SELECTED SLIDE SUMMARY

This slide summary is supplied for purposes of teacher professional development, to suggest strategies and approaches for ATAR Literature in WA.

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Portions have been adapted from the following:
ATAR LITERATURE UNITS 3 & 4

- how representations of culture support or challenge ideologies
- how representations vary according to the discourse
- how reading intertextually helps readers to understand and critique representations
- how the social, cultural and historical spaces in which texts are produced and read mediate readings
- the ways in which ideological perspectives are conveyed through texts drawn from other times and cultures
- how genres may have social, ideological and aesthetic functions
- how genre, conventions and language contribute to interpretations of texts.
- exploring a range of critical interpretations produced by adopting a variety of reading strategies

(Scsa, 2016, ATAR Literature Syllabus. www.scsa.wa.edu.au)

THE ATAR TRAJECTORY

Personal reading - Analysis - Criticism - Theory

THE ATAR THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Traditional view
- the author is the creator of a literary work
- a literary work has a fixed, intrinsic meaning
- a literary work can be separated from its context
- literary language has special properties
- criticism is the exercise of individual perception and judgment

Contemporary view
- works are ‘assembled’ rather than created: writers are artisans who mix sources
- works can have multiple meanings; none is definitive
- meaning is inherently intertextual: there is no inside/outside of the text
- all meanings/readings are shaped by context, which frames our activity
- literary effects are produced by institutions and discourses, not by ‘literary’ language
GENERAL STRATEGY

1. Differentiate personal response, analysis, criticism and theory. Lead students from one to the next, over time.

2. Introduce Literature as a systematic study requiring knowledge and technical skills.

3. Differentiate and teach the types of literary reading:
   - aesthetic appreciation
   - rhetorical analysis
   - structural analysis
   - reader response study
   - critical appraisal

4. Systematically build knowledge – of literature, history, culture, language, theory.

TAKING STOCK, SETTING GOALS

Personal reading
- spontaneous
- for pleasure
- favourite authors, genres
- in private spaces: home, free time
- familiar vocabulary, ideas
- read from personal experience
- unaccountable

Literature study
- systematic field of study
- to learn, grow and contribute
- new authors, genres, periods
- in public spaces: classroom, library...
- new vocabulary, ideas
- read from knowledge: history, contexts
- accountable (essays, exams, publication)

Personal reading is a recreation
Literary criticism is a profession and field of knowledge

I want to get better at:
- reading more widely
- reading more closely
- identifying themes
- seeing the purpose in texts
- figurative language, symbols
- sticking with texts I don’t like
- knowing terms and facts
- making sound judgments
- writing essays
- knowing about history

What might help:
- using the course reading list
- building my personal library
- avoiding distractions
- keeping a reading journal
- making notes while reading
- researching authors and texts
- reading essays and reviews
- using a dictionary and glossary
- taking part in discussions
- doing my own creative writing

(Introducing Literature, p. 15-16.)
CLOSE READING & 'PRACTICAL' CRITICISM

OZYMANDIAS

Percy Bysshe Shelley 1818

I met a traveller from an antique land
Who said: Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk, a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them and the heart that fed:
And on the pedestal these words appear:
’My name is Ozymandias, king of kings:
Look on my works, ye Mighty, and despair!’
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away.

“antique” = old, quaint, objects for display
“cold command” = alliterative harshness
Dramatic irony, contrast

WAYS OF READING

Response
It reminds me of Egypt and the pyramids with all the old statues.
I think there are statues like this of the old kings. I don’t know who Ozymandias is.
I like how it shows that nothing lasts forever.
I am not sure what it means by “the hand that mocked them” – does it mean he ruled people in a mocking way?
I think it’s a good poem.

Analysis
The poem is a sonnet that reports a traveller’s tale from an ancient, distant land.
It was written in the 1800s when Egyptian tombs were first being discovered. This would have been an exotic subject for a poem.
The poem depicts a scene of devastation that contrasts with the confidence and grandeur of the original statue.
It achieves its effect through the dramatic contrast between past and present, power and loss.

Critique
Ozymandias is a highly effective exercise in didactic moralising.
The lesson it teaches—that power fades and pride precedes a fall—is made more effective by locating it in a foreign land.
Shelley has played on the public fascination with Egypt to distance his reader from the particulars of the story.
The poem is well designed. It is also obliquely imperialist, in its reliance on myths of the despotic Orient.

RULES FOR CRITICAL JUDGMENT?

William Hudson, An Introduction to the Study of Literature (1921)

Significance Must contribute to an understanding of life; not trivial or mindless.
Universality Must deal with the common experience of humanity; must be recognisable to people of all times and places.
Vitality Must feel alive and powerful; tackles its subject with energy and intensity.
Artistry Must be artistically skilled; there should be skill in what is said and how it is said. The language is shaped for effect.
Durability Must have lasting value; should not be merely topical or fashionable.

(Moon, Introducing Literature, p. 41)
LIMITATIONS OF 'CLOSE READING'

Critics disagree over meaning and value.

Problems: criteria for judgment are vague
  texts are diverse in form, content, aims: one size does not fit all
  readers differ in 'social location' and training
  context matters
  texts are rooted in culture: a web of language / knowledge / power

Hence: must consider reading practices, contexts, discourses, ideologies.

GAPS AND SILENCES

"Cinderella was the most beautiful girl at the ball.
The prince would dance with no-one else. But soon the clock was striking
midnight..."

GAPS AND SILENCES

What information is missing?

- Men like to dance with beautiful women, not plain women.
- The prince is not a homosexual.
- The prince is powerful and so gets his own way.
- Cinderella is not allowed to choose her dance partner.
- Dancing is a form of courtship.
- The prince is very handsome.
- A prince needs a wife who can give him a son.

How would the story change if these connections were stated explicitly?
**GAPS AND SILENCES**

*Cinderella was the most beautiful girl at the ball. The prince liked the company of beautiful women and preferred not to dance with plain women. Because he was a prince he was always allowed to get his own way, and so he would dance with no-one else....*

What is revealed about reading?
How does this complicate critical analysis and judgment?

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**GAPS AND SILENCES**

**THE EAGLE**
Alfred, Lord Tennyson

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring’d with the azure world he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

(Moon, *Studying Literature*, p. 35-6)

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**GENDERED READINGS**

**UNTITLED 1**

He clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring’d with the azure world he stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath him crawls;
He watches from his mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt he falls.

(Moon, *Studying Literature*, p. 35-6)

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**UNTITLED 2**

She clasps the crag with crooked hands;
Close to the sun in lonely lands,
Ring’d with the azure world she stands.

The wrinkled sea beneath her crawls;
She watches from her mountain walls,
And like a thunderbolt she falls.

(Moon, *Studying Literature*, p. 35-6)
SOCIAL-HISTORICAL VIEW OF LITERATURE

- **Culture** (language, values, history)
- **Economy** (resources, goods, services)
- **Technology** (print, digital communications)
- **Work & Leisure** (reading, film, TV, sports)
- **Institutions** (schools, universities, churches)
- **Publishing** (printers, publishers, booksellers)

LITERATURE

THE SOCIAL PRODUCTION OF LITERATURE

**How would our literature change if...**
- books had to be copied by hand?
- we had no electric lighting?
- people worked much longer hours?
- there was no paper, only screens?
- people had no free will?
- most people could not read?
- no one went to school?
- there was no religion?
- Australia was a dictatorship?
- only poor people were readers?

**Some possibilities:**
- books would be longer / or shorter
- books would be rarer / more common?
- styles of writing would change
- books would be written in code
- the structure of stories would change
- books would/would not teach moral lessons
- there would be single "correct" readings
- poetry would overtake fiction
- novels would rise / decline
- more men/women/minorities would write

What economic conditions shape our literature now?
Who writes? Who buys books? Who judges them?

Context - refers to social and historical factors that frame a text and determine its form and meaning. These may be general influences such as social values, or specific times and spaces that mediate meaning, such as the classroom. There is a context of production and a context of reading.

**Literary Terms, 3rd ed., 2017**

Intertextuality – is the fundamental interconnection of all texts produced by a culture. Such connections arise from the shared language, conventions, expectations and practices of a community. Intertextuality is a precondition of literary meaning.

**Literary Terms, 3rd ed., 2017**
Once upon a time...
It was a dark and stormy night...
Call me Ishmael.
"You had it coming," she said.
London.
It is a truth universally acknowledged...
I had reached the age of six hundred and fifty miles...

He had a round face and a broad smile...
She had the appearance of being tall, though she was not...
His bearing inspired trust in those he led...
His bald, purplish head looked like a mildewed skull....
She was exceedingly thin and pale...

**Discourse** - is a form of language associated with a field of knowledge or social institution. Discourses frame a set of concepts, texts, relationships and forms of authority. The users of a discourse reproduce those concepts, texts and relations through their activity.

* Literary Terms, 3rd ed. 2017

**Ideology** - is a set of social and political beliefs that reflect and sustain the economic and class organisation of society. Such beliefs are shared among people based on their social class, occupation, or other common factors. Ideologies are reproduced in texts and are enacted unconsciously by people in their daily life.

* Literary Terms, 3rd ed. 2017
DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY

Northside Hospital was a sprawling, glittering marvel spread over three hectares, with a central tower of steel and glass that flung itself triumphantly twelve storeys up into a cloudless sky. A decade in construction, not counting the three-month delay while protesters lay in the mud in front of the bulldozers, the complex catered for half the city’s medical needs, with unheard of efficiency. It was, simply, the best hospital in the state. And I am part of it, thought the young resident, Mac Welby.

Striding through the reception hall after completing his rounds in Cardiac, the young Dr Welby collided with Nurse Sally Mitchell, a green-eyed blonde whose willowy frame had caught his attention from day one. He caught her before she fell, and slipped his arm around her waist protectively.

‘Sorry Sally, are you okay?’ he inquired.

‘I’m fine, doctor. I just wasn’t looking where I was going.’ She blushed at the sudden closeness, then straightened her cap and skirt.

‘Well, I’m glad it was you I bumped into and not Sister Greer,’ he joked, thinking of the stern woman who ran the wards in C Block. ‘She would have seen it as a political act, I’m sure.’

(Moon, Literary Terms. p.37)

DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY

DOMINANT           MARGINAL

Medical Discourse:         Protest:
ward, rounds, Cardiac        why?
nurse, sister, doctor, C Block    against what?

Progress:           Feminism:
glittering marvel, tower, Sister Greer
triumphant, steel and glass    political act

Romance:
Sally/Dr Welby, green-eyed blonde, willowy frame, asymmetrical power

DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY

What current ideologies can we find in texts, and in society?

☐ Saving the planet must come before the economy.
☐ The natural is superior to the social.
☐ Economic growth is essential to national success.
☐ Hard work is rewarded in life.
☐ If you believe in yourself you can do anything.
☐ We cannot pay ourselves more than we earn.
☐ Material goods make people happy.
☐ Relationships are more important than things.
☐ Social equality is more important than individual wealth.
☐ You are in control of your own destiny.

Do people choose such beliefs themselves, or are they acquired socially?
Are such beliefs common because they are true? Or considered true because common?
Reading Practices - are the shared rules and strategies that a community of readers follow when making meaning with text. Reading practices change across time and place, contributing to new interpretations of texts.

*Literary Terms, 3rd ed. 2017*

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**READING PRACTICES & CONTEXTS**

Reading is shaped by context – by the social relations, practices and spaces within which we read.

Elements of a reading context:

- personal situation
- socio-cultural position
- acquired/valued practices

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**TWO READING PRACTICES**


1900s

The Queen was not a bad-hearted woman, not at all the woman to think little of murder. But she had a soft animal nature, and was very dull and very shallow. She loved to be happy, like a sheep in the sun... She never saw that drunkenness is disgusting till Hamlet told her so; and though she knew that he considered her marriage o'er hasty, she was untroubled by any shame at the feelings which had led to it. It was pleasant to sit upon her throne and see smiling faces round her, and foolish and unkind in Hamlet to persist in grieving for his father instead of marrying Ophelia and making everything comfortable... The belief at the bottom of her heart was that the world is a place constructed simply that people may be happy in it in a good humoured sensual fashion.

2000s
The queen is problematic for the Elizabethans. Her worldly status as a ruler at the right hand of God conflicts with perceptions of the 'fairer' sex. As a woman she is thought to be soft, yielding, maternal, and morally labile in nature. Yet as ruler she has absolute power and the responsibility to preserve the honour and dignity of the realm — capacities attributed more often to men. In Hamlet, we see these tensions given form in the figure of Gertrude. In Hamlet’s speech she is condemned for the haste with which she remarries, but not for her need to marry. Her failing is moral, not political. The play thus encodes the gender ideology of its day. Our modern expectations of powerful women are quite different. We don’t automatically assume incompetence or frailty. While past readings have constructed Gertrude as complicit, even conniving in the King’s death, feminist readings note that there is no evidence in the play itself to suggest she knew of the poisoning.

READING PRACTICES
What are the Rules?

MORAL READING
- Analyse the characters and their actions as people.
- Infer their motivations and desires.
- Diagnose their condition and 'character.'
- Make a moral judgement, applying current standards.
- Praise/condemn the characters for their conduct.

HISTORICAL READING
- Research the period and its culture.
- Place the text in its period.
- Look for evidence of social tensions reflected in the text.
- Compare the modern perspective.
- Draw conclusions about social progress or regression.

Character as person
Character as social construct.

ASPECTS OF A READING PRACTICE

TREAT THE TEXT AS:
- a slice of life
- an example within a genre
- a document of culture
- a political message
- a piece of ideology

BASE JUDGMENTS ON:
- ideas of human nature
- the rules of a genre
- the values of its original readers
- the politics of its day
- the politics of our day

REFLECT ON YOUR CONTEXT:
- as a private individual
- as a member of a group
- as the product of a time
- as a practitioner of a method
**STAGES IN TEXT STUDY**

I. Read *aesthetically*:
- Read the text for the ‘unfolding’ pleasure.
- Read it again: to appreciate the design.
- Read for patterns, descriptions, images, connotations, ambiguities.
- Read for themes and values.

II. Apply a *reading practice*:
- Read for structure, genre, discourse, ideology ...
- Read for borrowings / allusions / intertexts.
- Read for social or political issues.
  (Remember aesthetic reading is also a *practice*.)

III. Make a judgment.

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**DISCOURSE, IDEOLOGY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Structuralism</th>
<th>Marxism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look for any oppositions/contrasts</td>
<td>Look for any markers of class</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sort into positive and negative groups</td>
<td>Look for ownership, power, control</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for oppositions being resolved</td>
<td>Look for social acts disguised as nature</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criticalise</strong> inconsistency or loose ends</td>
<td><strong>Criticalise</strong> power, privilege</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Praise</strong> resolutions that establish order</td>
<td><strong>Praise</strong> equality, harmony, mutuality</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feminism</th>
<th>Psychoanalysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Look for any signs of sex/gender</td>
<td>Look for a developmental trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look at who wields power / is passive</td>
<td>Look for symbols of sex, self, other</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Look for silencing, stereotyping</td>
<td>Look for responses from ego, superego</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Criticalise</strong> male power, inequality</td>
<td><strong>Criticalise</strong> neurotic denial of reality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Praise</strong> equality, negation of stereotypes</td>
<td><strong>Praise</strong> healthy recover of selfhood</td>
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(Based on Moon, *Introducing Literature*, p.176-79)

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**Aesthetics** – is the study of what is beautiful and pleasing in a work of art or literary text. It considers the *elements* that make a work pleasing or beautiful and the sensitivity, perceptiveness and tastes of people who appreciate it.

*Literary Terms, 3rd ed. 2017*
AESTHETICS

Natural/‘Universal’ Aesthetics
Study of the fundamentals of aesthetics and aesthetic response.
- sound, euphony, onomatopoeia proportion
- rhythm, rhyme, cadence
- imitative description, balance, proportion, contrast

Rhetorical aesthetics
Study of contrived effects: the use of devices for argument, persuasion, illumination.
- isocolon, parallelism, repetition
- congeries, comparative description, auxesis
- diction: grand and demotic styles

Political aesthetics
Study of the styles related to genres, ideologies, in specific historical contexts.
- social realism vs impressionism vs surrealism (Literary Terms 3rd ed., 2017)

AESTHETICS IN POETRY

Kubla Khan (A Vision)
Samuel Taylor Coleridge

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasure-dome decree:
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea.
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round;
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills,
Where blossomed many an incense-bearing tree;
And here were forests ancient as the hills,
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

What aesthetic effect is created?
- epic grandeur?
- dreamy fantasy?
- exotic nonsense?
- surreal mythology?
- seductive madness?
- something else?

(Moon, Literary Terms, 3rd ed, 2017, ‘Aesthetics’)
AESTHETICS IN POETRY

What sources of pleasure stand out in the poem?

☐ A strong 4-beat rhythm:
   (Mark out the rhythm in the first 10 lines and read them aloud.)

☐ A pattern of rhymes: Khan/decree/ran/man/sea
   (Mark out the rhymes in a section of the poem and practise reading them aloud.)

☐ Pleasant alliteration and assonance:
   measureless to man ... / twice five miles of fertile ground ... / sunless sea ...
   (Pick out some phrases that you find pleasing and say them aloud.)

☐ Interesting visual images:
   measureless caverns ... / a sunless sea ... / walls and towers that 'girdle' the lands
   (Pick out your own favourite images – even if you are not sure what they mean.)

AESTHETICS: CHANGES OVER TIME

"nonsense ... we can only regret its publication" (J. Conder, 1816)
"fragmentary nonsense that comes to no conclusion" (W. Hazlitt, 1816)
"voice and vision ... tuneful" (L Hunt, 1821)
"a psychological curiosity" (T. Trail, 1885)
"thrilling vividness...a work of genius" (JL Lowes, 1920)
"a work of high imagination ...beyond compare... magical" (V. Radley, 1966)
"a work of ordered perfection... " (G. Watson, 1966)
"unique, a masterpiece" (N. Fruman, 1971)
"the circumstances of its composition are central to an understanding" (D. Jasper, 1985)
"No one even knows whether it is complete. Maybe it is not a poem at all..." (A. Sisman, 2006)

A CONCEPT SEQUENCE

AESTHETICS AND RESPONSE
CLOSE READING
CONTEXT
DISCOURSE AND IDEOLOGY
TEXT AND INTERTEXTUALITY
READING PRACTICES
AESTHETICS
Thank you.