



Literary Tools

What is literature to you?

Explain the meaning of the following words and phrases with the help of a dictionary. Do they all belong to the world of literature? Discuss with the help of your teacher, then give an example of each item either in English or in Italian.



An **anthology** usually offers you a variety of literary texts that may be **prose** (mainly novels and short stories), **poetry** or **drama**.

Before starting, see if you can identify the main features of the three genres by filling in the following chart with the help of a partner. Tick as appropriate, then discuss with the class.

FEATURES	PROSE	POETRY	DRAMA
It tells a story			
It has plot(s) and sub-plot(s)			
The plot develops through conflicts and resolutions			
It is mainly based on dialogues			
It contains descriptions of settings			
There is a number of characters			
It is divided into acts/scenes			
It is written in prose			
It may be performed			
It is divided into chapters or episodes			
It is written primarily to be seen			
It is a public experience			
For full effect, it requires other people than the reader			
It is written primarily to be read			
Sounds and visual effects are added to words			



1. PROSE

1. MAIN ELEMENTS

Prose includes **fiction** and **non-fiction**: in other words, literature and informational texts.

Fiction: features

- It is made up;
- it tells a story with a beginning, a development and an ending;
- it is written to entertain;
- it must be read in the order chosen by the writer;
- it includes characters, settings, conflicts and solutions.

Fiction: main types

Novels
Mystery novels, detective stories
Science-fiction novels
Thrillers, horror stories, suspense stories
Short stories
Humorous stories
Love stories
Adventure stories
Fairy tales
Legends
Myths
Comics

Non-fiction: features

- It tells and/or teaches true facts;
- it is written to inform and teach;
- it must be read in order to follow the logic;
- it may be divided into contents, photos, charts, diagrams, headings, labels, captions, indexes, glossaries.

Non-fiction: main types

Encyclopaedias
Biographies
Textbooks
Dictionaries
Magazines
Newspapers

	ELEMENTS OF FICTION	USEFUL WORDS	FUNCTION
Plot	Basic storyline	Exposition, climax...	To involve the reader in the unfolding story.
Setting	Time, place, circumstances	Exotic, familiar, remote, contemporary...	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give the background to the action. • To (possibly) act as an antagonist. • To create atmospheres or moods. • To reveal the personality of the characters. • To suggest underlying themes.
Characters and conflicts	Actors in the story (traits, motives, personalities, changes) who face conflicts of different kinds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flat or static / round or dynamic, protagonists, antagonists... • Types 	To make events happen and show struggle: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • between characters; • in society; • against nature; • with technology; • against the supernatural; • against fate; • with themselves.
Narrator (Point of view)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who tells the story • From whose perspective 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First/Third-person, multiple • Internal, external • Omniscient, non-omniscient • Intrusive, non-intrusive • Reliable, unreliable 	To filter the events from his/her point of view (of a character in the story or an external voice).
Style (Tone)	Author's attitude	Objective, clear, critical, detached, matter-of-fact, impersonal, formal, neutral, committed, humorous, pessimistic, informal, playful, cheerful, ironic, light, pompous, sad, angry, serious, resigned, suspicious, gloomy, optimistic, witty...	To underline the author's opinion .
Style (Mood)	General atmosphere created by the author's words; the feelings experienced by the reader	Fanciful, melancholic, frightening, mysterious, frustrating, romantic, gloomy, sentimental, happy, sorrowful, joyful, suspenseful...	To arouse emotions in the reader.
Style (Form)	The way in which an author writes and/or tells a story by choosing words, tone, register, grammar, syntax, devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word choice (diction) • Register • Sentence structure (long, short, compound, inverted word order, regular) • Syntax • Mode (description, narrative, dialogue, comment) • Rhythm • Imagery 	To make writing interesting , memorable, intriguing, and different (also the style/form determines whether readers enjoy their works).
Theme	Main point(s) or message	Subject matter and the writer's attitude toward it	

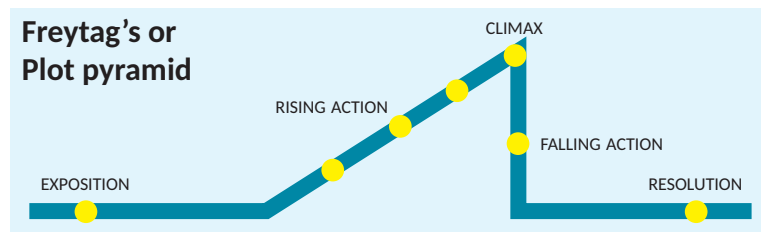
2. PLOT

Both novels and, on a smaller scale, short stories, are narrative forms in prose telling stories usually based on a **plot**: a plot is a **sequence of events**, the 'why' for the things that happen in the story.

It draws the reader into the characters' lives and motivations for action. It essentially revolves around a **conflict** between the character and:

- another character (or characters);
- the environment (some external force, like physical nature, society, fate);
- him/herself (against some elements of his/her own nature).

A plot structure is the way in which the story elements are arranged; it varies, but it usually follows a basic pattern:



The plot of a novel or a short story includes:

- an **introduction or exposition**, in which the author gives the first necessary information about the background (setting) and main characters. A typical short story usually revolves around a single character and his/her achievements;
- a **problem or complication** to face;
- several points of **rising tension** or action to solve the conflict;
- a **climax** or a **turning point**, which corresponds to the highest moment of tension;
- a **resolution** which may either restore life as it was before or open it up to new horizons. The end may either satisfy the reader's doubts or leave some questions unanswered.

Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights* (1847)

An example of a complicated plot is in *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë, a widely read novel published in 1847.

Mr Lockwood is visiting Yorkshire, where he meets Heathcliff. Lockwood is curious to know the story of this enigmatic man, therefore he asks Nelly, the housekeeper, about him. Nelly tells Lockwood the story of two Yorkshire families, starting from 25 years before: the Earnshaws, living at Wuthering Heights, on the moors, and the sophisticated Lintons, living at Thrushcross Grange.

One day, Mr Earnshaw brings home a gypsy boy to live in the family with his children, Hindley and Catherine. Soon Hindley develops feelings of jealousy and rivalry

towards him, whereas Catherine soon becomes his soul mate and is always ready to help him.

One day, Catherine meets young Edgar Linton and takes a fancy to him. When she later decides to marry Edgar, Heathcliff, wild with rage and feeling rejected, leaves Wuthering Heights to make his fortune.

After three years Heathcliff comes back to find Catherine married to Edgar Linton, but still deeply attached to him. Tragedy follows for the two families as Heathcliff takes revenge on them all.

Only the second generation, young Cathy (Catherine's daughter) and Hareton (Hindley's son) Earnshaw, survive to overcome the destructive passion in their mutual love.

1. What is Heathcliff's problem?

2. In your opinion, what is the climax or turning point of this romantic story?

3. SETTING

3.1 Space

The elements of a novel are usually set in a geographical and social **background**, which is either made real or important through **descriptions** interrupting the narration of events, or just hinted at through scattered **clues**. The main functions of descriptions are:

- to decorate;
- to delay the sequence of events;

- to give clues (psychological, social, environmental...);
- to demarcate (e.g. the beginning or the ending).

The characters or the reader him/herself perceive space by means of **senses**, so physical perception is highlighted when the narrator focuses on space. That is why the speaker's stance, point of view, position and mood are pivotal: they all convey meaning, showing whether the vision is objective,

subjective, static, dynamic, realistic or sentimental, if the place is seen as an obstacle or if it is symbolic. Therefore, when analysing space in details, we should mainly consider:

1. What type of space/social background is being described/suggested. Places are mainly described under the following headings:

- geographical;
- topographical;
- inanimate object (plane, boat, bus, space shuttle...);
- environment.

Significant oppositional spaces are city vs country,

civilisation vs nature, house vs garden, transitional vs permanent space, and public vs private space. It is important to check whether they are open, closed, still, in motion; whether they trap the characters (as in many 20th-century novels) or whether they are dominated by the characters themselves, who move freely to conquer real or imaginary spaces (as in many 19th-century novels).

2. Who sees it (focus): details about the speaker's eye and mood.

3. How it is seen: distance, point of view, spatial deictics (prepositions, adverbs of place).

A. Exotic setting: India

Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (1997)

The novel tells the story of young Estha, his twin sister Rahel, and their divorced mother Ammu, who live in the south Indian state of Kerala. After divorcing her Hindu husband, Ammu has to return to her parental home with her children. During their visit, the twins' half-English cousin, a nine-year-old girl named Sophie Mol, drowns and Ammu has an affair with the family's carpenter, Velutha, a member of the untouchable caste. These intertwined events have tragic outcomes: Estha

stops speaking; Ammu is banished from home and dies at thirty-one; Rahel is expelled from school, drifts from school to school and eventually marries an American, whom she later leaves. The narrative begins and ends when Rahel returns to India and to Estha, leaving some hope that their mutual love and memories will console them. The novel is both a tragic mystery and a love story, and shows the contradictory features of a colonised country whose culture was changed by the English.

Set in the District of Kerala, India, during the late 1960s, the novel offers an environment as beautiful as it is dangerous, in a country losing its past and unable to define its paradoxical present.

May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month. The days are long and humid. The river shrinks and black crows gorge on bright mangoes in still, dustgreen trees. Red bananas ripen. Jackfruits¹ burst. Dissolute bluebottles hum vacuously in the fruity air. Then they stun themselves against clear windowpanes and die, fatly baffled² in the sun. The nights are clear, but suffused with sloth and sullen³ expectation. But by early June the southwest monsoon breaks and there are three months of wind and water with short spells of sharp, glittering sunshine that thrilled children snatch to play with. The countryside turns an immodest green. Boundaries blur⁴ as tapioca fences take root and bloom. Brick walls turn mossgreen. Pepper vines snake up⁵ electric poles. Wild creepers burst through laterite banks⁶ and spill across the flooded roads. Boats ply⁷ in the bazaars. And small fish appear in the puddles that fill the PWD potholes⁸ on the highways.

1. **Jackfruits:** it. *I frutti dell'albero del pane*
2. **Dissolute bluebottles hum ... fatly baffled:** it. *Mosconi viziosi ronzano vacui nell'aria fruttata. Poi si schiantano contro i vetri delle finestre e muoiono, goffamente inermi*
3. **sloth and sullen:** it. *fosca e pigra*
4. **Boundaries blur:** it. *I confini sfumano*
5. **Pepper vines snake up:** it. *I viticci di pepe nero si avvinghiano*
6. **Wild creepers burst through laterite banks:** it. *I rampicanti selvatici traboccano dagli argini di laterite*
7. **ply:** it. *riformiscono*
8. **the PWD potholes:** it. *le buche lasciate dal dipartimento dei lavori pubblici*

1. Underline all the exotic elements in the passage.
2. What gives the reader an idea of full bloom alternating with death?
3. What is the weather like in June?
4. The place is unfriendly, uncomfortable and decaying at the beginning. When June comes, how does the writer use adjectives, verbs, alliteration to give a sense of life?

B. Urban setting: an industrial landscape

D.H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow* (1915)

Published in 1915, *The Rainbow* was immediately banned as obscene, since it deals with sex in a way that was considered scandalous at the time.

The novel follows three generations of a single family, the Brangwens, living in the Midlands. Their story runs parallel with the development of their hometown into an industrial centre. The main protagonists of the novel are first Anna Brangwen then her daughter Ursula, the latter being a perfect example of the 'new woman' at the beginning of the 20th century: she is dissatisfied

with her condition and reflects the female quest for social and private enfranchisement. She studies, finds a job to support herself and be independent, falls in love – and will eventually get married in *Women in Love* (the sequel to *The Rainbow*, published in 1920).

The novel explores the personality of the characters to the full, not only through their actions, but rather through symbolic episodes which suggest their true essence. The style is a combination of realism and symbolism.

Ursula, the female protagonist of the second part of the novel, goes and visits her uncle Tom, who owns a coal mine. The visit gives Lawrence the opportunity to describe the place in detail.

He lived in a large new house of red brick, standing outside a mass of homogeneous red-brick dwellings¹, called Wiggiston. Wiggiston was only seven years old. It had been a hamlet² of eleven houses on the edge of heathy³, half-agricultural

5 country. Then the great seam of coal⁴ had been opened.

In a year Wiggiston appeared, a great mass of pinkish rows of thin, unreal dwellings of five rooms each. The streets were like visions of pure ugliness; a grey-black macadamised⁵ road, asphalt causeways⁶, held in between a flat succession of wall,
10 window, and door, a new-brick channel that began nowhere, and ended nowhere. Everything was amorphous, yet everything repeated itself endlessly. Only now and then, in one of the house-windows vegetables or small groceries⁷ were displayed for sale.

15 In the middle of the town was a large, open, shapeless space, or market-place, of black trodden earth, surrounded by the same flat material of dwellings, new red-brick becoming grimy⁸, small oblong windows, and oblong doors, repeated endlessly, with just, at one corner, a great and gaudy⁹

20 public-house, and somewhere lost on one of the sides of the square, a large window opaque and darkish green, which was the post-office.

1. **dwellings**: houses (it. *abitazioni*)

2. **hamlet**: it. *villaggio*

3. **heathy**: it. *coperto di erica*

4. **seam of coal**: it. *vena di carbone*

5. **macadamised**: paved with a particular material made of compressed layers of broken stones (it. *macadamizzato*)

6. **asphalt causeways**: it. *strade rialzate fatte di asfalto*

7. **groceries**: it. *prodotti alimentari*

8. **grimy**: dirty

9. **gaudy**: bright-coloured and vulgar (it. *appariscente, pacchiano*)

1. Is Wiggiston an old village? What was it like in the past? How has it changed?

2. Which are the predominant colours? Why?

3. What is the general atmosphere of the passage? Underline all the negative expressions referring to the place before drawing your conclusions.

3.2 Time

Story events in fiction can be arranged as:

- **chronological** narrative leading up to a climax;
- **non-chronological** narrative: deviating from the strict chronology of the story;
- **in medias res**: beginning in the middle of the action;
- **flashback**: an action that occurred chronologically earlier is inserted later into the story;
- **foreshadowing**: an action that will occur later in the story is hinted at, usually to increase the tension of a coming conflict;
- **time lapse**: the story skips a period of time, which seems unusual compared to the rest of the plot.

Nineteenth-century novels are rich in precise references to the most common measurable time

dimensions, i.e. past, present, future, season, time of the day, historical background, etc.

