 Year 12 Advanced English 2019

Unit title:

Module A – Textual Conversations – Ted Hughes & Sylvia Plath

Duration:

30 hours (36 x 50 min periods)

Description of unit:

The focus of this Module is the interactions between composers through their texts. A comparative study of Hughes’ and Plath’s poems will explore the ways these composers grapple with their own life, each other’s lives and the representations of those lives in poetry. This volatile, controversial and highly personal textual conversation is one in which both the content and style has been greatly influenced by a shared personal context and changing public perceptions of both the poetry and the relationships depicted therein.

Through the process of connecting and engaging critically with these two texts students will explore the nature of ‘textual conversation’ to develop an understanding of processes such as reframing, reimagining and re-contextualising. Students will examine Plath’s methods of representing her inner self and compare this with Hughes’ methods and intentions in responding to her poetry through his own. This will allow students to explore the resonances and dissonances between texts, the values and perspectives portrayed and the intentions behind this

kind of intertextuality. Students will develop a considered personal response to how and why these texts interact and the complexity of their textual conversation.

Rationale:

This unit has been deliberately designed to introduce students to a selection of the poetry **before** they can make judgments based on the context or biographical information about the poets. Our intention is to allow students to develop their own impressions of some of the poetry, then have a guided ‘lightbulb’ moment when we move on to the context of the relationship, professional and personal, between the poets, as well as the impact of Plath’s childhood. This pathway should alert students to the impact of context – as well as later critical reading frames – on our understanding and interpretations, and allow students to reflect on and revise initial interpretations as they participate in an unfolding textual conversation.

We will then move on to the remaining poems in a more comparative format, allowing the earlier poems to be reinterpreted in the light of contextual knowledge, in order to reflect the students’ growing understanding of the intricacies of the textual conversations being studied. Texts are not created or interpreted in a vacuum. By structuring the module this way, we intend to highlight the dynamic forces of context, perspective and intertextuality which influence a responder’s ability to construct meaning.

Focus questions:

* What constitutes a ‘textual conversation’?
* How is our understanding of textual conversations impacted by our knowledge of the personal, social and historical context?
* How and why can these ‘conversations’ vary between intrapersonal, interpersonal and intertextual conversations?
* In which ways does the interplay of texts reveal the composers’ individual purposes and intentions?
* What purpose does the alignment and mirroring of ideas between texts serve?
* How does the understanding of textual dynamics (context, purpose and audience) influence your understanding of the values and perspectives in a text and between texts?
* Who has the authority to tell the story?
* How do the commonalities and collisions between texts bring responders to a deeper consideration and understanding of the poetry itself?

Outcomes:

EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts

EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued

EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning

EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner

Assessment:

| Assessment for learning | Assessment as learning | Assessment of learning |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 3 Core Classwork tasks – teachers give feedback only. These tasks teach skills needed for the HSC and feedback helps identify areas of weakness which student’s need to concentrate on. DIRT (Dedicated Improvement and Reflection) time is given following the return of Feedback, encouraging students to reflect on their skill development and areas of further need. | * Regular **Journal** entries. (graded A-E plus feedback) * Class ‘blog’: minimum number of entries required. Students write responses to the Module **‘Big Ideas Blog’ (BIB)’** as suggested in the Evidence of Learning column. This will involve students in an ongoing ‘textual conversation’ of their own, relating to the Module. | Assessment Task – Discursive Feature article  NB – This suggested task could be easily modified into a Podcast or other Multi-modal task if required. |

Texts:

Hughes, Ted, Birthday Letters, Faber and Faber, 1999, ISBN: 9780571194735 (p) – These are in Resource 17 (we advise you give poems to students as needed, rather than as a booklet)

‘Fulbright Scholars’

‘Fever’

‘The Shot’

‘A Picture of Otto’

‘The Bee God’

‘Red’

Plath, Sylvia, Ariel, Faber and Faber, 2001, ISBN: 9780571086269 (p) – These are in Resource 18 (we advise you give poems to students as needed, rather than as a booklet)

‘Daddy’

‘The Arrival of the Bee Box’

‘Fever 103°’

‘Lady Lazarus’

‘Nick and the Candlestick’

‘A Birthday Present’

Phase 1: Introduction (2 weeks) – orientation and engagement. Students are introduced to three key poems of Ted Hughes and understand that they represent autobiographical insights into moments across a relationship. Do not go into context re Plath/Hughes until Phase 2 - so students can engage with Hughes' and Plath’s poetry free of any preconceptions or bias.

