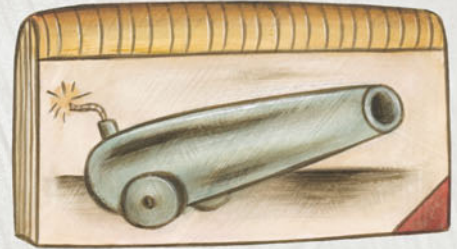
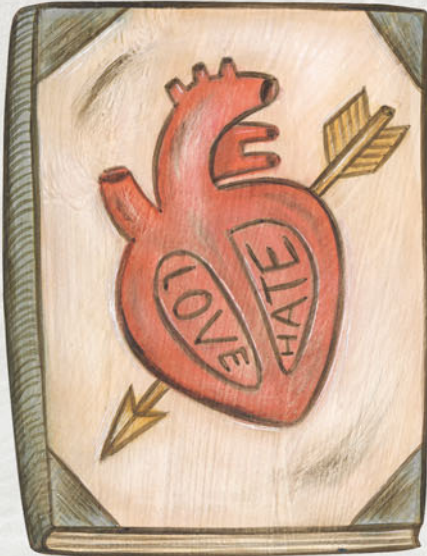




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# CANON Reloaded



Jacqueline  
Grassmayr



ISBN: 9781107608719

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Cambridge University Press

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CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

Cambridge, New York, Melbourne, Madrid, Cape Town,  
Singapore, São Paulo, Delhi, Mexico City

Cambridge University Press  
477 Williamstown Road, Port Melbourne, VIC 3207, Australia

[www.cambridge.edu.au](http://www.cambridge.edu.au)

Information on this title: [www.cambridge.org/9781107608719](http://www.cambridge.org/9781107608719)

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First published 2013

Cover designed by Kerry Cooke  
Typeset by Kerry Cooke  
Illustrations by Matt Clare  
Printed in China by C & C Offset Printing Co. Ltd.

*A Cataloguing-in-Publication entry is available from the catalogue of the National Library of Australia at [www.nla.gov.au](http://www.nla.gov.au)*

ISBN 978-1-107-60871-9 Paperback  
ISBN 978-1-139-86048-2 Digital

Additional resources for this publication at [www.cambridge.edu.au/GO](http://www.cambridge.edu.au/GO)

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# FOREWORD

By Michael Parker

A funny thing happened in an English class I taught recently, in a unit designed by the author of this book, Jacqueline Grassmayr. We were studying 'The Death of King Arthur' and we had as our four sources a poem from Thomas Malory (1485), a rock opera by Rick Wakeman (1975), a film by John Boorman (1981) and a novel by Philip Reeve (2007). When we took a vote on the class' 'favourite' text, the clear winner was from 1485 – the lines of Thomas Malory's *Le Morte D'Arthur* hurtling through the intervening centuries and forging through the cultural murk of the 1970s before finding their target in the hearts and minds of young people in the twenty-first century. The canon can still find its mark.

Of course, the days when we held canonical works up as unambiguously better, more moral and more universal than other texts have thankfully gone. However, the canon still has much to say to each new generation. Perhaps in this era, when value is increasingly disposable and paradigms shift in the space of years, not decades, a canon has more to say than ever. Works from the canon are aesthetically powerful. Works from the canon provide a window into a culture and a history. Works from the canon tell us much about the human condition across time. And works from the canon both illuminate and give weight to subjects as varied as love, landscape and death. Reading the canon is like getting a (long) Facebook message from someone thousands of miles away and hundreds of years ago saying 'This is what I think, and *this* is what it's like'. It can be energising and it can be fun.

*Canon Reloaded* is an excellent place to start. It takes the 'reloaded' aspect of the title to heart and lays waste to the traditional structure for a book about the canon. No chapters entitled 'Renaissance' or 'Victorian' or 'Modern' for her. Instead, it sets up a series of themes and ideas to which various texts throughout the ages become magnetised. A curious student could study Death, and read as widely as John Donne, Charlotte Brontë and Wilfred Owen. Or they could consider landscape and read as widely as Christopher Marlowe, Mary Shelley and Robert Frost. Or, in one of my favourites, they could read about cityscapes and venture as far as William Wordsworth, T.S. Eliot and Virginia Woolf.

One of the exciting aspects of *Canon Reloaded* is that the chapters can be studied as stand-alone units or incorporated into something much wider. Any of the texts in the chapter might be studied in its entirety, with the remainder of the chapter used for fascinating additional perspectives. Alternatively, the focus of the units ('Grave Matters' and so forth), might become a part of a unit that reflected on the concept in both the present and the past. *Canon Reloaded* both provides a

complete package, yet respects English teachers' desires to reform and reshape textbook material into something that is uniquely theirs.

In addition, the very notion of the canon is thoroughly tested – indeed *Canon Reloaded* turns the canon back upon itself. Exercises that try to distinguish the brilliant from the terrible suggest that even the least expert among us can tell a 'masterpiece' from doggerel, but also emphasise the role of subjectivity. Sections asking students to think about their favourite television programs also ask students to consider what it is that makes a canon in the first place, and how works may or may not get onto it.

A decent exposure to the works of the canon will not turn our students into twenty-first century parodies of *Brideshead Revisited*, clutching their teddy bears and reminiscing of the Dreaming Spires. Instead it will help them to recognise that there is a cultural past and that they do not just live their whole lives in a momentary cultural present. It will help shape them into people who feel that aesthetic value, appreciation and even pleasure can come from study, concentration and rereading. And it will allow them to buy cheaper books on Kindle, because all of those texts are way out of copyright.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

After graduating from the University of Sydney with a Master of Arts, Jacqueline Grassmayr entered the teaching profession in western Sydney until being drawn overseas. While developing her career in London, she read her way around Europe, England and America, visiting places significant to her literary heroes. Since returning to Sydney she has presented at English Teacher Association workshops, advised on the production of Shakespearean graphic novels and been involved in the making of short films. She is currently Head of English at Cranbrook School and edits its literary journal, *Benchmark*. Jacqueline is passionate about reading, letter-writing, theatre, dance, live music and all varieties of cheese. She lives near the sea with her husband, in a home filled with books.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

### Author acknowledgements

I would like to thank Joanna Di Mattia for her guidance and warmth, Megan Brooks for her library expertise and support, and Enda O'Callaghan whose belief, encouragement, advice and love make everything possible.

### Publisher acknowledgements

The Publisher, Joanna Di Mattia, would like to extend her thanks to everyone involved in this project, but in particular the author, Jacqueline Grassmayr, for her beautiful writing and hard work, the illustrator, Matt Clare, for his stunning artwork, and the Project Editor, Isabelle Sinclair, for her enthusiasm and care.



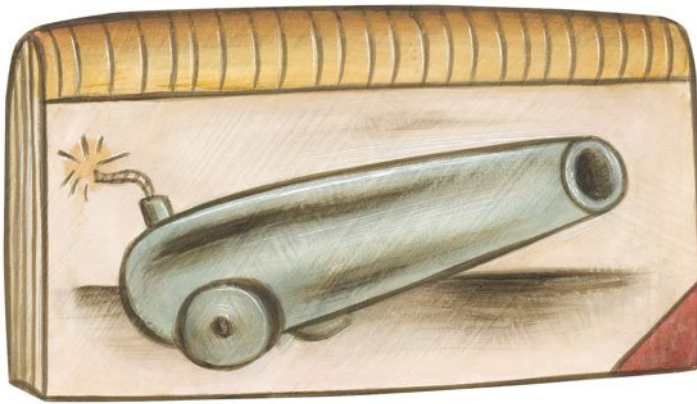
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# 1

# Introduction

## RELOADED IN THIS CHAPTER

- What is the canon?
- What is literature?
- Quality control
- The classic
- Canon clues
- Summing up
- Words, words, words
- Read and view more
- Final words

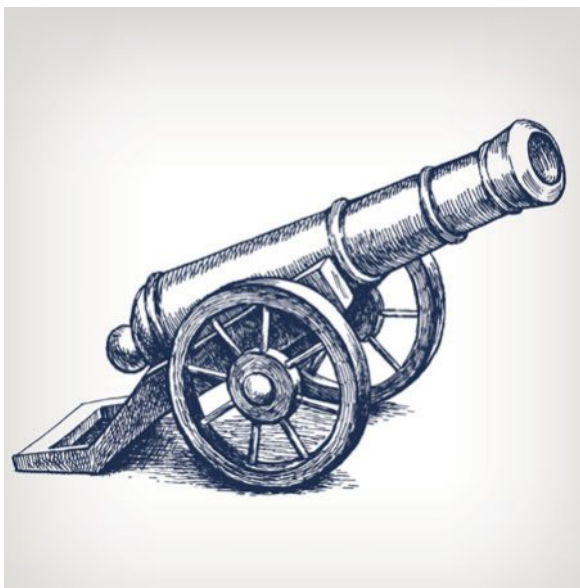
## What is the canon?

When you hear the word 'canon', you generally think of a large, heavy weapon on wheels that fires lead balls at some enemy army across a field. That, of course, would be a 'cannon' and not what we are talking about here. Although, in the study of English, the canon is indeed made up of what are considered the 'big guns' of literature and may even be thought of as a weapon against ignorance, we are not talking about destructive artillery.

What we are talking about is an arsenal of knowledge: knowledge of literature. The canon is a list of literary texts that are considered so important that everyone should read a selection of them during their lifetime. Having read them and appreciated their merits, we are considered 'cultured, educated and well-read'. We are talking mostly about books written in English or works of literature that have been translated into English from foreign languages, such as French and Russian.

Of course, this idea of the canon as a list of the great works of English and foreign literature raises all sorts of questions:

- Why is 'the canon' so called?
- How long has the canon been around?
- What is literature?
- Why is it considered important to read literature?
- Which books and authors are on this list and which are not – and why?
- Has the list changed over time?
- Who decides what's on the list and what isn't?



This is not the type of 'canon' this book is concerned with

- What about books written in Asia, Africa or even Australia?
- Will the canon survive in the digital age?
- What will happen if you don't read the books on the canon?

This book addresses these questions, but first let's begin with what you already know.

## Activity 1.1 Your thoughts

- 1 Look through the lists of creators and texts below. Which have you heard of or read?
- 2 Match each composer to their text in the table below:

<b>Creators</b>	<b>Text</b>
Shakespeare	<i>Peter Pan</i>
Chaucer	<i>Frankenstein</i>
Jane Austen	<i>Oliver Twist</i>
Emily Brontë	<i>The Great Gatsby</i>
Samuel Taylor Coleridge	<i>Anna Karenina</i>
Homer	<i>Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde</i>
Alexandre Dumas	<i>Macbeth</i>
Mark Twain	'Paradise Lost'
F. Scott Fitzgerald	<i>Wuthering Heights</i>
Edgar Allen Poe	<i>Gulliver's Travels</i>
Charles Dickens	<i>Pride and Prejudice</i>
Robert Louis Stevenson	<i>Huckleberry Finn</i>
Mary Shelley	<i>The Three Musketeers</i>
Bram Stoker	'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'
Charlotte Brontë	'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'
John Milton	<i>The Odyssey</i>
J.M. Barrie	<i>The Canterbury Tales</i>
Jonathan Swift	<i>Dracula</i>
T.S. Eliot	'The Raven'
Leo Tolstoy	<i>Jane Eyre</i>

- 3 How many texts do you know because you have seen the film or television adaptations?
- 4 Many people know of canonical texts even though they have never read them. What does this tell you about the canon?

## Who and what is on the canon?

You may not have heard of the literary canon but you *will* have heard of some of the writers and texts that are a part of it.

Of all the writers on the canon, it is most likely that you will have heard of and studied Shakespeare. This is because he made such a huge contribution to literature with his 37 plays and 154 sonnets (that we know of!). He also coined words and phrases that are commonly used in the English language today. 'Accommodation', 'blood-stained', 'eventful' and 'gloomy' all come from 'the **Bard**' (as he is often called), as do the expressions 'all that glitters is not gold', 'green-eyed monster', 'heart of gold' and 'love is blind'. If you investigate further, you will be surprised how commonplace much of his language is. You should never feel that Shakespeare's language is too difficult because you actually already use some of it.

**Bard** refers to William Shakespeare but also (when lowercase) to a poet, minstrel or the name for the winner of the prize for Welsh verse at an Eisteddfod



## Activity 1.2

---

- 1 Make a list of the plays by Shakespeare that you have heard of, read or seen performed.
  - 2 Unless you are a Shakespeare scholar it's unlikely that you would have heard of most of these: *Timon of Athens*, *Titus Andronicus*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *Troilus and Cressida*, *Cymbeline*, *King John* and *Pericles*. Why do you think that some Shakespeare plays are more well-known and more often performed than others?
  - 3 Make a list of other words and expressions that Shakespeare introduced into the English language.
  - 4 Ideas about what texts should be taught in schools change over time. Shakespeare has been taught in Australian schools for many years and has often been compulsory. Why do you think the education authorities in Australia see the study of Shakespeare as important?
  - 5 Do you think Shakespeare is regarded the same way in all countries around the world? Why or why not?
- 

### *Did you know?*

William Shakespeare had at least 11 different ways of spelling his name.

An **anagram** of his name is: I am a weakish speller.

We tend to refer to writers like Shakespeare, whose works are many and familiar to us, as giants of the canon. You will often hear them referred to and quoted from. You may have heard of characters – some of the canon's superstars – that walk from the pages of canonical texts even if you've never read them: Hamlet and Macbeth (William Shakespeare), Frankenstein's monster (Mary Shelley), Dracula (Bram Stoker), Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde (Robert Louis Stevenson), Oliver Twist (Charles Dickens) and so on. We might know about these authors, their works and their characters without realising that they form part of the literary canon.

So the canon is made up of many writers and texts that are familiar in some way. We will investigate *why* we continue to admire, respect, read and study these today, but before that we will look at how the canon actually came into being.

**anagram** a word formed by rearranging the letters of a given word

---

## Origins of the canon

If you look up 'canon' in the dictionary you will find the following definitions:

- a general rule, law or principle
- a church decree or law
- a collection of sacred books that are considered genuine
- those literary works regarded as significant by the literary establishment
- the recognised works of an author.

You can see that references to literature come after definitions of rules, laws and religious texts. This is because the literary canon was given its name after the Christian church used religious or 'canon' laws to establish the New Testament of the Christian Bible. Some religious texts – like gospels and epistles – were seen to be **authentic** and divine. These were included while other texts, which were considered fake, were not. The process was long and controversial. Arguments and debates began around 367 AD and continued well into the sixteenth century.

**authentic**  
genuine, real

The books that make up the Christian Bible were written long ago. They were selected from a finite number and it is unlikely that any new ones will be discovered. This means that the books in the Bible are fixed and unchanging. Those not included were thought to be apocryphal (or not genuine) and were discarded and put on a different type of canon devised in 1559, called the Index Librorum Prohibitorum, which also included books considered immoral. This was a list of banned books, or, in other words, an early example of censorship. This list of forbidden reading – begun in the sixteenth century but added to over time – was around until 1966!





Some books that we now consider part of the literary canon were once banned. The following books suffered such a fate for their sexual content or for being 'obscene': Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* (United States in 1873), D.H. Lawrence's *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (Australia, England and the United States in 1928), James Joyce's *Ulysses* (England and Australia in the 1930s) and Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (South Africa in 1955).

### Activity 1.3

---

- 1 What words do we use that come from 'Librorum' and 'Prohibitorum'?
- 2 In small groups, conduct some research on censorship and discuss the following:
  - a What are some of the reasons that texts are censored?
  - b What kind of censorship operates in our society today (consider film, television, music, video games, photography)?
  - c Who controls censorship?
  - d Why do you think censorship laws change over time?
  - e What are the positive aspects of censorship?
  - f What are the negative aspects of censorship?
  - g Do we need censorship laws? Why or why not?

Ways to present your findings:

- a class discussion
  - a class debate
  - a poster or pamphlet either in favour or against censorship
  - as an information clip for electronic media (TV or YouTube).
- 

### *Did you know?*

George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949) was banned in the former Soviet Union in 1950 because Stalin saw it as a satire of his leadership. The ban was not lifted until 1990.

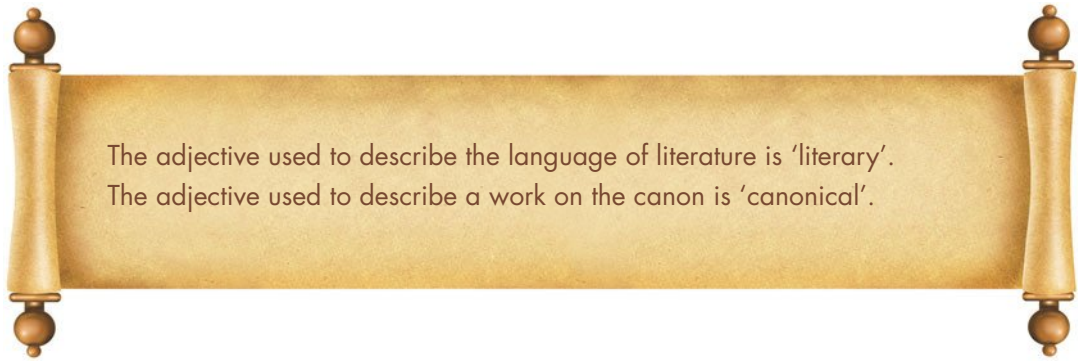
## What is literature?

You will notice that I have used the word literature many times when referring to the canon. But how do you actually define it?

If you look up 'literature' in a current dictionary you will find the following definitions:

- written words especially those considered of superior or lasting artistic merit
- the realm of letters
- the writings of a country or a period
- the material in print of a particular subject.

If you had looked up 'literature' in the Oxford English Dictionary at the end of the nineteenth century you would have found this definition: 'writing which has claim to consideration on the ground of beauty of form or emotional effect' (Jonathan Bate, *English Literature: A Very Short Introduction*, p. 31).



## The study of literature

For many years the subject of English was mainly the study of the structure and development of language – grammar, Greek origins and Latin roots. In 1831 English literature as we understand it was introduced as a serious academic subject. Literature (with a capital 'L') was seen to be beautiful, timeless, educational and morally guiding. This recognises that understanding language is not just about knowing what a verb or an adjective does as a job in a sentence or from where a word originates – although these can be useful and interesting things to know.

Language is not just about clear and precise communication – although this too is important. Language is powerful and passionate. Used skillfully it stimulates both our minds, with the ideas it can express, and our hearts, with the emotions it can stir. This appreciation of literature changed the way the subject of English was understood and taught.

Literature continues to maintain an important position in school and university courses, although the way it is taught and studied has changed. Literature is still the biggest general section of most bookshops; it is downloadable on electronic reading devices; can be accessed via the internet; and is reviewed, judged, referred to and being read by more people than ever before.

### Activity 1.4

.....

Compare and contrast the opening page of a literary text with an example of non-literary writing (a newspaper or magazine article, a non-fiction book, a textbook, recipe, set of instructions, etc.). What are the differences between literary and non-literary language?

.....



## Literature and the canon

It is difficult to work out when the literary canon became established and accepted, but from the eighteenth century we find evidence of the canon forming. It was believed that certain texts were valuable to the development of human society. Literature was considered educational, in that great works would and should sharpen our moral well-being, improve our vocabulary and shape our emotions. Readers should be able to relate to their ideas regardless of when they are written. In this way, through reading a selection of texts considered worthy, we can share common human experiences regardless of time.



List making began in the eighteenth century

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries certain people (writers, publishers, clerics and intellectuals) began making lists and collections of texts that they believed people should read in order to develop into moral and intelligent beings. Here are some of the most significant ones:

**Unitarian** a religious body that believes in freedom from formal principles, a belief that God is not a Trinity but one being

- 1774** William Enfield (a British **Unitarian** minister) published an anthology called *The Speaker*, which contained his choice of the 'best' English writers.
- 1779–81** Samuel Johnson (poet, essayist and literary critic) wrote *Lives of the Most Eminent English Poets*.
- 1811** Anna Barbauld (poet, essayist and literary critic) published *The Female Speaker*, which was a companion book to Enfield's.
- 1861** Francis Turner (critic and poet) selected the 'best' poetry to be published in his anthology, *Palgrave's Golden Treasury of Verse*.
- 1906** Joseph Dent (publisher) founded Everyman's Library, which published a group of 'significant' texts. These became an 'unofficial' canon of literature.
- 1920s** F.R. Leavis (literary critic and theorist) made a list of 'great writers' that would promote an 'awareness of the possibilities of life'.
- 1920s** T.S. Eliot (poet and critic) created a ranked list of literary texts that he believed communicated universal (in fact, Western European) values.

When these lists were first being compiled, the written word was the dominant medium, and the canon is a way of retaining our recognition of, and respect for, the well-written word. But we now live in a world of images, electronic media and digital texts. What would our lists of these types of texts include?

## Activity 1.5 Group activity

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- 1 In groups, compile a 'Top 5' of the following categories of TV programs (or each group can take a particular category and create a 'Top 10'):
    - dramas
    - comedies
    - cartoons
    - talent shows
    - reality shows
    - cooking shows.
  - 2 Then compile an 'Ultimate Top 5' of the 'best' TV shows of all time.
  - 3 Compare your decisions with other groups and the class.
  - 4 Can you agree on an 'Ultimate Top 5' TV shows as a class?
- 

### *Did you know?*

The two longest-running Australian TV shows are *Four Corners* (since 1961) and *Play School* (since 1966).

## Quality control

The word 'canon' can be traced back to the ancient Greek word for 'measuring rod', so you can think of the texts on the canon as having been measured against certain standards or **criteria** and found to be worthy, valuable and important to read. The chosen texts were deemed to be 'mind improving', 'educational' and 'moral'.

Unlike the religious texts of the New Testament, the literary canon continues to evolve over time. Some texts lose their place because they are no longer considered significant or relevant; some are rediscovered or revalued and added. As time passes more and more texts are written – some will be judged and deemed to be worthy to join the canon.

To recognise great works of literature there are literary festivals, literary events and literary prizes. There are, in fact, hundreds of both international and national prizes awarded for 'significant' literature every year.

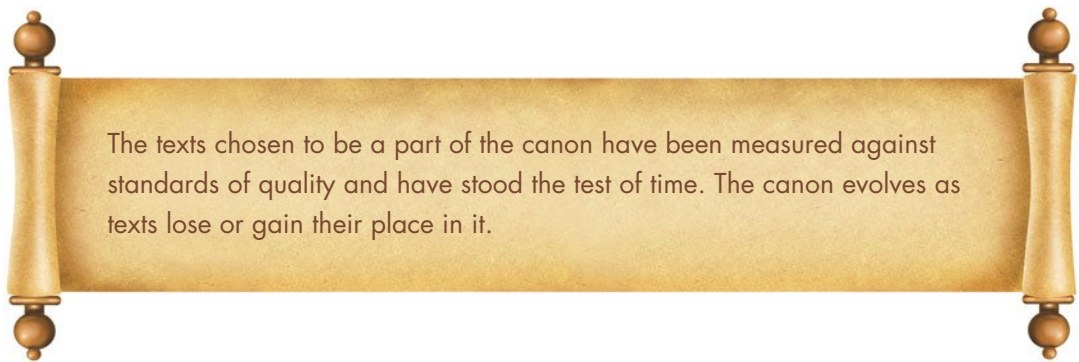
**criteria** (plural of criterion) principles or standards by which things are judged or measured

---

You may have heard of these: the Nobel Prize for Literature, the Man Booker Prize for Fiction, the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction, the Orange Prize for Fiction (for women) and the Australian Miles Franklin and Vogel Literary Awards.

Here are some qualities for which the Nobel Prize for Literature has been awarded:

- the power of observation
- originality of imagination
- distinguished art of narration
- highly artistic form that gives expression to a nation
- poetic beauty
- humanitarian ideals
- lyrical beauty
- ethical depth
- a significant body of work.



### Activity 1.6

- 1 Which of the qualities in the prize-winning list do you think are important?
- 2 What would your criteria be for 'quality' literature? Think about the books that you have read and that you would recommend to others. Think about why you would recommend them.
- 3 The Elizabethan playwrights Beaumont and Fletcher were once more popular than Shakespeare. What do you think causes a change in the way writers and texts are regarded?



**personification** giving human characteristics to an object

- uses figurative devices such as similes, metaphors and **personification** originally and effectively
- is imaginative and interesting
- flows well – this may be due to its rhythm and rhyme schemes that work effectively when you read the poem aloud
- evokes strong emotions
- has subjects or topics that people relate to
- is carefully structured to add to the meaning of the poem.

### Activity 1.7 Pair work

- 1 What do you think the features of 'bad' poetry are?
- 2 Read each of the six following extracts aloud (the poets' names have been deliberately left off to allow you to make an impartial decision) and decide whether each extract is 'good' poetry or 'bad' poetry. Provide reasons for your decisions. (Answers provided at the end of the chapter.)

#### Extract 1

*It must have been an awful sight,  
To witness in the dusky moonlight,  
While the Storm Fiend did laugh, and angry did bray,  
Along the Railway Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay,  
Oh! ill-fated Bridge of the Silv'ry Tay,  
I must now conclude my lay  
By telling the world fearlessly without the least dismay,  
That your central girders would not have given way,  
At least many sensible men do say,  
Had they been supported on each side with buttresses,  
At least many sensible men confesses,  
For the stronger we our houses do build,  
The less chance we have of being killed.*



## Extract 2

*All down the mountain sides, wild forests lending  
One mighty voice to the life-giving wind;  
Rivers their banks in the jubilee rending,  
Fast through the valleys a reckless course wending,  
Wider and deeper their waters extending,  
Leaving a desolate desert behind.*

## Extract 3

*Had I the heavens' embroidered cloths,  
Enwrought with golden and silver light,  
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths  
Of night and light and the half-light,  
I would spread the cloths under your feet:  
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;  
I have spread my dreams under your feet;  
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams.*



## Extract 4

*All that doth flow we cannot liquid name  
Or else would fire and water be the same;  
But that is liquid which is moist and wet  
Fire that property can never get.  
Then 'tis not cold that doth the fire put out  
But 'tis the wet that makes it die, no doubt.*

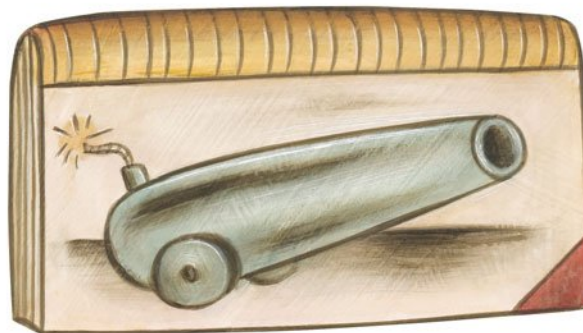
## Extract 5

*He clasps the crag with crooked hands  
Close to the sun in lonely lands,  
Ring'd with the azure world, he stands.  
The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;  
He watches from his mountain walls,  
And like a thunderbolt he falls.*

## Extract 6

*Death!  
Plop. The barges down in the river flop.  
Flop, plop.  
Above, beneath. From the slimy branches the grey drips drop,  
As they scraggle black on the thin grey sky,  
Where the black cloud rack-hackles drizzle and fly  
To the oozy waters, that lounge and flop  
On the black scrag piles, where the loose cords plop,  
As the raw wind whines in the thin tree-top.*

---



## *Did you know?*

William McGonagall (1825–1902) of Dundee, Scotland, is regarded as the worst poet of all time. He was a loom weaver, who claims he discovered his poetic genius in 1877, and wrote and performed poetry for 25 years. In his day he was considered so bad that some considered him to be 'gifted' with an ability to write truly awful poetry. Today he is fondly thought of because the 'badness' of his poetry is so amusing.

## Prose: the good, the bad and the ugly

Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton (1803–1873) was a politician and writer who was hugely popular in his day. He gave us famous quotes such as 'the pen is mightier than the sword' from his play *Richelieu* and 'pursuit of the almighty dollar' from his novel *The Coming Race*. Although he was a bestselling author between the years of 1837 and 1859, he is not regarded as a canonical writer. Popularity does not guarantee a place on the canon.

Ironically, his name is now famous for the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest. This competition, which began in 1982, gives awards for terrible first sentences to imaginary novels. It is named after Bulwer-Lytton because of the melodramatic opening sentence of his novel *Paul Clifford*:

It was a dark and stormy night; the rain fell in torrents – except at occasional intervals, when it was checked by a violent gust of wind which swept up the streets (for it is in London that our scene lies), rattling along the housetops, and fiercely agitating the scanty flame of the lamps that struggled against the darkness.



Sir Edward Bulwer-Lytton

## Activity 1.8

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Read the following opening sentences. Some are from canonical novels and some are from Bulwer-Lytton prize winners. Try to identify which is which. Give reasons for your decisions. (Answers provided at the end of the chapter.)

- 1 'Cheryl's mind turned like the vanes of a wind-powered turbine, chopping her sparrow-like thoughts into bloody pieces that fell onto a growing pile of forgotten memories.'
  - 2 'The Nellie, a cruising yawl, swung to her anchor without a flutter of the sails and was at rest.'
  - 3 'Emma Woodhouse, handsome, clever, rich, with a comfortable home and happy disposition, seemed to unite some of the best blessings of existence; and had lived nearly twenty-one years in the world with very little to distress or vex her.'
  - 4 'Maggie said they were birthmarks and they very well could be, but the three very small black moles in a horizontal line just above her right eyebrow looked like an ellipsis to some, but to others who did not know what an ellipsis was, they looked like three very small black moles in a horizontal line just above Maggie's right eyebrow.'
  - 5 'As his small boat scudded before a brisk breeze under a sapphire sky dappled with cerulean clouds with indigo bases, through cobalt seas that deepened to navy nearer the boat and faded to azure at the horizon, Ian was at a loss as to why he felt blue.'
  - 6 'Under certain circumstances there are few hours in life more agreeable than the hour dedicated to the ceremony known as afternoon tea.'
  - 7 'Wearily approaching the murder scene of Jeannie and Quentin Rose and needing to determine if this was the handiwork of the Scented Strangler – who had a twisted affinity for spraying his victims with his signature raspberry cologne – or that of a copycat, burnt-out insomniac detective Sonny Kirkland was sure of one thing: he'd have to stop and smell the roses.'
  - 8 'It was about eleven o'clock in the morning, mid-October, with the sun not shining and a look of hard wet rain in the clearness of the foothills.'
  - 9 'No one would have believed in the last years of the nineteenth century that this world was being watched keenly and closely by intelligences greater than man's and yet as mortal as his own; that as men busied themselves about their various concerns they were scrutinised and studied, perhaps almost as narrowly as a man with a microscope might scrutinise the transient creatures that swarm and multiply in a drop of water.'
-

# The classic

## Activity 1.9

- 1 Look up the word 'classic' in a dictionary and write the meanings it offers.
- 2 Give an example of how the word can be used as an adjective and as a noun.
- 3 Make a list of words in your dictionary that begin with 'class'.
- 4 Find out what the Latin adjective 'classicus' means.
- 5 What do you personally use the word 'classic' to name or describe? Give a specific example of what would be on your list of classics for the following categories: albums, cars, jokes, films and songs.



A classic car

Literary texts that have made it onto the canon are usually referred to as 'classics' because they:

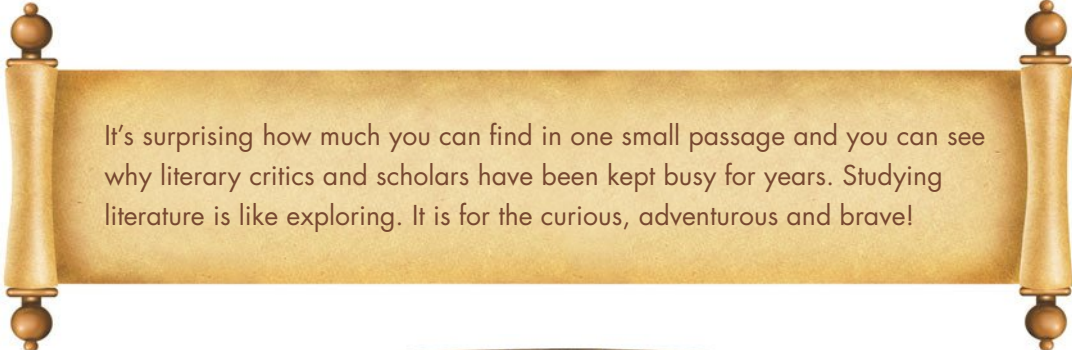
- express ideas and feelings that we can relate to as human beings
- express ideas and feelings in a way we consider to be artful and beautiful
- make us feel and think
- expand our knowledge of the world
- deepen our understanding of the human condition
- can be read a number of different ways by a number of different people
- can help us make sense of our own experiences and help us empathise with others
- inform us of other times and other cultures
- can be read and appreciated by people across time and cultures.

To give you an idea of how we can match these qualities to texts, read the following extract and the paragraph that follows.

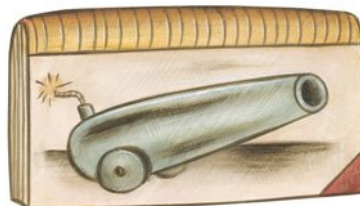
## Extract 1: from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

The village of Longbourn was only one mile from Meryton; a most convenient distance for the young ladies, who were usually tempted thither three or four times a week, to pay their duty to their aunt and to a milliner's shop just over the way. The two youngest of the family, Catherine and Lydia, were particularly frequent in these attentions; their minds were more vacant than their sisters', and when nothing better offered, a walk to Meryton was necessary to amuse their morning hours and furnish conversation for the evening; and however bare of news the country in general might be, they always contrived to learn some from their aunt. At present, indeed, they were well supplied both with news and happiness by the recent arrival of a militia regiment in the neighbourhood; it was to remain the whole winter, and Meryton was the headquarters.

The passage meets the criteria of a classic text in terms of how we can relate to it, what we learn from it about time and place and how well it is written. Although the novel is set in the early nineteenth century, we can relate to the sisters visiting their aunt to catch up on gossip and go shopping. We can relate to the fact that they are happy to discover something new in their area – a military regiment – which offers opportunities for romance. It informs us of other times by showing us that in the past, girls of a particular section of society seemed to have a lot of leisure time and walked from place to place. The language contains older forms of words like 'thither' (meaning 'to' or 'towards that place'), is formal and flows easily. We can admire Austen's control of complex sentences and her fluent style.



It's surprising how much you can find in one small passage and you can see why literary critics and scholars have been kept busy for years. Studying literature is like exploring. It is for the curious, adventurous and brave!



## Activity 1.10

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- 1 In pairs, read the following passages from the classic novels, *Anna Karenina* (1873–7) by Leo Tolstoy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) by Thomas Hardy and *The Great Gatsby* (1925) by F. Scott Fitzgerald.
  - 2 In a paragraph or set of bullet points, explain how each extract connects to the qualities of a classic. You might like to consider the following questions:
    - a What is the purpose of the excerpt (e.g. does it describe a character, set a scene, move the action forward, describe or explain a situation)?
    - b What do we learn about the time and place in which the excerpt is set?
    - c What does it communicate about human nature?
    - d What can we relate to?
    - e What is interesting about the language used?
- 

### Extract 2: from Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1873–7)

The big barrier stood just in front of the tsar's pavilion. The emperor, and the entire court, and throngs of people – all were looking at them, at him, and at Makhotin, who kept one length ahead of him, as they approached the devil (as the solid barrier was called). Vronsky felt those eyes directed at him from all sides, but he saw nothing except the ears and neck of his horse, the earth racing towards him, Gladiator's **croup** and white legs beating out a quick rhythm ahead of him and maintaining the same distance. Gladiator rose, not knocking against anything, swung his short tail and disappeared from Vronsky's sight.

**croup** the hindquarters of a horse

---

'Bravo!' said some single voice.

That instant, just in front of him, the boards of the barrier flashed before Vronsky's eyes. Without the least change of movement the horse soared under him; the boards vanished, and he heard something knock behind him. Excited by Gladiator going ahead of her, the horse had risen too early before the barrier and knocked against it with a back hoof. But her pace did not change, and Vronsky, receiving a lump of mud in the face, realised he was again the same distance from Gladiator. In front of him he saw his croup, his short tail, and again the same swiftly moving white legs not getting any further away.

Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky, Penguin Books, England, 2010, pp. 197–8.



Extract 3: from Thomas Hardy's *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891)

'You ought to have been more careful if you didn't mean to get him to make you his wife!'

'O mother, my mother!' cried the agonized girl, turning passionately upon her parent as if her poor heart would break. 'How could I be expected to know? I was a child when I left this house four months ago. Why didn't you tell me there was danger in men-folk? Why didn't you warn me? Ladies know what to fend hands against, because they read novels that tell them of these tricks; but I never had the chance o' learning in that way, and you did not help me!'

Her mother was subdued.

'I thought if I spoke of his fond feelings and what they might lead to, you would be **hontish** wi' him and lose your chance,' she murmured, wiping her eyes with her apron. 'Well, we must make the best of it, I suppose. 'Tis **nater**, after all, and what do please God!'

**hontish** dialect for haughty and proud

**nater** matter, as it is



## Extract 4: from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

At least once a fortnight a corps of caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough coloured lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, garnished with glistening hors d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived, no thin five-piece affair, but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos, and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and salons and verandas are gaudy with primary colours, and hair bobbed in strange new ways, and shawls beyond the dreams of **Castile**.

**Castile** a former kingdom of Spain

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## Canon clues

There are a number of ways that you can tell whether texts belong to the canon or not. They tend to be texts that:

- people have a general knowledge of even if they haven't read them
- have been on school and university courses for a long time
- are found in the classics sections of libraries and bookshops
- are in a series labelled as classics (for example, Penguin Classics)
- have study guides written about them
- have introductions at the beginning
- have pages of notes at the end explaining the meaning of words that we no longer use and explaining references to events, places and people with which we may no longer be familiar
- have critical and academic books written about them
- are discussed on arts shows
- are compared to new literature
- were written a long time ago and are now being made into mini-series, films, graphic novels, digital versions, etc.
- are mentioned or referred to in TV shows, films, songs and other media
- have been abridged and/or turned into versions for children
- are answers to quiz show questions
- are parodied
- are appropriated into new and modern texts.



### Activity 1.11 Conduct a vox pop

Many people know texts that are on the canon without actually knowing anything about the canon itself. This is mainly because most people came across some of the texts at school and did not realise that they belonged to a group of texts.

- 1 Interview a number of people of different ages and, if possible, of different cultural backgrounds about the literature they studied at school. You could start with people who work at your school: teachers, librarians, tuck-shop or canteen staff, office staff, etc. and then ask members of your family.
- 2 Collate the responses as a written survey, a series of film interviews or another form of your choice.
- 3 Whichever way you choose to present, you will need to sum up your findings by answering the following questions:
  - a What texts, if any, are in common?
  - b Do the texts studied depend on when and where you went to school?
  - c Has Shakespeare been studied by many people?
  - d What do the various responses tell you about the study of literature across times and cultures?

## Summing up

Hopefully you now have a more developed idea of what the canon is, what's on it and why it's significant. Consolidate what you know with the following activity.

### Activity 1.12

In groups, create an informative presentation on 'the canon' for another class. You might like to consider one of the following as a means of presentation:

- PowerPoint
- web page
- brochure or information leaflet
- film or video clip
- speech
- interactive poster (such as Glogster)
- a rap
- combination of any of these.

# Words, words, words

*abridged, anagram, anthology, antonym, apocryphal, appropriation, authentic, canonical, criteria, criterion, parody*

**antonym** opposite

- 1 What is the difference between criterion and criteria?
- 2 Which word from the list is an **antonym** of authentic?
- 3 Create concept cards for:
  - a appropriation
  - b parody.

Use the following diagram to help you create the concept card.

My definition:	Characteristics:
<b>Appropriation</b>	
Examples:	Graphic:

- 4 Provide a synonym for abridged.
- 5 What are the origins of the word anthology?
- 6 Write an anagram of your name.
- 7 Name one canonical text.

## Read and view more

- *Planet Word* by Stephen Fry (television series and book)
- *The Story of English* by Robert McCrum, Robert MacNeil and William Cran
- *English Literature: A Very Short Introduction* by Jonathan Bate
- *Kate's Klassics* by Kate Camp
- *The Pocket Guide to Classic Books* by Maureen Hughes

- *Literary Trivia* by Aubrey Malone
- *Doing English: A Guide for Literature Students* by Robert Eaglestone
- *The Western Canon* by Harold Bloom

## Final words

- Write three things that you now know about the canon.
- Write two things that you now understand about the canon.
- Write one question that you still have about the canon.

## Solutions to Activity 1.7

- 1 William McGonagall, 'The Tay Bridge Disaster' (1879) – bad poetry
- 2 Emily Brontë, 'High waving heather' (1836) – good poetry
- 3 W.B. Yeats, 'He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven' (1899) – good poetry
- 4 Margaret Cavendish, 'What is Liquid?' (1653) – controversial
- 5 Lord Alfred Tennyson, 'The Eagle' (1851) – good poetry
- 6 Theophilus Marzials, 'A Tragedy' (1874) – bad poetry

## Solutions for Activity 1.8

- 1 Bulwer-Lytton Overall Winner 2011, Sue Frondie
  - 2 Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*
  - 3 Jane Austen, *Emma*
  - 4 Bulwer-Lytton Miscellaneous Dishonorable Mention 2011, Betty Jean Murray
  - 5 Bulwer-Lytton Winner of Purple Prose 2011, Mike Pedersen
  - 6 Henry James, *The Portrait of a Lady*
  - 7 Bulwer-Lytton Winner Crime, Mark Wisnewski 2011
  - 8 Raymond Chandler, *The Big Sleep*
  - 9 H.G. Wells, *The War of the Worlds*
- \* (All Bulwer-Lytton winners can be viewed online at the Bulwer-Lytton Fiction Contest website)



# 2

# Journeys

## RELOADED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Paired texts: extracts from *The Odyssey*
- The pilgrimage
- Journeys out to sea
- Journeys through life
- Focus on: the Gothic – journeys of the mind
- Your writing
- Extension: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde
- Words, words, words
- Read and view more
- Final words

A journey is not a walk to the local shops, bus ride to school or plane trip to your holiday spot. Why not? Each of these involves movement from one place to another and some sort of means to achieve this. Each, like a journey, has a purpose and a destination. But a journey offers much more than a place to go and a way of getting there. A journey offers adventure, danger, challenge, wonder and discovery, all of which make actual travel experiences more important than the destination. These experiences shape us through the knowledge we acquire of the world around us and the insights we gain about ourselves. We are shaped by them and grow from them. Most importantly they give us stories around which to weave the narrative of our lives.



The word 'journey' came to us in the thirteenth century from the Old French word 'journée', meaning 'a day's work or travel': 'jur' from 'day', which came from 'diurnus' in Latin, meaning 'of one day'.

Around 1300, a journey meant 'the act of travel by land or sea' as well as 'distance travelled in one day'. The distances that could be travelled in a day in medieval times would not be great but the length of the journey is measured in time, rather than in distance.





A journey is measured by time,  
not distance

The journeys we will read about all take much longer than a day. They contain voyages to exotic lands, tales of strange inhabitants and perilous adventures. Some stories draw from real journeys that writers would have read or heard about – from explorers’ tales, records of expeditions and travel writing – while others are products of fertile imaginations flowing from the quills and pens of brilliant minds. Anyone can record their travel experiences (social networking sites and travel blogs are proof of this) but not everyone can record them in a way that makes a cultural impact. The canonical texts on journeys are valued for the beauty of their writing and their lasting impact.

The earliest written text about a journey is Homer’s *Odyssey* from the eighth century BC. This **epic** poem tells of the adventures of Greek warrior Odysseus as he travels home by sea from the Trojan Wars. Tales of exotic lands and powerful gods are told in captivating language – originally in ancient Greek, then by translators ever since. The word ‘odyssey’ has even entered the language to mean ‘a series of wanderings, a long adventurous journey’.

Since Homer, great writers have taken readers on wonderful journeys: physical, spiritual and imaginative. We love reading about journeys because *life* is a journey – from birth to death. As English poet John Dryden (1631–1700) wrote: ‘Like pilgrims to th’ appointed place we tend; The world’s an inn, and death the journey’s end’.

**epic** a long poem  
or narrative relating  
heroic deeds

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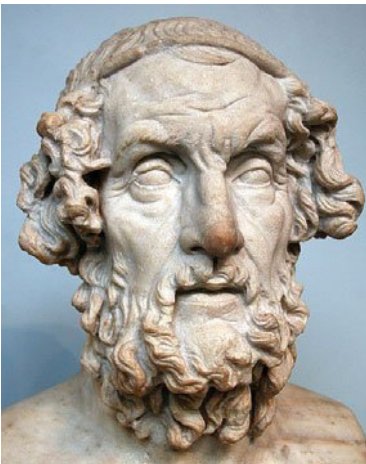
In this chapter, we will look at some of the canonical writing about journeys. Here are the texts and extracts that you will read, in chronological order of publication:

- 700s** *The Odyssey* by Homer (translated by Robert Fagles [1996])
- 1478** *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer
- 1791** *The Romance of the Forest* by Ann Radcliffe
- 1798** 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge
- 1839** 'The Fall of the House of Usher' by Edgar Allan Poe
- 1861** *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens
- 1884** *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain
- 1891** *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde

### Activity 2.1 Your thoughts

- 1 In three minutes, write as many words and phrases associated with journeys that you can think of. In a small group, compare and add to your lists.
- 2 In pairs, use layout and design features to create a poster from these words that promotes journeys.
- 3 Describe a journey (real or imagined) that you would like to undertake.

## Paired texts: extracts from *The Odyssey*



Bust of Homer from the British Museum

Homer's two epic narrative poems, *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* are considered the very foundation of the Western canon and the beginning of written storytelling. *The Iliad* tells the battle tales of heroes and warriors in the 10th year of the Trojan Wars. *The Odyssey* relates the adventures of one of these warriors, Odysseus, as he journeys home from Troy to his wife Penelope and his son Telemachus. He is constantly thwarted by the gods who present him with life-threatening dangers: angry seas whipped up by Poseidon, wild winds that tear at the timbers of his ship, luring sirens with entrancing songs, ferocious monsters with hideous heads, treacherous whirlpools and more! After a 10-year journey of bravely facing all the perils the gods throw at him, Odysseus finally reaches his native shores of Ithaca.

These poems are considered the starting point of the literary canon because they are the earliest stories recorded using an alphabetic system of writing that arrived in Greece around the eighth century BC. Enterprising merchants brought papyrus scrolls back from Egypt and so there was also material on which to write.

The language of the tales is Ionic, a form of ancient Greek, and, except for a very few scholars, we must read Homer's tales in translation. The Romans produced a Latin version in the third century BC and it became a compulsory school text (much like Shakespeare is for us). As the centuries rolled by, the poems were translated for each era's readers, up to the modern day.

Before writing and reading became commonplace, the tales were told orally and passed down from generation to generation, or sung by bards who travelled from town to town to earn their keep through their performances. The advantages of the written text were many. Readers no longer needed to be in the presence of the storyteller or rely on the memory of the bards, and a narrative coherence could be developed through greater consistency of plot and style. Language had to be used to create the excitement and drama that a storyteller could convey through voice and gesture. The Greeks became masters of the figurative language that brings *Odysseus'* journey to life.

And what of Homer? The legend is that he sailed the vast seas, told stories of his experiences, became blind and travelled ancient Greece as a bard above all others in skill. He may have been a man who, in the eighth century BC, collected the tales and wrote first *The Iliad* and then *The Odyssey* for posterity. We don't know. In fact,



The Parthenon, an enduring symbol of the creativity and sophistication of the ancient Greeks

we do not even know if he existed at all. Some scholars believe that Homer is a term or symbol for the art of the ancient bards. Some believe there was a group of authors who became known to us as 'Homer'. Whoever or whatever Homer was, we can be thankful that we have these wild and wonderful tales that have come to represent the metaphorical journey of life and all human struggle.

In the following extract, Odysseus tells the story of having landed with his crew on the island of Cyclops, where a race of one-eyed giants, including Poseidon's son, Polyphemus, live. Ignoring his duties of hospitality, Polyphemus traps the men in his cave by pushing an enormous boulder across its entrance and proceeds to eat the crew one by one. Odysseus comes up with a plan to lull the giant into a drunken sleep and then blind him with a burning stake.

### Extract 1: the Cyclops from Homer's *The Odyssey* – Book 9 (c. 700s)

#### 'In the One-Eyed Giant's Cave'

(lines 420–447)

Now, at last, I thrust our stake in a bed of embers  
to get it red-hot and rallied all my comrades:  
'Courage – no panic, no one hang back now!  
And green as it was, just as the olive stake  
was about to catch fire – the glow terrific, yes –  
I dragged it from the flames, my men clustering round  
as some god breathed enormous courage through us all.  
Hoisting high that olive stake with its stabbing point,  
straight into the monster's eye they rammed it hard –  
I drove my weight on it from above and bored it home  
as a shipwright bores his beam with a shipwright's drill  
that men below, whipping the strap back and forth, whirl  
and the drill keeps twisting faster, never stopping –  
So we seized our stake with its fiery tip  
and bored it round and round in the giant's eye  
till blood came boiling up around that smoking shaft  
and the hot blast singed his brow and eyelids round the core  
and the broiling eyeball burst –  
  its crackling roots blazed  
and hissed –  
  as a blacksmith plunges a glowing ax or adze  
in an ice-cold bath and the metal screeches steam

and its temper hardens – that’s the iron’s strength –  
so the eye of the Cyclops sizzled round that stake!  
He loosed a hideous roar, the rock walls echoed round  
and we scuttled back in terror. The monster wrenched the spike  
from his eye and out it came with a red geyser of blood –  
he flung it aside with frantic hands, and mad with pain  
he bellowed out for help from his neighbour Cyclops  
living round about in caves on windswept crags.

Robert Fagles (translator) of Homer’s *The Odyssey*, Penguin Books, London, 1996, pp. 223–4.

In Extract 2, the god of the sea, Poseidon, takes revenge on Odysseus for blinding his son.



Poseidon, the god of the sea, in a statue from the second century BC (National Archaeological Museum of Athens)

Extract 2: Poseidon's wrath from *The Odyssey* – Book 5  
(c. 700s)

'Odysseus – Nymph and Shipwreck'

(lines 346–65)

At that a massive wave came crashing down on his head,  
a terrific onslaught spinning his craft round and round –  
he was thrown clear of the decks –

the steering-oar wrenched  
from his grasp –

and in one lightning attack the brawling  
galewinds struck full force, snapping the mast mid-shaft  
and hurling the sail and sailyard far across the sea.  
He went under a good long while, no fast way out,  
no struggling up from under the giant wave's assault,  
his clothing dragged him down – the divine **Calypto's** gifts –

but at last he fought his way to the surface spewing  
bitter brine, streams of it pouring down his head.  
But half-drowned as he was, he'd not forgot his craft –  
he lunged after her through the breakers, laying hold  
and huddling amidships, fled the stroke of death.

**Pell-mell** the rollers tossed her along down-current,  
wild as the North Wind, tossing thistle along the fields  
at high harvest – dry stalks clutching each other tightly –  
so the galewinds tumbled her down the sea, this way, that way,  
now the South Wind flinging her over to North to sport with,  
now the East Wind giving her up to West to harry on and on.

(lines 402–07)

But just as great Odysseus thrashed things out,  
Poseidon god of the earthquake launched a colossal wave,  
terrible, murderous, arching over him, pounding down on him,  
hard as a windstorm blasting piles of dry parched chaff,  
scattering flying husks – so the long planks of his boat  
were scattered far and wide.

**Calypto** the goddess  
who gave Odysseus  
a gift of clothes  
when she finally  
allowed him to leave  
her island after  
seven years

**pell-mell** recklessly  
or wildly

## Activity 2.2 Extract 1: the Cyclops

- 1 Write the verbs that show us the effort Odysseus and his men put into blinding the Cyclops.
- 2 Explain how the use of **onomatopoeia** adds to the story.
- 3 Explain the effect of one of the similes in the poem.
- 4 What sound device is used in 'the broiling eyeball burst'?
- 5 What words or phrases communicate the Cyclops' pain?
- 6 Why is the first person voice effective here?

**onomatopoeia**  
a word that sounds  
like the object it  
describes

## Activity 2.3 Extract 2: Poseidon's wrath

- 1 In what narrative voice is this story told?
- 2 How do adjectives and verbs communicate the ferocity of Poseidon's wrath?
- 3 Comment on the similes in lines 360–62 'the rollers tossed her along down-current, wild as the North Wind, tossing thistle along the fields at high harvest' and lines 404–05 'pounding down on him, hard as a windstorm blasting piles of dry parched chaff'.
- 4 Give examples of other literary devices that are used in this extract and explain their effect.
- 5 How and why have dashes been used in both extracts?

## Activity 2.4

- 1 Imagine you are a bard in ancient Greece. Perform each of these extracts with the purpose of impressing your listeners into offering you shelter and food.
- 2 Describe your experience, real or imagined, of the sea – surfing the perfect wave, being tossed about in a storm, floating about in a calm sea, etc. Use verbs, adjectives, similes, **alliteration** and onomatopoeia to create your description. Read your description aloud.

