

## YEAR 12 ADVANCED ENGLISH 2019, MODULE A: TEXTUAL CONVERSATIONS

**You have studied two texts composed at different times. When you consider these texts and their contexts, how has your understanding of the concepts and values of each text been developed and reshaped?**

Valid works of literature reflect their contexts whilst developing and challenging relevant concepts and values. Original texts and modern appropriations have the power to broaden the audiences understanding through intertextuality. Value is added to an appropriated text due to its ability to reflect modern society whilst past texts remain important in outlining continuously relevant concepts. Both past and current works of literature have the power to reshape perceptions that are traditionally accepted by society. Shakespeare's play 'The Tempest' and Atwood's postmodern novel 'Hag Seed' achieve this through explorations of imprisonment and forgiveness. Composers interpretations of these concepts resonate and disonate according to context and values. Such timeless concepts will everlastingly be part of literatures ability to develop and question universal beliefs.

'The Tempest' explores imprisonment by shifting traditional paradigms of colonialism, allowing audiences to consider the unjust nature of colonisation by presenting it as irrational and unethical. Shakespeare introduces Caliban's mistreatment to outline his mental and physical imprisonment, reshaping audiences' assumptions of good human values by painting them as oppressive instead. In contrast, Atwood rejects the notion of psychologically imprisoning the inmates by using art, literature and creativity to provide them with a voice, hence dissonating with Caliban, who remains a slave. Shakespeare develops his idea through Caliban's imprisonment of the body and mind when he states (*aside*) "I must obey; his art is of such power...". The use of *aside* as a dramatic element subjects the audience to a brief moment of Caliban's thoughts, allowing readers to reflect on his distress and inability to defend himself. This demonstrates personal experiences of imprisonment in one's own environment and mind, proving that humankind controls those deemed less civilised, causing them suffering. Prospero threatens Caliban, implying he is his slave. Shakespeare's metaphor "wreck thee with old crams" demonstrates Prospero's power to use force, causing Caliban to obey orders out of fear. Colonisation is a contextual reflection of the Renaissance movement in 1607, when English colonization in America began concentrating on territories of New England and Virginia. Shakespeare was also inspired by Montaigne's essay "Of the Cannibals". He incorporates imprisonment to depict his beliefs of Western colonisation being foolish, encouraging audiences to develop the same views. Humans assume they are morally just enough to grant freedom to others. The play challenges readers to reconsider these assumptions regardless of the passing of time. Atwood's appropriation contrastingly converses with the play, reimagining Caliban's mental torture by differently appropriating her 'hagseeds' as being mentally free, utilising the arts to figuratively provide escape from literal prisons.

Atwood outlines literature and theatres power to provide escapism for those who are physically imprisoned, causing readers to understand the importance the arts have in creating freedom through imagination. Atwood's appropriation emphasises her intertextual approach to storytelling which encourages readers to re-explore 'The Tempest' with a postmodern lens. Through her postmodern fiction, she disonantes with Shakespeare's depiction of Caliban as a slave by giving the prisoners the opportunity to explore mental liberation. The use of the screenplay format "...*first scene of the Fletcher Correctional Players' production of The Tempest*" conveys intertextuality by resonating with the beginning of 'The Tempest'. Atwood's incorporation of "*Fletcher Correctional*" outlines the prisoners crucial role in the production and eagerness to be a part of it in order to escape their physical

prisons. Rather than depicting her prisoners as powerless like Shakespeare did with Caliban, Atwood incorporates them within the production in order for acting to imaginatively remove them from their incarceration. Intertextuality is evident in the inmate's musical reference to Caliban as music remains a crucial element in both texts. The lyrics "Who's more monstrous, who's more monstrous than you?" include a rhetorical question and repetition, incorporating Atwood's appropriation of Caliban's oppressed character by transforming him into a likable persona for the prisoners to identify with, proving they create literary and artistic versions of reality to achieve mental escapism, emphasising arts ability to eliminate psychological imprisonment. 'Hag-seed' is a contextual mirror of late 20th century postmodern beliefs of rejection from universal paradigms such as religion, conventional philosophy, capitalism and gender. Atwood values typical humanist beliefs of liberty as well as postmodern storytelling. This is evident in her stylistic use of intertextuality as she converses with the play by resonating and dissonating with Shakespeare's concept of imprisonment. Such concepts are developed and reshaped to provoke readers to consider the vital role of the arts within contemporary society.

Forgiveness in 'The Tempest' reflects traditional religious paradigms whilst causing audiences to consider the universality of forgiveness in human nature. Intertextuality is evident as Atwood shifts Shakespeare's notions of forgiveness into a constant thirst for revenge, incorporating a secular perspective. Forgiveness is highlighted when Prospero declares "...rarer action is in virtue than in vengeance". Juxtaposition of 'virtue' and 'vengeance' states forgiveness is stronger than revenge, removing the previous notions of revenge that resonated with 'Hag-seed', and reimagining the values in the play as Christian and based on good morals, therefore creating a dissonance. Prospero's request for forgiveness incorporates *theatrum mundi*, he announces "...let your indulgence set me free. (Epilogue.1-20)". The epilogue demonstrates renouncement from sin and removal from the supernatural in order to be forgiven. Human nature continuously sins and forgiveness will always be relevant yet Atwood diverts readers away from this concept. Christian values in Elizabethan times made forgiveness relevant as people were conflicted about revenge as the idea of revenge creating honour was valued by the Elizabethans yet forbidden by their religious beliefs. During that age, people's views were dictated protestant ideals, upheld by the ruling monarchy. This is evident in Shakespeare's final reversion back to religious connotations by ending in forgiveness. *The Tempest* is also viewed by as a farewell from Shakespeare to theatre. Shakespeare's ending reconsiders human natures need for forgiveness. His parallel of Christian beliefs causes readers to consider pre-existing values prominent in Shakespeare's time.

'Hag-seed' holds a key dissonance to the play due to its absence of forgiveness, causing readers to reconsider traditional religious morals while questioning society's inability to forgive. Atwood resonates with Shakespeare's depiction of revenge throughout his play yet does not maintain his diversion back to religious ideals. Atwood's use of drugs and special effects to enhance *mise-en-abyme* outlines Felix's inability to forgive as 8Handz states "...This is too sick even for me...". Irony and satirical humour is evident as the prisoner demonstrates more humanity than Felix, reshaping values of forgiveness by demonstrating individuals refuse to forgive, regardless of how looked up to they are. Felix's cruelty opposes religious ethics by outlining the harshness of humanity, reinforced in Sal's agony as he shouts, "they'll find the footage, they'll destroy-". The fractured sentence proves Felix's urgency to interrupt Sal stating he has threatening evidence, proving inability to forgive and trust, which is a dissonance to Prospero and Alonso's forgiveness. Removal of religious values from the play parallel Atwood's doctrinaire agnostic beliefs. Agnostics believe the existence of a God cannot be known unless scientifically proven. Atwood encourages readers to develop these secular perspectives, questioning previously unchallenged religious ideals through Atwood's postmodern and agnostic beliefs. Along with this, audiences are provoked to reflect on the lack of mercy in human nature.

Texts have the power to converse with one another through resonances and dissonances, shaping perspectives on endlessly relevant concepts. Timeless works of literature provide audiences with the ability to further develop and reshape significant values present in past and contemporary societies, whilst challenging certain beliefs. Both appropriations and the original texts they have sprung from have the capacity to reflect contexts and values. Such will universally be evident in Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' and Atwood's postmodern appropriation 'Hag Seed.'