like a man who is dying/and walks away from a road/that runs only one way".*

*This tension is most explicit in the collection Time's Revenge where meditations on mortality and the passing of time are presented with the context of sickness and the struggle to continue to live. Students could explore the autumnal reminiscences of the titular poem where once it was a simple belief that "after tomorrow/there was another day" but now that had come the acceptance that "eternity was a meaningless word". This reflective acceptance is contrasted with the anxiety of serious illness 'now the word 'leukemia'/will be part of you/for as long as you live" Leukemia which leads to a more harrowing acceptance that "you will never be the same/it likes your body/already owns your name". Such poems allow students to tackle the central theme of the question which is how Skrzynecki's poems shift between an account of the daily lives and activities of its protagonists to revelatory moments where the poet encounters both the limits of human life and its passing into memory. Other profitable groupings of poems to tackle this question could include the various elegies and Skrzynecki's many descriptions of his parents.*

ii. 'Skrzynecki's poetry is a powerful mediation on the importance of family'.

Discuss.

*A central theme running through Skrzynecki's collection of poetry is the influence and continuing resonance that family life plays. This question asks students to identify this current in his work and develop a reading which sheds light on the many ways that the concept of family functions in the poems and through this demonstrate their understanding of the demands of the topic. Skrzynecki's own experience is marked by being the son of migrants and therefore as a someone caught between the two worlds suggested by the title of the collection. The domestic space of the family becomes the context by which larger truths and understanding occur and is the primary catalyst for the transformation of the prosaic into the poetic. A successful engagement with this topic will demonstrate not only the significance of the family as a subject of poetry for Skrzynecki but do so through the way other themes such as loss, memory and the past are filtered through it.*

*Skrzynecki's past conditions his sense of identity in a way made mysterious by its location in a distant Polish heritage, "who are these shadows that hang over you in dream" (Ancestors), yet one bought to life in the world of his parents and their experience. Even his own experiences of becoming a father are meditated through this discord between his past and his family; "I think of my father/and the house he lives in-/the land that I came from/and have never known" (The Birth Of a Son). This geographical dislocation leaves behind a psychological disquiet that animates many of the poems which deal with the migrant experience and could be profitably used in the service of developing a sense of how family retains its broader history across generations.*

*A poignant aspect of Skrzynecki's reflections of family are framed by his poems about his father. Through many poems his father appears as a screen upon which ideas of identity, comfort, love and the encroaching movement of time occur; "I've grown up unprepared to face a future that will not include his physical presence permanently" (My Father's Birthday). Students could focus on the poems which record Skrzynecki's pained observations of his father's passing as a way of showing the depth of this experience in poems such as Polish Soil, First Potatoes, My Father's Watch, My Father's Hammer. They are marked by how Skrzynecki uses imagery of gardens and growth, as well as ordinary objects such as a new watch "sometimes/holding it for a long time as though he expected it/to come to life" (My Father's Watch). His relationship with his mother is also explored in poems such as Mother and Son where within a fragmentary photo from war torn Europe he discerns in his mother's smile "a smile of pure love/you can see it in her eyes". Also, through the collection Immigrant Stories, students could select poems which illustrate the bigotry, racism and trials of resettlement for migrant families as a way to demonstrate how Skrzynecki's family was a place both a dislocation and renewal. As Skrzynecki frequent mediations upon singular photographs of his parents past suggest-upon reflection and through the passage of time they are transformed into a "portrait that hangs in my mind-and does not fade away-as other possession do".*

### **Persepolis by Jonathan Cape**

- i. 'It is Satrapi's depiction of the impact of war on Marji and those she knows that gives the novel its power'.

Do you agree?

*This topic invites students to agree with the initial proposition, as there are many examples that can be analysed for the devastation the conflict brings to the Satrapi family, their friends and neighbours. The novel deliberately focuses on the lives of ordinary citizens, rather than just conveying the grand narrative of history. However, it can also be argued that Satrapi deliberately places these personal stories within the wider historical, social and political framework, thus providing the story of Iran or 'Persepolis' and not the just the 'childhood story' of Marji herself. Another point to consider is that the novel does not focus only on the Second Revolution and war with Iraq, but also the events that led up to this, "2,500 years of tyranny and submission", and this political and personal legacy as framed through the story of Marji's family.*

*The use of the term ‘depiction’ prompts students to consider the use of graphic as well as narrative techniques. Students might analyse a range of characters, but are encouraged to move beyond describing their fates to instead explore the power of Satrapi’s methods in conveying the impact of war. For example, as Grandma relates her family’s story in the chapter ‘Persepolis’ Satrapi intersperses the present day panels of her and Marji with images of Taji as a young girl, suffering her father’s imprisonment whilst Grandma tries to keep her family from starving. The panel on p.23 depicts the Shah attempting to emulate Cyrus the Great, but contrasts this with the image of Marji and Grandma. Satrapi echoes the suffering of their family in Marji’s oblivious words ‘I’m hungry!’ as the soldiers in the opposite frame loom over the two, highlighting the continued threat war brings. It can be noted that as Marji matures and the conflict drags on, Satrapi represents her growing awareness of the tragedy unfolding around her, from “getting used to the war” to understanding that her and her family “would never live together again”. This can also be explored via the fate of minor characters, such as Uncle Taher, Niloufar, and the death of Nada Baba-Levy, ending with the powerful panel where Satrapi demonstrates no image can depict “(the) suffering and (the) anger”. There are also instances where Satrapi depicts how the conflict exploits and furthers divisions in society, such as Mrs Nasrine’s son and other “kids from the poor areas” being recruited for the army. As Marji states, “the internal war had become a bigger issue than the war against Iraq”.*

*Overall, a useful technique to focus on would be the use of mainly small, intimate panels to represent the family and domestic settings, with the impact of war related through the private moments and conversations between family and friends. This is set against a backdrop of larger panels, depicting the greater impact outside the walls of the Satrapi family home, intermingled with the key ‘historical’ panels. There are examples where these can be seen to impinge on the private spaces, as in the episode where Marji travels down the basement stairs to her “hideaway” but scenes of war and torture steal in. No matter how close your family, how secure your occupation, how faithful your religious or political allegiances, Satrapi depicts that no one is safe from the destruction of war.*

- ii. How does *Persepolis: The Story of a Childhood* demonstrate that change is an inevitable part of life?

*Students may focus on the Bildungsroman genre of this text, following the course of Marji’s life as she matures from childhood to early adolescence. Furthermore, the narrative trajectory that begins with Marji being forced to don the veil together with the changes wrought in her education, her community, her family and the political regime can be explored in a response. Satrapi takes her readers back to before the Revolution, to depict the changes that Iran has suffered over centuries due to internal and external conflict. An aspect of this topic that should be not ignored, however, is whether or not change is ‘inevitable’. Students should be able to offer an argument – for example, yes, when one focuses on the inevitability of growing up. However, the extent of the change and the suffering wrought by the changes around Marji are integral to the text as well. Students may consider how the abuse of power ‘inevitably’ leads to political change, which is initially welcomed, but also the impact this has on the lives of ordinary citizens. They may also consider the ways in which such changes are implemented – through force and violence – and the subsequent costs.*



*Students should be encouraged to recognise the irony of Marji’s declaration that she “kissed childhood goodbye” with her first cigarette and is “now a grown-up”. She still has many lessons ahead of her at this point, not the least being her lack of awareness of the implications of war. In 1984, she is “fourteen and a rebel. Nothing scared me anymore” as her parents desperately try to make her understand the lengths the regime will go to with the fate of Niloufar. The resolution of the text, with Marji being forced to leave her family and her home, is a melancholy reminder that there will be further change ahead, with the implication that nothing will ever be the same for her, or for Iran, again. Taji and Eby’s responses imply that with the benefit of an adult perspective, they are better placed to recognise this truth.*

*Finally, students should not overlook the ‘how’ in the topic. A focus on the graphic and narrative techniques might include the use of symbolism, an obvious choice being the veil – the most visible change of all, initially. However, a more subtle approach could be to explore clothing across the text, and the symbolism associated with this, as we see Marji develop through several phases, from young schoolgirl to punk to finally somewhat of a ‘clean slate’ as she prepares to face the unknown. Another example of symbolism is through the use of mirrors, as a tool of self-reflection and a representation of Marji’s changing identity as she learns the importance of not being swayed by every current trend or ideological argument, but to be “true to herself”.*

### **Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen**

- i. ‘In *Pride and Prejudice*, Jane Austen questions society’s views of marriage.’

Discuss.

*The question of Georgian society’s views of marriage can be explored in a number of ways in relation to Austen’s text. Students could focus on those marriages which occur in the text and why, according to social decorum and class, they are regarded as acceptable by Austen’s society. Students could work successfully to compare and contrast the bases on which marriages occur; for example, the Bennets’ marriage is one of beauty and social ascension on her part and her proffered money to shore up the estate on his. Her ‘mean understanding’ and his ‘odd...mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice’ are immediately flagged by Austen as a union which is socially acceptable, but personally unfulfilling – where ‘neither partner can respect the other.’ This could lead to a further nuanced discussion of the union between Collins and Charlotte Lucas, where ‘she knows she is marrying one of the stupidest men in England’ yet Charlotte also knows she has little choice but to accept, if she is ever to secure ‘a comfortable home.’ Charlotte lacks the obvious beauty of the older Bennet girls and Austen presents her as a pragmatist – that women of her age and appearance cannot afford to be ‘romantic you know’ – therefore, they set aside their own ‘chance of (personal) happiness’ and must ‘sacrifice every better feeling to worldly advantage.’ Collins, too, submits to social conformity, but it is his sycophancy to Lady Catherine de Bourgh which acts as a stronger incentive to marry, rather than any sincere notion of love. He is fixated on Lady Catherine’s directive of ‘chuse a gentlewoman for my sake, ... not brought up high’ – and in Charlotte’s conscious acquiescence to class, rank and status, he finds a partner who will meet with Lady Catherine’s approval, but at the expense of her own fulfilment. Again, Austen works to critique*

*these dysfunctional unions and the hypocrisy of a society which condones them as valuable and acceptable.*

*Austen presents a range of both actual and hypothetical marriages and in each case the bases of these marriages are endorsed by society yet critiqued by Austen. The topic invites students to discuss on what basis are marriages viewed as acceptable, palatable and desirable. Both the Bennets' and Collins' unions are acceptable, but the marriage of Lydia and Wickham brings into sharp relief the views and values of women's virtue which must be assured at all costs, even at the expense of Darcy paying the lecherous Wickham to marry Lydia to save her reputation and therefore protect the marriage prospects of the other sisters (clearly with his own ulterior motives in mind). It is this unpalatable union and the associated grubby scandal which Lady Catherine savours as she works to block any prospective union between Elizabeth and Darcy, that Austen also highlights as hypocritical and a good student would draw parallels between the sordid union of the Wickhams and the sordid business of Lady Catherine plotting Darcy's union with her daughter, Anne 'from the cradle'. In both cases, the unions work to preserve reputation and it is beyond Lady Catherine's ken to 'endure' or 'tolerate' any lesser union which would 'pollute' the status and assured wealth that such a union between cousins would secure.*

*High level responses will also analyse stylistic elements of the text, such as Austen's keen characterisation, use of irony and satirical wit, when assessing the flaws and weaknesses of such hypothetical unions as Collins and Lizzy, Wickham and Lizzy, or Lizzy and Darcy in the first instance. Collins' proposal is comic genius; pompous, excruciating and insulting all at once. Wickham's hypothetical match highlights the blinkered vanity of both players. In contrast, Darcy's first proposal is entitled, smug and assured. In all instances, Austen scrutinises the presumptive rights and power of men over women and this presents strong students with the opportunity to discuss those qualities of change and maturity Austen endorses in a marriage partner and how Elizabeth defends her own aspirations of integrity and happiness, while others such as her close friend Charlotte and even obliquely, her sister Jane, surrender to marital conformity. High level responses will set aside the more superficial romantic notions in favour of exploring the quiet social revolution signalled by Lizzy's marriage to Darcy, which speaks of a conscious social defiance of Lady Catherine's suffocating class conservatism, while securing the personal happiness so readily sacrificed by other weaker characters who typify the disempowered conformist views of their society.*

**ii.** To what extent is *Pride and Prejudice* a novel about power and choice?

*This topic provides a range of access points for students prepared to engage in a multi-dimensional discussion of the text. When addressing the prompt, students need to think about the mechanisations of power at work in Austen's society, as well as in her novel. There are obvious points of societal power: the power of social class and status, the power of new and old money and the power of social intimidation. There is the opportunity to discuss Bingley's new money which tries to assert itself by insisting Darcy adhere to the expectation of dancing, yet is firmly rebuffed by the old money power of Darcy's status and decorum. So too is there the opportunity to discuss the power of Lady Catherine, whose social dominance and righteousness, by dictating*

*to Collins and attempting to intimidate Lizzy, is firmly drawn from her class power and rank, yet ironically this is secured through marriage, not birthright.*

*At a deeper level, there are also the dimensions of the power of social conformity, the power of male inheritance to disadvantage women and the power of men to determine a woman's future stability and comfort, all clearly explored through Mrs Bennet's aspirations for her daughters, as well as Charlotte Lucas and Mary King. There is also the power of façade and artifice, examined through the rise, admiration and hypocritical acceptance of Wickham, whose artful study of the power of manners and 'the appearance of goodness' enables him to insidiously wreak social havoc among the fine families of the text. An astute writer might explore in the ways in which Georgian society provides this power of artifice and deceit to Wickham and how it hypocritically excuses him through the virtuous façade of marriage? There is also the power of duty, so artfully used by Mrs Bennet and Lady Catherine in attempting to break Lizzy's will and bring her to Georgian society's conformist heel.*

*High level responses would engage with the broader notions of the power of pride and the power of prejudice. In each case, students could discuss how the power of pride entitles its proponents to righteously interfere with those viewed as inferior and beneath them; obviously through Lady Catherine's dictatorship of Collins' choice in marriage, but more deeply in her engineering of her own daughter's union and her attempted intimidation of Elizabeth, all to secure her own selfish interests. But Darcy, too, uses the power of pride – to pass judgment and insult Elizabeth at the ball, to pass judgement on Jane's interest in Bingley and to interfere in this proposed union by persuading Bingley away to London, all based on his own presumed power of upper class pride and superiority of mind and character. Conversely, writers could explore the power of prejudice, where Elizabeth's curt judgments impact and prejudice those around her – from her father, mother, Charlotte, even the Gardiners and which must be reversed upon Elizabeth's own moment of humiliation.*

*These broader discussions lead strongly into the dove-tailed concept of choice: the power to choose, to submit or to defy. The exploration of choice presents itself strongly throughout the text and Austen provides key moments to explore what will be lost through obeying individual choice. For Charlotte, it is the loss of intellectual and emotional equality, for Lizzy, it is initially the insipid tantrum of her mother, when Lizzy refuses Mr Collins and then the ferocious wrath of Lady Catherine whose plans for the united future (and wealth) of Pemberley and Rosings are foiled by an 'obstinate, headstrong girl' who refuses to negate her own integrity and feelings for the expected conformist will of the aristocracy. Austen clearly explores the perceived social price paid for personal choice, through both Lizzy and Darcy, yet they gain much more than they lose in terms of ensuring personal honour and integrity, while securing the shared values of respect, ardour and intellectual and emotional equality, so clearly denied in other cases in the text. High level responses can work with both concepts and draw insightful, individual conclusions as to how far Austen disputes, critiques or endorses a character's ability to deal with the societal pressures of power and choice.*

**Rear Window by Alfred Hitchcock (Director)**

- i. In *Rear Window*, Alfred Hitchcock turns the lens back on to the audience.

Discuss.

