

OXFORD IB DIPLOMA PROGRAMME



2ND EDITION

ENGLISH A: LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

COURSE COMPANION



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Course Companion definition

The IB Diploma Programme Course Companions are resource materials designed to support students throughout their two-year Diploma Programme course of study in a particular subject. They help students gain an understanding of what is expected while presenting content that fully illustrates the aims and purposes of the IB. They reflect its philosophy and approach, by encouraging a deeper understanding of each subject through connections to wider global issues, based on independent, critical thinking.

The Companions mirror the IB philosophy of whole-course approaches to the curriculum through the use of a wide range of authentic resources. These resources integrate perspectives in international-mindedness, promote learning in accord with the IB learner profile and deepen experience of the IB Diploma Programme core requirements: theory of knowledge, the extended essay, and Creativity, Action, Service (CAS).

Each Companion can be used in conjunction with other materials. Indeed, successful IB students are strongly encouraged to enhance their learning through consultation of a variety of supplementary resources. Suggestions for further reading, as well as for extending research investigations, are regularly given in a fashion that integrates this extension work within each course.

In addition, all Companions provide guidance for successfully completing all course assessment requirements and advice for respecting academic honesty protocols. They are distinctive and authoritative, without being rigidly prescriptive.

IB mission statement

The International Baccalaureate aims to develop inquiring, knowledgeable and caring young people who help to create a better and more peaceful world through intercultural understanding and respect.

To this end the IB works with schools, governments and international organisations to develop challenging programmes of international education and rigorous assessment.

These programmes encourage students across the world to become active, compassionate, and lifelong learners who understand that other people, with their differences, can also be right.

The IB learner profile

The aim of all IB programmes is to develop internationally minded people who, recognising their common humanity and shared guardianship of

the planet, help to create a better and more peaceful world. IB learners strive to be:

Inquirers They develop their natural curiosity. They acquire the skills necessary to conduct inquiry and research and show independence in learning. They actively enjoy learning and this love of learning will be sustained throughout their lives.

Knowledgeable They explore concepts, ideas, and issues that have local and global significance. In so doing, they acquire in-depth knowledge and develop understanding across a broad and balanced range of disciplines.

Thinkers They exercise initiative in applying thinking skills critically and creatively to recognise and approach complex problems, and make reasoned, ethical decisions.

Communicators They understand and express ideas and information confidently and creatively in more than one language and in a variety of modes of communication. They work effectively and willingly in collaboration with others.

Principled They act with integrity and honesty, with a strong sense of fairness, justice, and respect for the dignity of the individual, groups, and communities. They take responsibility for their own actions and the consequences that accompany them.

Open-minded They understand and appreciate their own cultures and personal histories, and are open to the perspectives, values, and traditions of other individuals and communities. They are accustomed to seeking and evaluating a range of points of view, and are willing to grow from the experience.

Caring They show empathy, compassion, and respect towards the needs and feelings of others. They have a personal commitment to service, and act to make a positive difference to the lives of others and to the environment.

Risk-takers They approach unfamiliar situations and uncertainty with courage and forethought, and have the independence of spirit to explore new roles, ideas, and strategies. They are brave and articulate in defending their beliefs.

Balanced They understand the importance of intellectual, physical, and emotional balance to achieve personal well-being for themselves and others.

Reflective They give thoughtful consideration to their own learning and experience. They are able to assess and understand their strengths and limitations in order to support their learning and professional development.

A note on academic honesty

It is of vital importance to credit owners of information appropriately, whenever that information is re-used. Originators of ideas (intellectual property) have property rights.

You must base honest, productive work on your own individual ideas. The work of others used in developing these ideas, must be fully referenced in correct fashion.

Therefore, in all assignments for assessment, written or oral, you must always express yourself without copying from others.

Whenever other sources are used or referred to, either as direct quotation or as paraphrase, they must be appropriately recorded and listed with the relevant academic references.

How do I acknowledge the work of others?

This is done through the correct and systematic use of footnotes and bibliographies.

Footnotes (placed at the bottom of a page) or endnotes (placed at the end of a document) are required when you quote or paraphrase, translate, or closely summarise the information provided in other documents.

You do not need to provide a footnote for information that is part of a recognised 'body of knowledge'. That is, commonly accepted definitions do not always need to be footnoted, as they are part of such assumed knowledge.

Bibliographies should include a formal list of the resources used in your work.

'Formal' means that you should use one of several commonly accepted forms of presentation. This usually involves separating your resources into different categories (e.g. books, magazines, newspaper articles, Internet-based resources, CDs, works of art and translations from other languages, whether computer derived or not).

In this way, you provide full information for your readers, or viewers of your work, so that they can find the same information, if they wish. A formal, academic bibliography is compulsory for the extended essay.

What constitutes malpractice?

This is behaviour that results, or may result in you, or any student, gaining an unfair advantage in one or more assessment component.

Malpractice includes plagiarism, whether in the same language, or translated from another language. It also includes collusion.

Plagiarism is defined as the representation of the ideas or work of another person as your own. The following are some of the ways to avoid plagiarism:

- Words and ideas of another person used to support one's arguments must be acknowledged.
- Passages that are quoted verbatim must be enclosed within quotation marks and acknowledged.
- CD-ROMs, email messages, websites on the Internet, and any other electronic media must be treated in the same way as books and journals.
- The sources of all photographs, maps, illustrations, computer programs, data, graphs, audio visual, and similar material must be acknowledged if they are not your own work.
- Works of art, whether music, film, dance, theatre arts, or visual arts, and where the creative use of a part of a work takes place, must be acknowledged.

Collusion is defined as supporting malpractice by another student. This includes:

- allowing your work to be copied, or translated, and then submitted for assessment by another student
- duplicating work for different assessment components and/or diploma requirements.

Other forms of malpractice include any action that gives you an unfair advantage, or affects the results of another student. Examples include, taking unauthorised material into an examination room, misconduct during an examination, using unauthorised electronic aids of any type, and falsifying a CAS record.

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Introduction

This is our second time writing an Oxford University Press course book for Language and Literature. Each book took almost three years to write and during the course of researching, writing and revising, we were teaching both “Language and Literature” and “Literature”, developing curriculum for IB and marking too many papers. Writing, as you know, can be difficult—you read, research, think, outline, write, rewrite and never seem to get it right. But it can—just like the teaching and marking—be fun. For our introductory note, that is what we want to stress: reading, writing and “doing” English can be fun ... and meaningful. The best part of writing the book was having conversations with each other, friends, colleagues and students about what really matters when approaching language and literature; it was also finding surprising texts, sharing articles, and writing posts on social media to generate discussion. At one point during the work, Rob told the story of his own reading and progression to becoming a teacher. It was pretty simple: he loved reading and he did not really know why. Part of it was, almost stereotypically, being taken away to another place. Part of it was wanting to just find more, to work your way through the shelves of the library. Part of it was enjoying finding “a good part” that you just had to read to someone else. Reading and thinking was not something you had to do or learned to do and doing it almost felt like a guilty pleasure. This is what writing the book was for us, so we hope that you will get some of that pleasure yourself as you read this book. This is also what a good language and literature class should be. We know that not every text is something you find interesting and that in some classes you just sit down and write a “practice commentary”, but it is the engagement and curiosity that will make you a good student of IB Language and Literature and serve you in the future.

We have tried to structure this book so that it imitates an interesting language and literature classroom. We have built activities, discussions and texts into thematic units within each of the three areas of exploration in the course. As we move through the main concerns of each area, we not only introduce a wide variety of texts but try to ask the kinds of questions and offer the kinds of ideas that will help you to get at the concepts that underpin the course and, really, the kinds of big questions that all people working with language and literature are constantly considering.

What we will not do is answer any of the questions. If the questions had answers, you could just Google them. And though we know you have assessments to do, and we know that grades matter to you and to your future, we will not offer shortcuts and tricks. We will, however, give you tips on how to approach assessments, but we believe that by just reading and considering questions and writing in your learner portfolio, you will become a better student of language and literature. The classroom and this book should be a place for you to read, think, play, hypothesize, make connections, express ideas and grow. Ideally, the classroom would never have a test. It would be great if assessment were invisible, if the teacher simply observed and enjoyed and then adjusted teaching, activities and projects to suit this invisible assessment. As soon as you tune yourself to a test, to a particular task, it is too easy to see the task and the criteria for assessing it rather than seeing the reading, thinking and play that will naturally lead you to doing that task well. A language and literature class is not meant to get you ready to do well on assessment but to read and think better, which will also result in greater success on assessments. All the research says that reading and responding—thinking about a text and having something to say about it—is the best way to learn to understand, analyze, synthesize, interpret, organize your thoughts, learn vocabulary and gain clarity in your writing.

You may not love reading books or blogs, watching movies and discussing these things. In that case, a language and literature class can be a boring place for you. But it is our job (and your teacher’s job) to help you see the variety and excitement in language and literature and try to enjoy and appreciate it—at least part of the time!

But if you love reading and thinking, we hope you will not find this book, or the language and literature class, boring. It should be just the kind of thing you like because we are not putting you on an endless march through lists, acronyms and memorized facts, but offering you a chance to do what you enjoy, to do what works best, and to “do English”.

Brian Chanen and Rob Allison

STUDYING LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

IB Language and Literature

To paraphrase the *IB Language A: language and literature guide*, this course is meant to be a broad engagement with both language and literature through the study of a wide range of literary and non-literary texts in a variety of media. By examining communicative acts of all sorts, by discussing these and secondary texts with your classmates, and by working through problems with the help of your teacher you “will investigate the nature of language itself and the ways in which it shapes and is influenced by identity and culture”.

There are many ways to study texts and to study language and literature more broadly. While you may certainly be exposed to particular literary and linguistic theories, and although you may appreciate some approaches more than others, it is our hope that as secondary students you will embrace the diversity of texts and approaches. The best way to approach the study of language and literature is to be open to texts, to be critical of texts and to be both open to and critical of the very ways in which you choose to study and question. In the section below, we will touch on some approaches to the study of language and literature that not only represent a particular critical perspective, but suggest in themselves a broad approach.

Other than the fact that the IB Language and Literature course focuses on both literary and non-literary texts in order to investigate language and communication in the broadest senses, the course shares many attributes with the other courses in Studies in language and literature. All three courses, in fact, are concerned with broad aesthetic and cultural literacy, all three incorporate elements of performance (ranging from the “performance” of analysis and interpretation to the reciting of poems and the performance of dramatic interpretations) and all three courses help to develop the language competence and communicative skills of students. Just as the approach to investigating texts can and should be wide and varied, so should the approach to building your skills of speaking, writing and presenting. The best approach to building your communication skills is to be engaged in your reading, to be engaged in classroom discussions, and to write as freely and as often as possible.

The *IB Language A: language and literature guide* summarizes the learning in the course this way:

“In the Language A: language and literature course students will learn about the complex and dynamic nature of language and explore both its practical and aesthetic dimensions. They will explore the

crucial role language plays in communication, reflecting experience and shaping the world. Students will also learn about their own roles as producers of language and develop their productive skills. Throughout the course, students will explore the various ways in which language choices, text types, literary forms and contextual elements all affect meaning. Through close analysis of various text types and literary forms, students will consider their own interpretations, as well as the critical perspectives of others to explore how such positions are shaped by cultural belief systems and to negotiate meanings for texts. Students will engage in activities that involve them in the process of production and help shape their critical awareness of how texts and their associated visual and audio elements work together to influence the audience/reader and how audiences/readers open up the possibilities of texts. With its focus on a wide variety of communicative acts, the course is meant to develop sensitivity to the foundational nature, and pervasive influence, of language in the world at large.”

Learning grammar

Many students wonder if they should be “learning grammar” or doing exercises of some sort to help their writing. This is a somewhat difficult question to answer. First, the problem is defining what teachers and students might mean by grammar. For linguists, grammar is the system of rules that describes structures (such as both sentence and word structures), forms and sometimes even the sounds and meanings of words. What we tend to mean when we are talking about speaking and writing is whether we follow the “prescriptive” grammar rules that we take to mean the right and wrong way to write and speak. If your goal is to increase your vocabulary, the best method is to read as much as possible as soon as possible. If your goal is to become a more fluent writer, better able to express your ideas, then the best method is to read as much as possible and to write without inhibition. In terms of errors (verb tense, a missing apostrophe), these are often best cured by learning good editing, or from some intervention from your teacher who sees a frequent error in your work. Most studies show, though, that frequent reading and writing usually leads to the disappearance of errors over time without any intervention. To be fair, many would argue that it is useful to know some basic grammatical structures or the names of parts of speech—knowledge like this can help to clarify your understanding of how language works and why, and may help you to self-correct. The act of worrying about correcting yourself, though, can often lead to less writing, a fear of writing, or writing that is stilted. If you feel like you need more facility with language, you can exercise your writing skills through work like sentence-combining activities, writing pastiche or imitations of professional work (literary and non-literary) or writing “variations” on single sentences.

There are many aspects to the language and literature course and there are many ideas, terms, text types, modes, literary periods and theories that you can explore over the course of the two years. Obviously, you can never learn everything there is to know about language and literature, but not only that, there is not a set body of knowledge to know and understand even for this course. You will be encountering ideas because of your teacher, your community, your peers and the texts you study. You will learn, in a sense, what you need to know in the moment and, perhaps more importantly, what you want to know.

With this in mind, the most important aspect of the IB Language and Literature course is the set of aims as well as the concepts that underlie the study. No matter what you are studying at any given moment, it should tie back to the aims and somehow be grounded in the important concepts. While these aims and concepts are important, they are also not meant to be intimidating or complex or even represent something that you have to “learn”. The aims are natural, the concepts are inherent in the study of language and literature. In fact, when we design a curriculum, the first thing we do as a group of language and literature teachers from a wide variety of languages is say “what is it that we really want students to be able to do, to take with them into the future?” The concepts are not made up after the fact, but come from where we think all questions, problems and the power and wonder of language and literature spring.