Yet, when a new perception of time starts to develop at the end of the same century, the chronology of events becomes less important, while the idea of subjective time emerges. Writers such as James Joyce and Virginia Woolf explore memories and associations of ideas, experiment with time and handle the plot with greater freedom by varying its speed through:

- **descriptive pauses**: including daydreaming and fantasies;
- **scenes**: mainly dialogues;
- **ellipses**;
- **summaries**.

A. Once upon a time

Charles Dickens, *A Tale of Two Cities* (1859)

This historical novel combines the French Revolution with romance; the two cities of the title are London and Paris. The protagonist, Charles Darnay, is a young French nobleman who rejects his social status to marry the daughter of Dr Manette, a man just released from the

prison of the Bastille. When in danger during the Terror period, Darnay is saved by an Englishman who sacrifices his life for him by taking his place.

Dickens meant his novel to be read while bearing in mind contemporary politics.

The following passage – the opening of the novel – suggests an age of radical opposites across the English Channel, in France and the United Kingdom. It tells a story of contrasts and comparisons between London and Paris during the French Revolution.

- It was the best of times, it was the worst of times, it was the age of wisdom, it was the age of foolishness, it was the epoch of belief, it was the epoch of incredulity, it was the season of Light, it was the season of Darkness, it was the spring of hope, it was the winter of despair, we had everything before us, we had nothing before us, we were all going direct to Heaven, we were all going direct the other way – in short, the period was so far like the present period, that some of its noisiest authorities insisted on its being received, for good or for evil, in the superlative degree of comparison only.¹
- There were a king² with a large jaw³ and a queen with a plain face, on the throne of England; there were a king with a large jaw and a queen with a fair face, on the throne of France. In both countries it was clearer than crystal⁴ to the lords of the State preserves of loaves and fishes, that things in general were settled⁵ for ever.

1. **insisted on its being received ... of comparison only**: it. *insistevano affinché se ne parlasse soltanto al superlativo sia nel bene sia nel male*
2. **king**: in 1775, King George III sat on the throne of England, preoccupied with the rebellious colonies in America. Louis XVI reigned in France, not very much concerned with anything except seeing to his own comforts
3. **jaw**: it. *mascella*
4. **clearer than crystal**: very clear
5. **settled**: arranged

1. List examples of overregularity in the text. They contrast with the events Dickens is about to describe: the French Revolution is confused, chaotic and the events in the story will run into each other just as his opening main clauses do. Yet the short, controlled parallel construction of the syntax implies a subtle control of the events.
2. Underline precise historical references.
3. Are there examples of contradiction? Why?

B. The story starts

Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (1981)

Midnight's Children is a complex novel which combines the history of India, the story of a boy's coming of age, the saga of his family and the epic of the liberation of a people. Its narrative framework is a tale reminiscent of the *Arabian Nights*. It starts with the boy's life story, orally told by himself, Saleem Sinai, to his wife-to-be Padma

when he is grown up; it shifts to the history of India's independence; and it includes Saleem's family saga. Just like a good cook, the narrator skilfully blends all the narrative ingredients, often using features of magical realism as a device binding the Indian culture of the past to the contemporary multicultural society.

This is the opening of the novel.

I was born in the city of Bombay... once upon a time. No, that won't do¹, there's no getting away from the date: I was born in Doctor Narlikar's Nursing Home on August 15th, 1947. And the time? The time matters, too. Well then: at night. No, it's important to be more... On the stroke of midnight, as a matter of fact. Clock-handed joined palms² in respectful greeting as I came. Oh, spell it out³, spell it out: at the precise instant of India's arrival at independence, I tumbled forth⁴ into the world. There were gasps⁵. And, outside the window, fireworks and crowds. A few seconds later, my father broke his big toe⁶; but his accident was a mere trifle⁷ when set beside what had befallen⁸ me in that benighted⁹ moment, because thanks to the occult tyrannies of those blindly saluting clocks I had mysteriously handcuffed¹⁰ to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country. For the next three decades, there was to be no escape.

1. **that won't do**: it. *non va bene*

2. **Clock-handed joined palms**: with his hands united as the two hands of a clock

3. **spell it out**: explain it clearly

4. **tumbled forth**: came out, was born (it. *sono capitombolato fuori*)

5. **gasps**: expressions of surprise and shock

6. **big toe**: it. *alluce*

7. **trifle**: trivial thing (it. *sciocchezza*)

8. **had befallen**: had occurred to

9. **benighted**: obscure for him

10. **handcuffed**: united (it. *ammanettato*)

1. Saleem is both the protagonist and the narrator of the novel, which he apparently tells in the form of an autobiography. What detailed information does he give about his place and date of birth?
2. Underline all time references. One is different from the others: what contrast does it create? Is it solved?

4. CHARACTERS

The characters of a novel all have different **qualities** and **personalities**. They react to circumstances or attempt to shape the environment around them. In the analysis of a character, you should:

- consider the character's **name** and **appearance**;
- consider if he/she is a **static** (flat) or **dynamic** (round) character;
- consider how the author **discloses the character** by:
 - what he/she says or thinks;
 - what he/she does to solve conflicts;
 - what other characters say about him/her;
 - what the author him/herself says about him/her.

In **direct characterisation**, the author expresses his/her opinion about the character (e.g. He's a bad man).

In **indirect characterisation**, the author shows what a character is like by revealing his/her actions, thoughts, words, and through other people's reactions to the character.

When describing the main characters of a novel, it may be a good idea to start with:

- **facts**: name, appearance, family background, social class, marital status, etc.
- After that you may move on to:
- their **inner life**: their thoughts and feelings – analyse their behaviour, their dialogues and all the information the narrator gives about them;
 - their **development** – find out if the characters change in the course of the story.

A. A queer lady

Charles Dickens, *Great Expectations* (1860)

The orphan Pip grows up in miserable conditions – living tragic experiences that often recall Dickens's autobiographical adventures –, until a chance encounter with an escaped convict radically and arbitrarily changes the lives of everyone around them. Once again the themes of imprisonment and individual redemption are dealt with, as in previous works by Charles Dickens, like *Oliver Twist* and *David Copperfield*. The word *expectations* in the title refers to Pip's hopes of self-improvement, a typical Victorian value: most of

all, he wants to become a gentleman, but his illusions will be frustrated. At the end of the novel (through suffering and disappointment) he learns to accept his destiny and is finally able to live a simple but fulfilling life as a clerk in the company of his great friend, Herbert Pocket.

Narrated by a middle-aged Pip, *Great Expectations* can be read on many levels – as a coming-of-age story, as an ironic critique on money and its importance but also as a mystery story full of secrets.

Miss Havisham, a minor character in the story, was abandoned on the altar on her wedding day. One day, Pip is introduced to the old lady and what he sees is rather amazing.

She was dressed in rich materials – satins, and lace, and silks – all of white. Her shoes were white. And she had a long white veil dependent from her hair, and she had bridal¹ flowers in her hair, but her hair was white. Some bright jewels sparkled² on her neck and on her hands, and some other jewels lay sparkling on the table. Dresses less splendid than the dress she wore, and half-packed trunks³, were scattered about⁴. She had not quite finished dressing, for she had but one shoe on – the other was on the table near her hand – her veil was but half arranged, her watch and chain were not put on, and some lace for her bosom⁵ lay with those trinkets⁶, and with her handkerchief, and gloves, and some flowers, and a prayer-book, all confusedly heaped⁷ about the looking glass. It was not in the first few moments that I saw these things, though I saw more of them in the first moments than might be supposed. But I saw that everything within my view which ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre⁸, and was faded⁹ and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken¹⁰ eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose¹¹ had shrunk¹² to skin and bone.

1. **bridal**: for a woman about to get married (it. *nuziali*)
2. **sparkled**: shone
3. **half-packed trunks**: it. *bauli parzialmente disfatti*
4. **scattered about**: it. *sparsi tutt'intorno*
5. **lace for her bosom**: it. *pizzi per il corpetto*
6. **trinkets**: it. *paccottiglia*

7. **confusedly heaped**: piled untidily
8. **lustre**: bright, original colours
9. **faded**: it. *scolorito, sbiadito*
10. **sunken**: it. *infossati*
11. **hung loose**: it. *pendevano*
12. **had shrunk**: had grown smaller

1. What is the dominant colour in the description? Why?
2. As usual in his works, Dickens piles up details. Make a list of the objects surrounding Miss Havisham and explain their function on a wedding day. Why is there such a mess now?
3. How old do you think she is? Give reasons for your answer, keeping in mind the metaphorical images used by the narrator.
4. What is the general impression the reader gets from the picture?

B. Mr Darcy

Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

Pride and Prejudice follows the relationship between the witty and independent Elizabeth and the arrogant and wealthy Mr Darcy. The young gentleman's apparent indifference to her and his disapproval of her inferior social background both provoke and make Elizabeth prejudiced against him. Later on, however, she is able to discover his real nature, generosity and

self-righteousness – and recognise her misjudgements. The third-person narrator gives a clear external account of the characters' actions and reactions, mainly from the heroine's point of view.

Austen's usual irony helps distinguish between appearance and truth and hints at the complexity of life as well as the need for balance.

In the following scene, Jane Austen sets her characters in a ballroom. The occasion of a party allows her to reveal a great deal about them: a ball (dance) was an important event in her time, for this was how young people met in a socially acceptable way.

Mr Bingley was good-looking and gentlemanlike: he had a pleasant countenance¹, and easy, unaffected manners. His sisters were fine women, with an air of decided fashion. His brother-in-law, Mr Hurst, merely looked the gentleman; but his friend Mr Darcy soon drew the attention of the room by his fine, tall person, handsome features, noble mien², and the report, which was in general circulation within five minutes after his entrance, of his having ten thousand a year. The gentlemen pronounced him to be a fine figure of a man, the ladies declared he was much handsomer than Mr Bingley, and he was looked at with great admiration for about half the evening, till his manners gave a disgust which turned the tide³ of his popularity; for he was discovered to be proud, to be above his company, and above being pleased; and not all his large estate in Derbyshire could then save him from having a most forbidding⁴, disagreeable countenance, and being unworthy to be compared with his friend.

1. **countenance:** it. *aspetto*
2. **noble mien:** it. *nobile espressione*
3. **turned the tide:** it. *inverti il corso* (lett. *la marea*)
4. **forbidding:** unfriendly

1. Underline details about the characters in the spotlight. Are they pleasant people?
2. What tells the reader that Mr Darcy is rich?
3. Why do people feel disgusted by him after a while?

5. NARRATOR

When reading a novel, we should always remember that someone is telling the story from his/her own **point of view**. Identifying **who** the **narrative voice** is (who speaks?) and whose point of view orients the narration (who sees?) is important for literary analysis. In fact, the perspective from which people, events, and the details of a story are told can help understand its overall message.

Tone and **mood** are elements of style deeply connected with the narrator's voice.

There are three basic types of narrators:

- **first-person** (a character in the story);
- **second-person**;
- **third-person** (not a character in the story).

5.1 First-person narrator ('I' or 'We')

In **first-person central** the narrator is also the protagonist of the story and tells the story from his/her perspective.

In **first-person observer** the narrator is a character in the story but not necessarily the main one. He/She tells the protagonist's story, having witnessed most of it.

5.2 Second-person narrator

In this little-used technique the narrator employs the second person ('you') to immerse the reader into the text and make him/her identify with the character.

5.3 Third-person narrator

The **omniscient narrator (third-person omniscient)** reports everything about his/her characters, including their feelings and thoughts. He/She is usually not a character in the story but an invisible storyteller who can see and tell everything, either expressing his/her own opinions and judgements (**intrusive**) or just neutrally reporting the facts.

The **limited omniscient narrator (third-person limited)** relates the story by third-person pronouns but

adopting the viewpoint of one (or more) character(s) in the story. Therefore, he/she seems to have the same limitations as the protagonist(s), because he/she does not know the inner thoughts of the other characters. The **objective** narrator is not a character, is not omniscient, nor does he/she report any thoughts or feelings. This narrator is like a journalist or a movie camera reporting the events matter-of-factly and without any explanation.

A. If you really want to hear

J.D. Salinger, *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

Published in 1951, *The Catcher in the Rye* achieved immediate popularity among young people who identified with the protagonist and his sense of alienation. Holden Caulfield is an adolescent incapable of coming to terms with the world of adults. In a way, the novel is a coming-of-age story, focusing on the failure of schooling.

Holden considers all adults phonies, which means superficial and hypocritical. When he is expelled from

school, he does not go home but starts an adventurous experience on his own.

He tries to involve Sally, an old friend, in his picaresque escape into a childish 'frontier' adventure, but she refuses. In the end, he seems to prefer his little sister Phoebe's innocence to the cruel world of adults and shows a deep lyrical sensitivity that, however, does not help him conform. Refusing to grow up, Holden ends up under medical treatment.

Salinger offers an insight into Holden's personality and unique narrative style from the very beginning. The reader soon understands that Holden will not play the traditional narrator. The boy is in a sanatorium in California where he is undergoing rehabilitation after a nervous breakdown.

If you really want to hear about it, the first thing you'll probably want to know is where I was born, and what my lousy¹ childhood was like, and how my parents were occupied and all before they had me, and all that David Copperfield kind of crap², but I don't
 5 feel like going into it, if you want to know the truth. In the first place, that stuff bores me, and in the second place, my parents would have about two hemorrhages apiece if I told anything pretty personal about them. They're quite touchy about anything like that, especially my father. They're nice and all – I'm not saying that – but
 10 they're also touchy as hell. Besides, I'm not going to tell you my whole goddam autobiography or anything. I'll just tell you about this madman stuff that happened to me around last Christmas just before I got pretty run-down and had to come out here³ and take it easy. I mean that's all I told D.B. about, and he's my brother and all.
 15 He's in Hollywood. That isn't too far from this crummy place, and he comes over and visits me practically every week end. He's going to drive me home when I go home next month maybe. He just got a Jaguar. One of those little English jobs that can do around two hundred miles an hour. It cost him damn near four thousand bucks⁴.
 20 He's got a lot of dough⁵, now. He didn't use to. He used to be just a regular writer, when he was home. He wrote this terrific book of short stories, *The Secret Goldfish*, in case you never heard of him. The best one in it was 'The Secret Goldfish.' It was about this little kid that wouldn't let anybody look at his goldfish because he'd
 25 bought it with his own money. It killed me. Now he's out in

1. **lousy**: it. *pidocchiosa*
2. **all that David Copperfield kind of crap**: it. *tutta quella robaccia* (crap stands for excrement; it sounds offensive) *sentimentale alla David Copperfield* (riferimento al romanzo di Charles Dickens, volto a commuovere il lettore con le tristi vicende dell'omonimo protagonista)
3. **out here**: it refers to the mental hospital in California in which he is hosted
4. **bucks**: dollars (inf.)
5. **dough**: money (slang)

Hollywood, D.B., being a prostitute. If there's one thing I hate, it's the movies. Don't even mention them to me.