| Outcomes/content | Teaching and learning | Evidence of learning |
| --- | --- | --- |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  Content: Students -  analyse the ways in which perspectives are conveyed through texts drawn from other times and cultures, and how these may be renewed for a contemporary Australian audience | Part 1 – ½ a 50min period  ‘Hook’ lesson  Driving question: What are your expectations of a love-at-first sight moment in literature?   * How would it be written/filmed? * What would lead up to it and what would come after? * What kinds of text (genre?) would you expect this from?   Read the extracts from Shantaram and The Return of Sherlock Holmes (in Resource 1)  Individually students identify a literary device in each which can be described as ‘Romantic’ (may need to be defined depending on the class).  Class discussion: how do these example texts bring alive the issues raised in the driving question activity above?  Individual writing: predictive activity – Are there clues in these extracts about where the relationship narrative might go to from here? | Think, pair (choose one specific example from own knowledge) then share.  Open class discussion.  Students can identify and explain the effect of phrases such as ‘my eyes were lost swimming floating free in the shimmering lagoon’  Students express personal responses in short written text. |
| EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  Content: Students -  appreciate, analyse and speculate about the power of language to represent personal and public worlds for critical reflection and pleasure  EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  Content: Students -  critically reflect on the way particular uses of language, for example imagery and allusion, convey values and perspectives in texts  EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner | Part 2 – 1 ½ periods  Introduction of first Ted Hughes poem: Fulbright Scholars  Teacher: the aim of these short activities is to introduce the gist of the ‘story’ of the poem and its place in ‘triptych’ with which we begin. Extensive literary analysis is deferred, especially of key phrases that are affected by later contextual awareness and knowledge of Plath’s poems.  Students are given Fulbright Scholars with the following driving question to respond to (briefly, personally, in their Journals):  What are your first impressions of the persona, the ‘you’ and the relationship? Is it a love-at-first sight poem?  Teacher reads poem aloud to class  Teacher then guides students (explicit instruction) through the following key points, taking note to situate poem as grounded in biographical and historical detail, but also typically symbolic and allusive for Hughes:   * The Strand and Charing Cross Station as, respectively, a London avenue and train station (situate poem geographically on a map) * Fulbright scholars - academic exchange scholarship for US students (situate historical context) * Veronica Lake - famous blond American actress (allusion/ metaphor) – show images or students find some   Then note all the allusions evoked by these details. (see Resource 3)  Annotate the poem – Teacher to explicitly teach how to annotate (including structure and rhyme scheme if any), Teacher guides students through the process. (see Resource 2)  Initial response activities:   1. Visuals: students in pairs identify the key ‘visual’ moments in the poem. If this were a moment in a Romantic film, how would it be filmed? Do you think it would be a Romantic film? Brainstorm specific image ideas 2. Tone: What is the tone of the poem and how is it developed by the poet? Think-pair-share, then short written response.   Memory: the poem is predominantly a memory-in-poem form. Class-developed/ collegial notes on the ways in which the poet develops a sense of memory in this poem. Develop low modality responses to the ‘argument’ of the poem in relation to memory (eg truth as affected by the fallibility of memory; the constructed truth we recall is influenced by the importance we place on it – at the time? Later?) | Journal: Students write first impressions, encouraged to develop a non-analytical first personal response based on the question. Share with teacher for feedback/marking.  Students annotate poem with details from teacher description.  Students choose 3-4 images from poem, argue for their inclusion as ‘key’ moments and suggest possible visuals for a film version  2 sentence response: student practice quote-technique-explanation sentence with focus on specific techniques such as the low modality eg the repetition of ‘maybe’.  Students contribute to class discussion and development of notes on ‘memory’ (could be done on a share Google Doc)   * Low modality captures sense of memory and uncertainty, making some episodes more salient than others * Lexical chain constructing memory – forget, remember, seems * Caesura and juxtaposition heightening contrast between less and well-remembered details |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  Content: Students -  analyse the ways in which perspectives are conveyed through texts drawn from other times and cultures, and how these may be renewed for a contemporary Australian audience  EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  Content: Students -  appreciate, analyse and speculate about the power of language to represent personal and public worlds for critical reflection and pleasure  EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning | Part 3 – 2 periods  Introduction of 2nd Hughes poem: Fever  Start with class debate:  ‘Texts (film, novels, poems, songs) are more interested in the grand moments of love going right, than the quotidian moments of love going wrong.’  Hand out ‘Fever’ and introduce to students by explaining that the poem deals with relationship events and issues further on from those explored in Fulbright.  Read aloud to students.  Students write first impressions as personal response: What is revealed about relationships (generally) in this poem?  Deconstruction of poem:  The following deconstruction activities avoid specific biographical connection to Plath and Hughes’ relationship. It is probably a good idea to introduce these activities by explaining that the poem CAN be seen as addressed to the same person as Fulbright, just at a later point in the relationship.  While avoiding Plath specifics at this stage, do introduce the idea that the poet here may be using poetry to construct a narrative of a relationship that may or may not have connections to autobiography.  Post-reading Activities   * Trace the way the poem characterizes both the persona and the sick addressee. Make notes on how key images and techniques are used to construct character. * Plot the ‘story’ of the poem. Choose a moment where the persona is positioning the reader to see things from a particular perspective. How does the poet do this? * A moment in a relationship as a metaphor for the entire relationship? * A new title: Argue for an alternative title you think sums up this poem | You would expect sophisticated, nuanced discussion/ debate to turn to aspects of (but may need teacher nudging in this direction):   * Genre * Context * Purpose of composer   Journal: explore first impressions; entries should connect ideas from the poem with the concept of change/deterioration in romantic relationships  Written notes and opportunities to practice analytical paragraph writing  Pairs: students demonstrate an understanding of the symbolism of a moment by explaining how they would film this scene to reveal wider relationship dramas  Debate/ discussion through the prism of creating a new title. Students defend their choices (in pairs) through an argument using evidence from the poem.  BIB #1 (see Resource 4)  Note to teacher: set the class blog up with 6 ‘streams’ corresponding to the 6 Big Ideas.  What are the advantages and disadvantages of reading/viewing/listening to an artist’s work as autobiography? Refer to both Hughes and another artist in your experience. |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  Content: Students -  explore the ways that texts represent alternative ways of seeing the world | Part 4 – 2 periods  Introduction of 2nd Hughes poem: The Shot  Hand out copies of the Taylor Swift song *‘The Last Time’ -* (URL link in Resource 1) [Taylor Swift song - The Last Time](https://genius.com/Taylor-swift-the-last-time-lyrics)  Brief (light-hearted?) student activities:   * What evidence is there that the addressee is generic as opposed to specific? * This kind of address to a ‘you’ is common in pop music (perhaps listen to a segment?). How does this compare to the use of ‘you’ in other art forms/ text types? Significance? * What is the attitude of the persona to both herself and the addressee? Use evidence to support answer.   Hand out copy of The Shot. Teacher reads aloud the first time after sharing the following driving questions to be considered individually in their reading logs:  Does this seem like a poem addressed to a specific individual – why, why not?  How would you describe the poet’s tone, especially towards the ‘you’ in the poem?  Annotate the poem – Students in groups of 3 – They then collaborate in annotating the poem. Teacher to guide students if/as needed, using the same process previously taught. (see Resource 2)  The following deconstruction activities again avoid specific biographical connection to Plath and her father. Of course students will develop a sense that these poems may represent a narrative/chronological sequence.   1. Explore the lexical chain related to religion, and the images related to men. Why would the persona represent a love-interest in this way? 2. What biographical aspects of the addressee are hinted at in this poem? Explore how specific language features (eg the violent imagery of ‘flash…ricochet...’) create the poet’s tone. 3. How does the persona represent himself at the end? 4. Teacher introduces psychoanalytic concept of the Electra Complex[what is the electra complex](https://www.verywellmind.com/what-is-the-electra-complex-2795170) Trace the references in this poem and consider, again, why the persona might represent a love-interest in this way. | Building-the-field type discussion: student engagement in concepts of ‘confessional’ or ‘accusatory’ art.  Journal: Individual student writing reveals personal response based on textual detail  Student written responses done individually, then discussion, then focus on writing style – especially incorporating judicious evidence from the poem – to support ideas. |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  Content: Students -  critically evaluate the effect of engaging with other cultures and values through texts on their own perspectives and values  EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner | Part 5 – 2 periods  Introduction of the first Plath poem: Daddy  Note to the teacher: the introduction of this poem is intended as the ‘Aha!’ moment for students in the process of introduction to the Textual Conversations notion. We would recommend the initial post-reading activities are done without comment or introduction so that students can have their own experience of the intertextuality. Activities are brief and focused on the ‘story’ of the poem to lead up to the contextual phase which follows. Further analysis/annotation of this poem will be done in relation to Hughes’ ‘A picture of Otto’ which follows.  Teacher hands out poem and splits students into pairs for the first reading. Pairs find spot outside to read aloud to each other.  Preliminary activities:   1. Try reading the poem in different tones. How does the poem guide your choice of tone? Report back to the class on which tone you preferred. 2. Report back to the class on how you think this poem connects to the previous 3 poems studied.   Teacher guided initial annotation and explanation.   * Take first responses from pairs in above activity. Student notes on the tone of the poem; Teacher facilitates notion of a love-hate poem towards her father. Which images suggest love and which hate? * Clarification/biographical annotation as below:   Stanza 1 and 2: death of her father at age 8 from complications due to diabetes after an infected toe leads to amputation of leg.  Stanza 3: geographical detail about area of the US where they lived  Stanzas 4 – 10: the search for the father through his German ancestry  Stanzas 11 – 16: the implications of the search for her life and relationships with men (a particular man?!)   * Key images: the shoe (constriction); Jews, the Nazis and concentration camps (the oppression she feels at her father’s hands); the vampire (the blood-sucking, undead mythical creature who must be killed to release villagers from fear) * Explore the Electra Complex: what purpose is fulfilled by the daughter ‘killing’ the father in this poem?   Now, listen to a recording of Plath herself reading the poem:  [Daddy - read by Sylvia Plath](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_hz1ar58BIM)  (recording plays over a still picture of Plath) or  [Sylvia Plath reads Daddy](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6hHjctqSBwM)  (NB this one has accompanying video with some biographical, as well as some disturbing images of suicidal pill-taking)  Class discussion: how does Plath’s own reading of the poem add to your understanding of its ‘story’ and themes? | Think/pair/share: class discussion of connections to Hughes’ autobiographical poems  Annotated poem guided by teacher discussion and joint analysis  **BIB #2** (see Resource 4)  Can this poem be understood without the support of biographical information? What are the issues for the relationship between composer and responder if a text cannot ‘stand’ on its own?  Class discussion (then further annotation of poem) to outline key moments in poem that respond to different reading styles. |

Phase 2: Context (1.5 weeks) – Having now been introduced to the style of Hughes’ poems and one of Plath’s, students are made aware of the context surrounding each poet and their shared personal and professional history. This should result in a ‘lightbulb moment’ and students’ re-evaluating and reinterpreting the poems they have covered so far.

| Outcomes/content | Teaching and learning | Evidence of leaning |
| --- | --- | --- |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  Content: Students -  evaluate the effect of context on shaping the social, moral and ethical perspectives in texts  EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner  Content: Students -  select, adapt and create individual and collaborative processes that are effective for a range of learning contexts | Part 1 - 2 periods  NB: We have also created a Weebly site for this Module which links to this unit (but does not mirror it). However, students should NOT be introduced to this site until the Phase 2 Context work is begun. The site is at [**Module A - Textual Conversations**](http://modatextualconversationshughesplath.weebly.com/)  Context: Teacher leads the class into the context, introducing Hughes and Plath as individuals and poets, as well as through their relationship and shared personal and professional context. Some introductory resources include: (Resources 5,6,7)  Consider and discuss -   * How do our initial ideas, thoughts, preconceived ideas change when we learn the context? * Introduce students to Plath’s style as a confessional poet and compare with Hughes’ usual style of poetry and how ‘Birthday Letters’ is a departure from this in some ways. (Resource 8) * How does the contextual background highlight the ‘textual conversation’ between Hughes’ poems and Plath’s? * Slideshow (Resource 9) will be used to introduce students to the contextual background and as a model for CC1 task students will do.   Consider module rubric and syllabus documents here. What elements should they focus on in this Module?  Use as opportunity to define ‘textual conversations’  For ‘hook activity’ see Beyonce vs Jay-Z resource (in Resource 1)  Part 2 - 3 periods (+ work done at home = 1 week to complete CC1) then present to the class which should take 1 or 2 periods.  Context - research task (CC1 – Informative)  Students to work in 3’s to research a given aspect of the context of Plath and Hughes’ relationship. They are to consider how this information may change their initial reading / understanding of the poems set for study.  Students are to present their findings in a slideshow presentation which will be shared with the rest of the class on Google Drive / Google Classroom. The presentations are to be read (presented if time) by the rest of the groups. This information will form the basis of a class discussion answering the driving question.  Driving Question:  Why is the social, historical, personal context vital in gaining a deeper understanding of the ‘Textual Conversations’ between Hughes’ and Plath’s poems and of the differing readings that have arisen?  Requirements:   * Create a slideshow presentation for the class on your given context area - you are to become the ‘experts’ on this area, keeping the driving question in mind. * Presentations are to have no more than 10 slides - therefore you will need to be selective with the information provided - be succinct (do not copy and paste!) * Use the given websites as a starting point, but you must also find other relevant sites and either hyperlink to your slideshow or embed video. * You should include relevant images * Include a hyperlinked bibliography of all sites, images and sources used (put these on slide11)   Group 1  Create a timeline of the lives of Hughes and Plath (birth ⇾ death) which includes major events which influenced their lives.  Hughes:  [Timeline for Ted Hughes 1](http://ann.skea.com/timeline.htm)  [Timeline for Ted Hughes 2](http://literary-destinations.com/authors/ted-hughes/timeline)  [Biography about Ted Hughes](https://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/ted-hughes-206.php)  Plath:  [Biography about Sylvia Plath 1](https://www.thefamouspeople.com/profiles/sylvia-plath-125.php)  [Biography about Sylvia Plath 2](https://www.biography.com/people/sylvia-plath-9442550)  [Timeline for Sylvia Plath](https://www.timetoast.com/timelines/the-life-of-sylvia-plath)  Group 2  Hughes talks about the publication of *Birthday Letters* and *The Last Letter.* What does he say about his motives for writing, publication and his feelings about Sylvia Plath and their relationship?  [An introduction to birthday letters](https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/an-introduction-to-birthday-letters)  [Article from The Guardian - Hughes in hiding over birthday letters](https://www.theguardian.com/uk/2004/apr/14/education.books)  [Last letter - Ted Hughes](https://genius.com/Ted-hughes-last-letter-annotated)  [Article from Daily mail - Ted Hughes' letter unearthed poets lament Sylvia Plaths suicide](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-1318398/Ted-Hughess-letter-Unearthed-poets-lament-Sylvia-Plaths-suicide.html)  [Ted Hughes last letter to Sylvia Plath](https://www.theguardian.com/books/2010/oct/10/ted-hughes-last-letter-sylvia-plath)  Group 3  Plath - a feminist icon? How can her poems be read in a feministic way and how does this impact the understanding / meaning? How did feminists view Ted Hughes after her death?  [Feminist critical study on Sylvia Plath’s poems](https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/262d/127aaa6e5d34a61568bb714598a9f329b68a.pdf)  [Article from The Telegraph - Biography of Sylvia](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/booknews/9633302/Remembering-poet-Sylvia-Plath.html)  [Biography of Sylvia Plath](https://www.poetryarchive.org/poet/sylvia-plath)  Feminist sensibility in the works of Sylvia Plath  Group 4  Life of Otto Plath, and the impact his death had on Sylvia. How did she convey her feelings about him through her poetry? What was Plath’s relationship with her mother, Aurelia Plath?  [Blog post about Sylvia Plath](http://sylviaplathinfo.blogspot.com/2008/12/sylvia-plath-did-you-know.html)  [Profile of Sylvia Plath's father - Otto Plath](https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/20723236/otto-emil-plath)  [Biography of Sylvia Plath](http://www.neuroticpoets.com/plath/)  [Article by Rachel Nuwer](https://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/fifty-years-after-sylvia-plaths-death-critics-are-just-starting-to-understand-her-life-15403012/)  Group 5  Hughes’ poetry (other than ‘Birthday Letters’) was different in style and themes. What did he become known for as a poet? Find out why Hughes was made Poet Laureate in 1984?  [Undergraduate from Cambridge evaluates the work Hughes produced as Poet Laureate](https://www.english.cam.ac.uk/cambridgeauthors/hughes-as-poet-laureate-dark/)  [Biography for Ted Hughes](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poets/ted-hughes)  [10 of the best Ted Hughes poems](https://interestingliterature.com/2017/01/11/10-of-the-best-ted-hughes-poems-everyone-should-read/)  [Ted Hughes poems](https://www.poetryarchive.org/explore/browsepoems?f%5b0%5d=sm_field_poet:node:192465)  Group 6  What is Frieda Hughes’ point of view on the life of her parents? Why did she believe that she was adopted until the age of 14? Why didn’t she read any of her parent’s poetry until her mid 30’s?  [Article from The Guardian - Frieda Hughes felt her parents were stolen](https://www.theguardian.com/lifeandstyle/2016/may/28/frieda-hughes-i-felt-my-parents-were-stolen)  [Article from The Telegraph - Frieda believed she was adopted until 14](https://www.telegraph.co.uk/family/relationships/frieda-hughes-genuinely-believed-adopted-14/)  ['My mother' by Frieda Hughes](http://derekdenton.com/blog/2014/2/14/my-mother-by-frieda-hughes)  [Article by Independent - Frieda criticises feminist activists](https://www.independent.co.uk/news/people/sylvia-plaths-daughter-criticises-feminist-activists-who-blamed-her-death-on-father-ted-hughes-a6679051.html)  Foreword (by Frieda) to Ariel, The Restored Edition, Faber and Faber, 2004 | Students annotate rubric and syllabus in light of the question and come up with a working definition of ‘textual conversations’.  Core Classwork 1 – Informative  (in Resource folder)  Students will work in small groups to research a given context area (6 options) and present their information as a Slideshow. This will be given feedback by the teacher, DIRT time is given for student reflection when feedback is returned. They will then be improved on by students and shared with the class via Google Classroom or G Drive.  These slideshows will serve as a resource and reference for students throughout the remainder of the module.  Post sharing of research activities:  **BIB #3**  Identify a particular ‘reading’ of the textual conversation (feminist, psychoanalytical, biographical etc).Read the ‘reading’ critically: how does this reading justify itself and what does the reading ‘do’ with the poems to make them fit its reading position?  **BIB #4**  Is *Birthday Letters* (BL) really ‘slight’ as Hughes has suggested? Or, is it a carefully constructed representation as explanation/ justification/ self-defense/ honoring? Is it an act of love or spite? What evidence is there for the two views: organic, confessional, personal, unvarnished vs carefully constructed for the public. See the review of BL in The Independent for the case against seeing BL as self-defense or PR exercise. |
| EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  Content: Students -  evaluate how texts, including their own compositions, are influenced by personal, social and cultural contexts and recognise how they are valued | Part 3 – 2 periods  Readings and Bias Review a number of articles to further explore the variety of perspectives the media and others have expressed on Hughes and Plath. (Resource 10 and 11) | Students create a table of articles or sources which are from particular perspectives eg. Feminist readings, psychological readings, pro-Hughes etc. This could be done collaboratively on a shared google doc. |

Phase 3: Texts in Conversation (4.5 weeks) – The first 4 poems will gradually be reinterpreted in light of these contextual insights as well as examining the remaining texts and the ‘conversations’ they reveal/construct.

| Outcomes/content | Teaching and learning | Evidence of learning |
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| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner  Content: Students -  reflect on and discuss personal preferences and insights gained from familiarity with a wide repertoire of complex texts | Part 1 - 2 periods  Introduction of Hughes’ 4th poem: A Picture of Otto  Students discuss the ways their initial reactions to Fulbright Scholars, Fever, The Shot and Daddy have been impacted by the contextual information. See Resource 3 for supplementary questions and activities on these earlier poems.  What do they think of Otto Plath and his impact on Plath’s and Hughes’ lives? (see Resource 7 re Otto)  Hughes wrote the 88 poems in ‘Birthday Letters’ over many years and only published the collection in January 1998, when he knew he had cancer. Discuss the timing with students and why he may have done this after his years of silence on the matter of Sylvia Plath.  Discussion (brief): Ask student how they ‘picture’ (imagine) Otto Plath at the moment? What do they think he was like as a man/ father? Why?  Students are given Hughes’ A Picture of Otto with the following questions to respond to following a think/pair/share activity:  How do we immediately realise in line 1, there is a connection between A Picture of Otto and Daddy? In which other ways can you see links between these two poems?  Annotate the poem – Students in groups of 3 – They then collaborate in annotating the poem following the process used previously. Teacher to guide students if/as needed. (see Resource 2)  Further deconstruction and comparison:   1. In most of ‘Birthday Letters’, ‘you’ refers to Sylvia Plath. Who does it refer to here? How can we tell? 2. Look up the meaning of ‘manqué’. What does this imply about Hughes’ attitude to Otto Plath? 3. Plath says “If I’ve killed one man, I’ve killed two –“and refers to Hughes as a “vampire”. How does Hughes’ imply that her issues with her father spilled over onto him (Hughes) until “she could hardly tell us apart in the end” in both Picture of Otto and The Shot? 4. The last stanza alludes to Wilfred Owen’s ‘dark poem’, ‘Strange Meeting’. Read that poem as a class and discuss the links between the two in terms of ideas, imagery and theme. How does Hughes this use intertextuality to add deeper meaning in his poem? How does this also create another textual conversation? 5. How does A Picture of Otto suggest that Hughes has finally come to some accord with the memory of Otto Plath? Compare this with Plath’s emotional ending to ‘Daddy’. | Journal: Reflect on the ways your initial reactions to Fulbright Scholars, Fever, The Shot and Daddy have been impacted by the contextual information. How important is it to understand the social, historical and personal context of any text? Share to teacher for feedback/marking.  Students answer these questions with specific references to, and examples from, the 2 poems. This should lead to further class discussion.  Student responses may be marked or shared for teacher feedback.  **BIB #5**  Find an example of each of these in the poem: inter-textual, intra-personal and inter-personal conversations. Do you find one or other more personally interesting? Explain. |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  Content: Students -  critically evaluate the effect of engaging with other cultures and values through texts on their own perspectives and values  EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner  Content: Students -  independently reflect on and experiment with their own processes of responding to and composing texts | Part 2 - 3 periods  Introduction of the paired texts ‘The Arrival of the Bee Box’ (Plath) and ‘The Bee God’ (Hughes)  Students will initially be broken into two groups. One group will be given a printed copy of ‘The Arrival of the Bee Box’ (Plath) and the other ‘The Bee God’ (Hughes)  Each group will then break into pairs and complete the following activities:   * Read the poem and annotate it – on paper. * Open and share a Google Doc. Find definitions for any unfamiliar words and consider them in the context of the poem. * Create a TEE (Technique, Example (quote), and Effect) table for this poem and list examples of imagery (similes, metaphors, personification etc) which add layers of meaning. * Also discuss any links you see to the other poems studied so far and note these down.   Then each pair will partner with another pair who studied the other poem (=2 Plath/ 2 Hughes). Each foursome will discuss and compare poems using the following process:   * Swap annotated poems and silently read the 2nd poem. * Discuss similarities and differences between the 2 poems; consider structure, content, tone and imagery. Consider [The bee god](https://getrevising.co.uk/diagrams/the_bee_god) * Each pair shares their Google Doc with the other pair. Jointly add anything they can to the TEE tables. * What are the deliberate links in ideas or images Hughes has made to Plath’s poem? Why do you think he has done so? * Core Classwork 2 (homework) -Then, each person writes an analytical paragraph which answers the following question, supporting it with evidence from the two poems: In which ways does Hughes’ poem ‘The Bee God’ respond to and engage with the ideas in ‘The Arrival of the Bee Box’ by Plath? When done, hand these in to the teacher for feedback.   Finally, Teacher facilitates a whole class discussion of the two poems and students add further insights to their shared notes.  Focus question: What purpose does the alignment and mirroring of ideas between these texts serve? | Students cooperate in the initial analysis of one poem, then form mixed groups and collaborate via ICT to deepen their understanding of both poems and their connections.  Core Classwork 2 (Analytical)  Paragraph length response using analytical paragraph template if desired (eg WHY, PEEL etc) and dense quote-technique-analysis sentence structures  Evidence of learning through teacher feedback (and mark?) on the analytical paragraphs written by students, as well as by ensuing discussion of the two poems. DIRT time is given for student reflection when feedback is returned.  Students discuss and make notes.  