*Alfred Hitchcock was always intensely conscious of the role of the audience in cinema. L.B. Jefferies is essentially a voyeur, however Hitchcock's use of Point of View shots in the film are as much a reflection of society as they are of the psychology of his characters.*

*By filming *Rear Window* almost entirely from Jeff's point of view through the subjective use of camera, Hitchcock positions the viewer to join in on Jeff's voyeuristic activity, rendering them complicit in his spying. The mis-en-scene allows Hitchcock to skilfully disclose the narrative of L.B's neighbours. Each apartment acts as an individual screen or frame. Hitchcock provides snippets of compact information of each character, leaving the audience, like Jeff, wanting more to be revealed.*

*The political context of the film raises another fascinating aspect of Hitchcock's vision for *Rear Window*. The making and setting of the film corresponds with the age of McCarthyism and the communist scare in The United States. Neighbours turned on neighbours and suspicion was rampant. It seems reasonable to suppose that Hitchcock may have been inspired by the social discord in America during this period. One neighbour speculating about another committing terrible actions is very reminiscent of the atmosphere that existed and the attitude of many Americans during the early 1950s. When Jefferies asks "do you suppose it's ethical" regardless of innocence or guilt and Lisa responds by announcing "we're two of the most frightening ghouls I've ever known", Hitchcock has completed a 180° turn with the camera and has it staring squarely back at the audience asking them to consider their behaviour during this volatile time in American history.*

*However, Hitchcock was acutely aware of cinema's ability to entertain and act as a form of escape from the realities of post-war life. Students could refer to Hitchcock's use of the convenient plot devices of Jefferies being house bound by a broken leg and in the middle of a New York heatwave. Jeff feels trapped and due to the heatwave his neighbour's blinds are up and the windows are open. He cannot help but watch the world outside him as he increasingly immerses himself in the lives of others as a diversion from his own private issues. Similarly, the audience at the cinema are trapped in front of a screen able to engage in fantasising about other people's lives and relieve their boredom in a similar way to Jefferies.*

*The morality of all this peeping on other people's lives forms a central sub-text in the film. Stella, Lisa, and Doyle each point out the moral and legal questionability of LB's activities. Yet despite their reservations LB cannot let go of the mystery of what happened to Mrs Thorwald. Hitchcock suggests his reasons seem to be more from boredom and self-satisfaction as an amateur sleuth rather than any deep concern for a possible victim. Hitchcock appears to be simultaneously accusing the audience of doing the same.*

- ii. Alfred Hitchcock's *Rear Window* is less about a murder and more about human interaction.

Do you agree?

*While the Thorwald murder would appear to be the main plot of the film it can also be seen as simply a device through which Hitchcock explores human interaction. Set in Greenwich Village of 1954, Rear Window is placed in a dense apartment block, a microcosm of New York City. Here, the audience's view is confined to the space of one window and seen through the eyes of protagonist, J.B Jefferies.*

*In the world that Hitchcock has created and that Jefferies views daily, his characters are neatly contained and seemingly confined in their own small worlds. Hitchcock's strategic deployment of LB as a photographic journalist works on two levels. He is both by profession and instinct an observer who must remain detached from his subjects. His job dictates that he must not engage personally but clinically chronicle the events unfolding around him. This is now applied to the community of the courtyard. His injury allows him to keep his distance from his neighbours as he at times disdainfully observes their behaviour in their apartments and their interactions with each other. What we see through his lens is an insight into how people, who despite living on top of each other, barely ever connect. They rarely interact with one-another, loneliness appears to be widespread and compassion nowhere to be seen. This is symbolised by the Siffleuse on the fire escape who publicly castigates all of her neighbours for their lack of care as they fail to even notice or care that the little dog she dotes on has been strangled in the courtyard.*

*Furthermore, Jeff's obsession with the Thorwalds seems to have more to do with relieving his boredom and the itch to get back to work and less to do with his concern and compassion for Mrs. Thorwald. Jeff is repeatedly shown trying to document something horrible and arguing with Doyle about it. His motivation appears to be driven more by his desire to prove that his instincts for a story are right rather than about the wellbeing of the missing woman. Similarly, on a personal level, Jefferies uses the drama of the missing Mrs Thorwald as a way of distancing himself from his own fears of commitment and intimacy towards Lisa, who longs to formalise their relationship. LB would rather maintain the 'status quo', determined not to lose her but wishing to keep Lisa at arm's length.*

*Discussion could focus on the theme of loneliness. In their most private moments, many of the characters in Rear Window are seen to be lonely. Hitchcock's separation of Mr. and Mrs. Thorwald by framing them through different windows emphasises this loneliness, even when characters are living together. Miss Lonelyhearts, who contemplates suicide, is the most obvious example of loneliness. Jefferies, despite his desire to forego a formal relationship with Lisa and get back to his adventurous lifestyle has, besides Lisa, only his editor, Stella (paid by his health insurer to come to his apartment) and Detective Doyle to talk to.*

*However, Rear Window concludes with a hopeful message and suggests that humans need to interact with each other. The denouement sees LB with two broken legs but smiling as Lisa sits dutifully beside him, Miss Lonelyhearts seems to have found love as she is presented in the*

*Songwriter's apartment and Miss Torso, despite her multitude of suitors, is thrilled by the arrival of her true love.*

### **Runaway by Alice Munro**

- i. 'Munro's stories feature characters challenged by separation and loss'.

Discuss.

*When considering this topic, students need to recognise that while separation and loss are related themes, they are not the same. In some cases, separation leads to loss but this is also dependent on perspective. For some characters, separation is a positive thing. Students should analyse a range of stories and make meaningful connections between stories. A number of the stories feature young women who separate themselves from their parents with mixed consequences. Carla, in Runaway, leaves her family home when still a teenager, abandoning plans to go to college to set up home with the older Clark whose 'friendliness ... could suddenly turn sour'. She becomes estranged from her family as the couple live in a trailer home on Clark's farm and run a struggling business. After three years with Clark she decides to 'run away' from him but eventually gets off the bus and calls Clark to 'come and get' her. Carla's separation from her family is unsuccessful as she becomes a disempowered young woman unable to escape a damaging relationship. Juliet, in Chance, is a Classics graduate who travels across the country to take up a short-term teaching position at a prestigious private school in Vancouver. Unlike Carla, Juliet travels with the blessing of her parents, and while she too falls for an older man, her love interest, Eric, is a much more solid figure. Juliet's separation from family leads to love and baby Penelope, although in subsequent stories Munro reveals some of the stresses in Juliet's life. In Soon, Juliet travels east with Penelope to visit her parents and realises that cultural differences have developed since she has been away. In Silence, 20-year-old Penelope leaves Juliet for a spiritual retreat and never returns; choosing to sever all contact with her despairing mother. Juliet eventually recovers from this loss and rebuilds her life. Little is revealed of Penelope's life, however the second-hand news that she has five children and is living 'way up north' suggests a kind of happiness.*

*Another kind of separation explored in the stories is that of young women separating from love interests. There are different reasons for these separations occurring, leading to different outcomes. Juliet's relationship with Eric is one of the more successful romantic connections in the collection. However, their temporary separation when Juliet travels east to visit her parents leads to an infidelity on his part which causes problems in the relationship when the details are inadvertently revealed years later. Nineteen-year-old Grace, in Passion, ends her passionless relationship with the lovely Maury after meeting Dr Neil Travers, Maury's thrilling but married older brother. Working-class Grace's rejection of middle-class Maury is bold and courageous, but Neil's suicide introduces a melancholia to Grace's life that is still apparent decades later when she revisits the scene of the drama. Students could also discuss the example of Robin and Danilo in Tricks. This is one of the more promising couplings in the collection but becomes a*

*story about what might have been when their planned reunion is ruined by a cruel case of mistaken identity.*

*The sense of loss is most apparent in the number of deaths featured in the collection. Several characters lose their spouse (or partner): Sylvia loses her elderly husband in Runaway; Eric loses his ‘more or less brain dead’ wife in Chance; Juliet loses fisherman Eric in a sudden storm in Silence; and Nancy loses her husband Wilf after a long and slow decline in Powers. Eric rebounds quickly, while the others take more time. Juliet and Nancy in particular are forced to deal with complicating factors. The suicide of Dr Neil Travers in Passion greatly affects many of the characters in the story. Trespasses explores a different kind of death. A long-held family secret is finally revealed which leads to a cathartic scattering of ashes in the snow.*

- ii. “No. He hadn’t hurt her physically. But he hated her. He despised her”.

‘Runaway reveals love to be fraught and destructive.’

Do you agree?

*The quote comes from the first story, Runaway, and refers to Carla’s difficult relationship with Clark. Students could begin by discussing this disturbing union. While Clark is not physically violent, he is considerably older than Carla and extremely controlling. He has an antagonistic nature, often getting into arguments; he is known to ‘suddenly turn sour’ and to ‘flare up’. Carla, aided by neighbour Sylvia, gets on a bus in order to run away but eventually loses her will and calls Clark to pick her up. Clark is emboldened by Carla’s failure to leave and confronts Sylvia in a threatening manner late at night in order to revel in his victory. Munro’s powerful metaphors of a ‘murderous needle’ buried in Carla’s lungs and buzzards feasting on the corpse of her treasured goat create a sense of hopelessness for the protagonist. Trespasses features another dysfunctional couple in Harry and Eileen. The couple have a sad backstory, with the loss of an adopted baby in a car accident, and a history of excessive drinking and ‘volatile’ arguments. However, unlike Runaway, the ceremonial scattering of the baby’s ashes toward the end of the story introduces an element of hope.*

*Next, students can discuss relationships which contain both periods of extended happiness and times of difficulty. Two of these feature Eric in Chance and Silence. The first with his wife, Ann; the difficult period beginning when she is hit by a car, becoming ‘paralysed’ and almost ‘brain dead’. The second with Juliet. The two seem to have a healthy and happy relationship until Juliet inadvertently discovers an infidelity more than a decade old. Eric dies in a sudden storm out at sea with ‘their last quarrel’ not ‘entirely resolved’. Juliet’s parents, Sam and Sara in Soon, also have a seemingly strong relationship with Sam often having to care for Sara on account of her ‘weak heart’. However, Sam eventually becomes ‘unhappy’, frustrated with his wife’s ill health. When she dies, Sam marries ‘a good-natured, handsome and competent woman’ and tears ‘down the house where he and Sara had lived’ to extend the garden.*

*Finally, students can discuss examples where couples meet and discover some unexpected passion which cannot be acted upon due to circumstances or misunderstandings. Grace in*

*'Passion' chooses to go on some kind of adventure with Neil rather than attend Thanksgiving dinner with her beau (Neil's young brother), Maury. Grace surrenders to 'a stream of desire' where she does 'not have to think of' Maury and 'still less of Mavis', Neil's wife. This coupling is impossible from the beginning and ends abruptly with Neil's suicide. The experience is so powerful, however, that Grace is still re-living it some 40 years later. Robin and Danilo in Tricks also spend a splendid day together but a tragic misunderstanding thwarts their potential romance. Robin finally discovers the truth decades later and while eventually 'grateful for the discovery', Robin, like Grace, is left thinking of what might have been.*

### **Stations Eleven by Emily St John Mandel**

- i. Memories serve as both a gift and a burden for Mandel's characters.

Discuss.

*This question invites students to consider memory, a central concern within Station Eleven and one which is enabled through her non-linear narrative structure. Indeed, the back-and-forth movements allow Mandel to make thematic connections across time and add layers of emotional depth into her characters, with whom the reader journeys in both pre- and post-pandemic worlds.*

*Students could respond to the topic by referring to Mandel's diverse characters which she uses as vehicles to explore what truly sustains people in both the pre and post pandemic landscape. St John Mandel's characters are wrenched from the warmth and safety of the civilised world. Within this landscape the notion of memory is highly significant and explored by Mandel as a paradoxical factor, where for some characters it sustains them yet, acts as a burden for others. As the point of civilisation collapse gets further away, some characters ponder whether memories of the former world should be forgotten, tossed aside as remnants of the past. Characters too young to remember the former world, or much of it, often question whether the pre-pandemic world should be remembered, as they sometimes find themselves jealous of it.*

*Students could refer to the memories of August and those preserved in Clark's Museum of Civilisation where can be perceived as a gift and in the form of nostalgia serves to sustain, offering hope and optimism to some. August, for example, has strong memories of science fiction television shows. This untainted and biased memory of the pre-pandemic world acts as a reservoir of optimism for August, who believes "the world didn't end... It's still spinning". Thus, August's memory preserves his innocent and untainted demeanour, and protects him against the corruption of post-pandemic savagery. Similarly, Clark's Museum of Civilisation serves as an almost religious location for people to reflect on 'what was best about the world'. These memories of the pre-pandemic world sustain through invoking hope that civilisation may return to the level it was once was, with hope to ride a motorbike again, to use a cell phone, or to wear high heels again. This preservation of memory is particularly important to those born after the collapse, who cannot remember a world without savagery. Further, Francis Diallo started venturing into creating newspapers so the period just after the societal collapse isn't forgotten either. "The more we remember about the former world, the better we will understand why it*



*fell”. Diallo seeks understanding at the notion of remembering the pre-collapsed civilisation. Kirsten often ponders whether the past should be forgotten as many of the children seek jealousy as they haven’t had the same luxury of the everyday objects of the past. However, the children’s ignorance also protects them from the horrifying events during the pandemic.*

*Yet memories are an affliction for others and a more complex student response would seek to analyse the notion of the burden of memory upon individuals. Identifying characters such as Kirsten and Dieter for whom memory serves as a reminder of traumatic better times, and mistakes invoking emotions of stress, jealousy and regret. Kirsten, in a contrasting juxtaposition to August, is burdened by her traumatic memories and consequently, constantly battles with the concept of whether it is ‘better to know’ about what has happened in the past, to an extent that she has completely forgotten the First year on the road and hopes to ‘never remember’ as a means to protect herself. Additionally, Dieter is a character used by Mandel to explore the notion that ‘the more you remember, the more you’ve lost’. Dieter who ‘longs for the sound of his electric guitar’ is one of the few characters who have a full memory of the pre-pandemic world, and Dieter knows that the peak civilisation of his life is behind him, and as a result, is jealous and envious of his past life, and feels robbed of his future.*

*Student responses would do well to consider Arthur and the role memory plays for him. Arthur dies before the pandemic reaches momentum and as such, his character offers the student an opportunity to address the topic in a different way. Arthur is a vain, arrogant and ambition driven character, who is afflicted by the mistakes he has made in life. Before Arthur dies, and he is reflecting on his life, he realises how he has hurt those who love him, how he has neglected his own child and how all this was for a career which ‘he can’t remember’ the last time he had enjoyed. Arthur’s burden of memory also drives him to endeavour to be a better father in an attempt to escape his memories of neglect and self interest.*

*Student responses would do well to consider Arthur and the role memory plays for him. Arthur dies before the pandemic reaches momentum and as such, his character offers the student an opportunity to address the topic in a different way. Arthur is a vain, arrogant and ambition driven character, who is afflicted by the mistakes he has made in life. Before Arthur dies, and he is reflecting on his life, he realises how he has hurt those who love him, how he has neglected his own child and how all this was for a career which ‘he can’t remember’ the last time he had enjoyed. Arthur’s burden of memory also drives him to endeavour to be a better father in an attempt to escape his memories of neglect and self interest.*

- i. *Station Eleven* proves that even in the midst of tragedy, it is possible to find hope.

Discuss.

*In the tumultuous world of Station Eleven where a pandemic and the ensuing chaos results in a perpetual struggle for survival, Emily St John affirms that subsistence is no substitute for a life filled with art, beauty and spiritual peace. The act of sheer survival leads to being physically alive, but can neglect being functional on a spiritual or emotional level, which comes from the negligence to find a meaning or fulfilling purpose in life. As a piece of speculative fiction, the*

*world of Station 11 in which time is reset to Year 1, Mandel provides the opportunity to reflect upon what of value would remain and what would be discarded.*

*Mandel's world she tells us, has "No cities. No countries, no internet, no more Facebook, no more email," and much of the action is set 15 and then 20 years after the fateful pandemic and it is this breadth of time which allows for the consideration relating to the new world which begins to emerge. As such, the novel, whilst partially a tale of tragic loss and one which might be enjoyed by some readers for its sprinkling of 'doomsday elements', moves to offering a strong sense of hope as Mandel slowly reveals that which is valued and thus, retained.*

*Students will find it easy to identify elements of tragedy within the novel ranging from death, to religious persecution, the abuse of power to the terror of a survivor making it safely to Severn City Airport and weeping with relief to find he is not alone. What is significant in a student response will be their identification and articulation of that notion of hope, what it means to different individuals and how it can be achieved.*

*Key elements which could be offered by students in terms of what sustains the survivors may vary. Most certainly discussion regarding the pursuit of art in comparison to the materialistic views of the modern society destroyed in the path of the pandemic is of value. Evidence used here could be an analysis of the motif of the paperweight, symbolic of need for beauty and elegance in the world with the paperweight having 'no practical use whatsoever'. Nonetheless, carried by Kirsten because 'she found it beautiful', and keeps it as a reminder that beauty can be found in modest and unanticipated packages, driving her to look for delicacy in the most unpredictable places.*

*Likewise students could explore the idea of self-expression, individuality and a sense of purpose individuality which ultimately sustains characters and provides hope in Station Eleven. Art is the primary vehicle of example and the travelling Symphony is a key example of this, bearing the motto 'survival is insufficient'. The Travelling Symphony receives no monetary or material payment, and operates out of the pure desire to promulgate their art. Art acts as a kernel of civilisation among the savagery of the post-pandemic world, and its preservation allows the members of the Symphony to 'sleep better at night', thus sustaining them.*

*St John Mandel also delves into the importance of relationships and themes of gratitude and memory, and how these contribute to creating a life of hope that is focused on more than just existing. Relationships that are forged from respect, trust and common personal traits, allow people to be vulnerable and experience comfort when change occurs both pre and post-pandemic.*

### **Stories We Tell by Sarah Polley (Director)**

- i. *Stories We Tell* explores what is real and what is not real.

