



ENG4UZ & ETS4UZ

IB Learner Portfolio
Fiona Cai

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(still finishing up The Wars by Thomas Findley)



“Why am I trying to become
what I don’t want to be ... when
all I want is out there, waiting
for me the minute I say I know
who I am.”

—Arthur Miller, Death of a Salesman



Half a Lifelong Romance

Eileen
Chang
Author of
Lust, Caution

"A dazzling and distinctive fiction writer." —*The New York Times Book Review*

A NOVEL



01 Half a Lifelong Romance





<https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1001694>
https://columbia.edu/exhibits/show/linglong/about_linglong/1930s

known to be the subordinate and inferior sex → lowest on the social ladder of all rights
 Women did not have the right to education in the 1930s, most were illiterate sexist ideals:

Very early times, historical records and the philosophy of Confucius illustrated the institutionalized and deep-rooted ideals: men have been seen as the core of the family, while women often only went on record because they had men problems.

The image that men created for women characterized them as lacking refinement, elegant, humble, subservient, resigned, clean, and obedient

often discussed in terms of yin and yang:
 Yin is soft, yielding, receptive, passive, reflective, and tranquil
 Yang is hard, active, assertive, and dominating.

It reinforces that these differences between genders are part of the natural order of the universe,
 According to yang theory, the two forces complement each other but in unequal ways. If one naturally gains the upper hand, order at both the cosmic and social level is endangered.

To be obedient to their husband, married, their son
 Expected to change their life
 There were no grounds on which a woman could divorce her husband

<https://www.sixthtone.com/news/1001694>



A photograph of a peasant family in Yantai, Shandong province, taken by a foreign missionary in the 1920s. Courtesy of 'Old Photos'

- The baby being cradled in the back row is probably a girl; boys would generally have been held in the front row.
- From the small size of the wife's feet, we can deduce that they were bound when she was a child
- Patriarchal family systems
 - The male head of the household held authority over all family members

- Despite the image of the 1920s as a patriarchal society, family roles and expectations remained largely unchanged.
- The Kuomintang party promoted modern family reforms.
- Abolition of arranged marriages.
- Women could inherit property from their parents.
- Criticism of Large Families
 - People criticized the inequality in large families across the whole society.
 - In large families where adult sons and daughters married together with their brothers without considerable authority to manage family affairs, there was a lack of social and legal life.
- Legal Reforms
 - Instead of preaching "parents can never be wrong", new laws and codes granted children more agency and rights as equal citizens.
 - Mutual legal bonds between parents and children were strengthened.

Social Etiquette

https://culturalsavvy.com/chinese_culture.htm#
<https://digitalcommons.colby.edu/clas/2015/program/10>

- Importance of group consensus over individualism, with the group placed in high regard
- Chinese do not like to do business or make personal decisions in established relationships or an international context.
- Introductions to strangers are done through intermediaries.
- Saving face is very important; emphasis on politeness and respect.
- Expectation is to be considerate, patient, and kind.

Worker's Rights + Class Divisions

<https://blogs.lse.ac.uk/economichistory/2021/10/08/the-1930s-in-china/>

- Strikes in 1933 and 1936 were mainly caused by economic factors such as inflation and welfare issues.

percentage of strikers

3 accepted rose from 1933 to 1936
 Population, class structure

In Class Discussion: Societal Expectations

- Criticisms and reforms



Literary Devices

#1

Foreshadowing

#2

Symbolism of Light and Darkness

#3

Third Person Omniscient



"Manzhen led Shijun to a **square table** next to the window, and they sat down. They hadn't seen anyone on their way in, and even Manzhen's mother seemed to have disappeared, but he could hear half-whispered talks and occasional coughs in the next-door room: the whole family must be gathered in there, too shy to come out." (36)

Visual Imagery

Auditory Imagery

Parallelism





“‘You know him,’ Jiemin piped up. ‘He’s the one who looks like a rat—and then, when he smiles, looks like a cat.’” (16)

Parallelism

Simile

Juxtaposition



Symbolism of Light and Darkness

"Even in the **dim lights** of the street lamps, he could see her face shining with happiness." (33)

"Her face was perfectly calm, but he could see that she was very, very happy. The world was suddenly **bathed in light.**" (84)

Symbolism of Light

Visual Imagery

Emphasis of Emotions



Symbolism of Light and Darkness

"She was alone in that **dark, dark room.**" (248)

"A sunbeam shone onto her foot, warm and soft as a purring cat pressing up against her. She was so far removed from the world that this little spot of sunlight felt sweet to her." (252)

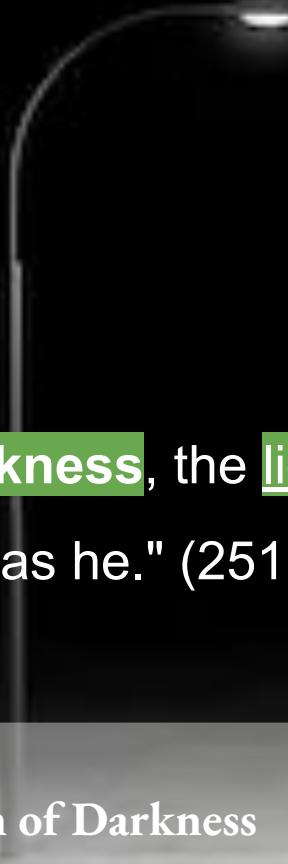
Symbolism of Light & Darkness

Tactile Imagery

Emphasis of Emotions



Symbolism of Light and Darkness



"In that **darkness**, the light of the street lamps was ineffectual and blurry, as was he." (251)

Symbolism of Darkness

Symbolism of Light

Juxtaposition



“Shijun was instinctively jealous. He sat to one side, listening silently ...

Manzhen didn’t see anything unusual in his behavior.” (128)

“She was following, one might say, a deep design but, naturally enough, Shijun couldn’t see that. He was just getting rather cross.” (128-129)

Adverbial Modifiers

Contrast

Disconnected Atmosphere



“Shijun again fell silent for a long moment. ‘I see. I’m sure I’ve seemed weak to you, ever since I gave up my job.’ In fact, he’d quit that job mainly because of her. It was so unfair—**words could not begin to express the unfairness of it all.**” (202)

“Do you plan to go out and get a job? I can’t believe you’d be willing to stay at home your whole life, **like your father.**” (202-203)

Narration

Dialogue

Internal Monologue



02

George Orwell

Selected Essays
(I used this for my IO)

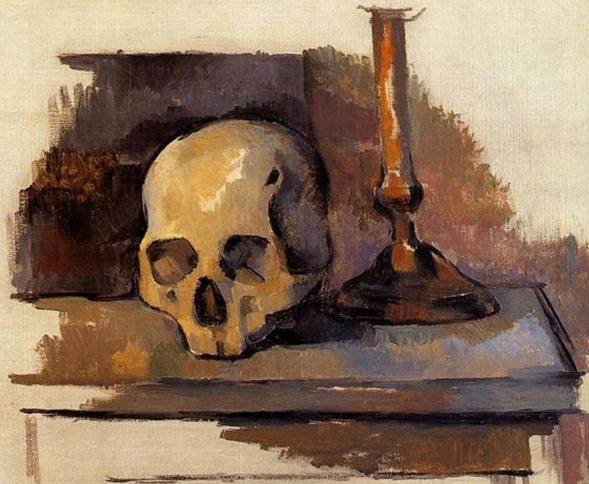




I watched this whole thing in class - we had a content test with Orwell's short stories but not really any conversations in class



William Shakespeare



Hamlet

03 Hamlet

(I used this for my HL Essay)

We also watched a play called “Fat Ham” downtown and it was very cool!



Why day is day, night night, and time is time
Were nothing but to waste night, day, and time.
Therefore, (since) brevity is the soul of wit,
And tediousness the limbs and outward flourishes,
I will be brief. Your noble son is mad.
"Mad" call I it, for, to define true madness,
What is 't but to be nothing else but mad?
But let that go.

QUEEN More matter with less art.

POLONIUS Madam, I swear I use no art at all. *alliteration*
That he's mad, 'tis true; 'tis true 'tis pity, *repetition*
And pity 'tis true—a foolish figure,
But farewell it, for I will use no art.

Mad let us grant him then, and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or, rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause.
Thus it remains, and the remainder thus,
Perpend.

I have a daughter (have while she is mine)
Who, in her duty and obedience, mark,
Hath given me this. Now gather and surmise.

opheila under ? reader
He reads. To the celestial, and my soul's idol, the most beautified Ophelia— opheila reads young of him
That's an ill phrase, a vile phrase; "beautified" is a
vile phrase. But you shall hear. Thus: *He reads.*

In her excellent white bosom, these, etc. *opheila exits crying*

QUEEN Came this from Hamlet to her?

