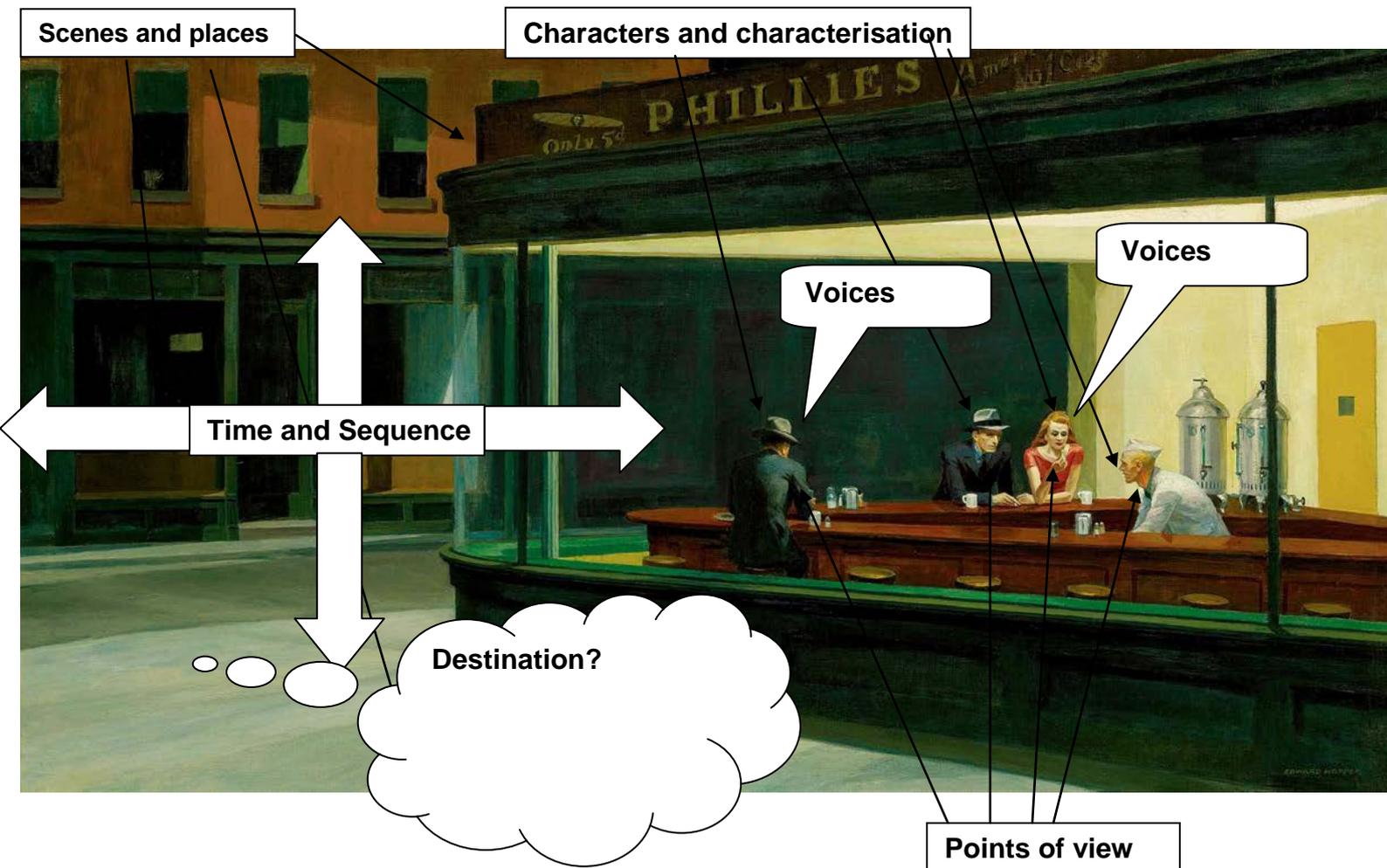


AS English Literature Unit 1 – Narrative



Easter Revision Booklet

The Great Gatsby...Enduring Love.....Rossetti.....Auden...

Introduction to Narrative

Key Terms

Story = all the various events that are going to be shown

Plot = the chain of causes and circumstances that connect the various events and place them into some sort of relationship with each other

Narrative = involves how the events and causes are shown, and the various methods used to do this showing. Exploring aspects of narrative involves looking at what the writer has chosen to include or not include, and how this choice leads the reader to certain conclusions.

All stories are a form of **representation** – you are taking part in a constructed process. You are being shown something, being given a version by various narrative methods.

It is the author who controls the characters and events in a story. Characters cannot do or say anything other than what the author makes them do. For this reason, when asked to explore aspects of narrative in the exam, it is vital to keep the authors, and their methods of working, at the heart of what you say.

The word 'narrative' has its origins in the Greek word for knowledge. Ultimately, then, looking at narrative involves looking at knowledge.

The building blocks of narrative

Scenes and places

Where the action is set and its significance beyond just being a place where something happens. Fictional stories, if they are to represent in some ways the real world, need to be set in significant places.

Stories are condensed versions of reality, shaped to present actions and ideas that tell us something about the lives we lead. Stories need to be set in places if they are to persuade us of their connections with our lives, but at the same time these places can be more than just settings where events happen. Scenes and places frequently carry a significance that goes way beyond being where something merely happens. In their use of scenes and places, authors are taking advantage of the possibilities of creating meanings.

In a poem, with its concise narrative, specifics of a place can be given without all the detail of precise location. The absence of any precise location helps us to think that the place could be anywhere, which makes the significance more widely applicable.

In addition to providing the necessary arenas for people and their actions to take place in, locations can also carry greater significance. The places are not only venues where things happen; they throw extra light and significance on events, people and relationships.

Time and sequence

The order in which events are shown is a key part of how narrative works. While time in the real world is represented by clocks and calendars which tick over at the same regular rate, time in stories is manipulated so that some points in time go slowly, others accelerate and others are missed out altogether.

All stories need to have aspects of time: **time covered by the events within the story**, and **the broader time which surrounds the story, the time in which the story is set**. If a story is to appear believable then the author will have to incorporate aspects of the life and

attitudes of the time. Timescales can be deliberately manipulated by writers to help them create subtle effects and meanings.

Sequence meanwhile refers to the order in which events are told. Although at a very simple level all narratives involve a movement from a beginning to an end, they are rarely told in strict sequence. *How* the sequence of events is presented to the reader is of considerable importance.

Chronology, then, is one way in which the writer of a narrative can influence the way a reader responds to it. This can lead to a focus on suspense, where the action and its results are foregrounded, or on character, where feelings and foregrounded, or sometimes both.

Poems by definition tend to be briefer exercises in narrative than novels. Whereas in a novel we expect some detailed establishment, in terms of place, time, people and so on, in poems we tend to be straight in and out of the story with much less detail. Indeed, the effects of the poem are often emphasised by what is not given, by what can be called meaningful absence.

Characters

Character in this sense refers not just to the people in the story but, much more importantly, to their character traits and how they are revealed: this is known as characterisation. Characters in fictional texts are usually described early on, as part of the establishment of the text.

In narrative poems a couple of features are often enough to pin down not just what the character looks like, but what the character is like in a broader sense. Just as a name can conjure up ideas about a character's moral qualities, so can a description of their appearance. Authors can also signal aspects of character by giving their creations distinctive speech manners, or mannerisms. Sometimes these can be used to represent social class.

Voices in the text

One way in which we get information in a story is through what we are 'told' by characters involved. Voices in stories can help to establish character traits, and so are part of characterisation, but they also enable authors to give information. Voices in texts can be the actual 'voices' of the characters who get to speak in the text, and they can also be the thoughts of characters and the voice of the narrator.

Narrative poems too have voices within them that help tell the story. How many voices, and what use is made of voices, can vary though.

Point of view

The perspective from which events are told (eg: third-person or first-person narrative). The term point of view is very important when studying aspects of narrative. Where we, as readers, are 'placed' in the telling of the story is vital to the way we interpret it. This does not just refer to your physical position, this also relates to your position in terms of the beliefs you hold, the ideas you have.

Looking at point of view is important because it allows us to analyse narratives technically and also in terms of their ideas and views: how they see the world. Point of view is therefore both the technical description to do with how the text works and an indication of the **ideology**

in a text. (The **ideology** of a text is the attitudes, values and assumptions that the text contains). By exploring these elements we are able to arrive at a more complete reading of the text.

Another way in which the narrative point of view can be varied is by how close to the action we as readers are allowed to get. Is it viewed from a certain distance or is it viewed close-up? What is our proximity? Perspectives also frequently shift and move within texts.

Although poems sometimes give multiple points of view, more frequently they keep to one or two. Poetry tends to condense narratives, which may in part account for this. If only one point of view is given, then there is the potential for ambiguity – what would the story be like if it were told by another voice which is not heard?

Destination

For the storytelling process to have any real purpose, you need to understand that the whole process is designed to make readers think, to make them respond to what is being said, to make them see the point or points. You have been taken on a journey in the story, and when you reach the end, you have reached a destination.

Consider the following things:

1. What have I seen about the methods used and how does this help me come to an interpretation?
2. Is there any contextual material worth considering in helping me to come to an interpretation?
3. Are different interpretations now possible? Is one more convincing than the other?

Glossary of Literary Terms

Complete the grid below with your own explanations and examples:

| Term/Feature | Explanation – its impact or effect | Example |
|--|------------------------------------|---------|
| Alliteration: the repetition of the same consonant sound, especially at the beginning of words | | |
| Ambiguity: use of language where the meaning is unclear or has two or more possible interpretations of meanings. | | |
| Archaic: language that is old-fashioned – not completely obsolete but no longer in current modern use | | |
| Assonance: the repetition of similar vowel sounds | | |
| Author: a real person who creates a text – not the narrator or implied author | | |
| Ballad: a narrative poem that tells a story (traditional ballads were songs), usually in a straightforward way. | | |
| Blank verse: unrhymed poetry that adheres to a strict pattern in that each line is an iambic pentameter (a ten-syllable line with five stresses). | | |
| Character/Characterisation: how the personalities of the text are revealed through their actions and behaviour | | |
| Chronology: the sequence or order of events in the text | | |
| Colloquial: ordinary, everyday speech and language | | |
| Couplet: two consecutive lines of verse that rhyme | | |
| Denouement: the ending of a play, novel or drama where 'all is revealed' and the plot is unravelled | | |
| Diction: the choice of words that a writer makes. Another term for 'vocabulary' | | |
| Distance: (narrator's/reader's) | | |

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| Dramatic irony: when the reader is made aware of the disparity between the facts of a situation and a character's understanding of it | | |
| Dramatic monologue: a poem or prose piece in which a character addresses an audience. | | |
| Elegy: a meditative poem, usually sad and reflective in nature. Sometimes, though not always, it is concerned with the theme of death. | | |
| Endings – plot endings: resolution or deliberate non-resolution. Or the last page or two of a text that act as epilogue or postscript | | |
| Enjambement: where a line of verse flows on into the next line without a pause | | |
| Epiphany: moment of great significance/intensity/recognition | | |
| Framing narrative: literally a frame for a story | | |
| Genre: a recurring literary form eg horror, gothic, romantic etc | | |
| Iambic: the most common metrical foot in English poetry, consisting of an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable | | |
| Imagery: the use of words to create a picture or 'image' in the mind of the reader. | | |
| Interior monologue: capturing how thinking and feeling occur | | |
| Lyric: originally a song performed to the accompaniment of a lyre (an early harp-like instrument) but now it can mean a song-like poem or a short poem expressing personal feeling | | |
| Metafiction: narratives that call attention to their own fictional status and compositional procedures | | |
| Metaphor: a comparison of one thing to another in order to make description more vivid. The metaphor actually states that one thing <i>is</i> the other. | | |

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| Metre: the regular use of stressed and unstressed syllables in poetry (iambic, trochaic) | | |
| Motif: a dominant theme, subject or idea which runs through a piece of literature | | |
| First/Second/Third person narration: who is telling the story (I/You/He, she) | | |
| Narrative: a piece of writing that tells a story | | |
| Narrative structure: the way that a poem or play or other piece of writing has been put together. | | |
| Narrator: the person who tells a story | | |
| Omniscient narrator: narration which is all-knowing/godlike | | |
| Onomatopoeia: the use of words whose sound copies the sound of the thing or process they describe | | |
| Opening: how the story begins | | |
| Pathetic fallacy: projection of human emotions onto phenomena in the natural world | | |
| Persona: personality or mask constructed by author to speak in his/her name | | |
| Plot: the sequence of events in a poem, play, novel, or short story that make up the main storyline | | |
| Poetic form: ballad/elegy/monologue/lyric | | |
| Point(s) of view: from which the story is told – fundamentally affects the way a reader will respond | | |
| Protagonist: the main character or speaker in a poem, monologue, play, or story | | |
| Quatrain: a stanza of four lines, which can have various rhyme schemes | | |
| Realism: a narrative seemingly truer to the common sense realities of life | | |
| Refrain: repetition throughout a poem of a phrase, line, or series of lines, as in the 'chorus' of a song | | |

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| Revelations: moments when the surface of things suddenly changes its meaning – when what we've read already shifts its meaning | | |
| Rhyme: corresponding sounds in words, usually at the end of each line but not always | | |
| Rhyme scheme: the pattern of the rhymes in a poem | | |
| Rhythm: the 'movement' of a poem as created through the metre and the way that language is stressed within the poem | | |
| Sonnet: a fourteen-line poem, usually with ten syllables in each line. The lines often consist of an octave and a sestet | | |
| Stanza: the blocks of lines into which a poem is divided | | |
| Style: the individual way in which the writer has used language to express his or her ideas | | |
| Symbol: something representing something else | | |
| Tense: the time in which the story takes place (present, past, future) | | |
| Tetrameter: a verse line of four feet. | | |
| Theme: the central idea or ideas that the writer explores through the text | | |
| Time shift: moving forward and backward over time to allow us to make connections of causality and irony between events | | |
| Title: the name of the text | | |
| Tone: the overall impression or mood of the text, (mournful, upbeat) | | |
| Type/Stereotype: a recurring kind of character | | |
| Voice: the sensibility through which we hear the narrative even when reading silently | | |

The Great Gatsby, by F. SCOTT FITZGERALD (from *Sparknotes*)

Context

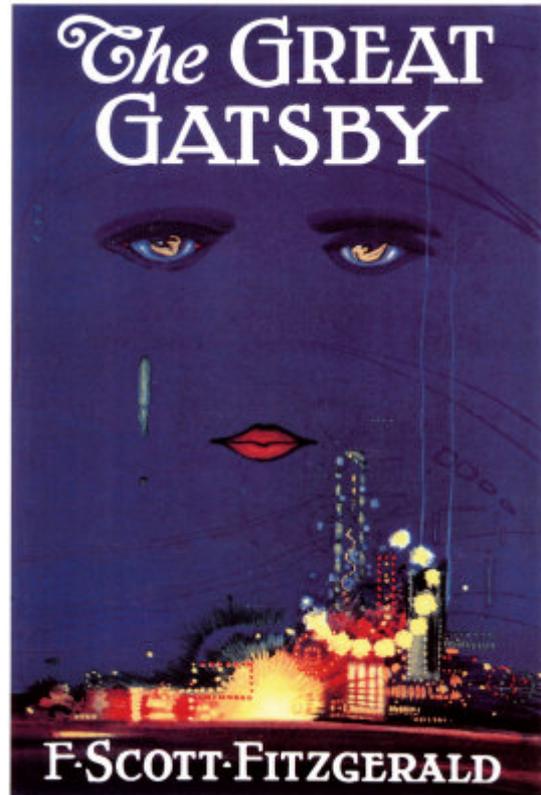
FRANCIS SCOTT KEY FITZGERALD WAS BORN on September 24, 1896, and named after his ancestor Francis Scott Key, the author of *The Star-Spangled Banner*. Fitzgerald was raised in St. Paul, Minnesota. Though an intelligent child, he did poorly in school and was sent to a New Jersey boarding school in 1911. Despite being a mediocre student there, he managed to enroll at Princeton in 1913. Academic troubles and apathy plagued him throughout his time at college, and he never graduated, instead enlisting in the army in 1917, as World War I neared its end.