Discuss.

*The question of what is real and what is not real can be applied to several aspects of the Stories We Tell. Students could begin with a focus on Polley’s family history. The documentary reveals a complex family history with Polley uncovering new information about her parentage. This information shatters her former perception of reality and creates a new situation where reality is contested and uncertain. Polley learns that Harry Gulkin is her “biological father”, not Michael Polley. The DNA test proves this to be real, but the film raises questions beyond this fact. Michael is still her legal father, but Polley explores the more complicated question regarding their emotional connection. She asks Michael whether it makes “any difference” and spends countless hours interviewing him on camera as the film attempts to establish the nature of their relationship during different phases of the family history – before Diane’s death, after Diane’s death and most critically, after the revelation that there is no biological connection between the two of them.*

*Polley also investigates the relationship between Michael and Diane in light of the infidelity and the “intense” love affair with Harry Gulkin. Is it true that Diane’s “heart really belonged to Michael” or does Harry have a point when he says that Diane is “the only person who could provide ... the essentials of what took place”. A new reality explored in the film is Polley’s relationship with Harry, the “biological father” she never knew she had. At first he is “crazy” about her but the “atmosphere” becomes “heavy” when the two disagree about how the story should be told. Harry wants to publish his version of events while Polley wants to include “the whole picture”; that is, her “experience of it, [Harry’s] experience of it, as well as [Polley’s] family’s”. At this point the film questions whether a work of art can “find the truth” and whether it is more efficacious to give precedence to the central “parties to an incident” or to “give equal weight” to “different narratives”. Furthermore, Michael argues that Polley’s editing of the film will undermine the aim of giving “equal weight” to different perspectives, thus suggesting that *Stories We Tell* is primarily Polley’s reality.*

*High level responses will also analyse structural and stylistic elements of the film.*

*Stories We Tell blends archival footage with recreated scenes. These scenes feature actors and are deliberately made to look like old Super-8 films; some mimic home movies and some recreate social scenes featuring Diane and Harry. The blending of real and convincing recreated footage places the audience in a similar position to Polley as interviewer and protagonist. She deliberately creates a puzzle for the audience to navigate. Polley also includes a behind the scenes shot of her directing one of the recreated scenes. This inclusion reveals a critical element of her process and prods the audience to further question what is real and what is not real.*

ii. Why do the interviewees in *Stories We Tell* agree to talk to Sarah Polley?

*When attempting this question, students need to think about the identity of the interviewees. Harry’s “concentric” circles metaphor is useful for this purpose. The interviewees who have most at stake are Michael and Harry; the next circle would include Polley’s siblings and Harry’s family; and the outer circle would include friends (mostly Diane’s), extended family and Geoff Bowes (Diane’s short-term lover). These people speak to Polley for a variety of reasons: some welcome the opportunity to put forward their version of events; some do it to get close to Polley; some contribute out of love or loyalty to Polley or Diane; and some do it in order to deal with grief. In most cases the interviewees participate for more than one reason.*

*The cases of Michael and Harry are very similar but their roles in the film are very different. Both have written their own version of the events, but these feature in the film in very different ways. Michael’s memoir provides the spine of the film. The film opens with Michael’s voice reading from his memoir, there are images of him handwriting the memoir, and several scenes of Michael in the studio reading his script while being directed and recorded by Polley. Michael seems to relish the opportunity to tell his story in all its detail, but also appreciates that his story will become “something completely different” when edited by Polley. Harry writes a “six page summary” of the story at the behest of Polley and the typed first draft is shown in the film, but not read. Harry and Polley argue about his desire to publish “his story” so Harry drops it in order to preserve his “relationship” with Polley. He appears in the film with some “trepidation” but “is going along with it” in the hope that it will bring him closer to Polley. Michael also observes that the day Polley told him he was not her biological father was “the closest [they had] been in quite a few years” thus suggesting that his participation is motivated in part by a desire to get closer to Polley. Both Michael and Harry love Polley and contribute in order to please her. They also appear to be still in love with Diane and use the film to declare their love and loyalty to her.*

*Polley’s siblings and Harry’s family (daughter and sister) represent the middle circle. Polley’s siblings appear with varying degrees of enthusiasm, however, they all seem to want to please Polley and want to help her with her project even though they might not understand it. Johnny and Joanne, in particular, grasp the opportunity to express their views on what happened. All four siblings express their love for Diane and all seem determined to give positive accounts of their mother. Harry’s daughter, Cathy, and sister, Marie, appear to be willing participants in the film. They both seem to have positive relationships with Polley, their newfound relative, and are both very supportive of Harry. They have similar motivations for appearing in the film, that is, they both want to help Polley with her project, but more importantly, they want to help Polley and Harry become close again after the “misunderstanding” regarding the telling of the story.*

*There is a large cast of interviewees in the outer circle. Most of the interviewees in the outer circle are friends of Diane and Michael. They all convey great regard for the couple and are especially protective of Diane. The women, in particular, are determined to protect their friend’s memory and reputation: Anne says that Diane was not “terribly promiscuous”; Deirdre talks about Diane’s ability to “razzle dazzle”; and several interviewees say that Michael and Diane were “incredibly different people” and discuss Diane’s frustration with Michael. Others in the*

*outer circle are theatre people involved in the play in Montreal who seem to welcome the opportunity to be involved in a Sarah Polley production. The exception is the actor, Geoff Bowes, who appears out of some sense of obligation, awkwardly confessing that he and Diane “slept together once”.*

### **The Golden Age by Joan London**

- i. ‘Near Death experiences change people’s lives in different ways’.

Discuss.

*Joan London’s novel The Golden Age clearly engages with the theme of survival - both physical and emotional - in the face of life-threatening and life-altering events including World War II, the Holocaust and a virulent polio outbreak. Related to this theme are the ways in which individuals, families and groups navigate feelings of despair and hope (represented through London’s allusions to darkness and light), confinement and freedom (note London’s symbolic reference to birds and the juxtaposition between inside and outside) and how this shapes their responses to adversity.*

*The Gold family are central to this theme and endure multiple traumas, These include the near-death experiences of Meyer (in a Nazi Concentration camp) and those of Ida and Frank who are separated as they elude Nazi capture; and the scourge of polio as Frank initially fights for his life, and later for a sense of belonging in a society that saw him as a “broken... a wounded animal”. In mirroring the sense of confinement and separation Frank experiences during the Holocaust with his experiences recovering from polio, London examines the consequences of repeated trauma and the pervasive belief that “death was all around” (and this is reinforced with the accidental death of Lidja). For Ida, this layered trauma saw her “become somebody else”, someone who largely cast off her talent for music and instead became preoccupied with pessimism and a belief that she was cursed. In this sense, near-death experiences can have a dislocating effect that has long lasting psychological effects - the death of one’s dreams and aspirations as it were. Some people are able to deal with this loss better than others - Meyer is able to reinvent himself as a ‘new Australian’ and relishes his new found vocation as a drinks delivery driver and Sister Penny tries to overcome the loss of her relationship with her daughter by making connections with others in her role as a nurse and her perfunctory relations with men.*

*Another critical point of comparative analysis are the near-death experiences of polio victims and the ways in which those around shape their responses. Whilst the families of polio victims invariably suffer, the relationship between polio victim and parent shapes the ways in which individuals deal with their illness. Whilst Frank and Elsa are able develop a new appreciation for life and a tenacious commitment to independence, younger victims like Ann-Lee and Albert, who are unable to let go of their past and seek to resume their previous life regardless of how it might limit their recovery. Undeniably, there are galvanising events that allow Frank and Elsa to build their own independent futures - their romance and their emerging sense of vocation provide an identity beyond that of a dependent child or cripple. So too, Frank’s short lived*

*friendship with Sullivan Backhouse who “learnt how to live” inside an iron-lung proves pivotal in Frank’s understanding of the ways in which he can harness his mind to fulfil his dreams and “in recovery {Frank thus} felt a hunger to know why he was alive”.*

- ii.** To what extent was time spent at The Golden Age Children’s Polio Convalescent Home ‘a golden age’ for characters in the novel?

*This essay prompt requires students to engage with the symbolic meaning of the novel’s title. To do this, students will need to demonstrate an understanding of the adage ‘a golden age’ and associations of an idyllic or peak time of achievement and prosperity. Built as “a pub at the turn of the (19th) century”, ‘The Golden Age’ was re-commissioned as a convalescent home in 1949 “to service the years of the great epidemics” and students should note the irony in the name whilst also engaging with the deeper suggestion that periods of adversity can have an edifying effect as the title suggests.*

*Students should note the question stem - ‘to what extent’ - as this prompt requires a quantified answer. As such students should compare and contrast the different experiences of patients, their families and workers at the Golden Age and analyse the differential impact of time spent at The Golden Age.*

*For some patients - most notably Frank and Elsa - their time at The Golden Age was a coming of age. It stood in contrast to their traumatic experience of the Isolation Ward where others were actively afraid of them (“they wore masks and gowns”) and allowed them to avoid the disappointment, shame and fear of their parents. Whilst both are aware of “how they must look to the outside world. Tragic children, cursed, deformed”, it was at the convalescent home, that they realised they “belonged to no one but themselves” and that there was a “strange beauty” in a children’s polio ward. Indeed, it was at The Golden Age that Frank and Elsa were able to assert a sense of independence from their families and a freedom from the strict confines of society - they developed a sense of connection with one another (“that filled the air around them”) and with many of the staff and thus formed a “family” of their own. They also develop a sense of appreciation for, and contentment with, their solitude. In many ways Frank and Elsa were able to overcome much more than the physical challenges polio presents - they learnt to walk, they fell in love and they each developed a sense of vocational purpose. Polio challenged and transformed their mindsets. In this sense it was ‘a golden age’ - a transformative period - for Frank and Elsa albeit one tempered with later sadness as they are separated (after their relationship is discovered) and ultimately continue to live their lives independent of one another.*

*So too, The Golden Age offered families time and space to come to terms with the changing nature of their lives, and that of their children, in the face of the scourge of polio. For example, following her escape from Poland Ida renounced her ‘gift’ and became a “bird who refused to sing”. It was an invitation to perform at a concert at The Golden Age that reignited her passion and led her to the realisation that “this was the land in which her life would take place. In which her music must grow”. The Golden Age in some ways promoted a sense of acceptance and healing and students could likewise discuss its effects on Meyer whose “disappointments and resentments had begun to evaporate” and “he felt a return to a certain lightness” or on Sister*

*Olive Penny who like Frank and Elsa has learnt to find her own path. This reminds readers that 'a golden age' can be experienced as the result of a relationship with another person or a personal catharsis that leads to a new perspective.*

*Finally, students could contrast these experiences with those of patients who in many ways do not rise to the challenges that their recovery presents. These tend to be younger children like Ann-Lee and Albert whose dependence on their family stymie their progress.*

### **The Lieutenant by Kate Grenville**

- i. 'Rooke is an observer rather than a participant'.

Do you agree?

*To frame their response, students could consider the evolution of Rooke from observer, to passive participant and finally active participant as he takes a stand against the atrocities of the "Imperial Machine" in coming to the realisation that "if you were part of the machine, you were part of its evil". In doing so students move away from a reductive and dichotomous view of Rooke as either observer or participant. This evolution is part of Rooke's bildungsroman, - his transformation - from complicit coloniser to active abolitionist as he realises he is not willing "to turn his back on the man he had become". Whilst this is certainly a journey of self-discovery, students should highlight a range of pivotal events, experiences and relationships that shape this journey.*

*Initially, this might include reference to Rooke's experiences as an outsider at the Portsmouth Naval Academy and his realisation that he was "out of step with the world". This and his adherence to the theory of logic (as experienced through his passion for mathematics, music and astronomy) is epiphanous and leads Rooke to understand the "unity of all things" and to believe "that there would one day be a place somewhere in the world for the person he was". It also positioned Rooke on the periphery of society - as an observer of both the cosmos (an astronomer) and of the microcosmic world around him. Students should note Grenville's deliberate symbolism (telescope and sextant) that posits Rooke both as observer and inquirer - someone who was seeking answers to questions. Rooke's innate sense of social justice is foreshadowed early in the text when he "puzzled" over the perceived necessity of slavery and "something about the argument did not cohere".*

*Rooke's enlistment in "his Majesty's Marine Forces" and his experiences of war (and defeat) on the ironically named Resolution forced him into the role of participant - albeit a fairly passive and even resistant one as he quickly realised "he did not trust the machine". It was however his experiences in New South Wales that cemented Rooke's destiny. Grenville juxtaposes the evolution of Rooke as a man unwilling to put duty before morality with Silk (the name is synonymous with his 'slippery' actions), a man who justifies his own, often self-serving actions, as that of a soldier merely responding to orders. So too, Grenville highlights the difficult journey Rooke makes in transitioning from a focus on the celestial world to enacting his 'terrestrial duty' which ultimately sees him acknowledge that "the service of humanity and the service of His Majesty were not congruent". This also frames the central conflict of Grenville's novel and*

*the refusal to actively participate in the murder of indigenous people (“your orders are a most gravely wrong thing”). This difficulty is highlighted by Rooke’s relationship with Gardiner and his sense of shame that he had so “glibly” silenced Gardiner’s concerns about the actions of the British by simply excusing them as duty. Students should also examine the central role of Tagaran and Rooke’s emerging understanding of Cadigal language and the ways in which this humanises the Indigenous people and inspires Rooke’s ultimate refusal to obey orders and his decision to follow his moral compass and commit his life to the abolition of slavery in Antigua.*

- ii. “What had passed between Taragan and himself had gone far beyond vocabulary or grammatical forms”.

*‘The Lieutenant demonstrates both the power, and limitations, of language’.*

Discuss.

*This prompt encourages students to analyse the ways in which language can be used as a point of commonality and connection and also as a tool of control over others. It invites a consideration of language in all its forms - verbal and non-verbal and their relative merits and limitations. Certainly, language has multiple purposes in The Lieutenant and Grenville’s precise use of the language of science highlights the centrality of language to Rooke’s understanding of the world around him and his place in it. Students might consider for example, Rooke’s changing perception of language; at first, decoding the Cadigal language was driven by a need for the settlers to “become familiar with the native tongue swiftly” and Rooke was “to be the man... who could do more than collect words and learn them by rote” as he understood that “language was a machine” that needed to be dismantled to be understood. It is his relationship with Tagaran that both humbles and surprises Rooke as he is able to understand that language is a more than a system of words - it was more than the literal; the words “had a life of their own” and you learn the language by “entering into a relationship with the people who spoke it to you”. This is symbolised by ‘puttawa’ the laying of hands on one another. At the same time the spoken language is limited as it cannot accurately convey all that is experienced in a moment as the quote in the prompt highlights.*

*As students navigate the prompt they should consider the power of language to control others. They could, for example, consider the ways in which language is used more covertly to obscure the truth (the instruction to show the natives “amity and kindness”), to distort the truth “into well-shaped smooth phrases” (Silk) and to indoctrinate (the language of service and obligation). So too, language is used overtly to oppress and this is evident in the language of “His Majesty’s Service” which prosletises compliance based on a punitive view of ‘justice’ and a projected notion of nobility and what it means to act honourably. The language of violence permeates the novel and is symbolised by the gun and a belief that it is the “only language these buggers will understand”. In this sense the language of the British is a language of racial oppression (“mister darkie”) and cultural superiority; it is transactional and reactionary, it is a ‘conversation’ that expects a specific outcome and that outcome is the acquiescence of everyone to the colonial might of the empire. This stands in stark contrast to the Cadigal language as “Tagaran was*



*teaching him a word and by it she was showing him a world". So powerful was his connection to Tagaran (his "Kamara") that 50 years later he continues to dream of her.*

### **The Women of Troy by Euripides**

- i. *The Women of Troy* suggests that it is better to die and be free of suffering than to be captured and assigned to slavery.

Discuss.

*This is a difficult question because while Euripides's characters debate whether living or dying is the preferable option in the circumstances, the play does not clearly favour one above the other. Students can begin by analysing the fate of Polyxena. Polyxena is killed by the Greeks, a sacrifice for Achilles's tomb. Talthibius argues that the dead Polyxena is free from suffering and Andromache supports this idea, stating that Polyxena is more "fortunate" than the living. Hecuba's response, that death is extinction while life still offers hope provides a contest of ideas, a contest that Euripides explores throughout the play but does not fully resolve.*

*Students can examine the response of Cassandra regarding the options of death versus slavery. The Chorus think Cassandra out of her mind as she welcomes her fate to be taken as a slave and married to the famous king, Agamemnon. This seems to support the argument for living, but the prophetess knows that her conjoining with Agamemnon will result in his death, her death, the death of Agamemnon's wife and the fall of the house of Atreus. Thus, in welcoming slavery, Cassandra also welcomes death and realises vengeance. Her case provides another element of complexity to the topic.*

*Hecuba and Andromache adopt opposing positions as suggested above. Andromache makes a long speech expanding on the idea that her plight – to become wife to Neoptolemus and live in the house of the man who killed Hector – is more miserable than that of the murdered Polyxena. Hecuba rebuts this idea, imploring Andromache to think of the child Astyanax and holds out hope that the boy may one day establish a new Troy. When Talthibius brings news that the child is to be killed because the Greeks fear the future threat he may pose, the argument turns in favour of Andromache. Hecuba's response is to blame Helen for all of the suffering endured by the Trojans and she implores Menelaus to kill his former wife. When Helen's clever tongue seems to sway Menelaus against this course of action, Hecuba contradicts her initial position of hope and attempts (unsuccessfully) to leap into the flames of the burning city. Students may argue with some validity that the attempted suicide indicates that the weight of evidence favours death.*

*High level response might also discuss gender. The Trojan men in the play do not have to confront the question of slavery or death because they have already fallen in acts of war; the opportunity to fight not being something available to the women. Euripides shows that even if the women resolve to accept or challenge the positions assigned to them, they are nevertheless unable to affect change. Polyxena is killed while Hecuba is unable to kill herself, Andromache becomes a slave bride but cannot protect her son, and Cassandra becomes both a slave bride and a victim of murder. The opening exchange between Poseidon and Athena suggest that the*

*humans, Greek or Trojan, have little agency when confronted with the whims of the gods, and this is reinforced near the end of the play, when there is no response to Hecuba's desperate cries for divine help.*

- ii. Should Helen take responsibility for her actions, or, is she, like the other humans, simply at the mercy of the gods?

*When approaching this topic students need to recognise that there are two parts to the topic. The first part asks for an analysis of Helen's integrity. The second part asks for an analysis of the human characters' ability to influence their own lives when confronted with the whims of the gods. The line of argument taken in response to the latter should inform the former.*

*There are references to Helen throughout the text although she does not appear until well into the second half of the play. Most of these references are negative and they emanate from a number of characters: Hecuba, Cassandra, Andromache, the Chorus and Menelaus. The primary accusations are that Helen betrays her husband, pursues selfish desires, causes the deaths of thousands of Greek and Trojan soldiers and is responsible for the destruction of Troy. The latter two, in particular, are momentous claims to assign to one person, but the Trojan women are determined for some kind of vengeance and implore Menelaus to carry out his intended execution.*

*High level responses will recognise that the question of Helen's integrity is a complex one and that the allegations will require an extended response from the accused. Helen's response is clever and multi-dimensional. She accuses Hecuba of contributing to the troubles by producing Paris and accuses Priam for refusing to kill his infant son despite warnings that the child will bring great destruction. Next Helen blames the goddesses, Athena, Hera and Aphrodite for their dealings with Paris and criticises Menelaus for sailing off to Crete and allowing Paris access to his house. She then claims that she was powerless to withstand the divine power of Aphrodite and finally says that she was a victim, taken by force by Deiphobus after the death of Paris. The accusations of Hecuba and Priam seems fanciful but Helen's arguments regarding the behaviour of the gods is valid and is supported by Athena and Poseidon plotting to make the Greeks suffer on their return trips to their homelands. Given this evidence, Helen's claim regarding Aphrodite is entirely believable and Hecuba's counter-argument particularly weak. Regardless, the accusation that Helen is to blame for the war and its terrible outcomes, overlooks the aggressive deeds of Agamemnon, Menelaus, Odysseus and Neoptolemus, and the counter deeds of their Trojan equivalents.*

*The second part of the topic regarding the idea of humans being at the mercy of the gods is more problematic. The aforementioned exchange between Athena and Poseidon clearly illustrates the power of the gods. However, it would be wrong for students to argue that the humans have no agency whatsoever. Agamemnon and company clearly have agency regarding the choices they make after Helen abandons Menelaus and Sparta for Paris and Troy. Ironically, despite all that has happened to her, Helen also maintains some degree of power. Of all the Trojan women in the play, she is the only one who has some influence over her fate. Having been sentenced to death by Menelaus, she uses beguiling charm and clever words to achieve a stay of execution*

and win her way back to Sparta. While Menelaus plans to have her executed in Sparta, Euripides clearly suggests that Helen will be able to persuade Menelaus to show mercy.

### **Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe**

- i. ‘*Things Falls Apart* explores the consequences of Okonkwo’s uncompromising nature’.

Discuss

*Chinua Achebe’s 1958 novel Things Falls Apart, set in Nigeria near the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, gives a powerful depiction of a both traditional tribal life and the effects of change due to British colonialism. At the centre of this account is Okonkwo – a man depicted as caught in often contradictory forces – his own success as born from his father’s failure, a brutal rendition of masculinity against his perception of weakness in all things feminine and the obligations of tradition and against the encroachment of British rule. This question asks students to discuss the events of Achebe’s narrative through a reading of Okonkwo’s uncompromising and often blinkered nature as their cause. Students should demonstrate an understanding of how the plot of the story can be connected to their analysis of Okonkwo’s traits, values and beliefs.*

*In exploring this topic students could draw upon the various aspects of the novel which suggest that Okonkwo’s sense of identity informs the outcomes of the narrative. His relationship to his father is crucial to understanding his nature and students could analyse this as a way of understanding his nature as a reaction against the failures of his father. Okonkwo grew up in the shadow of his father Unoka’s failure – a man who loved music, amassed large debts, was seen as lazy and even admonished to ‘go be a man’ by the oracle. The shame that this visited on Okonkwo left him with a lifetime ruled “by one passion – to hate everything that his father Unoka had loved.” He defined himself by laborious hard work and industry, his victory over Amalinze the Cat at 18 in wrestling being just the beginning of his growing fame and wealth and vindication in his eyes for his belief in the virtue of strength. The allusion that his father was ‘womanly’ through the schoolboy taunt of ‘agbala’ also left an indelible mark on Okonkwo and marked his relationship with his own son Nwoye who he saw as showing early signs of laziness and femininity. Okonkwo is often seen as impatient, aggressive and inarticulate – he rules his household with an unflinching iron fist and does not take court from anyone whom he considers his lesser. This fear of failure leads to his obsessive following of the values of his society and are symbolised in his impressive yam stockpile, as it is known as the ‘king of crops’.*

*However, the story works to undermine Okonkwo’s adherence to this strict personal and social code through the disastrous nature of the outcomes of his actions. There a variety of examples students could use to demonstrate this point. The storyline of Ikemefuna is an especially poignant one: the boy sent as tribal reparation, utterly alone and vulnerable, through his friendship with Nwoye comes to be seen as a member of the family, even calling Okonkwo ‘father’. Yet after three years living with his family when the decision comes that Ikemefuna must be killed, Okonkwo strikes the mortal blow. Against the advice of the tribe he places his own need to be seen as strong over any compassion he could have given the boy in his last moments. Likewise, when he beats his youngest wife for not being home in time to prepare the evening meal, he*

*breaks the solemnity of the Week of Peace. Despite inwardly acknowledging his wrongdoing, his refusal to show public contrition is read by the rest of the tribe as evidence of his arrogance and unrepentant nature. These events, as well as his desire to wage war in Umuofia and Mbanta, show that he is not always supported and pits his nature against that of the collective. The accidental killing which leads to his exile in Mbanta - a 'feminine crime' that allows for his return – takes him away from his tribe during the period of religious colonialism. He returns to a community changed but he himself is still directed by his strict adherence to his values of assertiveness and power. This sets in chain the series of events which leads firstly to his arrest and beating for burning down the missionaries' church and his striking down of the court messenger. His final act of suicide could be read as the almost inevitable conclusion of a man dedicated to a war against all – his hanging body a symbol of a violent conclusion to a life spent dominating others, even himself.*

- ii. *Things Fall Apart* depicts a society torn between tradition and change.

Discuss.

*Chinua Achebe's first novel Things Fall Apart, which takes its name from Yeats celebrated poem, The Second Coming, itself a darkly impressionistic vision of ruin, conveys the tumultuous change which occurred in Africa in the wake of colonialism. Written in the third-person, it closely follows the life of Okonkwo, a man equally strong as he is stubborn, as his narrative becomes a microcosm of the larger currents of tradition and change. This question requires students to investigate the dual forces of Achebe's text – the complex traditions and customs of Igbo society and the growing influence of British colonial rule. Significantly however, the successful response will draw out how these two forces created tensions within the lives of the characters and by extension, the broader cultural and societal effects. The text is set at the beginning of colonial rule and Achebe shows a society in transition – and nowhere is this more forcefully portrayed than in the life of Okonkwo. It is important to remember that Achebe is also writing a post-colonial text which attempts to offer a more nuanced representation of Nigerian life and free it from the overly reductive readings of the 'noble savage' indicative of Western representation of tribal life.*

*Okonkwo can be used by students to frame the role of tradition in the text – his aggressive and domineering personality is informed by the pre-eminence given to masculinity in Igbo society and he asserts his superiority at every opportunity. Driven by his fear of failure, one that was "not external but lay deep within himself", he embraced the structure that gave meaning to his strength. Students could analyse events such as his killing of Ikemefuna as indicative of the force that tradition played in Okonkwo life. Despite advice not to be involved in the sacrificial killing, his desire to not be seen as weak overpowers any compassion. As the text progresses Okonkwo falls out of favour with the tribe – including a period of seven years in exile – which students could understand as symbolic of the gradual unravelling of the structures of Igbo society generally. The irony of Achebe's is that Okonkwo's fierce adherence to values of rank, order and masculinity ultimately make him most vulnerable to the counterforces of British colonialism.*

*Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, could be used to show the counter force of change in the development of a student response. More alike his maligned grandfather Unoka, he knew "that it was right to be*

*masculine and to be violent, but somehow he still preferred the stories that his mother used to tell”, he ultimately rejects his father’s brutal vision of life. Nwoye shows that Igbo culture was not homogenous – offering a counter vision to the death of Ikemefuna and the practice of leaving a baby twin to die in the ‘evil forest’. His eventual attraction to the new religion of the missionaries is not to the ‘mad logic of the trinity’ but rather to the aesthetic and narrative elements it brings which helps him find a new framework to understand Ikemefuna’s death and the abandonment of the twins. Change is also represented through the two reverends Brown and Smith who function in the text as the bringers of the new religion. Mr. Brown is shown as a conciliatory figure and offers a relationship founded not in violence and coercion but cultural understanding. Rev. Smith, however, is provocative and impatient (thus mirroring Okonkwo in some ways) and encourages acts which lead to the eventual clashes between the two religions. An episode such as Enoch’s de-masking of an egwugwu, an outrage during a ceremony towards the earth deity, is motivated by his zealous belief. That Enoch, once ostracised and powerless, has under the sign of the new religion become brazen enough to challenge the authority of the tribal custom is itself indicative of the unravelling of that tradition.*

### **William Wordsworth: Poems selected by Seamus Heaney**

- i. Wordsworth’s poetry suggests that it is how we relate to nature that reveals our humanity.

Discuss.

*Central to Wordsworth’s poetry is a dichotomy between a magisterial and sublime nature and a human nature which, whilst in moments of poetic imagination is able to apprehend this natural force is also often corrupted and fallen prey to its own hubris. The former constitutes the essential form of Wordsworth’s poetic vision, the latter the peculiar kind of blindness that he saw as indicative of his age. To answer this question the student will need to demonstrate this broad scope of experience as it relates to Wordsworth’s depiction of the human condition. In essence, it asks students to explore this tension in Wordsworth’s poems as a way to chart how he uses nature as a foil against human folly, but also a restorative force that can lead to self-understanding. This collection of his work gives students several ways to approach this theme and therefore allows for complexity in their responses. The central requirement in effective answers is to demonstrate this crucial relationship in a detailed enough manner to fulfil the requirements of the task.*

*A major poem such as Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey provides students with multiple ways of composing their response. This poem draws a stark contrast between the nurturing countryside and an urban setting variously described as ‘lonely’, ‘evil’ and ‘selfish’. In contrast nature is presented as a restorative to these ills of human community, away from “the fever of the world” it offers a view into “the life of things” and “something far more deeply interfused/Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns”. Tintern Abbey ultimately suggests nature provides a refuge from the machinations of Wordsworth’s rapidly industrialising world – and the poet’s experience of this connection can be explored further when addressing the question. A poem such as The World Is Too Much frames this relationship as one of loss – the*

*capacity to respond to the power of nature has been given up for the pursuit of material gain; “We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!” It is this fall into instrumentalism that informs the anxious voice of the poem – “we are out of tune” – and again provides resources for students to show the importance of the human’s relationship to nature.*

*Throughout the collection students can organise their reading to show how, for Wordsworth, nature is both a fundamental force worthy of veneration, “my heart leaps up when I behold/a rainbow in the sky” (My Heart Leaps Up) and also a way to frame what he saw as the degradation of modern urban life, which for him has become a “fen/of stagnant waters” (London, 1802). In such a world, humans have lost their capacity to show proper reverence to nature and as such are lost in the world. Other poems, such as Composed upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802 offer a more conciliatory vision, encapsulated in the image of the bridge, as a possibility of connection between the urban and natural spaces. When there is balance nature can bestow its splendour on the world of humans so that a city “can wear the beauty of the morning”. Nowhere is this more clearly expressed than in I Wandered Lonely As A Cloud, where Wordsworth performs a synthesis of romanticisms dual currents – individualism and a worship of nature – so that from within isolation can come a vision of “what wealth the show to me had bought”. Tracking these many and varied ways that Wordsworth traces the contours of our relationship to nature will allow the student to fully address how these poetic expressions also give witness to the human.*

- ii. “The music in my heart I bore,/Long after it was heard no more”.

Wordsworth’s poetry is concerned with memory and imagination.

Discuss.

*This question invites students to produce a reading of Wordsworth’s poetry that demonstrates the role that memory has in his vision of the human encounter with the world – but natural and human. Importantly for Wordsworth, memory was a way to capture and preserve the experiences of the past and was a vital resource of the poetic imagination, which could reanimate these moments in a way that brought them back to life. This question requires that students understand this role of memory as a preservation of the past and identify and analyse selected poems which support their interpretation of how Wordsworth presented memory to his readers. Connected to this is how imagination reframes these past experiences and allows for them to be transmitted to the present.*

*An example of how Wordsworth explores the role of memory can be found in Lines Composed A Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey, where the poem begins in the reflective mood of times passing; “five years have past” and then recollects the memories of a now past experience against a return to a “wild secluded scene”. Students could use the next passages as a way of showing how memory functions for Wordsworth as a kind of escape from the increasingly unnatural life of the cities where in lonely rooms and “mid the din of towns and cities/I have owed to them/In hours of weariness, sensations sweet”. Nature returns through memory as a way of offering recuperation to the poetic mind and also of orientating the poet through their own life. This*

*aspect is seen also in Tintern Abbey's meditations on the passage of time where the reflections on the poet's early life enjoying "courser pleasures" gives way to an understanding of how the poet's movements through time are reflective of the larger movements of nature and he is thereby connected to them.*

*Another central poem that could be used to explore this topic is I wandered Lonely As A Cloud – the poem itself is a work of memory whereby the previous experiences of a "crowd/a host/of daffodils" is reborn in the recollection of the poetic imagination. Through the focus of the 'inner eye' the past is returned as a source of pleasure and joy both to the poet and potentially to others. Students might also discuss how poetic devices such personification are used in the poem, for example the daffodils that 'tossing their heads in spritely dance' show how the work of imagination when given to memories allows them to bring again their pleasure. In fact, this poem suggests that the real joy occurs only after the initial event, where in 'blissful solitude' the memory of the past truly reveals its nature. In poems such as The Solitary Reaper, Wordsworth offers a more melancholy vision of the past – where memory becomes a kind of haunting – as hard to decipher as the words of the Scottish maiden – but all the more open then to imagination. His lament that he will never hear her song again is recuperated in his acknowledgement that it now lives heart "long after it was heard no more". These poems, along with many others in the collection, offer students a broad scope of possibilities to frame their engagement with Wordsworth's with memory and imagination.*

## SECTION B – Comparative analysis of texts

### Pair 1 *Tracks* by Robyn Davidson and *Charlie's Country* by Rolf de Heer

- i. Compare the ways *Tracks* and *Charlie's Country* explore issues of racial oppression.

*Both Robyn Davidson's autobiographical travel memoir Tracks and Rolf De Heer's film Charlie's Country are set within a social context that is deeply informed by a persuasive historical and legal legacy of racial and cultural tension. The central divide of a 'black' and 'white' Australia plays out in both texts and this topic invites students to chart how the tensions, misunderstandings, and occasional rapprochements depicted in their narratives represent this stark demarcation. An effective answer will recognise that the key term 'oppression' suggests a perspective on the power relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. The term makes clear that there is a structural inequality that acts as a framework for the many interactions represented in the texts. Whether it be the heavy-handed paternalism that informs the curtailing of traditional life in De Heer's film or the menacing racism of Alice's Springs in Davidson's memoir, both texts clearly depict this fundamental inequality – and hence oppressive living conditions.*

*Students could chart Davidson's narrative as an account of her own dawning awareness of the deeply entrenched injustice that informs social interactions in Alice Springs. Davidson, armed initially with an abstract sense of this injustice is educated through the beliefs, attitudes and behaviours of the majority of white Australians she meets of its real implications and consequences. Indigenous people, and by extension their culture, is denigrated and marginalised as inferior. Whether it be the many derogatory comments or the inappropriate, and often insensitive manner, of providing basic amenities such as schooling, Davidson comes to learn that Indigenous Australians are viewed with a dismissive scepticism as to their value and worth. The incident of the young boy she befriends, Clivie, makes the point that punishment is not metered out equally and that there is a brutality that informs the 'correctives' given indigenous people that singles them out. A key point of comparison here with Charlie's Country is that given the dependence Indigenous communities have developed to the supply of resources, they are at the mercy of that oppressive system – and because of that attempts to change or take responsibility are often doomed. In both Tracks and Charlie's Country these conditions have been internalised - the overt and implicit racism of white society is mirrored in the substance addictions and forlornness of Indigenous communities as 'how things are' rather than as symptomatic of historical forces.*

*Students could also explore how both texts offer a counter-vision to this oppressive situation. Both Tracks – through Davidson's slow immersion into the different rhythms and understandings of Indigenous life in the desert – and Charlie's Country – through Charlie's return to his community after a period on incarceration – offers a view of a different and more redemptive experience.*



*Charlie, though frustrated with the passiveness of his own community still falls foul of the law – as his hunting trip with Black Pete illustrates. His retreat to the bush in the second act of the film demonstrates that the environment offers a way for him to reclaim his tribal identity and to resist the internalised self-understanding that the Federal Intervention – the historical context of the film – seems to have enshrined. Students could compare this movement as it is reflected in Davidson’s trip, as she moves further into a landscape informed by the deep time of Indigenous culture and historical legacy of successive generations of people who have been dispossessed of their land and sense of identity.*

*In both texts the current state of racial oppression is depicted as a result of colonialist intolerance and misguided paternalism. Students in responding to this topic could show how this sense of disorientation and loss is a direct consequence of this legacy – whether it be the infantilism of white policing towards Indigenous people (regardless of the well-meaning intention) in Charlie’s Country or the poverty and alcoholism Davidson witnesses. Both texts offer many opportunities to demonstrate how these large scale historical forces have shaped the lives of the individuals portrayed – yet also of the resilience of those individuals – as seen in Charlie’s return to teach the young to dance or Davidson resolving to learn from Eddie who “should have been bitter, and he was not”.*

- ii. “Capacity for survival may be the ability to be changed by environment”. (Tracks)  
Compare the ways both texts show how environment shapes individuals.

*Rolf De Heer’s film Charlie’s Country and Robyn Davidson’s memoir Tracks both represent the complexities of the Australian environment – whether it be the harsh yet restorative force of the outback or the destructive and oppressive nature of outback urban environments. This topic asks students to explore and compare the ways that each text suggests that the individual’s capacity to survive, or thrive, is determined by their relation to the environment. An effective response will demonstrate that each text is divided along this split between a vast and almost timeless outback and the settlements and towns which are founded on the post-colonial legacy of Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.*

*Students could frame this comparison by investigating how each text introduces its readers/viewers to the protagonists. In Charlie’s Country De Heer depicts Charlie as both an elder who participates and contributes to his community but also as a critic of the pervasive dependency of it’s origin. His encounters with Policeman Luke reinforce this sense of dispossession and as seen in the sequence around the confiscation of his hunting tools (gun then spear) his place within his environment in marginal and at the mercy of White Law. De Heer shows through vignettes where locals are shown as sick, or where the traditional and modern conflict – as seen in the communities relation to food – that this urban environment has diminished the capacity of its members to live freely and do much more than survive. Charlie’s escape to the bush (ironically in a ‘borrowed’ police car) shows his recognition that his current environment is limiting and dire. He looks to the bush as a place of redemptive power where he can reconnect to a way of life that restores him to an identity that is in balance with his surroundings. As suggested by the quote from the topic, Charlie allows himself to be changed by his environment and in doing so finds a strength and resourcefulness that augments his sense of*

*self. Yet it is fleeting, and his underlying bad health draw him back to the urban setting. His fall into drinking and subsequent jailing in Darwin is fuelled by his sense of dislocation. In this environment where he is further marginalised with the 'long grassers' his anger erupts in the conflict with Policeman Luke. The dehumanising experience of prison is further evidence of the way settings can reduce individuals, most poignantly visualised in the cutting of Charlie's hair and beard. Students could explore how the Darwin sequence of the film shows how Charlie ultimately needs to return to his country in order to once again reclaim his role as an elder.*

*In contrast, Davidson begins her journey with a sense of being an outsider within her identity as a white, female Australian. Her initial experience in Alice Springs shows the casual, and at times threatening, sexism and racism of the white population as confronting and isolating. In a similar view to Charlie, she recognises that she needs to leave where she is in order to locate a space or environment that could better foster a sense of belonging and balance. Underlying Davidson's personality however is a sense of wanting to be alone – a point of contrast with Charlie – as a way of escaping the values and pressures of her society. Unlike Charlie who must resist the individualism that eroded his community, Davidson craves her descent into the desert as a way of being freed from the gender and class expectations of White Australia. Students could look to accounts of being profoundly moved as evidence of how she is altered by this force of the outback environment she traverses, and in this encounter is shaped anew by her environment.*

*Both texts show how the environment shapes and transforms the individual and in doing so how both characters find a capacity to survive. Both texts show the effects of living in a limiting and dysfunctional setting – whether it be that of institutional racism or deeply engrained sexism – and also the power of the natural environment to counter and reshape these same individuals.*

## Pair 2 *The Queen* by Stephen Frears and *Ransom* by David Malouf

- i. Compare how both *Ransom* and *The Queen* explore the challenges which arise from grief and loss.

*The central players in the two texts for comparison could not be more different in terms of culture, gender and historical context, yet Ransom and The Queen both explore the universal experiences of loss and grief and both also recognise our human capacity to act in ways which reflect the lens through which we and others view the world.*

*In Ransom David Malouf uses his reimagining of Homer’s The Iliad to identify conflicts which emerge amidst the siege of Troy and uses his central characters of Achilles and Priam to explore the ways in which a seemingly impossible situation can be resolved through leadership, reconciliation and a new understanding of what it means to behave in an heroic manner. Priam’s decision to speak to Achilles as father rather than king is an act of humility which diffuses anger and offers the two men a way of moving forward. Likewise, Frears’ film, The Queen uses an historical event - the death of Diana, mother of the future King of England and former senior royal, to explore the impact of this crisis on a nation and in particular, the royal family’s perceptions of their role in modern society. Queen Elizabeth, whose mantra is “Duty first. Self, second,” and who declares, “I doubt there are many who know the British more than I do... it is my belief that they will soon reject this ‘mood’...in favour of a period of restrained grief, and sober, private mourning,” must come to an understanding of the new needs of her people if she is to lead them in their time of grief.*

*This question requires students to consider their interpretation of the word, “challenges” and what these could be. There is also a need here to consider the nature of ‘grief and loss’; its universality but also the different ways it can be represented and felt. Students will naturally identify the consequences of the deaths of Diana and Hector and will discuss the differences between individuals within the texts in terms of their management of grief and loss. Priam, as the young Podarces, witnessed his “parents slaughtered, and [his] brothers laid out with their white throats slashed,” and even as an old man with hands “no longer white now but veined and mottled...with liver-coloured spots”, he recalls the traumas suffered desiring to be remembered as more than his past. As King of Troy, Priam grieves for the loss of over 20 of his royal offspring including Hector and “the grief that racks him is not only for his son Hector. It is also for a kingdom ravaged and threatened with extinction.” Likewise, Queen Elizabeth’s relief at being safe within the world of Balmoral where “all seems to breathe freedom and peace and to make one forget the world and its sad turmoils,” but which also separates her literally and figuratively from a nation which needs her presence back in London. Another interesting element for student discussion and analysis is the way grief is expressed by the ‘common man’ in both texts; the public grief exhibited by a nation and why this is the case, in comparison to Somax the carter’s pragmatism and capacity to forgive his donkey, Beauty, for the role it plays in the death of his son. It is Somax who suggests that vengeance will not assuage grief when he explains, “I felt like punching her where she stood. But what could have been the good of that? That wouldn’t have brought him back.”*

*Students wishing to move away from the reactions of the central players could also explore the impact of grief and loss on those who serve in other ways. Tony Blair plays a significant role in *The Queen* as Prime Minister, elected only four months before Diana's death on his platform of reform. Blair is presented in the film both as the representative of the views of the country who incurs the distaste and mistrust of Queen Elizabeth when he responds to the apparent needs of the people and their outcry against their previously much-loved monarch. Blair is only too aware of the problems associated with the proposed public funeral of Diana who is mother to the future king of England and yet, due to her divorce and use of the press to create a cult of personality, is no longer a member of the royal family. It is Blair who treads a precarious road, encouraged behind the scenes by close members of the royal household to persuade the Queen to return to London, resisted by the Queen who sees the public displays of emotion as "hysteria" and criticised by his own wife and party for his apparent sympathies for the royal family as he comes to realise the damage caused on a personal level by Diana's own inability to maintain silence and perhaps "dignity" during the latter part of her life. Likewise, Malouf allows his readers to view Achilles' actions through the eyes of his own men who had previously perceived his behaviour to be heroic. The Myrmidons begin to fret over their leader's behaviour; believing he has become mad with grief yet they obey Achilles' strange orders to ready the chariot daily later commenting that he has become "as fouled with dust as the thing – bloody and unrecognisable – that he trails from his axle bar." Further, those who support Priam in his kingly role, are also included in the text to provide a range of perspectives of grief such as wife Hecuba, who shares her distress with her elderly husband within the privacy of their royal bedchamber where "they sit a moment, holding one another like children."*

*A more complex interpretation might also look at different forms of grief such as Achilles' anger upon the death of his friend Patroclus and his own inability to reconcile his later unheroic violation of the body of the murderer of Patroclus. Achilles has dragged Hector's dead body behind his chariot for eleven days but achieves no peace from the age of vengeful disrespect and despite wanting to break free of the web of confusion and maddened grief of his own creation, he does not know how to do so. Students could also explore the idea of grief and loss moving beyond death, for example, Priam's desire to rid himself of the memory of his enslavement and loss of prestige as a child.*

*A counter argument which could be offered would be an exploration of other aspects which create challenges in the texts such as misunderstanding the mood of the people and the conflict between duty and self-interest. Further, students should explore the complex situation which arises due to the juxtaposition of the grief of Britain's public for a much-loved figure and the royal family's perception of Diana as being the source of public humiliation who by virtue of divorce, is no longer deserving of certain protocols. Students might also like to explore Diana's actions relating to her grief over her marriage and the life she chooses to live as a consequence. An interesting complexity is the fact that it is the intense scrutiny of their marital issues by the media which raises questions relating to the fidelity of both Diana and Charles and which ultimately leads to their divorce, yet later, it is Diana's relationship with the press and need for her public persona which makes her one of the most well known women in the world at the time of her death.*

- ii. ‘Once you lift the veil there will be trouble’. (Walter Bagehot - Victorian Era journalist and economist).

How do *Ransom* and *The Queen* demonstrate the conflict which occurs when our humanity is revealed?

*One is a reimagining of the lives of those who feature in one small section of the Ancient Greek epic poem, The Iliad and the other follows the real events which occur following the death of Lady Diana in 1997, yet both explore the notions of public perception, our views of those we hold in esteem and the realities of being human.*

*Frears’ The Queen explores a family which has been almost an enigma to the British public for most of its history, having created a mystique around their daily lives and presenting to the public a highly orchestrated and choreographed façade. The events of the film document not only the death of Diana and its aftermath but also the stripping of this façade, the lowering of veil created by a more modern royal couple in the form of Charles and Diana who allowed the press greater access into their lives, setting in motion a media frenzy which ultimately led to Diana’s demise. Set against another historical event, the Trojan War, Ransom traces the events which follow the death of Hector, the conflict which arises through the actions of Achilles whose behaviour is very much in conflict with his reputation as a valiant soldier, more god than human. Achilles is maddened by the murder of his friend Patroclus which leads him to act in a way which is not in keeping with his heroic status. He violates the body of Hector and in doing so displays his humanity in his need for revenge. Even before the death of Patroclus, the reader is led to speculate about Achilles’ sense of self which hides behind his façade of soldier; it would appear he feels as though he is a failure as a father when he wonders at how “far a son has grown since last year’s notch on a doorjamb.” Further, the unexpected decisions of Priam, King of Troy and a man so powerful, that he has his loyal Idaeus to speak for him and who understands the power his own silence provides, “keeping hidden and therefore mysterious, one’s true intent.”*

*To address this question students will doubtless explore the nature of public versus private persona and the conflicts which can occur, both within society and at a private level. Each text reveals a ‘kingdom’ which can be perceived to be ‘under siege’. The Queen reveals a monarchy which is struggling to maintain legitimacy in a modern world whilst dealing with the fallout of their perceived indifference in the face of the death of the much loved “People’s Princess”, Diana. In Malouf’s Ransom the kingdom of Troy is literally under siege and the actions of its King are held to scrutiny. Despite Priam’s belief that he has been shown a new way, he is counselled by his wife Hecuba to stay at home and is later counselled to be “patient like the rest of us” despite the fact that he witnesses the desecration of his son’s body on a daily basis as Achilles drags Hector’s corpse behind his chariot for eleven days. Priam’s son Deiphobus is also quick to dismiss his father’s idea to ask for the body of his son as grief, warning him that “a man who has no respect for the body of his enemy... that such a man would not take delight in hauling down your kingly image...”*

*The Queen can be seen as an exploration of the public and private face not only of an institution but of a family. As such, notions of tradition, duty and what is right feature as cornerstones for the behaviour of all but particularly Elizabeth, who feels that she knows her people and what they need. It also implies that nothing can remain static and that where human beings are involved, in a time of technology and intense media scrutiny, it is no longer possible to maintain distance, to hide behind a metaphorical veil. Elizabeth's reaction to news of the event of Diana's death in France is accurately portrayed as reserved and restrained; Elizabeth, as Queen and grandmother, believed it was a "private matter" and she is staunchly protective of her grandchildren, not wanting them to learn of the details of their mother's death but also, rightly, the public and media conjecture relating to their parent's infidelity, "loveless marriage" and Diana's use of the media to garner public sympathy. Frears conveys the notion, it is this concern which governs Elizabeth's behaviour during the first week with dialogue including her insistence to Phillip that he "make sure the boys never hear you talk like that" and "I think the less fuss one makes, or draws attention to it, the better... for the boys." It is interesting to note Frears' decision to depict Elizabeth, calm and incisive in her conversation with Tony Blair in which she declares that Diana will not be given a state funeral, whilst at the same time carefully placing her stationery in a line, symbolising her humanity and the need she has for order in a time of chaos.*

*Achilles is confronted with the disapproval of his own men and whilst they still follow his orders, they "know what he has in mind and cannot bear to meet his eye," when he cannot contain his grief and anger, subsequently tying the body of Priam's son to his chariot and dragging the body under the watchful eye of Hector's grieving father from Troy's battlements. Likewise, Elizabeth orders that "no member of the royal family will speak publicly about this," but is told that there will be a public funeral and is pictured reading the inflammatory newspaper headlines which defame her family but against which she cannot take action. It would appear that a balance between Elizabeth's traditional understanding of her duty to her people and a new expectation needs to be met.*

*It is hoped that students will include in their discussion and analysis, examples of individuals beyond the central figures. In The Queen, Frears' portrayal of Charles as a man deeply concerned for the welfare of his sons but also realising the mood of the country more quickly than older members of the family is demonstrated during a private discussion with Tony Blair: "My mother... the Queen, comes from a generation not best equipped to... she grew up in the war... I think what we need, what the country needs is to be led by someone ... of today." Likewise, scenes which feature Prince Phillip would not be surprising to many but also reveal much of the man and his thinking as he declares acerbically, "in forty-eight hours it will all have calmed down" and later, "You're the sovereign. The Head of State. You don't get dictated to." In his depiction of Tony Blair, Frears has also chosen to highlight the man behind the Prime Minister, often cutting from the offices of Downing Street to Blair's private home where he conducts his country's business amid the chaos of rooms which are cluttered with toys and even dirty laundry.*

*A more complex response would also identify the positive results which can follow from introspection, a capacity for change and acceptance of human frailties. Priam's grief at the loss*

*of his son leads him to remove himself from his royal status and to embrace his humanity, approaching Achilles, not as King of Troy but as a father. Incensed by the arrival of his ceremonial chariot, Priam chooses instead to travel in a donkey cart, accompanied only by Somax, a common man and on the journey, learns much about what it means to be human and wins the respect of his court and his people for his willingness to try something new. Priam steps out of his “royal sphere” finding a newfound wisdom and awareness as a King, a father and above all, as an ‘ordinary’ man when he tells Achilles, “We are mortals, not gods. We die .... we should have pity for one another’s losses.” In The Queen, the royal family’s return from Balmoral, walk amongst the grieving public and attendance at Diana’s funeral allows them to gain a better understanding of the mood of the country. Furthermore, these actions enable the public to see behind the veil of traditional stoicism and witness a grieving family coming to grips with the enormity of loss faced by William and Harry. Ultimately, Frears allows the viewer a moment of introspection in his final scene, featuring Queen Elizabeth and her Prime Minister, Blair, in which she admits to not “ever understand[ing] what happened this summer” and speculates about the damage which may have been done to the public’s perception of the monarchy. In this moment it appears that the Queen may have forgotten her mantra, “Duty first. Self, second” as she wonders why her peoples’ devotion for her might have diminished.*

### Pair 3 *Stasiland* by Anna Funder and *Never Let Me go* by Kazuo Ishiguro

- i. Compare how both *Never Let Me Go* and *Stasiland* represent the effects of the misuse of power.

*Students could initially consider who holds power in the world of each text, and over whom. Both texts depict the role of institutionalised power and the ways in which this can be used for good or ill. For example, in Stasiland, the legal system might be used to find justice for the victims of the Stasi, but in the GDR it was used to persecute those who did not abide by the rules of the regime. In Never Let Me Go, Hailsham is an educational facility with complete power over the lives of the students, offering at least a brief respite, but behind it lies a greater, shadowy authority as schools like it become replaced by “government ‘homes’”. There is also the misuse of technology and science in both texts to serve utilitarian ideals. In Stasiland, however, these institutions can be named and exposed, becoming ‘museums’ to a past best ‘forgotten’ – “an experiment and it failed”. A key difference is that the human cloning ‘experiment’ in Never Let Me Go continues, and will continue, as long as society continues to convince themselves that the clones are “less than human”.*

*Students can also compare how power is misused in the sense that people are no longer given any control over their fate. The destruction of lives under the GDR persists beyond the fall of the Wall, with the victims still “unable to go forward into (their) future”. In Never Let Me Go, of course, they never had a choice at all. Kathy notes she felt she always really knew, “all this stuff was there in our heads without us ever having examined it properly”. Worse are those figures in authority such as Madame and Miss Emily who argue that they were powerless to help. This is similar to some of the ex-Stasi men who were coerced into obeying the regime, such as Hagen Koch. It is interesting to note his early ‘education’ in “the making of a patriot”. Both texts, thus, highlight the exploitation of the innocence and compliance of children in the misuse of power, but also the failure of those who might have some power to do good.*

*Finally, students might compare how both texts explore the misuse of power in demonstrating that the most successful approach to wielding control is to get people to accept their fate, rather than challenge or resist it. Characters are shown to be willing to compromise their freedom for perceived safety, as with Professor Mushroom. Kathy at the end of the novel declares, “I was pretty much ready when I became a donor. It felt right. After all, it’s what we’re supposed to be doing, isn’t it?” Even after the GDR collapses, Frau Paul is pursued, as “there are a lot of people who don’t want us to raise our voices”. True courage is represented by her and others who are determined to continue to seek justice, like Miriam. Uwe, Funder’s boss, also represents the acceptance of those beyond the victims, in a sense leaving them to their fate – “No one here is interested ... it’s sort of ... embarrassing”. This is similar to Madame’s statement that “for a long time you were kept in the shadows, and people did their best not to think about you.” Essentially, both texts demonstrate that as long as society is willing to look the other way, abuses of power will continue.*



- ii. “Even back when Hailsham was considered a shining beacon, an example of how we might move to a more humane and better way of doing things, even then, it wasn’t true”. (*Never Let Me Go*)

“In the GDR people were required to acknowledge an assortment of fictions as fact ... such as the idea that human nature is a work-in-progress which can be improved upon, and Communism is the way to do it”. (*Stasiland*)

Compare how both texts explore the idea of trust.

*Students can unpack both quotations to explore the notion of truth and belief, especially in the sense of being made to believe there is an ideologically sound basis to the horrors perpetrated by the relevant authorities upon their victims. Characters in Ishiguro’s novel and the people Funder interviews in the former GDR are asked to believe the fiction that their best interests are being served. What both texts slowly reveal through their various methods is how characters, victims and sometimes perpetrators, come to understand that they have been betrayed, and the consequences of this knowledge.*

*Students can compare key figures in each text who seem to wholeheartedly buy into the fictions they are served, or act in the service of, such as Herr Winz, who still believes “Capitalism will not last, the revolution is coming” and Von Schnitzler, who proffers his propaganda as truth. Miss Emily and Madame persist in the idea that they were doing what was best for their students, stating, “That it might look as though you were simply pawns in a game ... But think of it. You were lucky pawns”. None of these characters truly consider the harm they have caused. Students can also consider those who initially trust the system, but are then betrayed by it, to devastating effect – Julia, Frau Paul, Herr Koch, Tommy and Ruth. Those who attempt to speak the truth are silenced, such as Miss Lucy, whose declaration “you’ve got to know and know properly” might be compared with Miriam and Ursula whose “asking questions about the way their parents had implemented Communist ideals” ends with their arrest.*

*Betrayals also occur between those who are closest to each other. In *Never Let Me Go*, the clones are made fully complicit in the system, being ‘carers’ to ‘donors’. The relationship between Kathy, Tommy and Ruth is always shadowed by the knowledge of what will happen to them. Shared experience creates trust to an extent, as Kathy is set apart when Tommy notes, “Ruth would have understood. She was a donor, so she would have understood”. Frau Paul feels she has betrayed Torsten - the Stasi use husbands and wives, parents and children against each other, prying into intimate family secrets and love affairs. Julia’s box of love letters, like the Hailsham students’ collections and artworks, the outward evidence of their “inner selves” represents the access the state can gain into private thoughts and feelings. Overall, both texts critique ideologies that ask people to trust their claim to be ‘bettering’ humanity, when they instead feed into its worst aspects.*

#### Pair 4 *Reckoning* by Magda Szubanski and *The Namesake* by Jhumpa Lahiri

- i. Compare the ways Magda and Gogol both struggle to establish their own identities.

*The struggles faced by the protagonists are explored throughout each text, however, students need to consider specific struggles faced by each character and the different ways these struggles are presented. Some of their difficulties are similar and relate to the expectations of their migrant parents, however, the two characters also experience some very different challenges regarding the establishment of their respective identities. For Magda, the question of her sexuality causes her extreme angst, while Gogol obsesses about his name.*

*Magda, unlike Gogol, is not born in the new country and her first challenge is to adapt to life and school in Australia. Students can focus on her accent and her British habits. Unlike Gogol, Magda's parents come from different backgrounds, meaning that in her first years in Australia she has to reconcile her Scottish/Irish identity (mother), her Polish identity (father) – which she carries in her name – and her new Australian identity. Magda finds it easier to integrate her mother's cultural background in part because there is no language barrier and in part because she spends her early years in Great Britain. However, Magda's father's demands and behaviour prove more challenging, particularly his desire to have Magda excel at tennis and school. These demands stem from opportunities missed in his own life due to WWII. As Magda becomes an adult she learns more about her father's role in the Polish resistance movement; his family's protection of Jews and his execution of Gestapo officers and Polish collaborators. She travels to Poland to connect with her Polish family and her father's history – and to process the trauma and guilt that have been passed down to her. Students can also discuss other significant conflicts that greatly influence Magda's identity – her feminist politics, her desire to become a performer rather than the scholar that her father wants her to be, and her struggles with depression. Finally, students need to discuss Magda's difficulties concerning her sexuality and 'coming out', first to her parents and then to the media and her fans. Her parents' acceptance of her sexuality is crucial to Magda finally establishing a more complete identity.*

*Gogol is born in the USA and for the first part of his life he seems to have two identities, the American identity he embodies at school and amongst his friends, and the Bengali identity he embodies within his family and the growing Bengali community of New England. Gogol has a clear preference for his American identity which increases during his teenage years. Students can discuss the frequent and difficult family trips back to Calcutta to illustrate this.*

*Next students can discuss Gogol's name change at 18. While Magda briefly discusses her difficult name, Gogol becomes obsessed with his – reflected in the title of the novel – and changes it to Nikhail as soon as he turns 18. This is critical to his identity and marks a further separation from his parents. This separation becomes literal during his university period as he moves to New York and increases again when he meets Maxine and immerses himself in her family home, even spending his summer vacation with Maxine and her parents at the lake house. The first sign that Gogol regrets any of this is his reaction to his father finally telling him about the train crash and the reason for the name, Gogol. The sudden death of his father, Ashoke, prompts a turn back toward family and Bengali traditions. Gogol's split from Maxine and*

*subsequent marriage to Moushumi – including a traditional wedding - marks a further acceptance of his Bengali roots. While Gogol’s marriage does not last, the successful reconciling of his American and Bengali identities does. Like Magda’s parents’ acceptance of her homosexuality, Gogol’s mother’s acceptance of his divorce helps cement this.*

- ii. ‘The challenges faced by the children of migrants can be just as difficult as the challenges faced by parents’.

Compare how the two texts explore this idea.

*Firstly, students need to realise that this is a two-part question asking for analysis of the challenges faced by both parents and children. Furthermore, students may disagree with the statement, or agree in part; for example, they might contend that Magda’s challenges are just as difficult as those faced by her parents, but that Gogol’s challenges are not as difficult.*

*In Reckoning, the most significant challenges are faced by Magda’s father, Zbigniew. These begin in Poland during the war where he is a member of the Polish resistance movement, specifically an executioner whose task it is to kill captured Gestapo officers and Polish collaborators. Other challenges include hiding Jews in the family home, escaping the Warsaw Uprising through a sewer, fleeing the Lamsdorf Death March and being liberated from a POW camp. In England, Zbigniew is denied the opportunity to complete his medical studies when funding for Polish survivors of the war is suddenly withdrawn. The next challenge for Zbigniew being the difficulty of putting all of this behind him and adapting to being an ordinary husband and father living in an ordinary outer suburb in Melbourne.*

*Next students can discuss Magda’s challenges. These include: arriving in Australia as a five-year-old with a British accent and a difficult name; clashing with her father over his desire to have her excel at tennis and at school; learning about her father’s past and processing second-generation trauma and guilt; travelling to Poland and reconciling her Polish heritage; rejecting her family’s (primarily her father’s) expectation that she become a scholar, choosing instead to pursue acting and comedy; and coming to terms and finally going public with her sexuality.*

*In The Namesake, both Gogol’s parents, Ashoke and Ashima, face significant challenges. Firstly, Ashoke almost dies at 22 in a horrific train accident – which leaves him with a permanent limp, a love for the Russian writer, Gogol, and a yearning for a life beyond the narrow constraints of Calcutta and India. Ashima’s great challenge is to leave behind her family and her country and move to New England with Ashoke, her husband, but at this point, a man she barely knows. Life in Massachusetts is considerably more difficult for Ashima as she faces long, lonely days while Ashoke is at work, communication with family in India is slow and frustrating and her efforts to reproduce dishes of home equally difficult given the lack of availability of important ingredients. The challenge the couple face in trying to respect Bengali traditions in the USA is best illustrated by the drama surrounding Gogol’s name. First, the breakdown in communication with Grandmother and later, the unsuccessful exchange with Gogol’s first school principal regarding their request for the school to refer to Gogol by ‘his good name’ Nikhail. Gradually life becomes less challenging for the couple as they establish*

*new friendships with the growing Bengali community. Although this suddenly changes with Ashoke's unexpected and premature death leading to another set of challenges for Ashima.*

*Gogol's life might be considered privileged when compared with that of his parents, particularly his mother. His primary challenges growing up are the inconvenience of his curious name – neither Bengali or American – and the frequent family trips back to Calcutta. In his 20s, Gogol faces the challenge of finding an effective balance between his American and Bengali identities as illustrated by his ill-fated relationships with Maxine and Moushumi. These challenges are made more difficult by the sudden loss of his father and the accompanying feelings of guilt associated with his name change and infrequent visits. Students could also discuss Moushumi as another child of migrants – particularly her move to Paris, her humiliating cancelled wedding, her affair and divorce from Gogol and her determination not to repeat the limiting choices of her mother.*

**Pair 5 *The Crucible* by Arthur Miller and *The Dressmaker* by Rosalie Ham**

- i. Compare the ways in which hysteria is explored in both texts.

*In both texts, hysteria emerges in response to an internal community crisis (to unexpected change) and is a mechanism through which prejudices are revealed, vengeance sought and ultimately hypocrisies revealed. Students could explain that both texts are influenced by the paranoia of the 1950s - The Crucible was written during this period and The Dressmaker is set during this time. Consideration of authorial context and setting is therefore relevant. So too, students might consider how individuals promote hysteria to protect their secrets or save themselves from the judgement of others. In The Crucible, Abigail seeks to protect her secret and that of the girls - that they were in the woods with Tituba attempting to conjure Ruth Putnam's dead babies and place a curse on Elizabeth (to allow Abigail to continue her illicit affair with John Proctor); whilst in The Dressmaker Evan Pettyman sought to conceal his parentage of Tilly Dunnage. Both were motivated by self-interest and used blame to conceal their culpability and protect themselves.*

*In both texts, the ways in which hysteria generates a herd mentality is explored. Both Salem and Dungatar are geographically isolated and this promotes insular communities. For Salem, the fear of attack from Indians and their zealous fear of the "prodigious devil" (radical puritanism) incite a mania that is not matched in Dungatar. Rather, as the town's name suggests, Dungatar is mired in dirty secrets (dung) and the herd mentality is less driven by fear than it is by jealousy. Students might also explore the role of rumours and gossip in fueling hysteria in both communities ("there are wheels within wheels in this village, and fires within fires") and the relationship between truth and lies. So too old rivalries drive accusations in Salem with characters like the Putnams "quick to jump to witchcraft" and use the crisis as a vehicle for exacting revenge against others (Giles Corey's refusal to sell land). Students might also compare the ways in which the victims of herd mentality respond to their accusers. In both texts, innocent people are accused of wrong-doing (Rebecca Nurse and Giles Corey in The Crucible and Molly and Tilly Dunnage in The Dressmaker). Related to the concept of herd mentality is the concept of belonging. In The Crucible we see characters ostracised from their communities via accusations of witchcraft. They are given the opportunity to re-enter their community via confession. Only too aware of the moral hypocrisy of those around them and of the personal consequences for providing false confession (damnation) many refuse - references to quotes such as "they cannot take my name" (John Proctor) and "more weight" (Giles Corey) are relevant in this context. The Dunninges on the other hand, never belong in Dungatar. They are socially isolated on the basis of Myrtle/Tilly's illegitimacy and both were stigmatised - Molly as a madwoman and Tilly as a murderer. Ham's positioning of their cottage atop a hill overlooking Dungatar is both ironic (they are considered lowly by their peers) and also purposeful as it reflects their ultimate moral superiority.*

*Students should compare and contrast the experiences of key protagonists John Proctor and Tilly Dunnage. Whilst Proctor is falsely accused of witchcraft he is guilty of adultery and thus the audience both condemns and sympathises with him. Whilst John ultimately "has his goodness" and atones for his sin by allowing himself to be executed rather than to "lose his*

*good name". Tilly on the other hand, is innocent of the crime of which she is accused and changes her name (from Myrtle) to establish a new pain-free identity. Ham's portrayal of Tilly is sympathetic (she also loses Teddy) and the reader sees her ultimate response (burning Dungatar to the ground - a literal expungement) as justified. Proctor's response and the execution of nineteen Salemites condemned as witches ultimately acts as a crucible for Salem which unlike Dungatar is able to recover and become a better place as a result.*

- ii. 'The Crucible and The Dressmaker suggest that human nature is essentially dark'.

To what extent is this true?

*Both The Crucible and The Dressmaker certainly highlight the darker sides of humanity - how people lie to protect themselves and how they congregate to ostracise and blame others when a crisis emerges. We see this in the emergence of a herd mentality (see suggestions on previous essay prompt). In analysing the darker dimensions of humanity, students might contrast the communities of Salem and Dungatar. The supernatural themes of The Crucible suggest that humans are always in danger of the influence of the devil; references to "incubu", "succubi", "witches" and "Wizards" incite a perennial sense of fear. Ironically, it is not the devil the Salemites need to fear - it is one another - and Hale's loss of faith is evidence of this realisation. In the secular society of Dungatar, the darker side of humanity in petty jealousies and competition amongst the locals. Having said this some comparisons between the supernatural elements of The Crucible and a sense that Dungatar is cursed (as evidenced by a series of unusual deaths) is worth consideration. Ham is deliberate in naming her characters - some quite literally - Evan Pettyman is a philanderer, and 'pets' all manner of local women and Buella Harridene is a harridan as her name suggests. Una Pleasance is, unlike her name, arrogant and proud whilst Molly and Tilly Dunnage are seen as town refuse to the locals. The proclivity of the townsfolk to gossip and their long held grudges are reflected in the name of the local pharmacist - Percival Almanac - purveyor of all manner of rumour and innuendo. In the very naming of characters, therefore, Ham infers the darker side of human nature. The banishing of Myrtle/Tilly, the stigmatisation of Mad Molly and the marginalisation of the McSwiney's who are viewed as pigs by the locals. Some comparison between the ways in which communities shun the poor (McSwiney's) or practice racism (Tituba) is relevant here also.*

*Students might also include analysis of symbolism. For example, Mary's doll in The Crucible is a reflection of Abigail's cunning deception (she metaphorically stabs Elizabeth in the back). So too, students could consider the ways in which fashion and beauty mask the ugly side of people's natures. Despite reservations that Tilly is "up to no good...worse than her mother, the local ladies benefit from her spectacular seamstress skills. As they become more physically appealing their behaviour becomes darker and this is one of the deceptive facades people use to mask their real intent. In contrast, Abigail hides behind others' perceptions of her as a child.*

*Both texts, however, provide examples of the propensity for good in all communities. Arguably, Proctor's confession (he admits his lechery) and his refusal to condemn others to evade execution, evidence his moral evolution and the ability of individuals to demonstrate integrity. The Dressmaker, whilst less a narrative of personal growth, does highlight those who refuse to*

*conform to the malicious expectations of others most notably through the romance between Tilly and Ted McSwiney. Having said this Tilly's vengeance on the town does perhaps suggest that individuals, however, innocent of all alleged wrongdoing can seek vengeance rather than forgiveness.*

**Pair 6 Photograph 51 by Anna Ziegler and *The Penelopiad: The Myth of Penelope and Odysseus* by Margaret Atwood**

- i. Compare the ways in which women respond to misogyny in both texts.

*This prompt encourages students to consider varied responses to the different forms of misogyny present in patriarchal societies across different time periods and how different women within and between the texts respond to the limitations misogynist cultures generate. Students could consider for example the range of women presented in each text. In both texts we see women who challenge the limitations society places on them - albeit in different ways.*

*In the context of Ancient Sparta (The Penelopiad), a woman's status was reliant on her social class. As a woman of higher class, Penelope is defined by her marriageability - she was a "gilded black pudding" who learned early on to "bite her tongue" and that "happy endings were best achieved by keeping the right doors locked and going to sleep during the rampages". Her worth was tied to her "glittering pile of junk" and her ability to produce a male heir. Students might compare the ways in which higher class women attempted to exert control over their own lives including reference to "prune-mouthed" Anticleia who could "freeze the balls of Helios" and the beautiful Helen whose sexual appeal allowed her to evade any form of punishment. Penelope on the other hand is clever, she learns to "be like water" and her response to misogyny can only really emerge in her husband's absence. Her attempts to exert power are covert and relies on the help of other women. Unable to secure the assistance of women of her own class, Penelope sought the assistance of the least powerful women - her twelve maids who society viewed as "animal young... spawned merely... to be disposed at will" and Atwood's ironic reference to Odysseus condemnation of the maids based on the fact they "were raped without permission of their master", their subsequent execution and the outcome of Odysseus' trial highlights the brutal consequences of misogynist cultures and the lack of justice for lower class women.*

*In contrast, in Ziegler's post WWII, Photograph 51 Rosalind overtly challenges the gendered "men only" culture of King's College. She aggressively questions why "the letters I acquired do not have the same value for me" and in heeding her father's advice that a woman in her field "must never make a mistake" she not only doesn't seek assistance - she rejects all forms of help - and in doing so subjugates the least powerful person in the play - PhD student Gosling. In isolating herself and committing herself to 'proof' Rosalind refused to partake in the 'competition' generated by her male colleagues and is blind to the treachery of her male colleagues.*

*In both texts there are expectations of women's appearance and behaviour and students might compare the sexualisation of women across texts and a privileging of male sexuality - rape is sanctioned in The Penelopiad and in Photograph 51 Crick explains that "women expect men to fall upon them like unrestrained beasts". Whilst Penelope is forced to submit to sexual expectations of marriage, Rosalind refuses to marry and is maligned for her lack of femininity ("she's a cipher where a woman should be"). Interestingly, Ziegler refers to Crick's estranged wife as another woman unwilling to tolerate the strictures of married life.*



*Both texts centre on competitive masculine cultures which limit opportunities for women. In both texts too, we see women attempt to resist the limitations around them in covert and overt ways. Some attempt to use social expectations to their advantage whilst others rally against these expectations. Ultimately, both texts reinforce that the pervasiveness of oppressive patriarchal societies are hostile environments for women and often cause suffering. A further point of comparison might be the positioning of Penelope as narrator (from the Underworld) as it allows her to take control of her narrative and this contrasts with the narration of Photograph 51 which is often told from the perspective of Gosling.*

ii. “It was my fault! I hadn’t told her of my scheme”. (*The Penelopiad*)

“Gosling: That night I slipped Wilkins the photograph. I did think it was his right to see it. I knew it was the best photograph we had”. (*Photograph 51*)

‘There is often a fine line between trust and betrayal.’ Discuss in reference to both texts.

*This prompt invites students to compare and contrast how the related themes of trust and betrayal are problematised within the texts. The prompt requires students to engage with the stated quotes, both of which invite students to explore the nuanced connections between trust and betrayal rather than seeing them as dichotomous. Students could consider the ways in which power dynamics shape the nature of relationships and how these encourage or discourage the development of trust. For example, gendered norms in Spartan society insist that women remain chaste whilst the same is not expected of men. Sexual transgressions by married men are not therefore deemed a betrayal but rather a patriarchal right. Interestingly, whilst Penelope remains faithful she is still accused of the same “sluttery” as her maids.*

*In Photograph 51 it is the men who engage in betrayal. Whilst Gosling initially justified showing Rosalind’s photograph to Wilkins, Ziegler’s reference to “slipping” the photo underscore the slippery nature of Gosling’s actions and his role as narrator and repeated references to the “different ways our lives could go” infer a sense of regret at his complicit role in usurping Rosalind’s findings. Having said this, students should also note Rosalind’s unwillingness to share her findings - is this a lack of trust for her colleagues or a sense of not wanting to be wrong and thus ensuring she had evidence rather than mere hypotheses before sharing her findings? Certainly there is a sense that Rosalind saw herself as intellectually superior and possessive of her research - “I don’t want others to analyse my data... I work best when I work alone” and this engendered a lack of professional trust with her colleagues. This was however, in response to Wilkins attempts to subjugate “Miss Franklin” and position her as his assistant. Perhaps the most brutal betrayal is that of Wilkins who in turn shares Rosalind’s findings with Watson and Crick, who are ostensibly working in opposition to King’s College. He therefore betrays both his colleague and his institution in an effort to secure his name in history. He comes to regret it and is so ashamed of his role in “offering [her photograph] up like a leg of lamb we’d share for dinner” that he dreams of “starting again... just us this time”.*

*Penelope, on the other hand is unable to trust her blood relations - her father tried to drown her and her son Telemachus not only “defied [her]... parental responsibility” he took an active role in executing Penelope’s maids. Who betrayed Penelope’s confidence and condemned her maids to death is unclear with Penelope blaming herself (for not informing Eurycleia) and the reader unsure of how much Eurycleia knew. Given her steadfast commitment to Odysseus it is quite possible that Eurycleia actively betrayed Penelope. So too, one cannot overlook the fact that Penelope was unable to save her maids and is thus, at least in part, responsible for their deaths. What is perhaps most pointed, is Atwood’s suggestion that the justice system itself betrays the maids as it fails to hold Odysseus accountable for his actions.*

*In this sense students need to consider whether the line between trust and betrayal is indeed thin – perhaps it is not and instead in both texts we see different responses to the challenges associated with trusting others in hierarchical societies and we see the consequences of betrayal?*

**Pair 7 *The 7 Stages of Grieving* by Wesley Enoch and Deborah Mailman and *The Longest Memory* by Fred D’Aguiar**

- i. “We’re not fighting, we’re grieving” (*The 7 Stages of Grieving*)

Compare the way the two texts explore this idea.

*The quote comes from The 7 Stages of Grieving, specifically from Scene 15 – ‘March’, which follows the death in custody of Daniel Vocke in the previous scene, ‘Mugshot’. The Aboriginal Woman says ‘We’re not fighting, we’re grieving’, but contradicts this at the end of the scene, saying, ‘Don’t tell me we’re not fighting! Don’t tell me we don’t fight most of our lives.’ Students should be able to recognise this and therefore contend that the play includes characters, specifically Indigenous, doing both, grieving and fighting. The same can be said for The Longest Memory where D’Aguiar also presents significant conflict and overwhelming grief. Both texts exhibit characters who do both grieving and fighting, and others who gravitate to one or the other. One important difference is that in the play the fighting occurs mostly between black and white and the grieving mostly affects Indigenous Australians, while in the novella there is more intra-race fighting and the grief is more widespread.*

*In The 7 Stages of Grieving the two most striking examples of individuals fighting against systemic injustice are the protagonist’s brother in Scene 18 and Daniel Vocke in Scene 14. Both are racially targeted by police. The brother’s ‘shame’ prompts a ‘cycle’ of petty crime which leaves him facing court and probable jail. The consequences for Vocke are greater, he is arrested, taken to the Watchhouse, then to the hospital ‘and at 7.13 pm he [is] pronounced dead’. Other individuals fighting against systemic injustice include Black Skin Girl fighting against assimilation in the form of the British alphabet in Scene 9 and the protagonist buying a dress and fighting against prejudice and racial stereotyping in Scene 12. Community action is represented by the ‘peaceful ... silent march’ that follows the death of Vocke. Other scenes illustrate the national challenges faced by Indigenous people since the arrival of the British. These include: Scenes 10, 11 and 16 which focus on invasion and the taking of land; Scene 17 which references the stolen generations and the destruction of Indigenous culture and tradition; Scene 6 which foreshadows the premature death of the protagonist’s father and highlights the low life-expectancy for Indigenous Australians; and Scenes 21, 22 and 24, which explore the idea of national reconciliation. Scene 24 stands out as the only scene that shows black and white people together fighting for the same thing.*

*In The Longest Memory, the most notable fighting is performed by Chapel who fights for his freedom and his right to love Lydia. His fighting is ended by the whip and death, having been betrayed by his father. Another slave who fights against the system is Chapel’s mother, Cook, who refuses to silently endure ‘Sander’s forced seed’. Unlike Chapel, her decision to fight has positive consequences. A key difference between the texts is that The Longest Memory features more white characters, some of whom are given a voice in the narrative. Many of these characters are fighting, mostly each other, and for very different goals. Lydia fights for her right to love Chapel and to end the system of slavery, which results in her losing her lover to murder and being publicly shamed for her ‘love of blacks’. Her father, Mr Whitechapel, is mocked by*

*fellow plantation owners for wanting to ‘treat [his] slaves with humanity’. Sanders Senior fights against the orders of his employer and against the idea that he is not as ‘good’ as Whitechapel. While Sanders Junior becomes sick of fighting for his father’s ideals, finally admitting that his memory of his father is ‘sullied’ and that Whitechapel ‘would have’ made a better ‘father’.*

*While the majority of the scenes in The 7 Stages of Grieving focus on fighting, scenes highlighting grief feature throughout. Scene 1 presents ‘a freshly turned grave’ and warns about ‘representations of people recently dead’. Scene 2 reveals ‘an Aboriginal Woman alone with her grief’ and projects 20 words on the screen relating to that grief. Scenes 4, 5, 8 and 12 tell ‘Nana’s Story’ and feature the ‘suitcase’, family photos’ and ‘red earth’ that become symbols of the family grief. These symbols also appear in Scenes 19, 20 and 23 where the protagonists talk about Indigenous people having ‘been taught to cry quietly’. ‘March’ and ‘Walking Across Bridges’ show that grieving and fighting are linked; the fighting leads to grieving, which in turn prompts more fighting. However, the final scene is the most optimistic in the play. It compares the walking masses to ‘the rainbow serpent’ and describes an Old Aunty crying for a ‘different’ reason. It suggests that while the fighting is clearly not over, perhaps the protagonist and other Indigenous Australians might finally be subjected to less grieving. In The Longest Memory most of the grieving is done by Whitechapel, firstly for his young wife who is not afforded medical treatment when taken ill, and then for his son, Chapel. Whitechapel’s sorrow is increased by his own culpability in his son’s capture, causing him to not ‘want to remember’. Chapel also grieves over the death of ‘the woman who gave [him] breath’. It is assumed that Lydia grieves for the loss of Chapel, although this is never documented, and ironically Sanders Junior is the only person shown to grieve for Whitechapel, offering his ‘jacket’ to the ‘old man ... in death’.*

**ii.** Compare how the two texts explore injustice.

*When attempting this topic, students need to grasp the opportunity to discuss a range of features from the two texts. Both texts draw on plot devices, symbolism, non-linear episodic structures and different forms of writing to explore injustice.*

*Both the play and the novella feature emotional scenes portraying vicious and hateful acts of violence against black characters. In The 7 Stages of Grieving, these acts are committed by the police and include the death in custody of Daniel Vocke and the racially motivated arrest of the protagonist’s brother. In The Longest Memory the shocking acts include the multiple rapes of Cook and the whipping to death of her son, the runaway slave, Chapel. The crimes are committed by the overseers, Sanders Senior and Junior; the latter tragically killing his half-brother. These devastating acts highlight the systematic abuse of human rights committed by the white authorities against Indigenous Australians and slaves. Both texts also feature multiple examples of discrimination, racial stereotyping and grief. Combined, these abuses illustrate that both systems are broken and both texts include consequent protest action. In the play, the protests are broad based movements eventually including both black and white; while in the novella the only voices of protest belong to Chapel and Lydia, although readers understand that history will eventually catch up with these courageous characters.*

*Symbols feature prominently throughout both texts. In the play, the family photos, suitcase, red earth, wooden cross and eucalypt leaves weave in and out of the drama offering regular reminders of the injustice and grief experienced by Indigenous characters. In the novel, the symbols of injustice and grief include, the whip, 'sour-face', 'red eyes', Whitechapel's knot, Cook's 'torn' clothes, the book, Cook's pot, stars, 'dream about Africa' and Sanders Junior's jacket.*

*The structure of each text helps facilitate the exploration of injustice. Both texts have non-linear episodic structures. In the play the 24 short scenes are set across different centuries and different states. While the perspective of the contemporary Indigenous woman remains constant, even when the action is set in 1788, Enoch and Mailman use the device to present injustices across different centuries, such as invasion, land theft, Stolen Children, life expectancy and deaths in custody. The novella uses its episodic structure slightly differently. It has 13 chapters (plus prologue and epilogue), narrated by an assortment of characters, (black and white) and set across the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. D'Aguiar uses the device to illustrate a range of injustices – slavery, murder, rape, illiteracy and anti-miscegenation. However, the use of various narrators also allows for the exploration of these violations from competing perspectives, those of the perpetrators, victims and invested witnesses.*

*Each text builds on the episodic structure with the use of different forms of writing. The 7 Stages of Grieving uses a diverse mix of dramatic forms and techniques to highlight injustice. These include words and images projected on a screen (multimedia), music, ritual dance, song, oral storytelling, reportage, poetry and stand-up comedy. The different forms and techniques allow the playwrights to appeal to different senses and evoke a range of emotions. They also allow for a more complex tone and a richer theatrical experience. The complexity is evident in 'Murri Gets a Dress', where the protagonist uses 'stand-up' style humour to critique white prejudice; while the ritual dance and smoking ceremony illustrate the richness of the play. The Longest Memory uses first-person narrative, second-person narrative, monologue, diary entries, poetry and editorials. The different styles explore private and public, old and young and powerful and oppressed. They invite the reader into the Antebellum South and contribute to the idea that the institution of slavery damages all come into contact with it.*

**Pair 8 *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* by Malala Yousafzai with Christine Lamb, and *Pride* directed by Matthew Warchus**

- i. ‘There is power in a union’.

Compare how the texts *I Am Malala* and *Pride* explore the importance of powerful relationships.

*The prompt line comes from English protest singer and staunch unionist, Billy Bragg, whose song of the same name closes the film, Pride. The importance of the song’s message, which was released at the time of the coal miners’ strike cannot be understated. Although this pairing of a devout Muslim woman and the support of the L.G.S.M. in the 1984-85 miner’s strike against the Conservative government of Margaret Thatcher may seem poles apart, in their fight and advocacy for human rights, dignity and equality, the texts very much share a synergy of core values.*

*The prompt provides a range of access points for discussion. Both texts offer strong protagonists who staunchly believe in their own power and voice to advocate for change; yet in their contrasting settings and political circumstances, there are different forces at work which both Malala and Mark Ashton must navigate, and this would provide students with points of comparative discussion. However, it is through the power, support and belief of their support networks that both figures are able to push forward in their campaigns, and it is these personal relationships which lend themselves to further exploration and analysis. Mark has comrade and co-founder, Mike as a pragmatic rudder for Mark’s mercurial and dynamic leadership, and there is also the under-age (20 year old) Joe who emerges as an articulate and committed activist by the film’s end. For Joe, his powerful relationship with Mark is one based on acceptance, empowerment and self-truth, which gives Joe a sense of belonging he would not otherwise experience in his conservative family. Students would compare Mark with Malala – two strong leaders, unafraid in the face of society’s rejection and disapproval, and there are central qualities shared by these characters which would prove worthy of analysis, comparison and contrast.*

*More capable students could discuss those powerful relationships which either support or scar us. In Malala’s case, she has a devoted father, Ziauddin, and devout mother, Toor Pekai, to adore and support their daughter as she campaigns for female education and equality. Ziauddin’s influence upon his daughter’s thinking, values and use of the media to campaign clearly prove powerful in shaping Malala’s brave, perhaps naïve, views that she could protest without consequence. However, in contrast, in the film *Pride*, students can discuss the enduring damage when a child is rejected by their family – where that important, powerful relationship is withdrawn, and the void filled by others who either share that sense of rejection, or share same-sex attraction and the fight for identity and equality. The film offers us both Gethin, isolated from his family for 16 years but who reconciles after the influence of Welsh committee member Hefina, and then Joe, who has hidden his sexuality from his family for fear of such rejection, only to walk away from their oppression, to be welcomed back into the L.G.S.M. fold, where Stef, Mark, and Mike embrace him for defending his sense of self-truth and integrity.*

*On a broader level, stronger candidates would engage not just with the protagonists, but the wider landscape of movements and the potency for change. Malala and the schoolgirls advocate for female education and the right to equality in the face of the Taliban's threats, intimidation and violence. She finds allies in the Western media, and world leaders, looking to the doomed Benazir Bhutto as a role-model. Both the members of the L.G.S.M. and the miners of Onllwyn also face intimidation, violence and betrayal – both within and without their community. There is the work to dispel the entrenched prejudice and homophobia among the miners themselves, although the powerful relationship with the womenfolk of Onllwyn becomes the backbone of support and acceptance in the small community. There are the 'unions' of Dominic West's Jonathan teaching the miners to dance to woo women, and his encouragement of miner's wife Sian James to not waste her 'sharp mind', which prompts her to pursue a tertiary education and ultimately become a British MP. There is the powerful relationship between Mark Ashton and Dai Donavon, the local union leader, whose enduring speech about friendship, the symbolism of joined hands on the historic union banner, and his unflinching defence of the L.G.S.M.'s unwavering support and generosity is revisited at the closing of the film, with its Gay Pride march. The topic can be unpacked for further dimensions of discussion.*

- ii. Compare how the texts *I Am Malala* and *Pride* explore the notion of courage in adversity.

*The notion of courage lends itself to various interpretations – courage can be both an external action or an internal choice to defend one's sense of integrity and justice. Some might view the concept as physical courage – that is, to stand against physical intimidation or violence, or the courage of principles often tested against a greater, oppressive force. This pairing of texts addresses these interpretations as well as the courage not to submit in the face of adversity, and the courage of truth and self-knowledge. Students would generally find the access point of discussing Malala's defiance and courage in the face of being intimidated and then targeted by the Taliban. There is fruitful discussion around whether she was naïve and insulated by her father's mantra, 'I will protect you. Get on with your dreams', or whether they felt not even the Taliban would come after a schoolgirl, which provided a foolhardy kind of courage until that moment on the school bus. In contrast to Malala's naivety, the film's key character, Mark Ashton, is acutely aware of the physical threat of violence carried out against gay men, yet the L.G.S.M. members still fund-raise on the streets, despite being spat at and insulted, with the visual intimidation of skinheads looming in shots. The enforced "First rule of the group, Comrade. Nobody collects alone." reinforces this all too real physical threat, unlike Malala's naivety, yet their intent on raising funds for the miners, making themselves visible targets, also speaks to a defiant kind of physical and moral courage.*

*There can be the exploration of courage in accepting identity, depicted through the timid Joe, who finds – despite his trepidation – that the L.G.S.M. is 'a broad church' not only in terms of gay and lesbian members, but also of class and eccentricity. Yet, for Joe, he must have the conviction to continue to participate in the lobby group, while hiding his sexuality from his conservative parents and sister. Here there is a discussion between Joe lacking the courage to come out to his family fearing judgment and rejection, and the contrast of Malala securely cocooned in her father's idealism; - where Joe must hide from his own identity and truth, Malala is encouraged to embrace and promote her sense of self, despite the judgements of patriarchal Pushtan society. Whilst Malala never psychologically*

*flinches in the face of adversity, Joe, Mark and the assaulted Gethin all demonstrate kinds of courage in celebrating their gay identity, seeking reconciliation after years of rejection, or choosing rejection in order to stay true to themselves.*

*The courage of principles in the face of oppression and discrimination can also be explored – both in terms of Ziauddin and the girls’ school, standing against the mounting pressure of the Taliban and tribal elders to close the school, and the mining community of Onllwyn, struggling to maintain their dignity in the looming oppression of police intimidation and Thatcher’s hard-line ‘new kind of leadership’. In Malala’s case, there is scope to discuss the deeper dimensions of religious piety contrasted with a fanatical zealotry which manipulates and subverts the ideas in the Qu’ran. Malala herself points out the discrepancies in the Taliban’s messages, and it is her courage to expose and question their oppression which places her squarely in the sights of the terrorist group. The film offers a palate of characters fighting their own courageous battles where morality, principles and honouring the fading ideals of Welsh unionism are played out. Director Matthew Warchus also implicitly explores those like Joe, who have conformed to a heterosexual façade, or those who have hidden their truth away, yet through the courage of the L.G.S.M. becoming involved and offering a staunch, defiant courage, their example helps liberate these characters to courageously step forward. There is the courage of working to retain one’s dignity in the face of adversity, the ability to stand up for what you believe in – even if others disagree. This can be richly explored through some of the secondary characters such as Dai, the union leader of Onllwyn, Hefina the union committee member, Cliff, and their opponents, such as Maureen and her sons.*

*Capable students will explore the deeper notions that to be courageous is to follow your dreams and aspirations, and to have the mental toughness and resilience to persevere and fight for what you consider is honourable and morally right. Malala, Ziauddin, Madam Maryam all share these core views of courage, and draw from their Islamic faith to provide fortitude in the face of adversity. Yet, skilful students can conversely discuss the views of the Taliban, who believe that their perverse readings of the Qu’ran endorse and facilitate their violent courage, to bomb schools and murder women who will not submit to their suffocating misogyny, such as the traditional dancer found dead on the sports oval, left as a warning and example that all women should observe purdah and submit to the control of men. Similarly, the key members of L.G.S.M. understand all too well that society would want them to become invisible; yet for Mark Ashton, despite the difficulties of discrimination, he sees beyond the struggle for gay rights, to a broader human landscape – of mining families suffering, of a shared struggle for worth, respect and acceptance in the face of a conservative society which would silence and crush dissenters; - the film eloquently depicts the shared perseverance and courage found in the L.G.S.M. and the miners’ cause, which despite their seeming strangeness, are bound by deeper core values of honour and comradeship.*



## SECTION C – Argument and persuasive language

High level sample response with annotations (in bold) for each paragraph.

*As our cities have become bigger and our lives busier, more and more people have been looking at different work models as part of the solution to some of society's most pressing problems. However, in the conservative world of government regulation and corporate profit, the thoughts of reducing work hours or employees working from home, have been met with some resistance. Professor Roman James, the keynote speaker at The Modern Workplace Conference, is firmly in favour of reforming work practices. His authoritative address, 'Big problems require radical solutions!' does not outline a new model of work for society, but rather, argues that all of the stakeholders must 'work together' to build models 'that improve the quality of life for all ... citizens'. James's title, Professor, suggest that he is an academic in the area of workplace structures and operations and therefore, he would be expected to advocate reform. Moreover, James's use of inclusive language when describing the frustrating commute suggest that he too would like to spend more of the working week working from home. The Professor's live audience consists of representatives from the three main stakeholder groups, government, business and trade unions, and he uses a mix of frustration, passion and academic knowledge to inspire them to 'find ... solution[s] that will take us into the rest of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and beyond'.*

**The first part of the introduction outlines the issue, the type of text, the style and contention of the speech. The second part analyses the identity of the writer, the target audience, the tone and purpose of the speech.**

*James's first argument is that 'we are a society that has become overworked' which 'is destroying our sense of family' as well as 'our physical and mental well-being'. He begins his address with a description of a stress-free and efficient drive to work in 'the world's most liveable city' before introducing the word 'fantasy' and the first slide – a cartoon of an angry man in a suit holding a steering wheel in one hand while the other makes a suggestive clenched fist. This juxtaposition indicates that the first description is full of sarcasm. Furthermore, it illustrates the point that the task of getting to work has become extremely stressful for most people and thus supports the idea that the nature of work in society is in desperate need of reform. James uses inclusive language, 'us', to connect with members of the audience who also face frustrating drives to work, and loaded terms, 'standstill', 'gridlock' and 'eternity' to illustrate that the system needs fixing. James then raises the alternative of 'public transport' but destroys this idea with more vitriolic language: 'long haul', 'hell' and 'hot sardine' thus reaching out to members of the audience who usually take public transport to work.*

**This paragraph analyses James’s first argument and explains how key strategies attempt to position different sections of the audience. It analyses the first visual and also notes tone.**

*James casually mentions the ‘debt-ridden dream home’ before detailing the ‘matter of emails, text messages and phone calls’ that begin ‘pinging’ as soon as you set out on ‘your journey’. He links these ideas to the second slide – a photograph of a young man asleep at his desk with his head pinned to the computer keyboard by a large pile of heavy files. This exaggerated image offers some humour, but also serves to demonstrate how ‘utterly exhausted’ workers are, even before they officially begin work. The image is supported by powerful and distressing terms like ‘anxiety, stress and burn out’ and attempts to illicit feelings of sympathy from those in the audience who have the power to drive change; specifically the leaders of each sector.*

**This paragraph continues the analysis of James’s first argument and explains how key strategies attempt to position different sections of the audience. It analyses the second visual and also notes tone.**

*Next, the professor ‘indulge[s] in some history’ to argue that modern work practices have betrayed the ideals that led to the ‘eight-hour-day’. He describes an earlier time when people ‘worked close to where they lived’ and explains that increased ‘technology’ and other social improvements led to ‘predictions’ of ‘a further reduction in work hours’. This allows James to reveal some of his academic learning whilst providing context for his audience. He attempts to strengthen his connection to said audience when he asks them to reveal if they ‘work longer than eight hours a day’ and if they work ‘close to where live’. James receives the feedback he sought, ‘most’ work longer and ‘very few’ live close. He then puts up a third slide in an attempt to continue his manipulation of the audience. This slide contains four dot points. The first two consolidate his points regarding work hours and commute times. The third points to the damage being done to workers’ ‘physical and mental health’ and ‘the environment’; while the fourth says ‘wages are stagnating and the cost of living is rising’. James’s address becomes very serious at this point and the vision he paints is bleak and alarming. This is a deliberate attempt to condition the audience to accept his suggestion for a ‘possible solution’.*

**This paragraph analyses James’s second argument and explains how key strategies attempt to position the audience. It analyses the third visual and also notes the shift in tone.**

*James solution is ‘that all ... in the room ... and across the conference need to work together to devise’ plans that improve the ‘work-life balance’ for all. He draws on two examples to show that solutions could look different depending on the context. The first example, Californian company, Blue Steel Capital, implemented a ‘five-hour day’ to facilitate the CEO’s ‘passion for surfing’, and the second, Microsoft Japan moved to a ‘four-day week’. Both companies reported increased productivity and ‘happier workers’. James uses various statistics and a quote from Microsoft Japan CEO, Takuya Hirano - “Work a short time, rest well and learn a lot” - to highlight the overwhelming benefits of each plan. James outlines these two examples in an attempt to convince the audience that radical reform can work. The example of Microsoft Japan in particular, could soften the resistance of more conservative members of the audience, as Microsoft is one of the world’s biggest and most successful companies, and Japan has a reputation for being a traditional and conservative nation. James ends his address in a constructive manner with an emotional appeal and a gesture. He implores his audience to value their ‘one life’ and our ‘one planet’ before pointing ‘to the room’ in a final effort to motivate them to build new, ‘healthier’ and more sustainable work models.*

**This paragraph analyses James’s third argument and explains how key strategies attempt to position different sections of the audience. It also notes the shift in tone.**

*Professor James’s keynote speech aims to inspire his diverse audience – government, business and unions - to build vastly improved workplace models. The different sectors of his audience have different and sometimes competing interests, but James asks them to think in new ways for the benefit of individual workers, families, society and the planet. His speech has three distinct phases. The first phase uses anecdotal material to outline the ever mounting pressures on individual employees and is targeted towards the government and business sectors in the hope that they will acknowledge these pressures and investigate solutions to deal with them. The second phase highlights some of the historic achievements and past ideals of the union movement, challenging union leaders in the audience to become as ambitious and visionary as their predecessors. In the final phase, James outlines two very different examples of companies who have successfully implemented reforms that address ‘work-life balance’. Here James asks all three sectors to work together during (and beyond) the conference to find specific solutions for specific contexts. However, while the solutions may vary, the goal is the same: to ‘value’ the lives of workers, build stronger families, ‘healthier’ societies and a sustainable ‘planet’. James combines frustration and humour in the first phase, employs a serious tone in the second phase before ending on a more positive and constructive note in order to support his purpose.*

**The conclusion restates James’s purpose and lists his key arguments. It touches on the strategies employed in the speech and explains how the different arguments and strategies**

**appeal to different sections of the audience. The final sentence notes the tonal shifts throughout the address.**