According to the *IB Language A: language and literature guide*, the aims of all subjects in Studies in language and literature are to enable students to:

- 1** engage with a range of texts, in a variety of media and forms, from different periods, styles and cultures
- 2** develop skills in listening, speaking, reading, writing, viewing, presenting and performing
- 3** develop skills in interpretation, analysis and evaluation
- 4** develop sensitivity to the formal and aesthetic qualities of texts and an appreciation of how they contribute to meaning
- 5** develop an understanding of relationships between texts and a variety of perspectives, cultural contexts, and local and global issues
- 6** develop an understanding of the relationships between studies in language and literature and other disciplines
- 7** communicate and collaborate in a confident and creative way
- 8** foster a lifelong interest in and enjoyment of language and literature.

The key concepts of all three courses in Studies in language and literature are shown in the margin on the next page.

Conceptual understanding



CREATIVITY

Conceptual understanding



COMMUNICATION

Conceptual understanding



CULTURE

Conceptual understanding



IDENTITY

Conceptual understanding



PERSPECTIVE

Conceptual understanding



REPRESENTATION

Conceptual understanding



TRANSFORMATION

During your course of study you will see that these concepts and the questions and concerns around them or inherent in them, are reflected in the texts and ideas you examine. The concepts can help you to make connections between texts and they can also remind you of the fundamental concerns that underlie the study of language and literature. While it may be obvious, for example, that poetry involves creativity, it may be interesting to consider the ways in which this creative act compares with the creativity involved in producing propaganda. As another example, you may also see yourself moving back and forth in relation to culture. You may purposefully study a given text in order to consider the ways in which a work of literature might engage with, reflect or refract cultural values. At another time, though, while you are working on considering the rhythm and effect of a sonnet, you may be drawn to think about the ways in which culture figures in the use of structure or form. And, ultimately, your study in this course is not about “learning” a particular text or coming up with a neat set of stylistic features of various text types, but is about engaging with the concepts that are at the heart of language and literature.

The course itself is structured in three areas of exploration: “Readers, writers and texts”; “Time and space” and “Intertextuality: connecting texts”. There is some logic in moving through these areas of exploration in order. The first section focuses closely on the creation of meaning and the interactions between producers, texts and receivers. “Time and space” widens the study of a text to include the complex contexts that influence meaning, and “Intertextuality” encourages further connections between and among texts. At the same time, these areas of exploration naturally overlap and can be studied in any order. In fact, while we progress through the areas in this book, you will notice many connections among the ideas, texts and concepts in the various activities and discussions in each part.

Studying language and literature

When you study language and literature, you are not just investigating texts and communicative acts of all kinds, you are also learning the techniques of a discipline. The IB Language and Literature course is wide-ranging, so it can incorporate the methods (and deal with the problems) from many particular disciplines at university level. In relation to the study of language you might draw on insights and methods from individual disciplines within the study of linguistics such as sociolinguistics, historical linguistics or even cognitive linguistics. In relation to literature, your approach could be similar to those of the New Critics of the first half of the 20th century who advocated a close reading but will most likely draw on everything from post-colonial theory to advances in digital humanities. Throughout the IB Language and Literature course you are also likely to draw on methods from the broad field of media studies. You might even find time to practise being a “semiotician” or someone who studies the signs and symbols of communication. Regardless of where your methods come from or what your teacher may stress, the idea is not that you are

“learning about” a particular field of study, but that you are immersing yourself in academic activities that come from existing fields, that are practised today by professionals and that share some common conceptual concerns. The beauty of a language and literature course is not that you will **learn to be** a linguist or a particular type of literary critic, but that you will, in your approach to the problems of language and literature, simply **be** a critic and a scholar.

Lessons from linguistics

Many linguists focus on the broad theory of language and how meaning is created through sounds and patterns. Others focus on the intricacies of grammar and the structure of language and attempt to describe how language functions. Still others may focus more exclusively on the brain and its role in the functioning of language. A large part of the field of linguistics, though, is “applied linguistics” or taking what we know about language and communication and studying it in relation to its use in society. It is this applied side of linguistics that might have the most in common with what you do in this course. You are investigating texts—essentially any kind of communicative act from a song to a speech utterance to a handwritten letter—in order to see how language creates meaning, how form affects function, how language can affect and be affected by the world at large. In this way, you are looking at what language does in the world.

At the same time, you are drawing on some of the more theoretical aspects of linguistics. At the very start of this course you may ask yourself what language is. The way you define language can affect the way you study it. You may also look at the historical development of language in order to have a sense of how language changes over time, how it might change in the future and what this suggests about the meaning and power of language.

But how do linguists go about their study? For one, they analyse texts as you will. They read studies and discussions of language—secondary sources—as you can and likely will. While some linguists are involved in long, scientific studies or very close analyses of grammatical forms, you are more likely to look more generally at language. You may share some of the methods that have been developed in an approach called Critical Discourse Analysis. First coined in the 1990s the approach is meant to carefully investigate the language in texts in order to see how the texts operate in relation to given social practices. While these analysts tend to work with large bodies of texts and sort the words with programs designed to tag and sort words, their basic protocol may be a useful approach. The goals of Critical Discourse Analysis are:

- 1** to describe the relationships among texts and social practices
- 2** to interpret the configuration of discourse (how are texts produced and consumed)
- 3** to use the description and interpretation to explain social practices in the wider context.

In Critical Discourse Analysis, then, a description of texts becomes an interpretation of the effect of texts which then gives insight into the wider world or our social practices. In this way, Critical Discourse Analysis has links to work you will do for your internal assessment in which you trace the ways in which texts engage with global concerns. An analysis of different texts such as an advertisement and an editorial in terms of the kinds of words used to describe women, for example, may lead to an interpretation of their similarities, a discussion of the ways in which women are portrayed and questions about the social functions of these texts.

Approaching literature

If there is one thing that can be said about literary studies today it is that it is an inclusive field that represents many varied ways of approaching literary texts. While one of the first shifts in literary studies in the early 1900s was to move from appreciating the beauty of literature and understanding the history of literature to close, careful interpretations of individual texts, many theoretical movements since then have expanded the field. Today, you are likely to find professors and critics who are still interested in studying the history of literature (though they may be doing this with the aid of text analysis software) or are offering close readings of texts but you will also find, in every English department, scholars who closely consider reader responses to texts or investigate texts in relation to post-colonial culture or gender. Once again, your job in this course is not to understand a particular theoretical approach, but to borrow liberally from all fields in order to understand both the richness of literature and the common problems that are concerns throughout the discipline.

The areas of exploration in this course offer a nice analogy for the ways in which all literary scholars can look at texts. We might first be concerned with what literature is and how it functions. In looking closely at a text and determining its meaning and offering an interpretation, we are acting like “new critics” or doing a kind of “practical criticism”. But we soon may find in the classroom that everyone has a slightly different view of the text or that the reader plays a very large role in determining meaning. We may also find that we can argue over what we may consider to be the author’s intentions based on the text at hand. Or we can argue that it is wrong to consider “intention” at all. While at these times in the classroom it may seem that almost any interpretation is possible, or that some interpretations seem better than others, we may ultimately think along with the scholar Umberto Eco who says that “if there is something to be interpreted, the interpretation must speak of something which must be found somewhere, and in some way respected”.

Looking at the interactions of “readers, writers and texts”, we may also see that there is so much more that bears on the meaning of a given text, offers insight into a text, or suggests how a text might be significant or interesting to more than just an individual reader but is also important across “time and space”. As we begin to broaden our investigation we could go back to “historical” literary criticism that

looks at the development of literature or such things as the history of the novel. But we may also look at the ways in which power is portrayed or even perpetuated in texts. We could look at how gender or race are constructed by texts. Literature, we can see, is both part of culture and reflects culture and it is difficult to separate text and context ... even while remaining very attentive to language, style and structure.

Finally—or even throughout the course—we can make connections among texts and approaches. Intertextuality broadens our appreciation of how creativity works and how texts and cultural objects “speak” to each other over time. Newer approaches to literature, such as cognitive narrative theory, which looks at how the mind and text interact, or digital humanities, which combine the methods of computer analysis and production with the interpretation of literature, can offer new insights into individual works and literature as a whole. Ultimately, the course is about connections, whether investigating very close relationships between texts of a particular mode (like the novel), genre (like pastoral fiction) or text type (like an email) or looking at connections across wide types of texts and long periods of time.

Aesthetic experience and critical reflection

Activity

Let us take some time to appreciate an aesthetic response to a work. All texts and images can have an aesthetic value just as all texts and images that may seem purely aesthetic can have an intellectual, social or political purpose. While thinking about beauty and how people respond to work based on feelings or emotional responses, write down your impressions of the painting and photograph in the margin.

Now research the context for these works of art further. Where were they painted/taken and why? What did these works of art say about the lives of the people they depicted? Think about the relationship of the form to the content to also help in your critical evaluation. Does your initial response still inform your revised critical response? In what ways are these works both beautiful and somehow engaged with the idea of beauty?



◀ Image 1: *Nave Nave Moe* (*Spring or Sweet Dreams*) (also known as *The Reaper*) was painted by the French artist Paul Gauguin in 1894 when he returned to Paris after a two-year stay in Tahiti.



◀ Image 2: A photograph by Camila Fontenele de Miranda from a series called *Todos podem ser Frida* (“Everyone Can Be Frida”) in reference to the Mexican artist Frida Kahlo.

Media studies

Media studies is another area that will influence your study of texts. Media studies, by definition, concerns itself with the study of communication through a variety of media so is concerned with the ways in which language is communicated whether in the medium of print, through a telephone or on the screen. Media studies often deals with mass communication and the ways in which communication changes when transmitted through a device. Media studies is also concerned, then, with “the media” itself and both the meaning and effect of texts in popular culture ranging from music videos to fake news.

A big part of media studies has come out of developments in literary studies in the 1960s in the form of a new focus, semiotics. Semiotics can be defined as a science of signs, focusing in particular on how signs work as an emerging construction from a complex relationship between sender and receiver. While literature clearly focuses on signs in language, media studies expands its net to include multiple sign systems found in popular and mass culture. This might include obvious contributor fields such as film, music, television, video games and graffiti art but may also attend to less obvious fields such as traffic signage, fashion, furniture or toy design, job applications and interviews, and so on. Media studies may include considerations of the use of language but obviously adds consideration of additional grammars (sets of rules) focusing on, for example, design, colour, setting, movement, sound and taste (perhaps all of the physical senses). Regardless of which grammar system is emphasized, media studies looks to focus on signs and codes in multiple contexts to understand how meanings are generated, an attention that has obvious overlaps with several contemporary approaches to literature.

Digital humanities

Digital humanities is one of the fields influencing the study of literature today. The excerpt on the next page shows how digital tools can bring together many ways of analysing texts and presenting an interpretation of how they function. In the following study, the theorists worked on a type of historical literary study that also looked very closely at the language and structure of texts. Using tools and mapping software, the critics looked at hundreds of texts from the 1800s to determine how emotions portrayed in the text were linked to geographical locations in London. The image taken from the study represents some of the researchers’ findings and shows how the new and old of literary studies comes together.

6. The Emotions of London

Figure 5.1 offered a synthetic overview of London's emotional temperature between 1700 and 1900; Figure 6.1 breaks the data down into four distinct half-centuries.

In the first fifty years, the fear associated with Newgate, Tyburn, Bedlam, the Tower and the Pool of London is clearly the dominant emotion in our corpus. In the following half century though, as the West End makes its appearance in the narrative geography of London, fear seems to undergo a significant decline (Figure 6.2). "Seems to"; because, if there is no doubt that "the overall reduction of fear" – as Fisher puts it, has been "one of the central accomplishments of modern civilization" (116), the key factors he singles out as causing the transformation – "nighttime electrical lighting, insurance policies, police forces" – date to the middle (the police), or even the end of the nineteenth century (electricity and insurance); that is to say, a full hundred years later than what appears in Figure 6.2.

It's another discrepancy between quantitative and qualitative research; this time, though, we think we have found the reason. Here is the *incipit* of a forgotten Victorian novel, William North's *The Impostor* (1847):

Midnight was at hand, as in a small ill-furnished room, above a low shop, in one of the dirtiest, narrowest, and most ancient looking lanes in the oriental moiety of the English metropolis, were seated two individuals of the most opposite appearance conceivable. The one, an old man of at least three score, exhibited a set of pinched up, call-skin colored features in which dotage, stupidity, and cunning seemed to struggle for the ascendancy.

