

A-level English Literature A and B

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Booklet 2 – Approaches to A-level English Literature NEA

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English Literature A

Assessment Objectives

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all AS and A-level English Literature specifications and all exam boards.

The exams and non-exam assessment will measure to what extent students have achieved the following AOs:

AO5: Explore literary texts informed by different interpretations.

AO4: Explore connections across literary texts.

AO3: Demonstrate understanding of the significance and influence of the contexts in which literary texts are written and received.

AO2: Analyse ways in which meanings are shaped in literary texts.

AO1: Articulate informed, personal and creative responses to literary texts, using associated concepts and terminology, and coherent, accurate written expression.

Student responses

Extract A

***Lady Chatterley's Lover* and *Madame Bovary*: explorations of the desire for self-actualisation**

Both D. H. Lawrence and Gustave Flaubert examine humanity's struggle for self-actualisation. Through his characterisation of the rather ordinary Emma Bovary, Flaubert presents self-actualisation as an impossibility, this realist technique perfectly shaping the pragmatism and slight cynicism of his view of the human condition. In 19th century France. In contrast, publishing in 1928, D. H. Lawrence shocked the nation with his explicit sexual language and complete subversion of class and sexuality to the point where unexpurgated copies of his work were banned until 1960. The anarchism of his language and ideas reflects his radical viewpoint that individuals can become self-actualised and journey towards fulfilment through two key behaviours; the forming of a genuine human connection through sex, and the rejection of machines and industrialisation.

Extract B

***Frankenstein* and *Dracula*: the pursuit of omnipotence creates destruction**

Omnipotence literally means all-powerful. One could argue that to the greater extent the pursuit of this by Dr Frankenstein and the Count is what causes the majority of the destruction in *Frankenstein* and *Dracula*, not only self-destruction but also to those around them. For some context, *Frankenstein* was written in 1816 by Mary Shelley (Formally Mary Wollstonecraft Godwin) during a holiday in the swiss alps. Due to the weather they had to stay inside so to pass the time they competed in writing the best ghost story, Godwin's winning story was *Frankenstein* or the Modern Prometheus. The plot is about a scientist named Victor or Dr. Frankenstein who creates a horrific but intelligent monster through a scientific experiment. *Dracula* was written in 1897 by Bram Stoker and is responsible for creating some of the key archetypes and traits used when describing vampires today. It is about a vampire named Count Dracula who is looking to move from his home Transylvania, to spread his vampiric curse to new blood and his battle against the vampire hunters lead by Abraham Van Helsing.

Extract C

Dracula and Under the Skin: presentation of sexuality – social commentaries?

Both *Dracula* and *Under the Skin* are crafted works of social commentary, using the sexual limitations and transgressions of the times they are set in as overt plot elements. This is typical of gothic literature, with heightened sexuality enhancing the thrill and tension of various scenes. The intended readers' attitudes towards the transgressions of (supposedly) promiscuous women are taken into account to create enthralling texts. In Stoker, the sexualised women are punished for their immorality, with Lucy and the three female vampires coming to grisly ends, the text thus conforming to Victorian ideals. Faber, however, challenges our modern objectification of women and rape culture, by creating the repulsively disfigured and pained Isserley as a crude, mocking depiction of the 'perfect' woman. However, it could be argued that all these women are presented as flawed, in that they exploit their sexual allure to manipulate others and satisfy their own greed. The authors differ in how freely they can use language to explore sexuality, being constrained to different degrees by the eras in which they wrote. Stoker, in a time of conservative values, could convey meaning only through metaphor, whereas Faber could use explicit language without risk of prosecution in a more liberal climate. It is evident that candid expression of sexuality has advanced considerably over the last hundred years, and this is reflected in how gothic literature has refined the techniques used to convey meanings.