Fitzgerald became a second lieutenant, and was stationed at Camp Sheridan, in Montgomery, Alabama. There he met and fell in love with a wild seventeen-year-old beauty named Zelda Sayre. Zelda finally agreed to marry him, but her overpowering desire for wealth, fun, and leisure led her to delay their wedding until he could prove a success. With the publication of *This Side of Paradise* in 1920, Fitzgerald became a literary sensation, earning enough money and fame to convince Zelda to marry him.

Many of these events from Fitzgerald's early life appear in his most famous novel, *The Great Gatsby*, published in 1925. Like Fitzgerald, Nick Carraway is a thoughtful young man from Minnesota, educated at an Ivy League school (in Nick's case, Yale), who moves to New York after the war. Also similar to Fitzgerald is Jay Gatsby, a sensitive young man who idolizes wealth and luxury and who falls in love with a beautiful young woman while stationed at a military camp in the South.

Having become a celebrity, Fitzgerald fell into a wild, reckless life-style of parties and decadence, while desperately trying to please Zelda by writing to earn money. Similarly, Gatsby amasses a great deal of wealth at a relatively young age, and devotes himself to acquiring possessions and throwing parties that he believes will enable him to win Daisy's love. As the giddiness of the Roaring Twenties dissolved into the bleakness of the Great Depression, however, Zelda suffered a nervous breakdown and Fitzgerald battled alcoholism, which hampered his writing. He published *Tender Is the Night* in 1934, and sold short stories to *The Saturday Evening Post* to support his lavish lifestyle. In 1937, he left for Hollywood to write screenplays, and in 1940, while working on his novel *The Love of the Last Tycoon*, died of a heart attack at the age of forty-four.

Fitzgerald was the most famous chronicler of 1920s America, an era that he dubbed "the Jazz Age." Written in 1925, *The Great Gatsby* is one of the greatest literary documents of this period, in which the American economy soared, bringing unprecedented levels of prosperity to the nation. Prohibition, the ban on the sale and consumption of alcohol mandated by the Eighteenth Amendment to the Constitution (1919), made millionaires out of bootleggers, and an underground culture of revelry sprang up. Sprawling private parties managed to elude police notice, and "speakeasies"—secret clubs that sold liquor—thrived. The chaos and violence of World War I left America in a state of shock, and the generation



that fought the war turned to wild and extravagant living to compensate. The staid conservatism and timeworn values of the previous decade were turned on their ear, as money, opulence, and exuberance became the order of the day.

Like Nick in *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald found this new lifestyle seductive and exciting, and, like Gatsby, he had always idolized the very rich. Now he found himself in an era in which unrestrained materialism set the tone of society, particularly in the large cities of the East. Even so, like Nick, Fitzgerald saw through the glitter of the Jazz Age to the moral emptiness and hypocrisy beneath, and part of him longed for this absent moral center. In many ways, *The Great Gatsby* represents Fitzgerald's attempt to confront his conflicting feelings about the Jazz Age. Like Gatsby, Fitzgerald was driven by his love for a woman who symbolized everything he wanted, even as she led him toward everything he despised.

Plot Overview

NICK CARRAWAY, A YOUNG MAN from Minnesota, moves to New York in the summer of 1922 to learn about the bond business. He rents a house in the West Egg district of Long Island, a wealthy but unfashionable area populated by the new rich, a group who have made their fortunes too recently to have established social connections and who are prone to garish displays of wealth. Nick's next-door neighbor in West Egg is a mysterious man named Jay Gatsby, who lives in a gigantic Gothic mansion and throws extravagant parties every Saturday night.

Nick is unlike the other inhabitants of West Egg—he was educated at Yale and has social connections in East Egg, a fashionable area of Long Island home to the established upper class. Nick drives out to East Egg one evening for dinner with his cousin, Daisy Buchanan, and her husband, Tom, an erstwhile classmate of Nick's at Yale. Daisy and Tom introduce Nick to Jordan Baker, a beautiful, cynical young woman with whom Nick begins a romantic relationship. Nick also learns a bit about Daisy and Tom's marriage: Jordan tells him that Tom has a lover, Myrtle Wilson, who lives in the valley of ashes, a gray industrial dumping ground between West Egg and New York City. Not long after this revelation, Nick travels to New York City with Tom and Myrtle. At a vulgar, gaudy party in the apartment that Tom keeps for the affair, Myrtle begins to taunt Tom about Daisy, and Tom responds by breaking her nose.

As the summer progresses, Nick eventually garners an invitation to one of Gatsby's legendary parties. He encounters Jordan Baker at the party, and they meet Gatsby himself, a surprisingly young man who affects an English accent, has a remarkable smile, and calls everyone “old sport.” Gatsby asks to speak to Jordan alone, and, through Jordan, Nick later learns more about his mysterious neighbor. Gatsby tells Jordan that he knew Daisy in Louisville in 1917 and is deeply in love with her. He spends many nights staring at the green light at the end of her dock, across the bay from his mansion. Gatsby's extravagant lifestyle and wild parties are simply an attempt to impress Daisy. Gatsby now wants Nick to arrange a reunion between himself and Daisy, but he is afraid that Daisy will refuse to see him if she knows that he still loves her. Nick invites Daisy to have tea at his house, without telling her that Gatsby will also be there. After an initially awkward reunion, Gatsby and Daisy reestablish their connection. Their love rekindled, they begin an affair.

After a short time, Tom grows increasingly suspicious of his wife's relationship with Gatsby. At a luncheon at the Buchanans' house, Gatsby stares at Daisy with such undisguised passion that Tom realizes Gatsby is in love with her. Though Tom is himself involved in an extramarital affair, he is deeply outraged by the thought that his wife could be unfaithful to him. He forces the group to drive into New York City, where he confronts Gatsby in a suite at the Plaza Hotel. Tom asserts that he and Daisy have a history that Gatsby could never understand, and he announces to his wife that Gatsby is a criminal—his fortune comes from bootlegging alcohol and other illegal activities. Daisy realizes that her allegiance is to

Tom, and Tom contemptuously sends her back to East Egg with Gatsby, attempting to prove that Gatsby cannot hurt him.

When Nick, Jordan, and Tom drive through the valley of ashes, however, they discover that Gatsby's car has struck and killed Myrtle, Tom's lover. They rush back to Long Island, where Nick learns from Gatsby that Daisy was driving the car when it struck Myrtle, but that Gatsby intends to take the blame. The next day, Tom tells Myrtle's husband, George, that Gatsby was the driver of the car. George, who has leapt to the conclusion that the driver of the car that killed Myrtle must have been her lover, finds Gatsby in the pool at his mansion and shoots him dead. He then fatally shoots himself.

Nick stages a small funeral for Gatsby, ends his relationship with Jordan, and moves back to the Midwest to escape the disgust he feels for the people surrounding Gatsby's life and for the emptiness and moral decay of life among the wealthy on the East Coast. Nick reflects that just as Gatsby's dream of Daisy was corrupted by money and dishonesty, the American dream of happiness and individualism has disintegrated into the mere pursuit of wealth. Though Gatsby's power to transform his dreams into reality is what makes him "great," Nick reflects that the era of dreaming—both Gatsby's dream and the American dream—is over.

Analysis of Major Characters

Jay Gatsby

The title character of *The Great Gatsby* is a young man, around thirty years old, who rose from an impoverished childhood in rural North Dakota to become fabulously wealthy. However, he achieved this lofty goal by participating in organized crime, including distributing illegal alcohol and trading in stolen securities. From his early youth, Gatsby despised poverty and longed for wealth and sophistication—he dropped out of St. Olaf's College after only two weeks because he could not bear the janitorial job with which he was paying his tuition. Though Gatsby has always wanted to be rich, his main motivation in acquiring his fortune was his love for Daisy Buchanan, whom he met as a young military officer in Louisville before leaving to fight in World War I in 1917. Gatsby immediately fell in love with Daisy's aura of luxury, grace, and charm, and lied to her about his own background in order to convince her that he was good enough for her. Daisy promised to wait for him when he left for the war, but married Tom Buchanan in 1919, while Gatsby was studying at Oxford after the war in an attempt to gain an education. From that moment on, Gatsby dedicated himself to winning Daisy back, and his acquisition of millions of dollars, his purchase of a gaudy mansion on West Egg, and his lavish weekly parties are all merely means to that end.

Fitzgerald delays the introduction of most of this information until fairly late in the novel. Gatsby's reputation precedes him—Gatsby himself does not appear in a speaking role until Chapter III. Fitzgerald initially presents Gatsby as the aloof, enigmatic host of the unbelievably opulent parties thrown every week at his mansion. He appears surrounded by spectacular luxury, courted by powerful men and beautiful women. He is the subject of a whirlwind of gossip throughout New York and is already a kind of legendary celebrity before he is ever introduced to the reader. Fitzgerald propels the novel forward through the early chapters by shrouding Gatsby's background and the source of his wealth in mystery (the reader learns about Gatsby's childhood in Chapter VI and receives definitive proof of his criminal dealings in Chapter VII). As a result, the reader's first, distant impressions of Gatsby strike quite a different note from that of the lovesick, naive young man who emerges during the later part of the novel.

Fitzgerald uses this technique of delayed character revelation to emphasize the theatrical quality of Gatsby's approach to life, which is an important part of his personality. Gatsby has literally created his own character, even changing his name from James Gatz to Jay

Gatsby to represent his reinvention of himself. As his relentless quest for Daisy demonstrates, Gatsby has an extraordinary ability to transform his hopes and dreams into reality; at the beginning of the novel, he appears to the reader just as he desires to appear to the world. This talent for self-invention is what gives Gatsby his quality of "greatness": indeed, the title "*The Great Gatsby*" is reminiscent of billings for such vaudeville magicians as "The Great Houdini" and "The Great Blackstone," suggesting that the persona of Jay Gatsby is a masterful illusion.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us.

As the novel progresses and Fitzgerald deconstructs Gatsby's self-presentation, Gatsby reveals himself to be an innocent, hopeful young man who stakes everything on his dreams, not realizing that his dreams are unworthy of him. Gatsby invests Daisy with an idealistic perfection that she cannot possibly attain in reality and pursues her with a passionate zeal that blinds him to her limitations. His dream of her disintegrates, revealing the corruption that wealth causes and the unworthiness of the goal, much in the way Fitzgerald sees the American dream crumbling in the 1920s, as America's powerful optimism, vitality, and individualism become subordinated to the amoral pursuit of wealth.

Gatsby is contrasted most consistently with Nick. Critics point out that the former, passionate and active, and the latter, sober and reflective, seem to represent two sides of Fitzgerald's personality. Additionally, whereas Tom is a cold-hearted, aristocratic bully, Gatsby is a loyal and good-hearted man. Though his lifestyle and attitude differ greatly from those of George Wilson, Gatsby and Wilson share the fact that they both lose their love interest to Tom.

Nick Carraway

If Gatsby represents one part of Fitzgerald's personality, the flashy celebrity who pursued and glorified wealth in order to impress the woman he loved, then Nick represents another part: the quiet, reflective Midwesterner adrift in the lurid East. A young man (he turns thirty during the course of the novel) from Minnesota, Nick travels to New York in 1922 to learn the bond business. He lives in the West Egg district of Long Island, next door to Gatsby. Nick is also Daisy's cousin, which enables him to observe and assist the resurgent love affair between Daisy and Gatsby. As a result of his relationship to these two characters, Nick is the perfect choice to narrate the novel, which functions as a personal memoir of his experiences with Gatsby in the summer of 1922.

Nick is also well suited to narrating *The Great Gatsby* because of his temperament. As he tells the reader in Chapter I, he is tolerant, open-minded, quiet, and a good listener, and, as a result, others tend to talk to him and tell him their secrets. Gatsby, in particular, comes to trust him and treat him as a confidant. Nick generally assumes a secondary role throughout the novel, preferring to describe and comment on events rather than dominate the action. Often, however, he functions as Fitzgerald's voice, as in his extended meditation on time and the American dream at the end of Chapter IX.

Insofar as Nick plays a role inside the narrative, he evidences a strongly mixed reaction to life on the East Coast, one that creates a powerful internal conflict that he does not resolve until the end of the book. On the one hand, Nick is attracted to the fast-paced, fun-driven lifestyle of New York. On the other hand, he finds that lifestyle grotesque and damaging. This inner conflict is symbolized throughout the book by Nick's romantic affair with Jordan Baker. He is attracted to her vivacity and her sophistication just as he is repelled by her dishonesty and her lack of consideration for other people.

Nick states that there is a “quality of distortion” to life in New York, and this lifestyle makes him lose his equilibrium, especially early in the novel, as when he gets drunk at Gatsby's party in Chapter II. After witnessing the unraveling of Gatsby's dream and presiding over the appalling spectacle of Gatsby's funeral, Nick realizes that the fast life of revelry on the East Coast is a cover for the terrifying moral emptiness that the valley of ashes symbolizes. Having gained the maturity that this insight demonstrates, he returns to Minnesota in search of a quieter life structured by more traditional moral values.

Daisy Buchanan

Partially based on Fitzgerald's wife, Zelda, Daisy is a beautiful young woman from Louisville, Kentucky. She is Nick's cousin and the object of Gatsby's love. As a young debutante in Louisville, Daisy was extremely popular among the military officers stationed near her home, including Jay Gatsby. Gatsby lied about his background to Daisy, claiming to be from a wealthy family in order to convince her that he was worthy of her. Eventually, Gatsby won Daisy's heart, and they made love before Gatsby left to fight in the war. Daisy promised to wait for Gatsby, but in 1919 she chose instead to marry Tom Buchanan, a young man from a solid, aristocratic family who could promise her a wealthy lifestyle and who had the support of her parents.

