

OXFORD IB DIPLOMA PROGRAMME



2ND EDITION

ENGLISH A: LITERATURE

COURSE COMPANION

Anna Androulaki
Brent Whitted

OXFORD



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Course Companion definition

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

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

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

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

IB mission statement

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

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

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

The IB learner profile

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A note on academic honesty

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

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

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

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

How do I acknowledge the work of others?

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

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

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

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

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

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

What constitutes malpractice?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Access your support website for additional content here:
www.oxfordsecondary.com/ibenglisha



The structure of the English A literature course

The English A literature course (first teaching 2019) identifies three areas of exploration: “Readers, writers and texts”, “Time and space” and “Intertextuality: connecting texts”. These areas are to be understood as directions in lines of inquiry rather than “parts” of the course that correspond to specific works and an assessed component as an outcome. The works teachers will choose in each area are the starting point of a line of inquiry, and the subject guide offers six guiding conceptual questions to support students and teachers in their inquiry. Beyond that starting point, students will be able to connect works from other areas or lines of inquiry as they explore their conceptual understanding of combinations of works for their assessments (paper 2 and the individual oral).

The principles of variety, integration, autonomy and accountability will provide guidance for teachers when designing and delivering the course, supporting students with their learner portfolio work and advising them about assessments.

This course companion is designed as an application of the new subject guide in relation to a sample syllabus—it is written with the understanding that teachers have read the new subject guide. It also serves as a way for students taking the new course to enhance their approaches to learning in relation to specific works and assessments. This companion consolidates all aspects and components of the new subject guide in a manner that is designed to be user-friendly for students and teachers alike.



The significance of concepts

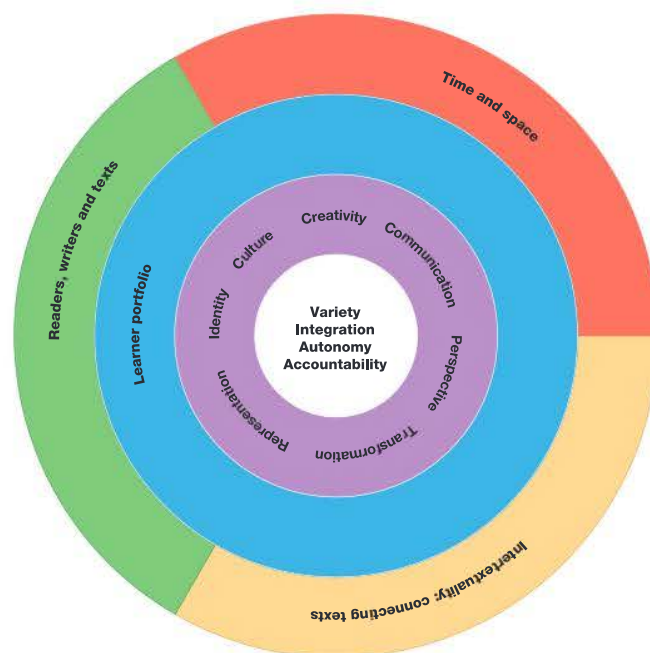
The process of inquiry, exploration, analysis, evaluation and interpretation of literary texts and the preparation for assessments are informed by the consideration of seven concepts identified in the subject guide. The concepts are identity, culture, creativity, communication, perspective, transformation and representation.

The role of the learner portfolio

The learner portfolio is a personal learning space for students where the process of learning is chronicled and documented. The learner portfolio can include notes, responses to activities, written work, reflections, brainstorming ideas, marked assignments—in short, any stage or aspect of students' learning. The significance of the learner portfolio is paramount to students' cognitive and metacognitive skills, for it reveals how they learn and how they know they have learned. The practical uses of the learner portfolio are numerous. For example, the learner portfolio:

- helps students make decisions and prepare for assessments
- offers teachers an overview of students' learning
- provides students with a safe space for reflection and writing practice
- encourages the development of a personal response to literary works
- fosters students' ownership of the learning process in the classroom and beyond.

The seven concepts in the diagram guide the design and the teaching of the course. They guide the work of the students, with the learner portfolio, in all three areas of exploration.



The aims of this course companion

One of the primary aims of this course companion is to support teachers and students through the new course and offer guidance, ideas and activities by using several popular works but also by providing readers with new options and suggestions. The companion aims to support learning and teaching of the English A literature course and is a resource of materials that can be used to enhance learning, the enjoyment of literature and students' achievement. For these reasons, the companion aims to present—through different approaches but also its format—the interconnectedness of the areas of exploration via the seven concepts of the course. It aims to offer help with several aspects of formal assessment, such as global issues and the higher level essay, as well as skills needed for paper 1 and paper 2.

By design, the English A literature course also offers teachers the option of a conceptual and thematic structure. To demonstrate this, each chapter

of this book includes a section that is thematically and/or conceptually designed within the area of exploration covered. The cross-referencing of the areas through the consideration of concepts, topics and themes is particularly significant because the assessment tasks are not outcomes of specific areas, and students can combine works (individual oral and paper 2) included in different areas of exploration.

Construction of the syllabus

The English A literature curriculum design requires a variety of texts and an integrated approach to teaching these works. To model these principles and to support teachers' understanding of the course, a syllabus is incorporated in this companion, and a group of works was chosen according to the requirements of the course. Assessment practice activities that are specific to this syllabus are also included. These can be adjusted by students and teachers for use with other examples. The works chosen for this purpose are examples that we encounter often in English A literature syllabi. These works were chosen to ensure that teachers have access to the companion and the activities without having to read a large number of new texts. More importantly, the more familiar works will allow teachers to connect their practice and experience with the approach of the new curriculum. This is not to say that all of these works are dealt with in detail from beginning to end. They are showcased with reference to the guiding conceptual questions and a variety of activities that teachers can use as springboards for teaching these works or for modelling the teaching of others. One sample teaching unit of an entire work is included for reasons of clarity and guidance: a unit based on *Antigone*. Beyond that, there is a clear focus on exploring a variety of works, and teachers can use these suggestions for their freely chosen works, for unseen commentary practice or for the sheer enjoyment of reading literature in the classroom. The syllabus below is just an example to demonstrate the connections across the areas of exploration. The works mentioned in this course companion alone make several more options possible.