Extract D

Frankenstein and Dracula: omnipotence

In conclusion, one can determine that the pursuit of omnipotence is, to the greater extent, destructive for the following. Firstly, by pursuing omnipotence it is something that one can only obtain with great effort and focus. Thus it often becomes obsessive as we see with Dr Frankenstein when he neglects everything else in order to complete his monster as quickly as he can. Had he known about the consequences of his actions perhaps he would have taken more time to think about the monstrosity he was trying to realise. This relentless pursuit, in Frankenstein, ultimately leads to fear and regret at what he had created. Therefore not just the pursuit of omnipotence is destructive, one could argue that obtaining it is can be even more the terrifying and self-destructive. In *Dracula's* case, the pursuit of omnipotence is less about self-destruction but more about the world around him. Due to *Dracula's* existing omnipotent nature the reader can infer how the pursuit of omnipotence is thrilling and obsessive as seen with Dr Frankenstein, but after obtaining it, one can often become desensitised and are filled with boredom. *Dracula* is at this stage at the being of the story and one could argue that his moving to London is him seeing to re-experience the feeling of obtaining omnipotence. *Dracula's* lust for this moves him across the continent in search of new blood which he can sink his claws into. This demonstrated that the pursuit of omnipotence not only leads to self-destruction but also to the destruction of others. Therefore I and others would suggest to the greater extent that the pursuit of omnipotence is destructive.

NEA: prohibited texts

A-level English Literature A

Students need to study two texts for NEA. These must be written by two different authors, and one of these texts must have been written pre-1900.

For support with the NEA, including choosing texts and writing tasks, see aqa.org.uk/7712nea

Set texts for the A-level exam components (Love Through the Ages, WW1 and its Aftermath, and Modern Times) cannot be used for non-exam assessment, even if the texts will not be used in the exam or the component will not be studied.

Below is the alphabetised list.

A

Atwood, Margaret	The Handmaid's Tale
Austen, Jane	Persuasion

B

Barker, Pat	Regeneration
Barker, Pat	Life Class
Barry, Sebastian	A Long, Long Way
Blake, William	The Garden of Love
Brontë, Charlotte	Jane Eyre
Brontë, Emily	Wuthering Heights
Burns, Robert	Song (Ae fond kiss)
Byron, Lord	She Walks in Beauty

C

Chopin, Kate	The Awakening
Churchill, Caryl	Top Girls
Cope, Wendy	After the Lunch
Curtis, Richard and Elton, Ben	Blackadder Goes Forth

D

Donne, John	The Flea
Douglas, Keith	Vergissmeinnicht
Dowson, Ernest	Non Sum Qualis Eram Bonae sub Regno Cynarae
Du Maurier, Daphne	Rebecca
Duffy, Carol Ann	The Love Poem
Duffy, Carol Ann	Feminine Gospels

E

Elton, Ben The First Casualty

F

Faulks, Sebastian Birdsong
 Fitzgerald, F. Scott The Great Gatsby
 Forster, E.M. A Room with a View
 Frayn, Michael Spies
 Friel, Brian Translations
 Frost, Robert Love and a Question

G

Gardner, Brian ed. Up the Line to Death
 Graves, Robert Goodbye to All That

H

Haig, David My Boy Jack
 Hardy, Thomas The Ruined Maid
 Hardy, Thomas At an Inn
 Hardy, Thomas Tess of the D'Urbervilles
 Harrison, Tony Timer
 Harrison, Tony Selected Poems (2013 Edition)
 Hartley, L.P. The Go-Between
 Heaney, Seamus Punishment
 Heaney, Seamus New Selected Poems (1966-1987)
 Hemingway, Ernest A Farewell to Arms
 Hill, Susan Strange Meeting
 Hughes, Ted Birthday Letters

J

Jennings, Elizabeth One Flesh

K

Keats, John La Belle Dame sans Merci. A Ballad
 Kesey, Ken One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

L

Larkin, Philip	Wild Oats
Larkin, Philip	Talking in Bed
Littlewood, Joan	Oh! What a Lovely War
Lovelace, Richard	The Scrutiny

M

MacNeice, Louis	Meeting Point
Marvell, Andrew	To His Coy Mistress
McEwan, Ian	Atonement
Mew, Charlotte	A quoi bon dire
Millay, Edna St. Vincent	I, being born a woman and distressed
Miller, Arthur	All My Sons
Muldoon, Paul	Long Finish

P

Plath, Sylvia	Ariel
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R

Reilly, ed. Catherine	Scars Upon My Heart
Remarque, Erich Maria	All Quiet on the Western Front
Roberts, Michael Symmons	To John Donne
Rossetti, Christina	Remember
Roy, Arundhati	The God of Small Things

S

Sexton, Anne	For My Lover, Returning to His Wife
Shakespeare, William	Othello
Shakespeare, William	The Taming of the Shrew
Shakespeare, William	Measure for Measure
Shakespeare, William	The Winter's Tale
Shakespeare, William	Sonnet 116
Sheers, Owen	Skirrid Hill
Sherriff, R.C.	Journey's End
Stallworthy, ed. Jon	The Oxford Book of War Poetry
Stallworthy, ed. Jon	The War Poems of Wilfred Owen
Stockett, Kathryn	The Help
Swift, Graham	Waterland

W

Walker, Alice	The Color Purple
Walter, ed. George	The Penguin Book of First World War Poetry
Wertebaker, Timberlake	Our Country's Good
West, Rebecca	The Return of the Soldier
Whelan, Peter	The Accrington Pals
Williams, Tennessee	A Streetcar Named Desire
Williams, Tennessee	Cat on a Hot Tin Roof
Wilmot, John Earl of Rochester	A Song (Absent from thee)
Winterson, Jeanette	Oranges are not the Only Fruit
Wyatt, Sir Thomas	Who so list to hount I knowe where is an hynde

Y

Yates, Richard	Revolutionary Road
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Notes

English Literature B

Assessment Objectives

Assessment objectives (AOs) are set by Ofqual and are the same across all AS and A-level English Literature specifications and all exam boards.

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Task titles for discussion

- Is *Trainspotting* 'great literature'?
- To what extent do you agree that Austen challenges social conventions in *Northanger Abbey*?
- "Women are presented solely as victims in *The Waste Land*". To what extent do you agree?
- To what extent can it be argued that Dorian Gray is presented as respectable simply because he is male?
- To what extent do you agree with the view that Rachel's presentation as a sinister threat is due to the fact that she defies the expectations of a patriarchal society?
- "Eliot's characters are singularly passive and inept and this is the root cause of their unsuccessful lives". Do you agree with this view of Eliot's poetry?
- "Beowulf is an artistic mess". Using ideas from the Critical Anthology to support your argument, to what extent do you agree with this view?
- "In his portrayal of Arabella and Sue in *Jude the Obscure* Hardy conforms to, and therefore contains his female characters within the patriarchal virgin-whore dichotomy". To what extent do you feel this is true?
- In Hughes' poetry the natural world is presented very much as "red in tooth and claw". Do you agree and do you think this is the only way to respond to his poetry or can his presentation of the natural world be understood in different ways?
- "The beginning of the novel is a threshold, separating the real world we inhabit from the world the novelist has imagined". How successful is Wells in creating this threshold in the opening of *The War of the Worlds*?

Student response NEA: Article on Tony Harrison

If Tony Harrison is our greatest living poet then let us study him at school!

“Who’d have thought that some of the most moving poems in the language would have been composed in a language normally reserved for sheep shaggers and colliers?” Simon Armitage.

Admittedly AQA, in one of the organisation’s more enlightened moments, has included some poetry by Tony Harrison on its latest A Level English Literature course but by and large generations of British children have passed through school without ever reading a word written by the man who is universally (and it seems uncontroversially) hailed as “Britain’s leading poet-playwright”¹. Why is this? While the likes of Simon Armitage and Gillian Clarke have regularly appeared in school anthologies and on exam specifications Harrison has been largely ignored. Given his work is held in such high regard, he has after all won more poetry awards than most other poets put together, why is he not seen as a central figure in the corpus of English Literature that is deemed to be important, valuable and worthy of study? In short, why is he not widely lauded as the great writer he is and avidly studied by students of English Literature throughout the land, instead of some of his far less talented peers? (No offence Si and Gill).

Harrison has much to offer students as we grow up in a world still riddled with the class divisions and social conflicts that he feels so strongly about. Admittedly, some of his work is of its time, about current political issues like the Iraq war, but I imagine he is pleased about that and intended those poems to have an immediacy and direct relevance to current affairs. For Harrison poetry is at the heart of life, not the preserve of one of its more rarefied boudoirs. If the criteria for greatness is some sort of universality then some might argue the topical nature of some of his poetry is a barrier but I see it as strength; we live in this world, now, and, to me, Tony Harrison’s work has a relevance and potency that so much so-called canonical poetry simply does not have.

Quote: “I want to write poetry that people like my parents might respond to”- Harrison in an interview with *The Guardian*

Yes, Harrison is a poet with a political message but he is also a poet who has produced work that can reduce even the most hard-hearted reader to tears and he is a role model for young people like me. I have grown up in the North East of England, in an area with a strong regional identity but, I am told, fewer opportunities than those in the more affluent South. Tony Harrison, born into a working class family in Leeds, is proud of who he is and where he came from, he is proud of his accent and the dialect of his home and his ancestors and so am I (despite my teacher telling me I should maybe try to tone it down before I go to university). I didn’t get the chance to study Harrison at school, I had to find him for myself, but I wish I had.

¹ www.poetryfoundation.org

Literary critics have spent much time defining what makes ‘great’ literature and there seems to be a consensus that it is associated with being ‘tasteful, refined and discriminating’² and has little to do with what is ‘ordinary and ugly’³. In addition it is ‘complex’ and does not use ‘ordinary words’ but rather vocabulary that is ‘elegant, witty, patterned, controlled’⁴. Harrison has produced work that meets all of these requirements but he has also written poems in everyday language about things that are ordinary and ugly and he has made them powerful, memorable and deeply moving. To me that is why he is a great poet and if that doesn’t meet some set of official criteria for greatness, then the criteria is wrong.

To convince any doubters and to educate those readers new to Harrison, let us look at some of his most moving poetry, that which relates to his parents. In these poems, taken from his 1978 collection *The School of Eloquence*, Harrison explores both his love for his parents but also how his education came between them and took his life in a direction they could not follow. His relations with them were not always easy, particularly with his father, and the poems make it clear there were tensions and difficulties but the bond is deep and his love profound, in spite of the barriers and divisions. These tensions and conflicts within families, the difficulties and the love between the generations are surely ‘universal themes’ which are of ‘concern to all people’⁵. Harrison’s poetry speaks honestly and realistically about family life and it speaks to us all, both to our brains and our hearts.

Quote: “I’m opening my trap/to busk the class that broke him” – Turns

In *Book Ends* Harrison recounts a scene at home with his father following the death of his mother. Despite the fact the pair sit in ‘silence’ amidst ‘sullen looks’ Harrison demonstrates a profound understanding of the fact his father’s life is ‘all shattered into smithereens’ following the loss of his wife. The two voices that are depicted in the poem represent the differences between the two men, Harrison’s commentary being in Standard English, while his father’s regional speech is represented phonetically. There is a painful awareness that his education, the ‘books, books, books’ referred to at the end of Part 1, has opened up a gulf between them that can never be bridged. Despite their shared grief Harrison does not shy away from making it clear there are difficulties in their relationship, his father can still ‘cut’ him with his criticism. Unlike many other poets he does not romanticise nor dramatise the scene, he depicts it for us in all its painful, everyday complexity. It is a scene that speaks true to those of us who do not live an idyllic family life and who sometimes find it difficult to communicate with and relate to those who are closest to us – that will be all of us then. In this poem, as in so many others, Harrison also makes it clear that he knows his education does not make him better nor his feelings more profound, although they may be more eloquently expressed. His father is not a ‘scholar’ and his attempts to decide what to put on his wife’s grave stone are ‘mis-spelt’ and ‘stylistically appalling’ but Harrison admits he ‘can’t squeeze more love’ into the inscription. The poem ends with the deeply moving image of him pondering what his father has scrawled on the back of an envelope in a futile attempt to find the words that will do justice to his terrible, life-changing loss.

² R Pope; The English Studies Book

³ R Pope; The English Studies Book

⁴ M. Montgomery, et al; Ways of Reading

⁵ M. Montgomery, et al; Ways of Reading

It is the very fact that Harrison does not use complex imagery or convoluted extended metaphors, so often hailed as the sign of 'quality' poetry, that makes these poems so moving. He does not need to use 'complex language', he uses the language of the everyday and in doing so confers on it a value and status and it does not let him down. Harrison shows that the language of his parents, of ordinary working people, is suitable for poetry and its very accessibility and honesty is its strength. Those who seek complexity in these poems can of course find it. Many of his poems, including *Book Ends*, are extended 16 line sonnets, with carefully crafted regular rhyme patterns throughout. Harrison writes as part of the great tradition of poets who have used the sonnet form for their love poetry but the love he explores is more everyday and, for that, more real. By choosing the 16 line sonnet Harrison is utilising the form used most extensively by Meredith in his 1862 sonnet sequence *Modern Love*, arguably an apt name for Harrison's poems also.

Quote: "I thought it made me look more 'working class' (as if a bit of chequered cloth could bridge that gap)" – Turns

In *An Old Score*, another of his sonnets, written after the death of his father, Harrison reflects on how far away he has moved from his roots, he is now called 'poet' in his passport, but also on the profound link he feels to his lost parent. Clearly the young, poetic Harrison, with his 'flowing hair' was a figure his father struggled to relate to, something that 'hurt' him deeply, but what makes this poem so powerful is his overwhelming sense of loss, that things have moved on and cannot be got back. In the poem this is symbolised by the fact that 'Joe's Saloon', with its connotations of tough masculinity, where his father took him for his 'forced fortnightly clip' has gone, like his father and his old fashioned notions. The deliberate modern misspelling and rather mawkish pun of the new hairdressers, 'Kurl up & Dye', represents the new world that Harrison's father would not have understood and in which he would have struggled to find a place. Harrison's tears suggest that in the passing of that older world and its associated values something important has been lost.

And that is one of the intriguing things about Tony Harrison, he confronts head on the complex relationship he has with education, culture and social class. Despite being a world-renowned poet and classical scholar he understands, even partly agrees with, his father's views on 'the Arts'⁶ and frequently sets himself up against the so-called educated elite (of which of course he is a part). He is also well aware of the irony that his way of expressing his opposition is to write poetry, possibly the most 'elite' of art forms. Many poems refer to the bald patch Harrison has inherited from his father and the flat cap, that iconic northern working class symbol, that he now wears himself. He is astute enough to know that 'a bit of chequered cloth'⁷ cannot bridge the gap between who he is and where he has come from but, in his poetry, there is a genuine sense that to be a working class man like his father, who 'never begged. For nowt!⁸ but who worked honestly all his life, is one of the most dignified and admirable things to be.

Tony Harrison's poetry has interested me, inspired me and moved me in a way no other poetry has. It has a power and relevance for all of us and I urge everyone to go away and read him – whatever your situation there will be something to intellectually or emotionally grab you. With heartbreaking tenderness he tells his father that 'once I'm writing I can't put you down' and that is how I feel about him. Tony Harrison's poetry has challenged me, motivated me and made me cry and if I ever see him in Greggs on Gosforth High Street⁹ I will tell him so.

⁶ A Good Read

⁷ Turns

⁸ Turns

⁹ Harrison has lived in the same house in Gosforth, a suburb on Newcastle-upon-Tyne, for over 40 years. That's also where I go to school.

Student response NEA: Pride and Prejudice

Write a re-creative piece from the perspective of Hill, the housekeeper at Longbourn, in which she reflects on her situation. Use Marxist and Feminist literary critical ideas to inform your writing and produce a commentary to make explicit how those critical ideas have shaped your reading of *Pride and Prejudice*.