Where I want to start telling is the day I left Pencey Prep. Pencey Prep is this school that's in Agerstown, Pennsylvania. You probably heard of it. You've probably seen the ads, anyway.

1. What type of narrator tells the story?
2. What is his relationship with the people around him?
3. Which words show that the narrator is young?
4. What is the tone? Tick as appropriate, then give reasons for your choices.

<input type="checkbox"/> a. Formal	<input type="checkbox"/> c. Conversational	<input type="checkbox"/> e. Intimate
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Informal	<input type="checkbox"/> d. Spontaneous	
5. Is the narrator telling his birth as in traditional coming-of-age stories? What is his tone?

B. Our dear heroine

Jane Austen, *Emma* (1816)

Emma Woodhouse is a young heroine who likes to play with other people's emotions. Her process of self-deceit and self-discovery has its climax after her failure to dominate the world around her.

In a way, her antagonist is the man she will marry, George Knightley: in fact, at the beginning of the novel the plot shows them in sharp contrast, since Emma

represents impulsive and wilful imagination, while Knightley stands for order, rational thinking and calm. This clash is symbolic of many human relationships, and Emma and Knightley each represent the two extremes of human feelings. Austen seems to observe and analyse them with great delight and ironic detachment.

Emma's portrait opens the novel.

Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, and rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings¹ of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.

1. **blessings:** it. *benedizioni*, *fortune*, *doni*

1. Who is the narrating voice?
2. Is he/she hidden or overt?
3. Does he/she give a lot of information?
4. What shows that he/she is reader-conscious, that is to say, wants to make the reader curious to know more?

6. STYLE & THEME

Style is the way a writer uses language. When considering it, we must refer to:

- his/her **choice of words** (diction);
- his/her use of **syntax** (grammar, structure of the sentences);
- his/her use of **imagery** (or figurative language, such as metaphors, similes and other rhetorical devices);
- the **way he/she tells the story** (narrating, describing, reporting dialogues, representing thoughts, etc.).

Tone can be defined as the **voice filtering the style**. It conveys the writer's or the character's attitude toward something and can be neutral, tender, serious, sarcastic, light-hearted, angry, distant, formal, ironic, etc.

Mood instead is **the feeling the reader experiences**.

Irony is the use of language to express the opposite of what is actually said. It shows an incongruity or discrepancy creating tension between what is and what is expected, desired, or hoped for. There are four types of irony:

- **verbal irony**, when what is said is the opposite of what is meant (that is, when words are used non-literally);
- **situational irony**, when there is a difference between the expected and the real outcome of an event;
- **behavioural irony**, when a character believes reality is one way but his/her expectations are frustrated;
- **dramatic irony**, when the reader or audience knows more than a character does.

The **theme** is a central idea, the concept, thought, opinion or belief that the author expresses within his/her work. It is not explained overtly, but usually presented indirectly through different elements or strategies, and it is made up of two components:

- it is a **generalisation** on the subject or issue highlighted by the story, expressed with abstract words, like *love*, *death*, *war*, etc.;
- it involves the **writer's comment or opinion** on that issue.

Kate Chopin, *The Story of an Hour* (1894)

Born in St Louis (USA), Kate Chopin (1850-1904) started writing in the 1890s to fight depression. Her works often had feminist themes and were true portrayals of women's lives and feelings.

In *The Story of an Hour* Chopin tells the story of Mrs Louise Mallard, a woman trapped in a traditional Victorian marriage in the late 19th century. The writer summarises the external events of the story in the first sentence: 'Knowing that Mrs Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as

gently as possible the news of her husband's death.' Chopin decides to share with the readers the internal experience taking place inside the lady's mind, so that they know more than the characters, which creates ironic effects. For example, it is ironic that her family think their sad news is sad; another irony at the end of the story is the diagnosis of the doctors. Yet, the general central irony lies in Mrs Mallard's own life as a Victorian wife: she is apparently happy, but deeply frustrated.

The End

Knowing that Mrs. Mallard was afflicted with a heart trouble, great care was taken to break to her as gently as possible the news of her husband's death.

It was her sister Josephine who told her, in broken sentences; veiled hints that revealed in half concealing. Her husband's friend Richards was there, too, near her. It was he who

- 5 had been in the newspaper office when intelligence¹ of the railroad disaster was received, with Brently Mallard's name leading the list of "killed." He had only taken the time to assure himself of its truth by a second telegram, and had hastened to forestall² any less careful, less tender friend in bearing the sad message.

- 10 She did not hear the story as many women have heard the same, with a paralyzed inability to accept its significance. She wept at once, with sudden, wild abandonment, in her sister's arms. When the storm of grief³ had spent itself she went away to her room alone. She would have no one follow her.

- There stood, facing the open window, a comfortable, roomy armchair. Into this she sank, pressed down by a physical exhaustion that haunted her body and seemed to reach into
15 her soul.

- She could see in the open square before her house the tops of trees that were all aquiver with the new spring life. The delicious breath of rain was in the air. In the street below a peddler was crying his wares. The notes of a distant song which someone was singing reached her faintly, and countless sparrows were twittering in the eaves. There
20 were patches of blue sky showing here and there through the clouds that had met and piled one above the other in the west facing her window.

She sat with her head thrown back upon the cushion of the chair, quite motionless, except when a sob came up into her throat and shook her, as a child who has cried itself to sleep continues to sob in its dreams.

- 25 She was young, with a fair, calm face, whose lines bespoke repression and even a certain strength. But now there was a dull stare in her eyes, whose gaze was fixed away off yonder⁴ on one of those patches of blue sky. It was not a glance of reflection, but rather indicated a suspension of intelligent thought.

There was something coming to her and she was waiting for it, fearfully. What was it?

- 30 She did not know; it was too subtle and elusive to name. But she felt it, creeping out of the sky, reaching toward her through the sounds, the scents, the color that filled the air.

1. **intelligence:** news

2. **to forestall:** anticipate

3. **the storm of grief:** a metaphor to stress the chaotic, violent anguish she felt at first

4. **off yonder:** far

Now her bosom rose and fell tumultuously. She was beginning to recognize this thing that was approaching to possess her, and she was striving to beat it back with her will – as powerless as her two white slender hands would have been. When she abandoned herself a little whispered word escaped her slightly parted lips. She said it over and over under her breath: “free, free, free!”

[...]

“Free! Body and soul free!” she kept whispering.

Josephine was kneeling before the closed door with her lips to the keyhole, imploring for admission. “Louise, open the door! I beg, open the door – you will make yourself ill. What are you doing, Louise? For heaven’s sake open the door.”

“Go away. I am not making myself ill.” No; she was drinking in a very elixir of life through that open window.

Her fancy was running riot along those days ahead of her. Spring days, and summer days, and all sorts of days that would be her own. She breathed a quick prayer that life might be long. It was only yesterday she had thought with a shudder that life might be long.

She arose at length and opened the door to her sister’s importunities. There was a feverish triumph in her eyes, and she carried herself unwittingly like a goddess of Victory. She clasped her sister’s waist, and together they descended the stairs.

Richards stood waiting for them at the bottom.

Someone was opening the front door with a latchkey. It was Brently Mallard who entered, a little travel-stained, composedly carrying his grip-sack and umbrella. He had been far from the scene of the accident, and did not even know there had been one.

He stood amazed at Josephine’s piercing cry; at Richards’ quick motion to screen him from the view of his wife.

But Richards⁵ was too late.

When the doctors came they said she had died of heart disease – of the joy that kills.

5. **Richards:** the husband’s friend who was in the railroad office when the telegram arrived with Mallard’s name on the list of the ‘killed’

1. Fill in the gaps.

The front 1. is opened, Mr 2. enters, without even knowing about the train accident, Mrs Mallard’s sister Josephine screams. Mrs Mallard 3. of a heart attack ‘of the joy that kills.’ *The Story of an Hour*, therefore, has an 4. ending: Mrs Mallard dies just when she is beginning to live.

2. This part of the story is both the climax and the end, that is, the most emotional part of the story.

Explain what feelings the following words refer to:

- *feverish triumph*;
- *like a goddess of Victory*;
- *the joy that kills*.

3. The passage is an example of both

- **situational irony:** The difference between what is expected to happen and what actually happens (Is Louise happy to see her husband?).
- **dramatic irony:** The reader is more aware than a character of what is happening (Does she really die of heart disease?).

Give reasons.

4. Explain how Chopin deals with the themes of:

- women in 19th-century society;
- freedom and independence;
- love and marriage.

5. Does she explain her opinion on marriage or does she show it through stylistic choices?



A FULL ANALYSIS: A SHORT STORY

Robert T. Kurosaka, *A Lot to Learn* (1979)

from *The Little Book of Horrors* (1992)

<p>The Materializer was completed.</p> <p>Ned Quinn stood back, wiped his hands, and admired the huge bank of dials, lights and switches. Several years and many fortunes had gone into this project. Finally it was ready.</p>	<p>STEP 1</p> <p>e.g.: Ned Quinn's machine is ready.</p>
<p>Ned placed the metal skullcap¹ on his head and plugged the wires² into the control panel. He turned the switch to ON and spoke:</p> <p>"Pound Note."</p> <p>There was a whirring³ sound. In the Receiver a piece of paper appeared. Ned inspected it. Real.</p> <p>"Martini," he said.</p> <p>A whirring sound. A puddle⁴ formed in the Receiver. Ned cursed silently. He had a lot to learn.</p> <p>"A bottle of beer," he said.</p> <p>The whirring sound was followed by the appearance of the familiar brown bottle. Ned tasted the contents and grinned⁵.</p> <p>Chuckling⁶, he experimented further.</p> <p>Ned enlarged the Receiver and prepared for his greatest experiment. He switched on the Materializer, took a deep breath and said, "Girl."</p> <p>The whirring sound swelled⁷ and faded. In the Receiver stood a lovely girl. She was naked. Ned had not asked for clothing. She had freckles, a brace and pigtails. She was eight years old.</p>	<p>STEP 2</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>"Hell!" said Quinn.</p>	<p>STEP 3</p> <p>.....</p>
<p>Whirr.</p> <p>The fireman found two charred⁸ skeletons in the smouldering rubble⁹.</p>	<p>STEP 4</p> <p>.....</p>

1. **skullcap:** it. *calotta*

2. **plugged the wires:** it. *inserì i cavi*

3. **whirring:** it. *ronzante*

4. **puddle:** it. *pozzanghera*

5. **grinned:** it. *fece un largo sorriso*

6. **Chuckling:** it. *Con un riso soffocato*

7. **swelled:** it. *aumentò*

8. **charred:** it. *carbonizzati*

9. **smouldering rubble:** it. *calcinacci ardenti*

HOW TO READ THE TEXT

1. Plot

1. Identify the different steps of the plot with a short label, then sum it up.
2. Now analyse the elements of the plot (exposition, rising action, climax or turning point, falling action, and resolution). Does the story fit Freytag's pyramid, or is it organised differently? Is the conflict internal or external? Specifically, who vs whom? Is the conflict resolved?
3. Fill in the following short summary (remembering that the plot is the arrangement of events in a story and the story is the chronological order of events).

STORY	PLOT
Ned Quinn experimented with the Materializer.	Ned Quinn built a 1. with which he did experiments. When trying to materialise a 2., he failed and cursed the 3. by using the word <i>hell</i> . Consequently he 4. by burning in the materialised hell.

2. Setting

1. Is the setting detailed? Contemporary? Exotic?
2. Are there geographical, social and historical references to the background? Where does the action take place?

3. Character

Focus on the characters and their characterisation.

1. Are there enough elements in this story to define Ned Quinn?
2. Why do you think he is not presented as a scientist?
3. Is he static or dynamic? Is he a stock, conventional character, like the fool in a play by Shakespeare or the muscular hero of an adventure story, or is he rather an ordinary man who makes mistakes?
4. How is Ned Quinn presented? Consider the way characters may be presented. Two main techniques are employed:
 - **telling**: the author tells the reader about the characters, their features and personality, often commenting and describing them in detail;
 - **showing**: the author shows the reader the characters' behaviour, dialogues, interactions, and the reader draws his/her conclusions about their features and personality.
5. Who is the antagonist?
6. Why is the machine called the Materializer?

4. Narrator

1. Which type of narrator do you recognise in *A Lot to Learn*? Give reasons for your choice.
2. Does the narrator enter Ned's mind? How limited is the narrative perspective?
3. Why does the narrator choose to report few details and not all the project development?
4. Why doesn't the narrator provide any comment or interpretation?
5. Which conclusions is the reader led to draw?

5. Style

Focus on style, tone and irony.

1. Would you define the style of *A Lot to Learn* as complex, rich in images, or plain, with a minimal variety of structures?
2. Do you find the tone serious, neutral or ironic? Can we talk about frustrated expectations?

6. Theme

The text deals with the theme of technology, or rather Artificial Intelligence, and how difficult it is to use it well.

1. Does Kurosaka overtly convey his ideas about technology? Consider if the story includes any of the following:
 - direct statements expressing his opinions;
 - imagery and symbolism suggesting evaluation;
 - a character who stands for something else (e.g. an archetype).
2. If you cannot find any of the above-mentioned devices, you are free to infer the author's position about the theme. What is your overall impression of the message hidden in this short story?

7. Response

After analysing the story, you may reflect on its meaning and see how you respond to the topic presented, to the images suggested and the emotions aroused.

Do you agree with Kurosaka that science must be dealt with carefully?

Should there be any control on scientific experiments?

How far should science go?

Discuss with a partner, then with the whole class.

2. POETRY

1. MAIN ELEMENTS

Poetry expresses mainly what is unspeakable, our innermost emotions, by using peculiar features such as rhythm, rhyme, imagery, language and sound. Poems are written for several purposes, the main ones being:

- to tell a story;
- to present a new picture of the world, a new perception of reality;
- to express emotions;
- to reflect on life, to educate and create a mood;
- to entertain.

