GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE:

Theory, style and poetics

ONLY STUDY GUIDE FOR ENG2602

Department of English Studies

Compiled by
David Levey, Clifford Ndlangamandla, Eileen Donaldson, Pinky Makoe, Marinus van Niekerk, Sira Dambe, Allyson Kreuiter, Nomsa Zindela

Editor
Deirdre Byrne

English 2 level coordinator
Jessica Murray

Deputy English 2 level coordinator
Sope Maithufi

DCLD consultant
Martsie Roman

University of South Africa, Pretoria

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Contents

GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE:
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Introduction

GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE:
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David Levey and Clifford Ndlangamandla

In this module we focus on the fascinating area of how 'language' contributes to any writing, whether this is 'literature' or another kind of text. We are sure that you will enjoy this exercise.

Thus, when we read a piece of writing, whether it is a book, a poem, an advertisement for soap, a newspaper, or a blog on the Internet, we are concerned with questions such as:

1. 'What genre is this text?' This helps the reader to become aware of appropriate ways of reading it. She should read a poem differently from an advertisement, or a drama, or a study guide, such as this one.

2. 'What is its purpose?' *No piece of writing is ever neutral*: amongst other purposes (such as the writer's desire to express herself, to explore something in writing) it is always intended to place the reader in a particular position and create a specific response. Think about this for a moment.

3. 'How is this purpose being achieved?' What kinds of language features (or linguistic devices) is the writer using to address, influence, entertain, challenge, inform, even manipulate, the reader?

Let's put this in official terminology: what are the outcomes of this module? What do we expect? Below we have *italicised* some of the more important points and mentioned some of the queries one could pose.

Outcome 1: students (in other words, ourselves and yourselves) identify the *typical English language attributes* of *prose, poetry* and *drama*. We should ask ourselves, 'what are the common features of these kinds of writing?'Also, 'in what ways do they differ?'

Outcome 2: students discuss the use of *figurative language* in a variety of texts. We need to be sure in our minds what figurative language *is*, and what it *does*. Why is it being used?

Outcome 3: students read literary language as a means of *positioning the reader* in order *to elicit a particular response*. One could ask: 'how does the text create a response in me, the reader?'

Outcome 4: students discuss the *creative choices* made in literary texts. We might enquire: 'why does the writer use this particular word instead of another, or place the words in this specific order, not another?'

Now, circle the key words or phrases in the above questions and outcomes. This will concentrate your mind on what you should be looking for. Also, in a dictionary (good online ones are Merriam-Webster and www.dictionary.com) look up any terms such as 'genre', 'figurative' and 'elicit', which you may not know.

Here are three thoughts to get you going:

- It is impossible to discuss and even to appreciate any text without being aware of how its language is operating.
- Or if we put this slightly differently, it is really useful to understand the way language functions so that we can say worthwhile things about a text.
- We could also say that the kind of text that is being written affects the kind of language the writer will use.

At the beginning of this section we put the words 'language' and 'literature' in quotation marks and you may be wondering why.

This is a particular technique, known as using scare quotes, designed to make the reader realise that such terms should not just be taken for granted, at face value. They should be probed more deeply. The speaker or writer may be using them in a different sense. We may think we know what 'literature' and 'language' are, but do we really?

Here, then, we want to make you aware that, as with any word, 'language' and 'literature' should not be taken at face value but should be defined in their context: that is, as they are used in a sentence, paragraph or longer piece of writing.

Activity

Pause for a few seconds and write down what you understand 'language' and 'literature' to be in general and in the context of this module.

Feedback

We shall not provide an answer, but it will emerge as the module unfolds. It is quite possible that your responses may evolve as you work through the material.

Activity

Think about your expectations of this module. What concerns do you have? What do you hope to gain from it?

Be aware that you already have valuable knowledge and experience which you can bring to bear. You will already have met poetry, drama and all kinds of prose, for instance, not only in your first-level English modules, but also in your everyday existence: advertisers are fond of using poetic devices such as metaphor, rhyme and alliteration, every 'soapie' (and every conversation) represents a form of drama and you are reading prose right now …

Feedback

Again, this will be your own answer, drawing from your own experience.

How to work through this module

We expect you to achieve the four outcomes by:

- keeping a journal
- Becoming familiar with the features of all four genres
- Understanding and applying the various ways of reading them
- Working through all the activities; in this way the module will become more inter-active. We expect to learn from you – this is why we also call ourselves students – as well as vice versa
- Studying the prescribed book by Goatly, concentrating particularly on

  – Chapter 1 (organisation; the clause and sentence; the paragraph)
  – Chapter 2 (language as a tool for thinking; ideology and vocabulary)
  – Chapter 3 (all sections are useful for understanding drama and conversation)
  – Chapter 4 (metaphor and irony; adverts, association and inference)
  – Chapter 5 (all sections, especially how texts position the reader)
  – Chapter 7 (this relates to persuasive writing)
  – Chapter 8 (fiction and feminism in general, especially narrative structure, vo-cabulary and ideology; metaphor, irony and inferences)
  – Chapter 9 (this deals with the media as a genre)

- Reading all the drama and poetry texts in the Reader on myUnisa
- Being able to use the appropriate critical vocabulary and concepts in the Toolkit there
- Consulting and using all the digital sources we provide on the myUnisa course site at https://myunisa.ac.za. Visit this regularly to keep up to date.

UNIT 1

Critically reading a text and writing about it

GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE:
Theory, style and poetics

David Levey and Clifford Ndlangamandla

This unit guides us through a practical method of reading and discussing a text, by posing the questions *what, why and how.* We provide an example of working through a passage, paying close attention to the use of language. In so doing, we demonstrate some ways in which attention to the details of the language in a text enriches our understanding of the text itself.

Before you read our comments, make some brief notes on features of the style in the extract below that interest you. If you studied our first level modules, we recommend you quickly skim them again.

From ENG1501, the first-level literature module, you will remember that every text represents choices which the writer or speaker has made so as to achieve certain effects. The language module, ENG1502, made the points that:

- a text is an interwoven entity, weaving together many facets of language, and
- that no text is neutral, not even an item of news in a newspaper or on the radio, TV or internet.

In the light of this, recall that we are carrying out a basic form of discourse analysis, in which amongst other aspects of a text, we take note of:

- pragmatics, roughly who the speaker or writer is and in what context she is speaking
- the linguistic information which the text holds – for instance, lexis (vocabulary), syntax (sentence structure), and phonology (sounds)
- the intended and actual audience of the text
- its purpose, which might be to share something with the audience; to persuade; to convey or create a certain emotion/mood/response; to engage intellectually; to amuse;
- structural cohesion (how the text's components are linked)
- style
- tone
- semantics, or approximately the implications of a text.

Put simplistically, we are dealing with the *what*, *why* and *how* of a text.

Critical Reading of a Text

One of the principles in English Studies is the intertwining of language and society: one could say that society is created by language, but society also creates language. In this module we use the terms 'language' and 'discourse' as equivalents. There are several definitions of this term. Firstly, discourse can be defined as any stretch of language longer than the sentence. Secondly, it can be defined as a view of language that is embedded in its social context, and thirdly, discourse is also associated with abstract ideas and beliefs that constitute social thinking and formations, such as, a Marxist discourse or a capitalist discourse. When we adopt a critical stance towards the production and reception of texts we ask questions that have to do with inequality or power. This is sometimes referred to as Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA): an interdisciplinary approach to the study of the relationship between texts and social structures. One of the scholars in this field is Norman Fairclough (1992, 2003). His model of analysis is based on three dimensions of discourse. These are:

1. The **object of analysis** (including verbal and visual texts). In our case the poems, the short stories and other literary or non-literary texts.

2. The **processes** by which the object is produced and received (writing/speaking/ designing and reading/listening/viewing) by human subjects.

3. The **socio-historical conditions** that govern these processes.

Janks (1997:1) argues that 'what is useful about this approach is that it enables the analyst to focus on the signifiers that make up the **text**, the specific linguistic selections, their juxtapositioning, their sequencing, their layout.' It also requires that the historical determinations of these selections are recognized. Janks (2010) then provides a useful table of language/literary concepts that can be used in the critical reading of texts. We have adapted the table below. The goal is not just to identify these devices but rather to look for patterns and answer any of the critical questions that this module is based on. One looks at the patterns of the language features and then arrives at the intended meanings and the beliefs that the text advances or promotes.

The following exercise is based on a text in your prescribed book (Goatly, 2000:61– 63). The title and a brief summary are reproduced below:

I'm sorry teenagers, you are not the centre of the universe

Whether it's lovers on the Titanic or White House Bimbos, youth isn't so cool

First read the passage. Let's now consider the possible ways in which a critical reading of the text can be done.

Let's remind ourselves some of the questions that we seek to answer in order to do a critical reading of the text above. For example:

- What is the genre of the text? It is important to establish this, because this shapes our expectations and prepares us to read the text analytically: with an eye to its deeper and wider significance.
- What is the purpose of the text?
- How does it achieve this purpose?
- Why has the writer chosen to write in this way?

These questions are broad. We can further break them down into specific aspects of language, and elements of the texts. Once we have analysed, identified, or explained these language and textual features we can then decide on the main questions about genre, audience, and purpose. To illustrate this let us consider one aspect of genre: the topic of the text.

We can see that this is an extract from a British newspaper, *The Guardian*. We do not need to enquire what kind of genre it is, since we are told it is a newspaper column. From our background knowledge of newspaper columns we know that these are often critical commentaries, opinions, and views on social matters. They sometimes question political leaders and their decisions.

The writer has chosen the title, 'I'm sorry teenagers, you are not the centre of the universe.' This is an unusually long title for an article. Can you look at the structure of a newspaper article? Find any daily or weekend newspaper in your neighbourhood and describe the structure of the article. Look for a comment column. How is it structured?

You will find that such a column normally consists of a heading or title. It is followed by a brief summary of the main argument in the column, what is also called a précis or a lead.

The title is conversational in 'style', offering an apology but then also creating a negative 'polarity'. We have referred to two language features in the preceding sentence. These are 'style' and 'polarity'.

In terms of style we can tell that this title is informal because it uses contractions like 'I'm'. Offering an apology in this way is more typical of conversational speech than formal academic writing.

As regards polarity, the negative operator word 'not' is suggesting that the writer is asserting a negative statement. We refer to this as negative polarity. Imagine what the contents of the 'comment column' would have been if the writer had said, 'You **are** the centre of the universe'.

We can also extend this use of language to metaphors (please consult the contents pages and index in Goatly (2000) for the appropriate references to these and other terms in his text). Metaphor refers to the direct transfer of qualities from one entity to another. For example, teenagers are referred to (or not referred to) as 'the universe'. The word 'universe' is symbolic of completion, the totality of the world, and everything that exists. How do these connotations guide our interpretation of the title? After doing a critical analysis of the text, we may come back to the title and comment on how effective and suitable it is.

We have now briefly introduced language features such as: metaphor, polarity, and style.

Below the title of the article, there is a short, catchy summary of the entire column. This is referred to as the lead in journalistic writing. In this case, 'Whether it's lovers on the Titanic or White House Bimbos, youth isn't so cool.'

Again we could say more about the choice of language and why the language has been chosen. We would like to focus on the word 'Bimbos'. Already there are several synonyms (words that carry similar meanings) that can be noted in the title and the lead: teenagers, youth, and now Bimbos. You may have encountered this word for the

first time in this article. (If so, please look it up in a dictionary.) The word Bimbo is used as a pejorative term; however, its denotational meaning (remember the semantics unit on denotations and connotations in ENG1502) is encompassed in the reference to young children, probably infants. In this case it is pejorative to suggest that the White House contains 'Bimbos'. In terms of why the writer chooses such a style of introducing the article, we can guess that the aim is to make the reader interested in finding out more. It is also sensationalizing the subject matter as some journalistic writing does. Again in the lead, we meet another negative polarity in the simple sentence, 'youth isn't so cool'; notice that the writer uses vocabulary **t**hat is associated with young people to discredit the youth. The language is informal because we observe contractions like 'it's, and isn't', and also such words as 'cool', which are usually associated with teen talk.

These features are used in the analysis of both literary and non-literary texts. In the following table we are going to illustrate how a critical reading of this newspaper column might proceed. In the table, we merely describe the language features and give examples from the text. We do not interpret them or suggest reasons and explanations for their use. In other words, we are mainly focusing on *what* kinds of language are used. We give less attention to *how* they are used, and no focus on *why* they are used. You will be expected to do more than what is found in the table when engaging in the critical reading of texts. However, the table is important for summarising the language devices and features that can be employed when reading both literary and non literary texts in this module and in other modules.

Language features	Explanation	Example from 'I'm sorry teenagers …'
Lexicalization	The selection/choice of wordings. Different words construct the same idea differently.	Words like teenagers, youth, bimbos, adolescents, daughter, are more frequently mentioned than words for older groups, e.g. 'adults', 'grown ups' and 'parents.'
Lexical cohesion	Provides connections across stretches of text by: synonymy (the same meaning); antonymy (the opposite meaning); repetition; collocation (associated words).	The word adolescence is repeated a number of times. It is contrasted with grown ups. The age groups are also contrasted.
Metaphor	Yoking ideas together and the discursive construction of new ideas.	'you are not the centre of the universe', and 'That metaphor about rearranging the deckchairs on the Titanic has never seemed so freshly-minted.'
Hyperbole	Expressing exaggerations	'pulling the whole world off kilter'
Euphemisms	Expressing a situation in an evasive, indirect way	'the young women who may or may not have gone down on Bill Clinton'

Language features	Explanation	Example from 'I'm sorry teenagers …'
Polarity and tense	Positive polarity – it is. Negative polarity – it is not. The present tense is used for timeless truths and absolute certainty.	There is negative polarity in the title. The writer wants to depict teenagers as marginal. Most of the text is in the present tense.
Mood	Is the clause a statement, question, offer or command?	Paragraph 1 and other paragraphs pose several questions. The writer invites the readers to think and agree with her views. Notice how she positions the reader.
Modality degrees of uncertainty	Logical possibility/ probability. Modality created by modals (may, might, could, will); adverbs (possibly, certainly, hopefully); intonation; tag questions.	This writer appears highly certain of her opinions as we saw in the negative polarity. Where she may appear doubtful, she chooses to raise questions and leave the answers to the reader.
Pronouns	The choice of person; such as, first, second or third.	The writer uses 'you' and 'yours' many times as if she is chatting to the reader. This is similar to the language of advertising or religious sermons. There is an example of the first person when the writer identifies with certain ideas.
Simile	Something is compared or likened to something else.	'whether the approaching war with Iraq was being got up as a smokescreen to shift attention away from what mattered: the US President's sex life.'
Quoted speech	What is the effect of scare quotes?	For example, 'the "me, me, look at me" cries of the young women draw attention to them'.

Further questions on the passage (You will find some of our answers on myunisa).

1. What is the meaning of 'hunk factor' in paragraph one?

2. Describe the audience for such an article and explain your reasoning.

3. The writer compares teenage habits with natural disasters and political wars; why does she do that?

4. What is the writer's attitude towards youth in general?

5. Whose interests are being served by this text?

6. What are the silences and absences in this text?

7. Whose views or voice is represented?

Conclusion

Language is not neutral or free of certain beliefs, interests, biases, and positions. In the passage we have just analysed, the group of teenagers is portrayed as a threat to the more serious activities of adults. Whether the field is politics, wars, entertainment or domestic matters, the writer attempts to place more importance on adults. Young people are depicted as people who are interested in trivial matters. This is a common theme termed 'the generation gap'.

Think of similar movies, novels, and short stories that you have read with a similar ideology. The critical reading of the text is not an end in itself but it is to reveal the obscure ideology that we would have missed had we not been paying attention to language devices that have been used by the writer.

We have explored several language features above. You have probably noticed that we did not take much note of such matters as lexis and syntax, tone and style. However, those we did discuss aided us to arrive quite easily at observations about context (pragmatics) and implications (semantics).

You will come across more such features in your textbook, the Reader, in the rest of the study guide and on myUnisa. The critical reading of the text helps us to find answers to questions like the further questions above which do not have one correct answer. The ultimate objective is not only to critique texts but ultimately to learn how to analyse language use and to become a skilled critical writer.

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Prose

GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE:
Theory, style and poetics

Eileen Donaldson

A loose definition of prose is writing which takes the form of sentences combined into paragraphs. This section of the guide explores the two dominant modes of prose: fiction and non-fiction. Like other kinds of writing, the author of prose is trying to achieve something, to communicate some meaning to his or her reader using various linguistic and literary techniques. As an English scholar, you need to study any piece of writing objectively. These three questions appear in the two previous study units but it is worth repeating them here:

- What is the author communicating?
- Why is the author communicating in this way – what is the purpose of the text? And
- How does the author achieve this purpose?

The difference between fiction and non-fiction is that the author of non-fiction generally communicates fact, whereas the author of fiction communicates truths drawn from reality in an imaginative way. Of course, one could argue that the author of non-fiction also writes subjectively because his or her opinions may colour the 'facts' that they report.

The Purpose of Fiction

"It is man's job to be curious; it is man's job to try to find out the truth about the world about us." (Burgess: 2)

Literature enables us to explore what it means to be human, challenging the reader's assumptions about their world and asking them to re-evaluate their understanding of people and situations. Literature may provoke this reaction through humour and satire, through realism, through fantasy or any number of strategies used by the author. Literature always asks us to grow as human beings, to open ourselves to experiences outside our own. It is also true that every book has value, whether you agree with what the author says or not. As a scholar of literature, you may argue against the ideologies an author espouses, but you cannot refuse him or her the right to express the truth as he or she understands it. An author is often influenced by his or her historical and cultural context and so, before judging that a book expresses closed-minded, out-dated ideologies, you need to understand the situation of the author and consider the world as he or she experienced/experiences it. Reading books from various historical eras

and authors from diverse cultures asks us to re-evaluate values that we assume to be universal: things like 'beauty', 'truth', 'freedom', 'independence', key concepts such as 'society', 'justice', 'family', 'love', 'sexuality' and 'spirituality'. Our understanding of these terms depends on our culture, our historical era and, sometimes, on our individual experiences. Literature forces us to acknowledge that there is no 'one truth' – human experiences are as diverse as the number of people on our planet and, as a scholar of literature, your task is to discover (and hopefully relish) this rich diversity.

Forms of Fiction

Fictional prose takes many forms: novels, novellas, short stories and flash fiction. Broadly put: fiction is anything written or printed that tells an invented story. The purpose of this section is twofold:

- it should equip you to recognise fictional prose and understand its features; and
- it should prepare you for the task of analysing the narrative and linguistic techniques used by authors to communicate meaning through their prose.

<u>Novels and novellas</u> are both longer forms of prose; the only difference between the two is that novels can be a long as the author wishes, while novellas tend to be shorter: consider the difference between John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath* (usually over 600 pages) and his novella *Of Mice and Men* (about 100 pages). <u>Short stories and flash fiction</u> are, as the names suggest, pieces of short fiction. In fact, flash fiction can be a story of only 100 words. You will use the same techniques to analyse novels, novellas and short stories, but bear in mind that the short story frequently condenses meaning.

Features of fictional prose

1.   Plot

<u>Novels and Novellas</u>

- Usually there is a **main plot** that develops the dominant action of the story, supported by a number of **sub-plots** that explore issues tangential to the main action. Authors use sub-plots to develop thematic aspects of the main plot, or to introduce character-specific information. When you analyse a novel you need to be aware of the various threads of story that the author has interwoven, because they all add to the complexity of the overall pattern – adding psychological depth to the main story. Joseph Campbell suggests that there is a 'hero's journey' that many protagonists follow as they grow. While this pattern may not be reflected in every book you read, it might help to consider some of these 'moments' as you analyse the plot structure of the novels you read. In a novel the hero: is often called to adventure (i.e. something happens that changes the protagonist's situation and marks the beginning of a new challenge); has companions that help him or her (consider the relationships that the protagonist has); descends into the dark (this could mean a trial or challenge that forces the protagonist to face aspects of themselves that are hidden or painful); has to undergo various trials (consider each of the conflicts that the protagonist faces and what these mean in terms of themes that the author is exploring); experiences **apotheosis** (the protagonist learns something that results

in a rebirth of sorts, a revelation that transforms them or their understanding of the world) (*The Hero With a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell).

Short Stories:

- A short story explores a single action and so there is seldom space for sub-plots. The short story encourages an author to focus on one action and the reaction is provokes; the stark simplicity of this form is thus far more focused than a novel.

2. Character

Novels and Novellas:

- In a longer piece of prose, an author may have a full cast of characters. However, there is usually one character who stands out more than the others; this person is known as the **protagonist** and the plot revolves around their experiences and growth. If there is a character that is described as in conflict with the protagonist, he or she is called the **antagonist**. Very often the conflict between these two is what drives the action in the plot. Pay careful attention to the other characters as well; like a subplot, they may reflect human characteristics that are essential to the story, allowing the author to explore other concerns that enrich the overall psychological or ideological meaning of the whole. Each character expresses human characteristics and as a reader and a scholar, you must pay attention to what each one does, what they say and how they say it. Character is revealed through what is said, as well as what is implied; descriptions of the characters, their thoughts and their reactions to other characters and situations.

Short Stories:

- As I mentioned above, a short story is more focused than a novel and so there is usually a single protagonist and an antagonist and the conflict between them may be what provokes the action/reaction of the story. Alternatively, the short story may focus only on the protagonist and his or her experiences.

Here are two activities to help you explore how character is created in a passage.

Activity 1

If there was one thing that he hated more than any other it was the way she had of waking him in the morning. She did it on purpose, of course. It was her way of establishing her grievance for the day, and he was not going to let her know how successful it was. But really, really, to wake a sensitive person like that was positively dangerous! It took him hours to get over it – simply hours. She came into the room buttoned up in an overall, with a handkerchief over her head – thereby proving that she had been up herself and slaving since dawn – and called in a low, warning voice: "Reginald!"

"Eh! What! What's that? What's the matter?"

"It's time to get up; it's half-past eight." And out she went, shutting the door quietly after her, to gloat over her triumph, he supposed. (*Victory*: Joseph Conrad).

- In one sentence, summarise what happens in this passage.
- Write down a word or two to describe each of the characters we meet in this passage.

