

# Scheme of work

A-level English Language and Literature 7707

*Writing about society*

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## Introduction

This is a scheme of work for the teaching and learning of *Writing about society*. It is not prescriptive but offers suggested approaches for teaching around the topic, drawing upon key learning, concepts and analytical skills.

In this part of the subject content, students should be encouraged to explore, through analysis and re-creative writing, how writers present narratorial point of view, characters, events, themes and genre through specific uses of language and through the conscious shaping of their narratives. Students should be able to build up a richly detailed understanding of how different aspects of texts are stylistically created. They should be able to intervene in texts in experimental and targeted ways to explore and reveal the workings of texts. Students should also be taught how to construct comparative analytical commentaries reflecting on their re-creative writing.

**Students study one of four set texts chosen from:**

- *Into the Wild* by Jon Krakauer
- *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher: Or the Murder at Road Hill House* by Kate Summerscale
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini

**Key terms for this unit are:**

**Society:** a group of people working and living in a specific location who act out cultural beliefs and practices.

**Characterisation:** the range of strategies that authors and readers use to build and develop characters.

**Point of view:** the perspective(s) used in a text through which a version of reality is presented.

**Motif:** a repeated concrete object, place or phrase that occurs in a work of fiction and is related to a particular theme.

**Base text:** the original text from which re-creative writing takes place.

## Assumed coverage

*Writing about society* is an A-level topic and is not examined at AS level. If students are entering the A-level only, then this part of the subject content can be taught at any point. However, if students are entering for both the AS and A-level *Writing about society* should be taught in the second year. Covering this subject content in the second year also allows for AS and A-level students to be co-taught in the first year. It is assumed that approximately 9 weeks would be spent in the study of the text, comprising of about 4.5 hours classroom contact per week.

# Scheme of work

## *Writing about society*

*Prior knowledge: understanding of levels of language analysis, some basic understanding of re-creative writing, and some basic ideas about narrative structure and point of view.*

### Week 1

Learning objective	Subject-specific skills	Learning activities	Differentiation and extension	Resources
<p><b>Society</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand the concept of society in relation to the individual, context, culture, family, community, power and place</li> <li>be able to talk about how the concept of society can be explored by authors in fiction.</li> </ul>	<p>Applying knowledge of the following to their set text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>different kinds of societal structures and social connections</li> <li>the influence of a reader's experience and expectations of particular societal structures and relationships on their interpretation of different portrayals of society.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ask students to bring in examples of literary and non-literary texts from their own reading which engage with issues to do with society. Explore how different social groups and society more broadly are portrayed in these texts, and consider the contexts of the author and audience in relation to this portrayal.</li> <li>Refine the focus by asking the students to consider the same questions about society in relation to the set text.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students could research 'society' to present a historical overview of the concept, looking at different kinds of societal structures in different eras and different places.</li> <li>Students could draw out a 'tree' or 'web' of the societal connections between the characters in their set text, and explore the nature of those connections (the 'branches', eg family kinship relationship, landlord/tenant relationship, business partnership, etc)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>extracts from texts (and/or those supplied by students)</li> <li>A3 paper to allow diagrammatic representation of societal connections in the set text</li> </ul>

## Week 2

Learning objective	Subject-specific skills	Learning activity	Differentiation and extension	Resources
<p><b>Beginning re-creative writing and commentary</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>begin experimenting with re-creative writing</li> <li>begin reflecting on stylistic insights made available through re-creative writing.</li> </ul>	<p>Applying knowledge of the following to their set text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the ways in which different themes can be foregrounded or backgrounded by different kinds of framing of texts</li> <li>how language choices create interpretative effects</li> <li>the degree of conscious consideration that can go into choices authors (and others) make in presenting a story.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Compare some different kinds of re-creative acts, discussing the extent, nature and effect of that act. Examples could include editorial interventions in literary texts (eg Ezra Pound's interventions in T. S. Eliot's poetry, or Raymond Carver's editor's cutting and changing of his stories, authors' own revised editions of their works); graffiti interventions into previous graffiti or street-signs, fanfiction, adaptation, etc.</li> <li>Explore epigraphs, and examine the ways in which these frame books and chapters, foregrounding particular themes. Experiment with adding epigraphs (quotes/extracts from other works, or invented quotes) to chapters of the set text, or changing or re-ordering those that are already there, and reflect on what the new epigraph 'does' to the chapter (foregrounding,</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Students could find examples of epigraphs from different literary and non-literary works to create a bank of epigraphs of different kinds. Cut out and put in a bag. Each student could pick one or two in turn, add them to the beginning of their chosen chapter, and discuss the effects.</li> <li>Students could collaboratively create a collection of 're-created' texts (including cross-media adaptations), and attempt to organise them according to different scales: how radical/subtle the intervention is, how enhancing/detracting/distorting, how 'legitimate' and permitted/uninvited, etc. Student should justify their decisions.</li> <li>Students could design a new cover for their set text and compare this to the original in terms of the kinds of audience it might appeal to, what it suggests about the story contained</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a selection of examples of texts involving re-creative acts, including copies of drafts of literary texts showing editorial comments</li> <li>some children's books</li> <li>a collection of texts that use epigraphs (eg John Fowles' <i>The French Lieutenant's Woman</i>)</li> <li>some secondary material on epigraphs (eg Gerard Genette's <i>Paratexts</i>)</li> </ul>

		<p>backgrounding, tone-setting, etc).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Working alone, each student chooses a paragraph from the set text and re-writes it in the genre of fiction for very young children.</li><li>• In pairs, students compare their re-written extracts, explaining the choices they made in terms of language, structure and tone, and reflect on the resulting differences in interpretative effects.</li></ul>	<p>within, etc.</p>	
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## Week 3

Learning objective	Subject-specific skills	Learning activity	Differentiation and extension	Resources
<p><b>Character studies</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand the ways in which characters are presented and developed through the process of characterisation</li> <li>develop their knowledge of key characters within their chosen text.</li> </ul>	<p>Applying knowledge of the following to their set text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ways of describing characters: physical appearance and body language, interaction, speech, opinions of other characters and the narrator</li> <li>the ways in which readers draw on schematic knowledge to flesh out descriptions and create vivid senses of characters</li> <li>the amount of focus afforded to individual characters at specific points in the novel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore a key character in the set novel by tracing their progression through the narrative, deciding on pivotal and key episodes in the characterisation of that character (these should include the first and last time these characters are mentioned).</li> <li>Choose one scene and compare how each of the characters involved (major and minor) is portrayed in that episode. Look at the language they use in expressing themselves (register, modality, verb processes, kinds of address, perceptual dimensions and deixis, etc), and the ways in which they interact with others (dominating, interrupting, supporting,) etc.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working in pairs, students could choose a character and create a chart, with the name of each other character they interact with in columns across the top, and rows down the side with the sub-headings 'behaviour', 'body language', 'speech', 'interaction', and 'opinions'. In as many boxes of the chart as possible, students provide one or two quotes from the novel which are representative of the characterisation of that character in relation to that aspect of characterisation (the row) when interacting with the other character (the column), and an analytical description of what the language of that quote reveals. Once the chart is complete, highlight and discuss any notable patterns.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a selection of scenes/episodes from the set text</li> <li>A2 pieces of paper for charts</li> </ul>

## Week 4

Learning objective	Subject-specific skills	Learning activity	Differentiation and extension	Resources
<p><b>Re-creative writing and characterisation</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further enhance their understanding of processes of characterisation</li> <li>• develop their skills in re-creative writing about and in the voices of particular characters</li> <li>• develop skills in comparative stylistic commentary on re-creative interventions</li> </ul>	<p>Applying knowledge of the following to their set text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ways of describing characters: physical appearance and body language, interaction, speech, opinions of other characters and the narrator</li> <li>• differences in narratorial modes (homodiegetic vs. heterodiegetic, etc)</li> <li>• elements of language at different language levels (verb choice, modality, etc.) which convey characterisation and perspective</li> <li>• reliability and unreliability in narration.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students should choose a minor character and creatively flesh out that character. They should insert into the narrative an episode in which they play a key role, re-creatively writing it to portray this character's attitude, speech, etc.</li> <li>• Students should choose a short extract in which the main character is in conversation or is doing something active. They should re-write the extract from that character's perspective (if they are not the narrator) or from the perspective of a heterodiegetic narrator.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In pairs, students could choose a character, and one student could interview the other. The interviewer could take the role of another character, or a journalist or similar; the interviewee should take the role of the chosen character, or of someone close to them. Questions could be personal or related to a specific episode in the story.</li> <li>• Students could write a letter or diary entry in the voice of a chosen character, based on their analysis of the way in which they express themselves in the story. They should consider how that character's manner of expression might be shaped depending on who the letter is being written to.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a selection of scenes/episodes from the set text</li> <li>• a sample personal interview from a magazine or radio programme for reference</li> </ul>

## Week 5

Learning objective	Subject-specific skills	Learning activity	Differentiation and extension	Resources
<p><b>Tellings and tellability</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understand how themes are developed across a text</li> <li>investigate the nature and functioning of motifs</li> <li>explore the effects of different ways of structuring narrative telling in terms of the duration and ordering of events.</li> </ul>	<p>Applying knowledge of the following to their set text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>the nature of themes and motifs and their significance to the story</li> <li>duration and pace in narration</li> <li>plot and the significance of the order of the telling.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>As a whole class, generate a list of key themes and key motifs in the set text. Reflect on the lists and see if some of the identified themes warrant re-wording/re-focusing slightly, and whether or not some themes and motifs are primary and others secondary in terms of importance in the text.</li> <li>Split students into groups and give them a key theme (eg the domestic space of the home in <i>The Suspicions of Mr Whicher</i>). Each group investigates where and how that theme features and is developed across the text, and present findings back to the rest of the class, including key episodes from the text in which the theme is developed, and/or characters significant to that theme.</li> <li>In groups, students find one event which is given a lengthy description in the text, one which is only briefly mentioned/ summarised, and one</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In small groups, students could work with one motif (eg the breast flannel in <i>The Suspicions of Mr Whicher</i>). Create a poster with an image of that motif at its centre, and a summary of its functioning in the novel around it. For example, arrange in an array around it, quotes and words conveying the significance of that motif to different characters, events, and to the story as a whole. Encourage alternative designs.</li> <li>As a whole class, students could create a visual representation (eg a web) of how the themes of the text interconnect. Reflect on if/how each theme relates to ideas about society.</li> <li>In small groups, students could choose an event which is significant to the plot, and insert a brief flash-forward to it at a point much earlier in the narration – a summary-style reference to it. Discuss the ramifications</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A3 paper for posters</li> </ul>

		which is elided entirely. Discuss the effects of the choices in the duration of the telling on interpretations of the story as a whole.	for this on interpretation of the events in between the early flash-forward and the later full telling of the event.	
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## Week 6

Learning objective	Subject-specific skills	Learning activity	Differentiation and extension	Resources
<p><b>Re-creative writing and narrative</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• further understand how themes are developed in single episodes within a text.</li> <li>• further investigate how motifs are made interpretatively significant in single episodes within a text.</li> <li>• re-creatively embellish or extend scenes and events.</li> <li>• critically comment on the effects of the embellishment or extension.</li> </ul>	<p>Applying knowledge of the following to their set text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the significance of choices in language and structure in constructing and communicating interpretative significance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choose a key motif (they could be provided on individual slips of paper). Students identify an episode in the narrative where a key motif is presented.</li> <li>• They construct a 300 word narration of the episode (or part of) from the perspective of a major character for whom that motif is significant (but NOT the character whose perspective dominates the telling of the original episode). Students pair up to compare their re-creative writing, explaining and justifying the choices they have made in the nature of their portrayal, the level of detail of certain aspects, etc.</li> <li>• Students choose a scene in which an event is mentioned but not given much description. They embellish the scene by adding to that description, (about 200 words), in the form of a narratorial aside, or through a conversation between characters.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Working independently, students could invent a new motif for their set text, and plan and plot where and how it would be embedded in the text. At what junctures would it appear? To which characters would it be significant? What themes would it relate to? Students present their re-creative intervention to the class.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• key motifs on slips of paper in a bag</li> </ul>

## Week 7

Learning objective	Subject-specific skills	Learning activity	Differentiation and extension	Resources
<p><b>Re-creative writing and discourse</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop understanding of the conventions of different genres and discourse types</li> <li>consider how stylistic choices are tailored to audiences.</li> </ul>	<p>Applying knowledge of the following to their set text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>conventions of language and structure specific to different genres and discourse types</li> <li>Significance of contexts of production and reception to stylistics choices.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>If your set text is <i>Into the Wild</i> or <i>The Suspicions of Mr Whicher</i>, ask students to go through the text and make a list of all of the different genres and discourse types used (including that of the text as a whole). Pick two each and describe in detail the conventions specific to that genre or discourse type, in terms of structure, layout, language choices and so on. How far does the example of this genre/discourse type fit your expectations of a stereotypical example?</li> <li>If your set text is <i>The Great Gatsby</i> or <i>The Kite Runner</i>, ask students to imagine converting it into an entirely different genre (for example, turn <i>The Great Gatsby</i> into a horror, a biography, or a work of detective novel). In small groups, pick a genre and plan how you would change the original text to make it fit the conventions of the new genre.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Working in pairs, students could identify three episodes in the text, one major, one minor and one of medium significance. They could create a mind map for each episode, planning some different ways in which some of the detail of that episode could be presented. For example, an event could be reported in a newspaper article, a sensationalising story in a magazine, or a diary entry, aspects of an episode surrounding a death could be portrayed through an obituary or a reading a funeral or a personal letter, a narrated journey could be presented in the form of a few pages of a travel guide, the beginnings of a relationship could be presented through a love poem from one character to another, etc. Students should think as widely and creatively as possible. Then, working on their own, students could choose one plan and draft</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A3 paper for the mind maps.</li> <li>some secondary material on genres, and/or examples of different genres and text types (perhaps revising some of the work done on this topic in the <i>Imagined worlds</i> topic)</li> </ul>

			<p>it in full. They should reflect on which aspects of the base text they are using, and how they are re-casting them.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Then students could adapt that re-creative draft in a different way, by lifting it from the context of the original novel and re-setting it in a different historical era – a century earlier, or later, for example. How would students adapt the language and material form of the text to fit its new historical context?</li></ul>	
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## Week 8

Learning objective	Subject-specific skills	Learning activity	Differentiation and extension	Resources
<p><b>Expanding commentaries</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>comparatively analyse original and re-cast texts</li> <li>engage with relationships between stylistic choices and interpretative effects</li> <li>practise selecting key points</li> <li>structure comparative analyses into coherent commentary.</li> </ul>	<p>Applying knowledge of the following to their set text:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>understanding of the different levels of language</li> <li>stylistic terminology and concepts relating to language choice</li> <li>relationships between stylistic choices and interpretative effects</li> <li>ways of structuring comparative analyses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Do this activity as a whole class or in small groups. Each student follows the following steps:               <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>at the top of a page of blank A4 paper, students write out an interesting sentence from the set text</li> <li>pass the page to their left</li> <li>with a new page and new sentence in front of them, students re-cast the sentence</li> <li>pass the page to their left</li> <li>faced with two sentences, one re-cast, they identify some of the language features altered</li> <li>pass the page to their left</li> <li>read what they see and write down how the features which have been written down have been altered</li> <li>pass the page to their left</li> <li>read what they see and write down the changes in</li> </ol> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Using the sheets from the first learning activity detailed to the left, pairs of students could take a sheet and compare the two re-castings of the sentence. Each can then take one of re-castings and flesh out a brief commentary on the re-cast sentence, using the notes made in the activity as a prompt, building upon these notes, and giving the commentary a logical structure. The students can then compare their commentaries, exploring strengths and areas for improvement.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>blank/lined sheets of A4 paper for the pass-it-round activity</li> <li>photocopies of each of these pages after the activity would be useful for the extension activity</li> </ul>

		<p>interpretative effects created in the alteration</p> <p>10. students turn the page over and copy the original sentence from the top of the previous side to the top of this blank side, and the process starts again.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Students re-read the last re-creative writing exercise they did. They create a table with five rows, and of three columns headed 'WHAT', 'HOW', and 'EFFECTS?' In the 'WHAT' column, students give an example of a feature in the original altered in the re-writing. In the 'HOW' column, student describe <i>how</i> they altered that feature. In the 'EFFECTS?' column, students describe any changes in the interpretative effects created. Repeat to complete the other four rows.</li> </ul>		
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## Week 9

Learning objective	Subject-specific skills	Learning activity	Differentiation and extension	Resources
<p><b>Reflective re-creative writing</b></p> <p>Students will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>bring together and enhance the skills they have developed in analytical interpretative understanding, re-creative writing, and comparative commentary writing.</li> </ul>	<p>Applying knowledge of the following to their set text</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a synthesis of the knowledge developed in the previous weeks studying this unit.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each student should design a re-creative writing task which requires the re-casting of an extract (up to three pages) of the set text in a new way, describing two key aspects of the re-casting, eg from whose perspective, and with what focus? Pool all the tasks together. Each student picks one from the pile, and completes the re-casting activity, (finishing it for homework).</li> <li>In the next lesson, each student writes a comparative commentary on their re-casting (again finishing it for homework).</li> <li>Each student brings the completed draft of the task and commentary to the next lesson and pools them again, and takes another. Each student reads the one they have picked, and annotates it with constructive feedback.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In a whole class discussion, perhaps reflecting on the learning activity detailed to the left, students share thoughts on particular difficulties and challenges with the re-creative writing and commentary tasks, possible traps/obstacles for the commentary that students can accidentally set for themselves in the re-creative writing process, etc., and share thoughts on possible strategies to avoid/overcome these possible problems.</li> </ul>	<p>N/A</p>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• These are then pooled, and each student finds and reads their work and feedback, and adds their own reflective comments and plans for improvement.</li></ul>		
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