

KEY QUESTIONS RELATED TO MODULES

Below is a further breakdown of the syllabus. As you make your way through this book, keep returning to this section. It will help you to consolidate your understanding of the syllabus and assist you when researching and writing.

All modules require you to:

- draft, appraise and refine your own texts, applying the conventions of syntax, spelling and grammar appropriately.

Each module has a unique focus. The questions below will help you to address the focus for each module.

Module	Key concepts	Overarching questions
A: Language, Identity and Culture	Language Culture Identity	How does language have the power to reflect and shape individual and collective identity and culture? How have your responses to texts shaped your self-perception? What are the impacts texts have on shaping a sense of identity for individuals and/or communities? How do language forms and features communicate information, ideas, values and attitudes? In what ways do these language forms and features inform and influence perceptions of ourselves and other people and various cultural perspectives? How can language affirm, ignore, reveal, challenge or disrupt prevailing assumptions and beliefs about you personally, individuals and cultural groups?
B: Close Study of Literature	Distinct qualities of a text Personal response	What is a personal response to a text? How can I express an informed personal interpretation of the significance and meaning of the text's distinctive qualities? How do the characteristics of the text express its distinctive qualities? How does the composer portray people, ideas, settings and situations in the text? How do the elements of the text affect those responding to it? What are the text's specific language forms and features? How do these language forms and features express complex ideas?
C: The Craft of Writing	Craft of imaginative, discursive and persuasive writing Purpose and audience	How do composers of texts use language creatively and imaginatively for a range of purposes and audiences? What is the importance and power of language? How can I reflect on the complex and recursive processes of writing? How can the processes of writing other composers use assist me in creating my own texts? How can I express my ideas through a sustained and engaging voice? How can I experiment with language forms and features to express ideas and develop my voice? How can I work independently and with others to develop my best piece of imaginative, discursive or persuasive writing?

EVALUATING TEXTS IN THE MODULES

As Modules A and B require you to closely study a text, you need to ensure you have a thorough understanding of all aspects (or elements) of the text. According to the rubric, the following key ideas ensure you will write sophisticated responses.

Aspects of texts to look out for

The language forms and features are the textual distinctive qualities of the text. Consider the following when studying how aspects of texts represent key ideas:

- **Key ideas and concepts:** the main ideas and concepts represented in and through the text that invite a personal and intellectual connection with the text
- **Structure:** the way the text is constructed. The structure is coherent with the details of the text expressed through language forms and features
- **Context:** the historical, social and literary background of the text

- **Content:**
 - * **Themes, concepts and ideas:** the overarching ideas in your prescribed text
 - * **Characterisation:** the way that a character is presented that makes them appear authentic and recognisable
 - * **Place/Setting:** the physical, spiritual and metaphysical place and time represented in texts. It also includes the time of day and day/s of the year, seasons and weather
- **Language** (written, visual, verbal, digital):
 - * **Figurative language:** visual imagery created through devices such as metaphors, similes, personification, anamorphism and sound imagery created through devices such as onomatopoeia, alliteration, assonance, rhythm and rhyme. There are many more figurative devices unique for each text
 - * **Narration:** the point of view, as shown through first (I, me, us), second (you, your) and third person (he, she, they) narration
 - * **Voice:** the voice of a character or persona appears when the composer clearly shows through their choice of language and word choice who the character or persona is—without directly telling the reader. It is through the voice of character/s or persona/s that the reader gains a sense of the author's attitudes, feelings and ideas
- **Positioning:** the textual details and features will affect the reader in some way and position the reader to respond
- **Evaluating worth:** to evaluate the worth of a text we make informed judgements on the success of the text by looking at how well-crafted it is for its subject, purpose and audience.

WRITING AN EXEMPLARY RESPONSE

Module A & Module B

Below is an outline of what makes an effective response in the HSC English Standard exam for Module A and Module B:

- a deep understanding of ideas is shown by drawing on detailed textual knowledge
- a personal perspective is included/guides the response
- the purpose of the text is demonstrated through a conceptual understanding of the text
- ideas are developed by referring to the complete text
- appropriate textual evidence and explanation of why this textual evidence is valid is clearly demonstrated
- appropriate language is used for your analytical response
- conventions of syntax, spelling and grammar are used appropriately.

Module C

Below is an outline of what makes an effective response in the HSC English Standard exam for Module C:

- coherent and consistent development of ideas is shown
- ideas are relevant and engaging
- style, register and voice are appropriately used
- ideas are expressed with power and increasing precision
- reflection is based on an understanding of the process of creating imaginative and creative texts
- a meaningful connection between the process of writing and ideas demonstrated in other texts is shown in your reflection.

Feedback from the Marking Centre

For each Module, it is a good idea to read the feedback from the HSC Marking Centre from previous examinations (when they become available). Apply what it tells you about the qualities of good scripts to your analytical and imaginative responses. Use the key comments to make any refinements to your responses.

Activity

1. Refer to notes from the Marking Centre for your exams from last year (when they become available). Pay careful attention to the characteristics of best responses. Consider what the Marking Centre deems valuable.
2. Write notes about the key characteristics that are significant for you when you write your analytical and imaginative responses.
3. What are the areas that you could improve on when writing responses for each module?

2 Module A: Language, Identity and Culture

SYLLABUS REQUIREMENTS

Essentially, Module A requires you to:

- explore, analyse and assess the ways in which meaning about individual and community/collective identity, as well as cultural perspectives, are shaped in and through texts
- investigate how textual forms and conventions are used to communicate information, ideas, values and attitudes which inform and influence perceptions of ourselves and other people and cultural perspectives.

See Chapter 1: Syllabus Requirements for more information on the syllabus requirements for Module A. Chapters 6–16 also address the prescribed texts for Module A.

KEY TERMS

Language: method of human communication, either spoken, visual or written, consisting of the use of words in a structured and conventional way

Identity: the values and beliefs and qualities that distinguish a person or group; that which we identify with

Culture: the agreed values, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society

Context: the social, cultural and political background environment at the time the text was composed, including biographical and historical events that influenced the text

Values: the beliefs and attitudes of the composer, which may shift to reflect those of the society at the time. They are conveyed directly and indirectly through the world of the text and characters' words and actions

INFERRING MEANING THROUGH LANGUAGE

It is through language that we understand the world and our connection to it. Language can be written, spoken, audio and visual. Language shapes our perceptions of ourselves and others.

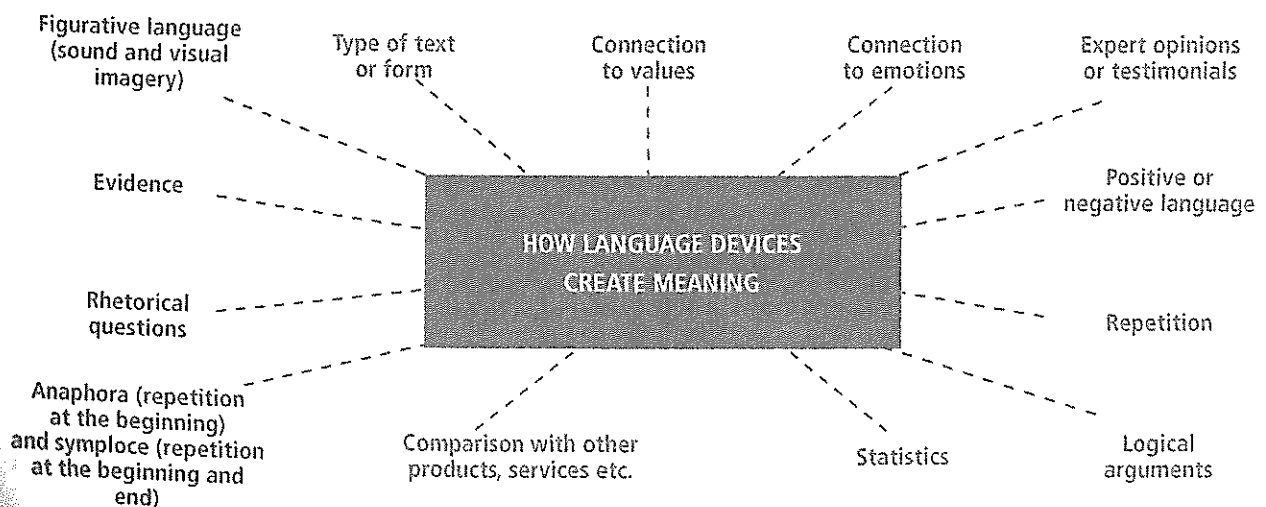
In Module A, you look at language in the following ways:

- what language tells you about individual and collective identity and culture
- how language conveys ideas about individual and collective identity and culture.

The information and activities below will help you to consider language through the lenses of identity and culture. But first, let's look more closely at the language devices used in texts.

Written language devices

Below is a list of possible written language devices used to convey meaning. Remember that not all devices will necessarily be used in each text.



Activity

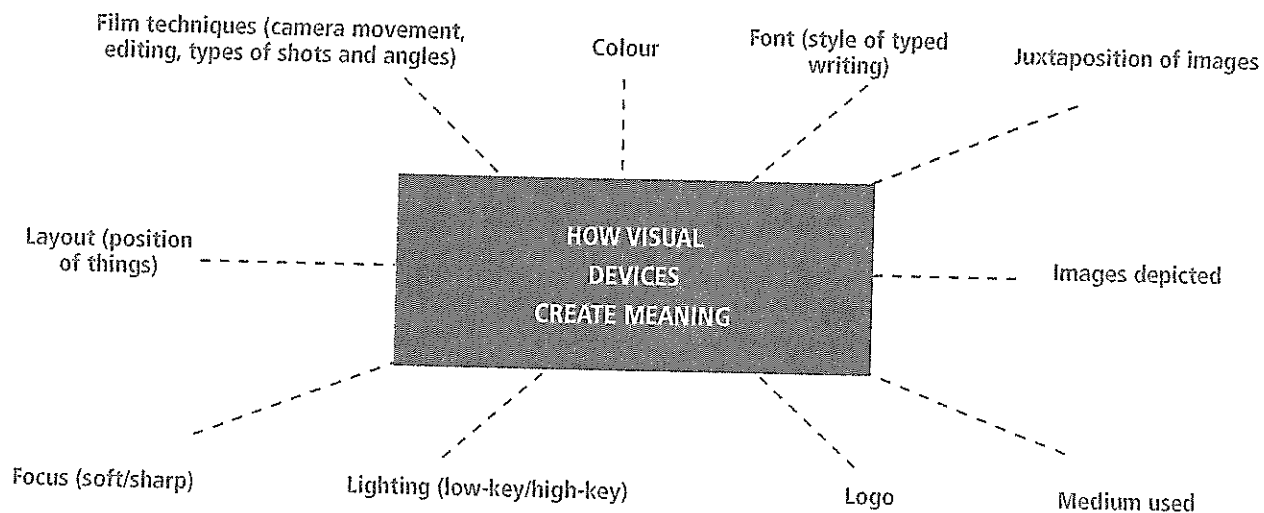
1. Are there any written language techniques you know of that are not written above? Write them down and explain what they mean.
2. Find an example of a language device from your own reading that relates to identity and/or culture. Explain what your example conveys about identity and/or culture.
3. Choose from the headings below. Write a brief creative piece of writing inspired by the heading, using at least one written language device.
 - a hobby or interest
 - family
 - school.

Feel free to choose your own heading if you prefer.

Visual language devices

When looking at visual texts, consider how both the visual, verbal/non-verbal and written language or devices create meaning. Visual texts are either still frames or film or animation.

Below is a list of possible visual language devices used to convey meaning. Remember that not all devices will necessarily be used in each text.

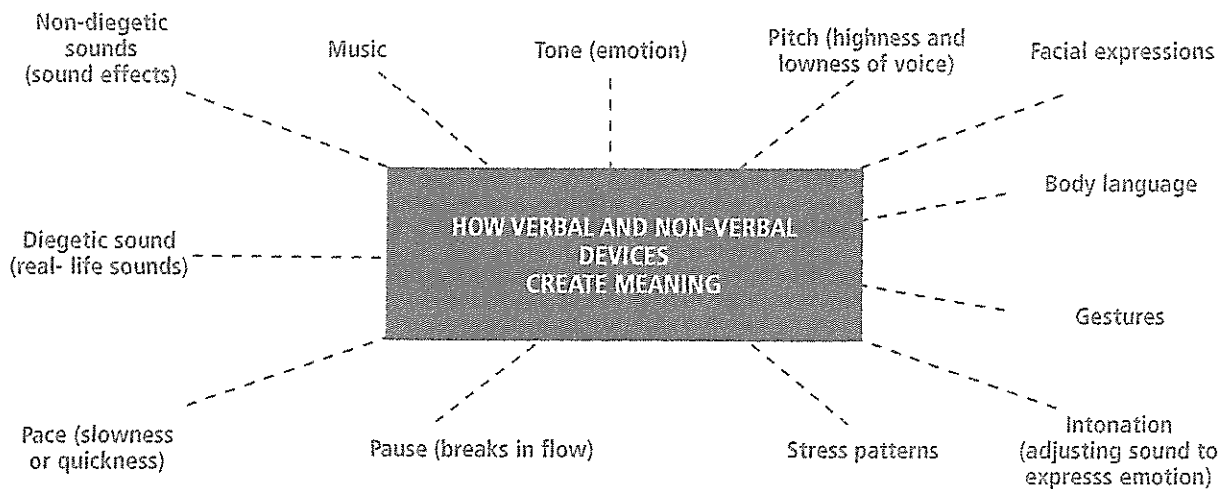


Activity

1. Are there any visual language devices you know of that are not written above? Write them down and explain what they mean.
2. Find an example of a visual language device from your own reading that relates to identity and/or culture. Explain what your example conveys about identity and/or culture.
3. Create a visual inspired by one or more key ideas explored in one of your prescribed text.

Verbal and non-verbal language devices

Below is an outline of the various verbal and non-verbal devices used in texts. Keep in mind that the actual words spoken will often be language devices. Remember that not all devices will necessarily be used in each text.



Activity

1. Are there any verbal/non-verbal language devices you know of that are not written above? Write them down and explain what they mean.
2. Find an example of a verbal/non-verbal language device from your own reading that relates to identity and/or culture. Explain what your example conveys about identity and/or culture.

HOW INDIVIDUAL AND COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IS SHAPED

What is identity?

A person or character's identity refers to a set of characteristics they have that makes it easy to recognise that person or character. The identity tells you a great deal about that character's personality and how they see the world. Your identity or individuality is comprised of many aspects. Some identities include the underdog or rebel, wealthy or poor, son or daughter, student, boyfriend or girlfriend, artist, athlete or teenager. Identities can also be collective. They can represent a society, a country or a group of people with similar backgrounds or interests. For example one component of Australia's identity is that we barrack for the underdog. Remember when talking about collective identity, not everyone in the group may relate to the common characteristics of the identity.

You associate identity with a person but you can also associate identity with a character in a literary text.

What is identity determined by?

You can identify a person or character's identity through various means such as their:

- appearance – what they wear and how they wear it
- interests and hobbies – what they like to do in their spare time
- behaviour – what they do or how they act
- cultural background – including religion and heritage
- social conditions – including their level of affluence
- level of education
- language used in different situations.

Note: when looking at texts, not all aspects of a character or person's identity will be conveyed.

It is important to remember that assumptions can be easily made about identity. Assumptions are the belief that something is true or false, when this may not necessarily be the case. It's important to look deeper into assumptions about identity to make sure you do not offend anyone.

Australian identity and language

Australian's national identity is determined by the language we speak and reflects the socio-demographics of the speaker's character. While English is the dominant language there are many dialect forms used in Australia including Aboriginal English and Ethno-cultural Australian English.

The Australian accent differs from the way English is spoken in other places. In Australia it is the combination of new sounds in the vowel system, modification of consonants, differences in voice (pitch and nasality), rate of speaking and the assimilation or elision of words that contribute to the Australian accent. An accent is usually described as a single dialect. There are many variations in the pronunciation of British English. Generally, Australia has a broad single dialect, although the Australian accent also has some variation depending on where people grow up.

Activity

- Look at the following images from Tourism Australia represent aspects of the Australian identity. What information about individual and collective identity can you deduce from the person/people and the landscape depicted in the images below? Consider the following:
 - appearance
 - interests and hobbies
 - behaviour – what they do or how they act
 - cultural background
 - social conditions
 - level of education
 - language used in different situations.
- Are any of your ideas above assumptions about a person's identity? Which ones? How do you know they are assumptions? What are some potential issues that could arise from making assumptions about one's identity?
- In what ways do the two Tourism Australia images represent an Australian collective identity?
- Find an alternative image that reflects your understanding of Australian collective identity. In three sentences explain how your image reflects Australia's collective identity. How does it compare and contrast to the images from Tourism Australia?



Acknowledgment: Tourism Australia advertising campaign, Bondi Skate park, Bondi, NSW.



Acknowledgment: Tourism Australia advertising campaign, Twelve Apostles Lodge Walk, Great Ocean Road, VIC.

HOW CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES ARE SHAPED



Acknowledgment: Tourism Australia advertising campaign, Twelve Apostles Lodge Walk, Great Ocean Road, VIC.

Through the text, the composer conveys ideas about culture that are important to them. These are aspects of culture as the composer saw them at the time of creating the text.

What is culture?

Culture isn't static, which means it does not stay the same. Over time our values and ideas about culture can change as people adapt to changing climate, new inventions and influences from other people and other cultures. Therefore, although culture shapes who we are, we speak back to culture through texts, as we reflect on these changes.

Culture can be defined in the following ways:

- the quality in a person, organisation or society that arises from a concern for what is regarded as excellence in arts, letters, ethics, manners, scholarly pursuits, etc.

- a particular form or stage of civilization, as that of a certain nation or period, for example ancient Greek culture
- development or improvement of the mind through education or training
- the behaviours and beliefs characteristic of a particular social, ethnic, or age group, for example youth culture; Indigenous culture.

What is culture determined by?

Although this is not an exhaustive list, culture can be determined by the following:

- family background – heritage – where you come from and family structure
- socio-economic issues – occupation, wealth and status, social class
- traditional or societal beliefs, customs, attitudes and values
- friends and peer groups
- education – knowledge and understanding of the world
- demographics – where you live and the landscape.

When we think about how culture is represented in texts, we consider the following aspects:

- written, verbal/non-verbal and visual language
- themes and ideas about life and culture.

In narratives we also consider:

- characterisation
- storyline – plot – events
- setting.

Australian culture

The oldest culture in Australia is the Indigenous culture of the Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Australian Aboriginal culture varies throughout the continent and people from various regions have different languages, customs, beliefs and lifestyles. These cultures have adapted dramatically to accommodate all that has been introduced into Australia since 1788, when the country was colonised by the British.

One of the most interesting and enriching aspects of Australian society is its multicultural makeup. Like the US and Canada, Australia is a migrant nation; in fact, according to the 2006 census, half of the country's population was either born overseas or have one or both parents who were born overseas.

Despite the stereotype of the Aussie as a golden-tanned, blonde-haired surfer, the reality is that Australia is one big melting pot made up of people from an enormous variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds.

Activity

1. Look at the images on the next page from Tourism Australia that represent aspects of Australian culture. What information about individual and collective culture can you deduce from the person/people and the landscape depicted in the images? Consider the following:
 - family background
 - socio-economic issues
 - traditional or societal beliefs, customs, attitudes and values
 - friends and peer groups
 - education
 - demographics.
2. Are any of your ideas above assumptions about culture? Which ones? How do you know they are assumptions? What are some potential issues that could arise from making assumptions about culture?
3. In what ways do the two Tourism Australia images represent individual and collective Australian culture?
4. Find an alternative image that reflects your understanding of Australian culture. In three sentences explain how your image reflects Australia's individual and collective culture. How does it compare and contrast to the images from Tourism Australia?

8

Poems by Adam Aitken, Kim Cheng Boey and Michelle Cahill (eds)

SYLLABUS REQUIREMENTS

If *Contemporary Asian Australian Poets* is your prescribed text for Module A, you are required to explore and analyse how language has the power to reflect and shape individual and collective identity, as well as cultural perspectives, in and through texts. The syllabus states that you should be focusing on how textual forms and conventions and language structures and features in visual, aural and printed texts communicate information, ideas, values and attitudes. You need to also consider how information, ideas, values and attitudes can shape and change our perceptions of ourselves, other people throughout the world and cultural perspectives.

You are required to know ALL the poems set for study in detail. However, when you write about them in Section II of the exam, you should write about at least three poems. You may refer to other poems where relevant, although you will not be required to write about all of them.

The prescribed poems are:

- Merlinda Bobis, 'This is where it begins'
- Ouyang Yu, 'New Accents'
- Jaya Savige, 'Circular Breathing'
- Miriam Wei Wei Lo, 'Home'
- Vuong Pham, 'Mother'
- Maureen Ten (Ten Ch'in Ü), 'Translucent Jade'

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Context

About the editors: Adam Aitken, Kim Cheng Boey and Michelle Cahill are the editors of this anthology. They are all talented poets in their own right, and have each contributed an introduction to this collection.

Adam Aitken is a young award-winning Asian-Australian poet, with seven major collections published in Australia. He is featured in numerous poetry anthologies, and has published poems in many Australian and international literary journals. In his introduction he throws up questions of choice around an identity for Asian-Australian poets.

Kim Cheng Boey is an award-winning poet of Chinese descent. He grew up in Singapore and studied at the Goethe Institute in Germany before moving to Australia with his wife in 1997. He focuses here on issues of migration.

Michelle Cahill is a prize-winning Sydney-based poet and author of Goan-Anglo-Indian descent. She has migrated several times in her life, arriving in Australia at the age of 11, and migration is a prominent theme in her writing. Here she explores the 'double exile' and marginalisation of Asian-Australian women poets.

About the poems: *Contemporary Asian Australian Poets* (2013) is the first anthology dedicated to Asian-Australian literature. This notable collection comprises 37 poets with ancestral links to China, Vietnam, India, Singapore, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Hong Kong, Thailand, and the Philippines. Included are immigrants and Australian born poets, expressing a diversity of themes directly and indirectly, including geographic and cultural dislocation, trauma and loss, racism and exile.

According to Timothy Yu in *Cordite Poetry Review*,

'*Contemporary Asian Australian Poets* offers a dizzying array of Asian-Australian poetics – exilic to identitarian [a European, North American, Australian, and New Zealander white nationalist, far-right movement], earnest to ironic, formalist to experimental, cosmopolitan and feminist. Rather than presenting these as different phases in the development of Asian-Australian writing, or privileging one mode over another, it insists that all are simultaneously available to the Asian-Australian poet. This openness makes Asian-Australian poetry vital and exhilarating ... This anthology demonstrates beyond question that there are astonishingly accomplished poets of Asian descent writing in Australia, and makes a strong case that those poets should be better known by Australian readers.'

Merlinda Bobis, 'This is where it begins'

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Context (about the poet): born in the Philippines in 1959, Bobis now resides in Australia. A writer, academic, dancer and visual artist, Bobis' writing encompasses different genres in both Pilipino and English. She also speaks a regional dialect, based on Spanish, called Bikol. Bobis has published four novels, six books of poetry, a collection of short stories and a vast array of literary and scholarly articles. She has had ten dramatic works produced in Australia and internationally and won many awards.

Purpose and audience: this poem speaks of the power of words and the deep connections between generations. Bobis illustrates how the passing on of culture, beliefs and values happens through words and stories creating an invisible yet visceral connection with the next generations. This poem could appeal to a wide audience as the direct learning of one's cultural values, however fragmented, is a universal human experience.

KEY TERMS

Conjure: to invoke, bring about as if by magic

Infernal: devilish

Umbilical cord: conduit through which a mother nourishes her unborn child

HOW LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND CULTURE RELATES TO 'THIS IS WHERE IT BEGINS'

The poem begins with an italicised statement about the three languages the poet speaks: Bikol, Pilipino and English and how through the different types of language we communicate the same type of thing 'over and over again'. The use of the universal 'Once upon a time' establishes the connection to stories, in particular fairytales, that have been told and retold again and again in different countries. It is commonly known for example that countries have their own versions of common stories, like for example Cinderella. In this way, the poet expresses the universality of storytelling as a cultural phenomenon. It is through stories that we explore and express our culture, identity as both individuals and as a society, and community. Hence the first two stanzas in a language other than English represents this universality of language. It matters not what the words mean, but more that they communicate messages that are common in many cultures.

The poet then proceeds to give accounts of the various ways she could have learned the value of storytelling. At first it is through her grandmother, who told stories about the crab-stealer. Then she thinks that it may have been her grandfather, who metaphorically teased her with stories about 'that lady in the hills' who sparked her curiosity about stories and the people's lives and experiences they represent. Then she says that perhaps it was her mother who sparked her curiosity when she was reviewing her 'college Spanish exam'. It is through her mother, she realises, that she becomes aware of the fluidity and beauty of language that describes things in figurative ways. Fourthly, she notes that perhaps it was her father who gestured in a way that made her think of stories.

The poet concludes that this poem is for not only her grandmother, grandfather, mother and father who inspired others through storytelling, but to all the storytellers who have lived before. Here, it becomes apparent that the poem is an ode to the written word and the stories these words convey. She declares that the value of storytelling is that it incites emotions and connect us with others. The poet suggests that stories have a way of connecting us to each other in ways that are surprising. As the poem says, sometimes when we hear a word that 'hits a hidden / crevice in the ear', we imagine the worlds that the words and stories inspire. However when we hear about these worlds, we are often surprised that someone else has thought of them too. Such is the nature of storytelling: it allows the storyteller to express their understanding of the world. Many times these representations of the world are familiar to others in ways that are humbling and inspiring. This is because we realise that we are not alone in seeing the world as we do. This is perhaps why the poet says that storytelling is 'not lonely'. Rather, the act of writing the story may appear to be lonely as writing is often a solitary pursuit, but because the stories being written are able to provide a connection with others, loneliness is impossible. The poet concludes that the stories that have been told to us stay with us indefinitely as they are metaphorically 'under our skin'.

Activity

How do you relate language, identity and culture to 'This is where it begins'?

TEXT STRUCTURE AND SUMMARY

The poem is made up of nine stanzas – all of varying line lengths. The poem begins with a statement in italics about a time gone by in Bikol, Pilipino.

Stanzas 1 & 2: written in Bikol and then Pilipino language, so that the meaning is unclear.

Stanza 3: the stanza begins stating 'this is where it begins' as a story begins. We are informed that the speaker, probably the poet, was six years old, maybe five. She refers to her grandmother's storytelling.

Stanza 4: the poet expresses doubt that perhaps the story began at another time, when her grandfather teases her. Again she is six years old, perhaps five.

Stanza 5: the poet gives an alternative option to where it began. This time it's when her mother was reviewing her college Spanish exam.

Stanza 6: continuing the doubt, the poet remembers her father and suggests that this where it begins.

Stanza 7: she concludes that the poem is for all these people and for all the storytellers who have come before us. The poem is an ode to stories. She expresses the sensory impact that language and words have had on her.

Stanza 8: the poet further explains her values around storytelling – that it is not a lonely experience. She says that the storytellers from the past have left their stories under our skin.

Stanza 9: the poet explains how the act of storytelling is an interconnected act between the storyteller and reader.

LANGUAGE FORMS AND FEATURES

Figurative language

The poet refers to elements we need to tell stories, such as 'eyes', 'lips' and 'hands' when referring to her mother who taught her the value of storytelling. The poet metaphorises these things are the conjurers of stories themselves, for example, the eyes bring up visions of ghosts under the bed, the lips enable the ghosts to speak and the hands are clear communicators. The metaphorical reference to ghosts alludes to the stories from the past that continue to exist in the present. Even if they cannot be seen or heard, we know they are there. In addition, stories themselves are described metaphorically as crackling in 'Each story-word crackles / under the ghost's teeth'. The ghost metaphor also enhances the idea that the past intermingles with the present in surprising and mysterious ways. Referring to the story-words as 'infernal under my skin' that makes the poet 'shiver' suggests that stories can haunt us, especially when we hear a horror or suspense story, that is alluded to through the 'crab-stealer'.

Storytelling, as the poet sees it, connects us all, and she metaphorises stories as 'all our eyes', meaning stories about the human condition, referring to the common bond we all share and the understanding of each other made possible by stories. They unite us through this common understanding and engender empathy. Through the repetitive use of the collective noun 'our' and the images the poet consistently uses as a metaphor for storytelling in 'our eyes', 'our lips', 'our hands', the poet expresses how we metaphorically create stories together. In this way, stories are the unifier, the way that the metaphorical 'umbilical cord', symbolising life and birth, is restored, suggesting that stories will continue to unite people from generation to generation, country to country, in a common understanding of each other.

Enjambment and symploce

It is through these stories that the poet believes feelings are aroused that connect us so deeply to the human condition that they make us shiver. The repetition of 'they made us shiver' in 'not just over crab-stealers' and 'also over faith, over tenderness' shows that the stories she refers to are not just about interesting and unusual things and events, but also things that inspire deep emotions. The use of enjambment, with the beginning of the expression 'They made us shiver' at the end of the lines enhances the emotional impact of words and stories on us. Another example of enjambment is 'not lonely, / not as we claim'. The word 'lonely' is emphasised, however the statement 'not as we claim' qualifies the poet's perception of loneliness, which is enhanced by the em dash (—) after 'claim'. Here the poet represents a common assumption that the act of writing is lonely, as shown through the imagery of the 'little rooms' lit by a lamp or 'computer glow'. The poet disputes this however explaining that through the act of writing, the writer is conjuring up the collective memory of all the stories told before. She shows this through the juxtaposition of the 'hand' and the 'pen' and the 'eye' and the 'screen'. She qualifies her thoughts with the emphasises on "storytold" in 'they who "storytold" before us'. She concludes with a claim about the power of storytelling, through the metaphor of them being 'under our skin', meaning the stories we are raised on are so entrenched in our collective identity and culture that they are a part of us.

The poet uses symploce (repetition of words at the beginning and ending of a sentence or clause) of 'six years old, perhaps five' when describing the moment she discovered her appreciation for storytelling from the members of her family. Similarly, she uses anaphora (repetition of words at the beginning of a sentence or clause) of 'This is

where it begins', sometimes with the modal adjective 'perhaps', to highlight the significance of the experience. Through these techniques, the poet represents the elusiveness of storytelling. The actual facts around a story are often forgotten. However the poet suggests that it is not the accuracy of the account of a story that is most valuable, but rather the elements we remember that invoke a feeling or memory that touches us in a way that is meaningful. Hence, the poet does not recite stories in full, but rather refers to certain elements of the story that stand out to her, such as the 'crab-stealer / hiding under the bed' or the 'colour of (the) dress' of the 'lady in the hills' that changes each time her grandfather tells the story, or the sound of her mother reciting Spanish words in preparation for her Spanish exam.

Activity

Create and fill in the table by choosing appropriate quotes from the poem, identifying language forms and features, then providing a brief analysis of what each quote tells you about identity and culture. The first one has been completed as an example.

Quote from 'This is where it begins'	Language forms and features	What it tells you about identity and culture
'Just air / heralding the world or worlds that we think / we dream up alone'	Enjambment	The word 'air' at the end of the line evokes the way stories are shared orally, the inflection, emphasis and what the sound of the words actually signify. It is this mystery of storytelling that makes it so interesting. The 'worlds that we think / we dream up alone' represents the symbiotic nature of storytelling as the teller and the listeners create the experience together.

Miriam Wei Wei Lo, 'Home'

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Context (about the poet): born in Canada in 1973 and raised in Singapore, Wei Wei Lo moved to Australia in 1993 and now lives in Margaret River, Western Australia where she is involved in her church community with her Baptist pastor husband. She is of Chinese-Malaysian and Anglo-Australian descent. As well as poetry, she writes creative non-fiction, performance pieces and children's books.

Purpose and audience: Wei Wei Lo explores concepts of home, family and heritage in this poem, using sensory auditory and tactile and biblical imagery to conjure the mystery of the notion of home. She points out that for her home is not about the physical structure and that even when she's surrounded by those she loves she still feels alone. She evokes a universal sense of home as a safe place where everyone is cared for. Section 2 describes a spiritual epiphany where the outer world is eclipsed and she finds 'home' inside herself. There is a sense of struggle as this knowledge requires sacrifice on some level.

Section 3 explores the physical idea of home as a house comparing her family's comfortable house and her children's easy sense of belonging with her father's Spartan childhood. Relenting that the body needs 'a tent' she accepts what she has, using botanical imagery of foreign plants 'so completely at home' in her garden to symbolise the possibility of feeling at home on foreign soil.

KEY TERMS

Ikan balls:	Malaysian dish of anchovy balls
Braille:	tactile writing for vision impaired readers
Stone tablets:	reference to the twelve commandments in the bible
Wafer of honey:	biblical reference meaning God will provide
Plumbago:	shrub with small blue flowers, native to South Africa
White jasmine:	vigorous vine from Asia, considered a weed
Mulberry:	introduced fruit tree common all over the world
Dowager:	a widow with property from her late husband

HOW LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND CULTURE RELATES TO 'HOME'

The sense of belonging and 'home' is a basic need for humans although the form that takes can vary widely, such as for nomadic people. Belonging is a significant contributing factor to one's sense of identity. However the concept and considerations in this poem are universal and could appeal to a wide audience of all ages. As the poet alludes to the awful things that occur in the world we come to understand that this poem is also about being displaced from one's homeland due to hunger, rape, threat of violence or poverty. The poem begins with the poet proposing that 'One Day I Will Find It', suggesting that once our home has been lost we will keep looking, hoping to find it again. The poet speaks for all refugees as she reveals the aspects of home she will recognise if she finds it, such as the smell of familiar food, or the sound of water falling on known landscapes made of 'sand, stones, mud', illustrating that home is made up of physical elements as well as emotional ones.

For the poet, the process of adapting to a new culture is both bitter and sweet. In the second part of the poem, the poet, who is a religious woman, experiences a spiritual awakening that comes 'Without Warning' when she discovers a transcendent feeling of home or wholeness in her own being, 'an image so bright and complete / it can only be seen with eyes shut tight'. The biblical references to the crucifixion 'to enter me like a knife, like a nail, ... taking my body / like breath, like the strong kiss of a bridegroom, / like death' suggest some kind of rebirth into a new perception of life, anchored in 'the pure language of that other place'.

The poet describes her experience as an act of Grace, saying 'Someone is at work in me'. This suggests that there is a benevolent presence, perhaps God, that is guiding her. This is enhanced by the biblical reference to the 'wafer of honey', meaning God will provide what is needed. The poet is able to trust this force which assists her in translating the language of her body. She describes this language as corrupt, alluding perhaps to her way of seeing the world or the pain and suffering she and many refugees have experienced. These experiences are embedded in her body: 'the dark, bitter words of my heart'. Reference to the heart suggests the emotional impact of these 'dark' and 'bitter' experiences. In this way, the poet refers to the trauma many survivors of war and genocide must deal with. These experiences are dark as they are cruel, representing the bleakest part of the what humans are capable of, such as rape and torture. The bitterness is therefore caused by the conditions that force people to leave their own homelands to seek a better life. Many refugees have lost loved ones and most would prefer to stay in their own homeland, only leaving because of unbearable conditions.

In the last part the poem we see that this inner transformation changes the need to find solace in an external home for the poet. The poet's attitude to the house she has becomes more accepting as she focuses on the positives, learning from her children and the introduced plants thriving in her garden. She comes to appreciate the home that she has made for herself. For her children their home is familiar and comforting, as they have no recollection of anything else. Accepting her new identity as a migrant, she says if there must be 'a place, a tent for the body', she will 'take this one'. The main reason she is able to appreciate this place is because she has discovered an inner sense of home. She also appreciates that she is fortunate when she considers her father, who was born into a room where the whole family lived. She also has modern conveniences, such as a fridge, running water, that make life easier, which her father did not have. In addition, the 'books for a dowager empress, or medieval king' symbolically represent hope for the future through education and learning, a valued cultural component of her new country.

Activity

How do you relate language, identity and culture to 'Home'?

TEXT STRUCTURE AND SUMMARY

The poem comprises of three parts, formally marked with numbering.

1. One Day I Will Find It

Stanza 1: the speaker in the poem, presumably the poet, declares that she follows the smell of food, indicating the types of food she will follow, such as 'ikan bilis, roast lamb, mangoes' or the sound of water. She surmises that the code for entry may be a series of road blocks, like being in Braille, or it will be in her mouth. She confirms to herself that she will see this thing she is searching for, she is sure.

Stanza 2: she outlines a number of things this thing will be, such as a skyscraper and a cottage.

Stanza 3: the poet declares that at this place, no children are raped, nor do they go hungry, or lie awake thinking about sweatshops; nor will she be forced to lock her door for safety.

2. Without Warning

Stanza 4: the poet alludes to a powerful and unexpected spiritual experience using biblical references such as a 'word that is itself' and 'the strong kiss of a bridegroom, / like death'.

Stanza 5: the poet reports that 'Someone is at work' inside her, translating the language of her body into a 'pure language' and drawing her 'across the threshold', suggesting that she has transformed in some way.

3. A Place to Return To

Stanza 6: the poet refers to her and her family returning home, and feels a new level of acceptance around her life situation.

Stanza 7: the poet counts her blessings as she thinks about her father who was born into a 'single room' where his whole family lived.

Stanza 8: the poet concedes that if there must be a place on earth for her to live, she gladly takes this one. She describes the plants in the garden, such as the 'blue plumbago', 'white jasmine' and 'mulberry tree' – all of which have come from other countries and are now thriving here.

LANGUAGE FORMS AND FEATURES

Symploce

The poet uses symploce (repetition of words at the beginning and ending of a sentence or clause) throughout the first part of the poem, this time of 'it will' and 'I will' to represent human qualities of perseverance and hope. For example, 'It will be in my mouth' is used to metaphorically show that the poet will recognise home as it will be in her mouth, meaning embodied in her sense memories. She develops the metaphor further through reference to a 'thin wafer of honey' to not only make a cultural reference, but to show its familiarity. The poet contrasts the sweetness with a paradoxically bitter image of 'salt taste of my husband's sweat'. The familiarity of something from her husband and the bitterness of the salt suggests that finding home for the poet is both sweet, because she has found home, and bitter, because she has lost it in the first place due to horrendous cultural practices. The poet continues to provide contrast to show the complexity of home. Using symploce accumulation of 'It / I will', she refers to the home she aspires to find as both recognisable as a 'skyscraper' and a small cottage: 'It will be a skyscraper', 'It will be the smallest, most picturesque cottage' and 'I will live there'. Here the poet uses imagery of beauty and quaintness in her use of a 'picturesque cottage' to show her longing for 'home' to be a place of comfort. Again she uses contradiction through an oxymoron in her description of living in the home both 'alone' and 'with everyone I love'. As strange as it may seem, even though we can live with other people, we can also be alone within ourselves. Such is the human condition, that we have internal thoughts, processes that are unique to the individual. The example of symploce of 'I will' in the first part, in 'I will not have to lock the door' emphasises the danger the poet experienced in the home. It is not what is mentioned so much that represents this danger, but what is omitted. The gaps and silences indicated by locking the door suggests that the poet, or those she is giving voice to, have had no safe or private place even in their homes, where fear and the threat of home invasion is ever-present.

Figurative language

Numerous images are referred to in the poem that create a sense of the dangers of living in the poet's homeland. For example, images of sweatshops, people going hungry while others eat and how they are 'lying awake', shows that the experience of home is heart-breaking and seemingly beyond the control of anyone to change due the breakdown of culture. The reference to sweatshops that make the sheets, pyjamas and rugs refers to an industry where people work for minimal wages in cramped and uncomfortable conditions for an industry that generates big profits from the sale of inexpensive goods. It is an inequitable and uncaring system. Reference to Braille in relation to the code the poet may need to enter a peaceful place illustrates the tactile quality of this elusive thing we call home. Images of the poet 'weeping' in a 'dark room at midnight' highlight her sense of aloneness and feeling her way in the dark with this challenge of finding peace, while also reflecting the collective sadness she feels because of all the pain and suffering in the world.

The poet develops the imagery of pain and suffering in the second part of the poem through reference to the way an 'image' will enter her 'like a knife, like a nail, / hammering in'. The reference to the crucifixion implies that the poet sees this quest as the cross she bears, showing that living with trauma is fraught with complex emotions. The final line of this stanza, 'like death, in all its finality' continues the crucifixion theme as part of her spiritual awakening. Here the poet suggests that an old way of being is dead; just as there can be no going back to the old home she once knew: a commitment has been made to integrate into a new culture and society. However, it is a joyous occasion 'where every word is a radiant arrival' drawing her 'across the threshold' and claiming her 'as its own.' The 'threshold' is what we cross to enter the home or a new state of being: in some cultures the 'bridegroom'

will carry his new wife across the threshold into their new life together. This inner experience heralds a change in the author's attitude to her external situation. The angst is replaced by a more practical and accepting approach in Part 3 of the poem.

The poet's children lead the way forward, innocently calling out in the car: "Home" and "We're going home!" The poet expresses a thoughtful ambivalence however, qualifying her children's comments with: 'They must mean this place.' Nevertheless, the poet has found the answer to her own question, established at the beginning of the poem, having crossed her inner threshold and discovered peace within. She acknowledges that she is content with the place she now lives, 'with the blue plumbago' and the 'white jasmine', images of natural beauty. She concludes that it is possible for foreigners to find home through the example of the thriving non-native plants in her garden including the mulberry tree – 'that foreigner / so completely at home, growing taller each year.' The enjambment of 'foreigner' at the end of the line is deliberately ambiguous as we consider the metaphor of the mulberry tree.

Activity

Create and fill in the table by choosing appropriate quotes from the poem, identifying language forms and features, then providing a brief analysis of what each quote tells you about identity and culture. The first one has been completed as an example.

