

English Literature

Summer Preparation Work

Reading: Choose a text from the recommended reading list at the end of this document. Be prepared to discuss your chosen text in September.

Writing:

Analytical Task: Read the extracts taken from the prescribed area for study, *Love Through the Ages*. Bear in mind that they were written at different times by different writers and are open to different interpretations.

Item A is taken from **Angela Carter's** *The Magic Toyshop*. (1967)

Item B is taken from) *North and South* by **Elizabeth Gaskell** (1810 – 1865)

Write a comparison of the ways in which relationships are presented in these two items.

Think about:

- What the extracts tell us about the thoughts and feelings of the characters.
- The narrative viewpoint used by the writer-how this affects the impression created of the relationship.
- The writer's use of dialogue and characters' actions.
- The choice of language and its effect
- The context : Find out about the authors and when they were writing. Think about how this context has affected the way relationships are presented.

1000 words

Item A

Angela Carter's *The Magic Toyshop* (1967) is the story of fifteen year-old orphan, Melanie, who is sent from her comfortable rural home to live with her uncle, Philip, a toymaker, and his family in a shabby part of London. Uncle Philip's household includes his wife and her nineteen-year-old brother, Finn.

In this extract Finn has taken Melanie on a walk to a park that contains, according to him, all that is left of a famous Victorian exhibition.

It was growing dark, for the clocks had been turned back weeks ago and the nights were drawing in. Far away, through the mist, the blur of the city deepened like a sooty thumbprint and a few lights came out. Trees and bushes lost the precision of their leafless outlines. The white marble squares of the pavement glowed as if on a phantom chessboard. Melanie felt a drop or two of moisture on her face- rain, maybe, or the coagulated damp of the wet night air, or spray from Finn's regard. He took the bubble-gum (by now exhausted) from his mouth and stuck it deliberately on Queen Victoria's swelling stone backside. When she saw him do this, Melanie knew he was going to kiss her or try to kiss her.

She could not move or speak. She waited in an agony of apprehension. If it was going to happen, it must happen and then she would know what it was like to be kissed, which she did not know, now. At least she would have that much more experience, even if it was only Finn who kissed her. His hair was marigolds or candle flames. She shuddered to see his discoloured teeth.

They were standing on opposite sides of the fallen queen. He lightly set his feet on the stone buttocks and sprang across, and, seized by some eccentric whim in mid air, raised his black p.v.c. arms and flapped them, cawing like a crow. Everything went black in the shocking folds of his embrace. She was very startled and near to sobbing.

'Caw, caw,' echoed his raincoat.

'Don't be frightened,' he said. 'It is only poor Finn, who will do you no harm'.

She recovered herself a little, though she was still trembling. She could see her own face reflected in the black pupils of his subaqueous eyes. She still looked the same. She saluted herself. He was only a little taller than she and their eyes were almost on a level. Remotely, she wished him three inches taller. Or four. She felt the warm breath from his wild beast's mouth softly, against her cheek. She did not move. Stiff, wooden and unresponsive, she stood in his arms and watched herself in his eyes. It was a comfort to see herself as she thought she looked.

'Oh, get it over with, get it over with,' she urged furiously under her breath.

He was grinning like Pan in a wood. He kissed her, closing his eyes so that she could not see herself any more. His lips were wet and rough, cracked. It might have been anybody, kissing her, and, besides, she did not know him well, if at all. She

wondered why he was doing this, putting his mouth on her own, undesiring one, softly moving his body against her. What was the need? She felt a long way from him, and superior, also.

She thought vaguely that they must look very striking, like a shot from a new-wave British film, locked in an embrace beside the broken statue in this dead fun palace, with the November dusk swirling around them and Finn's hair so ginger, hers so black, spun together by the soft little hands of a tiny wind, yellow and black hairs tangled together. She wished someone was watching them to appreciate them, or that she herself was watching them, Finn kissing this black-haired young girl, from a bush a hundred yards away. Then it would seem romantic.

Finn inserted his tongue between her lips, searching tentatively for her own tongue inside her mouth. The moment consumed her. She choked and struggled, beating her fists against him, convulsed with horror at this sensual and intimate connection, this rude encroachment on her physical privacy, this humiliation. She swayed to and fro; she almost slipped down onto the ground beside the dead queen in the mud but Finn kept hold of her no matter how hard she struck at him, lightly clasping her shoulders so that she would not fall. When she grew calmer, he slowly released her and she walked away a few paces, staggering, digging her hands in her pockets and turning her back on him. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand.

'Look on my works, ye mighty, and beware,' he said to the statue, prised off his bubble-gum, examined it for impurities and put it back in his mouth.

Turn over for Item B

Item B

Elizabeth Gaskell (1810 – 1865) wrote *North and South* in 1855. It is the story of Margaret Hale, who leaves the south of England to live in the northern town of Milton. During a strike at the local mill, Margaret persuades the owner, John Thornton, to speak directly to his workers. When they turn on him, Margaret tries to calm the situation, but is injured by a stone, which was thrown at Thornton by a striking worker.

The following extract begins as Thornton waits to see Margaret on the day after the riot.

His heart throbbed loud and quick. Strong man as he was, he trembled at the anticipation of what he had to say, and how it might be received. She might droop, and flush, and flutter to his arms, as to her natural home and resting-place. One moment, he glowed with impatience at the thought that she might do this, – the next, he feared a passionate rejection, the very idea of which withered up his future with so deadly a blight that he refused to think of it. He was startled by the sense of the presence of someone else in the room. He turned round. She had come in so gently, that he had never heard her; the street noises had been more distinct to his inattentive ear than her slow movements, in her soft muslin gown.

She stood by the table, not offering to sit down. Her eyelids were dropped half over her eyes; her teeth were shut, not compressed; her lips were just parted over them, allowing the white line to be seen between their curve. Her slow deep breathings dilated her thin and beautiful nostrils; it was the only motion visible on her countenance. The fine-grained skin, the oval cheek, the rich outline of her mouth, its corners deep set in dimples, – were all wan and pale today; the loss of their usual natural healthy colour being made more evident by the heavy shadow of the dark hair, brought down upon the temples, to hide all sign of the blow she had received. Her head, for all its drooping eyes, was thrown a little back, in the old proud attitude. Her long arms hung motionless by her sides. Altogether she looked like some prisoner, falsely accused of a crime that she loathed and despised, and from which she was too indignant to justify herself.

Mr Thornton made a hasty step or two forwards; recovered himself, and went with quiet firmness to the door (which she had left open), and shut it. Then he came back, and stood opposite to her for a moment, receiving the general impression of her beautiful presence, before he dared to disturb it, perhaps to repel it, by what he had to say.

‘Miss Hale, I was very ungrateful yesterday —’

'You had nothing to be grateful for,' said she, raising her eyes, and looking full and straight at him. 'You mean, I suppose, that you believe you ought to thank me for what I did.' In spite of herself — in defiance of her anger — the thick blushes came all over her face, and burnt into her very eyes; which fell not nevertheless from their grave and steady look. 'It was only a natural instinct; any woman would have done just the same. We all feel the sanctity of our sex as a high privilege when we see danger. I ought rather,' said she, hastily, 'to apologize to you, for having said thoughtless words which sent you down into the danger.'

'It was not your words; it was the truth they conveyed, pungently as it was expressed. But you shall not drive me off upon that, and so escape the expression of my deep gratitude, my —' he was on the verge now; he would not speak in the haste of his hot passion; he would weigh each word. He would; and his will was triumphant. He stopped in mid-career.

'I do not try to escape from anything,' said she. 'I simply say, that you owe me no gratitude; and I may add, that any expression of it will be painful to me, because I do not feel that I deserve it. Still, if it will relieve you from even a fancied obligation, speak on.'

'I do not want to be relieved from any obligation,' said he, goaded by her calm manner. 'Fancied, or not fancied — I question not myself to know which — I choose to believe that I owe my very life to you — ay — smile, and think it an exaggeration if you will. I believe it, because it adds a value to that life to think — oh, Miss Hale!' continued he, lowering his voice to such a tender intensity of passion that she shivered and trembled before him, 'to think circumstance so wrought, that whenever I exult in existence henceforward, I may say to myself, "All this gladness in life, all honest pride in doing my work in the world, all this keen sense of being, I owe to her!"

doubles the gladness, it makes the pride glow, it sharpens the sense of existence till I hardly know if it is pain or pleasure, to think that I owe it to one — nay, you must, you shall hear’ — said he, stepping forwards with stern determination — ‘to one whom I love, as I do not believe man ever loved woman before.’ He held her hand tight in his. He panted as he listened for what should come. He threw the hand away with indignation, as he heard her icy tone; for icy it was, though the words came faltering out, as if she knew not where to find them. ‘Your way of speaking shocks me. It is blasphemous. I cannot help it, if that is my first feeling. It might not be so, I dare say, if I understood the kind of feeling you describe. I do not want to vex you; and besides, we must speak gently, for mamma is asleep; but your whole manner.

Recommended Reading List.

Whichever English A-level you have chosen to study, you will need to read widely. This is a small selection of suggestions that will give you somewhere to start. A fuller list will be provided on the school’s English Faculty Website along with some more personal recommendations from your teachers and links to other websites.

Broadsheet Newspapers – The Independent, The Guardian, The Telegraph

Magazines – The New Internationalist, The Spectator, The Big Issue.

The Stories of English David Crystal

Margaret Atwood	The Handmaid’s Tale
Jane Austen	any title
Iain Banks	The Wasp Factory
Louis de Bernieres	any title
Charlotte Bronte	Jane Eyre
Emily Bronte	Wuthering Heights
Anthony Burgess	A Clockwork Orange
Angela Carter	any title
Joseph Conrad	The Heart of Darkness
Charles Dickens	any title
George Elliot	any title
Graham Greene	any title

Mark Haddon	The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night
Thomas Hardy	any title
Joseph Heller	Catch 22
John Hershey	Hiroshima
Russell Hoban	Riddley Walker
Khaled Husseini	The Kite Runner
Aldous Huxley	Brave New World
Brian Keenan	An Evil Cradling
Ken Kesey	One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest
Kazuo Ishiguru	The Remains of the Day
Sebastian Junger	The Perfect Storm
Harper Lee	To Kill a Mocking Bird
Andrea Levy	Small Island
Ian McEwan	Atonement
Ian McEwan	Enduring Love
Toni Morrison	Beloved
George Orwell	Animal Farm, 1984
Sylvia Plath	The Bell Jar
Annie Proulx	Close Range
Salman Rushdie	Midnight's Children
John Steinbeck	any title
Patrick Suskind	Perfume
Alice Walker	The Colour Purple
Evelyn Waugh	A Handful of Dust
Jeanette Winterson	Oranges are not the only Fruit