English Reading Log

By Luca Burman

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| **Date Read** | **Bibliographic Information (Text Title, Author, Composer, Etc.)** | **Personal Response to text** |
| 1/2 | Read a Novel: It’s Just What the Doctor Ordered  By Sarah Begley | What makes this article so engaging to its audience is its delivery of information? It includes facts, a necessary element of any report, but it does not display them as a group of numbers. Instead it uses an extremely logical writing structure that not only presents these statistics but yet engages and entertains the reader. This is a factor that can make or break a report as there is marginal room for error. I can take this writing format into my own when working on reports, discussions and arguments. |
| 1/2 | Can Reading Make You Happier  By Ceridwen Dovey | The reason this article is so fascinating is its level of depth. In most articles the author can only reach a certain level of detail before the reader is disinterested. But Ms Dovey achieves a level of detail that is understandable for a reader with minimal knowledge in the field but yet includes a vast enough expanse of information that a capable reader would be intrigued as well. The structure used to both address an audience both knowledgeable (in a particular field) and not, simultaneously is a universal technique I hope to use effectively in my own reports and accounts. |
| 2/2 | Heat and Light  By Ellen Van Neerven | This novel effectively uses not only deep sets of adjectives strung together but also metaphoric phrases and symbolism to create an atmosphere of mystery. What makes this novel different is its use of context paired with these literary techniques to build suspense. Delivering it from the perspective of a child is a highly appropriate vector for the underlying themes. This use of context is something I can extract for this piece and add to my own. |
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| 3/2 | Portable Curiosities  By Julie Koh | Portable Curiosities uses an abstract method to portray the current clash of race in our modern society. It uses analogies and comparisons to show the adversity faced due to migration, and the inherent struggle to be accepted into the community. It touches on major issue of the present including discrimination due to cultural barriers using an abstract method as to indirectly approach these issues. It aims to raise awareness of our current multicultural situation and educate readers using a fictional context. This method of indirectly approaching a highly conflicted modern day issue has been used by many authors over the course of time but portable curiosities has taught me that the there is no limit to its effectiveness and inspires me to strive for improvement in my own writing in this context. |
| 4/2 | Heart songs  By Annie Proulx | Heart songs takes a different approach to connecting the characters to the reader. Instead of the conventional method of presenting a character and his or her accompanying idiosyncrasies that are often over done to the point that a caricature is formed; Proulx directs her descriptive talents towards setting. Now this method takes some time to effect readers but after, a sense of lifestyle is created. Specifically in this novel an rural way of life. Just through the descriptions the readers get a raw, uncensored peep into rural country, and thus an atmosphere is created. And the characters are a product of this world, this lifestyle and that is how the reader placed beside the character |
| 6/2 | Like my Dad  By Isabelle Rivette | What the Author of the piece does most effectively is evoke emotions, by building and immediate connection to the characters, even though this is an extremely short piece. This is done by Rivette making educated decision on textual elements as basic as format (text type). For this story it is personal reflection, giving the impression that it may have been a private source like a diary/journal. This immediately gives us a sense of knowing the characters real reactions to the events that unfold. This is further more emphasised by the character admitting to repressing emotions in front of his peers to save embarrassment. This has taught me that the simple choices such as text type can be as effective as other techniques. |
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| 8/2 | The Hunter’s Wife  By Anthony Doerr | An effective technique to engage the reader is to not wait, but instead create intrigue from the first lines. This short story has taught me this by starting immediately with a juxtaposition, describing the country where the main character originates from and the city the hunter is now approaching. This technique expresses a sense of adventure that is relatable to all the readers’ lives as it is leaving the familiar and approaching the unknown. This concept is kept universal by the author refraining from giving the hunter a name, making us have a connection to what the character represents rather than the character itself. |
| 10/2 | Younger Woman  By Karen Joy Fowler | This short story adapts a unique perspective. It tells of Chloe, an adolescent girl, making the audience to presume that this is yet another coming of age story, but the story takes a turn, telling it from a mother’s perspective. This is something that is an important choice for any writer as the way in which a situation is viewed is heavily reliant on the character. This is an element of writing that previously I had not attributed much thought to but this short story has shown that its can be influential to the whole demeanour of the story. |
| 11/2 | Love and Squalor  By David free | The tile immediately sets the temperament of this article. Love and Squalor. Not only is it an allusion to J.D Salinger’s sort story, “For Esmé” but is a blatant juxtaposition. This foreshadows not just the wit of Mr Free but also the discussive nature of this article. The article rapidly exchanges ideas and views, this quick nature gives the reader constant opposing perspectives. These perspective of David Free’s are thus given merit due to the reader acknowledging his relatively unbiased overall view. This article is also extremely thorough as it dives into the personal life of J.D Salinger and how his character influenced the final product of his works. I have learnt from this article that when a dicussive nature is given to an article it has a significant impact on the article’s reliability. |
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| 12/2 | Journey, the North Coast  By Robert Gray | The over-arching theme that this poem incorporates into its descriptive nature is what makes it stand out. Mystery. And with Mystery comes a sense of adventure, change and general intrigue. How Robert Gray executes this, is by alluding to the themes in the title giving the readers knowledge that there is going to feature travel and giving a vague direction, but other than those details the entire poem is void of any indication of a final destination. There is a motif carried forward about how the main character is leaving the city for the country |
| 14/2 | Catcher and the Rye Chapter 1  By J.D Salinger | J.D Salinger immediately sets the themes for this novel in the opening paragraphs. Using and extended metaphor, the main character recounts how is brother D.B, who is a role model to him, is “selling out” and trading wealth and fame for a serious career in literature. This metaphor is powerfully portraying that even D.B, the person Holden most highly regards is losing his innocence and being consumed by a materialistic world. This attitude is one carried out throughout Catcher and the Rye by Holden, how is quick to point out the flaws in others but ignorant enough to presume he will not develop any of his own. What I take away from this chapter is that a powerful first chapter can set a tone for an entire novel. |
| 16/2 | Catcher and the Rye Chapter 2  By J.D Salinger | This chapter again uses another extended metaphor but in this instance a juxtaposition is utilized to escalate the reader’s involvement. This is done by Holden going to see Mr Spencer, a previous teacher of Holden’s whose health is depleting. Holden is at first taken back by Mr Spencer’s state, but continues. Mr Spencer attempts to lecture Holden on his decreasing aptitude but Holden refuses to take the guidance on board. This represents the responsibilities of a mature person calling out to Holden but him once again avoiding them. The juxtaposition emphasises this by the distance of the two in age, wisdom and maturity. This piece of text has taught me to pair certain techniques together to potentially emphasise their overall effect on the reader and general message. |
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| 18/2 | Catcher and the Rye Chapter 3  By J.D Salinger | The main purpose of this chapter predominantly for character building and a more in depth look into how Holden analyses the behaviours of others. This Chapter is like many others in the book but is differentiated by the use of a specific literary technique that grabbed my attention. A motif. Holden buys a red hunting hat. The meaning is somewhat indirect at first. But the hat symbolises Holden’s own uniqueness and within the sense of individuality comes a sense of security for Holden. He eventually gives this hat to phoebe which is again symbolic of him not needing its protection anymore. A motif is a literary technique that is often used but is also heavily overlooked and I will attempt to incorporate this technique into my writing. |
| 19/2 | Lord of the Flies  By William Golding | How Golding moulds the plot to make a statement is the reason why this novel is considered one of the classics. The skill required to make a comment on society using a story detached from immediate context is a skill that if manipulated correctly can produce extremely successful end product. Lord of the Flies uses a survival situation with children to emphasise the imminent clash between modern societal constructs (e.g. Law, order, etc.) and primal instincts. This overall effect on the reader boils down to immense planning regarding the plot, and has been done before in numerus other classic novels, E.g. Animal farm commenting on political issues. This would be something I would consider using in my own writing on a long term basis. |
| 20/2 | Dracula Chapter 1  By Bram Stoker | Dracula is an interesting novel as a whole because it resorts to convention settings and character for a horror novel, E.g. Ruined Castle; But it also incorporates many underlying themes that have such a universal appeal that they can even be relatable to readers today over 120 years later. The interesting fact is that Stoker does not wait to introduce them, in the first chapter alone an Englishmen visits Romania, relating to the key theme of Eastern and Western Europe’s integration at the time due to the industrial revolution. And also the Englishmen is engaged setting the tone for a constant emphasis on love throughout the novel. Introducing so many key themes so early in such a lengthy novel is a strategy I had not considered using before but Dracula has made me aware of its use. |
| 22/2 | Doctor Jekyll and Mr Hyde  Chapter 1  By Robert Louis Stevenson | This story is a classic that text that many know of yet if you were to read the first chapter you would find yourself hooked regardless of prior knowledge of its quality. The novel spares no time to engage the reader as it introduces an unknown figure that does and acts in a peculiar manner. He is ugly, hunch backed, and acts out violently without being provoked. To add to that he presents a check to make amends for his violent outburst but the check reads the name of another man. Stevenson intentionally excludes this man’s name. What I have learnt for this first chapter is that mastering the art of suspense and mystery can transform a novel and I can improve this in my own writing by using technique like Stevenson’s to engage a reader |
| 24/2 | To Kill a Mocking Bird  Chapter 1  By Harper Lee | In this chapter we are introduced to the two main child characters in the book, Scout and Jem. The book is written in first person but is recounting past events meaning that although at the time of these incidents Scout was young, presumably under 10, but now it seems that she is much older. This allows Harper Lee to fluctuate between the innocent perspective of a child and the critical one of a more mature character. This technique of using children in a novel to be immediately associated with innocence by the reader is one commonly used throughout many novels. It usually involves, like in this case, the child(ren) loosing this innocence and coming to a realisation about the world around them. Using children to create a sense of innocence is a technique I will use in my own writing and Harper Lee has shown me in this first chapter that this effect can be increased by the inclusion of many features. In this case Harper Lee uses a nickname to emphasis this. |
| 25/2 | Sonnet 18  By William Shakespeare | Sonnet 18 begins with Shakespeare comparing his beloved with a summer’s day. It is obvious to the readers that this poem is going to romantic, but what Shakespeare does to increase the romantic effect is create a certain atmosphere by making particular use of Iambic pentameter and anaphora. These both give the reader the impression that the poet is lost in their own mind, with free flowing thoughts. The pentameter gives the poem an even flow and the Anaphora used links the sentences together as if in thought. What I have learnt from this poem is that techniques can not only have a descriptive effect but can also sway the nature of the poem completely. |
| 27/2 | Breath  By Tim Winton | This story creates a link between us the reader and the characters in the book in an extremely unique way. The novel starts with providing the reader a sense of the way of life of the characters. This is done by explaining in detail the connection between the main characters and nature. Giving the impression they co-exist, by using skilled phrases like “The earth beneath us seemed to hum”, to show this connection. Also Winton creates a sense of community, for example stating that everyone learnt to swim in the river. This tradition link the characters to the way of life. Through this novel I have learnt that the character its self does not need be described as the setting and nature of that setting can do that very job. |
| 28/2 | The Secret Goldfish  By David Means | In The Secret Goldfish, David Means uses a seemingly unrelated parallel story line to link into the main one. The mother considers a fresh start of hearing of her father’s death, but chooses to overcome her adversities and is thus a stronger women for it. Meanwhile the Goldfish named Fred, (named specifically to humanise the animal), is dumped by her father into a dirty pond outside. The Goldfish like the mother over comes its seemingly irrelevant obstacle but later show the importance of it in the overall story line. These two are also parallel in chronological terms as in the Goldfish is safe when the parents are described as happy but is dumped in the dirty pond at the time of the father’s affair. Showing the connection between the character’s and the Fishes adversity. This use of parallel story line has inspired me to use it in my own writing. |
| 2/3 | Whoso List to Hunt  By Sir Thomas Wyatt | This poem does not seem directed without context. The writer call out for a person to join him on a hunting trip, full well knowing that this is not an accepted activity by the monarchy. It is seemingly innocent but in reality is a direct objection to the authority of the monarchy. This poem also entails a double meaning, as the poet refers to hunting dear but is actually referring to a lady, who like the dear, is considered property of the king. This poem, like many other, uses an analogy to oppose the rule of others. And thus inspires a passion to the work. I will use this as an example to broaden my means of obtaining poetic inspiration |
| 5/3 | Sonnet 68  By Mary Wroth | This Poem uses a repeated metaphor throughout the entire poem effectively to provide a solid connection to the reader. The poet compares the ridding of a presence in her own life to a ship who is in distress. Wroth uses this analogy continuously making alluding to connected ideas including Goodwin sands, a notorious spot for ships to be wrecked. She makes a particular emphasis on the ships inevitable end, devoting two lines to the final image of the ship being consumed by the ocean. This idea of connecting imagery to a metaphor throughout a poem is one I would like to experiment with in my own writing. |
| 6/3 | Alma  By Junot Diaz | This short story creates an immediate connection to the reader by starting off in a peculiar way. The first sentence, “You have a girlfriend named Alma…”. It addresses you the reader directly. This not only makes you intrigued instantly but it also makes the rest of the story so relatable and connects on a personal story. No story can be completely relatable because different people hold different perspectives but Diaz allows the reader to mould this character in their however they like. This makes the character so intimately your own that the author no longer has to explain what she looks like or why she does things rather he lets your imagination do the work for him. This concept is extremely effect in grabbing the audience’s attention and keeping that engagement throughout the story. Starting a story with “You have” is a strategy I would like to utilize in my own writing. |
| 8/3 | The Cask of Amontillado  BY Edgar Allan Poe | In this short story Poe is acutely aware of the effects of sentence structure. The author in fact is so aware that he uses it to develop the character. The short, direct sentences in this story suggest the character is witty, intelligent and even arrogant. In a short story a character has to be built as fast and as effectively as possible and I had never considered using something as simple as sentence length to do this. This technique is one that is not seen in many stories as prolifically as it is in “The cask of Amontillado” but Poe, to his credit, uses it excellently and it is something that I will strive to incorporate into my own short story writing. |
| 12/3 | Inauguration speech  By John F Kennedy | The famous quote from this speech is “Ask not what your country can do for you. Ask what you can do for your country”. This is a technique that Kennedy repeats through his entire speech. By asking a question he gets the listeners to think. This makes the each person’s thoughts specific to their own situation thus making it relatable. Public speeches like this one always have the aim of not only addressing but evoking change in as many people as possible. Thus by making the response to this speech personal Kennedy has increased the likelihood of the speech actually making a significant impact on the population. Thus if the speech is in their immediate memory it will they are more likely to act upon his message. This a technique that I will attempt to employ in my argumentative works. |
| 11/3 | Get a Life, Holden Caulfield  By Jennifer Schuessler | This discussion is about a federal judge banning the publication of the book of “60 years later: coming through the rye” a take on the events that unfold after Catcher and the Rye ends. What the author of this article includes multiple expert witness opinions to provide several educated insights into whether or not this judge’s ruling is fair and its impact on the writing/reading society. The discussion at hand is whether this novel provide a valuable insight into the future could have held or whether it ruin the narrative line completely. Schuessler discusses both sides of the story but it is the experts in literature that make her case. This is an excellent use of expert opinions which has a significant overall effect on the discussion. It is a technique I will consider using in my next argumentative work |
| 13/3 | Inauguration Speech  By Franklin D. Roosevelt | The element that made this speech so famous, was that Roosevelt did not write this speech to sound upstanding or powerful. He addressed the audience at that time. At technique that should be applied to all literary works regardless of their form. How Roosevelt does this is by acknowledging their problems. This builds integrity and therefore trust in the people. It is easy for a person of such power to not do this but Roosevelt did and this is a general concept that can be applied through all works. Write for your audience, not for the sake or writing. This is what made the line “there is nothing to fear itself” regarded as one of the most influential of all time. Although I am not in a position of power over my audiences I still will compose my works with the audience in constant consideration. |
| 15/3 | The Dead  By James Joyce | This short story begins with the main character being introduced to two young but higher class ladies. Their position is not mentioned until later in the story but it is implied. This is done by Joyce intelligently using titles (Mr, Mrs, etc.). The two ladies are introduced as Miss Kate and Miss Julia. Using the title indicated that they are respected but using their first names after suggests they are with the times and do not want to be considered as dated. This use of title to imply the characteristic and position of a person in a story is effective and intelligence and is something that I will consider when writing a short story of my own. |
| 16/3 | Hard Times  By Charles Dickens | Charles Dickens does in many stories as he does in Hard Times. He creates caricatures, meaning he over exaggerates a certain characters feature for an added effect on the reader as people identify with stereotypes. He also associates these stereotypes with common items to thus build the relatability to the readers. For example the character Mrs Gradgrind is exaggeratedly cold and unfeeling, with description of her including multiple connection to metallic items. Even thought has gone into her name as the sounds of her surname are very hard, and require emphasis. This technique is carried throughout this novel and many others and the three elements it requires; Caricature, association and naming; are a set of technique I will attempt to incorporate into my own writing |
| 20/3 | Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-street  By Herman Melville | This short story begins with a man acknowledging his own advancing age. This is a topic brought up several times during the story and is an inner self issue that almost all with address in our lives. The story follows a man that looks back on his times as a young man with ambition that is now faded. This choice of a universal theme pared with an intriguing narrative line is one that can be used across all short stories. Melville picks age as the main universal theme due to it having room for character development which is extremely essential to the story line he chose. What I can learn from this short story is that a proven formula to making a short story work is pick a universal theme that’s characteristic suit the general message of the story and the characters in it. |

**Reflection**

Over the course of the term I have read and analysed tens of textual pieces. This has given me a broad understanding of textual structure and how to execute techniques in the most efficient methods. What I have used in my own imaginative writing piece that was learnt through many different texts, is that I place a particular emphasis on the core element of a short story. For example methods for naming a character in a way to convey certain characteristics. I have believe that I have learnt a lot due to this task as it has given me a depth of resources when in need of finding the method in which to approach different element of writing. The raw exposure to different text ideas and types has also impacted the way I will analyse texts in the future. Over all this task was successful in its aim to improve my writing.