

Extending your English Studies:



School of English

- Want to study English at A level?
- Want to study English at Degree level?
- Want to read some new and thought provoking texts that push the boundaries of what you normally read?
- Want to write something to enter a competition and win bragging rights for writing for a university competition?

If the answer to any of the above is yes then these resources from Sheffield University might be of interest.



Contemporary Literature Challenge: Transformations

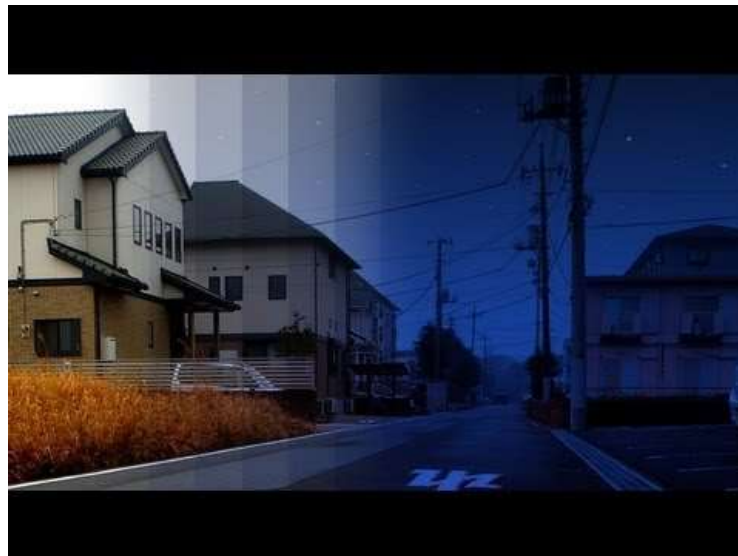
Literature is responsive to the world around us. Fiction, poetry and plays don't merely 'reflect' reality but are instrumental in framing our understanding of events, peoples and places. In times of transformation – rapid change or crisis, the arrival of new social movements, revolutionary technologies – literature articulates and interprets their impact. Writing across genres and media engages with what is happening and generates new forms of understanding; literature itself is transformative.

The challenge

This challenge is in two parts; Part 1 asks you to engage with a text that deals with a 'transformative' event, movement or phenomenon while Part 2 gives you the option of writing your own critical or creative piece on the theme of 'transformation'.



Transformations



The Challenge: Part 1

The examples on the later slides are poems or short stories that relate to specific social or political **'transformations'**. Choose one and respond to it critically in a format of your choice. You could use a word cloud, spider diagram or mind map, or you could write a one paragraph response.

Questions you could consider:

- How does the text engage the reader in thinking about the topic? Is it polemical? satirical? metaphorical? magical?
- What choices does the writer make in relation to language, style and structure? How do these features contribute to the effect the text achieves?
- How does the text create a narrative voice or perspective?
- Who is the intended audience? Is there anyone you would recommend this text to?
- Are there other books, plays, films, songs or TV shows that you've come across that cover similar themes?

Follow the links and read the texts:

‘Cat Person’ by Kristen Roupenian



<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/12/11/cat-person>

Written a few months before the #MeToo movement took off, this story went viral in 2017. It focuses on the power imbalance between older men and younger women and the dynamics of coercion in dating.

'The Thing Around Your Neck' by Chimamanda Adichie

<https://icpla.edu/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/Adichie-CN-TheThing-Around-Your-Neck.pdf>

This story narrates the experiences of a young Nigerian woman's migration to the US. Published in 2009, it deals with migration and racism at a time when there was a lot of political wrangling about immigration as well as optimism about 'post-racial' societies as Barack Obama came into office.

'Black' by Dave (track from his 2019 album Psychodrama)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pDUPSNdmFew>

This might seem to stretch the definition of 'literature' but rap has a lot in common with poetry and you can analyse the song's lyrics as you would a piece of writing. It deals with race in contemporary Britain via a global perspective that connects to the Black Lives Matter movement. If you choose this one also think about the video.

'Black Box' by Jennifer Egan

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2012/06/04/black-box-2>

This story is an example of 'twitterature', first published in 2012 as series of tweets. It offers us a chance to think about how narratives work in/through social media as well as raising questions of posthuman identities and gender relations.

'The Tamarisk Hunter' by Paolo Bacigalupi

<https://www.hcn.org/issues/325/tamarisk-hunter-Bacigalupi>

This story is an example of 'cli-fi', fiction that addresses climate change. It imagines a future US short of water.



'People's Faces' by Kate Tempest

<https://thepreludepress.com/news/2019/10/10/kate-tempest-sharesvideo-for-peoples-faces-streatham-version>

This song/spoken word/animated piece from Tempest's album *The Book of Traps and Lessons*

- (2019) deals with divisive politics in contemporary Britain (Brexit anyone?). If you choose this one think about the animations in relation to the lyrics.

The Challenge Part 2

Part 2

Either (1) write up ideas from Part 1 as a more formal essay (max. 500 words),

Or write a piece of flash fiction (max. 500 words) or a poem (max. 20 lines) on the theme of 'transformation'. You don't need to relate your piece to a specific event unless you'd like to. Try to use some of the techniques that you noted in your analysis in Part 1 and aim to create a powerful narrative voice.

Advice on writing flash fiction (there's plenty more out there):

<https://www.theguardian.com/childrens-books-site/2012/may/15/flash-fiction-tips-david-gaffney>

<http://flashfictiononline.com/main/2015/04/thirteen-tips-for-writing-flash-fiction/>

If you'd like to submit your piece for Part 2 to our 'Challenges' competition, see 'The School of English Y11 /Y12 Prize': 'how to enter'.



The School of English Y11/12 Prize

Please note that we are unable to provide feedback on unsuccessful entries. Entrants must be in Y11 or Y12 in the academic year 2019-20 and from a school in the UK. Winners and runners-up will be informed and the results announced on 30 October 2020.

How to apply

- **Deadline 2019-20:** 5pm, Monday 31 August 2020.
- No more than one submission per student.
- **Literature submissions:** email your submission (as pdf or word doc) and your completed coversheet to English-Prize2020@sheffield.ac.uk with "English Prize" in the subject field; (2) copy your teacher or parent/guardian into the email so they can verify your entry.

Enter at the email address above and good luck!

If you have any questions, or issues, please get in touch with us at: English-Prize2020@sheffield.ac.uk

www.sheffield.ac.uk/english



School
Of
English.

Print off this page and fill in the details and send it with your competition entry

English Prize 2020: cover sheet

Name of entrant:

Email address of entrant:

Name and address of school:

School year in 2019-20: Y11/Y12* (*delete as appropriate)

Challenge entered: Theatre/ Literature analytical essay/ Literature creative writing*
(*delete as appropriate)

Theatre entries only, please give the link to your uploaded piece on
<https://wetransfer.com/>:

I certify that the attached essay is my own work and that the essay/audio/video* is within the 500-word limit/5-minute time limit* (*delete as appropriate)

Date:

Referee:

Name of teacher/parent/guardian:

Email address of teacher/parent/guardian:

I certify that the attached essay is the entrant's own work.

Please copy your referee into your submission email as confirmation of their sign-off.

This form (and for Literature submissions, your essay or creative writing) should be submitted via email to English-Prize2020@sheffield.ac.uk (subject: English Prize), copying in your referee, by 5pm, Monday 31 August 2020.