"I can assure you, Sir, that we are very well able to keep a cook; my daughters have nothing to do in the kitchen". Hill carried the heavy trays of dishes out of the dining room as Mrs Bennet impressed upon her guest just how well situated the family was at Longbourn and how her daughters did not need to become embroiled in domestic chores. Idleness, Hill reflected, was the prerogative of rich women, although Mrs Bennet would have called it gentility. The servants' passage was poorly lit and her back ached as the long day of work neared its end but rest did not beckon just yet; the dinner needed to be cleared away, the young ladies would need hot water and candles before bed and Mrs Bennet often requested a last dish of tea before retiring. Sarah, the cook's girl, was in the yard drawing the water that she would heat in order to wash the plates and crockery. Hill sighed. She had worked at Longbourn for many years and, at heart, she was very fond of all of its inhabitants but their careless, carefree ignorance and disregard also weighed on her at times. As Sarah carried the heavy pails of water in from the dark yard Hill put the five dirty petticoats into a tub to soak. Lizzie had clearly been out walking again; the mud would take some considerable scrubbing to remove. Hill flexed her red, chapped hands and thought rather dimly of the caustic soap and rough scrubbing brush she habitually took to Miss Lizzie's more persistent stains.

"The mistress says to send up the next course. Lord but that Mr Collins can talk, I've fair got an headache and I only took up the madeira for later."

"That's enough Tom," Hill reprimanded sharply, although she couldn't help but agree. "Carry the platter of meat and I will bring the sauces." Although Mrs Bennet was quite accurate in stating that neither her nor her daughters helped out in the house, and while her sense of social propriety required Mr Bennet to keep a full complement of domestic staff despite his obviously straightened circumstances, it was not usual for the family to have quite so many courses at dinner. The need to impress Mr Collins, to whom the estate was entailed, had however required an extra special effort from the kitchen staff tonight; not that Hill expected this to be acknowledged in any way. Mrs Bennet was far more concerned with the marriage prospects of her daughters, and the adverse effect these had on her nerves, to concern herself with the feelings of her staff.

Mr Hill often told his wife that she would be waiting a very long time if she expected her employers to enquire, let alone care, about her life. The fact that she had a son who was volunteering in the militia, and that Hill worried about him day and night, had eluded Mrs Bennet. George was currently stationed on the south coast as the wars with France were still ongoing and there were again rumours of an invasion. While the officers in Meryton were wined and dined by the local gentry, men like her George suffered the privations and harsh discipline of military life. Not that the Bennets cared; to Hill's horror the news that a private had been flogged was mentioned in passing the other day before news of the forthcoming marriage of one of the Colonels was discussed at length. Hill prayed her George was faring better than that poor soldier had.

Not that life at home was easy. The shadow of the French Revolution still loomed large and struck fear into the hearts of many. The poor were downtrodden by the rising cost of living and food riots were occurring all over. Hill thanked providence that both her and her husband actually had a roof over their heads and food on the table – many didn't. Hill feared what was happening around her, not within the privileged walls of Longbourn, but elsewhere. Like many others she feared that the new machines might take away her work but, unlike some, she was not prepared to take violent action in an attempt to prevent them. Hill shuddered as she thought of the merciless sentence pronounced on one of these so-called Luddites at the recent Meryton assizes.

Had Lizzie and Jane known of the burden being carried by the loyal Hill the two elder girls would have been most concerned but the Bennets, like most of their social circle, remained largely ignorant of the cares, trials and tribulations of those so far beneath them on the social ladder. The abject poor could be taken baskets of food during a morning walk, and then be suitably grateful to the generous young ladies, but the working classes were not of concern to them. Resigned, and realising it would do little good to become bitter with her employers, Hill returned to the dining room and removed the last of the crockery as Mr Collins began to read to the family from Fordyce's sermons, much to Lydia's absolute horror.

In this re-creative piece I have adopted the perspective of Hill, the housekeeper at Longbourn, and explored a different reading of *Pride and Prejudice* using both Feminist and Marxist literary critical ideas. The third person narration of the novel largely conveys the perspective and point of view of the privileged elite, especially Lizzie its favoured leading lady, but in this piece it aligns itself with the point of view of Hill, a female servant.