	<p>Higher level: five works in language A Four works in translation Four works chosen freely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● minimum of three works in each area ● works of four forms ● three periods ● four places (at least two continents)
	<p>Standard level: four works in language A Three works in translation Two works chosen freely</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● minimum of two works in each area ● works of three forms ● three periods ● three places (at least two continents)



Readers, writers and texts	Essays by George Orwell <i>The Colossus</i> by Sylvia Plath Short stories by Anton Chekhov Free choice: David Sedaris, Bill Bryson, Mark Twain, Pico Iyer, the graphic novel
Time and space	<i>Antigone</i> by Sophocles Sonnets by Shakespeare <i>The Caretaker</i> by Harold Pinter Free choice: <i>The Makioka Sisters</i> by Tanizaki, poetry in translation
Intertextuality: connecting texts	<i>Wuthering Heights</i> by Emily Bronte <i>Hedda Gabler</i> by Henrik Ibsen Free choice: <i>Poems on the Underground</i> , "Place, belonging and our search for the self"

Higher level

Paper 1—guided literary analysis: the paper consists of two passages from two literary forms, each accompanied by a question. Students write an analysis of each of the passages.

Paper 2—comparative essay: the paper consists of four questions. In response to one question students write a comparative essay based on two works studied in the course.

Essay: students submit an essay of 1200-1500 words on one work studied in the course.

Individual oral: supported by an extract from a work originally written in English and one from a work studied in translation, students offer a response to the prompt "Examine the ways in which the global issue of your choice is presented through the content and form of two of the works that you have studied".

Standard level

Paper 1—guided literary analysis: the paper consists of two passages from two literary forms, each accompanied by a question. Students choose one to write an analysis of it.

Paper 2—comparative essay: the paper consists of four questions. In response to one question students write a comparative essay based on two works studied in the course.

Individual oral: supported by an extract from a work originally written in English and one from a work studied in translation, students offer a response to the prompt "Examine the ways in which the global issue of your choice is presented through the content and form of two of the works that you have studied".

Conceptual understanding



CREATIVITY

Conceptual understanding



COMMUNICATION

Conceptual understanding



CULTURE

Conceptual understanding



IDENTITY

Conceptual understanding



PERSPECTIVE

Conceptual understanding



REPRESENTATION

Conceptual understanding



TRANSFORMATION

Sequencing of the course

The area of exploration “Readers, writers and texts” can be seen as an introductory line of inquiry for the course, but there is no design necessity to follow a strict linear sequence across the areas. In fact, intertextuality as a concept runs through the entire course as students make connections across forms, works, periods and so on. Indeed, some of the sections in the “Intertextuality: connecting texts” chapter can be used at the beginning of the course to introduce students to the way texts connect with one another, the reader and the world around us. The interconnectedness and overlap of the areas of exploration is to be expected and desired, and offers teachers freedom to explore possibilities of textual associations and relationships.

Integration of concepts and conceptual questions

Teaching in the IB Diploma Programme is based on conceptual understanding; it is inquiry-focused, informed by formative and summative assessment, and based on collaboration (approaches to teaching and learning: ATL).

The English A literature curriculum lists a number of concepts that are relevant to the literary exploration and discussion:

“The concepts interact with the three areas of exploration in numerous ways and contribute a sense of continuity in the transition from one area to the next. They also facilitate the process of establishing connections between texts, making it easier for students to identify different ways in which the works they study relate to one another. Although they are not explicitly assessed in any component, the concepts constitute an essential part of a student’s investigation and should therefore be included in the discussion of each of the works studied.

The seven concepts which structure the teaching and learning of these courses have been selected because of the central position they occupy in the study of both language and literature. They foreground aspects of linguistic and literary study that have been the focus of attention and inquiry.”

From the IB Language A Literature subject guide, pages 25–26.

In this companion, these concepts are identified in the margin to help students and teachers make the connections that will support conceptual understanding.

The guiding conceptual questions should not be understood as questions to be answered as such but rather as provocations for investigation, debate, interpretation and perspective-taking. They are the lines of inquiry to be undertaken by students and appear throughout the text where they are pertinent and relevant. Students and teachers can use them as discussion questions, prompts for writing and ideas for activities.



Integration of assessment objectives

The assessment objectives of the English A literature course have been integrated in the companion based on several aspects: the range and diversity of works presented or discussed; the number of activities and the kinds of activities suggested; and the variety of approaches to literary texts. This companion takes into consideration the skills and aptitudes that we seek to develop in students so they can successfully meet the requirements of formal assessment. These objectives are as follows.

“Know, understand and interpret:

- a range of texts, works and/or performances, and their meanings and implications
- contexts in which texts are written and/or received
- elements of literary, stylistic, rhetorical, visual and/or performance craft
- features of particular text types and literary forms.

Analyse and evaluate:

- ways in which the use of language creates meaning
- uses and effects of literary, stylistic, rhetorical, visual or theatrical techniques
- relationships among different texts
- ways in which texts may offer perspectives on human concerns.

Communicate:

- ideas in clear, logical and persuasive ways
- in a range of styles, registers and for a variety of purposes and situations”

From the IB Language A Literature subject guide, page 14.

Activities: ATL

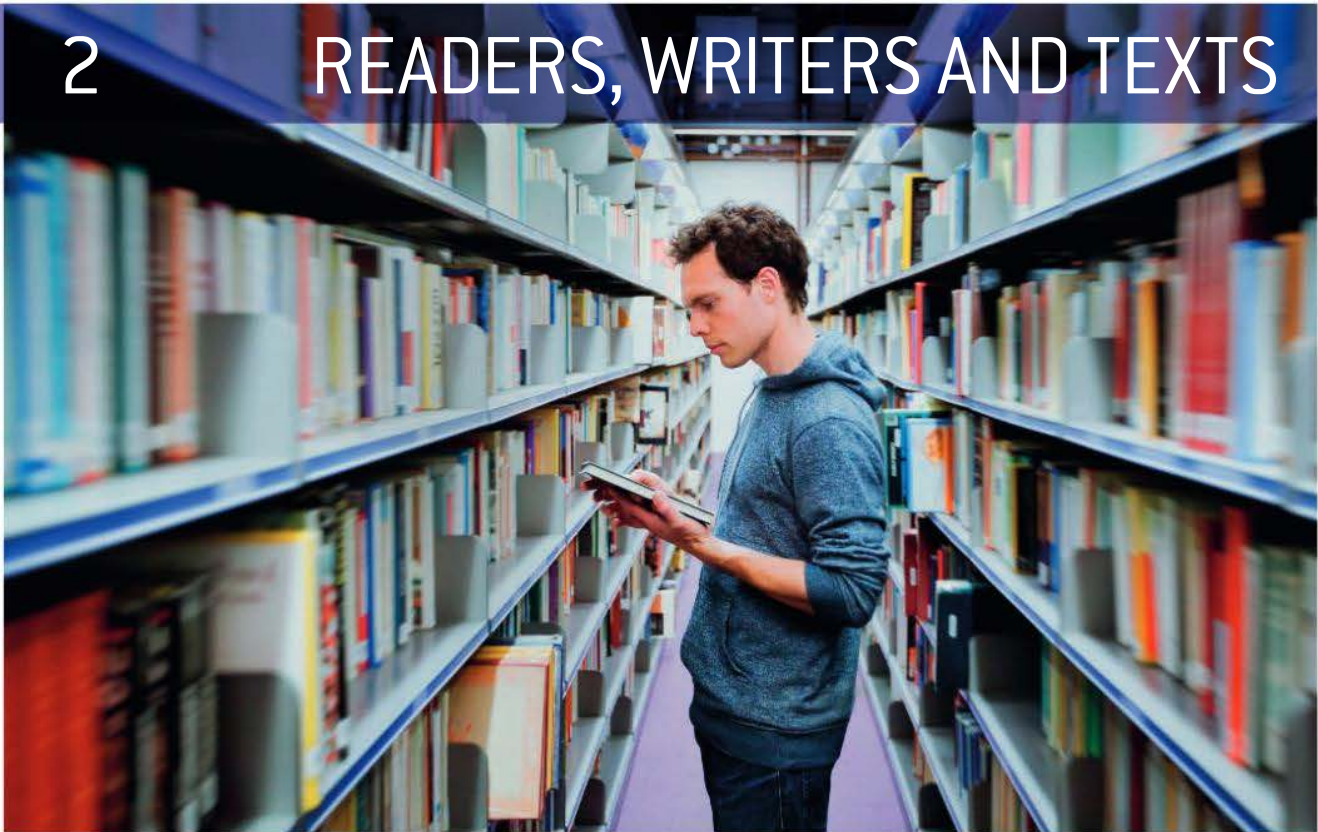
ATL skills are identified throughout the companion as reminders for teachers. Of course, the activities suggested can be adjusted and developed to integrate more skills. The intention of the ATL tags is to show the relevance of and connections between these skills and the design and approach of the English A literature course.

Features

In all sections there are boxes containing supplementary material that aims to enrich the experience of the course and to offer insight into a variety of texts and literary perspectives. Teachers and students can use these boxed features as they wish.

2

READERS, WRITERS AND TEXTS



This chapter is based on the area of exploration “Readers, writers and texts”. The objectives of this chapter are to:

- **introduce** students to the skills involved in literary study
- **exemplify** the use of these skills in interpreting texts representing a variety of genres
- **investigate** the ways writers write from creative or personal and from critical or scholarly perspectives
- **guide** students toward integrating these skills and perspectives by adopting and practising them in their own writing
- **provide** constructive advice for generating students’ literary aptitude, helping them appreciate literature (and also writing about literature) as a skilled art form.

The “Readers, writers and texts” area of exploration aims to introduce students to the skills and approaches required to examine literary texts closely, as well as to introduce metacognitive awareness of the work of the discipline by considering the following guiding conceptual questions.

1. Why and how do we study literature?
2. How are we affected by texts in various ways?
3. In what ways is meaning constructed, negotiated, expressed and interpreted?



4. How does language use vary among text types and among literary forms?
5. How does the structure or style of a literary text affect meaning?
6. How do literary texts offer insights and challenges?

From the IB Language A Literature subject guide, page 20.

Introduction

The value of literature

A lot has been written about the value of reading, studying and teaching literature. Considered from a very broad perspective, literature is a reflection and an exploration of the human experience in all its magnificent and mystifying range.

Literature may have a representational function but it is also relational. It implicates the writer and the reader in the reconstruction of the imaginary experience and its impact on reality, personal or collective. Imagination is, in part, the stimulus and also the impetus for the creation of literary works that will then engage the reader's imagination. According to Scarry (1995), for example, when an author is describing something, the author is giving us instructions on how to imagine or construct the described object. The mental images that are created under authorial instruction are linked to our perceptual world and constitute a kind of mimetic perception on the reader's part.

In other words, the mental image created by the words of the literary text leads our brain to imitate the perception linked with the image. This is just one of the ways reading literature has been shown to affect us in a powerful way.

Guiding conceptual question

Why and how do we study literature?

Numerous recent scientific studies also offer analyses of the impact of reading on cognitive capacity, working memory, attention span and positive brain rewiring. In fact, the survival and popularity of ancient stories—possibly even before writing systems developed—are seen by evolutionary biologists and evolutionary psychologists as evidence of our need for stories. Some of these stories we still read today, such as *The Odyssey* or *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, and scholars specializing in “literary Darwinism” are seeking to identify the elements of these stories. Viewing the question from another perspective, if literature is a reflection of human experience, then it automatically becomes a source of knowledge of other places, periods and people.

Through literary texts, we learn about cultures and worldviews different from our own. Through reading about differences we also come to understand and appreciate what we all have in common, and our shared humanity is revealed through our reading.

Core concept



REPRESENTATION

Core concept



COMMUNICATION

Core concept



TRANSFORMATION

Core concept



CULTURE

TOK

What knowledge can audiences gain from different times and places from reading a text?



Core concept



TRANSFORMATION

Literature allows us to inhabit characters, hear their voices and see the world through their eyes, enhancing our knowledge and understanding of the world and ourselves. Sontag (2001) eloquently states that if literature has engaged her as a project “first as a reader and then as a writer, it is as an extension of [her] sympathies to other selves, other domains, other dreams, other words, other territories of concern”. In this sense, literature comes into contrast with information and fixed opinion as it reveals complexities, nuances and even conflicts of ideas we cherish and values we hold dear.

TOK

Does every literary work have an ideal reader? What are the challenges this presents for us as readers in our interaction with and understanding of the work?

Core concept



CREATIVITY

In this way, literature engages us in reflection and rumination as readers and also citizens of the world. By extension, literature cultivates the knowledge of our self and also our feelings of empathy and compassion for others. Even when we are reading a book we don’t like or we find difficult to understand, we are benefiting from the thought-provoking activity of reading with all the pleasures, challenges and emotions involved.

In addition, what we contribute to this activity is our own imagination, the blueprint of our context as individuals with distinct experiences, wishes, inclinations and habits.

In return, reading rewards us with storytelling skills and the ability to construct our own narrative—that is, to tell our own story.

ATL

Communication and self-management skills

Reflection

Activity

1. Make a list of the literary works you have read in the last year or so, including those you study at school. What does this list reveal about you as a reader, your interests and your relationship with literature?
2. Refer to a list of bestsellers in a newspaper, and find out a local bookstore’s or (if possible) a local publishing company’s bestsellers. What patterns do you notice and how do you interpret them?
3. Looking at your list of local bestsellers, how does your reader profile compare to the profile of the general public buying these books?
4. What value does literature have for you on a personal level?



Uses of Literature

In her book *Uses of Literature*, published in 2008, Rita Felski seeks to build bridges between literary theory and common knowledge by re-examining the reading experience and its significance for readers in general. Her aim is to get “a better handle on how and why we read”.

Felski presents a taxonomy of four of our most enduring and complex reactions to reading. They are:

- recognition: seeing ourselves in our reading
- enchantment: being in a state of fascination and suspended disbelief
- knowledge: getting to understand the world in a new way
- shock: feeling stimulated by unexpected developments.

Have you experienced these four reactions when:

- reading a literary text
- reading a newspaper
- solving a mathematical problem
- conducting a science experiment
- watching a film?

TOK

In what ways is the kind of knowledge we gain from literature different from the kind we gain through the study of other disciplines?

Guiding conceptual question

How are we affected by texts in various ways?

Reading—our starting point to learning

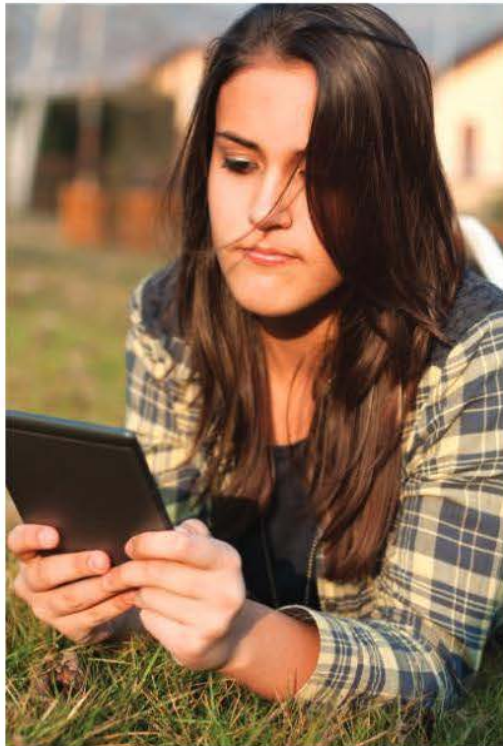


In the English A literature course we will engage with a large number of texts of great diversity in form and genre as well as time and place of origin. We will study the ways language is used to construct meaning in these texts. As we develop our understanding of the function and effect of textual features in different forms and genres we will consider different perspectives, our own included, and respond to texts critically, analytically and also creatively. The starting point of our learning—the fundamental principle of our journey through the course—is reading. We will reflect on what we read, discuss what we read, analyse what we read, interpret what we read, write about what we read and so on. The way we read and how we consciously shape this will be of great importance for understanding and responding to texts as well as completing the tasks required by the course. The continuum of skills we aim to develop in this course will lead us from reading to understanding to interpretation and finally to articulation—that is, our own oral or written work.



Different types of reading

A lot of the reading we do daily is information reading, such as reading road signs, package labels and street names. We also read to find information by skimming and scanning texts for what we need to find out.



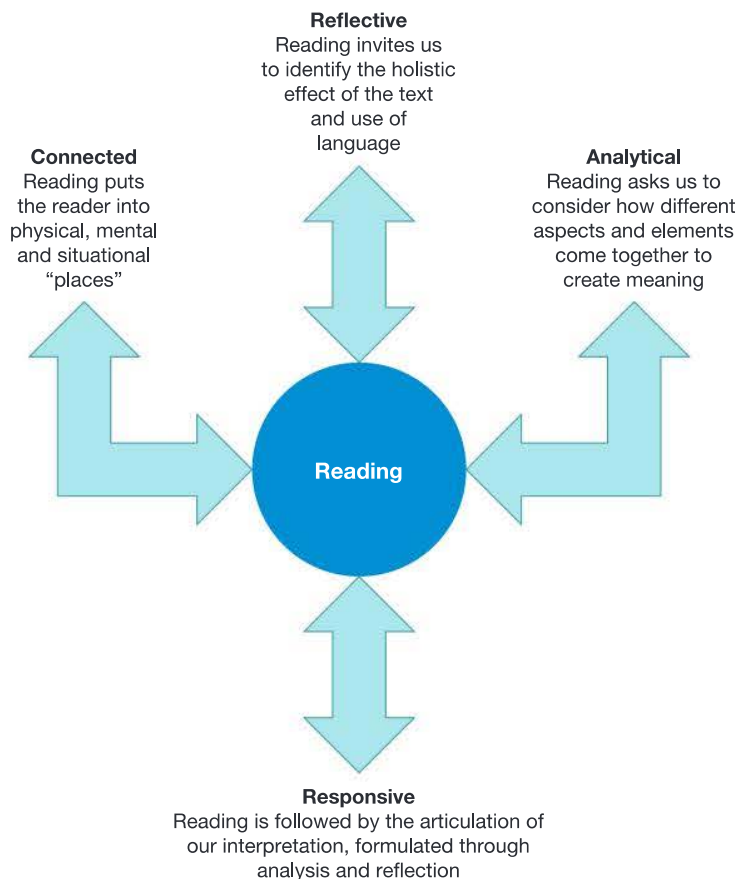
When we read an article about a news item, very often we are scanning—reading fast, focusing on key words such as names and places as we try to collect the information we need about a specific event. Very often, such reading is also guided by titles that alert us to information that may be of interest. Scanning does not require us to “understand” the text but rather to extract from it what we need to learn. Skimming, on the other hand, is a different kind of reading activity that entails going quickly through a text, looking for references to a specific item. Since a part (or most) of our reading of this kind is done online these days, search options very conveniently perform this process for us. Whatever we choose to call these types of reading (inspectional, informational, superficial) they are very different from reading literature. Literary texts take on their reality by being read and because they are read and thereby stimulate our faculties and cognitive skills on many levels.



If we are to describe, in general terms, the kind of reading we will engage in as students of English A literature we can call it **connected, reflective, analytical** and **responsive**. In the case of studying any text, we view reading as learning, and in the specific case of literary texts we construct an interpretation following analysis and reflection of the text and its features. This process will lead us to one of our purposes of the course, which is to write ably and knowledgeably about literary texts. This means that reading and writing are viewed as reciprocal acts: reading supports our writing, and our writing brings to light our reading.

TOK

Does a reader gain knowledge through literature? If so, what different kinds of knowledge does literature offer?



Performative literacy

In his article “Performative Literacy: The Habits of Mind of Highly Literate Readers” Blau (2003) revisits the issue of the complex contemporary literacies and proposes three new kinds of foundational literacies: textual, intertextual and performative literacy. Textual literacy is the knowledge that allows the reader to create an interpretation of a text and to think about it critically. Intertextual literacy refers to prior conceptual and informational knowledge that allows the reader to make connections with other texts. Performative literacy, however, is more complex because it is “knowledge that enables readers to activate and use all the other forms of knowledge that are required for the exercise of anything like a critical or disciplined literacy [which requires students to be active, responsible and responsive readers]. It also represents a set of literate practices without which readers cannot continue to grow in knowledge and literary competence through their reading experience. This enabling form of knowledge—performative literacy—is essential to functioning as a fully enfranchised reader in 21st century schools”. The traits of performative literacy—Blau’s “seven habits of mind”—are:

1. a capacity for sustained focused attention
2. willingness to suspend closure—to entertain problems rather than avoid them
3. willingness to take risks—to offer interpretive hypotheses, to respond honestly, to challenge texts, to challenge normative readings
4. tolerance for failure—a willingness to reread and reread again
5. tolerance for ambiguity, paradox and uncertainty
6. intellectual generosity and fallibility: willingness to change one’s mind, to appreciate alternative visions and to engage in methodological believing as well as doubting
7. a capacity to monitor and direct one’s own reading process: metacognitive awareness.

Consider the comments (starting opposite) of a teacher reflecting on his or her reading during the early years at university. The comments reflect the teacher’s understanding of how he or she read texts then, and compares this past experience to Blau’s “seven habits of mind”.

From “Performative Literacy: The Habits of Mind of Highly Literate Readers” by Sheridan Blau in *Voices from the Middle* (2003)



Capacity for sustained, focused attention

I did not give careful and sustained attention to text, because I did not think I was capable of understanding the text. "... when simple lack of appropriate effort is treated—as it often is—as a symptom of cultural illiteracy or insufficient mastery of some subskill of reading, students are likely to be offered forms of instructional assistance that support inattention and confirm the students' own mistaken notion that they lack some specialized body of knowledge or reading skills that distinguish them from their teachers." (Page 211)

Willingness to suspend closure

I avoided difficult texts. Therefore, I did not engage in literary analysis in fear of being wrong. It was easier to be lazy and give up by formulating weak explanations. "Expert readers... are more willing to endure and even to embrace the disorientation of not seeing clearly, of being temporarily lost." (Page 211)

Willingness to take risks

I did not value my responses to texts in order to "talk back" to text. I did not know that I was allowed to interact with text or question it. Willingness to take risks is "... to offer interpretive hypotheses, to respond honestly, to challenge texts, to challenge normative readings. This characteristic is closely related to a willingness to entertain problems, and both of them are functions of what we might more globally identify as intellectual courage." (Page 212)

Tolerance for failure

I viewed my failure to comprehend the text the first, second, or even the third time as my own insufficiency, which prevented me from sustaining my efforts until the confusion became lucid. "... one of the principal differences between expert readers and those who appear less skilled is that the more accomplished have a greater capacity for failure... framing their failure but as part of the difficulty that comes with the territory of reading difficult texts." (Page 213)

Tolerance for ambiguity, paradox and uncertainty

As a reader I looked for security, certainty, and the path of least resistance. "The least competent readers tend to confuse intellectual sufficiency with certainty and completed knowledge, and are inclined to equate uncertainty with ignorance, and ambiguity or paradox with confusion."

Guiding conceptual question

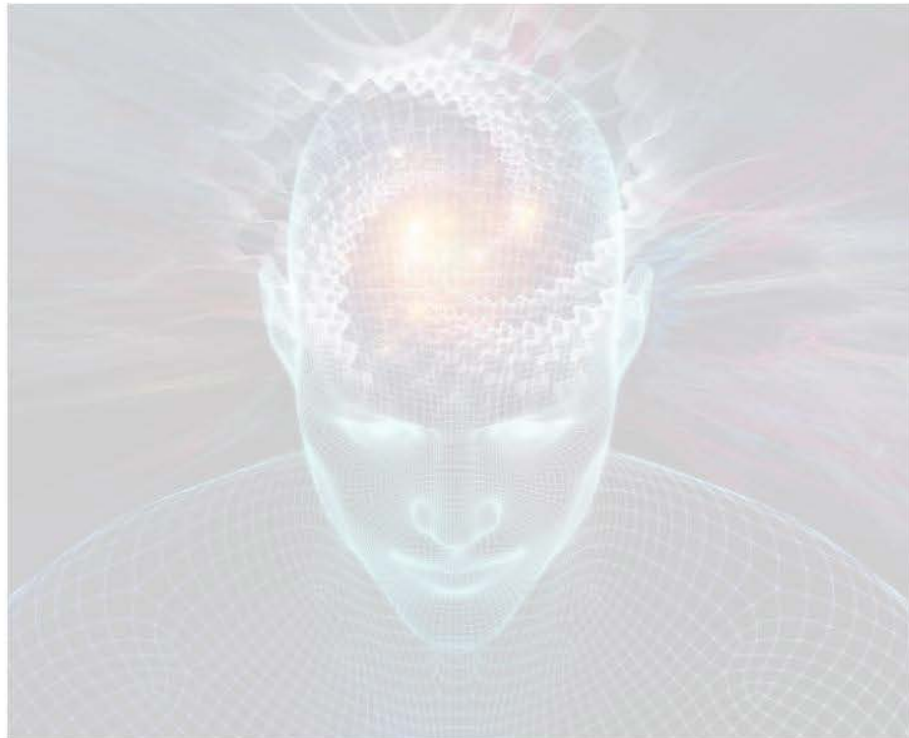
How do literary texts offer insights and challenges?

Intellectual generosity and fallibilism

I did not remain open to new and alternative perspectives and meanings—one of the barriers of critical thinking. “The strongest readers will generally argue persuasively for their own readings of texts and be able to demonstrate the deficiencies of arguments for alternative readings... In this process they also show themselves to be fallibilists, persons capable of changing their minds, capable of learning from their encounters with other readings to look in a new way and therefore to adopt a perspective that is more comprehensive than their own former vision.” (Page 214).

Metacognitive awareness

I lacked metacognition—I was not aware of my own thinking, my own comprehension, or how to strategically correct my confusion of text. “... a major difference between strong and weak readers has to do with the way that strong readers monitor the progress of their understanding as they move through a text, self-correcting as necessary and recognizing when they need to reread or refocus their attention or take some other step to assist themselves in understanding what they are reading... they are less likely to feel defeated by difficult text.” (Page 214)





Reflecting on reading

Activity

- How do the reader's comments on the previous pages compare to your experience as a reader of literature?
- How do they reflect your challenges and the setbacks you have encountered or may encounter in the future?
- Include in your learner portfolio a table like the one below. Revisit it as often as possible to document the development of your reading and to reflect on the skills you need to work on.

The table below gives an example of the kind of reflection you may find useful. Treat this reflection table as a living document, not a filling-in exercise. It will increase your awareness of your skills and will guide you in your efforts throughout the course.

Habits of mind	What are my challenges?	What can I do to address the challenges?
1. Capacity for sustained, focused attention	I easily get distracted and I am also worried that I do not fully understand the text.	a. Turn off electronic distractions. b. Set a timer for focused reading and build up gradually. c. Make a note of textual aspects that puzzle me and write questions about them. d. Use these questions in group discussions or respond to them in my learner portfolio.
[Continue the list of the seven habits of mind.]		

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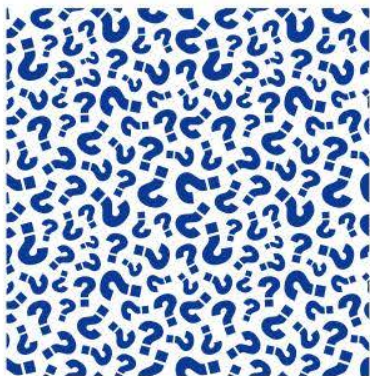
Thinking and self-management skills

Important development skills following reading

Reading actively and reflectively is the foundation of the process of understanding texts and developing the skills needed to articulate a response to the text, written or oral. Recall the continuum of skills we aim to be developing (in the sections "Reading—our starting point to learning" and "Different types of reading") that will lead us from reading and knowing the text to understanding to interpretation and, finally, to articulation—that is, our own oral or written response.

The assessment tasks for the course are:

- the guided literary analysis of unseen passages (paper 1)
- a comparative analysis of two works with a given focus (paper 2)
- the evaluation of two works in terms of a global issue (individual oral)
- a discussion of work on a broad literary focus (higher level essay).



ATL

Thinking skills

Although each of these tasks involves some skills that are unique to this component and differentiates it from the others, there are some skills of comprehension and textual response that are the same across all tasks. Two of these very important development skills are *asking questions* and *making notes*.

What kinds of questions?

Asking the right kind of questions about a text will further our understanding of it and will reveal aspects for us to focus on in discussion and assessments. Note that we are not talking about the *right* questions but the right *kind* of questions. Consider the following examples.

* What are the names of the family members of the protagonist?

** What happens in the second part of the novel?

*** What is the significance of the dialogue between the main character and his father in the third chapter and how does this affect the main character?

Note: the three-star notation is adopted from Erica McWilliam's presentation at an IB professional event for teachers: the IBAEM Regional Conference in The Hague in 2011.

The first two types of questions, marked with one star and two stars, seek answers that focus on information and summary respectively. Both of these types of questions can be of use in other contexts. For example:

- when students are revising a text and recall questions are necessary to ensure that they remember the facts of the work
- when a teacher seeks to confirm that the students have all read and understood the facts of the work
- when a teacher would like to recap the facts of the work before proceeding to an activity.

However, it is only third kind of question that really probes into the workings of the text and provokes readers to reflect on their reading and explore aspects that they found interesting, unusual, puzzling or significant. Three-star questions are open-ended and involve a link with the text in terms of effect, consequence and/or language: they question the text, not the reader.

Guiding conceptual question

How do literary texts offer insights and challenges?

Why am I asking the questions?

The kind of questions you are asking are genuine questions that result from your reading. You may know part of the answer or have some indication about how to respond, but the process of questioning is important for your learning for several reasons, a few of which are given in the following list.



- Your questioning originates from your reading and so it guides your understanding of the text and your awareness of your skills as a reader.
- Your questioning helps you and your teachers identify how your understanding of the text is developing, individually or for the group.
- Your questioning gives you confidence, empowers you and makes you responsible for your learning.
- Answering your questions helps you build up “tolerance for ambiguity, uncertainty and paradox” (Blau 2003) to become a more effective reader even beyond the completion of your English A literature course.

What if I ask the wrong questions?

There are no wrong three-star questions as such. Some questions may be less focused than others or relate to an aspect that is not as significant or pertinent as another. As you practise asking questions during your reading, in your learner portfolio and during class discussions, you will notice how your intuition about and appreciation of a very good three-star question will sharpen.

How are questions useful for my assessments?

Beyond its valuable contribution to your understanding and interpretation of texts, formulating questions is a skill that is very relevant to assessment tasks. Paper 2, for example, asks you to respond to a question using two works you have studied. As a question expert you will be able to identify and address all aspects of the examination question and ask also the right kind of questions about the texts you use for your response. For internal assessment, questions about the global issue of your choice will help you access its presentation in the two extracts you have chosen and examine this presentation in depth and in detail. For the higher level essay, questioning will be the first step of the process of reflecting on a concept and identifying an aspect to write about. Further questioning with reference to this aspect will allow you to present a response that is probing and sophisticated.

Making notes and your learner portfolio

For the English A literature course, the learner portfolio is a place where, for example, you reflect, respond, brainstorm and draw diagrams as you read and discuss literary texts. It can contain classwork and marked assignments, ideas for assessments and drafts. Whatever its format and shape, you must think of your portfolio as the chronicle of your English A literature journey—a road map of your academic and personal experience of the course. The processes recorded in the learner portfolio will be instrumental in moving you toward success in the course. The learner portfolio is your personal learning space, a resource for self-assessment, revision, inspiration for tasks and a safe space for your deep thinking. How you manage your portfolio will depend on your own context. To some extent its usefulness will be determined by your awareness of the kind of note-making you use when reading and discussing texts, focusing on discovering the connections between



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Thinking and research skills

them. You may use your learner portfolio or the margins of your book to identify significant aspects of the text or you may want to write down the facts of the work that you need to remember (such as names of characters, dates and events). However, when it comes to responsive and reflective note-making you will realize that there are at least three levels to the processing of your response:

1. Structural note-making	Examples: noting the facts in a work; drawing a diagram of the events in a novel; making a list of the characters in a play; drafting a table that gives the argument in an essay
2. Conceptual and analytical level	Examples: identifying concepts, ideas, thoughts and global issues in texts; appreciating the ways language is used in different texts
3. Dialectical or cross-textual	Examples: looking at the ways concepts, ideas, thoughts and global issues are presented across texts you are studying—making connections and comparisons among these and in the different ways language is used to convey them

Adapted from Adler and Van Doren (2014)

In addition to these kinds of note-making, you may also use underlining, colour-coding and marginal notes in the text you are reading and in tasks linked to it. Just remember that your learner portfolio is there to reflect your entire learning experience during the course and to identify meaningful connections across your evolving work over the two years.

What is the practical purpose of note-making?

Devising a note-making strategy for your work will also be very helpful when reading longer works. It will help you track how your expectations change as your reading progresses while giving you the opportunity to return to previous impressions and readjust your understanding of the work.

A note-making strategy will also help you with your revision before examinations, and it will make it easy for you to explore options for assignments such as the individual oral or the higher level essay. More importantly, in the English A literature course you will be studying different literary forms (four in higher level, three in standard level) and note-making helps develop the study skills that are relevant to the diversity of the texts as well as the aims and the objectives of the course.

What happens when we read a poem?

Unlike prose with its regular lines of print, poetry already creates a riddle for the reader with the way it is laid out on the page. This quality of poetry as a riddle to be solved is very often the reason students talk about “getting” or “not getting” a poem. In what follows, we will outline different approaches to reading poems that will help students abandon this false dichotomy of “getting” or “not getting” it and find ways into poems that will allow students to connect with, analyse, reflect on and respond to these texts. This section features different kinds of poetry, such as visual poetry, haiku and concrete poetry. These are not the type

ATL

Self-management skills



of poems that you will be asked to respond to in examination papers but texts that will help you reflect on the nature and function of poetry and enhance your appreciation of literary forms. Teachers and students can use these readings for activities and discussions as appropriate and relevant.

Guiding conceptual question

How are we affected by texts in various ways?

Poems about poetry

Activity

The two poems below describe attitudes to poetry. The first one elaborates on the students' approach and attitude to poetry; the second one expresses the opinion of the speaker about what genuine poetry is.

1. Choose a phrase from each poem that resonates with you for some reason. You may share the speaker's opinion or you may have had a similar experience to the one described.
2. Which of these two poems is closer to your experience of poetry?
3. How does the language of this poem reflect that experience?
4. If you wrote a poem about poetry, from your own perspective, what would you choose to focus on? What image would you use to represent your experience of poetry?

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Thinking and communication skills

"Introduction to Poetry" by Billy Collins

I ask them to take a poem
and hold it up to the light
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

- 5 I say drop a mouse into a poem
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room
and feel the walls for a light switch.

- I want them to waterski
10 across the surface of a poem
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do
is tie the poem to a chair with rope
and torture a confession out of it.

- 15 They begin beating it with a hose
to find out what it really means.

From *The Apple That Astonished Paris* by Billy Collins (2006)

“Poetry” by Marianne Moore

I, too, dislike it: there are things that are important beyond
all this fiddle.

Reading it, however, with a perfect contempt for it, one
discovers in

it after all, a place for the genuine.

Hands that can grasp, eyes
that can dilate, hair that can rise

if it must, these things are important not because a

high-sounding interpretation can be put upon them but because
they are

useful. When they become so derivative as to become
unintelligible,

the same thing may be said for all of us—that we
do not admire what

we cannot understand. The bat,

holding on upside down or in quest of something to

eat, elephants pushing, a wild horse taking a roll, a tireless
wolf under

a tree, the immovable critic twitching his skin like a horse
that feels a flea, the base-

ball fan, the statistician—

nor is it valid

to discriminate against “business documents and

school-books”; all these phenomena are important. One must make
a distinction

however: when dragged into prominence by half poets, the
result is not poetry,

nor till the poets among us can be

“literalists of

the imagination”—above

insolence and triviality and can present

for inspection, imaginary gardens with real toads in them,
shall we have

it. In the meantime, if you demand on the one hand, in defiance of their opinion—

the raw material of poetry in

all its rawness, and

that which is on the other hand,

genuine, then you are interested in poetry.

5

10

15

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25

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35



Misguided questions students often ask

It is useful to consider some questions often asked by students when they read poetry. Some of these questions may be based on wrong assumptions and therefore confuse us in the way we hope to explore poetry. Exploring these false assumptions can help focus on how students can construct meaning by reading and examining language use, a process that becomes accessible to students when it is viewed as a supported exploration and discovery of texts.

Guiding conceptual question

In what ways is meaning constructed, negotiated, expressed and interpreted?

Misguided question 1: “How do I know what the poem means?”

“Knowing” the meaning of the poem is very different from knowing a fact—knowing what day of the week it is or that it’s raining. Knowing and understanding a poem is the result of reading that explores different aspects of the text by examination and questioning. The meaning of the poem is not “known” as such but it is constructed by the reader. Sometimes the meaning can be elusive or complex. Again, we need to examine the clues, ask the right kind of questions and put the pieces together. Uncertainty and ambiguity are part of the magic and the enjoyment of reading poetry. It is precisely these subtle qualities of poetry that you will be asked to explore in this course rather than definitively absolute statements about specific interpretations of specific works.



What is the meaning of this?

Activity

1. Read the following poem where the speaker identifies herself as a riddle. Each line also seems to be a kind of image-riddle. Do not attempt to find a meaning yet. Read the first eight lines carefully and make a note of the qualities of each image in each line. Think of the shape, size and look of things the speaker describes in each line. Start with simple questions and observations such as the one given for the first line. You can also draw these images on a separate sheet of paper if you want to.

“Metaphors” by Sylvia Plath

I’m a riddle in nine syllables,	1. Why “nine” syllables?
An elephant, a ponderous house,	2.
A melon strolling on two tendrils.	3.
O red fruit, ivory, fine timbers!	4.
This loaf’s big with its yeasty rising.	5.
Money’s new-minted in this fat purse.	6.
I’m a means, a stage, a cow in calf.	7.
I’ve eaten a bag of green apples,	8.
Boarded the train there’s no getting off.	9.

From *The Collected Poems* by Sylvia Plath (2015)

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Thinking skills

2. List the qualities of the images in the poem.
3.
 - a. Why does the speaker consider the journey in terms of getting off or not getting off?
 - b. Are there any clues in the text that she wants to get off?
 - b. Are there any clues in the text about her feelings about getting off?
4.
 - a. What do these images have in common?
 - b. How do they fit together and how are they different?
 - c. Do you see a pattern? If so, does this pattern help you solve the riddle?
5. Once you have solved the riddle, look at lines 2–8 in more detail. Does the choice of images reveal something about the experience of the speaker? Make a note of your ideas and impressions.
6. Taking into account what you have discovered about the speaker’s feelings for or attitude towards the experience, reread the final line that is the concluding statement of the speaker. Consider the questions below the poem and remember that this is part of the riddle and you are still looking for clues.

Visual poetry

“Visual poetry provides a reading challenge to most readers because the methods of interpreting information vary widely. Some poems read linearly, just as a traditional poem would. Many others utilize individual words outside of any traditional syntax, requiring the reader to find connections that are suggested only spatially. Most contemporary visual poems fragment words into pieces, forcing the reader to delve ever more deeply into the text to sift meaning out of an often hectic

mise-en-page. One important notion to keep in mind while reading visual poetry is that it makes sense via more than just the text itself. Color, shape, and arrangement—including proximity to, and integration with, images—are important elements in the meaning of any visual poem” (Huth 2008).

“Joel Lipman has worked for years with rubber stamps, creating poems on yellowing acidic pages torn out of old books. This technique produces a *frisson* between the apparently unrelated base text and Lipman’s overttext. As evidenced by the meter and movement of the words on the page... it is clear that Lipman is writing real poetry, but it is poetry enhanced by the distinctive appearance of the words” (Huth 2008).



Misguided question 2: “How can I find the deeper meaning of the poem?”

Students are often led to believe that every poem should have a deeper meaning. When students read a poem that is, for example, about a fish, they seek a “deeper” meaning for the fish—they want to find what the fish “stands for”. However, sometimes in poetry a fish is a fish. Sometimes a fish is something more than that, not because it has to be, but because other clues in the text make it something more.



Guiding conceptual question

How does the structure or style of a literary text affect meaning?

Is the house a house? Is the soap a soap?

Activity



1. The following two poems mention a house that the speaker visits or seems to inhabit, respectively. In order to discover the meaning of a poem (and in this particular case, the significance of “a house”) students need to question the text themselves rather than the teacher questioning the students. To help you get started with the process of questioning, you are given some keywords to use, as well as some prompts. Read the two poems carefully before you start formulating your questions in response to these prompts. You can use these questions as counterpoints of reflection or analysis in your learner portfolio or in discussions with your peers. During reflection or discussion you will begin to construct the meaning of the poems and start developing your understanding of the poems. Make a note of your thoughts and ideas as you engage in the questioning process, alone or with your peers.