Quote from 'Home'	Language forms and features	What it tells you about identity and culture
'An image so bright and complete / it can only be seen with eyes shut tight.'	Metaphor and enjambment	The poet explains her realisation through the metaphor of the 'bright image'. This image is so powerful that it can only be metaphorically seen with eyes shut, meaning the experience is internal and personal, not seen with the physical eyes.

Ouyang Yu, 'New Accents'

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Context (about the poet): born and educated in China, including an MA in Australian and English Literature, Yu, 35, moved to Australia in 1991 where he completed a PhD on the representation of Chinese in Australian literature. He is an editor, translator, critic and prolific writer of poetry and fiction in both Chinese and English.

Purpose and audience: Yu uses humour to expose the difficulties immigrants have in learning to pronounce English, here referred to as 'Anguish'. He also exposes the repercussions this can have for new Australians as he failed to receive his M.A. (Master of Arts) in Canton due to a mispronunciation. This may have cost him a sought-after position, suggesting that this difficulty may affect people's prospects in Australia. This poem could appeal to all Australians and residents of other English-speaking countries where we understand this phenomenon.

KEY TERMS

- Accent:** way of pronunciation particular to a speaker or group of speakers
- Kingsbury:** a suburb of Melbourne, Victoria
- Antipodes:** places on the other side of the globe, usually in reference to Australia, by the British
- Canton:** now known as Guangzhou and formerly romanized (a system of transliterating Chinese place names) as Kwangchow or Kwong Chow, is the capital and most populous city of the province of Guangdong in southern China

HOW LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND CULTURE RELATES TO 'NEW ACCENTS'

There are three speakers in this poem: the poet who meets people who speak in 'new accents', and the two people he speaks to – 'P from Wuxi' and 'C from Canton'. Through these speakers, the poet explores the challenges of adapting to a new language as a migrant. He achieves this through referring to the 'new accents' he hears in the Melbourne suburb Kingsbury, where he presumably now lives, in the late 1990s. The image of people speaking English with new accents shows that they have made an effort to integrate into their new culture by learning the language. Language is therefore presented as an important aspect of assimilation: language is vital in culture as it

ensures that people can communicate with each other in ways that are understood. However the 'accent' identifies people as coming from a foreign country as their first language is not English. English is renowned as difficult to learn as it contains many contradictions especially in the pronunciation and even the meaning of words that look identical. Certain sounds that are unique to the English language are not part of some people's native language so the way they speak clearly identifies them as foreigners or migrants. In this way, the 'accent' can become a component of one's identity.

The poet shows that Australia is a multicultural country through the imagery of Melbourne as a cosmopolitan city. The poet refers to the various 'new accents' he hears as he experiences the city he lives in. He identifies these people as 'P from Wuxi' and 'C from Canton', thereby giving them universal names we can associate with Asian countries. Showing the randomness of hearing these accents he says that he heard 'P from Wuxi' speaking of walking down a street in Melbourne he had not heard of called Neechosen Street, for example. The identification of the street name is just as odd sounding as the language would be to foreigners who come to Australia and learn the language. On another occasion he hears 'C from Canton' speaking about criminal cases and the apt contribution he made to the English language through his mispronunciation of "English" as "Anguish". Here the poet highlights the challenges migrants experience as they often unknowingly misinterpret the sound of words. For the speaker, 'C of Canton' the implications of this were far reaching as he missed out on an opportunity to complete a M.A. (postgraduate study – Master of Arts) in Canton. In turn the speaker declares that the university lost a 'genius' in him because of this. Here the poet shows how the presumption of ignorance in relation to language proficiency can cause misunderstandings and loss of potential for both the migrant and the adopted country. Society could have benefited from the knowledge and wisdom 'C from Canton' possessed through his tertiary studies and his life experiences. Instead, the 'genius' of this man will never be known.

Activity

How do you relate language, identity and culture to 'New Accents'?

TEXT STRUCTURE AND SUMMARY

Stanza 1: the poet begins by setting the scene of the poem – Kingsbury, late 1990s, where the people he met spoke with 'new accents'.

Stanza 2: 'P from Wuxi' is mentioned, who talked of walking down Neechosen Street.

Stanza 3: 'C from Canton' spoke of criminal cases and the best contribution he has made to 'the English'.

Stanza 4: the meaning of English is clarified in this stanza, meaning the 'English / Language'.

Stanza 5: again the meaning from the last stanza about when C from Canton arrived in Australia is clarified as the time when 'they tried to fool' him around because he couldn't speak 'Anguish', meaning English. He recognises that he has been pronouncing words incorrectly.

Stanza 6: as the speaker, C of Canton continues, relaying that some of his students would pronounce words incorrectly.

Stanza 7: continuing further, the speaker refers to setbacks he has experienced because he was unable to speak English in the expected manner, such as losing an M.A. candidacy in Canton.

Stanza 8: the speaker notes that the professors, as a result of this, lost a 'genius' in him.

LANGUAGE FORMS AND FEATURES

Figurative language

Metaphorically the poet uses the term 'new accents' to identify migrants. By using the term 'new accents' instead of migrants the poet alludes to certain values and ideas around people whose accents are not indicative of the dominant culture – that of native Australian speakers of the English language. In particular the speaker 'C from Canton' represents the limitations placed on the individual but also the greater society when judgements and restrictions are applied to the validity of accents. Because of C from Canton's accent his ability to achieve his academic aspirations were limited. In this way, his 'new accent' caused him 'Anguish'. The play on the word 'English' shows the speaker's frustrations at not being able to pronounce words in a way that is accepted. The speaker's satirical modification of his 'Anguish' as 'wonderful' shows his wry humour and that he can laugh about the predicament of his desire to learn to master the finer elements of the English language over all these years.

The poet outlines many ways that migrants can mispronounce English words. For example, "veege table" instead of 'vegetable' and the accentuation (stress) of the 'b' sound in 'subtly'. The poet uses a capital 'B' in "SuBtlety" to

show the subtle and not so subtle ways that words can be pronounced incorrectly. Even though they are slight changes, they have significant implications. At the same time, the poet shows that these different ways of speaking do not diminish the ability to understand the meaning of the word. The only limitation is the struggle of the speaker to pronounce the word, not understand its meaning. However it is with some humour that the poet refers to the speakers mispronunciation. For example the confusion between “whore” for “whorl” and pronouncing “antipodes” as “anti-pode-s”. In this way, the poet shows that language is malleable (flexible) in its meaning and pronunciation. Language is not fixed: it is fluid and changes according to the collective needs of the society. Think for example of the development of slang words and phrases and how they connect certain cultural groups, like teenagers, and sometimes gain mainstream currency as well.

However, the poet shows the value of language in its stability and formality. He shows this through ‘C from Canton’s attitude towards the loss of his M.A. candidacy. He adds that the ‘professors, rightly, lost a genius’ in him. Here the speaker shows that in academia it is important to uphold the sanctity (purity) of language. In this way, the poet shows that the speaker is a true academic as he upholds values of respect for the native language and the information it conveys that is for the collective good of the society. We know that the speaker achieved some level of education as he is a teacher, indicating that he ‘Laboured on, with myself, with my students’ attempting to master the language. The poet illustrates the connection between generations as new migrants integrate into Australian society, admirably utilising the resources available to them.

Activity

Create and fill in the table by choosing appropriate quotes from the poem, identifying language forms and features, then providing a brief analysis of what each quote tells you about identity and culture. The first one has been completed as an example.

Quote from 'New Accents'	Language forms and features	What it tells you about identity and culture
'And the best contribution he has made to the English / Language'	Enjambment	The poet emphasises 'English' by placing it at the end of the line before a new stanza, which links the word to 'language'. In this way the poet ironically sets the reader up for the way the speaker has made his 'best contribution' to the language. The speaker overcomes obstacles encountered by the authorities who tried to 'fool' him around, by being persistent in learning the language himself. This shows the determination of many migrants to learn the language in their new country so they can make the most of their new lives.

Vuong Pham, 'Mother'

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Context (about the poet): Vuong Pham was conceived in Vietnam in troubled times and born in Brisbane to Vietnamese refugee parents. He teaches English and Studies of Society and Environment (SOSE) in Brisbane. His writing tends to be deeply spiritual and he has been a featured poet at the Queensland Poetry Festival.

Purpose and audience: this poem casts a wide net exploring change, life's seasons, the mother/son relationship, childhood memories, dislocation caused by war, the refugee experience and the values and aptitudes passed down from generation to generation. It tells his mother's story through device of the poet's curiosity and their conversation while they are engaged in an intimate act of pulling the grey hairs from her aging head. This verse could appeal to a wide audience as we all have mothers and there will always be mysteries about their younger years before we knew them. It will also appeal to Asian-Australians and anyone interested in the refugee or migrant experience.

KEY TERMS

Exodus:	mass evacuation or emigration
Pho:	Vietnamese noodle soup
Halcyon:	happy, carefree, peaceful
Diaspora:	dispersal, exodus
Cerulean:	deep blue

HOW LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND CULTURE RELATES TO 'MOTHER'

This poem is an ode to the poet's mother and her cultural identity. Through her experiences the poet shows not only his respect for her endurance and persistence in dealing with surviving in a worn torn country and managing to find a way out, but to all the others immigrant mothers who have had similar experiences. The poem is also a personal exploration of the poet's relationship with his mother. By understanding his mother, the poet is able to better understand himself. His developed sense of identity is shown through the intimacy the mother and son share, illustrated by the recurring motif of the son plucking grey hairs from his mother's head. In this quiet space, they talk about things that are important to them. For example, the poet, asks his mother a question "Mother, what ever was your passion in life?" The nature of the question shows that the poet is genuinely interested in understanding his mother on a deep level. He notes that he expects his mother to reply that it would be 'gardening' and is surprised when she says it is high school teaching. By enquiring into his mother's deepest passions, the poet unlocks a greater understanding of her and himself as memories flood back to him. He remembers his mother's excitement when he returned home with a certificate for 'improved literacy'. The poet creates a common image of the pride parents feel when their children achieve in ways they deem valuable. Hence the reader can see the influence the poet's mother has had on his own values and his achievements.

This can be seen in the fact that the poet is a teacher himself. As he states, the 'teaching legacy passed down to me'. The poet realises the sacrifices his mother made for this to occur. The em dash (—) highlights these sacrifices as his mother's responsibilities to provide for her children outweighed the desire to be further educated at a tertiary level, which is required in this country to teach in schools, but perhaps not in her home country, where she was able to teach high school. The poet shows his respect for the opportunities his mother afforded him through his reference to teaching his students Wordsworth, a famous English poet, and 'thinking of' her when he saw 'thousands of daffodils'. The reference to the daffodils alludes to one of Wordsworth's most famous poems of the same name. As Pham is also a poet, like Wordsworth, and his mother a teacher as he is, it seems like a fitting acknowledgement of and compliment to his mother as her influence has clearly contributed to the poet's success. This is further accentuated by the fact that his mother worked hard to support her son, sewing for the minimal wage of \$5 an hour, to afford not only basic commodities like 'rice, pork, Asian vegetables' but her son's tuition. Here, the poet illustrates the sacrifices and dedication his mother applied to provide a better future for their children. A quality education is often seen a valuable cultural commodity in the realisation of this. Although these are values held by many Australians, they are particularly important for migrant families who have come from hardship.

Activity

How do you relate language, identity and culture to 'Mother'?

TEXT STRUCTURE AND SUMMARY

The poem is made up of eight stanzas – all of varying line lengths. It is a narrative poem where stories within a story are conveyed.

Stanza 1: the poet begins by stating that he knows now that his mother dreamed of a life other than the one she has lived that has been shaped by war and exodus.

Stanza 2: in an intimate moment, as he plucks her grey hairs, the poet asks his mother what her passion in life was. She smiles as she prepares to give him an answer.

Stanza 3: the poet says that he expected his mother to say gardening, as he remembers his childhood and the garden.

Stanza 4: the poet recites his mother's response to his questions: teaching and he remembers a time in childhood when he returned home with a 'certificate of improved literacy'.

Stanza 5: the poet describes how as he continues to pluck the grey hairs from his mother's head, the conversation continues. He notes that he now knows about his mother's youth before the bloodshed of Saigon. He imagines his mother in her childhood, describing cultural scenes that would have been familiar to her, such as the yellow scooter, street markets, in this city which was her home that she was forced to flee.

Stanza 6: the poet describes how, as he continues to pluck the grey hairs, new understanding comes into focus and he acknowledges that his mother's responsibilities prevented her from perusing a tertiary education, while he was able to. He reflects on the sacrifices his mother made to provide him with a good education.

Stanza 7: the poet reflects on what it must have been like to be a mother in a 'refugee boat'.

Stanza 8: the poet continues to reflect on refugees, focusing on his own mother who was pregnant with the poet when she fled the country aboard a boat.

LANGUAGE FORMS AND FEATURES

Figurative language

The poet creates a very intimate picture of the relationship he shares with his mother through imagery of the scene where they talk. The poet recounts, like he is telling an anecdote, what he remembers during this conversation. For example the imagery of his mother smiling '— that eternal smile' to show that she continues to be happy and loving despite any setbacks she has endured. The em dash (—) accentuates this. Later she smiles again, and the poet reflects on the time he came home from school with a certificate of achievement in literacy. The poet develops the appearance of his mother at this time through the simile describing the way she tilts her neck 'like a sunflower'. The poet clearly sees his mother as inspiring wonder and beauty as he observes her deliberating over the answer to his question about her passion in life. The question is further described as suspending in 'mid-air', metaphorising the way the question lingers in the mind of both mother and son in sweet suspense. His mother is clearly thinking about her answer. While she thinks, the poet imagines what her response will be and metaphorically turns his 'mind's eye' to childhood. He uses an extended number of images to recapture his past: 'shadows / stirring beneath star fruit trees', the cherry tomatoes growing over the fence, and being awoken from a slumber by a call to supper. Further, the imagery of the 'lotus-dotted ponds' the poet remembers close by is in direct contrast to the harsh images of the homeland his mother fled. The poet has clearly enjoyed an idyllic childhood because of the sacrifices his mother has made. The love and care between them is further demonstrated through the imagery of them sitting together on the carpet in 'soft daylight'.

The poet reflects on what he knows about his mother's youth, demonstrating a growing awareness of his mother, not as a parent, but as a woman, a human being. We can imagine that the things he remembers about his mother's past have sprung from the stories he has been told. Hence, like other poems in the selection, the poem represents the importance and value of storytelling. The poet recreates the environment his mother grew up in through rich imagery of the place: the 'yellow scooter', street markets, 'rickshaws' and 'water buffalo'. All these are unique to her culture and vastly different from what she would have experienced since arriving in Australia. The image of his mother looking out from her classroom window at the 'flooded paddies' is a scene that is evocative of the place she can 'no longer' call home. We understand the reasons for her migration when we consider the images of 'war and exodus' and the 'bloodshed in Saigon' alluded to. It is in the gaps and silences around these images that the greatest impact is achieved. The poet does not explicitly explore these images, but the reader can imagine the horror that his mother endured. This makes her determination to create a better life for her children all the more admirable.

The poem conveys the notion that memories are central to a person's sense of identity. It is through memories that the poet develops a new understanding of his mother's past and through this recollection rekindles memories of his own early years. The poet describes the recollection of stories and memories metaphorically as 'jigsaw-puzzle pieces', highlighting the elusive nature of memory. Piecing together the past can be like putting a puzzle together. At this time, however the poet experiences a sense of wholeness by recollecting memories about his mother's values around teaching. Metaphorically, the more hairs the poet plucks from his mother's head, the more his past 'realigns itself'. It is in quiet contemplation that he comes to understand his mother better and consequently to understand himself more fully. He discovers more certainty of things which he knew about, but only in his 'childhood wonder'. This suggests that children have a knowing about things, but it is only with maturity that they can fully understand the implications of events and things relayed to them. Only now does the poet fully appreciate how significant his mother's choices, values and skills have been to him and the person he has become.

Activity

Create and fill in the table by choosing appropriate quotes from the poem, identifying language forms and features, then providing a brief analysis of what each quote tells you about identity and culture. The first one has been completed as an example.

Quote from 'Mother'	Language forms and features	What it tells you about identity and culture
'stitched floral / pyjamas, tablecloths, bedsheets together'	Enjambment	The poet highlights the word floral through enjambment, to show that even though his mother had to stitch various things together to make something useful, there was a beauty and elegance about the things she made. The pride she feels about her sewing contributes to her sense of identity.

Jaya Savige, 'Circular Breathing'

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Context (about the poet): Savige is a contemporary Australian poet, editor and academic. While born in Sydney to an Anglo Australian mother and an Indonesian father his work makes scant reference to his Asian genealogy. He grew up in Queensland where he attended the University of Queensland completing a BA, and later a Masters in Philosophy. He now resides in Cambridge, England where he is a Gates Scholar at Cambridge University and is completing a PhD in English. His award-winning work is recognised internationally and he has given readings across the globe.

Purpose and audience: 'Circular Breathing' is one of a series from a visit to Italy where Savige happened upon a didgeridoo player near the oldest church in Rome. It aims to place the grand though relatively recent traditions of the Catholic church in contrast to the ages old Aboriginal traditions that the didge player conjures, while admitting his own distance from such a venerable history, being a white Australian with little understanding of this ancient culture in his own country. It echoes in a sense a famous poem by Les Murray, 'An Absolutely Ordinary Rainbow', which begins 'There's a fellow crying in Martin Place. They can't stop him'. It is left for the reader to decide if it is meant as a kind of homage to Murray or simply an affiliation of ideas.

This poem could appeal to any traveller who has chanced upon something uniquely indicative of their country in a foreign place, which both delights and inspires thoughts. It is also relevant to Australians who are interested in our culture and heritage.

KEY TERMS

- Piazza di Santa Maria:** the lively piazza in front of the church of Santa Maria in Trastevere, Rome, Italy, which has a monumental fountain in the middle, where people like to sit
- Didgeridoo:** Australian Aboriginal wind instrument in the form of a long wooden tube
- Carabinieri:** the national gendarmerie (a military component with jurisdiction in civil law enforcement) of Italy who primarily carry out domestic policing duties
- King George Square:** Brisbane's premier public square located in front of Brisbane City Hall, Brisbane City
- Om:** mystic syllable, considered the most sacred mantra in Hinduism and Tibetan Buddhism
- Lurch:** stagger

HOW LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND CULTURE RELATES TO 'CIRCULAR BREATHING'

The poet captures a moment in time on his travels in Rome, Italy, where he sees something that is incongruent with the culture of the town. He is surprised by the sight of a dreadlocked musician playing a didgeridoo, an iconic Aboriginal wind instrument. The imagery of the musician playing his instrument in the famous Piazza di Santa Maria in front of Rome's oldest church seems bizarre to the poet. Both are cultural icons indicative of their respective cultures – the didgeridoo of the ancient Aboriginal culture from Australia and the church representing the Roman Catholic religion that spread across the world throughout the early Roman Empire. Both cultures, however, represent cultures that have stood the test of time, although the Aboriginal culture is far older than Christianity or Catholicism.

The poet's identity comes into question when he refrains from expressing his connection to the ancient culture the didgeridoo represents. He realises that to do this would be hypocritical considering he rarely stops to hear a similar, 'truer player' busking in King George Square in his home city of Brisbane. The didgeridoo performance is clearly engaging as the poet describes how 'everyone is listening'. Nonetheless it is with a sense of pride that he is motivated to claim the 'sound as the sound' of his home. Perhaps suggesting that he was prompted by this, he relates the feeling of nostalgia and homesickness many people experience when far away from their home. Seeing or hearing something culturally familiar in a distant land can evoke feelings of comfort and familiarity. At the same time, the fact that the poet stops to listen to the busker in the piazza shows how we are more likely to pay attention to public entertainment when we are away from home, especially if they are free. This begs the question why we don't do this in our home environment, especially, as the poet notes, the performance would be more authentic than in this foreign country. The poet personifies memory as kinking his 'measured walk into a lurch', suggesting that poet staggers as he realises his hypocrisy. Metaphorically his stomach 'fills with fire', perhaps conveying a mixed sense of passion for his culture, but shame that he has not acknowledged it in his own country, needing to be removed from it to appreciate the culture it represents.

Activity

How do you relate language, identity and culture to 'Circular Breathing'?

TEXT STRUCTURE AND SUMMARY

The poem is *for Samuel Wagon Watson*. It is made up of four stanzas – the first and last of seven lines and the second and third of six lines.

Stanza 1: the poem begins with an image of a man playing a didgeridoo to a crowd of people in the Piazza di Santa Maria. He describes some of the happenings at that moment: kids sitting swapping smokes, tourist eating ice-cream, 'illicit markets', nuns that 'halt' and the Carabinieri.

Stanza 2: the poet contemplates the strange appearance of the didgeridoo player and the evocative sound of the instrument, which would be unusual for people in Italy. He compares the uniquely Australian sound to Italian cultural elements, such as famous designers Armani, Ray-Ban and Dolce & Gabbana.

Stanza 3: the poet compares what the didgeridoo player does not do to Australian cultural icons, such as the Holden or the kangaroo. Instead he describes the sound the didgeridoo makes and that the sound is familiar yet strange in this environment.

Stanza 4: the poet declares that he wishes to proudly shout out that the sound is representative of his home, but stops when he realises that he does not take the time to appreciate this instrument when he hears it played in his own country.

LANGUAGE FORMS AND FEATURES

Figurative language

The poet juxtaposes the two cultures through his imagery of the performance and the landscape in which the performance occurs. For example, the poet places the didgeridoo player in the piazza, where people mull about and the crowd metaphorically 'hems the young musician in'. This suggests that the crowd are growing in number and therefore getting closer to the musician, such is the interest in the music he makes. The imagery of the piazza serves to illustrate the oddness of the ancient instrument being played in a country that is so vastly different from the one the didgeridoo signifies. The poet notes that rather than playing something that is iconically Australian, like the 'kangaroo, the mosquito', he creates a sound that is 'one dark warm lush hum', equating it to an 'unhurried Om', a mystical sound made by the control of the breath. Here the poem represents the power of the breath and connects it to the way the sound is created through the didgeridoo through 'circular breathing'. As the poet explains the 'lungs / and instrument the sum', the enjambment of the lungs at the end of the line highlights the connection of the lungs to the instrument. It is a difficult instrument to play properly and can only be achieved when the breath and instrument are in alignment, which makes the performance of the musician remarkable.

Imagery of the kids sitting by the fountain 'swapping smokes for laughs', the nuns, and the tourists eating ice-creams as they pass by the 'illicit markets' suggests an eclectic mix of people engaging in various cultural practices commonly found in piazzas in Italy. This is further highlighted by the fact that the 'belts, handbags, sunglasses' are made in unknown countries. Italy is traditionally known for good quality goods and high fashion, as suggested by the famous designers 'Armani, Ray-Ban, Dolce & Gabbana', all of which are internationally recognised. However, it is with some irony that these goods are no longer made in Italy, but rather the place where they are made is blanked out, developing the element of deceit suggested by the illegal markets. The reference to the illegal markets suggests that the society turns a blind eye to illegal activity. The presence of the Italian police, identified as Carabinieri, enhances this notion. However their appearance, with their 'white gloves, black steel-capped boots glistening' gives the appearance of decadence and prestige, when in fact they are not really doing much at all.

In addition, the poet represents the venerable longevity of the Indigenous culture to show that it is just as valid and significant as Roman culture. For example the poet portrays the didgeridoo player as a type of 'hippy' considering his dreadlocks and the sound the didgeridoo makes as a 'drone as deep as unexcavated ruins', thereby suggesting that the instrument is not only ancient but the sound it makes is as well. In addition, the poet compares the instrument to the Forum in which it is played. Here the poet connects the two venerable cultures noting that the Indigenous culture is far older. This is accurate considering Aboriginal culture is said to be between 70 and 100,000 thousand years old, whereas Rome was founded around 753 BC, less than 3,000 years ago.

Activity

Create and fill in the table by choosing appropriate quotes from the poem, identifying language forms and features, then providing a brief analysis of what each quote tells you about identity and culture. The first one has been completed as an example.

Quote from 'Circular Breathing'	Language forms and features	What it tells you about identity and culture
'from where could this / strange music have come?'	Rhetorical question	Here the poet alludes to what he imagines is the sense of wonder the audience in the piazza experience as they hear the didgeridoo and watch it being played. He answers his own question with 'Surely not this hemisphere.' Here he shows the truly unique nature of Australia's Indigenous culture.

Maureen Ten (Ten Ch'in Ü), 'Translucent Jade'

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Context (about the poet): born in Malaysia in 1948, Ten travelled to Sydney with her family in 1989. She holds a BA(Honours) from the University of Malaya and a MA in Literature from the University of Kent in the UK and has worked as a reporter, feature writer, documentary film maker, university tutor, teacher and book editor, among other things. Her heritage is Malaysian Chinese.

Purpose and audience: the poem would be appreciated by anyone who is interested in the migrant experience, but particularly those who are migrants themselves or have migrant parents. The poem conveys the conflict many people from migrants families who are caught between two cultures: those of the families and the culture they were born into.

KEY TERMS

Ten Ch'in Ü: the poet's Chinese name meaning 'Translucent Jade'

Jostled: push, elbow, or bump against (someone) roughly, typically in a crowd

HOW LANGUAGE, IDENTITY AND CULTURE RELATES TO 'TRANSLUCENT JADE'

The poem describes an impact of migration, when the place that holds the culture is left behind and new ways and a new language must be integrated into one's life. Children grow up in a different culture and learn to speak and think differently. Ten describes her disconnection from her heritage as well as a curiosity towards the potential qualities she might learn to own. Jade is highly prized by the Chinese and translucent jade is the most valued. For the Chinese, the poet's rejection of this name would be seen as a rejection of her heritage. This sense of distance from the parents' and grandparents' culture is common among people who are born and educated in a new country. It can cause divisions within the family and make it difficult to feel a real sense of belonging to either culture. This in turn affects one's sense of identity.

The poem represents this notion of being caught between two cultures through the recurring motif of the poet's Chinese name, which means, 'Translucent Jade'. The poet metaphorises this name as the gift her grandfather gave her. However the name is superseded by the one given her by her mother, Maureen, which she continues to use as indicated by the publication of both names in *Contemporary Asian Australian Poets*. As the poet notes the name was not so much discarded as 'forgotten'. Here she metaphorically represents the culture of her forbears through the 'Translucent Jade' that her grandfather symbolises. Her mother, perhaps trying to assist her daughter's acceptance in Australian society, gives her daughter a new gift. It is this gift that the daughter becomes more familiar with. The three generations of grandfather, mother and daughter show the ease with which culture can be forgotten as a result of migration. One's heritage can be dismissed because it is not as prominent as the new culture being adopted and there is a need to create a sense of belonging in one's new home, especially for the next generation. In this way the poet highlights the schism (spilt or division) this can create for young people who are not exposed to their parents' culture.

However the poet demonstrates an interest in her culture as she metaphorically tries on the name her grandfather gave her after it has been silenced for a long time. The poet notes that it was a 'little strange' and made her wonder if she truly belonged to it. However, the act of trying to reconnect with one's cultural heritage shows the importance of our heritage for all of us. As demonstrated in 'Mother' by Vuong Pham, this shows that to

understand ourselves and to fully express oneself, it is important to understand where you come from. This is what constitutes one's true identity.

Activity

How do you relate language, identity and culture to 'Translucent Jade'?

TEXT STRUCTURE AND SUMMARY

The poem comprises three stanzas of varying lengths.

Stanza 1: the poet refers to an unnamed gift made for her by her grandfather when she was born, which was set aside for another gift from her mother, which was similar in 'place of origin', but her mother's gift 'sparkled and sang'. The original gift wasn't rejected but simply 'slipped away' and was forgotten.

Stanza 2: in the present, the poet recounts how she revisits her grandfather's gift. She tries on the pristine gift and reflects that it makes her feel both strange and somehow connected to and curious about the culture it represents.

Stanza 3: here the poet reveals that the gift is her Chinese name which means 'Translucent Jade', as she wonders about its 'vibrations', comparing it to music, and whether it belongs to her or SHE BELONGS TO IT.

LANGUAGE FORMS AND FEATURES

Figurative language

The poet establishes the significance of the 'gift' her grandfather gave her in the first stanza, but does not reveal what it is until the last line of the poem. This engages the reader as we wonder what this gift is and how the poet has experienced it. This suspense is made even more dramatic through metaphorising the gift as something she wears. As the poet eventually reveals, she 'tries it on'. The gift has been 'Barely, rarely used'. The rhyme at the beginning of the line is unusual and serves to enhance the strangeness with which the poet experiences her reconnection with her name. The simile comparing the gift to another world she 'hadn't inhabited but had heard stories about' highlights the disenfranchisement many second or even third generation migrants feel. They hear about their family's stories, but their own experiences in Australia are so different that they feel they do not really belong. The poet develops the notion of not belonging through feeling like an 'imposter', although she shows curiosity feeling that sometimes it 'reflected hidden aspects I could own'. This shows her willingness to be open to exploring her culture and heritage, recognising the value it can bring to her sense of wellbeing.

In contrast to the gift from her grandfather, the new gift, representing the new culture she has been brought up in, is initially more appealing. The poet shows this through metaphorising her new name as a gift that 'sparkled and sang'. She recognises that the name was 'common' in England, but here, for her, it stood out. This shows how something new can seem attractive, even if others find it commonplace. The poet personifies the way this gift supersedes her grandfather's gift which quietly 'slipped away', in a way that 'no one seemed to mind' thereby suggesting that without the insistence of people to honour the culture, it can easily 'lay in disuse... quite forgotten'. Therefore the willingness of the poet to investigate the feeling of her original name represents a sense of hope that her culture will not be forgotten. Like anyone experiencing something new, she expresses a sense of uncertainty. This is shown through the use of rhetorical questions in: 'What vibrations are these?' and 'do I belong to it?' She wonders if her name will become her as she contemplates the wonder of it, shown through her description of her name as 'This translucent, slowly-yielding music / Chinese name.' Rather than giving a definitive answer to her questions, the poet leaves the image open, illustrating the complexity she experiences, suggesting that names are personal, subjective and symbolic and difficult to capture in any definite sense.

Activity

Create and fill in the table by choosing appropriate quotes from the poem, identifying language forms and features, then providing a brief analysis of what each quote tells you about identity and culture. The first one has been completed as an example.

Quote from 'Translucent Jade'	Language forms and features	What it tells you about identity and culture
'My grandfather made me a gift when I was born'	Metaphor	The gift can be seen as the name as well as the qualities it represents and the culture it signifies.

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by Mark Haddon

SYLLABUS REQUIREMENTS

If *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* is your prescribed text for Module B, you are required to know the entire literary text in detail, demonstrating an understanding of how ideas and forms and language of a text interact within the text and affect the responder. The examiner is looking for you to analyse how the characteristics of the text contribute to its distinctive qualities and explore the ways the composer conveys people, ideas, settings and situations in the text. You achieve this through creating critical and creative responses to text based on your understanding of the text and its features.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

Context

About the author: Mark Haddon was born in Northampton, England, in 1962. He graduated from Merton College, Oxford, in 1981. He then spent time working with children who had differing abilities, including autism. He also worked for prominent British publications as an illustrator and cartoonist. At Edinburgh University Haddon received his Master's degree in English Literature. His first book, *Gilbert's Gobstopper*, was published in 1987, after which he wrote another dozen or more books for children. Many of these he also illustrated. Haddon has written for children's television and won multiple awards including Best Children's Drama for *Micosoap*. It was not until 2003 that Haddon published his first adult fiction, *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. His second novel, *A Spot of Bother*, was published in 2006 and shortlisted for the 2006 Costa Novel Award. His first book of poetry, *The Talking Horse and the Sad Girl and the Village Under the Sea*, was published in 2005. He has also published *Boom!* in 2009 and a picture book *Walking on The Moon* in 2009.

About the Novel: *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* was published 2003. The book was met with critical acclaim, largely due to the narrator's exceptional voice. The book depicts the ethos of English culture, however the main protagonist, Christopher John Francis Boone, has no sense of belonging to an English way of being. This gives Christopher a unique perspective and the ability to articulate in detail his logical point of view of the everyday life of English culture. Christopher, as the autistic narrator who does not know the social rules that the people around him take for granted, highlights the subjectivity of difference. It is for this reason that the narration shifts from the main storyline to reveal how Christopher relates to the emerging fact that while life can be ordered into different categories it is also a self-evolving drama full of diversity and chaos. The themes would appeal to teenagers who are learning where they fit into society, to anyone who feels different from the imaginary 'norm', to people living or working with unconventional thinkers. It also appeals to anyone who enjoys an original, unorthodox narrative and having their conditioned assumptions questioned. This book was published in England in two imprints, one for adults and another for young adults. The only difference in the two editions is a slight change in the artwork of the cover.

Purpose

The purpose of the novel is to entertain and give insights in the world of people who have Asperger syndrome.

Audience

This book has wide appeal as, although it deals with some serious issues and dramatic scenarios, it achieves a light and at times humorous touch making it easy to read and therefore accessible to a wide range of readers from young adults onwards.

KEY TERMS

- Bildungsroman: a 'coming of age' story
- Asperger syndrome: an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) that is characterised by significant difficulties in social interaction and non-verbal communication, alongside restricted and repetitive patterns of behaviour and interests
- Emoticons, graphics and orthography: the faces, the illustrations and the graphical use of writing to convey emotions

CHARACTERISTICS, IDEAS AND DISTINCTIVE QUALITIES

In *The Guardian* on April 11, 2004, Haddon declares that in his writing, he tries to write like Jane Austen, who writes about the 'humdrum lives' of 'boring people with desperately limited lives with such empathy that they seem endlessly fascinating'. Through the characterisation of Christopher, his intention was to explore a life that seemed 'horribly constrained' and to 'hopefully show that if you viewed this life with sufficient imagination it would seem infinite'. This is one of the overarching distinctive qualities of the novel. Perhaps it is because we can recognise ourselves in these characters. Therefore the enjoyment comes from exploring our own foibles indirectly and seeing what is possible.

Crime genre

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time is a mystery story using a similar structure to a crime novel. For Christopher, crime novels are the only stories he can grasp as they follow a strict pattern that he can figure out. In crime fiction evidence is slowly accrued until the mystery is solved. The detective, who may be an amateur or a professional sleuth, is central to uncovering the evidence. There are two mysteries in the novel—firstly who killed Wellington the dog, and then later the family drama and the missing mother. Haddon has reinvented the crime genre with his autistic 15-year old detective. The references to Sherlock Holmes and 'the curious incident of the dog' from Arthur Conan Doyle's story *Silver Blaze* strengthen this connection. Christopher sets out to solve and write a murder mystery. Little does he know it will lead to the unearthing of another kind of murder mystery even closer to home. What appears to Christopher to be a straightforward investigation to uncover the truth of Wellington's demise becomes a complex personal tale of intrigue and deceit. Christopher is unsuspecting that Wellington's murderer is his own father, but added to that disturbing fact is that Ed has also orchestrated the metaphorical murder of Christopher's mother by fabricating her death. In effect, he killed her connection with her son because of his perceived "problem with her heart" (p. 29). For Ed, the problem with her heart refers to her being unable to show her love to him in their relationship. As we accompany Christopher on his investigative quest, much more is uncovered than who killed Wellington, or the family disruption that led to that drastic act. The responder steps outside the square to become acquainted with a different way of seeing the world, through the eyes of a gifted boy who has Asperger syndrome.

The power of the written word

The responder becomes aware that we are reading the novel as Christopher writes it. The responder is effectively written into the story. We are literally positioned in Christopher's mind as all events are processed through his perspective. This brings the responder in close to Christopher's reality, creating an intimate understanding of his experience. The emotional outbursts of people in his life are relayed dispassionately making these angry scenes even more shocking. We are granted entry into Christopher's world in a way that even those closest to him are barred from. No one in his life, even his beloved teacher Siobhan, has this privileged intimacy with Christopher's inner world. Through Christopher's novel, as a symbol of his own desire to express himself, Haddon has created and demonstrated the power of the written word to communicate thoughts, ideas and values that are often misinterpreted in everyday interactions. The truth of the core mystery of his mother's disappearance is also revealed through writing—in Christopher's search for the book his father confiscates he finds his mother's letters. Reading her words on the page gives him time to piece together the puzzle they expose. These letters also give the responder an insight into the motives, emotions and experiences of Christopher's mother.

Valuing difference and diversity

Haddon asserts that this is 'not a novel about disability, but a novel about difference'. The story invites the responder to see themselves in Christopher in order to experience how we all have rules, behaviours and patterns that allow us to feel safe in the world. The difference is that most of us share these conventions, while Christopher represents those who don't. It becomes clear that every individual has a unique view of the world and that our perspective of events is largely a matter of where we choose to focus our attention. The responder is given a detailed description of how the world is ordered for an unconventional mind, thereby asking the responder to look at how their world may also be framed subjectively into categories of meaning. *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* is a significant novel as it encourages us to review our assumptions about the nature and meaning of reality, while fostering acceptance of difference, whether it be intellectual, emotional, cultural or age or gender based. At the same time it engages the responder with important contemporary issues, such as sensitivity to people with disabilities, the value of honesty and the challenges facing contemporary families.

There is no mistaking that Christopher is unusual. His perceptions of and interactions with the world around him are decidedly unconventional yet his consistently logical reasoning both adds to entertain and educate the responder as we journey with him on his quest to find answers and get to know his uncomplicated personality. We empathise with Christopher more than any other character, as we come to understand his impulses and his

inability to tell a lie. Christopher is a believable human being, a gifted boy with challenges. Like John Nash in *A Beautiful Mind*, Christopher has a remarkable talent for science and mathematics which will hopefully lead him to his professional niche in life. Christopher has a form of autism called Asperger syndrome, a term not used in the novel. This means he cannot interpret social cues such as facial expressions and body language, people's unspoken motivations or metaphorical language. 'I find people confusing,' he says (p. 19). Yet the simple language of his narrative reveals a world of complex truths. Haddon writes a story about Christopher writing a story and Christopher's story exposes the assumptions in our own stories. His stripped bare accounts create a spaciousness in the narrative and allow us to see the world anew.

Complexity of relationships

Through the mistrust caused by Christopher's father, Haddon explores the value of open communication and trust in relationships. The breaking of trust between the adults leads to the breaking of trust with Christopher. In trying to protect his son, Christopher's father lies to him about his mother leaving them to live with Roger. When he finally admits to killing Wellington, Christopher is scared because he can no longer trust his own father. Demonstrating the logic of reason, Christopher reasons that: 'Father had murdered Wellington. That meant he could murder me, because I couldn't trust him ... because he had told a lie about a big thing.' (p. 152). Christopher refuses to live with his father and his father realises that it might take a long time to rebuild that trust.

The universal human impulse to seek security through stability and order is evident in Christopher's dedication to science, maths and logic. Christopher is aware he likes order in his life to feel safe and comfortable. He creates his own sense of 'nice order' (p. 31). This is shown through his explanation of how '4 red cars in a row made it a Good Day, and 3 red cars in a row made it a Quite Good Day, and 5 red cars in a row made it a Super Good Day' and why '4 yellow cars in a row made it a Black Day' (p. 31). Christopher's sense of order is not logical or conventional but, as he observes, his father 'always put his trousers on before he put his socks on and it wasn't logical but he always did it that way, because he liked things in a nice order, too'. (pp. 31 – 32).

Despite Christopher's inability to express feelings of love and affection in a typical manner, Haddon illustrates his humanity through alternative ways of expressing love. Christopher's resistance to physical touch could be perceived as alienating and that he is incapable of expressing love. However, through Christopher's story the responder is invited to reassess our definitions and assumptions about people with Asperger syndrome. Christopher is uneasy with strangers and unfamiliar places which keeps his world quite small, yet he does not hesitate to hug Wellington even though he 'was leaking blood from the fork-holes' (p. 4). Haddon illustrates that Christopher does indeed receive and give love, as is shown through the description of how Christopher and his father made their 'fingers and thumbs touch each other' (p. 21). Christopher realises this means that he loves him. Christopher also remembers that his mother smelt nice, suggesting that he actively senses and responds to the world around him. In another example, when Christopher arrives in London, it becomes clear that his disability renders him extremely vulnerable as he tries to rescue his pet rat, Toby. It also conveys not only Christopher's loyalty to his pet rat, but that he is capable of great love and affection for animals. Although he was detached when investigating the murder of Wellington, there was obviously a great care behind his reasoning to investigate the death of the dog in the first place. It concerns him that a dog would be killed in this way, even if he is unable to express this emotionally through his words. Through these images reflecting Christopher's human frailty, a sense of caring, closeness and comfort emerges that is present in Christopher's world.

Challenges faced raising a child with a disability

Christopher acknowledges the stress on his parents caused by looking after someone with behavioural issues. 'I used to think that Mother and Father might get divorced' (p. 59) he tells us, explaining: 'That was because they had lots of arguments and sometimes they hated each other.' (p. 59). He lists his behavioural problems and the responder is given an insight into the challenges these would present to any parent or carer. His mother would sometimes imagine a different life, and we hear her voice as she tells Christopher: "'If I hadn't married your father I think I'd be living in a little farmhouse in the south of France with someone called Jean... and we'd sit outside in the evening and drink red wine ... and watch the sun go down.'" (p. 98). Her fantasy about a life she could have lived accentuates the challenges she faces in her life being a mother to a child with Asperger syndrome. Christopher's account of his mother's dialogue illustrates her frustrations, but also the emotional impact her words would have had on Christopher. For example he explains that his mother would comment: "Jesus Christopher, I am seriously considering putting you in a home," or "You are going to drive me into an early grave." The inference to abstract ideas, such as a home for children with behavioural issues, would have been confusing for Christopher, although the emotional impact of her words would have been felt. Christopher's mother's letters reveal the strain she experienced living with Christopher, when she admits: "I was not a very good mother, Christopher. Maybe if things had been different, maybe if you'd been different, I might have been better at it." (p. 133). She freely admits to Christopher that she thought she "couldn't take any more," (p. 134) acknowledging her own sense of failure as she compares the way Christopher's father coped with Christopher's behaviour to her own way. She perceives his

father as being really patient, while she was not as she would get cross, even though that was not her intention. The letters further reveal the effect having a child with Asperger syndrome had on her marital relationship as she acknowledges how she became really lonely living with Christopher's father as they "stopped talking to each other very much" (p. 135). Her casual and honest writing style and misspelling are also evocative of who she is. The responder is positioned to therefore view Christopher's mother with empathy, challenging notions of motherhood as it appears at first that she abandoned her child.