- Consider what features of the passage made you choose those specific adjectives to describe these characters. Pay attention to punctuation marks, the tone of certain words and how the author creates the illusion of conversation outside the pieces of dialogue.

Activity 2

Every eye was turned to the jury. The same predetermined patriots and good republicans as yesterday and the day before, and to-morrow and the day after. Eager and prominent among them, one man with a craving face, and his fingers perpetually hovering about his lips, whose appearance gave great satisfaction to the spectators. A life-thirsting, cannibal-looking, bloody-minded juryman, The Jacques Three of Saint Antoine. The whole jury, as a jury of dogs empanelled to try the deer. (*A Tale of Two Cities*: Charles Dickens)

- Unlike the previous passage which uses conversation, this one relies on images and adjectives to describe the character of the juryman. Consider the connotations of the words 'eager', 'craving', 'life-thirsting' and 'cannibal'. What is Dickens suggesting about this juryman, and the jury in general? How does this contrast with what we normally expect of a jury?

- What does the image 'a jury of dogs empanelled to try the deer' suggest?

- In terms of atmosphere, what effect does this description create?

- Why do you think the spectators in the court would enjoy 'great satisfaction' because of the appearance of the juryman?

You do not need to know anything about the book in order to analyse this passage – look only at the details that Dickens includes here and consider the effect of this passage.

3. Setting

<u>**Novels and Novellas:**</u>

- Setting refers to both the time (the historical era) and place in which a story takes place. The setting of a novel is important because the landscape often reflects something about the themes that the author will be exploring. Pay attention to which characters appear in which settings and what this suggests about them, whether or not the setting changes as the protagonist develops and what sort of atmosphere the settings evoke; all the details the author includes have a purpose in establishing the narrative and its actions. Because a novel is a longer piece of fiction, there is space for the author to explore more than one setting, so you will want to note how the setting changes and decide what these shifts suggest. You might also consider whether each of the settings is appropriate to the specific stage of the hero's journey discussed above. For example, the hero's journey involves separation (from the hero's home). It is interesting to note how many literary texts begin with the main character leaving home.

<u>**Short Stories:**</u>

- Usually the author of a short story will keep to one setting, or possibly two. Everything about this form suggests simplicity – the reader sees one action, one place, one person and yet this glimpse tells a story that can often be profoundly moving.

Consider how the setting creates atmosphere in the next two passages and also how setting can affect the expectations of the reader in terms of what kind of story is coming.

Activity 3

The messenger rode back at an easy trot, stopping pretty often at ale-houses by the way to drink, but evincing a tendency to keep his own counsel, and to keep his hat cocked over his eyes. He had eyes that assorted very well with that decoration, being of a surface black, with do depth in the colour or form, and much too near together – as if they were afraid of being found out in something, singly, if they kept too far apart. (*A Tale of Two Cities*: Charles Dickens)

- Having read the passage, what do you think the setting for this piece would be?

- What words in the passage give you clues about the era and geographical location of the story?

- There are also stylistic aspects of the writing that suggest the era in which the passage is set – what are they?

- Focus now on the man Dickens is describing: would you trust him? Identify at least three descriptive details in the passage that suggest the man is not trustworthy.

Activity 4

The Germans and the dog were engaged in a military operation (...). The dog, who had sounded so ferocious in the winter distances, was a female German shepherd. She was shivering. Her tail was between her legs. She had been borrowed that morning from a farmer. She had never been to war before. She had no idea what game was being played. Her name was Princess. (*Slaughterhouse 5*: Kurt Vonnegut)

- Unlike the last few passages, this author uses short sentences: consider the effect they create in terms of pace and tone.

- Do you think the author is for or against war? What aspects of the passage led you to your answer?

- As in the last passage, there are clues here that reveal the setting of the passage. Which details reveal when and where this passage is set?

- Why is the name of the dog ironic? Consider too, what effect this irony has on the tone of this passage, and therefore on the meaning of the passage as a whole.

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4. Theme

Novels and Novellas:

- Because a novel is long, the author is able to cover a number of themes. A theme is the exploration of a central idea. Usually this concerns some aspect of human experience, such as: love, loss, cruelty, faith, stoicism – any characteristic that helps us understand why people do the things they do. One of the wonderful things about books is that different people will interpret the same text differently. You need to be aware that you might be drawn to one theme in a novel, while someone else might be affected by something else. Usually themes are reflected in all the aspects of a story: setting, characterisation, action, imagery and language. When you ana-

lyse a passage from a novel, be aware that you must address each of these aspects in your discussion of theme (this may also appear to be the purpose of the narrative).

Short Stories:

- A short story usually explores one theme. But always be aware that you might understand the text differently from someone else and so different readers might identify different themes even in a short story.

Look at the details of the next passage and see if you can gain an idea of the themes of the novel.

Activity 5

Kurtz discoursed. A voice! a voice! It rang deep to the very last. It survived his strength to hide in the magnificent folds of eloquence the barren darkness of his heart. Oh, he struggled, he struggled. The wastes of his weary brain were haunted by shadowy images now – images of wealth and fame revolving obsequiously around his inextinguishable gift of noble and lofty expression. My Intended, my station, my career, my ideas – these were the subjects for the occasional utterances of elevated sentiments. The shade of the original Kurtz frequented the bedside of the hollow sham whose fate it was to be buried presently in the mound of primeval earth. (*Heart of Darkness*: Joseph Conrad)

It is more challenging to discuss theme when one has only a short passage from which to work, rather than a whole novel. But it is still possible: in order to discuss theme in a passage, read it very carefully and decide what the author concentrates on – look at details and ideas that are repeated.

- In this passage there is a marked concentration on Kurtz's manner of speaking: Kurtz 'discoursed'; he has 'a voice! a voice!' that '[rings] deep'; his speech is 'magnificent folds of eloquence'; he has an 'inextinguishable gift of noble and lofty expression' and speaks in 'elevated sentiments'. From this we learn that he is a charismatic and powerful speaker – perhaps someone we should admire and follow, given that he speaks about 'lofty' things.
- Other details suggest, though, that the reader be wary of him. His eloquent speech hides 'the barren darkness of his heart' and he is, finally, a 'hollow sham'. The man is dying: what does the text suggest about the kind of person he is?
- Thematically, what does this passage suggest about ambition, 'images of wealth and fame' and the effect they have had on Kurtz? Kurtz constantly discusses 'my Intended, my station, my career': what does the repetition of 'my' suggest about him?
- This passage is replete with words that have rich connotations. Consider the atmosphere created and the implications suggested by words like 'barren', 'weary', 'struggled', 'haunted' and 'obsequiously', particularly in a deathbed scene such as this one.

Focus on the meaning the author writes into the passage in order to decide what theme is being explored. Then look at how individual words and images are used to encourage the reader to perceive this specific meaning.

Genre: In this module we use 'Genre' to mean the various forms of text that exist. But the word is also used within the world of fiction to mean something slightly different. You may well be aware of the fact that we refer to different kinds of stories – detective fiction, science-fiction, fantasy, fairy tales, erotica, children's literature, thrillers, romance – as being (sub-)genres of fiction. Each sub-genre of prose fiction has its own codes and conventions, which govern the way it is usually written. As you read, try to take note of the features of each of these genres. The language an author uses is often influenced by the choice of genre and the author may write in a specific genre because it suits the themes explored.

Analysing Prose, or Close Reading

To analyse a piece of literature you must read the text carefully and decide *what* the text communicates, *why* the author writes what he or she does (i.e. what is the purpose of the text?), and *how* the author achieves this purpose. In other words, you need to discover the *meaning* of the text, which is a complex task. You need to respond to the text and be able to explain why you responded in the way you do, and communicate this response in a well-argued essay. How to write an essay is dealt with in the Academic Toolkit in the Reader that is on myUnisa. As you focus on your response and the why of it, you will need to consider elements of the text: structure, word choice, language, poetic devices, narrative devices and dialogue. In effect, you need to look at each element of language, every mark on the printed page, whether it's a punctuation mark or a collection of words that form a simile, and you need to explain how the use of this specific linguistic feature evoked your response: this really is a case of analysing *language in use*. Before you can begin any analysis you must have read the text *at least* twice. During your first reading, pay attention to the story: what is the main action and how do the sub-plots interact with the main action? How does the structure reflect the development of motifs and characters? – and so on. During your second reading, note your reactions to certain scenes, characters and passages and 'dissect' these passages to identify what narrative and linguistic devices the author has used to manipulate your reaction.

A close analysis of a text should answer three questions:

What?

Once you have read the story once or twice, you should be able to summarise the plot in a few simple sentences – *what happens* in the story? You should also be able to identify some of the main themes. In doing so, you identify the bare bones of *what* the narrative is saying, no matter how complex the ideas are. Read the sections in Goatly on 'The structure of a paragraph' and 'Generic structure'. In these sections, Goatly explains how an author structures meaning in order to develop ideas. This is an essential element of literature. Throughout this course, you need to develop sensitivity to the mechanics of writing; in this case, understanding how a paragraph or a piece of writing is structured alerts you to what the text is saying and it may point you to its purpose as well as to 'how' it creates meaning.

<u>Why?</u>

Answering *why* is more difficult because it requires you to consider the purpose of the text: does it entertain, frighten, warn, titillate, persuade, shock or teach? Most good literature achieves a number of these effects. Because we cannot say for certain what an author's purpose is, we interpret literature only via the guidance of our own responses to the text. A text achieves a certain purpose only because *you* responded to it in the way you did. Therefore your analysis of any text will, by and large, discuss the features that provoked your specific reaction. In your essays, you must therefore avoid any reference to 'the author's purpose' (or intention). Always be clear that it is your reading of the text that has revealed certain themes, conflicts and so on, and you need to substantiate your interpretation with close reference to the features of the text. This process is discussed in the 'How?' section below.

Ideology

Scholars have sometimes found that they respond to texts in the same way, identifying similar issues in various texts and developing theories that investigate these issues. These scholarly discourses have informed various Literary Theories (such as Feminism, Marxism, Reader-Response Theory), which can be applied to the study of literature. Read Chapter 2 in *Critical Reading and Writing*, which describes how texts are often infused with ideologies (or ideas) that perpetuate certain ways of perceiving the world. The literary theories I have just mentioned can be used to unpack these ideas. The chapter in your prescribed book will help you begin to understand how language manipulates the reader and how an author can use language to achieve a certain purpose. Practise the skills described in this chapter so that you can identify language markers that are infused with ideological significance when you analyse passages of prose fiction in your assignments and in the exam.

<u>How?</u>

As a scholar of literature, your most absorbing task is the close reading of texts: having answered 'what' and 'why', you have to answer the question '**how** does the author produce this effect?' In order to do so, you need to evaluate every word, punctuation mark, space and literary device an author puts on the page – because every single one of them is a choice the author has made and every single one of them produces an effect. There are two parts to the close analysis of a text:

- considering the use of literary devices and
- the use of grammar and linguistic features.

Literary Devices:

Please refer closely to the list of literary techniques included in the Toolkit in your Reader. You are expected to identify all these devices and must be able to discuss the effects they create when they are used in a passage. Possible effects are: tension; quickening or slowing of pace (in order to create an emotional reaction); onomatopoeic sounds; images that resonate with meaning. In each case consider the device in its context and the effect it evokes in you. Then discuss this effect in terms of the whole passage.

Features of Language:

Grammar is also used to create literary effects. Tenses can create atmosphere: the present tense creates a sense of immediacy and tension while the past tense may create a feeling of nostalgia and/or melancholy and it allows characters to reflect on their experiences. Punctuation can be used to slow down or speed up the pace of a passage: a slow pace may encourage a sense of sadness or longing (among other things), whereas a fast pace tends to create excitement and passion or anger (or panic). Pronouns can point the reader to the speaker and the relationships among characters. Letters of the alphabet create sounds that can be used to great effect in fiction. Your task is to revise what you know about English grammar so that you are aware of all the devices a writer can employ, allowing you to comment on them in your analyses of passages.

Further Activities

Please read the remaining passages and use the questions that follow each passage to help you consider the comments you would make about each of them. Remember that in an analysis you must have dealt with these elements: characterisation; action; setting; atmosphere and/or tone; meaning/theme. For each of these elements, you must explore the literary devices and features of language that led you to your interpretation of and understanding of the text.

Activity 6

Two of the Germans were boys in their early teens. Two were ramshackle old men – droolers as toothless as carp. They were irregulars, armed and clothed fragmentarily with junk taken from real soldiers who were newly dead. So it goes. (*Slaughterhouse 5*: Kurt Vonnegut)

- What details included in this passage suggest setting?

- Vonnegut's description of the soldiers is telling. How do you interpret the fact that they were 'in their early teens' or 'ramshackle old men'?

- What does the word 'ramshackle' suggest?

- Look at the simile, 'droolers as toothless as carp': why is this comparison so effective? Consider the look of carp, the smell of them, the weakness of fish on dry land – all these connotations tell us something about the old soldiers.

- What do these details tell you about the narrator's attitude to war?

- Look at the image 'armed and clothed fragmentarily with junk': are these 'men' prepared for battle? Why not? Also consider the fact that the narrator says their 'junk' is taken from 'real soldiers' – this is another detail that you would comment on in an analysis.

- Analyse the phrase 'so it goes': look at the tone and what it suggests about the narrator's emotional state/ attitude to war and life. Is it an amusing phrase? Consider your response to this aside and analyse it closely.

Activity 7

"Hi, Sam," I said, maybe not sounding too glad because I knew something had gone wrong at work.

"Dawn didn't make it in, cher," he said.

"Oh ... hell," I said, knowing I'd have to go in. "I kind of have plans, Sam."

"Could you just come in from five to nine? That would help out a lot." (...)

I made a rude noise, and Gran stood there with a stern Face. I knew I'd get a lecture later. "Oh, all right," I said grudgingly. "See you at five." (*Dead Until Dark*: Charlaine Harris)

- Consider the language used in this passage and the way in which the characters speak to each other. What does this tell you about the era in which this story is set? Note the colloquial and the slang phrases and in your own analysis, quote and discuss them at length. Being aware of these details is what the close reading of texts is all about.

- What does this dialogue tell you about the relationship between the two speakers?

- Consider the relationship between the one speaker and her Gran. What do the details in the text suggest about their relationship?

- This passage suggests that the speaker lives with her grandmother; what does this detail reveal about the speaker?

Activity 8

Then the fog came. The fog came from the river in thin spirals like spirits in a churchyard and thickened with the force of a genie from a bottle. The bulrushes were buried first, then the trunks of the trees, then the forks and the junctions. Then the top of the trees floated in the fog, making suspended islands for the birds. The cattle were all drowned and the moat-light, like a light-house, appeared and vanished and vanished and appeared, cutting the air like a bright sword. The fog came towards me and the sky that had been clear was covered up. (*Sexing the Cherry*: Jeannette Winterson)

- What effect does the short first sentence create? Why?

- From what kind of story do you think this passage might come? What images and words led you to your conclusion?

- If I were to suggest that the fog is threatening, what adjectives and images in this passage could support my suggestion? Can you see how the author creates this atmosphere in this passage?

As you can see from these passages, if you look at the words (both denotation and connotation), the words in combination (similes, metaphors and images), the tone, punctuation and structure of sentences and paragraphs, you will have a fair amount of material with which to begin your analysis of any passage. These are all the elements that you need to address when you write an analysis of a text. Practise these skills every time you read something and you will develop an awareness of the uses to which authors put the linguistic tools at their disposal.

Assignment and Exam Questions

Your assignments and exams will follow the same format for the section on Fictional Prose:

You will be given an unseen passage and have to do a close reading of it. This will require you to answer the *what*, *why* and *how* questions that have been discussed in this section. You do not need to know the books from which the passages are taken because the tasks require you to demonstrate that you can focus on the features of a piece of the text, identify what the author is saying in the passage, what effect the passage creates (development of theme, character, plot and/or the response evoked in the reader) and discuss the linguistic and poetic features of the passage that enable the author to communicate his or her meaning and create an effect. The assessment tasks

are therefore practical in nature and test your acquisition of the skills necessary to analyse a passage as a scholar of English.

References

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UNIT 3

Persuasive texts

GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE:
Theory, style and poetics

Pinky Makoe

By the end of this unit you should be able to

- define non-fiction prose
- identity and differentiate features of different types of texts such as newspapers, advertisements and speeches
- explain the way language is used in persuasive texts to convey messages or meanings
- explain the relationship between the text, purpose, audience and context
- understand the role and function of persuasive language in texts and how this language affects meaning
- understand the ideologies behind a selection of persuasive texts

Introduction

This study unit builds on the previous unit that looked at fictional prose. As mentioned earlier in study unit 1, genre is a broad term used to refer to a range of different texts, all of which serve a particular purpose and function. The focus of this unit is to introduce you to some of the non-fiction prose texts that fall into the genre of the media. Non-fiction prose, as opposed to fiction prose, is mainly based on fact and is about real people, places, stories, events and social issues. Non-fiction prose is a general term used to refer to a range of texts such as biographies, speeches, essays, journal entries, diaries and letters. The main function of non-fiction prose is to inform, tell a story or present a point of view about a certain topic, event and issue. In this unit, we will look more closely at the content of newspaper extracts, headlines, speeches and advertisements in order to differentiate features of these texts and analyse the language that is used. The language of newspapers is different from language in speeches or advertisements and vice versa. In the analysis of these texts we will pay attention to language use, with a specific focus on the devices employed and how these devices can be manipulated to create a certain effect and impression. In addition, we shall look at how the language of non-fiction prose, specifically persuasive texts, highlights particular kinds of ideologies. Throughout this unit, the terms non-fiction prose and persuasive texts will be used interchangeably to refer to specific media texts including newspapers, advertisements and speeches.

What is a persuasive text?

A persuasive text is a text that is aimed at persuading the audience to believe or to do something using a variety of techniques, such as humour, testimonials, symbols and reference to celebrities in order to make the audience believe that what they are seeing or reading about is real and accurate. The main purpose of persuasive texts is to capture the attention of the audience, to establish a relationship (with the audience), to stimulate desire for a product or service (to buy, to vote, to donate, and so on). There are numbers of persuasive texts, including television commercials, magazines, newsletters, brochures, websites, billboards and fliers, all of which motivate the audience to act. For example, politicians and advocacy groups often use texts like brochures, billboards, advertisements and speeches to persuade the audience to vote for them, to support their cause or policy.

In this section we will focus on a selection of print advertisements, headlines, newspapers and speeches. As highlighted in the introduction to this module, our analysis of the texts will address the following key questions:

- What? (What type of text is this?)
- How? (What is the purpose or function of the text? What does the text sets out to achieve and how does it do that?)
- Who? (Who are the audiences for whom the text is intended?)
- Why? (Why was this text written?)
- Why has the author chosen these specific linguistic strategies?

All of the factors listed above will combine to influence the tone and style, as well as highlight the ideology behind the text. We will consider tone and style when we address the purpose of the text. There are a number of linguistic devices, including irony, sarcasm, metaphor, idioms or imagery, which the writer of a text can use to create a certain impression and position the readers. The analysis of texts provided in this unit will not include all the linguistic devices used in each text. However, we will look at a sample of linguistic devices such as choice of vocabulary, sentences and phrases in order to illustrate how non-fiction prose can represent reality, position and persuade the reader, and what kind of ideology is represented in the text.

For an extended discussion on how texts position readers, you are advised to read Chapter 5, "Reading and Writing Positions", in your prescribed textbook. In addition, do Activity 39 and 42 and answer the questions in each case. Activity 39 is based on a letter written by the English poet John Keats to his younger sister. The focus of this activity is to analyse the manner in which language is used to set up the relationship between the writer (John Keats) and the reader (his sister). In activity 42, you are expected to analyse the online advert provided in order to determine how linguistic devices such as vocabulary, terminology and modals can be manipulated to attract a target audience and to create a particular view. Then look at the commentary on these activities provided at back of the prescribed book. This chapter does not look at linguistic devices per se, but it discusses the way factors such as direct and indirect speech acts can influence the meaning of the text and position the reader. These speech acts are important because they make the reader aware whether the text aims to inform, assert, command, remind, request, sympathize, apologize, suggest, compliment, advice, thank or promise something (for example). Let us now consider the following questions in turn with reference to newspaper articles.

News reports

This section has to be read in conjunction with Chapter 1, 'Genre and the Organisation of Text', and Chapter 9, 'News and Institutional Power', of the prescribed textbook. Both chapters are relevant and form an important basis for this unit. Chapter 1 introduces you to the concept of genre as well as the generic structures of different texts, including letters, advertisements, narratives and news reports. You will also learn about the role of different elements that comprise news reports such as the headline, lead, main event, actors and background of what is being reported on. Chapter 9 explores in more depth how news is represented, which voices become fore-grounded and which voices are backgrounded in news reports, and why? Furthermore, it is important to realise that like news reports, the press is not entirely free but reflects the power structures of society (Goatly, 2000). News reports that we read daily tend to perpetuate specific agendas and content. Depending on the newspaper, the coverage may be biased towards certain topics, nations, politics, individuals, sources of information etc. Before you study this section, make sure that you have read and understood Chapter 9. Let us begin.

What? (What kind of text is this?)

We read and are influenced by newspapers on a daily basis. Newspaper articles provide information on newsworthy topics and current events that are of importance to society. The topics may cover politics, health or finance matters for instance. Newspapers provide the reader with comprehensive news reports with background information, interpretation and analysis on a specific issue/event including who, what, where, when, why and how. Depending on the topic, the news report may include statements, comments and opinions from experts or people involved. Newspapers also provide entertainment and are a reference for television, sport results, movie listings, community events and weather reports.

There are different kinds of newspapers, including local and national papers and tabloids. The newsworthy topics in each newspaper will vary according to the newspaper's intended audience. A national newspaper will report on national issues like finance, war and politics. On the other hand a local community newspaper would report on actions and events in the area. Local newspapers tend to focus on immediate issues that impact on the community's day-to-day livelihood, such as emotional stories and community concerns. This is because people tend to be more interested in a local minor event than a distant disaster. A tabloid is usually popular in style and dominated by very compelling headlines and pictures. Tabloids are sensational and use persuasive language that can be characterised as lurid and shocking. Unlike broadsheet newspapers, tabloids are normally thin in size and issues are not reported on in as much detail.

How? (How does the text use language?)

Newspapers use a combination of visual and written techniques, such as pictures, captivating headlines and leads to draw in readers and hold their attention. The **headline** is found at the top of any news report; it is more prominent and bolder than the rest of the text. Like the headline, the **lead** is at the beginning and very briefly introduces the main event or topic. The lead often provides information about who did what, when, where and how, but stops short of answering the question *why?* All of these techniques

are important because they do not only appeal to the reader, but give special character to the content of the issue or event that is being reported. However, not all news reports include visuals and leads. Those news reports that do not have accompanying visuals and/or leads often use unique, confusing, ambiguous and evocative headlines to appeal to and attract readers. This is done through persuasive language including emotive words, imagery, idioms, metaphor, and rhetorical questions.

Who? (Who is this text aimed at?)

Audience is a general term used to refer to the readers or listeners of a particular text. In our discussion here we refer to the readers of print advertising as the audience, because our focus is on written texts. A writer is often aware who the readers of a text may be and s/he can then write in such a way that will appeal to his/her intended audience. The same content or article may be written in different ways in order to accommodate different audiences. In other words, a writer may adapt his/her language choice, use appropriate style and tone that takes into account the target audience. For example, a newspaper article that includes abstract medical vocabulary, formal expressions and specialist medical discourse will most likely not be accessible to the general audience or children. The article in this case will be intended for a specialist audience because they will be able to make sense of the terminology and understand the message.

Why? (Why was this text written?)

The choice of linguistic devices that the writer uses influences the meaning and inevitably conveys the tone, style and ideology behind the text. **Tone** refers to the feeling or attitude with which the writer addresses or discusses the subject matter. Tone is often conveyed by the connotations and emotive power of the vocabulary and expressions chosen (Horne and Heinemann, 2003:206). For example, the questions that the reader may consider in order to identify the tone of a text are: how does the writer's choice of language sound or make the reader feel? That is, is the language used personal, formal, impersonal, bitter, ironic, sarcastic (or something else)? **Style,** on the other hand, has to do with aspects such as the sentence structure, vocabulary and phrases used. For example, you can ask yourself whether the writer uses vocabulary that is simple enough for a general audience; are the words literal or figurative; are the sentences long or short, simple or complex? Tone and style are sides of the same coin, and one cannot be understood without the other. **Ideology** generally refers to particular ways of thinking that are often biased to create certain assumptions, ideas, understandings and even stereotypes about a group of people who share a particular race, gender, age or other qualities.. The role of ideology in any type of text, be it an advertisement or a newspaper article, is important. For example, the following sentences 'it is well-known that men are better drivers than women' and 'she is an exceptionally good politician' both articulate specific ideologies about gender. In the first sentence the descriptor 'it is well-known' and the adjective 'better' presupposes that it is a fact that men have superior skills at driving and women lack this quality. In the second sentence, however, 'exceptionally good' may be taken at face value to characterise the woman in a positive manner. However, the latent ideology here implies something different, that she is perhaps participating in a role that is normally associated with men, so she is depicted as someone who stands out from the crowd. When reading texts, it is necessary to analyse and to identify explicit as well as implicit

messages that are being communicated. In this way you will be able to determine the extent to which the text involves objective or biased reporting.

The following extracts are taken from the same newspaper. Carefully read Text 1 and Text 2, which we will now look at in detail. Our analysis of these texts will focus on the following questions – what? how? who? why?

Text 1:

Don't worry, South Africans still eat meat

It seems South Africans are still licking their chops – despite concerns that their favourite food may contain donkey, goat and water buffalo.

Customers at restaurants appear to be unfazed about a Stellenbosch University study which found that a large proportion of meat products on the South Africa market have been fraudulently labelled.

(Extract taken from *The Saturday Star* March 2, 2013)

Text 2:

Bad drivers to do a stint in the morgue

Compulsory community service in road accident trauma unit wards or state mortuaries. That is the choice motorists who endanger others' lives could face in future, as punishment.

Government is so determined to combat the menace of road accidents which result in the death of more than 10 000 people yearly that it is proposing amendments to road regulations to include mandatory rehabilitation programmes for habitual offenders.

(Extract taken from *The Saturday Star* March 2, 2013)

What?

Texts 1 and 2 are taken from the same broadsheet newspaper and both focus on national topics. Text 1 reports on the state of meat products in South Africa while Text 2 has to do with government's plans to minimize the high level of road accidents.

How?

In both cases evocative headlines are used to attract the reader's attention. In Text 1 the language used in the headline is ironic and somewhat sarcastic. The headline suggests that South Africans continue to enjoy their meat, specifically beef and lamb, despite conclusive research findings that these meat products contain donkey, goat and water buffalo. This is evident in the words **'don't worry'** and **'South Africans still eat their meat'**. The fact the research suggests otherwise does not deter the South African population from enjoying themselves. In other words, nothing has changed and things continue to be the same. The content of the article is interesting as well. The writer uses phrases like '**still licking their fingers', 'favourite food', 'customers ... appear unfazed'** to illustrate that the findings have had little impact and seem not to have alarmed the public.

The headline in Text 2 shows decisiveness and determination. The choice of the words **'to do', 'stint'** and **'in the morgue'** all point to the government's firm and resolute attention to these **'to bad drivers'** who continue to cause road accidents. The word

'morgue' is an interesting one as it not only highlights the enormity and magnitude of the problem but instils fear in these **'bad drivers'**. The content of the news article is filled with vocabulary such as 'trauma unit wards or state mortuaries', 'to combat the menace of road accidents' that appear to highlight panic, anxiety and fright. However, this choice of vocabulary is juxtaposed with **'... road regulations to include mandatory rehabilitation programmes for habitual offenders'** to give it a positive light and to imply that all this is meant to benefit offenders and the country.

Who?

Based on the topics covered, the intended audience seems to be the general nation. Both texts address issues of national importance.

Why?

The tone in Text 1 uses a relaxed tone, while Text 2 seems tense and strict. In Text 1 the style, vocabulary and expressions chosen are laid-back, whereas in Text 2 more emotive and authoritarian language is evident. Both texts seem accessible to the general audience as the vocabulary and the sentence structures are not complex. We can conclude that these texts are not intended for a specialist audience. In terms of ideology, Text 1 seems to suggest that South Africans are unconcerned '... **South Africans are still licking their chops – despite concerns that their favourite food may contain donkey, goat and water buffalo**'; and Text 2 portrays a stringent and ruthless attitude **'Government is so determined to combat the menace of road accidents'**.

Activity 1

Identify one tabloid and one broadsheet newspaper that you are familiar with and carefully read these texts. Choose one news article in each case. Now look at the headlines of the two texts you have chosen and answer the questions below. Provide evidence from the texts to support your answers.

What type of text is this?

- What is the purpose or function of the text? What does the text set out to achieve and how does it do that?

- Who are the audiences for whom the text is intended?

- What types of linguistic devices are used, why do you think the author chose these specific devices, and in what way do these devices affect meaning?

Activity 2

Here is a selection of headlines from a range of newspapers. These headlines are arranged in no particular order and are not classified according to newspaper. They are all ambiguous and have more than one meaning.

- Based on these headlines, can you tell what the story is about?

- In what type of newspaper do you think these headlines will be most suitable? (e.g. tabloid, broadsheet newspaper)

1.   Prison turned into a tourist attraction (*Saturday Star*, 2 March 2013)
2.   Lights out for a South African leader? (Adapted from *News24 Media*, 17 March 2013)

3. Pope makes impromptu appearance (*News24 Media*, 17 March 2013)
4. Liquor sales set for a Sunday punch (*iolnews*, 16 March 2013)
5. Olympic heroes can't keep afloot (*The Times Live*, 15 March 2013)

MyUnisa Activity 1

Look at the following headlines. They are all ambiguous and have more than one meaning.

● Write down 2 interpretations for each of these headlines.
● Identify the specific word(s) and phrases that have influenced the meanings.
● Explain the effect that is created by the word(s) and phrases you have identified.

1. Bird flu found in Turkey (*Washington Post*, 14 October 2005)

2. How meat hops through SA hoops (*Mail and Guardian*, 15 March 2013)

3. Minister grilled at a parliamentary meeting

4. Lung cancer in women mushrooms (*GetAmused.com*)

5. Celebrities shy away from UK elections (*The National UK,* 16 April 2010)

Activity 3

The extract below is taken from the business section of The Times newspaper dated 30 April 2013. The news report is about the South African Revenue Services (SARS) and Treasury's plans to collect taxes. The first sentence in bold is the headline and the sentence that follows is the lead. Read the extract carefully and answer the following question:

● What is the relationship between the headline and the lead? Using examples, show whether these two elements of this news report are related, or not.

● Analyse the language used in the headline and the lead. What conclusions can you draw about the writer's choices of language? Does this influence the meaning, and how?

● Do you think the main event reported links with the headline and lead? Give evidence for your answer.

● What ideologies can you read in this news report?

Taxman always rings twice (HEADLINE)

Changes to tighten noose on 'cunning' multinationals (LEAD)

The government is gearing up to rake in a big share of multinational corporations' profits. The Treasury and SARS yesterday invited public comment on their 'Proposed limitations against excessive interest tax deduction' … The country's tax base, it is said, is being eroded by 'excessive deductions by some corporates with income effectively shifted to a no-tax or low-tax jurisdiction'. Finance Minister Pravin Gordhan in a public lecture last week hinted that change was afoot and that 'everyone has to pay their fair share' … 'Over the past several years, tax schemes by some corporate have become an increasing concern locally as well as globally' SARS said.

Advertisements

Read Chapter 7, entitled 'Advertising and Consumerism' in your prescribed textbook. Make sure you have studied the chapter in detail before you look at the discussion

below. The chapter provides a detailed analysis of strategies such as desire and power, buying as problem solving, choosing an identity and buying a lifestyle that are used in advertising. Understanding how these strategies are used and for what purposes advertisers use these is important.

Advertisements are all around us in newspapers, magazines, on television, on billboards and in other places. These types of text include both visual images and verbal language. Advertisements do their best to get the attention of the audience by using persuasive or attractive language. They make us turn towards them to read or to listen to the message. Advertisements sell products and services often by assuring the reader that whatever they buy or the service they choose will be worth their while.

Below are examples of examples of texts that you may see around you on a daily basis. Which of these texts would you say are advertisements, and which are not? Motivate why you have included or excluded these texts.

- A political manifesto
- A 'pot-hole' road sign
- A university prospectus
- A pair of jeans with a manufacturer's label sewn on the outside – Levis, Nike
- A plastic carrier bag with the name of a shop clearly marked in bright colours

Commentary

All of the texts that we have provided above would undoubtedly get the attention of the reader; however, we cannot say that everything that gets our attention is an advertisement. The 'pot-hole' road and a university prospectus are not normally perceived as advertisements. This is so because these texts mainly present information to the audience as opposed to selling a product. That said, it is important to realize that a university prospectus may have the university's logo, which is a form of advertising (known as 'branding'). The pair of jeans and carrier bag would be considered advertisements. The manufacturers' label on clothing and the name of the shop on the plastic bag are direct strategies to get broad publicity.

How?

Advertising is an attention-seeking strategy used to sell or promote a company's products and services. Advertising intends to increase the sales of a product or service as well as inform the masses about its features. The advertiser or seller will try to manipulate the emotions of the audience in order to make them buy a certain product. Hence it is an effective means of communicating the value of a product or service with people at large. Advertising utilizes different media, including magazines, radio, internet and fliers to reach the target audience. It also uses different types of appeals to connect to consumers and to draw mass attention. There are a number of reasons for advertising, some of which are as follows:

- to increase the sales of the product or service
- to create and maintain a particular brand identity or brand image
- to introduce a new product or service
- to create a 'buzz' about the product

Look at the following examples. The first one uses emotive language to appeal to you and it is an advertisement for a holiday destination: **'Imagine a land of endless opportunities, where wildlife gracefully roams the majestic, lush landscape'** (adapted from Horne and Heinemann, 2003). The choice of words in **'a land of endless opportunities'**, creates an impression that this destination is a place that should not be missed because it is full of many possibilities and prospects. Furthermore, **'where wildlife gracefully roams the majestic, lush landscape'** depicts a sense of tranquillity, elegance and the scenery is unimaginable.

This second example creates a sense of urgency by using an exclamation: **'Dial 31500 NOW and win R10 000!'**. The urgency here implies that you the reader will lose this opportunity if you do not act immediately. The advertisement uses large sums of money to draw in the reader and to make them feel that the service, goods or products offered is essential and vital.

This last example here uses employs a rhetorical questions in order to get the reader to act: '**What's nicer than home-made soup on a cold winter day?'** The 'soup' is presented as something that you should have on that 'cold winter day' to keep the chill away and to keep warm. It is not just any type of soup but a 'home-made' one, which means it is a nourishing and healthy.

Who?

The audience will differ according to the product and service that is being advertised. The advertisers know who the target audience for their products will be, and advertisements are often geared towards these people. For example, an advertisement for baby food will be aimed at mothers as opposed to young children.

Why?

Advertisements contain emotive language, that is, language deliberately chosen to evoke an emotional response from the target audience. Advertisers use this type of persuasive language to move the audience to action so that they can buy a certain product or service that is sold. Advertisements manipulate your emotions by claiming that buying a certain product will change your lifestyle, change your identity for the better, solve your problems, make you superior and give you power (for example). In order to make you buy a product, advertisers deliberately manipulate language by a careful choice of words to create the necessary illusion of superiority or reality. For example, advertisers may use celebrities and their popularity to advertise their products. Just consider all the women's deodorant and skin products that are advertised by celebrities. They are aimed to give the reader a sense that buying a particular product will give him/her the identity and qualities similar to that of the celebrity. In other words, the advertisers imply that buying their product is tantamount to buying a unique identity and becoming popular just like the celebrity.

For example, the Opel car (p. 198) and the Emirates airline (p. 204) adverts in the prescribed textbook demonstrate how one's identity or quality of life can change for the better when you choose a particular product. Both adverts use women, a model and an award-winning photographer, in order to show the reader to the benefits of the products. Note that the visual images, words, sentences and phrases work together to create an impression on the readers. The words '**when you've mastered the art of**

control people will know' suggest that driving an Opel car is tantamount to art and elegance. When you buy or drive this car you will actually belong to a certain class of people, possibly with enviable status hence 'people will know'. In other words, an Opel is presented as a way of life and nothing compares with it. The Emirates airline advert uses an established Chinese photographer to sell its product **'Mary Cheung, award-winning photographer, on Emirates (award-winning airline)'**. The parallel drawn between the photographer and the airline as both award-winning is interesting. This implies that by choosing to fly with Emirates travellers will inevitably become winners just like Mary Cheung. As in the Opel car advert, Emirates airline is given refined and sophisticated attributes. Choosing it means, according to the advertisement, that you will be associated with best qualities and your identity will be enhanced.

Activity 4

Below are a few examples of advertisements for a range of products. Pay particular attention to the choice of vocabulary used and the extent to which these words or phrases induce an emotional reaction or action on the part of the reader. Note that the vocabulary used is a deliberate manipulation of emotions in order to sell a persuade you to buy.

Now look at the highlighted words and comment on what you think they represent in each case. How do the highlighted words influence the meaning in each case?

- *Helps control* dandruff *symptoms* with *regular use*.

- Leaves dishes *virtually* spotless.

- Tests confirm one mouthwash *best* against mouth odor.

- Hot Nestlé cocoa is the very *best.*

- Listerine *fights* bad breath.

wikipedia.org/wiki/weasel_word

Activity 5

Look at the advert of Sheraton hotels provided on page 208 of the prescribed textbook and then answer questions (a) and (b).

(a) Carefully analyse the advertisement and respond to the following:

- What type of texts is this? How do you know?
- What is the purpose of the text?
- For whom is the text intended? Give evidence.
- What linguistic devices are used and how do these influence the meaning? Provide examples.

(b) Comment on how the visual and written language is used to present the product as desirable. Do you think the two aspects complement each other and why? Give examples to illustrate your answer.

Speeches

This section of the unit focuses on another type of non-fiction prose text: the speech. Speeches, like some news reports or advertisements, are written with a particular audience in mind. Depending on the audience, the speaker may make a speech in order to persuade people to act, to inform them or to celebrate something. Speeches can be formal or informal depending on the target audience and the speaker's relationship with that audience. This will further determine the language and style that the speaker will use in order to deliver his/her message. For example, a speech by a young teenager at school to fellow students on the importance of doing homework will be specific to this group. The language that the teenage speaker will use will be appropriate and relevant for the audience that s/he hopes to address. Speeches can also be delivered to professionals in a specific field such as medical doctors, lawyers and engineers. This means that the speaker is likely to use specialised language including terms and concepts that are associated with these fields, which may not be easily understood by everyone. However, there are situations where speeches could be aimed at both the young and adults because the issues or topics that are addressed will be meaningful to everyone regardless of age, gender or race. Celebratory speeches like Nelson Mandela's and Barack Obama's inaugural addresses, for example, fall in this category. Such speeches are often structured in such a way that they appeal to all groups of people. In most cases, speeches are written down first and then read out at specific events. The oral technique plays an important role in speeches and has implications for how the message is received. Speakers not only manipulate the language to get a certain effect but also engage strategies such as oratory, tempo, tone and storytelling skills in creative ways to excite their listeners. In addition, the speaker may also use body language and gestures in an attempt to connect with his/her audience. It is not surprising that some of the speeches that continue to be highly regarded, such as Abraham Lincoln's, are those in which the speakers employed a range of spoken and written techniques to as a means to relate to his/her audience. For purposes of our discussion we will analyse the extract from Barack Obama's 2009 speech using the questions listed here: what?, how?, who?, why?

The extract below is taken from President Barack Obama's first Inaugural address in 2009 as published by Penguin Books. The fuller version of the address is can be accessed through online sites such as Youtube.

> I stand here today humbled by the task before us, grateful for the trust you have bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors. I thank President Bush for his service to our nation, as well as the generosity and cooperation he has shown throughout this transition …, In reaffirming the greatness of our nation, we understand the greatness is never a given. It must be earned. Our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the fainthearted – for those who prefer leisure over work, or seek only pleasures of riches and fame. Rather, it has been the risk takers, the doers, the makers of things – some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor – who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom. (Barack Obama, *The Inaugural Address* 2009, p. 3 and p. 5. New York: Penguin Books)

Who?

The message in this speech is inclusive in nature thus it is aimed at nations in the USA as well as abroad.

What?

The text presented falls under the broad genre of non-fiction prose, and it is a type of a speech. The manner in which the text is organised, and its content, signals to us that it was presented at a formal event hence the opening **'I am humbled today by the task before us ...'**

How and why?

As mentioned earlier, the linguistic devices that are used impact not only on the message but help to establish a relationship between the speaker and his/her audience. Depending on how and for what purpose these devices are used, the speaker's message will be able to build a rapport or not with the listeners. Obama's speech starts off by showing appreciation to the audience '... **grateful for the trust you bestowed, mindful of the sacrifices borne by our ancestors**'. Constructive words such as **'generosity', 'cooperation', 'greatness', 'pleasures'** all give a sense of positive outlook to how he views himself as part of this nation. Throughout the pronoun **'our'** is evident in order to reaffirm the nation that America belongs to all of them and his victory is not his alone but everyone's. In an inclusive manner, he positions himself and the nation's triumph as **'our journey has never been one of shortcuts or settling for less. It has not been the path for the fainthearted ...'** He makes reference to his ancestors, acknowledging the long history of women and men in the struggle towards the attainment of freedom. It is particularly evident in the speech that 'the journey' as he describes this American dream that many thought will never happen '**... has been the risk takers, the doers, the makers of things – some celebrated, but more often men and women obscure in their labor – who have carried us up the long, rugged path towards prosperity and freedom'**.

Activity 6

The following extract is taken from President Nelson Mandela's Inaugural Speech. The speech was delivered on 10 May 1994 in Pretoria. The complete speech is available online and can be accessed from Youtube or the South African Government Information site.

Read the speech provided and then answer these questions. Provide evidence to support your answers.

- Who is the text aimed at?

- Why is the purpose of this text?

- How does the speaker use language? Comment on the language devices used and describe how these devices influence the message that is being conveyed. Furthermore, pay particular attention to the use of the pronoun 'we' and explain its significance in the speech.

Your Majesties, Your Highness, Distinguished Guests, Comrades and Friends: Today, all of us do, by our presence here, and by our celebrations in other parts of our country and the world, confer glory and hope to the newborn liberty. Out of the experience of an extraordinary human disaster that lasted too long, must be born a society of which all humanity will be proud. Our daily deeds as ordinary South Africans must produce an actual South African reality that will reinforce humanity's belief in justice, strengthen its confidence in the nobility of the human soul and sustain all our hopes for a glorious life for all ... We have, at last, achieved our political emancipation. We pledge ourselves to liberate all our people from the continuing bondage of poverty, deprivation, suffering,

gender and other discrimination. We succeeded to take our last steps to freedom in conditions of relative peace. We commit ourselves to the construction of a complete, just and lasting peace ... (www.info.gov.za/speeches/1994)

Conclusion

In this study unit 3 we have looked at different types of non-fiction prose, such as newspaper articles, advertisements and speeches. Our main focus was on the features and the generic structure of each of these texts including the similarities and differences. The analyses throughout this study unit have demonstrated that texts are written for a specific audience hence linguistic devices that are used can be manipulated to suit, to persuade or to convince that audience. In addition, texts are not neutral or objective. They represent a particular set of ideas, beliefs and thoughts. Authors often use certain ideologies to position their readers to think or to perceive issues in a particular way. The linguistic strategies that an author or speaker employs in a text play an important role in shaping the meaning and interpretation of that text. Depending on the purpose, the specific text may be organised in such a way that it persuades the reader to do something, supports and promotes a product.

Important terms

Note that all these terms are defined in the study unit. Further descriptions are also provided at the back of the prescribed textbook. Make sure that you are familiar with the meaning of all these terms because you are expected to use them in your activities and assignments.

- Ambiguous
- Tone
- Style
- Ideology
- Headline
- Lead
- Persuasive text
- Emotive language
- Non-fiction prose

UNIT 4

Poetry

GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE:
Theory, style and poetics

Marinus van Niekerk and Sira Dambe

Introduction

As you know by now, this module is structured around various genres or literary categories, based on form, style, or subject matter, to which artistic written works can be assigned. The three main categories in literature are poetry, drama, and narrative fiction, which includes the novel and the short story. Non-literary genres include persuasive writing and conversational interplay.

We believe that poetry is simultaneously the most challenging and the most rewarding literary genre to study. It is a very condensed form of literary expression, which conveys a great deal in a few words. As a result of its brevity, poetry compresses more meaning into each word, phrase and line than other literary forms. Often a single word serves to signify more than one meaning, which leads to ambiguity, polysemy and a general openness to more than one interpretation.

This last characteristic can cause some difficulties to undergraduate poetry students, who feel anxious because they do not know or cannot find 'the meaning' of a poem. Their anxiety about finding 'the right answer' may lead students to copy or paraphrase what other people say about the meaning of poems. This might feel like the right way to go about solving the puzzle, but it will not help you at all: it is the same as walking *for* a child when the child needs to learn to walk alone. A critic, whose interpretation or notes on a poem you slavishly follow or, even worse, copy in desperation is, in fact, doing the work for you. As long as you rely heavily on critics' thoughts and words, you do not read poetry with the attention and intensity necessary to lead you to your own interpretation.

For these reasons, in this unit on poetry, we do not tell you what poems 'mean'. Instead, we guide you towards acquiring the skills that will help you to construct a coherent interpretation of poetry on your own. We then expect you, in your assignments and examinations, to apply these skills to the close reading and analysis of poems you have not seen before.

You may find this challenging at best and alarming at worst. But the only way to learn how to read poetry closely, which is also the only way to gain maximum benefit from reading it, is to practise doing so on your own.

Some key questions

What do we mean when we talk about poetry? Is it enough to say that it is a genre of literature, to be differentiated from prose and drama? If so, what is the basis of that differentiation? Do texts that we classify as poetry possess certain attributes that other texts do not? Do we not sometimes say that a certain novel is poetic, though, or that a convincing speech was 'sheer poetry'? Could poetry then be said to be a genre of *language*, rather than of literature? Or is it rather language written in a particular style? Will we always know poetry when we see it?

Outcomes

This unit aims to give you some insight into the nature of poetry and to address some of these questions. Briefly, we hope to achieve the following:

- Explore a number of poems together
- Show you a method of close reading that will enable you to approach poetic texts critically, with a view to gaining a sense of their possible meanings and of their style
- Enable you to relate your insights to a single line of poetry, to the immediate context in which the line occurs within the poem, and to an entire poem
- Develop awareness of various aspects of poetic language
- Build up a critical vocabulary appropriate for discussing poetry
- Enable you to write concisely and meaningfully about poetic texts in a manner suited to this intermediate level of your studies

The Poetry Unit is subdivided into Sections, which address in some detail different aspects of a poem:

- What is poetry?
- The poetic subject
- Poetic language – tropes and schemes
- Sound and rhythm

Each Section contains Activities and Feedback that will help us to build a logical sequence in our thinking and discussion about poetry. We need to establish some clear parameters of critical analysis, by exploring details, before we can embark on interpretation in larger-scale essays.

Readings of all the poems discussed in this Unit are available on your CD: we hope that you will enjoy listening to these often and that you will feel closer to the poems once you hear them recited.

Our aim is to show you how to engage in a <u>close reading</u> of a poetic text, so that your experience of poetry may be stimulating and enjoyable. We will try to do this by guiding you through an exploration of those aspects of language and style that make a text 'poetic'. In this way, we will help you to develop the skills necessary to express, in academic writing, your critical appreciation of prescribed and unseen poetic texts.

Section 1: What is poetry?

Consider the following phrase:

> O my luve's like a red, red rose

What is this phrase saying? Is it saying it effectively, well, clearly? Would it make any difference if we made a minor change to the line?

Activity 1

The line above can be rewritten (or rephrased) in different ways. Read the following rephrasings of the line and then answer the questions that follow in your journal:

Ugh my love is like a red, red rose

O your love is like a red, red rose

O my love resembles a red, red rose

O my love is like a crimson, scarlet rose

O my love is like a red rose

O my love is like a rose pigmented so it reflects light at a wavelength between 620 and 740nm and a frequency between 480 and 400 THz

O my love is like a red, red specimen of *rosa chinensis*

(a) Look at each rephrasing in turn. In which of these has the meaning of the line changed? Explain <u>how</u> the meaning has changed in each rephrasing.

(b) In which has the meaning of the line remained the same? In these, is there any shift in emphasis? Explain <u>how</u> for each in turn.

Feedback

You may have noticed that some changes are very significant. For example changing 'O', which in this line seems to express joy at the speaker's love being like a rose, to 'Ugh', a characteristic expression of disgust, conveys a sense of repulsion at the idea of the speaker's beloved being like a rose. This makes it seem as though being like a rose would be an undesirable feature for love or a lover to possess.

While changing 'my' to 'your' deeply alters the basic sense of the line, other shifts are subtler and more difficult to pin down, as they maintain the literal meaning, but affect the sense, texture or emotional content of the line. Changing 'red, red' to simply 'red' or to 'crimson, scarlet' preserves the general sense of the original, but reduces its impact on the reader's imagination and memory.

Although a 'rose' could be classified as a 'specimen of *rosa chinensis*' (the botanical Latin name for a rose), describing it in this way shifts the sense of the phrase from an expression of romantic feeling, which plays on the associations of roses with beauty and love, to a scientifically accurate categorisation (which might make it possible to read the line as an <u>ironic</u> comment on expressions of romantic feeling).

Has this exercise revealed anything to us about the nature of poetry? One thing that has become apparent is that <u>every</u> word in the line we have examined seems to have been chosen with great care. We see how each element works together in subtle ways to convey a certain idea. As soon as we change a detail, something about what the line tries to express seems to alter or disappear.

This insight places some emphasis on details of language – specific words and phrases carefully chosen to express something – and some emphasis on what the language expresses. We have given some consideration to the former; let us now consider the latter more closely.

Activity 2

(a) Rewrite the phrase ('O my luve's like a red, red rose') in your own words, __without__ using the terms 'love', 'red' 'rose' or 'flower'. It might be helpful to use the following formulation:

The speaker says that _____ .

(b) Think carefully about the specific words that have been used in the line, comparing what they express to what your paraphrase expresses. Do they say the same thing? Rewrite your paraphrase if you notice that the line conveys something that your paraphrase does not quite capture.

> **Paraphrase**
>
> If you refer to the online *Oxford Dictionary* (http://english.oxforddictionaries.com/), you will see that a 'paraphrase' is an expression of a text's meaning in __different__ words, or a rewording of a text

(c) In the table below write down all the possible meanings and associations you can think of for the words in the left-hand column:

Red Love Rose	e.g. Passion; fire

(d) Now read the line again; look at the following paraphrases and compare them to your own:

The speaker says that his (or her) darling is very beautiful.
The speaker says that his (or her) sweetheart is very fragrant.
The speaker says that the person that he (or she) cherishes has a youthful complexion.
The speaker says that he (or she) experiences feelings of great passion.
The speaker says that his (or her) romantic affair is currently in a stage of extraordinary freshness.

Do they say the same things? What are the differences? Think about your own paraphrase again. If you think one or more of the given paraphrases best explains the line, you are welcome to use them to help you construct your own.

(e) Look at the table you completed earlier. Did you list any negative meanings or associations for the words in the table? If not, go back to the table now, and try to think of some negative meanings or associations.

(f) Next, read the line again, and look at the following list of statements about the line. Do you think they are accurate? Do they affect your understanding of the line? Compare them to your own paraphrases. Modify your own paraphrase if you think it necessary:

The speaker is aware that his (or her) darling's beauty will fade.
The speaker is aware that his (or her) passion will only last for a while.
The speaker implies that his (or her) intensely passionate affair has an element of danger.

(g) Read the line again. Choose any detail in the line – a specific word, punctuation, the way the line sounds. In a short paragraph, explain how and why that particular detail is necessary for the line to express what it does. For extra practice, repeat this exercise with as many details of the line as you can identify.

Feedback

The aim of this exercise is to try to summarise, as accurately and fully as possible, what is expressed in the line of poetry we have been looking at. Is it possible to do this? You may have noticed that the paraphrases listed in 2d and 2f, and perhaps also your own rewordings of the line, seem somehow inadequate. Why is this?

Each of these paraphrases misses some aspect of what the original line expresses, whether it is some of the many connotations associated with the colour, and word, 'red', for example; or the possible emotional impact of using the word 'love', rather than 'deep affection'; or the various possible senses which 'love' can be understood to have in this context – a specific person or a type of feeling, or both.

Attempts to reword or re-state the line might also fail to reproduce successfully the tension between the joyful expression of love and admiration of beauty on the one hand, and recognition of the mortality of love and passion on the other. More precisely, we would weaken considerably the persuasive force inherent in this paradox: intense experience of beauty, and of sexual and other passions, also contains a premonition of their inevitable decline.

As we look closely at the details, we detect more and more possible nuances of meaning in the line. In turn, noticing these nuances allows us to adjust our paraphrases and rephrase them and, in so doing, to refine further our understanding of the line as a whole.

In <u>Activity 1</u> we noticed the importance of specific details in a line of poetry. In <u>Activity 2</u>, we gained a sense of the many different things the line could be thought to express. Now, let us consider these insights together, to gain a further sense of what poetry is.

We have realised that even a long list of paraphrases, each highlighting a different quality of the line, would not fully convey the same effect as the original. This is because the <u>particular kind</u> of language used in the line evokes more than it appears to say at the simplest level. More precisely, words are combined here in such a way that they convey more than they would singly, so that the <u>full measure</u> of what the line expresses cannot be communicated in an abstract re-statement or through a list of possible meanings. In brief, the line contains language that appears to be <u>unusually meaningful</u>.

We see, in this brief line, a use of language where meaning is <u>intrinsically</u> connected with the way in which it is expressed, where all the constituent linguistic elements relate in essential ways to each other, to create a whole that is not merely a sum of all its parts.

The Activities have led us, therefore, to a certain view of the nature of poetic language. They have illustrated also how complex and nuanced even a single line of poetry can be, and how much careful thought and attention it requires to be explored productively.

The Activities also showed us how to engage with the line. Our initial reading – expressed in our first paraphrases – was inadequate, because it did not account for the unusually meaningful nature of the language in the line. We had to read the line over and over again, constantly asking ourselves different questions about what it says and how it says it. As we progress, we will examine various strategies for performing this

kind of close reading, which allows us to engage with poetic language more effectively and enjoyably.

<u>Pause for Reflection and Fun</u>

We saw in Section 1 of this Unit that poetic language may be said to be unusually meaningful or extraordinarily rich in meaning. Even a single line of poetry can warrant a great deal of attention and examination: as we explored different aspects of the line, more nuances of its meaning emerged.

And, while discovering something about the nature of poetic language, we also discovered something about how to approach it: through close, careful reading (reflect again on what you learnt from the discussion on close reading provided in the Unit on Drama). We had to read the line several times, and ask ourselves a variety of questions about it; we found that each detail we noticed allowed us to discover something else that is expressed in the language.

Think again on what you have learnt in this Section: have you gained a greater awareness of how difficult it is to write a good poem and how exciting it is to read one?

MyUnisa activity

Now, have fun and write a blog of around five hundred words about how you would introduce a friend to the poetry we have discussed so far. Use the blogging tool on myUnisa to insert your blog.

Section 2: The poetic subject

Our examination of a single line of poetry, careful as it was, was partly flawed, in that it did not look at how the line relates to its context. More precisely, our claims about what the line expresses and its method of communicating meaning should relate to the immediate context in which the line occurs within the poem, and to the larger context, that is, the poem as a whole. Surely we would understand the line differently, if the poem ran:

> O my luve's like a red, red rose,
> That's newly sprung in June

rather than:

> O my luve's like a red, red rose,
> That's rotting in my vase

It follows that our understanding of the way language is employed in a single line will be shaped by our understanding of the poem as a whole. For example:

- in a poem about love, the metaphor of a rose might represent passion
- in a poem about death, the metaphor of a rose might represent the ephemeral nature of beauty or youth

36

The next step: if we are to examine usefully the relationship between <u>what</u> is said and <u>how</u> it is said in poetic language, in single lines within their larger context, we need to gain insight into a poem's subject.

What do we mean by 'subject'?

The subject is the <u>topic</u> of the poem: the person, idea or object it explores or comments on.

Be careful not to confuse

• the poetic subject, which is the topic of the poem

with

• the <u>grammatical</u> subject, which is the agent of the action performed by a verb (the man walks; the dog barks; the sky is blue).

How do we discover a poem's subject?

We are going to guide you through a few steps, which will make your search for the idea/s at the core of a poem much easier.

In some of the Activities that follow, you will be asked to identify, underline, and mark various items in the poem. We suggest that you work with a copy of the poem in front of you and that you highlight, underline, circle, and annotate the features of the poem that you gradually identify. Later, you will see an example of an annotated copy of the poem, based on some of the Activities.

<u>Step 1: Explore the title</u>

Activity 1

Read the title of the poem, 'The Sun Rising', and consider these questions:

(a) What would you guess the poem is about?

(b) What do you associate with the rising of the sun? Are your associations with this idea positive or negative? What activities, actions or emotions do you associate with it? Is sunrise ever represented in other literature, movies, TV, advertisements, or games? In what way?

Feedback

The title seems quite straightforward: it suggests the poem will be about the sun rising – but we might wonder at this point whether it will be about sunrise in general, or sunrise on a particular day. We might associate sunrise with new beginnings, or with getting up to go to work. There are many things you might have mentioned here.

Bear in mind, however, that this exercise is intended only to stimulate you to think further. What you associate with sunrise might be completely different to what the poem says about it. At this stage in the process of close reading, you should think about the poem and scribble some notes in your journal or notebook.

Step 2: Read through the poem, more than once

By now, you will realize that poems are frequently dense, compact and ambiguous, and, therefore, require close reading. You will need to read a poem several times, possibly approaching it from several different perspectives, in order to begin to get a sense of what it is about.

Activity 2

Read slowly through the poem 'The Sun Rising' in your Reader.

What do you think is its subject? You may have to read the poem several times and from different angles, before you begin to grasp what it is about.

(a) Write down what subject you expected from the title of the poem.

(b) Now write down what you actually found the poem's subject to be.

(c) What is the difference between what you expected and what you actually found when you read the poem closely?

(d) Does the poem seem to be positive or negative about what it says? Does it appear to be serious or humorous, happy or sad, or any combination of these? Can you think of other adjectives you might use to describe it? Pick out words and phrases from the poem that give or reinforce this impression.

Feedback

At this point you may be struggling still to come to grips with the **subject** of the poem. If this is the case, do not be anxious. We will guide you through your exploration and you will complete activities which will help you develop your own understanding of the poem.

We notice that this poetic text seems to be an address to the sun. In the beginning the speaker appears to be angry (words like 'fool', and 'unruly' might suggest this), but this attitude changes and by the end of the poem the speaker talks to the sun more kindly. We also notice that, in part, the poem seems to focus more on a 'she' – the speaker's lover, who is referred to with great admiration – than on the sun (can you find any words or phrases that support these observations?).

The historical person who wrote the poem is the **poet**. The voice in the poem belongs to the **speaker**. Bearing in mind this terminology is particularly useful when the speaker expresses different views from those we think belong to the poet: in dramatic monologue, for example, when the poet creates a fictional character, who is different from him/herself.

When you discuss poetry, always write: 'The speaker says' instead of 'The poet says'.

Step 3: Read sentence by sentence

We saw earlier how much insight may be gained from exploring a single line. It makes sense, therefore, to read the poem sentence by sentence in order to shape some basic meaning. At this point, ignore line and stanza divisions: break up the poem into sentences.

When reading poetry, you will notice that word order often follows a different pattern from the normal sequence, which may make some lines difficult to follow. In order to make things easier:

● Identify the verbs: find the action or actions being performed in the sentence. Underline them.

So in the first sentence: 'Busy old fool, unruly sun, why <u>dost</u> thou thus, through windows, and through curtains <u>call</u> on us?' ('dost' is an obsolete way of saying 'do')

● Identify the <u>grammatical</u> subjects, the persons or things that perform the actions. Underline them.

So in the first sentence, 'why dost <u>thou</u> thus, through windows, and through curtains call on us?', identify the sun as the <u>grammatical</u> subject (which is a little tricky because it is a question).

● Once you know who is doing what, look at the other elements of the sentence. To/ for whom is each action performed, and how are these described?

In the opening sentence, we are given more information on the grammatical subject of 'thou' in the phrases 'Busy old fool' and 'unruly sun'. The sun is described as 'Busy', 'old', 'fool', and 'unruly'. What additional information is given in this sentence?

Activity 3

(a) Read through the poem again. Find all the punctuation marks that indicate the end of a sentence. Read the poem again, sentence by sentence, still ignoring, for now, line and stanza divisions.

(b) Identify the verb or verbs in each sentence.

(c) Identify the <u>grammatical</u> subject of each sentence.

(d) Identify other elements of each sentence.

Feedback

For your own benefit, when you have broken a poem down to its individual sentences, try paraphrasing the entire poem, sentence by sentence. This will help you to reconsider what the subject of the poem may be. For example, we can say about the first line that the speaker insults the sun, calls it an idiot and asks why it is shining through the curtains to rouse the speaker and his companion.

Activity 4

(a) Read through the poem again. Briefly paraphrase each sentence in your notebook.

(b) Reconsider what you think the poem is about, and what it expresses. Write a short paragraph (10–15 lines) in your journal in which you summarise what you think the poem is about.

Feedback

In Section 1 we realised that paraphrases do not adequately reproduce the meaning of the original text and you may have noticed this again. The best they can do is to provide an outline of what the poem says, but they cannot convey the poem's full meaning and all the nuances that enrich its expression. Nevertheless, a paraphrase can be a useful starting point for a close reading: use it as a tool to test and refine your understanding of a poem before you start writing about it.

> Remember:
>
> Paraphrases are a <u>useful step</u> in the reading process, but they are to be avoided at all costs when you are required to write an essay about a poem.

<u>Step 4: Examine Form and Argument</u>

Poems frequently arrange their sentences – and their ideas – in special ways. These arrangements are meaningful, as they form part of the way in which language is shaped to express a poem's meaning. The way a poem is laid out on the page and arranged into stanzas, patterns of rhythm and rhyme, is usually significant. For example, one aspect of a concept or argument might be developed in one stanza, and a different aspect in another. Or certain ideas might be linked together by rhyme in order to be compared or contrasted.

At this point we will pause for a few moments, which will give us the opportunity to look at some formal arrangements employed by poets. Their names may or may not be familiar to you:

● Stanza
● Couplet
● Tercet
● Quatrain
● Sonnet

Please consult the Toolkit in your Reader for definitions of these terms.

Activity 5

Look at the way in which 'The sun rising' is laid out on the page. Try to identify the points at which it may be broken down into smaller sections and consider the following questions for each section:

(a) What is the subject of the section (the basic idea or ideas it addresses)?

(b) What is the setting of that section (the location or place where the action unfolds)?

(c) What are the circumstances and attitude of the speaker?

(d) How does the subject of each section relate to the subject of the poem – to the person, object or idea the poem as a whole is about?

(e) Do any of the ideas in the sections contradict each other or conflict with the meaning expressed in other sections?

(f) Explain these contradictions and conflicts.

While you analyse each section of the poem in turn, remember that each section forms part of the poem as a whole. So make sure you take note of how the different sections of the poem relate to each other. Use the following Activity to guide you.

Activity 6

(a) Compare the different sections of the poem to each other. Is the setting the same in each? If not, what changes, and where and how does it change?

(b) Are the circumstances of the speaker the same in every section? Is the attitude of the speaker the same in every section? If not, what changes, and where and how does it change?

(c) Do the ideas expressed in the poem progress or shift anywhere in the poem? If so, where and how do they shift?

(d) How do the ideas expressed in the different sections of the poem relate to each other?

(e) Do the different sections sustain each other? Do any of them conflict or contrast with the others?

(f) Explore contrasts and conflicts in the poem. Are these tensions resolved? If so, how and where? If not, for what effect are these tensions maintained?

Feedback

Once again, bear in mind that this is an exercise to further refine your reading of the poem, and not a demonstration of what you should write in an essay. Your analysis of the form and argument of a poem should form part of an integrated overall analysis, and not stand on its own, as it does in this Activity. What we aim to do below is to guide you, stanza by stanza, through the thought movements that the poem develops within a tight formal structure:

The divisions in 'The Sun Rising' are quite clear: the text contains three main sections, falling into three stanzas of ten lines each, with a line left blank between each. Some of you may have noticed further divisions within the stanzas marked by rhyme. Each stanza begins with four lines (a quatrain, see the Toolkit in your Reader for the

definition) arranged in the ABBA rhyme pattern, followed by a quatrain that rhymes according to the CDCD rhyme pattern, followed in turn by a rhyming <u>couplet</u>. You may also have noticed that the argument progresses from stanza to stanza, and also from section to section within a stanza.

<u>The first stanza</u>:

- In the first quatrain, the speaker's attitude conveys annoyance, even anger: he appears to be a lover woken ('called') by the light of the rising sun shining through the window. He chides the sun for being an interfering busybody, and questions whether lovers should obey the ordering of time determined by the sun.
- In the second quatrain the speaker moves from annoyance to scorn, insisting that the sun enforce this ordering of time on various groups besides lovers. Here there seems to be an emphasis on busy-ness and urgency amongst those called upon by the sun.
- The couplet that closes the first stanza develops from this: love, unlike the other activities that have been named – all of which adhere to time frames – remains the same at all times.
- The first stanza as a whole, therefore, portrays the sun as a measurer and determiner of time, and develops the argument that lovers do not fall under the jurisdiction of the sun's rule.

<u>The second stanza</u>:

- In the second stanza there is a shift, both in the argument and in the treatment of the subject. The speaker moves from questioning the sun as ruler of time to calling into question the sun's very power to shine. This challenge to the sun's power – the power that commands such great respect – in the first quatrain segues into another shift in focus: from the sun to the speaker's beloved.
- The speaker claims that it is in fact the beloved who is awe-inspiring, from two points of view. First in relation to sight: the power the speaker wields to block out the sun's rays merely by closing his eyes and the power of the beloved potentially to blind the sun, presumably with her great beauty, reverse assumptions about the sun as a source of light, and therefore sight, and also as potentially blinding. Secondly, the beloved is worthy of admiration in relation to riches from distant and exotic lands.
- The stanza's overall argument seems to address power, as it calls into question the sun's greatness by declaring it inferior to the beloved's, who, in the eyes of the speaker, embodies all the earth's riches and dominion.

<u>The third stanza</u>

- The third stanza picks up the thread from the second, expanding its argument, by claiming that not only the beloved, but the speaker and beloved together, embody all authority. This line of thought is taken to its logical conclusion when the speaker claims that he and his lover therefore embody everything, and everything else is imitation. Observe the <u>progression</u> from the first stanza to the last one: from the sun as ruler of time, to the lovers' supremacy.
- In the second quatrain you may have noted another significant shift, from the initial annoyance with the sun to a conciliatory mood of sympathy. The sun is pitied for being deficient (lacking a lover), old and burdened by duty – that duty

is now defined not in terms of time or light, but in terms of providing warmth to the world.

- The final couplet draws together the arguments of the stanza: the sun's duty is to warm the world; the lovers <u>are</u> the world; therefore, as long as the sun shines on the lovers, it does its duty. From beginning the poem with a complaint that the sun is interfering, the speaker has moved to a position where he calls on the sun to revolve around him and his beloved, always shining on them – and for them.

Step 5: Exploring Diction and Mood

In the previous activity we learned that:

- poems may be divided into sections, with each section unified and held together by, for example, rhyme (as is the case with each quatrain and couplet), or layout on the page (the stanzas)
- the division into sections often reflects divisions in the argument and treatment of the subject
- in short, the layout of the poem and rhyme-marked divisions form an important part of the meaning-making process of the poem, because they signify shifts in thought.

You may have noticed some other patterns around which the poem is ordered, other markers of progression, change, contrast, that help to express the ideas of the poem, signalling the attitude of the speaker, the situation of the poem and so forth.

You have been encouraged already, to some extent, to engage with some of these patterns in earlier Activities, when you were asked to consider the atmosphere of the poem, and to find words and phrases that suggested its basic subject and approach. It is important to consider what type of words, phrases and images are used in a poem, and in its various sections.

Activity 7

Progression of main ideas and tropes

In our discussion earlier, we thought that, at first, the speaker's attitude to the sun was marked by annoyance or anger.

(a)   Identify the words and phrases in this stanza that suggest anger or annoyance. Mark each of these on the poem.

(b)   Identify words and phrases in the other two stanzas that suggest anger or annoyance. Mark each of these on the poem.

(c)   Compare the stanzas: has a pattern emerged in the speaker's emotional response to the sun? At this point, it will be useful to look at your annotated copy of the poem. How are the words dealing with anger or annoyance distributed through the stanzas?

We also thought that, in the third stanza, the speaker's attitude to the sun shifted to pity.

(d)   Identify the words and phrases in this stanza that suggest pity. Use a new colour to mark each of these on the poem.

(e)   Identify the words and phrases in the other two stanzas that suggest pity. Mark each of these on the poem.

(f)   Compare the stanzas: has a pattern emerged? How are the words dealing with pity distributed through the stanzas? (Are there more or less in the first stanza?)

In the above discussion, we thought that the speaker was concerned with time and being occupied:

(g)   Identify the words and phrases in the poem that suggest this. In a third colour, mark each of these on the poem itself.

(h)   Compare the stanzas: has any pattern emerged?

For practice, and on your own, repeat this activity for other ideas that are important in the poem: love, power, the preciousness of the beloved, and so forth.

Feedback

Did you notice any patterns emerging? Here is an example of how you could have marked some of the words and phrases on your copy of the poem:

Patterns of words and phrases clearly are employed to create shifts in mood, setting the emotional tone of the poem:

44

- words and phrases like 'Busy old fool', 'unruly sun', 'Saucy pedantic wretch', 'chide', and 'sour' suggest the anger expressed at the beginning of the poem,
- while 'beams', 'eclipse', 'wink', 'sight', 'eyes', 'blinded', 'Look', and perhaps even 'cloud' (used in this context to mean 'cover', 'darken' or 'overshadow') reflect a concern with sight in the second stanza
- note how the mood and tone created by the choice of words and phrases – the diction of the poem – relate to the argument of the poem and to the thematic explorations of its various divisions, reflecting them and supporting them.

A careful examination of the patterning of the ideas in a poem can also help you to identify tensions and parallels:

- we have noted the contrasting attitudes towards the sun in the first and third stanzas.
- we could attempt to go further and ask ourselves to what extent these are, in fact, contrasting and whether we might detect any mockery or contempt in the apparently pitying attitude in the third stanza.
- we note that another tension exists, in the development of the thought in the second stanza, around the ideas of sight and blindness.
- we might comment on references to kings in the first and second stanzas, and relate them to the 'states' and 'Princes' mentioned in stanza 3: how does the speaker's response to authority figures shift as the poem progresses?

Pause for Reflection and Fun

This section, devoted to the poetic subject, offered much food for thought. Let us see what we have achieved so far: we have looked carefully at some of the ways in which poems can be organized around their subject and we have gradually obtained a clearer idea of what the poem expresses, by:

- reading the poem sentence by sentence,
- identifying and examining patterns of form (stanzas, units of rhyme),
- following the argument (what observations, insights, claims are being made; how the poem progresses from idea to idea), and
- understanding better the diction and mood of the poem, through a careful inspection of patterns of words and phrases.

Now, write a blog of around five hundred words in which you explain to a friend how the various patterns you have observed relate to one another, and how each aspect of the poem works with all the others to create something of that 'unusual meaningfulness' that we highlighted earlier.

Section 3: Poetic language – tropes and schemes

In Sections 1 and 2, we suggested that poetic language is particularly evocative or expressive: it expresses much in a few words, and conveys more than it appears to say. We noted some aspects of the carefully constructed nature of poetic language, and observed the significance of some of the choices the poet has to make – which form is appropriate for the subject matter, how to order the sentences and the argument, which words to use and how to arrange them. But it is not only through the careful choice of form, argument and diction that poems are constructed.

What do we mean by this?

Tropes

First, a word or a thought might be used in a way that shifts its meaning from our ordinary understanding of it to some other sense. Let us look at a simple example. The speaker in Andrew Marvell's poem, 'To his Coy Mistress', says 'at my back I always hear / Time's winged chariot hurrying near'. Normally 'time' means the progress of existence, or the measure of that progress. Clearly, the progress of existence neither does nor can literally ride in a chariot. Time is understood here as a person: that is, it is personified.

Instances of the manipulation of language, such as this, include many figures of speech, some of which you may know already. These are called **tropes**:

- Metaphor
- Simile
- Personification
- Metonymy
- Hyperbole
- Irony
- Oxymoron
- Understatement

Check the Toolkit on myUnisa for definitions. Even if you cannot recall the name of a specific trope, you can still comment on it effectively by describing the way in which it manipulates meaning.

Schemes

Secondly, the pattern in which words or phrases are arranged may be shifted from the ordinary to some other, striking pattern. We can see this in Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice*, when Shylock insists:

I'll have my **bond**! Speak not against my **bond**!
I have sworn an oath that I will have my **bond**! (III.iii.3–4)

In ordinary, everyday phrasing, he might have said: 'I'll have my bond! Speak not against *it*! I have sworn an oath that I will have *it*!' Shakespeare has manipulated the way Shylock would have expressed his wrath in ordinary speech to ensure that the phrase 'my bond' occurs at the end of each of these sentences. Why? Because, in doing so, Shylock's unyielding insistence on keeping to the contract, against all humane logic, is strongly emphasised.

The way in which words are arranged has been changed, for a specific purpose. Instances of the manipulation of language, such as this, include many figures of speech with which you might be familiar. These are called **schemes**:

- Repetition
- Anaphora
- Alliteration
- Parallelism
- Antithesis
- Ellipsis
- Parenthesis

Please see the Toolkit on myUnisa for definitions of each of these terms.

Activity 8

Examine the following instances of poetic language. Decide which use tropes and which use schemes:

- Look at that red, red rose

- She's all states, and all princes, I

- His lips are like rubies

- Bend your force to break, blow, burn

Feedback

In ordinary, everyday speech we would say 'look at that red rose'. The repetition of 'red' does not play with the meaning of the word, so it is not a trope. Rather, it inserts an 'unnecessary' repetition, and is therefore a scheme.

On the other hand, in the third example it is unlikely that the comparison between someone's lips and rubies should be understood in a literal sense. The language here manipulates the usual meaning of a term, and we can thus conclude that a **trope** has been used here.

Some poetic expressions may use **both** tropes and schemes. 'She's all states' is not literally true: the beloved is in fact a human being. To say that she is 'all states' transfers the meaning of one word (states) to another word (she), and is thus a trope.

But, take note, the syntax of the sentence is also unusual. How would we express it in everyday speech? We would probably say something like: 'She's all states, and I am all princes.' Notice in Donne's version how only one verb has been used, with two subjects – 'she' and 'I'. The verb ('am') for I is implied and omitted – a clear manipulation of syntax. In addition, we see a conspicuous change in word order that creates an interesting pattern, in the shape of an X:
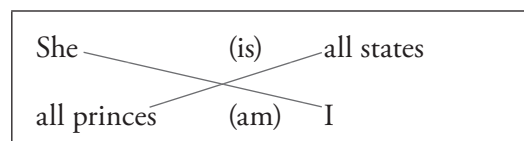
The first phrase is arranged according to normal word order in English sentences: subject, verb, predicate. This order is inverted in the second phrase. This shift in pattern

stands out due to the repetition of the word 'all' to relate to both states and princes. We observe how carefully Donne manipulates the language of his poem from the detailed patterning of word order and repetition, combined with the shift in sense in the line.

We have now identified two main types of figurative language in poetry: tropes and schemes. Let us look in more detail at each in turn, not only with the aim of learning how to identify them, but in order to see the effect of each in relation to subject, argument, mood, and so forth.

Tropes

We saw earlier how the specific choice of words can convey mood in a poem; we looked also at strategies for identifying and tracing a central idea or argument throughout a poem. You may have noticed that at times the mood was created or the argument conveyed through a shift away from the ordinary sense in which something is understood – that is, through the use of tropes.

So, let us examine tropes more closely.

Activity 9

1. **Read Shakespeare's *Sonnet 73* in your Reader.**

> Before you move onto this Activity, we advise you to apply the process for reading a poem explained in the previous activities (the poem has no title, so Activity 1 is not relevant). You should try to become familiar with the steps of careful reading that the Activities encourage you to follow and always examine poems with that high degree of attention.

Feedback

- You may have noticed that the poem has four basic divisions: three quatrains and a couplet, which confirm it to be a sonnet. These divisions are indicated through the rhyme scheme, and through the different ways in which each division treats the subject

- You might also have got some sense of its mood and atmosphere, and some of the tensions that exist in it (words like 'none', 'few', 'shake', 'cold', 'bare', 'late' might be contrasted with 'sweet birds sang' in the first quatrain, for example, to give a negative overall mood to this section of the poem; this might have been seen to continue or develop with 'sunset', 'fadeth', 'west', 'black night', 'take away', 'Death', and 'seals') .

- What did you think about the ideas, though? Did you notice how each stage in the quatrains compares the speaker to something? Are these comparisons literal, or do they in some way manipulate meaning? Now, do Activity 10.

Activity 10

Think carefully and then answer the following:

(a) To what does the speaker compare himself in the first quatrain? (Note that the rest of the questions follow from the answer to this one. Before you attempt to answer the other questions, check your answer to question (a) against the first sentence of the Discussion, below)

(b) What qualities do you associate with the thing the speaker is compared to?

(c) What qualities of the thing the speaker is compared to does the speaker himself draw attention to?

(d) What is the overall effect of this comparison?

(e) Look carefully at the words and phrases in this quatrain. Do they relate in any way to the comparison that occurs in this quatrain? Explain.

(f) Besides this comparison, can you spot any other places and senses in which meaning is manipulated in this quatrain? Identify and discuss as many as possible.

(g) How does this comparison relate to the overall theme of the poem?

Feedback

- You may have noticed that the speaker compares himself to a specific time of year, autumn, when leaves turn yellow and fall from trees. You might associate autumn with the weather turning cold or even with the approach of death. Autumn ushers in winter, when seasonal plants die, some wildlife migrates or hibernates, and the natural world seems dead. The speaker draws attention to the loss of life, to dying leaves and the disappearance of birds, to cold weather, and to the passage of time.

- The comparison does not suggest that the speaker is literally a season, but gives the impression of the speaker himself approaching his natural end, dying. The year and the natural world go through natural cycles – from new life (spring) and the height of vitality (summer), through a gradual shutting down (autumn), to winter (the end of the cycle, the death of vegetation): so a person's life – here the speaker's – might be seen to progress through a natural and inevitable progression, from birth to death.

- The trope suggests that the height of the speaker's vitality is behind him; dying has begun, and death lies ahead. It is a law of nature that autumn and winter must always come, and are entirely unstoppable, and this suggests the inevitability of the speaker's own mortality. Words like 'none', 'few', 'shake', 'cold', 'bare', and 'late' reinforce the sense the comparison is creating: that the speaker is portrayed as approaching the end of his life.

- Notice how much this comparison between two things that are not, in fact, comparable (a season and a person), succeeds in expressing. How does it do this? To begin with:

- it succinctly gives information (the speaker is dying), but also evokes a certain mood (a sense of loss),

- and perhaps makes us think about the two things in a slightly different way, or highlights a tension that we might not notice or pause to consider in much depth in our everyday existence (for example, simultaneous to the sense of loss in the quatrain is the difficult recognition that death is inevitable, and in fact natural).

- You may have noticed other tropes in this quatrain: notably, the metaphor of the autumn branches, stripped of leaves and of birds, as 'bare ruined choirs'. Do you find this comparison between birds and singers in a choir effective? Does it help to convey the sense of loss of life, of emptiness and desolation, of beauty vanished, central to the quatrain and the poem?
- You may also have noticed how the argument of the quatrain is linked to its particular expression. If Shakespeare had simply said: 'You see me growing older', the effect and impact of the lines, and the thought that informs them, would have been lost. If someone asks me about Shakespeare's *Sonnet 73* and I respond 'In it, the speaker implies that he is dying, and in the first quatrain compares himself to autumn', I would fail to express most of what the quatrain conveys**.**

<u>What</u> is said is closely linked with <u>how</u> it is said, and what is produced is <u>more</u> than the sum of its parts.

Schemes

You have learned that an important part of the process of close reading is to examine the syntax of the poem very carefully: that you should identify the subject and verb of each sentence, see how other elements of the sentence relate to these, and so on. While doing this, you may have noticed that, at times, the poems you have studied so far manipulate syntax in interesting and often extraordinary ways. Now let us go into this more actively:

Activity 11

Read Thomas Gray's 'Ode *On the Death of a Favorite Cat, Drowned in a Tub of Goldfishes*' in your Reader.

Before you move onto this Activity, we advise you to apply the process for reading a poem explained in the previous sections, as well as the activities in the section on tropes. You should try to become familiar with the steps of careful reading that the Activities encourage you to do, and always try to examine poems with that high degree of attention.

Feedback

The content

The poem is clearly divided into seven stanzas. It describes a cat first admiring its own reflection in a bowl of water, then noticing some fish in it, attempting to reach in and catch them, falling in, and drowning. So far, your task proves to be easy enough. But what if you asked yourself some of these questions?

- What about the final stanza? Is it still about the cat? Is there perhaps a shift in subject?
- How does the final stanza relate to the rest of the poem?
- Would relating it to the end of the second stanza provide a useful way into answering this question?
- Who are the beauties addressed, and what is their relevance to the poem?

The diction (or, choice of words and phrases)

Clearly, the highly dignified diction of the poem is at odds with the humble topic of a cat drowning in a fishbowl. Consider these questions:

- Are these words and phrases appropriate to describe the subject and action of the poem: 'lofty', 'pensive', 'beguiled', 'tumbled', 'Nereid', 'undeceived', and 'heedless'; 'Demurest of the tabby kind', 'The velvet of her paws', 'Her ears of jet', 'angel forms', 'Their scaly armor's Tyrian hue', 'hapless nymph', 'Presumptuous maid', 'Malignant Fate'? Why, or why not?
- Does reference to the water in the bowl as 'lake', 'tide', 'stream' and 'flood' seem an over-elaborate way to refer to a commonplace fishbowl?
- Why do you think the poet chose to use this mismatched style? What is its effect?

Finally, you may have noticed that, with the elaborate choice of words in this poem, comes an elaborate syntax. The syntax and word choice together form a lofty diction that gives the poem its elevated and ceremonious style.

Let us see if we can analyse some of the elements of that lofty syntax.

Activity 12

(a) Look at lines 4–6. What would the lines say if they contained simple, straight-forward syntax?

(b) What is different about the actual syntax of the line?

(c) What is the effect of this difference? Why has the line been written in this way?

Feedback

In less poetic speech, the line might run as: 'The pensive Selima, who is the demurest of the tabby kind (or, simply, the demurest tabby cat), reclined, and gazed on the lake below.' The normal word order has been changed here, and a conjunction has been left out ('*and* gazed on the lake below' would have been expected):

- The unusual word order places 'Demurest' at the beginning of this sentence, perhaps according it particular significance; 'demure' is an adjective normally applied to a woman, so the emphasis on the word here is possibly an early introduction to the satirical criticism of women the poem makes through its depiction of the cat's unfortunate end, and certainly renders the next stanza, where Selima admires her own reflection, all the more ironic and biting.
- The omission of the conjunction perhaps makes the word 'gazed', appear at first sight like an appositional noun (a noun that describes Selima) rather than a verb,

suggesting the lack of action in the stanza, reflected in the cat's lazy, pensive mood as she stares absorbedly at herself.

- We could comment on the <u>irony</u>, and on the <u>onomatopoeic</u> quality of the lines (which enables them to sound like what the speaker is describing).
- We could integrate a discussion of the <u>schemes</u> used here (such as inverted word order and the technique of omitting key words or phrases, known as <u>ellipsis</u>) with a discussion of <u>tropes</u> (irony and onomatopoeia), showing how the two relate to one another to construct meaning in the poem.

Activity 13

(a) Look at line 7. What would the line say if it were written in conventional syntax?

(b) What is different about the actual syntax of the line?

(c) What is the effect of this difference? Why has the line been written in this way?

Feedback

- In ordinary syntax the word order would be different: 'Her conscious tail declared her joy'. You might have said that the change in word order creates a pleasing pattern: in both phrases 'her' is followed by an adjective, but the one phrase ends with the subject, the other with the verb. Could this serve to emphasize the relationship between the two? You might have found this pattern rhythmically pleasing, and therefore striking, and felt that it contributes to the lofty feel of the poem.
- Lines 8-11 contain a list of Selima's physical qualities that she sees reflected in the water. Normally, the last item of a list would be introduced with the conjunction 'and'. Think about the effect of this omission (also called ellipsis) and ask yourself these questions: Does the lack of a conjunction here affect the rhythm? Does it make the list seem longer to you, or shorter? Does it relate in any way to the loftiness of the poem? Does it contribute to the overall satirical point?

Activity 14

(a) Look at line 26. What would the line say if it were written in conventional syntax?

(b) What is different about the actual syntax of the line?

(c) What is the effect of this difference? Why has the line been written in this way?

Feedback

- In ordinary syntax, we might have expected the line to read: 'She stretched and bent again and again'. An element of symmetry (or balance between elements in a sentence) is created in the line through the parallel structure of the phrases:

  Again she   stretched
  Again she   bent

- The repetition in the parallel phrases serves simultaneously to reflect the cat's repeated attempts to escape drowning and to build pace in this section of the poem.

- Do you think <u>pace</u> (the speed of the lines) matters at this point in the poem? Might the style of writing here have a humorous effect (again)?

Activity 15

(a) Look at lines 28-30. Does it make any difference to the syntax of the sentence if you take out the phrase in brackets: '(Malignant Fate sat by and smiled)'?

(b) Does it make any difference to the sense, mood, or effectiveness of the sentence, or of the stanza or poem as a whole, if you remove it?

(c) Why has it been included? Why is it in brackets?

Feedback

- It makes no difference to the syntax, but it does introduce something new. Brackets convey the sense that this line is written/spoken as an aside, a sudden shift from describing events to commenting on them. It is as though we get the author's voice directly coming across to us ('authorial comment'). This serves to create the impression that the speaker is unable to hold back frustration or emotion, and veers off into an unexpected direction
- We notice that this sudden and unexpected change affects tension and pace in the poem: the parenthetical phrase (= the phrase in brackets) contains an ominous forecast of the impending horrible end, so we could argue that this abrupt interruption of the momentum that had been building in the stanza dramatically increases tension
- Again, we must remain aware also of its effect, bearing in mind the discrepancy between lofty diction and humble subject.

Activity 16

(a) Look at lines 40–42. What would line 42 say if it were written in conventional syntax?

(b) What is different about the actual syntax of the line?

(c) What is the effect of this difference? Why has the line been written in this way?

Feedback

- In simple syntax it might say 'nor is all that glisters gold.'
- The verb 'is' has been omitted, but we readily deduce it from the context.
- We might argue that this <u>succinct</u> ('brief', 'economical') phrasing gives the line an <u>aphoristic ring</u>, the weight of truth.
- You might have felt that it gives the line additional emphasis, and therefore draws attention to the word 'gold' and its two senses suggested here – the golden colour of the fish, and the wealth that the 'beauties' desire.

Think about what you have learnt in this section and how far you have travelled from the first page of this Poetry Unit. You know, now, how to recognise and interpret two significant devices, which poetic language employs, namely <u>tropes</u> and <u>schemes</u>. You have learnt also that poetic language frequently shifts the sense in which we understand ideas or things from ordinary to unusual, or changes the predictable patterns in which we arrange words and phrases in a sentence. You understand now that this is done to challenge us into thinking afresh, or further, and to open our minds to that extraordinary richness of meaning, which is the primary characteristic of poetry.

Now, write a blog of around five hundred words, in which <u>you</u> explain how to read a poem and to <u>look at both the sense and syntax of its language;</u> show your friend whether and how sense and syntax have been adjusted, moulded and manipulated: to reflect, support, parallel, or contrast with, the poem's subject, argument, tone, mood, diction, and so forth.