BIB #6  Explore Reader Response Theory. Does the focus on intertextuality break down the notion of fixed/ stable meaning? Is the author dead? Or does the focus on context reaffirm the importance of authorial intention? |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  Content: Students -  analyse how composers (authors, poets, playwrights, directors, designers and so on) combine elements from different texts, sources and genres to create new texts for particular audiences and purposes  EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner | Part 3 - 2 periods  Introduction of ‘*Lady Lazarus’* by Plath. Listen to Plath read it [Lady Lazarus-read by Sylvia Plath](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkK2fwZfVjA)  Individually: Students are given a copy of the poem and, for the first time, asked to read it and annotate it individually. By now they should be fairly comfortable with the process but teachers may choose to support or pair less capable students. (see Resource 2)  Students then read the article on themes and allusions in ‘*Lady Lazarus*’ [A close reading of lady lazarus](https://www.bl.uk/20th-century-literature/articles/a-close-reading-of-lady-lazarus) and make dot point notes.  Look up the major allusions to the New Testament account of the resurrection on Lazarus and TS Eliot’s ‘The Lovesong of J Alfred Prufrock’ and make dot point notes on how these connect to the poem and add depth to its imagery.  Also research Plath’s suicide attempts and find references to these in the poem.  Discuss as a class:   * Is this poem a plea for help or a chilling foreshadowing of her eventual death? * Do her continued allusions to herself as a Jew or victim of the Nazi holocaust throw greater light onto her psychological issues with her father, now that you’ve studied more of the poems? Where is it referenced in ‘Lady Lazarus’? * How do the intertextual allusions (Bible & TS Eliot) add another layer of textual conversation? * Are we part of “the peanut-crunching crowd”? How do we feel about that? Is Plath accusing us? * How does this poem ‘converse’ with ‘The Shot’, ‘Fulbright Scholars’ and ‘Daddy’ to deepen your understanding of all poems? (In the Journal entry give specific quotes and analysis to support your points) | Notes and research may be marked  Journal: following this discussion, reflect on each of these questions and write your own response to them. Share to teacher for feedback/marking. |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  Content: Students -  evaluate and discuss whether textual appropriations lead to a deeper understanding of the original text and their own cultural context  EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner  Content: Students -  reflect on their development as skilful and confident composers, in particular how they have experimented with and refined language choices to establish a distinctive personal style | Part 4 - 3 periods  Introduction of ‘Fever 103˚’ by Plath and revisit ‘Fever’ by Hughes.  Students will initially be given a printed copy of ‘Fever 103˚’  This time students will individually complete the following activities:   * Read/ research the poem and annotate it – on paper. ([this may help](https://genius.com/10280100)) * Open a Google Doc. Find definitions for any unfamiliar words and consider them in the context of the poem. * List examples of imagery (similes, metaphors, personification etc) which add layers of meaning and create a TEE (Technique, Example (quote), Effect) table for this poem. * Return to your notes and annotations on Hughes’ Fever. Why do you think Hughes deliberately writes about this event (her illness) from his own viewpoint? * Also list any links you see to the other poems studied so far or questions you have been unable to answer yourself.   Then each student will partner with another and each pair will discuss and compare the 2 poems using the following process:   * Discuss similarities and differences between the 2 poems; consider structure, content, tone and imagery. * Each student shares their Google Doc with the other person. Jointly add anything they can to the TEE tables and discuss, research, answer any problematic questions which have been identified. * In which ways does Hughes’ poem respond to specific ideas in Plath’s poem? Give examples. How does he use this event (her fever) as a metaphor to explore their relationship as a whole? * Then, each student adds to their own Google Docs by writing an analytical paragraph which answers the following question, supporting it with evidence from the two poems: In which ways does Hughes’ poem ‘Fever’ respond to and engage with the ideas in ‘Fever 103˚’ by Plath? When done, share these to the teacher for feedback/marking.   Finally, Teacher facilitates a whole class discussion of the two poems and students add further insights to their shared notes. (see Resources 6 and 7)  Focus questions: What purpose does the reinterpretation of this event serve in Hughes’ poem? How does it influence our perceptions of both him and Plath?  Core Classwork 3 (homework) - Take on the persona of either Hughes or Plath. Write a letter, diary entry or poem from the perspective of your chosen persona, in which you discuss and reflect on a specific event mentioned in one of the poems you have studied so far. Consider: what happened, how you (and possibly your husband/wife) reacted, how you feel about this and how it has affected you. (Teachers may need to help identify particular events from real life in the poems) | Students work individually in the initial analysis of one poem, then form pairs and collaborate via ICT to deepen their understanding of both poems.  Paragraph length response using analytical paragraph template if desired (eg WHY, PEEL etc) and dense quote-technique-analysis sentence structures  Core Classwork 3 (Imaginative) - Evidence of learning through teacher feedback (and mark?) on the insights shown into the chosen persona and their perspective on a chosen event. DIRT time is given for student reflection when feedback is returned. |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner | Part 5 - 2 periods  Introduction of ‘Nick and the Candlestick’ by Plath.  This poem refers to Plath and Hughes’ second child, Nicholas, who was born shortly before the end of their marriage. At the time it was written, Plath and the children, Frieda and baby Nicholas were living alone at Court Green, a centuries old house in Devon, England. She was depressed and struggling to cope. The first seven stanzas create an extended metaphor, while the rest is more directly addressed to Nicholas, as she watches him sleep. Ask students to keep this in mind as they work through the poem.  Students will pair up and read the poem, discussing initial impressions. Annotate the paper copy either individually or in pairs.  Students read the analysis of this poem (Resource 12) [Sylvia Plath - Nick and the candlestick](https://www.poetryfoundation.org/articles/143643/sylvia-plath-nick-and-the-candlestick) and revisit their annotations in light of this, adding detail.  Then, individually, answer the following:   1. What is the mood set in the first 7 stanzas? How does it differ from the mood of the second half of the poem? Give quotes to show this. 2. How does the title’s allusion to the nursery rhyme ‘Jack be nimble’ link to this poem? Contrast the light-hearted rhyme with the somber mood of much of this poem. 3. How does the extended metaphor of the cave, link ideas of the dark empty house Plath is actually walking through, with pregnancy and emotional crisis? 4. Plath often used colour symbolically; blue was associated with pregnancy and motherhood, white with death, red with blood and life and yellow with moments of happiness. Revisit the poem and quote lines, commenting on how each uses these colours symbolically. 5. Religious imagery is also visible in many of Plath’s poems. Identify the religious imagery and allusions in this poem and quote lines, explaining the effect of this imagery. 6. How does the final metaphor of Nicholas as the “baby in the barn” show the positive light with which she views her son? 7. Which poems does this one link with the best? Find specific lines or stanzas to support this. | **Journal:** Reflect on what you find difficult or challenging about this poem. Also discuss how its imagery links to that of at least two other poems studied.  This work is to be handed in for marking. |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  EA12-7 - evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  Content: Students -  evaluate interpretations of texts that derive from different perspectives and recognise how this influences personal composition and response  EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner | Part 6 – 3 periods  Introduction of ‘A Birthday Present’ by Plath and ‘Red’ by Hughes.  Introduction: in pairs students are given cut up fragments of BOTH poems (with titles cut off). NB the fragments should be large – perhaps cut each poem into 3 or 4 and then mix together. There is an adjusted version of ‘A Birthday Present’ (Resource 13) for use in this activity.  Students are told there are two poems, one from each of Plath and Hughes. They then work to:   * Organise into the two poems * Order the fragments of each (cut up in a way that this is not obvious!) * Come up with a title for each   Return to class group and discuss clues and process for each dot point above. Students are then given a clean copy of each poem for the annotation activities below.  Annotation and initial activities for Red   * Annotate the poem for colour. Student first impressions about the connotations and the reasons why Hughes may be characterising Plath in his way. Teacher gives biographical and literary (colour symbolism through Plath’s oeuvre eg Tulips, Whiteness I Remember and Ariel) background as needed. Use Spurr’s True Confessions [Spurr's true confessions](https://openjournals.library.sydney.edu.au/index.php/SSE/article/view/560) * Consider Nick and the Candlestick. Do you agree with Hughes that "Blue was better for” Plath and her “kindly spirit”? Why? * Students write paragraph length analytical response to: * ‘Explain how Hughes uses colour to express his views on Plath’s life and their relationship.’ * Annotate the poem for other techniques and references * Construct a colour mindmap (see link in Resource 3) * This poem ends Birthday Letters. Activities and discussion:   + What is the effect on the reader/ different readers of placing this poem here?   + Chart the tone of the poem. What does the tone of the final lines reveal about Hughes’ intentions and mindset? Explore the way sound is used to construct tone.   Annotation and activities for A Birthday Present and comparison to Red  (NB for teacher: be aware that this poem deals directly with Plath’s suicidal thoughts and plans)   * Teacher guided discussion and annotation of the key symbols: the veil and the present. Who/ what do the pronouns, ‘I’, ‘it’ and ‘you’, refer to in this poem? * Students annotate poem * Student individual writing - analytical paragraph length response: ‘What is Plath’s attitude to death in this poem?’   Pair-work: students sit Red and A Birthday Present side by side and list possible connections: biographical details; attitudes and values; allusions and references. Are there other poems in the two collections that shed light on the attitudes in these two poems? | Student discussion demonstrates their growing awareness of differences in style and approach  Complete annotation of poem  Paragraph length response using analytical paragraph template if desired (eg WHY, PEEL etc) and dense quote-technique-analysis sentence structures  Class discussion and teacher guided notes from think/pair/share. Consider for example how fans of Plath might view the poem.  Students complete annotation of poem  Paragraph length response  Mindmap of connections |
| EA12-8 - explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  EA12-9 - reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner | If time #1  In “Birthday Letters shows Hughes using his considerable brain-surplus in an attempt to possess, or re-possess, his own experience. The book has a clear and practical purpose – correcting distortions, setting the record straight, putting right the gossips and the speculators, the detractors and the critics – and it will have numerous consequences for readers of poetry. But it is by no means a final statement of ‘fact’.” Source - [Ian Sansom](https://www.lrb.co.uk/v20/n04/ian-sansom/i-was-there-i-saw-it)  Students discuss the quote above in light of their learning. Then plan and write an essay on the following topic: (from the sample HSC paper)  How has the context of each text influenced your understanding of the intentional connections between them?  If time #2  Explore the publication circumstances around Hughes’ Last Letter  [Ted Hughes last letter annotated](https://genius.com/Ted-hughes-last-letter-annotated)  Published posthumously by Melvyn Bragg with the assistance of Hughes’ widow Carol in 2010, this poem is a fascinating biographical and intellectual variable. Though not in the collection set for study, it could offer students the opportunity to reflect on their own perspectives on Hughes and Plath. (see Resource 6 at the bottom) |  |
| EA12-6 - investigates and evaluates the relationships between texts  **EA12-7 -** evaluates the diverse ways texts can represent personal and public worlds and recognises how they are valued  **EA12-8 -** explains and evaluates nuanced cultural assumptions and values in texts and their effects on meaning  **EA12-9 -** reflects on, evaluates and monitors own learning and refines individual and collaborative processes as an independent learner | Assessment Task - Discursive Feature Article  Students are to draw on their learning from this Module and do further research to write a discursive Feature Article which could be intended for publication in the Australian literary magazine [Voiceworks](http://www.voiceworksmag.com.au/), entitled ‘Dialogues between the poetry of Sylvia Plath and Ted Hughes.’  In it students must discuss the ways contextual background informs our understanding of the prescribed poems, as well as exploring the textual conversation between these poems, with detailed reference to and analysis of at least 3 of the set poems from each poet.  (See Resources 14 & 15)  Assessment task notification and Marking guidelines available. | Summative assessment task |

Reflection and evaluation: