 Links to the rubric

Havoc: A life in accidents

Students deepen their understanding of how texts represent individual and collective human experiences – this chapter is a very personal experience of Winton’s, detailing moments of havoc that impact upon him greatly, even far into the future. Winton’s individual experience offers a deeper understanding of the collective human experience of vulnerability.

They examine how texts represent human qualities and emotion – vulnerability, fear, trauma, acceptance, responsibility and the process of managing these emotions/experiences. This chapter offers students a personal account of Winton’s experiences with accidents. It explores the reaction, process and result of Winton’s experience – all of which are aspects of human qualities and emotion.

Students explore how texts may give insights into the anomalies, paradoxes and inconsistencies in human behaviour and motivation – this chapter offers students the same experience: havoc/accidents, and how individuals respond to this experience differently. Winton offers us his experience while also reflecting on his father’s and mother’s reaction and process of accepting and managing these challenging experiences. In presenting the different responses, Winton enables us to recognise and value that these differing responses are all largely connected as a part of human experience.

Inviting the responder to see the world differently, to challenge assumptions, ignite new ideas or reflect personally – this chapter offers students Winton’s view of his life (accidents) as he experiences it and also as he reflects on it. Winton challenges his teenage self upon reflection, realising that what he longed for as a teenager has dramatically changed now that he is an adult, acknowledging how his experiences with havoc/accidents have shaped his perception and attitude as a father himself.

They may also consider the role of storytelling throughout time to reflect particular lives and cultures – through storytelling Winton is able to reflect on his experiences while also allowing students to understand that an aspect of human quality is the ability to reflect on past experiences and understand how particular experiences have impacted individuals.

Betsy

Students deepen their understanding of how texts represent individual and collective human experiences – this chapter explores Winton’s individual experience with Betsy, which can reflect collective human experiences as the influence of other people’s perspectives on an individual’s perception of themselves is universal, particularly for teenagers.

They examine how texts represent human qualities and emotion – embarrassment, shame, frustration, etc. This chapter is all about the human quality of wanting to belong, be accepted and being self-aware. The chapter not only reveals Winton’s own personal experience of the fear of being judged, but also offers readers a chance to recognise how this fear of judgement is a collective human experience that we all share.

Students explore how texts may give insights into the anomalies, paradoxes and inconsistencies in human behaviour and motivation – this chapter is about the unexpected transformation of perception after reflecting on past experiences, another human quality. Winton’s relationship with Betsy is unique, and contrasts with his grandfather’s and father’s experience, and depicts the inconsistencies in human behaviour highlighting the unique experience of the individual.

Inviting the responder to see the world differently, to challenge assumptions, ignite new ideas or reflect personally – through Winton’s storytelling, students are challenged to understand the motivations and reasons for their behaviour - much like Winton as he reflects on his experiences with Betsy. By providing readers with his own personal narrative of human experience, students can acknowledge and reflect on their own human experiences by drawing similarities and differences between Winton’s and their own narrative.

They may also consider the role of storytelling throughout time to reflect particular lives and cultures – through storytelling, Winton is able to offer an insight in his life as teenager growing up in Perth, Australia. As he reflects on his experiences with Betsy he is able to acknowledge how his perceptions have changed, although, is still able to connect to and relate with his initial experience.

Twice on Sundays

Igniting new ideas/role of storytelling - The stories from the Bible ignited new ideas and inflamed his creativity through the vivid stories he read in the Bible, particularly stories about Jesus. This offered him some formative inspiration for his own writing as he appreciated the storytelling of the Bible. He learnt that “Story…is the bearer of imaginative energy.” Clearly an influence on his own ambition to be a writer as he didn’t “catch the (writer's) bug at school, I picked it up at church.”

Individual and collective human experiences/Human qualities and emotions/Cultural experience - His experience in the Church provided him with a sense of belonging to a community. This community accepted him and his family at a time when they were perceived as odd for going to Church ‘Twice on Sundays.’

Impact of language on individuals - Winton’s appreciation of language stemmed from his appreciation of the talks of the Ministers.

Motivations/ new ideas/ views on the wider world - This sect of Church offered him the experience to see what it meant to live a ‘civil life.’ Without the pomp of other sects like Catholicism, his Church was about a direct link to Christ and about hard work and appreciation. He appreciated the notion that his Church made him an outsider, as he states, “…our loyalties were unfathomable to outsiders.” His family’s devotion to the Church clashed with Australia’s growing apathy and secularism within broader society. Thus, his experience as an outsider feeds into the later chapters of his love for the serenity of surfing and perhaps his environmental views. It also influenced his future writing and unique take on the world.

Views on wider world/ new ideas/ challenge assumptions - His family’s church allowed him to take on the world as many parishioners “…were hungry to improve themselves.” Growing up in a working class family this allowed Winton to strive for greater heights.

Reflect personally/ emotional experience - Religion also allowed him to reflect personally on his place in the world as he states it offered him the chance to learn “self-reflective examination and reflective discipline.” The ability to reflect on his place in the world, how he could impact it, and how it would impact him were significant to his maturity.

Experience of storytelling/motivations for growth/ insight into culture - He states that the Church was his way into, “politics, high language, story and music.” However, his family’s religious zealotry clashed with Winton’s development as he matured. His experience of religion ironically, made him see the world differently, in a way that turned him away from being a ‘true believer.’ That is not to say he does not appreciate the sense of community he felt and what he learnt, but his family’s dogmatic approach to religion became inconsistent with his world-view. He found church, like school to be boring. He felt it kept him “captive.” Although he loved the paradoxes of the Bible, he found religious debates tedious, though he does say he does not think that those debates were wasted time.

Reflect on experience/ challenged assumptions within the religion - With the state of the world changing dramatically in the 1970s, the church became insular and oppressive. In his adolescent years, he was chided for being ‘obtuse’ in Bible Studies and as he read more widely he was no longer seduced by the Bible’s dogma. Despite this he still considered himself a “passionate believer.” As the church insulated itself, Winton became uncomfortable with its “repudiation of life.” This was a great anomaly to Winton; the religion which propagated, love, liberty and an appreciation for God’s creations also had a thirst for death. The church became dismissive of the “great gift of life” as the parishioners were preparing themselves for the afterlife. They saw the ‘End of Days’ as a chance to ‘go home.’

Through these examples we see how our childhood experiences significantly shape who we are as people. They profoundly affect who we are, how we see the world and create new ways of thinking. Such experiences are paradoxical, in that they will shape you holistically whether you allow the experience to overcome you or you rail against it. The final sentences offer the best explanation of Winton’s relationship with religion, “Church was my village, but I doubt I’ll ever be truly at ease there again.”

Barefoot in the Temple of Art

Ignited new ideas/ Challenged assumptions of his identity in a working class environment - It reinforces his place as an outsider, as his childhood in Western Australia meant he felt ostracised from the central artistic hub of Melbourne. Moreover, he makes a comment on class within society as his identity was fostered within a working class ‘utilitarian environment…where practical skills were valued and beauty, art and language were mere frippery.” Thus, his experience to appreciate the beauty of art was hard fought, reinforcing his desire to acquire beauty which was lacking in his utilitarian environment. He recounts his family’s long drive to Melbourne, again suggesting that his journey towards artistic fulfilment was not easy. His ability to tell this story is key to us understanding why this artistic experience so heavily shaped him as an artist.

Challenge assumptions/ cultural experience - His family’s rejection at the door of the museum because they were barefoot, symbolises again his struggle to break out of his working class roots. However the anecdote about them being let in allows art to ignite new ideas within him. Each artwork provided him with a new idea or a story he could relate within his own world. Art gave him an uneasy but giddy feeling as he struggled to comprehend the extent of creativity of which the human mind is capable.

See the world differently/ challenge assumptions/ ignite new ideas/ shift in his perception of himself and society through this experience - His experience of art shaped him immensely and is encapsulated in, “There was no single experience that made me want to live by my imagination, but I don’t doubt the pivotal effect this visit had. Within a year I was telling anyone who’d listen that I was going to be a writer.”

The ambiguous nature of human experiences - One experience is never an end in itself, but they all make up a “patchwork,” as Winton puts it, which shape us. Some of those experiences are dark, some have holes as they were unfulfilling and others are bright, enlightening us and allowing us to feel comfortable in order to grow. For Winton, art allowed him to experience Beauty, which in turn provoked him to devote his life’s work to revealing his imagination.

The Wait and the Flow

Individual and collective human experiences - personal stories - the essay opens with a flashback to a moment with a clear snapshot of Australian vernacular, which leads Winton to contemplate the 'purpose' of surfing and the role the swell and tides have played in his life.

See the world differently, challenge assumptions - Winton contrasts two worlds, one world that's rigid, artificial and highly structured, with another world that is natural, flowing and without straight lines or sharp corners.

Paradoxes in human behaviour and motivation - the cyclical nature of fashion is explored through Winton's recollections of surfing history. The essay opens with a reflection about the youthful creativity and freedom of the 40s and 50s and in his opinion the subculture sees a resurgence of this trend in the 90s and 2000s.

Human anomalies and inconsistencies - Winton states that 'Waiting and flowing were anachronistic notions' in order to contrast the 'pragmatic philistine and insular culture' of his home life, plus the emerging consumer and artificial 'Australian' culture with the world of the surfer.

The Demon Shark

Explore how texts may give insights into the anomalies, paradoxes, and inconsistencies in human behaviour and motivation - Winton connects the different values people hold in relation to our natural world to present both a didactic and deeply personal account of the conflicts that exist between human’s perceived and conceived interactions with the oceanic world.

Inviting the responder to see the world differently, to challenge assumptions, ignite new ideas or reflect personally - Winton connects the treatment of the shark to the media’s desire to make money and the issue of hyper reality. Tim Winton has said that the shark is 'our secular substitute for the devil' and he has connected the treatment of the shark to the burning of 'witches' throughout history. Thus, it is very easy to see that he has a clear bias toward the treatment of the shark.

Deepen their understanding of how texts represent individual and collective human experiences - Winton creates a unique version of the bildungsroman world where he plots his own personal catalytic transformation in perspective toward the natural world and in the case of ‘The Demon Shark…’, the shark. In this, he is also charting Australia’s changing environmental concerns.

Challenge assumptions - The didactic nature of the essay ‘The Demon Shark…’ has been connected by critics to Winton’s humanist values and his desire to decrease the gap between humans and nature. He wants to raise the human consciousness regarding the paradoxes that exist within the human, and particularly Australian, treatment of certain aspects of our environment. Winton makes numerous comments about the self, individual motivations and goals, while also connecting these to collective monetary motivations and goals. Within the essay ‘The Demon Shark…’ he makes a connection between the media’s seemingly intentional obscurantism regarding the full picture of shark danger, and instead utilises collective fear to sell stories.

In the Shadow of the Hospital

Representation of individual experience/emotions arising from these experiences - Unlike other chapters, this one stays focused on Winton’s personal response to a range of encounters with hospitals and explores his emotional response to these events.

Paradoxes in human behaviour and motivation - Winton identifies the contrast experienced with regards to hospitals, dependent on the reason. The unknown security of the existence of a hospital as an ethereal entity, versus the terrifying reality of wounds and illness and the desperate need for assistance.

The role of storytelling - This chapter stays focused on Winton’s storytelling style - he is sharing his lived experiences as the word Shadow in the title demonstrates the negative tone of the chapter, which is highlighted by his short, sharp use of language in an almost panicked staccato at times.