In some ways *Pride and Prejudice* can be read as a 'feminist' novel in that Lizzie is a strong, independent character who, to the horror of her mother but the delight of the reader, rejects the odious Mr Collins and also Mr Darcy's first proposal of marriage. Austen presents Lizzie as being prepared to go against social expectations and insist on her own choice of husband and the novel celebrates this independent spirit. Of course, in the end Lizzie still becomes a wife and ultimately fulfils her social duty to marry but she does this on her own terms and generations of readers have enjoyed this early example of 19th century 'girl power'.

Although female voices are heard a great deal throughout *Pride and Prejudice*, so in some ways the text could be seen to be "reconstructing the lost or suppressed records of female experience"¹, Austen is only interested in those voices and experiences if they belong to characters of a particular social class. There are socially constructed roles and expectations of the female characters within the novel and a set of attitudes and values that underpin these however these do not apply to all of the female characters. Women don't necessarily have marginal roles in *Pride and Prejudice*, poor people do.

While *Pride and Prejudice* appears to celebrate female independence that independence is only given to those who can afford it and it operates within very narrow boundaries. Ultimately the novel does not challenge the prevailing ideology or status quo either for rich or poor characters. The difference is that while the values of the novel centre on notions of candour and true gentility no narrative space is given to the army of women and men who support and facilitate the genteel and privileged lifestyles at the heart of the text. Darcy and Elizabeth's fondness for the Gardiners, her 'new money' middle class relatives, is presented as enlightened and even slightly radical but the working class effectively do not exist.

¹ P Barry, *Beginning Theory*

By giving the narrative perspective over to Hill I have tried to shed a different light on the novel, exploring a reading of the text that a Marxist or feminist critic might be interested in. I found it impossible to separate Hill's gender from her socio-economic situation and indeed felt the latter was a more significant determining factor. I have made her a character who inhabits a social reality that contains significant hardships and tensions, as indeed the 'real' social and historical context of the novel did for many people. She not only works very hard, doing long hours of physically demanding work for relatively little pay, but she also lives in a world where there are social pressures that are simply not reflected in the text. Hill is aware that the increasing industrialisation of the rural economy is causing anxiety and tension amongst workers and she knows that many people cannot feed their families. In addition England has been at war with France for many years and although this contextual feature does appear in *Pride and Prejudice* in the form of the militia that are stationed at Meryton there is no sense of threat, loss or danger that accompanies them, instead the soldiers provide a source of "news and happiness" for the Bennet girls. Just as the stories of working class women are not heard within the novel, so the text only concerns itself with "the officers" of the militia, not the volunteers or conscripted foot soldiers. The officers, who look "very becoming" in their "regimentals", are presented as little more than a colourful addition to the social scene and a way for Lydia and Catherine to further make fools of themselves. The news of a private who has been "flogged" is glossed over because the physical pain and suffering of those at the bottom of the social ladder is not of concern within the narrative.

In my piece I have attempted to present Hill as painfully aware of the harsher side of the social context of the novel because, unlike the Bennets, she actually has to exist in that world and is not protected from its more extreme elements. The novel encourages us to laugh indulgently at the Bennets and to fall in love with the well-bred, wealthy Darcy and the spirited, independent-minded Elizabeth. The only trials and tribulations in the novel are the hurdles the couples must overcome on their path to love and marriage but I wanted to encourage the reader to criticise this depiction of the world and see it as both narrow and lacking. I wanted to show a much harsher, bleaker story lying behind, or beneath, the main narrative, even though it is a story that is neither acknowledged nor valued by Austen. I have presented Hill as being frustrated by the lack of awareness and lack of concern shown by the Bennets, especially the women who she is most in contact with. I wanted her to have a voice so that she can be given the respect she, and others like her, deserves for the work she does and the life she leads. I am conscious however that by producing a piece of writing that continues the classic realist form of *Pride and Prejudice* I may be exploring Hill's story but I am not changing it as "literary realism carries with it and implicit validation of conservative social structures".²

Using Feminist and Marxist ideas to read *Pride and Prejudice* in a new way was illuminating but it also felt quite radical and disloyal to the original text. To explore the story of characters such as Hill is to essentially alter the genre of the novel and change it from light-hearted romance to a more gritty social drama and, as an avid fan of the original text, I do feel that something is lost in doing this. Austen would have known about all of the contextual elements I have included but she chose to leave them out and presumably did this consciously and for a reason.

² P Barry; *Beginning Theory*

NEA: prohibited texts

A-level English Literature B

Students need to study two texts for NEA. These must be written by two different authors – one poetry, the other prose. Each text must be linked to a different section of the Critical Anthology.

For support with the NEA, including choosing texts and writing tasks, see aqa.org.uk/7717nea

Set texts for the A-level exam components (Aspects of Tragedy, Aspects of Comedy, Elements of Crime Writing, and Elements of Political and Social Protest Writing) cannot be used for NEA, even if the texts will not be used in the exam or the component will not be studied.

Below is the alphabetised list.

A

Atkinson, Kate	When Will There Be Good News?
Atwood, Margaret	The Handmaid's Tale
Auden, W.H.	Miss Gee
Austen, Jane	Emma

B

Betjeman, John	Death in Leamington
Blake, William	Songs of Innocence and of Experience
Browning, Robert	The Laboratory
Browning, Robert	My Last Duchess
Browning, Robert	Porphyria's Lover
Burns, Robert Tam o'	Shanter. A Tale

C

Chaucer, Geoffrey	Extracts from the Prologue of 'The Monk's Tale'
Chaucer, Geoffrey	The Monk's Tale
Chaucer, Geoffrey	'The Nun's Priest's Tale' inc. Prologue and Epilogue
Christie, Agatha	The Murder of Roger Ackroyd
Coleridge, Samuel	Taylor The Rime of the Ancient Mariner
Crabbe, George	Peter Grimes
Crace, Jim	Harvest

D

Dickens, Charles	Oliver Twist
Dickens, Charles	Hard Times
Donne, John	The Flea
Duffy, Carol Ann	Mrs Sisyphus

F

Fanthorpe, U.A.	Not My Best Side
Fitzgerald, F. Scott	The Great Gatsby
Frost, Robert	Out, out -

G

Goldsmith, Oliver	She Stoops to Conquer
Greene, Graham	Brighton Rock

H

Hardy, Thomas	Tess of the D'Urbervilles
Hardy, Thomas	The Convergence of the Twain
Harrison, Tony	V
Harrison, Tony	National Trust
Harrison, Tony	Them and [uz]
Harrison, Tony	Divisions
Harrison, Tony	Working
Harrison, Tony	Marked with D
Hosseini, Khaled	The Kite Runner

I

Ibsen, Henrik	A Doll's House
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K

Keats, John	Lamia
Keats, John	Isabella or The Pot of Basil
Keats, John	La Belle Dame Sans Merci. A Ballad
Keats, John	The Eve of St. Agnes

L

Larkin, Philip	Sunny Prestatyn
Levy, Andrea	Small Island
Lochhead, Liz	My Rival's House

M

McEwan, Ian	Atonement
Miller, Arthur	Death of a Salesman
Milton, John	Extract from 'Paradise Lost'

R

Rossetti, Christina	Jessie Cameron
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S

Shakespeare, William	Othello
Shakespeare, William	King Lear
Shakespeare, William	Richard II
Shakespeare, William	The Taming of the Shrew
Shakespeare, William	Twelfth Night
Shakespeare, William	Hamlet
Shakespeare, William	Henry IV Part I
Swift, Jonathan	A Satirical Elegy. On the Death of a Late Famous General

T

Tennyson, Alfred	Tithonus
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W

Wilde, Oscar	The Importance of Being Earnest
Wilde, Oscar	The Ballad of Reading Gaol

Y

Yeats, W.B.	The Death of Cuchulain
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