After 1919, Gatsby dedicated himself to winning Daisy back, making her the single goal of all of his dreams and the main motivation behind his acquisition of immense wealth through criminal activity. To Gatsby, Daisy represents the paragon of perfection—she has the aura of charm, wealth, sophistication, grace, and aristocracy that he longed for as a child in North Dakota and that first attracted him to her. In reality, however, Daisy falls far short of Gatsby's ideals. She is beautiful and charming, but also fickle, shallow, bored, and sardonic. Nick characterizes her as a careless person who smashes things up and then retreats behind her money. Daisy proves her real nature when she chooses Tom over Gatsby in Chapter VII, then allows Gatsby to take the blame for killing Myrtle Wilson even though she herself was driving the car. Finally, rather than attend Gatsby's funeral, Daisy and Tom move away, leaving no forwarding address.

Like Zelda Fitzgerald, Daisy is in love with money, ease, and material luxury. She is capable of affection (she seems genuinely fond of Nick and occasionally seems to love Gatsby sincerely), but not of sustained loyalty or care. She is indifferent even to her own infant daughter, never discussing her and treating her as an afterthought when she is introduced in Chapter VII. In Fitzgerald's conception of America in the 1920s, Daisy represents the amoral values of the aristocratic East Egg set.

Themes, Motifs & Symbols

Themes

Themes are the fundamental and often universal ideas explored in a literary work.

The Decline of the American Dream in the 1920s

On the surface, *The Great Gatsby* is a story of the thwarted love between a man and a woman. The main theme of the novel, however, encompasses a much larger, less romantic scope. Though all of its action takes place over a mere few months during the summer of 1922 and is set in a circumscribed geographical area in the vicinity of Long Island, New York, *The Great Gatsby* is a highly symbolic meditation on 1920s America as a whole, in particular the disintegration of the American dream in an era of unprecedented prosperity and material excess.

Fitzgerald portrays the 1920s as an era of decayed social and moral values, evidenced in its overarching cynicism, greed, and empty pursuit of pleasure. The reckless jubilation that

led to decadent parties and wild jazz music—epitomized in *The Great Gatsby* by the opulent parties that Gatsby throws every Saturday night—resulted ultimately in the corruption of the American dream, as the unrestrained desire for money and pleasure surpassed more noble goals. When World War I ended in 1918, the generation of young Americans who had fought the war became intensely disillusioned, as the brutal carnage that they had just faced made the Victorian social morality of early-twentieth-century America seem like stuffy, empty hypocrisy. The dizzying rise of the stock market in the aftermath of the war led to a sudden, sustained increase in the national wealth and a newfound materialism, as people began to spend and consume at unprecedented levels. A person from any social background could, potentially, make a fortune, but the American aristocracy—families with old wealth—scorned the newly rich industrialists and speculators. Additionally, the passage of the Eighteenth Amendment in 1919, which banned the sale of alcohol, created a thriving underworld designed to satisfy the massive demand for bootleg liquor among rich and poor alike.

Fitzgerald positions the characters of *The Great Gatsby* as emblems of these social trends. Nick and Gatsby, both of whom fought in World War I, exhibit the newfound cosmopolitanism and cynicism that resulted from the war. The various social climbers and ambitious speculators who attend Gatsby's parties evidence the greedy scramble for wealth. The clash between “old money” and “new money” manifests itself in the novel's symbolic geography: East Egg represents the established aristocracy, West Egg the self-made rich. Meyer Wolfsheimer and Gatsby's fortune symbolize the rise of organized crime and bootlegging.

As Fitzgerald saw it (and as Nick explains in Chapter IX), the American dream was originally about discovery, individualism, and the pursuit of happiness. In the 1920s depicted in the novel, however, easy money and relaxed social values have corrupted this dream, especially on the East Coast. The main plotline of the novel reflects this assessment, as Gatsby's dream of loving Daisy is ruined by the difference in their respective social statuses, his resorting to crime to make enough money to impress her, and the rampant materialism that characterizes her lifestyle. Additionally, places and objects in *The Great Gatsby* have meaning only because characters instill them with meaning: the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg best exemplify this idea. In Nick's mind, the ability to create meaningful symbols constitutes a central component of the American dream, as early Americans invested their new nation with their own ideals and values.

Nick compares the green bulk of America rising from the ocean to the green light at the end of Daisy's dock. Just as Americans have given America meaning through their dreams for their own lives, Gatsby instills Daisy with a kind of idealized perfection that she neither deserves nor possesses. Gatsby's dream is ruined by the unworthiness of its object, just as the American dream in the 1920s is ruined by the unworthiness of its object—money and pleasure. Like 1920s Americans in general, fruitlessly seeking a bygone era in which their dreams had value, Gatsby longs to re-create a vanished past—his time in Louisville with Daisy—but is incapable of doing so. When his dream crumbles, all that is left for Gatsby to do is die; all Nick can do is move back to Minnesota, where American values have not decayed.

The Hollowness of the Upper Class

One of the major topics explored in *The Great Gatsby* is the sociology of wealth, specifically, how the newly minted millionaires of the 1920s differ from and relate to the old aristocracy of the country's richest families. In the novel, West Egg and its denizens represent the newly rich, while East Egg and its denizens, especially Daisy and Tom, represent the old aristocracy. Fitzgerald portrays the newly rich as being vulgar, gaudy, ostentatious, and lacking in social graces and taste. Gatsby, for example, lives in a

monstrously ornate mansion, wears a pink suit, drives a Rolls-Royce, and does not pick up on subtle social signals, such as the insincerity of the Sloanes' invitation to lunch. In contrast, the old aristocracy possesses grace, taste, subtlety, and elegance, epitomized by the Buchanans' tasteful home and the flowing white dresses of Daisy and Jordan Baker.

What the old aristocracy possesses in taste, however, it seems to lack in heart, as the East Eggers prove themselves careless, inconsiderate bullies who are so used to money's ability to ease their minds that they never worry about hurting others. The Buchanans exemplify this stereotype when, at the end of the novel, they simply move to a new house far away rather than condescend to attend Gatsby's funeral. Gatsby, on the other hand, whose recent wealth derives from criminal activity, has a sincere and loyal heart, remaining outside Daisy's window until four in the morning in Chapter VII simply to make sure that Tom does not hurt her. Ironically, Gatsby's good qualities (loyalty and love) lead to his death, as he takes the blame for killing Myrtle rather than letting Daisy be punished, and the Buchanans' bad qualities (fickleness and selfishness) allow them to remove themselves from the tragedy not only physically but psychologically.

Motifs

Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can help to develop and inform the text's major themes.

Geography

Throughout the novel, places and settings epitomize the various aspects of the 1920s American society that Fitzgerald depicts. East Egg represents the old aristocracy, West Egg the newly rich, the valley of ashes the moral and social decay of America, and New York City the uninhibited, amoral quest for money and pleasure. Additionally, the East is connected to the moral decay and social cynicism of New York, while the West (including Midwestern and northern areas such as Minnesota) is connected to more traditional social values and ideals. Nick's analysis in Chapter IX of the story he has related reveals his sensitivity to this dichotomy: though it is set in the East, the story is really one of the West, as it tells how people originally from west of the Appalachians (as all of the main characters are) react to the pace and style of life on the East Coast.

Weather

As in much of Shakespeare's work, the weather in *The Great Gatsby* unflinchingly matches the emotional and narrative tone of the story. Gatsby and Daisy's reunion begins amid a pouring rain, proving awkward and melancholy; their love reawakens just as the sun begins to come out. Gatsby's climactic confrontation with Tom occurs on the hottest day of the summer, under the scorching sun (like the fatal encounter between Mercutio and Tybalt in *Romeo and Juliet*). Wilson kills Gatsby on the first day of autumn, as Gatsby floats in his pool despite a palpable chill in the air—a symbolic attempt to stop time and restore his relationship with Daisy to the way it was five years before, in 1917.

Symbols

Symbols are objects, characters, figures, or colors used to represent abstract ideas or concepts.

The Green Light

Situated at the end of Daisy's East Egg dock and barely visible from Gatsby's West Egg lawn, the green light represents Gatsby's hopes and dreams for the future. Gatsby associates it with Daisy, and in Chapter I he reaches toward it in the darkness as a guiding light to lead him to his goal. Because Gatsby's quest for Daisy is broadly associated with the American dream, the green light also symbolizes that more generalized ideal. In Chapter IX, Nick compares the green light to how America, rising out of the ocean, must have looked to early settlers of the new nation.

The Valley of Ashes

First introduced in Chapter II, the valley of ashes between West Egg and New York City consists of a long stretch of desolate land created by the dumping of industrial ashes. It represents the moral and social decay that results from the uninhibited pursuit of wealth, as the rich indulge themselves with regard for nothing but their own pleasure. The valley of ashes also symbolizes the plight of the poor, like George Wilson, who live among the dirty ashes and lose their vitality as a result.

The Eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg

The eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg are a pair of fading, bespectacled eyes painted on an old advertising billboard over the valley of ashes. They may represent God staring down upon and judging American society as a moral wasteland, though the novel never makes this point explicitly. Instead, throughout the novel, Fitzgerald suggests that symbols only have meaning because characters instill them with meaning. The connection between the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg and God exists only in George Wilson's grief-stricken mind. This lack of concrete significance contributes to the unsettling nature of the image. Thus, the eyes also come to represent the essential meaninglessness of the world and the arbitrariness of the mental process by which people invest objects with meaning. Nick explores these ideas in Chapter VIII, when he imagines Gatsby's final thoughts as a depressed consideration of the emptiness of symbols and dreams.

Enduring Love by Ian McEwan

Plot summary (from Wikipedia)

On a beautiful, cloudless day, a young couple celebrate their reunion with a picnic. Joe Rose and his long-term partner Clarissa Mellon are about to open a bottle of wine when a cry interrupts them. A hot air balloon with a 10-year-old boy in the basket and his grandfather being

dragged behind it has been ripped from its moorings. Joe immediately joins, along with several other men, in an effort to bring the balloon to safety, but in the rescue attempt, one man, John Logan, dies.



Another of the would-be-rescuers is Jed Parry. Joe and Jed exchange a passing glance, a glance that has devastating consequences and that indelibly burns an obsession into Jed's soul, for Jed suffers from de Clerambault's syndrome, a disorder that causes the sufferer to believe that someone else is in love with him or her. Delusional and dangerous, Jed gradually wreaks havoc in Joe's life, testing the limits of his beloved rationalism, threatening Clarissa's love for him, and driving him to the brink of murder and madness.

During a lunch with Clarissa and her godfather, Joe witnesses the attempted shooting of another man. However, he realises that the bullet was meant for him and that the similar character of the people at the other table had misled the killers into thinking the other man was their target. Before the hitman can deliver the fatal shot, Jed, orchestrator of the event, intervenes to save the innocent man's life before fleeing from the scene. In the subsequent interrogation, Joe insists that it was Jed who was behind this but the detective does not believe him, possibly because he appears to get many of the facts of the incident incorrect. Joe leaves dissatisfied, knowing that Jed is still out there and looking for him. Like the detective, however, Clarissa becomes skeptical that Jed is stalking Joe and that Joe is in any danger. This, plus the stress Joe suffers at Jed's hands, strains their relationship.

Fearing for his safety, Joe purchases a gun through an acquaintance. On the journey home, he receives a call from Jed, who is at Joe's home with Clarissa. Upon arriving at his apartment, Joe sees Jed sitting on the sofa with Clarissa. Jed then asks for Joe's forgiveness, before taking out a knife and pointing it at his *own* neck. To prevent Jed from killing himself, Joe shoots him in the arm. He escapes without charges. In the first of the novel's appendices (a medical report on Jed's condition) we learn that Joe and Clarissa are eventually reconciled and that they adopt a child. In the second (a letter from Jed to Joe), we learn that after three years, Parry remains uncured, and is now living in a psychiatric hospital.

Literary contexts, by Peter Childs

Enduring Love is a novel with one narrator but it is also a story with three central protagonists who all have a different understanding of human reality. Joe Rose is a rationalist who thinks science reveals facts about existence and the universe. Though she might not disagree with this standpoint, his partner Clarissa Mellon feels that art, beauty and happiness, not facts, are at the centre of people's relationships and that these are the important things that underpin life and love. Jed Parry believes that God underpins reality. The three of them thus begin from different premises: cognition, emotion and faith. It is

worth considering that these three perspectives also relate to significant periods of Western cultural history. The view that God was at the centre of life was incontestable in Europe up to the Renaissance, after which time, through the influence of art and classical civilisation, human interests became more important; since the eighteenth-century Enlightenment, rationalism and science have dominated our understanding of the world, though the Romantic period at the turn of the nineteenth century reasserted the importance of nature, emotion and imagination.

These three perspectives all have their correlatives in the novel. McEwan's incorporation of Jed's religious viewpoint is most clearly present in the book's religious allusions, especially in its opening scenes when parallels with Eden and the Fall, from the first book of the Bible, are suggested. It is also there, however, in small parallels between the suffering and sacrifice of Jesus and that of Joe and John Logan. Each aspect also has its literary connections within the novel: in the nineteenth-century narrative turn in science discussed by Joe (Ch. 5, pp. 48—9), in the references to Clarissa's search for Keats's missing letter (Ch. 24, p. 221) and in the allusions to John Milton's seventeenth-century epic poem of the Fall, *Paradise Lost* (while the first chapter concludes with, 'I've never seen such a terrible thing as that falling man' [Ch. 1, p. 16], a direct quotation from *Paradise Lost* follows shortly: 'Hurl'd headlong flaming from th' Ethereal Sky' [Ch. 3, p. 29]).

When Joe first brings de Clérambault's syndrome to mind, he recognises that: for there to be a pathology there had to be a lurking concept of health. De Clérambault's syndrome was a dark, distorting mirror that reflected and parodied a brighter world of lovers whose reckless abandon to their cause was sane...Sickness and health. In other words, what could I learn about Parry that would restore me to Clarissa? (Ch.15, p.128)

Joe makes the connection between Jed's love and other kinds, but he is not able to admit a resemblance beyond that between the diseased and the healthy — between the recklessly sane and the recklessly insane. Yet, he does see Jed's love for him as a distorted reflection of his own love for Clarissa. Joe's description of Parry's behaviour is indeed sometimes deeply reminiscent of what might be regarded as a 'normal' state of being in love: 'teasing out meanings, imbuing nonexistent exchanges with their drama of hope or disappointment, always scrutinizing the physical world, its random placements and chaotic noise and colours, for the correlatives of his own emotional state' (Ch. 17, p. 143). There is here a reminder that romantic love is itself a contested phenomenon. For evolutionary scientists it is practically a universal feeling, evident in almost all societies. For social scientists, love has not been seen as a constant fact of human life but as a Western cultural concept that should be historicised. For example, Morton Hunt writes in *The Natural History of Love* that it is 'a pattern of love that is essentially Western, strongly Anglo-Saxon, and relatively new on earth. Western love, in a manner scarcely to be found in earlier history, attempts to combine sexual outlet, affectionate friendship and the procreative familial functions, all in a single relationship.'

What is not open to question is that the modern understanding of love in the West has been informed by Romanticism, and by poets such as Keats, and is today so important that it has become a key measure of individual happiness and a pervasive ingredient of popular culture, in which the metaphorical register has shifted from 'my love is like a red, red rose', one origin of Joe's name, to kinds of (sexual) dependency: 'Love is the Drug' and 'Addicted to Love.' At one point, Joe muses on drink, drugs and mind-altering substances, which he does not explicitly link to love, but which appear to have similarities and which can have beneficent effects but can also lead to addiction and worse: 'these are the consequences of simple abuse which flow, as surely as claret from a bottle, out of human weakness, defect of character' (Ch. 20, p. 187). Another aspect of this passage is the renewed suggestion that Joe is resistant to losing control, that he is intolerant of people who allow desire to overwhelm reason: 'You can hardly blame the substance,' he concludes (Ch. 20, p. 178).

Joe is hostile to the narratives of literature in which Clarissa believes, as we find when he

laments the 'derisory' science collection at the London library: 'The assumption appeared to be that the world could be sufficiently understood through fictions, histories and biographies. Did the scientific illiterates who ran this place, and who dared call themselves educated people, really believe that literature was the greatest intellectual achievement of our civilization?' (Ch. 4, p. 42). It is not hard to imagine this mental comment directed at Clarissa, who devotes her life to studying literature and who, in the months before the balloon accident, has been taken away from Joe for much of her sabbatical by her devotion to another man: Keats.

One of the purposes of the novel's open-to-doubt account of what occurred at Keats's meeting with Wordsworth in December 1817 (Ch. 19, pp. 167—8) is to remind the reader that stories are often perpetuated because they are memorable and appealing rather than because they are true. When questioned by Wallace at the police station over whether the Keats—Wordsworth anecdote is rooted in fact, Joe replies 'the only account we have is unreliable' (Ch. 20, p. 179).

Deciding on whether an account is reliable or unreliable is not necessarily straightforward and can frequently be a matter of perspective. It is a dilemma the reader faces through most of the book with regard to Joe's narrative because his is the only account available. Reliability can also be subjective and is often a matter of trust rather than of the 'facts' that Joe would prefer to rely upon. A story might also be factually incorrect but emotionally true: 'it isn't true, but we need it. A kind of myth,' says Jocelyn of the Keats and Wordsworth story; 'It isn't true but it tells the truth,' says Clarissa (Ch. 19, p. 169). The story of the two poets also parallels Joe's relation with Jed, since Wordsworth at forty-seven, the same age as Joe) dismisses his admirer's poem because he is 'unable to endure any longer this young man's adoration' (Ch. 19, p. 168). Keats, we are told by the 'unreliable' witness Haydon, felt the rebuff deeply and never forgave Wordsworth (Ch. 19, p. 168), just as Jed's inability to forgive Joe's rejection of him is about to be demonstrated in this scene by the restaurant shooting.

McEwan cites two texts that would have provided information on the first meeting between Keats and Wordsworth. The first of these, Robert Gittings' biography of Keats, is referenced in the novel (Ch. 19, p. 169), but the second, Stephen Gill's *William Wordsworth: A Life*, is only mentioned in the acknowledgements. In a phrase that could apply to Joe Rose, Gill says of the two poets' meeting: 'Perhaps more than on any other occasion in Wordsworth's life one longs for a reliable witness to what actually happened.' Instead, there is only the word of the painter who introduced them, Benjamin Haydon. The words 'pretty piece of Paganism' are reported by Haydon and it is he who decides that this was an insult for which Keats never forgave Wordsworth. Yet Gill points out that 'pretty' was not for Wordsworth a derogatory term. And Gittings observes that Haydon's account was given thirty years later when his 'megalomaniac tendencies' were bordering on 'insanity'. McEwan is not choosing the anecdote about Keats just for its example of a grievance felt by a younger man against an older, but because of its parallel case to the restaurant scene with regard to the difficult surrounding the reliability and objectivity of witness accounts. (Gittings says that 'What followed [when Keats met Wordsworth], though often repeated in various forms, is still open to doubt'.) Interestingly, what in many ways undermines Joe's account of the restaurant shooting is his 'daydream' about the poets' meeting triggered by the words '*By then Keats was dead*' (Ch. 19, p. 170).

In relation to Keats, the theme of enduring love surfaces again in the novel's last chapter. Clarissa has been in touch with a Japanese scholar who has read a reference to a letter Keats wrote but never posted. It was addressed to his fiancée Fanny Brawne and contained a 'cry of undying love not touched by despair' (Ch. 24, p. 221). In a strand of the narrative that runs parallel to Joe's attempt to divert Parry's love through rational analysis, Clarissa is determined to track down further proof of Keats's ardent love for Fanny: of something undying at the moment of Keats's death. Her quest is as driven as Joe's, and

just as his is partly rooted in guilt, hers is partly rooted there too: in her desire to affirm that love endures after death, a belief that is arguably all the more important to her because she cannot conceive and so will not endure through her children. Joe says she wants her 'ghost child' to 'forgive her' despite the fact that she is guilty of nothing (Ch. 3, p. 32), just as Joe wants expiation for Logan's death despite the fact he has nothing to be ashamed of according to Clarissa (Ch. 23, p. 217).

The relevance of Keats to the three protagonists of *Enduring Lore* is suggested by the references in the restaurant scene to his poems *Endymion* and 'Ode on a Grecian Urn'. While one of the closing lines of the ode is quoted in the novel, 'Beauty is truth, truth beauty' (Ch. 19, p. 166), it is complemented by the equally famous line, 'A thing of beauty is a joy for ever', which are the opening words of Book I of *Endymion* (1818). When connected to the closing sentence of McEwan's novel - Jed's assertion that 'Faith is joy' — the lines help to draw the different values but linked terms of the novel's love triangle. Joe adheres to the notion of truth's importance above everything else, even though he is aware of the near impossibility of objectivity. Clarissa, the Keats scholar, places greater trust in Keats's view of love and beauty — joys that endure (on 13 October 1819 he wrote in one of his letters to Fanny that 'love is my religion'). For Jed, such joy is to be found in faith.

Keats's odes have themes that are relevant to *Enduring Love*: the difference between the transient and the permanent, the inextricable ties between joy and pain, the contrasts and similarities between nature and art, knowledge and imagination. Keats's 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' contrasts life, with its trials leading only to death, to the permanence of beauty in art, represented by the figures on the urn. Textual connections between the ode 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' and *Enduring Love* are easy to trace, most clearly in Keats's phrase 'For ever wilt thou love', but there is also, for example, the second line's reference to the urn as a 'foster-child',

bringing to mind Joe and Clarissa's adoption of a child. Similarly, *Endymion* has many phrases that strike the reader of McEwan's novel as bearing on the same theme: '. . . if this earthly love has power to make / Men's being mortal, immortal. . . .' Keats' poem is an allegory of the search for love, based on the Greek myth of Endymion, which tells the story of the moon goddess, Cynthia, who falls in love with the shepherd boy Endymion, tending his flock on Mount Latmos. She is so besotted by his beauty that she descends from heaven to be with Endymion in his dreams — Endymion begged youth, sleep and immortality from the gods so he could dream forever. The poem is a fine example of Keats's ability to luxuriate in sensuous description, though it is often deemed also to have faults of excessive digression and tedious narrative exposition.

Keats is renowned not only for his poetry but also his letters, which were described by the eminent twentieth-century poet T. S. Eliot as the most important in all literature. Clarissa's belief that 'love that did not find its expression in a letter was not perfect' (Ch. 1, P. 7) has to be considered in this light, though it would be impossible to resolve the question of what 'perfect love' might be, other than God's. The relationship between Keats and Fanny Brawne, the 'girl next door' at Wentworth Place he fell in love with, is well known as one of the greatest examples of a love affair in letters (though none of Fanny's survives), but it was a relationship in which Keats greatly feared his love was unrequited. It is thus a comparison and contrast to the love affair Jed seeks to conduct with Joe through his 1,000 letters (while Keats suffered, and died, from tuberculosis before he could marry Fanny, Jed suffers from a very different kind of illness). Joe's intense scanning of these letters for clues about Jed is meant directly to parallel Clarissa's

literary analysis of Keats. Her search for the last unsent letter from Keats to Fanny finds its correlative in the final letter of *Enduring Love*, which is an unsent letter (the last one as far as the novel is concerned) from Parry declaring his undying love for Joe. While Clarissa says that she detects a similarity between Jed's writing and Joe's in the letters, a thematic comparison would be made with the Keats correspondence. Jed's letters make declarations and accusations similar to phrases found in Keats's letters to Fanny Brawne, in one of

which he even declares that 'You will call this madness' (May 1820). Three examples from Keats can suffice: 'Ask yourself my love whether you are not very cruel to have so entrammelled me, so destroyed my freedom' (letter dated 1 July 1819); 'I cannot exist without you — I am forgetful of everything but seeing you again — my Life seems to stop there—I see no further. You have absorb'd me' (13 October 1819); and 'Do not live as if I was not existing. . . . You must be mine to die upon the rack if I want you' (May 1820).

If we move now to a further literary context, *Enduring Love* can be also considered in the light of the major preoccupations of McEwan's other works. For example, *Atonement* (2001) emerges at the end of its narrative as an extended exercise in attempted reparation and expiation. It is presaged in the earlier novel's concern with forgiveness: Joe is seeking forgiveness for his part in John Logan's death, Clarissa wants her unborn children to forgive her (Ch. 3, p. 32), Jed asks Joe for 'forgiveness' (Ch. 22, p. 212), and the novel ends with James Reid and Jean Logan each seeking forgiveness (Ch. 24, p. 230). The book ends before the appendices with Joe and Clarissa needing to forgive each other but unable to see the other person's point of view. Another related theme of *Enduring Love* is that of innocence and guilt and this features strongly not just in *The Innocent*, but also in both *Saturday* and *Atonement*, while the presence of unconventional love triangles is again notable in *The Innocent*, but also in *Amsterdam*.

Also, it has been noted many times in reviews that children and childhood are an abiding concern of McEwan's fiction from the short stories onwards. His first novel *The Cement Garden* features children almost exclusively, while even those that centre on adults, such as *Black Dogs*, *Saturday* and *The Child in Time* are clearly concerned with the responsibilities of one generation towards another. There are also many novels that feature orphans or in which adults either mourn the removal or regret the absence of children from their lives.

Certainly one of the most remarked-upon aspects to several of McEwan's novels is a focus on couples at a major crossroads in their relationship, as in *The Comfort of Strangers* and *The Child in Time*. The latter novel's main storyline concentrates on Stephen and Julie, a husband and wife who, through the disappearance of their only child, become estranged, but appear to be reconciled with the birth of a new baby at the close of the narrative. The movement from estrangement to tentative reconciliation in scenes associated with children has a distinct parallel in *Enduring Love*.

Lastly, one of the major elements of *Enduring Love* that features in the next section, science, was a much-debated interest of *The Child in Time*. In that novel the protagonist Stephen has a vision across time, which is a phenomenon that can be explained from the perspectives of art, religion or science, like the three endings of *Enduring Love*. McEwan had been interested in science since childhood and in the years before the publication of *The Child in Time* he continued to read books on Newtonian physics, quantum mechanics and relativity theory. By the time of *Enduring Love*, McEwan's focus has of course shifted from theoretical physics (in *The Child in Time* there is a physics lecturer, Thelma, who challenges the importance of literature much as Joe does in *Enduring Love*) to evolutionary biology, but both novels underline McEwan's belief that we live in a 'golden age' of scientific discovery and popular explanation (in books like the British theoretical physicist and cosmologist Stephen Hawking's *A Brief History of Time* [1988], the American psycholinguist Steven Pinker's *The Language Instinct* [1994] and the British evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins' *The Selfish Gene* [1976]).

Christina Rossetti

Rossetti was born in London and educated at home by her mother. Her siblings were the artist Dante Gabriel Rossetti, William Michael Rossetti, and Maria Francesca Rossetti. Their father, Gabriele Rossetti, was an Italian poet and a political asylum seeker from Naples; their mother, Frances Polidori, was the sister of Lord Byron's friend and physician, John William Polidori. In the 1840s her family was stricken with severe financial difficulties due to the deterioration of her father's physical and mental health. When she was 14, Rossetti suffered a nervous breakdown and left school.



Her breakdown was followed by bouts of depression and related illness. During this period she, her mother, and her sister became seriously interested in the Anglo-Catholic movement that was part of the Church of England. This religious devotion played a major role in Rossetti's personal life: in her late teens she became engaged to the painter James Collinson but this ended because he reverted to Catholicism; later she became involved with the linguist Charles Cayley but did not marry him, also for religious reasons. She was a volunteer worker from 1859 to 1870 at the St Mary Magdalene "house of charity" in Highgate, a refuge for former prostitutes.

Rossetti began writing at age 7 but she was 31 before her first work was published — *Goblin Market and Other Poems* (1862). The collection garnered much critical praise and, according to Jan Marsh, "Elizabeth Barrett Browning's death two months later led to Rossetti being hailed as her natural successor as 'female laureate'." The title poem from this book is one of Rossetti's best known works and, although at first glance it may seem merely to be a nursery rhyme about two sisters' misadventures with goblins, the poem is multi-layered, challenging, and complex. Critics have interpreted the piece in a variety of ways: seeing it as an allegory about temptation and salvation; a commentary on Victorian gender roles and female agency; and a work about erotic desire and social redemption. Some readers have noted its likeness to Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner" given both poems' religious themes of temptation, sin and redemption by vicarious suffering.

Her Christmas poem "In the Bleak Midwinter" became widely known after her death when set as a Christmas carol by Gustav Holst as well as by other composers.

Rossetti continued to write and publish for the rest of her life although she focused primarily on devotional writing and children's poetry. She maintained a large circle of friends and for ten years volunteered at a home for prostitutes. She was ambivalent about women's suffrage but many scholars have identified feminist themes in her poetry. Furthermore, as Marsh notes, "she was opposed to war, slavery (in the American South), cruelty to animals (in the prevalent practice of animal experimentation), the exploitation of girls in under-age prostitution and all forms of military aggression."

In the later decades of her life, Rossetti suffered from Graves Disease. In 1893 she developed cancer, and died the following year 29 December 1894; she is buried in Highgate Cemetery. In the early 20th century Rossetti's popularity faded as many respected Victorian writers' reputations suffered from Modernism's backlash. Rossetti remained largely unnoticed and unread until the 1970s when feminist scholars began to recover and comment on her work. In the last few decades Rossetti's writing has been rediscovered and she has regained admittance into the Victorian literary canon.

Goblin Market

Plot

Goblin Market is about two close sisters, Laura and Lizzie, as well as the goblin men to whom the title refers, and another girl named Jeanie.

Although the sisters seem to be quite young, they live by themselves in a house, and are accustomed to draw water every evening from a stream. As the poem begins, twilight is falling, and as usual the sisters hear the calls from the Goblin merchants, who sell fruits in fantastic abundance, variety and savor. On this evening, Laura lingers at the stream after her sister has left for home. Wanting fruit but having no money, the impulsive Laura offers a lock of her hair and "a tear more rare than pearl."

Laura gorges on the delicious fruit in a sort of bacchic frenzy, then comes to her senses and, after picking up one of the seeds, returns home. Lizzie, waiting at home, and "full of wise upbraidings," reminds Laura about the cautionary tale of Jeanie, another girl who, having likewise partaken of the goblin men's fruits, sadly died just at the beginning of winter, after a long decline.

Night has by then fallen, and the sisters go to sleep in their shared bed.

The next day, as Laura and Lizzie go about their work in the house, Laura dreamily longs for the coming evening's meeting with the goblin men. But at the stream that evening, as she strains to hear the usual goblin chants and cries, Laura discovers to her horror that, although Lizzie still hears the goblins' voices, she no longer can.

Unable to buy more of the forbidden fruit, pining away for the lack of it, Laura falls into a slow physical deterioration and depression. As winter approaches, Laura pines away and no longer does her household work. One day she remembers the saved seed and plants it, but it bears nothing.

Weeks and months pass, and finally sister Lizzie realizes that Laura is on the verge of death. Lizzie resolves to visit the goblin men to buy some of their fruit, hoping thereby to soothe Laura's pain. Carrying a silver penny, Lizzie goes down to the brook and is greeted in a friendly way by the goblins. But their attitudes turn malicious when they realize Lizzie wants to pay with mere money, and to carry the fruits home with her. Enraged, the goblins pummel and assault Lizzie, trying to make her eat the fruits. In the process, the goblins drench the brave girl in fruit juice and pulp.

Lizzie escapes to run home, hoping that Laura will eat and drink the juice from her body. The weakened sister does so, then undergoes a violent transformation of such intensity that her life seems to hang in the balance.

The next morning, though, Laura has returned to her old self, both physically and mentally. As the last stanza attests, both Laura and Lizzie live to tell their children of the evils of the goblins' fruits – and the awesome powers of sisterly love.

Criticism

Since the 1970s, critics have tended to view *Goblin Market* as an expression of Rossetti's feminist (or proto-feminist) politics. Most critics agree that the poem is about feminine sexuality and its relation to Victorian social mores. In addition to its clear allusions to Adam and Eve, forbidden fruit, and temptation, there is much in the poem that seems overtly sexual, such as when Lizzie, going to buy fruit from the goblins, considers her dead friend Jeanie, "Who should have been a bride; / But who for joys brides hope to have / Fell sick

and died", and lines like "Lizzie uttered not a word;/ Would not open lip from lip/ Lest they should cram a mouthful in;/ But laughed in heart to feel the drip/ Of juice that syruded all her face,/ And lodged in dimples of her chin,/ And streaked her neck which quaked like curd."

The poem's attitude toward this temptation seems ambiguous, since the happy ending offers the possibility of redemption for Laura, while typical Victorian portrayals of the "fallen woman" ended in the fallen woman's death. It is worth noting that although the historical record is lacking, Rossetti apparently began working at Highgate Penitentiary for fallen women shortly after composing "Goblin Market" in the spring of 1859.

According to Antony Harrison of North Carolina State University, Jerome McGann reads the poem as a criticism of Victorian marriage markets and conveys "the need for an alternative social order". For Sandra Gilbert, the fruit represents Victorian women's exclusion from the world of art.^[1] Other scholars – most notably Herbert Tucker – view the poem as a critique on the rise of advertising in precapitalist England, with the goblins utilising clever marketing tactics to seduce. Laura J. Hartman, among others, has pointed out the parallels between Laura's experience and the experience of drug addiction.

The poem uses an irregular rhyme scheme, often using couplets or ABAB rhymes, but also repeating some rhymes many times in succession, or allowing long gaps between a word and its partner. The meter is also irregular, typically (though not always) keeping four or five stresses per line. The lines below show the varied stress patterns, as well as an interior rhyme (grey/decay) picked up by the end-rhyme with "away". The initial line quoted here, "bright", rhymes with "night" a full seven lines earlier.

But when the noon waxed bright
Her hair grew thin and grey;
She dwindled, as the fair full moon doth turn
To swift decay, and burn
Her fire away.

Jessie Cameron

Jessie Cameron is a poem about the story of a girl who is propositioned by a young man but rejects him. The young man is the son of a "witch" and referred to as being of gypsy descent. Jessie is an outspoken girl, and turns this man down even after he tells her of his undying love for her on the basis that "he may be right for others" but not for her.

The poem ends tragically- both Jessie and her lover disappear into the sea and cries are heard as echoes forever more. Nobody knows whether the young man threw his life away or whether he lost it... hints at his sorcerous background.

Maude Clare

"Maude Clare," by Christina Rossetti, deals differently with the common Pre-Raphaelite theme of tragic love than do contemporary members of the PRB. While Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poems infuse love with elements of tragedy through the introduction of death, Christina Rossetti's work, "Maude Clare" deals with a more complex form of tragic love. As Lord Thomas's previous love, Maude Clare's presence sullies the nuptials between Nell and him, adding conflict to the wedding day occasion. Neither bride nor groom experience pure joy during the occasion because of Maude Clare's conspicuous attendance:

My lord was pale with inward strife,
And Nell was pale with pride;

Rather than using flowery description or hard-edged realism, like her brother Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Christina Rossetti primarily composes her narrative poem of dialogue. Her unusual preponderance of dialogue with little attention to description of the environment gives the reader a sense of watching a scene in a play, rather than reading a poem.

Instead of stealing the focus of the wedding day, as one would traditionally expect, the bride forfeits all the attention to Maude Clare. A former lover (perhaps a very recent lover) of Lord Thomas, Maude usurps the reader's attention as the focal point of the narrative at the outset of the first stanza:

Out of the church she followed them
With a lofty step and mien:
His Bride was like a village maid,
Maude Clare was like a queen.

Rossetti continues to contrast Maude Clare and the bride throughout the poem. Nell serves as a secondary character, speaking only in retaliation to Maude Clare's non-too-well masked jabs, and pales, literally and figuratively, in comparison to Maude Clare's stature and personage. As an ironic wedding gift, Maude Clare offers Thomas and Nell both physical amulets of love like 'half of the golden chain" that Thomas wore, as well as a more biting gift of her 'share of a fickle heart." Though Rossetti doesn't specifically delineate the exact circumstances that lead to this uncomfortably awkward and emotionally charged wedding scene, she highlights the profound tension between Maude Clare and Nell. Furthermore, Lord Thomas struggles to reconcile his marital vows and obligations to Nell with Maude Clare, the 'More wise, and much more fair" other woman. Maude Clare claims that she has washed her hands of Thomas and that Nell can have his heart, which lacks 'bloom" or 'dew", implying that it has somehow lost its sparkle. The tone of her words and her conspicuous domination of the scene reveal her true, somewhat bitter attachments, however. In the end when, in a curt exchange of dialogue, the two women shoot venom-charged words at one another, Nell's retaliation concludes the poem. The interchange reminds us of Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream* when, while fighting over Lysander's affections, Helena attacks Hermia by calling her a puppet, prompting the deterioration of the argument into a clawing, biting, physical confrontation:

"Yea, tho' you're taller by the head,
More wise, and much more fair;
I'll love him till he loves me best,
Me best of all, Maude Clare."

Though not the blushing, bubbling bride that one might stereotypically expect, Nell gets the last word, but not the last thought. Rossetti's choice to emphasize Maude Clare's name in the finale leaves the reader to ponder the impending doom of Thomas and Nell's marriage. With the looming presence of Maude Clare at their wedding, acting as a bad omen for the marriage in general, it's unlikely that Thomas will ever love Nell the best, as she hopes. The tragedy lies not in a spiritual love lost by means of mortality, but instead in the interplay of a love triangle that leaves all parties unsatisfied, confused, and still longing for an ill-manifested vision of love.

Winter: My Secret

There have typically been two main interpretations of the secret. One is that it is sexual in nature. Rossetti has an interesting history when it comes to the subject of men and marriage; we talked last time about how twice in her life—once with James Collinson and again with Charles Cayley (incidentally a relationship that begins approximately the same

time that this poem is written)—Rossetti goes through relationships that suddenly break off. Some critics have suggested that the "secret" in this poem is an early expression of a love and perhaps even a sexual attraction to Charles Cayley that has not yet progressed to the point that it can be spoken. Even if we move away from the biographical interpretation of the poem, there are certain things that lend themselves to such a reading. Note particularly line 23-34—these lines follow the description of winter as being a cold, barren time. We move from this empty, bleak time into spring, but the speaker refuses to tell her secret even then because of fear that something may kill it. The only time when she *might* tell her secret is in the summer. Be sure to note the language here which should take us back to Keatsian sensual pleasure! It's in the summer, when everything has blossomed and come to fruition that the secret can (possibly) be spoken, suggesting that the speaker must progress in the relationship to a certain point (and this is reading the relationship between the speaker and the auditor as the relationship that is developing).

An alternative take on this, however, is that the secret is simply knowledge of the speaker. If we think about relationships (think back to *Goblin Market*), knowledge about someone becomes a way of possessing them. A secret, by definition, is withholding knowledge. Thus for the speaker of the poem to withhold knowledge about herself from the auditor—whether that be someone within the poem or us as readers as the last line implies—is to assert power over the auditor. This reading emphasizes the second word of the title; it is MY secret as opposed to ours or yours.

Whether the emphasis is on the secret (and the sexual nature of the secret) or on the possession of the secret, either way, CR asserts that we cannot know. We can't pigeon hole, interpret the poem in a single right way. The secret is that the poem is open to multiple readings, many ways of looking at things. We see an interesting contrast to this in "In an Artist's Studio" where the speaker accuses the artist of having tried to possess the subject of his art in an almost vampiric way.

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Such poems sometimes appropriately reveal her ability to be playful and ironically detached, to parody the kinds of issues her poetry raises. Such is the case in a poem like "Winter: My Secret." In it the speaker confesses to wearing masks:

We find the clue to understanding this enigmatic poem in its self-parodic tone. The extraordinary fact here is that the work builds a thoroughly engaging relationship between the speaker and reader out of nothing substantial. No events transpire or are described, and even the "secret" has no extrinsic reference. The reader's curiosity and affection for the speaker are generated entirely by means of a fictive enigma that compels our interest. The poem thus becomes a commentary upon itself, upon the "secret" power of art. It also becomes, on an admittedly small scale, an exemplification of artistic perfection, a self-sufficing artifact. That such may be its design is indicated by the clear allusions, in the first three lines of the last stanza, to Keats's odes "To a Nightingale" and "To Autumn," both of which are concerned with acts of poetic creativity and the acceptance of created beauty (whether imaginative or natural) for its own sake.

Like many of Rossetti's poems, "Winter: My Secret" skillfully indulges in linguistic, formal, and metaphorical play. Such works by her are often unsettling because of their self-conscious experimentation and their aesthetic as well as substantive challenges to convention. Yet, unlike "Winter: My Secret," these works frequently close in conventionally settled ways — with the thematic, dramatic, or psychological tensions resolved. Closure, however, very often embodies a literal resignation of the rebelliousness of language, themes, and characterization within the works, a giving over of the potential evoked in the

poems for destabilizing the conventional world (of language, social expectations, literary conventions) in which the poems are usually set.

WH Auden

W.H. Auden has been described as 'the first poet writing in English who felt at home in the twentieth century'. Despite recent attempts to rewrite the 1930s, its writers are likely to remain 'the Auden generation' and the era to retain his characterization of it in 'September 1, 1939' as 'a low dishonest decade'.

...

Wystan Hugh Auden was born on 21 February 1907 in York, the third and last son of a doctor and nurse. His family moved to Birmingham when he was one year old, where his father became Chief Medical Officer for Schools and later Professor of Public Health at the University. Auden came to consciousness in a secure upper-middle-class world at a time when, as he wrote nostalgically in 1964 in 'The Cave of Making', railway engines were named after Arthurian knights, science was known to schoolboys as 'stinks' and 'the Manor' was still politically important. Since then, the churches have emptied, the cavalry disappeared and 'any faith in immanent virtue died - if we had it'.



...

The great modern systems of thought by which Auden sought to understand himself and his age all had roots in the 19th Century: Charles Darwin's theory of evolution, Karl Marx's exposure of 'the economic/reasons for our acts' and Sigmund Freud's account of the unconscious.

...

Auden was an undergraduate at Christ's Church, Oxford between 1925 and 1928, where he first first Natural Sciences, then PPE (Politics, Philosophy and Economics) before graduating with a Third in English. His poetry at Oxford was heavily influenced by T.S. Eliot's 'The Wasteland' (1922). At Oxford he was widely seen as the figurehead of a group of young writers, including Louis MacNeice, Cecil Day Lewis and Stephen Spender - sometimes referred to as 'the Auden gang'.

...

After leaving Oxford in 1928 he spent a year in Germany in the last days of the Weimar Republic where he encountered Left Wing politics as well as sexual and social promiscuity 'undreamt of by a provincial middle-class youth'. On 'Black Friday', 28 October 1929, the Wall Street Crash ushered in the chronic economic collapse of the Depression Years. Mass unemployment fostered the advance of Communism and Facism throughout Europe.

...

Between 1930 and 1935, Auden taught at private schools in Scotland and Herefordshire. It was in this period that 'The Orators' (from which 'Ode' is taken) was written.

...

The Spanish Civil War broke out in July 1936 when under the command of General Franco and other right wing officers the Army rebelled against the elected left wing Republican government. Franco was supported by Hitler and Mussolini. Auden went to Spain intending to enlist as an ambulance driver with the (Left Wing) International Brigade but ended up staying only a short while and left in March 1937. Auden left England in 1938 to live in

America, renting a house in Brooklyn Heights with his partner Chester Kallman and an assortment of 'literati and oddballs' (including the stripper Gypsy Rose Lee).

After the war he took US citizenship and split his time between America and Europe. He was the elected Professor of Poetry at Oxford University from 1956-1961. He died on September 29, 1973 in Vienna after a heart attack.

September 1, 1939

Auden wrote the poem just after the start of World War 2 in 1939. He is writing for two audiences: the people in England and the people in America. He starts off by writing like a reporter, saying where he is reporting from:

"I sit in one of the dives/ On Fifty-second Street"

His use of 'dives' is a reflection of his desire to give his language an American flavour. 'Fifty-second Street' continues his American stance, but lightens it and makes it more familiar to his audience in England because at the time Fifty-second Street was the jazz strip of the world.

Finding the reasons for his uncertainty and fear is a large part of the poem.

The first reason is 'the clever hopes' of people in England who had pinned their hopes on pacifism and appeasement. The previous decade was certainly low and dishonest. As the fear about Hitler grew, so did the argument, especially on the Continent, that things would somehow come right. 'Waves of anger and fear' are the radio waves. 'the bright and darkened lands of the earth' refers both to the lands in daylight or night, and to those who are enlightened (in the eyes of the West) and those who are not. Newspapers have a circulation; so it's they who 'circulate'.

The first stanza ended on a highly emotional note with 'The unmentionable odour of death'. Auden wants to come down from that high emotional level, so he becomes objective and dispassionate with '*Accurate scholarship can... Unearth the whole offence From Luther until now... Find what occurred at Linz, What huge imago made A psychopathic god*'

Linz is the place where Hitler grew up without a father. 'Imago' is a term from psychoanalysis. It is the idealised or fantasized figure, often a father, especially in the absence of a real father, from a person's early childhood, whose standards then become a model for his behaviour in adult life.

People do not only do evil in return when evil has been done to them. They do evil in return when they *feel* evil has been done to them. The Germans certainly felt evil had been done to them in the way they were treated after the first World War.

The German soldiers, including 29-year-old Hitler, were shocked when they heard of the surrender. So that was another reason for them to feel that evil had been done to them.

Auden visited Germany several times after leaving Oxford and saw at first hand the people whose social fabric and economy were completely undone. Christopher Isherwood's *Berlin Stories* give a good picture of Germany at that time. German Expressionism flourished with its stress on distortion, fragmentation and the communication of violent and overstressed emotion. The ground, especially in the youth, was being fertilised to produce evil.

'*Exiled Thucydides knew*'. Thucydides the historian was also the general Thucydides who arrived too late to save the important town of Amphipolis because the Spartan general Brasidas had offered the city moderate terms to surrender. For this he was exiled from the city he passionately loved. The speech that Auden mentions was the speech by Pericles for the soldiers who fell in the war. It is probably the greatest speech about democracy ever made. In his biography of Auden, Humphrey Carpenter says that Auden was rereading Thucydides at the time he wrote this poem. Thucydides wrote his history after the war, which Athens lost, knowing that it had spelt the end of Classical Greece. Auden realised that great change for our own times loomed on the horizon. In a sense he wants to be a

Thucydides for our time, but he does not have the advantage of hindsight that Thucydides had. As Brodsky says:

"We must remember that Auden landed in New York just eight months earlier, on December 26 1938, the very date the Spanish Republic fell. The sense of helplessness which presumably overcame this poet (who had by that time issued more and better warnings against Fascism than anyone else in the field) on this September night simply seeks solace in the parallel with the Greek historian who dealt with the phenomenon at hand no less extensively, two millennia ago. In other words, if Thucydides failed to convince the Greeks, what chance is there for a modern poet, with his weaker voice and bigger crowd?"

Auden probably expects us to contrast Thucydides-Athens-Democracy-Enlightenment as against Sparta-Dictatorship.

Auden is supposed to have gone through three stages: Freudian, Marxist, religious. Brodsky thinks that the lines '*The habit-forming pain, Mismanagement and grief*' has them all. 'Habit-forming pain' is a term from **psychoanalysis** in which Auden was well versed, 'mismanagement' refers to the political economy, and 'grief' in which the lines culminate, is pure King James Bible. Seldom is the relationship between cause and effect so poignantly expressed in two successive words as in 'Mismanagement and grief'.

With 'Habit-forming pain, Mismanagement and grief' Auden has again ended a stanza in an emotionally loaded way, and 'this neutral air' helps to lower the tone. It also helps to let the poet seem objective, neutral. But above all, he is writing in America and at this stage America is still neutral. And anyway, there is no better adjective for air than 'neutral'.

In this stanza, Auden moves from the past into the present. Why are skyscrapers blind? The word 'window' comes from the German 'wind auge'. (Afrikaans: 'wind oog'). It is an opening through which the wind can come in and an eye through which we can see out. But the skyscrapers do not see through their many windows, so they are blind.

In any country, small towns have no tall buildings. Skyscrapers are always a sign of dense population; they always proclaim the existence of 'collective man'. I wonder whether they proclaim his strength.

The rest of stanza 4 deals with the attitudes, the indifference, the inertia, that brought the whole tragedy about. Brodsky claims that the poem is mainly about shame, and among the faces in the mirror, Auden sees his own.

In the poem it is very comforting to blame others, like 'important Persons' who shout 'militant trash', for what is wrong.

In this stanza Auden comes to what he thought was the root cause of what was wrong in this era: selfishness.

For the error bred in the bone
Of each woman and each man
Craves what it cannot have,
Not universal love

But to be loved alone does not refer only, or even mainly, to jealousy or selfishness in love between men and women, but to selfishness in general, to the ancient Greek vice of pleonexia, (always wanting more). Individuals as well as nations.

Brodsky says that Auden quotes verbatim from Nijinsky's diary at the end of the stanza, and strongly recommends that we read the diary. But where can one find it?

In the first two lines we go from 'the conservative dark', not to light, but to 'the ethical life'.

Throughout his discussion Brodsky makes much of Auden's use of assonant rhyme, such as 'love-have-Diaghilev' in the sixth stanza and 'dark-work-wake' in this one.

At this stage Auden has doubts about the value, or at least possible impact, of what he is writing and says: "*All I have is a voice To undo the folded lie*". Which is odd, since he had already said in his poem in memory of Yeats that 'poetry makes nothing happen'. That is not its function. Its function is to make us vividly aware

of something. Stephen Spender said that Auden was very good at diagnosis, but would never presume to offer a cure. Quite right, too. Such presumption is not in the nature of poetry or that of Auden. If he can undo the folded lie in the brain of the sensual man-in-the-street and the lie of authority, he need not be so despondent about his work. He has done his job as a poet: to interpret his society, not to reform it or try to cure its ills. Except that an

increase in insight, awareness, human sympathy are necessary, though not sufficient for such reform or cure.

In this stanza Auden moves from impersonal objectivity to a personal, subjective note, using 'I' for only the second time in the poem.

This stanza echoes the theme of 'universal love' versus 'to be loved alone' in stanza 6. 'The sensual man-in-the-street', 'Authority', and 'the citizen or the police' are just instances of 'each woman and each man'.

As I Walked Out One Evening

The poem main theme is that pure love cannot last forever and time will take control and break down love.

"O let not Time deceive you
You cannot conquer Time."

The lovers song in stanzas 2-4 uses many poetic techniques to describe how their love will go on forever. Their love will only cease to exist when impossible things happen such as, "the river jumps over the mountain" and if "the seven stars go squawking like geese in the sky".

In stanza 6 Auden personifies Time. Time is portrayed as evil and sleazy, "oh let not Time deceive you".

"Time watches from the shadow//And coughs when you would kiss" suggests that Time is a voyeur and is disgusted by one of the most common ways of showing love, kissing. The word "coughs" also suggest that Time is spreading illness and disease which will get to you eventually.

"O plunge, plunge your hands in water
Plunge them in up to the wrists
Stare, stare in the basin
And wander what you have missed"

This stanza is Time commanding the lover to commit suicide as they have reached a complete opposite from the song they were singing early, ultimate despair as they no longer "hold the Flower of Ages" in their arms. This stanza also conveys the power time has over you with the use of command verbs "stare" and "plunge".

"The glacier knocks in the cupboard
The desert sighs in the bed
And the crack in the tea cup opens
A lane to the land of the dead"

This part of the poem is suggesting that the lovers have separated and that the space they previously shared is now barren and lifeless like a desert and that all the Love had brought life to the bed and cupboard but now it has gone there is nothing.

The crack in the tea cup is metaphorically linking back to "Vaguely life leaks away" as small amounts of your life fall away from you and you barely notice except you begin to become frail and weak.

Towards the end of the poem Auden changes the tone from a pessimistic view to that of a slightly more optimistic and hopeful tone.

"You shall love your crooked neighbour
With your crooked heart"

Here the poet is corrupting the bible as one of the commandments was to love your neighbour. Auden is suggesting that your love will never be pure like in the lovers song but

you can still love your neighbour but selfishness and jealousy will always be in humans as we (i am sorry to say) are not perfect!

The very last stanza of the poem "As I Walked Out One Evening" shows that the lovers have separated and that man has been beaten and the clocks have fallen and ceased but still time continues.

"The clocks has ceased their chiming
And the deep river ran on"

If I Could Tell You

In "If I Could Tell You," time is personified and introduced to the reader as an unreliable character, through through various poetical devices such as personification, repetition, and juxtaposed imagery. The speaker in the poem blames Time (with a capital "T") for unwanted changes in life, and he repeats the line because he observes that all changes, even those that are unintentional, come with Time.

In If I Could Tell You, a villanelle poem, time is introduced to the reader as an unreliable person. This characteristic of Time given by the speaker is embroidered in the poem through various poetical devices such as personification, repetition and juxtaposed imagery. It can be inferred from the third tercet that the speaker apostrophes to his lover. The poetical devices in this poem serve to intensify the conflict between the speaker's desire to inform his lover of the future and the unexpected nature of Time.

The personification of time is the major element in this poem to deliver the reader that time is unreliable. In each line the word time is capitalized; this converts the concept of time into Time as a person with a special name.

The repetition of the lines "Time will say nothing but I told you so" and "If I could tell you I would let you know" emphasize the narrator's acknowledgement that only the passing of time will SHOW events, emotions, or actions that will happen. The second stanza's oxymoronic "ifs" may happen, but perhaps only after many "I told you so"s FROM time. Predictions of the future cannot be made, as stated in the third stanza, and, although the narrator would tell if he could, he has an ineffable love for some person. The fourth stanza reveals about the speaker that he actively questions how and why things happen around him. He implies that all things have a cause in the line, "The winds must come FROM somewhere when they blow," and strongly reiterates his assertion in the following line, "There must be reasons why the leaves decay, / Time will say nothing but I told you so." Auden appears to say that even time will SHOW that all reactions have a cause.

The final stanza asks the reader to imagine that "the lions all get up and go, / And all the brooks and soldiers run away." In this supposition, an unknown presents itself, as neither soldiers nor streams, here personified, run away. A stream may dry up, just as a life ends, but Auden asks whether time can even prove or disprove these possibilities- whether one man's question will be remembered long enough for an answer to evolve. Auden recognizes that nothing exists to foresee events and no true presages exist in life, as they do in literature. The perception of life and its events only comes FROM the passing of time, and in that perceivable flow it 'tells' what has happened- "I told you so."

The poem generally has ten syllables per line, except for line 14, which has 11 beats. The syllable usage adds a rhythmic feeling of time, an overtone in the poem. Auden's use of

alliteration adds to the flow of the poem, as the rhyme scheme and meter give a beat of time. On line 13, the phrase “roses really want to grow” has both alliteration and personification, and more alliteration in the words “we should weep” appears on line 5. In each stanza, the recurrence of either “If I could tell...” or “Time will say nothing...” also confer more depth to the rhythmic tick of time in the poem.

O What Is That Sound?

Critics have been reluctant to be precise about the situation in W. H. Auden ballad "O What Is That Sound" (entitled "The Quarry" in the 1958 *Selected Poetry*), probably because they start (as does Monroe K. Spears in *The Poetry of W. H. Auden*, London, 1968 , p. 109) with the understandable but, probably, mistaken assumption that the woman is the first speaker. This assumption makes it difficult to explain why the first speaker kneels in stanza 4, and why the second speaker remains so calm throughout. If we reverse this assumption, these difficulties are resolved in what can be seen as a tale of double betrayal.

The man (who speaks in lines 1-2 of each stanza except the last, which is spoken by the poet) is a traitor or rebel who is hiding out with his mistress in a house on a mountainside; he is the "quarry" wanted by the soldiers. Knowing himself wanted, he is alarmed at the sound of troops in the distance, and his terror mounts as they approach. When they leave the road (stanza 4), he kneels so as not to be visible through the window. (In stanzas 2-4 his questions concern what he sees through the window; in subsequent stanzas he is dependent on the woman to report what she sees.) Having no reason to think his hiding place known, the man tries to convince himself that the troops are headed elsewhere--the doctor's, the parson's, or the farmer's--but they are coming for him. They come directly; they do not have to search or make inquiries; obviously, they have been tipped off. Who has tipped them off? Clearly the woman, whose vows have indeed been "deceiving," and who may be a secret agent. At any rate, she has betrayed him, just as he has previously betrayed, or plotted against, the government of his country. Her knowledge of the situation accounts for her coolness, so markedly in contrast to the hysteria of the man, and her purpose has been, by minimizing the import of the situation, to hold the man in the house until the soldiers can get there. (The drumming sound, she tells him, is "only" the soldiers, and they are "only" performing "their usual manoeuvres.") When it is too late for him to make a break, she leaves, so as not to witness any violence.

Auden's poem concerns terror, menace, and betrayal in a world where politics rule, not love.

O Where Are You Going?

Auden was very attuned to sound, and one way to understand this poem is simply to read it out loud. The sounds and the way it makes your mouth feel when his words are spoken are alone a grand justification for the poem. You can feel many of the contrasts in your mouth, in the vowel and consonant sounds.

There is plenty of contrast to talk about in the imagery and structure of the poem too. The primary contrast is between an alive participant (the "rider", the "farer," the "hearer,") and a semi-dead asker of questions, who is sitting on the sidelines (the "reader," the "fearer," the "horror"). You could consider it the poet's critique of his audience if you wished--the poet descends into the maelstrom of human experience, while the reader, horrified, can only wonder.

But that doesn't do full justice to the poem. As you read it think how the vowel sounds contrast. The starting place is between the speaker and the one spoken to (fearer to farer, etc) but there is so much more. What a lovely surprise in the second stanza to find consistent vowel sounds in a the context of contrasting consonants (and textures) when we move from "path to pass" and "from granite to grass."

As you revel in the sounds of the poem, think about the active character, who strikes out for the fatal valley where furnaces burn, and compare him to the fearful speaker of the first three stanzas.

Then consider the active character's responses in the fourth stanza, particularly the third response, where the active character suggests that whatever it is that the passive character fears is looking for HIM, who is left behind with his fears. Is our active character, who runs fearless into the fire, the one who escapes it, while the passive character, who avoids it, is burned?

Tasks to complete to revise your set texts

1. Write a chapter summary and brief notes under the six narrative headings for each key chapter of both of your novels.
2. Write a summary of each poem and brief notes under the six narrative headings you have studied.
3. Complete the grid to compare all 4 texts at once.

Now the really dull part, the exam itself

The exam you are going to sit is in two sections. Each section lasts for 1 hour. Yes mathematicians, that means the exam is 2 hours long.

The exam is designed to focus on four assessment objectives. These are as follows:

AO1 – Articulate creative, informed and relevant responses to literary texts, using appropriate terminology and concepts, and coherent, accurate written expression

In other words, how well you can write and structure an argument

AO2 - Demonstrate detailed critical understanding in analysing the ways in which structure, form and language shape meanings in literary texts

In other words, closely analyse the use of form, structure and language in the text(s) you are writing about

AO3 - Explore connections and comparisons between different literary texts, informed by interpretations of other readers

In other words, how texts compare to one another, and how you interpret the texts

AO4 - Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received

In other words, the context in which the text was written and received

Each section of the exam specifically targets particular assessment objectives, so you need to know which bit of the exam does what.

MARK BAND DESCRIPTORS

Band 6 evaluation

Band 5 analysis

Band 4 explanation

Band 3 some understanding

Band 2 some awareness

Band 1 very little grasp

Section A

Section A of the exam requires you to focus in detail on **one** of your set texts. The choice is yours as to which of the 4 texts you choose to write about in this section, since there is one question on each text set by the board. You can answer on either a novel or a poet, it doesn't matter. You may already have a view about which of the 4 texts you know the best and would like to focus on for this section, but in reality we think it's best for you to keep your options open. In particular, have a read of the Section B questions before you make up your mind, since this may affect your choice.

Section A is itself in two parts, a) and b). You have to answer **both** parts of **one** question, spending around 30 minutes on each mini essay. Each part is assessing particular skills, so it's important to be aware of what these are before you start. Since these are mini-essays, you don't have time to fart about – get straight to the point. This means you don't even always need an introduction (for the odd-numbered questions, unless you think it's necessary. Just two to three focused body paragraphs should do it.

Section A, odd-numbered questions

The odd-numbered questions are entirely focused on AO2, how the writer uses form, structure and language in their text. You don't need to worry about the other assessment objectives here. That doesn't mean to say that you can completely ignore how to write coherently, but it should get you thinking about how to focus. These questions will ask you a specific question about one or two chapters or poems from your set text. They will name the chapter(s) or poem(s) they want you to write about. There are 21 marks on offer here.

The secret to doing well at these questions is to be really focused on form, structure and language, and to provide a really close reading of what you are writing about.

Let's recap on what form, structure and language mean:

Form – the kind or type of text, i.e. novel or poem, but also the kind of novel or poem it is (genre, ballad, lyric poem, etc) and how it makes use of or challenges the conventions of its genre.

Structure – how the text is organised and put together. Why has the author structured the text or part of the text in the way they have? What are they seeking to achieve or convey?

Language – why has the author made the linguistic choices they have? This is particularly important with poetry in terms of imagery, but it is also important in novels in terms of characterisation, amongst other things.

Try to make sure you cover each of these aspects in your answer.

What do these questions look like?

Here are a few sample questions:

- What methods does Hardy use to create settings in *The Darkling* *Thrush* and *At Castle Boterel*?
- Write about the ways Rossetti tells the story in *Winter: My Secret*.
- Write about some of the ways Fitzgerald tells the story in Chapter 5.
- Write about the ways that Hosseini tells the story in Chapter 7 of *The Kite Runner*.

As you can see, all of these questions are very focused on how the author has created their text – the techniques they have used. A good way of generating ideas for these is to make notes under the 6 narrative headings discussed at the beginning of this booklet. Making one of these the focus for each body paragraph of text will help you to stay focused on the job at hand.

How are these marked? What are the examiners looking for?

Here is the marking criteria the exam board uses:

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------|-----|--|
| Band 1 (0-3) | U (approx) | AO2 | Very little grasp of how the author's narrative methods work |
| Band 2 (4-6) | E (approx) | AO2 | Some awareness of how the author's narrative methods work |
| Band 3 (7-9) | D (approx) | AO2 | Some understanding of how the author's narrative methods work |
| Band 4 (10-13) | C (approx) | AO2 | Explanation of how the author's narrative methods work |

| | | | |
|-------------------|------------|-----|--|
| Band 5 (14-17) | B (approx) | AO2 | Analysis of how the author's narrative methods work |
| Band 6 (18-21) | A (approx) | AO2 | Evaluation of how the author's narrative methods work |

Try to think about the difference between the particular grade bands and how these might cash out in practice.

Look at the following exemplar response, and the examiner's comments which follow. This should give you a pretty good idea of how to successfully approach this section of the exam.

Write about some of the ways Fitzgerald tells the story in Chapter 8.

Chapter 8 is extremely significant in this novel about Gatsby's romantic, pure but impossible dream that is destroyed by moral corruption and wealth. This chapter confirms the novel as an awful, 20th century tragedy as Fitzgerald uses the first person, retrospective and sympathetic narration of Nick to convey the tragic inevitability resulting from the aftermath of Gatsby's failed dream in chapter 7. Fitzgerald opens this chapter by establishing an ominous note: the 'fog-horn' groans incessantly' and in the night Nick 'tossed half-sick between grotesque reality and savage frightening dreams'; these images foreshadow the nightmare of Gatsby's death to come. This detail is juxtaposed with Nick's conversation with Gatsby where he suggests he should leave, the incredulity in Gatsby's voice 'Go away *now*, old sport?' conveying his tragic error of judgement in still believing in Daisy. Gatsby's murder placed structurally at the end of this chapter emphasises how his tragic mistakes can only end in his death.

The story of the chapter is not told chronologically and after the focus on Nick and Gatsby in the narrative present at the start, Fitzgerald shifts back in time to when Daisy and Gatsby first met, embedding Gatsby's account into Nick's narrative. We learn how Gatsby's obsession began with Fitzgerald using the image of the grail to convey Gatsby's unwavering devotion, the dream Gatsby was always faithful to. This is juxtaposed with Daisy's material world of five years earlier: 'She vanished into her rich house, into her rich full life' suggesting how even then Gatsby's dream was doomed. Nick's voice is used as a commentator: 'leaving Gatsby - nothing', confirming how futile Gatsby's beliefs in Daisy are, and the failure of the dream increases our sense of the tragic inevitability.

Fitzgerald shifts in time again, recreating the past so we are aware of how it shapes the present. Gatsby's background is told ('He did extraordinarily well in the war'), making us sympathise with him further (interestingly we were told this but did not believe it in chapter 3), but Fitzgerald also supplies the back story here to juxtapose Gatsby's with Daisy's artificial world that was 'redolent of orchids and pleasant cheerful snobbery'. Daisy's awful moral corruption and emptiness against Gatsby's hard efforts at war convey that she is not trustworthy nor worthy to be the heart of Gatsby's dream.

Fitzgerald characterises her here as empty and shapeless to foreshadow her later choice to stay with Tom rather than protect Gatsby from death.

Fitzgerald briefly interrupts this past narrative to focus on Gatsby's present delusion, his belief that Daisy never loved Tom, the absurdity of Gatsby's state of mind highlighted by the 'curious' remark: 'it was just personal'. The past is succinctly filled in - Nick's reporting events Gatsby told him - all pointing towards Gatsby's desperate loneliness, juxtaposing his longing for the past with the tragic inevitability of the future. Fitzgerald ends the section with Nick's 'good-bye'.

Towards the end of the chapter, there are further time shifts to the events after Myrtle's death when Michaelis's narrative is embedded into Nick's to

give a relentless factual account of Wilson's actions. This builds the suspense until the final moment Fitzgerald closes the chapter, like a classical tragedy, with Gatsby's murder, Wilson's suicide and 'the holocaust was complete'. Gatsby's death is conveyed almost beautifully with a 'thin red circle' confirming the idyllic life Gatsby believed in until death.

Commentary on Student 1 (response to Q 29 *The Great Gatsby*)

This is an excellent answer in which the student shows insight and offers astute judgement. There is some intelligent thinking going on here and a real engagement with the story and Fitzgerald's methods. The student begins by focusing on the form of the text as revealed in chapter 8, the awful 20th century tragedy, and a relevant structural connection is made with chapter 7. The main strength of the answer is the discussion of the chapter's structure and the relationship between structure and story is closely detailed in the second paragraph. There is good discussion of the non chronological pattern of the chapter, with the student writing confidently about how Fitzgerald embeds Gatsby's back-story into Nick's narrative. In the fourth paragraph there is evaluation of Fitzgerald's placement of the back-story with the present story of Daisy's moral corruption. Further structural comments are linked to Fitzgerald's use of different voices to reveal the key event of this chapter – Gatsby's death. The student evaluates how Michaelis's voice is used by Fitzgerald to build suspense and secure the chapter as a classical tragedy. Throughout the answer the student demonstrates an ability to stand back from both the story and method and then assess their effects. These are clear Band 6 qualities.

Section A, even-numbered questions

Again, there are 21 marks on offer here. These questions work by giving you a critical statement about your chosen text and asking you how far you agree with it. The even-numbered questions focus on assessment objectives 1, 3 and 4, and are therefore more interpretative than the odd-numbered questions. The question won't usually specify which bits of the text you need to focus on in your answer – you need to figure these out yourself. Since AO2 is not an assessment objective here, you need to worry less about close analysis here, though clearly you should still make reference to the text to support your argument.

A good answer needs to be well-structured, show interpretative skill, and an awareness of the context(s) of the text you are writing about. This doesn't have to be the context in which it was produced, but can mean the context of how it might be received.

The key things that the examiners want to see are:

AO1

- Use of critical vocabulary
- Technically fluent expression
- A relevant and focused argument

AO3

- Consideration of different interpretations of your text

AO4

- Understanding of a range of contextual factors

You must show an awareness of each of these factors to get top grades here.

What do these questions look like?

Here are a few sample questions:

- ‘Hardy’s poems reveal a morbid fascination with death.’ Write about this view.
- ‘Rossetti’s poems are an odd mixture of revelation and secrecy.’ Write about ‘Winter: My Secret’ and ‘Maude Clare’ in the light of this comment.
- How do you respond to the claim that ultimately *Enduring Love* is too contrived?
- What do you think of the view that obsession with money and the consumer culture of the 1920s dominates human thinking and behaviour in *The Great Gatsby*?

As you can see, each question begins by offering you a viewpoint and asking you to respond. These questions are more open so that the examiners can assess your skills of interpretation. A good response needs to cover all three assessment objectives as well as confidently arguing a viewpoint. You don’t need to definitely agree or disagree with the statement under discussion, perhaps the best option might be to consider both sides of the argument...

| |
|--|
| Introduction – focus on the statement under discussion |
| What evidence from the text might support the claim under discussion? (referring to two chapters or poems or characters from the text) |
| Connective, then consideration of evidence which might contradict the claim discussion (referring to one or two chapters or poems or characters from the text) |
| Conclusion – overall, do you agree or disagree with the statement under discussion? Why? |

How are these marked? What are the examiners looking for?

Here is the marking criteria the exam board uses:

| | | | |
|-----------------|---------------|-----|--|
| Band 1 (0-3) | U (approx) | AO1 | quality of writing hinders meaning; little relevance to task; little sense of argument |
| | | AO3 | very little grasp of an interpretation or interpretations; little textual support |
| | | AO4 | very little grasp of contextual factors |
| Band 2 (4-6) | E (approx) | AO1 | simple writing; some awareness of critical vocabulary; may be technical weakness; some relevance to task; some sense of argument |

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-----|--|
| | | AO3 | some awareness of an interpretation or interpretations with some reference to the text |
| | | AO4 | some awareness of relevant contextual factors |
| Band 3 (7-9) | D (approx) | AO1 | generally clear expression; some use of critical vocabulary; generally accurate writing; relevant to the task; argument developing |
| | | AO3 | some understanding of an interpretation or interpretations with textual support |
| | | AO4 | some understanding of relevant contextual factors |
| Band 4 (10-13) | C (approx) | AO1 | accurate expression; clear use of critical vocabulary; accurate writing; clear argument |
| | | AO3 | explanation of an interpretation or interpretations with clear supportive references |
| | | AO4 | explanation of relevant contextual factors |
| Band 5 (14-17) | B (approx) | AO1 | confident and assured expression; appropriate use of critical vocabulary; generally fluent and accurate assured argument |
| | | AO3 | analysis of an interpretation or interpretations with well chosen textual support |
| | | AO4 | analysis of relevant contextual factors |
| Band 6 (18-21) | A (approx) | AO1 | sophisticated expression; excellent use of critical vocabulary; technically fluent writing; sophisticated shaped arguments |
| | | AO3 | evaluation of an interpretation or interpretations with excellently selected references |
| | | AO4 | evaluation of relevant contextual factors |

Again, try to think about the difference between the particular grade bands and how these might cash out in practice.

Look at the following exemplar response, and the examiner's comments which follow. This should give you a pretty good idea of how to successfully approach this section of the exam.

How appropriate do you think it is to label *The Great Gatsby* 'a rags to riches story'?

Within *The Great Gatsby*, the idea of moving from 'rags to riches' is certainly a key pattern. Despite this, the structure of events do not comply with the 'rags to riches' formula, and Gatsby's pursuit of 'riches' ultimately does not seem to be enough to satisfy his ambition.

Within the non-chronological effects of the narrative, Gatsby does not seem to be presented as moving from 'rags to riches'. Before his appearance in chapter three, Gatsby's identity is built up to by description of his elaborate home (a 'factual imitation of a Hotel de Ville in Normandy') and his impressive party (salads of harlequin designs' and causing the 'moon [to have] risen higher, and floating in the Sound was a triangle of silver scales, trembling a little to the ...banjos on the lawn'). This portrays Gatsby to be, like the characters of 'fashionable east egg' to be very much in command of the 'riches'. The revelation that he, unlike the Buchanans or Nick, has transformed from 'rags' to the outward appearance of glamour is so well hidden by his facade that it is only revealed gradually through the novel. It is not fully placed in the open until Tom's adamant calling of Gatsby 'Mr Nobody from Nowhere' and a 'common swindler' in chapter seven. This could link to the idea of the money-obsessed world of the 'roaring' 1920s, in which a past of lower-status (or gaining of 'new money') was something to be concealed and perhaps ashamed of. In addition, despite the realisation that Gatsby has chronologically gone from rags to riches, this is not enough for him, and the

primary focus of the story seems to be on his attempted transition from riches to *more* riches. He pursues Daisy incessantly, Nick acknowledging in chapter four the absurdity of having 'bought a mansion where he dispensed starlight to casual moths' - so that he could 'come over' to speak with Daisy. Gatsby 'revalued everything in his house according to the measure of response it drew from her well-loved eyes'. This displays the way that although Gatsby has achieved the vast riches of a man of high status, he is unable to truly be happy and satisfied unless he has one more crowning possession - Daisy Buchanan. Even when he has re-entered her affections he demands that she tell Tom 'I never loved you', constantly grasping for just one more piece of 'riches' to add to his collection. This can also be said of the other characters, such as Tom who has 'reached such an acute limited excellence at the age of twenty-one that everything afterward savours of anti-climax'. The characters in the novel aren't satisfied with just 'riches'. This links to the American Dream, as Fitzgerald perhaps criticises that it is flawed, as humans are always trying to take and gain as much as they can. Nick concludes the novel with this idea, that 'tomorrow we will run faster, stretch out our arms further' but we will never gain enough 'riches' to be satisfied.