"One of the dirtiest, narrowest, and most ancient looking lanes"... We were measuring emotions in the proximity of London place-names – but as this sentence proves, there can be plenty of alarming scenes which include some form of localization, *but without involving any place name at all* (not even "London!") "A single lamp shed a sickly light on the linked and intersecting lanes (though lane is too lofty a word)" (Bulwer-Lytton, *Pelham*, 1828); "a maze of narrow lanes, choked up

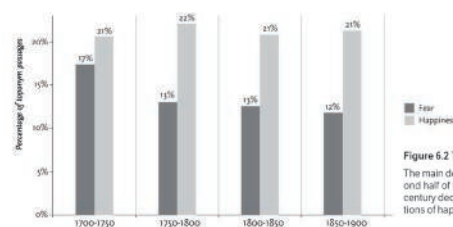
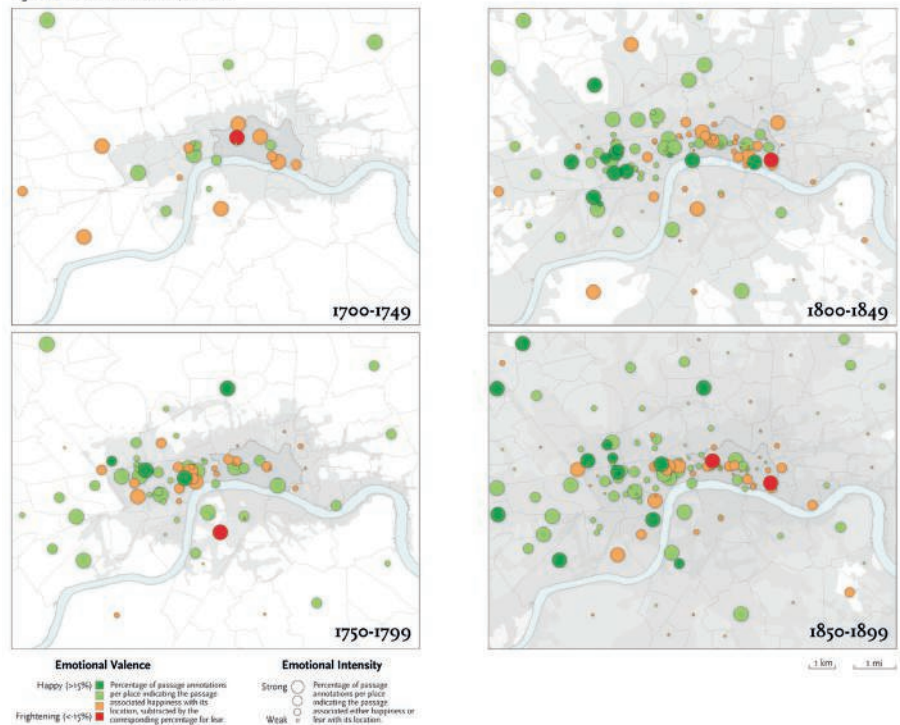


Figure 6.2 The decline of fear, 1700-1900

The main decline of fear, according to our data, occurred between the first and the second half of the eighteenth century, when it dropped from 17.4% to 13%; its nineteenth-century decline (to 12.6% and then 11.8%) seems hardly relevant in comparison. Indications of happiness, for their part, hardly change over the 200-year period.

Figure 6.1 The emotions of London, 1700-1900



From: Pamphlet 13: "The Emotions of London", by Ryan Heuser, Franco Moretti and Eric Steiner (October 2016), Literary Lab, litlab.stanford.edu

An approach to all texts: critical literacy and performative literacy

Critical literacy is an approach to all texts that asks readers to be critical, sceptical and active. Critical literacy makes some assumptions about texts that may be useful in this course. First, it assumes that all texts are worthy, as communicative acts, of being analysed and interpreted. In part, this is because the approach assumes that culture itself is a system of signs and symbols, that these signs have multiple possible meanings, and that all communicative acts within a culture cannot be approached innocently. Basically, we should approach every text with a sceptical eye: Who is communicating? Why? What are the implications of this communication? In what ways is this communicative act political? How should we think about this text? How should we react to this text in the world? A truly critical reader would not be one duped by "fake news".

In fact, a critical reader would be able to recognize fake news, explain its strategies and respond in a meaningful way.

A useful list

Following are a set of simple questions to ask yourself in response to any text/language act to encourage active rather than passive encounters. Hopefully, these simple steps will support a wide range of the possible variables.

- Whose views are being represented?
- What or whose interests are being served?
- What are the intentions behind the message?
- What reading or speaking position are you being invited to take up? Are we being asked to see the situation from a particular point of view?
- What cultural assumptions are being taken for granted?
- What or who is absent that one might expect to find?

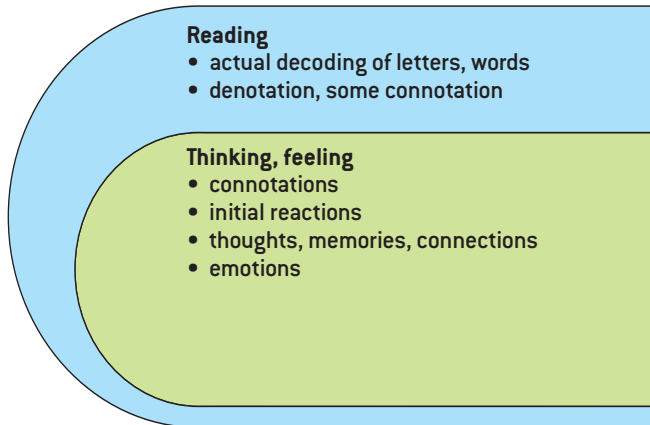
Critical literacy is part of what Sheridan Blau has called “performative literacy”. Blau shows that it is important to have textual literacy (the ability to read and interpret individual texts), intertextual literacy (the ability to understand and appreciate the connections among texts, and performative literacy (the ability to criticize, or even stand against, a text). Blau’s attributes of performative literacy provide a good way of approaching all of your reading work in this course.

- **Sustained attention:** The ability to spend time reading, re-reading and reading closely.
- **Suspension of closure:** The willingness to be open to difficulties, ambiguities and problems in a text. This includes the ability to come up with ideas, change them or abandon them. It involves embracing difficult moments in a text instead of avoiding them.
- **Taking risks:** This is important in terms of your reading and your analysis. Read widely and offer interesting, challenging opinions. Do not be afraid to say something that may feel “wrong” because every interpretive risk is a step towards being more literate.
- **Tolerance for failure:** Inexperienced readers often think that understanding and interpretation is easy. Good teachers will tell you, though, that they struggle with texts all the time, that they often do not understand at a first reading or even abandon interpretations of texts that they have held for a long time.
- **Intellectual generosity:** This is the ability to be open to opposing points of view about texts and also about being open to texts. Just as critical literacy might ask us to be suspicious of texts, sometimes, in order to understand, we have to be willing to go along, give the argument a chance.

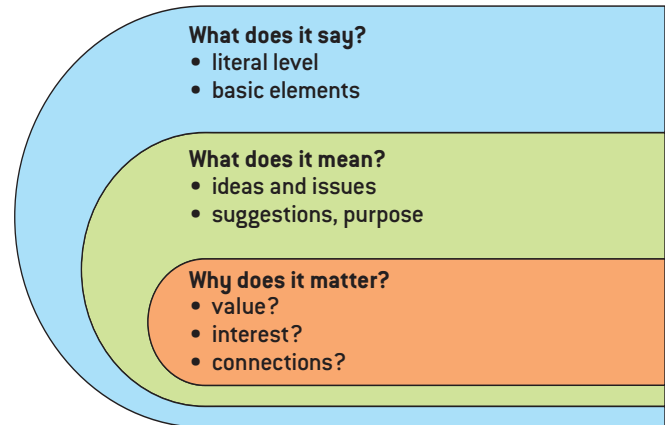
- **Metacognitive awareness:** This attribute might be something that is called to your attention in the Theory of Knowledge course. You become a better reader if you are able to monitor your difficulties, understand when you need help and know where to go to find it.

Thinking about reading and criticism

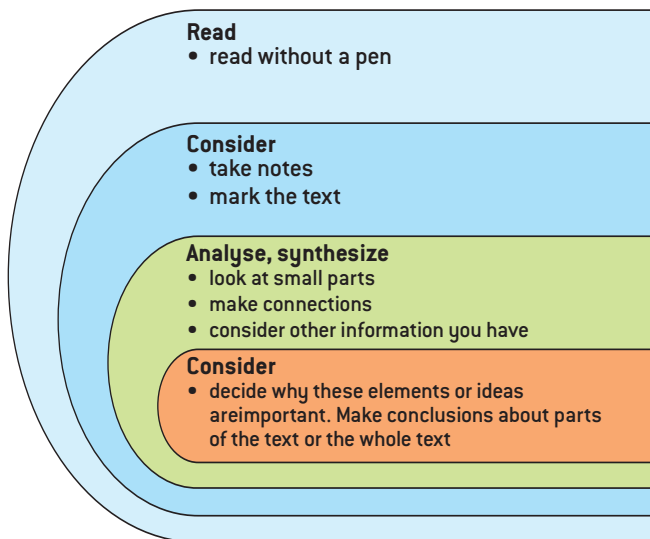
An initial approach to a text



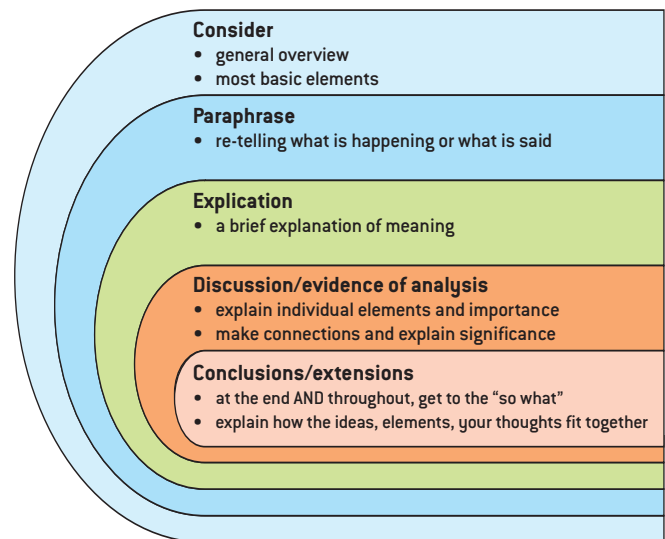
Moving to critical reading



Steps toward being critical



Showing critical reading in your writing/speaking



This set of diagrams suggests some very practical ways of moving from your first reading of a text to a more formal analysis (which might result, for example, in an essay, a commentary or a presentation).

The learner portfolio: a place to explore

An important element of the IB Language and Literature course is the learner portfolio. The learner portfolio is a collection of your work that you do throughout the course and is also a place where you can write, respond, collect, transform or even take notes. The learner portfolio is a mandatory part of the course and your teacher will need to keep a record of your work. Ideally, you will be given very specific assignments for your learner portfolio while also being given space to reflect on your own or to pursue your own interests. You can think of the portfolio as a type of journal, as a “growth” portfolio that shows how much you have learned, as a kind of notepad or as simply a place to explore and store.

Importantly, the learner portfolio is also a place where you can reflect on the texts you study in the course as you refine your skills and prepare for assessments. The learner portfolio is a place to reflect, free-write, take notes, draft and revise as you work through the constant back and forth of the writing process. It is also a good place to record responses to the activities in this book. You will find a constant connection among texts you study, the work you do in class, the texts and topics in this book and the larger concepts that underlie the course.

The requirement for the portfolio is that it is a diverse collection of formal and informal responses. But the only limit to the diversity is your own imagination—responses can be creative, transformative or critical, and can include anything: word, image, sound, video (depending, of course, on whether your learner portfolio is print or digital).

Ultimately, the learner portfolio, while not assessed or moderated, provides a place for you to document your “performative literacy”. The learner portfolio can be the first place you start to reflect before you even begin reading for the course and can be the tool that allows you to build metacognitive awareness of your own reading and writing.

The learner portfolio assignment 1

Before you begin the course (or before you read any further) reflect on the following in your learner portfolio: What do you think the course will be like? What are you excited to do or learn? What are your biggest worries about your two years of IB Language and Literature? What do you currently enjoy reading? What do you think you would most like to read in the next two years? What do you think your strengths are in relation to the study of language and literature? What do you think are your areas for growth?

Conclusion: opening up the discipline

Before you begin your study of the areas of exploration in this book and over the next two years, perhaps it is worth considering not only the variety of academic approaches we have mentioned above but all of the ways in which you naturally read and respond to texts. If we were to ask “Why do we read books?”, you will have many possible responses. Similarly, if

we ask “Why do we study these books, why not just read them?” you will have a variety of responses and you might even have a more difficult time answering the question. It is useful to remember that one of the aims of this course is to “foster a lifelong interest in and enjoyment of language and literature”. This may seem like a strange or gratuitous or even somewhat disingenuous goal. But it is not. And the enjoyment of language and literature should not be far removed, if at all, from the other skills of the course. In fact, maybe those other skills, like critical thinking, are best developed through enjoyment. Perhaps “enjoyment and engagement” is the best way to go on to show “knowledge and understanding” or build “interpretation” in relation to later assessment criteria.

The literary critic Rita Felski, who we will mention later in this book, has written about a push to “address the limits of scholarly skepticism” and this look at the limits of “pure” academic criticism might be an interesting way to look at varied and interesting inquiry in the classroom. This move, she says, “calls on us to engage seriously with ordinary motives for reading—such as the desire for knowledge or the longing for escape—that are either overlooked or undervalued in literary scholarship” (*Uses of Literature*). Comparing everyday reading to the work we might see in a literary journal, Felski makes the following observations:

“[Academic] reading constitutes a writing, a public performance subject to a host of gatekeeping practices and professional norms: a premium on novelty and deft displays of counter-intuitive interpretive ingenuity, the obligation to reference key scholars in the field, rapidly changing critical vocabularies, and the tacit prohibition of certain stylistic registers. This practice often has little in common with the commentary a teacher carries out in the classroom, or with what goes through her mind when she reads a book in an armchair, at home. Published academic criticism, in other words, is not an especially reliable or comprehensive guide to the ways in which academics read. We are less theoretically pure than we think ourselves to be; hard-edged poses of suspicion and skepticism jostle against more mundane yet more variegated responses”.

From *Uses of Literature* by Rita Felski (2008)

Commenting on the different ways in which we read, Felski says that she is trying to show the “shared affective and cognitive parameters” of reading for enjoyment and reading from a more academic perspective. Classwork and work in the learner portfolio that comes from your genuine response to the pleasures and difficulties of any text are valid not only in and of themselves but as companions to the kind of work you might be expected to do in more formal academic settings like the exam room. Felski goes on to extol the virtues of reactions to, and stances towards, reading that include **recognition, enchantment, knowledge and shock**—reading reactions that we might have at home, but might shy away from in the classroom. Let us not be afraid to read and respond, and to grow by doing so.

ATL

As you progress through this course, you will be growing in your experience with the subject and you will also be growing as a learner in general. The skills you need as a learner—thinking skills, communication skills, social skills, self-management skills and research skills—are, in turn, developed through your engagement with the concerns of language and literature. Obviously, these are the skills you need to do the work in this book and the work in this book will help you to further develop these skills. Just as a reminder, we will highlight each of these skills once so you see how you are always learning to learn.