POLONIUS Good madam, stay awhile. I will be faithful.
He reads the letter.

Flashback of Hamlet & opheila
Doubt thou the stars are fire,
Doubt that the sun doth move.

Hamlet says this in his bookcase
feeling in a dark room w/ romantic music

O dear Ophelia, I am ill at these numbers. I have not art to reckon my groans, but that I love thee best, O most best, believe it. Adieu.

Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this machine is to him, Hamlet.

This, in obedience, hath my daughter shown me,
And more (above,) hath his solicitings,
As they fell out by time, by means, and place,
All given to mine ear.

KING But how hath she received his love?

POLONIUS What do you think of me?

KING

As of a man faithful and honorable.

POLONIUS

I would fain prove so. But what might you think,
When I had seen this hot love on the wing *imaging*
(As I perceived it, I must tell you that,
Before my daughter told me), what might you,
Or my dear Majesty your queen here, think,
If I had played the desk or table-book *metaphor*
Or given my heart a *winking*, mute and dumb,
Or looked upon this love with idle sight?
What might you think? No, I went round to work,
And my young mistress thus I did bespeak:

"Lord Hamlet is a prince, out of thy star, *metaphor*
This must not be." And then I prescripts gave her,
That she should lock herself from *(his)* resort,
Admit no messengers, receive no tokens;
Which done, she took the fruits of my advice, *metaphor*
And he, repelled (a short tale to make),
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to (a) lightness, and, by this declension,
Into the madness wherein now he raves
And all we mourn for.

KING So, Ophelia, Do you think Ophelia is

Through the use of juxtaposition, metaphors, and stage directions, Shakespeare portrays Polonius' character as someone who likes to be in control.

Juxtaposition

- Polonius likes to appear knowledgeable and in control, even when discussing Hamlet's madness.
 - For this effect defective comes by cause." (110)
 - Polonius' use of wordplay and repetition here shows his desire to assert his authority. By convoluting simple ideas, he tries to appear as an intellectual who understands Hamlet's madness better than anyone, reflecting his need to be in control.
- Polonius criticizes Hamlet's use of language to reinforce his own sense of superiority.
 - "Beautified" is a vile phrase." (119)
 - Polonius' criticism of the word "beautified" reveals his inclination to assert authority over language itself. By demeaning Hamlet's words, he elevates himself as the arbiter of what is proper, demonstrating his need to control how things are expressed.
- Polonius tries to control the narrative of Hamlet's emotions through doubt and certainty.
 - "Doubt truth to be a lar." (126)
 - Polonius reciting Hamlet's lines about doubting truth reflects his control over the situation. He interprets Hamlet's love letter for the Queen and King, positioning himself as the one who can best understand and manage Hamlet's emotions, thus maintaining control over how others perceive the situation.

Metaphor

- Line 145 - "If I had played the desk or table-book" → compares desk/table-book to ignorance
 - Polonius justifies his decision of interfering in his daughter's romantic relationships by bringing up his duty as a father to protect his daughter from Hamlet, showing his desire of control over Ophelia's love life
- Line 150 - "Lord Hamlet is a prince out of thy star" → compares Hamlet to a star
 - Polonius is saying that Hamlet is too unachievable for Ophelia to encourage his daughter to stay away from him, showing the desire of control over Ophelia
- Line 154 - "she took the fruits of my advice" → compares fruits to the outcome of Polonius' advice, implying a positive connotation as following the advice allowed for the growth of a plant
 - Polonius is justifying his decision to meddle by saying it was effective for Ophelia and that Ophelia benefited from it, showing some power imbalance between the two

Stage directions:

- Passage focuses on Polonius talking to Claudius & Gertrude in a room → no background music or lighting/stage effects
 - Focuses on the conversation between Polonius, Claudius and Gertrude
- Line 117 - in the play, Ophelia enters and reads the letter
 - Line 122 - Ophelia exits crying
 - Director's choice to make Ophelia read the letter to show how heartbroken Ophelia is over Hamlet and further emphasizes the control Polonius wants to have control over others (in this case, Ophelia)
 - "Who in her duty and obedience, mark / Hath given me this" (2.2.115)
- Line 124-132 - flashback to Hamlet and Ophelia together and in love while Polonius reads the letter
 - Located in a dark room with sentimental/romantic music playing in the background
 - Shows when Ophelia and Hamlet were in love or Ophelia felt loved by Hamlet
- Line 128-132 - Hamlet says this part in flashback
 - More impact if Hamlet is reciting his own words in the letter to Ophelia

In Class Partner Activity

Mandatory Outline Template

RE CONCEPT TO BE EXPLORED: Culture

QUESTION: How does Shakespeare use the characterization of Ophelia and Hamlet to reflect the cultural and societal constraints placed on women in the era?

Y TITLE: The Patriarchal Constraints on Women in Shakespeare's Hamlet

INTRO

BOOK:
The role of women in literature often mirror the societal norms of their time, revealing the cultural values and constraints imposed upon them.

- NESS:
• The Elizabethans had very clear gender expectations
◦ men were expected to be the breadwinners
◦ women to be housewives and mothers. ([Citation](#))
• Women are denied full voice, the voice of soliloquy especially
◦ Hamlet's deafening vocal posturing desensitizes the audience to quieter, less powerful, voices. ([Citation](#))
• Hamlet presents only two female characters, Ophelia and Gertrude, who are defined/confined by the men around them.
◦ Ophelia demonstrates the tragic consequences of a woman's powerlessness in a male-dominated world.
◦ Gertrude represents the complexities faced by women in positions of power, struggling to navigate political intrigue and personal desires within the confines of societal norms

ESIS:
In Hamlet, Shakespeare illustrates the patriarchal structure of the Elizabethan era by using metaphors, Ophelia's floral symbolism, and restrictive stage directions to highlight the constraints imposed on women and their lack of autonomy.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1: Metaphors

TOPIC SENTENCE:
Shakespeare employs metaphors throughout Hamlet to emphasize the societal expectations and limitations placed on women, particularly through the way they are perceived by men.

INT 1:
Ophelia as a fragile figure, defined by male approval

EVIDENCE 1:	Laertes compares Hamlet's love to a fleeting flower: - "Hamlet's love is like a violet, the perfume and supplance of a minute" (1.3.8-10).	POINT 1:	Flowers as symbols of women's passive roles
ANALYSIS 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">The violet symbolizes the lack of stability of Hamlet's affection<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ophelia's worth is tied to this, foreshadowing the instability of her life and eventual death later in the play.Highlights Ophelia's fragility – dependence on male validation.Reinforces the idea that women's identities are dictated by their relationships with men.	EVIDENCE 1:	Ophelia distributes flowers, linking them to emotions and memory <ul style="list-style-type: none">"There's rosemary, that's for remembrance; pray, love, remember: and there is pansies, that's for thoughts" (4.5.175-176).
POINT 2:	The expectations of purity placed on women	ANALYSIS 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Rosemary symbolizes remembrance and pansies symbolize thought, reflecting the sentimental roles expected of women.These qualities do not empower Ophelia; instead, they confine her within traditional female expectations.Her act of handing out flowers is not one of agency but passive observation.
EVIDENCE 2:	Hamlet's demand for Ophelia to be chaste and pure: - "Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny" (3.1.137-138).	POINT 2:	Women's intelligence and awareness are stifled by societal expectations
ANALYSIS 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ice and snow symbolize purity<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ophelia = societal ideal of female obedience and virginityImportance of marriage and purity before marriage<ul style="list-style-type: none">Arranged to bring prestige or wealth to the family.Women were raised to believe that they were inferior and that men knew better (Citation)Value of a woman is tied to her desirability for men.	EVIDENCE 2:	Ophelia gives fennel (flattery and deceit) and columbines (intimacy with the court) <ul style="list-style-type: none">"There's fennel for you, and columbines" (4.5.177).
POINT 3:	The contrast between Hamlet's and Ophelia's madness	ANALYSIS 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Ophelia's choice of flowers reflects her deep awareness of the deceit and corruption surrounding her, yet she cannot voice her thoughts.The use of floral symbolism allows her to subtly challenge the hypocrisy of the court; maintaining the appearance of innocence.This reinforces the idea that women in the Elizabethan era were forced to suppress their intellect and insight<ul style="list-style-type: none">Resorts to indirect means of expression to navigate a world that denied them power to speak openly.
EVIDENCE 3:	Gertrude describes Hamlet's madness as something noble: - "O'er whom his very madness, like some ore / Among a mineral of metals base, / Shows itself pure" (4.1.24-26).	POINT 3:	The withering violets as a symbol of lost purity
ANALYSIS 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Madness in men is seen as intellectual and strategic, whereas in women, it is dismissed as emotional weakness.Highlights the gendered double standard in how emotional expression is perceived.Demonstrates how patriarchal norms suppress female agency by dismissing women's emotional expression as hysteria	EVIDENCE 3:	Ophelia laments the absence of violets: - "I would give you some violets, but they withered all since my father died" (4.5.180-181).
FULL TOPIC SENTENCE:	BODY PARAGRAPH 2: Symbolism of Ophelia's Flowers	ANALYSIS 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Violets symbolize chastity and obedience—ideals that define Ophelia.Their absence signifies the collapse of societal expectations as Ophelia loses her father - the controller over her identity.Foreshadows Ophelia's tragic fate<ul style="list-style-type: none">the destructive nature of societal constraints on women's autonomy.
FULL TOPIC SENTENCE:	The symbolism of Ophelia's flowers reflects the societal pressures placed on women, illustrating how their roles are dictated by external forces		

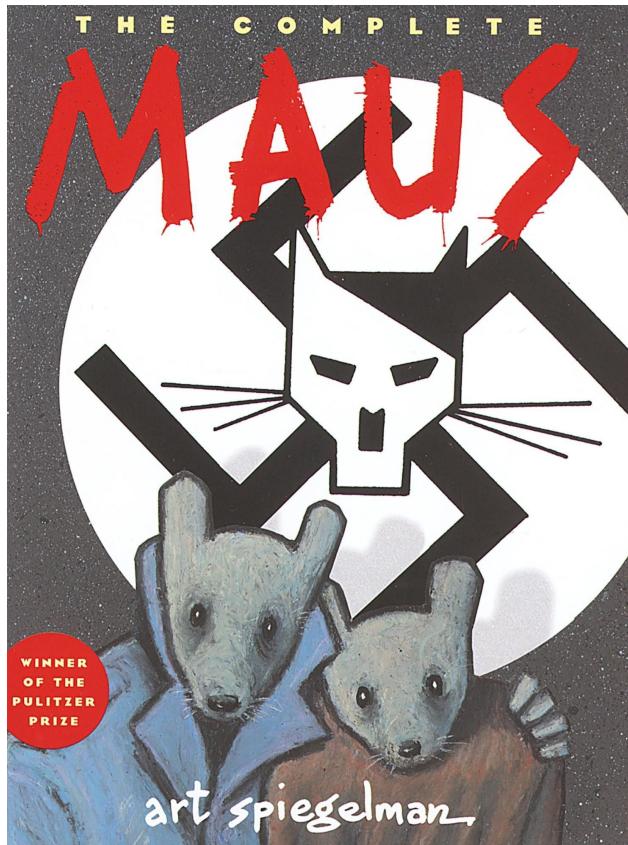
Mandatory HL Essay Outline



BODY PARAGRAPH 3: Stage Directions		CONCLUSION
FULL TOPIC SENTENCE:	Shakespeare uses stage directions and the physical limitations of space to emphasize women's lack of agency, reinforcing the societal expectation of female submission.	
POINT 1:	Gertrude's confinement in her chamber	
EVIDENCE 1:	Gertrude's plea as Hamlet confronts her: - "Thou wilt not murder me? Help, hol" (3.4.21).	
ANALYSIS 1:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Even in her private chamber, Gertrude lacks control over her own space. Highlights the broader reality that women's autonomy is constantly threatened. The domestic sphere, which should be a place of safety, becomes a site of male dominance. 	
POINT 2:	Hamlet's physical control over Gertrude	
EVIDENCE 2:	Hamlet commands his mother to sit down and listen: - "Leave wringing of your hands. Peace, sit you down" (3.4.41-42).	
ANALYSIS 2:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hamlet's demand suppresses Gertrude's emotional expression. Reflects the societal expectation that women should remain composed and silent. Highlights male dominance, as Gertrude is forced into submission. 	
POINT 3:	Ophelia's drowning as the ultimate symbol of female powerlessness	
EVIDENCE 3:	Ophelia's passive death: - "Her clothes spread wide, / And, mermaid-like, awhile they bore her up." (4.7.175-176)	
ANALYSIS 3:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Her body is described as passive, reflecting her complete lack of control. Symbolizes how women are swept away by societal pressures. Her death becomes the only means of escape from patriarchal constraints. 	
RESTATED THESIS:	Through the use of metaphors, symbolism, and stage directions, Shakespeare's <i>Hamlet</i> highlights the societal and cultural constraints imposed on women, showing how their identities are shaped and confined by patriarchal structures.	
LASTING THOUGHT: (How is it significant?)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Hamlet</i> serves as a reflection of the limitations historically placed on women, many of which persist in modern society. The struggles of Ophelia and Gertrude reveal the dangers of silencing and restricting women's autonomy. Shakespeare's portrayal invites audiences to challenge oppressive societal norms and advocate for gender equality. 	

Mandatory HL Essay Outline





04

Maus

Probably my favourite read but I find it hard to reference the literary devices because it's all based on the images



Bolded letters and jagged speech bubbles → shouting (98)



Prisoner on the Hell Planet
extended across several
pages → reader
perspective (102-5)

- Darker background, faces are more geometric shapes (especially when seen up close)



Large frame with thick borders, separated into smaller frames (113)

- Thick borders show the outside world, smaller frames show the Germans in different areas of the house → resembles a house with many rooms



Road resembles a swastika (127)



Hamlet

"To be or not to be"

- paradoxical

- Hamlet's moral compromise

- Unknowingly compromises his morals → leads to further compromises

- Relationship with other characters

- Not supported by the queen
on his belief and points

What leads characters to
compromise their morals and
beliefs?

Half a Life long Romance:

- desperation → manlu wants a son
leads to manzhen wants to protect her kid
- societal expectations → women in 1930s Shanghai
as to trial pretty
- love / lust → manzhen wants to protect her kid
Mrs. Gu keeps silent

ANALYSES:

eshadowing
nibolism
rast → tension

THESIS:

GOOD LUCK ☺

- the consuming effect of love drives
characters to compromise morals and
beliefs

MAUS

- survival
- desperation

✓

Techniques:

Shading

parallels

1st and 3rd person.
perspective
Loshifting.



05

Death of A Salesman

The American Dream :(



Work a lifetime to pay off a house. You finally own it, and there's nobody to live in it. (15)

- House is symbol for willy's career, which he spends his entire life focused on
- "Nobody to live in house" is symbol for willy working and missing his kids grow up
 - This is the context of conversation with linda
- The structure frames the inhabitants as more important
 - Everything he does is useless
- This is also foreshadowing willy's demise:
 - Sacrificing himself for getting money
 - Suicide for 20,000

Carrots... quarter-inch apart. Rows... one-foot rows. ... 'Cause she's suffered, Ben, the woman has suffered. You understand me? A man can't go out the way, he came in, Ben, a man has got to add up to something.

- He obsessively plants the seeds, saying measurements out loud. This represents his search for control within his chaotic life
- He imagines talking to his brother Ben, which shows his deteriorating mental state brought on by stress. He asks his brother "you understand me?"
- Repetition of "suffered" shows his guilt from not achieving his dreams and harming linda
- "go out the way, he came in" contrasts with "add up to something" to highlight willy's internal struggle and desperation
 - These two phrases are a metaphor for creating something significant in your life, which willy has not done
- Repetition of "a man" portrays as a universal duty to further show willy's perceived failure

WILLY (anxiously): Oh, I'd better hurry. I've got to get some seeds. (He starts off to the right.) I've got to get some seeds, right away. Nothing's planted. I don't have a thing in the ground.

- The yard represents his career, it is barren
 - Inability to fulfill goals
- His urge to plant seeds reflects his desperation to achieve something he finds valuable in his life
 - Said anxiously
 - Repeats "nothing's planted", "don't have a thing" shows his empty achievements
 - Repetition of "i'd better hurry", "i've got to go" shows his desperation
- However, he is planting seeds at night, in a place which has no sun due to apartments surrounding
 - Foreshadows his failure in the future, as the seeds will not grow

Some Quote analysis



- explain the context (briefly),
- discuss in detail the significance of the quotation (i.e., what it reveals about character, conflict and/or theme, etc.), and
- identify and explain any important stylistic features.

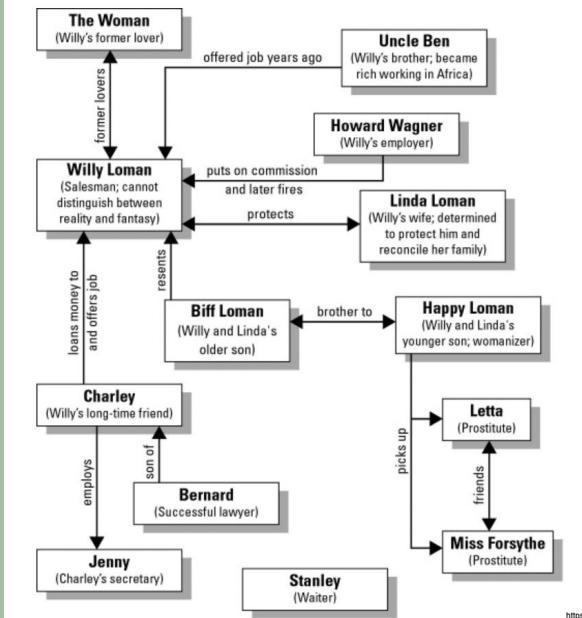
- 1) "WILLY: And when I saw that, I realized that selling was the greatest career a man could want.
'Cause what could be more satisfying than to be able to go, at the age of eighty-four, into twenty or thirty different cities, and pick up a phone, and be remembered and loved and helped by so many different people?" (81)
 - a) In this scene, Willy speaks about the origin of his desire to become a salesman.
 - b) The quote reveals Willy's idealistic views about a career as a traveling salesman; wealthy and loved by everyone. Connects to the play's theme of the American dream, where hard work will be rewarded (the quote focuses on the reward).
 - c) Casual/conversational tone ("cause"), positive/optimistic diction
- 2) "WILLY: Loves me. *Wonderingly*: Always loved me. Isn't that a remarkable thing? Ben, he'll worship me for it!
BEN, with promise: It's dark there, but full of diamonds." (135)
- 3) "LINDA: I can't understand it. At this time especially. First time in thirty-five years we were just about free and clear. He only needed a little salary. He was even finished with the dentist." (137)
 - a) Said at Willy's funeral
 - b) Shows that a little salary was not enough for Willy because it's not about money to him
 - c) Stilted sentences that do not follow grammatical conventions (i.e. missing subject, dangling sentence) show's Linda's grief
- 4) "LINDA: Forgive me, dear. I can't cry. I don't know what it is, but I can't cry. I don't understand it. Why did you ever do that? Help me, Willy, I can't cry. ... I made the last payment on the house today. Today, dear. And there'll be nobody home. *A sob rises in her throat*. We're free and clear. *Sobbing more fully, released*. We're free. *Biff comes slowly toward her*. We're free...We're free..."(139)
 - a) The last spoken line of the play, Linda saying goodbye to Willy at his grave.
 - b) It details Linda's thoughts towards Willy's death, and her gradual acceptance of the fact.
 - c) Repetition: "I can't cry" "We're free"

In Class Activity

We also looked at like a bunch of images about the American Dream with ladders and analyzed that.

Expressionism vs Realism





Character Map

my teacher found



THE #1 WORLDWIDE BESTSELLER

MARGARET
ATWOOD



THE
HANDMAID'S
TALE

06

The Handmaid's Tale



Next up:
In class presentation
(Night and Nap chapters)



Formatting (italization)

III Night, Chapter 7

"A story is like a letter. *Dear You*, I'll say. Just *you*, without a name (...) I will say *you*, *you*, like an old love song. *You can more more than one. // You can mean thousands.*" (Atwood 44)

- Breaks the 4th wall
- The italicized *You* highlights the fluidity of identity—Offred's audience shifts between an individual, a collective, or even herself.
- Repetition reinforces how language blurs individuality, mirroring the Handmaids' loss of distinct selves.



Formatting (italization)

V Nap, Chapter 13

“Her fault, her fault, her fault, we chant in unison. // Who led them on? Aunt Helena beams, pleased with us. // She did. She did. She did. // Why did God allow such a terrible thing to happen? // Teach her a lesson. Teach her a lesson. Teach her a lesson.” (82)

- Janine tells story of how she was gang raped
- Italicization emphasizes how language enforces guilt and internalized oppression.
- Chant reduces victims to objects of blame.
- *Lesson* underscores indoctrination, showing how identity is shaped through forced complicity.



Formatting (italization)

XI Night, Chapter 30

“I’ll take care of it, Luke said. And because he said *it* instead of *her*, I knew he meant *kill*.” (223)

- Couldn’t take cat across border
- Italicization exposes how language erases identity—*her* becomes *it*; dehumanizing, foreshadow
- Luke’s phrasing; Gilead’s objectification of women.
- Offred’s sensitivity to language reflects its impact to her and her perception of herself and the events around her.

Italicization shows how language manipulates self-perception, enforces control, and erodes individuality under oppression.



Flashbacks

fragmented narrative techniques

III Night, Chapter 7

“Now, said Moira. You don’t need to paint your face, it’s only me. What’s your paper on? I just did one on date rape.//Date rape, I said. You’re so trendy. It sounds like some kind of dessert. Date Rapé.” (42)

- Context: Offred recalls a conversation with Moira from their university days.
- Highlights Offred’s past intellectual freedom and ability to speak casually.
- The sarcastic tone contrasts with her current lack of agency under Gilead.
- Reinforces how oppression has reshaped and silenced her former identity.



Flashbacks

fragmented narrative techniques

V Night, Chapter 13

"I read about that in Introduction to Psychology; that, and the chapter on caged rats who'd give themselves electric shocks for something to do." (80)

- Context: Offred remembers a psychology lesson while reflecting on her captivity.
- The caged rats symbolize Offred's own entrapment in Gilead.
- Reflects how oppression conditions individuals into submission.
- Shows her identity reduced to mere survival, erasing past independence.



Flashbacks

fragmented narrative technique

VII Nap, Chapter 18

"I lie in bed (...) I want to be with someone. // Lying in bed, with Luke, his hand on my rounded belly." (117)

- The seamless transition between past and present.
- Juxtaposes past intimacy with current isolation, deepening her loss.
- Fluidity of identity - she was once a wife and mother

Through these flashbacks, Atwood emphasizes how Gilead's oppressive forces distort and destabilize Offred's identity by contrasting her past freedoms with her present captivity.



Metaphors

V Nap, Chapter 13

"Behind my closed eyes thin white dancers flit gracefully among the trees, their legs fluttering like the wings of held birds." (41)

- Context: Offred recalls an exercise session from the Red Center, where they practiced breathing techniques while listening to classical music.
- The imagery of "held birds" suggests captivity, mirroring Offred's own restricted existence.
- The contrast between the gracefulness of the dancers and the implied struggle of the birds highlights Offred's internal conflict
 - forced control versus the desire for freedom.



Metaphors

VII Night, Chapter 18

“This is what I feel like: this sound of glass. I feel like the word *shatter*.” (41)

- The image of glass evokes fragility and instability, reflecting Offred’s vulnerability under Gilead’s control.
- “Shatter” suggests both emotional breakdown and potential rebellion—she is on the verge of breaking.
- The use of synesthesia
 - emphasizes effects of oppression
 - blurring the lines between emotional and physical experience.



Metaphors

V Night, Chapter 30

"It was like being in an elevator cut loose at the top. Falling, falling, and not knowing when you will hit." (41)

- Offred wonders who informed the authorities about their leaving, possibly a neighbor? passport forger?
- The uncontrolled descent mirrors sudden destruction of her former life.
- The uncertainty of when she will "hit" captures the psychological torment of waiting for an inevitable, but unknown, punishment.

Atwood illustrates Offred's fractured sense of self, using imagery of captivity, fragility, and free-fall to emphasize how oppressive forces erode identity.

Dropping Canadian Birth Rates And Immigration

Around the time that Margaret Atwood was writing *The Handmaid's Tale*, she also found articles that showed Canada's birth rate was dropping for the same reasons the Romanian birth rate was dropping. Some people tried to blame it on pollution, saying that inorganic foods and toxins in the air made it less likely for women to get pregnant. While it's true that an unhealthy lifestyle can lead to infertility, the major factor that lead to the drop in Canadian birth rates was women entering the workforce.

This is why Canada has a relatively relaxed immigration policy, (at least, in comparison to the complex and expensive process in the United States.) Since the 1970's, the majority of population growth in Canada has come from immigrants. They project that by the year 2035, 80% of Canada will be an immigrant population.

This is one of the many reasons why Canada is always featured as being the safe haven for refugees to flock to in books, TV, and movies. *The Handmaid's Tale* is no exception.

Connected it to Canada



End.