**alliteration**  
the repetition  
of consonants to  
create a harsh or soft  
sound effect

## *Did you know?*

James Joyce's novel *Ulysses* transforms the 10-year journey of the warrior Odysseus (Ulysses is the Latin translation of this name) into a one-day journey of Leopold Bloom through Dublin on 16 June 1904. Joyce parallels the adventures of Bloom with those of Odysseus. (You can read more about Joyce's *Ulysses* in Chapter 6.)

### Activity 2.5 Visual texts

- 1 Watch YouTube clips of the Cyclops episode from the film *The Odyssey* directed by Andrei Konchalovsky (1997) (you can find links at [www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks](http://www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks)). How have film techniques been used to create these scenes?
- 2 Look up images of the Cyclops and Poseidon on the internet or in books on mythology. Which images do you think offer the most effective representations and why?
- 3 Create your own storyboard of one of the extracts.





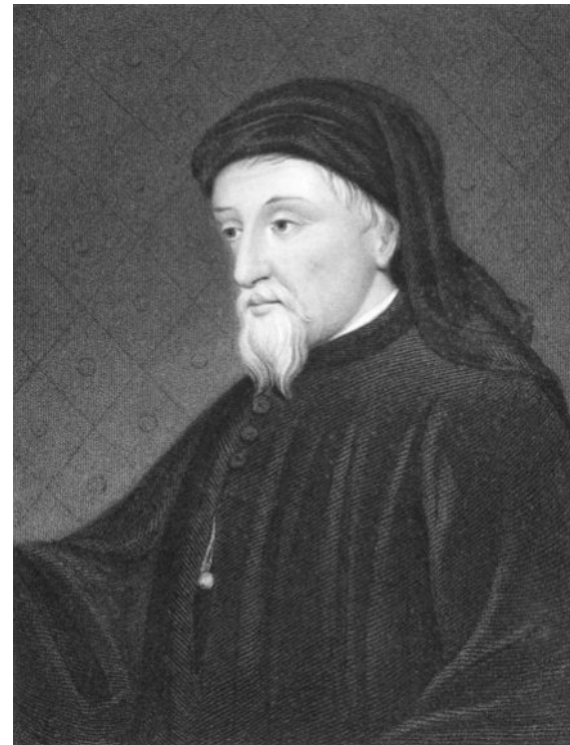
If you are interested in reading more stories from *The Odyssey*, the prose version by Rosemary Sutcliffe (illustrated by Alan Lee) and the graphic novel by Gareth Hinds are great places to start!

## The pilgrimage

### 'General Prologue' to *Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer

Geoffrey Chaucer (c. 1343–1400) was born into a London bustling with trade and commerce. His father was a wealthy wine merchant and he himself became involved in the commercial life of the city. He travelled to France and Italy on royal business, serving two kings: Edward III and Richard II. He became Comptroller of Customs in 1374, was elected to parliament in 1386, became a Justice of the Peace in 1385 and was made Clerk of the King's Works in 1389 (which meant he oversaw royal building projects). He fought in the Hundred Years War between England and France, went on several diplomatic missions, escaped death by plague, married, had three – maybe four – children, and wrote extensively throughout his life. All in all, he was a pretty busy man who led a full and happy life.

Chaucer began the *Canterbury Tales* in 1387. It is a collection of stories told by a group of about 30 people who travel as pilgrims to Canterbury in England. Each comes from a different walk of life (no pun intended) and the group includes a knight, miller, cook, merchant, friar, physician and a woman who had been married five times (the Wife of Bath). There is a host who acts like an organiser and he suggests they have a story-telling competition to pass the time while they are on the road. Each pilgrim tells two tales on the way to Canterbury and two tales on the return trip to London. Chaucer was able to vary the subject matter, theme and language to suit each pilgrim. The stories are linked by sections in which the pilgrims react to each tale and talk among themselves. A masterpiece!



Geoffrey Chaucer

## Activity 2.6

- 1 Conduct some research into Chaucer's era and life.
- 2 Display or present your findings in a medium of your choice (for example, an interactive poster, a PowerPoint presentation, a pamphlet, a Photo Story, an interview, etc.).



Life in the Middle Ages

### *The language of the tales: Middle English*

Perhaps the greatest significance of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* is that it was written in English at a time when Latin and French were the languages of literature and law. Chaucer's choice to write in English allowed him to record, for one of the first times, the colloquial speech of the day – a London dialect of Middle English. You have to remember that English was, and still is, an evolving language. Middle English, which looks odd but sounds familiar, had grown from around the eleventh century out of Old English, which is much less recognisable to us today. Middle English eventually developed into what we call Modern English around 1470.

There was no standardised way of writing Middle English. Spelling, punctuation and even grammatical rules were flexible and varied. The standardisation of the English language came about gradually with the invention of the printing press, the first dictionaries, early grammar texts and the expansion of the use of the language with the spread of the British Empire. Several handwritten manuscripts of the *Canterbury Tales* survive but it's likely that most people heard them read aloud. After Chaucer's death, William Caxton printed the tales in 1478 and again in 1483. There are a number of differences between the two versions but the ability to print meant that we moved closer to a standard version of English.

## Activity 2.7

Middle English might look very odd to us but, in fact, many of the words are recognisable – particularly when you read them aloud. The most interesting point about the pronunciation of Middle English is that consonants were nearly always pronounced. Here are some examples:

- 'L' was pronounced in words like 'folk', 'half', 'palm'.
- 'Ch' was always pronounced as in 'church' (not as in 'machine').
- 'K' was pronounced in words such as in 'knight'.
- 'Gh' was pronounced softly like 'ish' before vowels and harshly like 'k' after vowels. That means the word 'knight' sounded very different than it does today.
- 'E' was pronounced even when it came at the end of a word (e.g. 'came').
- 'Y' was usually pronounced like a short 'i'

- 1 Read these Middle English words aloud and write their Modern English equivalents: yong, seyde, storie, swoor, trewely, devel, wyf.
- 2 Try saying these words aloud with Middle English pronunciation: knight, telle, trewely, wyf, fynde, half.

Extract: from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*  
(from 'The Prologue') (1478)

Here bygonneth the book of the Tales of Caunterbury

Whan that Aprill with his shoures soote  
The droghte of March hath perced to the roote,  
And bathed every veyne in swich licour  
Of which vertu engendred is the flour;  
Whan Zephirus eek with his sweete breeth  
Inspired hath in every holt and heath  
The tender croppes, and the yonge sonne  
Hath in the Ram his halve cours yronne  
And smale foweles maken melodye,  
That slepen al the nyght with open ye  
(So priketh hem naturein hir corages);  
Thanne longen folk to goon on pilgrimages,  
And palmeres for to seken straunge strondes  
To fern halwes, kowthe in sondry londes;  
And specially from every shires ende

(continues)

(continued)

Of Engelond to Caunterbury they wende,  
The hooly blisful martir for to seke,  
That hem hath holpen whan that they were seeke.  
Bifil that in that seson on a day,  
In Southwerk at the Tabard as I lay  
Redy to wended on my pilgrimage  
To Caunterbury with ful devout corage,  
At nyght was come into that hostelrye  
Wel nyne and twenty in a compaignye,  
Of sondry folk, by aventure yfalle  
In felawshipe, and pilgrims were they alle,  
That toward Caunterbury wolden ryde.  
The chambres and the stables weren wyde,  
And wel we weren esed atte beste.  
And shortly, whan he sonne was to reste,  
So hadde I spoken with hem everichon  
That I was of hir felawshipe anon,  
And made forward erly for to ryse,  
To take oure wey ther as I yow devyse.  
But nathelees, whil I have tyme and space,  
Er that I ferther in this tale pace,  
Me thynketh it acordaunt to resoun  
To telle yow al the condicioun  
Of ech of hem, so as it semed me,  
And whiche they weren, and of what degree,  
And eek in what array that they were inne;  
And at a knight than wol I first bigynne.



## Activity 2.8

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- 1 Listen to the Middle English version of the prologue being read aloud (the link can be found at [www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks](http://www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks)). There's also an excellent Middle English rap version!
  - 2 In small groups, read the extract aloud slowly. Break it down into its rhyming couplets and decode it into modern English. You will be surprised how much of it you can work out! For the sections that are difficult you can ask your teacher for help or use a Middle English glossary (there are lots of these available on the internet). Check your translation against a modern version.
  - 3 At what time of year are the pilgrims setting out and what is the weather like?
  - 4 When does the host propose they begin their journey?
  - 5 What does the host say about the pilgrims and who is he going to tell us about first?
- 

## Journeys out to sea

### 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' by Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) was a poet of the Romantic Era, which is characterised by its veneration of nature, respect for the imaginative and emotional sides of humanity and an interest in the supernatural. He lived in a time of exploration and would have read the accounts of voyages by noted mariners of the day such as James Cook, Thomas James and George Shelvocke.

'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798) was influenced by Romantic thought and interests, and possibly inspired by the books available on travel and exploration. It tells the story of a mariner whose ship is caught in a storm near the South Pole and then entrapped by ice. An albatross flies through the fog and the crew are delighted. The ice eventually breaks and the albatross travels along with the ship but, for some inexplicable reason, the mariner shoots it dead. This brings a curse to the ship, which is sent north to lie on a rotting sea under a burning sun. It's a long tale and you will need to read it yourself to find out how the mariner finally returns to shore.

The following **stanzas** describe the storm that sends the ship towards the South Pole where it is trapped by ice.

**stanza** grouped lines in a poem, also called a verse

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Extract 1: from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798)

*And now the storm-blast came, and he  
Was tyrannous and strong:  
He struck with his o'ertaking wings,  
And chased us south along.*

*With sloping masts and dipping prow,  
As who pursued with yell and blow  
Still treads the shadow of his foe  
And forward bends his head,  
The ship drove fast, loud roared the blast,  
And southward aye we fled.*

*And now there came both mist and snow,  
And it grew wondrous cold:  
And ice, mast-high, came floating by,  
As green as emerald.*

*And through the drifts the snowy cliffs  
Did send a dismal sheen:  
Nor shapes of men nor beasts we ken –  
The ice was all between.*

*The ice was here, the ice was there,  
The ice was all around:  
It cracked and growled, and roared and howled,  
Like noises in a **swound!***

*At length did cross an Albatross:  
Through the fog it came;  
As if it had been a Christian soul,  
We hailed it in God's name.*

**swound** to swoon  
or faint

## Activity 2.9

- 1 How is the storm personified and what effect does this have?
- 2 How do we know the ship struggled through the storm?
- 3 How does Coleridge create an eerie scene?
- 4 What is the effect of repetition and onomatopoeia in these stanzas?
- 5 Why do you think the sailors are so happy to see the albatross?

Identify examples of the following literary devices in these extracts from 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner':

- Anaphora: the repetition of a word or expression at the beginning of stanzas, clauses or sentences.
- Polysyndeton: the use of many conjunctions in a sentence to create emphasis, pace and/or rhythm.

After the mariner has shot the albatross and the fog lifts, the ship sails to the north. But the fair wind suddenly drops and the mariner and the crew find themselves stuck in a hellish spot.

## Extract 2: from 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'

*Down dropt the breeze, the sails dropt down,  
'Twas sad as sad could be:  
And we did speak only to break  
The silence of the sea.*

*All in a hot and copper sky,  
The bloody Sun, at noon,  
Right up above the mast did stand,  
No bigger than the Moon.*

*Day after day, day after day,  
We stuck, nor breath nor motion;  
As idle as a painted ship  
Upon a painted ocean.*

*Water, water, every where,  
And all the boards did shrink;  
Water, water, every where,  
Nor any drop to drink.*

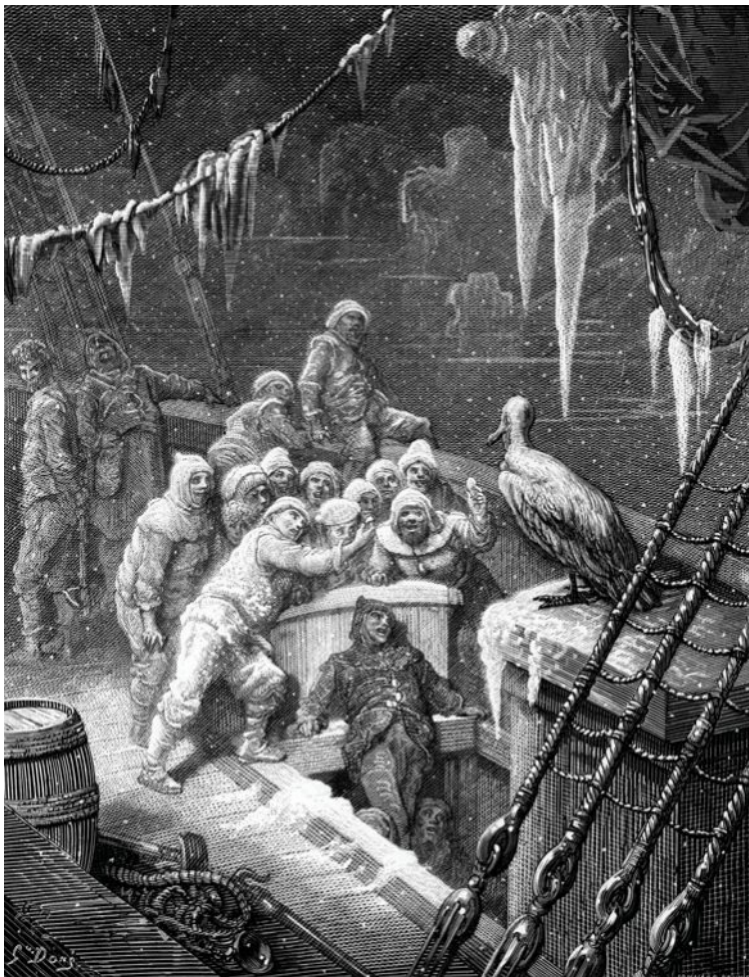
*The very deep did rot: O Christ!  
That ever this should be!  
Yea, slimy things did crawl with legs  
Upon the slimy sea.*

*About, about, in reel and rout  
The death-fires danced at night;  
The water, like a witch's oils,  
Burnt green, and blue, and white.*



## Activity 2.10

- 1 How has Coleridge created a stark contrast to the crew's experiences near the South Pole?
- 2 Which poetic techniques that are found in the first extract are also used here?
- 3 Which extract do you prefer and why?
- 4 In 1876 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' was published with illustrations by Gustave Dore. Explore these images (either on the internet or in books from your library) and compare them with your own images (created or imagined) of the scenes.
- 5 Imagine you are one of the sailors on board the ship. Write a diary entry about the experiences described in these extracts.

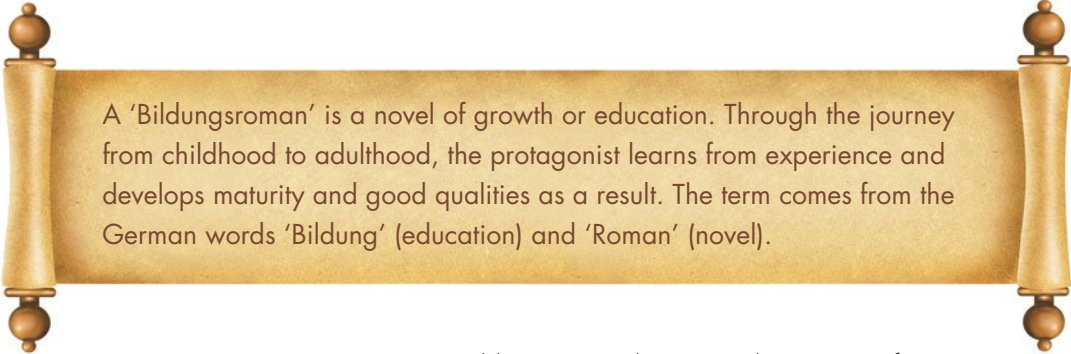


'The Albatross', illustration by Gustave Dore, for the 1876 edition of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner'

# Journeys through life

## *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens

You will find references to the Victorian writer Charles Dickens (1812–1870) in most books about the literary canon. He is one of the big guns who fired out 15 major novels, over 20 Christmas stories and several works of non-fiction. Many of his novels came out in serial form (like modern soap operas) and are full of colourful characters, twisting plots and graphically detailed scenes of life in Victorian England.



A 'Bildungsroman' is a novel of growth or education. Through the journey from childhood to adulthood, the protagonist learns from experience and develops maturity and good qualities as a result. The term comes from the German words 'Bildung' (education) and 'Roman' (novel).

*Great Expectations* (1861) is a Bildungsroman that traces the journey of a young orphan, Pip, who is raised by his mean and brutal sister, Mrs Gargery, and her kind, compassionate husband, Joe the blacksmith. Pip is given the means to become a gentleman and therefore 'better' himself in society. In the process, he forgets what is truly valuable in life. His experiences finally shape him into a *true* gentleman – not one of status and fortune but one of honesty and morals. Much of this maturity comes from his reflections on his relationship with Joe. The novel is narrated by the mature Pip, who harshly judges his past actions in the light of the knowledge he has gained. It is a complex tale full of twists and turns, wild coincidences, suspense and humour – a *must read* for those exploring the canon.

In the following extract, Joe visits Pip in London. It is an uncomfortable reunion between the good-hearted rural blacksmith, Joe, and the increasingly snobbish city-slicker, Pip. The mature narrator is able to reflect on his behaviour.



## Extract 1: from Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861)

Let me confess exactly, with what feelings I looked forward to Joe's coming.

Not with pleasure, though I was bound to him by so many ties; no; with considerable disturbance, some mortification, and a keen sense of incongruity. If I could have kept him away by paying money, I certainly would have paid money ... As the time approached I should have liked to run away, but ... presently I heard Joe on the staircase. I knew it was Joe, by his clumsy manner of coming up-stairs – his state boots being always too big for him – and by the time it took him to read the names on the other floors in the course of his ascent. When at last he stopped outside the door, I could hear his finger tracing over the painted letters of my name, and I afterwards distinctly heard his breathing in at the keyhole ... I thought he would never have done wiping his feet, and that I must have gone out to lift him off the mat, but at last he came in.

'Joe, how are you, Joe?'

'Pip, how AIR you, Pip?'

... Then he fell into such unaccountable fits of meditation, with his fork midway between his plate and his mouth; had his eyes attracted in such strange directions; was afflicted with such remarkable coughs, sat so far from the table, and dropped so much more than he ate, and pretended that he hadn't dropped it; that I was heartily glad when Herbert left us for the City.

I had neither the good sense nor the good feeling to know that this was all my fault, and that if I had been easier with Joe, Joe would have been easier with me. I felt impatient of him and out of my temper with him; in which condition he heaped coals of fire on my head.

### Activity 2.11

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- 1 What is it about Joe that embarrasses Pip?
  - 2 What is the effect of the dialogue here?
  - 3 How do we know that Joe is uncomfortable?
  - 4 What do you think the narrator means by 'he heaped coals of fire on my head'?
-

'Dialect' is speech particular to a group of people or a region. In this extract, Dickens has used dialect to capture the way Joe, a blacksmith from rural Kent, would speak.



Dickens' Dream, 1875, Robert William Buss

Time passes. Pip falls ill with a fever and, on recovery, realises that Joe has been nursing him slowly back to health. Joe's kind and honest words show Pip the true value of friendship.

### Extract 2: from *Great Expectations*

I opened my eyes in the night, and I saw in the great chair at the bedside, Joe. I opened my eyes in the day, and, sitting on the window-seat, smoking his pipe in the shaded open window, still I saw Joe. I asked for cooling drink and the dear hand that gave it me was Joe's. I sank back on my pillow after drinking, and the face that looked so hopefully and tenderly upon me was the face of Joe.

At last, one day, I took courage, and said, 'Is it Joe?'

And the dear old home-voice answered, 'Which it air, old chap.'

'O Joe, you break my heart! Look angry at me, Joe. Strike me, Joe. Tell me of my ingratitude. Don't be so good to me!'

For, Joe had actually laid his head down on the pillow at my side and put his arm round me neck, in his joy that I knew him.

'Which dear old Pip, old chap,' said Joe, 'you and me was ever friends. And when you're well enough to go out for a ride – what larks!'

After which Joe withdrew to the window, and stood with his back towards me, wiping his eyes. And as my extreme weakness prevented me from getting up and going to him, I lay there, penitently whispering, 'O God bless him! O God bless this gentle Christian man!'

## Activity 2.12

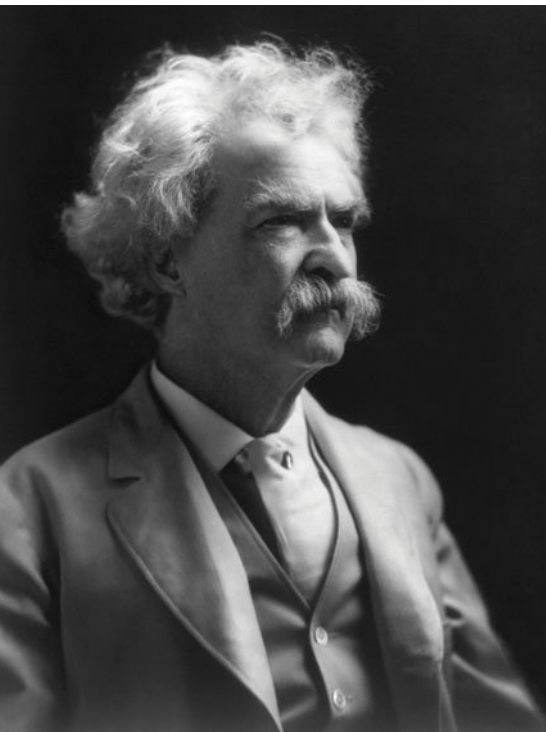
- 1 How would you describe Joe's character? Use quotations in your answer.
- 2 How has Pip developed from Extract 1 to Extract 2? Use quotations in your answer.
- 3 Explain how two experiences in your life so far have helped you grow and develop as a person.

A 'parody' is a humorous imitation of a work, style or genre designed to entertain audiences or mock the original work. You can watch a parody of *Great Expectations* in the South Park episode 'Pip' (the 14th episode of the fourth series) on DVD.



'Picaresque' is a term used to describe episodic novels. The protagonist is a likeable rogue who has a series of adventures that are usually told as a journey. Unlike in the Bildungsroman, the picaresque character rarely learns or matures as a result of his or her experiences. The plots are usually simple, with abrupt endings that allow for sequels. The term comes from the Spanish word 'pizaro' meaning 'rogue'.

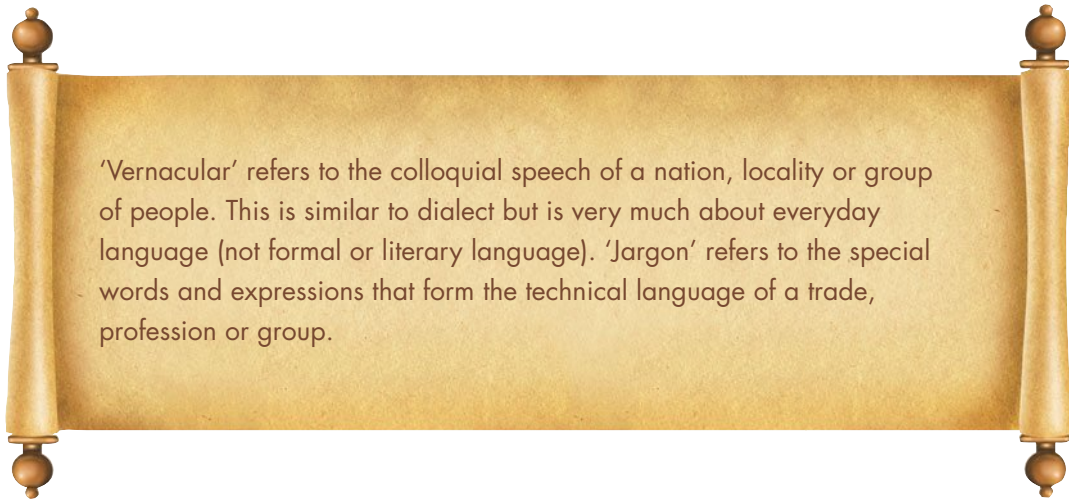
## *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* by Mark Twain



Mark Twain in his  
later years

Humourist, satirist, journalist and novelist Mark Twain (1835–1910) was born Samuel Langhorne Clemens in the American state of Missouri. At the age of 11 his father died, which ended his school education but began his education in life. After a number of jobs, including writing articles for newspapers in New York, he embarked on a career as a riverboat pilot. 'Mark Twain' are the words that the leadsman on a boat would call out (or sing) to signal that the boat was in two fathoms of deep water and therefore safe. Piloting a riverboat could be dangerous work as river waters and currents shifted and swirled. The Civil War put a stop to the boats for a time. Clemens joined up on the Confederate side but then left to try his hand at silver mining. We can consider ourselves lucky that he didn't find his fortune there, as he went on to become a successful writer, now known as 'the father of American literature'.

*The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884) is Twain's most famous novel. It tells of the adventures of a young boy, Huck Finn, who travels down the Mississippi on a raft with a runaway slave, Jim. Twain's father and uncles had owned slaves and, as a child, he had spent time playing in slave quarters and listening to their songs and stories. He captures the dialect of Jim and the vernacular of the South in this novel, and has been lauded for creating an American literature that is *heard* as well as *read*. Huck and Jim meet many colourful characters on their journey, with whom they have all sorts of adventures. Huck himself is a picaresque hero – a loveable rogue and



'Vernacular' refers to the colloquial speech of a nation, locality or group of people. This is similar to dialect but is very much about everyday language (not formal or literary language). 'Jargon' refers to the special words and expressions that form the technical language of a trade, profession or group.

innocent narrator. He doesn't learn or mature much along the way but readers do. We are treated to a moral commentary and witty satire on the American South in the late nineteenth century.

### Extract: from Mark Twain's *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884)

The fifth night below St Louis we had a big storm after midnight, with a power of thunder and lighting, and the rain poured down in a solid sheet. We stayed in the **wigwam** and let the raft take care of itself. When the lightning glared out we could see a big straight river ahead, and high rocky **buffs** on both sides. By-and-by says I, 'Hel-lo, Jim, looky yonder!' It was a steamboat that had killed herself on a rock. We was drifting straight down on her. The lightning showed her very distinct. She was leaning over, with part of her upper deck above water, and you could see every little **chimbly-guy** clean and clear, and a chair by the big bell, with an old slouch hat hanging on the back of it when the flashes come.

Well, it being away in the night, and stormy, and all so mysterious-like, I felt just the way any other boy would a felt when I see that wreck laying there so mournful and lonesome in the middle of the river. I wanted to get aboard of her and slink around a little, and see what there was there. So I says:

'Le's land on her, Jim,'

But Jim was dead against it, at first. He says:

'I doan' want to go fool'n 'long er no wrack. We's doing' blame'

(continues)

**wigwam** a tent

**buffs** a high, steep bank

**chimbly-guy** the wires that brace chimneys

(continued)

well, en we better let blame' well alone, as de good book says. Like as not dey's a watchman on dat wrack.'

'Watchman your grandmother,' I says: 'there ain't nothing to watch but the **texas** and the pilot-house; and do you reckon anybody's going to resk his life for a texas and a pilot-house such a night as this, when it's like to break up and wash off down the river any minute?' Jim couldn't say nothing to that, so he didn't try.

**texas** the part of the riverboat that contains the pilothouse



Modern-day riverboat paddle wheel, Mississippi River

### Activity 2.13

- 1 In your own words, explain what is happening in the above extract.
- 2 How is personification used to describe the wrecked steamboat?
- 3 What riverboat jargon is used here?
- 4 Read the passage aloud so you can hear the way Huck and Jim speak. Write examples of Huck's vernacular and Jim's dialect.
- 5 What do we learn about each character here?

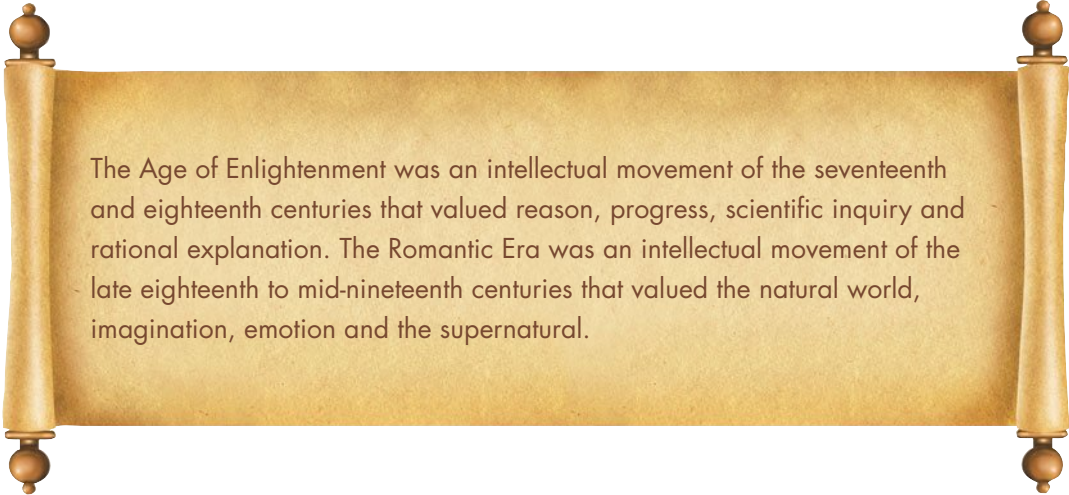


## *Did you know?*

Twain warned: 'Be careful about reading health books. You may die of a misprint.'

### Activity 2.14

- 1 Make a timeline of the significant historic events that have occurred in your lifetime. Add the significant events that have occurred in your personal life.
- 2 When you think back over your life so far, do you feel your life story is more like a Bildungsroman or a picaresque novel? Give reasons for your answer.



The Age of Enlightenment was an intellectual movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that valued reason, progress, scientific inquiry and rational explanation. The Romantic Era was an intellectual movement of the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries that valued the natural world, imagination, emotion and the supernatural.

## Focus on: the Gothic – journeys of the mind

Clouds drift across the moon, the wind tears at the trees, lightning cuts jagged streaks across a midnight sky, some unidentified creature howls in the distance and a rusty gate creaks open onto an overgrown path that leads to a ruined castle. You have entered the Gothic novel: a world of sinister secrets, twisting plots, brooding villains, supernatural creatures and spine-chilling terrors.



The Gothic genre took off in the late eighteenth century when imaginative, Romantic ways of thinking were challenging rational, Enlightenment ways of thinking. Gothic stories explore the darker territories of our minds: the sinister side of humanity, the nature of evil and the supernatural. They are set in remote, isolated places of wild but picturesque beauty – deep in the forest or on the precipice of a mountain cliff. The style of the Gothic novel is melodramatic and the structure is often complex. Stories may be told through more than one perspective and letters, diaries, legal documents and confessions often help form the narrative. The tales were wildly popular in their day and, although the fashion waned, there were revivals in the Victorian period, the early twentieth century and, indeed, in modern times.

The stories allow a ‘dark age of the mind’ – a space in which to explore evil, experience the thrill of terror and witness – from a distance – violence, cruelty and twisted passions. Then, safely, we can turn the last page, close the covers of the book and leave the horrors behind.

Some noteworthy Gothic novels include:

- *The Castle of Otranto* (1765) by Horace Walpole
- *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) by Ann Radcliffe
- *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) by Ann Radcliffe
- *The Monk* (1796) by M.G. Lewis
- *The Italian* (1797) by Ann Radcliffe
- *Frankenstein* (1818) by Mary Shelley
- *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820) by C.R. Maturin
- *Wuthering Heights* (1847) by Emily Brontë
- *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* (1870) by Charles Dickens
- *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) by Robert Louis Stevenson

### Activity 2.15

- 1 Conduct some research to discover who the original Goths were and how this style of literature got its name.
- 2 Look at the titles of existing Gothic novels in the list above. How do they give clues about the style and content of the genre?
- 3 Create five Gothic-sounding titles of your own.

## Ann Radcliffe

Like her novels, Ann Radcliffe (1764–1823) presents us with a mystery. All we really know about her life is that she was born in London to a tradesman, married the editor and owner of *The English Chronicle*, William Radcliffe, in 1788, and then wrote five very popular Gothic novels. She appealed, in particular, to young women readers and earned herself a fortune through her multi-volumed novels, which sent thrills of terror running down her readers' spines. It seems she enjoyed a long and happy marriage, loved travelling in the south of England and generally lived a quiet life. *The Romance of the Forest* (1791) combines romance with mystery and horror as our heroine, the orphan Adeline, travels from an ancient ruined house to an abbey in a dark forest, meeting with macabre twists and sinister turns on the path to love.

In the following extract, La Motte and his family are fleeing Paris. When they take refuge in a ruined house, a stranger thrusts Adeline upon them with the words, 'If you wish to save your life, swear that you will convey this girl where I may never see her more' (p. 5). They leave the house and arrive at a Gothic abbey.



Extract: from Ann Radcliffe's *The Romance of the Forest* (1791)

'melancholy boughs'  
from Shakespeare's  
*As You Like It*

The carriage drove along under the shade of '**melancholy boughs**' through which the evening twilight, which yet coloured the air, diffused a solemnity that vibrated in thrilling sensations upon the hearts of the travellers. Expectation kept them silent. The present scene recalled to Adeline a remembrance of the late terrific circumstances, and her mind responded too easily to the apprehension of new misfortunes. La Motte alighted at the foot of a green knoll, where the trees again opening to light, permitted a nearer, though imperfect, view of the edifice.

He approached, and perceived the Gothic remains of an abbey: it stood on a kind of rude lawn, overshadowed by high and spreading trees, which seemed **coeval** with the building, and diffused a romantic gloom around. The greater part of the pile appeared to be sinking into ruins, and that, which had withstood the ravages of time, **shewed** the remaining features of the fabric more awful in decay. The lofty battlements, thickly enwreathed with ivy, were half demolished, and

**coeval** of the same  
age or date

**shewed** showed

become the residence of birds of prey. Huge fragments of the eastern tower, which was almost demolished, lay scattered amid the high grass, that waved slowly to the breeze. **'The thistle shook its lonely head; the moss whistled to the wind.'** A Gothic gate, richly ornamented with fret-work which opened into the main body of the edifice, but which was now obstructed with brush-wood, remained entire. Above the vast and magnificent portal of this gate arose a window of the same order, whose pointed arches still exhibited fragments of stained glass, once the pride of monkish devotion. La Motte, thinking it possible it might yet shelter some human being, advanced to the gate and lifted a **massy** knocker. The hollow sounds rung through the emptiness of the place. After waiting a few minutes, he forced back the gate, which was heavy with iron work, and creaked harshly on its hinges.

**'The thistle shook its lonely head; the moss whistled to the wind.'** from James MacPherson's *The Works of Ossian* (1765)

**massy** massive

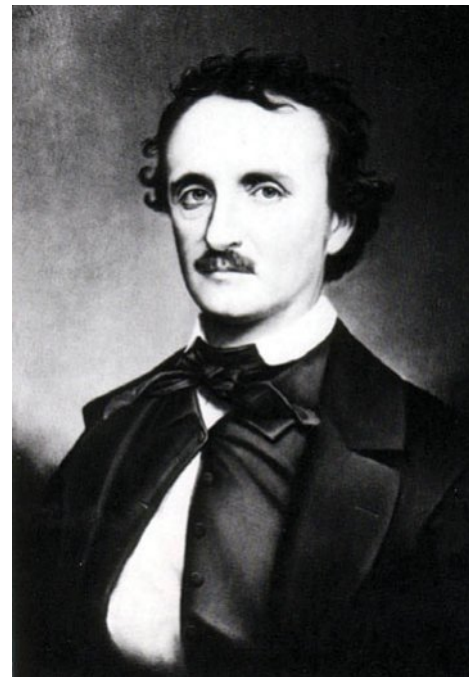
## Activity 2.16

- 1 What mood is created by the description of the time, place and building?
- 2 List the Gothic descriptions of the abbey.
- 3 Draw the abbey and label its features using quotations.

## Edgar Allan Poe

Characters with mysterious pasts, dark secrets and tortured lives haunt the pages of Edgar Allan Poe's (1809–1849) short stories. Poe, himself, lived a strange and somewhat mysterious life. His English mother started working on the American stage at the age of nine. After her first husband died, she married an actor, David Poe, at the age of 18 and had three children, the second of whom was Edgar. Unfortunately, his father disappeared before he was two (some sources say he died) and his mother died of tuberculosis shortly after, in 1811. The young Edgar was brought up by a wealthy tobacco merchant, John Allan, and his wife (hence, Edgar *Allan* Poe), but it was not the most harmonious of relationships. Poe's gambling problems at university, along with his drinking habits, exploration of drugs, such as opium, and his dismissal from the West Point military academy resulted, finally, in him being disinherited.

Edgar Allan Poe



Through all of these adventures he was writing poetry and short stories, and was eventually published in 1827. He moved to Baltimore where he lived with his aunt, Maria Clemm, her daughter Virginia and his brother Henry. Sadly, Henry died of tuberculosis shortly after he moved in and, bizarrely, Poe married his cousin Virginia before she was 13! They lived in the Bronx in New York and then the countryside where Virginia, too, succumbed to tuberculosis. By this stage, Poe's short stories and poetry – especially 'The Raven' – had made him famous (although not exactly wealthy). By the time Virginia died he was already a heavy drinker and her death, which devastated him, did nothing to alleviate that problem.

Most mysterious of all is his death, and there are a number of different theories surrounding its circumstances. In October 1849, Poe was found wandering the streets of Baltimore in someone else's clothes. Some sources say he was unconscious when found. He was taken to hospital where he died the next day. Some say he was ranting in a delirious way because of a combination of drugs and alcohol. Some say he was murdered or perhaps badly beaten by West Point cadets. Some say that, because he was often drunk, he was dragged around by electioneers and made to vote in many different places (a practice called 'cooping'). Perhaps we will never know for sure. What we do know is that he lived a short but remarkable life and left us with some wonderfully spine-chilling tales of Gothic horror.

In this extract, the narrator has been mysteriously summoned to the house of a long-lost childhood friend, Usher. He describes the house that he has not seen for many years.

### Extract: from Edgar Allan Poe's 'The Fall of the House of Usher' (1839)

I rode over a short causeway to the house. A servant in waiting took my horse, and I entered the Gothic archway of the hall. A valet, of stealthy step, thence conducted me, in silence, through many dark and intricate passages in my progress to the studio of his master.

... the carvings of the ceilings, the sombre tapestries of the walls, the **ebon** blackness of the floors, and the **phantasmagoric armorial** trophies which rattled as I strode, were but matters to which, or to such as which, I had been accustomed from my infancy ... The valet now threw open a door and ushered me into the presence of his master.

The room in which I found myself was very large and lofty. The windows were long, narrow, and pointed, and at so vast a distance from the black oaken floor as to be altogether inaccessible from within.

**ebon** from ebony, a dark wood

**phantasmagoric** like shifting figures in a dream

**armorial** suits of armour

Feeble gleams of **encrimsoned** light made their way through the **trellised** panes, and served to render sufficiently distinct the more prominent objects around; the eye, however, struggled in vain to reach the remoter angles of the chamber, or the recesses of the vaulted and fretted ceiling. Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all.

**encrimsoned**  
made crimson

**trellised** with lattices

## Activity 2.17

- 1 What Gothic elements can you find in this description?
- 2 List the adjectives in this extract.
- 3 What mood and atmosphere is created?
- 4 What is your overall impression of the house?
- 5 How do you think the narrator would be feeling upon entering this house?
- 6 What kind of person do you think lives in such a house?
- 7 What does this extract have in common with the extract from *The Romance of the Forest*?
- 8 Which of these Gothic extracts most appeals to you and why?
- 9 In what ways might the lives of these authors have shaped their writing?
- 10 Is this a genre that appeals to you? Why or why not?



## Your writing

Using your knowledge of Gothic literary features and the extracts as models, compose the first chapter of a Gothic novel. Establish the setting and introduce at least one or more of the characters.

## Extension: *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde



Oscar Wilde

A flamboyant and fascinating character, Dublin-born Oscar Wilde (1854–1900) became a glittering celebrity in London where his plays were a huge hit. Like a modern-day star, he enjoyed the fortunes of fame but also suffered from the publicity about his private life, which was, at the time, considered immoral.

He was imprisoned in Reading Gaol (about which he wrote the well-known poem ‘The Ballad of Reading Gaol’) for two years when his affair with English poet Lord Alfred Douglas ‘Bosie’ (1870–1945) was discovered. When released, he was declared bankrupt, his wife and sons changed their surname and Wilde spent the rest of his days in Paris where he died of meningitis at the age of 46.

*The Picture of Dorian Gray* (1891) is a Victorian Gothic novel set in London. It tells the story of Dorian Gray, a highly attractive young man about town who has his portrait painted by the artist Basil Hallward. Basil’s friend, Lord Henry Wotton, befriends Dorian and convinces him that a wild life is the only one worth living. When Dorian casually suggests that he would sell his soul to retain his youth and beauty, his wish is granted and while he lives a hedonistic life, he retains his dazzling good looks while his portrait ages. You will need to read the novel to discover Dorian’s fate.

### Activity 2.18

Read Chapter 13 of *The Picture of Dorian Gray* from ‘Hallward glanced round him, with a puzzled expression’ to ‘He passed his hand across his forehead. It was dank with clammy sweat’ and explain how Gothic elements have been used and what effect they create.



## Words, words, words

*epic, jargon, lauded, misanthropic, parody, picaresque, polysyndeton, protagonist, satire, vernacular*

- 1 Look up the meaning of the following words: polyglot, polymer, polysemy, polyphone, polysyllabic, polyvalent. What does the prefix 'poly-' mean? Look up the word 'syndetic'. Write the meaning of 'polysyndeton'.
- 2 What are the similarities and differences between satire and parody?
- 3 Compile a list of 10 words or phrases of jargon used for a particular sport, profession or activity.
- 4 Write four synonyms for 'lauded'.
- 5 What does the prefix 'mis-' mean? Write 10 words that begin with this prefix.
- 6 What term do we give to a person who thinks the worst of human society and so avoids it?
- 7 What is the origin of the word 'vernacular'?
- 8 An epic is a long poem narrating adventures and heroic deeds. How is the word 'epic' used colloquially?
- 9 Name five protagonists and the works they come from.
- 10 Complete a concept card for 'picaresque novel':

My definition:	Characteristics:
<b>Picaresque novel</b>	
Examples:	Graphic:

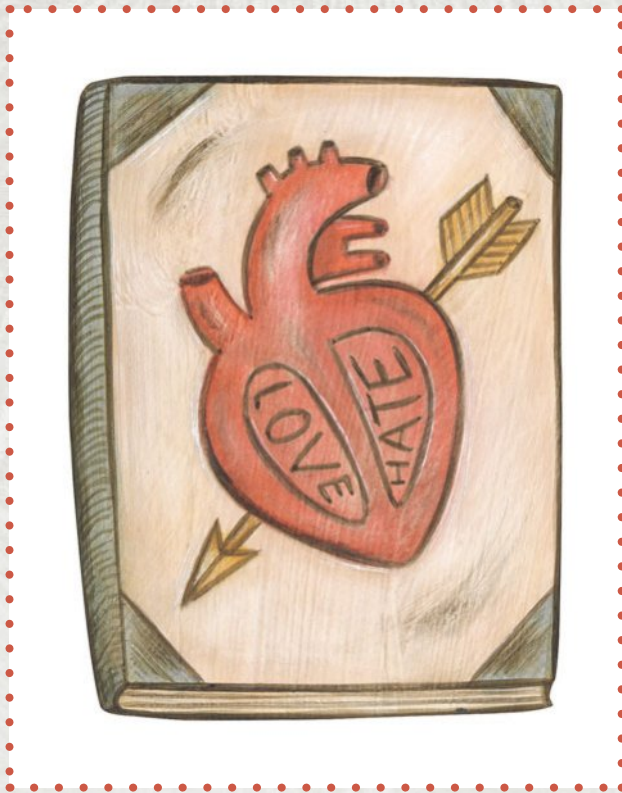
## Read and view more

- *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* by Jules Verne
- *Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy
- *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac
- *The Shadow of the Wind* by Carlos Ruiz Zafón
- 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' by Washington Irving
- *Thelma and Louise* (1991) directed by Ridley Scott
- *Planes, Trains and Automobiles* (1987) directed by John Hughes

## Final words

- 1 Write three things that you now know about canonical writing about journeys.
- 2 Which two extracts in this chapter did you find the most interesting and why?
- 3 If you could meet one of the authors mentioned in this chapter, which one would you choose and why?





# 3

## Affairs of the heart

### RELOADED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Paired texts: star-crossed lovers
- Affairs of the heart in poetry
- Affairs of the heart in prose
- Focus on: the sonnet
- Your writing
- Extension: 'The Sun Rising' by John Donne
- Words, words, words
- Read and view more
- Final words

'Love makes the world go around', according to a much-quoted traditional French song, which is why perhaps literature and popular culture concern themselves so much with this topic. Every day, people fall in and out of love; leap with the joys of it and sink under its sorrows. The intense emotions associated with love provide writers with opportunities to explore the human condition in all its glory and despair.

Although you will find that every age and every culture navigates the sometimes calm and sometimes stormy seas of love, we will focus here on English literature from the Elizabethan to the Victorian times. Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most famous tragedies of all time and presents a theme that continues to fascinate audiences today: that of forbidden love. But we will focus not on the tragic **denouement** but on the romantic words of ardour the young lovers exchange early in the play.

**denouement**

the final scene of a play or novel where the plot is resolved



In this chapter we visit the works of renowned women novelists who offer us insights into how their worlds shaped affairs of the heart. Emily Brontë continues the theme of forbidden love in her intense and dramatic tome *Wuthering Heights*, in which love, obstructed by society's conventions of the time, takes on a supernatural element to exert its power from beyond the grave. Her sister, Charlotte Brontë, delivers a no less dramatic but much happier story in which love finally overcomes social obstacles and dark mysteries in the novel *Jane Eyre*. Jane Austen offers us an array of characters engaged in a variety of relationships, which result in a number of different types of marriages. Her gentle satire allows us to gauge which of these liaisons to respect and which to mock.

We will also read the male perspective of love through the poetry of the Scotsman Robert Burns, the English adventurer Lord Byron, the famous preacher John Donne, and the sonneteers William Shakespeare and Michael Drayton. These offer ways to pay tribute to both beauty and affection through their elegant, playful and witty use of words that still resonate with lovers the world over today.

These are the texts and extracts that you will read, in chronological order of publication:

- 1594** Sonnet 61 by Michael Drayton
- 1599** *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare
- 1609** Sonnet 18 by William Shakespeare
- 1633** 'The Sun Rising' by John Donne
- 1794** 'My Love is Like a Red Red Rose' by Robert Burns
- 1813** *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
- 1815** 'She Walks in Beauty' by Lord Byron
- 1847** *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë
- 1847** *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë
- 1850** Sonnet 43 by Elizabeth Barrett Browning

### Activity 3.1 Your thoughts

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- 1 Tennyson said in his poem 'In Memoriam A.H.H.' written over 17 years after the death of his dear friend, Arthur Henry Hallam, 'Tis better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all'. Do you agree with this? Why or why not?
  - 2 Find 10 quotations about love. Design a poster that illustrates them.
  - 3 Make a list of famous pairs of lovers.
  - 4 Look up the meanings of these types of love: fraternal, maternal, paternal, unrequited, platonic.
  - 5 How would you say the experiences of love have shaped your life?
- 

### *Did you know?*

Tomatoes are also called 'love apples'.

## Paired texts: star-crossed lovers

William Shakespeare is *the* giant of the literary canon and yet he is a mysterious figure, as we know so little about his life. We *do* know that at some point he left his home and family in Stratford-upon-Avon to pursue a career in the London theatre world. We know that his theatre company was popular, that he was well-known and that he left the world with a legacy of 38 plays, 154 sonnets and two epic narrative poems. Over the years there have been doubts about the authenticity of his work and suggestions about who could have been the author(s) of such masterpieces. People find it hard to believe that one person, of humble beginnings, could have written so much, so brilliantly ... but why not?



### *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare

*Romeo and Juliet* tells the story of a pair of young lovers who fall in love at first sight after exchanging some of the most poetic lines of love in literature. The town friar marries them secretly, as he believes that, in time, this event might reunite their feuding families. He has a plan but it turns horribly wrong and tragedy ensues. It seems that Romeo and Juliet's love was destined to fail, as they are described in the opening of the play as 'star-cross'd lovers'. In the final lines their tale is described as the saddest of all time: 'For never was a story of more woe / Than this of Juliet and her Romeo.'

Extract 1 (opposite) takes place after a party where Romeo and Juliet meet for the first time and Romeo sees Juliet standing at her balcony window. He watches and listens for a little while before speaking to her.



## WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE (1564–1616)

- Playwright, poet, actor, theatre manager.
- Born in Stratford-upon-Avon, England.
- His father was a glover, merchant and alderman.
- Married Anne Hathaway in 1582 when he was 18 and she was 26.
- Had a daughter Susanna and twins Hamnet (who died when he was 11) and Judith.
- Went to London, possibly in 1588, to enter the world of theatre as a writer and manager.
- Joined The Lord Chamberlain's Men theatre company in 1594 (it was later renamed The King's Men).
- His most famous plays are *Macbeth*, *King Lear*, *Hamlet*, *Julius Caesar*, *The Merchant of Venice*, *Twelfth Night*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Much Ado About Nothing*.

### Extract 1: Romeo's speech from William Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (1599)

(Act 2, Scene 2, lines 2–6)

*But soft! What light through yonder window breaks?  
It is the east, and Juliet is the sun!  
Arise, fair sun, and kill the envious moon,  
Who is already sick and pale with grief,  
That thou her maid art far more fair than she.*

(lines 15–25)

*Two of the fairest stars in all the heaven,  
Having some business, do entreat her eyes  
To twinkle in their spheres till they return.  
What if her eyes were there, they in her head?  
The brightness of her cheek would shame those stars  
As daylight doth a lamp. Her eyes in heaven  
Would through the airy region stream so bright  
That birds would sing and think it were not night.  
See how she leans her cheek upon her hand:  
O that I were a glove upon that hand,  
That I might touch that cheek.*



*Romeo and Juliet*, Ford Madox Brown, 1870, oil on canvas

In Extract 2, Juliet speaks after she and Romeo have secretly married and she is waiting for him in her chamber that night.

## Extract 2: Juliet's speech from *Romeo and Juliet*

(Act 3, Scene 2, lines 20–31)

*Come, gentle night; come, loving, black-brow'd night,  
Give me my Romeo. And when I shall die  
Take him and cut him out in little stars,  
And he will make the face of heaven so fine  
That all the world will be in love with night,  
And pay no worship to the garish sun.  
Oh, I have bought the mansion of a love,  
But not possess'd it; and, though I am sold,  
Not yet enjoy'd. So tedious is this day  
As is the night before some festival  
To an impatient child that hath new robes  
And may not wear them.*

### Activity 3.2 Extract 1: Romeo's speech

- 1 Romeo describes Juliet as lighting up the night. What metaphor does he first use to tell us this?
- 2 Why is the moon personified as being 'sick and pale with grief'?
- 3 What does Romeo imagine the stars ask of Juliet and what does he think the consequences would be?
- 4 What does he say he would like to be and why?
- 5 What kind of impression does Romeo make on you through this speech?

### Activity 3.3 Extract 2: Juliet's speech

- 1 What three adjectives does Juliet use to describe the night? What do these choices reveal about how she is feeling?
- 2 What does she ask the night to do to Romeo when she dies and what effect does she say this will have on the world?
- 3 How do we know that she is restless?
- 4 What kind of impression does Juliet make on you through this speech?

### Activity 3.4

What are the similarities between these two speeches? What does this tell you about the language of love?

### *Did you know?*

It is believed that Shakespeare invented more than 1000 new words, although it is difficult to know for sure if he *invented* them or if he was the first person to write them down. Here are some of the words that are attributed to him that we still use today: accommodation, addiction, assassination, countless, go-between, hint, hunchbacked, misquote, priceless, savagery, successful, useless, zany.

### Activity 3.5 Visual texts

There have been many film versions of *Romeo and Juliet* but Franco Zeffirelli's 1968 version and Baz Luhrmann's 1996 adaptation (that modernises the setting but retains the Shakespearean language) are the most respected.

- 1 Watch the opening scenes of both films. In groups, discuss the features and qualities of each. What is each director aiming to communicate about the characters and the world in which they live? Which do you prefer and why?
- 2 Watch the film versions of the speeches printed here. Which do you prefer and why?
- 3 Choose one of the speeches and illustrate it using Photo Story, PowerPoint or a storyboard.





Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo + Juliet* (2013), starring Claire Danes and Leonardo DiCaprio

### Activity 3.6 Fun with Shakespearean insults

Match these adjectives and nouns to create Shakespearean insults!

#### Adjectives

artless  
beslubbering  
bootless  
dankish  
droning  
fobbing  
frothy  
gorbellied  
gleeking  
loggerheaded  
dizzy-eyed  
elf-skinned  
fly-bitten  
guts-gripping

#### Nouns

hugger-mugger  
maggot-pie  
bugbear  
joithead  
lout  
flirt-gill  
giglet  
baggage  
haggard  
canker-blossom  
lewdster  
dewberry  
barnacle  
apple-john

## Affairs of the heart in poetry

### 'My Love is Like a Red Red Rose' by Robert Burns

Robert Burns (1759–1796) was born in Scotland into a farming family that moved about a lot and suffered a great deal of poverty. Although he spent much of his time labouring on the farm, he also attended school where his studies included Shakespeare, French and Mathematics. In 1786 he became suddenly famous when his first poetry to be published became a huge success. He was launched into Edinburgh's literary world and was, by all accounts, greatly admired by other writers and was popular with the ladies! As well as writing his own works, he travelled the Scottish countryside collecting traditional songs and poems, which have now been preserved for generations to come. He wrote in both eighteenth-century English and Scottish dialect and his work is celebrated every year on Burns Night, which falls on his birthday, 25 January.

#### 'My Love is Like a Red Red Rose' (1794)

Robert Burns

*My love is like a red, red rose  
That's newly sprung in June:  
My love is like the melody  
That's sweetly play'd in tune.*

*As fair art thou, my bonnie lass,  
So deep in love am I:  
And I will love thee still, my dear,  
Till a' the seas **gang** dry.*

*Till a' the sea gang dry, my dear,  
And the rocks melt wi' the sun:  
And I will love thee still, my dear,  
While the sands o' life shall run.*

*And fare thee **weel**, my only love,  
And fare thee weel a while!  
And I will come again, my love,  
Tho' it were ten thousand mile.*



**gang** go

**weel** well

### Activity 3.7

- 1 Which of the two similes in the first verse do you prefer and why?
- 2 Which words in this song do you think are in Scottish dialect?
- 3 You will have noticed that, much like Elizabethan English, there are a number of words that use the apostrophe for contractions in this song. Write the following words in full: play'd, a', wi', o', Tho'.
- 4 Write five similes to describe your love for someone. Begin with 'My love is like ...'

### 'She Walks in Beauty' by Lord Byron



Lord Byron

Lord George Byron (1788–1824) was described in his lifetime as 'mad, bad and dangerous to know'. He was an aristocrat who wrote controversial poetry, satiric articles, political dramas, personal journals and many letters. Byron left England to spend most of his life travelling and living in Europe where he mixed with other writers. He moved to Italy in 1817 and led a wild life in Venice, Pisa, Rome, Genoa and Ravenna. He involved himself intensely and passionately in love affairs, philosophical arguments and political matters – all of which inspired his many literary works. In 1823 Byron left Italy for Greece to fight against the Ottoman Empire for Greek independence. He died in 1824 after contracting a fever. Despite being enormously popular, he was refused burial in the famous cathedrals of Westminster and St Pauls in London because much of his poetry (and the way he lived his life) was thought to be immoral. 'She Walks in Beauty' (1815) describes a beautiful woman, thought to be a widow he met at a party in London who had been wearing a dazzling mourning dress.

### 'She Walks in Beauty' (1815)

Lord Byron

*She walks in beauty, like the night  
Of cloudless **climes** and starry skies;  
And all that's best of dark and bright  
Meet in her aspect and her eyes:  
Thus mellowed to that tender light  
Which heaven to gaudy day denies.*

**climes** region or  
climate

*One shade the more, one ray the less,  
Had half impaired the nameless grace  
Which waves in every raven tress,  
Or softly lightens o'er her face;  
Where thoughts serenely sweet express  
How pure, how dear their dwelling-place.*

**tress** long lock of hair

.....

*And on that cheek, and o'er that brow,  
So soft, so calm, yet eloquent,  
The smiles that win, the tints that glow,  
But tell of days in goodness spent,  
A mind at peace with all below,  
A heart whose love is innocent!*

**tints** a variety of colours

.....



### Activity 3.8

.....

- 1 How does Byron use the contrast of light and dark to emphasise the woman's beauty?
  - 2 What comments does he make about the woman's hair and face?
  - 3 What does the last stanza tell us about the sort of life the woman has led?
  - 4 The poem contains 'alliteration' (the repetition of consonant sounds to create a harsh or soft sound effect). Write two examples of alliteration and explain the effect each creates.
  - 5 List all the words that create a soft sound. Why do you think Byron has used so many of these?
- .....

### *Enjambment and the end-stopped line*

The term 'enjambment' refers to a line of poetry that continues onto the next line without any pause or punctuation. Sometimes it is used to delay or reinforce meaning. Enjambment is also called a 'run-on line'. You can see it used in the first two stanzas of 'She Walks in Beauty'.

The opposite is called the end-stopped line. This is where a line contains meaning in itself and is paused at the end by a punctuation mark. You can see this used in the third stanza of Byron's poem.

## Affairs of the heart in prose

### *Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen*



Jane Austen, watercolour, c. 1810

Jane Austen (1775–1817) was born into a large, close-knit family and was educated at home by her father, a reverend in rural Steventon, England. She lived in a world that was changing through political and industrial revolution, though she rarely refers to the events of these times in her novels. Instead, her work explores the daily lives of middle-class and upper-middle-class families searching for suitable husbands for their daughters.

Austen is most famous for writing *Pride and Prejudice* (1813), which tells the story of the Bennett sisters and their marriages. It traces the obstacles and misunderstandings of the courtship of the intelligent and witty Elizabeth and the apparently haughty and vain Mr Darcy. Elizabeth prides herself on her self-respect and is prejudiced against Darcy because he sees his social superiority as a barrier to their relationship (which is both *his* pride and prejudice). While all around them marriages are being made for economic reasons, Elizabeth and Darcy's future is seen as a marriage of minds.



Darcy's first proposal begins well, 'In vain have I struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you'. But when he speaks of 'His sense of her inferiority – of its being a degradation', Elizabeth is, not surprisingly, angry, as seen in Extract 1.

### Extract 1: from Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* (1813)

'From the very beginning, from the first moment I may almost say, of my acquaintance with you, your manners impressing me with the fullest belief of your arrogance, your conceit, and your selfish disdain of the feelings of others, were such as to form that ground-work of **disapprobation**, on which succeeding events have built so immovable a dislike; and I had not known you a month before I felt that you were the last man in the world whom I could ever be prevailed on to marry.'

**disapprobation**  
strong disapproval

---

Darcy proposes a second time with very different results. Elizabeth accepts, explaining that her 'sentiments had undergone so material a change ... to make her receive with gratitude and pleasure, his present assurances'. Later, she resumes her verbal games with him, as seen in Extract 2.

### Extract 2: from *Pride and Prejudice*

Elizabeth's spirits soon rising to playfulness again, she wanted Mr Darcy to account for his having ever fallen in love with her. 'How could you begin?' said she. 'I can comprehend your going on charmingly, when you had once made a beginning; but what could set you off in the first place?'

'I cannot fix on the hour, or the spot, or the look, or the words, which laid the foundations. It is too long ago. I was in the middle before I knew that I *had* begun.'

'My beauty you had early withstood, and as for my manners – my behaviour to you was at least always bordering on the uncivil, and I never spoke to you without rather wishing to give you pain than not. Now be sincere; did you admire me for my impertinence?'

'For the liveliness of your mind, I did.'

'You may as well call it impertinence at once. It was very little less. The fact is that you were sick of civility, of deference, of officious attention. You were disgusted with the women who were always speaking and looking, and thinking for *your* approbation alone.'

(continues)

(continued)

I roused, and interested you, because I was so unlike *them*. Had you not been really amiable you would have hated me for it; but in spite of the pains you took to disguise yourself, your feelings were always noble and just; and in your heart, you thoroughly despised the persons who so assiduously courted you. There – I have saved you the trouble of accounting for it; and really all things considered, I begin to think it perfectly reasonable. To be sure, you knew no actual good of me – but nobody thinks of *that* when they fall in love.'

### Activity 3.9

- 1 Which three of Darcy's negative qualities does Elizabeth list in the first extract? Which of these do you think is the most offensive and why?
- 2 Elizabeth says that her behaviour towards Darcy would not have been very encouraging. How did she treat him at first?
- 3 Highlight the following words in the second extract and find their meaning: impertinence, civility, deference, officious, approbation, amiable, assiduously.
- 4 Elizabeth answers the question for Darcy. What reasons does she give for him falling in love with her?
- 5 Read the dialogue aloud in pairs using tone, emphasis, pauses, pitch, volume and pace to communicate the ideas and the characters' personalities. You will notice that Darcy doesn't get to say much!
- 6 Describe your idea of a romantic marriage proposal.



### *Did you know?*

Jane Austen accepted a marriage proposal in 1802 from a young man, Harris Bigg-Wither, but she changed her mind the very next morning. Despite all her novels being about the search for a husband, she never married.

*Pride and Prejudice* is referred to as a 'novel of manners' – this is because it provides realistic details of the specific social and domestic world of its characters in their particular setting. Austen rarely refers to the larger events of the day but, instead, provides details of daily life. Through gentle satire, she shows how the conventions of the day shaped people's behaviour depending on whether or not they conformed to them.

## *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë

The Brontë sisters – Charlotte, Emily and Anne – are probably the best-known sibling writers of canonical literature. Born to Reverend Patrick Brontë, they were largely raised by their aunt after their mother (and two other sisters) died. They also had a brother, Branwell, who died in his early 30s after an unsuccessful career in art.

The Brontë family lived in a parsonage in Haworth, West Yorkshire. Their home has been turned into a museum and displays the furniture, paintings, crockery,



Haworth parsonage, West Yorkshire, now the Brontë Parsonage Museum

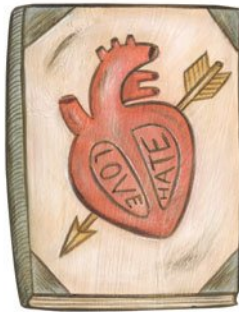
utensils, writing materials and even some of the clothes that the Brontës owned. You can walk through the entrance hall, bedrooms, kitchen, servants' room, studies and the dining room (which contains the sofa on which Emily died). Outside you will see the town below, the cemetery beyond and the bleak, windswept moors, stretching to the horizon.

It is on these moors that Emily Brontë (1818–1848) sets *Wuthering Heights* (1847), her novel of intense and destructive passion between characters Cathy and Heathcliff. Because of the difference in social status between them, they cannot marry. Instead, Cathy must marry the respectable Edgar Linton. In these extracts, Cathy makes it clear which of these men she truly loves.



### Extract 1: from Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847)

'I've no more business to marry Edgar Linton than I have to be in heaven; and if the wicked man in there had not brought Heathcliff so low, I shouldn't have thought of it. It would degrade me to marry Heathcliff, now; so he shall never know how I love him; and that, not because he's handsome, Nelly, but because he's more myself than I am. Whatever our souls are made of, his and mine are the same, and Linton's is as different as a moonbeam from lightning, or frost from fire.'



## Extract 2: from *Wuthering Heights*

My great miseries in this world have been Heathcliff's miseries, and I watched and felt each from the beginning; my great thought in living is himself. If all else perished, and *he* remained, I should still continue to be; and, if all else remained and he were annihilated, the Universe would turn to a mighty stranger. I should not seem a part of it. My love for Linton is like the foliage in the woods. Time will change it, I'm well aware, as winter changes the trees – my love for Heathcliff resembles the eternal rocks beneath – a source of little visible delight, but necessary. Nelly, I *am* Heathcliff – he's always, always in my mind – not as a pleasure, any more than I am always a pleasure to myself – but, as my own being – so, don't talk of our separation again – it is impracticable; and –



Cathy's love for Heathcliff is as eternal as the rocks

### Activity 3.10

---

- 1 What do you think Cathy means when she says of Heathcliff, 'he's more myself than I am'?
  - 2 The difference between her soul and Edgar's is put very poetically. What do you think is being emphasised by her choice of words?
  - 3 Extract 2 is very passionate. In your *own* words, describe the difference between Cathy's love for Heathcliff and her love for Edgar.
  - 4 Write a list about what you think love resembles. Begin with 'True love resembles ...' or, if you prefer, use similes, 'True love is like ...'
  - 5 The difference in social status keeps Cathy and Heathcliff from marrying. Are there still barriers that people today might face when wanting to marry? What are they and how might they be overcome?
- 

### *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë

Having had some miserable years at schools that treated children extremely harshly, Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855) became a teacher and governess in the hopes of providing better and more caring education for pupils of the nineteenth century. Her experiences shaped her novel *Jane Eyre* (1847), which is about an orphan at a hellish school who becomes a governess and falls in love with her employer, Edward Rochester.

The plot twists and turns dramatically; secret pasts are revealed, strange things happen in the dead of night, passions flare, a mad woman is kept in an attic, fires rage and, finally, the novel is brought to its close leaving the reader exhausted but ultimately rewarded.

Charlotte Brontë outlived her sisters and brother by a few years. She married her father's curate Arthur Nicholls in 1854 but sadly died the following year from an illness related to pregnancy.

In the extract opposite, Jane's emotions go from one extreme to the other, as they do throughout the novel. Jane, believing that Rochester is to marry another woman, 'sobbed convulsively ... shaken from head to foot with acute distress'. Rochester explains the truth of the situation and proposes to Jane. The next morning she is full of the joys of spring.

## Extract: from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847)

I was not surprised, when I ran down into the hall, to see that a brilliant June morning had succeeded to the tempest of the night; and to feel, through the open glass door, the breathing of a fresh and fragrant breeze. Nature must be gladsome when I was so happy ... the rooks carwed, and blither birds sang; but nothing was so merry, or so musical as my own rejoicing heart ...

'Jane you look blooming, and smiling, and pretty,' said he, 'truly pretty this morning. Is this my pale little elf? Is this my **mustard-seed**? This little sunny-faced girl with the dimpled cheek and rosy lips; the satin-smooth hazel hair, and the radiant hazel eyes? (I had green eyes, reader; but you must excuse the mistake: for him they were new-dyed I suppose.)

**mustard-seed**  
reference to a fairy  
from Shakespeare's  
*A Midsummer Night's  
Dream*



### Activity 3.11

- 1 List all the words that create a happy mood.
- 2 What do you think is meant by a 'musical' heart?
- 3 What is your opinion of Rochester's words to Jane?
- 4 The words placed in brackets (or parentheses) create an 'authorial intrusion'. Jane, as narrator, is commenting on Rochester's words to the reader. Why do you think Charlotte Brontë used this technique here?

## Focus on: the sonnet

A sonnet is a particular type of poem that has 14 lines, a strict rhyme scheme and regular metre (beats in a line of poetry). The form originated from Italy in the thirteenth century but it was the poet Petrarch (1304–1374) who really established the form and its content. His sonnet cycle ‘Canzoniere’ displays his love for a married woman he names Laura. These poems of courtly love inspired and influenced centuries of European love poetry that followed.

‘Courtly love’ is a nineteenth-century term used to describe a type of medieval romance between a man (usually a knight) and a woman who is out of his reach (usually because she is married). The love is seen as secret, noble and spiritual and it becomes the focus of the man’s life as everything he does is for the woman he loves. He fights battles for her and continually proves his devotion through chivalric acts and romantic words. However, because he can never truly have a life with her, he suffers. Because knights belonged to courts (like Lancelot belongs to the court of King Arthur and his wife Guinevere) the romance was labelled ‘courtly love’.

The form travelled to France and then to England in the sixteenth century, where Shakespeare took up his quill to create 154 sonnets. Poets enjoyed the challenge of writing in a disciplined and intellectual way using rules that forced them to be highly precise. Readers became quickly familiar with the form and enjoyed the results of the sonneteers’ talents, wit and artistry.

### Structure

The 14 lines are divided into two sections: eight lines (octet or octave) and six lines (sestet). The sections are usually divided by a change in argument or idea, as well as rhyme. Or they are arranged in three sections of four lines each (quatrains) and a rhyming couplet at the end. The rhyming couplet usually provides a summing up or a witty end to the poem.

### Types of sonnets

There are two main types of sonnets (though there are other variations): the Petrarchan sonnet and the Elizabethan (or Shakespearean) sonnet. The main difference between the two is the rhyme scheme (the pattern of rhyme that is found in lines of poetry):

- The Petrarchan rhyme scheme: abba, abba, cdc dcd (or sometimes the last six lines are cde cde).
- The Elizabethan rhyme scheme: abab, cdcd, efef, gg.



## Syllables

Each line of a sonnet should have a particular number of syllables:

- Petrarchan (Italian form) has 11 syllables.
- Elizabethan (English form) has 10 syllables.  
(And French sonnets have 12 ... just so you know!)

## Metre

The metre is the rhythm or beats created by the syllables in each line of poetry. These beats are caused by a 'stress', or emphasis, on some syllables. The syllables that are not given emphasis are called 'unstressed'. There are names given to the patterns of stressed and unstressed syllables. The best known is iambic pentameter.

## Iambic pentameter

In a line of 10 syllables, every second syllable is stressed. Iambic means that it is every second syllable that is stressed. Pentameter means that in 10 syllables, five are stressed. We say that the line has five feet. If the first syllable is stressed instead of the second, we call it a trochee (just so you know!).

### Activity 3.12

How many feet (or stressed syllables) do you think are in the following?

- monometer
- heptameter
- trimeter
- hexameter
- tetrameter
- dimeter

Now you are ready to read some sonnets.

## William Shakespeare

In 1609 Thomas Thorpe published a collection of 154 sonnets called *Shakespeare's Sonnets, Never Before Imprinted*. They cover themes such as love, death and the passing of time. It is difficult to know whether or not Shakespeare (1564–1616)

gave permission for the publication but the sonnets are arranged in a particular order, which makes sense as you read from the beginning to the end. Because they appear in this order, it is likely that Shakespeare at least *intended* their publication even if he didn't *authorise* it.

The first 126 sonnets address a young man, perhaps a rival poet, and are mostly about love. The next group are about the poet's infatuation with a dark mistress who, it seems, has been unfaithful to him with the young man. The last two are adaptations of Greek poems. The whole anthology concludes with a long narrative poem about betrayal.



## Sonnet 18 (1609)

William Shakespeare

*Shall I compare thee to a summer's day?  
Thou art more lovely and more temperate:  
Rough winds do shake the darling buds of May,  
And summer's lease hath all too short a date:  
Sometimes too hot the eye of heaven shines,  
And often is his gold complexion dimmed;  
And every **fair** from fair sometimes declines,  
By chance, or nature's changing course **untrimmed**;  
But thy eternal summer shall not fade,  
Nor lose possession of that fair thou owest;  
Nor shall death brag thou wander'st in his shade,  
When in eternal lines to time thou growest:  
So long as men can breathe, or eyes can see,  
So long lives this, and this gives life to thee.*

**fair** beauty

**untrimmed** wild,  
unpredictable

### Activity 3.13

---

- 1 Shakespeare says that his love is 'more lovely and more temperate' than a summer's day. What do you think temperate might mean when we talk about:
    - a The weather?
    - b Mood?
  - 2 Read lines 3–6 again. What four complaints does Shakespeare make about summer?
  - 3 What does Shakespeare say will give his love eternal beauty?
  - 4 Give one example of personification in this sonnet.
  - 5
    - a What is the name of this rhyming scheme?
    - b What do we call the metre of this sonnet?
  - 6 Rewrite the first two lines of the sonnet so that the love is compared to something else that you find beautiful.
  - 7 Most scholars agree that this sonnet was addressed to a young man but it is often read as if it is about a woman. What do you think and why?
  - 8 Songs have become a more popular way of expressing love but, in a way, they are a type of poetry too. Create a playlist of your favourite 10 songs about love. They may be about the joys and/or the sorrows of love.
- 

## Michael Drayton

Michael Drayton (1563–1631) was born one year before Shakespeare and, like the famous bard, grew from humble beginnings into a prolific writer. After spending his youth in the service of a noble family, he headed to London (obviously the place to be for ambitious writers) to pursue his literary career.

Like most poets of his era, Drayton dabbled in writing for the theatre, but mainly produced historical epics, narrative and pastoral poems (see Chapter 5). He also wrote religious verse, sonnets, odes and satires. Although Drayton lived 15 years longer than Shakespeare, he is not as well known or widely read. This is probably because he did not seem to find much success in the theatre and so did not make a name for himself as a dramatist. In addition to this, historical epics and sonnets, into which he put most of his energies, lost their popularity and status towards the end of his lifetime. The interest in sonnets was eventually revived, of course, and now it is for these, and particularly Sonnet 61, that he is best known.

## Sonnet 61 (1594)

Michael Drayton

*Since there's no help, come let us kiss and part,  
Nay, I have done: you get no more of me,  
And I am glad, yea glad with all my heart  
That thus so cleanly I myself can free,  
Shake hands forever, cancel all our vows,  
And when we meet at any time again,  
Be it not seen in either of our brows  
That we one jot of former love retain.  
Now at last gasp of love's latest breath,  
When his pulse failing, passion speechless lies,  
When faith is kneeling by his bed of death,  
And innocence is closing up his eyes,  
Now if thou wouldst, when all have given him over,  
From death to life thou mightst him yet recover.*

### Activity 3.14

- 1 This is a sonnet about breaking up with someone. Why might the poet say, 'And I am glad, yea glad with all my heart / That thus so cleanly I myself can free'?
- 2 Which line makes breaking up sound easy? What are your thoughts about how easy it is to break up with someone?
- 3 What does he say they must do if they meet again?
- 4 Read the octet aloud. What kind of tone works for these lines?
- 5 Drayton personifies love in the following sestet. What is happening to love in these lines and what does this suggest about the poet?
- 6 What appeal is there in the last two lines?
- 7 Read the sestet aloud. What tone works for these lines?
- 8 What is your impression of the speaker of this sonnet?
- 9 Work out the rhyming scheme by writing the correct letters at the end of each line.
- 10 Find a pair of images that illustrates the sonnet.

## Elizabeth Barrett Browning

Edward Moulton Barrett was a tyrannical figure who had made his wealth from plantations in Jamaica but moved his family to England. His eldest child, Elizabeth (1806–1861), became a strident opponent of slavery and criticised its injustices through her writing. A liberal thinker, she also spoke out against the oppression of women and was passionately interested in French and Italian politics. Her father forbade all of his children to marry without his permission (which he never gave) and so Elizabeth was disinherited when she secretly married the poet Robert Browning and left for Italy. Her father never spoke to her again.

The Brownings lived a happily devoted married life for 15 years and had a son, Robert. Elizabeth, who had been plagued with ill-health for much of her life, died in her husband's arms and is buried in Italy. She is best known for her *Sonnets from the Portuguese*, which are dedicated to Robert Browning and written in secret before their marriage.

### Sonnet 43 (1850)

Elizabeth Barrett Browning

*How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.  
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height  
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight  
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.  
I love thee to the level of everyday's  
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight.  
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;  
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.  
I love thee with the passion put to use  
In my old griefs, and with my childhood's faith.  
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose  
With my lost saints, – I love thee with the breath,  
Smiles, tears, of all my life! – and, if God choose,  
I shall but love thee better after death.*



Elizabeth Barrett Browning

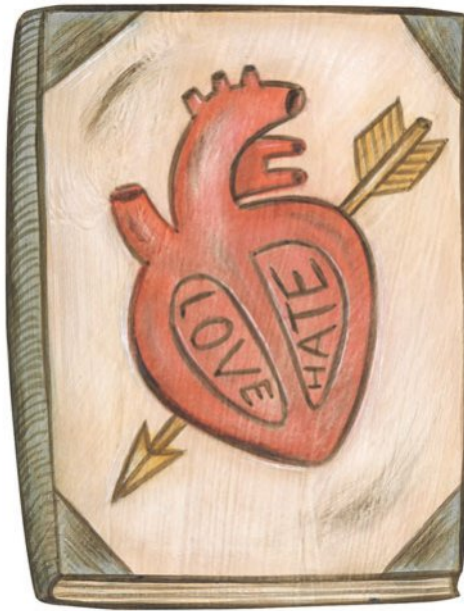


### Activity 3.15

- 1 Elizabeth Barrett Browning begins the poem by saying she will count the ways she loves Robert Browning. Type, copy or write the poem onto a document and separate the different ways she loves him by leaving two lines between each.
- 2 Highlight the way that you think is most romantic.
- 3 In a different colour, highlight the way that is most meaningful to you.
- 4 In a third colour, highlight any of the ways that you feel are difficult to understand. Work in pairs or groups to clarify their meaning.
- 5 What does 'if God choose, I shall but love thee better after death' suggest about Elizabeth Barrett Browning's beliefs?
- 6 Write a list of your own ways of loving someone. Begin, 'I love thee ...'

### Activity 3.16

- 1 Identify the rhyme schemes and metres for each of these sonnets. Which are Elizabethan and which are Petrarchan?
- 2 What words in these sonnets identify them as being from times past?
- 3 Which of the sonnets do you prefer and why?



## Your writing

Write your own poem about love or friendship. If you are feeling adventurous, try writing a sonnet!

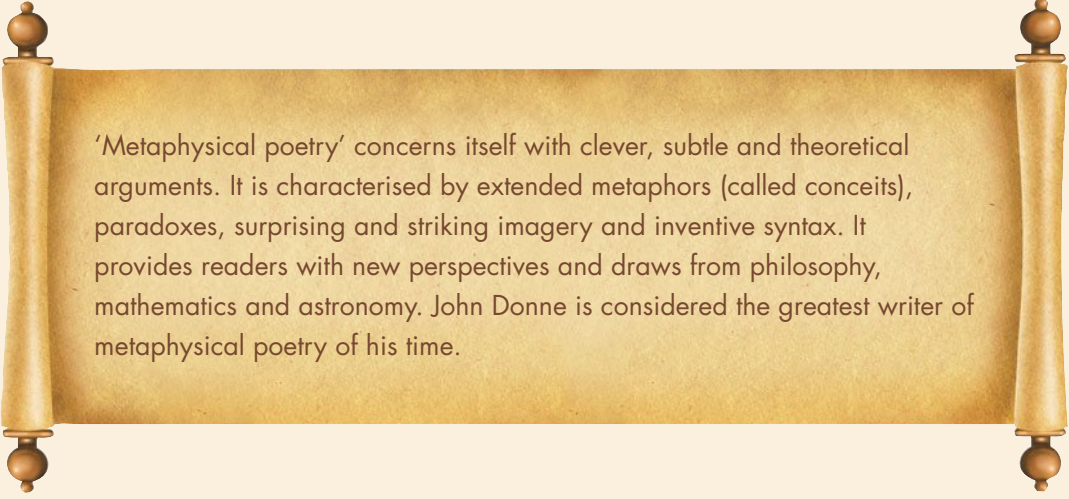
## Extension: 'The Sun Rising' by John Donne

John Donne (1572–1631) was born in London into a Catholic family. At this time, being Catholic could cause all sorts of problems in England. Donne was not able to graduate from Oxford or Cambridge because of his faith, and his brother died in prison after giving sanctuary to a priest. It's no surprise, then, that Donne eventually renounced his religion. He not only converted to the Anglican faith but, after pressure from King James I, became a chaplain, a famous preacher and, eventually, the Dean of St Paul's Cathedral. We usually divide Donne's work into two sections: his love poetry *Songs and Sonnets* and his religious verse *Holy Sonnets*. He also wrote sermons, meditations and prayers. John Donne is buried in St Paul's Cathedral and is commemorated by a white marble statue.



St Paul's Cathedral





'Metaphysical poetry' concerns itself with clever, subtle and theoretical arguments. It is characterised by extended metaphors (called conceits), paradoxes, surprising and striking imagery and inventive syntax. It provides readers with new perspectives and draws from philosophy, mathematics and astronomy. John Donne is considered the greatest writer of metaphysical poetry of his time.

'The Sun Rising' (published posthumously 1633)

John Donne

*Busy old fool, unruly Sun,  
Why dost thou thus,  
Through windows and through curtains call on us?  
Must to thy motions lovers seasons run?  
Saucy pedantique wretch, go chide  
Late school boys, and sour prentices,  
Go tell Court-huntsman, that the King will ride,  
Call country ants to harvest offices;  
Love, all alike, no season knows, nor clime,  
Nor hours, days, months, which are the rags of time.*

*Thy beams, so reverend, and strong  
Why shouldst thou think?  
I could eclipse them with a wink,  
But that I would not lose sight so long:  
If her eyes have not blinded thine,  
Look tomorrow late, tell me,  
Whether both the India's of spice and Mine  
Be where thou leftst them, or lie here with me.  
Ask for those Kings whom thou saw'st yesterday,  
And thou shalt hear, All here in one bed lay.*

*She is all States, and all Princes I,  
Nothing else is.  
Princes do but play us; compar'd to this,  
All honor's mimique; All wealth alchemy.*

(continues)

(continued)

*Thou sun art half as happy as we,  
In that the world's contracted thus;  
Thine age asks ease, and since thy duties be  
To warm the world, that's done in warming us.  
Shine here to us, and thou art every where;  
This bed thy centre is, these walls, thy sphere.*

### Activity 3.17

Complete the following activity in small groups or pairs.

- 1 Read Donne's poem aloud a few times. Write what you think the poem is about and a list of questions you have about it.
- 2 Read about the poem on three respected and trustworthy websites on the internet. Ask your teacher to help you distinguish between reputable sites and others.
- 3 How has your reading helped answer your questions? What do you now understand about the poem?
- 4 What is your reaction to the poem?

### *Did you know?*

The famous lines 'no man is an island' and 'never send to know for whom the bell tolls; It tolls for thee' are from Donne's 'Meditation 17'.

## Words, words, words

*amiable, dialect, enjambment, parentheses, satire, simile, stanza, syllable, traditional, tragedy*

- 1 Through research find five different dialects and give an example of each.
- 2 Write the definition of 'satire'. Name a television show that uses satire.
- 3 Write a sentence that includes the use of parentheses.
- 4 Look back through the chapter and find two examples of enjambment.
- 5 Write two synonyms and two antonyms of 'amiable'.
- 6 What is the origin of the word 'stanza'?

- 7 Write your name in full. Divide it into syllables. Highlight the syllables that are stressed.
- 8 What things do you consider are traditional in your culture?
- 9 Create concept cards for 'simile' and 'tragedy':

My definition:	Characteristics:
<b>Simile</b>	
Examples:	Graphic:

## Read and view more

- *Shakespeare* by Bill Bryson
- *The Time Traveler's Wife* by Audrey Niffenegger
- *The Lonely Passion of Judith Hearne* by Brian Moore
- 'The Gift of the Magi' by O. Henry
- 'When You Are Old' by W.B. Yeats
- 'The Good-Morrow' and 'The Anniversary' by John Donne
- *Wuthering Heights* (2011) directed by Andrea Arnold
- *Shakespeare in Love* (1998) directed by John Madden

## Final words

- 1 Write three things that you now know about canonical writing about love.
- 2 Which two texts or extracts in this chapter made the most impact on you?
- 3 What aspects of love would you like to see explored in literature?



# 4

## Grave matters

### RELOADED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Paired texts: death in war
- Grave matters in poetry
- Grave matters in prose
- Focus on: dialogue, monologues, the soliloquy (and the aside)
- Your writing
- Extension: 'Death Be Not Proud' (Holy Sonnet 10) by John Donne
- Words, words, words
- Read and view more
- Final words

'In this world nothing can be said to be certain in life other than death and taxes', wrote American inventor and scientist Benjamin Franklin (1706–1790). Although this is a sardonic view on taxes, the quotation reminds us, paradoxically, that death is the only real certainty in life. You could think of this as being pretty grim – no one wants to believe that they will one day die – but you could also look at how remarkable it is that, despite knowing that death is inevitable, we continue to live our lives fully, passionately and ardently.

Of course, many people have a spiritual belief in an afterlife, which provides comfort and reassurance when facing death. John Donne represents this conviction of eternal life in his holy sonnet 'Death Be Not Proud'. A number of other canonical writers had strong religious beliefs that shaped their work. It is interesting that these writers, like Christina Rossetti and Emily Dickinson, suffered long illnesses that turned them into recluses. Hence, they had a lot of time to ponder their mortality.

Other writers were deeply affected by deaths they witnessed or to which they were personally connected. Alfred Tennyson's long-term grief over the death of his closest friend Arthur Hallam influenced and shaped his poetry for nearly 60 years.

World War I poets Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen wrote about casualties of war. While Brooke remained patriotic, seeing death as a necessary sacrifice, Owen strongly criticised the slaughter that surrounded him.

Other writers take us into the darker territory of murder. In *Macbeth*, Shakespeare examines the psychology of a loyal man driven by both internal and external forces to **regicide**. At times, writers are able to provide justice not available in real life. Charles Dickens was affected by a news story that reported the vicious and brutal murder of

**regicide** the killing of  
a king or monarch

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a prostitute, Eliza Grimwood. The murderer was never convicted. In his novel, *Oliver Twist* (1837–9), Dickens used details from this real-life event in his portrayal of the murder of fictional prostitute, Nancy. He provides a kind of literary justice for Eliza Grimwood when Nancy's murderer is chased by an angry mob to his death.

Many canonical writers died young. Most, like Keats, Dickinson and the Brontë sisters, died of diseases for which we now have vaccines or cures. Some, like Owen, died in war and others, like Percy Shelley, from accidents. A few had ironic deaths. Dickens spent the last years of his life acting out parts of his novels on lecture tours. Legend has it that he died from an aneurysm after re-enacting Nancy's murder at his home in Gad's Hill in 1870.

Of course, all of the canonical writers are now dead but they have achieved immortality through their work. In this chapter, we will look at some of the canonical writing about death. Here are the texts and extracts that you will read, in chronological order of publication:

- 1623** *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare
- 1633** 'Death Be Not Proud' by John Donne
- 1785** 'Epitaph for James Smith' by Robert Burns
- 1786** 'Epitaph for Robert Aiken, Esq.' by Robert Burns
- 1837–9** *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens
- 1842** 'Break, Break, Break' by Alfred Lord Tennyson
- 1842** 'My Last Duchess' by Robert Browning
- 1847** *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë
- 1862** 'Song' by Christina Rossetti
- 1890** 'Because I could not stop for Death' by Emily Dickinson
- 1914** 'The Soldier' by Rupert Brooke
- 1920** 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' by Wilfred Owen

### Activity 4.1 Your thoughts

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- 1 In small groups, discuss the deaths that appear on news programs or in publications – murders, natural disasters, accidents, wars, etc. How are you affected by these stories? What do you think about the way they are reported?
  - 2 You may have had a family member or friend die. If you feel comfortable about reflecting on this, write about how the event affected you.
  - 3 What are your personal beliefs about death?
-

## Paired texts: death in war

Rupert Brooke and Wilfred Owen are famous World War I poets from England. Brooke experienced combat once, when he served as a member of the Royal Navy Volunteer Reserve. He died on a hospital ship from an insect bite that gave him blood poisoning. 'The Soldier' (1914) is typical of his extremely patriotic poetry, which has been greatly criticised in modern times for its glorification of war. Wilfred Owen, on the other hand, realistically exposed the slaughter and terror of war. He fought on the Western Front and was killed on 4 November 1918, one week before the Armistice was signed.



Rupert Brooke (above) and Wilfred Owen





## RUPERT BROOKE (1887–1915)

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- Poet, travel writer, literary critic, scholar and soldier.
- His father was a teacher at Rugby School in England.
- Won the poetry prize at Rugby in 1905.
- Studied at Cambridge University where he developed an interest in acting.
- Friends, Virginia Woolf and W.B. Yeats, described him as ‘the handsomest man in England’.
- Before the war, travelled in France, Germany, America, Canada and the South Seas.
- Most famous work is an anthology of sonnets called *1914 and Other Poems*. ‘The Soldier’ is the final sonnet in this collection.
- Died on the way to Gallipoli and is buried on the island Skyros.

## WILFRED OWEN (1893–1918)

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- Born in Shropshire, England.
- His father was a station-master.
- Taught English in France 1913–15.
- Joined up to serve the army in 1915.
- Wounded in 1917, he was taken to a military hospital in Edinburgh, and diagnosed with shell shock.
- Befriended another famous war poet, Siegfried Sassoon, while in hospital.
- Returned to the Western Front and earned the Military Cross in 1918 for leadership and courage.
- His poetry is famous for exposing the horrors of war.
- In his last letter to his mother, he quoted a Bengali poet called Tagore, ‘When I go from hence let this be my parting word, what I have seen is unsurpassable’.
- News of his death reached his parents on Armistice Day.

'The Soldier' (1914)

Rupert Brooke

*If I should die, think only this of me;  
That there's some corner of a foreign field  
That is forever England. There shall be  
In that rich earth a richer dust concealed;  
A dust whom England bore, shaped, made aware,  
Gave, once, her flowers to love, her ways to roam,  
A body of England's, breathing English air,  
Washed by the rivers, blest by suns of home.*

*And think, this heart, all evil shed away,  
A pulse in the eternal mind, no less  
Gives somewhere back the thoughts by England given;  
Her sights and sounds; dreams happy as her day;  
And laughter, learnt of friends; and gentleness,  
In hearts at peace, under an English heaven.*



## 'Anthem for Doomed Youth' (written 1917)

Wilfred Owen

*What passing bells for these who die as cattle?  
Only the monstrous anger of the guns.  
Only the stuttering rifles' rapid rattle  
Can patter out their hasty **orisons**.  
No mockeries now for them; no prayers nor bells,  
Nor any voice of mourning save the choirs –  
The shrill, demented choirs of wailing shells;  
And bugles calling for them from sad shires.*

**orisons** prayers

*What candles may be held to speed them all?  
Not in the hands of boys but in their eyes  
Shall shine the holy glimmers of goodbyes.  
The pallor of girls' brows shall be their **pall**;  
Their flowers the tenderness of patient minds.  
And each slow dusk a drawing down of blinds.*

**pall** cloth placed  
over a coffin

### Activity 4.2 'The Soldier'

- 1 Explain the first four lines of the poem.
- 2 How has Brooke personified England in the sonnet?
- 3 How would you describe the tone and mood of this poem?
- 4 Which lines do you think best communicate the tone and mood?



### Activity 4.3 'Anthem for Doomed Youth'

- 1 Comment on the title of the poem.
- 2 What message does Owen convey through the simile, 'these who die as cattle'?
- 3 What sounds of war does he write about in the octet (the first eight lines)?
- 4 The men who die on the battlefield do not receive a dignified funeral. Instead, the church rituals are replaced by the events surrounding them. Complete this table to show the difference between the two:

A dignified funeral at home	The battlefield
Church bells	
Prayers and voices of mourning	
Candles in the hands of altar boys	
A pall	
Flowers	

- 5 Owen has used poetic techniques such as personification, alliteration, onomatopoeia and metaphors. Find an example of each of these and explain their effect. Create a table with four columns – with the headings Quotation, Technique, Effect, Picture – in order to analyse what you consider to be the most effective lines.

### Activity 4.4

- 1 These poems provide different perspectives of death in war. As Brooke or Owen, write a letter to your publisher explaining the main message of your poem and stating why you think it's important that your poem be published.
- 2 Do you think these poems are still relevant today? Why or why not?

#### *Did you know?*

Of the two poets, Rupert Brooke was the most popular and revered of his day but Wilfred Owen has received much more critical respect in modern times.

## Activity 4.5 Visual texts

- 1 Using the internet or books from your school library, view a number of propaganda posters (they can be from any conflict). Choose two pro-war and two anti-war posters and explain how visual and textual features have been used to persuade the audience of their point of view.
- 2 Design a poster that promotes peace, as opposed to war.
- 3 Australian Frank Hurley (1885–1962) is famous for his war photography and particularly for the images that he manipulated for effect. Look at some of his photographs and comment on their composition and effect.
- 4 Look through war photographs on the Australian War Memorial website and comment on those that you find particularly moving or effective.



Australian anti-war poster

## Grave matters in poetry

### 'Break, Break, Break' by Alfred Tennyson

During his time at Cambridge University, Alfred Tennyson (1809–1892) joined the intellectual society (or club) 'The Apostles', which was founded in 1820 with 12 members. It still exists today and, unlike in Tennyson's time, women can now become members (though this has only been since the 1970s). Among club members was poet Arthur Hallam, who became Tennyson's closest friend. When Hallam died in 1833 at the age of 22, Tennyson was grief stricken and expressed his feelings of deep sorrow through poetry. Over 17 years, he wrote the long, philosophical poem 'In Memoriam A.H.H.' (1850) in memory of his friend. Queen Victoria was a great admirer of Tennyson's and claimed that 'In Memoriam' comforted her after her husband's death.

'Break, Break, Break' (written 1834–5) is another of Tennyson's poems that expresses his great sense of loss over the death of Hallam.



### 'Break, Break, Break' (written 1834–5)

Alfred Tennyson

*Break, break, break  
On thy cold gray stones, O Sea!  
And I would that my tongue could utter  
The thoughts that arise in me.*

*O well for the fisherman's boy,  
That he shouts with his sister at play!  
O well for the sailor lad,  
That he sings in his boat on the bay!*

*And the stately ships go on  
To their haven under the hill;  
But O for the touch of a vanished hand,  
And the sound of a voice that is still!*

*Break, break, break,  
At the foot of thy crags, O Sea!  
But the tender grace of a day that is dead  
Will never come back to me.*

## Activity 4.6

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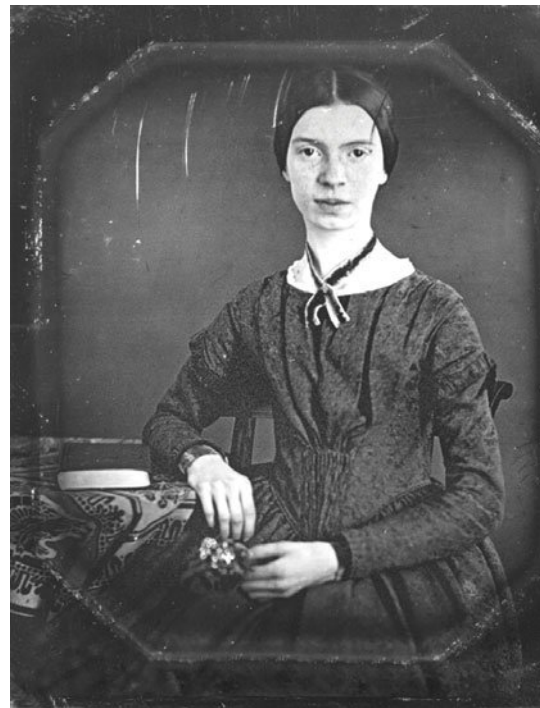
- 1 The opening lines suggest the crashing of waves on the shore. What else might be breaking?
  - 2 What effect do the adjectives 'cold' and 'gray' have?
  - 3 Tennyson says he wishes he could speak the thoughts that are building inside him. What might these thoughts be?
  - 4 What contrast does the second stanza provide?
  - 5 What does Tennyson wish he could feel and hear in the third stanza?
  - 6 How would you describe the rhythm of the poem?
  - 7 In your own words, describe Tennyson's thoughts in this poem.
  - 8 Create an audio-visual performance of 'Break, Break, Break'.
- 

## 'Because I could not stop for Death' by Emily Dickinson

Emily Dickinson (1830–1886) is an enigmatic figure. We know little about her life; what we *do* know makes her appear somewhat eccentric. She was born into a wealthy family in Amherst, Massachusetts, in the United States, and there she stayed for all but one year of her life. Although lively and vivacious in her youth, she became increasingly withdrawn from social life, eventually leading the life of a recluse in the family home.

There has been much speculation as to *why* Dickinson chose to live her life secluded from the outside world. One theory is that she was heartbroken over a man, or perhaps over a woman. Another is that she was ill. She suffered a disease that affected her kidneys and was most likely in a lot of pain. In the 1870s and early 1880s she suffered much grief over the deaths of her father, two friends, her mother and her nephew. For whatever reason, she preferred not to receive visitors, although she kept up prolific contact with people through letters.

Dickinson wrote poetry from a young age and we have around 1800 of her poems. Although she is now known as one of the greatest American poets of the nineteenth century, only a small number of her poems (fewer than 10) were published in her lifetime. Many of her poems explore ideas of death and immortality – 'Because I could not stop for Death' (1890) is one of these.



Emily Dickinson

'Because I could not stop for Death'  
(published posthumously 1890)

Emily Dickinson

*Because I could not stop for Death –  
He kindly stopped for me –  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –  
And Immortality.*

*We slowly drove – He knew no haste  
And I had put away  
My labor and my leisure too,  
For his Civility –*

*We passed the School, where Children strove  
At Recess – in the Ring –  
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –  
We passed the Setting Sun –*

*Or rather – He passed Us –  
The Dews drew quivering and chill –  
For only **Gossamer**, my Gown –  
My **Tippet** – only **Tulle** –*

**gossamer** light,  
delicate material

**tippet** a fur covering  
for the shoulders

**tulle** soft net-  
like material like  
that of a veil





*We paused before a House that seemed  
A Swelling of the Ground –  
The Roof was scarcely visible –  
The **Cornice** – in the Ground –*

*Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet  
Feels shorter than the Day  
I first **surmised** the Horses' Heads  
Were toward Eternity –*

**cornice** an ornamental part of a ceiling that sits just under the ceiling

**surmised** to guess or work out

.....

### Activity 4.7

.....

- 1 Death is personified in this poem. What qualities does he possess?
  - 2 The woman says Death stopped for her because she couldn't stop for Death. What do you think is meant by this?
  - 3 Why do you think Dickinson has included Death and his passenger passing a schoolyard?
  - 4 What does the setting of the sun symbolise?
  - 5 Explain the last stanza.
  - 6 Create a Photo Story or storyboard for this poem.
  - 7 Visit the Emily Dickinson Museum online (the link can be found at [www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks](http://www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks)) and look at the map of Amherst today. It marks interesting and significant sites for you to explore.
- .....

### Activity 4.8 Visual texts

.....

Death has often been personified as the Grim Reaper – a skeletal figure who wears a hooded cloak and carries a scythe. View a comic version of Death in the 'Grim Reaper' scene from Monty Python's *The Meaning of Life* (1983). Explain how humour is created in the scene. Compare this to the controversial 1987 Australian advertisement about AIDS prevention in which the Grim Reaper is presented in a much more threatening manner. What kind of reactions do you think this advertisement provoked? (Both clips can be found online at [www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks](http://www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks).)

.....

## 'Song' by Christina Rossetti

Christina Rossetti (1830–1894) is considered one of the most important women writers of the **Victorian period**. She established herself with the publication of *Goblin Market and Other Poems* in 1862 and continued writing poetry for the rest of her life, despite long bouts of illness. She was educated at home by her mother, who stressed the importance of religious works, classics and fairy tales. Rossetti used this foundation of her learning to write devotional verse, poetry for children and songs.

Much of her poetry for adults is tinged with melancholy and this quality, along with the religious focus of her work, has brought comparisons to Emily Brontë and Emily Dickinson. Her writing's popularity and acclaim faded a little during the Modernist period (which you can read about in Chapter 6) but gained favour again in the 1970s, when critics admired her **prosody** and feminist literary theorists drew attention to the value of her work.

'Song' (1862) offers the poet's thoughts about her own death.

### 'Song' (1862)

Christina Rossetti

*When I am dead, my dearest,  
Sing no sad songs for me;  
Plant thou no roses at my head,  
Nor shady cypress tree:  
Be the green grass above me  
With showers and dewdrops wet;  
And if thou wilt, remember,  
And if thou wilt, forget.*

*I shall not see the shadows,  
I shall not feel the rain;  
I shall not hear the nightingale  
Sing on, as if in pain:  
And dreaming through the twilight  
That doth not rise nor set,  
**Haply** I may remember,  
And haply may forget.*

**Victorian period**  
historical period  
dated by the years of  
the English monarch,  
Queen Victoria's,  
reign, 1837–1901

**prosody** the theory  
and practice of  
writing poetry and  
the study of speech  
patterns

**haply** by chance or  
with luck

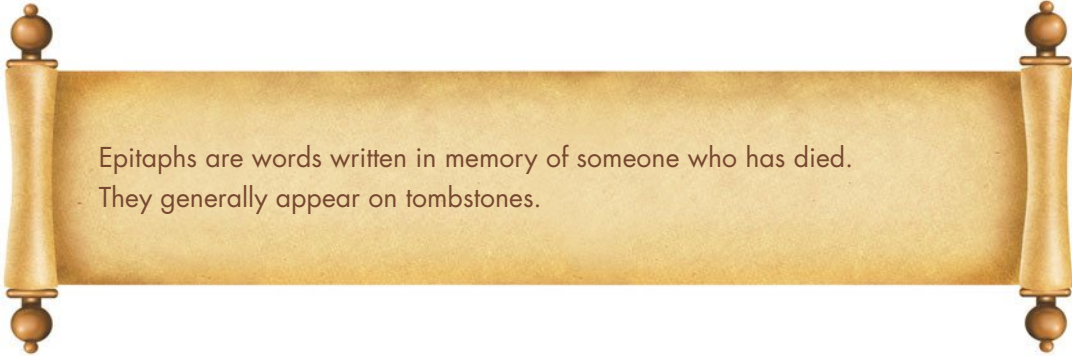


### Activity 4.9

- 1 What does Rossetti ask of people in the event of her death?
- 2 What view of death does she present?
- 3 Describe the tone and mood of the poem.
- 4 The name given to the deliberate repetition of a word or phrase is **anaphora**. Identify examples of anaphora from this poem and explain their effect.
- 5 To whom do you think the poem is addressed?
- 6 What thoughts and feelings do you have in response to this poem?

**anaphora** the repetition of a word or expression at the beginning of stanzas, clauses or sentences





Epitaphs are words written in memory of someone who has died.  
They generally appear on tombstones.

## Epitaphs by Robert Burns

Robert Burns (1759–1796) is often referred to as the National Bard of Scotland as he wrote most of his poetry in Scots dialect (discussed in Chapter 3). In 1784 he moved to a village outside of the town of Mauchline. He made a number of friends there but also a number of enemies – this was due to his liberal attitude to the church in an area that was very conservative, even fanatical. His epitaphs, which are often humorous, suggest who was friend and who was foe.

### 'Epitaph For James Smith' (1785)

Robert Burns

*Lament him, Mauchline husbands **a'**,  
He **aften** did assist ye;  
For had ye **staid hale** weeks **cwa**,  
Your wives they **ne'er** had miss'd ye.*

**hale** many or a  
good number

*Ye Mauchline **bairns**, as on ye press  
To school in bands **thegither**,  
O tread ye lightly on his grass, –  
Perhaps he was your father!*

**bairns** children

### 'Epitaph For Robert Aiken, Esq.' (1786)

Robert Burns

*Know thou, O stranger to the fame  
Of this much **lov'd**, much honoured name!  
(For none that knew him need be told)  
A warmer heart death **ne'er** made cold.*

## Activity 4.10

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- 1 Write the English version of the words in blue.
  - 2 You will notice that apostrophes for contractions are used in both epitaphs. Write the contractions (in green) in full.
  - 3 'Ye' and 'thou' are considered archaic now. They both mean 'you' but what is the difference between them?
  - 4 Using your answers from questions 1, 2 and 3, write modern English versions of each epitaph.
  - 5 Create a tombstone with an epitaph for a real or imaginary pet.
- 

## Grave matters in prose

### *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë

The Brontë sisters – Charlotte, Emily and Anne – form one of the most talented families of the canon. Each wrote novels that have lived long in the imaginations of generations of readers. *Jane Eyre* (1847) tells the story of an orphan who is sent to Lowood School where, after a mostly miserable time, she becomes a teacher. Charlotte Brontë (1816–1855) had attended a similar school and her brutal experiences there formed the descriptions of Lowood. Happily, Charlotte eventually attended and taught at a more respectable school and Jane, our heroine, goes on to become a governess at Thornfield Hall where she falls in love with the wealthy, though abrasive, owner, Edward Rochester. It is a story of emotional intensity and is full of dramatic twists and turns. Our extracts are from the early part of the novel and describe the diseased conditions of Lowood School, and the dying thoughts of one of the pupils, Helen Burns.



## Extract 1: from Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847)

**pastille** lozenge

**effluvia** a strong,  
unpleasant odour

While disease had thus become an inhabitant of Lowood, and death its frequent visitor; while there was gloom and fear within its walls; while its rooms and passages steamed with hospital smells, the drug and the **pastille** striving vainly to overcome the **effluvia** of mortality, that bright May shone unclouded over the bold hills and beautiful woodland out of doors. Its garden, too, glowed with flowers: hollyhocks had sprung up tall as trees, lilies had opened, tulips and roses were in bloom; the borders of the little beds were gay with pink thrift and crimson double daisies; the sweetbriars gave out, morning and evening, their scent of spice and apples; and these fragrant treasures were all useless for most of the inmates of Lowood, except to furnish now and then a handful of herbs and blossoms to put in a coffin.

## Extract 2: from *Jane Eyre*

'I am very happy, Jane; and when you hear that I am dead, you must be sure and not grieve: there is nothing to grieve about. We all must die one day, and the illness which is removing me is not painful; it is gentle and gradual: my mind is at rest. I leave no one to regret me much: I have only a father; and he is lately married, and will not miss me. By dying young, I shall escape great sufferings. I had not qualities or talents to make my way very well in the world: I should have been continually at fault.'

### Activity 4.11

- 1 How does Brontë use language to create a contrast between the Lowood School and the surrounding countryside in Extract 1?
- 2 Create a pair of visual images that illustrate the contrast.
- 3 Describe Helen's attitude to death in Extract 2. What is your opinion of this? Is it a brave, realistic or foolish view?

## *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) is a giant of the literary canon whose success and popularity in his own time continued into the modern era, with several of his novels being set for study and more being transformed into musicals, films and television dramas. Many of his tales were originally published in monthly serial form, over a year or two, so plots twist and turn, chapters have cliff-hanger endings and events are dramatic. *Oliver Twist* (1837–9) is no exception. It traces the ups and downs of a boy whose mother died shortly after his birth in a workhouse (where the poor and vulnerable lived miserable lives, working for their keep). After being cruelly treated, he runs away to London and falls in with a gang of pickpocketing children, organised and trained by the criminal adults Bill Sikes and Fagin. *Oliver Twist* raised awareness of the plight of Victorian children in institutions and on the street.

In the following extract, Sikes brutally kills his mistress (and prostitute) Nancy, as he mistakenly believes that she is a traitor who has informed on him.

### Extract: from Charles Dickens' *Oliver Twist* (1837–9)

'Bill,' said the girl, in the low voice of alarm, 'why do you look like that at me?'

The robber sat regarding her for a few seconds with dilated nostrils and heaving breast, and then, grasping her by the head and throat, dragged her into the middle of the room, and, looking once towards the door, placed his heavy hand upon her mouth.

'Bill, Bill –' gasped the girl, wrestling with the strength of mortal fear, '– I – I won't scream, or cry – not once, – hear me – speak to me – tell me what I have done!'

'You know, you she-devil!' returned the robber, suppressing his breath. 'You were watched to-night; every word you said was heard.'

'Then, spare my life, for the love of Heaven, as I spared yours,' rejoined the girl, clinging to him. 'Bill, dear Bill! You cannot have the heart to kill me! Oh, think of all I have given up only this one night for you! You shall have time to think, and save yourself this crime! I will not loose my hold; you cannot throw me off. Bill! Bill! For dear God's sake, for your own, for mine, stop before you spill my blood. I have been true to you; upon my guilty soul I have.' ...

(continues)

(continued)

... The housebreaker freed one arm, and grasped his pistol. The certainty of immediate detection if he fired flashed across his mind, even in the midst of his fury, and he beat it twice with all the force he could summon, upon the upturned face that almost touched his own.

She staggered and fell, nearly blinded with the blood that rained down from a deep gash in her forehead, but raising herself with difficulty on her knees, drew from her bosom a white handkerchief ... and holding it up in her folded hands as high towards Heaven as her feeble strength would let her, breathed one prayer for mercy to her Maker.

It was a ghastly figure to look upon. The murderer staggering backward to the wall, and shutting out the sight with his hand, seized a heavy club and struck her down.'



### Activity 4.12

- 1 How does Nancy try to save her life?
- 2 How does Dickens convey Nancy's fear?
- 3 Why doesn't Sikes shoot Nancy?
- 4 How does Dickens show Sikes's anger and savagery? Use quotations in your answer.
- 5 What is your reaction to this extract?



## *Did you know?*

Dickens was well-known for his concern for women who had fallen into prostitution. In 1847 he supported a rehabilitation home for prostitutes founded by the bank heiress Angela Burdett-Coutts. It provided help and domestic education for 'fallen' women until 1858.

## **Focus on: dialogue, monologues, the soliloquy (and the aside)**

The things we say and the way we say them can reveal a lot about us. We are often judged by our words but unless we are delivering a prepared speech, we have to 'talk off the top of our heads' – so to speak! Some of us are better at it than others. How many times have you thought of a great comeback, well *after* a conversation? Characters, of course, have writers to craft and shape their dialogue. Their speech becomes the written word, even when they are mumbling under their breaths or talking to themselves. Writers have a number of ways they can turn the spoken word into written text:

- Dialogue: a conversation between two or more people. You will find dialogue in prose and play scripts.
- Monologue: a speech, longer than a piece of dialogue, performed by one person. In a play, a monologue is usually addressed to other characters in the scene.
- Dramatic monologue: a form of poetry in which a character (not the poet) is speaking. The poem reveals the true personality of the speaker and the situation he or she is in. Dramatic irony is created when the speaker is not aware of what the speech reveals about his or her character.
- An aside: words spoken by characters in plays that some, or all, of the other characters on stage do not hear. It reveals motives or thoughts of the character.
- Soliloquy: a speech in a play that a character delivers alone on stage to reveal his or her innermost thoughts, feelings and motives. It allows audiences to hear characters thinking out loud in order to know their inner thoughts and understand their psychology.

## Macbeth by William Shakespeare

William Shakespeare (1564–1616) wrote the famous tragedy *Macbeth* (first performed in 1606 and first printed in 1623), which tells the tale of a brave Scottish warrior driven by ‘vaulting’ ambition to murder his king, Duncan. You can imagine how that turns out for him. He was a respected nobleman, renowned for his loyalty and rewarded by the king for his courage on the battlefield. But, oh, how the ambitious are tempted and manipulated! A trio of witches, ‘so withered and so wild in their attire’, seduce him with prophecies of success. His wife, with her ‘undaunted mettle’, urges him on. How easy it seems to take the throne treacherously rather than work towards it honestly! Once loving and loyal, Macbeth becomes merciless and traitorous. Once respected and admired, he becomes hated and feared. Having committed the deed, he is immediately remorseful and haunted by guilt. But it’s too late, of course, and he must spend the rest of his days desperately trying to maintain his status and power. It is a bloody story of the chaos that an act of regicide unleashes on the world.

In the following extract, at a gathering of nobles after a war, King Duncan announces that his son, Malcolm, has been granted the title Prince of Cumberland. He will eventually inherit the throne. Macbeth has just publically declared his loyalty to Duncan but, in an aside, he reveals to the audience that his thoughts lurk in dark territory.



## Extract 1: an aside from William Shakespeare's *Macbeth* (1623)

(Act 1, Scene 4, lines 48–53)

*The Prince of Cumberland: that is a step  
On which I must fall down, or else o'erleap,  
For in my way it lies. Stars, hide your fires,  
Let not light see my black and deep desires,  
The eye that wink at the hand. Yet let that be,  
Which the eye fears when it is done to see.*

### Activity 4.13

- 1 What do you think are Macbeth's 'black and deep desires'?
- 2 Why do you think Macbeth addresses the stars?
- 3 In groups of four, read the whole scene. Perform lines 14 to the end of the scene, paying particular attention to how you deliver Macbeth's aside. Why is it effective that these lines are delivered in an aside rather than in a soliloquy?
- 4 View the scene from Roman Polanski's film *Macbeth* (1971). Is it similar to your group's performance?

The second half of the soliloquy in Scene 7 reveals Macbeth's struggle with his conscience, as depicted in the following extract. Should he kill the king and seize the crown or should he remain a loyal nobleman, waiting for destiny to fulfill his ambition?

## Extract 2: a soliloquy from *Macbeth*

(Act 1, Scene 7, lines 12–28)

*He's here in double trust:  
First, as I am his kinsman and his subject,  
Strong both against the deed; then, as his host,  
Who should against his murderer shut the door,  
Not bear the knife myself. Besides, this Duncan  
Hath borne his faculties so meek, hath been  
So clear in his great office, that his virtues  
Will plead like angels, trumpet-tongued against  
The deep damnation of his taking-off.*

(continues)

(continued)

*And pity, like a newborn babe  
Striding the blast, or heavn's **cherubin** horsed  
Upon the **sightless couriers** of the air,  
Shall blow the horrid deed in every eye,  
That tears shall drown the wind. I have no spur  
To prick the sides of my intent, but only  
**Vaulting** ambition which o'erleaps itself  
And falls on th' other –*

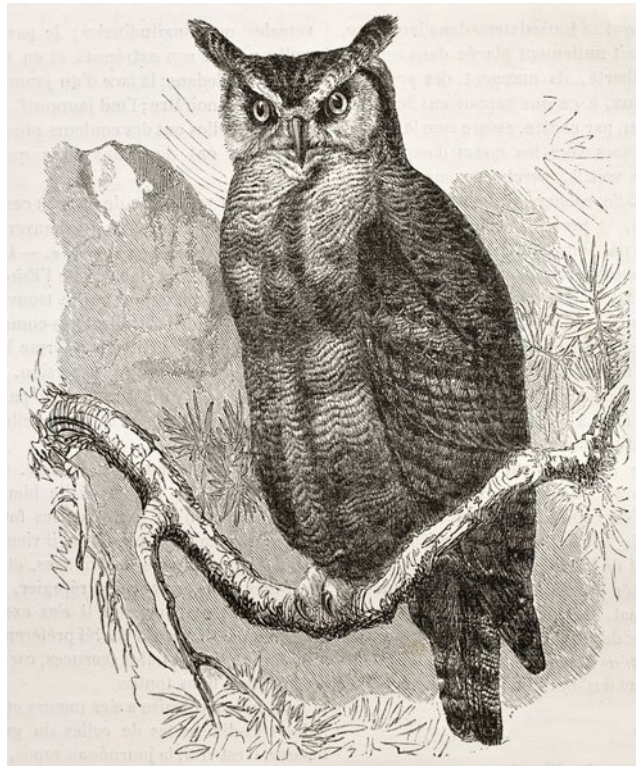
**cherubin** angelic children

**sightless couriers** the wind, described like blind runners carrying messages

**vaulting** leaping

## Activity 4.14

- 1 What two roles does Macbeth have that should demand loyalty and protection for Duncan?
- 2 Which lines tell us that Duncan has been a good king?
- 3 What role will his 'virtues' and 'pity' play after Duncan's death?
- 4 Which lines tell us that people will sob with sorrow when they hear the news?
- 5 What does Macbeth admit is the only reason to continue with the plan to kill the king?
- 6 At this point in the play, how do you think Macbeth is feeling about the plan?
- 7 Shakespeare has used personification, similes, alliteration, hyperbole and metaphors to make this a dramatic, poetic and passionate speech. Find an example of each and explain its effect.
- 8 In groups, devise two different ways this speech could be performed.



The following dialogue takes place immediately after Macbeth has murdered Duncan.

### Extract 3: dialogue from *Macbeth*

(Act 2, Scene 2, lines 14–24)

MACBETH: *I have done the deed. Didst thou hear a noise?*

LADY MACBETH: *I heard the owl scream and the crickets cry. Did not you speak?*

MACBETH: *When?*

LADY MACBETH: *Now.*

MACBETH: *As I descended?*

LADY MACBETH: *Ay.*

MACBETH: *Hark, who lies **i'th** second chamber?*

LADY MACBETH: **Donaldbain.**

MACBETH: *This is a sorry sight.*

LADY MACBETH: *A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight.*

**i'th** in the

**Donaldbain** one of  
Duncan's sons

### Activity 4.15

- 1 What do you notice about how this dialogue develops?
- 2 Why are the exchanges so short and why are there so many questions?
- 3 How is Macbeth feeling and what is the quotation that tells us this?
- 4 What does Lady Macbeth's response reveal about her character?

Macbeth makes the speech in Extract 4 towards the end of the play, immediately after he learns from a character called Seyton that Lady Macbeth is dead. There are no stage directions for Seyton to exit but he does not speak again in the scene. So, sometimes this speech is referred to as a monologue (spoken in front of Seyton) and sometimes it is referred to as a soliloquy (since there is an assumption that Seyton leaves silently). Either way, the speech reveals that Macbeth is weary of life.

## Extract 4: a monologue/soliloquy from *Macbeth*

(Act 5, Scene 5, lines 18–27)

*Tomorrow, and tomorrow, and tomorrow  
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day  
To the last syllable of recorded time;  
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools  
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle,  
Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player  
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage  
And then is heard no more. It is a tale  
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury  
Signifying nothing.*



### Activity 4.16

- 1 Explain the following metaphors that Shakespeare uses in this speech:
  - a 'Life's but a walking shadow, a poor player / That struts and frets his hour upon the stage / And then is heard no more.'
  - b 'It is a tale / Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury / Signifying nothing.'
- 2 Write three adjectives that describe Macbeth's state of mind at this point in the play.

## Did you know?

The play *Macbeth* is based on a real Scottish nobleman named Mac Bethad mac Findláich (Macbeth is the English translation), who was born around 1005. Shakespeare used Holinshed's *Chronicles of England, Scotland and Ireland* as one of his sources for the play but it would be an understatement to say that he used poetic licence to change events and personalities. Macbeth did in fact kill Duncan and take the throne (of Alba) but, unlike in the play, Macbeth was a good and fair king who ruled for at least 14 years. There are many sites on the web that tell the historical story of the real Macbeth.

## Dramatic monologue: 'My Last Duchess' by Robert Browning

A very bright child, Robert Browning (1812–1889) read voraciously from his father's extensive library of more than 6000 books, and was mostly educated at home. From a young age, he admired the poetry of Lord Byron and Percy Shelley. In fact, he declared himself to be a vegetarian and an atheist at the age of 13 in order to emulate his hero, Shelley.

When he was 16, he went to the University of London but left his formal studies there to pursue knowledge at his own pace and in his own way. His early poetry was not very successful. Readers and critics found his poems **obscure**. They couldn't understand many of the references he used. He also tried writing plays but didn't have much success with that either, although some of his dramas were performed. The experience of writing plays helped him develop the poetry for which he is now best known: the dramatic monologue. 'My Last Duchess' (1842) is a dramatic monologue in which a duke shows the portrait of his last wife to an envoy of a count. A chilling tale unfolds.

**obscure** not clearly expressed or understood



## 'My Last Duchess' (1842)

Robert Browning

*That's my last Duchess painted on the wall,  
Looking as if she were alive; I call  
That piece a wonder, now: **Fra Pandolf's** hands  
Worked busily a day, and there she stands.  
Will't please you sit and look at her? I said  
'Fra Pandolf' by design, for never read  
Strangers like you that pictured countenance,  
The depth and passion of its earnest glance,  
But to myself they turned (since none puts by  
The curtain I have drawn for you, but I)  
And seemed as they would ask me, if they **durst**,  
How such a glance came there; so, not the first  
Are you to turn and ask thus. Sir, 't was not  
Her husband's presence only, called that spot  
Of joy into the Duchess' cheek: perhaps  
Fra Pandolf chanced to say 'Her **mantle** laps  
Over my lady's wrist too much,' or 'Paint  
Must never hope to reproduce the faint  
Half-flush that dies along her throat;' such stuff  
Was courtesy, she thought, and cause enough  
For calling up that spot of joy. She had  
A heart – how shall I say? – too soon made glad,  
Too easily impressed: she liked whate'er  
She looked on, and her looks went everywhere.  
Sir, 't was all one! My favour at her breast,  
The dropping of the daylight in the West,  
The bough of cherries some **officious** fool  
Broke in the orchard for her, the white mule  
She rode with round the terrace – all and each  
Would draw from her alike the approving speech,  
Or blush, at least. She thanked men, – good! but thanked  
Somehow – I know not how – as if she ranked  
My gift of a nine-hundred-years-old name  
With anybody's gift. Who'd stoop to blame  
This sort of **trifling**? Even had you skill  
In speech – (which I have not) – to make your will  
Quite clear to such an one, and say, 'Just this*

**Fra Pandolf** the artist  
who painted the  
duchess

**durst** dared

**mantle** cloak

**officious** intrusively  
or excessively  
enthusiastic or  
meddling

**trifling** triviality



Or that in you disgusts me; here you miss,  
 Or there exceed the mark' – and if she let  
 Herself be lessoned so, nor plainly set  
 Her wits to yours, forsooth, and made excuse,  
 E'en then would be some stooping; and I choose  
 Never to stoop. Oh sir, she smiled, no doubt,  
 Whene'er I passed her; but who passed without  
 Much the same smile? This grew; I gave commands;  
 Then all smiles stopped together. There she stands  
 As if alive. Will't please you rise? We'll meet  
 The company below, then. I repeat,  
 The Count, your master's known **munificence**  
 Is ample **warrant** that no just pretence  
 Of mine for dowry will be disallowed;  
 Though his fair daughter's self, as I avowed  
 At starting, is my object. Nay we'll go  
 Together down, sir. Notice Neptune, though,  
 Taming a sea-horse, thought a rarity,  
 Which Claus of Innsbruck cast in bronze for me!

**munificence**  
 generosity  
**warrant** authorisation

### Activity 4.17

- 1 Highlight the sections of the poem where it is clear that the duke is speaking aloud to someone.
- 2 How does he establish his dominance in the first 12 lines?
- 3 What does the duke suggest was the chief fault of the duchess (lines 13–21)?
- 4 Of what else does the duke accuse the duchess (lines 21–35)?
- 5 What has happened to the duchess? Identify the lines that tell you this.
- 6 Describe the duke in your own words. Use quotations to support your point of view.
- 7 Evaluate the poem's ending.

## Your writing

The scenario: A talented member of a sports team has a driving ambition to become captain. The highly respected current captain has led the team to many victories and has always paid tribute to the other members for their efforts. The ambitious player has a good chance of becoming captain in a few years' time but is impatient. By coming up with a plan to injure or discredit the captain, he or she could take over the position.

Write a modern-day soliloquy during which the player wrestles with his or her conscience about this situation. You might like to use the structure of Macbeth's soliloquy to help you.

## Extension: 'Death Be Not Proud' (Holy Sonnet 10) by John Donne

John Donne's (1572–1631) work can be fairly neatly divided between his witty and elegant love poetry and his passionate devotional poetry, the Holy Sonnets. As you might guess, his love poetry was mainly written in his youth, in the 1590s, and his religious poetry followed around 1609–11. He converted from Catholicism to Anglicanism and, after pressure from King James I, was ordained as a chaplain in 1615. After this, he created little poetry and concentrated instead on delivering the 160 impassioned and ardent sermons that he wrote.

'Death Be Not Proud' is thought to have been written around 1610 but nobody really knows for sure. In the poem, death's power is limited to the imitation of sleep and brought about by chance. True to the sonnet form, the key of the poem lies in the last two lines.

### 'Death Be Not Proud' (Holy Sonnet 10) (written c. 1610)

John Donne

*Death be not proud, though some have called thee  
Mighty and dreadful, for thou art not so;  
For those whom thou think'st thou dost overthrow  
Die not, poor death, nor yet canst thou kill me.  
From rest and sleep, which but thy princes be,  
Much pleasure, then from thee much more must flow:  
And soonest our best men with thee do go,  
Rest of their bones, and soul's delivery.  
Thou art slave to Fate, chance to kings, and desperate men,  
And dost with poison, war, and sickness dwell,*

*And poppy or charms can make us sleep as well,  
And better than thy stroke; why swell'st thou then?  
One short sleep past, we wake eternally,  
And death shall be no more, Death thou shalt die.*

### Activity 4.18

- 1 For what reasons should Death not be proud?
- 2 What is the poet's tone?
- 3 In what way is Death 'slave to Fate, chance to kings, and desperate men'?
- 4 Why does Donne point out that Death dwells with 'poison, war, and sickness'?
- 5 Explain the last two lines.
- 6 Write Death's response to this sonnet.

## Words, words, words

*dialogue, epitaph, loquacious, monologue, recluse, regicide, soliloquy, taciturn, vice, virtue*

- 1 Why do you think a person might become a recluse?
- 2 Which five words are connected to speech?
- 3 What is the meaning and the origin of the prefix 'mono-'?
- 4 Write the definition of these words that begin with the prefix 'mono-': monobrow, monocle, monoculture, monoglot, monolith, monogamy, monopoly.
- 5 What is the connection between these words: soliloquy, solitaire, solitary, soloist?
- 6 Find the word from the list above that can be defined in the following ways:
  - a A word that goes with a noun to indicate second-in-charge.
  - b An instrument attached to a workbench with two moveable jaws.
  - c Evil or immoral quality.
- 7 Write the adjective and adverb of 'virtue'.
- 8 Write three adjectives that would describe the personality of someone who is **taciturn** and three for someone who is **loquacious**.
- 9 Write your own epitaph of exactly 15 words.
- 10 The suffix '-cide' means 'a person or substance that kills, the killing of'. Regicide, which means the killing of a king, combines the Latin word for king 'rex' with the suffix '-cide'. Write the definition of these words: pesticide, homicide, patricide, genocide.

**taciturn** reserved,  
saying very little

**loquacious** talkative

## Read and view more

- Hamlet's speech ('To be or not to be') from Act 3, Scene 1 of *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare
- 'Cold in the earth, and the deep snow piled above thee!' by Emily Brontë
- 'Dulce et Decorum Est' by Wilfred Owen
- *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* by Thomas Hardy
- 'Charge of the Light Brigade' by Alfred Lord Tennyson
- 'Do not go gentle into that good night' by Dylan Thomas
- *The Lovely Bones* by Alice Sebold
- *The Fourth Wish* (1976) directed by Don Chaffey

## Final words

- 1 What three thoughts or questions about death has this chapter provoked in you?
- 2 Which two texts have had the most impact on you?
- 3 Do you think modern texts reveal different or similar ways of thinking about death to canonical texts?





# 5

# Landscapes

## RELOADED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Paired texts: seasonal landscapes
- Wild and wonderful landscapes
- Focus on: Romantic poetry
- Your writing
- Extension: the pastoral
- Words, words, words
- Read and view more
- Final words

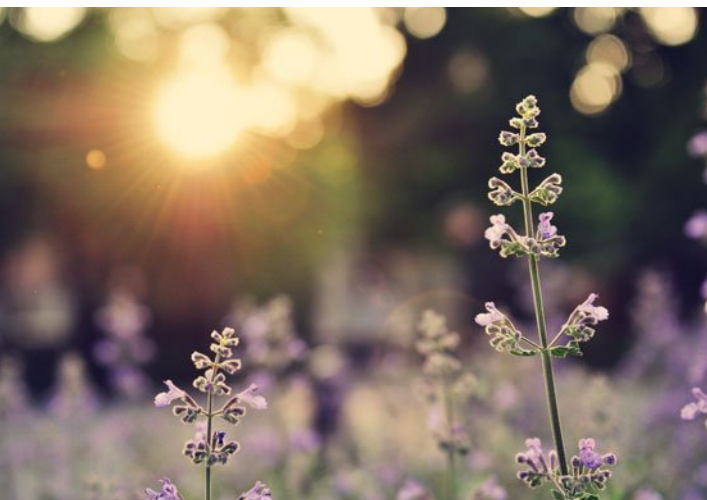
Think of all the different landscapes there are in the world: dizzying Alpine peaks; dark, mysterious woods and forests; unforgiving stretches of desert lands; soft, rolling valleys; flower-covered fields; secret, narrow gorges; winding rivers; tumbling waterfalls; crashing ocean waves – the list goes on and on. It is no surprise that writers have found great inspiration in the spectacle of the natural world. Their poetry and prose pays tribute to its grandeur and splendour. Writers evoke the local and national environments with which they are familiar, many celebrating the places in which they lived, and describing foreign and far-flung lands as places of great adventure. They also explore our interaction with the natural world by looking at both the tamed landscapes we have created (such as farmlands, parks and gardens) and the destruction we have wrought through industry and ‘progress’.

Nature has been explored through idyllic representations of its beauty and powerful descriptions of its realistic force. The pastoral genre represents the natural,

rural world as an idyllic place and its roots can be traced back to the poetry of third-century Greece. Its style has influenced poetry, drama, art and music for centuries. (You can read more about this genre in the Extension section at the end of the chapter.)

When industrialisation threatened both the landscape and the human condition, writers of the Romantic era (around 1790–1837) developed theories that extolled the values of nature. They were awed by the sights they encountered when they travelled around their own countries and through Europe, and by natural forces, such as storms and avalanches. Their belief in the power of nature to affect thought and emotions is a significant feature of their writing.

In more modern times, writers have continued to celebrate the natural world and criticise our interference with it. Think about contemporary issues of climate change, the destruction of rainforests, and the pollution of rivers, seas and air, and you can see why we still produce books, films, documentaries and websites that value the natural world and fear its disappearance. (If you are interested in writings about environmental





issues, both through fiction and non-fiction, the modern American writers Barry Lopez and Carl Hiassen might appeal to you.)

In this chapter we will look at some of the canonical writing about landscape. Here are the texts and extracts that you will read, in chronological order of publication:

- 1599** 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love'  
by Christopher Marlowe
- 1807** 'Daffodils' by William Wordsworth
- 1817** 'Mont Blanc' by Percy Bysshe Shelley
- 1818** *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
- 1820** 'To Autumn' by John Keats
- 1836** 'Porphyria's Lover' by Robert Browning
- 1878** *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy
- 1890** 'Lake Isle of Innisfree' by W.B. Yeats
- 1899** *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad
- 1916** 'The Road Not Taken' by Robert Frost
- 1923** 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' by Robert Frost



## Activity 5.1 Your thoughts

- 1 What type of landscape most impresses you and why?
- 2 Imagine standing on the peak of a mountain or in the middle of the desert or by a crashing sea. Write a description of the experience.
- 3 Create a collage of awe-inspiring natural scenes.
- 4 Describe a place you go to when you want peace and quiet.

## Paired texts: seasonal landscapes

Robert Frost (1874–1963) is an American poet whose work spans the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. He is closely associated with the area of New England that is made up of four states in the north-eastern corner of the United States. This is an area of spectacular beauty with its mountains, valleys, lakes and vivid seasons (particularly autumn). Frost lived in parts of New England most of his life and his poetry is very much about rural scenes (have a read of 'Out, Out' and 'After Apple-Picking') and the effect the landscape and seasons have on our hearts and minds. 'The Road Not Taken' (1916) is set in autumn and explores choices and our reasons for making them. 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' (1923) shows how a deep winter scene can have an enchanting and hypnotic effect on our thoughts.



Robert Frost

## ROBERT FROST (1874–1963)

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- Poet, farmer and teacher.
- Born in the city of San Francisco.
- Raised in rural Lawrence, Massachusetts, after the death of his father.
- He and his wife were high school sweethearts and the highest scoring graduates of their class.
- Farmed a property in New Hampshire.
- Lived for a while in England but moved back to the United States when World War I broke out.
- Most famous poems: 'The Road Not Taken', 'Mending Wall' and 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'.
- Won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry four times: 1924, 1931, 1937 and 1943.

### 'The Road Not Taken' (1916)

Robert Frost

*Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,  
And sorry I could not travel both  
And be one traveller long I stood  
And looked down one as far as I could  
To where it bent in the undergrowth;*

*Then took the other, as just as fair,  
And having perhaps the better claim,  
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;  
Though as for that the passing there  
Had worn them really about the same,*

*And both that morning equally lay  
In leaves no step had trodden black,  
Oh, I kept the first for another day!  
Yet knowing how way leads onto way,  
I doubted if I should ever come back.*

(continues)

(continued)

*I shall be telling this with a sigh  
Somewhere ages and ages hence;  
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I –  
I took the one less travelled by,  
And that has made all the difference.*



## Activity 5.2

- 1 Which road does the poet take and why?
- 2 Why do you think the poet says, 'I shall be telling this with a sigh / Somewhere ages and ages hence'?
- 3 What do you think is the main idea or message of the poem?
- 4 Why do you think the poem is set in autumn and not some other season?
- 5 In a small group, discuss choices you have made, how you made them and what differences they have made to your lives.

'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening' (written 1922)

Robert Frost

*Whose woods these are I think I know,  
His house is in the village though;  
He will not see me stopping here  
To watch his woods fill up with snow.*

*My little horse must think it queer  
To stop without a farmhouse near  
Between the woods and frozen lake  
The darkest evening of the year.*

*He gives his harness bells a shake  
To ask if there is some mistake.  
The only other sound's the sweep  
Of easy wind and downy flake.*

*The woods are lovely, dark and deep  
But I have promises to keep,  
And miles to go before I sleep,  
And miles to go before I sleep.*



### Activity 5.3

- 1 How does Frost create the sense that the traveller is in a remote and isolated area?
- 2 Sibilance (the repetition of the 's' sound) and assonance (long vowel sounds) are used in the third stanza. Quote the lines and explain the effect of these sound devices.
- 3 How does Frost make the woods sound both beautiful and dangerous in the last stanza?
- 4 Describe the effect of the repetition in the last two lines.

### Activity 5.4

Both of these poems combine a literal journey with reflections on life. Autumn provokes thoughts about choices and winter provokes thoughts about life and death. If the poet had been journeying in spring instead, what thoughts might have gone through his head? To help answer this, write a list of sights and sounds (and smells) he might encounter in spring.

### *Did you know?*

Robert Frost wrote a poem called 'Dedication' for John F. Kennedy's inauguration in 1961 but, blinded by the sun and unable to read it, he decided to recite a poem he had written in 1942 called 'The Gift Outright' instead.





New England landscapes

### Activity 5.5 Visual texts

- 1 Write a poetic description of one of these images of the New England countryside.
- 2 On the internet, search for images of 'The Road Not Taken'. Which four pictures would you use to illustrate the poem and why?
- 3 Create a Photo Story for 'The Road Not Taken' or 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening'.

If you are interested in poetry about particular places, have a read of 'Land's End' and 'Loch Ard Gorge' by the Australian poet John Foulcher. Your school library will have collections of his poems.

## Wild and wonderful landscapes

### *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley (1797–1851), (née Wollstonecraft Godwin) was born to intellectual parents famous in their own right. Her mother, Mary Wollstonecraft (who died when Mary was only 11 days old), was a writer who is best known for her feminist



Lake Geneva, Switzerland



book *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792) and her father was the political philosopher William Godwin.

Among the many literary visitors to the Godwin's home was poet Percy Bysshe Shelley (discussed later in this chapter). Against her father's wishes, at age 16, Mary ran away with Percy Shelley (who was already married but separated). They later married, after Percy's estranged wife, Harriet Westbrook, killed herself. They travelled widely and lived passionately until Percy Shelley's death in 1822. Mary Shelley wrote a number of novels and travel literature but is best known for her Gothic horror novel *Frankenstein* (1818), in which a scientist, Dr Frankenstein, creates a living being by stitching together body parts from a graveyard (discussed in Chapter 7).

*Frankenstein* was written on the shores of Lake Geneva in Switzerland, where Mary and Percy Shelley were holidaying with the poet Lord Byron and others. The dark skies and stormy weather inspired the group to write ghost stories to entertain each other. The novel *Frankenstein* was Mary's contribution.

The group, holidaying in Geneva, visited Chamounix in the French Alps, from where they could explore the Mont Blanc glacier. The following extract describes Dr Frankenstein's grief-stricken wanderings in the area. The awe-inspiring beauty of the landscape lifts his spirits and calms his soul. Nature is seen as a powerful force both on the world and on the individual.

Some of the sentences are very long so you should break them down to fully appreciate the description.

### Extract: from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)

I spent the following day roaming through the valley. I stood beside the sources of the Arveiron, which take their rise in a glacier, that with slow pace is advancing down from the summit of the hills, to barricade the valley. The abrupt sides of vast mountains were before me; the icy wall of the glacier overhung me; a few shattered pines were scattered around and the solemn silence of this glorious presence-chamber of imperial Nature was broken only by the brawling waves or the fall of some vast fragment, the thunder sound of the avalanche or the cracking, reverberated along the mountains, of the accumulated ice, which, through the silent working of immutable law as, was ever and anon rent and torn, as if it had been but a plaything in their hands. These sublime and magnificent scenes afforded me the greatest consolation that I was capable of receiving. They elevated me from all littleness of feeling; and although they did not remove my grief, they subdued and tranquilized it.

## Activity 5.6

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- 1 List five adjectives from this extract that communicate the physical power of nature.
  - 2 Write a simile from the extract that emphasises this power.
  - 3 What sounds of nature are described here?
  - 4 Explain the effect the scene has on Dr Frankenstein's emotional state.
  - 5 Write briefly about an experience you have had when the natural world has affected your emotions.
- 

### 'Porphyria's Lover' by Robert Browning

Robert Browning (1812–1889) began writing poetry from a young age and eventually became a well-known poet and playwright. He married the poet Elizabeth Barrett (best known for her love sonnets) in 1846 and they lived in Italy until her death in 1861. Robert Browning is best known for his dramatic monologues – these are poems in which a character speaks and reveals his or her true nature. His most famous dramatic monologues are 'Porphyria's Lover' (1836) and 'My Last Duchess' (1842). 'Porphyria's Lover' is a macabre poem about a man who strangles his lover with her own hair. It's worth reading in full!

The opposite extract is the beginning of the dramatic monologue. The stormy weather reflects the agitated state of the speaker of the poem. This device – when the mood of a character matches the weather – is called 'pathetic fallacy'.



## Extract: from Robert Browning's 'Porphyria's Lover' (1836)

*The rain set early in tonight,  
The sullen wind was soon awake,  
It tore the elm tops down for spite,  
And did its best to vex the lake:  
I listened with heart fit to break.  
When glided in Porphyria; straight  
She shut the cold out and the storm,  
And kneeled and made the cheerless grate  
Blaze up, and all the cottage warm; ...*

### Activity 5.7

- 1 How has the poet used personification of the weather to show the mood of the speaker?
- 2 How does Porphyria's entrance create a contrast to the opening scene?
- 3 Write a short paragraph in which the weather reflects the cheerful mood of a character.

### *Did you know?*

Robert Browning's voice was recorded on one of Thomas Edison's white wax cylinders in April 1889, only eight months before he died. He recites one of his poems, forgets the words, apologises, expresses amazement at the recording device and then cheers. You can listen to it online (the link can be found at [www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks](http://www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks)).

## *The Return of the Native* by Thomas Hardy

Thomas Hardy (1840–1928) was born, and lived most of his life, in Dorset in south-west England. He developed a deep love and detailed knowledge of the rugged landscape, which became the setting of nearly all his novels and poems. Landscape was so important for him that he included maps in his novels, which often gave fictitious names to real features. He named the area in which he based his novels Wessex after a kingdom that existed in the region in medieval times. He is

best known for the novels *The Return of the Native* (1878), *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* (1891) and *Jude the Obscure* (1895).

In the extracts below from Chapter 1 of *The Return of the Native*, the setting of Egdon Heath becomes a character itself.



The Wessex landscape that inspired Thomas Hardy

### Extract 1: from Thomas Hardy's *The Return of the Native* (1878)

A Saturday afternoon in November was approaching the time of twilight, and the vast tract of unenclosed wild known as Egdon Heath embrowned itself moment by moment. Overhead the hollow stretch of whitish cloud shutting out the sky was as a tent which had the whole heath for its floor.

### Extract 2: from *The Return of the Native*

The sombre stretch of rounds and hollows seemed to rise and meet the evening gloom in pure sympathy, the heath exhaling darkness as rapidly as the heavens precipitated it.

### Extract 3: from *The Return of the Native*

The place became full of watchful intentness now; for when other things sank brooding to sleep the heath appeared slowly to awake and listen.

#### Activity 5.8

- 1 Hardy provides us with details of time and place in Extract 1, which is the opening paragraph of the novel. He follows this with an unusual simile. What does the heath floor become in this image? Why is this effective?
- 2 Hardy personifies the heath by describing it as 'exhaling darkness'. What impression of the heath does this, and the rest of Extract 2, give you?
- 3 How does Hardy further personify the heath in Extract 3?
- 4 In Hardy's time there were concerns about the future of the actual heath on which he based the setting. He was particularly concerned about the damaging effect that 'progress' and 'civilisation' would have on it. In fact, it is now protected as a nature reserve. Are there any areas you know of that are in danger of being destroyed? If so, write a letter to a newspaper expressing your concerns or design a pamphlet to save the area.

### 'Lake Isle of Innisfree' by W.B. Yeats

William Butler Yeats (1865–1939) – poet, playwright and politician – was born in Dublin but spent much of his childhood in Sligo, in the west of Ireland. His attachment to the natural landscape, love for Maud Gonne (unrequited but life-long) and passionate commitment to restoring the identity of Irish culture influenced the topics of his poetry. He is well-known for founding Ireland's National Dramatic Society and first national playhouse, the Abbey Theatre. He served as a senator in the Irish Free State Parliament from 1922 to 1928 and won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1923. His most famous poems are 'When You Are Old' (1893), 'The Wild Swans at Coole' (1917) and 'Easter, 1916' (1920). 'The Lake Isle of Innisfree', first published in an English newspaper in 1890, was written in London while he was missing the beauty of the west of Ireland. The island becomes an escape from the urban life in which he feels trapped.



W.B. Yeats



'Lake Isle of Innisfree' (1890)

W.B. Yeats

*I will arise and go now, and go to Innisfree,  
And a small cabin build there, of clay and wattles made:  
Nine bean-rows will I have there, a hive for the honey-bee,  
And live alone in the bee-loud glade.*

*And I shall have some peace there, for peace comes dropping slow,  
Dropping from the veils of the morning to where the cricket sings;  
There midnight's all a glimmer, and noon a purple glow,  
And evening full of the **linnet's** wings.*

*I will arise and go now, for always night and day  
I hear the lake water lapping with low sounds by the shore;  
While I stand on the roadway, or on the pavements grey,  
I hear it in the deep heart's core.*

**linnet** a small bird  
from the linch family

## Activity 5.9

---

- 1 Reread the first stanza and describe the life the poet imagines living on the isle of Innisfree.
  - 2 Comment on the effect of the repetition in the second stanza.
  - 3 The purple glow of noon is caused by heather, which grows on the island. How do you think midnight is 'all a glimmer'?
  - 4 Identify the sounds of the island.
  - 5 Explain the last two lines of the poem.
  - 6 Describe a place that would provide an ideal escape for you.
- 

## *Heart of Darkness* by Joseph Conrad

Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) – originally named Józef Teodor Konrad Korzeniowski – was born of Polish parents in Russian-occupied Ukraine. He was orphaned by the age of 11 and raised by his uncle. From the age of 16 he pursued his childhood dream of going to sea and worked on a French vessel for a number of years before joining the British Merchant Service. His travels around the world provided the



The Congo River, near Mossaka

**novella** a narrative that is shorter than a novel but longer than a short story

---

material for the novels and short stories that made him famous. In 1890 he journeyed up the Congo River in Africa and his experiences on this trip formed the detail of his most famous work, *Heart of Darkness* (1899). This **novella** explores the atrocities of Belgian imperialism and the evil that lurks within human nature. It is a controversial text in that it has been both acclaimed for its brutally honest exposure of the excesses of colonialism and criticised for its seemingly racist depiction of the indigenous population. You will need to read it for yourself to decide with which view you agree.

In the following extract the narrator, Marlow, describes the journey up the river as belonging to another world altogether. It is not only unfamiliar to him but bewildering and threatening.

### Extract: from Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1899)

Going up that river was like travelling back in time to the earliest beginnings of the world, when vegetation rioted on the earth and the big trees were kings. An empty stream, a great silence, an impenetrable forest. The air was warm, thick, heavy, sluggish. There was no joy in the brilliance of sunshine. The long stretches of waterway ran on, deserted, into the gloom of the overshadowed distances. On silvery sandbanks hippos and alligators sunned themselves side by side. The broadening waters flowed through a mob of wooded islands. You lost your way on that river as you would in a desert and butted all day long against shoals trying to find the channel till you thought yourself bewitched and cut off for ever from everything you had known once – somewhere – far away – in another existence perhaps.

### Activity 5.10

---

- 1 What impression of the shore is Conrad trying to create in the first two sentences?
  - 2 The air is described by the list of adjectives, 'warm, thick, heavy, sluggish'. What kind of atmosphere does this create?
  - 3 Why do you think Conrad chose the expression 'a mob' instead of 'a number' when referring to the wooded islands?
  - 4 Which description do you think is particularly effective?
-



## Did you know?

Francis Ford Coppola's 1979 film *Apocalypse Now* was inspired by Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. The film stays true to the novella's themes and adapts the plot to fit the context of American involvement in the Vietnam War.

## Focus on: Romantic poetry

### Defining an era

It is never simple to define an era. How would you describe the times *you* are living in? Is it the same for everyone? Can all the books, movies, television shows and internet clips produced today be seen as having the same characteristics because they belong to the twenty-first century? You can probably see trends. You might have noticed that **contemporary** literature is often narrated by many characters or contains plots that jump around in time. Reality television shows and documentaries have surged in popularity. Genres and styles become fashionable, dominate for a while and then lose favour, to be replaced by the next 'big thing'.

**contemporary**  
living or existing  
in the current time

When you read about a literary era, you need to remember that not every text produced at that time had the same features or was written in the same style or genre, and not every writer felt or thought the same way. But poems of the Romantic era can be grouped together because they have common features and exhibit similar ways of thinking, particularly about the natural world.

### Ways of thinking

The period before the Romantic era is known as the Enlightenment (or the Age of Reason). It was an eighteenth-century intellectual movement that emphasised the importance of rational thought and scientific inquiry. The Romantics reacted against this way of thinking, by valuing *emotions*, rather than reason, and *imagination*, rather than scientific proof. They saw poetry as a means of spreading ideas as well as providing intellectual enjoyment for their readers.

The Romantic period (*around* 1790–1837) was one of great change in Europe. Radical politics, the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution had a significant

impact on society and the way writers interacted with their world. The Industrial Revolution had devastating effects on the landscape, ways of life and the human condition. As a reaction to this, Romantic poets worshipped nature rather than industry. They were awed by nature's beauty and its power, both in the physical world and on the human spirit.

## Activity 5.11

How would you describe your way of thinking? Do you lean more towards the Enlightenment (scientific) or the Romantic (imaginative) way of thinking? Give an example that demonstrates your answer.

## The two generations

**collaborative** group  
or team effort

The Romantic poets can be divided into two groups: the older and the younger generations. Each group was highly **collaborative**. Not only were the poets close friends, often travelling and sometimes living together, but they worked on each other's poetry and prose. You will also find that they wrote prefaces for and dedications to each other's works. They demonstrated that great literature does not have to be from a solitary genius but could be created through discussion, collaboration and friendship. Because the second generation were generally a wild bunch (Lord Byron was described as 'mad, bad and dangerous to know') they were almost all outlived by the first generation.

The main poets of the first generation, or the Lakeland poets, are William Wordsworth, Samuel Coleridge and Robert Southey. They glorified nature, seeing it in a pantheistic way (that is, identifying God with the forces of nature). They believed in the power of dreams to clarify reality and deliberately wrote poetry in language that was more accessible than the poetry that had gone before. William Blake also belongs to this group, although his poetry and art is not as easily classified. Unlike the others, he was based in the urban centre of London.

The second generation Romantics were Percy Bysshe Shelley, John Keats and Lord Byron. They valued the forces of nature and its wild landscapes, explored the processes of creativity and believed in the freedom of the individual from convention. They travelled widely, led unconventional, bohemian lives and died young.

## William Wordsworth

William Wordsworth (1770–1850) was born in the spectacular, scenic Lake District of north-west England where he spent much of his life. A walking enthusiast, he spent a great deal of time exploring the landscape around his home and touring Europe on foot. He spent some time in France and supported the ideals of the French Revolution but was eventually disillusioned by the accompanying outbreak of violence, called the Reign of Terror. He returned to his beloved rural home in Grasmere, where he wrote some of his most beautiful poetry in celebration of nature. He and his great friend and collaborator Samuel Taylor Coleridge saw nature as a spiritual and healing force and firmly established the idea of the sublime. Wordsworth is best known for his poems 'Tintern Abbey' (1798), 'Daffodils' (1807) and 'The Prelude' (1850). (Wordsworth is further discussed in Chapter 6.)

In the following poem, Wordsworth describes rambling in the Lake District and coming across a field of daffodils waving in the wind. The sight continues to affect him when he returns home.

### Extract: from William Wordsworth's 'Daffodils' (1807)

*I wandered lonely as a Cloud  
That floats on high o'er Vales and Hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd  
A host of dancing Daffodils;  
Along the Lake, beneath the trees,  
Ten thousand dancing in the breeze.*

*The waves beside them danced, but they  
Outdid the sparkling waves in glee:  
A Poet could not be but gay  
In such a laughing company:  
I gazed – and gazed – but little thought  
What wealth the **shew** to me had brought:*

*For oft when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in **pensive** mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude,  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the Daffodils.*

**shew** to show or display

.....

**pensive** thoughtful

.....



### Activity 5.12

- 1 What impression of the walker is created through the simile in the first two lines?
- 2 How does Wordsworth personify the daffodils in the second stanza?
- 3 How would you describe the mood of the poem?
- 4 What is Wordsworth saying about the power of nature in this poem?
- 5 Create a Photo Story or storyboard for 'Daffodils'.

### *Did you know?*

In 1843 Wordsworth became Poet Laureate, a position officially appointed by the government to write poetry for state occasions. However, he did not write a single line of poetry during the seven years he held the post.

## Samuel Taylor Coleridge

Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772–1834) was the son of a vicar who, instead of pursuing the life of a clergyman, as was expected, became a poet, lecturer, editor and writer of political and literary theory. Like many of the Romantics, Coleridge was drawn to the ideas of the French Revolution and non-conventional ways of life. With his friend Robert Southey he discussed setting up a commune but the idea never became a reality.

Coleridge's most creative partnership was with William Wordsworth, with whom he shared a love of poetry, hill-walking and political discussion. They spent much time in the Lake District, believing in the power of nature to work on the imagination and intellect. They worked closely together on a number of projects, though in later years they drifted apart, possibly because of Coleridge's heavy drinking and opium addiction, which stemmed from his attempts to manage depression and anxiety. Many of his poems are based on opium experiences and dreams.



The Lake District, England

In later years, though suffering poor health, Coleridge developed his critical ideas on knowledge, culture, creativity, social and political issues, literary criticism and religious theories. He died of heart failure in London in 1834 and left a wealth of poetry, including 'Frost at Midnight' (1798), 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' (1800), 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner' (1798) and 'Kubla Khan' (1816).

The following poem, in Extracts 1 and 2, was written when Coleridge was prevented from going out walking with his friends, including Wordsworth, after his wife accidentally spilled boiling milk on his foot. The lime-tree forms a bower (a shady enclosed space to sit) and Coleridge connects to his friends by imagining the sights that will greet them on their walk. He then begins to appreciate the natural beauty that surrounds him and, instead of envying his friends, is full of the joys of nature.

### Extract 1: from Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison' (1800)

*Well, they are gone, and here I must remain,  
This lime-tree bower my prison! I have lost  
Beauties and feelings, such as would have been  
Most sweet to my remembrance even when age  
Had dimmed my eyes to blindness! They, meanwhile,  
Friends, whom I never more may meet again,  
On springy heath, along the hill-top edge,  
Wander in gladness, and wind down, perchance,  
To that still roaring dell, of which I told;  
The roaring dell, o'erwooded, narrow, deep,  
And only speckled by the midday sun;  
Where its slim trunk the ash from rock to rock  
Flings arching like a bridge; ...*

dell small  
wooded hollow

---

### Extract 2: from 'This Lime-Tree Bower My Prison'

*A delight  
Comes sudden on my heart, and I am glad  
As I myself were there! Nor in this bower,  
This little lime-tree bower, have I not marked  
Much that has soothed me. Pale beneath the blaze  
Hung the transparent foliage; and I watched  
Some broad and sunny leaf, and loved to see  
The shadow of the leaf and stem above  
Dappling in the sunshine! And that walnut-tree  
Was richly tinged, and a deep radiance lay  
Full on the ancient ivy ...*

### Activity 5.13

- 1 Identify the lines from Extract 1 that tell us that Coleridge was very emotional when his friends first set off without him.
- 2 He imagines that they might visit a dell that he told them about. How does Coleridge describe the dell?
- 3 Identify the lines that show that Coleridge finds happiness in Extract 2.
- 4 What sights in the lime-tree bower have made him happy?

### John Keats

John Keats (1795–1821) was born in London and, after his parents died, was apprenticed to a surgeon. He became a licensed apothecary, which is like a pharmacist, but never practised this profession, turning instead to literature. In his short life, he gave us some of the most beautiful poems of the Romantic period. Like many poets of the era, he enjoyed walking and was highly impressed by the rugged landscape of the Lake District, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Keats met Wordsworth and Shelley, among other writers, who advised him on publishing poetry. He did not, though, form collaborative relationships with these poets, possibly because he was so ill from tuberculosis during his writing years.

John Keats famously fell in love with Fanny Brawne, a young woman who lived near him in Hampstead in London, but their love affair, passionate as it was, was cut short by his poor health (Jane Campion's 2009 film *Bright Star* details this relationship). In 1820 he was advised by doctors to leave cold, damp England and move to Italy. Keats, reluctantly, left Fanny and travelled to Naples and then Rome, where he died in 1821 at the age of 25. He is best known for 'Ode to a Nightingale', 'Ode on a Grecian Urn', 'Ode to Melancholy' and 'To Autumn', all written in 1819 and published in 1820.



John Keats



Keats wrote the following poem after a walk in autumnal Winchester in the south-east of England. He was struck by the beauty of the warm colours and the sharp quality of the air. The poem celebrates the season as being just as worthy of poetry as the much written about season of spring. This excerpt focuses on the sounds of autumn.

### Extract: from John Keats' 'To Autumn' (written 1819)

*Where are the songs of Spring? Ay, where are they?  
Think not of them, thou hast thy music too, –  
While **barred** clouds bloom the soft-dying day,  
And touch the **stubble**-plains with rosy hue;  
Then in a wailful choir the small **gnats** mourn  
Among the river **sallows**, borne aloft  
Or sinking as the light wind lives or dies;  
And full-grown lambs loud bleat from hilly **boorn**;  
Hedge-crickets sing; and now with treble soft  
The red-breast whistles from a garden-**croft**;  
And gathering swallows twitter in the skies.*

**barred** striped

**stubble** cut stalks  
after a harvest

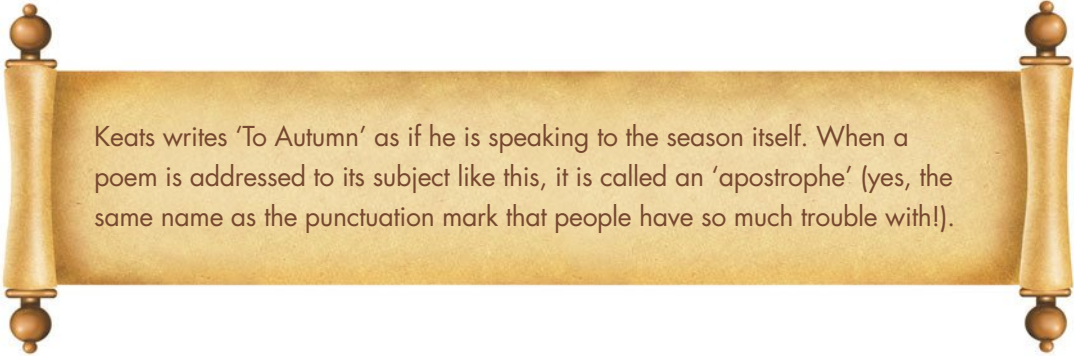
**gnats** small flies

**sallows** willow trees

**boorn** destination

**croft** piece of land





Keats writes 'To Autumn' as if he is speaking to the season itself. When a poem is addressed to its subject like this, it is called an 'apostrophe' (yes, the same name as the punctuation mark that people have so much trouble with!).

### Activity 5.14

- 1 Why do you think Keats uses a capital letter for 'Spring'?
- 2 List the animals, birds and insects that Keats can hear.
- 3 Keats describes the sounds of an autumn twilight as a song. Which verbs identify the sounds? You really need to imagine that you can hear them, not just write the words as an answer to a question. Try to imagine what Keats was trying to capture in writing to really appreciate the stanza.
- 4 The syntax (order of words) of 'full-grown lambs loud bleat' is unusual. How would you normally write this? Why do you think Keats has chosen to use this syntax?

## Percy Bysshe Shelley

Percy Shelley (1792–1822) lived his life according to principles that were based on the revolutionary politics and philosophy of his era. He was certainly true to his beliefs but they brought him tragedy as well as great happiness. He was expelled from Oxford University for writing pamphlets on atheism and not long after this he eloped with a 16-year-old girl, Harriet Westbrook. They married, despite Shelley's disapproval of marriage and his belief in free love, and they had two children.

After their marriage fell apart, Shelley ran away with Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin (another 16-year-old) and he eventually married her after Harriet killed herself. His marriage to Mary Shelley (who wrote *Frankenstein*) was an intellectually equal one and they collaborated to produce some of the greatest literature of the time. But their life together was complicated by living arrangements that nearly always included other people and was overshadowed by the deaths of all but one of their children. In 1822 they were living in Italy when Shelley took a boating trip (one of his favourite pastimes) and drowned when the boat overturned in a storm. His body was found a week later and he was cremated on the beach. He was an anti-monarchist, atheist and vegetarian, who believed in free love and liberating humanity from oppression.



Shelley wrote 'Mont Blanc' during the summer he, Mary Shelley, Lord Byron and others were staying in Geneva. It describes the same area as the extract from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* earlier in this chapter. Shelley was influenced by Wordsworth but saw nature as a wild and dynamic force, both beautiful and terrifying. This extract is from Stanza 4 and emphasises the sublime.

### Extract: from Percy Shelley's 'Mont Blanc' (written 1817)

*The glaciers creep  
Like snakes that watch their prey, from their far fountains,  
Slow rolling on; there, many a precipice,  
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power  
Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle,  
A city of death, distinct with many a tower  
And wall impregnable of beaming ice,  
Yet not a city, but a flood of ruin  
Is there, that from the boundaries of the sky  
Rolls its perpetual stream; vast pines are **strewing**  
Its destined path, or in the mangled soil  
Branchless and shattered stand; the rocks drawn down  
From **yon** remotest waste, have overthrown  
The limits of the dead and living world,  
Never to be reclaimed.*

**strewing** spreading  
across

**yon** yonder, the  
place to be

## Activity 5.15

---

- 1 The extract is all one sentence so it is easiest to appreciate what Shelley is communicating by breaking it down into parts. Draw up a table like the following to help explore these descriptions.

Quotation	Language device and explanation	Picture
The glaciers creep Like snakes that watch their prey		
Frost and the Sun in scorn of mortal power Have piled: dome, pyramid, and pinnacle		
wall impregnable of beaming ice		
vast pines are strewing Its destined path		

- 2 Compare this extract to the one from *Frankenstein*. What similarities and differences can you find?
-

## Your writing

- 1 Write a description of a landscape (or seascape) that reflects one or more of these moods: anger, calm, joy, sadness.
- 2 Personify a season in prose or poetry.
- 3 Write the opening of a short story in which the setting reflects the mood of the character.

## Extension: the pastoral

The word 'pastoral' comes from the Latin 'pastoralis', meaning 'relating to shepherds' – a pastor was a shepherd. When the term 'pastoral' is given to poetry, prose, drama, art or music, it describes texts that portray rural scenes in an idyllic way. In these texts, shepherds and shepherdesses fall in love, sing songs, play musical instruments, are visited by gods and goddesses, and enjoy blissful lives. These pictures of rural life are clearly imaginary but date back to third-century Greek poetry. After disappearing during medieval times, the pastoral re-emerged in the sixteenth century and continued into the early eighteenth century. However, by the middle of the eighteenth century, it had lost credibility and the Romantic poets depicted rural retreats more realistically by appreciating the power of nature and its effect on human emotion.

Christopher Marlowe (1564–1593), a contemporary of Shakespeare's, led a wild and violent life. He has been suspected of espionage, was involved in a street fight in which a man was killed, was deported from the Netherlands for trying to sell forged coins and was eventually killed in a tavern over an argument about money. But he left us great literature, including his most famous play, *Doctor Faustus* (1604), based on the legend of a man selling his soul to the devil.

'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love' (1599) is a pastoral poem and was published six years after Marlowe's death. The speaker of the poem is a shepherd, who promises a life of pleasure to a woman if she will come and live with him. Sir Walter Raleigh wrote a reply to the poem called 'The Nymph's Reply to the Shepherd'.

### Extract: from Christopher Marlowe's 'The Passionate Shepherd to His Love' (1599)

*Come live with me, and be my love,  
And we will all the pleasures prove  
That valleys, groves, hills and fields,  
Woods, or steepy mountain yields.*

*And we will sit upon the rocks,  
Seeing the shepherds feed their flocks  
By shallow rivers, to whose falls  
Melodious birds sing **madrigals**.*

*And I will make thee beds of roses,  
And a thousand fragrant posies,  
A cap of flowers and a **kirtle**,  
Embroidered all with leaves of **myrtle**.*

**madrigals** songs for several voices

**kirtle** a woman's gown

**myrtle** a type of plant with sweet-smelling white flowers

.....

## Activity 5.16

.....

- 1 List the things the shepherd promises to do if the woman agrees to live with him.
  - 2 Read all of Marlowe's poem and Raleigh's reply. Which poem do you prefer and why?
  - 3 Look up examples of pastoral art works. Your school library will help you with this or you can use the internet. What are the common features of the artworks?
- .....

## Words, words, words

*assonance, collaborative, dramatic monologue, intellect, novella, pathetic fallacy, Romantic poetry, sibilance, sublime, syntax*

- 1 Name three features of Romantic poetry.
- 2 Provide an example of a scene that a Romantic poet would describe as sublime.
- 3 'Collaborative' is an adjective. What is the verb and adverb?
- 4 Write a sentence or description that uses sibilance.
- 5 The word 'pathetic' comes from the Greek 'pathos'. Look up the meaning of 'pathos' in the dictionary and write its definition. Look up the word 'fallacy' and find its meaning and origin. Why do you think these words were combined to describe the way the weather reflects the mood of a character?
- 6 Write the difference between a dialogue, monologue and soliloquy.
- 7 Assonance affects the pace of writing. Long vowel sounds like 'Slowly dream' create a slow pace. Short vowel like sounds 'twitter' and 'chatter' create a fast pace. Make a list of 10 words for long vowel sounds and 10 for short vowel sounds.
- 8 Change the syntax of 'I plunged into the rough and stormy sea'.
- 9 What is the difference between 'intellect' and 'intelligence'?
- 10 What is the difference between a novel and a novella?

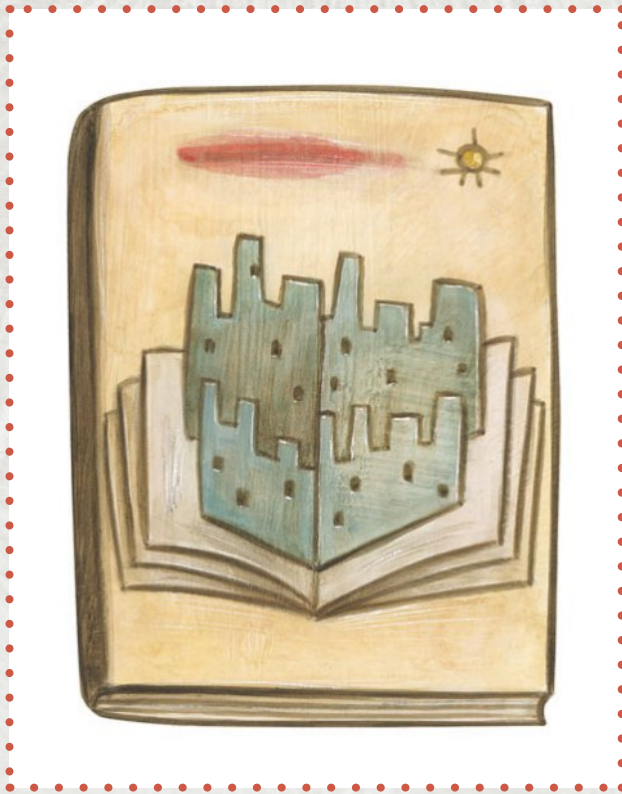
## Read and view more

- 'Out, Out', 'After Apple-Picking' and 'Mending Wall' by Robert Frost
- 'The Snow Man' by Wallace Stevens
- 'The Cloud' by Percy Bysshe Shelley
- 'Winter the Huntsman' by Osbert Sitwell
- *Young Romantics: The Shelleys, Byron and Other Tangled Lives* by Daisy Hay
- *Bright Star* (2009) directed by Jane Campion (about the love affair between John Keats and Fanny Brawne)

## Final words

- 1 Write three things that you now know about canonical writing about landscape.
- 2 Write two things that surprised you about the literature of landscapes.
- 3 Write one question you still have about this topic.







# 6

## Cityscapes

### RELOADED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Paired texts: London
- More London cityscapes
- Focus on: Modernism
- Your writing
- Extension: 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' by T.S. Eliot
- Words, words, words
- Read and view more
- Final words

What images do cities conjure for you? Are they bustling, inspiring places that spark the imagination and offer opportunities? Or are they crowded, soulless places that crush the spirit and offer only mechanical routine? The way you think about cities will depend on your experiences. Whatever your views, cities are undeniably busy places. They are densely populated centres of trade and commerce, art and culture, politics and learning. They are paradoxically places of wealth and poverty, potential and limitation, excitement and danger, ambition and crime. It is no wonder that writers have been drawn to cities as the setting of their works. Heroes and villains, the moral and the immoral, the exploiters and the charitable, the innocent and the wily have all walked the city streets of literature.



There was a significant growth of towns and cities from the beginning of the Industrial Revolution, which began at the end of the eighteenth century. Mechanisation of the textile industry, in particular, meant that skilled workers who had plied their crafts in villages and small towns were replaced by unskilled workers in factories in larger towns, which grew into cities. This led to populations leaving rural areas and flooding urban areas. Long hours, poor working conditions, limited education and exploitation led to many living in crowded poverty, suffering bad health and dying much earlier than their factory-owning counterparts. Most writers of this age were from privileged backgrounds but many had a social conscience and wrote critically, through their poetry, novels and plays, of the misery they witnessed. Social and economic issues, class distinctions and the changing role of women became important topics in Romantic (around 1790–1837) and Victorian (1837–1901) literature.

In Modernist times (around 1910–30) cities were firmly established. Writers were influenced by new styles of music (like jazz), developing art forms (like cinema) and new sciences (like psychology). Cities became hubs of cultural activity and centres of intellectual ideas.

Despite being busy, populated places, cities were also places of alienation. Modernists felt pessimistic after the devastation of World War I (1914–18). They questioned progress and despaired for humanity's future. They explored the paradoxes of city life: crowded streets and loneliness, identity and anonymity, public and private thoughts, the image we present and the way we feel inside. New topics and new ways of writing made the literature of this time exciting and interesting.



Jazz and cinema are art forms linked to Modernism and the city

In this chapter we will look at some of the canonical writing about cities. Here are the texts and extracts that you will read, in chronological order of publication:

- 1794** 'London' by William Blake
- 1807** 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge' by William Wordsworth
- 1854** *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens
- 1886** *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- 1912** *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw
- 1915** 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' by T.S. Eliot
- 1917** 'Preludes' by T.S. Eliot
- 1919** 'Kew Gardens' by Virginia Woolf
- 1920** 'Bliss' by Katherine Mansfield
- 1920** 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' by T.S. Eliot
- 1922** *Ulysses* by James Joyce

### Activity 6.1 Your thoughts

- 1 Make a collage (of words and images) that represents city life.
- 2 Create a simile poem: A city is like ...
- 3 Write 10 things you love about cities.
- 4 Write 10 things you hate about cities.
- 5 What aspects of city living do you think concern writers today?

## Paired texts: London

**Romantic era** an intellectual movement of the late eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries that valued the natural world, imagination, emotion and the supernatural

William Blake and William Wordsworth are poets of the **Romantic era**. Blake was London born and bred, and witnessed the harsh working and living conditions of the city's poor. His poem 'London' (1794) uses imagery of the Industrial Revolution to criticise its social effects. Wordsworth, on the other hand, was born in the English countryside and, apart from some bursts of travel in Europe, spent most of his life in rural England. His lengthily titled poem 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge September 3, 1802' (1807) seems full of admiration for the scene he witnesses while on a visit to London – but is there something more lurking between the lines?



## WILLIAM BLAKE (1757–1827)

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- Poet, painter and engraver.
- Experienced visions of angels from the age of four.
- Made his own ink and printed his own pages.
- Most famous anthologies: *Songs of Innocence* and *Songs of Experience*.
- Was thought to be mad – some of his friends called him ‘a harmless lunatic’.
- Died poor, in obscurity, and was buried in an unmarked grave.
- Extremely famous and greatly admired today.

## 'London' (1794)

William Blake

**chartered** mapped,  
regulated by law

**ban** regulation,  
prohibition,  
proclamation

**mind-forg'd  
manacles**  
chains or irons

**hapless** unlucky

**Harlot** prostitute

**blights** destroys or  
causes disease

*I wander thro' each **chartered** street,  
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.*

*In every cry of every Man,  
In every Infant's cry of fear,  
In every voice, in every **ban**,  
The **mind-forg'd manacles** I hear:*

*How the Chimney-sweeper's cry  
Every blackning Church appalls,  
And the **hapless** Soldier's sigh,  
Runs in blood down Palace walls.*

*But most thro' midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful **Harlot's** curse  
Blasts the new-born Infant's tear  
And **blights** with plagues the Marriage hearse.*

## WILLIAM WORDSWORTH (1770–1850)

- His mother died when he was eight, his father when he was 13.
- Lived and often travelled with his sister Dorothy.
- Supported the French Revolution until the Reign of Terror.
- Married a childhood friend and had five children.
- Often wrote about flowers but did not have a sense of smell.
- Seemed to give up writing poetry when his daughter Dora died in 1847.
- Famous poems: 'Tintern Abbey' (1798), 'The Prelude' (1850) and 'Daffodils' (1807).



Westminster Bridge, as it appeared around 1802

### 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge September 3, 1802' (1807)

William Wordsworth

*Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty;  
This City now doth, like a garment wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.  
Never did sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;  
Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!*

## Activity 6.2 'London'

- 1 Identify four aspects of London that Blake criticises in this poem and supply a quotation for each.
- 2 What specific people and places are included in the poem and why do you think Blake has chosen these?
- 3 What words or phrases link to the Industrial Revolution?
- 4 How does repetition help convey Blake's ideas?

## Activity 6.3 'Composed Upon Westminster Bridge, September 3, 1802'

- 1 Read the poem two or three times and try to conjure the scene that Wordsworth sees. This is a bit like decoding the language of time travel. What are his impressions of the scene and what words would you use to describe how he feels?
- 2 Identify two lines that you think provide a clear idea of what Wordsworth sees.
- 3 Find four examples of personification in the poem. Select one of these examples and describe the effect that is created.
- 4 It is clear that Wordsworth is impressed by what he sees. But something critical lies beneath the surface. Think about what Wordsworth finds beautiful in these lines to help you uncover the deeper message:
  - 'This City now doth, like a garment wear / The beauty of the morning'
  - 'All bright and glittering in the smokeless air'
  - '... the very houses seem asleep'
  - 'And all that mighty heart is lying still!'

### *Did you know?*

The phrase 'doors of perception' from Blake's poem 'The Marriage of Heaven and Hell' (1793) was used by Aldous Huxley as the title to his book (1954) about his experiences with the drug mescaline. Jim Morrison shortened the title when naming his band The Doors in 1965.



## Activity 6.4

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These poems provide different views of the city of London. Blake focuses more on the urban poor, who are suffering the effects of the Industrial Revolution, while Wordsworth focuses on the appearance of the city. If you were asked to select one of these to be included in an anthology of poems about London, which would you select and why?



## Activity 6.5 Visual texts

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It's hard to believe that Blake only gained respect, admiration and fame after his death when you consider his many talents, and the number of poems and artworks he produced. He created new methods and techniques for printing, and produced and illustrated his own books of poetry. He has a truly unique style and many of his images are drawn from religion, myth and legend.

- 1 Look on the internet or in a book to find out how Blake illustrated the poem 'London' in his anthology *Songs of Experience*. Explain how the illustrations and the visual techniques add to the meaning of the poem.
  - 2 Search the internet for paintings of Westminster Bridge. Which two paintings would you use to illustrate a new publication of Wordsworth's poem?
-

## More London cityscapes

### *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) is probably the most famous of all the Victorian novelists. You have no doubt heard of many of his works, such as *Oliver Twist* (1837–9) and *Great Expectations* (1861), or his famous characters, such as Scrooge. Many of his novels were published in serial form, like a Victorian soap opera, and he is well known for writing about the poor and satirising the wealthy. *Hard Times* (1854) is set in the city of Coketown, based on Manchester in England, which was a growing industrial town of cotton mills in Dickens' time.

In the following extract, Dickens describes the industrial setting of Coketown.

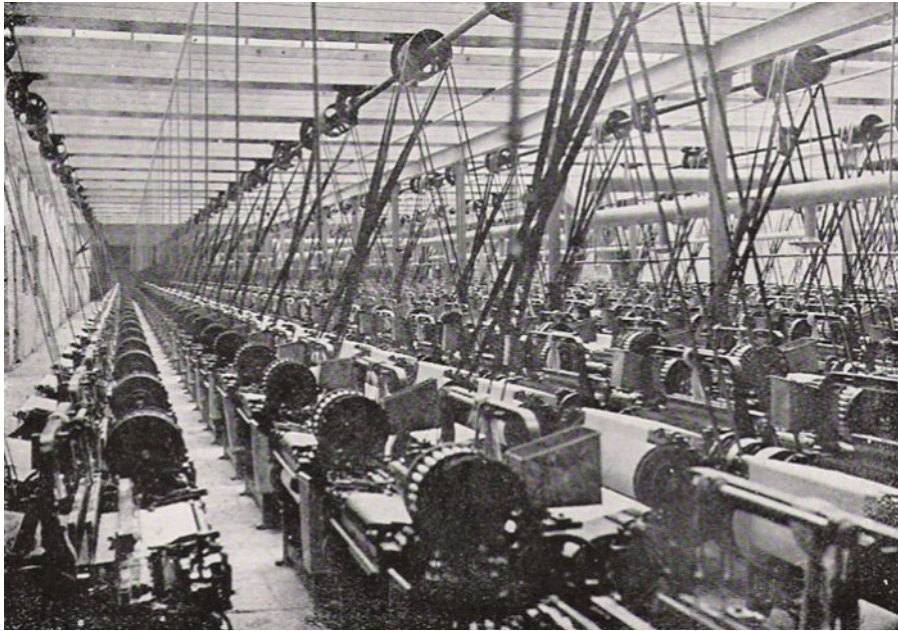
#### Extract 1: from Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854)

It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever, and never got uncoiled. It had a black canal in it, and a river that ran purple with ill-smelling dye, and vast piles of buildings full of windows where there was a rattling and a trembling all day long, and where the piston of the steam-engine worked monotonously up and down like the head of an elephant in a state of melancholy madness. It contained several large streets all very like another, and many small streets still more like one another, inhabited by people equally still more like one another, who all went in and out at the same hours, with the same sound upon the same pavements, to do the same work, and to whom every day was the same as yesterday and tomorrow, and every year the counterpart of the last and the next.



## Activity 6.6

- 1 What overall impression does Dickens create of Coketown through this description?
- 2 To what is the piston of the steam image compared? Explain the effect of this simile.
- 3 Comment on the effect of repetition in this passage.



Working conditions in Victorian England were appalling

This extract introduces us to the character of Stephen Blackpool, who leads a miserable life as one of the workers in the mill.

### Extract 2: from *Hard Times*

In the hardest working part of Coketown; in the inner-most fortifications of that ugly citadel, where Nature was as strongly bricked out as killing airs and gases were bricked in; at the heart of the labyrinth of narrow courts upon courts, and close streets upon streets, which had come into existence piecemeal, every piece in a violent hurry for come one man's purpose, and the whole thing an unnatural family, shouldering, and trampling, and pressing one another to death; in the last close nook of this great exhausted receiver, where the chimneys, for want of air to make a draught, were built in an immense variety of stunted and crooked shapes, as though every house put out a sign of the kind of people who might be expected to be born in it; among the multitude

(continues)

(continued)

**Providence**  
the protective care of  
God or nature

of Coketown, generically called 'the Hands' – a race who would have found more favour with some people, if **Providence** had seen fit to make them only hands, or, like the lower creatures of the seashore, only hands and stomachs – lived a certain Stephen Blackpool, forty years of age.

## Activity 6.7

- 1 Make a list of the negative adjectives and verbs in this passage. What is the cumulative effect of these?
- 2 Why do you think Dickens suggests the people of Coketown 'would have found more favour with some people' if they were only hands and stomachs?
- 3 Although the situation eventually improved, through the establishment of unions and changes in law, working conditions in Victorian England were appalling. The typical working day was 14 hours long. Children were employed because they were cheap, and injuries from the machines were both common and hideous. Health was very poor and most workers lived in overcrowded slums. In small groups, discuss whether or not the modern world has managed to completely rid itself of these harsh conditions.

## *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson

Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) was born in Edinburgh in 1850, the only child of a lighthouse engineer and his wife. He suffered ill-health from childhood to adulthood but this didn't stop him leading a wild, bohemian life. He rejected a career in law for which he'd trained, and instead pursued his passions of writing and travelling. He wrote novels, children's literature, essays and books about his journeys but is best known for *Treasure Island* (1883), *Kidnapped* (1886) and, most famously, *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). In this story, a doctor creates a potion that releases his dark and evil side. He becomes two people: the gentleman doctor, Jekyll, and the monstrous Mr Hyde. The novel is set in fog-bound Victorian London.

The following description from this story transports us to the dark, sinister streets of Soho, in central London.



Extract: from Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886)

It was by this time about nine in the morning, and the first fog of the season. A great chocolate-coloured pall lowered over heaven, but the wind was continually charging and routing these embattled vapours; so that as the cab crawled from street to street, Mr Utterson beheld a marvellous number of degrees and hues of twilight for here it would be dark like the back-end of evening ... for a moment the fog would be quite broken up, and a haggard shaft of daylight would glance in between the swirling wreaths ... This dismal quarter of Soho seen under these changing glimpses ... seemed, in the lawyer's eyes, like a district of some city in a nightmare.

### Activity 6.8

- 1 Stevenson has used a metaphor to describe the fog, personification to describe the wind and a simile to describe his overall impression of Soho that morning. Write the image that you think is most effective and explain your choice.
- 2 Use figures of speech to describe either a nightmare or a dream scene of a modern city.

## *Pygmalion* by George Bernard Shaw

George Bernard Shaw (1856–1950) was born in Dublin but spent most of his working life in London. And what a working life it was! He was a playwright, journalist, political activist, speech maker and linguist.

Shaw felt strongly that the English language needed a new alphabet so that spelling could become phonetic. Phonetics is the study of the sounds of words. For example, the sound 'f' is not only written as the letter 'f' but can also be found in the letters 'gh' (like at the end of 'laugh'). He even left money in his will for this great project of a new alphabet.

As a socialist, Shaw was critical of class divisions and believed that people should not be limited in life by their social status. His play *Pygmalion*, first performed in 1913 in England, explores the possibility of a working-class flower-girl, Eliza Doolittle, being passed off as a duchess after Higgins, a professor of phonetics, teaches her to speak 'properly'.

The following extracts are from the beginning of the play and set the scene, giving us an insight into the various accents and dialects that could be heard on the city streets of London.

### Extract 1: from George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion* (written 1912)

*London at 11.15pm. Torrents of heavy summer rain. Cab whistles blowing frantically in all directions. Pedestrians running for shelter into the portico of St Paul's church (not Wren's cathedral but Indigo Jones's church in Covent Garden vegetable market), among them a lady and her daughter in evening dress. All are peering out gloomily at the rain, except one man with his back turned to the rest, wholly preoccupied with a notebook in which he is writing. The church clock strikes the first quarter.*



Outside the theatre, a woman has a few words with the flower seller. The flower seller's reply is written phonetically, as seen in Extract 2.

### Extract 2: from *Pygmalion*

*THE MOTHER:* How do you know my son's name is Freddy?

*THE FLOWER GIRL:* *Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e? Wal, fewd dan y' de-ooty bawmz a mather should, eed now bettern to spawl a pore gel's flahrzn than ran awy athaht pyin. Will ye-oo py me f'them?*

*[Here with apologies, this desperate attempt to represent her dialect without a phonetic alphabet must be abandoned as unintelligible outside London]*

The notetaker is Higgins (as seen in Extract 3), the professor of phonetics. He is recording the speech he hears outside the theatre in his notebook. People standing around are sometimes offended but mostly amazed at the professor's ability to work out where they come from according to their accents. One man is so impressed, he thinks it could be an act on a stage!

### Extract 3: from *Pygmalion*

*THE NOTETAKER:* *And how are all your people down at Selsey?*

*THE BYSTANDER:* *[suspiciously] Who told you my people come from Selsey?*

*THE NOTETAKER:* *Never mind. They did. [To the girl] How did you come to be up so far east?*

*THE FLOWER GIRL:* *[appalled] Oh, what harm is there in my leaving Lisson Grove?*

*THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER:* *Do you know where I come from?*

*THE GENTLEMAN:* *[promptly] Hoxton*

*[Twitterings. Popular interest in the note taker's performance increases.]*

*THE SARCASTIC ONE:* *[amazed] Well, who said I didn't? Bly me! You know everything you do!*

\*\*\*\*

*THE FLOWER GIRL:* *Let him say what he likes. I don't want to have no truck with him.*

*THE BYSTANDER:* *You take us for dirt under your feet, don't you? Catch you taking liberties with a gentleman!*

(continues)

(continued)

*THE SARCASTIC BYSTANDER:* Yes; tell him where he comes from if you don't want to go fortune telling.

*THE NOTE TAKER:* Cheltenham, Harrow, Cambridge, and India.

*THE GENTLEMAN:* Quite right.

[Great laughter. Reaction in the note taker's favour. Exclamations of: He knows all about it. Told him proper. Hear him tell the toff where he come from? Etc.]

*THE GENTLEMAN:* May I ask sir, do you do this for your living at a music hall?

*THE NOTE TAKER:* I've thought of that. Perhaps I shall some day.

## Activity 6.9

- 1 With what impressions of city life does Shaw begin his play in Extract 1?
- 2 In small groups, read Extracts 2 and 3 aloud.
- 3 Rewrite the flower seller's words from Extract 2 in Standard English (that is, with the spellings of the words that we recognise as correct). For example: 'Ow, eez ye-ooa san, is e?' becomes 'Oh, he's your son, is he?' in Standard English.
- 4 Why do the onlookers at first resent and then praise the notetaker?
- 5 Try writing your own phonetic translations of speech. You could try Australian slang or accents from other countries, for example, 'Owyagoin?' 'Ees gawn owm'.

## Did you know?

In Act 3 Eliza utters the words, 'not bloody likely'. This caused a huge sensation, as it was the first time the word 'bloody' had been said on stage. Newspapers ran headlines – like 'The Pygmalion Sensation!' – about it, reporting that audiences gasped in surprise and then laughed.



## Focus on: Modernism

It is difficult to select a date that marks exactly when new ideas, ways of thinking and techniques actually *appear* but by the early years of the twentieth century there were significant changes in the way people thought about and created literature, art, music and architecture. Literature became more experimental, art more abstract, architecture more streamlined and functional, and music more chaotic and atonal.



An example of art in the Cubist style, one of the major Modern art movements of the twentieth century

### Changes in the world

The Industrial Revolution had resulted in an increasingly urban, mechanised and consumer-oriented world. Among other things, the new century brought with it the age of the automobile and aeroplane, the first motorised bus, mass production, rapid development of cinema, expansion of the newspaper industry, mass entertainment, the typewriter, electronic recording machines, the telephone, advertising campaigns and chemical industries. It also brought major ground-breaking works in psychology by

Sigmund Freud and Carl Jung, and the increasing power of the Women's Movement. All of these had an impact on the way people thought and the way artists worked.

World War I saw the introduction of chemical weapons, submarines, tanks and aircraft in battle. This mechanised warfare brought devastating results that raised questions about the value of progress and the nature of humanity. A mood of intellectual pessimism contrasted with the decadence and hedonism of the 1920s.

## Activity 6.10

The mass destruction of World War I had a huge impact on the way people thought about the world. We tend to describe the current 'modern' period as beginning at the end of World War II. What events since then do you think have had a significant effect on the way we think about the world?

## General features

Modernists wanted to break free from the traditional and conventional features of the past and instead experiment with new subject matter, techniques and forms. Modernism is a particularly urban and international movement that focuses on cities and their effects on the people who live in them. Like all movements in art and literature, it was greatly influenced by the changes of its time in culture, technology and intellectual ideas.

## Modernist literature

Modernist writers rejected traditional realism and the conventions of chronological plots, omniscient narrators and closed endings. They did not propose clear moral positions or adhere strictly to genre. Prose became more poetic, poetry was influenced by musical structure and short stories turned features from visual arts into language. The emphasis was on *how* we see rather than *what* we see; the abstract rather than the concrete.

There was a particular interest in the alienation and loneliness individuals can feel when living in a city and urban life was presented as fairly bleak. Writers were also fascinated by the mysterious ways time moves, the workings of memory and patterns of thought processes.

The major canonical Modernist writers are James Joyce, T.S. Eliot, Franz Kafka, Katherine Mansfield, Ezra Pound, Marcel Proust, Gertrude Stein and Virginia Woolf. Of the Modernist years, 1922 was particularly significant for many of these writers, who were experimenting with content and style. Joyce had the epic narrative *Ulysses*

published by American Sylvia Beach, who lived most of her life in Paris running the book store and library Shakespeare and Company. Other famous Modernist publications of the year included T.S. Eliot's poem, 'The Waste Land', Katherine Mansfield's short stories, *The Garden Party and Other Stories* and Virginia Woolf's novel *Jacob's Room*.



It's worth viewing Woody Allen's comedy *Midnight in Paris* (2011), which time travels from present day Paris to the glorious Modernist past and beyond.

## T.S. Eliot

T.S. (Thomas Stearnes) Eliot (1888–1965) was born in Missouri in the United States but travelled, studied and worked in England, France and Germany. Eliot had a highly intellectual and academic interest in literature. As well as being a poet, he worked as a critic, theorist and editor, and became director of the publishing house

Faber and Faber. Like many Modernists, he frequently filled his poetry with references and allusions that are classical and often deliberately obscure. Nevertheless, he gave us powerful Modernist poetry that leads us through sordid city streets and reveals how urban living has bruised our souls and crushed our dreams. He is best known for the poems, 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915), 'Preludes' (1917), 'The Waste Land' (1922) and 'Ash Wednesday' (1930).

Extract 1 is the first two stanzas of his poem 'Preludes'. The poem begins with images of a city evening and paints a depressing picture of dilapidation. Yet, the last two lines are quite romantic and beautiful. The second stanza brings us to morning and continues the description of the city as a seedy place, crowded with anonymous individuals, all performing the same actions at the same time.

### Extract: from T.S. Eliot's 'Preludes' (1917)

*I*

*The winter evening settles down  
With smells of steaks in passageways.  
Six o'clock.  
The burnt-out ends of smoky days.  
And now a gusty shower wraps  
The grimy scraps  
Of withered leaves about your feet  
And newspapers from vacant lots;  
The showers beat  
On broken blinds and chimney-pots  
And at the corner of the street  
A lonely cab-horse steams and stamps  
And then the lighting of the lamps.*

*II*

*The morning comes to consciousness  
Of faint stale smells of beer  
From the sawdust-trampled street  
With all its muddy feet that press  
To early coffee stands.  
With the other masquerades  
That time resumes,  
One thinks of all the hands  
That are raising dingy shades  
In a thousand furnished rooms.*

## Activity 6.11

- 1 What regular activities of city life are mentioned here?
- 2 One way Eliot builds a bleak picture of the city is through his use of adjectives. Make a list of the negative adjectives that can be found in these two stanzas.
- 3 Explain the metaphor 'burnt-out ends of smoky days'.
- 4 Why do you think Eliot personified the morning by having it come 'to consciousness'?
- 5 Why do you think only feet and hands are referred to, rather than people?

'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' is about a man who reveals his anxieties and insecurities as he walks through the evening streets to a tea party. He repeatedly refers to a question that he might ask if he finds the courage. He never tells us what the question is but we imagine that it is a question about love. These lines describe the streets through which he journeys. (Activity 6.18 on page 197 at the end of the chapter looks at the scene at the tea party.)

### Extract: from T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915)

(lines 1–12)

*Let us go then you and I,  
When the evening is spread out against the sky  
Like a patient etherised upon a table;  
Let us go, through half-deserted streets,  
The muttering retreats  
Of restless nights in one-night cheap hotels  
And sawdust restaurants with oyster shells:  
Streets that follow like a tedious argument  
Of insidious intent  
To lead you to an overwhelming question ...  
Oh, do not ask, 'What is it?'  
Let us go and make our visit.*

(lines 15–22)

*The yellow fog that rubs its back upon the window-panes,  
The yellow smoke that rubs its muzzle on the window-panes,  
Licked its tongue into the corners of the evening,  
Lingered upon the pools that stand in drains,*



(continues)

(continued)

*Let fall upon its back the soot that falls from chimneys,  
Slipped by the terrace, made a sudden leap,  
And seeing that it was a soft October night,  
Curled once about the house and fell asleep.*

(lines 70–74)

*Shall I say, I have gone at dusk through narrow streets  
And watched the smoke that rises from the pipes  
Of lonely men in shirt sleeves, leaning out of windows? ...  
I should have been a pair of ragged claws  
Scuttling across the floors of silent seas ...*

## Activity 6.12

- 1 Eliot refers to a hospital patient who is under anaesthetic in his simile 'like a patient etherised upon a table'. What do you think he is trying to convey about the evening sky through this image?
- 2 The fog is described as a cat rubbing and curling itself around the building. Do you find the image to be pleasant or unpleasant? Explain your answer.
- 3 Think of what it feels like to listen to the wind howl, roar and whip around your home. Use the same technique as Eliot to describe this experience by likening the wind to an animal and describing what it is doing.
- 4 'I should have been a pair of ragged claws / Scuttling across the floors of silent seas' are two of the most famous lines of Modernist poetry. What do you think they mean?

## Activity 6.13

In a group, reread the two extracts from T.S. Eliot's poetry. What similarities and differences can you find among and between them? What kind of picture of city life does Eliot paint for the readers of his poetry?

## Stream-of-consciousness

The term 'stream-of-consciousness' was coined by William James in his book *Principles of Psychology* (1890) to describe how thoughts flow in our minds. Modernist writing attempts to convey the workings of a character's mind: thought

patterns, memories, sense perceptions and feelings. Writers were interested in how all these worked together, in both connected and random ways. They felt that the inner life of a character was a more truthful representation than his or her outward behaviour. The technique of stream-of-consciousness is also called 'interior monologue'. To truly capture how our minds work, many writers expressed the flow of thoughts without using rules of grammar and punctuation. The most significant writers of stream-of-consciousness are Katherine Mansfield, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf.

## Virginia Woolf

Virginia Woolf (1882–1941) was born Adeline Virginia Stephen into a literary family. Her father was a critic and editor, and her childhood home was host to a number of well-known Victorian writers, such as Henry James and George Eliot. She shared her adult home with her husband Leonard Woolf, her sister Vanessa and a number of writers and artists who became known as the Bloomsbury Group (after the area of London in which they lived). Tormented by mental illness and severe bouts of depression, she eventually drowned herself in the River Ouse, in 1941. Virginia Woolf was a highly intelligent author, critic and feminist, best known for her novels *Mrs Dalloway* (1925), *To the Lighthouse* (1927) and *The Waves* (1931), her short stories, such as 'Kew Gardens' (1919), and her extended feminist essay 'A Room of One's Own' (1929).

The following extract is set on a hot summer's day in London's Kew Gardens. Typically Modernist, the story has no plot but instead provides a glimpse into the lives of four groups of people, through their dialogue and their thoughts, as they wander through the botanic gardens. This is the opening paragraph of the story, which zooms in like a close-up on the garden bed itself (in cinematic style) and describes the colours and shapes of the garden in a way that reminds us of an impressionist, or abstract, painting.



Virginia Woolf

### Extract: from Virginia Woolf's 'Kew Gardens' (1919)

From the oval-shaped flower-bed there rose perhaps a hundred stalks spreading into heart-shaped or tongue-shaped leaves half way up and unfurling at the tip red or blue or yellow petals marked with spots of colour raised upon the surface; and from the red, blue or yellow gloom of the throat emerged a straight bar, rough with gold dust and slightly

(continues)

(continued)

clubbed at the end. The petals were voluminous enough to be stirred by the summer breeze, and when they moved, the red, blue and yellow lights passed one over the other, staining an inch of the brown earth beneath with a spot of the most intricate colour. The light fell either upon the smooth, grey back of a pebble, or, the shell of a snail with its brown, circular veins, or falling into a raindrop, it expanded with such intensity of red, blue and yellow the thin walls of water that one expected them to burst and disappear. Instead, the drop was left in a second silver grey once more, and the light now settled upon the flesh of a leaf, revealing the branching thread of fibre beneath the surface, and again it moved on and spread its illumination in the vast green spaces beneath the dome of the heart-shaped and tongue-shaped leaves. Then the breeze stirred rather more briskly overhead and the colour was flashed into the air above, into the eyes of the men and women who walk in Kew Gardens in July.

### Activity 6.14

- 1 List the colours and shapes of the garden.
- 2 What overall impression is created of the flowerbed?
- 3 Create a visual representation of the description (a drawing, painting, collage or electronic image).

## Katherine Mansfield

Katherine Mansfield Beauchamp (1888–1923) – who wrote under the pen name Katherine Mansfield – was born in Wellington, New Zealand, but spent most of her short life in England and Europe. She was a talented cellist but pursued her literary, rather than musical, ambitions to become one of the most famous short story writers of her time. She led a rebellious and bohemian life, which included an intense but ultimately unhappy marriage to John Middleton Murry. She had many literary acquaintances and friends, including T.S. Eliot, D.H. Lawrence and Virginia Woolf (who was said to be jealous of Mansfield's work). Her tumultuous life and dazzling talent was cut short by tuberculosis, which finally killed her in January 1923. She is best known for her short stories 'Bliss' (1920), 'Miss Brill' (1920), 'The Garden Party' (1922) and 'The Doll's House' (1922).

'Bliss' traces the thoughts and feelings of young wife and mother, Bertha, on the day she is holding a dinner party in her London home. At the beginning of the day, she



is overwhelmed by the happiness (or bliss) that her life brings. This feeling eventually gives way to disappointment, as her misunderstandings are revealed. The following extract moves along with Bertha's thoughts and feelings just before the guests arrive.

### Extract: from Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss' (1920)

She went into the drawing-room and lighted the fire; then, picking up the cushions, one by one, that Mary had disposed so carefully, she threw them back on to the chairs and the couches. That made all the difference; the room came alive at once. As she was about to throw the last one she surprised herself by suddenly hugging it to her, passionately, passionately. But it did not put out the fire in her bosom. Oh, on the contrary!

The windows of the drawing-room opened on to a balcony overlooking the garden. At the far end, against the wall, there was a tall, slender pear tree in fullest, richest bloom; it stood perfect, as though becalmed against the jade-green sky. Bertha couldn't help feeling, even from this distance, that it had not a single bud or a faded petal. Down below, in the garden beds, the red and yellow tulips, heavy with flowers, seemed to lean upon the dusk. A grey cat, dragging its belly, crept across the lawn, and a black one, its shadow, trailed after. The sight of them, so intent and so quick, gave Bertha a curious shiver.

(continues)



(continued)

'What creepy things cats are!' she stammered, and she turned away from the window and began walking up and down ...

How strong the jonquils smelled in the warm room. Too strong? Oh, no. And yet, as though overcome, she flung down on a couch and pressed her hands to her eyes.

'I'm too happy – too happy!' she murmured.

And she seemed to see on her eyelids the lovely pear tree with its wide open blossoms as a symbol of her own life.

### Activity 6.15

- 1 How does the sight of the cats temporarily interrupt her feeling of bliss?
- 2 To what do her thoughts turn after the cats?
- 3 Look around the room in which you are currently sitting. Find an object (in the room or outside the window) that makes you feel happy. Write the thoughts that go through your head as you look at it.



James Joyce

### James Joyce

James Joyce (1882–1941) was born and educated in Dublin, Ireland, but he spent most of his life between Paris, Trieste and Zurich. Despite this, all his fiction is set in the carefully detailed city of Dublin. His short stories compiled in *The Dubliners* (1914) and his novel *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* (1914–15) are widely read and studied in schools and universities. His novels *Ulysses* (1922) and *Finnegan's Wake* (1939) are much more experimental in style and are for the brave of heart and mind. *Finnegan's Wake* was, and still is, declared to be unreadable, because it has no recognisable plot or character development and is written in language that is only barely recognisable as English (for example, 'were sosie sesthers wroth with twone nathandjoe'). It is a text that pushes stream-of-consciousness to extremes.

*Ulysses* (1922), a modern-day version of Homer's *The Odyssey*, is written in a number of different styles and

forms and is a 'must read' in your lifetime. The novel traces the journey of a character, Leopold Bloom, through Dublin, from around 8 a.m. on 16 June 1904 until around 2 a.m. the next morning. The day is commemorated around the world as Bloomsday, during which readings of the work are performed and, in Dublin, groups of literary tourists follow the footsteps of Leopold Bloom around the city. This extract demonstrates how Bloom's thoughts and memories connect and leap from one idea to the next.

### Extract 1: from James Joyce's *Ulysses* (1922)

So warm. His right hand once more more slowly went over again: choice blend made of the finest **Ceylon brands**. The far east. Lovely spot it must be: ... Too hot to quarrel. Influence of the climate. Lethargy. Flowers of idleness. The air feeds most. Azotes. Hothouse in the Botanic gardens. Sensitive plants. Waterlilies. Petals too tired to. Sleeping sickness in the air. Walk on rose-leaves ... Where was the chap I saw in that picture somewhere? Ah, in the dead sea, floating on his back, reading a book with a parasol open. Couldn't sink if you tried: so thick with salt. Because the weight of the water, no, the weight of the body in the water is equal to the weight of the. Or is the volume equal to the weight? It's a law, something like that. **Vance** in high school cracking his fingerjoints, teaching. The college curriculum. Cracking curriculum. What is weight really when you say the weight? Thirtytwo feet per second, per second. Law of falling bodies: per second, per second. They all fall to the ground. The earth. It's the force of gravity of the earth is the weight.

#### **Ceylon brands**

Bloom has bought a packet of tea

**Vance** Bloom's high school teacher

### Activity 6.16

Draw a flow chart that shows how Bloom's thoughts and memories move.



The following extract is taken from the last chapter of *Ulysses*, in which Joyce presents the stream of thoughts that flow through Molly Bloom's consciousness as she lies in bed beside her husband at the end of the day. The lack of punctuation is a way of trying to truthfully capture how we think.

### Extract 2: from *Ulysses*

... take that Mrs Maybrick that poisoned her husband for what I wonder in love with some other man yes, it was found out on her wasnt she the downright villain to go and do a thing like that of course some men can be dreadfully aggravating drive you mad and always the worst word in the world what do they ask us to marry them for if were so bad as all that comes to yes because they cant get on without us white Arsenic she put in his tea off flypaper wasnt it I wonder why they call it that if I asked him hed say its from the Greek leave us as wise as we were before she must have been madly in love with the other fellow to run the chance of being hanged.

### Activity 6.17

- 1 Read the passage aloud as this will help you understand it more easily.
- 2 What is Molly Bloom thinking about?
- 3 Rewrite her thoughts using punctuation.
- 4 Which version (the punctuated or unpunctuated) do you think works best and why?



## Your writing

Try writing in the stream-of-consciousness style. For five minutes, write down all the thoughts that flow through your head. You might choose to punctuate or just keep writing.

Consider the following: what you can hear and see, how you feel, memories that float through your mind, what you can taste, how tired or awake are. If you feel like you have nothing to write, start by saying you have writer's block. You might feel self-conscious at first, but once you get going it will be hard to stop, it's actually almost impossible to have no thoughts at all!

## Extension: 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' By T.S. Eliot

Read the following lines (opposite) from T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock'.



## Extract: from T.S. Eliot's 'The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock' (1915)

(lines 88–89)

*... the cups, the marmalade, the tea,  
Among the porcelain, among some talk of you and me*

(lines 102–110)

*After the novels, after the tea-cups, after the skirts that trail along the floor –  
And this, and so much more? –  
It is impossible to say just what I mean!  
But as if a magic lantern threw the nerves in patterns on a screen:  
Would it have been worthwhile  
If one, settling a pillow or throwing off a shawl,  
And turning toward the window, should say:  
'That is not it at all,  
'That is not what I meant at all.'*

### Activity 6.18

- 1 Compare the scenes inside the woman's home to the street scenes that you read earlier in the chapter.
- 2 Read all of Virginia Woolf's story 'Kew Gardens' and Katherine Mansfield's 'Bliss' (both are available to read online) and discuss their ideas and techniques with a partner or in a small group.

## Words, words, words

*bohemian, Modernism, obscure, omniscient, pessimistic, phonetics, psychology,  
stream-of-consciousness, urban*

- 1 Using the diagram on the following page as a guide, create vocabulary squares for the words 'bohemian' and 'pessimistic'.

Part(s) of speech and root or origin of the word:	Synonyms:
	Antonyms:
<b>Bohemian</b>	
Symbol, logo, graphic:	Definition:
Write a sentence using the word here:	

- 2 Write two features of Modernism.
- 3 Omniscient means knowing everything. 'Omni-' is a prefix (a group of letters at the beginning of a word that provides meaning). Use the dictionary to find three more words that begin with the prefix 'omni-' and write what they mean.
- 4 Use a dictionary to find the origin of the word 'phonetics'.
- 5 What does it mean to say that a writer has fallen into obscurity?
- 6 What do you call someone who has a career in psychology?
- 7 What word is a synonym of contradiction?
- 8 What is an urban myth?
- 9 Define stream-of-consciousness.



## Read and view more

- 'In Honour of the City of London' by William Dunbar
- 'William Street' by Kenneth Slessor
- 'Where Go the Boats' by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *Dubliners* by James Joyce
- 'Rhapsody on a Windy Night' by T.S. Eliot
- 'Symphony in Yellow' by Oscar Wilde
- 'Mrs Dalloway in Bond Street' by Virginia Woolf
- *Smith* by Leon Garfield
- *My Fair Lady* (1964) (the film version of George Bernard Shaw's *Pygmalion*) directed by George Cukor

## Final words

- 1 Write three things that you now know about canonical writing on cities.
- 2 Which two cities in the world would you like to visit and why?
- 3 Which extract in this chapter impresses you most and why?



# 7

## Superstars of the canon

### RELOADED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Paired texts: good and evil
- Dickensian characters
- Focus on: the Byronic hero
- Your writing
- Extension: Jay Gatsby – *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- Words, words, words
- Read and view more
- Final words

Of the thousands of characters who have walked the pages of literature, some manage to inhabit our minds long after we have closed the final pages of their stories. They continue to live vividly in our imaginations centuries after their authors have died. What makes some characters more memorable than others?

There are many 'good' characters in literature with qualities that we admire: loyalty, generosity, kindness, courage. These are people we would like to get to know or to be like. But these are not necessarily the characters that live largest in readers' minds. Think about Dracula, who sinks his blood-dripping fangs into the necks of the innocent, or Dr Jekyll, whose evil side creates havoc on the foggy streets of London. Think about Heathcliff, whose bitter, merciless revenge is surpassed only by his wild, intense, destructive passion. Then there is possibly the most famous of all, Frankenstein's monster, who is made of stitched-together body parts robbed from graveyards. These are hardly the sort of people we would like to know or to be like! Yet, they are some of the superstars of the canon. They push the limits of human existence and give us a glimpse into the darker side of humanity.

The superstars of the canon are often known through films, television series, stage plays, cartoons, graphic novels and video games. It is often the case that audiences are familiar with these characters without ever having read the novels from which they came. This is because they have continued to fascinate us over the years and have been transformed into other media, to make them accessible to audiences in an increasingly technological world. Then there are the references made to these characters in popular culture. You may have seen many literary heroes pop up in *The Simpsons*, for example, or in various parodies, spoofs and spin-offs.



*Wuthering Heights* (1939) starring Laurence Olivier and Merle Oberon



*Dracula* (1931) starring Bela Lugosi

Sometimes fictional characters become symbols or labels for human characteristics. If you look up 'Jekyll and Hyde' in the dictionary, one of its meanings is an adjective to describe a person who is 'alternately displaying opposing good and evil characteristics' and 'Frankenstein's monster' is 'a thing that becomes terrifying to its maker'.

Generally, the most interesting characters speak to us across time. They can be as frightening to us now as they were back when they were first described, or as admirable, loveable, clever or daring.

In this chapter, we will look at some of the famous characters that walk the pages of canonical literature. Here are the characters that you will read about, in chronological order of their creation:

- 1818** Frankenstein and his creature from *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley
- 1847** Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë
- 1854** Thomas Gradgrind from *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens
- 1861** Miss Havisham from *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens
- 1886** Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde from *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- 1887** Sherlock Holmes from *A Study in Scarlet* by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle
- 1897** Dracula from *Dracula* by Bram Stoker
- 1925** Jay Gatsby from *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

### *Did you know?*

The definition of a 'hero' has developed over time in the following stages:

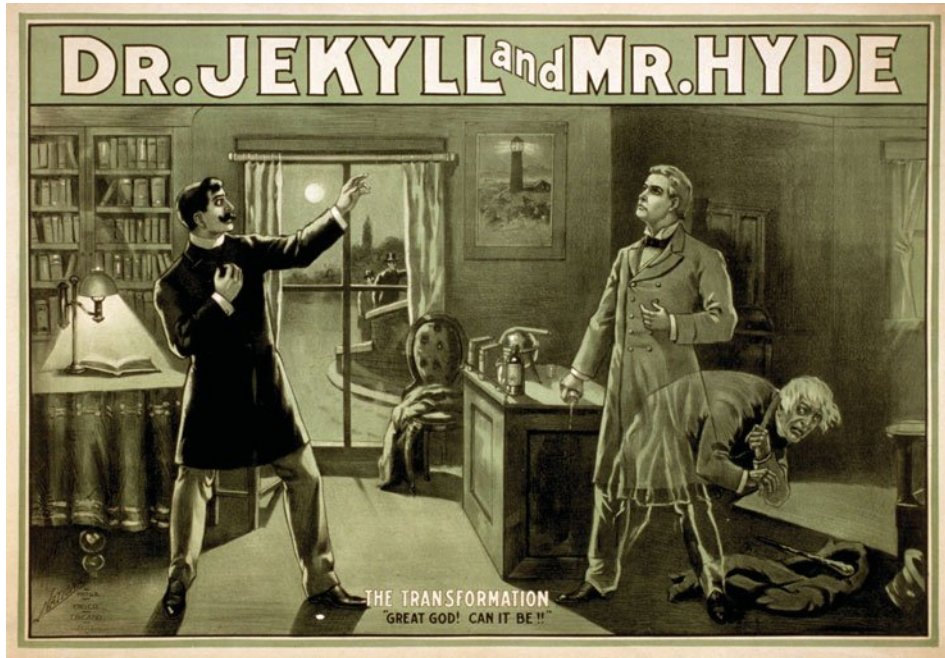
- 1 Offspring of a god and a human.
- 2 Someone of great distinction in a battle.
- 3 Someone of great bravery in any field.
- 4 The main character in an epic poem (then more loosely in a play or story).

### **Activity 7.1** Your thoughts

- 1 Describe a character from a book that you particularly admire.
- 2 Name five memorable characters from television or film. Give a brief description of each and explain why they are memorable to you.
- 3 List 10 qualities you would give to a likeable or loveable character.
- 4 Create your own villain. Describe and illustrate her, him or it.

## Paired texts: good and evil

Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde – from *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson



Robert Louis Stevenson was born in Edinburgh and, as a child, suffered frequent and severe illnesses that kept him away from school. He was nursed by his nanny, Alison Cunningham, who told him folktales and hair-raising stories that filled his dreams and nightmares, and sparked a lively imagination. His novella *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886) investigates the idea that we have a good side (Dr Jekyll) and an evil side (Mr Hyde).

Doctor Jekyll creates a potion that releases his dark side. He becomes addicted to the intense experience of being the evil Hyde, who eventually dominates Jekyll's life, with tragic results.

### Extract 1: Dr Jekyll from Robert Louis Stevenson's *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886)

... a large, well-made, smooth-faced man of fifty with something of a slyish cast perhaps, but every mark of capacity and kindness – you could see by his looks that he cherished for **Mr Utterson** a sincere and warm affection.

**Mr Utterson**  
Dr Jekyll's lawyer

## Extract 2: Dr Jekyll from *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

He came out of his seclusion, renewed relationships with his friends, became once more their familiar guest and entertainer; and whilst he had always been known for charities, he was now no less distinguished for religion. He was busy, he was much in the open air, he did good; his face seemed to open and brighten, as if with an inward consciousness of service and for more than two months, the doctor was at peace.

## Extract 3: the transformation from *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

He put the glass to his lips and drank at one gulp. A cry followed; he reeled, staggered, clutched at the table and held on, staring with injected eyes, gasping with open mouth ... he seemed to swell – his face became suddenly black and the features seemed to melt and alter.

## Extract 4: Mr Hyde from *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

Mr Hyde was pale and dwarfish, he gave an impression of deformity without any nameable malformation, he had a displeasing smile, he had borne himself to the lawyer with a sort of murderous mixture of timidity and boldness ... spoke with a husky, whispering, somewhat broken voice, all these were points against him, but not all of these together could explain the hitherto unknown disgust, loathing and fear with which **Mr Utterson** regarded him.

**Mr Utterson** the London lawyer who investigates strange occurrences between his old friend, Dr Henry Jekyll, and the evil Edward Hyde; he believes that Hyde is an associate of Jekyll's and is not aware that Hyde is actually Jekyll's evil side

.....

## Extract 5: Mr Hyde from *The Strange Case of Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde*

And then all of a sudden he broke out in a great flame of anger, stamping with his foot, brandishing the cane, and carrying on (as the maid described it) like a madman. The old gentleman took a step back, with the air of one very much surprised and a trifle hurt; and at that Mr Hyde broke out of all bounds and clubbed him to the earth. And next moment, with ape-like fury, he was trampling his victim under foot, and hailing down a storm of blows, under which the bones were audibly shattered and the body jumped upon the roadway.

## Activity 7.2 Extracts 1 and 2: Dr Jekyll

- 1 Which of Jekyll's positive qualities are communicated in these extracts?
- 2 What qualities do you think make someone a good person? In pairs, list 10 of these in order of importance.



## Activity 7.3 Extract 3: the transformation

Dr Jekyll drinks a potion that causes his transformation. Write a description of what you imagine the potion to look like. You can compare your description to Stevenson's, which is printed at the end of this chapter.

## Activity 7.4 Extracts 4 and 5: Mr Hyde

- 1 How has Stevenson contrasted Hyde to Jekyll?
- 2 How does Utterson react to Hyde?
- 3 What do you find to be the most disturbing aspect of Hyde's description?



## Activity 7.5

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- 1 There have been dozens of film, stage and television versions of this novella. There have also been numerous cartoons, video games, graphic novels, spoofs and parodies of the story. Why do you think the character of Jekyll, with his wild Hyde side, became so well-known and popular?
  - 2 Stevenson explores the duality of human nature. In cartoons and films, this is sometimes depicted as an angel sitting on one shoulder and a devil sitting on the other. Do we all have a good side and bad side? What do you think are your five best qualities and which are your five worst?
- 

### *Did you know?*

The tale was inspired by the true story of Scotsman William Brodie (1741–1788), who was a respected businessman, cabinet maker and councillor by day but a womanising gambler and criminal by night. His double life was eventually discovered and he was hanged, ironically, on a gallows he himself had designed. Robert Louis Stevenson not only knew the story well but his childhood bedroom contained a cabinet designed by the infamous Brodie!

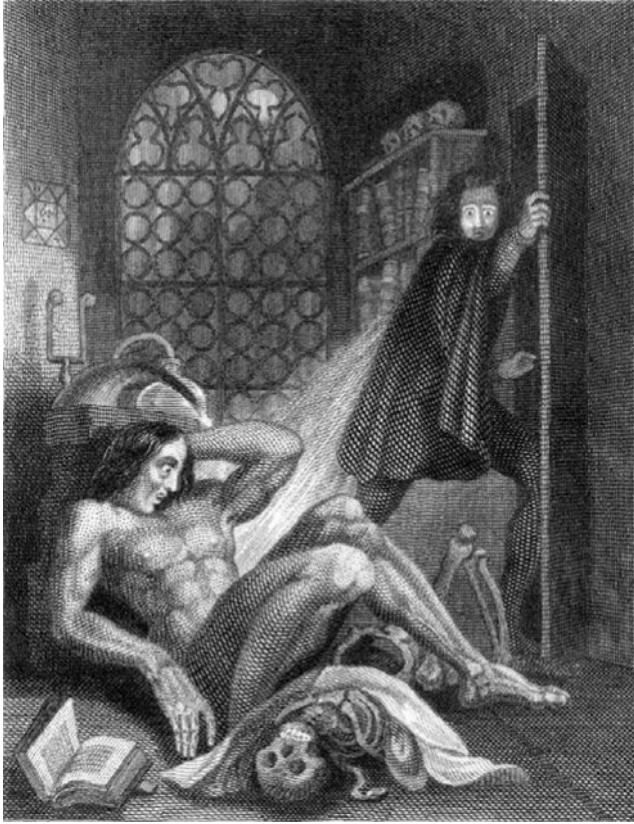
## Activity 7.6 Visual texts

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- 1 Search through images of film posters for *Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde*. Describe the visual features of three of them. Which of the three do you think is most effective and why?
  - 2 Using the extracts, create a storyboard that shows the transformation of Dr Jekyll into Mr Hyde.
- 

## Frankenstein and his monster – from *Frankenstein* by Mary Shelley

Mary Shelley (1797–1851) wrote her Gothic horror novel *Frankenstein* (1818) while holidaying on the shores of Lake Geneva, Switzerland, in 1816. The weather was particularly bleak after the eruption of a volcano in 1815, which caused the



following summer to be cold, dark and dreary. Mary Shelley, Percy Bysshe Shelley, Lord Byron and others spent a great deal of time indoors discussing literature, philosophy, politics and scientific developments – including those to do with electricity. They also entertained themselves by having a competition to see who could write the most frightening supernatural tale. Mary Shelley, aged 19 at the time, claimed that the plot for her contribution came to her in a nightmare that was fuelled by their candle-lit conversations. *Frankenstein* is considered to be the first true work of science fiction and inspired many film and television versions.

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* was published when she was 21

### *Did You Know?*

Frankenstein is the name of the scientist, not the monster, as commonly – and erroneously – thought. The monster is called 'monster', 'creature', 'fiend', 'demon' and 'devil' – among other names.

Doctor Frankenstein is a scientist whose obsession to discover the secret of life leads him to create a being made of stitched-together body parts from graveyards. When the creature is 'infused with the spark of life', Frankenstein is horrified by his creation's hideous appearance and abandons it in terror. The creature, who is never named, teaches himself to survive in the world but, to his great distress, is attacked and driven out of society because of his frightening appearance. Abandoned and feared, he lives a lonely existence in despair, until he decides to take his revenge.

The following extract is written from Doctor Frankenstein's perspective and records his reaction to the monster's birth.

## Extract 1: from Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818)

It was on a dreary night of November, that I beheld the accomplishment of my toils. With an anxiety that almost amounted to agony, I collected the instruments of life around me that I might infuse a spark of being into the lifeless thing that lay at my feet. It was already one in the morning; the rain pattered dismally against the panes, and my candle was nearly burnt out, when, by the glimmer of the half-extinguished light, I saw the dull yellow eye of the creature open; it breathed hard, and a convulsive motion agitated its limbs.

How can I describe my emotions at this catastrophe, or how delineate the wretch whom with such infinite pains and care I had endeavoured to form? His limbs were in proportion, and I had selected his features as beautiful. Beautiful! – Great God! His yellow skin scarcely covered the work of muscles and arteries beneath, his hair was of a lustrous black, and flowing, his teeth of pearly whiteness; but these luxuriances only formed a more horrid contest with his watery eyes, that seemed almost of the same colour as the dun-white sockets in which they were set, his shrivelled complexion and straight black lips.

### Activity 7.7

- 1 The night of the creature's 'birth' is described in a Gothic way (the Gothic genre was discussed in Chapter 2). How does the setting add to the tension of the moment?
- 2 What are the very first movements of the creature?
- 3 Frankenstein has been working on the creature for a long time. Why do you think he is so horrified by its appearance at this point?
- 4 Using the description that Frankenstein provides, draw your own version of the creature with one of its yellow eyes open.

The following extract is written from the creature's perspective and records the memories of his first moments of life.

## Extract 2: from *Frankenstein*

It is with considerable difficulty that I remember the original era of my being: all the events of that period appear confused and indistinct.

(continues)

(continued)

A strange multiplicity of sensations seized me, and I saw, felt, heard, and smelt, at the same time; and it was, indeed, a long time before I learned to distinguish between the operations of my various senses ... The light became more and more oppressive to me; and, the heat wearying me as I walked, I sought a place where I could receive shade. This was the forest near Ingolstadt; and here I lay by the side of a brook resting from my fatigue, until I felt tormented by hunger and thirst ... I ate some berries which I found hanging on the trees, or lying on the ground. I slaked my thirst at the brook; and then lying down, was overcome by sleep.

It was dark when I awoke; I felt cold also, and half frightened, as it were, instinctively, finding myself so desolate. Before I had quitted your apartment, on a sensation of cold, I had covered myself with some clothes; but these were insufficient to secure me from the dews of night. I was a poor, helpless, miserable wretch; I knew. And could distinguish nothing; but feeling pain invade me on all sides, I sat down and wept.

### Activity 7.8

- 1 What are the creature's first experiences of life?
- 2 Compare and explain the differences between the reactions of Frankenstein and that of the creature.
- 3 For whom do you feel the most sympathy and why?

### Activity 7.9

- 1 Romantic writers placed an emphasis on emotions. Look back through extracts and list all the words and phrases that convey strong emotion.
- 2 Why do you think Shelley did not give a name to the creature?
- 3 Why do you think the novel is named after Doctor Frankenstein?
- 4 The novel was published in 1818 and the first stage adaptation was as early as 1823. There have been many film and television versions of the novel. Why do you think these characters and their story so captured the public's imagination?

### *The epistolary novel*

An 'epistolary novel' is one that is told through letters written by characters participating in or observing events. The story of *Frankenstein* is told through the letters of an explorer named Walton. On his voyage to the Arctic regions, he encounters both Frankenstein and his creature who both relate their astounding stories to him. He records their tales in a series of letters to his sister back in England.

### Dracula – from *Dracula* by Bram Stoker

Bram Abraham Stoker (1847–1912) was born in Dublin and, for the first seven years of his life, suffered an illness that kept him bedridden. During this time, his mother entertained him with stories and folktales that, no doubt, fed his imagination and inspired him to become a writer.

The novel *Dracula* tells the story of Count Dracula from Transylvania, who buys an ancient house in England in order to extend his blood-sucking territory. His plan is world domination and his power, violence and cruelty seem unstoppable. The story



details the battle that a small group of men and women have to prevent Dracula from success. It is told through a series of personal and professional letters, telegrams, journal and diary entries, ship logs and newspaper reports, all of which lend authenticity to the story.

Originally titled *The Un-Dead*, the novel *Dracula* was not a huge success until the release of the 1931 film version, starring famous horror actor Bela Lugosi. It has continued to inspire versions and adaptations in every decade since and is, in fact, the most filmed book in cinema history. This shape-shifting, blood-thirsty, menacing figure will lurk in the shadows of your imagination long after you turn the last page of this horror story.

### Activity 7.10

- 1 Make a list of things you have heard about vampires.
- 2 Compare your list to the characteristics outlined by Doctor Van Helsing in the novel. His list appears at the end of this chapter.

#### Extract 1: from Jonathan Harker's Journal in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897)

His face was a strong – a very strong – aquiline, with high bridge of the thin nose and peculiarly arched nostrils; with lofty domed forehead, and hair growing scantily round the temples, but profusely elsewhere. His eyebrows were very massive, almost meeting over the nose, and with bushy hair that seemed to curl in its own profusion. The mouth, so far as I could see it under the heavy moustache, was fixed and rather cruel-looking, with peculiarly sharp white teeth; these protruded over the lips whose remarkable ruddiness showed astonishing vitality in a man of his years. For the rest, his ears were pale and at the tops extremely pointed; the chin was broad and strong, and the cheeks firm though thin. The general effect was one of extraordinary pallor.

Hitherto I had noticed the backs of his hands as they lay on his knees in the firelight. And they had seemed rather white and fine; but seeing them now close to me, I could not but notice that they were

rather coarse – broad, with squat fingers. Strange to say, there were hairs in the centre of the palm. The nails were long and fine, and cut to a sharp point. As the Count leaned over me and his hands touched me, I could not suppress a shudder. It may have been that his breath was rank, but a horrible feeling of nausea came over me, which, do what I would, I could not conceal.

### Activity 7.11

- 1 Identify and write all the adjectives in the description.
- 2 A thin nose, bushy hair, a moustache and squat fingers may not combine to make an attractive appearance but they are not in themselves sinister. What aspects of Dracula's appearance are unnerving?
- 3 From Harker's description, draw a picture of Count Dracula.

### Extract 2: from Mina Harker's Journal in *Dracula*

I can't remember how I fell asleep last night. I remember hearing the sudden barking of the dogs and a lot of queer sounds, like praying on a very tumultuous scale ... And then there was silence over everything, silence so profound that it startled me, and I got up and looked out of the window. All was dark and silent, the black shadows thrown by the moonlight seeming full of a silent mystery of their own. Not a thing seemed to be stirring, but all to be grim and fixed as death or fate; so that a thin streak of white mist, that crept with almost imperceptible slowness across the grass towards the house, seemed to have a sentience and a vitality of its own ... The mist was spreading, and was now close up to the house, so that I could see it lying thick against the wall, as though it were stealing up to the windows ... the air was heavy, and dank, and cold ... The mist grew thicker and thicker ... like smoke – or with the white energy of boiling water ... it got thicker and thicker, till it seemed as if it had become concentrated into a sort of pillar of cloud in the room ... the last conscious effort which imagination made was to show me a livid white face bending over me out of the mist.

## Activity 7.12

- 1 Annotate this passage by finding the meaning of the following words: tumultuous, profound, imperceptible, sentience, vitality.
- 2 What is strange about the contrast of sounds that Mina hears?
- 3 How do the comparisons Mina uses to describe the mist build a changing picture for the reader?

## Activity 7.13

Of the three characters of 'horror' – Mr Hyde, Frankenstein's creature and Dracula – which do you find the most frightening and why?

## Dickensian characters

The Victorian writer and giant of literature, Charles Dickens (1812–1870), created hundreds of colourful characters with witty names that reflect their personalities, trades or professions. In literature these kinds of names are called **aptronyms**. The characters' qualities are often exaggerated so that they are made to seem ridiculous. The term for this is **caricature** and you have probably seen this device in art when people's features are comically overemphasised in cartoon form.

**aptronym** in literature, a name that suits its owner and reflects their personality

**caricature** a portrait or description of a person that exaggerates or distorts their features to make them seem ridiculous



Marley's ghost from Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*



## Activity 7.14

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- 1 Describe what kind of personality you would expect the following characters to have:
    - a Ebenezer Scrooge (from *A Christmas Carol*)
    - b Mr Fezziwig (from *A Christmas Carol*)
    - c Mr Grimwig (from *Oliver Twist*)
    - d The Artful Dodger (from *Oliver Twist*)
    - e Uriah Heep (from *David Copperfield*)
    - f Wackford Squeers (from *Nicholas Nickleby*)
    - g Jagers (from *Great Expectations*)
    - h Pumblechook (from *Great Expectations*)
    - i Luke Honeythunder (from *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*)
  - 2 Create five of your own aptronyms for characters with particular jobs or personality traits.
- 

## Thomas Gradgrind – from *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens

Thomas Gradgrind is the headmaster from *Hard Times*. He is a cold man, interested only in facts, and is referred to in the following extract as the speaker.

### Extract: from Charles Dickens' *Hard Times* (1854)

The scene was a plain, bare, monotonous vault of a schoolroom, and the speaker's square forefinger emphasised his observations by underscoring every sentence with a line on the schoolmaster's sleeve. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's square wall of a forehead, which had his eyebrows for its base, while his eyes found **commodious cellarage** in two dark caves, overshadowed by the wall. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's mouth, which was wide, thin, and hard set. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's voice, which was inflexible, dry and dictatorial. The emphasis was helped by the speaker's hair, which bristled on the skirts of his bald head, a plantation of firs to keep the wind from its shining surface, all covered with knobs, like the crust of a plum pie, as if the head had scarcely warehouse-room for the hard facts stored inside. The speaker's obstinate carriage, square coat, square legs, square shoulders – nay, his very neckcloth, trained to take him by the throat with an unaccommodating grasp, like a stubborn fact, as it was – all helped the emphasis.

**commodious cellarage** spacious storage space

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## Activity 7.15

- 1 How does Dickens describe Gradgrind's forehead, eyes, mouth, voice and hair?
- 2 Give examples of the use of repetition to create an overall picture of the character.
- 3 What impression of the man's personality is created by the description?
- 4 Explain how Gradgrind's name is an aptronym.

## Miss Havisham – from *Great Expectations* by Charles Dickens

Miss Havisham is a jilted bride who remains in her wedding dress at the banquet table many years after being abandoned by her fiancé. She takes her revenge on the world by adopting a daughter, whom she raises to be cruel and heartless to men. In the following extract, young Pip describes his first meeting with her.

### Extract: from Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* (1861)

... everything within my view ought to be white, had been white long ago, and had lost its lustre, and was faded and yellow. I saw that the bride within the bridal dress had withered like the dress, and like the flowers, and had no brightness left but the brightness of her sunken eyes. I saw that the dress had been put upon the rounded figure of a young woman, and that the figure upon which it now hung loose, had shrunk to skin and bone. Once I had been taken to see some ghastly waxwork at the Fair, representing I know not what impossible personage lying in state. Once I had been taken to one of our old marsh churches to see a skeleton in the ashes of a rich dress, that had been dug out of a vault under the church pavement. Now, waxwork and skeleton seemed to have dark eyes that moved and looked at me. I should have cried out, if I could.

## Activity 7.16

- 1 Explain how Dickens uses contrast and comparison to create Pip's impressions.
- 2 What kind of personality do you expect Miss Havisham to have?



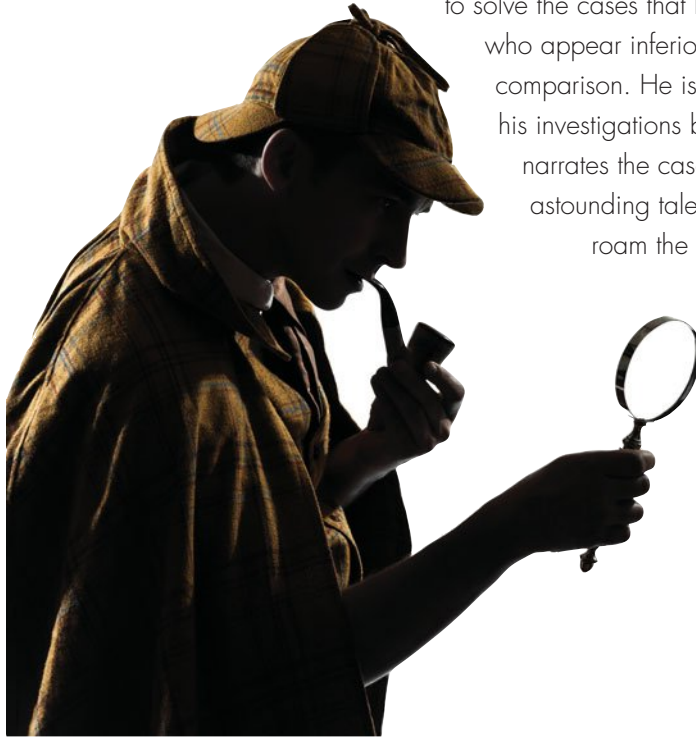
### *Did you know?*

It is thought that Dickens modelled Miss Havisham on the daughter of an Englishman who had retired in Sydney. Eliza Emily Donnithorne was jilted by her groom in 1856. She became a recluse, never leaving the house and insisting that the wedding table be left as it was. She died in 1886, still waiting for her fiancé to return.

## Sherlock Holmes – from *A Study in Scarlet* by Arthur Conan Doyle

Arthur Conan Doyle (1859–1930) was born and raised in Edinburgh, where he eventually graduated with a degree in medicine. After travelling as a ship's doctor to the Arctic and Africa, he set up a medical practice in England, married twice and spent his spare time writing, shooting and playing cricket. He wrote many types of fiction but, oddly enough, had the least regard for his detective stories, which continue to be his most popular by far!

Sherlock Holmes of Baker Street, London, is the most famous of all literary detectives. He uses extraordinary powers of observation and logical deduction



to solve the cases that baffle the police – who appear inferior and bumbling by comparison. He is accompanied on his investigations by Dr Watson, who narrates the cases and extols Holmes' astounding talents. Together they roam the pages of four novels and 56 short stories. *A Study in Scarlet* (1887) is the first of these canonical works.

In this extract, Watson describes Holmes to the reader.

### Extract 1: from Arthur Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet* (1887)

His very person and appearance were such as to strike the attention of the most casual observer. In height he was rather over six feet, and so excessively lean that he seemed to be considerably taller. His eyes were sharp and piercing ... and his thin, hawk-like nose gave his whole expression an air of alertness and decision. His chin, too, had the prominence and squareness which mark the man of determination. His hands were invariably blotted with ink and stained with chemicals yet were possessed of extraordinary delicacy of touch, as I frequently had occasion to observe when I watched him manipulating his fragile philosophical instruments.

In the next extract, we see Holmes in action, as he explains how he deduced that Watson has returned to England from Afghanistan.

## Extract 2: from *A Study in Scarlet*

'Observation with me is second nature. You appeared to be surprised when I told you, on our first meeting, that you had come from Afghanistan.'

'You were told, no doubt.'

'Nothing of the sort. I knew you came from Afghanistan. From long habit the train of thoughts ran so swiftly through my mind that I arrived at the conclusion without being conscious of intermediate steps. There were such steps, however. The train of reasoning ran, "Here is a gentleman of a medical type, but with the air of a military man. Clearly an army doctor, then. He has just come from the tropics, for his face is dark, and that is not the natural tint of his skin, for his wrists are fair. He has undergone hardship and sickness, as his haggard face says clearly. His left arm has been injured. He holds it in a stiff and unnatural manner. Where in the tropics could an English army doctor have seen much hardship and got his arm wounded? Clearly in Afghanistan."'

### Activity 7.17

- 1 What do the physical descriptions of Holmes in Extract 1 suggest about his personality?
- 2 Holmes' deduction in Extract 2 seems logical and simple once we know his train of thought. Is it as simple as it appears or does Doyle make it appear so? What aspects of his train of thought could be questioned?
- 3 Search the net for images of Holmes. What are the similarities and differences in the ways he is represented?

## Focus on: the Byronic hero

Lord George Gordon Byron was described in his lifetime as 'mad, bad and dangerous to know'. He was an aristocrat who wrote controversial poetry, satiric articles, political dramas, personal journals and letters. Byron left England to spend most of his life travelling and living in Europe, where he mixed with other writers. In 1823 he left Italy for Greece to fight against the Ottoman Empire for Greek independence. He died in 1824, after contracting a fever.

One of his legacies is the Byronic hero, so named after a character type in Byron's narrative poems, such as 'Childe Harold's Pilgrimage' (1812–18) and 'Manfred' (1817). The characters in these poems are not unlike Byron himself – arrogant, moody, mysterious, intelligent, in exile and disdainful of society's values, morals and conventions. Other characteristics of the Byronic hero include being capable of deep and intense passion, and merciless and unrepentant in revenge. They are often outcast from society, guilty of some unknown crime and yet proud in their guilt. True to the Romantic way of thinking about the natural world, these characters respect the powers of the natural world, are most comfortable in wild settings and tend to be misanthropic when living in society.

Many Gothic novels have these character types wandering through their pages but Heathcliff from Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* (1847) is the most famous Byronic hero in the literary canon.

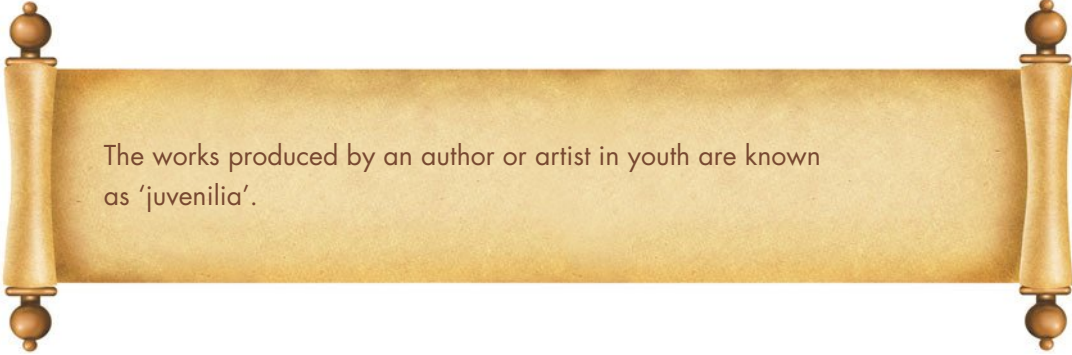
## The Brontë Sisters: Charlotte, Emily and Anne



As we have encountered in earlier chapters, there are few families that can claim such literary talent as the Brontës. Charlotte (1816–1855), Emily (1818–1848) and Anne (1820–1849) whirled away in their short but creative lives to give us such classics as *Jane Eyre* (1847), *Wuthering Heights* (1847) and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* (1848).

Their mother and two of their sisters died when they were small, leaving their father, the Reverend Patrick Brontë, with three daughters and a son, Branwell. They were looked after mainly by their aunt and educated mostly at home, where they spent hours in their father's library reading literature that included Byron's poetry. They also began writing their own stories, creating imaginary worlds in which Branwell's toy soldiers could wage their battles and lead their gallant lives.

The Brontë sisters (left to right) – Anne, Emily and Charlotte – painted by their brother Branwell, whose shadow appears in the centre



The works produced by an author or artist in youth are known as 'juvenilia'.

They lived in Haworth, West Yorkshire, where the landscape was wild and bleak. The surrounding moors were desolate and windswept, with a haunting beauty of their own – a perfect setting for a Byronic hero! *Wuthering Heights*, Emily Brontë's intense story of passion and revenge, is set on these moors and revolves around Heathcliff, a brooding, fiery outcast whose overwhelming love for Cathy Earnshaw shapes the events of the story. Fuelled by merciless revenge on those who make it impossible for them to marry, Heathcliff wreaks havoc on the lives of the remaining Earnshaws and the Lintons, the family into which Cathy marries. It is one of the most dramatic, wild and painful love stories of all time.

Neither Charlotte's novel *Jane Eyre* or Anne's novel *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* are set on the untamed moors but each have characters that display Byronic qualities. Edward Rochester, whom Jane falls in love with in *Jane Eyre*, is mysterious, brooding, moody and haunted by his past. Yet he is capable of deep affection and wild passion.

Gilbert Markham, the male protagonist and narrator of *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall*, is known for his moodiness and anger, while Arthur Huntingdon is an alcoholic, abusive husband who, it seems, was based on the Brontë brother Branwell. Both these novels take the reader on journeys that involve dark secrets, disturbing twists, moments of madness and triumphs of love.

### *Did you know?*

Before the twentieth century it was difficult for women to be taken seriously as writers and to have their work published. To combat this discrimination, many women sent their work to publishers using male-sounding **pseudonyms**.

The Brontë sisters published under the following pseudonyms:

- Charlotte Brontë: Currer Bell
- Emily Brontë: Ellis Bell
- Anne Brontë: Acton Bell.

**pseudonyms**  
fictitious names,  
or pen names,  
sometimes used  
by authors

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Heathcliff – from *Wuthering Heights*  
by Emily Brontë



Heathcliff is as wild as the landscape he haunts

The following extract describes the young Heathcliff and explains his arrival at Wuthering Heights.

Extract 1: from Emily Brontë's *Wuthering Heights* (1847)

I had a peep at a dirty, ragged, black-haired child; big enough both to walk and talk ... yet, when it was set on its feet, it only stared round, and repeated over and over again some gibberish that nobody could understand ... The master tried to explain ... of his seeing it starving, and houseless, and as good as dumb in the streets of Liverpool where he picked it up and inquired for its owner – Not a one knew to whom it belonged, he said, and his money and time being limited, he thought it better to take it home with him, at once, than run into vain expenses there; because he was determined he would not leave it as he found it.



In Extract 2, Heathcliff returns after a number of years of unexplained absence.

### Extract 2: from *Wuthering Heights*

It was a deep voice, and foreign in tone; yet, there was something in the manner of pronouncing my name which made it sound familiar ... I distinguished a tall man dressed in dark clothes, with dark face and hair ... the cheeks were sallow, and half-covered with black whiskers; the brows lowering, the eyes deep set and singular ...

... Now fully revealed by the fire and candlelight, I was amazed, more than ever, to behold the transformation of Heathcliff. He had grown a tall, athletic, well-formed man... His upright carriage suggested the idea of his having been in the army. His countenance was much older in expression and decision of feature than Mr Linton's, it looked intelligent, and retained no marks of former degradation. A half-civilized ferocity lurked yet in the depressed brows, and eyes full of black fire, but it was subdued; and his manner was even dignified, quite divested of roughness though too stern for grace.

Heathcliff wreaks revenge on all who keep him from being with Cathy. In Extract 3, he declares his intentions to her.

### Extract 3: from *Wuthering Heights*

'I'm trying to settle how I shall pay Hindley back. I don't care how long I wait, if I can only do it, at last. I hope he will not die before I do!'

'I want you to be aware that I *know* you have treated me infernally – infernally! Do you hear? ... and if you think I can be consoled by sweet words you are an idiot – and if you fancy I'll suffer unrevenged, I'll convince you of the contrary, in a very little while!'



Heathcliff is filled with anguish when Cathy dies and begs her ghost to haunt him so he is not left on earth without her, as seen in this extract.

#### Extract 4: from *Wuthering Heights*

You said I killed you – haunt me then! The murdered *do* haunt their murderers. I believe – I know that ghosts *have* wandered on earth. Be with me always – take any form – drive me mad! Only *do not* leave me in this abyss, where I cannot find you! Oh God! it is unutterable! I *cannot* live without my life! I *cannot* live without my soul!

### Activity 7.18

- 1 Explain how these passages present Heathcliff as a Byronic hero.
- 2 If you were to make a film of *Wuthering Heights*, who would you cast as Heathcliff and why?

### *Did you know?*

In 1979 Kate Bush wrote and performed a song called 'Wuthering Heights' about the intense love of Heathcliff and Cathy. It was a hit all over the world! You can listen to it on YouTube.



## *Narrative voice*

The person who tells the story in a novel or short story is called the 'narrator'. The word comes from the Latin 'narrare', which means 'to tell'. The story the narrator relates to the reader is called the 'narrative'.

The narrator presents a particular point of view on characters and events depending on how involved they are in the story:

- First-person narration:
  - The narrator speaks of him or herself as 'I' and is generally a character in the story.
  - Sometimes the first person narrator may be an 'unreliable narrator' who may see events from one perspective, while the reader sees them from another (John Fowles' 1963 novel *The Collector* is a chilling example of this).
- Second-person narration:
  - The narrator speaks directly to the reader, 'you', which puts the reader in the story.
  - There are a number of literary works written in the second person but this style of narration is less common, harder to sustain and usually used for a special effect.
- Third-person narration:
  - The narrator retells and describes events and characters but is outside the story.
  - The third person narrator can be omniscient (that is, outside of the story with knowledge of everything). This type of narrator is able to see every event and know all the characters' thoughts.

## Your writing

### anecdote

a short retelling of an interesting or entertaining incident

- 1 In pairs, tell each other an **anecdote** from your childhood. Choose an incident that had an impact on you – maybe because it was funny, exciting, sad or surprising. Listen to your friend's story and write it as if it is fiction. Use third-person narration, description, dialogue and well-chosen vocabulary to make it interesting to readers.
- 2 Change the narrative voice so that you have a first, second and third person version. When you have finished, ask your friend which version he or she prefers and why.

## Extension: Jay Gatsby – *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald

American novelist and short story writer F. (Francis) Scott Fitzgerald (1896–1940) led a life very much shaped by the hedonistic 1920s. He and his glamorous wife Zelda personified the Jazz Age, with their excessive party-going lifestyle. His most famous novel, *The Great Gatsby* (1925), was written while the Fitzgeralds were living on the French Riviera. Unfortunately, both F. Scott and Zelda suffered not only economic disasters in the 1929 stock market crash and the following Depression, but also health problems. Zelda suffered mental breakdowns in the early 1930s from which



she never fully recovered and F. Scott suffered alcoholism, which may have caused the heart attack that killed him.

*The Great Gatsby* tells the story of a mysteriously wealthy financier, Jay Gatsby, and his love for Daisy Buchanan. It is narrated by a minor character, Nick Carraway, who is Gatsby's neighbour for the summer and a distant cousin of Daisy's. Carraway observes the destructive lifestyles of the wealthy socialites and their hangers-on and watches as things inevitably fall apart.

In the following extract, Nick Carraway describes Gatsby's car.

### Extract 1: from F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1925)

He saw me looking with admiration at his car.

'It's pretty, isn't it, old sport?' He jumped off to give me a better view. 'Haven't you ever seen it before?'

I'd seen it. Everybody had seen it. It was a rich cream colour, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hat-boxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrored a dozen suns. Sitting down behind many layers of glass in a sort of green leather conservatory, we started to town.

In Extract 2, Fitzgerald builds a picture of excess and luxury.

### Extract 2: from *The Great Gatsby*

'I've got a man in England who buys me clothes. He sends over a selection of things at the beginning of each season, spring and fall.'

He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one, before us, shirts of sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel, which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-coloured disarray. While we admired he brought more and more and the soft rich heap mounted higher – shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange, with monograms of Indian blue.

## Activity 7.19

- 1 Comment on Fitzgerald's use of language to describe the car in Extract 1.
- 2 How does he build a picture of excess and luxury in Extract 2?
- 3 What overall impression of Jay Gatsby do these extracts give you?

### *Did you know?*

F. Scott Fitzgerald was named after a distant relative, Francis Scott Key, who wrote the American National Anthem 'The Star-Spangled Banner'.

## Words, words, words

*caricature, misanthropic, protagonist, narrate, epistle, hedonistic, ellipsis, intrusive, aptronym, monotonous*

- 1 Put these words in alphabetical order.
- 2 Use the diagram below to help you create vocabulary squares for the words 'misanthropic' and 'hedonistic'.

Part(s) of speech and root or origin of the word:	Synonyms:  Antonyms:
<b>Misanthropic</b>	
Symbol, logo, graphic:	Definition:

- 3 Write a quotation from an extract in this chapter that uses an ellipsis.
- 4 Write the verb, adverb and noun of 'intrusive'.
- 5 Draw a caricature of yourself or find caricatures that you think are funny and make a collage of them.
- 6 Make a list of surnames that are aptonyms relating to professions or trades.
- 7 What are synonyms for 'protagonist' and 'narrate'?
- 8 Monotonous is an adjective meaning 'without variation' or 'tedious for being the same'. Find five other words that begin with the prefix 'mono-' and write their meanings.
- 9 What is the origin of the word 'epistle'?
- 10 Write a sentence that contains any five of the words from the list.

## Read and view more

- *The Hound of the Baskervilles* by Arthur Conan Doyle
- *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens
- *To Kill a Mockingbird* by Harper Lee
- *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck
- BBC Television series *Jekyll* (2007)
- *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein* (1994) directed by Kenneth Branagh
- *Van Helsing* (2004) directed by Stephen Sommers
- *Jane Eyre* (2011) directed by Cary Joji Fukunaga
- *Wuthering Heights* (1939) directed by William Wyler

Graphic novels:

- *Frankenstein* by Fiona Macdonald (adaptor) and Penko Gelev (illustrator)
- *Dracula* by Fiona Macdonald (adaptor) and Penko Gelev (illustrator)
- *The Great Gatsby* by Nicki Greenberg (adaptor and illustrator)
- *The Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* by Alan Grant (adaptor) and Cam Kennedy (illustrator)

## Final words

- 1 Which of the characters in this chapter struck you as the most interesting and why?
- 2 What makes a character memorable for you?
- 3 Write two questions you still have about famous characters from the canon.

## Solutions to Activity 7.3

'The mixture, which was at first of a reddish hue, began, in proportion as the crystals melted, to brighten in colour, to effervesce audibly, and to throw off small fumes of vapour. Suddenly and at the same moment, the ebullition ceased and the compound changed to a dark purple, which faded more slowly to a watery green ...' – Robert Louis Stevenson.

## Solutions to Activity 7.10

Characteristics of vampires according to Doctor Van Helsing in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*:

- Have no shadows or reflections.
- Do not need to eat.
- Can transform themselves into bats, wolves, mists and dust.
- Can see in the dark.
- Thrive on the blood of the living.
- Have the strength of many men.
- Their powers are destroyed by garlic and crucifixes.
- Sleep during the day in a coffin.
- Branches of wild roses on their coffins trap them inside.
- Powers disappear in the daylight.
- Can only pass running water at the lowest or highest of the tide.
- Can be killed by a sacred bullet or stake through the heart.







# 8

## Around the globe

### RELOADED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Around the globe: Russia
- Paired texts: the art of translation
- Around the globe: France
- Around the globe: Japan
- Focus on: Australian literature
- Your writing
- Extension: Afghanistan – Rumi’s poetry
- Words, words, words
- Read and view more
- Final words

Every culture with a written tradition has a set of literary treasures – works that are familiar and significant because they shape the collective identity of a group of people. National canons are made up of writers whose thoughts reflect, shape and influence the culture in which they were produced. The Irish poet, William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), believed that ‘there is no great literature without nationality and no nationality without literature’.

Whether you realise it or not, your identity is shaped by your cultural practices: the language that you speak, stories that you hear, traditions in which you engage and ways you think about and relate to the world. Culture can be seen as all the things that surround and influence you – television, sport, religious ceremonies, films, advertising, leisure activities, family groupings. It can also be seen as the highest form of literature, art and music produced by a group. We describe people who know and understand these cultural products as ‘cultured’.



The texts that dominate the canon were originally written in English. However, a number of works in other languages from European national canons began to join them over time. If you look through books on English literature, you will find references to Russian, French, German, Italian and Spanish writers. Connecting to texts from other lands suggests that literature can transcend cultural boundaries. Through literature, we can share and celebrate what we have in common.

Of course, texts in other languages needed to be translated for English readers and this can be a tricky business. It is not easy to directly translate one word into another – think of all the synonyms, connotations and shades of meaning that words can have. Syntax (the order of words) in one language may not be the order of words in another and sometimes a word exists in one language but has no equivalent in another. The sound of a word in one language may be lost when translated into another. Anyone who learns or knows another language knows all these things. We are lucky there are people who work as translators and make great literary works accessible to as many readers as possible.

In this chapter, we will look at some of the canonical writing from around the globe. Here are the texts and extracts that you will read, in chronological order of publication:

- 1200s** 'Walnuts' by Rumi
- 1600s** Haiku poetry by Matsuo Bashō
- 1873–7** *Anna Karenina* by Leo Tolstoy
- 1884** 'The Necklace' by Guy de Maupassant
- 1889** 'Clancy of the Overflow' by A.B. (Banjo) Paterson
- 1892** 'In a Dry Season' by Henry Lawson
- 1908** 'My Country' by Dorothea Mackellar
- 1932** 'The Myall in Prison' by Mary Gilmore

### Activity 8.1 Your thoughts

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- 1 How would you describe Australian culture?
  - 2 Make a collage or interactive poster that illustrates Australian culture.
  - 3 If you have knowledge of another culture, what differences and similarities does it have to Australian culture?
  - 4 If you know or learn another language, translate a paragraph from a book written in English into another language. What were some of the difficulties in doing this?
-

## Around the globe: Russia

Russia's literary canon developed somewhat later than other nations but, in a relatively short time, translations of Russian literature claimed a significant place on the world stage.



There are, of course, Russian texts that stretch back in time to the medieval period but it was not until what is called the Golden Era, in the nineteenth century, that the Russian canon truly formed. Alexander Pushkin – poet, novelist, dramatist – is credited with taking national literature ‘to a whole new level’ through his virtuosic use of language. The big guns – Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky and Anton Chekhov – penned the novels, short stories and plays that continue to live vividly in the modern mind.

The works that characterise Russian literature tend to be lengthy and serious in tone. They are generally set in the cultural capitals of St Petersburg and Moscow, which were home to both the reading public and the publishing houses. Their characters are generally aristocratic families, government officials and military men. However, a prevalent theme was the plight of the peasant, as **serfdom** was not abolished until 1863 in Russia. They reflect and promote the values of honour, courage and sacrifice.

**serfdom** a system by which labourers were restricted to living and working on an estate; serfs had to give a share of their produce to the owner of the estate and, although not slaves, they had inferior status and few rights

Because of rising literacy rates and the development of mass press, literature was the main medium for political and philosophical discussion in Russia. Writing could be a risky occupation, with authors being censored and sometimes persecuted because of their 'dangerous ideas' and a fear of the power of the well-written word. Russian novels, plays and poetry became recognised worldwide as valuable for what they reflect about the nation and for their art. When we think of the literary canon, we include Russian literature as an integral part of the development of thought and its expression.

### *The giants of Russian literature*

- Nikolai Karamzin (1766–1826)
  - *History of the Russian State*
  - Short stories, including 'Poor Liza'
- Alexander Pushkin (1799–1837)
  - Short stories, including *The Tales of Belkin*
  - Plays, including *Boris Godunov*
  - Poetry, including 'Winter Evening'
  - Novels in verse, including *Eugene Onegin*
- Nikolai Gogol (1809–1852)
  - Plays, including *The Government Inspector*
  - Short stories, including 'Nevsky Prospekt'
- Ivan Turgenev (1818–1883)
  - Novels, including *Fathers and Sons*
  - Plays, including *A Month in the Country*
- Fyodor Dostoevsky (1821–1881)
  - Novels, including *Crime and Punishment* and *The Idiot*
  - Short stories, including 'White Nights'
- Leo Tolstoy (1828–1910)
  - Novels, including *Anna Karenina* and *War and Peace*
  - Short stories, including 'The Snowstorm'
- Anton Chekhov (1860–1904)
  - Plays, including *The Seagull* and *The Cherry Orchard*
  - Short stories, including 'The Lady with the Little Dog'
- Anna Akhmatova (Anna Gorenko) (1889–1966)
  - Poetry, including the anthologies *Evening*, *Rosary* and *The Flight of Time*

## Activity 8.2

Read a selection of short stories by one or more of the Russian writers listed on the previous page. It is always good to talk to others about your reading, so you could do this activity in pairs or you could start your own reading group. You don't need to write anything in response ... just enjoy the craft of the stories and the discussion that follows.

Woody Allen's 1975 comic film *Love and Death* provides a parody of Russian literature's themes and characters.

## Paired texts: the art of translation

**aristocracy** nobility  
or ruling class



Leo Tolstoy

Leo Tolstoy was born into Russian **aristocracy** on a country estate called Yasnaya Polyana in central Russia. His family had a library containing over 20 000 books in over 30 languages, and so he became a voracious reader, who was largely educated at home. Although he travelled widely and enjoyed an adventurous and wild youth, he spent most of his adult life on the family's country estate where he lived (not always happily) with his wife and children.

Tolstoy's novel *Anna Karenina* (1873–7) is one of the most famous Russian novels. It traces the tragic story of a married woman and her love affair with a young officer, Vronsky. It is woven into a larger story of two other families (the Levins and the Oblonskys) and explores both city and rural life. It is thought that Anna's situation, and fate, was inspired by a true story of a woman who had been having an affair with one of Tolstoy's neighbours. Life becomes art.



There is an interesting Tolstoy biography on YouTube in which Tolstoy's youngest daughter, Alexandra, talks about her experiences in the Tolstoy household and her relationship with her father (the link can be found at [www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks](http://www.cambridge.edu.au/canonweblinks)).

In the following extract, Anna Karenina has journeyed from St Petersburg, where she lives with her husband and son, to Moscow, to visit her brother Oblonsky. When the train arrives, she meets a young officer, Vronsky, who turns out to be the son of the woman she has been sitting with on the train. Anna makes quite an impression on the young man.

### Extract 1: from Leo Tolstoy's *Anna Karenina* (1873–7)

Translated by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky

Vronsky followed the conductor to the carriage and at the door to the compartment stopped to allow a lady to leave. With the habitual flair of a worldly man, Vronsky determined from one glance at this lady's appearance that she belonged to high society. He excused himself and was about to enter the carriage, but felt a need to glance at her once

(continues)



(continued)

more – not because she was very beautiful, not because of the elegance and modest grace that could be seen in her whole figure, but because there was something especially gentle and tender in the expression of her sweet-looking face as she stepped past him. As he looked back, she also turned her head. Her shining grey eyes, which seemed dark because of their thick lashes, rested amiably and attentively on his face, as if she recognized him, and at once wandered over the approaching crowd as though looking for someone. In that brief glance Vronsky had time to notice the restrained animation that played over her face and fluttered between her shining eyes and the barely noticeable smile that curved her red lips. It was as if a surplus of something so overflowed her being that it expressed itself beyond her will, now in the brightness of her glance, now in her smile. She deliberately extinguished the light in her eyes, but it shone against her will in a barely noticeable smile.

Vronsky entered the carriage. His mother, a dry old woman with dark eyes and curled hair, narrowed her eyes, peering at her son, and smiled lightly with her thin lips. Getting up from the seat and handing the maid her little bag, she offered her small, dry hand to her son and, raising his head from her hand, kissed him on the face.

*Anna Karenina Penguin Classics, Penguin Books, England, 2010, p. 61.*

## Extract 2: from *Anna Karenina*

Translated by Louise and Aylmer Maude

Vronsky followed the guard to the carriage and had to stop at the entrance of the compartment to let a lady pass out.

The trained insight of a Society man enabled Vronsky with a single glance to decide that she belonged to the best Society. He apologized for being in her way and was about to enter the carriage, but felt compelled to have another look at her, not because she was very beautiful nor because of the elegance and modest grace of her whole figure, but because he saw in her sweet face as she passed him something specially tender and kind. When he looked round she too turned her head. Her bright grey eyes which seemed dark because of their black lashes rested for a moment on his face as if recognising him, and then turned to the passing crowd evidently in search of some one. In that short look Vronsky had time to notice the subdued animation that enlivened her face and

seemed to flutter between her bright eyes and a scarcely perceptible smile which curved her rosy lips. It was as if an excess of vitality so filled her whole being that it betrayed itself against her will, now in her smile, now in the light of her eyes. She deliberately tried to extinguish that light in her eyes, but it shone despite of her in her faint smile.

Vronsky entered the carriage. His mother, a thin old woman with black eyes and curled hair screwed up her eyes as she recognised her son and her thin lips smiled slightly. She rose from the seat, and giving her hand-bag to her maid held out her small dry hand to her son, then lifting his head which had been bent to kiss her hand kissed him on his face.

*Anna Karenina*, Wordsworth Classics, London, 1999, p. 60.

### Activity 8.3 Extract 1: translation by Richard Pevear and Larissa Volokhonsky

- 1 What is it about Anna that makes such an impression on Vronsky?
- 2 List the adjectives that describe Anna's attractiveness.
- 3 How does Tolstoy create a contrast between Anna and Vronsky's mother?
- 4 What impression of the mother are we given?

### Activity 8.4 Extract 2: translation by Louise and Aylmer Maude

- 1 Which translation do you prefer and why?
- 2 Create a table that identifies the differences between the two translations and comments on the effect of these.

Translation 1: Pevear and Volokhonsky	Translation 2: L. and A. Maude	Comment
conductor	guard	A guard sounds more official than a conductor (with whom we associate collecting tickets) but the terms are very similar and the change does not affect the meaning significantly.

## Activity 8.5 Visual texts

- 1 Look at the different versions of book jackets for the novel by googling images of 'Anna Karenina book covers'. Which two are the most appealing to you and why?
- 2 There have been many film and television adaptations of *Anna Karenina*. English adaptations include a 1997 BBC miniseries directed by Basil Coleman, a 2000 series directed by David Blair and a 2012 film version directed by Joe Wright. These are easily available and some can be watched on YouTube. View a trailer, scene or episode from one of these and comment on how film techniques have been used to communicate information about the setting and the characters.

## Around the globe: France

**curricula** programs  
of study

Literature plays a significant role in the cultural history of France. Institutes, academies, universities and schools give it a prominent place in their **curricula**. Programs about the national canon and contemporary writing are regularly screened on French television. There is an acknowledgement and recognition in France that the creative output of a nation reflects and shapes its culture and identity. A genuine belief in the power of language to unite a nation is nourished. France, more than any other country perhaps, has actively guarded its language (a Romance language descended from Latin) against the growing dominance of English in the world arena. Its canonical literature is therefore highly valued for its skilled use of the uncorrupted French language and its expression of French thought.

The arrival of the Romance language (as opposed to the Germanic language) had an impact on France's medieval tales. These were epic poems that told of





the heroic deeds of chivalric knights. Many of these deeds were committed out of devotion to an unattainable woman. This type of story founded the tradition of 'courtly love' beginning in twelfth century France and spreading to Europe, where it became the longest-running tradition in medieval literature.

In the sixteenth century, there was a surge in creative thought. By the seventeenth century, French writing dominated European literature and, by the eighteenth century, French had become the diplomatic language of Europe. The literature of France made a huge impact on the world literary stage and influenced developments in other national canons. When we think of the literary canon, we include French literature for its significant and influential role in the development of genres and styles.

### *The giants of French literature*

- Molière (Jean-Baptiste Poquelin) (1622–1673)
  - Plays, including *Tartuffe*, *The Misanthrope* and *The Hypochondriac*
- Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet) (1694–1778)
  - Satires, including *Candide*
- Victor Hugo (1802–1885)
  - Novels, including *Notre-Dame de Paris* (or *The Hunchback of Notre-Dame*) and *Les Misérables*
  - Poetry, including the anthology *Odes et Ballades*
  - Plays, including *Cromwell*
- Alexandre Dumas (1802–1870)
  - Novels, including *The Three Musketeers*
  - Plays, including *Antony*
- Gustave Flaubert (1821–1880)
  - Novels, including *Madame Bovary*
- Charles Baudelaire (1821–1867)
  - Poetry, including the anthology *Les Fleurs du mal*
- Émile Zola (1840–1902)
  - Novels, including *Germinal*
- Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893)
  - Novels, including *Pierre et Jean*
  - Short stories, including 'The Necklace'
- Marcel Proust (1871–1922)
  - Novels, including *In Search of Lost Time* (seven volumes)
- Colette (1873–1954)
  - Novellas, including *Chéri* and *Gigi*

### Activity 8.6

Read a selection of poetry and short stories from one or more of the French writers listed above. You don't need to write anything in response ... just enjoy!

## *Did you know?*

Moliere died after a performance of his play *The Hypochondriac* in which he had just played the main role. How ironic!

## 'The Necklace' (1884) by Guy de Maupassant



Guy de Maupassant (1850–1893) is widely acknowledged as the master of the short story. He learnt much about the craft of writing from the novelist Gustave Flaubert, a family friend, who emphasised the importance of precision of language and attention to detail. Maupassant's stories are beautifully controlled, with masterful twists, and are often built around simple episodes that reveal hidden sides of human nature. Although he writes about all walks of life, he was particularly interested in the lives of the bourgeoisie. A prolific writer, Maupassant produced hundreds of short stories, as well as novels, plays and travel pieces. In his youth, he contracted the dreaded venereal disease, syphilis, and suffered increasing mental disorder as his life progressed. He died in a psychiatric clinic, after attempting to cut his throat.

### Activity 8.7 Before reading

Conduct some research into the setting of the story: late nineteenth century Paris. Create a page for a website on 'The Necklace' that describes what life was like for Parisians at this time.

### Activity 8.8

- 1 Read 'The Necklace' online or in an anthology of short stories.
- 2 What is the twist in this story?
- 3 What aspects of human nature does the story explore?
- 4 For which character do you feel the most sympathy and why?
- 5 'The Necklace' is regarded as one of the greatest short stories ever written. Why do you think this is?





## *Did you know?*

Guy de Maupassant was not a fan of the Eiffel Tower. Apart from signing petitions of protest against it, he often ate in the restaurant on its first floor so he could avoid actually seeing the tower!

## Around the globe: Japan

Traditionally, we do not include Japanese literature in 'the literary canon' in the way that we include Russian and French literature. This is mainly because Japanese was not a language commonly learnt in Europe – in contrast to, say, French – so not many people would have read or been able to translate Japanese texts. Its culture is also very different from England and Europe. What Japanese texts have in common with Western texts, though, is the exploration of human nature and the issues that concern us all as human beings.

Japanese literature is classified by the period in which it was created. Each period is identified by its location of the ruling government or monarchy.



## Yamato period (archaic times to late eighth century AD)

The most important form to arise from this time was the tanka (short poem), consisting of 31 syllables. Japanese mythology was the main subject matter. Truth and sincerity were the important values being communicated.

## Heian period (794–1185)

In the late eighth century the seat of government was shifted to Heian-kyo (present-day Kyoto). The literature of this era painted detailed pictures of aristocratic court society and was written by those living it.

## Kamakura-Muromachi period (1185–1573)

This was a period marked by warfare. In literature, as in life, the dominant figures were the samurai, or warriors, and the Buddhist priests.

## Edo period (1603–1868)

Peace came in 1603 and the seat of government was in Edo, present-day Tokyo. This was a flourishing period of trade and commerce, which resulted in prosperity, a growing population of townspeople, a rise in literacy rates, the foundation of libraries, and the development of new types of literature and genres. The condensed poetic form of the haiku was created, heavily influenced by Zen Buddhism. New dramatic forms emerged and travel writing became popular.

### *Did you know?*

Patrick Lafcadio Hearn (1850–1904), also known as Koizumi Yakumo, is one of the most respected writers on Japan and translators of Japanese folk tales, legends and ghost stories. He was born in Greece, raised in Ireland and began his journalistic career in New Orleans in the United States. He moved to Japan in 1890 where he became a professor of English, husband to a Japanese woman, a naturalised Japanese citizen and a writer of renown.

## Meiji period (1868–1912)

The Meiji period was marked by industrialisation and westernisation. Japanese scholars were studying in the West and Westerners were teaching in Japan. Foreign literary, political and philosophical works were translated into Japanese and Japanese texts were beginning to be translated into other languages. This cultural exchange brought developments in genre and style to both the East and the West.

Japanese literature is becoming better known and admired throughout the world. The Japanese language and culture is increasingly studied in schools and you would imagine that canonical Japanese literature will eventually become as familiar to English scholars as the literature of Russia and France.

### *The giants of Japanese literature*

- Sei Shōnagon (c. 965–1017)
  - Observations on court life: *The Pillow Book*
- Murasaki Shikibu (c. 973–1025):
  - Prose: *The Tale of Genji*
  - Diary: *The Diary of Lady Murasaki*
  - Poetry: *Poetic Memoirs*
- Yoshida Kenkō (c. 1283–1352)
  - Short essays: 'Tsurezuregusa'
- Matsuo Bashō (1644–1694)
  - Haiku poetry, including 'Haru no Hi' ('Spring Days') and 'Heikan no Setsu' ('On Seclusion')
- Kyokutei Bakin (1767–1848)
  - Prose, including *Nansō Satomi Hakkenden (The Chronicles of the Eight Dog Heroes of the Satomi Clan of Nansō)* and *Chinsetsu Yumiharizuki (Strange Tales of the Crescent Moon)*.
- Ichiyo Higuchi (1872–1896)
  - Novels, including *Growing Up* and *Troubled Waters*
- Jun'ichirō Tanizaki (1886–1965)
  - Novels, including *Some Prefer Nettles* and *The Makioka Sisters*
- Yasunari Kawabata (1899–1972)
  - Short stories and novels, including 'The Dancing Girl of Izu' and *Snow Country*



## Activity 8.9

Read a selection of haiku poetry or short stories from one or more of the Japanese writers listed on the previous page. You don't need to write anything in response ... just enjoy!

## Haiku

Poetry writing has a very long tradition in Japan. Haiku grew out of the classical court poetry that stretched between the eighth and fourteenth centuries. The first recognisable haiku is found around the twelfth century. The style developed from 'renga', which was like a party game in which groups collaboratively composed stanzas according to very strict rules about structure and content. The standard length of these poems was 100 stanzas but a much shorter form was known as 'haikai no

renga' (or playful renga). The 17-syllable form (three lines of five-seven-five syllables) was known first as 'haku' and then as 'haiku'.

As you read the haiku that follows you will notice that they do not seem to conform to the pattern of five-seven-five syllables. This is because the syllable count in Japanese is different to that in English. For example, a long vowel sound (like the 'oo' in moon) can be counted as one or two syllables in Japanese but only one in English). This, among other things, can make translation tricky. When we write haiku in English, though, we follow the five-seven-five pattern of syllables.

Traditional haiku is unrhymed and focused on nature – the season, weather, plants, animals and insects. In modern times, many people do not live in places where they can connect easily to nature, so modern haiku topics extend to human affairs.

Haiku is a popular form of poetry not only in Japan but also in the many countries around the world that have imitated it. This may be because, while it seems short and appears plain and simple, it creates poetry that is deep, subtle and incredibly beautiful.

## Bashō

Matsuo Kinsaku (1644–1694) was born into a lowly ranked samurai family in the Edo period and, as a boy, served a higher ranked samurai who shared his love of poetry. When this man died, Matsuo moved to Edo (now Tokyo) where he eventually set up a poetry school (yes, how wonderful that there were such things as poetry schools!). His adoring students set him up in a hut made of bashō (or banana) leaves and he would retreat to this cottage to meditate and write poetry, thus acquiring the name 'Bashō'. When he grew tired of urban living, he would wander in the wilderness, observing and reflecting on the natural world.

He became a practitioner of Zen Buddhism and in 1686 he wrote a poem describing a frog leaping into water. You can read two versions of it in Extract 1 on the following page. This haiku has been interpreted as an impression of meditation. The pond represents meditation and the splash represents the moment of enlightenment.



## Extract 1: frog haiku



### Translation 1

*Old pond –  
Frog jumps in,  
Sound of the water.*

Translated by Mosley, Ivo, *The Green Book of Poetry*, Frontier Publishing, Great Britain, 1994, p. 18.

### Translation 2

*Old pond,  
and a frog dives in –  
'Splash!'*

Translated by Patt, J, Warkentyne, M and Till, B, *Haiku: Japanese Art and Poetry*, Pomegranate Communications, San Francisco, 2010, p. 42.

## Extract 2: summer grasses haiku



### Translation 1

*Summer grasses –  
All that remain  
Of warriors' dreams.*

Translated by Mosley, Ivo, *The Green Book of Poetry*, Frontier Publishing, Great Britain, 1994, p. 17.

### Translation 2

*summer grasses ...  
traces of dreams  
of ancient warriors*

Translated by Haruo Shirane, Cobb, David, *Haiku*, The British Museum Press, London, 2002, p. 48.

## Activity 8.10

Which of the above translations of two of Bashō's haikus do you prefer? Explain why.

## Extract 1

*Withered branch  
A crow settles on it –  
Autumn dusk.*

Translated by Mosley, Ivo, *The Green Book of Poetry*, Frontier Publishing, Great Britain, 1994, p. 18.

## Extract 2

*even in Kyoto  
when I hear the cuckoo  
I long for Kyoto*

Translated by David Cobb, *Haiku*, The British Museum Press, London, 2002, p. 27.

## Extract 3

*So many things  
they call into my thoughts –  
cherry blossoms!*

Translated by Patt, J, Warkentyne, M and Till, B, *Haiku: Japanese Art and Poetry*, Pomegranate Communications, San Francisco, 2010, p. 19.



## Extract 4

*Such stillness!  
Into the rocks sink  
Cicada's cries.*

Translated by Mosley, Ivo, *The Green Book of Poetry*, Frontier Publishing, Great Britain, 1994, p. 224.

## Activity 8.11

- 1 For each haiku, explain what thought or mood Bashō was trying to capture.
- 2 Which haiku resonates the most with you and why?
- 3 Create an illustrated booklet or scroll that represents each haiku.
- 4 If you have knowledge of Japanese, translate a haiku into Japanese words or characters.
- 5 What do you notice about the similarities or differences in the way these have been printed in English? Which style do you prefer and why?

## Activity 8.12

- 1 Read haiku poetry by Yosa Buson (1716–1783), Takai Kito (1741–1789), Kobayashi Issa (1762–1826) and Masaoka Shiki (1867–1902) for enjoyment.
- 2 Write your own haikus.

### *Sei Shōnagon*

Sei Shōnagon's observations on court life in Japan in the tenth century offer witty insights into the lives of the aristocracy. She provides detailed descriptions of people, events and daily life, and delivers poetic musings on the natural world. There are some real gems in her *Pillow Book*, so called because the observations were written on pieces of paper stored in a pillow. Here are just two of her thoughts:

- 'I have never come across anyone with such keen ears as Masamitsu, the Minister of the Treasury. I believe he could hear the sound of a mosquito's eyelash falling on the floor.'
- 'When crossing a river in bright moonlight, I love to see the water scatter in showers of crystal under the oxen's feet.' (Translated by Ivan Morris, *The Pillow Book of Sei Shōnagon*, Penguin, London, 1971.)

This literature, which is almost like a collection of notes or diary entries, continues to be popular in Japan to the present day and is called *zuihitsu* or 'occasional writings'.

## Focus on: Australian literature

You will rarely find references to Australian literature in books about the canon, although the canon *is* an evolving beast and this is already changing. Australian literature of the past tends to be 'national' in scope. That is, it is mostly about responses to the Australian landscape and national events. English is an introduced language and writing an introduced cultural practice. So the history of Australian literature is short and limited, compared to other countries.





### *The giants of Australian literature*

- Rolf Boldrewood (1826–1915), *Robbery Under Arms*
- Henry Kendall (1839–1882), 'Song of the Cattle Hunters', 'The Barcoo' (poetry)
- Joseph Furphy (1843–1912), *Such is Life*
- Ada Cambridge (1844–1926), *A Marked Man*
- Marcus Clarke (1846–1881), *For the Term of His Natural Life*
- Barbara Baynton (1857–1929), *Bush Studies* (short stories)
- A.B. (Banjo) Paterson (1864–1941), 'Clancy of the Overflow', 'Waltzing Matilda' (poetry)
- Mary Gilmore (1865–1962), 'The Myall in Prison', 'Nationality' (poetry)
- Henry Lawson (1867–1922), 'The Loaded Dog', 'The Drover's Wife' (short stories)
- C.J. Dennis (1876–1938), 'The Sentimental Bloke' (poetry)
- Miles Franklin (1879–1954), *My Brilliant Career*
- Katharine Susannah Prichard (1883–1969), *Coonardoo*
- Dorothea Mackellar (1885–1973), 'My Country' (poetry)
- Kenneth Slessor (1901–1971), 'Country Towns', 'Five Bells' (poetry)
- Xavier Herbert (1901–1984), *Capricornia*
- Dymphna Cusack (1902–1981), *Come in Spinner*
- Christina Stead (1902–1983), *The Man Who Loved Children*
- Patrick White (1912–1990), *Voss*

### Activity 8.13 Research activity

- 1 From the list of canonical Australian writers on the previous page, which writers and/or works have you heard of or read?
- 2 Why do you think there are no Indigenous writers on this list?
- 3 Find out the birthplace of each writer. What do you notice about the origin of these writers?
- 4 Explore one of the writers in more depth. You may wish to create a bio box OR an interactive poster (using an online activity such as Glogster) OR an animated interview (using an online activity such as XtraNormal or GoAnimate) to display your findings about his or her life and work.

### Activity 8.14

Read a selection of poetry or short stories from one or more of the Australian writers listed on the previous page. You don't need to write anything in response ... just enjoy!

#### A.B. (Banjo) Paterson (1864–1941)

##### 'Clancy of the Overflow' (1889)

*I had written him a letter which I had, for want of better  
Knowledge, sent to where I met him down the Lachlan, years ago;  
He was shearing when I knew him, so I sent the letter to him,  
Just on speck, addressed as follows, 'Clancy of the Overflow.'*

*And an answer came directed in a writing unexpected  
(And I think the same was written with a thumb-nail dipped in tar):  
'Twas his shearing mate who wrote it, and verbatim I will quote it:  
'Clancy's gone to Queensland droving, and we don't know where  
he are.'*

**erratic** inconsistent

*In my wild **erratic** fancy visions come to me of Clancy  
Gone a-droving 'down the Cooper' where the Western drovers go;  
As the stock are slowly stringing, Clancy rides behind them singing,  
For the drover's life has pleasures that the townsfolk never know.*

*And the bush has friends to meet him, and their  
kindly voices greet him*

*In the murmur of the breezes and the river on  
its bars,*

*And he sees the vision splendid of the sunlit plains  
extended,*

*And at night the wondrous glory of the  
everlasting stars.*

*I am sitting in my dingy little office, where a stingy  
Ray of sunlight struggles feebly down between  
the houses tall,*

*And the foetid air and gritty of the dusty, dirty city,  
Through the open window floating spreads its  
foulness over all.*

*And in place of lowing cattle, I can hear the  
fiendish rattle*

*Of the tramways and the buses making hurry  
down the street:*

*And the language uninviting of the gutter children fighting  
Comes fitfully and faintly through the ceaseless tramp of feet.*

*And the hurrying people daunt me, and their pallid faces haunt me  
As they shoulder one another in their rush and nervous haste,  
With their eager eyes and greedy, and their stunted forms and weedy,  
For townfolk have no time to grow, they have no time to waste.*

*And I somehow rather fancy that I'd like to change with Clancy,  
Like to take a turn at droving where the seasons come and go,  
While he faced the round eternal of the cash-book and the journal –  
But I doubt he'd suit the office, Clancy of the Overflow.*



A.B. (Banjo) Paterson



## Activity 8.15

- 1 Create a table of two columns that contrasts Clancy's droving life to the poet's city life. Some examples have been provided to get you started.

Droving life	City life
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• sunlit plains</li><li>• wondrous glory of everlasting stars</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• dingy office</li><li>• stingy ray of sunlight</li></ul>

- 2 How does the poet use language to show that the droving life is more appealing?
- 3 Which lifestyle do you think you are more suited to: the rural or urban life? Why?

## Mary Gilmore (1865–1962)

### 'The Myall in Prison' (1932)

*Lone, lone and lone I stand,  
With none to hear my cry.  
As the black feet of the night  
Go walking down the sky.*

*The stars they seem but dust  
Under those passing feet,  
As they, for an instant's space,  
Flicker and flame and fleet.*

*So, on my heart, my grief  
Hangs with the weight of doom,  
And the black feet of its night  
Go walking through my room.*

## Activity 8.16

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- 1 Research the Myall Creek Massacre of 1838. Present your findings by writing a news article for today's readers that reflects on the significance of this tragedy. You may wish to use an online newspaper generator such as 'fodey' to publish your article.
  - 2 'The Myall in Prison' is a sympathetic poem written from the point of view of a Myall Aborigine in prison. Select a line or image from each stanza. For each, identify the technique used and explain the ideas and feelings created.
- 

## Henry Lawson (1867–1922)

### Extract: from Henry Lawson's 'In a Dry Season' (1892)

Draw a wire fence and a few ragged gums, and add some scattered sheep running away from the train. Then you'll have the bush all along the New South Wales Western line from Bathurst on.

The railway town consists of a public house and a general store, with a square tank and a schoolhouse on piles in the nearer distance. The tank stands at the end of the school and is not many times smaller than the building itself. It is safe to call the pub 'the Railway Hotel', and the store 'The Railway stores', with an 's'. A couple of patient, ungroomed hacks are

(continues)



(continued)

**sundowner**

a swagman,  
someone who travels  
the countryside in  
search of work, food  
and shelter

probably standing outside the pub, while their masters are inside having a drink – several drinks. Also, it's safe to draw a **sundowner** sitting listlessly on a bench on the verandah, reading *The Bulletin*.

The Railway Stores seem to exist only in the shadow of the pub, and it is impossible to conceive either as being independent of the other. There is sometimes a small, oblong weatherboard building – unpainted, and generally leaning in one of the eight possible directions, and perhaps with a twist in another – which, from its half-obliterated sign, seems to have started as rival to the Railway Stores but the shutters are up and the place empty.

\*\*\*\*

We crossed the Macquarie – a narrow, muddy gutter with a dog swimming across, and three goats interested.

A little further on we saw the first sundowner. He carried a **Royal Alfred**, and had a billy in one hand and stick in the other. He was dressed in a tailcoat turned yellow, a print shirt, and a pair of moleskin trousers, with big square calico patches on the knees; and his old straw hat was covered with calico. Suddenly he slipped his swag, dropped his billy, and ran forward, boldly flourishing the stick. I thought that he was mad, and was about to attack the train, but he wasn't, he was only killing a snake. I didn't have time to see whether he cooked the snake or not – perhaps he only thought of Adam.

Somebody told me that the country was very dry on the other side of Nevertire. It is. I wouldn't like to sit down on it anywhere. The least horrible spot in the bush, in a dry season, is where the bush isn't – where it has been cleared away and a green crop is trying to grow. They talk of settling people on the land! Better settle *in* it. I'd rather settle on the water; at least, until some gigantic system of irrigation is perfected in the West.



## Activity 8.17

- 1 Henry Lawson wrote this story from his observations of the outback and its towns on a train journey from Sydney to Bourke. The first three paragraphs of this extract describe the countryside and a typical railway town. What impressions of these scenes do the descriptions give you?
- 2 How does Lawson create humour in his description of the sundowner?
- 3 What is identifiably Australian about this extract?
- 4 Create three illustrations to accompany this story OR create a collage of the images that you find most striking.

## Dorothea Mackellar (1885–1973)

### 'My Country' (1908)

*The love of field and coppice,  
Of green and shaded lanes,  
Of ordered woods and gardens  
Is running in your veins.  
Strong love of grey-blue distance,  
Brown streams and soft, dim skies –  
I know, but cannot share it,  
My love is otherwise.*

*I love a sunburnt country,  
A land of sweeping plains,  
Of ragged mountain ranges,  
Of droughts and flooding rains.  
I love her far horizons,  
I love her jewel-sea,  
Her beauty and her terror –  
The wide brown land for me!*

*The stark white ring-barked forests,  
All tragic to the moon,  
The sapphire-misted mountains,  
The hot gold hush of noon,  
Green tangle of the brushes*

(continues)



(continued)

*Where lithe lianas coil,  
And orchids deck the tree-tops,  
And ferns the warm dark soil.*

*Core of my heart, my country!  
Her pitiless blue sky,  
When, sick at heart, around us  
We see the cattle die –  
But then the grey clouds gather,  
And we can bless again  
The drumming of an army,  
The steady soaking rain.*

*Core of my heart, my country!  
Land of the rainbow gold,  
For flood and fire and famine  
She pays us back threefold.  
Over the thirsty paddocks,  
Watch, after many days,  
The filmy veil of greenness  
That thickens as we gaze.*

*An opal-hearted country,  
A wilful lavish land –  
All you who have not loved her,  
You will not understand –  
Though Earth holds many splendours,  
Wherever I may die,  
I know to what brown country  
My homing thoughts will fly.*





## Activity 8.18

---

- 1 The second stanza is the best known part of this poem. Why do you think it is the second, and not the first stanza, that is the most memorable?
  - 2 How does Mackellar create images of Australia's 'beauty and terror' in this poem?
  - 3 Create a Photo Story reading of this poem.
  - 4 In the 'old days', poems were learnt by heart and recited from memory. Memorise and perform either a stanza or the entire poem.
- 



## Your writing

Write the first three paragraphs of a short story that is set in *your* town, city or area. Your aim is to establish a detailed picture of the setting in the first two paragraphs and introduce a character in the third. Try to describe your part of the country to a reader who has never been to Australia. Share your writing with others in the class.

## Extension: Afghanistan – Rumi's poetry

### Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi

Rumi (1207–1273), as he is known in the Western world, was born in Balkh, which was in the Persian Empire but is now in Afghanistan. The thirteenth century was a time of social and political unrest in Persia, as the Mongols were on the move. Rumi and his family fled their home town to escape Genghis Khan and his armies, and settled in Konya, Turkey. When his father died, Rumi succeeded him as religious teacher in the Sufi tradition and he became a well-known scholar of the Qu'ran. He wrote beautiful, spiritual poetry that reflects his liberal and cosmopolitan outlook, and transcends religious and ethnic boundaries. Translations of his work are popular all around the world today.



Jalal ad-Din Muhammad Rumi

A Sufi is a Muslim mystic. Sufism is a movement of Islam that focuses on a spiritual path to a union with God. It began around the seventh century as a reaction against the strict formality of orthodox teaching and reached its peak around the thirteenth century, when Rumi was writing.

## *Did you know?*

Rumi's funeral lasted 40 days and was attended by Muslims, Jews, Christians and Greek Orthodox followers.

### 'Walnuts' (c. 1200s)

Rumi

*Philosophers have said that we love music  
because it resembles the sphere-sounds*

*of union. We've been part of a harmony  
before, so these moments of treble and bass*

*keep our remembering fresh. But how  
does this happen within these dense bodies*

*full of forgetfulness and doubt and  
grieving? It's like water passing through us.*

*It becomes acidic and bitter, but still as  
urine it retains watery qualities.*

*It will put out a fire! So there is this music  
flowing through our bodies that can douse*

*restlessness. Hearing the sound, we gather  
strength. Love kindles with melody. Music*

*feeds a lover composure, and provides form  
for the imagination. Music breathes*

*on personal fire and makes it keener.  
The waterhole is deep. A thirsty man climbs*

*a walnut tree growing next to the pool  
and drops walnuts one by one into*

(continues)

(continued)

*the beautiful place. He listens carefully  
to the sound as they hit and watches*

*the bubbles. A more rational man gives advice,  
'You'll regret doing this. You're so far*

*from the water that by the time you get down  
to gather walnuts, the water will have*

*carried them away.' He replies, 'I'm not  
here for walnuts, I want the music*

*they make when they hit.'*

## Activity 8.19

- 1 What is the difference between the two men in the poem?
- 2 'Caesura' is a literary term that defines a break or interruption in a line of verse caused by the natural pattern of language rather than poetic metre. 'Enjambment' is the literary term that identifies lines of verse that carry on into the next line. Quote some examples of caesura and enjambment from 'Walnuts' and explain what effect they have.
- 3 What is your reaction to this poem?
- 4 Quote your favourite two lines from this poem.

## Words, words, words

*aristocracy, bourgeoisie, caesura, erratic, foetid, genre, monarchy, musings, pallid, scholar*

- 1 Explain the difference between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie.
- 2 What are the origins of the words 'caesura' and 'monarchy'?
- 3 Monarchy is a form of government with a monarch (king, queen, empress, etc.) at its head. Name five other types of government.
- 4 Write two synonyms for 'foetid'.
- 5 Give an antonym for 'erratic'.
- 6 Make a list of literary genres. Which do you prefer and why?

- 7 Under what circumstances might you look pallid?
- 8 'Scholar' comes from the Latin 'schola', meaning 'school'. Write five compound nouns that begin with 'school'.
- 9 What is the verb for 'musings' and what does it mean?
- 10 There are three adjectives in this list. Put each in front of nouns from the list.

## Read and view more

The Arab world:

- *One Thousand and One Nights* (a collection of centuries' old folktales and stories by many different authors)
- 'Layla and Majnun' (seventh-century poetry)
- 'The Story of Bayad and Riyad' (thirteenth-century poetry)

Chile:

- Poetry by Pablo Neruda (1904–1973)

China:

- *The Art of War* (military treatise) by Sun Tzu (c. 544–496 BC)
- *Journey to the West* (novel) by Wu Cheng'en (c. 1505–1580) – or watch the Japanese TV series *Monkey* (1978–80) (it is dubbed into English)

Germany:

- *Gertrude* (novel) by Hermann Hesse (1877–1962)
- *Death in Venice* (novella) by Thomas Mann (1875–1955)

India:

- *The Mahabharata* (a sacred Hindu text) – watch the 1989 film version directed by Peter Brook

Ireland:

- *The Vicar of Wakefield* (novel) by Oliver Goldsmith (1730–1774)
- *The Playboy of the Western World* (play) by John Millington Synge (1871–1909)
- *The Dubliners* (short stories) by James Joyce (1882–1941)

Nicaragua:

- Poetry by Rubén Darío (1867–1916)

Norway:

- *Hunger* (novel) by Knut Hamsun (1859–1952)
- *The Ice Palace* (novel) by Tarjei Vesaas (1897–1970)

Spain:

- *Don Quixote* (novel) by Miguel de Cervantes (1547–1616)
- Poetry by Federico Garcia Lorca (1898–1936)

Sweden:

- *Master Olaf* and *Miss Julie* (plays) by August Strindberg (1849–1912)

## Final words

- 1 Write three things that you have learnt about national canons.
- 2 Write two thoughts you have about translated literature.
- 3 Which country's literature would you like to explore further and why?







# 9

## Books at bedtime

### RELOADED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Paired texts: adaptation
- Fables
- Fairy tales
- Verse
- Focus on: children's classics
- Your writing
- Extension: Australian children's classics
- Words, words, words
- Read and view more
- Final words

There is something really wonderful about being snuggled up in bed on a cold winter's night and listening to a story. The pages turn, the words come alive, the pictures dance and the story unfolds into our own imaginations. Far-away shores, magical creatures and exciting adventures become vivid and real. As we nod off to sleep, the world of the story drifts into our dreams and wanders through our slumbers. All this begins before we can even read.

If we are lucky, this is how we are introduced to literature. Our parents, older siblings, grandparents and teachers read to us, and our lives become filled with stories and story-telling. We hear nursery rhymes, look at alphabet books, listen to fairy tales and are introduced to the classics, though not always in their original form. We learn to read and then a whole new variety of choices open up to us. We can select what to read and sometimes, when we love a book, we read it over and over again.



We are lucky that we live in times that make this possible. Childhood is a pretty recently acknowledged part of development. For centuries, children past the age of seven were used for labour – first in fields and then in factories. Eventually, the minimum working age for children rose, schools were developed, literacy rates increased and ‘childhood’ was recognised as an important phase in which morals, principles and behaviour could be taught. In the late seventeenth century, instructional works, such as James Janeway’s *A Token for Children* (1671), were being written for youngsters. It was not until the eighteenth century that children’s books were also designed to entertain and

then the nineteenth century that there was rapid growth in children's literature. Many of the 'classics' that you might be familiar with are from this time.

Not everyone becomes an avid reader or book lover. Not everyone likes to escape concrete reality and disappear into imaginary worlds. But everyone loves a story. When you come back to school after the holidays, you tell your friends stories about the most interesting things that happened to you. You create a narrative about your life. Hopefully, you tell the stories in an interesting way. One of the reasons you are able to do this is because you have listened to or read stories for much of your life. We have the children's writers of yesteryear to thank for the worlds they gave us and the possibilities of the imagination they revealed to us.

In this chapter we will look at some of the canonical children's writing from around the globe. Here are the texts and extracts that you will read, in chronological order of publication:

<b>First century AD</b>	'The Fox and the Crow' by Aesop
<b>1807</b>	'Twelfth Night' from <i>Tales from Shakespeare</i> by Charles and Mary Lamb
<b>1865</b>	<i>Alice's Adventures in Wonderland</i> by Lewis Carroll
<b>1871</b>	'Jabberwocky' by Lewis Carroll
<b>1880</b>	<i>Heidi</i> by Johanna Spyri
<b>1885</b>	'From a Railway Carriage' by Robert Louis Stevenson
<b>1893</b>	'Who Has Seen the Wind?' by Christina Rossetti
<b>1893</b>	'What Are Heavy?' by Christina Rossetti
<b>1911</b>	<i>Peter Pan and Wendy</i> by J.M. Barrie
<b>1926</b>	'Eeyore Loses a Tail' by A.A. Milne
<b>1956</b>	'The Fox and the Crow' by James Thurber

### Activity 9.1 Your thoughts

- 1 Write about a memorable moment from your childhood.
- 2 What are some stories that you can remember hearing or reading as a child?
- 3 Make a Photo Story or collage of the things that represent your childhood.



## Paired texts: adaptation

When we talk about adaptation, in terms of the canon, we mean the process of turning a classic text into a new form for new audiences. The main ways of adapting literature are to:

- adapt one medium to another; for example, turn a novel into a film or television series, or musical, or graphic novel
- abridge or shorten a text
- expand the text with annotations, illustrations, additional research, maps, explanations, diagrams, etc.

### Charles and Mary Lamb

Charles (1775–1834) and Mary Lamb (1764–1847) were born in London, moved in literary circles and lived busy social lives. Although Charles never achieved the success he desired as a poet, he was well-known in his day for the essays and articles he published regularly in magazines. He collaborated with his sister to produce *Tales from Shakespeare* (1807), which adapted 20 of Shakespeare's plays into prose stories for children.

The Lambs aimed to familiarise children with works of Shakespeare in an accessible form, until they were ready to read the plays. They tried to use Shakespeare's words as much as possible but acknowledged, very poetically in their preface, that their simplified prose was not as beautiful as the original, 'his language being transplanted from its own natural soil and wild poetic garden, it must want much of its native beauty'. They also abridged some of the stories to make them less complex for children. *Tales from Shakespeare* has never been out of print and has now become a classic in its own right.

### Extract: from William Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night* (1623)

(Act 1, Scene 2)

VIOLA: *What country friends is this?*

CAPTAIN: *This is Illyria, lady.*

VIOLA: *And what should I do in Illyria?*

*My brother he is in **Elysium**.*

**Perchance** he is not drowned. *What think you sailors?*

**Elysium** in Greek mythology, the home of the blessed dead

**perchance** perhaps, by chance

CAPTAIN: *It is perchance that you yourself were saved.*

VIOLA: *O my poor brother, and so perchance may he be.*

CAPTAIN: *True, madam; and, to comfort you with chance,  
Assure yourself, after our ship did split,  
When you, and those poor number saved with you,  
Hung on our driving boat, I saw your brother,  
Most evident in peril, bind himself  
(Courage and hope both teaching him the practice)  
To a strong mast that lived upon the sea;  
Where, like **Arion** on the dolphin's back,  
I saw him hold acquaintance with the waves  
So long as I could see.*

VIOLA: *For saying so there's much gold.  
Mine own escape unfoldeth to my hope,  
Whereto thy speech serves for authority  
The like of him. Know'st thou this country?*

CAPTAIN: *Ay, madam, well, for I was bred and born  
Not three hours' travel from this very place.*

VIOLA: *Who governs here?*

CAPTAIN: *A noble duke, in nature as in name.*

VIOLA: *What is his name?*

CAPTAIN: *Orsino*

**Arion** in Greek mythology, a bard who leapt over the side of a ship to escape murderous sailors and was carried back to shore by dolphins

### Extract: from Charles and Mary Lamb's *Tales From Shakespeare*: 'Twelfth Night' (1807)

Sebastian and his sister, Viola, a young gentleman and lady of Messaline, were twins, and (which was accounted a great wonder) from their birth they so much resembled each other, that, but for the difference in their dress, they could not be known apart. They were both born in one hour, and in one hour they were both in danger of perishing, for they were shipwrecked on the coast of Illyria, as they were making a sea-voyage together. The ship, on board of which they were, split on a rock in a violent storm, and a very small number of the ship's company escaped with their lives. The captain of the vessel, with a few of the sailors that were saved, got to land in a small boat, and with them they brought Viola safe on shore, where she, poor lady, instead of rejoicing at her own deliverance began to lament her brother's loss; but the captain comforted her with the assurance that he had seen her

(continues)

(continued)

brother, when the ship split, fasten himself to a strong mast, on which, as long as he could see anything of him for the distance, he perceived him borne up above the waves. Viola was much consoled by the hope this account gave her, and now considered how she was to dispose of herself in a strange country, so far from home; and she asked the captain if he knew anything of Illyria. 'Ay, very well, madam,' replied the captain, 'for I was born not three hours' travel from this place.' 'Who governs here?' said Viola. The captain told her, Illyria was governed by Orsino, a duke noble in nature as well as dignity.

## Activity 9.2

Which do you prefer, Shakespeare's play or the Lambs' prose version? Explain your answer.

## Activity 9.3

- 1 Graphic novels are a modern and popular way of adapting great works of literature into accessible versions for the young modern reader. Read a classic that you have either read or heard of in the form of a graphic novel. How does the experience compare to reading the classic in novel form?
- 2 Adapt the beginning of a Shakespeare play, or classic novel, with which you are familiar into a prose version or graphic novel for children.

### *Did you know?*

During a severe mental breakdown in September 1796, Mary Lamb stabbed her mother to death with a kitchen knife. She was saved from life imprisonment on the grounds of 'lunacy' and Charles took responsibility for her for the rest of his life. Her bouts, of what would now be known as bipolar episodes, did not stop her from living a fulfilling life when she was well.


## Activity 9.4 Visual texts

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One of the delights of reading children's classics is enjoying the beautiful illustrations. Here is a list of famous illustrators.

- George Cruikshank (1792–1878)
- John Tenniel (1820–1914)
- Vilhelm Pedersen (1820–1859)
- Gustave Doré (1832–1883)
- Jessie Willcox Smith (1863–1935)
- Beatrix Potter (1866–1943)
- E.H. Shepard (1879–1976)
- Virginia Frances Sterrett (1900–1931)
- Mary Shepard (1909–2000)
- Victor G. Ambrus (b. 1935)
- Alan Lee (b. 1947)

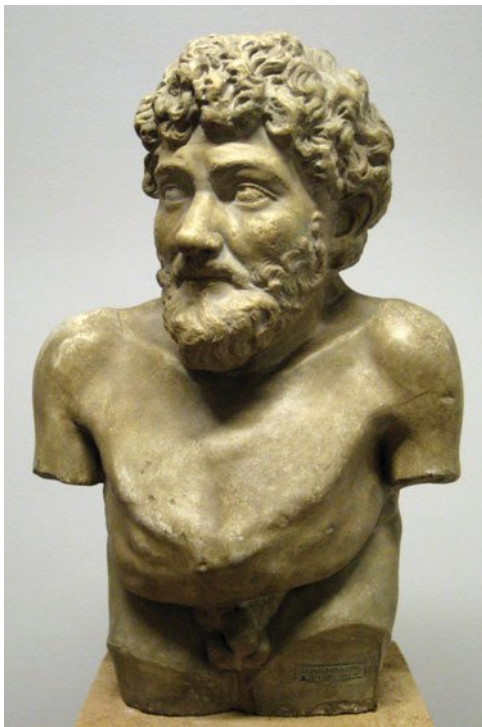
- 1 Find out what famous children's classics each of the artists listed above illustrated.
  - 2 Research one illustrator in more detail and create a biography and gallery of works for her or him.
  - 3 For the artist you chose to explore in more depth, which are your favourite two illustrations and why?
- 



If you are a fan of beautiful illustrations and quirky stories, read Shaun Tan's books: *The Arrival*, *The Lost Thing*, *The Red Tree* and *Tales from Outer Suburbia*.

## Fables

A fable is a short moral tale that usually involves animals that talk and behave like humans. The best-known fabulists are Aesop (620–564 BC) and Jean de La Fontaine (1621–1695).



Aesop

### Aesop

It is not certain whether Aesop (620–564 BC) wrote, created or collected the fables that are attributed to him. There are even some doubts as to his existence. But there are certainly references to him in ancient sources and, according to them, he was born around 620 BC but no one really knows where (perhaps in Ethiopia or maybe Athens). Some sources describe him as an ugly, misshapen man, a former slave in Ancient Greece, later a free man. He was regarded as clever and his fables were known for their political and social criticism. Over time, the collection we know as *Aesop's Fables* was written in Greek and Latin in the first century AD, and eventually translated and printed into English (from French) by William Caxton in 1484. They have continued to be revised and reprinted through the centuries and are regarded as a starting point of children's literature.

Anthropomorphism is the term for human attributes being given to animals and gods.



## Extract 1: Aesop's 'The Fox and the Crow' (first written down first century AD)

A crow, who had stolen a large piece of cheese from an open cottage window, carried it in his beak high into a tall tree. Seeing this, the fox said to himself, 'If I am clever, I can have that cheese for myself.' After a little thought he decided on a plan.

'Good afternoon,' he called up to the crow. 'How very beautiful you look today. And what delicate feathers you have; finer and more glistening than any I have ever set eyes on! Your neck is more graceful than a swan's, your wings mightier than those of an eagle. Surely, if you were blessed with a voice, you would sing more sweetly than any nightingale!'

Very pleased to hear such fine words, the crow hopped along the branch and then, in order to prove what a sweet voice he had, opened his beak to sing. A raucous 'Caw!' came from his throat and the cheese dropped to the ground where the fox swiftly snapped it up.

As he trotted off, he turned and called back to the crow, 'I may have said much of your beauty, but I said nothing at all about your brains.'



James Thurber (1894–1961) was an American satirist and humourist. He rewrote some of the classic fables exploring other endings and created fables for modern times. Here is an alternative ending for 'The Fox and the Crow' (1956).

### Extract 1: James Thurber's 'The Fox and the Crow' (1956)

A fox had used all his blandishments in vain, for he could not flatter the crow in the tree and make him drop the cheese he held in his beak. Suddenly, the crow tossed the cheese to the astonished fox. Just then the farmer, from whose kitchen the loot had been stolen, appeared, carrying a rifle, looking for the robber. The fox turned and ran for the woods. 'There goes the guilty son of a vixen now!' cried the crow, who, in case you do not happen to know it, can see the glint of sunlight on a gun barrel at a greater distance than anybody.

### Activity 9.5

- 1 What is the moral of Aesop's 'The Fox and the Crow'?
- 2 What is the moral of Thurber's alternative ending?
- 3 Which ending do you prefer and why?
- 4 Read a selection of Aesop's fables online and write alternative modern endings for two or three of them.
- 5 There have been many illustrators of Aesop's fables over the centuries: Arthur Rackham, Takeo Takei, Francis Barlow and Milo Winters, among others. Look at the illustrations online. Which style do you like the best and why?

## Fairy tales

Fairy tales are a variety of folk tales, told orally through the generations, before they were recorded in writing. They tend to be more fantastical (and less strictly moral) than fables. Giants, witches, princes, princesses, knights, dragons, fairies, elves and other magical beings enter the world of mere mortals to create harmony and havoc.



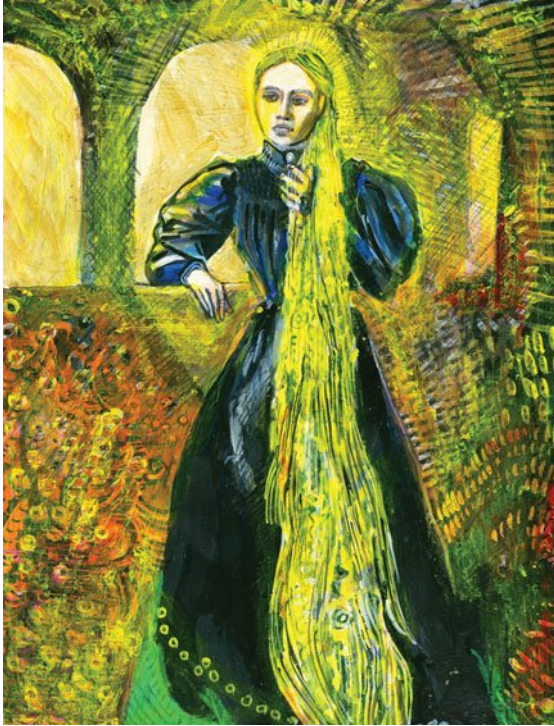
## The Brothers Grimm

The Brothers Grimm – as Jacob Ludwig Carl Grimm (1785–1863) and Wilhelm Carl Grimm (1786–1859) became known – came from a large family of eight boys and one girl. They were born in Hanau, Germany, and educated at Marburg University, where they studied law (in their father’s footsteps). By 1808 both parents had died and the two brothers supported the family by becoming librarians.

The Brothers Grimm went on to publish collections of folk tales and become professors at the universities of Gottingen and Berlin. As scholars and academics, they recorded folk tales, songs and poetry that were told to them orally, and wrote articles on linguistics and culture. It is thanks to them that so many oral folktales have been preserved in writing for generations of children to listen to at bedtime.

Here are *some* of the Grimm Brothers’ tales you may be familiar with:

- *Cinderella*
- *The Frog Prince*
- *Hansel and Gretel*
- *The Golden Goose*
- *The Goose Girl*
- *Little Red Riding Hood*
- *Little Snow White*
- *Rapunzel*
- *Rumpelstiltskin*
- *Sleeping Beauty*
- *Snow White and Rose Red.*



## Activity 9.6

- 1 In pairs, select one of the tales that you both know well. Each of you write the story as you know it – use description and narrative skill to do so. Then compare your versions. What are the similarities and differences between the two?
- 2 What is the moral of your selected fairy tale? Is it still relevant today? Why or why not?
- 3 Identify the passages of the story that you would illustrate if you were creating a book for children.
- 4 Create an illustration for the story.

## Hans Christian Andersen

The town of Odense in Denmark, where Hans Christian Andersen (1805–1875) was born, and the poor circumstances in which he began life, helped shape the writings that would bring fame to the Danish writer in later years. As a youth, Andersen listened to the folk tales and superstitions of the old women in the Odense Hospital, which was a workhouse for the very poor. These provided the inspiration for many of his tales, which began appearing in Danish in 1835.

After moving to Copenhagen in 1819, Andersen tried to forge a career in the theatre – singing, dancing and acting – but found that his true talent was in writing. Apart from the many fairy tales he wrote, some of which are quite dark and haunting, he wrote novels, poetry and travel literature based on his extensive journeys throughout Europe. He first visited England in 1847, where he read his fairy stories aloud to large audiences and became a good friend of Charles Dickens, with whom he stayed for a month in 1857. When he died in 1875, he had achieved international fame and his works had been translated into many languages.

Here are some of Andersen's tales you might be familiar with:

- *The Ugly Duckling*
- *The Little Match Girl*
- *The Emperor's New Clothes*
- *The Little Mermaid*
- *The Princess and the Pea*
- *The Snow Queen*
- *The Red Shoes*
- *Thumbelina*.



The Little Mermaid statue, Copenhagen

## Activity 9.7

- 1 Which of Hans Christian Andersen's stories do you know?
- 2 Andersen wrote many more tales than those listed on the previous page but we tend to know these well because they have been adapted into picture books, films, cartoons and television programs. Look up some YouTube clips of the Andersen tales and compare them to the written texts.
- 3 Read some of the less famous tales online and create an illustration for one of them.

### *Did you know?*

Hans Christian Andersen was so afraid of burning to death that he carried a piece of rope with him whenever he stayed overnight in someone else's house, in case he needed to escape fire from an upstairs room.

## Verse

### Lewis Carroll

Lewis Carroll (1832–1898) was born Charles Lutwidge Dodgson in Cheshire, England, to an Anglican **archdeacon** and his wife. He had a brilliant mind that played with both numbers and words, and became a mathematics lecturer at Oxford University (1855), an ordained minister (1861) and a writer (all his life). He loved word games, puzzles, puns and nonsense rhymes and wrote original fiction, short stories, poetry and plays. A busy man, he also wrote political pamphlets, essays and mathematical textbooks. He is best known for *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865). You can read an extract from this famous children's classic later in this chapter. 'Jabberwocky' appeared in the sequel *Through the Looking Glass* (1871). As Carroll said, 'Take care of the sounds and the sense will take care of itself'.

**archdeacon**  
a member of the  
clergy below  
a bishop

## Jabberwocky (1871)

Lewis Carroll

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogroves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.*

*'Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!*

*He took his vorpal sword in hand:  
Long time the manxome foe he sought –  
So rested he by the Tumtum tree,  
And stood a while in thought.*

*And, as in uffish thought he stood,  
The Jabberwock, with eyes of flame,  
Came whiffling through the tulgey wood,  
And burbled as it came!*

*One, two! One, two! And through and through  
The vorpal blade went snicker-snack!  
He left it dead, and with its head  
He went galumphing back.*

*'And hast thou slain the Jabberwock?  
Come to my arms, my beamish boy!  
A frabjous day! Callooh! Callay!  
He chortled in his joy.*

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe:  
All mimsy were the borogroves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe.*



'Jabberwocky', illustrated by John Tenniel, 1871

## Activity 9.8 Jabberwocky

- 1 What do you think this poem is about?
- 2 We understand how the words are working in the sentence because we understand the grammar as we read. Create a table with columns for adjectives, nouns and verbs. Write the nonsense words in the correct columns according to how they work in the poem.

Adjectives	Nouns	Verbs
Brillig	toves	gimble

- 3 Rewrite the poem by replacing the nonsense words with real adjectives, nouns and verbs.
- 4 Write your own nonsense stanza to add to the poem.

## Robert Louis Stevenson

A bohemian Scottish writer from a family of conservative lighthouse keepers, Robert Louis Stevenson (1850–1894) led a wild and fascinating life, which included much travelling, a marriage to an American divorcee 10 years his senior, sailing the South Seas with his wife and stepson in 1888 and, finally, settling in Samoa, where he died in 1894. He wrote plays, short stories, poetry and travel literature. His most famous works for children are the novels *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Kidnapped* (1886). The poem opposite is from *A Child's Garden of Verses* (1885).





## 'From a Railway Carriage' (1885)

Robert Louis Stevenson

*Faster than fairies, faster than witches,  
Bridges and houses, hedges and ditches;  
And charging along like troops in a battle,  
All through the meadows the horses and cattle:  
All of the sights of the hills and the plain  
Fly as thick as driving rain;  
And ever again, in the wink of an eye,  
Painted stations whistle by.*

*Here is a child who clambers and scrambles,  
All by himself and gathering brambles;  
Here is a tramp who stands and gazes;  
And there is the green for stringing the daisies!  
Here is a cart run away in the road  
Lumping along with man and load;  
And here is a mill, and there is a river:  
Each a glimpse and gone for ever!*

### Activity 9.9

- 1 How does Stevenson capture the changing pace of the train?
- 2 Which simile do you think is most effective and why?
- 3 What sights belong more to the nineteenth century than the present day?
- 4 Write what sights you would see if you travelled by train today.
- 5 Create a Photo Story reading of the poem.

## Christina Rossetti

London-born Christina Rossetti (1830–1894) was from a talented family. Her father was a poet, teacher and political exile from Italy, her brother Dante was a well-known artist and poet, and her other two siblings were also writers. Christina was educated at home and introduced to many literary and religious works by her mother. She began writing verse from an early age and had two poems published by the age of 18. From 1847 she experimented with different forms, such as sonnets and ballads, and different sources, such as bible stories and folk tales. She eventually focused on devotional poetry and children's verses. The poems on the following page were first printed in *Sing-Song* (1893).



## 'Who Has Seen the Wind?' (1893)

Christina Rossetti

*Who has seen the wind?  
Neither I nor you;  
But when the leaves hang trembling  
The wind is passing through.*

*Who has seen the wind?  
Neither you nor I;  
But when the trees bow down their heads  
The wind is passing by.*



## 'What Are Heavy?' (1893)

Christina Rossetti

*What are heavy? Sea-sand and sorrow;  
What are brief? Today and tomorrow;  
What are frail? Spring blossoms and youth;  
What are deep? The ocean and truth.*

### Activity 9.10

- 1 Comment on the structure of 'Who Has Seen the Wind?'
- 2 How does Rossetti mix concrete with abstract images in 'What Are Heavy?'
- 3 What similarities can you find between the two poems?
- 4 Write your own poem that answers the following questions: What is light? What is long? What is strong? What is shallow?

## Focus on: children's classics

### *Heidi* by Johanna Spyri

Johanna Heusser (1827–1901) was born in the village of Herzil, in the Swiss Alps. Not a great deal is known about her life, other than she married Bernhard Spyri in 1852 and had a son, also named Bernhard. Johanna Spyri wrote many short stories and novels for both children and adults. Her most successful and best-known work is *Heidi*. The novel is about a young orphan, Adelheid, known as Heidi, whose aunt brings the five-year-old to her grandfather in the mountains. There, Heidi learns to love the beauty and freedom of the Alps and befriends a goatherd, Peter. When she is sent to Frankfurt as a companion to a girl in a wheelchair, Klara, she misses her mountain life. Eventually, Heidi returns to her grandfather and Peter in the Alps, and Klara joins them, to be made well again by friendship and mountain air. The following extract takes place early in the novel, while Heidi and Peter are tending to the herd of goats.

#### Extract: from Johanna Spyri's *Heidi* (1880)

The valley lay far below, bathed in the sparkling morning sunshine. In front of Heidi a big, broad snowfield rose up to the dark blue sky and on the left stood a huge pile of rocks above which a bare rocky peak reached towards the sky, towering majestically above the child. Heidi sat motionless. A great silence was all around and only the delicate blue harebells and yellow **cistus** swayed softly in the gentle breeze, nodding joyfully on their slender little stems. Peter had fallen asleep and the goats were climbing high up amongst the bushes. Heidi had never been so happy. The golden sunlight, the fresh breezes and the delicate perfume of the flowers filled her with delight and she only wished that she might stay there for ever. She gazed so long at the mountains that it seemed to her that each had a face and that these mountainfaces were as familiar to her as old friends.

**cistus** a shrub with large flowers

Suddenly Heidi heard a loud, harsh cry and when she looked up she saw, circling overhead, a huge bird, larger than she had ever seen before. His large wings were outspread and he flew in a wide circle, coming back again and again and uttering loud, piercing shrieks above Heidi's head.

'Peter, Peter! Wake up!' cried Heidi. 'Look! There is a big bird just above us!'

Peter got up and watched the bird, too, as it rose higher and higher and at last disappeared behind the grey rocks.

(continues)

(continued)

'Where has he gone to?' asked Heidi who had been watching the bird with keen interest.

'Home to his nest,' replied Peter.

'Is his home up there? Oh, how nice to live so high up! How terribly he cries! Let's climb up there and see where his nest is!'

'Oh, no!' replied Peter emphatically. 'Even the goats can't climb so high and **the uncle** said you were not to climb the rocks.'

**the uncle** refers to Heidi's grandfather

### Activity 9.11

- 1 Make a list of the adjectives and adverbs used in the opening paragraph of this extract.
- 2 What mood is created by the description of the setting?
- 3 How does the mood change and why?
- 4 How do we know that Heidi is a newcomer to the Alps?
- 5 Are there any clues in this extract to suggest that it was written over a hundred years ago?
- 6 Describe a place that is important to you.

## *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll

Charles Lutwidge Dodgson – a.k.a. Lewis Carroll (1832–1898) – wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and its sequel, *Through the Looking Glass* (1871), for the children of his friend, Vice-Chancellor of Oxford University Henry George Liddell. During a boating trip, Dodgson told the three girls – Lorina, Alice and Edith – the story of young Alice, who disappears down a rabbit hole and finds herself in a fantastical place called Wonderland. The girls loved the stories and Alice asked him to write them down, which he did, under his **pseudonym** Lewis Carroll. In later publications, the title was shortened to *Alice in Wonderland*. A mathematician and lover of word games, Carroll plays with logic and language to create a story that would go on to be loved by children and adults alike.

**pseudonym**  
a fictitious name sometimes used by an author to hide their true identity

In the opposite extract, Alice is a guest at a 'mad' tea party with the March Hare, the Hatter and Dormouse. Time becomes a topic of discussion and it is revealed that Time has punished the Hatter by standing still at 6 p.m., which is tea-time.



John Tenniel's illustration of 'A Mad Tea Party'

### Extract: from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865)

'Have you guessed **the riddle** yet?' the Hatter said, turning to Alice again.

'No, I give it up,' Alice replied. 'What's the answer?'

'I haven't the slightest idea,' said the Hatter.

'Nor I,' said the March Hare.

Alice sighed wearily. 'I think you might do something better with the time,' she said, 'than wasting it in asking riddles that have no answers.'

'If you knew Time as well as I do,' said the Hatter, 'you wouldn't talk about wasting *it*. It's *him*.'

'I don't know what you mean,' said Alice.

'Of course you don't!' the Hatter said, tossing his head contemptuously. 'I dare say you never even spoke to Time.'

(continues)

**the riddle** refers to 'Why is a raven like a writing desk?'

.....

(continued)

'Perhaps not,' Alice cautiously replied; 'but I know I have to beat time when I learn music.'

'Ah! That accounts for it,' said the Hatter. 'He won't stand beating. Now, if you only kept on good terms with him, he'd do almost anything you liked with the clock.'

'For instance, suppose it were nine o'clock in the morning, just time to begin lessons: you'd only have to whisper a hint to Time, and round goes the clock in a twinkling!

Half-past one, time for dinner!

(I only wish it was,' the March Hare said to itself in a whisper.)

'That would be grand, certainly,' said Alice thoughtfully: 'but then – I shouldn't be hungry for it, you know.'

'Not at first, perhaps,' said the Hatter: 'but you could keep it to half-past one as long as you liked.'

'Is that how you manage?' Alice asked.

The Hatter shook his head mournfully. 'Not I!' he replied. 'We quarrelled last March – just before he went mad, you know –' (pointing with his teaspoon at the March Hare) '– it was at the great concert given by the Queen of Hearts, and I had to sing

*"Twinkle, twinkle, little bat!*

*How I wonder what you're at!"*

You know the song perhaps?'

'I've heard something like it,' said Alice.

'It goes on, you know,' the Hatter continued, 'in this way –'

*"Up above the world you fly*

*Like a tea-tray in the sky.*

*Twinkle, twinkle –"*

Here the Dormouse shook itself, and began singing in its sleep 'Twinkle, twinkle, twinkle –' and went on so long that they had to pinch it to make it stop.

'Well, I'd hardly finished the first verse,' said the Hatter, when the Queen bawled out, "He's murdering the time! Off with his head!"'

'How dreadfully savage!' exclaimed Alice.

'And ever since that,' the Hatter went on in a mournful tone, 'he won't do a thing I ask! It's always six o'clock now.'

## Activity 9.12

- 1 Explain how Carroll plays with ideas and the language of time in this extract.
- 2 'Race against time', 'spend time', 'from time to time' are expressions we use about time. Add five more to the list.
- 3 What other examples of playful language can you find in this extract?
- 4 Read the whole chapter online and note the other clever uses of language.
- 5 Watch the YouTube clip of the Mad Hatter's Tea Party. Is it how you imagined the scene? Why or why not?

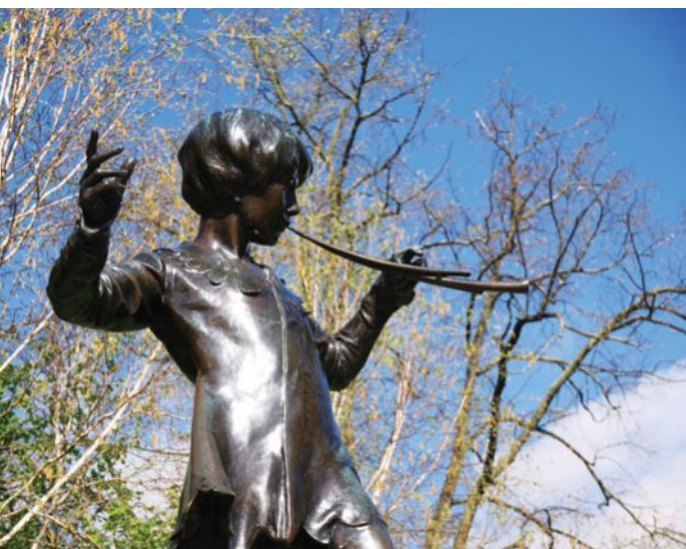
### *Did you know?*

The first film version of *Alice in Wonderland* was directed by Cecil Hepworth and Percy Stow in England in 1903. The film ran for 12 minutes, which made it the longest film of its day. It has been restored (to eight minutes) and you can watch it on YouTube.

### *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie

J.M. (James Matthew) Barrie (1860–1937) was born in Scotland, the ninth of 10 children. When he was seven years old, his older brother, David, died in an ice-skating accident the day before his 14th birthday. His mother, Margaret, suffered deep sadness and depression. This had a huge effect on James. It is reported that she took consolation in the fact that David would forever be a child and this, no doubt, was part of the inspiration of J.M. Barrie's famous children's story *Peter Pan*.

Barrie began his writing career as a journalist before becoming the author of many plays, short stories and novels for adults. In 1897 he met the Llewellyn Davies family. The parents became good friends of his and, when they died, he took care of their five sons, for whom he had written the play version of *Peter Pan*. The story



involves a boy, Peter Pan, who ran away from home and now lives, forever a child, in Neverland. He is the leader of the Lost Boys (other children lost by their parents) and has a fairy companion, Tinker Bell. Late at night, Peter visits the Darling children in London, teaches them to fly and, together, they have a number of adventures in Neverland, some involving the infamous Captain Hook. The play, first performed in 1904, was transformed into a novel in 1906. It has become a much-loved children's classic and has been adapted many times for stage and screen.

### Extract: from J.M. Barrie's *Peter Pan* (1911)

I don't know whether you have ever seen a map of a person's mind. Doctors sometimes draw maps of other parts of you, and your own map can become intensely interesting, but catch them trying to draw a map of a child's mind, which is not only confused, but keeps going round all the time. There are zigzag lines on it, just like your temperature on a card, and these are probably roads in the island, for the Neverland is always more or less an island, with astonishing splashes of colour here and there, and coral reefs and rakish-looking craft in the offing, and savages and lonely lairs, and gnomes who are mostly tailors and caves through which a river runs, and princes with six elder brothers, and a hut fast going to decay, and one very small old lady with a hooked nose. It would be an easy map if that were all, but there is also first day at school, religion, fathers, the round pond, needlework, murders, hangings, verbs that take the **dative**, chocolate pudding day, getting into braces, say ninety-nine, three-pence for pulling out your tooth yourself, and so on, and either these are part of the island or they are another map showing through, and it is all rather confusing, especially as nothing will stand still.

Of course the Neverlands vary a good deal. John's, for instance, had a lagoon with flamingoes flying over it at which John was shooting, while Michael, who was very small, had a flamingo with lagoons flying over it. John lived in a boat turned upside down on the sands, Michael in a wigwam, Wendy in a house of leaves **deftly** sewn together ...

#### **dative**

the grammatical case when a noun or pronoun is used as an indirect object (e.g. He gave it to me)

**deftly** with skill



Occasionally in her travels through her children's minds Mrs Darling found things she could not understand, and of these quite the most **perplexing** was the word Peter. She knew of no Peter, and yet he was here and there in John and Michael's minds, while Wendy's began to be scrawled all over with him. The name stood out in bolder letters than any of the other words, and as Mrs Darling gazed she felt that it had an oddly cocky appearance.

**perplexing** puzzling

'Yes, he is rather cocky,' Wendy admitted with regret. Her mother had been questioning her.

'But who is he, my pet?'

'He is Peter Pan, you know, mother.'

At first Mrs Darling did not know, but after thinking back into her childhood she just remembered a Peter Pan who was said to live with the fairies.

### Activity 9.13

- 1 What is your understanding of Neverland from this extract?
- 2 Comment on the voice of the narrator.
- 3 What does the last sentence of this extract imply about Peter Pan?
- 4 What clues are there that this was written some time ago?
- 5 What does *your* Neverland contain?

### *Did you know?*

In 1929 J.M. Barrie donated the copyright of *Peter Pan* to the Great Ormond Street Hospital for Sick Children, as it was known then. This meant that the hospital could use the royalties from all *Peter Pan* works and merchandise to help cure its patients. Barrie's generosity is remembered today through the Peter Pan Café, the Peter Pan Ward, the Barrie Wing and the statue of Peter Pan and Tinker Bell, which stands at the entrance. Peter Pan is helping give children a chance to do the one thing he (and Barrie's brother) could not do – grow up.

## Winnie-the-Pooh by A.A. Milne



A.A. (Alan Alexander) Milne (1882–1956) is best known for his children’s poetry *When We Were Very Young* (1924) and *Now We Are Six* (1927), and stories in *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926) and *The House at Pooh Corner* (1928). He was also a prolific writer of plays, screenplays, newspaper articles, novels, poetry and short stories. He served in both world wars, married Dorothy de Sélincourt in 1913 and had one son, Christopher Robin, who was the main character and inspiration for his children’s books. In 1925 the family moved to Cotchford Farm, a sixteenth-century country home, where A.A. Milne died in 1956.

The Winnie-the-Pooh adventures took place in the Hundred Acre Wood, which was based

on Five Hundred Acre Wood in Ashdown Forest near Cotchford Farm. Most sources claim that Christopher had a somewhat distant relationship with his parents. He spent most of his time with his nanny, Olive Brockwell, who appears in a number of Milne’s poems. Christopher eventually married his cousin, owned a bookshop in the English countryside and wrote three autobiographical works about his experiences as Christopher Robin and his desire to be recognised as the adult Christopher Milne.

### Extract: from A.A. Milne’s *Winnie-the-Pooh* (1926)

#### ‘Eeyore Loses a Tail’

‘You must have left it somewhere,’ said Winnie-the-Pooh.

‘Somebody must have taken it,’ said Eeyore. ‘How Like Them,’ he added after a long silence.

Pooh felt that he ought to say something helpful about it, but didn’t quite know what. So he decided to do something helpful instead.

‘Eeyore,’ he said solemnly, ‘I, Winnie-the-Pooh, will find your tail for you.’

‘Thank you, Pooh,’ answered Eeyore. ‘You’re a real friend,’ said he. ‘Not Like Some,’ he said.

So Winnie-the-Pooh went off to find Eeyore’s tail.

It was a fine spring morning in the Forest as he started out. Little soft clouds played happily in a blue sky, skipping from time to time in front of the sun as if they had come to put it out, and then sliding away suddenly so that the next might have his turn. Through them and between them the sun shone bravely; and a **copse** which had worn its firs all the year round seemed old and dowdy now beside the new green lace which the beeches had put on so prettily. Through copse and **spinney** marched Bear; down the open slopes of gorse and heather, over rocky beds of streams, up steep banks of sandstone into the heather again; and so at last, tired and hungry, to the Hundred Acre Wood. For it was in the Hundred Acre Wood that Owl lived.

**copse** a small group of trees

**spinney** a small area of trees and bushes

'And if anyone knows anything about anything,' said Bear to himself, 'it's Owl who knows something about something,' he said, 'or my name's not Winnie-the-Pooh,' he said. 'Which it is,' he added. 'So there you are.'

Owl lived at The Chestnuts, an old-world residence of great charm, which was grander than anybody else's, or seemed so to Bear, because it had both a knocker *and* a bell. Underneath the knocker there was a notice which said:

PLES RING IF AN RNSER IS REQIRD

Underneath the bell-pull there was a notice which said:

PLEZ CNOKE IF AN RNSR IS NOT REQID.

These notices had been written by Christopher Robin, who was the only one in the forest who could spell; for Owl, wise though he was in many ways, able to read and write and spell his own name WOL, yet somehow went all to pieces over delicate words like MEASLES and BUTTEREDTOAST.



## Activity 9.14

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- 1 Eeyore is the famously grumpy, pessimistic and melancholic character in the stories. How are these aspects of his character evident here?
  - 2 How would you describe Winnie-the-Pooh's character from this extract?
  - 3 Comment on the unusual spelling used for Owl's notices.
  - 4 How has Milne used figurative devices to create a spring setting?
  - 5 How is humour created in this extract?
  - 6 Can you name the other characters in the Winnie-the-Pooh stories? If so, make a list and briefly describe each.
- 

### *Did you know?*

Winnie-the-Pooh was originally called Edward but was renamed after Christopher Robin saw a Canadian bear called Winnie at the London Zoo. Lieutenant Harry Colebourn had bought the bear in Canada en route to England during World War I and named him after his hometown, Winnipeg. When Colebourn was sent to France, the zoo looked after Winnie, which became his home. The 'Pooh' part of the name apparently came from a swan that Christopher had seen on holiday. Winnie-the-Pooh and the other toys were donated to the New York Public Library in 1987 and now live in the History and Social Science Library in the Children's Room.



## Your writing

In pairs, plan, write and illustrate a story for young children. So that you have a real audience, you might like to send your story to a primary school for children to read and comment on.

## Extension: Australian children's classics

Here are some of the classics of Australian children's literature:

- *Seven Little Australians* (1894); *The Family at Misrule* (1895); *Little Mother Meg* (1902) by Ethel Turner (1872–1958)
- *Gumnut Babies* (1916); *Tales of Snugglepoot and Cuddlepie* (1918); *Bib and Bub: Their Adventures* (1925) by May Gibbs (1877–1969)
- *The Magic Pudding* (1918) by Norman Lindsay (1879–1969)
- *The Silver Brumby* (1958); *Silver Brumby's Daughter* (1960); *Silver Brumbies of the South* (1965) by Elyne Mitchell (1913–2002)
- *The Muddle-Headed Wombat* (1962–82) by Ruth Park (1917–2010)

### Activity 9.15

- 1 Read one of the stories from the list above.
- 2 Compare the classic you have read to a modern children's book. What are the similarities and differences?
- 3 Would you recommend the classic you have read to modern young readers? Why or why not?
- 4 What were your favourite books as a child?

## Words, words, words

*melancholy, anthropomorphism, fable, adaptation, pseudonym, deftly, preface, perplexing, illustrate, copse*

- 1 Put the words in alphabetical order.
- 2 Write the meaning of the prefix 'anthropo-'.
- 3 Write what you think these words mean then look up the definitions to see if you were right: anthropocentric, anthropology, anthropometry, anthropophagy.

4 Using the following diagram create a vocabulary square for 'melancholy'.

Part(s) of speech and root or origin of the word:	Synonyms: Antonyms:
<b>Melancholy</b>	
Symbol, logo, graphic:	Definition:
Write a sentence using the word here:	

- 5 What is the purpose of a preface?
- 6 a What was Charles Dickens' pseudonym and where did it come from?  
b For what reasons might writers use pseudonyms?  
c Write two pseudonyms that you would use and explain why.
- 7 What might you find living in a copse?
- 8 Explain the differences between 'illustrate', 'draw' and 'sketch'.
- 9 Write an antonym for 'deftly'.
- 10 What do we call a person who composes fables?
- 11 Write a synonym for 'perplexing'.
- 12 Why do you think there are so many adaptations of canonical literature?

## Read and view more

- *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame
- *The Secret Garden* by Francis Hodgson Burnett
- *Mary Poppins* by P.L. Travers
- 'The Happy Prince' in *Stories for Children* by Oscar Wilde
- *Book of Nonsense* by Edward Lear
- *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe
- *Fables* by Le Fontaine
- *Miss Potter* (2006) directed by Chris Noonan
- *Hook* (1991) directed by Steven Spielberg

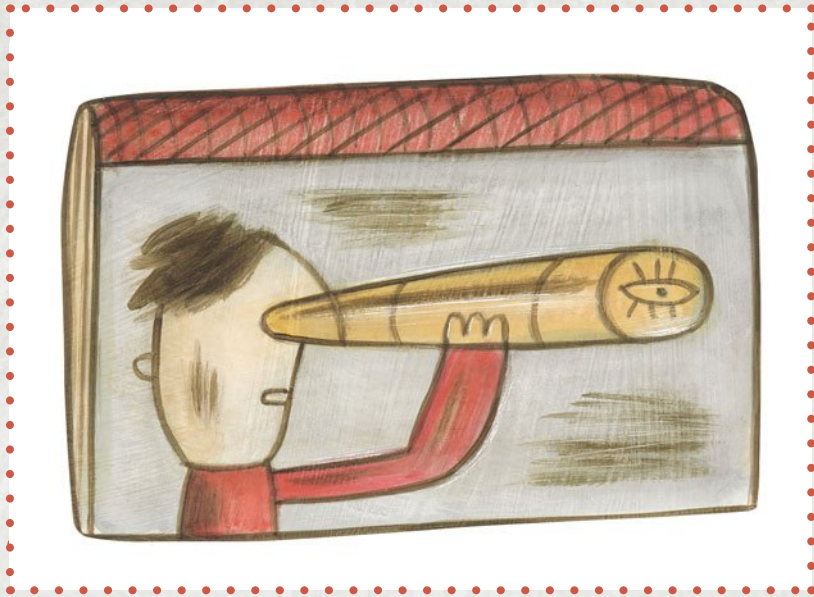
- *The Brothers Grimm* (2005) directed by Terry Gilliam
- *Hans Christian Andersen* (1952) directed by Charles Vidor
- *Alice in Wonderland* (2010) directed by Tim Burton

## Final words

- 1 Write three things that you have learned about children's classics.
- 2 What contemporary children's books do you think will become classics?
- 3 Write one question you still have about this topic.







# 10

## Future directions

### RELOADED IN THIS CHAPTER

- Modern classics
- Indigenous voices
- Dialect
- Bursting onto the scene
- Personal tastes
- Alternative canons
- Your writing
- Words, words, words
- Read and view more
- Final words

The passing of time brings change. In your lifetime you will have already witnessed developments in technology, fashion, music and art. More gradual shifts occur in attitudes, ways of thinking, beliefs and values. All these changes affect the texts a culture produces: what is reflected about humanity in them and how composers communicate through them. The canon is regarded as a way of recognising the most significant and valuable texts that any given age produces.

Around the 1980s, many aspects of Western culture and thought began to be questioned. Intellectuals and theorists were highly sceptical of 'universality', believing that what we had understood as universal was only one way (a white, Western, male way) of looking at things. So the view of the literary canon as a list of timeless, universal and well-written texts that can be read across generations was vigorously challenged.

These theorists, known as postmodernists, were critical of the labelling of some cultural products as valuable and others as not. They disliked the distinctions between 'high' and 'low' (or popular) culture. Instead they saw all cultural products as important and worthy of study. Their way of thinking had a huge impact on how we view literature and the canon. The questions they raised and the answers they found challenged not only what is on the canon and why, but the canon's very existence.

Although postmodern scepticism reshaped the way we think about many aspects of Western culture and thought, the canon has, rightly or wrongly, rediscovered its significance and importance. School curricula in English-speaking countries include canonical texts and many make the study of them compulsory. The canon, itself, retains its respected authors, such as Dickens, Austen, Shakespeare, Wordsworth and the Brontës. But as a result of postmodern questioning, it is becoming more inclusive, more flexible and more interesting. Writers from groups traditionally excluded from the canon



now find themselves on alternative canons; for example, 'working class' publications, Afro-American writing, gay and lesbian writing, postcolonial texts, science fiction and crime writing. Some of these texts may acquire a place on 'the canon'. To be judged worthy to be on the canon or an alternative canon, the texts must still meet some kind of criteria, which brings us back to the idea that the canonical literature of yesterday, today and tomorrow must exhibit qualities that we recognise.

In this chapter, we will look at some of the ways the canon is being re-shaped. Here are the texts and extracts that you will read, in chronological order of publication:

- 1949** *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell
- 1964** 'Time is Running Out' by Oodgeroo of the Tribe Noonuccal
- 1965** 'Wuthering Heights' by Sylvia Plath
- 1999** 'If I Woz a Tap-Natch Poet' by Linton Kwesi Johnson
- 2007** *After Dark* by Haruki Murakami
- 2010** 'Fluff' by Toby Fitch

## Activity 10.1 Your thoughts

Discuss answers to these questions in small groups:

- 1 What have you noticed about the majority of writers who are on the canon?
- 2 Who has been selecting the writers and texts of the canon and why?
- 3 Who and what is excluded from the canon?
- 4 If so many things change over time, how is it that literary texts can 'stand the test of time'? What qualities might they possess that don't change?
- 5 Remember that Shakespeare's plays and sonnets were written around about 400 years ago, yet we still read them and see them performed today. He is currently a significant canonical figure. Do you think Shakespeare will retain his place on the canon in the future? Why or why not?

## Modern classics

As we explored in Chapter 1, *endurance* is a **crit**erion for canonical texts. Texts written early enough in the twentieth century to have stood the test of time have become what we call 'modern classics' and, so, are regarded as part of *the* canon. It's hard to say how long novels, poems or plays need to be around to be valued. Fifty years? More? Less? They can't burn brightly one year and then disappear into the darkness of the past the next and be regarded as 'enduring'.

**crit**erion (singular of criteria) a principle or standard by which things are judged or measured

Of course, they would have to pass other criteria, though you could say that passing *them* is what makes them endure. The thoughts that they contain and the way those thoughts are expressed must resonate with us – engage, impress, move, provoke, challenge and reward us. This doesn't mean that you have to *like* a text – though that is certainly the point when it comes to reading – but you should be able to recognise and appreciate good writing when you see it.

We don't usually discover these texts on our own. We are introduced to them at school and, later, university. You may have heard about the great books or seen films of them before you read them. You will recognise them in book stores in literature sections, or as parts of series that have names like 'Modern Classics'.

Here are two examples of twentieth-century writers and texts that have endured and are often studied in schools.

## George Orwell

George Orwell (1903–1950) is a pseudonym for Eric Blair, who was born in Bengal, India, where his father worked as a civil servant. He moved to England as an infant and was educated at St Cyprian's, which he later described as brutal and miserable. He led an adventurous life. He spent five years as an officer in the Indian Imperial Police, and he lived on the streets in two cities and wrote *Down and Out in Paris and London* (1933) as a result. He joined an anarchist-leaning group to fight



for the Republic of Spain in 1936, and was a journalist, essayist, literary critic and novelist, best known for his political allegory *Animal Farm* (1945) and the **dystopian** novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949).

*Nineteen Eighty-Four* is set in a society under a **totalitarian regime**, led by The Party and its leader, Big Brother (whose existence is dubious). Winston Smith, a member of the Ministry of Truth (a government department that rewrites history the way The Party desires it to be recorded), attempts to rebel. These are the opening paragraphs, which give you some idea of the world Orwell feared would come to pass.

**dystopian** providing a nightmarish vision of the future

**totalitarian regime** a type of government run by a dictator who has total control (i.e. fascism)

### Extract: from George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four* (1949)

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

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



## Activity 10.2

- 1 *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was first published in 1949. What historical events and political and social ideas do you think influenced Orwell's novel?
- 2 'BIG BROTHER IS WATCHING YOU' reminds the people that inhabit the world of the novel that they are under constant surveillance, even in their own homes. The reality TV show *Big Brother* borrowed its name from Orwell's novel. Why do you think this choice was made rather than inventing a name, or borrowing from a different author and story, like Lewis Carroll's *Through the Looking Glass*?
- 3 The terms 'Thought crime', 'Thought police', 'double speak' and 'newsspeak' entered our language from *Nineteen Eighty-Four*. Write your own definitions for each of these terms.
- 4 The Party slogan in the novel is 'He who controls the present controls the past. He who controls the past controls the present.' What do you think Orwell meant by this? Do you agree with it?
- 5 Find out what you can about the censorship of *Nineteen Eighty-Four* on the internet. What do you think is ironic about this?

## Activity 10.3

- 1 What is your vision of a dystopian world? Identify the elements it would contain.
- 2 Write your own opening for a novel that sets its scene in a dystopian world (you never know, you could be the next George Orwell!).

### *Did you know?*

Orwell's original title for *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was *The Last Man in Europe*.

## Sylvia Plath

The American poet, novelist and journalist Sylvia Plath (1932–1963) was born in Massachusetts to a German professor, who had emigrated to the United States, and his wife, who had an Austrian background. Sylvia's father, Otto, died when she was eight years old and this had a deep and enduring impact on her, possibly



contributing to the mental illness from which she was to suffer for much of her short life. A very bright and talented young woman, she wrote from a young age and won a nationwide competition for a Guest Editorship with the New York magazine, *Mademoiselle*, in 1953. Her one novel, *The Bell Jar* (1963), is based on some of her experiences of this internship.

She met and married well-known poet Ted Hughes while on a Fulbright scholarship at Cambridge University, England. Their tempestuous marriage is as famous as their poetry. They were both gifted writers, winning acclaim for their work and this, along with their strong personalities and inner demons, no doubt put a strain on their relationship. After teaching in America they moved back to England, where Hughes was enjoying literary success. Plath, though writing, was busy looking after two young children, Frieda and Nicholas. The marriage became unstable; she suffered mental breakdowns and, tragically, committed suicide in her London flat in February 1963.

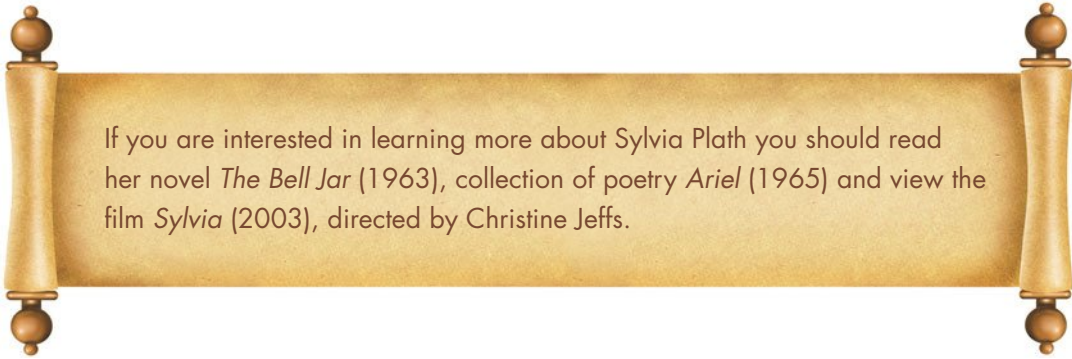
Plath was a prolific poet but most of her poetry only gained publication and critical acclaim after her death, in particular the posthumous collection *Ariel* (1965). She won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry in 1982 for *The Collected Poems*, becoming the first deceased poet to do so. Her poetry is rich, moving and witty, despite its often melancholic subject matter.



Sylvia Plath



Plath met Ted Hughes at Cambridge University



If you are interested in learning more about Sylvia Plath you should read her novel *The Bell Jar* (1963), collection of poetry *Ariel* (1965) and view the film *Sylvia* (2003), directed by Christine Jeffs.

## 'Wuthering Heights'

Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes had moved to North Devon, in England, on the edge of Dartmoor, when she wrote 'Wuthering Heights'. Emily Brontë's novel *Wuthering Heights* is set on the moors of West Yorkshire, which share a similar bleak beauty to Dartmoor.

Plath was often alone in this remote area, as Hughes spent more and more time away, and she found that the landscape became a metaphor for her loneliness and isolation. The poem describes her feelings and thoughts as she wanders across the moors one evening. Horizons, sheep, a ruined cottage and its ghosts, and the lights in the valley's houses become the elements of one of her most evocative poems.

### 'Wuthering Heights' (1965)

Sylvia Plath

**faggots** bundles of sticks or twigs bound together as fuel

---

*The horizons ring me like faggots,  
Tilted and disparate, and always unstable.  
Touched by a match, they might warm me,  
And their fine lines sing  
The air to orange  
Before the distances they pin evaporate,  
Weighting the pale sky with a solid color.  
But they only dissolve and dissolve  
Like a series of promises, as I step forward.*

*There is no life higher than the grassstops  
Or the hearts of sheep, and the wind  
Pours by like destiny, bending  
Everything in one direction.  
I can feel it trying  
To funnel my heat away.  
If I pay the roots of the heather  
Too close attention, they will invite me  
To whiten my bones among them.*

*The sheep know where they are,  
Browsing in their dirty wool-clouds,  
Gray as the weather.  
The black slots of their pupils take me in,  
It is like being mailed into space,  
A thin, silly message.  
They stand about in grandmotherly disguise,  
All wig curls and yellow teeth  
And hard, marbly baas.*

*I come to wheel ruts, water  
Limpid as the solitudes  
That flee through my fingers.  
Hollow doorsteps go from grass to grass;  
Lintel and sill have unhinged themselves.  
Of people the air only  
Remembers a few odd syllables.  
It rehearses them moaningly:  
Black stone, black stone.*

*The sky leans on me, me, the one upright  
Among all horizontals.  
The grass beating its head distractedly.  
It is too delicate  
For a life in such company;  
Darkness terrifies it.  
Now, in valleys narrow  
And black as purses, the house lights  
Gleam like small change.*



## Activity 10.4

- 1 Look at pictures of the landscape where Emily Brontë set her famous novel *Wuthering Heights*, and after which Plath named her poem, by searching for images under 'Wuthering Heights moors'. Then, look at images of Dartmoor. After looking at the images, describe the features that the landscapes share.
- 2 What lines or words in the poem match the images and the mood of these landscapes?
- 3 One of the reasons literature endures is because it is written in skilful, powerful and artistic language. Select an example of beautifully crafted language from each stanza and explain what you admire about each.
- 4 What does the poem reveal about the poet? Use quotations in your answer.

## Activity 10.5

- John Steinbeck
- William Golding
- Simone de Beauvoir
- Raymond Carver
- Patrick White
- Muriel Spark
- Iris Murdoch
- Christina Stead
- Ray Bradbury
- Carson McCullers
- Jean Rhys
- E.E. Cummings
- Arthur Miller
- J.B. Priestley
- Donald Horne
- Xavier Herbert
- Albert Camus
- J.M. Synge
- Roald Dahl
- Elizabeth Bishop

- 1 This is a list of writers that we would include in 'Modern Classics'. Which of these have you heard of?
- 2 Conduct some research into the life one of the writers. Write 10 bullet points that sum up the most significant aspects of his or her life.
- 3 Create an anthology of extracts, poems or quotations from the writer you have selected for research.
- 4 Create a book club that focuses on modern classics. Select, read and discuss works from some of these writers.
- 5 Make a list of 10 other writers whose works we would consider to be modern classics. Note that most writers of this group lived in the twentieth century and are no longer alive.

## *Did you know?*

Ted Hughes published a collection of 88 poems called *Birthday Letters*, in 1998, about his turbulent relationship with Sylvia Plath. All of the poems were written after Plath's death. Hughes himself died not long after their publication.

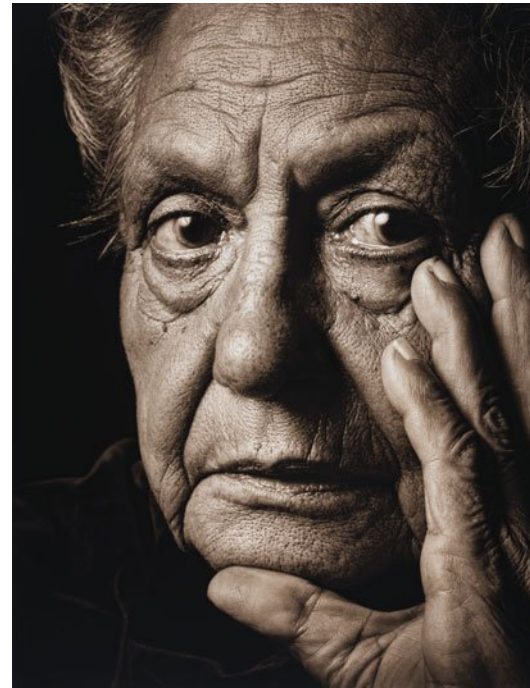
## Indigenous voices

You will have noticed that the traditional Western literary canon is mainly comprised of dead white males from affluent backgrounds. Yes, there are, of course, a number of famous women writers – though they are in the minority and attention often comes to them much later. Minority groups, who lack power in society – immigrants, members of colonised populations, the poor, gay and lesbian writers, and women – are least represented in the canon. One of the positive consequences of postmodern thinking is that the views, languages and cultures of these groups have, over time, gained respect and recognition.

Of course, some writers of the past spoke on behalf of minority groups, and used literature to criticise social ills and champion social change. Those writers were, generally, not from the groups to whom they gave a voice, and nor were they usually suffering the injustices they exposed. In modern times, we value the voices of minority groups for the content and artistry of their works. The Australian poet Oodgeroo of the Tribe Noonuccal (1920–1993) provides an example of how someone from a minority group can use the language of colonisers to express Indigenous experiences. She uses literature to raise awareness of issues and to fight for justice and equality.

### Oodgeroo of the Tribe Noonuccal

Kath Walker, as she was previously known, combined a traditional name 'Oodgeroo', meaning 'paperbark tree', with her tribal name of 'Noonuccal', in 1988, to claim her Australian Indigenous identity for both her personal and professional life. As well as being a poet, she was an artist



Oodgeroo of the  
Tribe Noonuccal

and a political activist. In the 1960s and 1970s, she served on federal councils for the advancement of Aboriginal people and campaigned for the full citizenship of Indigenous Australians.

She was the first Aboriginal woman to be published with her anthology of poems, *We Are Going* (1964), which speaks of the Indigenous experience in Australia, promoting pride in the Aboriginal culture and calling for equal rights for all Australians. Oodgeroo of the Tribe Noonuccal was a remarkable woman who seized her time to speak on behalf of her people. She leaves us with moving poetry in a voice not previously heard. Her contribution to our culture, and to the canon, has been recognised through a number of literary prizes and international publications.



### 'Time is Running Out' (1964)

Oodgeroo of the Tribe Noonuccal

*The miner rapes  
The heart of the earth  
With his violent spade.  
Stealing, bottling her black blood  
For the sake of greedy trade.  
On his metal throne of destruction,  
He labours away with a will,  
Piling the mountainous minerals high  
With giant tool and iron drill.*

*In his greedy lust for power,  
He destroys old nature's will.  
For the sake of the filthy dollar,  
He dirties the nest he builds.  
Well he knows that violence  
Of his destructive kind  
Will be violently written  
Upon the sands of time.*

*But time is running out  
And time is close at hand,  
For the Dreamtime folk are massing  
To defend their timeless land.  
Come gentle black man  
Show your strength;  
Time to take a stand.  
Make the violent miner feel  
Your violent  
Love of land.*

## Activity 10.6

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- 1 In this poem, how does the miner's view of the land contrast with the Indigenous view?
  - 2 How is the earth personified in the first stanza?
  - 3 How does the second stanza highlight the irony of the miner's actions?
  - 4 How does the poet show the strength of the Indigenous people in the third stanza?
  - 5 In groups, discuss the arguments that the following people and organisations might make to either support or protest mining activity:
    - a mining companies
    - b Indigenous Australians
    - c Greenpeace
    - d the government
    - e local populations who live near mines.
  - 6 Conduct some research on one of the following Indigenous Australian writers: Sally Morgan, Mudrooroo (Colin Johnson), Jack Davis, Doris Pilkington Garimara, Samuel Wagan Watson, Alexis Wright, Lisa Bellear, Larissa Behrendt, Marie Munkara, Elizabeth Hodgson.
  - 7 Create a presentation (a Photo Story, PowerPoint, speech, poster, etc.) that provides information about the life and work of the writer you have chosen.
-

## Dialect

**dub poet** a type of performance poetry that emerged from the West Indies and, in particular, Jamaica in the 1970s, combining poetry (as spoken word) with reggae music

**patois** dialect

You can find examples of dialect in some traditional canonical texts. Robert Burns (1759–1796) wrote in Scots dialect (you can read his poetry in Chapters 3 and 4), as do the modern Scottish novelists Irvine Welsh and James Kelman. Charles Dickens and Mark Twain both used dialect in their novels (you can read extracts in Chapter 2), mainly to indicate a character's social status or race, or even just for humour. Apart from Burns, these men did not write in a dialect that they themselves spoke. In fact, dialects were *generally* not regarded as worthy or suitable for whole works of literature. Another benefit of postmodern thinking is the acceptance and appreciation of different forms of expression to communicate experiences. The **dub poet** Linton Kwesi Johnson shows how Jamaican **patois** can be used to provide sharp critical social commentary as well as entertainment. He continues to enjoy international acclaim.

### Linton Kwesi Johnson

**Black Panther** a major African-American left-leaning organisation (1966–82) that promoted Black Power in a militaristic and revolutionary fashion

Linton Kwesi Johnson (b. 1952) – or L.K.J., as he is often referred to – was born in Jamaica and moved to England in 1963. In 1970, while still at school, he joined the British **Black Panther** movement where he organised a poetry workshop within the movement. He graduated with a degree in sociology from Goldsmiths College, London, became an Honorary Visiting Professor of Middlesex University and won great respect and awards from both the literary and music worlds for his dub poetry. He has the distinction of being only one of three poets to be published by Penguin Modern Classics while still alive. His poems are mostly political and many criticise racist police brutality he witnessed in London during periods of unrest in places like Brixton (the site of riots in the 1980s). L.K.J. writes and performs in Jamaican Patois, a dialect developed in seventeenth-century Jamaica by slaves from west and central Africa, as they shaped the English and Scots vernacular they learned from their colonisers. The poetry is best experienced by hearing it performed. You can listen to Johnson's work on YouTube or buy one of his many albums or, best of all, see him perform live.

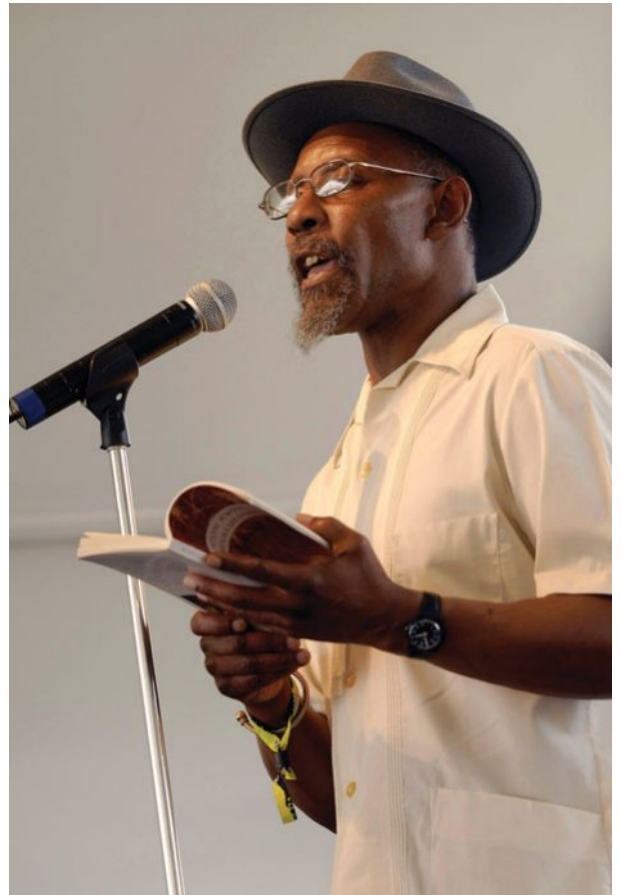




## 'If I Woz a Tap-Natch Poet' (1999)

Linton Kwesi Johnson

*if I woz a tap-natch poet  
like Chris Okigbo  
Derek Walcott  
or T.S. Eliott  
ah woodah write a poem  
soh dam deep  
dat it bittah-sweet  
like a precious  
memory  
whe mek yu weep  
whe mek yu feel incomplete  
like wen yu lovah leave  
an dow defeat yu kanseed  
still yu beg an yu plead  
till yu win a repreve  
an yu ready fi rack steady  
but di muzik done aready  
still  
inna di meantime  
wid mi riddim  
wid mi rime  
wid mi ruff bass line  
wid mi own sense a time  
goon poet haffi step in line  
caw Bootahlazy mite a gat couple touzan  
but Mandela fi im  
touzans an touzans an touzans an touzans  
if I woz a tap-natch poet  
like Kamau Brathwaite  
Martin Carter  
Jayne Cortez or Amiri Baraka  
ah woodah write a poem  
soh rude  
an rootsy  
an subversive  
dat it mek di goon poet  
tun white wid envy*



(continues)

(continued)

*like a candhumble/voodoo/kumina chant  
a ole time calypso or a slave song  
dat get ban  
but fram granny  
rite dung to gran pickney  
each an evry wan  
can recite dat-dey wan  
still  
inna di meantime  
wid mi riddim  
wid mi rime  
wid mi ruff bass line  
wid mi own sense a time  
goon poet haffi step in line  
caw Bootahlazy mite a gat couple touzan  
but Mandela fi im  
touzans an touzans an touzans an touzans  
if I woz a tap-natch poet  
like Tchikaya U'tamsi  
Nicolas Guillen  
or Lorna Goodison  
an woodah write a poem  
soh beautiful dat it simple  
like a plain girl  
wid good brains  
an nice ways  
wid a sexy dispozishan  
an plenty compahshan  
wid a sweet smile  
an a subtle style  
still  
mi naw goh bow an scrape  
an gwan like a ape  
peddlin noh puerile parchment of ethnicity  
wid ongle a vaig fleetin hint of hawtenticity  
like a black Lance Percival in reverse  
or even worse  
a babblin bafoon whe looze im tongue  
no sah*

*nat atall  
mi gat mi riddim  
mi gat mi rime  
mi gat mi ruff bass line  
mi gat mi own sense a time  
goon poet bettah step in line  
caw Bootahlazy mite a gat couple touzan  
but Mandela fi im  
touzans an touzans an touzans an touzans*

## Activity 10.7

- 1 Read the poem aloud to hear the rhythm and the rhyme. You will struggle to make sense of it if you don't read it aloud.
- 2 Listen to Linton Kwesi Johnson perform this poem (and others) on YouTube. Did the poem sound the way you thought it would?
- 3 Look up the references to the names of people (poets and politicians) and note down the identities of some of them: Chris Okigbo, Derek Walcott, T.S. Eliot, 'Bootahlazy' (Buthelezi), Mandela, Tchicaya U Tam'si, Nicolas Guillen, Lorna Goodison.
- 4 Identify the chorus of the poem/song.
- 5 In small groups, discuss what you think the poem is about and talk through sections you find difficult.
- 6 Why do you think L.K.J. chose to write his poetry in Jamaican patois?
- 7 Research, read or listen to the following poets who write in dialect or perform dub poetry: Jean Binta Breeze, Joy Harjo, Frances E.W. Harper, Alice Milligan, Grace Nichols, Oku Onuora, Malachi Smith, Benjamin Zephaniah, Afua Cooper, Bob Marley.

## Bursting onto the scene

We have looked at how the canon recognises texts that endure but how can we tell which texts of *today* will survive the test of time? And which of the contemporary texts we read will gain a place on the canon? Well, we can't really know for sure but we can, at least, recognise quality writing when we see it. This is what critics look for – texts that meet criteria that make them 'literary' rather than just popular. You are likely to find 'quality' contemporary texts in the review pages of respected publications, on prize-winning lists, at writers' festivals, on television arts programs and on bookshop shelves marked 'Literature' rather than 'Fiction'.

Sometimes, books will capture the imagination of a generation or appeal to huge numbers of readers. These books become bestsellers but this alone does not guarantee them longevity. Think about the bestsellers you might have heard about: the Harry Potter books by J.K. Rowling, for instance, Dan Brown's novels, Stephen King's horror stories or *Bridget Jones's Diary* (1996) by Helen Fielding. How many of these will last into the future? How many will gain literary status? Will teenage fiction (a relatively new genre) produce canonical writers in the same way children's fiction has? We can't answer these questions, yet, but we can enjoy contemporary writing, appreciate its art, and wait and see.

Haruki Murakami is a Japanese novelist who has been writing since the 1970s. He first gained critical attention in the 1980s and great acclaim has followed. Toby Fitch is a young poet who has attracted the attention and praise of critics in Australia and is taking his first steps on the international literary stage.

## Haruki Murakami



Haruki Murakami

Haruki Murakami (b. 1949) was born in Kyoto, Japan, to parents who taught Japanese literature. Now Murakami has joined the list of significant writers whose novels, short stories and non-fiction works have made an impact on readers around the world.

His works include:

- *Hard-Boiled Wonderland and the End of the World* (1985)
- *Norwegian Wood* (1987)
- *Dance, Dance, Dance* (1994)
- *The Wind-Up Bird Chronicle* (1995)
- *Sputnik Sweetheart* (1999)
- *Kafka on the Shore* (2002)
- *After Dark* (2007)
- *What I Talk About When I Talk About Running* (2008)
- *IQ84* (2011).

His novels have been hugely popular and he is a literary superstar in Japan. Critically acclaimed, he has been awarded prestigious literary prizes and honorary degrees. Some of his works have been made into films and multimedia productions. His style merges the surreal with the real, comedy with drama, lightness with darkness, the abstract with the concrete. You are well-rewarded for spending time with Murakami; his stories will stay with you long after the final pages have been turned.



In Murakami's novel *After Dark*, characters connect and disconnect in Tokyo between 11.56 p.m. and 6.52 a.m. The following extract is from the chapter '11.57pm'. We, the readers, become characters and are given a cinematic view of a room in which a girl, Eri Asai, is in a disturbingly deep sleep.

### Extract: from Haruki Murakami's *After Dark* (2007)

There is a small bookcase, but it contains only a handful of books, mostly college textbooks. And a pile of large-size fashion magazines. It would be hard to conclude that she is a voracious reader.

Our point of view, as an imaginary camera, picks up and lingers over things like this in the room. We are invisible, anonymous intruders. We look. We listen. We note odours. But we are not physically present in the place, and we leave behind no traces. We follow the same rules, so to speak, as orthodox time travellers. We observe but we do not intervene. Honestly speaking, however, the information regarding Eri Asai that we can glean from the appearance of this room is far from abundant. It gives the impression that preparations have been made to hide her personality and cleverly elude observing eyes.

Near the head of the bed a digital clock soundlessly and steadily renews its display of the time. For now, the clock is the only thing in the room evidencing anything like movement: a cautious nocturnal creature that runs on electricity. Each green crystal numeral slips into the place of another, evading human eyes. The current time is 11:59 p.m.

(continues)

(continued)

Once it has finished examining individual details, our viewpoint camera draws back momentarily and surveys the room once again. Then, as if unable to make up its mind, it maintains its broadened field of vision, its line of sight fixed in place for the time being. A pregnant silence reigns.

### Activity 10.8

- 1 How has Murakami used our understanding of film techniques in this passage?
- 2 Explain how he has also used literary descriptions to create the scene.
- 3 Do you like this style of writing? Why or why not?
- 4 Read through a selection of quotations from Murakami's books (you will find a number of internet sites to help you). Write down three or four that you like.

### Activity 10.9

Describe a scene as if you were viewing it through a camera lens. Begin with a long shot and then gradually focus (in a close-up) on one particular feature. For example, you might begin by describing a cityscape at dawn, then narrow your focus to one particular area, then move to a building, then to a window of that building, then inside that window to a room, then to a person in that room, etc.





### *Did you know?*

Murakami owned a jazz club called Peter Cat in Tokyo before he embarked on a serious writing career. Many critics have commented on the jazz rhythms of his prose.

### Toby Fitch

Because he is so new on the scene, there is not very much information available about Toby Fitch, other than that he was born in London and moved to Sydney when he was three. He has worked as a poet with the Red Room Company, an organisation that specifically promotes Australian poets and celebrates the place poetry has in our lives. Young emerging talents like Fitch provide fresh and creative ways of viewing the world. The following poem 'Fluff' was first published in 2010 and appears in his first full-length publication *Raw Shock* (2012).

## 'Fluff' (2010)

Toby Fitch

*Milling about the city's nightlife,  
she threads through the quilted crowd  
who rug themselves up, flattering  
each other's leathers and wispy flair.  
She stands on the fringe like a lost  
strand of hair, listening to the needles,  
the knit-knot words, the pinning-up of  
phrases – cottoning on to their lingo.  
She's ready to be brushed aside  
when some guy's quip poufs her up  
like a pillow, though she responds by  
chewing a ball of fluff because, for  
some fuzzy reason, she wants his hide,  
sewing what's left of her heart to  
her sleeve – a threadbare cliché that  
his quaff-like puns pierce like  
a pin-cushion. With conversation  
wearing thin, his hand reaching for  
her velvet, she remembers the lint  
piling up in the corners of her  
apartment; the frayed curtains she's  
never closed on her view of the city.  
She can see it now from her bedroom  
Window: the silhouetted skyline, a  
tattered hem; the stars, little white  
cross-stitches forming a sky of blind  
eyes; and rolling over the buildings,  
the moon, a silver ball of wool,  
unravelling.*



## Activity 10.10

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- 1 List all the words and phrases in the poem that are related to fabric and sewing.
  - 2 There are some fresh similes and metaphors in this poem. Write four that you particularly like and explain why you think they are effective.
  - 3 What do you think the poem is about?
  - 4 Create a Photo Story reading of the poem.
  - 5 Read more of Toby Fitch's poetry so you can honestly claim you read his early work when he becomes a literary sensation.
- 

## Personal tastes

There is a whole range of literature available for you to read – you just need to find writers whose stories and styles you admire and enjoy. Here is a list of *my* current favourite contemporary writers:

- Kate Atkinson
- Johanna Featherstone
- Jhumpa Lahiri
- Jon McGregor
- Rohinton Mistry
- Steven Murray
- Yoko Ogawa
- Michael Ondaatje
- Orhan Pamuk
- Jonathan Safran Foer
- Ali Smith
- Graham Swift
- John Tranter
- Jeanette Winterson
- Tim Winton
- Banana Yoshimoto.

For me, their stories and poems open new worlds; introduce new perspectives; provoke thought; provide possibilities; use language in skilful, artistic or playful ways, and generally provide a refuge from the busy, demanding everyday world. I know what I like because I have read a lot of books – including books *about* books. Features I hope to find in a story are: clever use of language, the simplicity



of the perfectly placed word, the complexity of the beautifully woven image, a quirky perspective (that makes the ordinary extraordinary) and an exploration of relationships – a story that delves deep into the psyche and the heart.

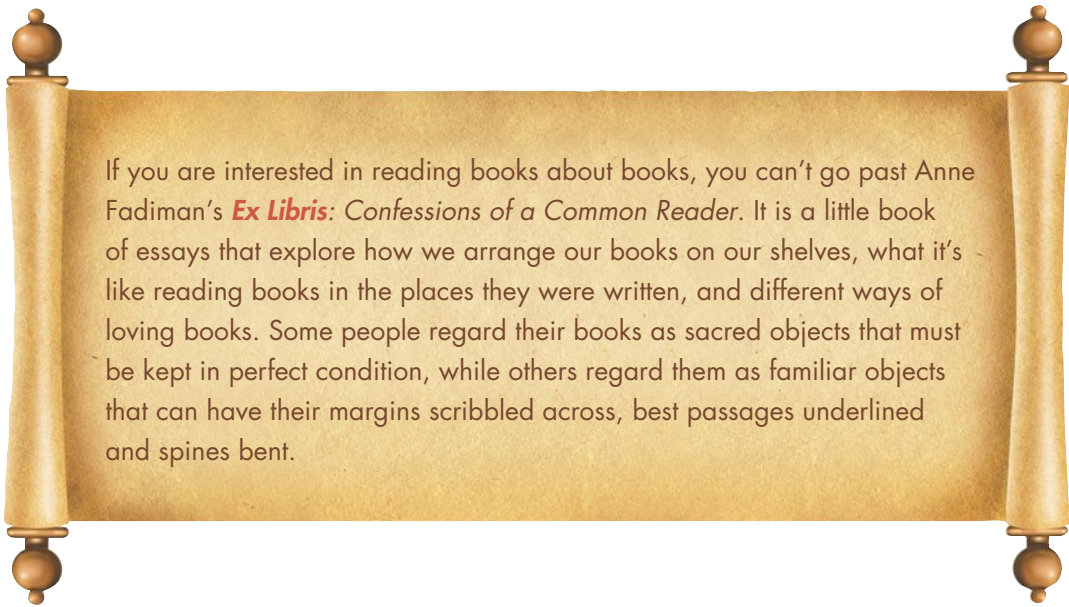
Of course, everyone has different tastes. By reading regularly, you will become a discerning reader who knows what sort of writing you like and what new literary directions you would like to explore. You might prefer non-fiction and will be pleased to discover there are some highly regarded writers in this field, such as Bertrand Russell, George Orwell, Susan Sontag, Andrew O'Hagan and Bill Bryson. You have to read enough to know yourself as a reader and to know what you will enjoy. Don't stop reading because you've read a few books you didn't like.



## Activity 10.11

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- 1 What three things do you think make a good book?
  - 2 Make a list of your favourite contemporary writers (aim for five or more) and explain what you like about each.
  - 3 Choose one of the writers from my list and conduct a bit of research into him or her.
  - 4 Ask your teacher, librarian or friend to suggest books that you might like and begin a reading diary. Record what you read and give books your own rating.
- 



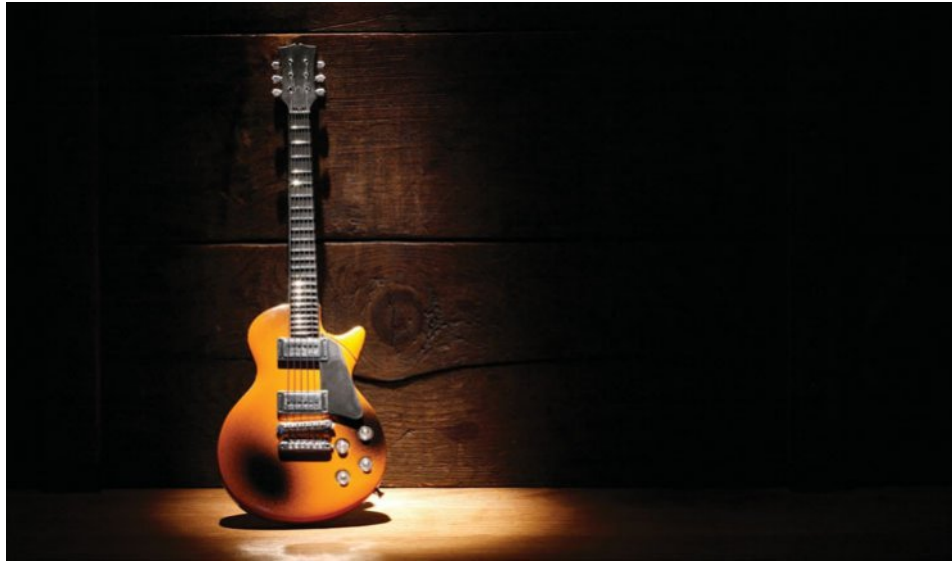
If you are interested in reading books about books, you can't go past Anne Fadiman's *Ex Libris: Confessions of a Common Reader*. It is a little book of essays that explore how we arrange our books on our shelves, what it's like reading books in the places they were written, and different ways of loving books. Some people regard their books as sacred objects that must be kept in perfect condition, while others regard them as familiar objects that can have their margins scribbled across, best passages underlined and spines bent.

**Ex Libris** Latin for 'from the books', commonly refers to a decorated label pasted at the front of a book that identifies its owner

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## Alternative canons

The study of English has been gradually redefined to include all manner of texts: literature, film, media, multimedia, multicultural, every day, popular, workplace, etc. Technology has evolved to provide new ways of experiencing them. So, it is inevitable that alternative canons will be come into being. 'Best of' lists are types of canons, as they provide the most significant works of their type and acknowledge the qualities that the texts possess.



Some genres that were not previously highly regarded have developed criteria that separate the respected texts from the rest. The science fiction and crime genres are examples of these. Graphic novels, video games, films, TV shows and even YouTube clips have 'best of' lists and are developing their own canons. Whichever way you look at it, a canon represents 'the best' works of whatever it is representing. The literary canon provides us with what has been deemed the best written works over hundreds of years. Now have a go at creating your own canon.

If you are interested in musical canons, you might like to read *The Rock Canon* (2010) by Carys Wyn Jones.

### *Did you know?*

*Time Magazine* published a list of 50 top clips to celebrate YouTube's fifth birthday in 2010. 'Charlie Bit My Finger', 'Sneezing Panda' and 'Christian the Lion' all made the list, which you can view online. Will future generations think that we were mad?

## Activity 10.12

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- 1 Create your own canon for a type of text that interests you. Here are a few ideas if you are stuck:
    - Films: you might make a list of all-time greats or focus on a particular genre like comedy, action, horror, disaster, science fiction, etc.
    - Television shows: you might make a list of greatest TV shows or focus on a particular genre like reality shows, music, sports panels, sitcoms, cartoons, cooking shows, etc.
    - Music: from all types or from one of the genres like hip hop, rap, rock, electronic, pop, punk, country and western, Eurovision songs; or the 'best songs' of one particular band; or the best music of a particular year.
    - Video games.
    - Anything else that you can make a canon from.
  - 2 You may want to start your own blog where you regularly write about your favourites or write reviews of new texts.
-

## Your writing

Create your own anthology of the most significant texts of your lifetime in either booklet, electronic or video form. You will need to first decide what criteria you will use to judge what is significant.

Include one example from five of the following categories and include a brief explanation of why each was chosen:

- novel
- graphic novel
- poem
- film
- multimodal text
- YouTube clips
- music video clip
- documentary
- TV show
- song
- video game
- website
- other.

## Words, words, words

*contemporary, curricula, dub, dystopian, Ex Libris, postmodernism, sceptic, slogan, totalitarian, universal*

- 1 How is a sceptic different to a cynic? What are the adjectives of each?
- 2 What is the antonym of 'dystopian'?
- 3 Write the singular of 'curricula'.
- 4 What is the difference between a slogan and catchphrase?
- 5 Provide four meanings for the verb 'dub'.
- 6 Why do you think the American film company 'Universal' is so named?
- 7 Design your own Ex Libris (you might like to look at designs that already exist to give you some ideas).
- 8 Break 'totalitarian' into its syllables and highlight the ones that are stressed.
- 9 Write as many words of four letters or more that you can make from 'contemporary'.
- 10 Write the definition of postmodernism. What kind of cultural products do you think we will produce after the era of postmodernism (some would say the movement is already stale)? What would you call the new era?

## Read and view more

A really good way of getting a taste for different writers and their styles is to read short stories. Here are some anthologies you might enjoy dipping in and out of:

- *The Street and Other Stories* by Gerry Adams
- *Ficciones* by Jorge Luis Borges
- *The Stories of Ray Bradbury* by Ray Bradbury
- *The Complete Cosmicomics* by Italo Calvino
- *The Fat Man in History* by Peter Carey
- *Cathedral* by Raymond Carver
- *Kiss Kiss* by Roald Dahl
- *Bullfighting* by Roddy Doyle
- *The Rip* by Robert Drewe
- *How We Are Hungry* by Dave Eggers
- *Collected Stories* by Marion Halligan
- *Suddenly a Knock on the Door* by Etgar Keret
- *Unaccustomed Earth* by Jhumpa Lahiri
- *The Boat* by Nam Le
- *Fishing the Sloe Black River* by Colum McCann
- *This Isn't the Sort of Thing That Happens to Someone Like You* by Jon McGregor
- *The View from Castle Rock* by Alice Munro
- *Close Range: Wyoming Stories* by Annie Proulx
- *Collected Stories* by Carol Shields
- *First Person and Other Stories* by Ali Smith
- *The Book of Other People* edited by Zadie Smith
- *Simple Recipes* by Madeleine Thien
- *The Turning* by Tim Winton
- *Lizard* by Banana Yoshimoto

## Final words

- 1 What three things have you learned about the future of the canon?
- 2 Do you think the traditional canon of books will survive the digital and electronic age? Why or why not?
- 3 How would studying the subject of English be different if we didn't have a literary canon?

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