Section 4: Sound and rhythm

In this section we will examine the importance of sound and rhythm in a poem and how these interact with other aspects of the poem's form to shape its ideas. We will read John Keats's poem, 'Bright Star', which you will find in your Reader.

If you have not read aloud the poems we have discussed so far, or any poem ever before, you have missed out on an <u>essential</u> component of the charm and force of poetry. Let us try to do so together:

Activity 17

Reading the poem aloud

- Find a quiet spot, where you will not be disturbed or distracted.
- Begin to read softly and slowly, allowing yourself to become accustomed to unfamiliar words, groups of words and sentence structure.
- Once you have reached the end of the poem, rest for a few moments.
- Take a deep breath and begin to read again, projecting your voice more forcefully, allowing the sounds to fill the space around you and to dominate your thoughts.
- Let your voice roll on with the poem's rhythm; let it linger slightly on the rhyming words.
- Put punctuation (commas, full stops, colons) to good use, reining in your voice at those points.
- Try to inject some warmth into your voice and avoid a monotonous drone.

Feedback

You will probably find that your reading aloud has brought you in close contact with the poem faster and more effectively than many silent readings could have done. What you have discovered is that, since ancient times, poetry is composed to be <u>spoken aloud</u> or <u>recited</u>, not to be read silently. The sound of single words or of combinations

of words, and the rhythm that holds the various sounds together from line to line, are essential components of the shaping of sense and poetic form that you have studied in the previous sections.

Activity 18

Listen to the poem being read on your CD:

(a) Into which form has the poem been cast?

(b) Were you aware that the rhythm is arranged in a fixed way?

(c) As you were reciting and listening, did you form the impression that the sound and rhythm were connected in some way to the sense of the poem?

Feedback

The poem's form is the sonnet, a poetic structure which you have encountered before. The interesting aspect, here, is that Keats has fused two forms into one, namely the Italian sonnet and the Shakespearean sonnet, maintaining the sense division of the former and the rhyme patterns of the latter. We will not go into complicated details, but we will bear in mind that this short poem displays remarkable technical ability.

Now that you have read the poem aloud and listened to it being read on your CD, you should try to see the links between the poem's subject, structure and imagery, and the components of sound and rhythm.

Before we go into this, though, we have to make sure that we know what type of metre or fixed rhythmic pattern the poet has used here. The metre is iambic pentameter, the most commonly used metrical pattern in English poetry. This strange-sounding phrase means nothing but: five (*penta* in Greek) subdivisions of sound in each line, with the emphasis of the voice falling on the second of each pair of syllables (= iambic rhythmic measure). If we look at an example, everything will become much clearer:

Bright **Star**, would **I** were **sted**fast **as** thou **art**

As you see, the weight of the voice falls more strongly on the syllables marked in bold, more softly on the others, so that a pattern of rising and falling is imposed on the reading voice across the line:

Ding DONG ding DONG Ding DONG ding DONG Ding DONG

To maintain the same rhythmic pattern throughout the poem would result in monotony, so the poet here and there rearranges the iambic pattern into a trochee, which means simply that the stress on the syllables shifts from the second to the first:

Pillow'd up**on** my **fair** love's **ripe**ning **breast**

or:

DONG ding DONG ding DONG ding DONG ding DONG ding

A brief interpretation of the poem: <u>one</u> of many possible readings

The speaker's direct address to the 'Bright Star' pulls us abruptly to the centre of his thoughts and emotions: we become the silent witnesses of his efforts to unfold a complex idea and a passionate impulse at the same time.

In this first line the speaker's longing for a steadfastness well out of reach of the human sphere places the poem in a firmly imaginary dimension. There is no discernible geographical setting to the first part of the poem, except for the immensity of the heavens from which the Star stares down, unblinkingly ('with eternal lids apart'), upon a world bathed by the cleansing waters of the oceans ('moving waters ... human shores'). The cold brightness and purity of the natural world (the Star, the moving waters, the snow, the moors) belong to a world aloof from human corruption and failings, insulated from both suffering and desire. Is this what the speaker longs for?

You will have noted the abrupt and surprising 'Not', which opens line 2 and provides a starkly antithetical position to the one the reader was encouraged to believe the speaker had taken in line 1. That 'Not' is picked up in another strong negative placed at the beginning of line 9: 'No – yet still stedfast, still unchangeable'. Do you see how skilfully the pattern of statement and denial is constructed? Look at it set out schematically, in the shape of an X:

would I were **steadfast** as thou art – / **Not** in lone splendour

No – yet still **steadfast**, still unchangeable

This is called a <u>chiastic</u> pattern (or <u>chiasmus</u>, from the Greek word for the letter X), and it is used here, quite deliberately, to compel us, the readers, to fix our attention on the play of contrasts. This is not a mere game of rhetorical devices, but rather an accomplished poetic technique to alert us sharply to the importance of what the speaker <u>really</u> desires. Let us think about this.

The speaker, we understand now, does <u>not</u> want to live in loneliness, no matter how pure and splendid such isolation might be; he does not want to live a life of inhuman purity and coldness, no matter how admirable such a life might appear to be. He tells us, from line 10, in <u>what</u> he longs to be as steadfast, as unchanging as the Star: in his closeness to his 'fair love', in his devotion to a life of shared tenderness and mutual trust.

We see now how the three lines 'Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,/ To feel for ever its soft fall and swell,/ Awake for ever in a sweet unrest' symmetrically respond to and balance the 'mask' of snow which coldly blankets the moors, and the 'moving waters' of the oceans, which rise and subside in tides against the 'human' shores, with deep indifference.

Can you see how deftly the warm glow that emanates from the young lovers' embrace is opposed to the cold gleam of star, snow and waters? Note also how, at this point, the setting acquires precision within the geography of love: the lovers' embrace <u>narrows down</u> the infinity of the starry universe, the vastness of the oceans, to the location of a softly swelling bosom, which anchors the whole poem. But the force of the wish for steadfastness sustains a deeper thought, which underlies all others in the poem: the <u>ephemeral</u> quality of youth, of love, of human life, when set against the everlasting splendour of the Star, and the ever-moving waters of the oceans. We could say that it is the <u>contrast</u> between eternity and mortality which

sustains, unspoken, the energy of the poem. And the thought of death, implicitly present throughout the poem, surfaces at its climax, providing closure to the text, as it does to human life:

Still, still to hear her tender-taken breath,
And so live ever – or else swoon <u>to death</u>.

The <u>closing couplet</u>, an essential feature of the Shakespearean sonnet, provides not only the finally <u>explicit</u> mention of death, but also, in unison, the speaker's challenge to time's consuming power: 'still, still...and so live ever' recalls 'Awake for ever in a sweet unrest', prolonging life into an eternity of desire, as long as his 'fair love' is beside him.

How do sound and rhythm enrich this text's meaning(s), its ability to arrest the reader's attention?

Activity 19

(a)   Try to mark on your copy of the poem the <u>accented</u> syllables in each line

(b)   Read the poem aloud again, placing greater stress on the accented vowels

(c)   Take note of the way in which you are compelled to increase or decrease the speed at which you read by alternating emphases on the syllables

(d)   Mark the vowel sounds that seem particularly effective

Feedback

Did you notice how slowly the poem unfolds in the first part and moves faster from line 10? It does this only to slow down again and roll towards the word 'death', in the last line. The pace reflects and reinforces the sense development of the poem: the immensity of the universe, the infinity of time require a dignified, slow pace, whereas the excitement and passion of young love are better indicated in a faster movement. Note the rhyme of 'Bright' and 'night': the two rhyming words enclose the first two verses, forming an <u>antithetical unit</u>, a contrast between brightness and darkness, which lends the opening lines an aura of mystery and of distance from human existence.

Note also how the open <u>a</u>, <u>e</u> and <u>o</u> sounds sustain the idea of eternal brightness in the first four lines and how the darker, closed <u>u</u> sound is used repeatedly in the following lines, underlining the cold indifference and melancholic aspect of the 'moving waters' and the 'soft-fallen mask/of snow'.

Feel how richly the two lines which turn the sense of the poem around ('Pillow'd upon my fair love's ripening breast,/ To feel for ever its soft fall and swell') fall on the tongue: the abundance of p/r/l/s sounds creates a sensual, swelling flow through the lines, which reveals the fullness and glow of love's passion.

Conclusion

In this Unit we have attempted not only to transmit to you the excitement and sense of adventure we always experience when we read poetry, but also to pass on to you the skills which we apply to the critical study and interpretation of poetic texts.

We hope that, by illustrating some of the ways in which poets use language, structure and sound, we have succeeded, at least, in communicating the profound joy that reading poetry with some understanding of its complexity and richness can give.

We thank you for having shared this brief, but intense, journey of poetic discovery with us.

Marinus van Niekerk and Sira Dambe

UNIT 5

Drama

Allyson Kreuiter

This unit is aimed to develop your analytical skills so that you are able to conduct a close reading of a drama or play. You will learn about dialogue, stage directions, blank verse, dramatic structure and conventions of dramatic performance. It is not necessary to have any prescribed plays or to have read the plays that will be mentioned in this section.

Outcomes

By the end of this unit you will

- Have read a number of short extracts from different dramatic works;
- Have learned the basic strategies of close reading/literary analysis;
- Be able to conduct a close reading of an unseen extract from a dramatic work;
- Be able to write a coherent literary essay expressing the findings emanating from your close reading;
- Have deepened and extended your command of academic English.

NOTE:

- Please ensure that you make use of a journal. This can be any A4 hard-covered or spiral- bound journal.
- It is important to look up words you do not know or understand in a dictionary. You may use any dictionary such as the *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary* or http://oxforddictionaries.com/. Write the meanings of unfamiliar words in your journal.
- In this journal you will write down your own responses to the learning material for this unit.
- You will consider what has been written in the guide and then answer the activities provided in this journal.
- After having answered the activities you can then consider the feedback provided.
- The passages that you encounter in your reader ***will not necessarily*** form a part of the assignment questions or of the examination questions.
- You will also be required to analyse ***unseen excerpts*** from different plays in both the assignments and the examinations.
- **The fact that the assignments and the examinations will focus on unseen extracts might seem to represent a challenge. If you work through the study**

guide and the close reading section in your Reader, you should be able to analyse any unseen text, whether drama, prose or poetry.

IMPORTANT NOTE:

- You are required to read the small one-act play by F. Scott Fitzgerald that appears in your Reader. This play may form the basis for an assignment or an examination question. This means that you need pay careful attention to this play.

Section 1: The origins of drama

Introduction

I am not sure how many of you have seen a play acted on stage. You might have seen plays on television or in films: think of Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet* with Leonardo DiCaprio and Clare Danes. In an everyday context, you probably encounter drama in soap operas and television serials. As a student of literature, you need to concentrate on the extracts that are provided on the page. These are literary extracts from plays for the stage. Texts that are written to be acted on the screen, on film or television are called scripts and look different from literary plays. Film scripts tend to concentrate on the visual and the conventions that are required for the presentation of a film. Thus a film script will differ from a drama script intended primarily for the stage.

In this unit I shall provide guidance on how to interact critically with a performance.

Studying a play:

You need to remember that drama **is written to be performed**. Plays should not been seen merely as something written down on a page: drama is, in fact, a very interactive medium. It has visual qualities: think of the costumes, the sets and how the characters in a play are positioned. If you have never seen a play on stage, consider these aspects with relation to a film you have seen or a television series. Answer the questions below:

- In any one scene, how important are the clothes the characters wear?
- What is the setting? (Are the characters in a house, in the countryside, in a bar or elsewhere)?

The 'realistic' features you see in film or in TV series are what we call sets on a stage. There is also an auditory component in drama: in other words, you hear people speak to one another in what is called a dialogue. In film and television there are the added sound effects of music or everyday noises like cars, telephones ringing, etc.

The dialogue between the main characters is always interactive.

- A dialogue is a conversation between two people.

Think about when you are speaking in a group of people: the conversation never consists of only one person delivering a **monologue**. Often several people talk at once and interrupt one another. You have heard and seen this in film and on television and this is what a play should sound like if you see one on the stage. There are certain situations where a character does actually deliver a monologue, or a soliloquy, where

they are talking alone and directly to the audience with no interaction with other characters. You will encounter this shortly.

- When you refer to people watching or reading a play. always talk about the **audience**
- When you refer to the text of a play, which in film and television would be called scripts, **always use the term 'play' and never 'book' or 'novel'.**

Plays on the stage always offer an interpretation of the writer's work, and each interpretation is different. So when you read a play, think about what your interpretation of it might be, how would you stage it, or turn it into a film or TV series. Remember that all performances are guided by the director's interpretations and these might differ from your own. But the actors also bring their own personalities and interpretation to their roles.

Drama is one of the three great literary **genres** (the other two are poetry and prose). A genre, as you are by now aware, is a type of literary text. Drama has a long history, dating back to ancient Greece. The Greek philosopher, Aristotle, in the fourth century BCE defined the main types of drama as tragedy and comedy.

Tragedy

When we talk of tragedy in daily conversation we mean something sad or a horrible event, like a person dying in a car accident, having taken place. In drama Aristotle's definition of tragedy is still relevant. The following are the basic attributes of a dramatic tragedy:

- The play has a central character, known as the **protagonist** or tragic hero. The hero has certain characteristics that appeal to the audience and in pre-twentieth century drama was a person of high rank (a king, prince or some sort of leader).
- The hero has a tragic flaw in his character, such as pride or greed, which leads to his downfall.
- The hero experiences a change in his fortune; he loses his position and dies.
- The downfall of the hero is designed to evoke terror and pity in the audience.

Through identification with the hero, the audience experiences a sense of loss at the hero's fate. By the end of the play the emotions of terror and pity have disappeared and the audience feels relaxed. This purging of emotions is known as **catharsis**.

Becoming a critical reader means that you must learn to adopt your own position when interpreting literary works. In the process, you will often need to question ideas and what other critics might write about plays. But mostly what you see in a play is important.

Comedy

A comedy, like a tragedy, does not have the everyday understanding of the funny things that happen in our daily lives, it is also not defined as someone standing on a stage making jokes. In Aristotle's view, comedy is the opposite of tragedy: a play with a happy ending and not one that was necessarily funny. In Shakespeare, the comedies are, in general, love stories in which there is much confusion, but in which the ending

resolves the situation. A comedy is closer to representations of everyday life than tragedy. It explores common human failings and errors rather than the sometimes disastrous crimes of tragedy. Yet, in a comedy, it is possible to find that the dramatist has a serious purpose. You should try to identify what this point is and what the playwright is trying to say about society or certain people. Some plays are more difficult to categorise as either a tragedy or a comedy because they have elements of both. These tend to be called tragic-comedies (Shakespeare's *A Winter's Tale* is a good example).

A play generally follows a three-part structure, though it can be longer:

- In the first part of the play the audience is introduced to the characters and a situation is 'set up', in which the central characters encounter a challenge, which will cause change.
- The middle of the play develops the situation and the audience begins to see and understand the possible consequences of the challenge through the reactions of the characters.
- The close of the play (known as the **dénouement**) tends to involve a return to some sense of order as the characters come to terms with what has happened.
- The **plot** of the play is the storyline. There is often a subplot, a secondary plot that runs alongside the main plot. You may have encountered this strategy in televised soap operas. There are often parallels and contrasts between the main plot and the subplot, though the subplot presents the themes from a different perspective.
- Plays are divided into *acts and scenes*, another important difference between a play and prose or poetry. Drama has its own distinctive format; you will see that it has the name of the speaker on the left hand side followed by their words, or dialogue, on the right.

Activity 1

Answer the following questions in paragraphs:

- Explain 'tragedy' and 'comedy' in relation to drama.
- Describe the stages of development of a tragedy.
- Outline the traditional three-part structure followed by most plays.
- Think of any film or television series you have seen that might be called a 'tragedy' and explain why.
- How do you the structure, form and style of a play differ from prose and poetry?

Feedback

Here are some pointers to the way you could have answered these questions:

- A tragedy is a serious play whose hero or protagonist suffers a serious downfall. Comedy is the opposite of tragedy and it has a happy ending. Comedy is closer to real life and deals with common human failings instead of the crimes frequently associated with tragedy.
- Tragedy concerns a main character, called a **protagonist** (or **tragic hero**). This hero has a character flaw that leads to a change in his fortune and his downfall.
- In the first part of the play you are introduced to the characters and a situation they face. The middle of the play extends the situation and the audience becomes

aware of the possible repercussions of the choices the characters make. At the close of the play or dénouement, there is closure of the situation. These stages make up an outline of the plot.

- For this question, you could take any television programme and consider how it might have aspects related to tragedy. You need to look at the structure of what a tragedy is and then apply this to your television series. Bear in mind that the protagonist could also be female.

- The difference between a play and prose or poetry is the fact that it is meant to be performed. The text of a drama looks different from prose or poetry on the page. It consists mainly of dialogue, instead of the description found in prose. It is divided into acts and scenes, while poetry is divided into stanzas or couplets and prose into either long or short chapters.

Section 2: Approaching a play

Introduction

Most people experience plays through either seeing them on stage, on television, in a film or on YouTube. Drama encompasses all these works, as well as soap operas and films. Since this is a literary module, we are going to confine ourselves to written dramas. I am going to show you how to use the strategies of close reading to explore how a play works. You will only be studying extracts, so you will not be required to examine the full structure of the play. Your Reader contains four passages, or extracts, from plays. You will see that extract 4 differs from the other extracts. This is because it is a film script. You will see how it concentrates on establishing the visual aspects and using specific conventions related to film.

<u>**NOTE**</u>: you should be able to use these strategies to respond to a live performance of a play too.

Now let us read the texts.

Activity 2

- You will notice that all the extracts look different on the page. They offer different challenges to interpretation. As you read these extracts, ask yourself how they differ and what they have in common. In a paragraph of about 10–15 lines, write down your ideas and opinions in your journal.

Feedback

- What these extracts have in common is that they are all meant to be performed. Some of the extracts include stage directions and others do not.

- My first example is from a modern work called *Top Girls* by a British **feminist** playwright, Caryl Churchill. No stage directions are offered in this first extract. Instead, it has short lines of what appears to be ordinary British dialogue between two female characters. In the full play, Churchill does provide rather sparse, brief stage directions.

- The second extract is from local playwright Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!*. In the extract there are a couple of lines providing stage directions. These establish

where the scene is taking place and who the characters in the scene are. However, Fugard makes very specific use of punctuation. This punctuation structures the dialogue to flow in an ordinary conversation between three people. There are only three characters in Fugard's play, the teacher Mr M, Isabel and Thami.

- The third extract is from William Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, first performed in 1600–1601 and printed in 1603. Shakespeare's plays have minimal stage directions: there are only brief indications of the entrance of characters onto the stage, the exits, the fights and flourishes. The play is written in what is known as **blank verse**. This poetic form uses **iambic pentameter**. Iambic pentameter is a specific structural form of unrhymed verse that was used in drama in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and is defined in the previous Unit on poetry.

  <u>**NOTE:**</u> When you do a close analysis of Shakespeare's plays it is possible to use the same techniques you use for a close reading of poetry. These are provided in the section on poetry in this guide.

- The fourth extract is taken from the film script by Quentin Tarantino for his film *Django Unchained*. You will notice that there are many more stage directions in this opening sequence of the film. These directions set the atmosphere, the events taking place, the visual aspects of the film (the sunlight), movement or action and sound happening in the background. You are introduced to the main character of the title (Django). But there are no spoken words, or dialogue.

  – It is important to remember that, in a drama, lines of dialogue are delivered by an actor in costume. These lines are addressed both to other actors on the stage and to the audience.

Section 3: Performance

Introduction

As I have mentioned, what distinguishes drama from prose or poetry is that the text of the play is meant to be performed for an audience. If you think about the film script above, or TV series and radio plays, you can see that the film has stage directions that are very similar in style to a literary play. There is a specific script and there is a dialogue for each actor. But the film script contains more information relating to lighting, props, sound, setting and movement than in a stage play. Yet, the dialogue in the film is addressed directly to the audience. In this manner it does not differ much from a stage play.

- Next time you watch a film or a television show, try to analyse how the actors are addressing you and how their lines resemble the dialogue in a written script.

Interaction with performance

Though poetry or prose can also be read aloud and the manner in which they are read can offer the listener cues for interpretation, **they are not written specifically to be performed like plays**. When reading the extracts provided, pay attention to:

- The playwright's choice of words: how could they be brought to life on a stage?
- The visual element (sight) and the aural element (sound). How do these elements work to pull the audience into the action?

Drama has visual qualities, sound and movement. If you have never seen a play on a stage, then consider these aspects with relation to the film script above, a film you have seen, or a television series.

- How important are the clothes the characters wear?
- What is the setting (or location) of the action? For example, does it take place in a house, in the countryside, in a bar?

These 'realistic' features are what we call sets on a stage. In film or on television it is much easier to create these backgrounds than it is on a stage.

The aural, or sound, element of drama includes people speaking to one another in dialogue. In film and television there are added sound effects of music or everyday noises like cars, telephones ringing, etc.

A further difference between drama and prose is that a play tends not to have a narrator, though there are exceptions. The chorus in *Romeo and Juliet* acts as a narrative voice.

NOTE: The section on prose in this study guide explores how the narrator in a novel shapes the narrative through his or her subjective viewpoint. The narrator may evaluate characters, comments on the action in the novel and influence how the reader responds. In this way, the narrator may control the reader's sympathies. **The narrative voice in a play does the same thing as the narrative voice in fiction.**

Activity 3

Answer the following questions in your journal.

- What is the difference between drama, prose and poetry?
- In what way are stage directions used in the extracts?
- Why are stage directions important?
- What effect do the exclamation marks and ellipses have on the dialogue in Athol Fugard's play?
- Does a play shape the audience's response? If so, how?

Feedback

You could have answered question one with the following ideas:

- Drama is meant to be performed. The difference between drama and prose and poetry is that though poetry and prose can be read and an interpretation offered, drama is a performance. Drama usually does not have a narrator, or narrative voice. In rare cases where there is a narrator, its voice constructs the plot and readers' perceptions. Stage directions are always in italics, which sets them apart from the dialogue of the play. They are prose, not dialogue. Extract one does not contain stage directions, although there are short ones in the body of the whole play. Extract two contains some stage directions which set the tone and setting. The stage directions also supply the names of the characters present. In extract three from Shakespeare's work there are few stage directions which indicate entrances, exits, fights and flourishes.

- Here you could have considered that having stage directions helps to provide the reader with a visual image of what is happening on the stage. The reader (you) then can picture the scene and the possible movements of the actors, the sounds around them and the setting (a classroom, a castle, a lounge, etc).
- Here you could have explored the elements of a close reading of a play. Ellipsis and exclamation marks are punctuation. They are aspects of language that the playwright is using to structure the dialogue. Using these grammatical structures, the playwright creates an interaction between the characters where what they say appears to be like normal speech between people in a real situation. But is it really 'normal'?
- Consider that all performances are interpretations of written plays. Both the director and the actors shape how the play is performed and, in so doing, they shape how the audience responds. This depends on how the characters are presented, what the setting is, the tone or mood created, and the use of sound (think of film: without music some dramatic scenes would fall flat and might be funny instead of scary).

Section 4: Dramatic dialogue

Introduction

In drama, dialogue is one of the main ways of revealing a character's personality traits. The content of the character's speeches is important and has to be examined. We need to do this so that we can understand what the dialogue tells us about the characters attitudes, moral values, personality, and so on. This can be done explicitly or implicitly. The way a character speaks is important. The term idiolect is used to talk about distinctive features of an individual's use of language. In a play, the idiolect reveals a great deal about a character. Dramatic dialogue involves an interaction between characters and shows the relationships between them. Read the passage on *Top Girls* in your reader.

Dramatic dialogue

The verbal interaction between the girls Angie and Kit relies on **antithesis** (opposites, contrasting ideas) and repetition to create tension and a sense of conflict. This technique is not uncommon in twentieth-century plays. In all plays, dialogue contributes to the creation of mood or atmosphere. The pace or rhythm of dialogue has a part to play in creating this mood. So in the **staccato** exchange between Angie and Kit there is an underlying feeling of tension and unease.

- Did you notice that the language in the excerpt is very ordinary and uses colloquial speech, but though it appears natural it is still constructed? This means that it does not resemble normal dialogue – say, the conversation you would have with a friend, as discussed in the previous unit.
  - Formal language consists of Standard English and is polite.
  - Informal language is colloquial and is used in every day conversation with people you know.
  - In general drama will use Standard English, but the more modern plays use colloquial speech.

- Do you notice any repetition in the excerpt?

– The word money and the idea of paying are very strong. There is also the whole notion of dislike of someone and "telling". The reader of the play will notice that there is a repetition of Angie saying "Shall I tell you something". There are the short one-liners that add to the idea that the scene will play out very quickly between the characters. This is the verbal interaction that establishes a negative tension between the two girls, one negating everything the other says.

- Did you also notice that the language is in an informal register?
  – This goes back to the use of idiolect (an individual's personal way of using language). The dialogue is relaxed and colloquial (uses slang expressions), so that it is just like everyday conversation. The words 'innit', 'telly' and 'wanna' are colloquialisms. At the same time, these slang words tell us that the girls are from a lower-class English background. In your conversations, you might also use slang and the sort of slang you used would place you in a certain class, culture, race and gender.

Drama is about conflict and resolution. In the scene between Angie and Kit, a tension is established between the two girls. This is emphasised in the use of space. The two girls are placed in close physical contact in the hut, indicated in the stage directions "squashed together" and later when Angie complains that Kit is "sitting on my leg".

- Despite the limited stage directions, would the director know how to position the characters/actors on the stage?

There is also movement in changing of positions in the space, establishing the girls' changing relationship. The hut can be considered a space where the girls hide from the outside world and in which they share secrets.

Different types of dialogue

One important kind of dialogue is presented in blank verse (which was briefly discussed in Section One). Blank verse is used in the soliloquy delivered by Shakespeare's Hamlet. This soliloquy can be found in your Reader. The speech does not involve another character, but is an extended speech directed at the audience and heard only by them. In this speech the character reveals his innermost thoughts, sharing them with the audience. This is a very persuasive technique used by the dramatist to make the audience identify with the character.

- We recommend that you should write on the text that you are studying, making note of words that are strange and, as mentioned at the beginning of this section, looking them up in a dictionary. Look out for language devices such as metaphor, simile, alliteration, personification, onomatopoeia and others and try to see how they structure and function in the text. I will provide a table describing some of these features and there will be a glossary of terms at the end of the section. It is always a good idea to buy a dictionary of literary terms for a full list of these (M.H. Abrams's *Glossary of Literary Terms* is now in its eighth edition and still extremely informative. Or you could try *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* by Chris Baldick).

Activity 4

In your journal, write down your own response to the following questions:

- Does a soliloquy use emotion to create a specific effect on the reader or audience? Explain how emotion is used.

- As self-reflexive and critical readers we are aware that it is the dramatist Shakespeare who is using the character Hamlet to express opinions and attitudes. What are these opinions and attitudes? And why should we pay attention to them?

Feedback

I am not going to give a full discussion of these questions. Your answers, though, could have considered the following:

- Hamlet's use of emotion is vivid and filled with hyperbole (or overstatements). His descriptions of how miserable life is are aimed to make the reader or audience sympathetic towards his situation. He is therefore manipulating the audience and reader by trying to persuade them to see the situation and his considerations of life and death as valid.

- Shakespeare has a reputation as one of the master dramatists whose plays capture the human condition. This perception appears to give him authority to speak about these issues (love, lust, gluttony, jealousy, murderous thoughts, violence, and so on).

TAKE CAREFUL NOTE:

The self-reflexive and critical reader will realise that Shakespeare has constructed the situations in his plays to create the drama that appears on stage and in the text. Thus the fictional part of the story should make you want to ask questions of (interrogate) Hamlet's arguments carefully and not to accept them at face value. This is true of prose and poetry as they are constructed literary creations that have an agenda. It is up to you, the reader or audience, to determine what this might be and to question it. Does it actually relate to your own philosophy or experience?

Section 5: Annotating a text

Introduction

In this Section I show you how to do a brief annotation of a portion of Hamlet's soliloquy. This annotation will explore what are called figures of speech or rhetorical devices. You must remember that once you have done an annotation of an extract, you are then capable of slowly unpicking any text and seeing the themes and ideas that it contains. You will then be able to write a well-argued essay discussing the themes, figures of speech or other devices that are present in the extract. Annotation is a very important part of close analysis. Remember that words frequently have more than one meaning, and that the manner in which sentences are structured grammatically always plays an important role in the meaning of a text. The speech from *Hamlet* is a good way to test the skills you have acquired from both the poetry and the prose sections of this study guide. Definitions of rhetorical devices (figures of speech) can be

found in the glossary in your prescribed book by Andrew Goatly on pages 329–345. This should help you when you do your own annotations in the activity section.

- **In the Reader, study the soliloquy from *Hamlet* again and then look at the annotated text of the soliloquy (also found in the Reader).**

Use of rhetorical devices

Perhaps you can see different examples of rhetorical devices in the extract, but these are some of the ones that I found:

- Repetition (to sleep ... to sleep)
- Alliteration (bare bodkin)
- Caesura (to be, or not to be: that is the question)
- Extended or complex metaphor (the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune)
- Comparison (to die, to sleep)
- Parallelism (to sleep; to sleep: perchance to dream)

Activity 5

- I want you to attempt to do a similar annotation from a different Shakespearean soliloquy from the history play *King Henry V*. You will find the soliloquy in your Reader. Then write a short close reading on how the rhetorical devices function in the passage.

Feedback

You could have chosen different examples, such as:

- Repetition (Once more ... once more. On, on)
- Imperatives or commands (imitate, stiffen, conjure up, disguise, cry). Though there are no exclamation marks, which tend to be used when giving a command, yet the King is demanding something from his soldiers. A command is therefore implied. These commands are mostly verbs and are strongly emphasized when the dialogue is spoken to indicate the command.
- Simile (like the brass cannon)
- Extended or complex metaphor (let the brow o'erwhelm it/As fearfully as doth a galléd rock/O'erhang and jutty his confounded base/Swilled with the wild and wasteful ocean.)
- Allusion (dishonour not your mothers: this is similar to the biblical commandment to 'Honour your father and mother'.

Did you see how the first line actually runs into the second?

This is called **enjambment**. The enjambment suggests that a statement that cannot be questioned is being made. King Henry is trying to prepare his men for the battle that is to come. He draws the men close by calling them 'dear friends', placing them on the same level as himself and implying that he cares for all of them. 'Once more unto the breach; implies that as friends they have gone to war together before. This is flagrant manipulation and persuasion of both the audience and the characters the king is addressing.

Section 6: Characters

Introduction

Characters in drama, like those in prose, are constructs. In drama you would consider them dramatic constructs, what I would call imaginary creations, rather than real people. In your written answers you should not try and consider the life of a character either before or after the play. Instead, refer to how the characters are represented by the playwright and discuss what the dramatic purpose of the character is in relation to the play as a whole.

The purpose of characters

Every character has a purpose in a play. Be careful not to disregard minor characters; they may be significant. When thinking about the purposes of a character, think in terms of the character's importance in the whole play. You must also consider their importance with regards to the following:

Plot

- The action of the play. How does the character contribute to the action of the play? Is the character crucial to the plot – the main protagonist.

Themes

- The ideas and issues that run through the play. In *Top Girls* one of the themes is the lives of women or girls. There are only female characters in this play and the dramatist is using these characters to show specific experiences women go through as high-powered business women, stay-at-home mothers or teenage girls.

How characters relate to one another

- This is very important in any play. Characters may contrast with one another, such as the career woman and the stay-at-home mother. Contrasting characters tend to bring out the differences, making characters' strengths and weaknesses more distinct.

Presenting characters

When you write about the manner in which a character is presented in a play you should consider the following points:

- **How is the character introduced by the playwright?**
  - A character can be introduced without being present. This is done by the main characters talking about them, creating a sense of anticipation in the audience.
  - Generally actions performed by the character in the play are significant. If you consider Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, when Lady Macbeth sleepwalks it is indicative of her guilt for having committed a murder.
  - It is important to consider whether a character develops during the course of a play. *Do they change their attitudes or ideas? Are the relationships with the other characters different in some way?* The main characters are more likely to develop than the minor ones. In *My Children! My Africa!*, the character Thami undergoes significant character development through his interactions with Sybil who

teaches him to stand up for himself allowing him to learn more about his own character.

Activity 6

- Read the extended extract from Athol Fugard's *My Children! My Africa!* This can be found in your reader. This dialogue occurs near the end of the play. It is a reaction to the death of Thami and Isabel's teacher Mr M.

- In a short essay (a page to a page and a half) in your journal examine how Fugard presents the characters of Thami and Isabel in this extract. You now need to do a close reading of the extract which means annotating and looking for characterisation and rhetorical devices and what they add to

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Feedback

- First you needed to annotate this extract to see what rhetorical devices the playwright has used to establish the characters of Thami and Isabel. You could have looked for how vocabulary is used. Short interchanges of question and answer.

- You could have looked at the punctuation marks: what is the function of "..." in Isabel's speech?

- What is Thami's dialogue doing? Is he trying to form the audience's response and that of Isabel? Is he trying to persuade them of something important?

- Is the dialogue natural or does it seem stilted?

- What does this say about the characters? Perhaps that they are uncomfortable with the situation and the parting that is about to happen?

- You could have come to the realisation that something horrible has occurred.

    - The reaction of Thami and Isabel says a lot about their emotional state. This response shows Thami's character as wanting to become active, involved in something greater than himself and the life around him. Isabel seems to have become passive, consumed by her emotions of loss, the use of the words 'awful', 'losing him', 'disposed of'. She seems lost in the repeated emphasis 'nowhere for me to go' and 'so where do I go' (*parallelism*).

- There is a lot of very evocative imagery that sets the atmosphere between the characters – which images struck you as significant?

    - How about the idea of 'disposed of in a 'Christian manner'? The word 'disposed' when talking about a body makes you imagine that it was merely thrown into a rubbish bin, or like the school, burnt. When it is **contrasted** with 'Christian manner' it makes you think of the pyres that they burnt heretics on, not the idea of a burial with prayers or sadness.

These are only a few of the things that you could have written down. I am sure that you had many more ideas.

Section 7: Stage directions

Introduction

Stage directions are the information provided by the dramatist on how the play should be staged. Shakespeare provided very few of these directions. Stage directions are perhaps the biggest device through which a playwright will show how a play should be performed on the stage. But these stage directions need to be interpreted by the director and the actors as much as the dialogue and its presentation to the audience. Drama is always open to subjective interpretation and is always a constructed device mirroring a certain viewpoint.

Many other playwrights, particularly modern ones, provide detailed stage directions. These should be carefully studied as they offer an insight into what the dramatist intended. These directions reflect atmosphere, aspects of the characters or of the time period in which the play occurs. This is also important in film scripts, which include very detailed directions, as you have seen in the extract from *Django Unchained.* Some playwrights include descriptions of the characters in the play. These are not visible to the audience, but would be visible to the reader of the play, such as yourself.

Tennessee Williams in his stage directions goes beyond the external appearances and behaviour in his stage directions. We will now look at an example of his stage directions in his play *The Glass Menagerie.* This will be followed by an excerpt from Henrik Ibsen's play *A Doll's House.* You will then be able to compare the stage directions and how they function. Please see your reader for these excerpts.

Activity 7

- In the *Glass Menagerie*, what do you think the function of the stage directions might be?

- What are they indicating about costume, atmosphere and the relationship between the characters?

- Compare this with the stage directions you have encountered in the other extracts with which we have dealt. Do you think they are similar? Explain your reasons

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Feedback

- The directions tell us about what the characters are doing. Laura is sitting and her mother Amanda climbs up the stairs of the fire escape and on to the landing and then enters the room where Laura is sitting. There is an indication of sound, Laura hearing her mother's steps, moves to hide what she is doing and pretends to be occupied with something else. The directions are very specific about costume as well; this provides the reader of the text with visual imagery so that they can try and imagine what the women would look like. The fact that Amanda looks through the open door to the room before entering, shows her to be a silent witness or observer of the scene in the room. Her facial reactions indicate her disgust at what she sees before she enters: Her destruction of the typewriter keyboard diagram is a direct criticism of what she knows Laura has been doing – washing her collection of glass. Speech and stage directions together provide us with a picture of the tension between the mother and the daughter.

Now please read the excerpt from Henrik Ibsen's *A Doll's House* in your Reader.

Activity 8

- What impression do you think is created by the stage directions in this excerpt from *A Doll's House*?

- In your opinion what are the dramatists trying to show about how women are perceived by men?

- Write a short essay (1 page or so) in your journal in which you consider the atmosphere and what the scene is telling you. Try and relate this to one of the other extracts previously discussed in the preceding units.

Feedback

- For me this description is cluttered by the piano, which would take up space, the numerous pieces of furniture, art works, the stove and carpet. I think that Ibsen is describing a domestic, middle-class interior. However, consider all of these objects placed onto a stage.

- How would the actors move without bumping into something, particularly if the stage is small?

- You will agree that it would be very difficult to fit all of this onto a stage. The quantity of the furniture in the limited space would place a constraint on the actors. But this room in the play might also symbolise a form of claustrophobic enclosure for the main female character, whose name is Nora.

- The living-room is Nora's space; her husband Torvald has his own space. A door on "*the left leads to HELMER'S study*". Remember, in middle-class households, the husband was often referred to simply by his surname. In the play Nora is always seen in this room. She seems trapped in a very limited space. This tight space also plays on the title of the play, *A Doll's House*. Nora is like a doll who lives in this house. She seems to be there for her husband to play with. She also does not appear to have a life outside of this room.

- We could employ a **feminist theoretical** close reading of this situation, showing how the manner in which Nora is treated conforms to the idea of **patriarchal** oppression of women.

- **Feminist theory** tries to analyse how gender inequality determines the conception of women's social roles and experiences under masculine domination. This theory sees gender as constructed by the social norms of any given time period. Thus a woman would be constructed as nurturing, gentle, passive and there to take care of her husband's needs – much like Nora.

For me, Nora is seen by her husband as conforming to certain socially constructed ideas. In Nora's case, she is a doll, a plaything trapped in a small space in a house. This is known as **stereotyping**. A close reading of the stage directions has shown how social situations and spaces shape the ways in which women, and men, are perceived. The dramatist seems critical of this system and is trying to make the reader think about the relationships between men and women.

Conclusion

Throughout this unit I have introduced you to the different aspects of a play's structure. I have outlined the basic genres of tragedy and comedy. I have considered how you need to approach a play and we have explored how to do this through the use of annotation. I have told you about rhetorical devices, figures of speech and we have examined performance, stage directions, characterisation and dramatic dialogue. In the next section you will be introduced to the type of dialogue you experience on a daily basis. You need to consider how the dialogues in which you engage with friends, colleagues, parents, authority figures and other daily interactions can be considered a form of dramatic dialogue.

UNIT 6

Conversational analysis – 'real life' dialogue

GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE:
Theory, style and poetics

Nomsa Zindela

In Unit 5, you explored the way in which characters; actors interact in a play or television drama. The interaction, you will have noted, is based on the exchange of words; expression through action etc. This section introduces another aspect of interaction; that which we observe in real life: conversation. The aim is to give you the tools and strategies you can use to analyse conversations. You will also realise how conversation can be considered a form of dramatic expression.

By the end of this section, you will have:

- discussed the differences between dramatic dialogue and conversation
- understood why conversations should be studied;
- read a few extracts from conversations and analysed them following the conversational analysis conventions;
- analysed several conversation excerpts to show how speakers open and end conversations; take and give each other turns; introduce a new topic; show politeness and cooperation;
- understood some cultural norms relating to conducting conversations.

N.B. You are advised to read this section alongside the following pages of your prescribed and recommended books. The last two books are prescribed for ENG1502 and ENG2601 respectively, but are recommended resources for ENG2602.

Goatly, A. (2000) *Critical Reading and Writing,* London: Routledge.

Carter C. et al. (2001) *Working with Texts* (3rd edition), London: Routledge.

Mullany S. & Stockwell, P. (2010) *Introducing English Language: a resource book for students*, London: Routledge.

Points for reflection

First we are going to consider conversation.

- Have you ever considered that the conversations you conduct in the course of your day are a form of dialogue that works on a similar basis to that of drama?
- Consider what a normal conversation is and how it is structured. Why would we study a conversational interaction and how would we analyse this interaction?
- Why is analysis of a conversation important?
- What relation could it have to dramatic dialogue?

SECTION 1 – Definition of conversation

What is a conversation?

A conversation *appears* to be different from the type of dialogue that occurs in a play, television series or film. We have stressed that a play is a written work intended to be performed before an audience. It is purposely structured to achieve certain aims, so it is constructed and is not really 'natural' conversation. Ordinary conversation can be seen to exhibit the following characteristics:

- It is not written for performance,
- It is spontaneous and unplanned,
- It exists within a social context,
- it takes place in many human social interactions.

Let's think for a minute of the following interactions:

- A telephone conversation
- An interaction between friends and strangers; mother and child;
- An interaction of players in a card game
- A debate/chat (in class, in parliament, in a meeting, among friends, family etc.)
- Sessions in therapy rooms (with psychologists, priests, counsellors etc.)
- Medical consultations (between nurses, doctors and their patients)
- Courtroom trials
- Press conferences
- Interviews of various kinds
- Interaction in an airline cockpit
- A phone call to a call centre
- Classroom interaction (amongst students, between teacher and students)

    – These actions sometimes referred to as 'speech events' are some examples of 'talk' or conversation in which human beings engage. Conversations have a different shape from the constructed dialogue of plays, movies or television series. What are some of the differences? Write your ideas down in your journal.

Surely, these interactions can be found within a play, movie or television series, and indeed one or all of them could appear in these forms. One could say drama is a reconstruction of conversational situations that occur in reality. Plays, therefore, attempt to make these actions real by 'imitating' what otherwise takes place in real life, and this is called **mimesis**. So if you study how conversation works in reality you will be better equipped to analyse dialogue in drama.

Conversation or spoken discourse, also known as 'talk-in-interaction', is a practice used by humans to interact socially. They could be exchanging thoughts, ideas, solving problems, correcting each other, teaching each other or reprimanding each other. In the same way as drama, film and television can be analysed as narratives, so can conversation. For example, the study of how rhetorical devices mentioned in Unit 5 of Section 7 are used in dialogue within a drama, could be thought of as being a top level, and the study of conversation the foundational level. The analysis of conversation is referred to as Conversational Analysis (CA). Conversational analysis is conducted using different rhetorical devices.

But what is conversational analysis?

Definition of conversational analysis

Conversation Analysis (CA) is a method for investigating the structure and process of social interactions between and among humans in real life situations. This methodological procedure (CA) attempts to describe people's methods of producing 'orderly' social interactions and to also show how interlocutors reflect on and interpret other's behaviours.

Why should we study conversations or social interactions?

You may be asking yourself this question already: why would we bother to analyse an action as mundane as a conversation?

- Think of at least three reasons why you think we study conversations.

Some possible answers are provided here:

- **We study conversations to assist the course of justice:** You may have heard the term 'forensic discourse analysis', what this discourse does is to study words used by a suspect, in order to determine, for example, their innocence or guilt. Forensic discourse analysis studies the structure of a conversation by examining word usage. The goal is to ascertain criminal intent, involvement or innocence by scrutinizing word choice. For example, a suspect who uses the word "we" or "us" when describing a crime indicates that he conspired with others.

  - Forensic conversation analysis can also focus on the study of a person's dialect to determine the origin and language of a person.
  - Author identification techniques can be employed to ascertain whether a recording or a note, such as a ransom note, indicates who the suspect might be.
  - Recorded police interrogations can be used to decipher whether or not a person knowingly admitted guilt, underwent just interrogation or understood the conversation conducted throughout the interrogation.
  - Lawyers can admit recorded interviews in court as evidence. Dialogue analysis can assist in proving or disproving guilt and can determine inconsistencies in the interviewing process, making recordings inadmissible in court.

Do you think that any of these aspects of forensic analysis could be applied to understanding a drama, a film or a television series? If so, how?

- **We also study conversations in order to understand how different societies and/or cultures interact.** Analysing the conversations of different societies would be one of the methods to get to understand each other better and where necessary, to be tolerant and accommodating of each other. For example the study of 'turn-taking' in conversations has shown that turn-taking practices differ from one society to another. Some societies frown upon what others tolerate, for instance some societies have been found to tolerate long pauses; talk at the same time or interrupt talk.
- Some people study conversations in order to write their own drama scripts. Unless you know how people talk in 'real life' you are likely to produce dull dialogues in your drama script. Read the following fictitious conversation between friends:

    Khumbu: *Hello guys! how are you today?*
    Nthabiseng: *I'm fine!*

Thoko: I'm great joy!

Pat: Thank you for asking!

Khumbu: Guys, can I invite you for dinner?

Nthabiseng, Pat, Thoko: Uhmmm?

Khumbu: It's my treat! I'm going to pay the expenses!

Nthabiseng, Pat, Thoko: Let's go!

Nthabiseng: How sweet of you treating us all for dinner. You are such a good friend!

Khumbu: Thank you.

You will agree with me that this is a very dry conversation; friends don't talk like this. If you write in this way, people are not likely to read your work.

- **We study conversations for academic reasons**; to create theories about human action and events. Textbooks writers for example benefit a lot from results of conversational analysis as they can show real authentic examples of conversations that they could include in textbooks to teach spoken discourse.
- Some dramatists include similar forms of dialects in their dialogues. This allows the audience to experience how different people might sound or express themselves.
- **We study conversations** so that we may create non-human interactions through technology. Examples are automated teller machines (ATMs), the recorded voices on phones etc. All these are modelled on how humans interact.

Activity 1

- Find an automated machine and write down/transcribe the 'wording' in it. When you phone a bank call centre or a telephone company call centre, you will hear a lot of automated messages.

- After transcribing the recorded message, examine it to see how the recording is modelled on 'features of conversation' such as greetings, pauses, information giving etc.

- While these automated messages will not answer your questions directly, the order in which they are arranged anticipates what you might have said in a real conversation.

In analysing conversation or 'talk' the focus is placed on the tacit, shared knowledge that allows people to engage with the social world. Conversational analysis studies focus on **three main dimensions** of social talk and how these are managed. These are: **actions, structure,** and **intersubjective understanding**.

Actions:

These include: how conversations are opened and closed /started and finished; how stories are told; how complaints are made; how questions and answers are practiced in contexts such as interviews, press conferences, hospital scenes (diagnosis) and classroom questioning. When you are investigating conversational actions, the question to ask is: 'how are conversations *organised* in order for these actions to happen?' Given that more than one person speaks, conversations mean that speakers give and allow each other *turns* to speak. Conversational analysis examines how this *'turn-taking'* is managed in conversation. When people speak they use body movements (what some call 'body language'). Conversational analysis looks at how these gestures such as gaze and body

postures function in interactions. When humans speak, *they pause, they overlap and they repair their utterances*, in case something is not clear or has been misunderstood.

CA examines how these patterns of *repair and overlap* occur and are managed in conversation.

The words we use in conversation may be formal, informal, ungrammatical, ambiguous, ironic, metaphorical, etc. In daily conversation it is generally the informal and ungrammatical use of language that occurs. This generally sets ordinary conversation outside of what occurs in a play, where Standard Formal English tends to be employed.

Structure

This refers to the way interactions are organised so that actions can take place. Certain rules and structures have to be observed: for example, if someone asks 'How are you'? You would, most likely, respond with 'I'm fine'. The conversation may proceed with more actions. If, however, the response is: 'What business is it of yours, how I am?' then a shift in direction of the conversation would occur. In fact the conversation would probably not continue. The explication of these 'rules' of paired actions can have important consequences for analysing social interaction. These paired actions such as question/answer are called *'adjacency pairs'*, and consist of actions where the first action (first pair-part) performed by one speaker, invites a particular type of secondary action (second pair-part) from the other speaker. Typical examples of adjacency pairs are: *Question is paired with answer; request is paired with grant/refusal; invitation is paired with acceptance/declination*. As you can see the relation between first and second pair parts is strict and normative. In some instances, if not adhered to, it may lead to the breakdown of a conversation.

> *Would these adjacency pairs occur in a conversation between actors? What do you think?*

Intersubjective understanding

This concerns how speakers create, negotiate and maintain conversation. One type of intersubjective understanding concerns how speakers present their intentions, their state of knowledge their relation; and their position towards what is being talked about. Put differently, intersubjectivity is concerned with the question: do speakers understand each other? A speaker who responds to an action does so to show they have understood the question, if the action is a question, the response should be an answer. A speaker's understanding of an action is measured against their response. If the understanding is considered problematic, there may be the need to restate and modify the utterance. Here context and state of knowledge become important.

In the example on page 230 of your prescribed text we read:

Line 10: 'would you like to take a seat?'

Line 11: 'No, thanks'

Line 12: 'I can't understand why.' (why you can't take a seat)

Line 13:' I can't sign a stolen car report because my car was not stolen.'

In this exchange Ms Engels in line 13 gives an account of why she refuses the offer: she doesn't want to sign a report. This may seem to indicate to a reader or listener that she

didn't understand the question, but the interlocutors understand each other. Ms Engels is making her position clear, using many strategies. She had seen the copy of the report in his hands and concluded he wants her to sign it. She will not allow the Lieutenant to have a hold on her. Context, physical gestures can influence a conversation to move in an unexpected direction. Intersubjectivity then becomes interplay between verbal and non-verbal communication.

> *In a film, play or television series are there intersubjective understandings? Do actors communicate or are there times when communication breaks down and one actor does not do what is expected*?

Let's examine the concept of speech acts.

Conversation actions (speech acts)

Conversation actions, or speech acts, refer to an expression used in conversations and in written discourse, which shows the position a speaker has taken in order to perform an action. On p. 148 ff of your prescribed text, speech acts are discussed and some examples are given on pp. 230–231. In each of these examples, the things people say 'do something'.

Let's discuss this further. Please read the conversation on pp. 230–231 of your prescribed book at least twice. We shall call one speaker Xe and the other one Zi. In brackets we indicate the name of the speech act as stated in your textbook.

Line 1–Xe: 'Ms Engel?' (summons)

Line 2–Zi: 'Lieutenant Renard is ready to see you.' (request)

In this example Zi doesn't use the word 'request', but we deduce from the utterance that what he says can be described as a request.

If you were to describe this exchange, you would say 'Mr. Xe summoned Ms Engel into the room and informed her that Lieutenant Renard is ready (has requested) to see her.'

Line 10–Vo: *'Would you like to take a seat?'* (an offer)
Line 11–Ke: *'No, thanks'* (decline)
Line 12–Vo *'I can't understand why.'* (seeking clarification)
Line 13–Ke *'I can't sign a stolen-car report, lieutenant, because my car was not stolen'* (an account of the refusal, or an explanation).

Again here we see how each utterance can be named in terms of what the speaker intends to do with it. Clearly a strong knowledge of *verbs* is required from you if you are to interpret speech acts successfully.

In drama and other literary narratives where dialogue features, we can analyse a dialogue and from the utterances one character makes, we deduce the kind of person they are. Similarly in real life, someone who uses a lot of apology speech acts; indirect speech acts; sympathy speech acts is likely to be described as polite.

Read pp. 231–234 in your textbook again and see how speech acts assist in describing the behaviours and characters of the Lieutenant and Ms Engels.

Speech acts can be used to analyse several aspects of conversation. Goatly (2000) examines how speech acts enforce gender power (see pp. 229–234). Politeness is discussed later in this section.

Conversation structure

Please read pp. 148–150 of your prescribed textbook alongside this section. Refer also to Unit 6 on pp. 197–201 of *Working with Texts*(Carter et al) and pp. 79–84 of *Introducing English Language* (Mullany and Stockwell).

Although there are many features of conversation, here we will look at only three elements: *openings, closings, and turn-taking*. All conversations begin; interlocutors take turns to speak – they don't all speak at the same time; and conversations come to an end, they close.

- **Openings:** There are conventional routines for openings, for example: greetings, introduction, opening questions.
- **Turn-taking mechanisms:** The intention to let the conversational partner speak is signalled with a low voice, slowing down, putting a question, body movement. In smooth communication less than five per cent of the conversation is delivered in overlap.
  - *Adjacency pairs:* utterances which require an immediate response or reaction from the partner (greeting-greeting, offer-accept, compliment-thank, question-answer); there are always preferred and non-preferred answers, and it is difficult for learners to distinguish between them.
  - *Back-channelling:* signals that show the speaker that his/her message is understood and listened to.

- **Closings:** Intentions to close a conversation are usually expressed with closing signals such as 'well', 'so', 'okay' used with falling intonation.

How do people open conversations? I am sure you all have an answer for this question. We can use words or actions to initiate a conversation. Here are some examples:

Words	Actions
• Greet them.	• Tap someone on the shoulder.
• Ask after their health: ' Hey, how are you?'	• Smile at them.
• Call them by name.	• Stand next to them.
• Make a comment or a compliment: 'your cap looks stunning …'	• Wave at them.
• Comment on what you both are looking at; comment on the weather etc.	Then start a conversation or wait for their response.
Then proceed to start a conversation or wait for a response.	

The method of beginning a conversation will vary depending on a number of factors: the relationship between the interactants, how much or how little they know each

other, where they are; who they are with; why the conversation has to open etc. Because of these factors there is no universal way of opening a conversation.

Think of at least three conversations you have had in the last two days; can you remember how they started? Can you explain why they started in the way they did?

How do people take turns in conversation?

Turn-taking is determined by what Sacks, Schlegoff & Jefferson (1979) refer to as *transition relevance points*. These, as the name suggests, refer to the point in a conversation where you think it is appropriate to say something. Some points are much more obvious than others. As these authors note, turns can happen at:

- *A change of pitch*
- *A change of intonation*
- *A momentary silence*
- *The end of a syntactic unit of language: a phrase, clause, or sentence; a question or statement, etc.*
- *A paralinguistic feature: a hand pointing at you, etc.*

Speakers use several techniques as well to give or take turns. For example:

- *A speaker who is 'holding the floor' can select the next person to speak;*
- *A speaker can select themselves;*
- *The speaker may decide to carry on and not give others a turn.*

Turn-taking cues

A speaker might 'signal' that it is time for another speaker to take a turn. For example:

When the current speaker asks a question it might be a cue for someone else to take over;

If the current speaker trails off, it could be a cue for someone else to take over;

If the speaker indicates that they have finished speaking with a closing statement such as: 'And so that's all …';

If the speaker uses 'marker words' such as but, so, well. (O'Grady and Archibald: 480)

Here is an example of a conversation between a doctor and a patient.

1. *A. Mary nice to meet you*   *(.5 sec.)*
2. *A. what could we do for you?*
3. *B. we:ll*   *(1 sec.)*
4. *B. .hh um::the last I'd say three weeks.*   *(.5 sec.)*
5. *B. I've had*   *(1 sec.)*
6. *B. the : se*   *(.3 sec)*
7. *B. really sharp pains down in this area of my abdomen*
8. *B. .hh and they've*
9. *B. they've been up in this area too=but not so much as down here*
10. *B. .hhh and I've had a sharp pain under my left breast*
11. *A. m'k*

Which turn-taking features can you observe in this conversation? Can you explain why one speaker holds the floor more than the other?

Turn-taking and culture

As we noted earlier, conversational analysis reveals a lot about cultural differences. Turn-taking is one conversational practice which varies from one culture to another. Culture plays a significant role in conversation and whether the conversation succeeds or fails. However, when people from multiple cultures engage in conversation, it is very easy for miscommunication and confusion to occur.

Similarities across culture …	Differences across culture …
Avoidance of overlapping talk	Turn-taking cues are different in ordinary conversation across cultures.
Minimal amounts of silence are preferred between speakers (ex. awkward silences)	Many different body language cues
Speed of the listener's response is important	Different gestures add to conversation (ex. hand usage in Italian)
	Different verb tenses are used for gender politeness and differences
	Honorifics are used in some cultural conversation (ex. Korean)
	Vowel and consonant systems (O'Grady and Archibald 292, 294)

General characteristics and turn-taking (Coates 126–138):

All-female groups:	All-male groups:
Cooperative/collaborative rather than competitive	Competitive. Hierarchies emerge in conversation: submission and dominance are evident
More flexible	Problems: discuss more circumstantial differences
Problems: discuss more personal issues	
Talk about people and feelings	Talk about current affairs, travel and sports
Turn Taking	Ask questions to gain information; Wish to achieve solidarity
Often violate the 'rule' that only one person can speak at a time	*Turn-taking*
Open up the conversational floor	Prefer one speaker at a time, with little overlap between them
Use overlapping and minimal responses	Playing the expert: hold the floor and talk for a long time about a subject
Simultaneous speech is understood: multilayered conversations	Verbal sparring: rapid-fire turns

SECTION 2 – The social nature of conversation

By the end of this unit you will have

- Grasped the cooperative principles of conversation
- explored the different ways in which speakers may receive certain utterances i.e. face saving
- demonstrated how politeness strategies work in conversations
- analysed how some principles can be broken or flouted
- understood the concept of implicature.

In the previous unit we listed the different types of conversations people can engage in, and we also saw how turns are taken and given. This unit develops this speech pattern further by examining 'the social graces' of conversations. By this we mean how speakers 'co-operate' when they interact. In 1975, the linguist Paul Grice made a claim that conversations are a cooperative enterprise. In other word, if speakers do not co-operate, a conversation may break down. Grice refers to this as the co-operative principle. In this principle he suggests four maxims of co-operation:

The maxim of quality: do not say what you believe to be false.

The maxim of quantity: give the amount of information you consider helpful.

The maxim of relevance: be relevant.

The maxim of manner: put what you say in the clearest, briefest and most orderly manner.

These maxims can be broken or flouted by speakers for many reasons. Please note that flouting a maxim does not necessarily result in a breakdown in a conversation: it may, as we shall show in the example below, simply mean the speaker assumes that an answer could be deduced from what is implied.

For example: you have just finished a meal in a restaurant. As you walk out a conversation begins:

Speaker 1: How did you find the food? Did you enjoy it?

Speaker 2: Oh the waiters were so filthy, I wanted to vomit.

An analysis of this exchange would conclude that the maxim of RELEVANCE has been broken, because the response is not straightforward, it's not relevant. So the maxim-break is a FLOUT and the extra meaning (The waiters were filthy) is an IMPLICATURE, intended by the speaker, which the hearer can work out. This is what is sometimes called 'reading between the line' or 'inference'.

Conversational implicature

What is it? Conversational Implicature is a concept invented by Paul Grice, which looks at the relation between what people say and what they actually mean in a conversation.

Example:

Sihle: Do you want to come to the cinema?

Khethe: I'm washing my hair.

In this example, it seems as though Khethe is not answering the question. She certainly does not actually say whether or not she will go to the cinema. The **implicature** of her response, though, is that she is not going. She has conveyed a meaning, intentionally, without explicitly stating it. This can be done in several ways.

> Can you work out the implicature in these exchanges? Which maxim has been flouted to achieve this? Note how the use of just one word can imply something more than is overtly shown in an utterance. (1 and 4 have been done as examples.)

1. Even: '*Even KEN knows it's unethical.*' This entails that: Ken knows it's unethical.

   This implicates that: Ken is the least likely to know that it's unethical. The maxim of quantity has clearly been flouted. A little more information could help the clarity of the statement.

2. But: *John is hungry but he won't stay for supper.*

3. Too: *Manfred Krifka was in Moscow last spring too.*

4. Manage: *Masha managed to start the car.* This entails that : Masha started the car. This implies that: It required some effort to start the car. Masha made some effort to start the car.

5. *Bush didn't fail to read the report.*

Politeness in conversations

Read the conversation in your textbook between the Lieutenant and Ms Engels and the commentary on politeness again

What do you understand by the term 'politeness?' Discuss this with your group on the discussion forum on myUnisa.

You will definitely realise that all societies and cultures practice a degree of politeness. There may be variations where other cultures are more polite than others, or where one behaviour may be regarded as polite by some, but impolite by others. For example; a very common practice in many African cultures is that you don't look an elder in the eye when talking to them, yet in some Western cultures, this is seen as being rude and devious. In other cultures interrupting a conversation, burping, and keeping people waiting constitute impoliteness.

You may here pause and list as many behaviours you can think of which are considered impolite in your culture. Share these with your discussion group and see where you differ and where you are agree.

The main argument in this theory is that when we speak, we try not to impose on others, by not getting in their way, by respecting their spaces.

Several times, I have walked into a shop in Pretoria with an intention to ask the security guard for directions and during the conversation have been made to feel 'impolite'. A typical example is:

Me: I am looking for the post office. Where is it?

Security guard: Hello, how are you?

Me: Oh yes. Hello.

Security guard: How can I help you?

Me: Sorry, I am new here and don't know where the post office is. Could you possibly help, please?

In this interaction, I quickly and efficiently indicated what information I needed. Still, though, the guard found me rather abrupt, if not rude, and this could well decrease her wish to help me. However, when I said, *'Excuse me, I'm new in Pretoria and don't know where the post office is. Could you possibly help, please?'* I was much more likely to receive a positive answer.

By using various linguistic politeness strategies, I was able to enhance the security guard's *positive face. 'Excuse me'* is a conventional politeness expression. Telling her I was new to Pretoria helped to indicate that I really did need assistance. And finally, when I asked the question, I was linguistically indirect through my use of *'could you'* (indirectness is more polite than directness) and also suggested through my hedging use of *'possibly'* that the size of the task I was asking of her was rather larger than it actually was (thus enhancing her positive face if she was able to tell me the way).

Conclusion

In this section you have been introduced to an aspect of pragmatics called conversational analysis (CA). The discussion has covered a definition of conversational analysis; outlined the reasons why we study CA; shown examples of CA in action and introduced the process of conducting an analysis of a conversation. The section has also shown that CA is a useful tool not only for spoken language analysis but for character analysis as well in dramatic dialogue.

Exercises for practicing conversational analysis

Complete exercise 40 on p. 150 of your prescribed text.

Observe several children of different ages playing with their peers (e.g. two-year-olds, three-year-olds, four-year-olds, and so on). Do the children demonstrate characteristics of adult-type conversations (e.g. turn-taking, collaboration, resolving overlapping talk), or do they, for example, talk in monologues either to themselves or at another child? Do all age groups demonstrate the same types of conversational skills? What are the differences between the age groups? At what age do you consider that children are able to engage in conversation? How might you explain this?

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GENRES IN LITERATURE AND LANGUAGE:
Theory, style and poetics

David Levey

A backward glance

As you come to the end of this module, we suggest you read through the notes you have made in your journal or on your tablet, and compare them with our comments below.

We are certain that you have found the interplay of texts and language as interesting as we do.

You should now be in a position to answer the apparently simple questions with which we began this guide. These concern the genre of the text, its purpose and the means by which this purpose is achieved: the who, what, why and how.

You will realise that the answers are intriguing and complex. Here, it is worthwhile to recall that we defined a text as an interweaving of many strands, including those of language.

The outcomes take these questions a stage further:

- From the first outcome you should have gained a sense of the characteristic language features of prose, poetry and drama.
- In particular, outcome 2 focuses on a grasp of the figurative language in such texts.
- The third outcome concentrates on how language causes the reader to respond in a particular way.
- The fourth outcome asks you to remain aware that authors evoke responses in their readers by making certain creative choices (outcome 4).

Throughout this guide we have stressed that our job, as scholarly readers, is to read with close attention to detail. This is a rewarding activity.

By all means skim a text on the first occasion, to gain a general impression of its contents, concerns, themes, purpose, attitudes; but then return to it at least two more times. You might like to regard yourself as a detective, searching for clues in order to bolster your interpretation of the text.

Along the way each reader needs to keep in mind such aspects as

- who the writer or speaker is, and the context where she is speaking or writing
- linguistic information such as vocabulary, sentence structure and sound patterning (glance back at the beginning of this guide to remind yourself of the actual technical terms)

- the text's audience, intended and actual
- how the text's components are interwoven
- style – this might range from highly formal to very informal, or may shift within a text, while alterations, combinations or contrasts in style usually indicate that the reader should pay extra attention
- tone – features of a text that convey emotion
- the implications of a text in its context.

We briefly analysed a particular passage from Goatly to provide you with a model of how this approach functions in practice.

Prose

We asked you to study the two main types of prose: fictional and persuasive.

As far as the former is concerned, go carefully through the exercises, calling to mind what they have inculcated about

- plot, character, setting, theme;
- narrative devices (who narrates the events? from what perspective?)
- tense, tempo, punctuation, sound effects, syntax, vocabulary
- ideology.

Persuasive prose is designed to do exactly this: to influence its audience in some or other way.

- We posed the questions 'what?', 'how?' 'who? and 'why?' again, applying them to news items, headlines, advertisements and speeches.
- In particular we drew attention to issues of power, and the results of different choices in regard to style and diction.

Poetry

This unit considered the nature of poetry, which is often dense, compact and ambiguous, thereby causing the experience of reading it to be rich and rewarding. We noted the importance of details and suggested some steps in applying strategies of close reading: these included paying attention to:

- the title
- form, structure, other patterning
- syntax
- speaker (not to be identified with the poet)
- diction
- mood.

Drama

We pointed out that drama is intended to be seen and heard (hence the audio clips we have provided). It is also a distinctly interactive medium, involving not only the characters but also the audience.

The unit dealt with:

- tragedy

- comedy
- structure, both of a play and of the speeches within it
- terms used to describe characters, such as protagonist
- word-choice
- dialogue
- stage directions
- characterization
- some theories one could apply in discussing drama.

Conversation

Here we explored the typical features and structure of conversation, especially the structure of conversational pairs (such as question/answer, request/granting) and turn-taking.

Overall, we want you to remember that your key purpose in studying this material is to take note of *what* can be done when you grapple with a text for the first time, *how* to do this, and *why* this can help you to acquire skills that you can use in reading any other texts.

A forward look

The skills you have acquired in studying this module will stay with you throughout your life. We have no doubt that you will now come to any text enriched, with a heightened awareness of what kind of text it is, of its language, its effect on you and others who encounter it, and that you will possess the ability to interpret it more critically. These are, after all, what you would expect from a university graduate. You are on the way there!

In preparing for the examination, check and double-check your own command of English. Also, hone your techniques of careful reading, in line with the suggestions given in the main guide.

However, please look beyond this formal requirement, making the approaches part of everything you do as a student, carrying them over to your other modules whether in English or in different disciplines. In this way the present module will not simply be another box that has been ticked, but will be of value far beyond itself.