

# **Contemporary English Literature**



**Dagmar Blight**

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## **Preface**

The core subjects of an English language teacher training programme generally include linguistics, cultural studies, language in use, methodology and literature. The future teacher of English is thus, among other skills, expected to have advanced mastery of the language, a good grasp of Anglo-American fiction and to be familiar with the use of literature in an EL class. The Pisa tests results, the research into the use of literature in ELT and personal experience, however, suggest reality is, sadly, very different. As a result of uninspiring literature lessons, the students tend to find the classes boring. They may be unable to relate to the characters and their stories; their insufficiently developed reading comprehension skills often bar their understanding, and thus their appreciation of the texts encountered during their studies. Consequently, and perhaps not surprisingly, once they become teachers they fail to make the best use of literary text in their teaching careers.

This textbook rather immodestly attempts to put the above-mentioned deficiencies right. To achieve this somewhat ambitious aim, the book provides MA students with a wide range of extracts from the very best English literature can offer from the Second World War period to now. The carefully chosen passages are then followed by reading comprehension check questions and by tasks that develop both speaking and writing proficiency skills as well as their cultural competence. Most of all, however, the questions attempt to personalise the characters, their stories and the issues that may bother them. All this is done to bridge the gap between them and the student: the contemporary reader often a lot younger than any of the literary characters, who speaks English as a foreign language, and who may not be used to reading lengthy texts.

Simultaneously, the textbook offers a few interesting details from the lives of the selected authors. Instead of providing the students with a comprehensive overview of each author, it provides key concepts related to their work. This is done on purpose, in order to encourage the students to seek further information by themselves rather than have it served on a plate. The ability to know where and how to search for additional information is an essential skill for any student, such as when preparing a presentation, or writing essays or theses.

Only time will show whether the ambitious plan to develop the afore-mentioned skills is viable or not. In the meantime, the author invites the student to read and to enjoy some of la crème de la crème of English literature masters.

## 1 Britain after the Second World War

During and after WWII, Britain saw unprecedented changes in society. The 1942 **Beveridge Report** looked into the welfare of British citizens. Its findings revealed a dire situation and led to a welfare package which aimed to provide for the people “*from the cradle to the grave.*” The 1944 **Education Act** gave the underprivileged access to higher education. The 1945 **General election** was won by the Labour Party and C. Atlee became the Prime Minister. Gas, coal and the railways were nationalized, and the NHS (National Health Service) was created in 1948. Despite the continuing austerity and rationing, the novelties of the welfare state gave working-class people the impression that Britain was soon to become a classless society. Instead, the Angry Young Men movement emerged. The wave of post war optimism even affected political leaders. H. Macmillan, a Conservative PM between 1957 – 1963, said Britain: “*never had it so good.*”

## 2 Anti-modernism/Non-Modernism

With the death of the two greatest Modernists in 1941, V. Woolf and J. Joyce, the Modernist movement came to its inevitable end during the Second World War. Instead of intellectual self-examination, the writers of the time turned their attention to more pressing issues of their era (moral, political, social etc.).

### 2.1 Anthony Burgess: *A Clockwork Orange* (1962)

A. Burgess (1917 – 1993) was a novelist, critic and a man of letters. His most famous works include: *The Wanting Seed*, an anti-utopian view of an overpopulated world, *Honey for the Bears* and *Enderby Outside*. Burgess also wrote as Joseph Kell: *One Hand Clapping*, *Inside Mr. Enderby* and *Enderby Outside*.

**Roman à these** – the novel with a thesis, the novel of ideas, is a novel in which ideas seem to be the source of the work's energy. These originate, shape and maintain its narrative momentum – rather than, say, emotions, moral choice, personal relations, or the mutations of human fortune.

In his autobiography, A. Burgess notes that the novel *A Clockwork Orange* was originally inspired by the delinquent behaviour of the young hooligans who went under the tribal names of Mods and Rockers in Britain in the early 1960s, and the perennial problem they posed: how can a civilized society protect itself against anarchic violence without compromising its own ethical standards?

The main character Alex commits crimes of sex & violence. He ends up in prison where he undertakes a Pavlovian aversion therapy. Although he is cured of his compulsion towards violence, henceforth it makes him sick, there is an ethical debate questioning the moral aspect of the treatment as Alex is left with no will of his own. Alex and his gang speak a “Teenage skaz,” a slang influenced by Russian. As the story takes place during the Cold War, the slang makes the character even more sinister.

### Pre-reading

- a, How can anarchic violence be prevented in a civilised society?
- b, What means of punishment are available in our judicial system?

### Ex. 1

And then I found they were strapping my rookers to the chair-arms and my nogas were like stuck to a foot-rest. It seemed a bit bezoomy to me but I let them get on with what they wanted to get on with. If I was to be a free young malchick again in a fortnight's time I would put up with much in the meantime, O my brothers. One veshch I did not like, though, was when they put like clips on the skin of my forehead,

so that my top glazz-lids were pulled up and up and up and I could not shut my glazzies no matter how I tried (Burgess, 1986, p. 58).

1a, Alex thinks he can put up with the Pavlovian aversion therapy in prison. T/F?

### **Ex. 2**

Then we shot straight into another lomtick of film, and this time it was of just a human litso, a very like pale human face held still and having different nasty veshches done to it. I was sweating a malenky bit with the pain in my guts and a horrible thirst and my gulliver going throb throb throb, and it seemed to me that if I could not viddy this bit of film I would perhaps be not so sick. But I could not shut my glazzies, and even if I tried to move my glaz-balls about I still could not get like out of the line of fire of this picture. So I had to go on viddying what was being done and hearing the most ghastly creechings coming from this litso. I knew it could not really be *real*, but that made no difference. I was heaving away but could not sick, viddying first a britva cut out an eye, then slice down the cheek, then go rip rip rip all over, while red krovvy shot on to the camera lens. Then all the teeth were like wrenched out with a pair of pliers, and the creeching and the blood were terrific. Then I slooshied this very pleased goloss of Dr. Brodsky going: "Excellent, excellent, excellent" (Burgess, 1986, p. 59).

2a, What is Alex's reaction to watching the film?

2b, What kind of films is he forcibly exposed to?

### **Ex. 3**

"Please, I must do something. Shall I clean your boots? Look, I'll get down and lick them." And, my brothers, believe it or kiss my sharries, I got down on my knees and pushed my red yahzick out a mile and half to lick his grahzny vonny boots. But all this veck did was to kick me not too hard on the rot. So then it seemed to me that it would not bring on the sickness and pain if I just gripped his ankles with my rookers tight round them and brought this grashzny bratchny down to the floor. So I did this and he got a real bolshy surprise, coming down crack amid loud laughter from the vonny audience. But viddying him on the floor I could feel the whole horrible feeling coming over me, so I gave him my rooker to lift him up skorry and up he came. Then just as he was going to give me a real nasty and earnest tolchock on the litso Dr. Brodsky said:

"All right, that will do very well." Then this horrible veck sort of bowed and danced off like an actor while the lights came up on me blinking and with my rot square for howling. Dr. Brodsky said to the audience: "Our subject is, you see, impelled towards the good by, paradoxically, being impelled towards evil. The intention to act violently is accompanied by strong feelings of physical distress. To counter these the subject has to switch to a diametrically opposed attitude. Any questions?"



“Choice,” rumbled a rich deep goliath. I kidded it belonged to the prison Charlie. “He had no real choice, has he? Self-interest, fear of physical pain, drove him to that grotesque act of self-abasement. Its insincerity was clearly to be seen. He ceases to be a wrongdoer. He ceases also to be a creature capable of moral choice” (Burgess, 1986, p. 72).

3a, Underline all the words of Russian origin used in this extract and translate them into English.

3b, Why do you think the author used “teenage skaz.”

3c, How does the reader undergo a kind of Pavlovian conditioning reinforced by reward rather than punishment?

3d, How effective is the therapy that Alex undergoes?

3e, What objections are raised against the therapy?

3f, Identify the central idea of the novel.

## 2.2 William Golding: *Lord of the Flies* (1954)

W. Golding (1911 – 1993) worked in theatre and education. As a Royal Navy officer he participated in the 1944 Normandy invasion. Having witnessed the horrors he came to the conclusion that “man produces evil, as a bee produces honey.” In his work he revealed the dark places of the human heart, when isolated individuals or small groups are pushed into extreme situations.

His notable works are: *The Inheritors*, *Free Fall*, *Rites of Passage*, *Close Quarters*, *Fire Down Below*, *The Paper Men*. In 1983 W. Golding was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

In the novel *Lord of the Flies* a group of British schoolboys are stranded on a deserted tropical island after their plane makes a crash landing. Subject to hunger, loneliness and fear, and without the restraints of civilised society or adult supervision, the behaviour of the playground degenerates into tribal violence. They regress to savagery and superstition, undergoing “the end of innocence, the darkness of man’s heart.”

### Pre-reading

a, What are the pitfalls of a lack of organised adult supervision?

b, Do you agree with the statement that children are innocent beings?

### Ex. 1

The smaller boys were known by the generic title of ‘littluns.’ The decrease in size from Ralph down, was gradual; and though there was a dubious region inhabited by Simon and Robert and Maurice, nevertheless no one had any difficulty in recognising

biguns at one hand and littluns at the other. The undoubted littluns, those aged about six, led a quite distinct, and at the same time intense, life of their own. They ate most of the day, picking fruit where they could reach it and not particular about ripeness and quality. They were used now to stomach-aches and a sort of chronic diarrhoea. They suffered untold terrors in the dark and huddled together for comfort. Apart from food and sleep, they found time to play, aimless and trivial, among the white sand by the bright water. They cried for their mothers much less often than might have been expected; they were brown, and filthily dirty (Golding, 1965, pp. 56–57).

1a, How did the little children cope on the island?

1b, How do we know from the passage that there was no supervision over them?

## **Ex. 2**

Jack leapt on to the sand.

“Do our dance! Come on! Dance!”

He ran stumbling through the thick sand to the open space of rock beyond the fire. Between the flashes of lightning the air was dark and terrible; and the boys followed him, clamorously. Roger became the pig, grunting and charging at Jack, who side-stepped. The hunters took their spears, the cooks took spits, and the rest clubs of firewood. A circling movement developed and a chant. While Roger mimed the terror of the pig, the littluns ran and jumped on the outside of the circle. Piggy and Ralph, under the threat of the sky, found themselves eager to take a place in this demented but partly secure society. They were glad to touch the brown backs of the fence that hemmed in the terror and made it governable.

“*Kill the beast!* Cut his throat! Spill his blood!”

The movement became regular while the chant lost its first superficial excitement and began to beat like a steady pulse. Roger ceased to be a pig and became a hunter, so that the center of the ring yawned emptily. Some of the littluns started a ring on their own; and the complementary circles went round and round as though repetition would achieve safety of itself. There was the throb and stamp of a single organism.

The dark sky was shattered by a blue-white scar. An instant later the noise was on them like the blow of a gigantic whip. The chant rose a tone in agony.

“*Kill the beast!* Cut his throat! Spill his blood!”

Now out of the terror rose another desire, thick, urgent, blind.

“*Kill the beast!* Cut his throat! Spill his blood!”

Again the blue-white scar jagged above them and the sulphurous explosion beat down. The littluns screamed and blundered about, fleeing from the edge of the forest, and one of them broke the ring of biguns in his terror.

“Him! Him!”

The circle became a horseshoe. A thing was crawling out of the forest. It came darkly, uncertainly. The shrill screaming that rose before the beast was like a pain. The beast stumbled into the horseshoe.

“*Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!*”

The blue-white scar was constant, the noise unendurable. Simon was crying out something about a dead man on a hill.

“*Kill the beast! Cut his throat! Spill his blood! Do him in!*”

The sticks fell and the mouth of the new circle crunched and screamed. The beast was on its knees in the center, its arms folded over its face. It was crying out against the abominable noise something about a body on the hill. The beast struggled forward, broke the ring and fell over the steep edge of the rock to the sand by the water. At once the crowd surged after it, poured down the rock, leapt on to the beast, screamed, struck, bit, tore. There were no words, and no movements but the tearing of teeth and claws.

Then the clouds opened and let down the rain like a waterfall. The water bounded from the mountain-top, tore leaves and branches from the trees, poured like a cold shower over the struggling heap on the sand. Presently the heap broke up and figures staggered away. Only the beast lay still, a few yards from the sea. Even in the rain they could see how small a beast it was; and already its blood was staining the sand (Golding, 1965, pp. 144–145).

2a, What does the passage remind you of and why?

2b, What evidence of savagery can be found in the passage?

2c, What is rain a symbol of?

### 2.3 **Graham Greene: *The Heart of the Matter*** (1948)

G. Greene (1904 – 1991) was a journalist who worked for the Foreign Office and travelled widely. He was heavily influenced by Roman Catholicism and his major theme was the conflict between good and evil. Greene’s works can be divided into two categories: **light** (entertainment): *Stamboul Train*, *The Ministry of Fear*, *The Third Man*, *Our Man in Havana* and **serious**: *The Power and the Glory*, *The Heart of the Matter*, *The Quiet American*.

#### ***The Heart of the Matter*** (1948)

This is a novel about the moral consequences of religious belief and about colonialism.

**Seedy setting** – Greene’s own epithet; abroad but not very glamorous or alluring; physically deteriorated (leaking roofs, unbearable heat, vultures, rats, cockroaches), and morally degraded (organised crime).

**Ex. 1**

The less he needed Louise the more conscious he became of his responsibility for her happiness (Greene, 1971, p. 21).

1a, Can one be responsible for the happiness of other people?

**Ex. 2**

He had always been prepared to accept the responsibility for his actions, and he had always been half aware too, from the time he made his terrible private vow, that she should be happy. For how far this action might carry him. Despair is the price one pays for setting oneself an impossible aim. It is, one is told, the unforgivable sin, but it is a sin the corrupt or evil man never practises. He always has hope. He never reaches the freezing-point of knowing absolute failure. Only the man of goodwill carries always in his heart this capacity for damnation (Greene, 1971, p. 60).

**Ex. 3**

It seemed to Scobie that life was immeasurably long. Couldn't the test of man have been carried out in fewer years? Couldn't we have committed our first major sin at seven, have ruined ourselves for love or hate at ten, have clutched at redemption on a fifteen-year-old death-bed? (Greene, 1971 p. 52).

3a, Scobie sounds tired of life. T/F?

3b, Is a long life necessarily a good thing?

**Ex. 4**

In the future – that was where the sadness lay. Was it the butterfly that died in the act of love? But human beings were condemned to consequences. The responsibility was his – he was not a Bagster: he knew what he was about. He had sworn to preserve Louise's happiness, and now he had accepted another and contradictory responsibility. He felt tired by all the lies he would some time have to tell; he felt the wounds of those victims who had not yet bled. Lying back on the pillow he stared sleeplessly out towards the grey early morning tide. Somewhere on the face of those obscure waters moved the sense of yet another wrong and another victim, not Louise, nor Helen (Greene, 1971, pp. 161–162).

4a, How can one cope with one's responsibility? What is your technique?

### Ex. 5

He thought again: if I were dead, she would be free of me. One forgets the dead quite quickly; one doesn't wonder about the dead – what is he doing now, who is he with? (Greene, 1971, p. 251).

5a, Is suicide a solution to one's problems?

### Ex. 6

More evidence must be invented in his diary, which had to be written up to the end – November 12. He must make engagements for the following week. In his behaviour there must be no hint of farewells. This was the worst crime a Catholic could commit – it must be a perfect one (Greene, 1971, p. 257).

6a, Find out how many people take their lives annually in Slovakia. What do you think can be done to lower this number?

6b, What is the Church's attitude to people who commit suicide now?

## 2.4 George Orwell: *Animal Farm* (1944), *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)

G. Orwell (1903 – 1950) was born in India as Eric Arthur Blair. He worked as a teacher, a bookshop assistant and a literary editor of *Tribune*. In addition, he contributed to the *Observer* and the *Manchester Evening News*. He was wounded in the Spanish Civil War. Orwell's most important novels are: *Burmese Days*, *Homage to Catalonia*, *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four*.

**Allegory** – (Gr. “other speaking”) a narrative which, through allusion, metaphor, symbolism, etc., can be read not simply on its own terms but as telling another, quite different story at the same time; names of the characters personify their traits.

**Satire** – exposes and ridicules the follies, vices and shortcomings of society and of individuals with the aim of reform.

**Utopia** – an imaginary place where all is well, (T. More, 1516).

**Dystopia** – a forecast of the doom awaiting mankind; a place where everything is bad, unpleasant, often totalitarian or environmentally damaged.

### *Animal Farm* (1944)

A political satire of a totalitarian regime

## Pre-reading

Find out from your parents and other relatives how the socialist regime repressed people and how it dealt with those who opposed it.

Parallels between *Animal Farm* and history:

Old Major's Speech	Ideas of Marx, Engels, & Lenin
The Rebellion	Bolshevik Revolution 1917
The 7 Commandments	Communist Manifesto 1848
Battle of Cowshed	Counterrevolutionary war
Napoleon & Snowball	Stalin & Trotsky
Confessions & executions	Moscow trials
Sale of timber to Frederick	Nazi-Soviet Pact 1939
Visit of Pilkington	Mutual aid agreement 1941

### Ex. 1

Man is the only creature that consumes without producing. He does not give milk, he does not lay eggs, he is too weak to pull the plough, he cannot run fast enough to catch rabbits. Yet he is the lord of all the animals. He sets them to work, he gives back to them the bare minimum that will prevent them from starving, and the rest he keeps for himself. Our labour tills the soil, our dung fertilizes it, and yet there is not one of us that owns more than his bare skin (Orwell, 1976, p. 15).

1a, What do the animals have against Man?

### Ex. 2

#### THE SEVEN COMMANDMENTS

1. Whatever goes upon two legs is an enemy.
2. Whatever goes upon four legs, or has wings, is a friend.
3. No animal shall wear clothes.
4. No animal shall sleep in a bed.
5. No animal shall drink alcohol.
6. No animal shall kill any other animal.
7. All animals are equal (Orwell, 1976, p. 21).

2a, Comment on the commandments. What was their purpose?

2b, How did the commandments change in the course of the novel and why?

### **Ex. 3**

And finally there was a tremendous baying of dogs and a shrill crowing from the black cockerel, and out came Napoleon himself, majestically upright, casting haughty glances from side to side, and with his dogs gambolling round him.

He carried a whip in his trotter.

There was a deadly silence. Amazed, terrified, huddling together, the animals watched the long line of pigs march slowly round the yard (Orwell, 1976. p. 63).

3a, Napoleon was walking on his hind legs. T/F?

3b, Why were the animals amazed and terrified to see Napoleon walking?

### ***Nineteen Eighty-Four*** (1949)

#### **Ex. 1**

It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking thirteen. Winston Smith, his chin nuzzled into his breast in an effort to escape the vile wind, slipped quickly through the glass doors of Victory Mansions, though not quickly enough to prevent a swirl of gritty dust from entering along with him.

The hallway smelt of boiled cabbage and old rag mats. At one end of it a coloured poster, too large for indoor display, had been tacked to the wall. It depicted simply an enormous face, more than a metre wide: the face of a man of about forty-five, with a heavy black moustache and ruggedly handsome features. Winston made for the stairs. It was no use trying the lift. Even at the best of times it was seldom working, and at present the electric current was cut off during daylight hours. It was part of the economy drive in preparation for Hate Week. The flat was seven flights up, and Winston, who was thirty-nine and had a varicose ulcer above his right ankle, went slowly, resting several times on the way. On each landing, opposite the lift-shaft, the poster with the enormous face gazed from the wall. It was one of those pictures which are so contrived that the eyes follow you about when you move. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption beneath it ran.

[...]

Outside, even through the shut window-pane, the world looked cold. Down in the street little eddies of wind were whirling dust and torn paper into spirals, and though the sun was shining and the sky a harsh blue, there seemed to be no colour in anything, except the posters that were plastered everywhere. The blackmoustachio'd face gazed down from every commanding corner. There was one on the house-front immediately opposite. BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU, the caption said, while the dark eyes looked deep into Winston's own. Down at street level another poster, torn at one corner, flapped fitfully in the wind, alternately covering and uncovering the single word INGSOC. In the far distance a helicopter skimmed down between the roofs, hovered for an instant like a bluebottle, and darted away again with a curving

flight. It was the police patrol, snooping into people's windows. The patrols did not matter, however. Only the Thought Police mattered.

Behind Winston's back the voice from the telescreen was still babbling away about pig-iron and the overfulfilment of the Ninth Three-Year Plan. The telescreen received and transmitted simultaneously. Any sound that Winston made, above the level of a very low whisper, would be picked up by it, moreover, so long as he remained within the field of vision which the metal plaque commanded, he could be seen as well as heard. There was of course no way of knowing whether you were being watched at any given moment. How often, or on what system, the Thought Police plugged in on any individual wire was guesswork. It was even conceivable that they watched everybody all the time. But at any rate they could plug in your wire whenever they wanted to. You had to live — did live, from habit that became instinct — in the assumption that every sound you made was overheard, and, except in darkness, every movement scrutinized (Orwell, 1987, pp. 3–4).

1a, What is the effect of the opening sentence?

1b, Underline phrases describing the weather. What is their effect?

**Pathetic fallacy** – a device that attributes human qualities and emotions to inanimate objects of nature. The word *pathetic* in the term is not used in the derogatory sense of being miserable; rather, it stands for “imparting emotions to something else.”

1c, What features of austerity can you find in the extract?

1d, How can we understand the caption *Big Brother is watching you*?

1e, Which phrases suggest Winston lives in a totalitarian society?

## Ex. 2

A Party member is expected to have no private emotions and respites for enthusiasm. He is supposed to live in a continuous frenzy of hatred of foreign enemies and internal traitors. Triumph over victories, and self-abasement before the power and wisdom of the Party. The discontents produced by his bare, unsatisfying life are deliberately turned outwards and dissipated by such devices as the Two Minutes Hate, and the speculations which might possibly induce a sceptical or rebellious attitude are killed in advance by his early-acquired inner discipline. The first and simplest stage in the discipline, which can be taught even to young children, is called, in Newspeak, *crimestop*. *Crimestop* means the faculty of stopping short, as though by instinct, at the threshold of any dangerous thought. It includes the power of not grasping analogies, of failing to perceive logical errors, of misunderstanding the simplest arguments if they are inimical to Ingsoc, and of being bored or repelled by a train of thoughts which is capable of leading in a heretical direction. *Crimestop*, in short, means protective stupidity (Orwell, 1987, pp. 220–221).



2a, Why do you think Crimestop is an essential tool for survival of both the individual and the system?

2b, Give examples of hatred used as an appealing feature of a political party.

### 3 Angry Young Men

The AYM were a group of British novelists and playwrights who emerged in the 1950s and expressed scorn and discontent with the established socio-political order in Britain. They were a generation of rebels and anti-heroes who were anti high-culture and anti-Establishment. They represented violent social criticism and were in favour of youth, the working class and the underprivileged.

#### 3.1 Kingsley Amis: *Lucky Jim* (1954)

K. Amis (1922 – 1995) was a poet and novelist. He was a middle-class Oxford graduate who taught at a provincial university. Amis' notable novels are: *Take a Girl Like You* (a world of fast cars, fast young men, parties and a girl who keeps herself to herself), *I Want it Now* (anger focused on the idle rich and gross materialism), *Girl, 20* (ageing males preserving their youth by having affairs with younger women).

**Campus novel** – a novel which has a university campus as its setting.

#### Pre-reading

- a, What role should universities have?
- b, How practical – vocational should be the courses they offer?

#### Ex. 1

“Let’s see now; what’s the exact title you’ve given it?” Dixon looked out of the window at the fields wheeling past, bright green after a wet April. It wasn’t the double-exposure effect of the last half-minute’s talk that had dumbfounded him, for such incidents formed the staple material of Welch colloquies; it was the prospect of reciting the title of the article he’d written. It was a perfect title, in that it crystalized the article’s niggling mindlessness, its funereal parade of yawn-enforcing facts, the pseudo-light it threw upon non-problems. Dixon had read, or begun to read, dozens like it, but his own seemed worse than most in its air of being convinced of its own usefulness and significance. “In considering this strangely neglected topic,” it began. This what neglected topic? This strangely what topic? This strangely neglected what? His thinking all this without having defiled and set fire to the typescript only made him appear to himself as more of a hypocrite and fool. “Let’s see,” he echoed Welch in a pretended effort of memory: “oh yes; The Economic Influence of the Development in Shipbuilding Techniques, 1450 to 1485. After all, that’s what it’s...” (Amis, 2010, p. 6).

- 1a, In what field of study is Dixon?
- 1b, What attitude does Dixon show towards the scholarly article he has written?

- 1c, In “a perfect title” is the word “perfect” to be understood literally or is it in the ironic sense?
- 1d, Identify phrases showing that Jim despises the rituals of academic scholarship.
- 1e, Dixon feels a hypocrite. Why?
- 1f, How do you understand Jim’s destructive analysis of the article’s opening sentence?

### 3.2 John Braine: *Life at the Top* (1962)

J. Braine (1922 – 1987) worked in shops and a factory, also as a librarian. His noteworthy works: *Room at the Top* (Joe Lampton fighting his way up into the world of money and influence), *The Jealous God*, *The Crying Game*.

In *Life at the Top* the protagonist Joe Lampton discovers that room at the top comes at a cost and does not necessarily bring happiness.

#### **Ex. 1**

There was an unopen case of Capstan in the cocktail cabinet; I put it in my case.

“Help yourself to anything you want,” he said. “Why don’t you take some liquor with you, too?”

“They are my cigarettes and it’s my liquor.”

“You are getting above yourself, aren’t you? Well, don’t let me keep you. You can send your resignation from the Counsel by post.” He clenched his fist.

[...]

I poured myself a large whisky. There was a drink still untouched beside my chair, but it seemed important, seeing him standing by the fire in that proprietorial attitude, to assert at least the ownership of the contents of the cocktail cabinet, and to make it plain that I wasn’t offering him any hospitality.

“We’re very clever, aren’t we?” His face was darkening, “May I ask how you’re proposing to live?”

“Tiffield’s offered me a job. You didn’t know that, did you?”

“I thought he was up to something,” he said. “But he’s too clever by half. He doesn’t want you because you’re such a bright young man, you know. He wants you because he thinks you are my blue-eyed boy and he thinks it’ll break my heart to see you go. You’re not as good as all that, Joe. You’re still the little Town Hall clerk at the bottom, you’ve gone as far as you ever will go—”

“Shut up. I may have to listen to you at the works, but I’m damned if I will in my own house.”

“It’s not your house. I made sure of that. You’re a lodger here, you cheap no good womanizer, and I’m giving you notice.”

I turned to Susan. "Let him rave," I said. "I'm going now. Tell Barbara I'm going away to – earn pennies. Promise?"

"You'll just be in time for the ten-thirty train," Brown said.

"I'm driving down."

"Oh no you're not. That's the firm's car, in case you'd forgotten." He held out his hand. "The keys."

I tossed them on the floor. "There you are," I said. "Root for them like a pig. Susan, will you lend me your car?" (Braine, 1965, p. 221).

1a, Who do you think the conversation is between? Who are Joe, Brown, Susan and Barbara?

1b, Where does the scene take place?

1c, In which passages does Joe show resentment towards Brown.

1d, On what grounds does Brown resent Joe?

### 3.3 John Osborne: *Look Back in Anger* (1956)

J. Osborne (1929 – 1994) was a playwright and a screenwriter. His plays include: *Look Back in Anger*, *Luther* (Reformation leader, rebellious figure), *The Entertainer* (failing comedian – decline of the nation's vitality), *West of Suez*, *Déjà vu*, *The Devil Inside Him*, *A Patriot for Me*, *Tom Jones* (script).

**Kitchen sink drama** – the term, which became popular in the middle and late 1950s, applies to plays which showed domestic situations of working-class Britons living in cramped rented accommodation.

The play *Look Back in Anger* shifts the setting from 19th century mansions to a drab Midlands flat (shock for the audience). The protagonists are young people, and the plot is driven by the marital conflicts of Jimmy and Alison. Jimmy Porter, is an **anti-hero**, a prototype of an AYM: working class, frustrated by social inequality and the futility of individual action, violent, self-pitying.

The theatre critic Kenneth Tynan (1956) said about the play: all the qualities are there, the qualities one had despaired of ever seeing on the stage; it presents post war youth: non-U intelligentsia in bed-sitters, the drift towards anarchy, the anti-establishment, the instinctive leftishness, the casual promiscuity, the sense of lacking a crusade worth fighting for.

#### **Ex. 1**

Act I

*The Porter's one-room flat in a large Midland town. Early evening. April.*

*The scene is a fairly large attic room, at the top of a large Victorian house. The ceiling slopes down quite sharply from L to R. Down R are two small windows. In front of these is a dark oak dressing table. Most of the furniture is simple, and rather old. Up R is a double bed, running the length of most of the back wall, the rest of which is taken up with a shelf of books. Down R below the bed is a heavy chest of drawers, covered with books, neckties and odds and ends, including a large, tattered teddy bear and soft, woolly squirrel. Up L is a door. Below this a small wardrobe. Most of the wall is taken up with a high, oblong window. This looks out on to the landing, but light comes through it from a skylight beyond. Below the wardrobe is a gas stove, and beside this, a wooden food cupboard, on which is a small portable radio. Down C is a sturdy dining table and there chairs, and below this, L and R, two deep, shabby leather armchairs (Osborne, 1996, p. 1).*

1a, What indicators of poverty/poor conditions can you find in the author's instructions at the beginning of Act I?

1b, How is the setting of the play different from that of Oscar Wilde's or G. B. Shaw's plays?

## **Ex. 2**

“Well, you've never heard so many well-bred commonplaces come from beneath the same bowler hat. The Platitude from Outer Space – that's brother Nigel. He'll end up in the Cabinet one day, make no mistake. But somewhere at the back of that mind is the vague knowledge that he and his pals have been plundering and fooling everybody for generations. [*Going upstage and turning.*] Now Nigel is just about as vague as you can get without being actually invisible. And invisible politicians aren't much use to anyone – not even to *his* supporters! And nothing is more vague about Nigel than his knowledge. His knowledge of life and ordinary human beings is so hazy, he really deserves some sort of decoration for it – a medal inscribed 'For Vaguery in the Field.' But it wouldn't do for him to be troubled by any stabs of conscience, however vague.” [...] “But they knew all about character building at Nigel's school, and he'll make it all right. Do not worry, he'll make it. And what more, he'll do it better than anybody else!” (Osborne, 1996, pp. 14–15).

2a, Underline the phrases insulting Nigel, Alison's brother.

2b, What injustice is described in the passage?

2c, Find an example of a pun.

## 4 The Theatre of the Absurd

The Theatre of the Absurd includes works of dramatists of the 1950s and early '60s who agreed with the Existentialist philosopher Albert Camus's assessment, in his essay "The Myth of Sisyphus" (1942), that the human situation is essentially absurd, devoid of purpose. It included dramatists such as Samuel Beckett, Eugène Ionesco, Jean Genet, Arthur Adamov, Harold Pinter, who shared a pessimistic vision of humanity struggling vainly to find a purpose and to control its fate. Humankind in this view is left feeling hopeless, bewildered, and anxious.

The 1950s saw a boom in theatre in Britain, with both the kitchen sink drama and the theatre of the absurd running simultaneously. There were social and economic explanations for the boom. The 1944 Education Act opened university education to working-class people, which led to new blood mixing successfully with excellent actors such as L. Olivier and R. Richardson. The state also helped with subsidies to build new theatres and stage new productions.

### 4.1 Samuel Beckett: *Waiting for Godot, A Tragicomedy in Two Acts* (1953), *The Unnamable* (1958)

S. Beckett (1906 – 1989) was a novelist and a playwright. He was a Dubliner just like J. Joyce, but unlike Joyce, a Protestant. It was at university in Paris that Beckett met Joyce, and even had 6 years of Joyce-like existence wandering through Europe. In 1937 he eventually settled in Paris. Beckett adopted France and the French language. He even wrote in French and later translated his own works into English.

Although Beckett was primarily a dramatist he also wrote a trilogy of narrative prose: *Molloy*, *Malone Dies*, *The Unnamable*. As a playwright he was in favour of a minimalist approach that sought to reflect the existentialist anxieties of the age. His groundbreaking works are *Endgame*, *Krapp's Last Tape*, *Happy Days*, *Not I*. In 1969 S. Beckett was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

### *Waiting for Godot, A Tragicomedy in Two Acts* (1953)

Is it a French or an Anglo-Irish drama? Is it a work of great profundity (*great depth of insight/knowledge*) or a profoundly boring experience? The play reduced dramatic elements, as a result there is no action, it is repetitive, the action and the dialogue are inexplicable, there are no spatial-temporal coordinates, the names of the characters suggest a hybrid cultural context, there is very little character development, no prompts on the stage, instead of dialogue we have individual discourses, circuitous (sə:'kjʊ:ɪtəs) conversations and long silences, the play has no proper ending, and finally, there are no women on the stage. Aristotle said drama is the imitation of action. But in Act One, and in Act Two nothing happens, nothing happens twice. The play may have religious, political, existentialist, etc. readings.

**Ex. 1**

*A Country road. A tree. Evening.*

1a, Note the brevity of the setting description. Compare it to that from *Look Back in Anger*.

**Ex. 2**

VLADIMIR: Did you ever read the Bible?

ESTRAGON: The Bible... [*He reflects.*] I must have taken a look at it.

VLADIMIR: Do you remember the Gospels?

ESTRAGON: I remember the maps of the Holy Land. Coloured they were. Very pretty. The Dead Sea was pale blue. The very look of it made me thirsty. That's where we'll go, I used to say, that's where we'll go for our honeymoon. We'll swim. We'll be happy.

VLADIMIR: You should have been a poet.

ESTRAGON: I was. [*Gesture towards his rags.*] Isn't that obvious.

[*Silence.*]

VLADIMIR: Where was I... How's your foot?

ESTRAGON: Swelling visibly.

VLADIMIR: Ah, yes, the two thieves. Do you remember the story?

ESTRAGON: No.

VLADIMIR: Shall I tell it to you?

ESTRAGON: No.

VLADIMIR: It'll pass the time. [*Pause.*] Two thieves, crucified at the same time as our Saviour. One—

ESTRAGON: Our what?

VLADIMIR: Our Saviour. Two thieves. One is supposed to have been saved and the other... [*He searches for the contrary of saved*]... damned.

ESTRAGON: Saved form what?

VLADIMIR: Hell.

ESTRAGON: I'm going.

[*He does not move.*]

VLADIMIR: And yet... [*pause*] how is it – this is not boring you I hope – how is it that of the four Evangelist only one speaks of a thief being saved (Beckett, 2006, Act One, p. 4).

2a, According to Aristotle, drama is an imitation of action. How much action do we have in the extract?

2b, Drama is based on dialogue. How would you define the dialogue between Vladimir and Estragon?

2c, Find examples of the inability to communicate.

**Ex. 3**

VLADIMIR: [*Silence. ESTRAGON looks attentively at the tree.*] What do we do now?

ESTRAGON: Wait.

VLADIMIR: Yes, but while waiting.

ESTRAGON: What about hanging ourselves?

VLADIMIR: Hmm. It'd give us an erection!

ESTRAGON: [*Highly excited.*] An erection!

VLADIMIR: With all that follows. Where it falls, mandrakes grow. That's why they shriek when you pull them up. Did you not know that?

ESTRAGON: Let's hang ourselves immediately!

VLADIMIR: From a bough? [*They go towards the tree.*] I wouldn't trust it.

ESTRAGON: We can always try.

VLADIMIR: Go ahead.

ESTRAGON: After you.

VLADIMIR: No no, you first.

ESTRAGON: You're lighter than I am.

VLADIMIR: Just so!

ESTRAGON: I don't understand.

ESTRAGON: Use your intelligence, can't you?

[VLADIMIR *uses his intelligence.*]

VLADIMIR: [*Finally.*] I remain in the dark.

ESTRAGON: This is how it is. [He reflects.] The bough... the bough... [*Angrily.*] Use your head, can't you?

VLADIMIR: You're my only hope.

ESTRAGON: [*With effort.*] Gogo light – bough not break – Gogo dead. Didi heavy – bough break – Didi alone. Whereas—

VLADIMIR: I hadn't thought of that (Beckett, 2006. Act One, pp. 9–10).

3a, Why do Vladimir and Estragon want to hang themselves?



**Ex. 4**

ESTRAGON: The tree?

VLADIMIR: Do you not remember?

ESTRAGON: I'm tired.

VLADIMIR: Look at it.

[*They look at the tree.*]

ESTRAGON: I see nothing.

VLADIMIR: But yesterday evening it was all black and bare. And now it's covered with leaves.

ESTRAGON: Leaves?

VLADIMIR: In a single night.

ESTRAGON: It must be the spring.

VLADIMIR: But in a single night!

ESTRAGON: I tell you we weren't here yesterday. Another of your nightmares.

VLADIMIR: And where were we yesterday evening according to you?

ESTRAGON: How do I know? In another compartment. There is no lack of void (Beckett, 2006, Act Two, p. 57).

**Ex. 5**

VLADIMIR: Well, shall we go?

ESTRAGON: Yes, let's go.

[*They do not move.*]

Curtain (Beckett, 2006, Act One, p. 47).

5a, Identify the contradiction in the final scene of Act One.

5b, How does Act Two end?

**Aporia** – a device that denotes a real or pretended doubt about an issue, uncertainty about how to proceed in a discourse; arouses curiosity in the audience or emphasizes the extraordinary nature of the story; often combined with another figure of rhetoric – **aposiopesis** – incomplete sentence or unfinished utterance indicated by dots.

***The Unnamable*** (1958)

**Ex. 1**

Where now? Who now? When now? Unquestioning. I, say I. Unbelieving. Questions, hypotheses, call them that. Keep going, going on, call that going, call that on. Can it

be that one day, off it goes on, that one day I simply stayed in, in where, instead of going out, in the old way, out to spend day and night as far away as possible, it wasn't far. Perhaps that is how it began. You think you are simply resting, the better to act when the time comes, or for no reason, and you soon find yourself powerless ever to do anything again. No matter how it happened. It, say it, not knowing what. Perhaps I simply assented at last to an old thing. But I did nothing. I seem to speak, it is not I, about me, it is not about me. These few general remarks to begin with. What am I to do, what shall I do, what should I do, in my situation, how proceed? By aporia pure and simple? Or by affirmations and negations invalidated as uttered, or sooner or later? Generally speaking. There must be other shifts. Otherwise it would be quite hopeless. But is quite hopeless. I should mention before going any further, any further on, that I say aporia without knowing what it means.

(Beckett, 1997, p. 107).

1a, Find examples of self-cancellations and contradictory statements in the discourse.

1b, What evidence of epistemological vacuum is there in the passage?

#### 4.2 **Harold Pinter: *Betrayal*** (1978)

H. Pinter (1930 – 2008) was an English playwright, actor, director, screenwriter and poet. His best-known plays are: *The Birthday Party*, *The Caretaker*, *The Homecoming*, *No Man's Land*. In 2005 H. Pinter was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature.

#### **Pre-reading**

a, Think of different kinds of betrayal and their consequences.

#### **Ex. 1**

JERRY

What?

ROBERT

I think I will sit down.

*He sits.*

I thought you knew.

JERRY

Knew what?

ROBERT

That I knew. That I've known for years. I thought you knew that.

JERRY

You thought I knew?

ROBERT

She said you didn't. But I didn't believe that.

*Pause.*

Anyway I think I thought you knew. But you say you didn't?

JERRY

She told you... when?

ROBERT

Well, I found out. That's what happened. I told her I'd found out and then she... confirmed... the facts.

JERRY

When?

ROBERT

Oh, a long time ago, Jerry.

*Pause.*

JERRY

But we've seen each other... a great deal... over the last four years. We've had lunch.

ROBERT

Never played squash though.

JERRY

I was your best friend.

ROBERT

Well, yes, sure.

*JERRY stares at him and then holds his head in his hands.*

Oh, don't get upset. There's no point.

*Silence.*

*JERRY sits up.*

JERRY

Why didn't she tell me?

ROBERT

Well, I'm not her, old boy.

JERRY

Why didn't you tell me?

*Pause.*

ROBERT

I thought you might know.

JERRY

But you didn't know for *certain*, did you? You didn't *know!*

ROBERT

No.

JERRY

Then why didn't you tell me?

*Pause.*

ROBERT

Tell you what?

JERRY

That you knew. You bastard.

ROBERT

Oh, don't call me a bastard, Jerry.

*Pause.*

JERRY

What are we going to do?

ROBERT

You and I are not going to do anything. My marriage is finished. I've just got to make proper arrangements, that's all. About the children.

*Pause* (Pinter, 1981, p. 182–185).

1a, What sort of betrayal is being discussed in the extract?

1b, Why does Jerry call Robert a bastard?

1c, Who is the bastard of the two?

1d, Identify features of absurd drama.

## 5 Poetry

### 5.1 Thomas Stearns Eliot: *Macavity: The Mystery Cat* (1939)

T. S. Eliot (1888 – 1965) was a poet (Modernism), playwright, literary critic and an editor. He was of American origin but became a British subject in 1927. His most important works are: *The Waste Land*, *The Four Quartets*, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, *Murder in the Cathedral* (play), *The Old Possum Book of Practical Cats*. T. S. Eliot was awarded the Nobel prize for literature in 1948.

#### Ex. 1

Macavity's a Mystery Cat: he's called the Hidden Paw—  
For he's the master criminal who can defy the Law.  
He's the bafflement of Scotland Yard, the Flying Squad's despair:  
For when they reach the scene of crime – Macavity's not there!

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
He's broken every human law, he breaks the law of gravity.  
His powers of levitation would make a fakir stare,  
And when you reach the scene of crime – Macavity's not there!  
You may seek him in the basement, you may look up in the air—  
But I tell you once and once again, Macavity's not there!

Macavity's a ginger cat, he's very tall and thin;  
You would know him if you saw him, for his eyes are sunken in.  
His brow is deeply lined with thought, his head is highly doomed;  
His coat is dusty from neglect, his whiskers are uncombed.  
He sways his head from side to side, with movements like a snake;  
And when you think he's half asleep, he's always wide awake.

Macavity, Macavity, there's no one like Macavity,  
For he's a fiend in feline shape, a monster of depravity.  
You may meet him in a by-street, you may see him in the square—  
But when a crime's discovered, then Macavity's not there!

He's outwardly respectable. (They say he cheats at cards.)  
And his footprints are not found in any file of Scotland Yard's.  
And when the larder's looted, or the jewel-case is rifled,  
Or when the milk is missing, or another Peke's been stifled,  
Or the greenhouse glass is broken, and the trellis past repair—  
Ay, there's the wonder of the thing! Macavity's not there!

And when the Foreign Office finds a Treaty's gone astray,  
Or the Admiralty lose some plans and drawings by the way,  
There may be a scrap of paper in the hall or on the stair—  
But it's useless to investigate – Macavity's not there!  
And when the loss has been disclosed, the Secret Service say:

“It must have been Macavity!” – but he’s a mile away.  
 You’ll be sure to find him resting, or a-licking of his thumbs,  
 Or engaged in doing complicated long division sums.  
 Macavity, Macavity, there’s no one like Macavity,  
 There never was a Cat of such deceitfulness and suavity.  
 He always has an alibi, or one or two to spare:  
 And whatever time the deed took place – MACAVITY WASN’T THERE!  
 And they say that all the Cats whose wicked deeds are widely known  
 (I might mention Mungojerrie, I might mention Griddlebone)  
 Are nothing more than agents for the Cat who all the time  
 Just controls their operations: the Napoleon of Crime! (The Nation’s Favourite  
 Poems, 1996, pp. 112–113).

- 1a, From which cultural references do you know the story takes place in England and not in Slovakia?
- 1b, Find examples of:
- A, repetition
  - B, gradation – a series of successive stages
  - C, hyperbole
- 1c, What does Macavity look like?
- 1d, Why is Macavity called the mystery cat?
- 1e, From which lines do we know that he is a clever, thinking cat?
- 1f, Find 5 examples of his titles, names such as “the Mystery Cat.”
- 1g, The author’s attitude to Macavity is
- A, disgust
  - B, admiration
  - C, indifference
- 1h, Read out the poem in pairs taking turns, and then make a record of your own reciting.

## 5.2 Philip (Arthur) Larkin: *This Be the Verse* (1971)

P. Larkin (1922 – 1985) was a poet and a jazz critic. He worked as a librarian and has a memorial in Westminster Abbey’s Poets’ Corner. His famous works are: *The Less Deceived*, *The Whitsun Weddings*, *High Windows*, *Collected Poems*. Larkin was awarded a CBE in 1975.

### Pre-reading

- a, Do parents deserve respect?
- b, Are there occasions when you resent your parents?

**Ex. 1**

They fuck you up, your mum and dad.

They may not mean to, but they do.

They fill you with the faults they had

And add some extra, just for you.

But they were fucked up in their turn

By fools in old-style hats and coats,

Who half the time were sippy-stern

And half at one another's throats.

Man hands on misery to man.

It deepens like a coastal shelf.

Get out as early as you can,

And don't have any kids yourself (The Nation's Favourite Poems, 1996, p. 94).

1a, "Fuck up" in line 1 means: a, to create; b, to damage?

1b, What are "the faults" in line 3?

1c, Who are "they" in line 5 and who are "fools in old-style hats and coats" in line 6?

1d, Explain the "coastal shelf" simile in line 10.

1e, The title is an allusion to another poem. Which one? What is the connection?

**5.3 Ted (Edward James) Hughes: Wind (1957)**

Ted Hughes (1930 – 1998) was a poet and the husband of another poet, Sylvia Plath. His works: *The Hawk in the Rain*, *Wolfwatching*, *Flowers and Insects*, *Crow*. In 1984 Hughes became the Poet Laureate.

**Alliteration** – a figure of speech in which consonants, especially at the beginning of words, or stressed syllables, are repeated.

**Ex. 1**

This house has been far out at sea all night,

The woods crashing through darkness, the booming hills,

Winds stampeding the fields under the window

Floundering black astride and blinding wet

Till day rose; then under an orange sky

The hills had new places, and wind wielded

Blade-light, luminous black and emerald,  
Flexing like the lens of a mad eye.  
At noon I scaled along the house-side as far as  
The coal-house door. Once I looked up—  
Through the brunt wind that dented the balls of my eyes  
The tent of the hills drummed and strained its guyrope,  
The fields quivering, the skyline a grimace,  
At any second to bang and vanish with a flap;  
The wind flung a magpie away and a black—  
Back gull bent like an iron bar slowly. The house  
Rang like some fine green goblet in the note  
That any second would shatter it. Now deep  
In chairs, in front of the great fire, we grip  
Our hearts and cannot entertain book, thought,  
Or each other. We watch the fire blazing,  
And feel the roots of the house move, but sit on,  
Seeing the window tremble to come in,  
Hearing the stones cry out under the horizons.  
(Hughes, "Wind.").

- 1a, Find examples of assonance, alliteration, and onomatopoeia. What is the role of these sound features in the poem?
- 1b, Identify the metaphors and similes that are visually or aurally evocative.
- 1c, How does the focus shift throughout the poem?
- 1d, How do the metre and the rhyme enhance the subject matter of the poem.



## 6 Postmodernism

Postmodernism was a cultural movement that emerged in the early sixties. The prefix “post” has an ambiguous meaning. Some consider post as anti-modernism (Fiedler, Jameson), others understand it as moderner modernism (Kermode, Brooke-Rose). The movement draws on philosophical ideas that were exported from France: Lyotard (grand/little narrative), Derrida (deconstruction-indeterminacy of meaning), Baudrillard (simulacrum, hyperreality), Foucault (demonization of difference), Barthes (death of the author; “*a text’s unity lies not in its origins but in its destination*”).

### 6.1 John Fowles: *The French Lieutenant’s Woman* (1969)

J. Fowles (1926 – 2005) was a novelist and a poet. He worked in education. His other noteworthy novels are: *The Collector*, *The Magus*, *The Ebony Tower*.

#### Ex. 1

There would have been a place in the Gestapo for the lady; she had a way of interrogation that could reduce the sturdiest girls to tears in the first five minutes. In her fashion she was an epitome of all the most crassly arrogant traits of the ascendant British Empire. Her only notion of justice was that she must be right; and her only notion of government was an angry bombardment of the impertinent populace (Fowles, 2005, p. 26).

1a, Mrs Poulteney, a hypocritical upper-class woman from the novel, is compared to a Gestapo officer. Why?

**Heterotopia** – juxtaposition of disparate worlds.

#### Ex. 2

The basement kitchen of Mrs Poulteney’s large Regency house, which stood, an elegantly clear simile of her social status, in a commanding position on one of the steep hills behind Lyme Regis, would no doubt seem today almost intolerable for its functional inadequacies. Though the occupants in 1867 would have been quite clear as to who was the tyrant in their lives, the more real monster, to an age like ours, would beyond doubt have been the enormous kitchen range that occupied all the inner wall of the large and ill-lit room. It had three fires, all of which had to be stoked twice a day, and riddled twice a day; and since the smooth domestic running of the house depended on it, it could never be allowed to go out. Never mind how much a summer’s day sweltered, never mind that every time there was a south-westerly gale the monster blew black clouds of choking fumes – the remorseless furnaces had to be fed. And then the colour of those walls! They cried out for some light shade, for

white. Instead they were a bilious green – one that was, unknown to the occupants (and to be fair, to the tyrant upstairs), rich in arsenic. Perhaps it was fortunate that the room was damp and that the monster disseminated so much smoke and grease. At least the deadly dust was laid (Fowles, 2005, p. 24).

2a, What is the narrator's opinion of Mrs Poulteney's kitchen? What has he got against it?

2b, The passage shows a juxtaposition of the past (the setting of the novel – 1867) and now (the time of writing the novel in 1969). What is the effect of such a juxtaposition?

**Metafiction, metatext** – writing about writing; the author comments on the process of his writing or becomes a character in his fiction.

**Allusion** – an indirect reference to a person, place, event, thing or idea of historical, cultural, literary or political significance.

### Ex. 3

I do not know. This story I am telling you is all imagination. These characters I create never existed outside my own mind. If I have pretended until now to know my characters' minds and innermost thoughts, it is because I am writing (just as I have assumed some of the vocabulary and 'voice' of) a convention universally accepted at the time of my story: that the novelist stands next to God. He may not know all, yet he tries to pretend that he does. But I live in the age of Alain Robbe-Grillet and Roland Barthes; if this is a novel, it cannot be a novel in the modern sense of the word (Fowles, 2005, p. 97).

3a, What effect does the metafictional comment have on the reader?

3b, Find examples of allusion in the extract.

3c, How does the understanding of the allusions influence your understanding of the passage?

## 6.2 Angela Carter: *The Tiger's Bride* (1979)

A. Carter (1940 – 1992) was a novelist, short story writer and critic. She was called "the gentle, wonderful white witch of the north," a "friendly witch." She wrote novels: *The Magic Toyshop*, *The Infernal Desire Machines of Doctor Hoffman*, *Nights at the Circus*, *Wise Children*, and the collections of short stories: *The Bloody Chamber and other Stories*, *Black Venus*, *American Ghost & Old-World Wonders*.

**Intertextuality** – a term coined by Julia Kristeva to denote the interdependence of literary texts, the interdependence of any one literary text with all those that have gone before it. A literary text is not an isolated phenomenon but is made up of a mosaic of quotations, and

that any text is the “absorption and transformation of another”; includes quotations, allusions.

**Carnival** – an occasion or season or revels, of merrymaking, feasting and entertainments.

**Carnivalization/Carnavalesque** – a term coined by Michael Bakhtin, used to describe the penetration or incorporation of carnival into everyday life; elements of carnival are according to MB subversive, they disrupt authority and introduce alternatives; are characteristic of burlesque, parody and personal satire.

**Ex. 1**

“My father lost me to The Beast at cards” (Carter, 1995, p. 51).

1a, What would a feminist object to in this opening sentence of the short story?

1b, The female protagonist does not have a name. Why do you think that is?

**Ex. 2**

There is a crude clumsiness about his outlines, that are the ungainly, giant side; and he has an odd air of self-imposed restraint, as if fighting a battle with himself to remain upright when he would far rather drop down on all fours. He throws our human aspirations to the godlike sadly awry, poor fellow; only from a distance would you think The Beast not much different from any other man, although he wears a mask with a man’s face painted most beautifully on it. Oh, yes, a beautiful face; but one with too much formal symmetry of feature to be entirely human: one profile of his mask is the mirror image of the other, too perfect, uncanny. He wears a wig, too, false hair tied at the nape with a bow, a wig of the kind you see in old-fashioned portraits. A chaste silk stock stuck with a pearl hides his throat. And gloves of blond kid that are yet so huge and clumsy they do not seem to cover hands. He is a carnival figure made of papier mâché and crêpe hair; and yet he has the Devil’s knack at cards (Carter, 1995, p. 53).

2a, What features of carnival can be found in the passage?

2b, Does the girl wear a mask throughout the story? If yes, what is it?

**Ex. 3**

[...] I certainly meditated on the nature of my own state, how I had been bought and sold, passed from hand to hand. That clockwork girl who powders my cheeks for me; had I not been allotted only the same kind of imitative life amongst men that the doll-maker had given her (Carter, 1995, p. 63).

3a, How do you understand the phrase “passed from hand to hand”?

3b, What similarities are there between the girl and the clockwork doll?

**Ex. 4**

The tiger will never lie down with the lamb; he acknowledges no pact that is not reciprocal. The lamb must learn to run with the tigers (Carter, 1995, p. 64).

4a, Explain the metaphors: the tiger and the lamb.

**6.3 David Lodge: *Changing Places: A Tale of Two Campuses* (1975)**

D. Lodge (born 1935) is a novelist and literary critic. He worked as a university professor (taught English literature). He is considered a Catholic writer. His well-known novels are: *The British Museum is Falling Down*, *Changing Places*, *How Far Can You Go?*, *Small World*, *Nice Work*, *A Man of Parts*, *Deaf Sentence*.

**Ex. 1**

Morris took the flat because it was centrally heated – the first he had seen thus blessed. But the heating system turned out to be one of electric radiators perversely and unalterably programmed to come on at full blast when you were asleep and to turn themselves off as soon as you got up, from which time they leaked a diminishing current of lukewarm air into the frigid atmosphere until you were ready to go to bed again. This system, Dr O’Shea explained, was extremely economical because it ran on half-price electricity, but it still seemed to Morris an expensive way to work up a sweat in bed. Fortunately, the apartment was well provided with gas burners of antique design, and by keeping them on at full volume all day he was able to maintain a tolerable temperature in his rooms, though O’Shea evidently found it excessive, entering Morris’s apartment with his arms held up to shield his face, like a man breaking into a burning house (Lodge, 1978, p. 59).

1a, Explain the allusion in the title.

1b, *Changing Places* is a campus novel. What other examples of a campus novel can you think of?

1c, Professor Morris is a visiting professor from California staying at the fictional Midlands university of Rummidge. What proofs of cultural differences are to be noted in the passage?

1d, Which particular scene comes across as a comic one?

1e, Which British cultural stereotype is mocked in the extract?

**Camera eye** – a dehumanised narrative technique which provides a limited view; no access to characters’ thoughts or feelings; it transmits, without an apparent selection or arrangement, a “*slice of life as it passes before the recording medium.*”

**Ex. 2**

HILARY: Shouldn't we have a serious talk? I mean, that's what we've come all this way for. What are we going to do? About the future?

MORRIS: Let's consider the options. Coolly. (*prepares to light a cigar*) First: we could return to our respective homes with our respective spouses.

MORRIS lights cigar, and examines the tip. HILARY looks at PHILIP, PHILIP looks at DÉSIRÉE, DÉSIRÉE looks at MORRIS.

DÉSIRÉE: Next option.

MORRIS: We could all get divorced and remarry each other. If you follow me.

PHILIP: Where would we live?

MORRIS: I could take the Chair at Rummage, settle down there. I guess you could get a job in Euphoria...

PHILIP: I'm not so sure.

MORRIS: Or you could take Désirée to Rummidge, and I'd go back to Euphoria with Hilary.

HILARY rises to her feet.

Where are you going?

HILARY: I don't wish to listen to this childish conversation.

PHILIP: What's wrong? You started it.

HILARY: This is not what I meant by a serious talk. You sound like a couple of screenwriters discussing how to wind up a play.

MORRIS: Hilary, honey! There are choices to be made. We must be aware of all the possibilities.

HILARY: (*sitting down*) All right, then. Have you considered the possibility that Désirée and I might divorce you two and *not* remarry?

DÉSIRÉE: Right on!

MORRIS: (*thoughtfully*) True. Another possibility is group marriage. You know? Two couples live together in one house and pool their resources? Everything is common property.

PHILIP: Including, er...

MORRIS: Including that, naturally.

HILARY: What about the children?

MORRIS: It's great for children. They amuse each other, while the parents...

DÉSIRÉE: Screw each other.

HILARY: I never heard of anything so immoral in my life (Lodge, 1978, pp. 244–245).

2a, The text has an unusual layout. What does it remind you of?

2b, Find an example of an ironic metatextual comment.

#### 6.4 **Antonia Susan Byatt: *Possession. A Romance*** (1990)

S. Byatt (born 1936) is a novelist, short story writer, scholar and critic. She is a sister of Margaret Drabble. Her works: *The Virgin in the Garden*, *Possession* (Booker Prize), *The Biographer's Tale*, *The Children's Book*. Byatt became a Dame in 1999.

#### **Pre-reading**

- a, Think of the different meanings of the word possession.
- b, The subtitle “*A Romance*” is an example of paratextuality. What effect does it have on the reader?

#### **Ex. 1**

The book was thick and black and covered with dust. Its boards were bowed and creaking, it has been maltreated in its own time. Its spine was missing, or, rather, protruded from amongst the leaves like a bulky marker. It was bandaged about and about with dirty white tape, tied in a neat bow. The librarian handed it to Roland Mitchell, who was sitting waiting for it in the Reading Room of the London Library. It had been exhumed from Locked Safe no. 5, where it usually stood between *Pranks of Priapus* and *The Grecian Way of Love*. It was ten in the morning, one day in September 1986. Roland had the small single table he liked best, behind a square pillar, with the clock over the fireplace nevertheless in full view. To his right was a high sunny window, through which you could see the high green leaves of St James's Square.

The London Library was Roland's favourite place. It was shabby but civilised, alive with history but inhabited also by living poets and thinkers who could be found squatting on the slotted metal floors of the stacks, or arguing pleasantly at the turning of the stair. Here Carlyle had come, here George Eliot had progressed through the bookshelves. Roland saw her black silk skirts, her velvet trains, sweeping compressed between the Fathers of the Church, and heard her firm foot ring on metal among the German poets. Here Randolph Henry Ash had come, cramming his elastic mind and memory with unconsidered trifles from History and Topography, from the felicitous alphabetical conjunctions of Science and Miscellaneous— (Byatt, 1990, pp. 3–4).

- 1a, Are the books mentioned in the extract real or fictional?
- 1b, Are the writers mentioned real or fictional?
- 1c, Why would be George Eliot looking at German poets?

#### **Ex. 2**

*Dearest Sir,*

*My dubious Muse is back. I send you (unperfected) what She has dictated.*

*The grassy knoll  
Shivers in His embrace  
His muscles—roll  
About—about—His Face  
Smiles hot and gold  
Over the small hill's brow  
And every fold  
Contracts and stiffens—now  
He gathers strength  
His glistening length  
Grips, grips: the stones  
Cry out like bones  
Constricted—earth—in pain  
Cries out—again—  
He grips and smiles—  
(Byatt, 1990, p. 219).*

2a, Find out who wrote the poem.

### **Ex. 3**

He thought of the Princess on her glass hill, of Maud's faintly contemptuous look at their first meeting. In the real world—that was, for one should not privilege one world above another, in the social world to which they must both return from these white nights and sunny days—there was little real connection between them. Maud was a beautiful woman such as he had no claim to possess. She had a secure job and an international reputation. Moreover, in some dark and outdated English social system of class, which he did not believe in, but felt obscurely working and gripping him, Maud was Country, and he was urban lower-middle-class, in some places less acceptable than Maud, but in almost all incompatible.

All *that* was the plot of a Romance. He was in a Romance, a vulgar and a high Romance simultaneously; a Romance was one of the systems that controlled him, as the expectations of Romance control almost everyone in the Western world, for better or worse, at some point or another.

He supposes the Romance must give way to social realism, even if the aesthetic temper of the time was against it.

In any case, since Blackadder and Leonora and Cropper had come, it had changed from Quest, a good romantic form, into Chase and Race, two other equally valid ones (Byatt, 1990, pp. 459–460).

3a, Is the passage about the romance of the two poets (Randolph Henry Ash & Christabel LaMotte) or the two academics (Roland and Maud)?

3b, What obstacles were there between the poets and what obstacles were there between the academics?



## 7 Literature of Minorities

**Minority** – a group of people that differ in some way from the majority of the population. The sociologist Louis Wirth defines a minority as “*a group of people who, because of their physical or cultural characteristics, are singled out from the others in the society in which they live for differential and unequal treatment, and who therefore regard themselves as objects of collective discrimination.*” There are different minority groups: racial, ethnic, religious, gender/sexual, political, age, people with disabilities.

### 7.1 Jeanette Winterson: *Oranges are not the only Fruit* (1985)

J. Winterson (born 1959) is a lesbian novelist. Her works: *Oranges are not the only Fruit* (Costa Book Award), *The Passion, Written on the Body, Art and Lies, Lighthouse keeping*. In 2006 she was appointed OBE.

**Bildungsroman** – (G. “formation novel”), an upbringing or education novel, an account of a youthful development of the protagonist; a coming-of-age novel.

**Lesbian novel** – addresses lesbian themes.

### Pre-reading

- a, What role should religion have in a society in family life?
- b, How would your life change if you were cast out by your family and your community?
- c, Do you know any names of the Old Testament’s chapters?

### Ex. 1

Like most people I lived for a long time with my mother and father. My father like to watch the wrestling, my mother liked to wrestle; it didn’t matter what. She was in the white corner and that was that.

She hung out the largest sheets on the windiest days. She *wanted* the Mormons to knock on the door. At election time in a Labour mill town she put a picture of the Conservative candidate in the window.

She had never heard of mixed feeling. There were friends and there were enemies.

Enemies were: The Devil (in his many forms)  
Next Door  
Sex (in its many forms)  
Slugs

Friends were: God  
Our dog  
Auntie Madge  
The Novels of Charlotte Brontë  
Slug pellets (Winterson, 1991, pp. 1–2).

- 1a, What impression do you get from the description of the mother? What is she like?  
1b, Why do you think “*wanted*” is in italics?  
1c, Is the world made of binary oppositions (good or evil)?

### **Ex. 2**

The class had gone very quiet. Teacher looked at me.

“Is there any more?”

“Yes, two more sides.”

“What about?”

“Not much, just how we hired the baths for our baptism service after the Healing of the Sick crusade.”

“Very good, but I don’t think we’ll have time today. Put your work back in your tidy box, and do some colouring till playtime.”

The class giggled.

Slowly I sat down, not sure what was going on, but sure that something was. When I got home, I told my mother I didn’t want to go again.

“You’ve got to,” she said. “Here, have an orange” (Winterson, 1991, pp. 59–60).

2a, The protagonist, Jean, finds school difficult. She is laughed at, misunderstood and to her great disappointment never wins any prize, no matter how hard she tries. Did you have an experience of being laughed at, bullied, unappreciated at school? How did you come to terms with it?

2b, Why do you think the mother gives her an orange as consolation. How would your mother console you?

### **Ex. 3**

“Will you repent?”

“No.” And I stared at him till he looked away. He took my mother off into the parlour for half an hour. I don’t know what they did in there, but it didn’t matter; my mother had painted the white roses red and she claimed they grew that way.

“You’ll have to leave,” she said. “I’m not having demons here.”

Where could I go? Not to Elsie's, she was too sick, and on one in the church would really take the risk. If I went to Katy's there would be problems for her, and all my relatives, like most relatives, were revolting.

"I don't have anywhere to go," I argued, following her into the kitchen.

"The Devil looks after his own," she threw back, pushing me out.

I knew I couldn't cope, so I didn't try. I would let the feeling out later, when it was safe. For now, I had to be hard and white. In the frosty days, in the winter, the ground is white, then the sun rises, and the frosts melt... (Winterson, 2011, pp. 210–211).

3a, What does the line "the Devil looks after his own" mean?

3b, What would you have to have done to be kicked out of home as Jean was?

3c, Would you have somewhere to go?

3d, Match the names of the Old Testament's chapters (Judges, Exodus and Genesis) with the three extracts.

#### **Ex. 4**

"It's decided then," I breezed in to my mother with more bravado than courage, "I'm moving out on Thursday."

"Where to?" She was suspicious.

"I'm not telling you, I'll see how it goes."

"You've got no money."

"I'll work evenings as well as weekends."

In fact I was scared to death and going to live with a teacher who had some care for what was happening. I was driving an ice-cream van on Saturdays; now I would work Sundays as well, and try to pay the woman as best as I could. Bleak, but no so bleak as staying there. I wanted the dog, but knew she wouldn't let me, so I took my books and my instruments in a tea chest, with my Bible on top. The only thing that worried me was the thought of having to work on a fruit stall. Spanish Navels, Juicy Jaffas, Ripe Sevilles.

"I won't," I consoled myself. "I'll go in the tripe works first" (Winterson, 1991, p. 211).

4a, What are Spanish Navels, Juicy Jaffas, Ripe Sevilles?

4b, Why is Jean scared of working in the fruit stall?

4c, What will she do first?

4d, Explain the title of the book.

## 7.2 **Fay Weldon: *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*** (1984)

Weldon's real name is Franklin Birkinshaw (born 1931). She is a novelist, playwright and scriptwriter. In her novels she deals with issues surrounding women's relationship with men, children, parents and each other. Weldon's famous novels are: *Down among the Women*, *Female Friends*, *Remember me*, *The Life and Loves of a She-Devil*, *Death of a She-Devil*, *The Cloning of Joanna May*. F. Weldon was appointed CBE in 2001.

**Feminism** – the belief in the social, economic, and political equality of the sexes.

**Feminist criticism** – investigates and analyses the differing representations of women and men in literary texts and rethinks literary history by exploring often marginalized tradition of women's writing.

### **Pre-reading**

- a, Is there pressure on women in society when it comes to their looks?
- b, How is this expectation forced on girls and women?

### **Ex. 1**

And I tell you this; I am jealous! I am jealous of every little pretty woman who ever lived and looked up since the world began (Weldon, 1984, p. 29).

I want, I crave, I die to be part of that other erotic world, of choice and desire and lust. It isn't love I want; it is nothing so simple. What I want is to take everything and return nothing. What I want is power over the hearts and pockets of men (Weldon, 1984, p. 29).

- 1a, Think of the first English literature female character who wanted to have power over men.

### **Ex. 2**

Ruth, he'd say, you're my friend, you must wish me well in this. Life is so short. Don't begrudge me this experience, this love. I won't leave you, you mustn't worry, you don't deserve to be left; you're the mother of my children; be patient, it will pass. If it hurts you, I'm sorry (Weldon, 1984, p. 39).

- 2a, Bobo expects his unattractive wife Ruth to put up with his affairs. T/F?
- 2b, Why do wives tolerate their husband's infidelity?
- 2c, Think of other literary characters in this textbook who have had an extra marital affair. How did their partners react to it?

**Ex. 3**

Peel away the wife, the mother, find the woman, and there the she-devil is (Weldon, 1984, p. 50).

**Ex. 4**

The hair's nothing, the face we can do – these are classic features we're looking at. The mouth will be tricky but possible. When your jaw's trimmed the lipline will fall quite nicely into a place... We can reshape the body quite dramatically [...] (Weldon, 1984, p. 215).

4a, To what length would you go to change your appearance? What action, treatment would be unacceptable or even unethical?

**Ex. 5**

Ruth closed her eyes for sleep with the comfortable thought that for a pretty woman the future lay in refusing men rather than submitting to them – or, indeed, hoping for their advances (Weldon, 1984, p. 247).

5a, What makes this book a feminist one?

**7.3 (Ahmed) Salman Rushdie: *Midnight's Children* (1981)**

S. Rushdie (born 1947) is a novelist of Indian origin. His notable works are: *Midnight's Children* (Booker Prize), *The Shame*, *The Satanic Verses* (fatwa issued), *Joseph Anton*, *The Golden House*. In 2007 Rushdie was knighted.

**Magic realism** – the mingling and juxtaposition of the realistic and the fantastic or bizarre, skilful time shifts, convoluted and even labyrinthine narratives and plots, miscellaneous use of dreams, myths and fairy stories, expressionistic and even surrealistic description, arcane erudition, the elements of surprise or abrupt shock, the horrific and the inexplicable.

**Ex. 1**

I was born in the city of Bombay... once upon a time. No, that won't do, there is no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-hands joined palms in respectful greeting, as I came. Oh, spell it out, spell it out; at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth into the world. There were gasps. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds. A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe; but his accident was a mere trifle when set beside

what had befallen me in that benighted moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blandly saluting clocks I had been mysteriously hand-cuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape. Soothsayers had prophesied me, newspapers celebrated my arrival, politicians ratified my authenticity. I was left entirely without a say in the matter. I, Saleem, Sinai, later variously called Snotnose, Stainface, Baldy, Sniffer, Buddha and even Piece-of-the-Moon, had become heavily embroiled in fate – at the best of times a dangerous sort of involvement. And I couldn't even wipe my own nose at the time (Rushdie, 1981, p. 11).

## **Ex. 2**

One Kashmiri morning in the early spring of 1915, my grandfather Aadam Aziz hit his nose against a frost-hardened tussock of earth while attempting to pray. Three drops of blood plopped out of his left nostril, hardened instantly in the brittle air and lay before his eyes on the prayer-mat, transformed into rubies. Lurching back until he knelt with his head once more upright, he found that the tears which had sprung to his eyes had solidified, too; and at that moment as he brushed diamonds contemptuously from his lashes, he resolved never again to kiss earth for any god or man. This decision, however, made a hole in him, a vacancy in a vital inner chamber, leaving him vulnerable to women and history. Unaware of this at first, despite his recently completed medical training, he stood up, rolled the prayer-mat into a thick cheroot, and holding it under his right arm surveyed the valley through clear, diamond-free eyes (Rushdie, 1981, p. 12).

### **7.4 Kazuo Ishiguro: *The Remains of the Day* (1989)**

K. Ishiguro (born 1954) is a novelist of a Japanese origin. His novels include: *A Pale View of Hills*, *An Artist of the Floating World*, *The Remains of the Day*, *When We Were Orphans*. Ishiguro was appointed OBE in 1995 and awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 2017.

**A story in a story** – in this novel, Stevens, a butler, tells the story of his master Lord Darlington.

**Irony** – saying one thing and meaning another; a rhetorical figure referring to the sense that there is a discrepancy between words and their meanings, between actions and their results, or between appearance and reality.

### **Pre-reading**

- a, What other novels, poems or plays can you think of with a story in a story?
- b, What does the “remains of the day” symbolize?

c, Think of British national traits. How do Brits differ from Slovaks, Czechs or Hungarians in their code of behaviour and attitudes?

**Ex. 1a**

How can one possibly be held to blame in any sense because, say, the passage of time has shown that Lord Darlington's efforts were misguided, even foolish? Throughout the years I served him, it was he and he alone who weighed up evidence and judged it best to proceed in the way he did, while I simply confined myself, quite properly, to affairs within my own professional realm. And as far as I am concerned, I carried out my duties to the best of my abilities, indeed, to a standard which many may considered 'first rate.' It is hardly my fault if his lordship's life and work have turned out today to look, at best, a sad waste – and it is quite illogical that I should feel any regret or shame on my own account (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 201).

**Ex. 1b**

Lord Darlington wasn't a bad man. He wasn't a bad man at all. And at least he had the privilege of being able to say at the end of his life that he made his own mistakes. His lordship was a courageous man. He chose a certain path in life, it proved to be a misguided one, but there, he chose it, he can say that at least. As for myself, I cannot even claim that. You see, I *trusted*. I trusted in his lordship's wisdom. All those years I served him, I was doing something worthwhile. I can't even say I made my own mistakes. Really – one has to ask oneself – what dignity is there in that? (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 243).

1a, Find a sentence in the text which indicates a certain degree of disapproval of the choices that Lord Darlington made in his life.

1b, What is the difference between the path that Lord Darlington took and that of Stevens, his butler?

1c, Do you think Stevens can be proud of his professional life?

**Ex. 2**

It is sometimes said that butlers only truly exist in England. Other countries, whatever title is actually used, have only manservants. I tend to believe this is true. Continentals are unable to be butlers because they are as a breed incapable of the emotional restraint which only the English race is capable of. Continentals – and by and large the Celts, as you will no doubt agree – are as a rule unable to control themselves in moments of strong emotion, and are thus unable to maintain a professional demeanour other than in the least challenging of situations. If I may return to my earlier metaphor – you will excuse my putting it so coarsely – they are like a man who will, at the slightest provocation, tear off his suit and his shirt and

run about screaming. In a word, “dignity” is beyond such persons. We English have an important advantage over foreigners in this respect and it is for this reason that when you think of a great butler, he is bound, almost by definition, to be an Englishman (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 43).

2a, Do you think “emotional restraint” is still a British national trait?

2b, Find clauses in which the narrator addresses the reader. What is such a technique called? What is its effect?

### **Ex. 3**

My father opened his eyes, turned his head a little on the pillow, and looked at me.

“I hope Father is feeling better now,” I said.

He went on gazing at me for a moment, then asked: “Everything in hand downstairs?”

“The situation is rather volatile. It is just after six o’clock, so Father can well imagine the atmosphere in the kitchen at this moment.”

An impatient look crossed my father’s face. “But is everything in hand?” he said again.

“Yes, I dare say you can rest assured on that. I’m very glad Father is feeling better.”

With some deliberation, he withdrew his arms from under the bedclothes and gazed tiredly at the backs of his hands. He continued to do this for some time.

“I’m glad Father is feeling so much better,” I said again eventually. “Now really, I’d best be getting back. As I say, the situation is rather volatile.”

He went on looking at his hands for a moment. Then he said slowly: “Hope I’ve been a good father to you.”

I laughed a little and said: “I’m so glad you’re feeling better now.”

“I’m proud of you. A good son. I hope I’ve been a good father to you. I suppose I haven’t.”

“I’m afraid we’re extremely busy now, but we can talk again in the morning.”

My father was still looking at his hands as though he were faintly irritated by them.

“I’m so glad you’re feeling better now,” I said again and took my leave (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 97).

3a, Find passages in the extract that suggest Stevenson has a formal relationship with his father, who was once himself a great butler.

3b, Where does Stevens show emotional sterility towards his dying father?

3c, How many times does Stevens say “I’m so glad you’re feeling better” in the course of the dialogue?

3d, Note the change in the way Stevens addresses his father.



**Ex. 4**

“Please, Mr Stevens, let me see your book.”

She reached forward and began gently to release the volume from my grasp. I judged it best to look away while she did so, but with her person positioned so closely, this could only be achieved by my twisting my head away at a somewhat unnatural angle. Miss Kenton continued very gently to prise the book away, practically one finger at a time. The process seemed to take a very long time – throughout which I managed to maintain my posture – until finally I heard her say: “Good gracious, Mr Stevens, it isn’t anything so scandalous at all. Simply a sentimental love story” (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 167).

- 4a, How does Stevens’ emotionally repressed response in this scene compare to that in the previous extract?
- 4b, What does the kind of book Stevens is reading tell us about him?
- 4c, Where can you see an indication of Stevens’ sexual repression?
- 4d, Can you think of a modernist male character who similarly “freezes” when a woman touches him?

**Unreliable narrator** – provides the reader with either incomplete or inaccurate information.

**Ex. 5**

However, I am not at all certain now as to the actual circumstance which had led me to be standing thus in the back corridor. It occurs to me that elsewhere in attempting to gather such recollections, I may well have asserted that this memory derived from the minutes immediately after Miss Kenton’s receiving news of her aunt’s death; that is to say, the occasion when, having left her to be alone with her grief, I realized out in the corridor that I had not offered her condolences. But now, having thought further, I believe I may have been a little confused about this matter; that in fact this fragment of memory derives from events that took place on an evening at least a few months after the death of Miss Kenton’s aunt – the evening, in fact, when the young Mr Cardinal turned up at Darlington Hall rather unexpectedly (Ishiguro, 1990, p. 212).

- 5a, How reliable is Stevens in recounting his memories and what does it tell us about him?
- 5b, In this passage Stevens mixes up two very personal incidents in his life. The news of Miss Kenton’s aunt’s death upon which Stevens fails to express his condolences, and the evening when he turns down Miss Kenton’s love. However, instead of remembering the second private matter he refers to the time of its occurrence as the unexpected visit of the young Mr. Cardinal. Why?

## 7.5 Benjamin Zephaniah: *We Refugees; The British (serves 60 million)*

B. Zephaniah (born 1958) is a poet, novelist, lyricist and musician. He is also a Rastafarian. His works: *Pen Rhythm, The Dread Affair: Collected Poems, Rasta Time in Palestine, Too Black, Too Strong, We are Britain.*

### Ex. 1

#### ***We Refugees***

I come from a musical place  
Where they shoot me for my song  
And my brother has been tortured  
By my brother in my land.  
I come from a beautiful place  
Where they hate my shade of skin  
They don't like the way I pray  
And they ban free poetry.  
I come from a beautiful place  
Where girls cannot go to school  
There you are told what to believe  
And even young boys must grow beards.  
I come from a great old forest  
I think it is now a field  
And the people I once knew  
Are not there now.  
We can all be refugees  
Nobody is safe,  
All it takes is a mad leader  
Or no rain to bring forth food,  
We can all be refugees  
We can all be told to go,  
We can be hated by someone  
For being someone.  
I come from a beautiful place  
Where the valley floods each year  
And each year the hurricane tells us  
That we must keep moving on.  
I come from an ancient place  
All my family were born there  
And I would like to go there  
But I really want to live.

I come from a sunny, sandy place  
Where tourists go to darken skin  
And dealers like to sell guns there  
I just can't tell you what's the price.

I am told I have no country now  
I am told I am a lie  
I am told that modern history books  
May forget my name.

We can all be refugees  
Sometimes it only takes a day,  
Sometimes it only takes a handshake  
Or a paper that is signed.  
We all came from refugees  
Nobody simply just appeared,  
Nobody's here without a struggle,  
And why should we live in fear  
Of the weather or the troubles?  
We all came here from somewhere.  
(Zephaniah, "We Refuges.").

1a, Where is the speaker from and how old do you think s/he is?

1b, Find passages suggesting doom and gloom.

1c, Is there a sign of hope in the poem?

1d, In view of the recent immigration crisis in Europe, caused by the civil war in Syria and the political turmoil and economic chaos in North Africa, what is the message of the poem?

## **Ex. 2**

### ***The British (serves 60 million)***

Take some Picts, Celts and Silures  
And let them settle,  
Then overrun them with Roman conquerors.  
Remove the Romans after approximately 400 years  
Add lots of Norman French to some  
Angles, Saxons, Jutes and Vikings, then stir vigorously.  
Mix some hot Chileans, cool Jamaicans, Dominicans,  
Trinidadians and Bajans with some Ethiopians, Chinese,  
Vietnamese and Sudanese.  
Then take a blend of Somalians, Sri Lankans, Nigerians  
And Pakistanis,

Combine with some Guyanese  
And turn up the heat.  
Sprinkle some fresh Indians, Malaysians, Bosnians,  
Iraqis and Bangladeshis together with some  
Afghans, Spanish, Turkish, Kurdish, Japanese  
And Palestinians  
Then add to the melting pot.  
Leave the ingredients to simmer.  
As they mix and blend allow their languages to flourish  
Binding them together with English.  
Allow time to be cool.  
Add some unity, understanding, and respect for the future,  
Serve with justice  
And enjoy.

**Note:** *All the ingredients are equally important. Treating one ingredient better than another will leave a bitter unpleasant taste.*

**Warning:** *An unequal spread of justice will damage the people and cause pain. Give justice and equality to all.*

(Zephaniah, “The British...”).

2a, What does the poem remind you of?

2b, Find words that one could find in a cooking recipe.

2c, Why are the Chileans described as “hot,” whereas the Jamaicans as “cool”?

2d, Explain the last stanza of the poem:

“Add some unity, understanding, and respect for the future,  
Serve with justice  
And enjoy.”

2e, Look at the note at the end of the poem and explain it.

2f, Look at the warning at the end of the poem and explain it.

## 7.6 Hanif Kureishi: *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990)

H. Kureishi (born 1954) is a playwright, screenwriter and novelist of English-Pakistani descent.

His works are: *The Buddha of Suburbia*, *The Black Album* (Muslim fundamentalism), *My Son the Fanatic* (a short story about a father and son, who is becoming a fanatical Muslim), *Intimacy*. He was awarded a CBE in 2008.

**Ex. 1**

My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere. Perhaps, it is the odd mixture of continents and blood, of here and there, of belonging and not, that makes me restless and easily bored. Or perhaps it was being brought up in the suburbs that did it. Anyway, why search the inner room, when it's enough to say that I was looking for trouble, any kind of movement, action and sexual interest I could find, because things were so gloomy, so slow and heavy, in our family, I don't know why. Quite frankly, it was all getting me down and I was ready for anything (Kureishi, 1990, p. 3).

- 1a, Compare this opening paragraph to the opening paragraph of *Midnight's Children*. What do Karim and Saleem have in common?
- 1b, Is Karim a regular English guy? What might be the consequences of his origin in society?
- 1c, What other teenage anxieties can you trace in the extract?

**Pre-reading**

- a, Have you ever experienced culture shock in another country or in different parts of Slovakia?
- b, What is rationing?
- c, In which period of history did the Brits have the rationing system?
- d, Have the Slovaks been exposed to austerity?

**Ex. 2**

London, the Old Kent Road, was a freezing shock to both of them. It was wet and foggy; people called you "Sunny Jim"; there was never enough to eat, and Dad never took to dripping on toast. "Nose drippings more like," he'd say, pushing away the staple diet of the working class. "I thought it would be roast beef and Yorkshire pudding all the way." But rationing was still on, and the area was derelict after being bombed to rubble during the war. Dad was amazed and heartened by the sight of the British in England though. He'd never seen the English in poverty, as roadsweepers, dustmen, shopkeepers, and barmen. He'd never seen an Englishman stuffing bread into his mouth with his fingers, and no one had told him the English didn't wash regularly because the water was so cold – if they had water at all. And when Dad tried to discuss Byron in local pubs no one warned him that not every Englishman could read or that they didn't necessarily want tutoring by an Indian on the poetry of a pervert and a madman (Kureishi, 1990, pp. 24–25).

- 2a, Why did people call Karim's father and other Indian immigrants "Sunny Jim"?
- 2b, What is "roast beef and Yorkshire pudding" a symbol of?
- 2c, How prosperous and cultured did Dad find England upon his arrival?

**Ex. 3**

Under the influence of Angela Davis, Jamila had started exercising every day, learning karate and judo, getting up early to stretch, and run and do press-ups. She bowled along like a dream, Jamila; she could have run on snow and left no footsteps. She was preparing for the guerrilla war she knew would be necessary when the whites finally turned on the blacks and Asians and tried to force us into gas chambers or push us into leaky boats.

This wasn't as ludicrous as it sounded. The area in which Jamila lived was closer to London than our suburbs, and far poorer. It was full of neo-fascist groups, thugs who had their own pubs and clubs, and shops. [...] At night they roamed the streets, beating Asians and shoving shit and burning rags through their letter boxes. Frequently the mean, white, hating faces had public meetings and the Union Jacks were paraded through the streets, protected by the police (Kureishi, 1990, p. 54).

- 3a, Find out who Angela Davis was.
- 3b, How safe were certain parts of London for coloured people in the 1970s?
- 3c, Find a synonym for neo-fascists in the extract.
- 3d, What are Union Jacks and why were they paraded through the streets?

**Ex. 4**

"Look at him, Karim, he hasn't eaten or drunk anything for eight days! He'll die, Karim, won't he, if he doesn't eat anything!"

"Yes, you'll cop it, boss, if you don't eat your grub like everyone else."

"I won't eat. I will die. If Gandhi could shove out the English from India by not eating, I can get my family to obey me exactly the same."

"What do you want her to do?"

"To marry the boy I have selected with my brother."

"But it's old-fashioned, Uncle, out of date," I explained. "No one does that kind of thing now. They just marry the person they're into, if they bother to get married at all."

This homily on contemporary morals didn't exactly blow his mind.

"That's not our way, boy. Our way is firm. She must do what I say or I will die. She will kill me" (Kureishi, 1990, pp. 59–60).

- 4a, What is Jamila's father trying to achieve with his hunger strike?
- 4b, What is the connection between Karim's uncle and Gandhi?
- 4c, Where can you see the cultural differences between the first and the second generation of the Indian immigrants?
- 4d, Can you think of habits or procedures in Slovakia that may be considered old-fashioned?

## 8 Contemporary Literature

### 8.1 Ian McEwan: *Atonement* (2001)

I. McEwan (born 1948) is a short story writer, novelist, writer of screenplays and opera librettos. He is “obsessed with the perverted, the depraved and the macabre, an inscrutable voyeur who describes abjection and obscenity with chilling detachment. His characters and their quandaries are dissected with the clinical precision of a pathologist, and in a prose style equally appropriate to that profession” (Ryan, p. 203). McEwan is labelled as “chronicler of comically exaggerated psychopathic states of mind or of adolescent anxiety, snot and pimples” (Ryan, 2007, p. 205). The Times called him “The Prince of Darkest Imaginings,” and he has been nicknamed Ian McCabre. His themes include: childhood trauma, teenage alienation, secret adult obsessions, post-war history, politics. McEwan was one of the first students on the MA Creative writing course established at the University of East Anglia by Malcolm Bradbury and Angus Wilson. McEwan’s famous novels are: *The Cement Garden*, *The Innocent*, *Black Dogs*, *Enduring Love*, *Amsterdam* (1998 Booker Prize), *Atonement*, *Saturday*, *Chesil Beach*, *In a Nutshell*. In 2000 he was appointed CBE.

#### Pre-reading

- a, What does atonement mean?
- b, What can one atone for and how?
- c, Can you think of the theme of atonement in literature or film?
- d, Read the quote from *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen the book starts with:

“Dear Miss Morland, consider the dreadful nature of the suspicions you have entertained. What have you been judging from? Remember the country and the age in which we live. Remember that we are English; that we are Christians. Consult your own understanding, your own sense of the, your own observation of what is passing around you. Does your education prepare us for such atrocities? Do our laws connive at them? Could they be perpetrated without being known in a country like this, where social and literary intercourse is on such a footing, where every man is surrounded by a neighbourhood of voluntary spies, and where roads and newspapers lay everything open? Dearest Miss Morland, what ideas have you been admitting?”

They had reached the end of the gallery; and with tears of shame she ran off to her own room (McEwan, 2007).

- e, Find out about *Northanger Abbey* and think what the quote might foreshadow.



**Ex. 1**

Three and a half years of nights like these, unable to sleep, thinking of another vanished boy, another vanished life that was once his own, and waiting for dawn, and slop-out and another wasted day. He did not know how he survived the daily stupidity of it. The stupidity and the claustrophobia. The hand squeezing on his throat. Being here, sheltering in a barn, with an army in rout, where a child's limb in a tree was something that ordinary men could ignore, where a whole country, a whole civilisation was about to fall, was better than being there, on a narrow bed under a dim electric light, waiting for nothing. Here there were wooded valleys, streams, sunlight on the poplars which they could not take away unless they killed him. And there was hope. *I'll wait for you. Come back.* There was a chance, just a chance, of getting back. He had her last letter in his pocket and her new address. This was why he had to survive, and use his cunning to stay off the main roads where the circling dive-bombers waited like raptors (McEwan, 2007, pp. 202–203).

1a, Underline examples of repetition and gradation in the extract. What is their effect?

1b, What horrors of the war are mentioned?

1c, Robbie prefers war to prison. T/F?

**Ex. 2**

[...] she needed to be alone to consider Robbie afresh, and to frame the opening paragraph of a story shot through with real life. No more princesses! The scene by the fountain, its air of ugly threat, and at the end, when both had gone their separate ways, the luminous absence shimmering above the wetness on the gravel – all this would have to be reconsidered. With the letter, something elemental, brutal, perhaps even criminal had been introduced, some principle of darkness, and even in her excitement over the possibilities, she did not doubt that her sister was in some way threatened and would need her help (McEwan, 2007, pp. 113–114).

2a, Briony, the novel's protagonist, and Cecilia's younger sister, witnesses a suggestive scene with obvious sexual connotations between Cecilia and Robbie. Which phrases suggest she has a vivid imagination misinterpreting the real facts?

**Ex. 3**

Throughout the day, up and down the ward, along the corridors, Briony felt her familiar guilt pursue her with a novel vibrancy. She scrubbed down the vacated lockers, helped wash bedframes in carbolic, swept and polished the floors, ran errands to the dispensary and the almoner at double speed without actually running, was sent with another probationer to help dress a boil in men's general, and covered for Fiona who had to visit the dentist. On this first really fine day of May she sweated

under her starchy uniform. All she wanted to do was work, then bathe and sleep until it was time to work again. But it was useless, she knew. Whatever skivvying or humble nursing she did, and however well or hard she did it, whatever illumination in tutorial she had relinquished, or lifetime moment on a college lawn, she would never undo the damage. She was unforgivable (McEwan, 2007, p. 285).

3a, How does Briony atone for the ruined lives of her sister Cecilia and of Robbie?

3b, Find a passage in Macbeth, in which lady Macbeth is washing her guilt.

#### **Ex. 4**

All the preceding drafts were pitiless. But now I can no longer think what purpose would be served if, say, I tried to persuade my reader, by direct or indirect means, that Robbie Turner died of septicaemia at Bray Dunes on 1 June 1940, or that Cecilia was killed in September of the same year by the bomb that destroyed Balham Underground station. That I never saw them in that year. That my walk across London ended at the church on Clapham Common, and that a cowardly Briony limped back to the hospital, unable to confront her recently bereaved sister. That the letters the lovers wrote are in the archives of the War Museum. How could that constitute an ending? What sense or hope could a reader draw from such an account? Who would want to believe that they never met again, never fulfilled their love? Who would want to believe that, except in the service of the bleakest realism? I couldn't do it to them. I'm too old, too frightened, too much in love with the shred of life I have remaining. I face an incoming tide of forgetting, and then oblivion. I no longer possess the courage of my pessimism. When I am dead, and the Marshalls are dead, and the novel is finally published, we will only exist as my inventions. Briony will be as much of a fantasy as the lovers who shared a bed in Balham and enraged their landlady. No one will care what events and which individuals were misinterpreted to make a novel (McEwan, 2007, pp. 370–371).

### **8.2 Julian Barnes: *Flaubert's Parrot* (1984)**

J. Barnes (born 1946) is a novelist and a short story writer. He worked as a deputy literary editor of the Sunday Times, and as a television critic of the Observer. The themes typical for his work: history, jealousy, truth, obsession, sorrow, bereavement. His best works are: *Metroland* (Somerset Maugham Award), *Before She Met Me*, *Flaubert's Parrot* (a Booker Prize nomination), *Staring at the Sun*, *A History of the World in 10½ Chapters*, *The Porcupine*, *Cross Channel*, *England, England* (a Booker Prize nomination), *Love, Etc.*, *The Lemon Table*, *Arthur & George*. Barnes also writes under the pseudonym Dan Kavanagh: *Duffy*, *Fiddle City*, *Going to the Dogs*.

**Ex. 1**

Contemporary critics who pompously reclassify all novels and plays and poems as texts – the author to the guillotine! – shouldn't skip lightly over Flaubert. A century before them he was preparing texts and denying the significance of his own personality.

“The author in his book must be like God in his universe, everywhere present and nowhere visible.” Of course, this has been keenly misread in our century. Look at Sartre and Camus. God is dead, they told us, and therefore so is the God-like novelist. Omniscience is impossible, man's knowledge is partial, therefore the novel itself must be partial. This sounds not just splendid, but logical as well. But is it either? The novel, after all, didn't arise when belief in God arose; nor, for that matter, is there much correlation between those novelists who believed most strongly in the omniscient narrator and those who believed most strongly in the omniscient creator (Barnes, 1985, pp. 88–89).

1a, Find a reference to a well-known postmodern literary criticism catch phrase.

1b, Who were Camus and Sartre?

1c, What do you think of Barnes' correlation between God and the novel?

**Ex. 2**

When the writer provides two different endings to his novel (why two? why not a hundred?), does the reader seriously imagine he is being “offered a choice” and that the work is reflecting life's variable outcomes? Such a “choice” is never real because the reader is obliged to consume both endings. In life, we make a decision – or a decision makes us – and we go one way; had we made a different decision (as I once told my wife; though I don't think she was in a condition to appreciate my wisdom), we would have been elsewhere. The novel with two endings doesn't reproduce this reality: it merely takes us down two diverging paths. [...]

After all, if novelists truly wanted to simulate the delta of life's possibilities, this is what they'd do. At the back of the book would be a set of sealed envelopes in various colours. Each would be clearly marked on the outside: Traditional Happy Ending; Traditional Unhappy Ending; Traditional Half-and-Half Ending; Deus ex Machina; Modernist Arbitrary Ending; End of the World Ending; Cliffhanger Ending; Dream Ending; Opaque Ending; Surrealist Ending; and so on. You would be allowed only one, and would have to destroy the envelopes you didn't select. That's what I call offering the reader a choice of endings; but you may find me quite unreasonably literal-minded (Barnes, 1985, p. 89).

2a, What is being mocked in the extract?

2b, Name novels with more than one ending.

### Pre-reading

- a, How do people mourn the death of their beloved?
- b, What remedy for bereavement would you suggest?

### Ex. 3

Mourning is full of time; nothing but time. Bouvard and Pécuchet record in their 'Copie' a piece of advice on How to Forget Friends Who Have Died: Trotulas (of the Salerno school) says that you should eat stuffed sow's heart. I might yet have to fall back on this remedy. I've tried drink, but what does that do? Drink makes you drunk, that's all it's ever been able to do. Work, they say, cures everything. It doesn't; often it doesn't even induce tiredness: the nearest you get to it is a neurotic lethargy. And there is always time. Have some more time. Take your time. Extra time. Time on your hands.

Other people think you want to talk. "Do you want to talk about Ellen?" they ask, hinting that they won't be embarrassed if you break down. Sometimes you talk, sometimes you don't; it makes little difference. The words aren't the right ones; or rather, the right words don't exist. "Language is like a cracked kettle on which we beat out tunes for bears to dance to, while all the time we long to move the stars to pity." You talk, and you find the language of bereavement foolishly inadequate (Barnes, 1985, p. 161).

- 3a, Has he eaten a sow's stuffed heart as suggested in How to Forget Friends Who have Died?
- 3b, What remedies has the narrator, Dr. Geoffrey Braithwaite, tried to get over the loss of his wife?
- 3c, Talking helps people to come out of mourning. T/F?

### 8.3 Hilary Mantel: *Fludd* (1989)

H. Mantel (born 1952) is a novelist, short story and a memoir writer. Her original name was Hilary Mary Thompson. Mantel's works: *Every Day is Mother's Day*, *Vacant Possession*, *Fludd*, *A Place of Greater Safety*, *A Change of Climate*, *Wolf Hall* (Booker Prize), *Bring Up the Bodies* (Booker Prize). Mantel was appointed CBE in 2006 and became Dame (DBE) in 2014.

### Pre-reading

- a, How does today's Roman Catholic Church differ from the Church in the 1950s?
- b, Can one still be a priest despite having lost faith?

**Ex. 1**

“I’ve come to talk to you on the subject of uniting all right-thinking people in the family of God,” he said. “Now then, now then, Father Angwin. I’m expecting trouble form you.”

“Are you going it to sit, or what?” Father Angwin asked him diffidently.

The bishop clasped his pink hands before him. He looked severely at the priest, and swayed a little on the spot. “The next decade, Father Angwin, is the decade of unity. The decade of gathering-in. The decade of Christ’s human family. The decade of the Christian community in communion with itself.” Agnes Dempsey came in with a tray. “Oh, since you’ve brought it,” the bishop said.

When Miss Dempsey had left the room – her knees had become stiff, owing to the wet weather, and she was obliged to take her time – Father Angwin said, “Do you mean the decade of burying the hatchet, by any small chance?”

“The decade of reconciliation,” the bishop said, “the decade of amity, the decade of coexistence and the decade of the many-in-one.”

“You are talking like a person right outside my experience,” Father Angwin said (Mantel, 1990, p. 9).

1a, What does the bishop mean by “*unity*” and “*reconciliation*,” etc.?

1b, Explain the idiomatic expression “*burying the hatchet*” in the context of the story.

1c, From which phrases can we deduce that Father Angwin does not show an appropriate degree of respect to the bishop?

**Ex. 2**

He had been drinking too, but he was certainly not drunk; despite the hour – and it was now eleven o’clock – he was as pleasant, mild and breezy as if it were teatime. Whenever Father Angwin looked up at him, it seemed that his whiskey glass was raised to his lips, but the level of what was in it did not seem to go down; and yet from time to time the young man reached out for the bottle, and topped himself up. It had been the same with their late dinner; there were three sausages (from the Co-op butcher) on Father Fludd’s plate, and he was always cutting into one or the other, and spearing a bit on his fork; he was always chewing in an unobtrusive, polite way, with his mouth shut tight. And yet, there were always three sausages on his plate, until at last, quite suddenly, there were none. Father’s Angwin’s first thought was that Fludd had a small dog concealed about his person, in the way that starlets conceal their pooches from the custom men; he had seen this in the newspaper. But Fludd, unlike the starlets, had not got his neck sunk into a fur; and then again, Father Angwin thought, would a dog drink so much whiskey? (Mantel, 1990, p. 46).

2a, Explain the words: *starlets*, *pooches*, *customs men*.

2b, How does Father Angwin explain the full whiskey glass and the three intact sausages?

2c, He, however, soon discovers the flaw in his thinking. What is it?

### **Ex. 3**

That night after dinner, Father Angwin said, “I have had a call from the bishop.”

“Oh yes?” Fludd said. “What did he want?”

“He wanted to know if I was relevant.” Father Angwin raised his face to Fludd, expectantly; but it was a barbed expectation. “You are clever and modern, Father Fludd, can you make anything of that?”

Fludd did not reply; indicating by his silence that he did not mean to be drawn out, about his modernity.

“He said,” “Are you relevant, Father? Are you real?” I said, well, that’s one for Plato. But the bishop continued without a pause. “Are your *sermons* relevant?” he said. “Are you attuned to the modern ear?” (Mantel, 1990, p. 83).

3a, Explain the bishop’s question: “*Are you attuned to the modern ear?*”

3b, How relevant are the sermons you get to hear? Might one object to their irrelevancy?

### **8.4 William Boyd: *Restless* (2006)**

W. Boyd (born 1952) is a novelist, short story and a screenplay writer. His other notable works are: *A Good Man in Africa*, *On the Yankee Station*, *An Ice-Cream War* (a Booker Prize nomination), *The New Confessions*, *Brazzaville Beach*, *The Blue Afternoon*, *Armadillo*, *Any Human Heart*, *Fascination*.

#### **Pre-reading**

a, Define a “page-turner.”

b, Have you read a spy thriller?

c, What famous spies can you think of?

### **Ex. 1**

She had come to think of the place as a kind of eccentric boarding school, and it had been a peculiar education she had received there: Morse code, first, interminable Morse code to the most advanced level, and shorthand also, and how to shoot a number of handguns. She had learned to drive a car and been given a licence; she

could read a map and use a compass. She could trap, skin and cook a rabbit and other wild rodents. She knew how to cover up a trail and lay false one. On other courses she had learnt how to construct simple codes and how to break others. She had been shown how to tamper with documents, and was now able to change names and dates convincingly with a variety of special inks and tiny sharp implements; she knew how to forge – with a carved eraser – a blurry official stamp. She became familiar with human anatomy, how the body worked, what is essential nutritional needs were, and its many points of weakness (Boyd, 2007, pp. 43–44).

1a, The female spy can counterfeit:

a, a distinct stamp    b, an indistinct stamp.

1b, Why would a spy need to know of a human body's weak points?

1c, Would you make a good spy?

1d, Rewrite the spy training now, 70 years on.

## **Ex. 2**

“How did you get in here?” he asked her, his voice unfriendly. “Why didn't the doorman ring up?”

Eva realised she had made a mistake: she should have gone to the doorman, not used her little subterfuge. That would have been normal: the normal, innocent thing a friend would do if another friend was late for a drink.

“He was busy, I just came up.”

“Or maybe you were looking for Elizabeth Wesley.”

“Who?”

Romer chuckled. Eva realised he was too clever – and he knew her too well, anyway.

Romer looked at her, his eyes were cold: “Never underestimate the scrupulous resourcefulness of our Miss Dalton, eh?”

And she knew.

She felt a shrilling in her ears, a keening note of hysterical alarm. She put her hand on his arm (Boyd, 2007, pp. 244–245).

2a, What do you think Eva did next?

2b, What would you do if you discovered your life was in danger and that you could not trust anyone?

2c, What literary means do writers use to create a thriller?

## 8.5 Mark Haddon: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* (2003)

M. Haddon (born 1962) is a novelist, children's author, illustrator, screenwriter, cartoonist and a playwright. He also teaches creative writing. Haddon's works are: *A Spot of Bother*, *Boom*, *The Red House*, *The Pier Falls*.

**A coming of age story** – see **bildungsroman**, p. 41.

### Pre-reading

- a, How can you recognize a person suffering from Asperger's syndrome?
- b, If you were to write a murder mystery novel, what would its ingredients be?

### Ex. 1

He was asking too many questions and he was asking them too quickly. They were stacking up in my head like loaves in the factory where Uncle Terry works. The factory is a bakery and he operates the slicing machines. And sometimes the slicer is not working fast enough but the bread keeps coming and there is a blockage. I sometimes think of my mind as a machine, but not always as a bread-slicing machine. It makes easier to explain to other people what is going on inside it.

The policeman said, "I'm going to ask you once again..."

I rolled back onto the lawn and pressed my forehead to the ground again and made the noise that father calls groaning. I make this noise when there is too much information coming into my head from the outside world. It is like when you are upset and you hold the radio against your ear and you tune it halfway between two stations so that all you get is white noise and then you turn the volume right up so that this is all you can hear and then you know you are safe because you cannot hear anything else.

The policeman took hold of my arm and lifted me onto my feet.

I didn't like him touching me like this.

And this is when I hit him (Haddon, 2004, p. 8).

- 1a, Christopher, the 15-year-old protagonist, likes to listen to the radio. T/F?
- 1b, What are the dis/advantages of a first person narration? What other texts with a first person narration can you remember?

### Ex. 2

This is a murder mystery novel. Siobhan said I should write something I would want to read myself. Mostly I read novel about science and maths. I do not like proper novels. [...]



But I do like murder mystery novels. So I'm writing a murder mystery novel.

In a murder mystery novel someone has to work out who the murderer is and then catch them. It is a puzzle. If it is a good puzzle you can work out the answer before the end of the book.

Siobhan said that the book should begin with something to grab people's attention. That's why I started with the dog. I also started with the dog because it happened to me and I find it hard to imagine things which did not happen to me (Haddon, 2004, p. 5).

2a, If you were to write a novel or a short story, what genre would it be? Why?

2b, The book was published for both children and adults. What other books with dual readership do you know?

**Ex. 3**

Chapters in books are usually given the cardinal numbers **1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6** and so on. But I have decided to give my chapters prime numbers **2, 3, 5, 7, 11, 13** and so on because I like prime numbers.

This is how you work out what prime numbers are.

First, you write down all the positive whole numbers in the world.

1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31	32	33	34	35	36	37	38	39	40
41	42	43	44	45	46	47	48	49	etc.

Then you take away all the numbers that are multiples of 2. Then you take away all the numbers that are multiples of 3. Then you take away all the numbers that are multiples of 4 and 5 and 6 and 7 and so on. The numbers that are left are the prime numbers.

	2	3		5		7			
11		13				17		19	
		23						29	
31						37			

41		43				47			etc.
----	--	----	--	--	--	----	--	--	------

[...]

Prime numbers are what is left when you have taken all the patterns away. I think prime numbers are like life. They are very logical but you could never work out the rules, even if you spent all your time thinking about them (Haddon, 2004, pp. 14–15).

3a, Why is 9 not a prime number?

3b, Comment on Haddon's style. How does it differ from Julian Barnes' in *Flaubert's Parrot*?

### 8.6 David Mitchell: *Cloud Atlas* (2004)

D. Mitchell (born 1969) is a novelist. His novels include: *Ghostwritten*, *number9dream* (Booker Prize shortlisted), *Cloud Atlas* (shortlisted for the Booker Prize), *Black Swan Green*, *The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet*, *The Bone Clocks*, *Slade House*.

The novel *Cloud Atlas* includes six stories, six time settings and is written in six styles: *The Pacific Journal of Adam Ewing*, *Letters from Zedelghem*, *Half-Lives – The First Luisa Rey Mystery*, *The Ghastly Ordeal of Timothy Cavendish*, *An Orison of Sonmi-451*, *Sloosha's Crossin' an' Ev'rythin' After*.

#### Ex. 1

Thursday, 7th November—

Beyond the Indian hamlet, upon a forlorn strand, I happened on a trail of recent footprints. Through rotting kelp, sea cocoanuts & bamboo, the tracks led me to their maker, a white man, his trousers & Pea-jacket rolled up, sporting a kempt beard & and an outsized Beaver, shovelling & sifting the cindery sand with a tea-spoon so intently that he noticed me only after I had hailed him from ten yards away. Thus it was, I made the acquaintance of Dr Henry goose, surgeon to the London nobility. His nationality was no surprise. If there be any eyries so desolate, or isle so remote that one may there resort unchallenged by an Englishman, 'tis not down on any map I ever saw (Mitchell, 2004, p. 3).

1a, What do you think Dr Goose was doing on the beach?

1b, Paraphrase the last sentence.

1c, Compare the opening extract of the novel to its film adaptation by The Wachowskis.

**Ex. 2****Can you describe a server's schedule?**

Hour four thirty is yellow-up. Stimulin enters the airflow to rouse us from our cots. We file into the hygiene; then we steam-clean. Back in our dormroom we dress in a fresh uniform; than gather around the Hub with our Seer and his Aides. Papa Song appears on His Plinth for matins, and we recite the Six Catechism together. Our Logoman then delivers His sermon. At a minute before hour five we go to our positions around the Hub.

The elevator brings the day's first consumers. For nineteen hours we greet diners, input orders, tray food, vend drinks, upstock condiments, wipe tables, bin garbage, clean consumers' hygieners and pray our honorable diners to debit their Souls on our Hub tellers (Mitchell, 2004, p. 188).

**Ex. 3**

*Bring me ev'dence, Vallesman, Abbess'd said, or hold your council,* so now I thinked ev'ry moment how to get my ev'dence an' if I couldn't grasp of it honor'bly well, so-be-it, I'd have to sneak my ev'dence. A bunch o' days later my fam'ly was over at Aunt Bees', with Meronym, 'cos she was learnin' honeying.' I came back from herdin' early, yay, with the sun still 'bove the Kohalas an' I crept into our vis'tors room an' searched for her gearbag. Didn't take long, the Shipwoman'd stowed it under the plankin'. Inside was littl' gifts like what she'd gived us when she first come, but some Smart gear too. Sev'ral boxes what din't rattley but'd got no lid neither so I couldn't open 'em, an eery tool what I din't know shaped'n'smooth as a goat's shinbone, but gra'n'heavy like lava-stone, two pairs o'well-crafted boots, three-four books o'sketchin's'n'writin's in secret Prescient tongue (Mitchell, 2004, p. 276).

3a, Compare and contrast the style of the three extracts.

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