On the other hand, it could be argued that within the money-obsessed 1920s culture, conveyed by the novel, 'riches' remains the ultimate goal of achieving happiness. Myrtle (with her 'crowded to the doors' apartment) seems to dream of moving from rags to riches, and Gatsby, although eventually dissatisfied does achieve his position within the story through his 'rags to riches' encounter with Dan Cody. These instances seem to suggest that the story is one of 'rags to riches' and Fitzgerald's portrayal of their dissatisfaction with it only shows that they remain in the transition stage from rags to riches. However, this view doesn't take into account the final fate of these characters. Myrtle ends up 'giving up [her] tremendous vitality' as she is hit by Gatsby's car (effectively killed by his riches) and Gatsby too is unsuccessful in achieving his dreams of truly entering the upper class (and gaining the status of riches). This ultimately means that the novel is not a 'rags to riches' story, as the characters fail to achieve the riches they desire. On the whole, the novel includes the pattern of pursuing 'riches', but it cannot be said to be a 'rags to riches' story. This is because the real focus is arguably on what happens to Gatsby when he is dissatisfied with his 'riches' and desires more. The deaths at the end of the novel prove that 'riches' are out of reach for Myrtle, and Gatsby, who desire them.

Commentary on Student 9 (response to Q30 Fitzgerald)

This question is also set up around genre, though this student approaches the task from a social and cultural angle which works very well. The student focuses well on the formula that is suggested by the rags to riches genre and challenges the concept in relation to the events and outcomes of the story. There is excellent discussion of the text's chronology in relation to Gatsby and his riches and the selection of textual detail is superb. This student clearly knows the text very well and makes very wise choices. There is clearly some intelligent thinking here in interrogating the meaning of 'riches' for Gatsby – and for Tom Buchanan- and ideas about the American Dream are well integrated. The argument is very well shaped and the quality of expression is very good. Overall this is a sophisticated response and the student is consistently evaluative. The answer is clearly at the top end of the Band 6 range.

Section B

Section B of the exam is the Big Kahuna, the question that requires you to write about three texts at once. These have to be the three texts that you haven't written about in Section A, since you must write about all 4 texts in the exam. If you don't do this, you may get zero. You have been warned...

Section B will give you a choice of 2 questions. You answer **one** of these. You spend around 1 hour on your answer. There are 42 marks on offer. The questions are fairly broad, and require you to write comparatively about the three texts under discussion. Each question will ask you about how an aspect of narrative is explored in all three texts. Clearly, in a one-hour essay you can't write about an entire novel or collection of poetry, let alone three, so you need to be selective in terms of what you choose to write about. You still need to show an awareness of an entire text, so try to mention more than one chapter of a novel or more than one poem by each poet, to show you know them really well. Try to write more or less equally on each of the three texts, though clearly your writing on one of them could be briefer than the other two.

What are the examiners looking for here?

This question is assessing Assessment Objectives 1, 2 and 3. This means:

AO1

- Use of critical vocabulary
- Technically fluent expression
- Structure and coherence of argument
- Relevance and focus on task

AO2

- Exploration and analysis of key aspects of form and structure
- Exploration and analysis of key aspects of language

AO3

- Connections and comparisons between texts
- Consideration of different interpretations of texts
- Use of supportive references

You will notice that AO4 – contexts – is missing here.

What do these questions look like?

Here are a couple of sample questions:

- Write about the importance of places in the telling of the narratives in three texts that you have studied.
- Write about the ways that writers aim to make the beginnings of their texts exciting. Refer to three texts you have studied.

As you can see, the questions are broader, focusing on one general aspect of narrative across the three texts. At least one question may well relate to one of the 6 narrative headings we have been exploring, although they also like to ask about the beginning and ends of texts too.

In terms of structuring your response, you should have an introduction, followed by a body paragraph on each of the three texts, and then a conclusion. When shifting from one text to

the next, link your thoughts with a connective word or sentence. Here's an example of what I mean. I have also indicated how much of each text you should discuss in each section:

| |
|---|
| Introduction – focus on the narrative theme under discussion |
| Discussion of the theme in Text A (referring to two chapters or poems from the text) |
| Connective, then discussion of the theme in Text B (referring to two chapters or poems from the text) |
| Connective, then discussion of the theme in Text C (referring to one chapter or poem from the text) |
| Conclusion (referring to all three texts) |

How are these marked? What are the examiners looking for?

Here is the marking criteria the exam board uses:

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-----|--|
| Band 1 (0-7) | U (approx) | AO1 | quality of writing hinders meaning; little relevance to task; little sense of argument |
| | | AO2 | Very little grasp of how the author's narrative methods work in relation to the question |
| | | AO3 | Very little grasp of the question and its significance across the three texts with little textual support |
| Band 2 (8-14) | E (approx) | AO1 | simple writing; some awareness of critical vocabulary; may be technical weaknesses; some relevance to task; some sense of argument |
| | | AO2 | Some awareness of how the author's narrative methods work in relation to the question |
| | | AO3 | Some awareness of the question and its significance across the three texts with some references to the texts |
| Band 3 (15-21) | D (approx) | AO1 | generally clear expression; some understanding of critical vocabulary; generally accurate writing; relevant to task |
| | | AO2 | Some understanding of how the author's narrative methods work in relation to the question |
| | | AO3 | Some understanding of the question and its significance across the three texts with textual support |
| Band 4 (22-28) | C (approx) | AO1 | clear expression; clear use of critical vocabulary; accurate writing; clear argument |
| | | AO2 | Explanation of how the author's narrative methods work in relation to the question |
| | | AO3 | Explanation of the question and its significance across the three texts with clear supportive references |
| Band 5 (29-35) | B (approx) | AO1 | confident and assured expression; appropriate use of critical vocabulary; accurate and generally fluent writing; assured argument |
| | | AO2 | Analysis of how the author's narrative methods work in relation to the question |
| | | AO3 | Analysis of the question and its significance across the |

| | | | |
|-------------------|---------------|-----|--|
| | | | three texts with well chosen textual support |
| Band 6 (36-42) | A (approx) | AO1 | sophisticated expression; excellent use of critical vocabulary; technically fluent and accurate writing; sophisticated shaped argument |
| | | AO2 | Evaluation of how the author's narrative methods work in relation to the question |
| | | AO3 | Evaluation of the question and its significance across the three texts with excellently selected references |

Once again, try to think about the difference between the particular grade bands and how these might cash out in practice.

Look at the following exemplar response, and the examiner's comments which follow. This should give you a pretty good idea of how to successfully approach this section of the exam.

Write about some of the ways characters are created in the three texts you have studied.

Characters are created through a range of narrative devices, with time and setting, voice and character relationships being key in how a character is received by a reader.

In 'The Great Gatsby' Fitzgerald has implemented a meta-fictional narrator to tell the story, with Nick Carraway remaining a spectator to the events of the novel, rather than an actor. His character is devised by Fitzgerald predominantly through his narrative, as his desire to remain an observer in the story demonstrates his reserved characteristic. Furthermore, he describes himself as 'one of the few honest people' he knows, showing that he wants his account of the story to be accepted as true; however, the audience is led to doubt his veracity as he states 'I'm inclined to reserve all judgements' before contradicting himself in the same passage by firstly depicting Gatsby as someone who 'represented everything...I have an unaffected scorn', and also judging the Buchanans, as Daisy's 'insincerity' rings in her voice whilst Tom's 'pathetic complacency' can be taken from his racist remarks.

Moreover, Nick is given a characteristic trait of wanting things in a uniform, refined state, as his actions of wiping from Mr McKee's cheek 'the sport of dried lather', or erasing the obscenities written outside of Gatsby's house, demonstrate an almost compulsive need to keep things clean and in order.

Similarly, his account of Gatsby's life is dealt with in this way, as Nick romanticises Gatsby's corrupt American Dream and thwarted love as 'the orgastic future'. Fitzgerald's choice to narrate the novel in this way is significant in building Gatsby's character, as the reader's last perspective of Gatsby is that of Nick, with him depicting an elusive dream that we will all try to chase. In this way, Gatsby is shown to be remarkable, because unlike other characters in the novel, he has ambition; Fitzgerald is able to contrast Gatsby with the 'careless' Buchanans, and 'spiritless' George Wilson. He is dissimilar to them all, and so shown to be great.

Similarly, In 'Enduring Love', McEwan is able to build the character of Inspector Linley significantly through Joe's narrative, which, alike Nick's in 'The Great Gatsby' is integral to the reader's response. The setting of the police station – described as a place of 'friction', the 'wear and tear' telling of neglect – is the first representation of Linley's character. His 'fluorescent pallor' is comparable to the dirty exterior of the police station, suggesting that he cares little about appearance. The general look of neglect also implies that he is disinterested with his work, or no longer cares about helping. This is supported by the comment that he'd be 'looking at

retirement'. His 'strangled' voice is also key in the development of his character, as it is implicit of 'imbecility', but could also be interpreted as a portrayal of his reticence. Joe describes him as building on silences – possibly to intimidate witnesses- and so this characteristic could be a depiction of his efficiency in his job, and a degree of professionalism and skill. However, the 'electronic whistle of breath' is suggestive of his mechanical nature, and the rather staid, robotic atmosphere of the police station, which is built through voice.

McEwan creates a sense of repetition as Linley asks short, snappy questions, quoting from 'The Public Order Act' as if having said this many times before. The accelerated pace of the dialogue also reflects his impatience, and Joe's reaction to this as he comments, 'I was doing well to keep calm', showing that Linley's actions may have been interpreted by Joe as rude or irritating. Voice similarly builds on Gatsby's character, as the affectation of 'old sport' in much of his speech reflects how the man has created a self-representation of himself, and the forced manner of the colloquialism suggests that he is rather false, or trying to impress Daisy by the use of a European saying.

Moreover, the indirect voices of neighbours is implemented in Rossetti's 'Jessie Cameron' to build on the sense of mystery which surrounds Cameron's admirer. The enigma of this character is heightened by the use of indeterminates such as 'some say', which is repeated in the fifth stanza in order to build on the sense of speculation. Rossetti also uses 'unked', the archaic language adding to the strangeness of his character, as he becomes all the more mysterious due to the odd language. Nature is also used as a pathetic fallacy for his emotions, as the sea 'crept moaning' whilst his speech 'waxed...urgent...louder'. His impatience is displayed by a quickening pace of dialogue, as in 'Enduring Love', whilst his desperation and adoration of Jessie Cameron is depicted throughout the repetition of her name, as well as by the action of following her along the beach despite 'her heedless tongue'. Jessie Cameron's actions are as much a reflection of his own, building on the ambiguity of his character as the reader wonders whether he 'helped or hindered' her, because her flirtatious manner suggests she stayed through her own choice.

The female voice in 'Jessie Cameron' is similar to that of 'Winter: My secret', as the sound-play and conversational tone build on the narrator's coaxing manner. This is also similar to Daisy, as in 'The Great Gatsby', it is her charm and laughter which captivates Gatsby, as does the playful femininity of the narrator of the dramatic monologue engage the reader. The use of long vowel sounds in 'froze, and blows and snows' are contrasted by the mono-syllabic 'fire' in the following line builds on the character's sense of enjoyment, with the poem's rhythm adding to the idea that they are having fun. Furthermore, as the notion of needing to be protected is introduced in the second stanza, it can be assumed that the narrator is vulnerable, as she needs 'a veil, a clock...wraps'. However, this teasing narrative could simply be the character's bid for attention, as the rhyme scheme deviates away from the conversational tone and further engages the reader.

Also, the secret allows her to have a certain possession over the auditor, as we know little of her, and this is similar to Jed Parry in 'Enduring Love', whose 'homo-erotic obsession', though flagrantly put forth, is never fully understood by the reader or Joe. Our lack of knowledge of Jed's condition adds to the threat he poses to Joe, and alike the narrative of his letter in chapter 16 as 'never, never...pretend' is ominous, and suggestive of peril due to the imperative language and repetition- builds on Joe's own fear and vulnerability.

On the whole, the texts I have studied sufficiently build character through narrative voice and setting, as well as by the way in which they engage the reader. Interesting

texts and characters forged a relationship with the reader, so that they have their own perspective of characters, such as 'Winter: My Secret' so that we respond to the flirtatious voice in a certain way; the nonsensical element also adds some humour, making the narrator seem rather comical. Yet, its ambiguity could lead to darker meanings, as the reader could interpret the uncertainty cultivated as being implicit of the narrator's own psychological perplexities, as is Jed's 'one thousandth letter' to Joe, which not only reflects the significance and strength of his belief, but also narrates the endurance of his compulsion, and so is intimate of his rather sad and unstable existence.

42/42 – A very enjoyable response which ranges confidently around the texts - focuses fully on methods of creating character with real attention to detail. Clearly expressed throughout with perceptive exploration.

Practice exam questions

Now you know how the exam works, you can have a go at answering a few practice questions. For Section A, there are two questions on offer for each text, and there is a choice of 3 Section B questions.

Have a go at answering as many of these as you can. Writing to the correct time limit will clearly be useful as well.

Section A

The Great Gatsby

Odd-numbered style questions:

- Write about some of the ways Fitzgerald tells the story in Chapter 3.
- Write about the ways Fitzgerald tells the story in Chapter 6.

Even-numbered style questions:

- '*The Great Gatsby* is essentially the story of East and West.' Discuss this view.
- Within *The Great Gatsby*, Fitzgerald seeks to show us the 'moral failure of the Jazz age'. How far do you agree with this statement?

Enduring Love

Odd-numbered style questions:

- Discuss McEwan's use of setting in Chapter 1 and Chapter 19.
- How does McEwan tell the story in Chapter 19?

Even-numbered style questions:

- 'Demystifying Jed's fixation by identifying it as a morbid passion called de Clerambault's syndrome saps the story of its energy.' To what extent do you agree with this view?

- ‘Rationality is a precious and precarious construct.’ Discuss Enduring Love in light of this statement.

Alfred Tennyson

Odd-numbered style questions:

- Write about the ways in which Tennyson tells the story of “The Lotus Eaters” in the first five stanzas of the poem.
- What methods does Tennyson use to create settings in “The Lady of Shalott”?

Even-numbered style questions:

- ‘Tennyson felt very little in common with a rapidly changing industrial world, for his deepest sympathies were called forth by an unaltered rural England.’ Write about “The Lotus Eaters” in light of this comment.
- Scholars often understand “The Lady of Shalott” to be about the conflict between art and life. How do you respond to this reading of the poem?

John Keats

Odd-numbered style questions:

- Write about the ways Keats tells the story in “Lamia”: Part II (lines 1-105).
- What methods does Keats use to create setting in the opening 10 stanzas of “The Eve of St Agnes”?

Even-numbered style questions:

- Some critics have argued that Keats has objectified women in his poetry. Write about Keats’ poems in light of this comment.
- Keats’ poetry has been criticised as ‘overly sensitive, sensuous and simplistic’. How far do you agree with this view?

Section B

- Write about the ways that writers use point of view in their texts. Refer to three texts you have studied.
- Write about the ways writers have made effective use of time and sequence in three texts you have studied.
- Writers often choose their titles carefully to allow for different potential meanings. Write about some potential meanings of titles in the **three** texts you have studied.