

Year 12

English 2013

Unit 5

Exam Revision

The End



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Why do we do revision for the VCE?

- Ownership of knowledge by students
- Consolidation of knowledge experiences
- Transferring of knowledge into different contexts, such as classroom experiences into exam room tasks.

In English (and other subjects) revision is an opportunity for you to be able to:

- know the range of purposes and intended audiences for whom you are writing
- write in a range of forms with clear organisation
- write in response to stimulus material in creative and analytical ways under time pressure
- understand how the responses you produce will influence your intended audience
- differentiate between the nature of written tasks that you are being asked to produce in the final examination

Your language skills are very important and through revision classes and private study programs you should be able to do the following:

- construct extended sentences and paragraphs
- organise information using topic sentences
- use connectives and linking phrases to develop fluency
- build a convincing argument
- use the basic conventions of punctuation
- use appropriate linguistic features that involve specialist vocabulary
- spell topic specific words
- use antonyms and synonyms
- paraphrase text and link to main ideas

GETTING STARTED – GETTING ORGANISED

- **DEVISE YOUR OWN REVISION PROGRAM – START A NEW UNIT – “UNIT 5 – REVISION” SECTION IN YOUR NOTES.**
- **CONSTRUCT A TIMELINE OF ACTIVITIES BASED ON THE EXAMPLE WHICH FOLLOWS ON PAGES 4 & 5.**
- **READ OR VIEW YOUR TEXTS AGAIN.**

A TIMELINE FRAMEWORK – A MINIMUM

Week	Revision Activity
Week 10 Term 3 <i>Revision time – at least 6 hours for English through the week.</i>	• Get organised – tidy your study space (and your room!), take all relevant books home from your locker, organise handouts and notes, buy stationery, photocopy and fill out daily study plan sheets, organise study groups and meeting times and stock up the lolly jar. • ORGANISE AND SUMMARISE STUDY NOTES IN ALL 3 AREAS OF TEXT, CONTEXT AND MEDIA ANALYSIS. • Read comments from your teachers from SACs and practice essays. Summarise them. • Anything else?
September break - Week 1 <i>Revision time – at least 6 hours for English through the week.</i>	• Read or view your texts again, taking notes as you do so. • Note any questions that arise for discussion later in class or study group. • Review study notes and organise twenty to twenty-five short quotations for texts and context texts on flashcards or wall charts so that you can learn them and apply them. • Read any model essays you have been given, or go to VCAA website. • Work through the revision tasks in this booklet for each section. • Organise meetings for next two weeks with study group. • Anything else?
September break - Week 2 <i>Revision time – at least 10 hours for English through the week.</i>	• Read through your lists of essay topics for the texts and conflict, taking the time to deconstruct them and think about them. • Note those topics that challenge so that you can bring them up in class discussion in the revision period. • Learn quotes, summaries. Practise plans, introductions, paragraphs and complete activities. • Continue working through revision tasks. • Towards end of week, apply learned material to at least one text response essay, one context essay and one media analysis essay, to be handed in first lesson back. Minimum of three essays in total. HANDWRITE! • Organise and participate in one study group discussion topic, completing all tasks. • Anything else?

Week	Revision Activity
September break - Week 3 <i>Revision time – at least 10 hours for English through the week.</i>	- Continue as per week 2. English Practice Examination - 9am –12.15 pm on Wednesday 9th October. Be at the KWC at 8.45am. Bring dictionary, pens, highlighters and unlabelled water. - Anything else?
Term 4 - Week 1 <i>Revision time – at least 6 hours for English through the week.</i>	- Learn quotes, summaries. Practise plans, introductions. Write practice paragraphs. Write practice essays for each section of exam. - Hand in work for correction and feedback. Note areas for improvement. - Organise and participate in one study group discussion topic, completing all tasks. - Anything else?
Week 2 - <i>Revision time – at least 8 hours for English through the week.</i>	- Learn quotes, summaries. Practise plans, introductions. Write practice paragraphs. Write practice essays for each section of exam. - Hand in work for correction and feedback. Note areas for improvement. - Organise and participate in one discussion topic, completing all tasks. - Make appointments with your teacher to discuss progress. - Anything else?
Weeks 3 & 4 SWOT VAC. <i>Revision time – at least 10 hours for English through the week.</i>	- You need to be writing essays consistently. - Focus on your teacher’s feedback carefully to try and improve each draft you write. - Be sure to ask your teacher if you are still unsure of anything. - Focus on any knowledge gaps or areas that are still unclear.
WEDNESDAY 30TH OCTOBER 9am – 12.15pm VCE ENGLISH EXAM	- Exam. Have breakfast. - Bring dictionary, highlighters, pens and unlabelled water. - Do not talk about the exam with others beforehand; trust in your preparation.

NOW MAKE 18 COPIES OF THE DAILY STUDY PLAN ON THE NEXT PAGE AND USE IT TO HELP YOU PLAN YOUR BRICK BY BRICK APPROACH TO STUDY, AS OUTLINED IN THIS BOOKLET.

DAILY STUDY PLAN

TIME GUIDE	WHAT TO DO	SUBJECT & TASK (Brick)
8am	Get up!	Shower to wake up. BREAKFAST
8.30am	Go to study area. Half hour of study.	
9.00am	5 minute break	
9.05am	Half hour of study.	
9.35am	10 minute break	
9.45am	Half hour of study.	
10.15am	5 minute break	
10.20am	Half hour of study.	
10.50am	10 minute break	
11.00am	Half hour of study.	
11.30am	5 minute break	
11.35am	Half hour of study.	
12.05pm	LUNCH	
HAVE	AFTERNOON	OFF!
5.00pm	Half hour of study.	
5.30pm	5 minute break	
5.35pm	Half hour of study.	
6.05pm	DINNER	
6.45pm	Half hour of study.	
7.15pm	5 minute break	
7.20pm	Half hour of study.	
7.50pm	HAVE EVENING	OFF!

EIGHT IMPORTANT REVISION ACTIVITIES

There are some common activities you can do when doing revision for all of your subjects. These include:

1. Developing scaffolds for short and paragraph answers.
2. Vocabulary lists (know the language of your topic and subject – understand what it means, spell it correctly and use it!)
3. Model or sample responses that you can deconstruct, thereby gaining knowledge about the subject and developing your skills by knowing what features should be in your writing.
4. Graphic planners – which ones can you use to help re-work knowledge – you need to own the knowledge. By using different organisation forms you are developing the ability to transfer your understandings from one learning context to another.
5. Know the essay/report response scaffolds that you will use. Better to plan and write quality rather than go in cold and show no control!
6. Immerse yourself (your bedroom, bathroom, the fridge) with key information/quotes lists.
7. Know your time management strategies for your subject examination paper – think about what works for you and use the practice exam to consolidate your response. You do not have to always “start at the start”.
8. Read and group essay topics to establish links and subtle differences between topics. This will give you the best chance of avoiding any surprises on exam day!

TEXT RESPONSE REVISION - DEVELOPING A READING

You must read or view your texts at least once (preferably >2) during the holidays. You need to master them. Know them inside out!

ACTIVITY: In note form, respond to the following prompts for EACH of your texts. These ideas will allow you to engage with the text to clarify your ideas. This should give you a way of working with all texts.

- Name of text:
- To me, this text is really about...
- I would summarise the main themes or ideas of the text as...
- The five key scenes that demonstrate my reading are:
- The ten most important quotes supporting my reading are:
- Word Bank: Verbs, Nouns, Adjectives, Adverbs:

ENGLISH REVISION ADVICE

- Memorise important quotes, ones that strengthen your major points of view about the text. Write them on Post It notes and stick them around your study space. You can also group them in different ways.
- Ensure that you have a clear overview of the whole text.
- Think of an important point about the text and write about it as if responding to an essay question.
- Write practice essays and submit them to teachers for feedback.
- Revise in small blocks of time, yet on frequent occasions. The text must remain 'fresh'.
- If you are confused about a particular theme, character, occurrence, etc., write about it to see how your thoughts appear logically, and then seek assistance if still unsure, or write a question to be explored later in class.
- Discuss texts with friends, or parents who have read the text, as this will allow you to clarify your own understanding but also gain new interpretations.
- Realise the benefits of both essays written under timed and exam conditions, and extended essays without these conditions → the extended essays may mould a more detailed understanding of the text that can then be used in exam essays.
- If someone has a different interpretation of a particular passage, scene, theme, etc., then do not get upset → either augment your own interpretation through theirs or retain your own interpretation and ensure that it is bolstered by evidence.
- If certain elements of the text are muddled and blurred in your head, simplify your interpretation, attach the interpretation to evidence, and write out the result.
- Realise that you always possess the answers; it is just the clarity of expression that you need to refine.
- Have a list of words that fit well into an essay response (eg. tumultuous applause).
- Have a gambit of good points, quotes, interpretations and evidence that you like using and that can be moulded to suit similar essay questions.
- Have a work environment that is productive.

REFINING YOUR UNDERSTANDING AND EXPRESSION

INTERPRETER OF MALADIES

ACTIVITIES:

List what you think the collection is about as a whole, then do the same for each individual story. Focus on the themes, ideas, values, what characters represent and the ways the stories are constructed to enhance meaning.

Try to create a concept map of the stories collectively so that you can map the obvious links. The graphic organisers starting on p.22 may assist you with this.

Write a paragraph in which you convey what you think these stories, collectively, are about.

Write a paragraph in which you explain what the main concerns of each of the stories are.

Read the essay topics below and group them by similarity.

Examine each group of topics and consider how they differ despite their similarities.

Choose some topics to plan, some to write introductions for, and other to write complete essays for.

1. *Interpreter of Maladies* explores how one culture adapts to living within another. Discuss.
2. *Interpreter of Maladies* examines the impact of acceptance and rejection on people. Discuss.
3. Lahiri's stories show the importance of communication in relationships. Discuss
4. The settings of Lahiri's stories are crucial in helping us understand their key concerns. Do you agree?
5. *Interpreter of Maladies* shows that all relationships are fraught with difficulties. To what extent do you agree?
6. It is Lahiri's use of the smallest of details that make her stories so powerful. Do you agree?
7. The strength of this collection lies in Lahiri's exploration of the daily dramas of everyday life. Discuss.
8. Happy, fulfilled characters are impossible to find in *Interpreter of Maladies*. Do you agree?

9. Although many of Lahiri's characters live abroad, their connections with their place of birth cannot be broken. How is this shown in *Interpreter of Maladies*?
10. Whilst all the characters in the stories carry burdens in their hearts, few are able to find peace within themselves. Discuss.
11. The clash of family values between old culture and the new creates tension between many of the characters. How is this shown in the stories?
12. Jhumpa Lahiri has said; '*The characters I'm drawn to all face some barrier of communication.*' How are communication barriers explored in the collection?
13. "Tell me the secret. I want to know."
To what extent do the secrets the characters keep affect their lives?
14. What do Lahiri's stories suggest is important and valuable to people?
15. "In time she would reveal the disappointment of her marriage, and he his." The stories present a particularly negative view of marriage. Does your reading of the stories support this view?
16. A character's identity and sense of belonging is intrinsically linked to their place of origin. To what extent do the stories support this view?
17. To belong is to be happy. How does Lahiri support or contradict this idea in her stories?
18. The truth and essence of a person can never really be known. Discuss.
19. Loneliness and alienation pervade the lives of many characters in these short stories. Do any of the characters find a way out of this misery?
20. "She guessed that he was used to it now, to the sound of a woman crying." The women in the collection seem to struggle more than the men. Is this how you see the stories?
21. The clash of family values compromises many of the characters' sense of belonging. Do you agree?
22. The void between the old culture and the new world leaves many characters feeling displaced. Do any of the characters ever solve this dilemma?
23. How does Lahiri show that family tensions are exacerbated when there is a clash of cultural values?
24. Why are a number of the characters in the stories treated as outsiders?
25. "It was hard to believe they were regularly responsible for anything other than themselves." Many of the parents in the collection seem to focus more on their own needs than those of their children. Do you agree?

26. The stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* are rich in symbolic meaning. How does Lahiri achieve this?
27. Do the stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* work as a collection, or are they too distinctly different from each other?
28. Though the general pace of the stories is quite slow, Lahiri builds up a strong sense of anticipation in many of them. How does she achieve this?
29. Why do some characters find contentment in their lives while others remain bewildered by life?
30. The endings of Lahiri's stories often convey important messages to the reader. What are some of the most important messages?
31. Many of the characters struggle to find love in the stories. Why is love so elusive for them?
32. "He looked at her...a woman not yet thirty...who had already fallen out of love with life." In what ways does Lahiri give the audience hope that her characters can carry on despite the disappointments they face?
33. Does the short story genre compromise the audience's capacity to really know the characters in *Interpreter of Maladies*?
34. "...Mr. Pirzada stopped bringing me candy, and...my mother refused to serve anything other than boiled eggs with rice for dinner." How does Lahiri use food as a motif to reflect the state of the characters' lives?
35. In what ways does Lahiri show through her stories that joy can be found in the simple things in life?
36. "They wept together for the things they now knew." How do Lahiri's characters show that knowing can change a person's life irrevocably?
37. Lahiri's stories show that all people face challenges no matter where they live in the world. To what extent do you agree?
38. How do the individual narrative perspectives of the stories influence the audience's reading of them?
39. "When I was your age I was without knowing that one day I would be so far. You are wiser than that, Eliot. You already taste the way things must be." How do the characters in the stories come to terms with the realities they must face?
40. Do the stories end too abruptly to give the audience a satisfying conclusion?
41. In seeking to improve their lives, some of the characters in the stories lose sight of what they truly value. Do you agree?

42. In *Interpreter of Maladies* the vulnerable characters invariably become scapegoats when life becomes difficult for others. Do you agree?
43. The characters have many different ways of dealing with loss. How is this shown in the stories?
44. It is those who leave their homeland who struggle the most in *Interpreter of Maladies*. Do you agree?
45. The stories set in India convey more vivid imagery for the audience than those set in America. Discuss.
46. It would seem that many of the children in Lahiri's stories are forced to grow up more quickly than they should. Why is this the case?
47. Though the plots of the stories are primarily driven by one key event or memory, does this detract from their power to engage the audience?
48. Changing one's life will always come at some cost. Discuss.
49. Many of the characters in *Interpreter of Maladies* find personal fulfillment and growth as a result of the adversity they experience. Discuss.
50. Lahiri paints a bleak picture of the lives of Indian women in the modern world. To what extent do you agree?
51. What are the maladies that afflict so many of the characters?
52. "Now he had one [a wife], a pretty one, from a suitably high caste, who would soon have a master's degree. What was there not to love?"
The couples in arranged marriages are invariably more content than those who marry of their own free will. Do you agree?
53. The settings of Lahiri's stories are as important as the characters. Do you agree?
54. The stories highlight the importance of communication and connections in people's lives. Discuss
55. Lahiri's ability to capture the details of day to day lives helps us to better understand her characters and their problems. Discuss.
56. Lahiri's stories are about much more than the immigrant experience. They also explore 'maladies' common to all people. Do you agree?
57. "I was hoping you could help me feel better, say the right thing. Suggest some kind of remedy."
The strength of Lahiri's short story writing is her unwillingness to allow her characters to have happy endings. Do you agree?
58. Lahiri's storytelling skills bring her rather passive characters to life. Discuss.

59. How important are humour and irony in Lahiri's short stories?
60. "Is it pain you feel, Mrs. Das, or is it guilt?"
How does Lahiri explore pain and guilt in her short stories?
61. "Mr. Kapasi observed it too, knowing that this was the picture of the Das family he would preserve forever in his mind."
How does Lahiri explore 'family' in her short stories?
62. In her stories Lahiri explores the power of a new beginning. Discuss.
63. Although in *Interpreter of Maladies* Lahiri predominantly paints men in a less than flattering light, readers can still feel sympathy for them. Do you agree?
64. Lahiri consistently criticises American society in her stories. Why does she do this?
65. Many of the stories in *Interpreter of Maladies* conclude on a very sober note. However, they do not leave the reader feeling depressed. Do you agree?
66. Lahiri's characters all learn something about themselves and others in *Interpreter of Maladies*. Discuss.
67. A sense of unhappiness defines the characters in Lahiri's stories. Do you agree?
68. All of Lahiri's characters have some kind of 'malady.' Are they 'interpreted' or cured within the stories?
69. What function do minor characters play in the stories?
70. Self-awareness seems to elude many of the characters. In what ways does Lahiri demonstrate this?
71. Lahiri's stories raise important questions about understanding others and ourselves. Discuss.
72. Lahiri's stories raise important questions about the nature of love. Discuss.

STASILAND

ACTIVITIES:

List the characters that Funder introduces us to in this text. Focus on the themes, ideas, values, what characters represent and the way the text is constructed to enhance meaning.

What is interesting about the structure of the text? What roles does the author's voice play in our reading of the text?

In what unique ways does each story contribute to the text?

Try to create a concept map based on your notes so that you can map the obvious links between narratives. The graphic organisers starting on p.22 may assist you with this.

Read the essay topics below and group them by theme.

Examine each group of topics and consider how they differ despite their similarities.

Choose some topics to plan, some to write introductions for, and other to write complete essays for.

1. Scheller tells Funder: "You won't find the great story of human courage you are looking for—it would have come out years ago, straight after 1989". Does Funder find stories of human courage?
2. "You know, they just want to stop thinking about the past. They want to pretend it all didn't happen." How does Funder show that thinking about the past is necessary to move on with the future?
3. "On some level, at least, I am aware that I am following a person who has been hounded enough."
'Funder treads a fine line between keeping a distance as an investigative writer and becoming emotionally involved with those she meets.'
Do you agree?
4. "Does telling your story mean you are free of it? Or that you go, fettered, into your future." '*Stasiland* shows that telling your story means different things to different people.'
Discuss.
5. 'The power of *Stasiland* comes as much from Funder's depiction of physical places as from the words of those whom she meets.'
Is this how you see *Stasiland*?
6. "Things have been put behind glass, but they are not yet over." 'Anna Funder discovers the difficulty of leaving the past behind.' Discuss.
7. 'The people of *Stasiland* hold differing views of justice.' Discuss.
8. "She's so slender and crumpled her whole body nearly fits onto it, strings cut, in the

- spotlight.” Is Miriam the most important character in *Stasiland*?
9. How does *Stasiland* show that people can be used against one another?
 10. ‘Funder works hard to make the reader sympathetic towards those who supported the regime.’
Was this your reading of *Stasiland*?
 11. How are the lives of the people in *Stasiland* shaped by the Wall?
 12. As well as being the author, what role does Funder herself play in *Stasiland*?
 13. How does Funder use symbolism to tell the story of *Stasiland*?
 14. Funder describes the Stasi as “innovators, story-makers and Faustian bargain-hunters”. How successful is she in this portrayal?
 15. “It’s so hard to know what kind of mortgage our acts put on our future.” How does *Stasiland* show that our actions can haunt us in the future?
 16. How does *Stasiland* show that guilt can take different forms?
 17. “Memory, like so much else, is unreliable. Not only for what it hides and what it alters, but also for what it reveals.”
What role does memory play in *Stasiland*?
 18. ‘Although a sense of loss permeates *Stasiland*, it is ultimately an uplifting book.’
Do you agree?
 19. ‘*Stasiland* shows that there are different kinds of conscience.’ Discuss.
 20. ‘Some characters in *Stasiland* believe that the Stasi have been punished enough.’
Does Funder reach this conclusion?
 21. ‘*Stasiland* is a book about lies.’ To what extent do you agree?
 22. In what ways does *Stasiland* show how quickly history can be remade?
 23. Julia tells Funder: “For anyone to understand a regime like the GDR, the stories of ordinary people must be told”. How does Funder tell the stories of ordinary people?
 24. ‘*Stasiland* examines how normal people manage with traumatic events in their past.’
Discuss.
 25. ‘*Stasiland* shows the effect too much structure and surveillance has on the human spirit.’ Discuss.
 26. Why does Funder find that the story of the GDR is a story lying somewhere between fiction and reality?
 27. ‘Sometimes ignoring reality is the only way to stay sane.’ How is this idea explored in *Stasiland*?
 28. In what way does Funder’s use of the ‘senses’ enhance *Stasiland*?

Text Response - Topic Sentences

Below are a series of topic sentences for Interpreter of Maladies and Stasiland. Write the paragraphs that would follow on from these topic sentences.

Interpreter of Maladies

1. Lahiri creates silence in the relationships of her characters as a metaphor for their disconnection.
2. Food is both representative of nostalgia as well as a recreation of the past in the present.
3. The children in Lahiri's stories offer an unadulterated view of the lives of their parents.
4. Though not the central premise of her collection, Lahiri is making a statement about the strong divisions which continue to exist in Indian society.
5. Lahiri's description of the complexities faced in relationships is sobering.
6. The Indian diaspora in Lahiri's stories are representative of a universal struggle for belonging.
7. The title story of the collection serves to embody the central themes existing in the remaining eight stories.
8. Despite their suffering most of Lahiri's characters achieve a sense of peace and reconciliation with the director their lives have taken.
9. Lahiri's characters of non-Indian descent serve as an important contrast with the characters of the sub-continent.

Stasiland

10. Funder observes both physical and emotional manifestations of the past trauma in Miriam and Julia.
11. Many victims of the regime attempt to remain stoic (present a brave face), but Funder uncovers that their past decisions continue to haunt them.
12. The remnants of the Stasi regime continue to haunt the modern day city of Berlin.
13. The Stasi men were products of indoctrination which they retained long after the Wall fell.
14. Despite the trauma many victims of the regime faced, many are able to come to terms with their experiences.
15. Anna Funder displays a level of empathy for the Stasi victims which brings their suffering into greater focus.
16. Through the nature of Funder's interactions with the characters, the reader can observe the level of sympathy she has for their experiences.
17. Funder's description of the places significant to the Stasi paints a colourless and brutal picture of life in the GDR.
18. Funder's documentation of her return to Germany serves to bring a sense of closure to the lives she has explored throughout Stasiland.

Analysis of the English Examination Section A topics

Below is a list of all of the tags and question styles that have been used in section A of the English examination for the past few years. Being exposed to these should assist you to understand the range of possibilities you might encounter in the 2013 examination. Be sure to familiarise yourself with them at the very least.

ACTIVITY:

Imagine what each of these 'tags/questions' has in front of it, either a statement about the novel or a direct quote from the novel. Your task is to make up topics to fit all of these possibilities. Fill in the gaps. Choose appropriate quotes. You must be prepared for two topics that will be similar to these.

Do you agree?

To what extent...?

How does this help the reader....?

Why?

Discuss

What does the novel suggest....?

How does the narrator....?

Why do some characters...?

How does the setting....?

What gives *text*....?

What is [author] saying about....?

In *text*, how does [author]....?

To what extent do the characters in the novel achieve this?

How does [author's] novel represent...?

In what ways does Pi's narration....?

How accurate are [character's] judgements?

In the text is this shown to be positive or negative for....?

In what ways isimportant in *text*?

How does [author] use to engage the reader in *text*?

Does your reading of *text* support this view?

Does [character] ever resolve?

Do you agree with this view of....?

In *text*, why is it so hard for.....?

What is your reading of this text: a story of or ?

How does the structure of *text* ?

How does this affect your reading of the novel?

How do you see character: or ?

How important is place in this novel?

Is *text* primarily a story of ?

Is it possible for any of the characters to be ?

How do the characters react to living in a world that is ?

As a reader, do you agree with [character's] observation that....?

How does life shape the characters in this book?

WRITING IN CONTEXT REVISION

DEVELOPING AN OVERVIEW OF THE CONTEXT AND THE TEXTS

You must read or view your texts in terms of encountering conflict at least once (preferably >2) during the holidays. This means focusing on the sections that most deal with encounters with conflict. You need to master this aspect of the texts. Know them inside out!

ACTIVITY: In note form, respond to the following for *Paradise Road* and *The Quiet American*. These ideas will allow you to engage with the text to clarify your ideas about encountering conflict.

- Name of text:
- In terms of encountering conflict, this text is really about...
- I would summarise the main types of conflict in this text as...
- I think the main players in these conflicts are...because...
- The five key scenes that demonstrate this understanding are:
- Word Bank: Verbs, Nouns, Adjectives, Adverbs:
- Now do the same for the extraneous examples you intend to use, starting the process from the first point above.

LINKS BETWEEN THE TEXTS

ACTIVITY: Using the notes from the above activity, write sentences or short paragraphs which explore the similarities and/or differences between the texts for each of points 2-6. Try to extrapolate from this comparison to broader notions or ideas of encountering conflict.

HOW TO RUN A YEAR 12 STUDY GROUP FOR ENGLISH

Focus of activity

To explore what is complex in the context we are studying, and how it relates to the texts. Your teacher should be made aware if there are areas that are worthy of further investigation, or of which you are unsure.

ACTIVITY: In groups of no more than 4, consider the following prompts for the context, referring to specific examples in the texts to support your assertions. Groups should be made up of representatives from different classes to allow for a richer exchange of ideas.

Process

Discuss each prompt for 15 minutes and then **write sustained discovery/views/response for 15.**

Use the Yes, but..., No, but...approach to build complexity into your response.

At the end of the session it is the group responsibility to devise two other complex areas that they take with them back to their classrooms.

ALTERNATIVE ACTIVITY: If you are unable to work through this process in a group, complete the tasks individually by thinking and note-taking for the first 15 minutes, then write your sustained response.

1. 'Conflict emerges from intensely emotional situations.'
2. 'Conflict is heightened when people are not permitted to speak.'
3. 'Conflict has the ability to bring people together towards resolution.'
4. 'Power imbalances will inevitably produce conflict.'
5. 'When values of institutions are at odds with those of individuals, conflict arises.'
6. 'Fear of what is different lies at the root of conflict.'
7. 'There are rarely two clear cut sides in human conflicts.'
8. 'People's desire for power will lead them to instigate conflict.'
9. 'Justice is often not achieved without conflict.'

- 10.** 'A true leader will always emerge from conflict.'
- 11.** 'It is the encounter with conflict that brings out either courage or cowardice in a character.'
- 12.** 'Conflict is a necessary step along the path to resolution.'
- 13.** 'It is through encountering conflict that an individual either grows or is corrupted.'
- 14.** 'Real conflicts do not offer easy resolutions or neat closure.'
- 15.** 'In encountering conflict an individual inevitably reassesses their values.'
- 16.** 'Encountering conflict will inevitably bring an individual to face moral issues.'
- 17.** 'It may be safe to remain a bystander when faced with conflict.'
- 18.** 'Truly facing conflict demands domination.'
- 19.** 'Life is rarely without conflict; it is how we resolve it that matters.'
- 20.** 'Saying sorry will not in itself resolve conflict.'
- 21.** 'Individuals will always respond differently to conflicts.'
- 22.** 'The ways individuals respond to conflict is determined by their past experience/culture/gender.'
- 23.** 'Understanding conflict is more important than winning it.'
- 24.** 'Conflict is more likely to persist than to be resolved.'
- 25.** 'Conflict is an inherent part of life; it is not necessarily negative.'
- 26.** 'We find ways of living with conflict and accepting it; it is an inevitable part of life.'
- 27.** 'Sometimes conflict promotes deeper human connections as much as it undermines them.'
- 28.** 'Without contraries there is no progression.'
- 29.** 'Conflict is a true test of human relationships.'
- 30.** 'Conflict is the true test of someone's inner strength and understanding.'

31. 'The need to be open to new ideas that may conflict with our own helps us to grow and develop.'
32. 'Conflict is more often caused by excess of weakness rather the excess of strength.'
33. 'Desire to control the emotions and needs of others often leads to conflict.'
34. 'The clash between reason and emotion lies behind many conflicts.'
35. 'A person never knows who they truly are until tested by conflict.'
36. 'Fear makes people either attack or retreat.'
37. 'Conflict makes people act out of character.'
38. 'It is only through conflict that change will emerge.'
39. 'The victims of one conflict are often the perpetrators of another.'
40. 'It is not always easy to distinguish the innocent from the guilty in situations of conflict.'
41. 'One conflict always contains the seeds of another.'
42. 'It is impossible to fully comprehend a conflict as a bystander.'
43. 'Miscommunication is often at the centre of conflict.'
44. 'It is the difference between perceptions of a situation that elevates the potential for conflict.'
45. 'The emotional bruises left by an encounter with conflict never really heal.'
46. 'It is people's self-centredness which renders them incapable of resolving conflict.'
47. 'Pride often inhibits the potential for reconciliation in a situation of conflict.'
48. 'It is through conflict that relationships become stronger and more enduring.'
49. 'Conflict is ubiquitous and unavoidable in life but our choices determine the degree to which it affects our lives.'
50. 'Despite our best intentions, it is impossible to avoid conflict in life.'
51. Devise some of your own prompts.

IMPROVING YOUR ESSAY WRITING – TIPS FOR TEXT AND CONTEXT RESPONSES

1. Avoid using contractions - cannot instead of can't, did not instead of didn't. The tone of your writing will lift instantly.
2. There is **no** place for slang in formal writing unless it is a quotation from the text.
3. Learn the spelling of the title, the author's name, place settings and character names. Check from the text.
4. Learn to love adjectives. Place carefully chosen adjectives before character and place names to bring them to life and show deeper understanding, but not every time.
5. Scatter your writing with the colour that adverbs bring. Describe the manner in which a character does something by using a well considered adverb.
6. Create vocabulary lists for each of the main characters, including short (even one word) quotations, which are used in the text to describe them.
7. Make linking words and phrases a part of your vocabulary to link ideas within paragraphs.

furthermore, however, similarly, in a similar vein, contrary to, in contrast, on the other hand, moreover, paralleling this..., equally, etc.

- 7b. Link paragraphs by linking ideas, characters, places, traits or themes.
8. Weave quotations into your sentences, about 5 words at a time, instead of placing quotations outside sentences as a separate entity.
9. Memorise words that enable you to create a bridge between evidence and your assertions. This will also help you to move away from mere storytelling.

highlights, symbolises, signifies, illustrates, reflects, emphasizes, epitomises, reveals, exposes, evokes, implies, represents, illustrates, proves, exaggerates, reinforces, acknowledges, conjures, illuminates, embodies, demonstrates, exemplifies, parallels, suggests, engenders, encapsulates, hints at, unveils, explores

10. Synonyms are super. Repeating words ad nauseum, ESPECIALLY THOSE USED IN THE ESSAY TOPIC OR PROMPT, shows you cannot be bothered to think for yourself.
11. A skilled author can imply meanings metaphorically – and a skilled reader (and writer of examinations like you) can identify and comment on this process, thereby

enhancing meaning and enjoyment – and, incidentally, doing no harm at all to your ATER score!

12. Reflect upon the use of symbolism by the author. What could it mean? Try to establish its significance by linking it to other events or the journey of the characters.
13. Take the time to proof read for spelling and punctuation errors, and to edit for meaning. Try to use 'fresh eyes'! (Allow time to lapse between when you write and when you edit.)
14. Alot is **NOT** a word. Try innumerable, many, a number of, frequently, the majority etc.
15. Never lose sight of the essay topic. Read it again and again and again and again to keep your essay focused and organised.
16. Always tie back to the essay topic when concluding a paragraph. Many an essay has been redeemed through this one little action.

HOW TO PREPARE FOR THE EXAM

It is assumed that all students will have completed their text revision sheets included in this booklet. As well, each student should develop comprehensive notes on the requirements of media analysis for the exam.

PRACTICE ESSAY TOPICS

Over the remaining weeks you will be expected to submit essays for all three sections - text response, context and using language to persuade. Essay topics for sections one and two are included in the handouts you were given during the year. If you have misplaced your copy go to STL Link. **These questions are a gift to you from your teachers and you should have read and considered EVERY SINGLE ONE OF THEM before the exam.**

Using language to persuade texts (media analysis) will be given to you by your English teacher before the holidays, or go to the VCAA website <http://www.vcaa.vic.edu.au/vce/studies/english/englishexams.html> and download your own. You will also find sample responses here under Assessment Reports, written by students in past exams, which you could use as models.

You should aim to write an equal number of essays for each section of the exam as they are all worth the same marks, ie. one third. If you know you do less well in one particular section, though, work hard on this to improve your skills by writing even more essays. The more you practise the more likely you are to improve.

Once you have done solid preliminary preparation (reading, note taking, memorising quotations, planning etc.) there is little doubt that the more essays you write at this stage of the year, which continually integrate the feedback of your teacher, the better your chances of reaching your individual potential in the exam. You would not run a marathon without preparing with training runs, so ensure you are prepared for the exam with intensive essay practice in the lead up.

TEXT RESPONSES

- **Read any supplementary material given to you by your teacher and your class notes.**
- **Organise this information into manageable study notes, using headings to assist you.**
- **Read the model essays given to you by your teacher.**

How to prepare:

1. After re-reading your texts, summarise them. You could use a flow chart for this. Pay note to characters, themes, plot, structure etc.
2. Learn around 20 short quotes (at least) so that you can show your knowledge of the text. You will find that if you have studied the texts closely enough you will already know some of them anyway.

3. Write up these quotes and group them according to concept/theme, then write a brief summary of how the quotes express something in particular about the text.
4. Look for sections in the text that 'link up'. This helps to avoid story telling as you can easily jump between two different sections of the book because of their relatedness.
5. Come up with some of your own individual, but valid, ideas about the text. It is easier to write about things that you believe rather than what your teacher or a book has told you. Just make sure you can justify these ideas with relevant evidence from the text.
6. PRACTISE WRITING TEXT RESPONSES (at first under no time pressure, then under exam time pressure) – it is incredibly important that you feel comfortable when writing a response. When practising the writing of text responses, try to 'nail' the introduction, even if this means you run a little over time. With practice you can open up the whole question if you can write a really good introduction. This will allow you to include the ideas you are familiar with after summarising the themes with supporting quotations.
7. Once you are comfortable with writing a response under time pressures, write up as many plans as you can for essays.
8. Try "The 20 minute think of a concept and write nonstop about it test".
9. Take the time to see your teacher during SWOT VAC. Give them essays and you will get feedback as to how you are going, your best performance indicator leading up to the exam!!!!
11. Share your ideas with friends. Different perspectives of the text do help!!!

WRITING IN CONTEXT

- **Read any supplementary material given to you by your teacher and your class notes.**
- **Organise this information into manageable study notes, using headings to assist you.**
- **Read the model essays given to you by your teacher.**
- **Write responses to the following headings and questions.**

Consider the following:

BACKGROUND: how does the social, cultural and/or historical context help us to better understand the reasons for conflict in each text?

CONNECTIONS: what other historical or social incidents, individuals or communities could you refer to, from which to draw parallels to the texts? Explore these connections in detail.

SETTING: in what ways do the settings in the texts contribute to the incidents of conflict encountered? Does this setting help dissipate conflict, at times, too?

LANGUAGE: does the language used by the writer demonstrate how conflict can be exacerbated? Avoided? Calmed?

STRUCTURE: do any of the structural elements of the text contribute to our understanding of character motivations in situations of conflict?

STYLE: are the incidents of conflict written differently to more peaceful or mundane events in the texts? If so, how? Consider the ways the author builds to incidents of conflict by foreshadowing, hinting, tone, then how this changes when writing about a situation of conflict through sentence lengths, use of figurative language, bookending and so on. How does the writing change again in the wake of a situation of conflict?

VALUES: what values about life, societies etc are expressed by Miller and Beresford in relation to encountering conflict?

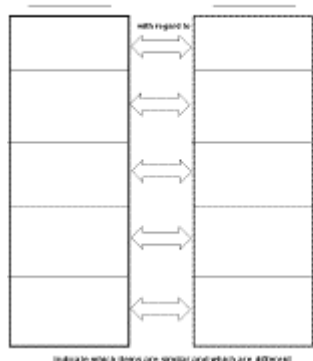
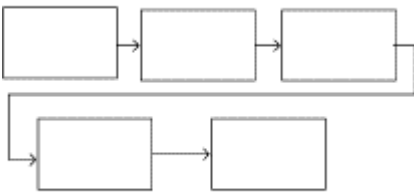
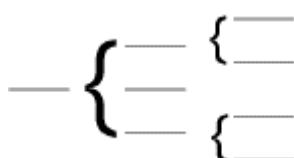
CONCEPTS: what major concepts or issues about encountering conflict are being explored by the author/director?

PERSPECTIVES: how does the author/director position you to view certain characters in relation to their responses to conflict?

IMPLIED VIEWS: what is under the surface of the text? What is the author implying overall about conflict in his or her description of characters & events?

You could also use graphic organisers to explore these headings, such as those on the next page, to clarify your understanding of the context, and make connections to each of the texts. You could also use the different graphic organisers at <http://www.somers.k12.ny.us/intranet/skills/thinkmaps.html>

[illegible]

		Compare and Contrast 
Sequencing * Analytical skills	How did conflict come about? What is the sequence of events? What are the sub-stages?	Timeline  FlowChart 
Part to Whole * Analytical skills	What is the whole object or concept? What are the major parts of it? What are the subparts of each major part (if any)?	Bracket Map  Puzzle Map 

USING LANGUAGE TO PERSUADE

- Complete the practice tasks that are available to you. They will help you to hone your skills in finding what writers are trying to express, how they are persuading, and what language/persuasive devices are being used.
- If you are unsure of persuasive techniques, study them from last year's textbook. Learn what they mean.
- Be familiar with a variety of response mediums i.e. speech, letter, editorial, essay, submission etc.
- Read as many models and write as many practice essays as you can!

USING LANGUAGE TO PERSUADE ESSAY MODEL

1. Highlight points in writing task materials. Make notes next to the text and around the visual. Numbering may help if you have worked out a certain way of progressing through the writing task.

2. Use the following structure:

In your introduction define or give background to the issue.

Who supports, who opposes the issue in general (e.g. pressure groups). On what grounds?

How does the visual connect to the article?

Relate the first author, group (s)he represents, relate style of article (Eg. opinionative/editorial), summarise contention and refer to target audience. Do the same for author two and/or three.

In the case of two articles, use two body paragraphs per article, grouping those for article one and those for article two together. You will also need to include a paragraph for the visual. Keep an objective distance. In the unlikely case of three articles, two paragraphs should be grouped together for the largest article and then one for each of the minor articles. The visual could be incorporated into the four paragraphs.

3. Paragraph 1 should elaborate on contention and tone generally, and effect, using quotes for support. From this point, if the writer is referred to by name, use the surname only. The rest of the paragraph should cover a particular grouping of ideas. Concentrate on the effect of appeals (using quotes and always referring to their effects on the audience). Other possibilities could be emotive language analysis. Try to incorporate the analysis of about 4 different techniques during this paragraph. If there is a change in tone that could be handled here.
4. There should be a link to the second paragraph through the use of a word or phrase (eg. Continuing, further, additionally and so on). To follow, second paragraph should handle grouped ideas eg. analysis of persuasive techniques. Writing technique should be as for paragraph 1, however.

5. When moving to the second analysis it is appropriate to use a link word or phrase that indicates difference, linking to the most major difference between the two articles (Could boil down to tone rather than argument or contention.)
Again, use the surname to refer to the writer. Students should try to vary verbs which indicate intention (not states, shows...there are many lists circulating, and the effect on the audience... not makes the audience think....) Again, start with analysis of contention, effect, then tone effect then group the main techniques you will analyse (perhaps appeals used again).
6. For second paragraph work as for paragraph two for article one. At this point if some comparative reference can be made towards the end of the paragraph, the examiners like it. A full blown comparison would be confusing. Comments about marginalisation of particular community groups within the audience could be made anywhere in the analysis.

In the case of a threefold analysis, identify contention and tone, quote at least two techniques and state effect in the final paragraph of your body. Then identify two appeals, using quotes and effects to justify your stance.

7. Refer to the visual in either its own distinct paragraph, or blend into another paragraph. The most important thing to remember when analysing the visual is to link it to the contention and arguments of the article, interpreting how it adds to their weight, or not.
8. To conclude, do not use the phrase “in conclusion”. The conclusion should involve a summary of each writer’s point of view and the predominant techniques employed to support it. Consider the audiences of the articles and the appropriateness of the type of article written, relating to what extent the writer’s intention is fulfilled for each case. When a group is alienated, reference could be made at this point. It is bad form to say that one article is better than another. A closing sentence which concerns the overall effect of the issue itself would be highly appropriate.

KNOW WHAT IS EXPECTED IN THE EXAM

The exam is outlined by VCAA as follows:

The VCE English examination is to be prepared, from 2009–2013, according to the following Examination specifications and criteria.

The examination paper is designed to assess the key knowledge and key skills which underpin the Outcomes for Unit 3 and Unit 4 (*VCE English/English as a Second Language Study Design*).

Examination specifications

Overall conditions

The examination will be sat at a time and date to be set annually by the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority. There will be 15 minutes reading time and 180 minutes writing time. VCAA examination rules will apply.

The examination will be marked by a panel appointed by the VCAA. The examination will contribute 50 per cent to the Study Score.

Content

All key knowledge and skills in Unit 3 Outcomes 1, 2 and 3 and Unit 4 Outcomes 1 and 2 are assessable. Each student response in each Section of the examination will be assessed against the examination criteria for that section.

Approved materials and equipment

An English and/or bilingual printed dictionary is allowed in the examination.

Format

The examination will be in a task book. Students will respond by writing in at least three separate script books, one for each section of the examination. Students are not permitted to write on any more than one selected film text in the examination. The examination will consist of three sections.

Section A – Text response (Reading and responding)

Section A will be worth one-third of the total marks. Students will be required to write one extended response to one of the two texts selected for study from the English/ESL Text list 1 published in the *VCAA Bulletin VCE, VET and VCAL* for Units 3 and 4, Outcome 1 for the year in question.

There will be two topics for each of the 20 selected texts for Outcome 1. Each topic will enable and require students to address the full range of key knowledge and skills. The choice between topics will enable students to develop their sustained discussion from an initial focus on one of the following aspects of key knowledge for Units 3 and 4 Outcome 1:

- the ideas, characters and themes constructed by the author/director and presented in the selected text; or

- the way the author/director uses structures, features and conventions to construct meaning; or
- the ways in which authors/directors express or imply a point of view and values; or
- the ways in which readers' interpretations of text differ and why.

All topics will require student responses to address the full range of key knowledge and skills, and to be supported by detailed analysis and reference to the selected text.

Section B – Writing in *Context* (Creating and presenting)

Section B will be worth one-third of the total marks. Students will be required to select one of the four **Contexts** set by the VCAA for the year of the examination. The task in each Context will require students to write an extended response, exploring ideas and using detail from at least one text selected from the English/ESL Text list 2 published in the *VCAA Bulletin VCE, VET and VCAL* for the year of the examination for Outcome 2. Students will be required to base their writing on unseen stimulus material or prompts associated with the ideas and/or arguments suggested by the four texts set for each **Context**.

Section C – Analysis of language use (Using language to persuade)

Section C will be worth one-third of the total marks. Section C will require students to write an extended piece of prose, analysing the use of written language and visual features in the unseen text(s). Section C will be based on written and visual stimulus material. The task in this section will be compulsory.

Examination assessment criteria

The examination will address all the criteria. All student responses will be examined against each criterion. The extent to which the response is characterised by:

Section A – Text response (Reading and responding)

- detailed knowledge and understanding of the selected text, demonstrated appropriately in response to the topic
- development in the writing of a coherent interpretation or discussion in response to the task
- controlled use of expressive and effective language appropriate to the task

Section B – Writing in *Context* (Creating and presenting)

- understanding and effective exploration of the ideas and/or arguments relevant to the prompt/stimulus material
- effective use of detail and ideas drawn from the selected text as appropriate to the task
- development in the writing of a coherent and effective structure in response to the task, showing an understanding of the relationship between purpose, form, language and audience
- controlled use of language appropriate to the purpose, form and audience

Section C – Analysis of language use (Using language to persuade)

- understanding of the ideas and points of view presented
- analysis of ways in which language and visual features are used to present a point of view and to persuade readers
- controlled and effective use of language appropriate to the task

AN ENGLISH EXAM PLAN

(as advised by Bob Hillman, Assistant Chief Examiner of English, 2011)

TIME	ACTION
9.00- 9.06 READING TIME	Study section A and B essay topics • Read topics for section A and prompts for section • Decide which you will write in response to.
9.06 – 9.15 READING TIME	Read section C material • Read and study analysis material. • Read it again. • Start with section C.
9.15 - 10.15 START OF WRITING TIME...	Section C • Highlight key words and phrases. Make notes. • Quick plan (up to 5 minutes) • Spend an hour on it – 2 ½ to 3 pages at least. • Complete section C.
10.15- 11.15	Section A or B • Section B probably best before A • Thinking time/ plan/ structure up to 8 minutes. • Don't write a flowery or overly neat plan. Assessors don't look at plans. • Write as much as you can in the remaining 52 minutes.
11.15 – 12.15	Section A or B • Section A or B thinking time/ plan/ structure up to 8 minutes. • Write as much as you can in 52 minutes.
12.15 pm FINISH	Pens down!

PROOF READING

- Does spelling count? If you want to do well, yes! Poor spelling, particularly of commonly used words, is distracting.
- Imperative to get spelling right for those words you KNOW you will have to use, and about which you want to appear to have some authority or expertise – e.g. titles, character names, language devices, etc.
- You look really silly if you misspell words that are actually printed on the paper for you!
- Make marks in the margin for the words that you think you may have misspelt.
- Grab dictionary and correct if you have time. If you are a poor speller, incorporate CHECKING TIME into your time plan.

THE EXAM

Reading time:

- Focus on SECTION C for most of the time. Make a mental note of sections that contain points that can be analysed.
- Read over the SECTION A & B questions and choose which ones you will attempt. Make a decision in reading time; do not leave it till later to choose which question to answer. Reading time is also choosing time.
- Use the dictionary to clarify any words you do not know.

Essay responses :

- There will be three different coloured booklets with your exam in which you must write your responses. You must write in each for a specific section of the exam only. Please note the following so that you are not confused on exam day:
- If you happen to write an essay in the wrong coloured booklet **DO NOT START AGAIN** in the correct coloured booklet. Simply cross out the essay label on the front of the booklet and write the part you have actually written. Eg. If you write your section 1 response in the section 2 booklet, just say so on the front. Check with the examination supervisor if you are unsure.
- Think about the order in which you will write your exam essays. There is no right or wrong approach but it is imperative that you have a plan and stick vigilantly to the times you allocate for each essay. One hour for planning and writing for each text essay, including planning time. **It is seriously worth considering starting with section 3 - Using language to persuade - as you will have just finished reading the stimulus material in reading**

time. You can try out your plan in the Practice Exam, and if it does not work satisfactorily, try another approach for the real thing.

- Plan your response, and then if you feel pressured and forget something, you have a little reminder of where you were going. Write your plan on the cover of your booklet and as you finish your first page of writing fold your page back so that you can always see your plan. Continue to use this technique and do so in other exams where you write essays. It ensures you are on track and that you do not waste time.
- Make sure you always answer the question and brainstorm parts of the question on the paper before you plan. **Try to open out** the question in your brainstorm, then plan. Look out of the window frame that the question suggests – go a little outside to consider all possibilities.
- Do not answer yes, yes, yes to any question. The best answer implies yes, but or no, but.
- Learning an essay off by heart and putting an introduction and conclusion on it that answers the question is strongly discouraged. In spite of the fact that assessors read quickly, they do read thoroughly and your work could be read up to four times. You will not get away with this.

What is your approach to the exam going to be? Write it out now! Use Bob Hillman's advice to help you.

Good Luck from your Year 12 English teachers !

SAMPLE STUDENT RESPONSES

Interpreter of Maladies – Hana Julian 2013

Lahiri's stories show the universal struggle for belonging and purpose. Discuss.

Jhumpa Lahiri's short story collection 'Interpreter of Maladies' explores the innate abilities for people, from different cultures and socio-economic lives, to find ways to cope with their 'maladies'. Lahiri not only encapsulates the difficulties physical displacement within migration out of India, but the ways her individual characters deal with their emotional burdens they face on a day-to-day basis. Although some characters cannot move forward, held back by past tragedies, all the characters inevitably find the struggle to find themselves often amounts to the support they have from the people around them.

In all three stories that focus on migration out of India, Lahiri carefully contrasts the emotions of her characters, based on their ability to adjust to their new life. For Mrs Sen the utter thought of "the place where Mr Sen has brought me" is horrible, her "hate" evident through her feelings at learning the mundane task of driving. Her blank expressions at the mention of "India" and constant checking of the mail paints her in a sad light as she cannot integrate into society whatsoever. Through the fresh eyes of Elliot, the reader is able to grasp the detachment Mrs Sen has not only to America but to her husband. Basic intimate notions such as "[putting] their arms around each others waists" and kissing Mrs Sen when Mr Sen got home are missing, the distance between the two in the plain sight of a young boy. Unlike Mr and Mrs Sen, Mala and the narrator find ways to connect. They are more "strangers" than ever however they do not let this ruin their chances at a life together. When Mala first arrives she "[cries] for her family" and he "[does] nothing" to console her. However through Mrs Croft this "distance [begins] to lessen" and they can move on. The only way this is achieved is through Mala's ability to readily integrate into her new society. Despite her perpetual longing for her home, she settles in by moulding her lifestyle to her husbands, merely through small acts of feeding him cereal. Their love for one another grows and they "decide to grow old" in America. Although migration plays a large role in the struggle the characters of both stories it does not determine their future, instead giving the characters a difficulty they need to face and overcome.

Lahiri highlights the human need to form connections with the people around us and indicates that if people do not have the support they need, they will never find their sense of belonging. Bibi Haldar and Boori Ma are similar, both living parallel lives in places where their communities defined their happiness. For Bibi Haldar, the collective women at the community take caring very seriously. They are so determined to improve her life and "cure" her they are burdensome. Bibi is alienated, constantly reminded of her "ailment" and always a hot topic "across the clothesline" while "scaling fish" she is not wrong in wanting a son "to teach good from bad" and ultimately it is the birth of a baby boy that cures her. Despite the horrible reminders that she is different from the collective women of the building, it is through their support and care that she is 'cured'. Boori Ma however is not so fortunate. Although Mrs Dalal takes an interest in her bedding, the care shown is minimal and she quietly gets caught up in her own materialistic wealth. Boori Ma lives for cleaning the "particular flat-building" characterised by her "life savings", "skeleton keys", "newspaper" and "reed broom" whether she was a "victim of changing times" or not she was "a real durwan", standing guard between the residents and the "outside world". Eventually she is

thrown out as the residents become submerged in their arrogant lifestyle. Although Bibi and Boori are similar, Bibi changes her fate and starts a new chapter of her life. Boori however is left alone to find solace and purpose in another stairwell; the lack of support she was shown determining her fate.

Lahiri explores other themes of tragedy and misfortune, and exemplifies the inability for people to find a fragment of happiness and meaning in a life that has been ripped to pieces. Shoba and Shukumar's grief after the still born birth of their baby is evident in their insipid, empty lives. One of the first descriptions of Shoba is "upon her returning home [letting] the leather strap slip from her shoulders...and left it in the hallway". Small signs of negligence such as this add up to reveal deeper, darker emotions the two feel. From the "charcoal patches" under her eye to the "cranberry lipstick visible on the out reaches of her mouth" it's clear that a dramatic change has come over the woman once watched not only by her physical beauty, but also by her meticulous manner in all things, Shukumar's depression is evident too, forgetting the mundane tasks of brushing his teeth and the systematic avoidance Shoba, his beloved wife. Both have lost their true identity in life with no images of a "vice ceremonies" or handing "juice boxes" to their kids to hang on to. Although Shoba eventually ends her meaningless and escapes her sadness, the couple had found themselves in a position where they no longer had the incentive to move on. Lahiri's opening stories and elegant tone indicates that sometimes tragedy can show peoples hopes and desires for a future and can leave people empty, unable to escape their lives ailments.

Jhumpa Lahiri's poignant collection gives the reader insight into the emotional and physical detachment all people face and the universal desire to feel contentment in life. Although some seek and find happiness in the people around them, others are not as fortunate, left to save themselves from their lives misfortunes. Despite this, often, in a position of grief, the adjustment to a new life or mere acceptance of a current one is dependent on the support we receive from others.

Interpreter of Maladies – Nick Hellyer 2012

Interpreter of Maladies shows that loneliness is inescapable. Discuss.

In her elegant Pulitzer prize winning short story collection 'Interpreter of Maladies', Jhumpa Lahiri explores the challenges that face the Indian diaspora, and the cultural and geographical distance from their homeland that impact their daily lives. Undeniably many of Lahiri's characters endure dire isolation within their lives both on their native subcontinent and in foreign countries. It is also clear that some of this loneliness and disconnection is unavoidable for certain characters. That said, there are characters in the anthology who do in fact have the option to overcome their disconsolate feelings of loneliness but are passive in their attempts to do so. In essence, the collection shows that those who can relieve themselves of such desolation are able to go on and lead happy and successful lives.

The ruptured and disconnected relationships with Lahiri's collection are a common source of unhappiness for her characters. Often, the dysfunction nature of such interactions are driven by a loss or event that is uncontrollable for those involved. The detached marriage of Shoba and Shukumar epitomises this kind of distance, as the loss of their born dead "baby" becomes a principal catalyst in their disconsolate relationship. Devoid of adequate communication and affection, Shoba and Shukumar eventually "become experts at avoiding each other", which sustains and fuels the unhappy and detached feelings they endure. Though this is not the sole cause of their disconnected marriage. The contrasting careers and lifestyles of the couple leads to even greater sorrow and anguish within their interactions. Clearly, Shukumar "envies the specificity of Shoba's job as a proof-reader, since it is so unlike the elusive nature" of his own career as a student. Such differences in personality undoubtedly lead to clashes and tension within their marriage and provides another source of detachment between the two individuals. Similarly, the relationship of Mrs and Mrs Kapasi is also severely plagued by unhappiness and dissatisfaction as a result of the loss of their son. This is underscored when Mr Kapasi considers if "he and his wife were a bad match". Furthermore, the fact that Mrs Kapasi believes her husband's job as a Doctor's interpreter is a "thankless occupation" further illustrates the disunion existing between them. Essentially, the fractured relationships within Lahiri's anthology that are primarily caused by a loss of some kind will be very difficult to resolve and transition to fulfilled and happy interactions. However, a lack of belonging and the inevitable escalation it creates are perhaps even more inescapable than the happiness within relationships, since the individual is invariably on their own without support from the other.

Isolation within communities' dues to a lack of acceptance is sometimes unavoidable for some of Lahiri's characters. In some cases, a particular feature of an event concerning an individual will mean they are almost pre-destined to lead a life of grave anguish and despair. The detached lives of Boori Ma and Bibi Haldar embody this particular type of inescapable loneliness. Boori Ma 'sweeper of the stairwell', is adversely ostracised from her community as a result of her 'plight and losses' involving her deportation after Partition. In her building where she resides, she is 'sleeping underneath the letterboxes' on a 'bed of newspapers'. This highlights the poor quality of life she leads. In similar fashion, Bibi Haldar suffers an 'ailment that baffles' all those around her, which causes her unremitting degrees of sorrow and 'such desolation'. Moreover, her life, along with Boori Ma's is deeply absent of proper love and affection, which is primarily a result of the selfish nature of her 'only local family' in cousin Haldar. This lack of support and care is evidenced by his opposition to Boori being

married off due to the financial costs associated with it, “and waste our profits on a wedding?” While both characters’ lives are devoid of love and belonging, readers assume that the life of Boori Ma is destined for even greater hardships as opposed to Bibi Haldar. Bibi is “cured” from her ailment after giving birth to her baby, whereas Boori Ma is “tossed out” by her neighbours and completely rejected. This demonstrates that hopeless circumstances can still be redeemed in some cases and that loneliness and despair can be resolved. However, some characters who have the ability to achieve these resolutions and changes are still unable to do so, usually through their own passive actions.

The concept of cultural displacement is certainly rife in the anthology and leads to adverse despair and isolation for some of Lahiri’s characters. However, there are instances where these feelings of pain and loneliness are avoidable, or at least escapable. The assiduous isolation facing Mrs Das illustrates this concept of passive actions in overcoming cultural differences. Indeed, Mrs Dad is brought to America unwillingly by her husband who wants to pursue his own career as a “mathematics professor”. At the same time, Mrs Sen endures terrible suffering and anguish through her homesickness of her native subcontinent where “everything is”. Having said that, Mrs Sen fails to assimilate and embrace American culture and therefore overcome her relentless despair, which is primarily due to her passive attempts to do so. Mrs Sen’s failure to drive a car is symbolic of her inability to adjust to American life, since driving is such a typical American activity. Though her apathetic approach to driving where she “refuses” and eventually “hates” learning to drive does not improve her lonely and isolated feelings within her life, rather it actually intensifies them. However, perhaps there is more to the “maladies” and despair that Mrs Sen endures. Unlike Lilia and her family who have successfully assimilated, maybe it is Mrs Sen’s own personality that is the principal barrier to her adjusting to new and unfamiliar surroundings.

In contrast to most of her other stories, Lahiri concludes her collection with a redeeming story that chronicles a successful assimilation into life abroad. Furthermore, it underscores that loneliness is not always inescapable, that such maladies can be overcome and endured. The ‘Third and Final Continent’ ignites a slow burning sense of hope, where regardless of the trying and hopelessly isolated situations that face us as individuals, we can still rebound and go on to achieve things that are “beyond [our] imagination”.

Interpreter of Maladies -Louis Hanson 2013

Lahiri's stories show the universal struggle for belonging and purpose.' Discuss.

Jhumpa Lahiri's culturally rich collection of short stories, *Interpreter of Maladies*, highlights the torment faced by those who struggle to find a sense of acceptance and purpose within society. Her Indian characters seem to carry burdens of isolation and confusion, about their place in society, on their shoulders, and the author explores the struggles that result from an inability to find appreciation and direction within their respective environments. Through the eyes of her characters, Lahiri poignantly signifies the turmoil associated with the inability to achieve a sense of acceptance and appreciation in society, as well as the failure to find a sense of direction in life, thereby resulting in intense disconnection from society and misery. However, by including examples in which immigrants are able to overcome hardships associated with belonging and purpose, Lahiri beautifully highlights the powers that a sense of place and inclusion have in overcoming inner turmoil. In this way, Lahiri conveys the message to the audience that not all immigrants experience the same troubles; while a struggle for direction and appreciation may be common, it is not universal.

Within her collection, Lahiri poignantly explores the torment associated with failing to find a sense of inclusion within society, and signifies the way in which this lack of acceptance produces feelings of intense social and emotional isolation. Mrs Sen, a woman defined by her Indian culture, experiences intense disconnection and alienation after moving to Boston for Mr Sen's work at the university. The distinction between America and her "home" in India is signified by the way in which she contrasts the "chatter" in India to the "silence" in her Boston apartment. Despite desperately trying to create a sense of India within her house, in which she owns "colanders" and "shallow bowls of water to immerse her chopped ingredients", Mrs Sen experiences a lack of appreciation from the society of Boston. The way in which the policemen mistake her "vermillion" on her forehead for blood represents the ignorance of American society and the inability to grasp Mrs Sen's Indian culture; this exacerbates her failure to belong. When Mrs Sen asks Eliot "if I began to scream at the top of my lungs would anybody come?", it becomes evident to the reader that Mrs Sen's cultural differences result in the inability to feel accepted within American society, as well as the intense isolation that she experiences as a result of this. Like Mrs Sen, Bib Haldar also highlights the failure to belong. The unique use of the collective first person narration, in which the apartment block's women "hang her laundry" and "scrub scales from her fish", may indicate the only love that Bibi receives, however it also signifies a fruitful Indian life that Bibi craves but cannot achieve. She is constantly looked down upon, due to her unexplainable illness and unattractive appearance, and despite showing a desperation for love and marriage, something that "plagues" her "with such ferocity", the views of society are reflected in Haldar's view that no one would marry her because "the girl knows nothing about anything". The reader witnesses the way in which a failure to achieve a "big wedding" with a "magenta sari", results in the women retreating "into a deep and dark silence." Despite eventually finding a sense of purpose and responsibility with the birth of her child, it is the child that fills the void of loneliness created by the evident lack of appreciation from society. By including the examples of Mrs Sen and Bibi Haldar, Lahiri exposes the reader to the common struggles associated with the inability to find inclusion and acceptance.

Through the eyes of her characters, the author signifies the hardships that many face in regards to the failure of finding a sense of place, direction and purpose with their surrounding

societies. Boori Ma, a woman defined by her position at the bottom of the brutal Indian social hierarchy, experiences great confusion about her place within India. This is fuelled by the ways in which the apartment block's inhabitants look down on her in a condescending manner, as shown by Mr Dalal's order to help him "carry these basins upstairs", and expose her to empty promises and constant disappointment, as reflected by the way in which Mrs Dalal's promise to buy Boori Ma a "sheep's hair blanket" leads to the old lady sleeping on wet "newspaper". This mistreatment from others leads to Boori Ma's uncertainty of her place in society. When visiting apartments, the old lady crouches "in doorways and hallways" and "observes gestures and manners in the same way a person tends to watch traffic in a foreign city." When all the basins are stolen and Boori Ma is left homeless, Lahiri purposely illustrates the vulnerability of a fragile woman with no sense of direction and purpose within an unforgiving society. By doing so, the author highlights that struggles associated with a lack of place within a community.

Despite exposing the universal pains associated belonging and purpose in great depth, Lahiri beautifully manages to highlight the power that qualities, such as appreciation and acceptance have in overcoming torment; thereby restoring one's purpose in life. Mr Pirzada experiences great loneliness and isolation after being separated from his family, who remain in Dacca, while he continues to study the 'foliage of New England' in Boston. However, the reader witnesses the way in which Mr Pirzada experiences respite through Lilia's family embracing him and welcoming him into their house. When the Bangladesh War of Independence escalates, Mr Pirzada's turmoil is lessened by the acceptance shown through Lilia's family; Lilia's mother cooks him "boiled eggs with rice" and spreads "a sheet and blanket on the couch" so that he can sleep there. Throughout his most vulnerable times, it is evident that he, along with Lilia's family, become a single entity; thereby confirming Mr Pirzada's place and purpose within Lilia's household. After returning to Dacca he writes that he "now understands the meaning of the words 'thank you'", highlighting the influence that the inclusion and acceptance, shown by Lilia's family, have in overcoming his feelings of social isolation and separation. Like Mr Pirzada, the narrator in "The Third and Final Continent" initially feels cultural isolation, as signified by his statement that the noise in Boston "is distracting, at times, suffocating." However, it is evident that Mala's arrival, something that the Narrator once sees as "inevitable, but meaningless at the time", begins to fill the narrator with a sense of appreciation and belonging. After Mrs Croft declares that Mala is "a perfect lady", the pair begin to explore "the city" together and meet "other Bengalis." When the narrator states that "at night we kissed. Shy at first, then quickly bold", it is evident that the relationship between the two creates a sense of purpose and direction for the narrator, as well as a sense of appreciation that transcends initial pains of isolation. Their tendency to find "solace in each other's arms" signifies the influence that belonging, within a loving relationship, has in creating a place within society. Lahiri is explaining to the reader that some immigrants are able to overcome turmoil associated with social dislocation, through the influence of inclusion and acceptance, thereby showing that not all immigrants experience continued hardships of purpose and belonging.

Jhumpa Lahiri's collection of short stories signifies the tragic struggle faced by many of her characters in finding a place to feel accepted, as well as achieving a sense of direction in life. By doing so, Lahiri is explaining the common experiences faced by, not only immigrants, but human beings in general to portray an inability to find a sense of purpose and inclusion. Through the eyes of her characters such as Mrs Sen and Bib Haldar, Lahiri poignantly signifies the torment associated with an inability to feel acceptance within society, and, by including Boori Ma, the author exposes the hardships associated with failing to discover a

sense of purpose in life. Their torment suggests that without the ideas of belonging and purpose, isolation, alienation and ultimate confusion are inevitable. However, through the use of the Narrator (in the “Third and Final Continent”) and Mala’s relationship, as well as the acceptance shown by Lilia’s family towards Mr Pirzada, Lahiri beautifully illustrates the influence that appreciation and love have in developing a sense of purpose and transcending emotional pains related to isolation and social disconnection. Lahiri is indication to the reader that there are some individuals who are able to develop purpose and belonging through love and acceptance.

Interpreter of Maladies – Eliza Quinn 2012

Interpreter of Maladies shows that loneliness is inescapable. Discuss.

Jhumpa Lahiri's acclaimed anthology of short stories Interpreter of Maladies explores the lives of those living on the Indian sub-continent and who make up the Indian diaspora. The collection addresses the ways in which people are plagued by isolation and loneliness, and whilst all the characters are encumbered by such feelings to an extent, there are a few who manage to overcome it. The stories take shape in a variety of contexts, and whether or not the loneliness stems from an unsatisfactory relationship, or from physical or cultural displacement, these characters do suffer as a result of it. However, in a select few narratives, Lahiri examines characters who, although they are enduring significant hardship, are in the end able to make peace with themselves and their environment and are able to stop feeling like an outsider.

Experiences of isolation can come about due to unhappy or dysfunctional connections with those around us. Mr Kapasi ruminates on his marriage, conceding that he and his wife are "a bad match". After their son died, Mr Kapasi took on his job as an interpreter, despite feeling it was "a sign of his failing", he did this so that he was able to stop his grieving wife from "crying in her sleep". His wife however, held his position in low esteem and their already difficult relationship suffered. Thus, when Mr Kapasi meets Mrs Das, he finds her fascination with his job "mildly intoxicating". He is charmed because "unlike other women... Mrs Das had taken an interest in him", and is soon imagining their courtship, conducted through letters sent across continents. He feels that in time she would reveal her "disappointment in her marriage, and he his", but when she reveals to him her infidelity and urges him to "suggest some sort of remedy" he realises that she had no such intentions. It becomes apparent that she was only interested in him because of his "skills" as an interpreter. Mr Kapasi is left pondering the fate of the Das family, no closer to absolving himself of misery than absolving them. Lahiri extends on the notion of loneliness in relationships through Mrs Das, a woman who "has already fallen out of love with life". She admits to Mr Kapasi that she married too young, and because she had spent so much of her life with Mr Das she had "no one to confide about him". After having their first child she was left at home all day, her feelings of resentment escalating. After cheating on her husband, Mrs Das said she felt "terrible urges... to throw everything [she] owned out the window". Mrs Das is a character who has had no reprise from her feelings of separation, as her action lead her to feel trapped within her marriage and frustrated with her family. It is through the characters of Mr Kapasi and Mrs Das that Lahiri has been able to illustrate the ways in which our relationships can become a factor for our intolerable loneliness, a factor which leads to our prolonged unhappiness.

Emotional or physical displacement can cause someone to constantly feel like stranger, no matter how hard they try. Mrs Sen was forced to move from Calcutta after her husband received a job at an American university, and she yearns for India as she feels "everything" is there. Her attempts to learn to drive as a way of integrating into US culture, but merely being near a busy road causes her "knuckles to go pale, her wrists to tremble, her English to falter". Her daily ritual of chopping meat and vegetables with her blade helps her feel connected to her homeland, as does her practise of checking for mail and sourcing fresh fish, those being the "two things that made [Mrs Sen] happy. However, it is simply not enough as she pines for the sense of community and belonging that she left back home. This sentiment is best illustrated when she asks Eliot "If I started screaming at the top of my lungs right now, would

somebody come?”. When Eliot concedes that they would probably “complain [she] was making too much noise” this seems to affirm her feelings that she could never grow to be happy in America. The character of Miranda, whilst being one of the few non-Indian protagonists, also suffers feelings of loneliness after moving from Michigan to Boston. She spends her time looking at the makeup counters in the department store, which [were] familiar to her in a way that the rest of Boston still was not”. It is here that she meets Dev, embarking on a clandestine affair and whilst this relationship does not offer her solace, it becomes apparent that it is not a healthy one. He shows her the Mapparium which made them feel “like they were standing in the centre of the world”, which symbolises Dev’s self-centeredness. After Rohin tells her that the word “sexy” means “loving someone you don’t know” Miranda sobers up to the fact that her relationship with Dev can never develop. The story ends with Miranda slowly severing her relationship with him, leaving her just as alone as she was before. Lahiri uses the character of Mrs Sen and Miranda to demonstrate that physical displacement can be the cause of overwhelming loneliness, which may never truly be absolved.

Whilst the characters in Interpreter of Maladies suffer due to the fact that they are in some cases a foreigner to a new land, there are examples of those who managed to overcome this. The narrator and Mala in The Third and Final Continent both travel very far to an unknown country. Mala especially has difficulty adjusting, for after her wedding night “a five mile separation from her family...caused her to weep”. Whilst the narrator has relatively little difficulty integrating into US society, he realises that he will be responsible for Mala’s wellbeing and must do everything for her, even “buy her first winter coat”. However, although the two are practically strangers at first, their meeting with Mrs Croft started them on “a honeymoon, of sorts”. The narrator considers how Mala had to embark on a journey to an unknown place just like he did, and this helps bind them together. Eventually the two “decide to grow old [in the US] and although they return to Calcutta to buy “drawstring pyjamas and Darjeeling tea” they regard the country where they once felt so out of place, to be home. Mr Pirzada is another character who must make a long journey, and at first he feels out of place. He questions US culture, asking “what is this thank you?”, but soon embraces his new surroundings, such as when he begins carving Lilia’s pumpkin “as though he had been carving...all his life”. Furthermore, despite not knowing anyone when he first arrived Mr Pirzada forms a bond with Lilia and her parents. This is a source of great comfort to him, especially when the conflict in Dacca worsens and they find themselves behaving “like a single unit...with a shared fear”. It is in this way that the characters of the narrator and Mala and Mr Pirzada show how the feelings of loneliness and separation can, in some circumstances, be overcome.

An idea that runs through the stories in Interpreter of Maladies is that of isolation and how it affects people. Whilst in most stories, the characters succumb to these feelings, be it a result of unhappy relationships, or a significant change in surroundings, it is not always the case. Lahiri has shown, through the stories of The Third and Final Continent and When Mr Pirzada Came to Dine that such sentiments are not an inevitability, that they do not always last forever. In the characters from these two stories, Lahiri explores the ways in which these obstacles can be overcome and that not all people are doomed to a life of crushing, unsurmountable loneliness.

Stasiland - Matt Daly 2013

'Stasiland' shows that fact is often stranger than fiction.' Discuss.

Anna Funder's work of creative non-fiction Stasiland, which deconstructs the period that Germany was divided into East and West, discusses the ways in which what people perceive as fact, or choose to perceive as truth, is often stranger than any fiction. During the course of her work, she finds herself falling down the rabbit hole to a land where everything is backward; the "sentence first", and the "verdict after". Her observations influence the reader into viewing this juxtaposition of reality and fiction through her eyes, as well as the interviews discussed with characters who have "fallen into the gap between reality and fiction", those who suffered from the absurdity of 'fact'. This confusion often crushes those captured in between the two worlds, and their ability to survive in 'Stasiland' seems dependent on their choice to 'acknowledge' a variety of fictions as fact'.

From the moment Funder arrives in Leipzig she begins her "Adventures in Stasiland" – a world where "what was said wasn't real, and what was real wasn't allowed". The contrasts with Lewis Carroll's novel Alice's Adventures in Wonderland are numerous. Soon after she has interviewed some individuals who are representative of life in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), she says "curiouser and curiouser", linking with Alice in that she has been so surprised by what she has found, she has quite forgotten accurate English. Funder even finds the Queen of Hearts, Frau Anderson; a woman with too much red lipstick applied wrongly", and still nostalgic to the days when the country was known as the GDR instead of Germany. Frau Anderson is very condemnatory towards most of the "damn turncoat" Stasi, yet praises Karl Eduard von Schnitzler in his continued support of socialist Germany. The discord of the country is also represented in the scene when Funder goes to her local public pool, only to think "what am I doing here?" when she realises she does not understand the "order to the chaos". The contrast between fiction and reality has become so strong, it is comparable to a novel where people could change size at will, and animals could talk; yet, because it has come from reality, it is stranger still.

Yet the confusion created by the GDR did not end for its citizens when the Wall came down in 1989; the younger generation are "looking for something to yearn for". "Ostalgie" parties are all the rage, where "you show an East German ID card at the door and you can get [beer] for DM1.30". Perhaps this is a side effect on the Germans created by history, when you are told your past was horrible (as a country), maybe you see it as "something to yearn for". Even those who lived through some of the regime of the Stasi do not feel that it was horrible, Julia, a woman who professes to have "no story" discusses the GDR with Funder, and Funder can't help but notice her tone is "nostalgic" rather than disgruntled or cynical. She even says "I'm definitely psychologically damaged" and laughs about it. Funder is sorry for her, because she fell into the "gap between GDR-logic and reality" after being told she "is not unemployed, (she) is looking for work" by an angry Stasi employee. This sentiment is echoed through other, less important characters, who tell Funder "You could go out at night as a woman. You could leave your door open!" Yet "you didn't need to, (Funder) thought, they could see inside anyway."

Even those raised to enforce "GDR-logic", the Stasi, were ensnared by this strange set of "facts and beliefs during and after the time of the German Democratic Republic. Hagen Koch, a man raised to be "the poster boy of the GDR" suffered due to his actions. The first

consequence came during his employment; his young wife and child were judged to be “GDR-negative”, and as such she was tricked into divorcing him after he was ‘outed’ as a ‘pornographer’. The second consequence came years later, after the end of the GDR and he stole a plate from the offices of the Stasi. One day two men turned up at his door and told him to hand over the plate because it belonged to the Stasi. He said no, and they left; but they returned the next day telling him to hand it over because he lied to the Stasi in the 1980’s and said he didn’t take it. His response was to stand in the door and laugh. “Do you want to see me punished because I worked for the Stasi, or punished because I worked against them?” was his response. Even for those who enforced the “GDR-logic”, where “everyone is a criminal” because “everyone is being investigated”, the absurdity of reality was stranger than any fiction produced by the Stasi.

GDR-logic made no sense, yet it had to be acknowledged as fact in order for an individual to survive. For those who fell into the gap between GDR-logic and reality, such as Julia, life was very difficult. These ‘facts’ that had to be acknowledged by the people were, and still are, stranger than a lot of fiction.

Stasiland – Imogen Frazer 2013

‘Stasiland shows that the impacts of the Stasi regime linger long after the wall has fallen.’ Discuss.

Although the physical division between East and West Germany no longer stands the segregation is still felt by those whose lives have been analysed, dissected and destroyed by an unflinching totalitarian regime. In Anna Funder’s prize winning semi-autobiographical “Stasiland” she reveals how ingrained the Stasi’s principles were in their “soldiers”, many of whom still stand by their horrendous actions during the Stasi’s reign. Families and marriages were ruthlessly ripped apart and the invasion of privacy brought some to their knees. Invisible to the eye, the separation between East and West remains, even today and is acutely felt by victims and aggressors.

Try as it might, Germany is unable to leave their debilitating past behind. As long as the aged ex-Stasi men survive, there will always be secrets, tension and lies. Funder is shocked to find there are still men who, in this day and age, stoutly defend their heinous actions during the wall’s ruling. Amongst these men is Herr Winz – the first and perhaps most alarming ex-Stasi man of all. Still clinging onto the “spy games” that kept him safe decades before, Herr Winz arranged to meet Funder at a hotel “neutral territory” and will be identified by the rolled up magazine under his left arm. Through his behaviour it is clear to see Herr Winz has faith in, and feels it necessary to carry out such measures, which seem almost comical in the light of the modern day. Yet his unswerving devotion and almost violent behaviour leave no hint of amusement. Belonging to an “Insider Komitee” of ex-Stasi men it is evident that there is a hidden, yet strong devotion to the ways of such an unflinching government that Herr Winz genuinely believes in. This same conviction is held by Von Schnitzler, another ex-Stasi man Funder meets. Nicknamed ‘Filthy Ed’ his actions were dominated by blackmail and backstabbing, yet he says to Funder “I would do it all again”. This chilling devotion illustrates that despite lacking a physical representation, the “antifascist protective measure” lives on, distinctly in the minds and lives of men who remain loyal to the Stasi.

So cruel and ruthless, the Stasi would destroy anyone and anything – usually by blackmail and bargaining. The wall tore Frau Paul’s life in half both physically and metaphorically. With her gravely ill infant son on one side of the wall, and her husband on the other, Frau Paul never truly became a mother. After attempting to cross the Wall illegally Frau Paul fell under the Stasi’s intense scrutiny. Aware of her plight and heartache, the Stasi made their signature move, offering what one wanted most dearly in return for information. But Frau Paul was more than they bargained for. Instead of choosing to be at the side of her ill son Torsten, she elected to remain loyal to Michael Hinze – an accomplice in illegal bids for freedom. This sacrifice destroyed her “her soul was buckled out of shape”. The Stasi may have failed to retrieve information but they succeeded in destroying Frau Paul. Funder wrote that the “sorriest thing” was that Frau Paul “saw herself how the Stasi saw her – a criminal”. Thus this terrifying institution left its mark on those who escaped them. Methodically slicing away all sources of joy – until even ones own self beliefs and confidence were Stasi-crafted. A far more eternal scar than physical separation.

The intense invasion of privacy eventually broke down once strong and defiant protesters. Unable to gain employment despite claims “there is no unemployment in the GDR” Julia slowly begins to lose her security and psychological stability. Due to a suspicious Italian

boyfriend the Stasi begin to deprive Julia of her goals and sense of trust. Refused college entry despite perfect academic results, followed and bugged, Julia eventually crumbles. Although no direct interrogation or imprisonment ensues, the world that Julia knew disappeared – and with it her safety. Having fallen between “the reality and the pretence of the GDR” Julia never recovers. Even when Funder meets her, as an adult years later, she is reclusive and scarred, hardly able to communicate her ordeal. Similar signs of deep psychological trauma are displayed by Miriam – though her experience with the GDR was far more intense and physical. Subjected to sleep deprivation, extensive interrogation and emotional anguish Miriam returns from prison “barely human”. Although the Stasi got their answers, Miriam never got hers – her husband’s death remains a mystery to haunt her. It is perhaps the Stasi’s destruction of relationships and psychological security that ensures that their regime never truly fades. Whilst scars heal – lost loved ones will never return and some damage never repairs itself. A wall exists in the loved ones lost and homes torn apart. The lack of answers ensures the Stasi’s actions live on, yet those affected must accept that “for now, the beasts are all in their cages”. Although the Stasi men who remain convinced of the return of the GDR are in political isolation it is the psychological and emotional damage that remains eternal. The wall is gone – but it is alive in the broken hearts, homes and heads of both victims and perpetrators. As Funder realises “things under glass are not yet over”.

Encountering Conflict – Paradise Road – Brad White 2012

‘It is our encounters with conflict that truly test us.’

The disastrous news of the Syrian massacre that has just recently been show-cased to the world in which over 100 innocents are thought to have been killed is just the latest slaughter that characterises man’s history of death and blood and the evil orchestrators of such acts. Ratko Mladic the man behind the 1995 Srebrenica massacre in which over 8000 men and boys were savagely butchered is currently on trial at the Hague being charged with War Crimes and 11 counts of genocide. This man shows utterly no remorse for his heinous deed and in his own mind believes that he was right to order the slaughter. In the arena of conflict man is confronted by hardship after hardship. How these challenges are overcome will continue to define him in life and those that gave in to the pressures of conflict can lose their sense of self and humanity. The continual slaughter of innocents throughout history shows that man refuses to learn from the mistakes of the past continuing to engage in conflict, one may argue that it is in his very nature.

Man’s tendency to engage in conflict predates our recorded history. Ever since man has existed there has been conflict of some form. This continual conflict has come to characterise human beings and how we function as a species. The cause of man’s lust for conflict has been the cause of great debate for centuries. Over time this has led to the emergence of two prominent views they are the naturalist and the Judeo Christian views. The naturalist view of human nature was the first proposed by Thomas Hobbes a prominent 17th century philosopher who believed that man was egotistic in nature motivated by a perpetual drive for power. Due to their egotistical nature man will often compete with one another in order to be the victor thus attaining power and causing conflict. As the desire for power in man is considered by Hobbes to be inherent and perpetual the naturalists believe that although a social creature conflict between men is unavoidable. The alternative Judeo Christian view does not believe in the inherent corruption of man as man was created in the image and likeness of God, they however believe that the notion of free will itself is corrupt as man carries with him the legacy of the original sin, the eating of a forbidden fruit. Due to this when given the choice man has the tendency to give way to his base nature leading to conflict.

When pushed to their physical and emotional limits man is able to come to fully understand themselves and what defines them finding reservoirs of courage and determination to overcome and challenging adversities that they face. In conflict those that suffer the most are the innocent raped, imprisoned and massacred unable to defend themselves, at the mercy of their tormentors. During WWII the brutality of the Japanese was renowned especially in the Pacific theatre where the treatment of prisoners of war and all that stood in the way of Japanese victory was callous and cruel. Bruce Beresford’s film ‘Paradise Road’ although fictional is based upon an amalgamation of true stories, seeking to illustrate the atrocities suffered by those who were unfortunate enough to become Japanese prisoners of war. The women of the film were able to put aside previous status, nationality and all other past preconceptions held in order to unite and form a vocal orchestra being able to amongst such copious amounts of death and brutality create something of beauty demonstrating their resistance against Japanese cruelty on a spiritual level. Led by Margaret Drummond and Adrienne Pargiter the women of the camp are able to garner the respect of their captors. The ultimate show of character comes while in the process of conducting a funeral procession for ‘Daisy’ Drummond Captain Tanaka their tormentor remarks “What no singing” to the

grieving emaciated women who do not have the physical strength necessary left to sing, yet as an act of defiance all through the camp the women remove shoes, clap rocks, utilising any means possible in order to create a simple beat showing that even near death with no end to their suffering in sight these women still find the resolve to demonstrate their resistance.

Conflict does not test man's moral and ethical values but endeavours to remove them completely. The act of killing is not one that comes naturally to man thus in preparation for battle man must be conditioned and trained to do so. In training for the Vietnam War recruits are removed from their home and placed in a foreign and new environment in which they are forced to blindly follow orders. A pack mentality ensues replacing the views and thoughts of the individual with the group discouraging individual action. The enemy is dehumanised, they are to be regarded as something less than human, their deaths are to be encouraged. In this surreal existence man can lose himself leading to acts of wanton destruction and brutality like those seen in the city of My Lai. The soldiers of Charlie Company under the command of Lieutenant William Calley proceeded to massacre the village of My Lai after receiving intelligence that suggested it was a Viet Cong stronghold. In the devastation that ensued hundreds of innocent men, women and children were maimed, decapitated and tortured, the soldier involved relinquished their humanity giving way to their base nature becoming lost in the orgy of blood and death. The atrocity of My Lai is not the only massacre of this calibre. Many believed that the pain and suffering caused by WWII would once and for all quench humanity's blood lust but to no avail. In the wake of WWII Germany had to come to terms with their acts that they committed as a country, the people are responsible for their actions of their government, it is impossible to be a bystander in conflict as those that allow evils to be committed without taking action to oppose it are as guilty as the evil doer themselves. WWII showed the German people to be less than they should be and since that dark time they have endeavoured to be better, to never allow the atrocities of the past be committed again yet throughout the world atrocities continue to occur with the innocent suffering and the guilty emerging free, un-trialled and unpunished.

The evil perpetrators of crimes of wanton death, pain and suffering must be held accountable for the actions and punished, these facilitators of destruction cannot be able to continue to wreak devastation upon humanity. When inevitably conflict occurs those whom are revealed to be less than what they should be, failing to act with any sense of morality or compassion, must be punished for their crimes against their fellow man. Ratko Mladic should no longer be considered a human being. Due to his actions he has revoked the right to be considered equal to the rest of the human species he is the personification of man's darker side of nature and his trial may serve to deter others from giving in to the rigours of conflict, instead leading them to prove themselves to be the best they can be while in the face of unimaginable hardship staying true to their values and beliefs, not becoming tainted by the evil of war.

Encountering Conflict – Paradise Road – Eliza Quinn 2012

‘It is our encounters with conflict that truly test us.’

Throughout history, human interaction has been marred by conflict. Be it on an interpersonal level or political or physical combat, our lives have been coloured by struggles and hardship. What is most intriguing about this phenomenon is how individuals respond to conflict of any kind, for it enables an insight into their true character. Turmoil can allow the human spirit to triumph or help us to see what we truly value in life. By contrast, war or terror can unfortunately unveil a darker side of the human psyche as we see people embrace a more sinister side of human nature. It is in difficult or strenuous circumstances that we are able to catch a glimpse of how far humans can be pushed and the repercussions that can have.

Experiences of hardship can bring people together even in the most unforgiving environments. A sense of camaraderie can still be felt in a group of desperate people, if they are able to use the respective skills and abilities to help each other. This can be seen in the lives of the women imprisoned in Palembang, a Japanese prisoner of war camp during the Second World War. As described in the memoirs “White Coolies” by Betty Jeffereys and “Song of Survival” by Helen Colijn, these women were able to use their talents in the fields of music, art and academia in order to create a sense of normality and a supportive community, even when subjected to great brutality by their captors. One of the most significant aspects of this spiritual resistance was the “vocal orchestra”, which was created by Norah Chambers. In her book, Jeffereys noted that when listening to the music, one could be “lifted right out of that atmosphere [of Palembang]”, demonstrating how powerful it was in terms of giving the women hope. The lives of the women in Palembang were the inspiration for Bruce Beresford’s 1997 film *Paradise Road*, in which the female prisoners use their vocal orchestra as an act of defiance against the Japanese. These women and their fictionalised counterparts exemplify how such a seemingly small act can serve as a source of courage and improve the morale of all involved, even when trapped in dire circumstances.

It is in the face of adversity that we can be enlightened as to what is truly important in life. Sometimes a person can emerge from difficult situations with a greater understanding of what their purpose is. Viktor Frankl is one such individual, for he used his experiences in the Holocaust to develop his theory of “Logotherapy” which states that it is our thirst for greater meanings or purpose in life which motivates us to survive. When in Auschwitz Frankl began imagining himself travelling the world and telling his story to others after the war was over. It was this goal that spurred on by his desire to overcome his circumstances and allowed him to see past his own immediate suffering. It is this feeling of striving for something greater than oneself, to achieve some sort of purpose, which enables us to triumph over hardship. Frankl’s teachings demonstrate how it is when we are faced with struggle that we can truly see what is significant in life.

When confronted with war or turmoil, a menacing side of the human psyche can be unveiled. Whilst it is an uncomfortable truth, it cannot be denied that when separated from normal society, a darker side of an individual’s personality may be indulged. This notion can be seen when examining the events of the My Lai massacre in the Vietnam War, in which hundreds of unarmed civilians were rounded up and killed by American troops. One of the main perpetrators was Lieutenant William Calley, who at one point ordered two of his men to open fire on a group of men and women standing ten feet away. When one soldier refused, Calley

started shooting the terrified villagers himself, running them down in a blaze of bullets. This chilling chapter in the war shows how combat situations can cause a man to de-humanise his enemy and lose sight of his sense of justice. The men of this platoon were encouraged to think as a group and had a lust for power instilled in them. This made it easy for them to open fire on these villagers who posed no real threat to them. The My Lai massacre is a bloody part of our history, made all the more shocking for the way it showed us how quickly humans can turn on their fellow man.

Conflict can allow us to gain incredible insight and understanding as to how the human mind works. Only when placed in desperate or brutal situations can we see where the morals and loyalties of an individual truly lie. For some, suffering gives them an opportunity to use their abilities to help and support others, even in a purely symbolic way. For others, hardship is the key to discovering a higher purpose or place them on a quest for greater meaning. But for all the positive qualities which can emerge in the face of adversity, there are also the deeply disturbing sides of human beings which can be seen. Struggle can cause a human to give way to their base desires for control and authority, to reign supreme even over those who are already helpless. Experiences with adversity provide a chance for us to observe what an individual is really like, to see what their character is made up of. There will be those who triumph and those who sink to new depths and it is conflict which will reveal who these people are.

Encountering Conflict – Paradise Road – Matt Daly 2013

‘The human spirit will rise above the despair and tragedy of conflict.’

THE BEAUTY OF THE HUMAN CONDITION

War is inevitable, and as such, will perpetually try the very core of our humanity; our moral fibre and our individuality. For the most part, the human spirit will rise above gruesome conditions which threaten to crush it, bringing beauty to turmoil and meaning to strife. This sense of awe at what we, as humans, can achieve can be brought on by acts both performed during or long after conflict. However, sometimes the environment can become too much, forcing us to forgo morality, causing pain long after the conflict is over.

Even during conflict, humanity can rise above their environment to bring meaning to their situation, and direction to their life. When meaning is gone, even the bravest soldier is likely to give up, so a key feature of the human condition is to try to find a sense of purpose that will cause us to battle on, through the turmoil surrounding us to greener pastures. During his period of imprisonment in Auschwitz, psychologist Viktor Frankl proposed that this very search for meaning is vital to supporting an individuals will to go on, when he discussed his theory of logotherapy. Logotherapy is based on the traditional saying “he who has a ‘why’, has a ‘how’”, stating that, when a person is embroiled in conflict, the best method of surviving is to focus on the search for the purpose of one’s survival, and this is based on his own experiences in the death camp Auschwitz. Key to this theory is Frankl’s tenet of ‘an abnormal reaction to an abnormal situation in normal behaviour’, and this is certainly true of the group portrayed in the film Paradise Road, which is based on the real life story of a group of women who become Japanese prisoners during World War II. Despite oppressive conditions, these women found the strength to form a vocal orchestra, giving a reason to their life, and an answer to why they should not give up. This technique of ignoring strife to continue ones existence is seen in many forms – from love poems sent from bullet-ridden trenches, to epic sagas written by men trying to describe the barbarity of war. The human spirit will continue its quest for purpose even during times of turmoil, transcending the dire situation of the environment surrounding them.

Humanity does not just rise above the tragedy of conflict during warfare – it continues to change the horrors of warfare to beauty for years afterward. Even after the conflict is done and dusted the victor has been declared, and the common people try to return to the life they lived before, humans can try to transcend horrors by making peace with those who used to be their foes. When Marty Connor was a soldier, battling on the Japanese island of Iwo Jima, it was quietly accepted that the American soldiers would take war mementoes from the deceased enemy. However, many year later, Connor decided to begin returning these souvenirs to the families of those they had been taken from; some of whom may not have any other ways to remember. This was the first stage of both sides making amends for the war, and some years later, the Japanese Government issued an apology to the soldiers who had been unlawfully imprisoned in Prisoner-of-War camps which did not comply with the guidelines of the Geneva Convention. These formed the first signs of bridge-making between two nations, previously bitter enemies, and the beginning of an end to the cultural division which has existed for so many years. While this change took many years to occur, it was not so many cases; some individuals were changed immediately after warfare, effecting a change on others as well. The French literary critic Ooka Shohei began his career as a Japanese

soldier, who was abruptly taken prisoner by the Allied Forces. This created what he described as a 'POW daze', where there was an internal clash between the honour instigated by his Japanese cultural upbringing, and the reality of his situation. Upon release, he released his most famous novel *Taken Captive*, which documents his experiences in this POW camp. This was a landmark book for the Japanese, dispelling many myths about the 'honour and glory' of war, instead showing it for what it is. This novel was released a few years after the conflict, and is still positively contributing to cultural awareness today, many years after World War II was finished. Despite the fact these actions didn't uplift the collective human spirit until after the conflict was over, they still effected despair and tragedy of warfare, and teaching us to transcend it with understanding.

Despite the many uplifting stories which have been brought about by conflict, sometimes the core of our humanity is crushed by the horrors we encounter; it always has and will likely continue to do so. The psychological construct of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) has been in existence at least since individuals have documented experiences in conflict. It has even been proposed by academics that Macbeth and Ophelia, notable characters in the works of Shakespeare, suffered PTSD after experiencing traumatic events. Despite this, it is only recently that this has been recognised as a disorder resulting from conflict; in World War I a US Army General famously stopped a young soldier, who had been diagnosed with 'battle fatigue' (an early PTSD), accused him of cowardice and demanded all the 'yellow-bellied sons of bitches' be sent to the front line. There are very few individuals who are unlikely to experience traumatic side-effects from conflict; and as we deny sociopaths and psychopaths the right to join armed forces, it is unlikely that these people will be sent into battle. This change is likely instigated by the effects on ones morality as a result of warfare, therefore some propose the solution is to suspend ones morality for the duration of conflict. Primo Levi was the first to propose this, after his time as a captive in Auschwitz. Despite being trapped in the death camp at the same time as Frankl, his theory could not have more different; while Frankl proposed a focus on the search for meaning, Levi states that, in order to survive dehumanising conditions, an individual must adapt their morality to the situation by suspending it. However, this generally resulted in an inhuman person emerging from conflict, a person who aimed to become 'like a sociopath'; and indeed, Levi committed suicide after the war, unable to live with his experiences. While there are many examples of the human spirit rising about the conflict surrounding them, sometimes, despair and tragedy weigh down an individual too much, causing them to drown in the horrors of conflict.

While it is apparent conflict will be continuing long into the future, it is less clear what the human spirits reaction to it will be. Generally, it can be said that humanity will transcend the horrors of warfare surrounding it, both during and long after; however, it must be said that there are many clear examples of individuals being suffocated by the many tragedies which encumber them during times of strife. Therefore, it is best to continue a search for some kind of meaning which will cause one to rise above despair; otherwise, one risks becoming mired in woes.

Encountering Conflict – Paradise Road – Matt Daly 2013

‘Our survival of conflict relies on the support of others.’

Humanity, as a whole construct, is generally rooted in social interactions. However, the same cannot be said for that humanity when it encounters conflict. Whether or not a person needs support from others to assist in these encounters is entirely relative based on their morality; it is very dependent on the individual. They may need the support to survive and stay themselves, or they go into a state of suspended morality alone to preserve themselves for the time when they are unrestricted by the turmoil. Independent of this, supporting others during times of warfare may not help the individual survive the conflict, but instead helps them live by their moral code.

Moral relativism plays a large part in how an individual responds to times of conflict, and whether or not they require the assistance of others, or will support those who ask. They may live by a code of Kantian morality, where their actions during a time of warfare is judged virtuous or not by what they are, rather than the outcome or consequences of those actions. These people will generally support others with less regard for their own survival, and will emerge from combat situations as hero or villain, because morality is relative to the individual. However, a person may subscribe to the theory of utilitarianism, where the ends justify the means. These individuals will generally rely on the support of others, or doing whatever it takes to survive in their state of suspended morality. The first person to propose the theory of suspended morality was Primo Levi, a man who survived the German death camp infamously known as Auschwitz. His theory, which was based off his own survival, states that an individual must suspend their own morality in order to survive the horrors inflicted by warfare. At the other end of the spectrum is the theory of logotherapy, proposed by Viktor Frankl. Frankl was a psychotherapist that was imprisoned in Auschwitz at the same time as Levi, and his theory says that, in order to survive conflict whilst retaining individuality and sanity, one must give meaning to their existence. This wide range of theories on ways to survive times of strife with morality and sanity intact demonstrate how individual each response to conflict is, and support may or may not help people when they encounter conflict.

Clearly support may or may not be required by the individual in times of conflict. In Bruce Beresford’s film ‘Paradise Road’ which, depicts the real life struggle of a group of women to survive a WWII prisoner of war camp in Sumatra, a wide range of responses are shown. Optimism is encapsulated in the character of Margaret Drummond, who continues to be adamant that the women sticking together is the only way they are going to survive, as well as believing they will be freed. At the funeral of Win, an Asian woman imprisoned as well in the camp until she was burned trying to get malaria medicine for another woman, Margaret recites the poem ‘Paradise Road’, which gives the movie its name. This poem contrasts heavily with the war-torn, foreboding jungle which surrounds them, as it describes it as a beautiful place, which can lead to salvation and paradise for all the women. This poem brings a sense of stillness and hope to their surroundings. On the other hand, you have other characters who are solely surviving by themselves and for themselves. At the end of the film, they are depicted as emaciated and alone, but alive – unlike Margaret Drummond, whose funeral takes place shortly before the end of the film. Perhaps the lack of support helps them through the encountering turmoil, as it is something they cannot lose to the conflict, as it is never there.

Being supported is not the only path of action available to those embroiled in battle; they can also choose to support others. While supporting others may not help the individual survive, a person who lives according to a code of Kantian morality will see this as the only way to be involved in a conflict and act in a virtuous manner. During WWII, a man imprisoned in Auschwitz chose to support others rather than relying on them. Father Maximillian Kolbe took the place of a man condemned to death in the notorious gas chambers. It would have been easy to allow the doomed individual to go to their death, but the right path for Father Kolbe was to sacrifice himself in place of the man, not even knowing if they would survive. While Father Kolbe didn't survive, supporting others helped him live by his moral code, and not doing so would likely have ruined him. The support of others may help some when encountering conflict, but that support has to come from somewhere – those who are helped by supporting others.

There are many responses to conflict, and all are dependent on the individual. They may find that the support of others helps them through these times of strife, or they may want to go alone, unwilling to love things and people which can easily be taken away by conflict. Alternatively, they may live by a code of strict Kantian ethics, and need to assist others in order to help themselves. In the end, the response is morally relative to the individual.

Encountering Conflict – Paradise Road – Hannah Woolston 2013

‘The human spirit will rise above the despair and tragedy of conflict.’

In times of extreme discord humans will respond differently; for some the external pressures become too much to bear while for others immeasurable inner strength will prevail. In some instances people are able to draw courage from a group, their burden lessened by the feelings of support stemming from the commonality they enjoy which allows them to unite with others for the common purpose of survival. Some dire situations produce ‘heroes’ as individual ‘leaders’ emerge and subsequently serve as an inspiration to those around them. Where there will be those resilient enough to endure and overcome the hardships they are faced with there will always be those circumstances where hope and spiritual resistance is insufficient and ultimately their fate has already been decided. Mary Dryburgh said “sometimes god reaches down and pulls the wings off his butterflies”

The camaraderie and commonality experienced by victimised groups assists in conquering the adversities they are forced to endure. The plural voice of a group will always sing louder than any one person ever can on their own. Unison within a community embodies spiritual resistance in its deepest sense. The formation of the vocal orchestra serves to connect disenfranchised groups interned against their will. Music’s capacity to encompass groups experiencing cultural divide highlights its importance in triumphing over conflict. The Dutch and English women prisoners unite to hum the New World Symphony, which the name itself suggests spurs hope and beauty in an otherwise impoverished society. As is echoed on the pages of Helen Colijn’s ‘Song of Survival’ the inspiration the women draw from Mary Dryburgh’s ‘Captive’s Hymn’ goes some length to comfort a dehumanised group; ‘give us strength to endure, keep our hearts serene and pure...be we free or captives still’. Links can be made to the elaborate pretend storybook crafted by teachers in the oppressed Lodz Ghetto. While the fiction serves as a warning to children, it simultaneously offers a beacon of hope of a life beyond the ghetto walls. Creativity is vital in enabling victims a temporary escape from their predicament, and ultimately, symbolises a future beyond the current day where strength can be drawn from being a member of a group. In times of strife and brutality certain individuals are able to rise above and act as a role model and servant to those around them. Adrienne’s gentle persistence although misinterpreted by a cynical few is her gift to a community she understands and attempts to improve the situation for all. Adrienne’s refusal to relinquish her morals and bow down to a drunken Japanese soldiers’ attempted rape signifies her immense courage that goes on to empower others in the camp. The care and selflessness she exhibits in dire situations, parallels can be drawn with Aung San Suu Kyi who manifests profound altruism in Burma’s struggle for democracy. Under home detention for 18 years Suu Kyi maintains her morals in threat of her own freedom and needs. When offered the chance to be freed and reunited with her family under the condition she never return to her native country Suu Kyi avidly declines despite the suffering she herself endures. Her faith in a democratic future for Burma accentuates this resilience of the human spirit to rise above grievous plights. Amidst times of grave discord the unshakeable inner strength of individuals can succeed.

When subject or witness to unfathomable atrocities some will draw strength from religion. Faith in god and human race itself can sustain people of reprobate actions by some. Mary Drummond, an English missionary gains strength from her faith, believing that regardless of the hardships she endures they will irrevocably bring her nearer heaven. Solace in religion

offers hope in times where it is lacking, and as Vivian Bullwinkel wisely speaks to little Dot “don’t look at the ground, look up at the stars”. A belief in an entity greater than the conflict is an innate in human tendency to surpass any contingencies, good or bad.

There will inevitably be some who are unable to overcome the harsh nature of their situation, surrendering their morals or lives to an external cause. People suffering violent conflicts undeniably require the will to live. If hope is lost one’s spirit intrinsically fades. Rosemary thrives off a promise of being reunited with her true love Dennis, but upon witnessing his imminent execution she loses all hope “none of us will ever leave Sumatra” and gives in to the harsh realities of camp life. Where Rosemary’s spirit falters Vivian Bullwinkel is truly admirable for continuing her quest for survival despite her status as the sole survivor of the Bangka Island massacre. Where Rosemary loses faith Bullwinkel is able to rise to the most defining of challenges and live on to bear witness to her previous friends and colleagues. For even the sole few strong enough to bear such heavy a cross forgiveness is seldom a wilful expression. However in Bullwinkel’s visits to Japan to bravely account to the Tokyo War Crime Tribunal she views firsthand the devastating and suffering experienced by Hiroshima. Despite initially believing forgiveness was beyond her Bullwinkel was deeply “moved” by the realities she saw as her human spirit is able to rise above prejudices and find common ground with a former enemy. Tragedy through melancholic culture forges connections on a basic humanitarian level and proves that love and the will to live surpass all.

Human nature has evolved to create coping mechanism enabling individuals to survive conflict, both physically and emotionally, be them victim or perpetrator. The morality of aggressors comes under question and the exact essence of their actions under weighed pressure. The strength of the human spirit is undeniable and does not always extend to include the perpetrators of violence. Hiroshima pilot Paul Tibbets died aged 92 with “no regrets” believing the bombings were the right thing to do. Contrary to this was renaissance pilot Claude Eatherly who became a figurehead of America’s guilt. Unsuccessful suicide attempts combined with distinctly odd crimes was the evidence of a severe guilt complex where the man had arguably lost his morals. Through correspondence with Austrian philosopher Gunther Anders, Eatherly managed to alter his life. His new response was advocating against nuclear weaponry to prevent hostile blood spillages in the future. Often extreme circumstances push people to breaking point, and experiences Tim O’Brien describes as a “moral split” felt as a “physical rupture”. The millions who perhaps must search deeper than most to unveil inner morality. Those who hold on to their ethics in times of strife like Hugh Thompson are reminders that the human spirit does beat strong in some of those we deem to be the aggressors of conflict.

From conflict emerges exhibits of strength and resistance that defies malevolence. As manifested by the survivors of conflict throughout the ages the human spirit is unequivocal under immense strain. Where at times it may fail, the extraordinary actions of mankind in desperate circumstances is tribute to the human spirit.