ITEMS	USEFUL WORDS
Subject matter	Love, hatred, war...
Purpose, theme, message	Subject + writer's attitude. Abstract, concrete, subjective, objective, emotional...
Emotion, mood, feeling	Tenderness, sorrow, despair, happiness...; serious, joyful, tragic, playful, formal...

FORM AND STRUCTURE

Language	<p>The chosen words may be formal, informal, concrete, abstract, etc. and can be used in two different ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • denotation: expresses the standard, direct meaning of a word (dictionary definition); • connotation: adds symbolic or emotional associations to a word.
Imagery	<p>Imagery is the figurative language used in poetry and includes figures of speech and rhetorical devices, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • simile: a comparison which uses <i>like</i> or <i>as</i>; • metaphor: an implied comparison between objects of unlike classes. Instead of saying a thing <i>is like</i> another, it states one thing <i>is</i> another; • metonymy: the description of an object through something closely associated with it; • synecdoche: substituting a part for the whole, the whole for a part; • personification: attributing personal qualities to objects or representing them in the form of a human being; • apostrophe: addressing objects as if they were alive, or addressing a dead or absent person directly.
Movement, rhythm	<p>Poets arrange words as to create rhythmical patterns, using:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • foot: basic unit of rhythm (two syllables); • line: a group of words arranged into a row; • stanza: a group of lines arranged as a melodic unit according to a definite pattern; • couplet: the shortest form of stanza consisting of two lines rhyming aa; • tercet: a stanza of three lines; • quatrain: four lines; quintet: five lines; sestet: six lines; septet: seven lines; octave: eight lines.
Sounds	<p>The sense of words may be stressed with sounds:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • fricatives (k, f, s, z, th, sh): conflict or else quietness; • plosives (p, b): fun or action; • liquids (l): pleasant feelings; • dentals (t, d): harsh or rushed effect; • short vowels: quick movements; • long vowels, diphthongs: slow movements. <p>The main sound devices are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alliteration: the repetition of initial letters or sounds in neighbouring words; • assonance: the repetition of vowel sounds in words while the consonant sounds differ; • consonance: the repetition of final consonant sounds while the vowel sounds differ; • onomatopoeia: the use of words whose sound suggests their sense (e.g. <i>buzz, hiss, clang, splash, murmur</i>, etc.).

Rhyme	<p>Rhyme serves three functions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • it is a melodic unit; • it emphasises rhyming words; • it serves to group lines into stanzas. <p>According to its position, we have:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • end rhyme: the rhyming words are at the end of two different lines; • internal rhyme: the rhyming words occur in the same line. <p>One of the most common rhyme schemes is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • alternate or cross rhyme: <i>abab</i>. <p>Enjambements occur when a sentence reaches the end of a line and continues in the next one.</p>
Metre	<p>The metre is the beat pattern of a poem, given by organising stresses and syllables.</p> <p>Free verse has no rhyme and irregular metre.</p> <p>Blank verse has no rhyme and lines of iambic pentameter.</p> <p>A pentameter is a line consisting of five feet.</p> <p>The two basic metres are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • iambic: a two-syllable foot with accent on the second syllable; • trochaic: a two-syllable foot with accent on the first syllable. <p>A refrain is the repetition of a word, phrase, or line.</p> <p>A caesura is a pause in the middle of a verse.</p>

2. MUSIC

The main difference between poetry and prose is the attention paid to **musicality**. The following poem by African American poet Gwendolyn Brooks (1917-2000) may give you a precise idea of the importance of music.

Gwendolyn Brooks, *We Real Cool*

from *The Bean Eaters* (1960)

We Real Cool is a poem about the identity of a group of black teenagers playing pool in the Golden Shovel and not caring about responsibilities. They are black just like Gwendolyn Brooks, but the poem could be about any group of rebellious youngsters, misbehaving to fight the establishment.

The poem has a jazz rhythm, also given by its frequent alliteration, which has a percussive effect.

Gwendolyn Brooks was an American poet, author, and teacher. On May 1, 1950, she became the first African American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry.

THE POOL PLAYERS,
SEVEN AT THE GOLDEN SHOVEL¹.

We real cool. We
Left school. We
5 Lurk² late. We
Strike straight. We
Sing sin³. We
Thin gin⁴. We
Jazz June⁵. We
10 Die soon.

1. **Golden Shovel**: a nightclub

2. **Lurk late**: it. *Restiamo in agguato, svegli fino a tardi* (*Lurk late* has negative connotations: they're wasting time, throwing their young lives away)

3. **Sing sin**: they are going against their religious education

4. **Thin gin**: they drink cheap alcohol

5. **June**: June represents polite society and authority. The boys rebel against June by *jazzing* it up

1. Underline with different colours all the poetic elements giving rhythm, namely:
 - parallel line structures;
 - repeated words/sounds;
 - internal rhymes (words rhyming inside a line, not at the end);
 - alliteration;
 - enjambement.
2. The general sound effect gives the poem a regular but intense rhythm in a short space, which seems to express a carefree attitude on the part of the speaker. Yet the last line, with no repetitions and no internal rhymes, surprises the reader for its sudden change of tone. Explain why.
3. Whose voice tells the poem? Why does Brooks repeat the word *We* at the end of almost every line? What effect does this have on the reader?
4. Do the pool players seem like good or bad people? Would you want to hang out with them?



3. IMAGERY

The second important element of poetry is **imagery**, or the way to suggest reality and emotions through **images**. These may be classified into types according to the **sensory impression** they are related to. Therefore,

we have **visual images** (sight); **auditory images** (hearing); **olfactory images** (smell); **gustatory images** (taste); **tactile images** (touch); and **kinaesthetic images**, suggesting movement.

Ezra Pound, *In a Station of the Metro* (1913)

from *Ezra Pound's Poetry and Prose, Contribution to Periodicals* (1991)

The following two-line poem by the American poet Ezra Pound (1885-1972) is an apparently simple example of emotions and impressions suggested through visual imagery. The poet juxtaposes what he saw in a Paris subway station, rather dark and badly lit, to elements from nature.

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;
Petals on a wet, black bough¹.

1. **bough**: it. *ramo*

1. What are the faces of the people he met compared to? Is the comparison explicit? What does the poet's choice suggest? (Think of colour, texture, delicacy, beauty, etc.)
2. If the petals are a metaphor and stand for the faces in the metro, what does the wet, black bough stand for?
3. What about the effect of such a concise poem on the reader? Does it make the compressed image and the emotion more or less memorable?

Carol Ann Duffy, *Valentine*

from *Mean Time* (1993)

On the surface, this poem by Carol Ann Duffy (b. 1955) is about giving somebody an unusual present for Valentine's Day. On a deeper level, however, it is an exploration of love and the relationship between two people. The poem develops around an extended metaphor.

This was a common technique of Metaphysical poetry in the 17th century: it was called *conceit* and Duffy employs it to experiment with the language of contemporary poetry in order to 'make it new.' The central image is that of an onion, chosen by Duffy as the most genuine, symbolic declaration of her love.

Not a red rose or a satin heart.
I give you an onion
It is a moon wrapped in brown paper.
It promises light
5 Like the careful undressing of love.
Here.
It will blind you with tears
Like a lover.
It will make your reflection
10 A wobbling photo of grief.
I am trying to be truthful.
Not a cute card or a kissogram¹.
I give you an onion.
Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips,
15 Possessive and faithful
As we are,
For as long as we are.

Take it.
Its platinum loops² shrink to a wedding-ring,
20 If you like.
Lethal.
Its scent³ will cling to your fingers,
Cling to your knife.

1. **kissogram**: (surprise) message delivered by someone who kisses the receiver
2. **platinum loops**: it. *cerchi color platino*
3. **scent**: usually, a pleasant smell

1. The poem challenges the idea of a normal Valentine's Day card or present by offering the beloved a surprising gift. What is it? How do you react as a reader?
2. What features of the object does the poet mention? Focus on the following images and explain them:

1. <i>It is a moon wrapped in brown paper</i>	e.g. It is round with a brown envelope
2. <i>It will blind you with tears</i>	
3. <i>Its fierce kiss will stay on your lips</i>	
4. <i>Its platinum loops shrink to a wedding-ring</i>	
5. <i>Its scent will cling to your fingers</i>	

3. Why is it a lethal gift? Why is a knife mentioned at the end? What sort of warning is the speaker giving?
4. Who are the characters in the poem?

4. MAIN TYPES OF POETRY

There are three main types of poetry:

- **narrative**: the poet tells a story, which unfolds and progresses. It is an **objective** type of poetry. **Ballads** are an example of narrative poetry as are **epic poems** and **medieval romances**;
- **lyric**: it takes its name from songs accompanied by the lyre and emphasises **sound** and **imagery**, to allow the poet to better express **personal emotions** and **experiences of the self**;
- **dramatic**: the poet tells a story objectively, embodying emotional experiences in the characters and reporting their words by means of **dialogue**. Dramatic poetry is basically happening now.

4.1 Narrative poetry: ballads

Ballads were originally anonymous **popular songs to be danced**. They usually told a story starting *in medias res* (not from the beginning, literally 'in the midst of things'), had a limited number of characters, were full

of repetitions so that it was easy to learn them by heart, and were often told in the form of dialogue. Today, they are composed to be read and insist more on **feelings** than on events.

Wystan Hugh Auden, *O What Is That Sound* (1932)

from *Look, Stranger!* (1936)

The following poem by Wystan Hugh Auden (1907-1973), published in the 1930s, is a conversation between two people. From the comfort of their home, the two speakers see the valleys and the nearest houses invaded by soldiers marching at a slow pace. The soldiers, who initially seemed harmless, gradually turn out to be violent and break into the home with their eyes *burning*. The breakdown of the couple's relationship and the resulting separation show how war can erode the love they have built over the course of so many years.

Like a traditional ballad, the poem plunges the reader *in medias res*: we see an imaginary setting and two characters made anxious by an impending danger. To make the message more effective, they don't have a

name, so the reader can transfer his/her impressions to his/her own personal experiences.

Each stanza consists of a question and an answer: it is a dialogue full of repetitions between the two characters, where the first couple of lines give voice to one, and the last two lines give voice to the other. The final stanza entirely expresses the observations of a single character.

The other has left as warned.

Auden's main contribution to the poetry of the 1930s was his critical vision of reality. He saw poetry as a tool to discuss the wrongs of society from a left-wing standpoint. The poet had to be a public voice, taking up a public role and supporting the fight against all forms of oppression.

O what is that sound which so thrills¹ the ear
Down in the valley drumming, drumming?
Only the scarlet soldiers², dear,
The soldiers coming.

5 O what is that light I see flashing so clear
Over the distance brightly, brightly?
Only the sun on their weapons, dear,
As they step lightly.

O what are they doing with all that gear³
10 What are they doing this morning, this morning?
Only the usual manoeuvres, dear,
Or perhaps a warning.

O why have they left the road down there
Why are they suddenly wheeling⁴, wheeling?
15 Perhaps a change in the orders, dear,
Why are you kneeling?

O haven't they stopped for the doctor's care
Haven't they reined⁵ their horses, their horses?
Why, they are none of them wounded, dear,
20 None of these forces.

O is it the parson they want with white hair;
Is it the parson, is it, is it?
No, they are passing his gateway, dear,
Without a visit.

25 O it must be the farmer who lives so near
It must be the farmer so cunning, so cunning?

1. **thrills**: fills with excitement but also fear
2. **scarlet soldiers**: soldiers wearing a red uniform. It is not a particular reference to any specific uniform. It recalls the British uniforms of the past but is mainly used to project the story into a sort of mythical time
3. **gear**: weapons, military equipment
4. **wheeling**: a military term which means 'to change direction' (it. *fare una conversione*)
5. **reined**: stopped, pulling back the reins (it. *tirato le briglie*)

They have passed the farm already, dear,
And now they are running.

O where are you going? Stay with me here!

30 Were the vows you swore⁶ me deceiving, deceiving⁷?

No, I promised to love you, dear,
But I must be leaving.

O it's broken the lock and splintered⁸ the door,

O it's the gate where they're turning, turning

35 Their feet are heavy on the floor

And their eyes are burning.

6. **vows you swore:** the promises you made

7. **deceiving:** false

8. **splintered:** broken (it. *fatta a pezzi*)

1. Focus on the speakers: find who speaks in each stanza and define the general mood.
2. Underline all the references to the setting. Where are the characters exactly? Are there many concrete details about the place and the time? Why?
3. Through the words of the characters you see something happening. Describe what they see and to what extent they are affected by the events in the story.
4. What is the theme of the poem?
5. Which elements of a traditional ballad does it include? The aim of a ballad is to reflect on universal themes. Focus on the theme and explain to what extent it can be described as universal.

4.2 Narrative poetry: epic

The word *epic* comes from the Greek for *word*, *poem* or *story*. It deals with the most important events of a nation or culture and illustrates the values and traditions of a society.

The ingredients of epic poetry are **formal style, brave heroes, supernatural elements, journeys, third-person narrator and long narration.**

Beowulf (8th century - uncertain)

Beowulf is considered the oldest epic poem in Northern Europe, dating back to a period which may range from the 5th to the 8th century. However, it was written down anonymously only by 1000 AD in a manuscript which is held at the British Library. It is the most famous Anglo-Saxon epic poem and deals with a hero, his fights against three monsters, battles, blood, death and fame.

Beowulf, the protagonist, is a young nobleman from Geatland. At the beginning, he travels to Denmark in order to help King Hrothgar fight two terrible monsters, Grendel and his mother; then he goes back to his land where he becomes king. Fifty years later, once again, he has to fight a dragon in a mortal combat. The poem ends with his testament and funeral.

The final battle

In his old age, Beowulf faces a monster for the third time in his heroic life. But this time the battle is harsh and he needs the help of the young hero Wiglaf.

The bold king again
had mind of his glory: with might his glaive
was driven into the dragon's head, –
blow nerved by hate. But Naegling was shivered,

- 5 broken in battle was Beowulf's sword,
old and gray. 'Twas granted him not
that ever the edge of iron at all
could help him at strife: too strong was his hand,
so the tale is told, and he tried too far
10 with strength of stroke all swords he wielded,
though sturdy their steel: they steadied him nought.

Il sovrano guerriero ripensò di nuovo alle sue gesta. La sua forza grandiosa colpì, con la lama di guerra, finché lo colse in testa, con un urto violento. Volò in frantumi, Naegling, lo tradi, in quello scontro, la spada di Beowulf, la sua antica arma grigia. A lui non fu concesso che il filo del suo ferro riuscisse a sostenerlo nello scontro. La mano di lui era troppo forte; tanto, a quanto ho saputo, da mettere ogni spada a troppo grave prova colpendo, quando in guerra portava un'arma dura a forza di ferite. Non gli serviva a niente.

Then for the third time thought on its feud
that folk-destroyer, fire-dread dragon,
and rushed on the hero, where room allowed,
15 battle-grim, burning; its bitter teeth
closed on his neck, and covered him
with waves of blood from his breast that welled.
(Modern translation, ll. 2554-2568)

E, per la terza volta, il Flagello dei popoli, il
temerario drago di fuoco, ripensando alla faida,
si avventò sul grand'uomo: e allora trovò spazio.
Caldo, feroce, ostile, gli strinse tutto il collo con
le sue grinfie amare. Lui ne fu insanguinato, di
un sangue d'anima. Sgorgava, il sangue, a
ondate.

(*Beowulf*, Torino: Einaudi, 1992, translated by
Ludovica Koch, ll. 2677-2693)

1. Fill in the following table with all the epithets and definitions of the hero and the antagonist.

BEOWULF	THE DRAGON

2. Which weapon is used for the battle? Is it useful for the hero?
3. Underline all the verbs and sum up the conclusion of the battle (max 50 words).

4.3 Lyric poetry

Nikki Giovanni, *I Wrote a Good Omelet* from *Selected Poems* (1996)

Most lyric poems are fairly short and highly subjective, since they mainly focus on insights and deal with the speaker's personal emotions, moods, feelings, ideas, and thoughts. They are like a flash in a timeless present. Lyric poetry makes wide use of sound devices and imagery to achieve musicality. It can encompass many forms, such as the sonnet, ode and elegy.

Nikki Giovanni (b. 1943) is an African American writer, poet, commentator, activist, and educator.

In this contemporary lyric she mimics the dizzying feeling of falling in love through a series of playful reversals, as if the speaker were unable to focus on anything else after being with his/her beloved.

I wrote a good omelet... and ate
a hot poem... after loving you
Buttoned my car... and drove my
coat home... in the rain...
5 after loving you
I goed¹ on red... and stopped on
green... floating somewhere in between...
being here and being there...
after loving you
10 I rolled my bed... turned down
my hair... slightly
confused but... I don't care...
Laid out my teeth... and gargled² my
15 gown... then I stood...
and laid me down...
To sleep...
After loving you

1. **goed**: went; the grammar used has also become chaotic
2. **gargled**: rinsed one's mouth (here rinsed *my gown* instead)

1. What happens to the protagonist?
2. All the images in the poem show a world turned upside down by the power of a new love. Underline all the unusual verb+object combinations you find.
3. Is there a refrain stressing an important idea?
4. Daily life continues in spite of emotions, but it becomes crazy, full of jumbled clichés. Do you think this is what happens to someone in love? Is the poem too paradoxical in your opinion? Why?

Louise Elisabeth Glück, *Gretel in Darkness* (1975)

from *The First Four Books* (1995)

Louise Elisabeth Glück (b. April 22, 1943 in New York City) grew up on Long Island and was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2020.

The following poem is a monologue delivered by the eponymous heroine of the fairy tale *Hansel and Gretel*. Rewriting the stories of female characters from the past is a common strategy employed by many contemporary women poets.

The young speaking heroine can still hear the screams of the witch she has killed, whose death keeps haunting her. Gretel is alone in her sorrow; nobody helps her overcome her trauma. She wonders why she can't forget even though she's living a happy and safe life in her home.

Gretel in Darkness is a lyric dealing with the themes of repression, misogyny and memory.

This is the world we wanted.
 All who would have seen us dead
 Are dead. I hear the witch's cry
 Break in the moonlight through a sheet
 5 Of sugar: God rewards.
 Her tongue shrivels¹ into gas...
 Now, far from women's arms
 And memory of women, in our father's hut
 We sleep, are never hungry.
 10 Why do I not forget?
 My father bars the door, bars harm
 From this house, and it is years.
 No one remembers. Even you, my brother,
 Summer afternoons you look at me as though
 15 You meant to leave,
 As though it never happened.
 But I killed for you. I see armed firs²,
 The spires of that gleaming kiln³ –
 Nights I turn to you to hold me
 20 But you are not there.
 Am I alone? Spies
 Hiss in the stillness, Hansel,
 We are there still and it is real, real,
 That black forest and the fire in earnest⁴.



1. **shrivels:** it. *si secca, si raggrinza*

2. **armed firs:** boughs

3. **The spires of that gleaming kiln:** it. *Le spire (fiamme) baluginanti di quella fornace*

4. **in earnest:** it. *sul serio*

1. Is the speaker clearly addressing another person? Does the speaker reveal her temperament and character?
2. When is she speaking?
3. Choosing Gretel as speaker sets up an intertextual relation with the source text. What is the relation between the fairy tale and this poem? Which original elements do you recognise?
4. What does the poem imply by the way it re-imagines the story and gives voice to the character? Why Gretel and not Hansel?
5. Retell the story from Hansel's point of view.
6. Choose another fairy tale and retell it from the villain's point of view.

4.4 Lyric poetry: sonnet

The sonnet is a refined **fixed verse form** consisting of **14 lines**. Brought to fame by the Italian poet Francesco Petrarca (Petrarch) in the 14th century, it was adopted in England in the Renaissance in a slightly different adaptation.

A comparison between the Italian and the English sonnet may simplify their features.

	Italian sonnet	English sonnet
Form	1 octave + 1 sestet	3 quatrains + 1 couplet
Basic rhyme scheme	<i>abba abba cdecde</i>	<i>abab cdcd efef gg</i>
Logical structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • octave: introduces the issue • sestet: develops it to the conclusion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 quatrains: introduce and develop the argument • final couplet: concludes, comments, sums up, criticises

Christina Rossetti, *Remember* (1849)

from *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862)

Christina Rossetti (1830-1894) was a Victorian poet mainly famous for her collection *Goblin Market and other Poems*.

The following, well-known, lyrical poem is about the importance of memory. The poet would like the addressee to remember her after she has died.

What gives the sonnet a twist is the final thought: it would be better for her loved one to forget her and be happy than to remember her if it makes him sad.

Remember me when I am gone away,
 Gone far away into the silent land;
 When you can no more hold me by the hand,
 Nor I half turn to go yet turning stay.
5 Remember me when no more day by day
 You tell me of our future that you plann'd:
 Only remember me; you understand
 It will be late to counsel then or pray.
 Yet if you should forget me for a while
10 And afterwards remember, do not grieve:
 For if the darkness and corruption leave
 A vestige¹ of the thoughts that once I had,
 Better by far you should forget and smile
 Than that you should remember and be sad.

1. **vestige:** trace

1. What is the poem about exactly? What is the poet worried about? What is the *silent land*?
2. Underline the pairs of opposites: what effect do they have? Are there any repetitions? What is their purpose?
3. Look at the rhyming scheme of *Remember*: is it an Italian or an English sonnet?
4. Identify the enjambements: what effect do they have? Could they suggest continuity between two worlds? Which ones?
5. Focus on the conclusion: if the poem from line 1 to 8 is an appeal not to forget, why does Rossetti conclude it with a contrasting remark?

Eleanor Brown, *Stillborn*from *Maiden Speech* (1996)

Stillborn is a meditation about poetry and the difficulty in giving birth to a perfect poem, as if it were a newborn baby. The metaphorical result of birth-giving is turned into pain and failure.

Eleanor Brown (b. 1969) grew up in Scotland and wrote some poetry collections, among which *White Ink Stains* (2019). This (post-)modern sonnet belongs to a group of fifty sonnets in the collection *Maiden Speech* (1996).

Stillborn; aborted; cot-dead¹; premature;
 Dead on delivery; 'untimely ripped'²
 (Not from the womb³, perhaps, because I'm not
 Yet sure I've got so generous a thing)
 5 Or springing fully-formed out of my head,
 In technical perfection – but quite dead.
 Frost-bitten fruit; small victims of freak spring
 Snow; bud-nipped blossoms. All because of what?
 Because I was not loved. Neglected; tipped
 10 Out with the bath water⁴; refused a cure;
 Exposed, as infants were who were the wrong
 Sex; drowned like litter-runts⁵. You too, poor song:
 Like all these bastard progeny of mine,
 You'll be garroted⁶ at the fourteenth line.

1. **cot-dead**: it. *morti nella culla*
2. **untimely ripped**: it. *strappati prematuramente* (a quotation from Shakespeare's *Macbeth*)
3. **womb**: it. *ventre*
4. **tipped out with the bath water**: it. *gettati via con l'acqua sporca*
5. **litter-runts**: the smallest and weakest animals in a litter (it. *piccoli bastardi*)
6. **garrotted**: it. *garrotati, uccisi crudelmente per soffocamento*

1. Who is the speaker?
2. She metaphorically refers to her poetry as a baby and a fruit. Circle the vocatives and similes referring to each field in a different colour.
3. How does the octave end? Where is the answer?
4. How does the poem end? Focus on the final couplet.
5. What is the tone used? Choose from the following:

<input type="checkbox"/> a. serious	<input type="checkbox"/> d. ironic
<input type="checkbox"/> b. tragic	<input type="checkbox"/> e. thoughtful
<input type="checkbox"/> c. playful	
6. To what extent is this sonnet traditional? Take both the form and the content into consideration.

4.5 Dramatic poetry

Dramatic poetry is written in the form of a **dialogue** or a **monologue** and often deals with 'dramatic' situations.

T. S. Eliot, *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*from *Prufrock and Other Observations* (1917)

An example of dramatic poetry is *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock*, a monologue in free verse – even if occasional rhymes may be found for special reasons – written by T. S. Eliot in 1910 and published in 1917. It is dramatic since there is dramatisation, a dialogue between the speaker and an addressee.

The external events are not important but for their triggering off mental activities, thoughts and feelings in the speaker. This is why it may be called *interior monologue*.

Let us go then, you and I,
 When the evening is spread out¹ against the sky
 Like a patient etherised upon a table²;
 Let us go, through certain half-deserted streets,
 5 [...]
 Oh, do not ask, "What is it?"
 Let us go and make our visit.

1. **is spread out**: it. *si stende*
2. **Like a patient etherised upon a table**: it. *Come un paziente eterizzato disteso su una tavola*

1. Which technique is used in the first lines? What is its effect on the reader?
2. What is unusual about the simile at line 3?
3. Who might the addressee be?

Edgar Lee Masters, *Spoon River Anthology* (1915)

The *Spoon River Anthology* is a collection of poems written in the voice of the people buried in the imaginary Spoon River cemetery. The poet Edgar Lee Masters (1868-1950) leaves his dead characters free to express themselves and they talk about their lives from their own point of view (dramatic monologue). Therefore, the anthology is a series of

'auto- epitaphs' (inscriptions on a grave in memory of the dead) or monologues in free verse which often contradict the commemorative epitaphs on gravestones and explore the hypocrisy of American small-town life. The poem below describes a woman sleeping on the hill of Spoon River who seems to be satisfied with her life.

Lucinda Matlock

- I went to the dances at Chandlerville,
And played snap-out¹ at Winchester.
One time we changed partners,
Driving home in the moonlight of middle June,
5 And then I found Davis.
We were married and lived together for seventy years,
Enjoying, working, raising the twelve children,
Eight of whom we lost
Ere² I had reached the age of sixty.
10 I spun,
I wove,
I kept the house,
I nursed the sick,
I made the garden, and for holiday
15 Rambled³ over the fields where sang the larks,
And by Spoon River gathering many a shell,
And many a flower and medicinal weed—
Shouting to the wooded hills, singing to the green valleys.
At ninety-six I had lived enough, that is all,
20 And passed to a sweet repose.
What is this I hear of sorrow and weariness,
Anger, discontent and drooping⁴ hopes?
Degenerate sons and daughters,
Life is too strong for you—
25 It takes life to love Life.

1. **snap-out:** card game
2. **Ere:** Before (lit.)
3. **Rambled:** Walked
4. **drooping:** falling

Ursula A. Fanthorpe, *Not My Best Side*

from *Side Effects* (1978)

For Ursula Askham Fanthorpe (1929-2009) a poem was 'as a conversation between the poet and the reader' and many of her verses are for two or more voices. The poem selected includes three dramatic monologues delivered by three characters from a painting by Paolo Uccello (1460), which Fanthorpe re-visits from a feminist perspective.

- I**
Not my best side¹, I'm afraid.
The artist didn't give me a chance to
Pose properly, and as you can see,
Poor chap, he had this obsession with
5 Triangles, so he left off two of my
Feet. I didn't comment at the time
(What, after all, are two feet
To a monster?) but afterwards
I was sorry for the bad publicity.
10 Why, I said to myself, should my conqueror

1. **Not my best side:** it. *Non il mio profilo migliore*

- Be so ostentatiously beardless, and ride
A horse with a deformed neck and square hoofs?²
Why should my victim be so
Unattractive as to be inedible,
15 And why should she have me literally
On a string³? I don't mind dying
Ritually, since I always rise again,
But should have liked a little more blood
To show they were taking me seriously.

II

- 20 It's hard for a girl to be sure if
She wants to be rescued. I mean, I quite
Took to⁴ the dragon. It's nice to be
Liked, if you know what I mean. He was
So nicely physical, with his claws⁵
25 And lovely green skin, and that sexy tail,
And the way he looked at me,
He made me feel he was all ready to
Eat me. And any girl enjoys that.
So when this boy turned up, wearing machinery
30 On a really dangerous horse, to be honest
I didn't much fancy him. I mean,
What was he like underneath the hardware⁶?
He might have acne, blackheads⁷ or even
Bad breath for all I could tell, but the dragon—
35 Well, you could see all his equipment
At a glance. Still, what could I do?
The dragon got himself beaten by the boy.
And a girl's got to think of her future.

III

- I have diplomas in Dragon
40 Management and Virgin Reclamation⁸.



- My horse is the latest model, with
Automatic transmission and built-in
Obsolescence⁹. My spear is custom-built¹⁰,
And my prototype armour
45 Still on the secret list. You can't
Do better than me at the moment.
I'm qualified and equipped to the
Eyebrow¹¹. So why be difficult?
Don't you want to be killed and/or rescued
50 In the most contemporary way? Don't
You want to carry out the roles
That sociology and myth have designed for you?
Don't you realise that, by being choosy¹²,
You are endangering¹³ job-prospects
55 In the spear and horse-building industries?
What, in any case, does it matter what
You want? You're in my way¹⁴.

2. **hoofs:** it. *zoccoli*

3. **have me literally on a string:** it. *avermi letteralmente in pugno* (lett. *alla corda*)

4. **Took to:** it. *Mi ero affezionata*

5. **claws:** it. *artigli*

6. **hardware:** it. *ferraglia*

7. **blackheads:** black spots

8. **Virgin Reclamation:** it. *Recupero vergini*

9. **built-in obsolescence:** it. *obsolescenza programmata*

10. **custom-built:** it. *personalizzata, costruita su misura*

11. **equipped to the eyebrow:** it. *equipaggiato di tutto punto*

12. **choosy:** it. *esigente, difficile*

13. **endangering:** compromising

14. **You're in my way:** it. *Mi sei d'impiccio*

1. Identify the speaker in each stanza.
2. Like animated characters in a painting, the three speakers seem to have an oddly strange point of view about their situation. *It* is critical of... *She* is critical of... *He* is critical of...
3. They do not play the conventional role of medieval characters, but rather belong to a more contemporary age. Explain why.
4. What role does the dragon play here: is it the traditionally dangerous creature?
5. What is the tone of each single speaker? Choose among the following:

<input type="checkbox"/> a. resigned	<input type="checkbox"/> b. matter-of-fact	<input type="checkbox"/> c. disillusioned
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 Is the overall tone serious or humorous? Give reasons.
6. What do the characters represent? Choose the appropriate answers:

<input type="checkbox"/> a. The passage from a primitive age to the age of technology.	<input type="checkbox"/> c. The condition of women.
<input type="checkbox"/> b. The clash between past and present.	<input type="checkbox"/> d. The arrogance of power.

3. DRAMA

1. MAIN ELEMENTS

Drama is a Greek word, since the **Greeks** were the first Europeans to stage religious performances with the aim of collective purification. Today we associate this word with **play** (it. *opera teatrale*). What is a play, then?

A **work written by a playwright to be performed on a stage**. The dramatic text is made up of a **series of characters** performing a **sequence of actions** that usually develop into a climax or a final resolution. Like any written text, its addressee may be any reader. The development of the play is mainly based on the

dialogues among the characters, while the description of the setting is given in the **stage directions** along with hints at sounds, tones, actions. The latter are essential parts of the performance, whose addressee is the audience at large. Instead of chapters, like a novel, the play is divided into **acts** and **scenes**. A play may be either:

- a **tragedy** (a serious work with a tragic ending);
- a **comedy** (an entertaining work with a happy ending);
- a **tragicomedy** (a work combining tragic and comic elements).

		FUNCTION	USEFUL WORDS
Plot	Basic storyline	There is: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a beginning; • a climax; • a development, given by the arrangement of the different situations and dialogues. 	Beginning, development, climax In a tragedy : introduction, rise, climax, return or fall, catastrophe
Setting	Time, place, scenery, props	To show/suggest where the action is taking place.	Nouns and adjectives for location
Characters	Actors in the story	There are two main types of characters: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • stock characters that never change during the play (stereotypical persons or types, typical of comedies); • round characters that reveal their vices and virtues throughout the play. Moreover, there is a protagonist (the hero) and an antagonist (society, nature, other people) and their conflict brings about the action.	Traits, motives, personalities, changes given through dialogues
Stage directions	(Not acted) Additional information, hints at the tone of voice, movements of the actors on the stage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To give information on the time and place of the action. • To give information on the characters, their physical appearance, their feelings, their personality, their actions. • To suggest the playwright's comments and thoughts. • To define the atmosphere of the scene. 	Adverbs, verbs of motion, deictics
Dialogues/ Monologues	Words delivered by the characters	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To build up the plot and the characters' personalities. • To inform about what is happening, what happened in the past, and raise expectations as to future developments. • To reveal aspects of a character's personality or a commentary on other characters/events – soliloquy, aside (i.e. a short soliloquy). • To reveal the thoughts of a character about someone else. 	
Theme	Main point(s) or message	To convey the playwright's message .	Subject matter + writers' attitude
Non-textual elements	Sounds, lights, scenery	To suggest the atmosphere .	Dim, muffled, bright, loud, etc.

2. TRAGEDY

Classical tragedies usually follow a pattern of **five acts**, divided into a number of scenes. This division allowed a sort of harmonious development of the various parts of a tragedy which can be summarised as follows:

1. **introduction**, showing a situation of prosperity;
2. **development**;
3. **crisis**;
4. **decline**;

5. **final outcome** with catastrophe and death of the hero(es).

The action represented in the scene allowed **identification** and purification (**catharsis**) through the death of the sinful hero. To reach this aim, the attention was mainly concentrated on one character, namely the tragic hero/heroine.

William Shakespeare, *Macbeth* (1606)

The following extract from *Macbeth* (1606), one of the most famous Shakespearean plays, acts as a prologue to the whole action of the tragedy. The play opens with this scene showing three witches speaking mysterious words in a setting that foreshadows impending disorder.

Fair is foul and foul is fair

(Act 1, Scene 1)

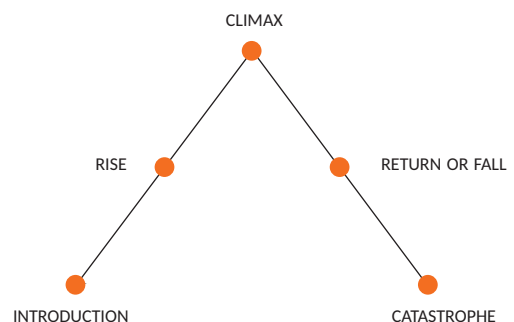
A desert place.

[Thunder and lightning. Enter three Witches]

- FIRST WITCH: When shall we three meet again
In thunder, lightning, or in rain?
- 5 SECOND WITCH: When the hurlyburly's done¹,
When the battle's lost and won.
- THIRD WITCH: That will be ere² the set of sun.
- FIRST WITCH: Where the place?
- SECOND WITCH: Upon the heath³.
- 10 THIRD WITCH: There to meet with Macbeth.
- FIRST WITCH: I come, Graymalkin⁴!
- SECOND WITCH: Paddock⁵ calls.
- THIRD WITCH: Anon⁶.
- ALL: Fair is foul, and foul is fair⁷;
15 Hover through the fog and filthy air.
- [Exeunt]*

1. **When the hurlyburly's done**: it. *Baraonda è stata fatta*
2. **ere**: before (lit.)
3. **heath**: it. *brughiera*
4. **Graymalkin**: it. *Gatto* (i.e. an evil spirit sent by Satan to help a witch)
5. **Paddock**: it. *Rospo* (i.e. an evil spirit sent by Satan to help a witch)
6. **Anon**: lit. it. *Subito*
7. **Fair is foul, and foul is far**: the whole line takes the form of a chiasmus (a reversal in the order of words in two parallel phrases)

1. (Setting) Where are the three witches? What is the weather like?
2. They are talking about a future meeting: where? What will the weather be like? Which atmosphere do all the words connected to the setting convey?
3. (Dialogues) Focus on the witches: what sort of words do they use? What is their function?
4. (Imagery) Focus on line 14 (*Fair is foul...*). Is the chiasmus a meaningful image to suggest confusion? Is there any other line as enigmatic as this one?
5. (Plot) What is the whole passage about? What step in the plot pyramid does it represent?



3. COMEDY

A **comedy** is a type of drama usually made up of the following elements:

- a **prologue** introducing the topic of the play;
- a series of **episodes** separated by short choral intervals and featuring a starting chaotic situation followed by a conflict and an elaborate plot;
- the **happy ending** (with the protagonist typically going to a wedding party or a banquet).

During Tudor and Jacobean times (1485-1625), comedies were written to **entertain** but also to provide **moral teachings** on social issues. The classic features were slightly modified – above all with the elimination of the choral intervals – but they maintained a loose and elaborate plot.

Today, comedy is still a very popular form of drama, in all its **types**, such as:

- **farce**: a light dramatic composition with highly improbable situations, stereotyped characters,

exaggerations, nonsense and violence;

- **satire**: a work showing human vices, folly and abuses to ridicule, sometimes to bring about social and personal improvement;
- **sentimental comedy**: a type of play mixing comedy and tragedy to inspire tears, whose protagonists have to overcome a series of moral trials;
- **comedy of manners**: a witty form of drama satirising the manners and fashions of a particular social class or set;
- **slapstick comedy**: a light and humorous drama with a happy ending often involving absurd situations and exaggerated physical actions;
- **stand-up comedy**: a comedian performing in front of a live audience, usually speaking directly to them and telling humorous stories or jokes;
- **sitcom**: the same set of characters who appear in different situations in every episode (i.e. *Friends*).

Oscar Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest* (1895)

The title itself of this comedy is a pun, since *Ernest* (a proper name) is pronounced in the same way as *earnest* (an adjective meaning honest, sincere). Yet, in a comedy where the importance of truth is stressed in the title, none is sincere.

The plot is quite complex, rich in misunderstandings and *coups de théâtre*, with a final denouement leading to a happy ending. In short, it is the story of two young men, Jack Worthing and Algernon Moncrieff, who are in love with two young women, Gwendolen and Cecily, and who both pretend that their name is Ernest – as both girls love this name only. Their love adventures

find an apparently insurmountable obstacle in Gwendolen's imperious mother, Lady Bracknell, who opposes the knot. Only when Miss Prism reveals the secret of a bag left at Victoria station years before and containing a baby, can the wedding between Jack and Gwendolen take place. In fact, Jack turns out to be Lady Bracknell's nephew, who had been lost by an absent-minded governess, said Miss Prism. Moreover, his real name is precisely Ernest. Wilde portrays the elegance and superficiality of the upper classes of his times through characters that are mere caricatures. They come to life through their dialogues.

An interview at tea-time

Lady Bracknell is interviewing Jack Worthing to check whether he is an appropriate match for her only daughter Gwendolen. This is how the scene develops.

LADY BRACKNELL: You can take a seat, Mr Worthing.

JACK: Thank you, Lady Bracknell, I prefer standing.

LADY BRACKNELL: I feel bound to tell you that you are not down on my list of eligible¹ young men, although I have the same list as the dear Duchess of Bolton has. We work together, in fact. However, I am quite ready to enter your name, should your answers be what a really affectionate mother requires. Do you smoke?

5 JACK: Well, yes, I must admit I smoke.

LADY BRACKNELL: I am glad to hear it. A man should always have an occupation of some kind. There are far too many idle men in London as it is. How old are you?

10 JACK: Twenty-nine.

LADY BRACKNELL: A very good age to be married at. I have always been of opinion that a man who desires to get married should know either everything or nothing. Which do you know?

JACK: I know nothing, Lady Bracknell.

15 LADY BRACKNELL: I am pleased to hear it. I do not approve of anything that tampers with²

1. **eligible**: qualified

2. **tampers with**: interferes with

- 20 natural ignorance. Ignorance is like a delicate exotic fruit; touch it and the bloom is gone. The whole theory of modern education is radically unsound³. Fortunately in England, at any rate, education produces no effect whatsoever. If it did, it would prove a serious danger to the upper classes, and probably lead to acts of violence in Grosvenor Square.
- [...]
- Who was your father? He was evidently a man of some wealth. Was he born in what the Radical papers call the purple of commerce, or did he rise from the ranks of the aristocracy?
- 25 JACK: I am afraid I really don't know. The fact is, Lady Bracknell, I said I had lost my parents. It would be nearer the truth to say that my parents seem to have lost me... I don't actually know who I am by birth. I was... well, I was found.
- LADY BRACKNELL: Found!
- JACK: The late Mr Thomas Cardew, an old gentleman of a very charitable and
- 30 kindly disposition, found me, and gave me the name of Worthing, because he happened to have a first-class ticket for Worthing in his pocket at the time. Worthing is a place in Sussex. It is a seaside resort.
- LADY BRACKNELL: Where did the charitable gentleman who had a first-class ticket for this seaside resort find you?
- 35 JACK: In a handbag.
- LADY BRACKNELL: A handbag?
- JACK: Yes, Lady Bracknell. I was in a handbag – a somewhat large, black leather handbag, with handles⁴ to it – an ordinary handbag, in fact.
- LADY BRACKNELL: In what locality did this Mr James, or Thomas, Cardew come across this
- 40 ordinary handbag?
- JACK: In the cloakroom⁵ at Victoria Station. It was given to him in mistake for his own.
- LADY BRACKNELL: The cloakroom at Victoria Station?
- JACK: Yes. The Brighton line.
- LADY BRACKNELL: The line is immaterial, Mr Worthing, I confess I feel somewhat bewildered⁶
- 45 by what you have just told me. To be born, or at any rate, bred in a handbag, whether it had handles or not, seems to me to display a contempt for the ordinary decencies of family life that reminds one of the worst excesses of the French Revolution.

3. **unsound**: wrong and unreliable

4. **handles**: it. *manici*

5. **cloakroom**: it. *guardaroba*

6. **bewildered**: perplexed

-
- Rearrange the list of topics touched upon by Lady Bracknell in her interview.
☐ a. Parents ☐ b. Age ☐ c. Knowledge/Education
 - What about the replies? Do they sound logical or quite unusual? Why?
 - Focus on the second part where Lady Bracknell and Jack talk about his origins. What makes the audience laugh is mainly verbal irony. Find examples of any of the following:
 - unbelievable stories;
 - the attitude of the two protagonists who take everything very seriously;
 - the choice of language (elevated to talk about trivial matters);
 - the unexpected content of Lady Bracknell's replies/requests.
 - Focus on Lady Bracknell. Which words would you use to describe her? Tick as appropriate and justify your choice by making reference to the text.

<input type="checkbox"/> a. Narrow-minded	<input type="checkbox"/> d. Snobbish	<input type="checkbox"/> g. Other
<input type="checkbox"/> b. Open-minded	<input type="checkbox"/> e. Superficial
<input type="checkbox"/> c. Assertive	<input type="checkbox"/> f. Ruthless
 - What is your impression of Jack? Who is the dominating character in this play?
 - Lady Bracknell represents Victorian aristocracy and upper classes. Do you think Wilde created this character to criticise them?

4. TRAGICOMEDY

Tragicomedy contains elements of both comedy and tragedy. It usually has a serious subject matter, lightened with jokes. The characters in tragicomedy are exaggerated, and sometimes there might be a happy ending after a series of unfortunate events.

The Merchant of Venice by William Shakespeare and *Waiting for Godot* by Samuel Beckett can be labelled as tragicomedies, as their dark atmosphere is lightened by humorous moments.

Tom Stoppard, *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* (1966)

The tragicomedy *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead* was first performed at the Edinburgh Fringe in 1966.

The play owes much, or rather, is full of inter-textual references to *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare. In the Shakespearean tragedy, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern were two minor characters, two 'attendant lords,' old friends of Hamlet from university: here, however, they become the protagonists of the play, both as witnesses and victims. In this play, in fact, Stoppard investigates what might have happened if things had gone a little different. This shift in perspective is a typical device of post-modern art, through which the reader is offered alternative points of view.

Stoppard's play also echoes another great modern work, Samuel Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* (1952), in the

inability of the two main characters to grasp the space/stage around them or influence the events. This device is used for both serious and comic effect and enhances the sense of solitude and lack of control over one's life.

At the beginning of the play, King Claudius of Denmark, Hamlet's uncle, wants Rosencrantz and Guildenstern to investigate Hamlet's madness: they find out what is wrong with the prince, but dare not tell the king. Hamlet may be mad but he is always aware of who he is, while Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, the modern men, spend their time playing games and discussing existential questions about truth and identity, unable to take action. The two characters are constantly on stage and never leave each other's sides, looking for certainties and hopes, such as God, but cannot find any faith.

Let's do something

The following episode from Act 1 shows Rosencrantz and Guildenstern trying to do something constructive with their time. The dialogues are ingenious, rapid-fire games in which every shot must be a question – all statements and repetitions are playfully rejected.

- | | | |
|----|------------------|---|
| | ROSENCRANTZ: | Shouldn't we be doing something – constructive? |
| | GUILDENSTERN: | What did you have in mind? ... A short, blunt human pyramid... ? |
| | ROSENCRANTZ: | We could go. |
| | GUILDENSTERN: | Where? |
| 5 | ROSENCRANTZ: | After him ¹ . |
| | GUILDENSTERN: | Why? They've got us placed now – if we start moving around, we'll all be chasing each other all night. |
| | [<i>Hiatu</i>] | |
| 10 | ROSENCRANTZ: | [<i>at footlights</i> ²]: How very intriguing! [<i>Turns.</i>] I feel like a spectator – an appalling business. The only thing that makes it bearable is the irrational belief that somebody interesting will come on in a minute... |
| | GUILDENSTERN: | See anyone? |
| | ROSENCRANTZ: | No. You? |
| 15 | GUILDENSTERN: | No. [<i>At footlights</i>] What a fine persecution – to be kept intrigued ³ without ever quite being enlightened... [<i>Pause.</i>] We've had no practice. |
| | ROSENCRANTZ: | We could play at questions. |
| | GUILDENSTERN: | What good would that do? |
| | ROSENCRANTZ: | Practice! |

1. **him**: Hamlet

2. **at footlights**: it. *rivolgendosi verso le luci della ribalta*

3. **kept intrigued**: it. *continuare a essere coinvolti*



GUILDENSTERN: Statement! One-love⁴.

20 ROSENCRANTZ: Cheating⁵!

GUILDENSTERN: How?

ROSENCRANTZ: I hadn't started yet.

GUILDENSTERN: Statement. Two-love.

ROSENCRANTZ: Are you counting that?

25 GUILDENSTERN: What?

ROSENCRANTZ: Are you counting that?

GUILDENSTERN: Foul⁶! No repetitions. Three-love. First game to...

ROSENCRANTZ: I'm not going to play if you're going to be like that.

GUILDENSTERN: Whose serve?

30 ROSENCRANTZ: Hah?

GUILDENSTERN: Foul! No grunts⁷. Love-one.

[...]

ROSENCRANTZ: What's the matter with you today?

GUILDENSTERN: When?

35 ROSENCRANTZ: What?

GUILDENSTERN: Are you deaf?

ROSENCRANTZ: Am I dead?

GUILDENSTERN: Yes or no?

ROSENCRANTZ: Is there a choice?

40 GUILDENSTERN: Is there a God?

4. **One-love:** it. *Uno a zero* (the same language used in a tennis match is used here to mark the scores)

5. **Cheating!:** it. *Imbroglia!*

6. **Foul!:** it. *Fallo!*

7. **No grunts:** it. *Niente brontolii*

-
1. What play are the two characters acting out?
 2. Is there a progression in the dialogue at the content level?
 3. Do the questions lead anywhere or not?

4. EXAM TIPS

1. READING TIPS

1.1 Works of art

Paintings

1. What is the subject of the painting? Are there objects/people?
2. Consider the art elements in the painting: line, colour, light, shape, form, space, texture, value...
3. What material did the artist use?
4. What is the focal point (the most important part) of the painting?
5. Why do you think the artist created it? Is there a message?

Sculptures and artefacts

1. What is the material of the piece, and how does it affect the viewer?
2. What was the purpose of the piece? In what setting was it originally placed?
3. How are scale and proportion respected?
4. Does the piece portray a person? What type of impression of the subject does it give?
5. Is the pose stiff or relaxed? Are there objects with the person?



Damien Hirst, *For the Love of God* (2007).

Architecture and space

1. What is the form of the building/space, and what is its function?
Is it in line with the surrounding landscape/cityscape or not?
2. Is the building/space useful/functional? How do people move throughout the structure?
3. Is the building/space structurally sound, given its location, design and materials?
4. What role does daylight play?
5. Do the exterior and interior complement each other?
Are they adorned?



The Shard, London.

1.2 Stills and photographs

Content

- Describe exactly what you see in the photograph: what is happening? What people and objects do you see? How are the people dressed?
- What can you infer from the expression on their faces and their posture? Do they pose or is it an authentic shot?
- What are the setting and season? What can you see in the background?
- Are there any objects? What function do they have?
- What circumstances does the photo represent?

Context

- What do you know about this time period or event?
- What does the picture tell you about its time and place of origin?
- What point of view is represented? Is it biased?

Conclusions

- What is unique about this image?
- What can you conclude from what you see?
- How would you describe the photographer's point of view?
- What questions does the photograph raise?
- What is missing from the photograph?
- Add noises and smells.

1.3 Poster

Colours and design

- What is the visual style of the poster (use of colour, line...)?
- What do the images say about its designer?
- Emotional appeal? How?

Symbols

- How do all the graphic elements combine to create symbolism?

Message

- Is it serious or playful? Formal or informal?
- Is it expressed:
 - visually;
 - verbally;
 - both;
 - both, with one prevailing?
- Does it make use of humour, parody, irony? Scare tactics? Logical arguments?

**Sender**

- What is its purpose?
- Who is the designer? Who is speaking? Why?
- What is its historical background?

Target audience/viewers

- Who is the designer speaking to? How do you know?
- Is the designer effective in gaining the audience's attention?

General effect

- Is the message effective?
- Is it memorable? Why/Why not?

1.4 Publicity

1. What is being advertised: a product/service/campaign...?
2. Analyse brand/company/trademark: nationality, type of product...
3. Where is the product shown? In the background/foreground/centre, it is not shown...
4. We can see the product...
5. The logo/logotype of the brand is visible/noticeable/conspicuous/never shown...
6. Analyse the slogan/catch phrase in terms of key-word(s), target audience, potential customers...
7. What is the general atmosphere (emotions or feelings induced by the advertisement)?
8. What are the arguments of the advertiser?
9. This advertisement appeals to our feelings/emotions/intellect/senses/sense of humour/wish to.../love for...
10. This advertisement is based on humour/eroticism/aestheticism/intelligence/power/reasoning...
11. There are stereotypes... or/and objectification of women... or/and an excessive use of children...
12. What emotional needs does the product/service satisfy? The need for acceptance/belonging to a group, the need for money/comfort...
13. The motivation(s) aroused or exploited are prestige/technique/freedom/beauty/pleasure/violence/ambition/youth/safety/guilt/tradition/wealth/sex/fear/tenderness/eroticism/comfort/sophistication/authenticity/love/energy/security/attraction/well-being/escapism/power...
14. We can associate this product/service with luxury/fame/beauty/family/fitness/happiness/well-being...
15. If the consumer doesn't use this product, he/she is afraid of being unattractive/rejected/ridiculed/unsafe/in danger...



1.5 Cartoons in the media

1. Check the persuasive techniques employed by the cartoonist: symbolism, exaggeration, labelling, analogy, irony (i.e. the difference between the way things are and the way things should be, or the way things are expected to be). Cartoonists often use irony to express their opinions on issues.
2. What issue is this political cartoon about?
3. What is the cartoonist's opinion? Is the cartoon critical of a certain historical issue, event or theme? Explain.
4. What is the climax or moment of highest tension? How is the conflict resolved?
5. Did you find this cartoon persuasive? Why/Why not?

1.6 Films

1. Identify the title of the film, the year it was released, the name of the director, where and when the story is set.
2. Focus on the characters: identify the protagonist and the antagonist as well as the minor characters, along with their interactions.
3. What is the main conflict driving the protagonist to act and how does he/she try to resolve it?
4. What is the climax or moment of highest tension? How is the conflict resolved?
5. What is the theme of the film? And its final message?
6. Music, sounds, light and shadow, set design, camera angles, colours... are all means through which movie-makers communicate their message. Give examples of how the director uses the main elements of the cinematic art, such as shot framing, camera angles and movements, colour and, above all, editing choices.
7. Is the director trying to do something new in the genre/time period? What?

1.7 Trailers

Background information	Director, stars Story plot Target audience
Sound and music	Voice over, addressee Vocabulary and devices used Loud music or noises, dialogues Hook, cliffhanger
The written word	Title of the film, names of the stars Graphics
Moving images	Editing (alternation, combination, abbreviation of scenes) Setting, colours Costumes Stars Spectacular moments



1.8 Non-fiction texts

Why	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To entertain: the author's main purpose is to entertain the reader. • To inform/explain: the author's main purpose is to inform or teach the reader. • To persuade: the author's main purpose is to convince the reader to believe an idea, have an opinion, take action, or respond in some other specific way.
Who	Speaker, addressee
How	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organisational aids: keywords (bolded), titles, headings, subheadings, captions, labels... • Visuals: illustrations (photos, drawings, magnification), diagrams, graphs and maps, charts and tables, cross-sections, timelines, online tools...
What	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content: keywords, summaries... • Language: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – specific vocabulary, sentence structure, punctuation; – tone/style; – imagery/symbolic language; – rhetorical effects; – references to specific topics, places or people; – quotations; – what type of arguments are used? Are they weak or strong?
Where	Where does the text appear? In what kind of newspaper (broadsheet or tabloid) or magazine? On the Internet? In an anthology/book? Was it written for TV/radio?

In detail...

WHO (sender)

age
education
background
political position
occupation
personal aims
immediate needs

HOW

composition or structure
language (word choice, connotations, allusions, figurative language)
tone
style
selection of material
types of arguments
degree of factual information
quotations
references
layout
illustrations

WHAT (genre)

article
essay
documentary
lecture
speech
advertisement
propaganda
instruction manual
message

WHY

inform
discuss or open a forum
for a debate
ask for opinions
instruct
argue
convince
entertain
prove
educate
accuse
chat

TO WHOM (receiver)

age
education
background
political position
occupation
marital status

WHERE

TV or radio
press (popular, serious, weekly/monthly magazine)
educational book
conference
meeting
hearing
e-mail/computer
SMS/mobile phone
chat/instant messaging



2. TEXT FORMATS

WHAT	WHY	WHERE	FEATURES
Descriptive	To report To describe To inform	Articles Diaries Guides Travel writing Novels Short stories	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Objective descriptions dealing with concrete, referential elements (like the shape/dimension of an object or the height/size of a person). • Subjective descriptions expressing the writer's attitude towards an object/person (use of evaluative adjectives).
Narrative	To tell To recount	Novels Short stories Letters News Articles Diaries Biographies	A sequence of actions basically following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a chronological order; • an order of importance leading to a climax.
Instructional	To give instructions, rules	Manuals Noticeboards Laws	Sequence of imperatives and modals.
Expository	To define To inform To explain procedures	Dictionaries Lectures Articles Science books Technical books Interviews Essays Biographies	It may: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • show the different features of a single topic in a list; • move from the specific to the general; • show some of the following structures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – sequence; – comparison/contrast; – cause/effect; – problem/solution.
Argumentative	To comment To discuss	Debates Interviews Reviews Reports Articles Essays	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comparison of two points of view to reach a final synthesis or conclusion. • Discussion from the general to the specific (deductive reasoning). • Analysis of several examples to reach a conclusion (inductive reasoning, i.e. from the specific to the general).

3. ORAL STRATEGIES

3.1 General tips

MAKE LINKS I wonder why... What caused... I think... This is similar to... This is important because... What do they mean by... ? What I find confusing is... This reminds me of...	MAKE PREDICTIONS What will happen next is... I can relate to this because... What comes next...	DECIDE PRIORITIES Three important points/ideas are... These are important because... The author wants us to think... At this point the article/story is about... What interested me most was... The author's purpose here is to...
EXPRESS OPINIONS In my opinion, ... In my view, ... I think... Why don't you tell us what you think... ? If you want my opinion, ... As for me, I... What do you think... ?	COMPARE AND CONTRAST While X is (good), Y is (bad). X is (better) than Y. Compared to Y, X is... Unlike Y, X is (good). X is (good). In contrast, Y is... Y is (less interesting/worse) than... Similarly, ... Likewise, ... In the same way, ...	SUMMARISE In short, ... In other words, ... In a nutshell, ... What I'm saying is... Let me put it like this, ... At this point... This means that...
AGREE/DISAGREE I totally agree... I think you're right... That's generally true... You may/might be right, but... I agree with you up to a point, ...	EMPHASISE I'd like to point out/stress... Don't forget... First and foremost, ... Last but not least, ... Most importantly, ... First of all, ...	EXPRESS CAUSE/EFFECT This leads to... Following this, ... Consequently, ... Therefore, ... As a result, ... This is the cause of... The result of this is... This might lead/have led to...

3.2 Presentations

When giving a **presentation**, please remember:

- a big smile at the beginning;
- to be as clear as possible;
- to use your own words without constantly reading the slides;
- to look at the audience.

When preparing your **slides** please consider the following aspects:

- **background:** select simple templates, themes, or bright colours;
- **audience:** include questions to keep your audience alert;
- **fonts:** choose clear, simple, readable fonts;
- **images:** use high-quality, dynamic images;

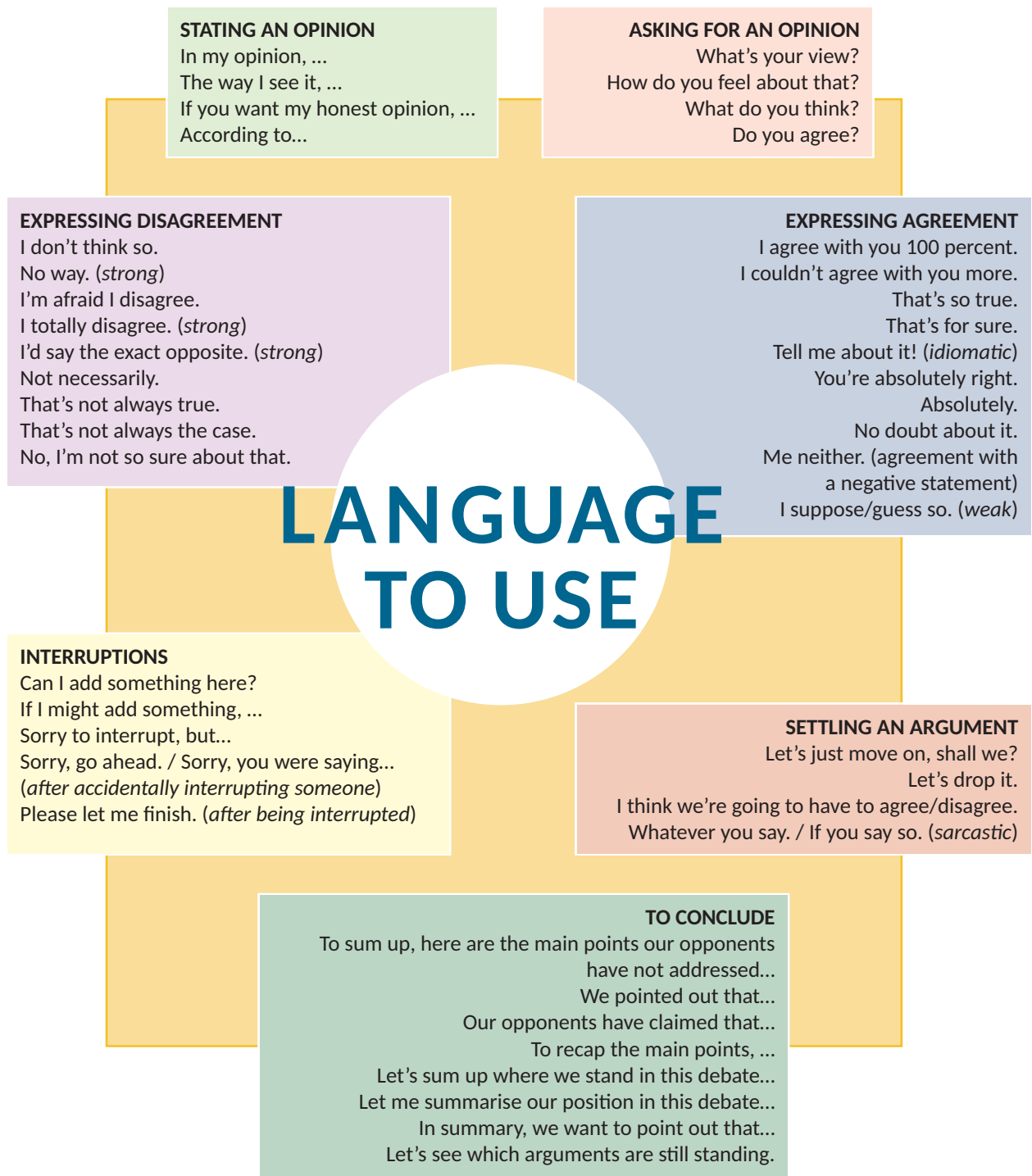
- **colour:** select high-contrast colours;
- **movement:** use animation;
- **title/heading:** use short headings;
- **sound & music:** embed sound clips and music if they support discipline-specific learning outcomes;
- **text:** keep texts short and underline or highlight important points in bold or italics;
- **bullets:** use bullet points;
- **video:** embed short clips.

The most common presentation software/apps are:
 PowerPoint, Google Slides, Prezi, Genially,
 Screencast-O-Matic, Canva, Animoto.

3.3 Debate strategies

Organise the class

1. Divide the class in half. One half will be *for* the motion, one half will be *against* it.
2. Each group must nominate three speakers: the **proposer**, the **second**er, and the **summariser**.
3. The groups prepare their **arguments** in detail.
4. The **proposers**, **seconders**, and **summarisers** are called forward. They sit at the front, with a **judge** in between.
5. The proposer for the motion speaks first for a fixed period of time. Then it is the turn of the proposer *against* the motion, and so on.
6. The rest of the class act as an audience and must ask (the speakers) questions at the end of the debate.
7. Finally, a judgement is given as to who has won the debate.



4. WRITING STRATEGIES

4.1 General tips

EXEMPLIFY This can be seen... As the passage reads in line... As X states in line... As we may infer from the passage...	EXPRESS CAUSE/EFFECT As a result of... Therefore, ... Consequently, ...	GIVE OPINIONS In my opinion, ... It can be said that... As I see it, ... These words show me that...
COMPARE/CONTRAST While... In contrast... Compared to... While X is (good), Y is (bad). X is (better) than Y. Compared to Y, X is... Unlike Y, X is (good). X is (good). In contrast, Y is... Y is (worse/less interesting) than... On the plus side, ... On the down side, ... On the one hand, ... On the other hand, ...	SUMMARISE In general, ... In short, ... In brief, ... To sum up, ...	CONCLUDE Therefore... In conclusion / To conclude, ... Finally, ... All in all, ... All things considered, ... For the above-mentioned reasons, ...

4.2 Text formats

During your exploration of literature, you will be requested to write the following formats:

- **summaries**;
- **descriptions** – people, characters, places and settings;
- **narrative texts** – to tell a story;
- **discursive texts** – to express opinions, to compare and contrast;
- **reviews**;
- **short essays on books/passages** – to show the results of your analyses;
- **reports** – to evaluate;
- **articles** – to inform;
- **letters/e-mails** – to inform;
- **speeches**.

The following grids sum up their most important features.

SUMMARIES	Language	Do not copy the same words, but paraphrase : <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • using synonyms; • shortening; • simplifying or transforming structures.
	Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Scan the text quickly to get the basic topic and overall shape. 2. Read the text carefully, highlighting important points and taking notes as you read. 3. Skim the text again to confirm you have understood the key points. 4. Break the text down into sections. 5. Identify the key points in each section. 6. Write your summary. 7. Check and revise.
	Vocabulary	Objective, essential, same register. A summary is always much shorter than the original text.
DESCRIPTIONS	Language	Adjectives, comparisons, connectors.
	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction: present the person/place to describe. • Body: develop the physical description, family background, personality, tasks, relationship with others. For places, describe material features in detail. • Conclusion: conclude by stating your opinion on the person/place.
	Vocabulary	Physical aspect, appearance, personality, geographical and historical connectors.

NARRATIVE TEXTS	Language	Past tenses, expressions of time sequence.							
	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction: set the scene with a few details about characters, setting, events.• Body: develop the plot with more details.• Conclusion: end by telling the causes or consequences of the events.							
	Vocabulary	Time expressions, time prepositions, expressions for time sequences (e.g. at first, to begin with, lastly, next, secondly, etc.).							
DISCURSIVE TEXTS persuasive to argue either <i>for</i> or <i>against</i> something; argumentative to balance the points <i>for</i> or <i>against</i> something	Language	Language of opinions , comparisons , debates about advantages and disadvantages : <ul style="list-style-type: none">• agreeing or disagreeing;• giving opinions;• giving information or explanations;• giving reasons;• giving examples;• comparing and contrasting ideas and opinions;• drawing conclusions. Present tenses, mostly written in a formal style , with an objective tone and style . Avoid words that are too common or generic (e.g. things, stuff, get, etc.) and contractions (e.g. can't, don't, won't, etc.).							
	Plan	An essay is written to analyse a topic , a situation or an issue: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• from different points of view;• providing different arguments;• expressing our opinion about it. It usually has a title + 5 paragraphs : introduction + idea 1 + idea 2 + idea 3 + conclusion. The paragraphs are visually well defined , which is very important: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• the introduction sets up the topic in a general way and leads to the second paragraph (first idea);• paragraph 2 deals with idea 1;• paragraph 3 deals with idea 2;• paragraph 4 deals with idea 3;• the conclusion restates the initial opinion to summarise the essay; conclude with a personal comment or suggest a solution to the debate.							
	Vocabulary	Personal opinions, comparisons, contrasts, further points (e.g. for example, i.e., e.g., moreover, in addition, etc.) <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Coherence: avoid writing incoherent, disordered paragraphs that have nothing to do with one another.• Cohesion: Your ideas must follow a logical order and be well connected with appropriate linkers (e.g. firstly, second, finally, etc.). Some useful expressions include: <table><tr><td>One of the things that...</td><td>Finally, ...</td></tr><tr><td>In the last few decades, ...</td><td>By doing so, ...</td></tr><tr><td>For this reason, ...</td><td>For example, ...</td></tr><tr><td>First/Second/Third, ...</td><td>In conclusion, ...</td></tr></table>	One of the things that...	Finally, ...	In the last few decades, ...	By doing so, ...	For this reason, ...	For example, ...	First/Second/Third, ...
One of the things that...	Finally, ...								
In the last few decades, ...	By doing so, ...								
For this reason, ...	For example, ...								
First/Second/Third, ...	In conclusion, ...								
REVIEWS	Language	Personal opinions, subjective point of view; adjectives, comparisons; connectors.							
	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction: give essential details about the book/film (author/director, year...).• Body: write a summary. What is the story about? Who are the main characters and what is the main conflict? Do not spoil the ending.• Body: present your evaluation. What did you think of the book/film? Which elements worked well, and which ones didn't?• Conclusion: give your recommendation. Would you recommend this book/film to others? If so, what kind of readers/audience will enjoy it?							
	Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction: define what you are reviewing. The (film/book...) I would like to review is... The last film I saw / book I read was...							

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explain: add details about what you are reviewing. It's set in... There are many memorable characters, including... The story is based on (a book)... The main theme of the (film) is... It's about... What the (film) is saying is... • Opinion: express your own opinion. I would recommend this (film/book) to anyone. Although I enjoyed it, I would not recommend it because... It's one of the best (shows) I've ever seen. Although I am not normally keen on (musicals), I am glad that I decided to go. The (film) lifts you out of your everyday life... Use a range of interesting vocabulary to bring the film/book... to life for the reader.
SHORT ESSAYS ON BOOKS/ PASSAGES	Language	Neutral register; passive forms, present/past tenses; references to the text, quotations.
	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction: put the passage into context, and summarise its arguments briefly, pointing out its most important thematic and structural aspects. • Body: describe the elements of the passage you identified during your analysis: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - basic events/ideas; - tone and register; - narrative techniques, point of view; - characterisation; - sentence structure and use of tenses; - punctuation; - vocabulary; - word order (balance or lack thereof, harmony, repetition, parallels...); - figurative language; - alliteration, assonance, rhyme (poetry and prose). <p>Explain how important they are for the general effect.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conclusion: summarise the different aspects of the text and evaluate the passage, both in itself and in relation to the work from which it is taken. Finally, express concluding remarks as a result of your research.
	Vocabulary	Technical language of literary analysis.
REPORTS	Language	Neutral, semi-formal language (may include subheadings); present tenses, passives; descriptions and evaluations for recommendations; suggestions.
	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction: explain why you are writing. • Body: discuss the topic/issue weighing good and bad points. Diagrams, photographs, illustrations and maps may be used to enhance the text. • Conclusion: state your opinion and give the required suggestions.
	Vocabulary	Giving suggestions, recommending; effective openings (a question, statistics, a provocative statement); factual language; present tense; third person; technical language or scientific terms when necessary.
(NEWS) ARTICLES	Language	Formal, concise language with short sentences, passives, connectors; third person and usually past tense (the final paragraph may switch to the future tense); direct speech with reporting verbs + reported speech to paraphrase what someone said.
	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction: start with a catchy headline. • Body: develop clear paragraphs, reporting facts and opinions to inform the reader correctly. • Conclusion: summarise, be thought-provoking.
	Vocabulary	Effective openings; factual language; emotional register.



LETTERS/ E-MAILS	Language	Informal, chatty language (jargon allowed); phrasal verbs; direct address to the reader or the personified diary.
	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction: state why you are writing. • Body: give latest news, information, details about people, events, personal responses. • Conclusion: close with a formula.
	Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening formulas (thank you for...; I was happy/sad to hear that...; I'm writing to tell you...; etc.). • Closing formulas (I look forward to hearing from/seeing you; please write soon; be well; take care of yourself; that's all for now; good bye for now; etc.).
SPEECHES	Language	Direct address to the reader (interaction); conversational tone (small talk or humour, if appropriate); short sentences.
	Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduction: create a catchy introduction by using rhetorical devices. In a brief preview of your topic, define the outline of your speech, including timeline and objectives (For example...; I'll be talking about...; First/Second/Third...; At the end you'll...). Begin with a story, a quote, a fact, a joke, or an observation about the room which you are in. • Body: all the main points of your speech. Prepare a systematic flow chart of the details, support your points with examples or statistics. Three main points are suggested: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – first (or main point); – second (to support the main point); – third (to support the second and main points). • Conclusion: close with a formula. It could be a reminder, a collective call to action, a summary of your speech, or a story. Do not forget to add a few lines of gratitude to the audience for their time.
	Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Opening formulas: short sentences; • repetitions, rhetorical questions; • closing formulas.