1

READERS, WRITERS AND TEXTS





"In the beginning was the word ..."

John 1:1

"A word after a word after a word is power."

Margaret Atwood

A well-known literary critic, Terry Eagleton, once pondered the question: "What isn't political?" Here, he was asking a question about how language is used. Yes, sometimes language is overtly aesthetic—as in poetry or literature or song—and yes, sometimes language is overtly practical—as in timetables for trains. But when we consider language, texts and works in the context of this course, we really mean the use of language for very specific purposes (intent) or for very specific effect (impact). We presume, in fact, that language is intentional or impactful, and the nature of this course is to trace the ways this may be true and, if so, how it has been accomplished. In this part of the course, you will consider overtly the way that both creators and consumers actively participate in the construction of knowledge.

This area of exploration introduces you to the nature of language and literature and their study. Specifically, the investigation in this area involves close attention to the details of texts of a variety of types, literary forms and genres, so that you learn about the choices made by creators and the ways in which meaning is communicated through, for example, words, image and sound. In your course, you will also focus on your own role as a reader in generating meaning, and you will learn to negotiate your own understanding of a text with the ideas of others in the classroom. Our goal in this first section of the book is to present works and activities that will help you understand the creativity of language, the relationship between language and thought, and the aesthetic nature of literature. Texts are powerful means to express individual thoughts and feelings, and your own thoughts and feelings and your own experience with texts are an essential part of communication.

The works in this section should also allow you to become familiar with the literary, stylistic and rhetorical features of all texts. The nature of the book is to let you experience texts and to learn features on a "need to know" and a "want to know" basis. In other words, this section gives you the opportunity to read a variety of complex texts and ask questions about the details of their operation. The aim is not simply to find or list the features of texts but to recognize the complex elements that affect meaning and to see that texts—indeed, all communicative acts—are constructed. Our questions throughout the section will allow you to respond to texts in ways that linguistic and literary professionals might and to engage with the same concerns. In your responses and your learner portfolio you can be a producer yourself, completing all kinds of writing: creative, academic, personal, expository or whatever you think you want to put on the page to record and respond.

These are the guiding conceptual questions that underpin the study in "Readers, writers and texts".

- 1 Why and how do we study language and literature?
- 2 How are we affected by texts in various ways?
- 3 In what ways is meaning constructed, negotiated, expressed and discovered?
- 4 How does language use vary among text types and among literary forms?
- 5 How does the structure or style of a text affect meaning?
- 6 How do texts offer insights and challenges?

1.1

THOUGHTS AND FEELINGS



Activity

How do we approach any text?

In this course, in order to study language and literature, you will be looking at a wide variety of texts. Our definition of “texts” must remain fairly broad and might include advertisements, websites, poems, television shows or even stand-alone images, as in this untitled photograph by Carrie Mae Weems.

Perform the following activity as a warm-up for the rest of the work in this book. It is important that the way you approach this text—in an open, inquiring way—is the way you will always approach texts. Though we will guide you with questions, just as your teacher would in class, we are not providing a formula for breaking down the text or a checklist of elements to find. A checklist, a list of features or prescribed steps can create a screen between you and the text, and can get you thinking about the “requirements” rather than the text at hand. As you move through activities, texts and information in this book and in your course, you will naturally build the skills of a critical reader.

- 1 Spend some time looking at the image, focusing primarily on what you see, but also what the image makes you think and feel. Note these initial impressions.
- 2 Some of your initial notes may have included stylistic elements such as the use of light or details such as the expressions on the faces. Putting these aside for a moment, let’s focus again on what you think and feel.



- Do certain thoughts come straight into your mind?
 - Are you immediately thinking of what this image suggests or implies?
 - What is the “content” of the image and what does this make you think or feel?
 - Does this image cause you to feel emotions?
 - Are there emotions that are somehow part of this image?
- 3 Let's focus on thoughts and feelings a bit more closely. It could be argued that thoughts and feelings are at the heart of, or are the very purpose of every “communicative act”. In fact, a definition of communicative act would be any process that demands an engagement between two or more parties involving production, reception, interpretation and response. One person speaking to another can be a communicative act just as the image on the opposite page functions as a text that is a communicative act. But where do the thoughts and feelings reside?
- What are your feelings or thoughts when viewing the image? To what extent are these reactions based on the image itself or based on your own experiences? To what extent are the reactions based on external information or your own community?
 - What thoughts and feelings seem to be generated by elements of the image itself? Does colour (or lack of it) affect feeling? What about the light? What gestures are depicted?
 - What about the people in the picture? Do we have a sense of their thoughts and feelings? Do these, in turn, affect our own?
 - Can we imagine the thoughts and feelings of the photographer in this case? Can we imagine what thoughts and feelings this photographer was attempting to communicate? Is the photographer communicating the emotions of the subjects or ideas about those emotions or both?
 - Finally, what happens when your thoughts about the image might contradict the purpose of this image? Is this a work of art, part of an advertisement or a piece of journalism? Does this make the thoughts and feelings different?

Thoughts, feelings and communication

The notion or topic of thoughts and feelings can be a great way of beginning to think about the nature of texts and communication. If we consider “thoughts and feelings” from a variety of perspectives, we begin to see that this is at the heart of the experience of everything from a poem to an advertisement. What are the thoughts or feelings of an author? A narrator? Characters? A text in general? What is an advertisement trying to make us think? What do we really think? Can we separate our feelings from our thoughts? One avenue for considering thoughts, feelings (and

maybe even intentions or purpose) in a text, is to consider “natural” storytelling, or the way we create narrative in everyday speech and communication. After all, every response to the question “What did you do this weekend?” tends to elicit a story. If it does not produce a coherent narrative, our response might be, “I guess you had to be there”. While a short story, poem or work of art might be carefully constructed, almost all communicative acts might be looked at through the lens of basic communication theory. In this course, it is likely that you will draw from a number of fields in order to interpret or critically approach texts. It is interesting to consider all texts from a variety of critical contexts.

In order to study mass communication—in order to study every text in this course—the most important thing this course can do is, perhaps, make communication seem bizarre to you. This may seem like a ridiculous statement, but the idea is that communicative acts are such a key part of the fabric of our lives that the “texts” become difficult to consider from a critical perspective. From a very young age, you are trained to approach literary texts; even when you are 5 years old, teachers ask such questions as: “What do you think will happen next in the story? How do you think the main character feels? Were you surprised when this happened at the end?” We do not always think, though, about all of the texts we encounter every day. Think about conversations you have with a friend and the difficulty of getting things right. Communication between two people is strange enough but the desire to communicate with a group of people and the attendant effects of this communication should seem almost magical. We are so immersed in a culture of easy and constant communication, however, that we too often ignore its complexity. One of the goals of this course is to step back from something you do every day in order to think critically about its means and effects.

Vocabulary



Natural Narrative

Natural Narrative is the name for the unpremeditated, unrehearsed stories that people tell every day. Natural narratives can tell us a lot about human concerns but also offer insights into the methods and structure of communication.

A basic model of communication, while it may break the communication process into steps, also suggests the complexity of the various components. When two people communicate (also known as dyadic communication as opposed to mass communication) the process can be described as follows.

- An individual reacts to stimulus and formulates thought.
- Thought is translated into code or language and sent along a channel (or, in the most basic case, spoken).
- Receiver perceives message.
- Receiver translates code into thought.
- Receiver can reverse the process.

While this model (which describes a basic “turn taking” model of communication) is a logical step-by-step explanation, it does not explain the complex contextual considerations of basic two-way communication. For one, it is assumed that the two participants speak the same language. Beyond this, however, there are other factors: some parts of the utterances may not be important to understanding, others may be key and cannot be left out; the participants are also, in this model, assumed

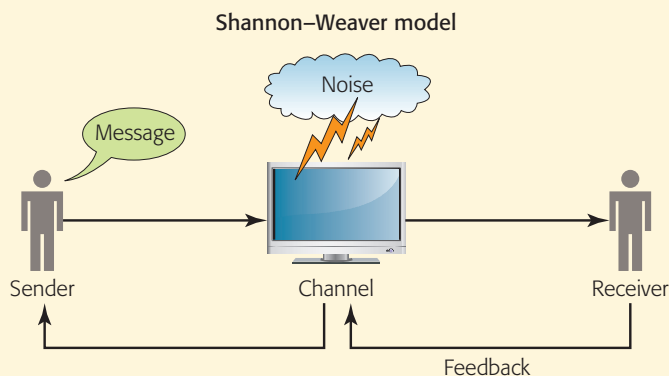
to be in close proximity and can understand paralinguistic features such as gestures and facial expressions. Difficulties in communication arise as soon as people are separated by distance or as soon as participants begin to rely on a medium for communication such as paper and pencil.

Noise

Noise is the enemy of communication. Noise is unfiltered information from which we must discern a message. As soon as a message leaves the sender, it is subject to noise: messages from other sources, background sounds and irrelevant chatter. Think about being at a party where four conversations are taking place around you at the same time. As a listener, you can filter the mass of undifferentiated information (the noise) by turning your head and focusing your attention on one conversation. However, this filtering system is imperfect and it would be easy to lose parts of the conversation or to misunderstand. Media designed for mass communication are made to reduce noise during the sending and receiving process (headphones are an example of a device that can help to filter noise and accentuate a message on the receiving end).

Communication models

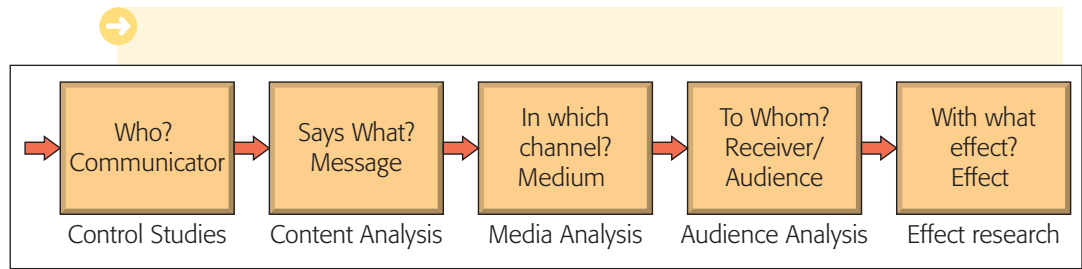
In the late 1940s information theorists Claude Elwood Shannon and Warren Weaver described what has come to be known as the Shannon–Weaver model of communication. This basic description of language transmission often serves as a starting point for studying the various stages of sending and receiving a message. The actual writings of Shannon and Weaver are quite complex and delve into detailed issues of encoding/decoding and the nature of noise, or those elements like poor satellite reception that affect the quality of the reception of information. The usefulness of the model is also complicated by current developments in technology that make the roles of participants and various technologies less clear. Here is a rough drawing of the model.



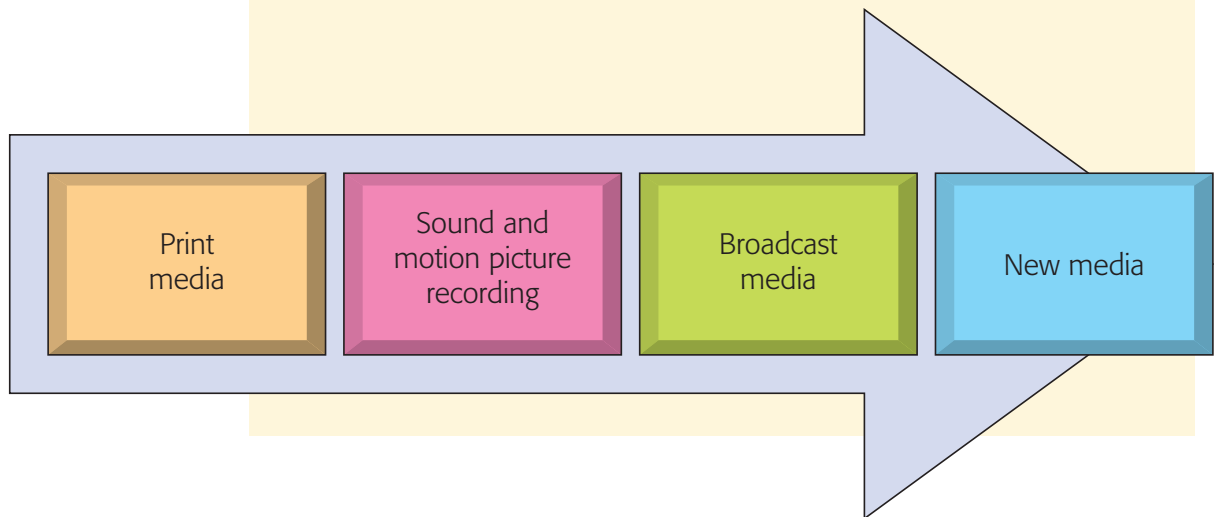
Also in the late 1940s, the political scientist Harold Lasswell developed a formula for the study of communicative acts. This model is similar to the Shannon–Weaver model and suggests possible areas for analytic attention.

Conceptual
understanding

COMMUNICATION



The mass media, which can be discussed as a conglomerate or plural mode of transmission, is the form of communication technology and its business interests that enables communication. While these technologies have changed over time, the technologies do not necessarily die; rather, they develop in relation to each other, and in relation to both technological developments and economic and social demands. The diagram below gives a basic list of the major categories of communication media in the order they were developed (the list does not consider the telephone and telegraph because these were initially meant to be only for one-to-one communication).



Message interrupted

Activity

Noise is interesting in that it serves as a nice metaphor for the complexity of communication. Thinking about all of the steps in the basic communication model, and considering the addition of noise, at which points along the continuum can a message deviate from its original intention as thought? Does an institutionalized mass communication apparatus (such as broadcast television) help to clarify or confuse messages?

- Reconsider the image at the start of this section: Is there “noise” in this image, or between you and the image? Are certain elements of the image itself or of your experience unnecessary?
- How do we know what is essential and what is noise in a newspaper? On a website? In a work of art?



A literary perspective

Activity

We could easily call literary works a special form of communication or at least a distinct use of language. Like any work of art, we may find it hard to talk about “purpose” or even “audience” in relation to literature. Even if the only, or most general, purpose of literature is to entertain, there is still communication. The short story “Faces” by Aimee Bender does more than serve here as an example of the communication of thoughts and feelings. In the passage below a young boy is taken to the doctor by his concerned mother because, strangely, he doesn’t seem to be able to name his friends ... or recognize their faces. Read this excerpt and consider what is interesting. Consider the questions that follow.

The doctor wrote something on her clipboard and returned to the drawer to take out another picture, this one of a family. I wasn’t sure why she had all these group pictures in her drawer, but maybe she saw people like me all the time.

“How about them?” she asked.

5 “Yes?”

“What can you tell me about them?”

“They’re all black,” I said. “I can see that.”

“Can you pick out the grandfather?”

I looked for a while. No one had white hair. “No.”

10 “Can you pick out the baby?”

I looked for a while again and finally I found a baby stroller, off in the corner.

“There,” I said. “A baby.”

“Can you find the young man?”

15 I stared at it, but I couldn’t find the young man any more than I could tell who was the grandfather. And just because someone was old didn’t mean he was a grandfather anyway.

“No,” I said. “And it’s not because I’m racist.”

She brought out a similar photo of a family of white people. All I got was the shape of the group made by their heights and the positions of arms and feet.

“This one is sitting,” I said, pointing.

20 The doctor looked at my mother now. They exchanged a meaningful look.

“What?” I said. “Do I have brain damage? What? Who cares who’s who? I enjoy the general. What’s so wrong with that? Why is this important? If I meet the person and talk to them, I’ll know who they are then.”

My mother was silent.

25 The doctor was silent.

“Why did you say that?” asked the doctor, after a minute.

“What do you mean?”

“Why did you just say all that?”

“Because I hate snap judgements,” I said.

30 The doctor folded her arms.

“But how do you know?” she asked.

“How do I know what?”





"How do you know we're making snap judgements?"

I unwrapped another candy. Green peppermint. "No reason," I said. "My mother gave you a
35 look."

Now the doctor leaned against the wall.

"So you could see her look?"

"What do you mean?" I asked. "Didn't she give you a look?"

"Yes," Mom said. "I gave her a look."

40 "But you could *see* your mother's look," said the doctor. "Why?"

"Why?"

"You can't see an old man. You can't see a soldier getting shot."

"I know my mother's face."

"Can you see it now?"

45 I looked over. Truth was, I couldn't really see her face. I could see big red lips because she was wearing lipstick because she likes to look nice for doctors.

"Make a face, Mrs. Robertson," the doctor said.

She did something. What, I couldn't tell.

"Can't tell," I said, sucking on the candy.

50 "But you could tell the earlier look," said the doctor.

"Just sometimes," I said. "Are we done?"

"Do you see me as a group?" asked the doctor then, in an all-too-friendly voice.

"I am not retarded," I said, pulling my shirt back over my head. "I can see that you are one person, and that you have a ridiculously long neck."

55 "William!" barked my mother.

"William, may I speak to your mother alone for a moment?" the doctor asked.

I stormed out. I emptied the entire lobby candy jar into my pockets and left the building.

There was a candle shop next door so I went in there and smelled wax for a while; the one that said it smelled like chocolate was wildly misleading. I have an excellent sense of smell. On the

60 street I tried to look at all the people walking by but they just looked like walking people to me.

I didn't see why I needed to read their faces. Wasn't there enough complication in the world already besides having to take in the overload of details and universes in every single person's [...] face?

From "Faces" by Aimee Bender in
The Paris Review, Issue 191 (Winter 2009)

- 1 What seems to be the general situation in this passage? Is this a "normal" visit to the doctor?
- 2 What are the various thoughts and feelings of the characters? How do you know?
- 3 Consider the narrator's response to the "look" exchanged between mother and doctor. If he can't read faces, how would he know there was a look? How would he know what look was exchanged?



- 4 It is worth considering at this point how we receive any thoughts and feelings from a work of fiction. If an emotion or thought isn't directly stated in a text, how do we know it is there? How do we know what the doctor is thinking or the mother? Do you think an author can give us too much information?
- 5 "Thoughts and feelings" wouldn't be a bad way of thinking about how to do a commentary: consider first your own thoughts and feelings about a passage. Next, what is the general situation? What is going on? Then, how do you think the passage generated the thoughts and feelings you had? If you thought something, it probably came from some association you had when reading the text. If you laughed, for example, what made you laugh? Why is this interesting or important?

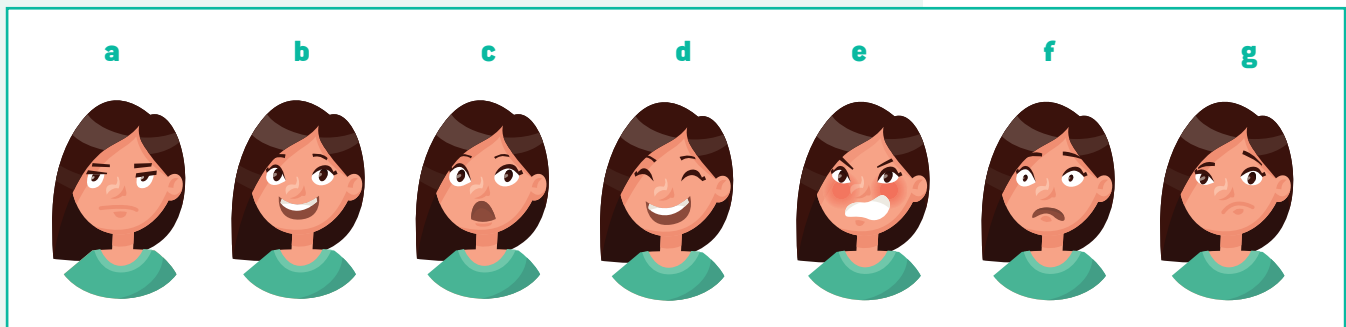
Gesture and expression

Activity

Language is expressed through writing and through the spoken word. Other types of communication, such as facial expression or gestures may be called language (body language) but they are not rule-governed in a complex system in the same way that language is. At the same time, facial expressions and gestures do communicate and often communicate across cultures.

- 1 Some researchers have suggested that there are seven basic emotions that can be communicated through facial expressions and that these are universal (some researchers suggest that there are up to eleven). Look at the facial expressions below and see if you can accurately match the emotion to the expression.

1. anger 2. disgust 3. happiness 4. fear
5. sadness 6. surprise 7. contempt



Thinking about the nature of expressions and gestures can help us to consider the complexity of human communication. While speech and writing are conscious acts, expressions and gestures can often be subconscious. Expressions can work in conjunction with or against verbal communication.





While many, if not most, of the texts you encounter in this course will be written, it is good to think about expressions in relation to images, film and drama. An actor can artfully create expressions to be used in either art or advertising. Expressions can work to communicate emotions in a way that seems to be beyond words.

- 2 *Vanity Fair* magazine and photographer Howard Schatz ran an interesting series of photographs called “In Character: Starring ...”. The series asked actors questions or gave them roles and asked them to “reveal the essence of their characters”. The following is an example with the actor Brooke Shields. How successful do you think she was in communicating a complex written cue? See if you can successfully play this expression game on your own or by photographing friends.



▲ **Left:** You're a celebrity guest at a White House state dinner, forced out of desperation to finally confront the creepy “nobody” crasher who has been trying to catch your attention all evening. **Centre:** You're a Kansas homemaker on vacation in Vegas, enjoying the stage show of the hypnotist, who has successfully programmed his volunteer (your husband) to quack like a duck. **Right:** You're in the fourth row of a high-school auditorium, watching as your 15-year-old daughter begins singing Annie Oakley's “Doin' What Comes Natur'lly” – and freezes halfway through.

- 3 How easy is it to lie with expression or gesture? How easy is it to lie with the spoken or written word? Look through magazines or other images: How can you tell when a smile is fake or genuine?

TOK

To what extent is your response to a text based on language—whether the language of image or the language of words on a page—as opposed to sense perception? Does an emotional reaction to a text come before a reaction to what a text means? Are these elements inseparable?



Guiding conceptual question

In what ways is meaning constructed, expressed and discovered? To what extent has meaning been expressed in the images and excerpts you have encountered so far? Is the meaning the result of a purposeful act of communication? How much are you working to find the meaning or how much of yourself is involved in your experience of the work? Is the meaning or feeling somehow “there” waiting to be discovered?

Conceptual
understanding



IDENTITY

Thoughts, feelings, advertising

Activity

When considering our thoughts and feelings in response to a text, we should also begin to consider the purpose of the text we are looking at. In this course, since you are studying a wide variety of text types, you are likely to consider non-literary works that serve a particular purpose such as to persuade or inform. All texts, all pieces of communication, have multiple purposes and even subconscious intentions. Advertising always has the purpose to sell a product. Sometimes, however, in the course of selling a product, an advertisement might also be communicating an idea. Many companies have taken up social causes at the same time that they are marketing a product (see popular campaigns from Nike, Heineken, Airbnb, Dove and others). What is the point in making social commentary in advertisement? When taking on a social cause—and influencing the public’s opinions—are companies trying to make what they see as positive social change or are they still simply selling a product? Can an advertisement play both roles?

First consider this “tweet” from an Indian railway company about the decriminalization of homosexuality in India. How does it serve as personal communication to the customer? Is it advertising? Attempt at social change? Then consider the advice to companies in the blog post on the next page. Does such advice diminish the value or importance of communicating openly with customers? Does your reading of the blog post influence your reading of the tweet?



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99%

How to write a great customer X


 https://www.oxscout.org/blog/how-to-write-a-great-customer-thank-you-note/

How to Write a Great Customer Thank-You Note

Imagine getting home to discover a handwritten card or letter in the mail, among all the daily invoices, bank policy updates and other unsolicited advertising. What if this card or letter simply said “thank you”? How would you feel? It’s amazing how much a kind word can brighten someone’s day.



Studies reveal that gratitude helps to improve people’s general health and wellbeing, makes them feel more optimistic about the tasks at hand and their life in general, lowers their level of stress and alleviates symptoms of depression. It can also prompt people to give back.

Now, what if we told you that simple gestures encourage customer loyalty? As a business owner, you know that without customers you wouldn’t have a business to run. But have you thought of telling them how much you appreciate their support? It doesn’t have to be about sales—customer’s feedback and public support for your brand also benefit the business, so why not show your appreciation?

Get your pen and paper ready and we’ll tell you how to write a thank-you note that is certain to delight your customers.

Dos and don’ts

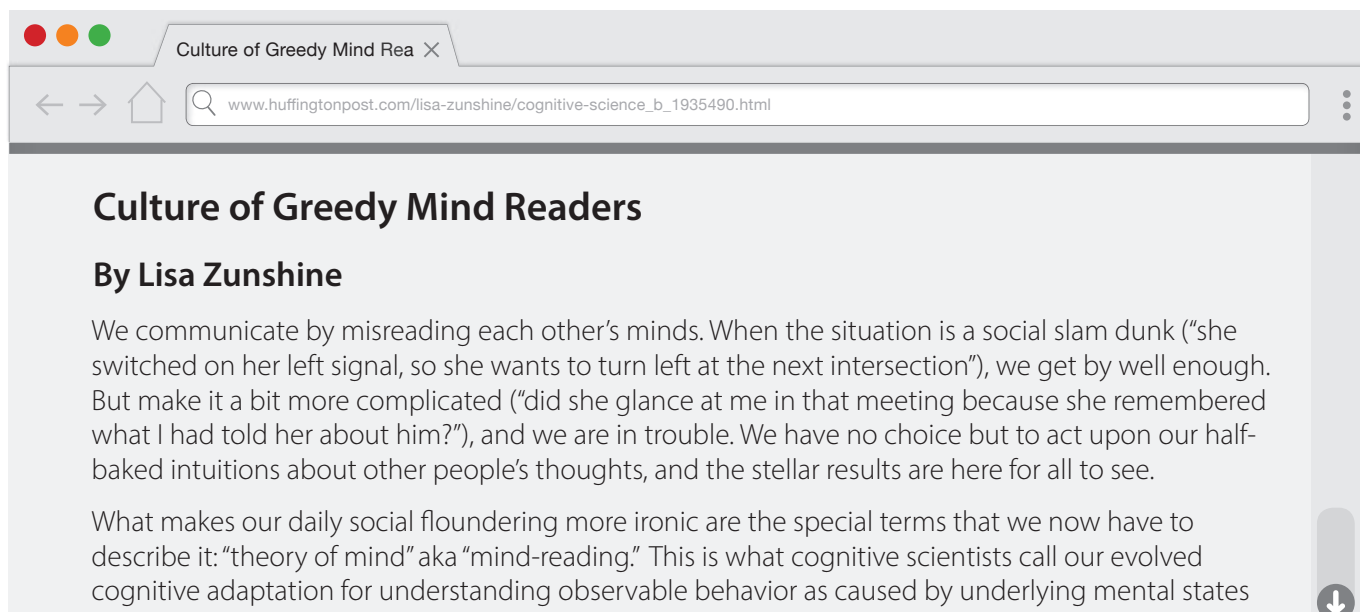
Here are a few tips on how to write a flawless thank-you note:

1. **Be sincere** – how does it make you feel to know that your products are bought and appreciated by people in Canada, Brazil or Latvia? Are you proud that Madam X thought it would make a good present for her nephew’s birthday? Say so!
2. **Don’t neglect penmanship** – your handwriting is unique but it’s not an excuse to write illegibly. The only way to improve your handwriting is through practice. Write a draft beforehand and draw lines in pencil if it helps. Don’t write in capitals—you’re saying thank you, not shouting at your customer.
3. **Personalize your note** – feel free to use a pink glitter gel pen (red ink should be avoided, though) and to add smileys, doodles and stickers if that reflects your company’s personality. If possible, also use custom-designed cards/paper. If you don’t feel creative, you’ll find various templates [here](#) and [here](#).
4. **Add a reward** – if someone is a regular customer, why not send them a small token of your appreciation like a badge or a sticker.
5. **Don’t sell** – don’t include anything self-promotional or encourage your customers to make another purchase. The point here is to show that you are genuinely thankful for their support, not to persuade them to buy something (else).

6. **Be specific** – if you already know your customer, greet them by name and include details about your experience with them, e.g. “You’ve been an OxScout customer for THREE YEARS! Thank you for your continuous support!” or “See you at the DIY festival in Toronto next April!”
7. **Get the tone right** – use a tone you’re comfortable with. There’s no need to be overly formal but if you don’t feel like addressing your customer like a long-time buddy, that’s ok too.

Cognitive science, thoughts and literature

Perhaps because texts are so concerned with communicating thoughts and because literature is not only indicating the thoughts and feelings of characters but perhaps also of authors, there has often been an overlap between the study of the mind or thinking and literary study. Sigmund Freud’s work in psychology, to use one example, changed the way authors approached displaying thinking on the page as they moved from straightforward, almost surface-level thinking to the display of the tangled subconscious. Freud’s theories also pushed many literary critics to think about the ways in which subconscious ideas may be displayed in the words on the page. Recent work with MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) and the brain has also led scientists to explore the way the reading mind responds to written descriptions of physical action, noting that when we read about catching a ball, for example, parts of our brain react in the same way as if we were actually catching the ball. Still more recently, cognitive science has influenced the way we “read minds” in texts. In the article below, Lisa Zunshine, a noted literary critic, discusses how mind reading is related to our cultural lives.



The screenshot shows a web browser window with a single tab titled "Culture of Greedy Mind Rea". The address bar contains the URL "www.huffingtonpost.com/lisa-zunshine/cognitive-science_b_1935490.html". The article title is "Culture of Greedy Mind Readers" and the author is "By Lisa Zunshine". The text of the article begins with: "We communicate by misreading each other’s minds. When the situation is a social slam dunk (“she switched on her left signal, so she wants to turn left at the next intersection”), we get by well enough. But make it a bit more complicated (“did she glance at me in that meeting because she remembered what I had told her about him?”), and we are in trouble. We have no choice but to act upon our half-baked intuitions about other people’s thoughts, and the stellar results are here for all to see. What makes our daily social floundering more ironic are the special terms that we now have to describe it: “theory of mind” aka “mind-reading.” This is what cognitive scientists call our evolved cognitive adaptation for understanding observable behavior as caused by underlying mental states".



(i.e., thoughts, feelings, intentions). So when I notice that your left turn light is blinking I use my “theory of mind” and interpret the situation as caused by your mental states: either you intend to turn left, or you forgot to turn off the light. And when you glance at me in that staff meeting, my theory of mind gets all fired up, and I start thinking about what you must be thinking about what I might be thinking.

Except that these terms are misleading. First, we don’t have a “theory” in our heads: most of the time we are not even aware that we are attributing thoughts and feelings to people. Second, our mind-reading is not linear or expressed in words, or whatever else we associate with “reading.” Sure, when I tell you about it afterwards—if I have had a chance to ponder it—I construct elaborate clauses about what I thought about what you thought about what I thought. But when it’s actually happening, it’s fast, messy, and mostly nonverbal.

They really should have called this cognitive adaptation “hazy but obsessive intuition of mind” instead of “theory of mind.” Or “unselfconscious mind-groping.” Or just “mind-misreading.”

But perhaps I’m too hasty. We do spend several hours every day immersed in social environments in which we read minds fluently. We do it when we watch movies or read novels. On some level our theory of mind doesn’t care if it’s attributing mental states to real people or to fictional characters. It applies itself with a healthy appetite to both.

However badly named, theory of mind does explain something important about our culture. Think about this. On the one hand, we have this greedy adaptation. It simply can’t get enough of what it evolved to process over hundreds of thousands of years: people’s thoughts, feelings, and intentions. On the other hand, poor theory of mind has to settle for being mostly wrong about those mental states. This means that social misses, big and small, are the norm rather than the exception in our daily life. But then we also have a consumer society designed to satisfy every identifiable appetite. Our cultural representations cater to our theory of mind, offering it delicious selections of complex yet nicely readable mental states.

Not *consciously* cater, of course. Quentin Tarantino doesn’t sit in the director’s chair asking himself, “what tasty morsels can I offer to my viewers’ theory of mind this time, so that they can feel great about themselves as social players as they watch my movie?” And we don’t say to ourselves as we click on Netflix: “I want to see people embroiled in complex social situations, in which they lie to others and to themselves, while I know what they are all thinking, or will know by the end of the movie.”

Once you start thinking about movies and novels as both satisfying and further whetting our appetite for mind-reading, nothing is the same. Recurrent narrative patterns, popular themes, and generic conventions appear in a new light as you ask what they do to our theory of mind, how they play with it, exploit it, give it what it craves, and make it crave for more.

Take, for instance, our belief that involuntary body language can betray someone’s innermost feelings. In real life, people’s involuntary body language gives us direct access to their mental states only when the context is socially very simple. I jerk my hand away from the hot stove, and you can be sure that what goes through my mind in that split second is some version of “Ouch!” But if the situation involves several people interacting with each other, and you observe what seems to be a tell-tale blush, a furtive glance, or a startled turn, you’d be naïve to think that you know what the observed person is thinking, no matter how well you know her.

In novels and movies, it’s the opposite. Writers and film directors construct extremely complex social contexts and then make their characters look up, half-turn, blink, or gasp—and we know exactly what they feel just then (or will know by the end of the story). Often we are the only appreciative witnesses of such involuntary displays of emotions (other characters around them are as clueless as we are, in real life).

Reality television producers routinely put people in situations in which they are embarrassed yet want to conceal their embarrassment, and *we know that they are trying to conceal their embarrassment*. We

thus have direct access to their feelings in a complex social context—a treat for greedy mind-readers who have to contend with daily misinterpretation of mental states and resulting social failures.

Different genres and media—musicals, operas, paintings, documentaries, and photographs—have different strategies for making us feel that we have just glimpsed a person’s “true” emotions. Old, obvious strategies become subject to subversion and parody, and new ones emerge. (Cinéma vérité spawned mockumentaries: we went from *Gimme Shelter* to *This Is Spinal Tap*.) What remains unchanged is a culture on the lookout for ways to deliver greedy mind-readers an illusion of perfect access to complex mental states.

www.huffingtonpost.com

Characters’ thoughts in literature

It is interesting that cognitive science is influencing the way that we think about minds in a work of fiction. The portrayal of the thoughts and feelings of a character is an obvious concern in literary works. In English literature, the Renaissance could be considered a time in which the portrayal of the inner conflicts of characters became of paramount concern to artists. While characters in folktales had personalities, perhaps, and while characters in medieval passion plays were the embodiments of certain human tendencies, Renaissance works certainly foregrounded the conflicting passions of characters in a way that had not been done before. The next three passages are from three different periods in English literature. Read through the passages and consider the ways in which authors reveal or portray the inner workings of characters’ minds.

Passage 1:

In this passage, Hamlet has information that his father was killed by his uncle. His mother and uncle are now together and Hamlet wonders what he should do while lamenting his mother’s lack of remorse.

O that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew,
Or that the Everlasting had not fixed
His canon ’gainst self-slaughter. O God! O God!

5 How weary, stale, flat and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of this world!
Fie on’t! O fie, fie! ’Tis an unweeded garden
That grows to seed; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this!

10 But two months dead—nay not so much, not two—
So excellent a king, that was to this
Hyperion to a satyr, so loving to my mother
That he might not beteem the winds of heaven
Visit her face too roughly. Heaven and earth,

15 Must I remember? Why, she would hang on him

Conceptual
understanding



REPRESENTATION

Vocabulary



Soliloquy

A method for portraying thought in drama in which a character speaks his or her thoughts aloud. A character delivering a soliloquy could be alone on the stage or in the presence of other characters but the convention is that this is a representation of thought, that there is no addressee for the speech and essentially the character is speaking to his or her self. This is different from a monologue, which may be addressed to one or more characters or a specific audience. Both are ways of portraying thoughts and feelings but in a soliloquy we assume that we are hearing the “truth” while in a monologue we might consider more carefully the audience and purpose of the speech.



As if increase of appetite had grown
 By what it fed on, and yet within a month—
 Let me not think on't; frailty, thy name is woman—
 A little month, or ere those shoes were old
 20 With which she followed my poor father's body,
 Like Niobe, all tears, why she, even she—
 O God, a beast that wants discourse of reason
 Would have mourned longer—married with my uncle,
 My father's brother, but no more like my father
 25 Than I to Hercules; within a month,
 Ere yet the salt of most unrighteous tears
 Had left the flushing in her gallèd eyes,
 She married. O most wicked speed, to post
 With such dexterity to incestuous sheets!
 30 It is not, nor it cannot come to good.
 But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.

From *Hamlet*, Act I, scene ii, lines 133–164, by William Shakespeare (1609)

- 1 John Keats once said that Shakespeare was of such high achievement because he had, “Negative Capability, that is, when a man is capable of being in uncertainties, mysteries, doubts, without any irritable reaching after fact and reason.” While Hamlet simply expresses his thoughts and feelings on the stage directly to the audience, how does Shakespeare manage to still embrace “uncertainties, mysteries, doubts”?
- 2 If you have studied Shakespeare before, you probably know that this soliloquy is written in the rhythm iambic pentameter. You most likely also recognize various features such as the use of imagery or the allusions to figures such as Niobe and Hercules. How do these poetic features affect the thought and feeling in the piece? How does the imagery of the world being a rotting garden affect the feeling here?
- 3 Could the same feelings be expressed in straightforward prose or informal contemporary language?
 How would you compare these spoken thoughts to your own everyday thoughts and feelings?
- 4 Would you say that an artistic representation of strong feelings makes these feelings more grand or elevated or makes them somehow distant or remote from our own feelings?

Passage 2:

In the following passage, note how the characters interact in this social situation and the different way in which thoughts and feelings are expressed.

When the ladies removed after dinner, Elizabeth ran up to her sister, and, seeing her well guarded from cold, attended her into the drawing-room, where she was welcomed by her two friends with many professions of pleasure; and Elizabeth had never seen them so agreeable as they were
5 during the hour which passed before the gentlemen appeared. Their powers of conversation were considerable. They could describe an entertainment with accuracy, relate an anecdote with humour, and laugh at their acquaintance with spirit.

But when the gentlemen entered, Jane was no longer the first object;
10 Miss Bingley's eyes were instantly turned toward Darcy, and she had something to say to him before he had advanced many steps. He addressed himself to Miss Bennet, with a polite congratulation; Mr. Hurst also made her a slight bow, and said he was "very glad"; but diffuseness and warmth remained for Bingley's salutation. He was full
15 of joy and attention. The first half-hour was spent in piling up the fire, lest she should suffer from the change of room; and she removed at his desire to the other side of the fireplace, that she might be further from the door. He then sat down by her, and talked scarcely to anyone else. Elizabeth, at work in the opposite corner, saw it all with great delight.

20 When tea was over, Mr. Hurst reminded his sister-in-law of the card-table—but in vain. She had obtained private intelligence that Mr. Darcy did not wish for cards; and Mr. Hurst soon found even his open petition rejected. She assured him that no one intended to play, and the silence of the whole party on the subject seemed to justify her. Mr. Hurst had
25 therefore nothing to do, but to stretch himself on one of the sofas and go to sleep. Darcy took up a book; Miss Bingley did the same; and Mrs. Hurst, principally occupied in playing with her bracelets and rings, joined now and then in her brother's conversation with Miss Bennet.

Miss Bingley's attention was quite as much engaged in watching
30 Mr. Darcy's progress through his book, as in reading her own; and she was perpetually either making some inquiry, or looking at his page. She could not win him, however, to any conversation; he merely answered her question, and read on. At length, quite exhausted by the attempt to be amused with her own book, which she had only chosen because it
35 was the second volume of his, she gave a great yawn and said, "How pleasant it is to spend an evening in this way! I declare after all there is no enjoyment like reading! How much sooner one tires of anything than of a book! When I have a house of my own, I shall be miserable if I have not an excellent library."

40 No one made any reply. She then yawned again, threw aside her book, and cast her eyes round the room in quest for some amusement; when hearing her brother mentioning a ball to Miss Bennet, she turned





suddenly towards him and said, "By the bye, Charles, are you really serious in meditating a dance at Netherfield? I would advise you, before
45 you determine on it, to consult the wishes of the present party; I am much mistaken if there are not some among us to whom a ball would be rather a punishment than a pleasure."

"If you mean Darcy," cried her brother, "he may go to bed, if he chooses, before it begins—but as for the ball, it is quite a settled thing;
50 and as soon as Nicholls has made white soup enough, I shall send round my cards."

"I should like balls infinitely better," she replied, "if they were carried on in a different manner; but there is something insufferably tedious in the usual process of such a meeting. It would surely be much more
55 rational if conversation instead of dancing were made the order of the day."

"Much more rational, my dear Caroline, I dare say, but it would not be near so much like a ball."

Miss Bingley made no answer, and soon afterwards she got up and
60 walked about the room. Her figure was elegant, and she walked well; but Darcy, at whom it was all aimed, was still inflexibly studious. In the desperation of her feelings, she resolved on one effort more, and, turning to Elizabeth, said:

"Miss Eliza Bennet, let me persuade you to follow my example, and take
65 a turn about the room. I assure you it is very refreshing after sitting so long in one attitude."

Elizabeth was surprised, but agreed to it immediately. Miss Bingley succeeded no less in the real object of her civility; Mr. Darcy looked up. He was as much awake to the novelty of attention in that quarter as
70 Elizabeth herself could be, and unconsciously closed his book. He was directly invited to join their party, but he declined it, observing that he could imagine but two motives for their choosing to walk up and down the room together, with either of which motives his joining them would interfere. "What could he mean? She was dying to know what could be his
75 meaning"—and asked Elizabeth whether she could at all understand him?

"Not at all," was her answer; "but depend upon it, he means to be severe on us, and our surest way of disappointing him will be to ask nothing about it."

Miss Bingley, however, was incapable of disappointing Mr. Darcy in
80 anything, and persevered therefore in requiring an explanation of his two motives.

"I have not the smallest objection to explaining them," said he, as soon as she allowed him to speak. "You either choose this method of passing the evening because you are in each other's confidence, and

85 have secret affairs to discuss, or because you are conscious that your figures appear to the greatest advantage in walking; if the first, I would be completely in your way, and if the second, I can admire you much better as I sit by the fire."

"Oh! shocking!" cried Miss Bingley. "I never heard anything so abominable. How shall we punish him for such a speech?"

"Nothing so easy, if you have but the inclination," said Elizabeth. "We can all plague and punish one another. Tease him—laugh at him. Intimate as you are, you must know how it is to be done."

95 "But upon my honour, I do not. I do assure you that my intimacy has not yet taught me that. Tease calmness of manner and presence of mind! No, no; I feel he may defy us there. And as to laughter, we will not expose ourselves, if you please, by attempting to laugh without a subject. Mr. Darcy may hug himself."

"Mr. Darcy is not to be laughed at!" cried Elizabeth. "That is an uncommon advantage, and uncommon I hope it will continue, for it would be a great loss to me to have many such acquaintances. I dearly love a laugh."

65 "Miss Bingley," said he, "has given me more credit than can be. The wisest and the best of men—nay, the wisest and best of their actions—may be rendered ridiculous by a person whose first object in life is a joke."

70 "Certainly," replied Elizabeth—"there are such people, but I hope I am not one of them. I hope I never ridicule what is wise and good. Follies and nonsense, whims and inconsistencies, do divert me, I own, and I laugh at them whenever I can. But these, I suppose, are precisely what you are without."

"Perhaps that is not possible for anyone. But it has been the study of my life to avoid those weaknesses which often expose a strong understanding to ridicule."

75 "Such as vanity and pride."

"Yes, vanity is a weakness indeed. But pride—where there is a real superiority of mind, pride will be always under good regulation."

Elizabeth turned away to hide a smile.

From *Pride and Prejudice*, by Jane Austen (1813)

Vocabulary

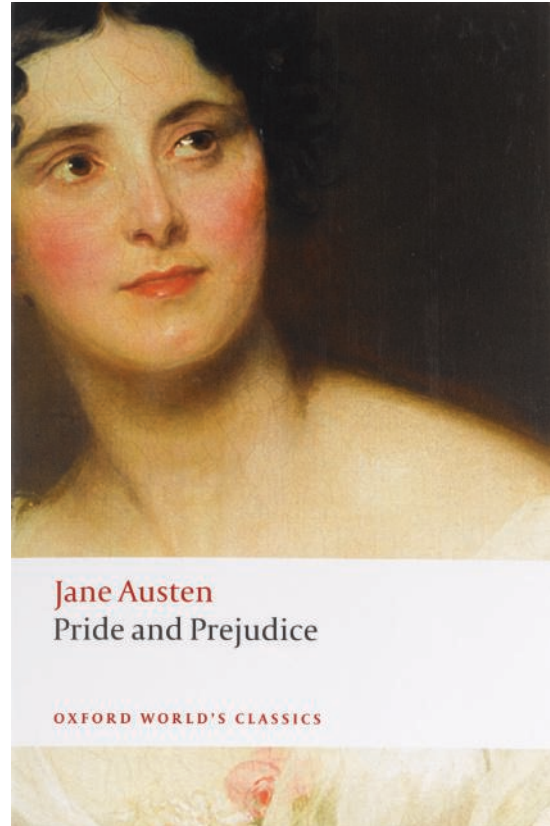


Free indirect discourse

This is a term used to describe another means of expressing the thoughts of characters in a work. Free indirect discourse is not reported speech or speech in quotation marks, but is a kind of narration that moves into the thoughts of a character and expresses views in what might be close to the voice of that character. In the third paragraph of Austen, for example, the narration is very close to the thoughts and feelings of Mr Hurst and we may consider certain words, in fact, to be the words and thoughts that Hurst himself would use.

We have very little direct expression of thoughts and feelings here, either from the characters themselves or from the narrator; there are only a couple of moments, for example when we learn that Elizabeth is “surprised”. But how else are emotions and thoughts communicated?

- 1 First, without re-reading the text, write down what you think the characters are thinking and feeling. You might want to add what the narrator thinks of these characters.
- 2 Now, go back to the text. How were these thoughts communicated if they were not directly stated? Make a list of words that describe actions that may indicate an attitude. List adjectives that describe characters.
- 3 Make another list. How do characters respond to one another? Look for speech tags (like “replied” or “said”) or word choice in responses. What do these indicate about thoughts and feelings?
- 4 Does the situation itself—a group of people quietly vying for attention or getting to know one another—help or hinder the communication of feelings?



Guiding conceptual question

How does language use vary among forms or text types? This is a big question with many possible answers and wide implications. Already in this first chapter, you might be able to consider the differences in register (level of formality—ranging, for example, from intimate to “frozen”) of a text. Does the use of language differ between text types? If so, does it affect the thoughts and feelings? Or perhaps, does varying language affect feelings, but not thoughts?

Passage 3: How are thoughts and feelings communicated differently in this passage?

She went down the length of the room and knelt by the fireside with one hand on the mantel-shelf so that she could get up noiselessly and be lighting the gas if anyone came in.

The organ was playing "The Wearin' o' the Green."

5 It had begun that tune during the last term at school, in the summer. It made her think of rounders in the hot school garden, singing-classes in the large green room, all the class shouting "Gather roses while ye may," hot afternoons in the shady north room, the sound of turning pages, the hum of the garden beyond the sun-blinds, meetings in the sixth form study. ... Lilla, 10 with her black hair and the specks of bright amber in the brown of her eyes, talking about free-will.

She stirred the fire. The windows were quite dark. The flames shot up and shadows darted.

15 That summer, which still seemed near to her, was going to fade and desert her, leaving nothing behind. To-morrow it would belong to a world which would go on without her, taking no heed. There would still be blissful days. But she would not be in them.

20 There would be no more silent sunny mornings with all the day ahead and nothing to do and no end anywhere to anything; no more sitting at the open window in the dining-room, reading Lecky and Darwin and bound *Contemporary Reviews* with roses waiting in the garden to be worn in the afternoon, and Eve and Harriett somewhere about, washing blouses or copying waltzes from the library packet... no more Harriett looking in at the end of the morning, rushing her off to the new grand piano to play the 25 "Mikado" and the "Holy Family" duets. The tennis-club would go on, but she would not be there. It would begin in May. Again there would be a white twinkling figure coming quickly along the pathway between the rows of holly-hocks every Saturday afternoon.

30 Why had he come to tea every Sunday—never missing a single Sunday—all the winter? Why did he say, "Play 'Abide with me,'" "Play 'Abide with me'" yesterday, if he didn't care? What was the good of being so quiet and saying nothing? Why didn't he say "Don't go" or "When are you coming back?" Eve said he looked perfectly miserable.

35 There was nothing to look forward to now but governessing and old age. Perhaps Miss Gilkes was right... Get rid of men and muddles and have things just ordinary and be happy." Make up your mind to be happy. You can be *perfectly* happy without anyone to think about..." Wearing that large cameo brooch—long, white, flat-fingered hands and that quiet little laugh... 40 The piano-organ had reached its last tune. In the midst of the final flourish of notes the door flew open. Miriam got quickly to her feet and felt for matches.

From *Pointed Roofs*, by Dorothy Richardson (1915)

Vocabulary



Stream of consciousness

This mode of presenting thought was popularized during the Modern period starting from the late 1800s. The narration tends to show the jumbled, connected flow of a character's thoughts without the traditional filter of an identifiable narrator, as if the character's subconscious mind were placed upon the page. Virginia Woolf, James Joyce, Joseph Conrad and William Faulkner are among writers in English who first used this technique. Other authors from around the world who have used the technique include Knut Hamsun, Marcel Proust, Bao Ninh and Roberto Bolaño. Both Eimear McBride and Ali Smith (two authors new to the IB list of authors) frequently use this technique today.

Conceptual understanding



REPRESENTATION

- 1 What is happening in this passage?
- 2 Are there clear or consistent thoughts or feelings communicated here?
- 3 We could argue that this passage is all thought. But how are these thoughts presented and where are they leading us? How do you think the reader is supposed to react to these thoughts?

Final consideration: If we think of the three authors who wrote these passages (just thinking about them now generally as artists of the written word), what would be the point or purpose in displaying thoughts and feelings in these different ways? Do these authors experience the world differently? Do they want to suggest something different about the nature of human thoughts and emotions? Does the particular means of showing thoughts and feelings point to themes or issues that may be important in the work?

More than style?

Consider these three images produced at roughly the same time as the passages above. Are there similarities in expression between these paintings and the passages? Could we argue that these paintings communicate thought and feeling in the same way as the passages?

▼ *Fray Hortensio Félix Paravicino* by El Greco (1609)



▲ *Mary Sicard David* by Thomas Sully (1813)



▲ *Lady with a guitar* by Lyubov Popova (1915)



Whose thoughts and whose feelings (and why it matters): narrators, authors and readers

We probably all learned a basic description of the different types of narrators while we were in elementary or primary school. Even now, you are likely to notice—or be asked to notice—whether a narrator is first person (using “I” to tell the story), the rare second person (using “you”, but perhaps implying a kind of “I”?) and the third person narrator (“he/she”). You have probably gone further during high school or secondary school to learn that often the first person narrator is unreliable; we might not always trust the point of view or the purported facts, and we may see obvious signs in the work that the narrator sees things in a way that are somewhat biased. You have likely also taken third person further: there is the omniscient narrator who seems to know the thoughts of all the characters as opposed to the more contemporary and frequent “limited” narration that is focalized through individual characters. But why do these distinctions matter? And is asking what “person” a story is told in the best question to ask?

First, in commentaries and essays we frequently read that a first person narration helps “express the feelings of the character” or that by reading the voice of the narrator we are somehow “closer” to this speaker/character. But is this really true? What about the examples provided here, from Richardson, Bender and Austen? It seems that we could easily claim that we have a good sense of the thoughts and feelings of these characters, or many of them, regardless of who is narrating and in what person. Another frequent response is that the first person voice makes the character more “relatable”. First, this is not really a term (see the box below). And even if it were—if it meant that we can somehow empathize with this character more—is this true either? Can’t we read about and empathize with any character that is described to us? Is the third person in Richardson really that distant or is it so close in focalization as to be almost indistinguishable from first person? First person may be an interesting way of building character and giving us a distinct and extended perspective on the world, but it is just as often used to make us question the idea of trust, perspective and perhaps even the notion of and limits of empathy itself.

It is not about terms

It is often helpful to have a vocabulary to talk about a piece of literature or about the stylistic elements of a non-literary text type. It certainly helps to be able to talk about “metaphor” or the use of a “headline” when discussing a passage. But terms can get in the way of your reading. Your job is not to find elements and correctly identify them. Simply labelling something as “first person” is not wrong, but it might not be very helpful or interesting. That is the point of this section. Instead of memorizing parts, elements and terms, think instead about why this aspect of a text actually matters. Why is the choice of a narrator actually important or interesting as opposed to how it can be labelled?

So what should we consider about a narrator? If we are considering thoughts and feelings, we may want to simply ask of any text: Who speaks, and who sees? This starts to get at the heart of what matters. We do not really care what words the narrator is using, we just want to consider who is actually telling this story to us and whose perspective, for the most part, we are getting. This helps us to consider how we are supposed to view or judge characters, whose side we should be on in a fight, or whether or not we can believe anything we are being told. It might also make us ask if someone—the speaker, the seer, another character—is getting something wrong. These kinds of wonderings start to get us to what a story might be “about” beyond just the events that are portrayed.

Then we might ask, “How close or far is the narrator in time and place?” What we are essentially wondering is how involved the narrator is. A first person narrator might be caught up in, or at the centre of, the action of the story and somehow be biased by this. On the other hand, a first person narrator might be viewing events from afar as a kind of observer witnessing a crime. Or the narrator might have been part of events but is now looking back in time and reconsidering things from the perspective of old age or the tragic turn of events. The same question could be asked of a third person narrator. Do we see a bias? Is this narrator giving us the thoughts of characters without comment (as in the Richardson, perhaps) or is the narrator asking us to pass some sort of judgement on some of the characters (as in Austen?). This, too, can depend on distance. This perspective matters because it becomes part of what the story is actually about. If a five-year-old breathlessly tells you the story of puppies being born, that five-year-old is consumed in the story, caught up in the moment and tells a story of wonder. If the 90-year-old narrator remembers the day when she was five and puppies were born, this may be a story about loss, nostalgia or simply the different kind of wonder we might have at different ages.

Another angle to consider in a text is where the author fits into all of this communication and what your role is in generating meaning as a reader of the text. We might wonder who a narrator is addressing in a text. When Nick Carraway tells his story in *The Great Gatsby*, is he talking to a specific person? To himself in a journal? To an audience of his contemporaries? When reading a novel, we easily might imagine that this narrator is speaking to us. But this is not always the case. In the Baz Luhrmann film of *The Great Gatsby*, for example, Nick Carraway speaks to a doctor or psychologist as he “narrates” his tale. This audience might change the meaning of his story. In considering an author we also have to use our imaginations. It is hard to speak about actual authors and readers. The so-called “flesh-and-blood” author is an imperfect human being who puts things in texts on purpose that we might not notice or who communicates an idea by mistake. We can’t really know the intentions of the flesh-and-blood author, even if we ask them. By the same token, every reader is imperfect and distinct. You read a text and



create meaning because of all of the experiences you have had and all of the other works you have read. We can never understand everything in a text or everything that is going on, and our opinion about what it all “means” can change as we go.

You can think about meaning and communication in texts these ways.

- What do you think as the reader? Where does your sympathy lie?
- What is the narrator trying to get you to think or feel? Do you agree with the narrator?

Now, what do you think the author is trying to get you to think or feel? You might sympathize with what the narrator says, but does the author want you to sympathize with the narrator? Sometimes we read works in which the narrator is evil but somewhat charming. Does the author want us to be swayed by the narrator or does the author want us to question our own reactions?

Considering all of these levels of communication in texts—all of these senders and receivers—is a means of teasing out thoughts and feelings.

Expert opinion

While discussing the use of “first person”, we can also look at the issue of voice in more formal essays or literary criticism. Can you use first person? Yes you can. Sometimes it is more awkward and unnatural to force yourself to avoid using “I”. The best advice is to try to write naturally and say what you think and often that means using the first person. Sheridan Blau, the past president of the National Council of Teachers of English in the United States of America puts it this way in his work *The Literature Workshop*: the result of trying not to use the first person is often that “students who are capable of intelligent, fluent, and felicitous discourse in their own nearly standard idiom produce sentences so wrenched to avoid a natural ‘I’ and so couched in overblown and pretentious diction as to obscure their meaning from the writer as well as the reader”. As Blau points out, a quick scan of professional literary criticism shows the pervasive use of first person. In *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism* Blau found “I” used on close to 70% of 2000 plus pages!

Relatable

The idea that a story, fictional or not, or a character may be “relatable” is a somewhat problematic idea in relation to response or interpretation. The first definition of “relatable” is that something can be compared to something else. It is only the second definition that suggests that “relatable” means something that we might have sympathy for. The problem in response is that we tend to apply



→ “relatable” only to those elements that we most clearly recognize. If the story is about a teen and you are a teen, then the characters are relatable. If someone feels sad at the break-up of a relationship and you have felt the same: relatable. But couldn’t I tell a story about a stone that falls to the bottom of a pond and sits in the darkness and we could all, somehow, say, “yes, relatable”. If sympathy does seem to be created for a particular character or situation, we might ask ourselves how this sympathy is created and to what ends. This, then, pushes to interpretation. A good response to a passage describing the stone in the water isn’t that the passage makes the stone relatable, but that the description of the heavy darkness of the water focuses our attention on the loneliness of the stone or the weight of depression that perhaps is like deep water. The other problem with “relatable” as a response is that sometimes fiction, an editorial, a speech or even an advertising campaign asks us to consider characters or situations that are quite pointedly not familiar. Connection may be important but being pushed away might also be valuable. The interesting interpretation comes with wondering about the how and the why.

Thought, feeling...

...and poetry

Lyric poetry is a particular form of poetry that derives from Ancient Greek poetry that typically expressed the thoughts and feelings of a speaker and was accompanied by a musical instrument, the stringed “lyre”. While modern poetry tended to veer away from the lyric tradition, much poetry in general owes something to the lyric as there is often a sense of a speaker expressing personal thought and emotion. The first of the following poems is an early lyric poem originally written in Latin by Catullus (84–54 BCE). The next is a contemporary poem by Rebecca Wolff. If you think of these works as a progression from the ancient until now, what would you say they share in common? How do they express thoughts and feelings similarly? What seems to preoccupy the speakers of these poems and how do you know?

To me that man seems like a god in heaven

To me that man seems like a god in heaven,
seems—may I say it?—greater than all gods are,
who sits by you & without interruption
watches you, listens

to your light laughter, which casts such confusion
onto my senses, Lesbia, that when I
gaze at you merely, all of my well-chosen
words are forgotten

as my tongue thickens & a subtle fire
runs through my body while my ears deafened by
their own ringing & at once my eyes are covered
in darkness!

Leisure, Catullus. More than just a nuisance,
leisure: you riot, overmuch enthusing.
Fabulous cities & their sometime kings have
died of such leisure.

“To me that man seems like a god in heaven”,
by Gaius Valerius Catullus (translated by
Charles Martin)



You are perfect for me

You are perfect for me
because you're psychic
no one else could
understand me
the way you
do and
I say
Drink Me
I say it to you silently
but it calls forth in me
the water for you
the water you asked for

"You are perfect for me" in
Figment, by Rebecca Wolff
(2004)



...and hip hop

Jay-Z (Shawn Carter) is the first rapper to be inducted into the songwriting hall of fame. Listen to one of his songs, perhaps "4:44" from his album of the same name. Does a song communicate thought and feeling differently from a poem? Could you turn one of the poems you have read into a song?

Spending time with poems

Activity

Have fun with these poems. There are all sorts of activities that you could do in class to help you enjoy poetry. While these poems are relatively straightforward in their thoughts and their emotions, there are still some difficult moments or allusions that might not be entirely familiar. It is okay to read and leave gaps in your understanding, though. Reading anything in this course is not about getting things right but about thinking about what you read and offering opinions. It is also not about "pinning down" the meaning of a work. The more you explore a poem, the more you may find that it is open to many readings or surprises you with new insight that you had not noticed before. You can play with texts in a variety of ways to deepen your understanding. Here are some questions or ideas that might help you into these poems.



Conceptual understanding



TRANSFORMATION

- 1 First, simply look at the poems individually and consider the general situation, the nature of the speaker and the basic emotions or thoughts being communicated. Who is speaking in the first poem? To whom is he speaking or about whom is he speaking? What about the speaker in the second poem? The speaker and the person addressed may be relatively clear, but can we tell what the speaker literally means? And what about the third poem/song? Is a very specific situation being referenced here? Is it possible to know what is going on? Can we discern the emotions regardless?
- 2 For fun, copy these poems onto another sheet of paper. Now cut the words up individually. Can you arrange these words into new poems? Do they end up expressing similar emotions?
- 3 What words are common to all three poems? Make up a new poem using only common words. How about unique words? Make up a new poem using only words that are used in only one of the poems.
- 4 Listen to “4:44”; it is fairly easy to find online. Would it be possible to create a rap song based on the Catullus or Wolff poem, or on any of the new poems you have created?

While some of these activities may seem like simple games, what you are doing is looking closely at words, playing with meaning, and considering how language matters and how language is malleable. You are also thinking about the ways in which thought and feeling are communicated. Playing with texts increases your facility with texts and prevents you from thinking that texts are something you have to “get right” and say the right things about. The more you play with texts, the better able you will be to discuss a work in class and even write about a work formally in an exam situation.

Final thoughts (and feelings)

It may seem like the easiest way to express your thoughts and feelings in text form would be through an essay. The essay is essentially designed to communicate thought and because of the attention taken in its crafting, an essay often contains complex thoughts and feelings. Oftentimes, though, the best essays seem to struggle their way to ideas or conclusions. Even great student exam essays, even if they have a clear introduction, still “feel” their way to an interesting conclusion or build along the way.

As a conclusion to this section, consider the beginning of this essay by Zadie Smith. In a sense, she is writing a commentary on a text, an advertisement for a beer. At the same time, she is clearly willing to bring together disparate ideas in order to express her thoughts and feelings.

Would this make a good exam commentary? In what ways is this a formal essay and in what ways could this be compared to prose fiction or even poetry?



Across the way from our apartment—on Houston, I guess—there’s a new wall ad. The site is forty feet high, twenty feet wide. It changes once or twice a year. Whatever’s on that wall is my view: I look at it more than the sky or the new World Trade Center, more than the water towers, the passing cabs. It has a subliminal effect. Last semester it was a spot for high-end vodka, and while I wrangled children into their snowsuits, chock-full of domestic resentment, I’d find myself dreaming of cold martinis.

Before that came an ad so high-end I couldn’t tell what it was for. There was no text—or none that I could see—and the visual was of a yellow firebird set upon a background of hellish red. It seemed a gnomish message, deliberately placed to drive a sleepless woman mad. Once, staring at it with a newborn in my arms, I saw another mother, in the tower opposite, holding her baby. It was 4 AM. We stood there at our respective windows, separated by a hundred feet of expensive New York air.

The tower I live in is university accommodation; so is the tower opposite. The idea occurred that it was quite likely that the woman at the window also wrote books for a living, and, like me, was not writing anything right now. Maybe she was considering antidepressants. Maybe she was already on them. It was hard to tell. Certainly she had no way of viewing the ad in question, not without opening her window, jumping, and turning as she fell. I was her view. I was the ad for what she already had.

But that was all some time ago. Now the ad says: *Find your beach*. The bottle of beer—it’s an ad for beer—is very yellow and the background





luxury-holiday-blue. It seems to me uniquely well placed, like a piece of commissioned public art in perfect sympathy with its urban site. The tone is pure Manhattan. Echoes can be found in the personal growth section of the bookstore (“Find your happy”), and in exercise classes (“Find your soul”), and in the therapist’s office (“Find your self”). I find it significant that there exists a more expansive, national version of this ad that runs in magazines, and on television.

In those cases photographic images are used, and the beach is real and seen in full. Sometimes the tag line is expanded, too: When life gives you limes ... Find your beach. But the wall I see from my window marks the entrance to Soho, a district that is home to media moguls, entertainment lawyers, every variety of celebrity, some students, as well as a vanishingly small subset of rent-controlled artists and academics.

Collectively we, the people of Soho, consider ourselves pretty sophisticated consumers of media. You can’t put a cheesy ad like that past us. And so the ad has been reduced to its essence—a yellow undulation against a field of blue—and painted directly onto the wall, in a bright pop-art style. The mad men know that we know the Soho being referenced here: the Soho of Roy Lichtenstein and Ivan Karp, the Soho that came before Foot Locker, Sephora, Prada, frozen yogurt. That Soho no longer exists, of course, but it’s part of the reason we’re all here, crowded on this narrow strip of a narrow island. Whoever placed this ad knows us well.

Find your beach. The construction is odd. A faintly threatening mixture of imperative and possessive forms, the transformation of a noun into a state of mind. Perhaps I’m reading too much into it. On the one hand it means, simply, “Go out and discover what makes you happy.” Pursue happiness actively, as Americans believe it their right to do. And it’s an ad for beer, which makes you happy in the special way of all intoxicants, by reshaping reality around a sensation you alone are having. So, even more precisely, the ad means: “Go have a beer and let it make you happy.” Nothing strange there. Except beer used to be sold on the dream of communal fun: have a beer with a buddy, or lots of buddies. People crowded the frame, laughing and smiling. It was a lie about alcohol—as this ad is a lie about alcohol—but it was a different kind of lie, a wide-framed lie, including other people.

From “Find Your Beach”, by Zadie Smith in *The New York Review of Books* (2014)

Expert opinion

What is the difference between interpretation, analysis and evaluation? What is it that you are supposed to do with a text? Basically, analysis is picking apart a text, looking at it closely and figuring out what it means and suggests. It goes well with synthesis that we actually use all the time and is underrated (what we learn from other things, and pull together, and what we combine from various aspects of a text can help us get at meaning as well). Interpretation is explaining the meaning of a text. This would involve getting at what a text explicitly states and what it suggests, implies or evokes (thoughts and feelings!). Evaluation is not just, as the word might suggest, saying whether a text or an author does something well or not. Evaluation is an “evaluative interpretation”. Evaluation is talking about what a text means or suggests and then discussing or showing why this might matter. Evaluation is getting at the “so what”. Robert Scholes, an important literary critic and former professor from Brown University, suggests we have three aspects of study: “reading, interpretation and criticism” and that “in reading we produce text within text; in interpretation we produce text upon text; and in criticism we produce texts against texts”. What this means is that when we read, we think inside a work, we move along with it and get caught up in the story. When we interpret, we stand back and think about what the text might mean or suggest. When we engage in criticism or “critical thinking” we might stand even further back, question the assumptions of a text or bring other perspectives to bear on the text. The images on the right might help you think about how you consider the “text” of a football match (or soccer game) in three ways.

- **Reading (text within text)** I am in this game, I am enjoying it and am going along with it. (See image 1.)
- **Interpretation (text upon text)** I understand this game. I can tell you what is happening and the strategy and what I think is going to happen, or has happened, and why. (See image 2.)
- **Criticism (text against text)** The more I think about this game, the stranger it seems. Why do we play this game? Any game? Is it right that we build these multi-million dollar temples of sport? Is this game about athleticism or national/team pride? (See image 3.)



▲ Image 1



▲ Image 2



▲ Image 3



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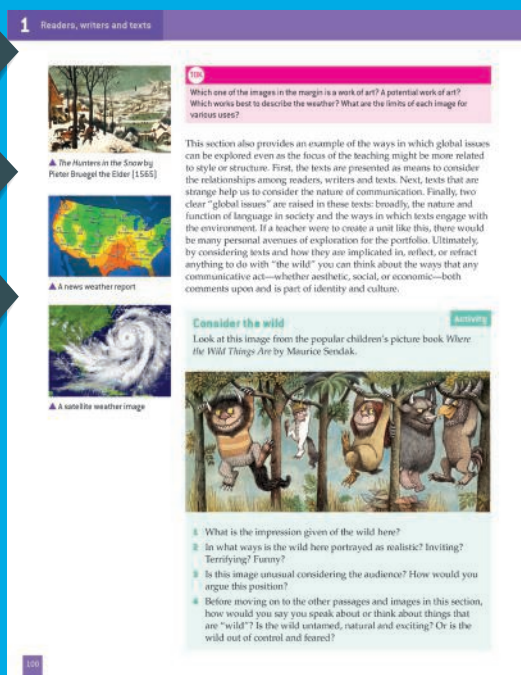
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