Haddon does not pass judgement on Christopher's parents, rather he portrays them with sincerity and honesty. He acknowledges that parenting is challenging, especially with a child with a disability. Despite the deceit that Christopher's father displays, Haddon illustrates his human frailty. He has been abandoned by his wife and left to look after a child with a disability. His pain and suffering are further illustrated by the fact that his wife left him for a neighbour, whose wife is also a victim of their separation. The lies he tells Christopher are in part due to his own inability to cope with the circumstances of his life and the frustrations he experiences adjusting to single parenthood. This can be seen when Christopher finds his father crying and drinking whisky. However, Haddon balances his portrayal of Christopher's father through the kindness and love he shows his son. For example, Haddon represents Christopher's father's implied voice through Christopher's account of his father apologising about lying to him saying: "I'm sorry Christopher, I'm so, so sorry." (p. 143). In another example, Christopher's father attempts to reconcile with Christopher at the zoo, declaring: "I love you very much, Christopher." (p. 109). He implores him to never "forget that" (p. 109). Christopher's father acknowledges to a certain degree his own behaviour and attempts to take responsibility for it when he states: "I know I lose my rag occasionally. I know I get angry. I know I shout. And I know I shouldn't." (p. 109). The repetition of 'I know' emphasises Christopher's father's suffering and also his frustration that he behaves in a way he knows causes pain, but he is unable to control himself. He clarifies explaining: "But I only do it because I worry about you" (p. 109) thereby illustrating that his behaviour comes from a loving place, but that he is human and does not know how to cope with a son who is different to others.

Activity

Explain and analyse how the text's characteristics and ideas convey its distinctive qualities. An example has been completed for you.

Modelled response

Characteristics and ideas: bildungsroman novel

How characteristics and ideas convey distinctive qualities: the concept Bildungsroman is central to *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time*. A bildungsroman is, most generally, the story of a single individual's growth and development within the context of a defined social order. The growth process (at its roots a quest story) has been described as both "an apprenticeship to life" and a "search for meaningful existence within society". Christopher embarks on a journey after an unexpected upset which begins with the murder of Wellington and culminates in him finding out that his father killed the dog. The process of maturity occurs for Christopher as a result of that journey—he learns how to trust himself, and life, for example, when he travels by himself to London. This is a 'coming of age' transition for Christopher, an uncomfortable initiation into the complexities of the world beyond childhood. He is forced to face his fears and in the process finds a new confidence and conviction, enabling him to move forward into life.

Characteristics and ideas: overcoming adversity

How characteristics and ideas convey distinctive qualities:

Characteristics and ideas: love and support

How characteristics and ideas convey distinctive qualities:

TEXT STRUCTURE AND SUMMARY

The novel has an unusual structure and form as the book we are reading is the same book the narrator is writing. The chapters are prime numbers because these are Christopher's favourite numbers.

Chapter 2: Christopher finds Wellington in the front yard of Mrs Shears' house.

Chapter 5: Mrs Shears finds Christopher holding the dog and demands he let him go.

Chapter 7: Christopher declares that the book he is writing is a murder mystery.

Chapter 11: the police arrive to investigate. Christopher becomes agitated when the police officer touches him, so he hits him.

- Chapter 13: Christopher declares that this book will not be funny because he does not understand jokes.
- Chapter 17: Christopher goes for a ride in the police vehicle and he observes the sky as they drive.
- Chapter 19: Christopher explains prime numbers and why he likes them.
- Chapter 23: Christopher arrives at the police station and he is placed in a cell.
- Chapter 29: Christopher explains why he finds people confusing.
- Chapter 31: at 1:12am Christopher's father arrives at the police station to collect him. He is let off with a caution, but a record is kept.
- Chapter 37: Christopher explains how he does not tell lies.
- Chapter 41: they drive home in the car. When they get home, Christopher feeds Toby, his pet rat.
- Chapter 43: Christopher explains how his mother died 2 years ago. She went to hospital but Christopher was not allowed to go and visit her.
- Chapter 47: on the way to school the next day, Christopher passes 4 red cars and explains what makes a good day and a bad day. Christopher explains how he would like to become an astronaut.
- Chapter 53: Christopher explains how his father took food and a get well card that he made for her with lots of cars on it to his mother in the hospital. Christopher's father tells him that a heart attack killed her.
- Chapter 59: Christopher decides to continue finding out who killed Wellington even though his father told him not to. Christopher goes over to Mrs Shears' house to tell her that he did not kill Wellington.
- Chapter 61: Christopher ponders what it is like to die.
- Chapter 67: Christopher explains how he does not like strangers. He makes a plan to conduct his detective work. He visits Mr Thompson, the lady at number 42, Mr Wise and Mrs Alexander. Christopher imagines a chain of reasoning in his head. He deduces that Mr Shears is the prime suspect.
- Chapter 71: Christopher explains that he wants to take his A levels but the school he is at does not have the facilities.
- Chapter 73: Christopher explains the issues with his parents and the behaviour problems he has.
- Chapter 79: when Christopher arrives home, he tells his father that he thinks Mr Shears is the prime suspect, and his father shouts that he does not want Mr Shears' name mentioned in the house.
- Chapter 83: Christopher says that he would have made a good astronaut.
- Chapter 89: Christopher tells Siobhan that he is not allowed to write the book anymore. He has a bad day.
- Chapter 97: Christopher has a super good day. He speaks to Mrs Alexander. He comes up with reasons why he can continue his detective work. Mrs Alexander tells Christopher about his mother's relationship with Mr Shears.
- Chapter 101: Christopher explains the Marilyn vos Savant theory, which is criticised by other mathematicians, but Christopher believes she is right.
- Chapter 103: when he arrives home, Rhodri, a friend of his father, asks him a mathematical question and insults Christopher in the process. Christopher explains how Siobhan said that he needs to include descriptions of things in his book.
- Chapter 107: Christopher explains why he likes *The Hound of the Baskervilles*.
- Chapter 109: Christopher takes his book to Siobhan and she lets him know that he can come to her if he feels sad.
- Chapter 113: Christopher explains that his memory is like a film.
- Chapter 127: Christopher explains how he likes *Blue Planet* videos. His father comes home and he abuses him for speaking to Mrs Alexander. His father grabs him and Christopher hits him. His father takes his book and puts it in the dust bin outside.
- Chapter 131: Christopher explains why he hates yellow and brown.
- Chapter 137: The next day, his father apologises and takes Christopher to the Twycross zoo.
- Chapter 139: Christopher explains how he does not like Arthur Conan Doyle as he believed in the supernatural. He describes The Case of the Cottingley Fairies.
- Chapter 149: at school, Siobhan asks about Christopher's bruise on the side of his face. Christopher goes searching for his book and he finds it in the cupboard in his father's bedroom. He finds letters from his mother and he reads one. It is clear that his mother is still alive, but to Christopher it does not make sense.
- Chapter 151: to understand what he just discovered, Christopher outlines how some things are mysteries.
- Chapter 157: six days later, Christopher goes back to the box in the cupboard and reads more letters and finds out that his mother is living in London with Mr Shears (Roger). He realises that his mother is not dead. His father finds him reading the letters. Christopher is sick all over himself.

Chapter 163: Christopher explains how when he was younger, he was involved in an experiment that showed that he would always find it difficult to see that other people had minds. He explains why people's brains are like computers.

Chapter 167: Christopher's father gives him a bath and redresses him. Christopher tries to remain calm by doubling 2s in his head, but he has trouble with this. His father explains why he did not tell him the truth and says that he can still trust him. Christopher escapes.

Chapter 173: Christopher comments on the Orion constellation.

Chapter 179: Christopher waits for his father to leave in his van and he goes into the house to get supplies to leave for London to go and stay at his mother's place. He asks Mrs Alexander to look after Toby, but she refuses. He takes him with him. He goes to the school, but sees his father's van there. He eventually finds the train station.

Chapter 181: Christopher explains how he sees everything.

Chapter 191: Christopher eventually hops on the train to London and experiences great difficulty.

Chapter 193: Christopher explains how time is a mystery.

Chapter 197: Christopher describes his journey on the train to London.

Chapter 199: Christopher outlines the conditions for life to exist.

Chapter 211: Christopher arrives in London.

Chapter 223: Christopher adds more descriptions to his novel as Siobhan said he should.

Chapter 227: Christopher loses Toby and tries to find him. Christopher makes his way to his mother's flat, where he is re-united with his mother.

Chapter 229: Christopher has a dream of the end of the earth.

Chapter 233: the next morning Christopher tells his mother he has to go back to Swindon as he wants to sit his A Levels. In the middle of the night, Christopher goes outside. Christopher's mother and Mr Shears argue. Christopher's mother drives Christopher back to Swindon so he can do his A Levels, which makes him happy. Christopher is re-united with his father, who tells him he is proud of him. Christopher sits his A Levels and realises he can do anything.

CHARACTERS

Christopher John Francis Boone: the fifteen year old, mathematically gifted narrator and protagonist of the story, who lives with his father and views the world through his own sense of belonging. Reason and rationality are a source of comfort for him when confronted with uncertainty and unfamiliar places. Christopher is driven to solve the case of Wellington's murder.

Christopher's father (Ed Boone): the single father who looks after Christopher and who owns a boiler repair business. He has been hiding the truth from Christopher about his mother.

Christopher's mother (Judy Boone): Christopher believes she died of a heart attack, although she is alive and living in London. She is loving but at times impatient with Christopher.

Mrs. Shears (Eileen Shears): a neighbour of the Boone family and the owner of the murdered dog, Wellington. She often visited Christopher's place to cook and play Scrabble when his mother left home.

Mr. Shears (Roger Shears): the estranged husband of Eileen Shears and Christopher's mother's lover. He worked at a bank in town and is a possible suspect in the investigation of Wellington's death.

Siobhan: Christopher's primary school teacher, who influences Christopher to write a book. Her help expands Christopher's social and academic future. Consequently, she is one of the few people that Christopher trusts.

Mrs Alexander: an elderly neighbour who is drawn to Christopher as he resembles her own grandson. She loves gardening and her dachshund. She helps in Christopher's investigation when she reveals his parents' affairs.

Wellington: the story opens with Mrs Shears' large black poodle murdered on the front lawn. The dog became erratic and occasionally violent after an operation.

Toby: Christopher takes his beloved and sole companion, his pet rat, on his confronting journey to London.

Activity

Create and fill in the table by writing your ideas about what each character quote tells you about the character/s and key ideas and concepts. The first one has been completed as an example.

Character quote	What it tells you about the character and his ideas and concepts
Judy: "Jesus, Christopher, I am seriously considering putting you in a home..." (p. 61)	Having a relationship with people with disabilities can pose challenges. Christopher's mother expresses her frustrations by taking it out on her child as she does not know how to cope with the challenge. However, Christopher's parents are responsible for caring for him and this comment has a psychological effect on Christopher. He may not understand what she means, but he is able to intuit her rejection of him.
Christopher: 'I like dogs. You always know what a dog is thinking.' (p. 4)	
Christopher: 'I said that I like things to be in a nice order. And one way of things being in a nice order was to be logical.' (p. 31)	
Christopher: 'I see everything.' (p. 174)	
Christopher: 'I was excited. When I started writing my book there was only one mystery I had to solve. Now there were two.' (p. 124)	
Judy: "'Come on Christopher, touch my hand ... you can do it.'" (p. 97)	

SETTING

The first half of the story is set in places that reflect Christopher's need for familiarity and routine. That is the street where he lives, the bus that he catches to school, school and the corner shop. In the second half, Christopher travels to unfamiliar places such as London.

Swindon, UK: the story is set in Swindon, in 1998. Swindon is on the railway line between Bristol and London. The landscape is dominated by the chalk hills of the Wiltshire Downs to the south and east. Christopher's favourite detective Sherlock Holmes ate lunch in the town in the short story 'The Boscombe Valley Mystery'. This is where Christopher lives with his father. The train station in Swindon is described as having a tunnel and some stairs, a shop, a cafe and a waiting room. It was busy and echoed and smelled of toilets and cigarettes. The train to London is also packed with people, and Christopher does not like this.

Police cell: this is where Christopher is taken when he assaults a police officer. To Christopher, the police cell was 'nice' (p. 17). Christopher describes it as almost a perfect cube with the dimensions—'2 metres long by 2 metres wide by 2 metres high' (p. 17).

London, UK: the chaotic city of London provides a window into the psychological landscape of Christopher's mind. All the information in the London Underground is confusing for Christopher. Christopher regularly describes his dissatisfaction with others and the world he lives in as is shown in his dream of the end of the world.

Activity

For each of the following descriptions of the setting, explain how the setting conveys the text's distinctive qualities. An example has been given to guide you.

Modelled response

Description of setting: the scene of the crime

How the setting conveys the text's distinctive qualities: Haddon uses the scene of the crime at the beginning of the novel to not only establish the complication that drives the narrative, but to set up his unusual main protagonist. Through the setting, the composer establishes Christopher's detached approach to investigating the murder of the dog as he observes the details of his discovery in precise language. Christopher accurately recounts details of the dog lying in the middle of Mrs Shears' lawn, who lives opposite him 'two houses to the left' (p. 1). For example he says: 'The dog was dead. There was a garden fork sticking out of the dog.' (p. 1). Christopher is removed from any emotional attachment to the fact that the dog, who he is very fond of, has not only died, but probably been brutally murdered.

Description of setting: the London Underground

How the setting conveys the text's distinctive qualities:

Description of setting: Randolph Street, Swindon is described through an image of the houses along the street

How the setting conveys the text's distinctive qualities:

LANGUAGE FORMS AND FEATURES

Voice

Christopher's view of the world is shown through the unconventional voice of the narrator. The voice of the narrator or persona appears when the writer clearly shows through their choice of language who the narrator or persona is—without directly telling the reader. Haddon has successfully established an authentic voice for fifteen year old Christopher, whose unusual voice with its honesty and simplicity captures our interest. From the very beginning, Haddon grabs our attention by engaging us in the mystery of who killed Wellington the dog through Christopher's matter of fact observations. Christopher offers detailed yet simplistic observations of people and places without any emotional involvement. We are positioned to see the events through his eyes. Even though the narrator lacks an emotional response, the response in the reader is powerful. We are able to observe critically the way others behave and the impact this has on Christopher. When Siobhan tells him 'the idea of a book was to describe things using words so that people could read them and make a picture in their own head' (p. 85), Christopher interprets this literally. He therefore gives many details that would at first appear to be insignificant, but they give the responder an insight into not only the way Christopher thinks, but what people think around him. For example, when Christopher struggles to get around in London, especially the Underground, Christopher compares the people he comes across as being '*like cows in a field*' (p. 212). The simile comparing cows to people illustrates how people are similar and in a routine that prevents creative thoughts or ways of being, hence illustrating why people struggle to deal with people like Christopher who are different to the rest of the population. Christopher describes how he copes moving through the streets by drawing a red line along the floor for him to follow. The description illustrates that many things happen inside Christopher's mind that cannot be seen, thereby showing how his lack of expression can be misconstrued as meaning that he is not engaging with the world.

Through Christopher's straightforward and honest notations, the responder comes to appreciate Christopher's values. For example, he declares that he likes dogs because they are faithful and honest. By comparing dogs to humans, Haddon is able to highlight human follies as Christopher finds 'some dogs were cleverer and more interesting than some people' (p. 6). Christopher clarifies this statement through imagery of Steve, a fellow school student, who comes to school on Thursdays who 'needs help to eat his food and could not even fetch a stick' (p. 6). Christopher's objective observations of people and situations around him allows the responder to imagine the implications of the lives of the various people he describes. We wonder about the challenges in Steve's life as he only comes to school one day a week and has a disability. Christopher does not identify himself as having a disability, thereby highlighting various assumptions about people with disabilities. Similarly, Christopher's descriptions of the information his father tells him about his mother, which are eventually juxtaposed with the truth, highlight the deceit Christopher is subjected to. Haddon therefore further develops the value of truth and honesty in relationships. This can be seen through Christopher's objective description of his mother's supposed cremation as he explains the meaning of this: 'This means that she was put into a coffin and burnt and ground up and turned into ash and smoke.' (p. 43). His explanation evokes feelings of shock and sadness as it becomes apparent that she is alive. At the same time we feel empathy for Christopher, we also feel sympathy for his father, who felt compelled to tell such a dreadful lie to his son about his own mother.

Christopher's unconventional voice is further developed through visual and figurative language. Emoticons (symbols used to convey emotional content) for example are used to convey how Christopher is feeling. Simple drawings of emotions demonstrate how Christopher perceives the world he lives in. When these images are unfamiliar to him, he is unable to interpret what people mean. The emoticons are a strategy used by his carers to communicate with Christopher. He is matter of fact about his interpretation of the images people draw for him. He declares: 'Then she drew some other pictures [of faces] but I was unable to say what these meant.' (p. 2). Christopher's lack of curiosity to uncover what these pictures meant demonstrates that there is an ordered way of delivering messages to him. If these messages do not correspond with the way he sees the world, they will be missed. Haddon therefore expresses the intricacies of communication for all of us. We cannot make assumptions about the reception of the signals we give to each other.

However, Haddon uses other forms of communication to represent Christopher's way of communicating in the world. Despite the unorthodox nature of his communication, Christopher's messages are still able to be delivered, just with a different system of signals. For example, Haddon uses orthography (capitals, italics, bold type, etc.) to represent key words that express Christopher's sensory perception of the world around him. For example, when he is in the London Underground he describes in minute detail the process of purchasing a train ticket. In bold type we are informed about the type of ticket he purchases, for example '**ADULT SINGLE**' (p. 213). He interjects that the button for 'adult single' was pressed by most people, indicating that Christopher consistently makes deductions that are accurate about the world around him as more adults would travel on trains than children.

Haddon also uses figurative language to communicate Christopher's observations of the world around him. For example, when he went through the turnstile at the train station Christopher is told to "Get a move on".

illustrating the impatience of the people around him, thereby highlighting how frustrating this would be for Christopher as he needs to take his time. Christopher reacts to being rushed by making a 'noise like a dog barking' (p. 213). Through the simile, Haddon creates an image of Christopher's frustration, demonstrating how Christopher communicates his feelings without the need for words. Similarly graphics are used to represent Christopher's perception of events and things. This is shown when he is at the London Underground. Christopher uses deduction to find his destination, Willesden Junction. A graphic of Bakerloo Line is given to illustrate how Christopher finds his way to where he needs to go. In another example of bold writing, Christopher comments on all the signs he sees at the train station in London, illustrating how much information people take in when riding the Underground. Advertising phrases such as 'Take time out to regret your career choice and JAMAICA' are intermixed with instructions such as 'WAY OUT' (p. 215). The advertising information appears to be random and at odds with the environment of the train station, thereby highlighting how confusing travelling would be for Christopher, but also how brave he is to push through this confusion.

Activity

Explore how the following examples of voice represent the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities. An example has been given to guide you.

Modelled response

Voice: straight forward and truthful observations

How voice represents the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities: Haddon establishes Christopher's voice through straight forward and truthful observations. For example, when Christopher is investigating the murder of the dog, he displays a detached assessment of the incident through simple and straightforward sentences. This can be seen in him listing information as he sees it: 'It was 7 minutes after midnight. The dog was lying on the grass in the middle of the lawn in front of Mrs Shears' house. Its eyes were closed.' (p. 1). This tells us that there is little room for alternative interpretations. It also tells us that Christopher is a good detective as he observes things closely. Haddon's use of varied lengths of sentences shows how Christopher perceives the stimulus around him—sometimes through multiple stimuli at once, and other times individually. Like a true detective, Christopher offers hypothesis about the information he uncovers, as can be seen in his precise statement: 'The dog was dead.' (p. 1). He demonstrates that he is a capable, though unlikely detective. In another example, Christopher decides that: 'the dog was probably killed with the fork because I could not see any other wounds in the dog and I do not think you would stick a garden fork into a dog after it had died for some other reason, like cancer for example, or a road accident.' (p. 1). Despite the obvious cause of death being the fork, he justifies his hypothesis with striking logic. It is this logic that creates the humour as he observes his surroundings in a methodical way that is unexpected for the audience.

Voice: seemingly unrelated observations of things such as the Milky Way in Chapter 17 and the formula for population numbers of animals over time

How voice represents the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities:

Voice: technical language, for example: 'I said that it was probably an aneurysm ... There are two main types of heart attack. The first is an embolism...' (p. 36)

How voice represents the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities:

Intertextuality

Through the intertextual references to Sherlock Holmes, a famous character from detective mystery novels by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, Haddon legitimises his characterisation of Christopher as a detective. Christopher likes detective stories because they are logical and follow a set formula or pattern. He refers to many well-known mystery novels and characters, as he understands the world through what he has read. Christopher models his investigative style on Sherlock Holmes as he inspires Christopher: 'I like Sherlock Holmes and I think that if I were a proper detective he is the kind of detective I would be.' (p. 92). Haddon uses intertextual connections to Doyle's writing in various detective stories to show that Christopher is using the same techniques Holmes uses to solve crimes and mysteries. For example, Christopher says he is 'trying to do' (p. 93) what Sherlock Holmes does by writing the book. He notes that Sherlock Holmes' companion and narrator of his stories, Watson, says of Holmes: '... his mind ... was busy in endeavouring to frame some scheme into which all these strange and apparently disconnected episodes could be fitted.' (p. 92). Like Holmes, Christopher uses his intelligence to solve mysteries. He is also extremely observant as he recognises that: 'The world is full of obvious things which nobody by any chance ever observes.' (p. 92).

Haddon's characterisation of Christopher also shows that he is able to detach 'his mind at will' (p. 92) like Holmes does, except that Christopher's detachment comes from his condition. It is his intelligence and observant nature that not only make him an excellent detective like Sherlock Holmes, but also surprise the people around him. Because of his Asperger's condition, people underestimate Christopher's abilities. For Christopher, Doyle's characters appeal to him as they are ordered and follow a particular format to reach a conclusion. This is central to how Christopher feels safe in the world.

Haddon's use of factual information about the original Sherlock Holmes detective stories illustrates the fickle nature of the human condition. Haddon represents Christopher's knowledge of the Sherlock detective stories through two facts about Holmes. For example Christopher notes that in the original story Holmes is never described as wearing a deerstalker hat, nor does he say "Elementary, my dear Watson" (p. 93). Haddon therefore illustrates how adults adjust information to suit their own needs. For Christopher, this is disturbing as he interprets the world literally and does not cope with change very well, especially changes that seem unnecessary. In another intertextual reference to Sir Charles Baskerville, the murder victim in the Sherlock Holmes story *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Haddon illustrates the difference between the way adults see the world and the way Christopher does. When Siobhan says that it is usually a person who is killed in a murder mystery because readers care more about people than dogs, Christopher points out that two dogs were killed in *The Hound of the Baskervilles*. He notes that in some ways he preferred dogs to people as they were faithful and honest, two qualities he was about to discover lacking in his parents.

Activity

Explore how the following examples of intertextuality represent the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities. An example has been completed for you.

Modelled response

Intertextual reference: Sherlock Holmes and the "curious incident of the dog in the night-time"

How intertextuality represents the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities: the intertextual reference in the title to the "curious incident of the dog in the night-time" from the Sherlock Holmes mystery entitled *Silver Blaze* establishes the detective genre of the novel, but also Christopher's astute awareness of the world around him. In *Silver Blaze*, the 'curious incident' Sherlock observes is when a dog guarding the stables does not bark even though there was an intruder. The 'curious incident' therefore leads Holmes to solve the crime. Holmes is able to use reason and deduction, like Christopher does, to conclude that the theft must have been an 'inside job' as the dog would have barked if the thief was unknown to him. Like Holmes, the 'curious incident' for Christopher leads to him uncovering the truth about not only the murder of Wellington but the truth about his parents. The truth he uncovers ultimately leads to his own transformation into an independent person who is capable of achieving great things, irrespective of his challenges.

Intertextual reference: *Blade Runner*

How intertextuality represents the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities:

Intertextual reference: *Star Trek*

How intertextuality represents the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities:

LETTERS

Christopher uncovers letters from his mother, hidden in his father's cupboard, when searching for his notebook that his father confiscated. Haddon uses these letters as a structural device to reveal a story about his mother that is contradictory to what Christopher has been told by his father. Through these letters, the mystery of Christopher's mother's life and the reasons for the choices she has made are unveiled for the reader. Along with Christopher, we come to understand how the complex intertwining events of his parent's relationships led to a web of lies involving the metaphorical murder of his mother due to a "problem with her heart" (p. 29) and the actual murder of Wellington. When he reads the first letter it makes no sense to Christopher and he thinks: 'Perhaps it was a letter to another person called Christopher, from that Christopher's mother.' (p. 124). True to his character, Christopher assesses this new information rationally, not wanting to 'Leap to the Wrong Conclusion' (p. 124). Yet he writes: 'I was excited. When I started writing my book there was only one mystery to solve. Now there were two.' His naivety serves to develop empathy for his character as the responder is given an insight into his father's betrayal before Christopher is aware of it. Six days later, when Christopher has a chance to read more letters, detailing events in his past that only his mother would know, the truth asserts itself in his mind and he feels sick and giddy. He is unable to process the inherent contradictions the letters present and he 'rolled onto the bed

and curled up in a ball' (p. 141). His father discovers him hours later covered in vomit. Even though Christopher is unable to express himself with words, his extreme physical reaction to the truth indicates that he feels the betrayal very deeply, thereby dispelling the notion that many people with Asperger syndrome are unable to feel or express emotions.

In the second letter to Christopher, dated 3rd of May, Haddon gives the responder a greater insight into Christopher's mother's perspective. The letter reveals that Christopher's mother is living in London with Roger, who is the ex-husband of Mrs Shears, who lives across the road from Christopher. The connection to Mrs Shears allows the responder to appreciate her ambivalence toward Christopher and his father. Haddon indirectly shows the type of relationship Christopher has with his mother through her unique voice. In the letters, she is chatty about everyday details like a new fridge and removing waste, suggesting that this letter is a continuation from many others, but also that she desires to develop her relationship with her son. Christopher's mother is clearly missing Christopher as she explains how she looked through photos of him to remind her of their life together, even though this makes her feel sad. The photo symbolises that Christopher and his mother have had good times together, despite recent events. Another way she shows a connection with her son is through the numerous questions she asks him in an attempt to engage with him on his level. For example, she asks about the train set and if he remembers how he would not go to bed as he wanted to continue playing with it, illustrating their shared history that is loving and supportive. Christopher's mother is considerate of her son's needs as she tells him the time as she knows that he always likes to know the time of day.

Activity

Explore how the following examples of letters represent the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities. An example has been given as a guide.

Modelled response

Letter: the second letter to Christopher—dated 3rd of May

How letters represent the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities: Christopher's mother has difficulty with spelling, which indicates that writing letters is probably not that easy for her, but she loves her son, so she perseveres. Christopher's mother continues to write letters to her son as it is important to her that their relationship continues. The imagery of the photographs suggests that Christopher's mother has some regrets about leaving her son as the photographs make her feel sad as she is no longer with him to create more memories. The questions about past experiences between the mother and son suggest there is a strong bond between the two of them. Christopher's mother is keen to continue that bond, but she realises this has been hampered by her leaving home.

Letter: the first letter to Christopher—dated approx 16th of October, 1997

How letters represent the ways characters and key ideas convey the text's distinctive qualities:

Letter: the fifth letter to Christopher—dated 23rd of August

How it represents characters, key ideas and themes: