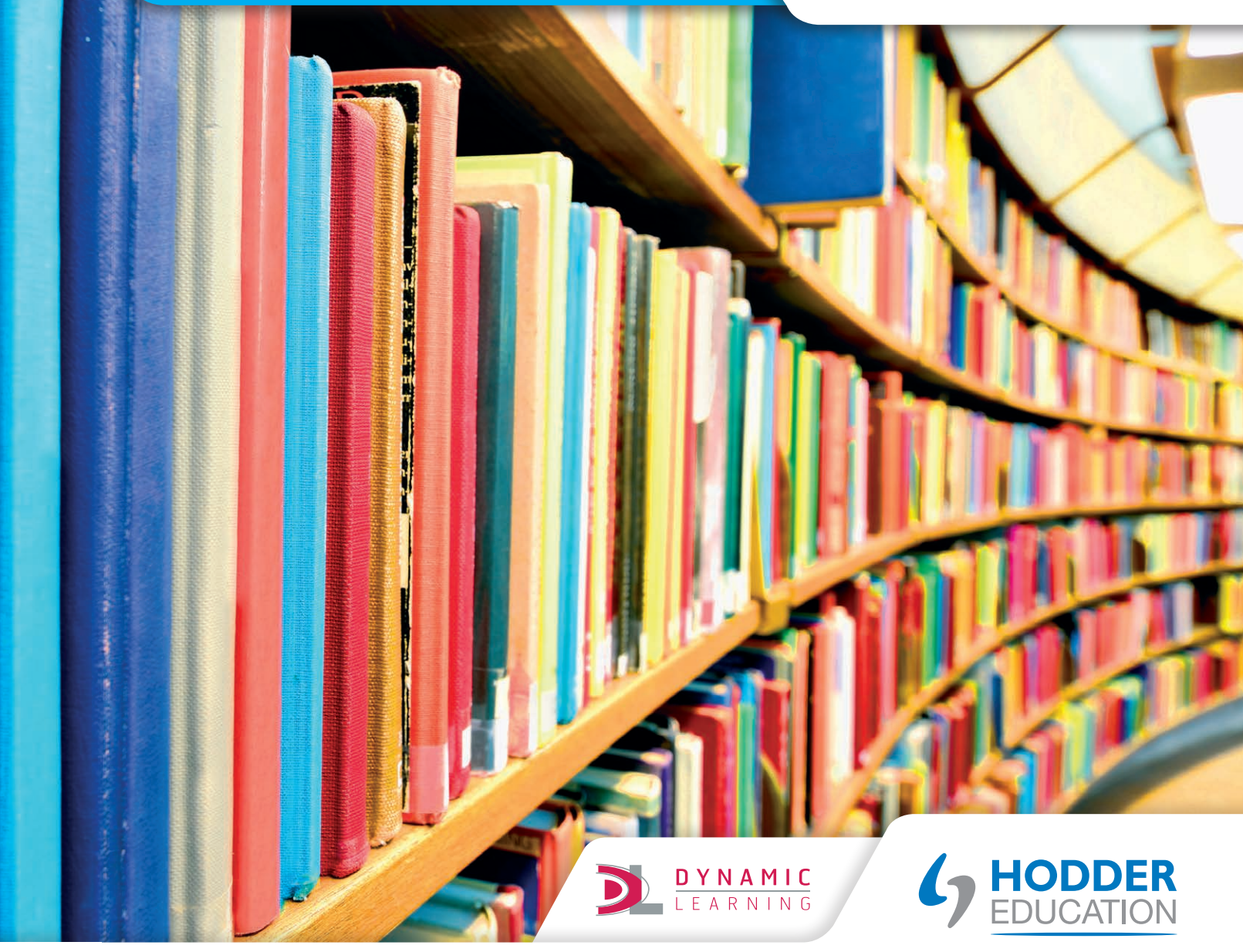
MYP *by Concept*
2

Language & Literature

SAMPLE CHAPTER

Zara Kaiserimam



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Contents

How to use this book

Welcome to Hodder Education's *MYP by Concept* Series! Each chapter is designed to lead you through an *inquiry* into the concepts of Language and literature, and how they interact in real-life global contexts.

Each chapter is framed with a *Key concept* and a *Related concept* and is set in a *Global context*.

The *Statement of Inquiry* provides the framework for this inquiry, and the *Inquiry questions* then lead us through the exploration as they are developed through each chapter.

KEY WORDS

Key words are included to give you access to vocabulary for the topic. **Glossary terms** are highlighted and, where applicable, **search terms** are given to encourage independent learning and research skills.

As you explore, activities suggest ways to learn through *action*.

ATL

Activities are designed to develop your *Approaches to Learning* (ATL) skills.

Definitions are included for important terms and information boxes are included to give background information, more detail and explanation.

Assessment opportunities in this chapter:

Some activities are *formative* as they allow you to practise certain of the MYP Language and literature *Assessment Objectives*. Other activities can be used by you or your teachers to assess your achievement against all parts of an Assessment Objective.

Key *Approaches to Learning* skills for MYP Language and literature are highlighted whenever we encounter them.

Hint

In some of the Activities, we provide Hints to help you work on the assignment. This also introduces you to the new Hint feature in the e-assessment.

EXTENSION

Extension activities allow you to explore a topic further.

These Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills will be useful …

- Thinking skills
- Communication skills
- Research skills
- Collaboration skills
- Organization skills

KEY WORDS

historical fiction, suspense, analepsis, prolepsis, anachronism, mutiny

We will reflect on this learner profile attribute …

- Inquirer – We nurture our curiosity, developing skills for inquiry and research.

Assessment opportunities in this chapter:

- **Criterion A:** Analysing
- **Criterion B:** Organizing
- **Criterion C:** Producing text
- **Criterion D:** Using language

ACTIVITY: 'Certain Items of Historical Interest'

ATL

- Communication skills: Make inferences and draw conclusions

For this chapter you will require a copy of *The Ruby in the Smoke* by Philip Pullman (Scholastic edition, 2015).

Turn to page ix of *The Ruby in the Smoke* and look at the items of historical interest from 1872.

1 **What inferences can you make about life in Britain during the late-nineteenth century?**
2 **Discuss why you think the writer has included this information at the start of the book.**
3 **Use the content on this page to make some predictions about what the story might be about.**

1 How can we separate fact from fiction? 3

! Take action

! While the book provides many opportunities for action and plenty of content to enrich the conceptual relationships, you must be an active part of this process. Guidance is given to help you with your own research, including how to carry out research, how to form your own research questions, and how to link and develop your study of Language and literature to the global issues in our twenty-first-century world.

You are prompted to consider your conceptual understanding in a variety of activities throughout each chapter.

Finally, at the end of the chapter you are asked to reflect on what you have learnt with our *Reflection table*, maybe to think of new questions brought to light by your learning.

Use this table to reflect on your own learning in this chapter.

Questions we asked	Answers we found	Any further questions now?			
Factual:					
Conceptual:					
Debatable:					
Approaches to learning you used in this chapter:	Description – what new skills did you learn?	How well did you master the skills?			
		Novice	Learner	Practitioner	Expert
Collaboration skills					
Communication skills					
Creative-thinking skills					
Information literacy skills					
Media literacy skills					
Reflection skills					
Learner profile attribute(s)	Reflect on the importance of being knowledgeable for your learning in this chapter.				
Knowledgeable					

We have incorporated Visible Thinking – ideas, framework, protocol and thinking routines – from Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education into many of our activities.

▼ Links to:

Like any other subject, Language and literature is just one part of our bigger picture of the world. Links to other subjects are discussed.

● We will reflect on this learner profile attribute …

- Each chapter has an *IB learner profile* attribute as its theme, and you are encouraged to reflect on these too.

6 Do girls run the world?

Throughout history women have used **creativity** as a means of **personal and cultural expression**. By looking closely at the **themes** explored in women's literature throughout the ages, we can develop an understanding of history from a female **point of view**.

CONSIDER AND ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

Factual: Who was the first female writer to be published?

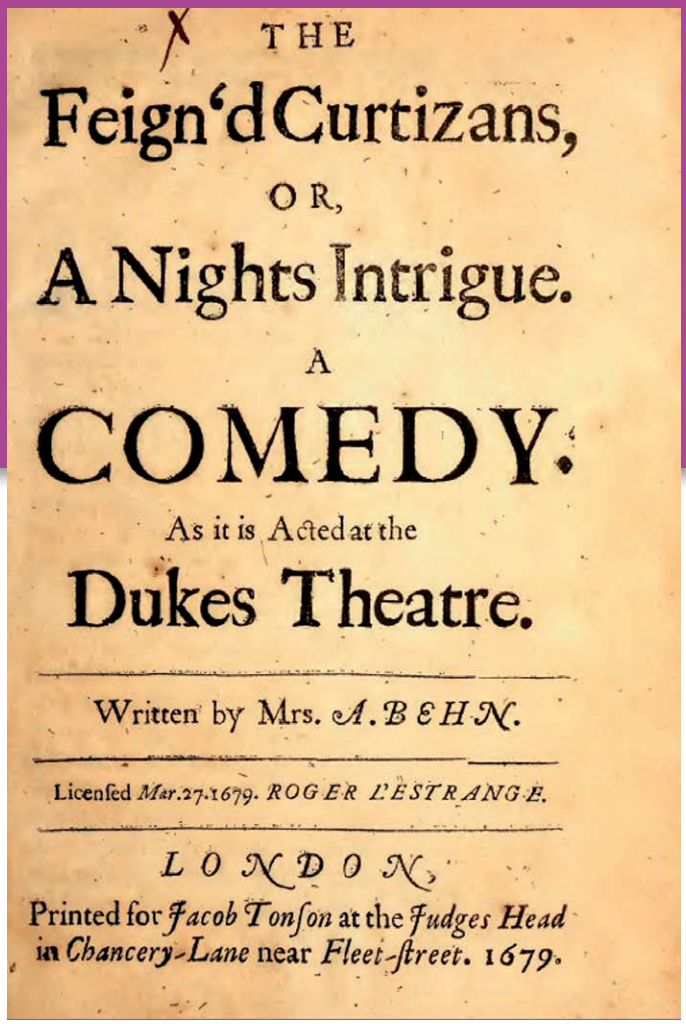
Conceptual: Why does women's writing matter? What can we learn about women's history through reading women's literature? What can we learn from women's poetry?

Debatable: Do men and women write differently? Why should we read more women's fiction? Why are certain literary genres dominated by male writers?

Now **share and compare** your thoughts and ideas with your partner, or with the whole class.

IN THIS CHAPTER, WE WILL …

- **Find out** who some of the most important women writers are.
- **Explore** what we can learn from women's writing and how it can give us a different point of view on history.
- **Take action** to help end gender inequality and celebrate women's contribution to society.



THE
Feign'd Curtizans,
OR,
A Nights Intrigue.
A
COMEDY.
As it is Acted at the
Dukes Theatre.
Written by Mrs. A. BEHN.
Licensed Mar. 27. 1679. ROGER L'ESTRANGE.
LONDON,
Printed for Jacob Tonson at the Judges Head in Chancery-Lane near Fleet-street. 1679.

These Approaches to Learning (ATL) skills will be useful …

- Thinking skills
- Collaborative skills
- Organization skills
- Research skills
- Communication skills

We will reflect on this learner profile attribute …

- Thinker – We use critical and creative-thinking skills to analyse and take responsible action on complex problems.

ACTIVITY: How inequality starts before birth

ATL

- Collaboration skills: Practise empathy
- Critical-thinking skills: Draw reasonable conclusions and generalizations

Visit the link below and watch the animation.

www.theguardian.com/global-development/video/2016/oct/11/a-girls-life-how-inequality-starts-before-birth-video-international-day-of-the-girl

In pairs, discuss the following:

1. **What is the purpose of the video? Who is the target audience? What message is being conveyed?**
2. **How did it make you feel? Reflect on what you have learnt.**
3. **Which fact or statistic surprised you most? Explain why.**
4. **Evaluate how effective the video is at conveying the intended message. Identify examples from the video used by the creators to support your answer.**
5. **Discuss what you think could be done to tackle the problem of gender equality.**

Assessment opportunities

- In this activity you have practised skills that are assessed using Criterion A: Analysing.

Assessment opportunities in this chapter:

- **Criterion A:** Analysing
- **Criterion B:** Organizing
- **Criterion C:** Producing text
- **Criterion D:** Using language

KEY WORDS

feminism *nom-de-plume*

Why does women's writing matter?

Women make up almost 50 per cent of the world's population, and over the centuries have made a tremendous contribution to all aspects of life, including art. But sadly, women haven't always received the recognition they deserve for their achievements. Women have overcome the obstacles which have lain in their paths and changed the course of history by demanding equality, a voice and a rightful place in their societies, and continue to do so in many parts of the world today.

Hypophora

Most of us are familiar with rhetorical questions (these are questions which don't require an answer, but rather are designed to create a dramatic effect or to encourage the audience to think), but what do you call a question that is immediately answered by the writer themselves?

Questions raised and then immediately answered by the writer are referred to as 'hypophora'. Take, for example, Beyoncé's '*Who run the world? Girls!*' lyric.

This chapter celebrates the contribution women have made in literature and is an inquiry into what women's writing, past and present, and from across the world, can teach us.

ACTIVITY: Words and women

ATL

Communication skills: Negotiate ideas and knowledge with peers and teachers

To start, in pairs discuss what you think 'feminism' is. Come up with a definition as a group and then use the Internet to help you refine it. Are you a feminist? Should we all be feminists? Discuss.

- **Interpret what each quote means.**
- **Analyse the thoughts, feelings, ideas or attitudes about women that are being expressed in these quotes.**
- **Which one do you like the most? Explain why.**

'No country can ever truly flourish if it stifles the potential of its women and deprives itself of the contributions of half of its citizens.'

Michelle Obama

'Who run the world? Girls!'

Beyoncé Knowles

'A woman is like a tea bag – you never know how strong she is until she gets into hot water.'

Eleanor Roosevelt

'I myself have never been able to find out precisely what a feminist is. I only know that people that call me a feminist whenever I express sentiments that differentiate me from a doormat.'

Rebecca West

'… if we revert to history, we shall find that the women who have distinguished themselves have neither been the most beautiful nor the most gentle of their sex.'

Mary Wollstonecraft

Assessment opportunities

- In this activity you have practised skills that are assessed in Criterion A: Analysing.

What can we learn about women's history through reading women's literature?

WHO WAS THE FIRST FEMALE WRITER TO BE PUBLISHED?

Aphra Behn is often credited with being the first woman writer to earn a living by her pen. She began to make a living by writing plays for the Duke's Theatre, London, but is also known for her novels and poems.

Did you know …

… many women writers in the nineteenth century adopted **noms-de-plume** or **pseudonyms**, which are fictitious names used by authors? Sometimes known as pen names, these can conceal a writer's identity. The Brontë sisters, Charlotte, Emily and Anne, published their first books under the pen names of Currer, Ellis and Acton Bell. Mary Ann Evans wrote under the name George Eliot, but was obliged to reveal her identity following the success of her novel *Adam Bede,* which prompted several men to come forward and claim authorship of the book! The French writer Aurore Dupin published several works under the pseudonym George Sand; Dupin was even known to disguise herself as a man so she could wander freely through the streets of Paris and observe life in the city.

In pairs, discuss the reasons why women might have used pen names. Use the Internet to find out more.

If you were to write a novel, what would be your pen name?

In a country house in the 1930s, something quite remarkable fell out of a cupboard during a search for a ping-pong ball: the only known manuscript of *The Book of Margery Kempe*, a fifteenth-century account of one woman's life. Believed to be one of the earliest examples of published women's writing, the book not only gives us a remarkable insight into life in medieval England, but also shows us that women like Margery were challenging social convention even then by deviating from prescribed 'feminine' roles and duties.

Throughout history, women's lives have been fraught with difficulty, and although we have made great strides towards achieving equality, we still have a long way to go even today. Up until very recently, the achievements and contributions of women have often been overlooked by historians and reading women's literature is one way in which we can fill in the gaps and develop a deeper understanding of the lives and struggles of women over time.

Despite the odds (literacy, poverty and rigid social norms to name a few), women have always written, and for a number of reasons too. Literature, whether that be poetry, fiction or drama, is a means of personal expression and writing gave women a voice in times where they were often denied one. But for some, writing served a more material purpose; it allowed women a chance to be economically independent. Take for instance seventeenth-century writer Aphra Behn, who wrote to earn money to save herself from debtor's prison. Behn is widely believed to be the first professional writer in English history and, according to Virginia Woolf, *'all women together ought to let flowers fall upon [her tomb], for it was she who earned them the right to speak their minds.'*

ACTIVITY: What can we learn from reading the work of Jane Austen?

ATL

- Communication skills: Take effective notes in class; Read critically and for comprehension

- *'Give a girl an education and introduce her properly into the world, and ten to one but she has the means of settling well, without further expense to anybody.'* Jane Austen

The year 2017 marked the 200th anniversary of Jane Austen's death. Austen is widely considered to be one of the greatest English novelists. Although Austen's novels failed to make her rich, she did make some profit from her writing.

Visit the link and watch the video. Complete the following tasks:

1. **Take notes about what we as readers can learn from Austen's novels. List some of the titles of her novels mentioned in the video.**
2. **Summarize what you learn about Jane Austen's life in a one paragraph biography.**
3. **In pairs, discuss whether you think any of the issues or lessons referred to in the video are still relevant today.**

www.youtube.com/watch?v=LIYiThAyY8s&index=18&list=PLwxNMb28XmpdJpJzF2YRBnfmOva0HE0ZI

Now, read the opening chapter of one of Austen's most popular novels, *Pride and Prejudice*, and complete the tasks that follow.

Assessment opportunities

- In this activity you have practised skills that are assessed using Criterion A: Analysing.

What can you infer from the extract about the position of women in society at the time?

Chapter 1

It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.

However little known the feelings or views of such a man may be on his first entering a neighbourhood, this truth is so well fixed in the minds of the surrounding families, that he is considered the rightful property of some one or other of their daughters.

'My dear Mr. Bennet,' said his lady to him one day, 'have you heard that Netherfield Park is let at last?'

Mr. Bennet replied that he had not.

'But it is,' returned she; 'for Mrs. Long has just been here, and she told me all about it.'

Mr. Bennet made no answer.

'Do you not want to know who has taken it?' cried his wife impatiently.

'You want to tell me, and I have no objection to hearing it.'

This was invitation enough.

'Why, my dear, you must know, Mrs. Long says that Netherfield is taken by a young man of large fortune from the north of England; that he came down on Monday in a chaise and four to see the place, and was so much delighted with it, that he agreed with Mr. Morris immediately; that he is to take possession before Michaelmas, and some of his servants are to be in the house by the end of next week.'

'What is his name?'

'Bingley.'

What factors might have influenced a woman's decision to accept or reject a marriage proposal?

'Is he married or single?'

'Oh! Single, my dear, to be sure! A single man of large fortune; four or five thousand a year. What a fine thing for our girls!'

'How so? How can it affect them?'

'My dear Mr. Bennet,' replied his wife, 'how can you be so tiresome! You must know that I am thinking of his marrying one of them.'

'Is that his design in settling here?'

'Design! Nonsense, how can you talk so! But it is very likely that he may fall in love with one of them, and therefore you must visit him as soon as he comes.'

In pairs, discuss why you think women were expected to marry during Austen's time and what the consequences of remaining single might have been. Use the Internet to see if you can find out.

What does the dialogue reveal to us about the characters?

'I see no occasion for that. You and the girls may go, or you may send them by themselves, which perhaps will be still better, for as you are as handsome as any of them, Mr. Bingley may like you the best of the party.'

'My dear, you flatter me. I certainly have had my share of beauty, but I do not pretend to be anything extraordinary now. When a woman has five grown-up daughters, she ought to give over thinking of her own beauty.'

'In such cases, a woman has not often much beauty to think of.'

'But, my dear, you must indeed go and see Mr. Bingley when he comes into the neighbourhood.'

'It is more than I engage for, I assure you.'

'But consider your daughters. Only think what an establishment it would be for one of them. Sir William and Lady Lucas are determined to go, merely on that account, for in general, you know, they visit no newcomers. Indeed you must go, for it will be impossible for us to visit him if you do not.'

'You are over-scrupulous, surely. I dare say Mr. Bingley will be very glad to see you; and I will send a few lines by you to assure him of my hearty consent to his marrying whichever he chooses of the girls; though I must throw in a good word for my little Lizzy.'

'I desire you will do no such thing. Lizzy is not a bit better than the others; and I am sure she is not half so handsome as Jane, nor half so good-humoured as Lydia. But you are always giving her the preference.'

'They have none of them much to recommend them,' replied he; 'they are all silly and ignorant like other girls; but Lizzy has something more of quickness than her sisters.'

What ideas about women are being presented here?

'Mr. Bennet, how can you abuse your own children in such a way? You take delight in vexing me. You have no compassion for my poor nerves.'

'You mistake me, my dear. I have a high respect for your nerves. They are my old friends. I have heard you mention them with consideration these last twenty years at least.'

'Ah, you do not know what I suffer.'

'But I hope you will get over it, and live to see many young men of four thousand a year come into the neighbourhood.'

'It will be no use to us, if twenty such should come, since you will not visit them.'

'Depend upon it, my dear, that when there are twenty, I will visit them all.'

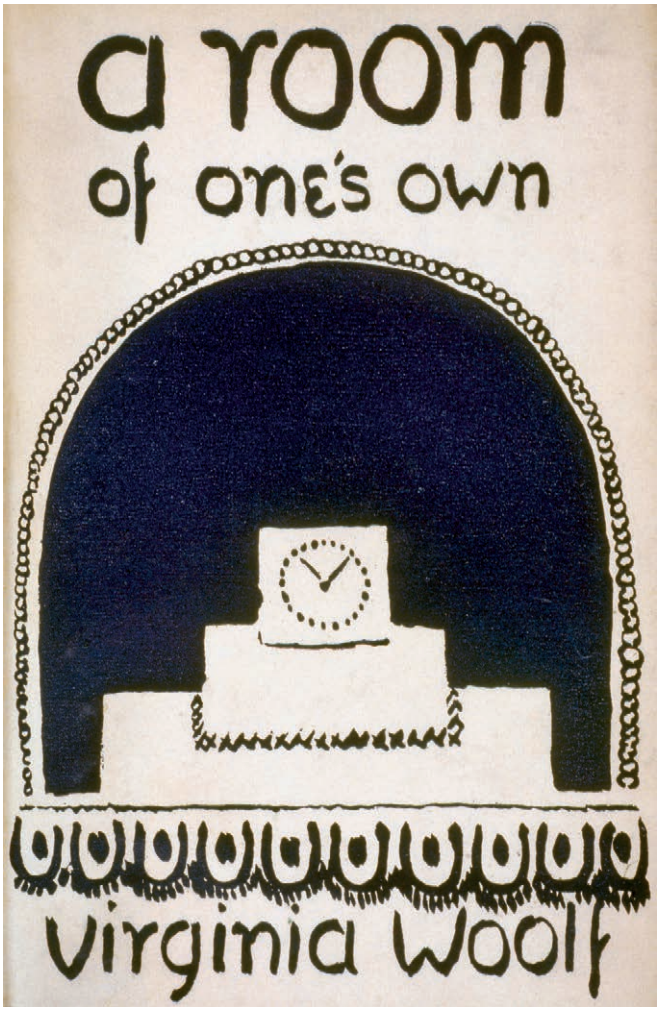
Mr. Bennet was so odd a mixture of quick parts, sarcastic humour, reserve, and caprice, that the experience of three-and-twenty years had been insufficient to make his wife understand his character. Her mind was less difficult to develop. She was a woman of mean understanding, little information, and uncertain temper. When she was discontented, she fancied herself nervous. The business of her life was to get her daughters married; its solace was visiting and news.

Identify whose voice this is? Comment on the effect of this.

ACTIVITY: *A Room of One's Own*

ATL

- Communication skills: Read critically and for comprehension



The modernist writer Virginia Woolf was an important voice in British literature during the early-twentieth century. Virginia Woolf was an advocate for women's rights and wanted to raise the status of women in society.

In *A Room of One's Own,* her famous 1929 essay on women and fiction, Woolf builds on the premise that *'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'* – *'500 a year to be exact'*, she later clarifies. In pairs, **discuss** and **interpret** what she means.

For Woolf, women were not free to participate fully in life or able to thrive creatively because they were economically oppressed and poorer than their male counterparts. Women didn't have the private space necessary for creative production or the money to support themselves so they could devote their minds and energy to their writing.

In the essay, Woolf takes a chronological journey through centuries of women's literature and in the extract opposite she shares her thoughts on nineteenth-century literature, and the era of the professional woman writer.

Read the extract and complete the tasks.

1. **What connections between the female writers of the nineteenth century does Woolf explore in this section?**
2. **What does Woolf suggest is the reason behind this?**
3. **Which technique does she use to explore this idea?**
4. **Can you link this back to her idea that *'a woman must have money and a room of her own if she is to write fiction'*?**
5. **What does Woolf imply about how certain female writers might have developed had their circumstances been different? What is your opinion of this?**

Assessment opportunities

- In this activity you have practised skills that are assessed using Criterion A: Analysing.

Here, then, one had reached the early nineteenth century. And here, for the first time, I found several shelves given up entirely to the works of women. But why, I could not help asking, as I ran my eyes over them, were they, with very few exceptions, all novels? The original impulse was to poetry. The 'supreme head of song' was a poetess. Both in France and in England the women poets precede the women novelists. Moreover, I thought, looking at the four famous names, what had George Eliot in common with Emily Brontë? Did not Charlotte Brontë fail entirely to understand Jane Austen? Save for the possibly relevant fact that not one of them had a child, four more incongruous characters could not have met together in a room – so much so that it is tempting to invent a meeting and a dialogue between them. Yet by some strange force they were all compelled when they wrote, to write novels. Had it something to do with being born of the middle class, I asked; and with the fact, which Miss Emily Davies a little later was so strikingly to demonstrate, that the middle-class family in the early nineteenth century was possessed only of a single sitting-room between them? If a woman wrote, she would have to write in the common sitting-room. And, as Miss Nightingale was so vehemently to complain, – 'women never have an half hour ... that they can call their own' – she was always interrupted. Still it would be easier to write prose and fiction there than to write poetry or a play. Less concentration is required. Jane Austen wrote like that to the end of her days. 'How she was able to effect all this', her nephew writes in his Memoir, 'is surprising, for she had no separate study to repair to, and most of the work must have been done in the general sitting-room, subject to all kinds of casual interruptions. She was careful that her occupation should not be suspected by servants or visitors or any persons beyond her own family party. Jane Austen hid her manuscripts or covered them with a piece of blotting-paper. Then, again, all the literary training that a woman had in the early nineteenth century was training in the observation of character, in the analysis of emotion. Her sensibility had been educated for centuries by the influences of the common sitting-room. People's feelings were impressed on her; personal relations were always before her eyes. Therefore, when the middle-class woman took to writing, she naturally wrote novels, even though, as seems evident enough, two of the four famous women here named were not by nature novelists. Emily Brontë should have written poetic plays; the overflow of George Eliot's capacious mind should have spread itself when the creative impulse was spent upon history or biography. They wrote novels, however; one may even go further, I said, taking *Pride and Prejudice* from the shelf, and say that they wrote good novels.

EXTENSION

Project Gutenberg is an online resource which provides access to free electronic, or eBooks. The project was set up to encourage the creation and distribution of eBooks.

Follow the link below to access more of Virginia Woolf's work. We recommend starting with some of her shorter essays.

http://gutenberg.net.au/pages/woolf.html

ACTIVITY: Women writers – research and presentations

ATL

- Information literacy skills: Access information to be informed and inform others
- Communication skills: Read critically and for comprehension

For this task you will carry out extensive research and prepare a detailed presentation for your peers. You can choose from one of the three following options:

1. **Focus on a particular woman writer of your choice.**
2. **Choose a particular time period (century or decade) or movement (for example, Romanticism or the Renaissance) and explore a variety of women writers and texts.**
3. **Explore women writers and writing from a particular country.**

You should spend at least a lesson to carry out extensive research and use a variety of sources. You might want to find out the following (focus on the bullet points most relevant to the option you have selected):

- **Biographical information about your selected writer or writers.**
- **The legacy/history of women's writing and how it may have changed over time.**
- **Social attitudes at the time towards women and writing.**
- **Historical context – what was happening at the time that some of these women were writing and their possible influence.**
- **The genre/genres of writing.**
- **Key literary works.**
- **Themes explored in women's writing.**
- **Publication and reception of the texts.**

Your presentation can take any form you please. Evaluate the most suitable way to present the content you have gathered.

In addition to your presentation, you must select a text by your (or one of your) selected writers – this could be a short poem or an extract from a longer text – and analyse and annotate it in detail. Share your text with your peers and guide them through a reading.

Assessment opportunities

- In this activity you have practised skills that are assessed using Criterion A: Analysing, Criterion B: Organizing and Criterion D: Using language.

Links to: Visual Arts – women and art

■ (Clockwise from left) Louise Bourgeois, Tracy Emin, Berthe Morisot, Frida Kahlo and Amrita Sher-Gil are just a few of the many female artists that have made an important contribution to the world of art.

Women have always created art but have often been overshadowed by their male counterparts. Visit the link below and read more about how women have been represented, underrepresented and misrepresented in art history.

www.khanacademy.org/humanities/art-history-basics/tools-understanding-art/a/a-brief-history-of-women-in-art

So far in this chapter we have looked at some aspects of the history of women's writing and explored some examples. We have carried out some research about female writers and have considered some of the obstacles they may have faced in times past. Through reading women's writing we have developed an understanding of social and historical contexts and have developed a different point of view on history.

Do men and women write differently?

WHY ARE CERTAIN LITERARY GENRES DOMINATED BY MALE WRITERS?

■ Why are female writers under-represented in certain genres?

'Women's writing' is the term often used to describe writing which captures the experiences and history of women. But this is a limiting definition. Women's writing is as diverse as the women who produce and, indeed, consume it. Writing produced by women spans all genres, fiction and non-fiction, but sadly, women writers are still under-represented in some areas.

Over the centuries, women have demonstrated time and time again that they are as capable at writing literature and non-fiction as their male counterparts.

Yet some critics believe that there are fundamental differences between the way men and women write. Since the 1970s linguists have developed theories about how men and women use language differently in their social interactions. But there is nothing to suggest that one gender is inherently better equipped to produce high quality literature.

In this section we will look at the under-representation of women writers in certain genres and explore female presentations of male characters and points of view.

ACTIVITY: Are women writers under-represented in imaginative fiction?

ATL

- Communication skills: Read critically and for comprehension
- Collaboration skills: Listen actively to other perspectives and ideas

Read the article in the link below and complete the following tasks:

www.theverge.com/2017/3/8/14835402/science-fiction-without-women-books-mary-shelley-ursula-k-le-guin

1. **What did Mary Robinette Kowal find after conducting her informal experiment? Does this surprise you?**
2. **What point does Liptak make about the target audience for fiction of this genre?**
3. **What does he suggest about the origins of the genre? Given the subject of our inquiry, why is this significant?**
4. **What point is made in the article about perspective?**
5. **Based on the content of the article, discuss how important you think the contribution of female writers is to the genre.**
6. **What challenges do female writers of imaginative fiction face? Why do you think this is?**
7. **Have you read any science fiction or fantasy novels? Are they written by men or women? Does this matter? Discuss in groups.**

Assessment opportunities

- In this activity you have practised skills that are assessed using Criterion A: Analysing.

ACTIVITY: Read, write, share: Can women write imaginative fiction?

ATL

- Communication skills: Read critically and for comprehension; Give and receive meaningful feedback
- Creative-thinking skills: Create original works and ideas
- Organization skills: Set goals that are challenging and realistic

Let's take a look at some examples of imaginative fiction written by women. Read the three extracts and complete the tasks.

1. **In pairs, discuss the genre conventions of imaginative fiction. You can refer to Chapter 3 in *Language & Literature 1* to refresh your memory. How many can you identify in these extracts?**
2. **For each text evaluate how effectively each writer transports you into the world they have created. Analyse the language and stylistic choices the writers use to achieve this.**
3. **Compare and contrast the texts. What do they have in common? How do they differ?**
4. **In pairs, discuss which one you enjoyed the most and explain why, making reference to the text.**
5. **Look again at Ursula Le Guin's *The Dispossessed*. What do you think happens next? Create a mind map of the possibilities then use your ideas to create a narrative description of what happens next. You should aim to write at least one page.**
6. **Share your writing and evaluate each other's work, and set targets to help you improve next time.**

Assessment opportunities

- In this activity you have practised skills that are assessed using Criterion A: Analysing, Criterion B: Organizing, Criterion C: Producing text and Criterion D: Using language.

Dragonworld

by Zhang Xinxin, translated by Helen Wang

As they come to the footbridge, his classmate whips a small hammer out of his trouser pocket, chips a piece of concrete off the pillar and pops it into the dragon's mouth. The dragon chomps with relish, spraying crumbs as it eats. The other dragons rush to snatch the crumbs from the ground, heads down, tails up, dust flying.

Dragons eating concrete? Is this a dream, wonders Zhaishao. He watches in amazement as the dragons gnaw on the pillars. A skirmish breaks out.

The dragons are eating away at the footbridge. As the concrete disappears, all that is left are the steel sinews weaving in and out, up and down, a dense interlocking spiral structure, like a tower of prehistoric fish bones on the beach. A dragon leaps up and bangs its head against it, sending a chunk of concrete crashing down and knocking over a cart full of sand and lime that had been left underneath. The youngsters scramble away as best they can, but the dragons keep their heads down and concentrate on the morsels of concrete. All except Zhaishao's little dragon which grabs hold of his T-shirt, and hauls him out of the sand. He notices a set of coloured bands on its front leg, the same ones he has seen on the girl's wrist! Zhaishao races home and as he runs inside he sees the little silver dragon vanish into the tall block by the footbridge and a dragon shadow appear in the window high up.

The Dispossessed

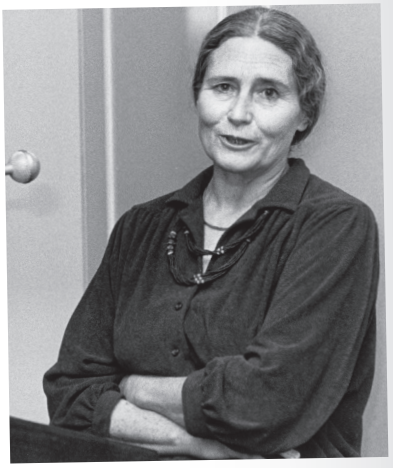
by Ursula Le Guin

The hatches of the shop closed. The Defense crew turned back, carrying their dead companion; they made no effort to stop the leaders of the crowd who came racing towards the ship, though the foreman, white with shock and rage, cursed them to hell as they ran past, and they swerved to avoid her. Once at the ship, the vanguard of the crowd scattered and stood irresolute. The silence of the ship, the abrupt movements of the huge skeletal gantries, the strange burned look of the ground, the absence of anything in human scale, disoriented them. A blast of steam of gas from something connected with the ship made some of them start; they looked up uneasily at the rockets, vast black tunnels overhead. A siren whooped in warning, far across the field. First one person and then another started back towards the gate. Nobody stopped them. Within ten minutes the field was clear, the crowd scattered out along the road to Abenay. Nothing appeared to have happened, after all.

The passenger watched. He saw the field, and the wall around the field, and far outside the wall the distant slopes of the Ne Theras, speckled with scrub holum and sparse, silvery moonthorn.

All this suddenly rushed dazzling down the screen. The passenger felt his head pressed against the padded rest. It was like a dentist's examination, the head pressed back, the jaw forced open. He could not get his breath, he felt sick, he felt his bowels loosen with fear. His whole body cried out to the enormous forces that had taken hold of him, *Not now, not yet, wait!*

Shikasta



by Doris Lessing

From: NOTES on PLANET SHIKASTA

for GUIDANCE of COLONIAL SERVANTS

Of all of the planets we have colonized totally or in part, this is the richest. Specifically: with the greatest potential for variety and range and profusion of its forms of life. This has always been so, throughout the very many changes it has – the accurate word, we are afraid – suffered. Shikasta tends towards extremes in all things. For instance, it has seen phases of enourmousness: gigantic lifeforms and in a wide variety. It has seen phases of the miniscule. Sometimes these epochs have overlapped. More than once the inhabitants of Shikasta have included creatures so large that one of them could consume the living space of hundreds of their co-inhabitants in a single meal. This example is on the scale of the visible (one might even say the dramatic), for the economy of the planet is such that every lifeform preys on another, is supported by another, and in turn is preyed upon, down to the most minute, the subatomic level. This is not always evident to the creatures themselves, who tend to become obsessed with what they consume, and to forget what in turn consumed them.

Over and over again, a shock or a strain in the peculiarly precarious balance of this planet has called forth an accident, and Shikasta has been virtually denuded of life. Again and again it has been jostling full with genera, and diseased because of it.

This planet is above all one of contrasts and contradictions, because of its in-built stresses. Tension is its essential nature. This is its strength. This is its weakness.

Envoys are requested to remember at all times that they cannot find on Shikasta what they will have become familiar with in other parts of our dominion and which therefore they will have become disposed to expect: very long periods of stasis, epochs of almost unchanging harmonious balance.

For instance. They may care to stand in front of the Model of Shikasta, Scale 3 – scaled, that is to roughly present sizes. (Dominant species half of Canonean size.) This sphere, which you will as they see it on their mapping and cartographic devices, has the diameter of their average predominant-species size.

ACTIVITY: Can women write believable male characters?

ATL

- Communication skills: Read critically and for comprehension
- Critical thinking skills: Evaluate evidence or argument

The writer V.S. Naipaul once said, '*I read a piece of writing and within a paragraph or two I know whether it is by a woman or not.*' How far do you agree with this statement? Think about some of the books you have read in the past. How aware were you of the writer's gender when you were reading the text? In pairs, discuss whether you think it is possible to tell whether a text has been written by a man or a woman.

Some critics have suggested that both male and female writers struggle to create characters of the opposite sex, but there are numerous literary texts which completely undermine this theory. Some male writers have written some of the most memorable female characters in history and likewise, many female writers have created authentic, well developed male characters. Think back to your study of *The Ruby in the Smoke* by Philip Pullman. How successfully does Pullman develop the character of Sally?

Read the short story opposite by Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie and complete the tasks:

1. **Identify the narrative voice. Whose point of view is the story from?**
2. **How does Adichie present the characters of the narrator's parents in her story? Comment on her use of language and stylistic choices.**
3. **Interpret what message she is trying to convey about superstition in Nigeria.**
4. **How does Adichie use time in the story?**
5. **What do we learn about class?**
6. **How is the character of the narrator presented in the story? Find some key quotes about his personality and analyse them.**
7. **What connects him to Raphael? What causes the friendship to break?**
8. **In pairs, discuss which IB learner profile attributes the narrator possesses and which he lacks.**
9. **Evaluate how well Adichie, a female writer, creates and develops the character of the narrator, who is male.**
10. **How far do you agree with V.S. Naipaul's claim that it is possible to tell if a text is written by a woman?**

Apollo

by Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie

Twice a month, like a dutiful son, I visited my parents in Enugu, in their small overfurnished flat that grew dark in the afternoon. Retirement had changed them, shrunk them. They were in their late eighties, both small and mahogany-skinned, with a tendency to stoop. They seemed to look more and more alike, as though all the years together had made their features blend and bleed into one another. They even smelled alike – a menthol scent, from the green vial of Vicks VapoRub they passed to each other, carefully rubbing a little in their nostrils and on aching joints. When I arrived, I would find them either sitting out on the veranda overlooking the road or sunk into the living-room sofa, watching Animal Planet. They had a new, simple sense of wonder. They marvelled at the wiliness of wolves, laughed at the cleverness of apes, and asked each other, 'Ifukwa? Did you see that?'

They had, too, a new, baffling patience for incredible stories. Once, my mother told me that a sick neighbor in Abba, our ancestral home town, had vomited a grasshopper – a living, writhing insect, which, she said, was proof that wicked relatives had poisoned him. 'Somebody texted us a picture of the grasshopper,' my father said. They always supported each other's stories. When my father told me that Chief Okeke's young house help had mysteriously died, and the story around town was that the chief had killed the teen-ager and used her liver for moneymaking rituals, my mother added, 'They say he used the heart, too.'

Fifteen years earlier, my parents would have scoffed at these stories. My mother, a professor of political science, would have said 'Nonsense' in her crisp manner, and my father, a professor of education, would merely have snorted, the stories not worth the effort of speech. It puzzled me that they had shed those old selves, and become the kind of Nigerians who told anecdotes about diabetes cured by drinking holy water.

Still, I humored them and half listened to their stories. It was a kind of innocence, this new childhood of old age. They had grown slower with the passing years, and their faces lit up at the sight of me and even their prying questions – 'When will you give us a grandchild? When will you bring a girl to introduce to us?' – no longer made me as tense as before. Each time I drove away, on Sunday afternoons after a big lunch of rice and stew, I wondered if it would be the last time I would see them both alive, if before my next visit I would receive a phone call from one of them telling me to come right away. The thought filled me with a nostalgic sadness that stayed with me until I got back to Port Harcourt. And yet I knew that if I had a family, if I could complain about rising school fees as the children of their friends did, then I would not visit them so regularly. I would have nothing for which to make amends.

During a visit in November, my parents talked about the increase in armed robberies all over the east. Thieves, too, had to prepare for Christmas. My mother told me how a vigilante mob in Onitsha had caught some thieves, beaten them, and torn off

their clothes – how old tires had been thrown over their heads like necklaces, amid shouts for petrol and matches, before the police arrived, fired shots in the air to disperse the crowd, and took the robbers away. My mother paused, and I waited for a supernatural detail that would embellish the story. Perhaps, just as they arrived at the police station, the thieves had turned into vultures and flown away.

'Do you know,' she continued, 'one of the armed robbers, in fact the ring leader, was Raphael? He was our houseboy years ago. I don't think you'll remember him.'

I stared at my mother. 'Raphael?'

'It's not surprising he ended like this,' my father said. 'He didn't start well.'

My mind had been submerged in the foggy lull of my parents' storytelling, and I struggled now with the sharp awakening of memory.

My mother said again, 'You probably won't remember him. There were so many of those houseboys. You were young.'

But I remembered. Of course I remembered Raphael.

Nothing changed when Raphael came to live with us, not at first. He seemed like all the others, an ordinary-looking teen from a nearby village. The houseboy before him, Hyginus, had been sent home for insulting my mother. Before Hyginus was John, whom I remembered because he had not been sent away; he had broken a plate while washing it and, fearing my mother's anger, had packed his things and fled before she came home from work. All the houseboys treated me with the contemptuous care of people who disliked my mother. Please come and eat your food, they would say – I don't want trouble from Madam. My mother regularly shouted at them, for being slow, stupid, hard of hearing; even her bell-ringing, her thumb resting on the red knob, the shrillness searing through the house, sounded like shouting. How difficult could it be to remember to fry the eggs differently, my father's plain and hers with onions, or to put the Russian dolls back on the same shelf after dusting, or to iron my school uniform properly?

I was my parents' only child, born late in their lives. 'When I got pregnant, I thought it was menopause,' my mother told me once. I must have been around eight years old, and did not know what 'menopause' meant. She had a brusque manner, as did my father; they had about them the air of people who were quick to dismiss others. They had met at the University of Ibadan, married against their families' wishes – his thought her too educated, while hers preferred a wealthier suitor – and spent their lives in an intense and intimate competition over who published more, who won at badminton, who had the last word in an argument. They often read aloud to each other in the evening, from journals or newspapers, standing rather than sitting in the parlor, sometimes pacing, as though about to spring at a new idea. They drank Mateus rosé – that dark, shapely bottle always seemed to be resting on a table near them – and left behind glasses faint with reddish dregs. Throughout my childhood, I worried about not being quick enough to respond when they spoke to me.

I worried, too, that I did not care for books. Reading did not do to me what it did to my parents, agitating them or turning them into vague beings lost to time, who did not quite notice when I came and went. I read books only enough to satisfy them, and to answer the kinds of unexpected questions that might come in the middle of a meal – What did I think of Pip? Had Ezeulu done the right thing? I sometimes felt like an interloper in our house. My bedroom had bookshelves, stacked with the overflow books that did not fit in the study and the corridor, and they made my stay feel transient, as though I were not quite where I was supposed to be. I sensed my parents' disappointment in the way they glanced at each other when I spoke about a book, and I knew that what I had said was not incorrect but merely ordinary, uncharged with their brand of originality. Going to the staff club with them was an ordeal: I found badminton boring, the shuttlecock seemed to me an unfinished thing, as though whoever had invented the game had stopped halfway.

What I loved was kung fu. I watched 'Enter the Dragon' so often that I knew all the lines, and I longed to wake up and be Bruce Lee. I would kick and strike at the air, at imaginary enemies who had killed my imaginary family. I would pull my mattress onto the floor, stand on two thick books – usually hardcover copies of 'Black Beauty' and 'The Water-Babies' – and leap onto the mattress, screaming 'Haaa!' like Bruce Lee. One day, in the middle of my practice, I looked up to see Raphael standing in the doorway, watching me. I expected a mild reprimand. He had made my bed that morning, and now the room was in disarray. Instead, he smiled, touched his chest, and brought his finger to his tongue, as though tasting his own blood. My favorite scene. I stared at Raphael with the pure thrill of unexpected pleasure. 'I watched the film in the other house where I worked,' he said. 'Look at this.'

He pivoted slightly, leaped up, and kicked, his leg straight and high, his body all taut grace. I was twelve years old and had, until then, never felt that I recognized myself in another person.

Raphael and I practiced in the back yard, leaping from the raised concrete soakaway and landing on the grass. Raphael told me to suck in my belly, to keep my legs straight and my fingers precise. He taught me to breathe. My previous attempts, in the enclosure of my room, had felt stillborn. Now, outside with Raphael, slicing the air with my arms, I could feel my practice become real, with soft grass below and high sky above, and the endless space mine to conquer. This was truly happening. I could become a black belt one day. Outside the kitchen door was a high open veranda, and I wanted to jump off its flight of six steps and try a flying kick. 'No,' Raphael said. 'That veranda is too high.'

On weekends, if my parents went to the staff club without me, Raphael and I watched Bruce Lee videotapes, Raphael saying, 'Watch it! Watch it!' Through his eyes, I saw the films anew; some moves that I had thought merely competent became luminous when he said, 'Watch it!' Raphael knew what really mattered; his wisdom lay easy on his skin. He rewound the sections in which Bruce Lee used a nunchaku, and watched unblinking, gasping at the clean aggression of the metal-and-wood weapon.

'I wish I had a nunchaku,' I said.

'It is very difficult to use,' Raphael said firmly, and I felt almost sorry to have wanted one.

Not long afterward, I came back from school one day and Raphael said, 'See.' From the cupboard he took out a nunchaku – two pieces of wood, cut from an old cleaning mop and sanded down, held together by a spiral of metal springs. He must have been making it for at least a week, in his free time after his housework. He showed me how to use it. His moves seemed clumsy, nothing like Bruce Lee's. I took the nunchaku and tried to swing it, but only ended up with a thump on my chest. Raphael laughed. 'You think you can just start like that?' he said. 'You have to practice for a long time.'

At school, I sat through classes thinking of the wood's smoothness in the palm of my hand. It was after school, with Raphael, that my real life began. My parents did not notice how close Raphael and I had become. All they saw was that I now happened to play outside, and Raphael was, of course, part of the landscape of outside: weeding the garden, washing pots at the water tank. One afternoon, Raphael finished plucking a chicken and interrupted my solo practice on the lawn. 'Fight!' he said. A duel began, his hands bare, mine swinging my new weapon. He pushed me hard. One end hit him on the arm, and he looked surprised and then impressed, as if he had not thought me capable. I swung again and again. He feinted and dodged and kicked. Time collapsed. In the end, we were both panting and laughing. I remember, even now, very clearly, the smallness of his shorts that afternoon, and how the muscles ran wiry like ropes down his legs.

On weekends, I ate lunch with my parents. I always ate quickly, dreaming of escape and hoping that they would not turn to me with one of their test questions. At one lunch, Raphael served white disks of boiled yam on a bed of greens, and then cubed pawpaw and pineapple.

'The vegetable was too tough,' my mother said. 'Are we grass-eating goats?' She glanced at him. 'What is wrong with your eyes?'

It took me a moment to realize that this was not her usual figurative lambasting—'What is that big object blocking your nose?' she would ask, if she noticed a smell in the kitchen that he had not. The whites of Raphael's eyes were red. A painful, unnatural red. He mumbled that an insect had flown into them.

'It looks like Apollo,' my father said.

My mother pushed back her chair and examined Raphael's face. 'Ah-ah! Yes, it is. Go to your room and stay there.'

Raphael hesitated, as though wanting to finish clearing the plates.

'Go!' my father said. 'Before you infect us all with this thing.'

Raphael, looking confused, edged away from the table. My mother called him back. 'Have you had this before?'

'No, Madam.'

'It's an infection of your conjunctiva, the thing that covers your eyes,' she said. In the midst of her Igbo words, 'conjunctiva' sounded sharp and dangerous. 'We're going to buy medicine for you. Use it three times a day and stay in your room. Don't cook until it clears.' Turning to me, she said, 'Okenwa, make sure you don't go near him. Apollo is very infectious.' From her perfunctory tone, it was clear that she did not imagine I would have any reason to go near Raphael.

Later, my parents drove to the pharmacy in town and came back with a bottle of eye drops, which my father took to Raphael's room in the boys' quarters, at the back of the house, with the air of someone going reluctantly into battle. That evening, I went with my parents to Obollo Road to buy akara for dinner; when we returned, it felt strange not to have Raphael open the front door, not to find him closing the living-room curtains and turning on the lights. In the quiet kitchen, our house seemed emptied of life. As soon as my parents were immersed in themselves, I went out to the boys' quarters and knocked on Raphael's door. It was ajar. He was lying on his back, his narrow bed pushed against the wall, and turned when I came in, surprised, making as if to get up. I had never been in his room before. The exposed light bulb dangling from the ceiling cast sombre shadows.

'What is it?' he asked.

'Nothing. I came to see how you are.'

He shrugged and settled back down on the bed. 'I don't know how I got this. Don't come close.'

But I went close.

'I had Apollo in Primary 3,' I said. 'It will go quickly, don't worry. Have you used the eye drops this evening?'

He shrugged and said nothing. The bottle of eye drops sat unopened on the table.

'You haven't used them at all?' I asked.

'No.'

'Why?'

He avoided looking at me. 'I cannot do it.'

Raphael, who could disembowel a turkey and lift a full bag of rice, could not drip liquid medicine into his eyes. At first, I was astonished, then amused, and then moved. I looked around his room and was struck by how bare it was – the bed pushed against the wall, a spindly table, a gray metal box in the corner, which I assumed contained all that he owned.

'I will put the drops in for you,' I said. I took the bottle and twisted off the cap.

'Don't come close,' he said again.

I was already close. I bent over him. He began a frantic blinking.

'Breathe like in kung fu,' I said.

I touched his face, gently pulled down his lower left eyelid, and dropped the liquid into his eye. The other lid I pulled more firmly, because he had shut his eyes tight.

'Ndo,' I said. 'Sorry.'

He opened his eyes and looked at me, and on his face shone something wondrous. I had never felt myself the subject of admiration. It made me think of science class, of a new maize shoot growing greenly toward light. He touched my arm. I turned to go.

'I'll come before I go to school,' I said.

In the morning, I slipped into his room, put in his eye drops, and slipped out and into my father's car, to be dropped off at school.

By the third day, Raphael's room felt familiar to me, welcoming, uncluttered by objects. As I put in the drops, I discovered things about him that I guarded closely: the early darkening of hair above his upper lip, the ringworm patch in the hollow between his jaw and his neck. I sat on the edge of his bed and we talked about 'Snake in the Monkey's Shadow.' We had discussed the film many times, and we said things that we had said before, but in the quiet of his room they felt like secrets. Our voices were low, almost hushed. His body's warmth cast warmth over me.

He got up to demonstrate the snake style, and afterward, both of us laughing, he grasped my hand in his. Then he let go and moved slightly away from me.

'This Apollo has gone,' he said.

His eyes were clear. I wished he had not healed so quickly.

I dreamed of being with Raphael and Bruce Lee in an open field, practicing for a fight. When I woke up, my eyes refused to open. I pried my lids apart. My eyes burned and itched. Each time I blinked, they seemed to produce more pale ugly fluid that coated my lashes. It felt as if heated grains of sand were under my eyelids. I feared that something inside me was thawing that was not supposed to thaw.

My mother shouted at Raphael, 'Why did you bring this thing to my house? Why?' It was as though by catching Apollo he had conspired to infect her son. Raphael did not respond. He never did when she shouted at him. She was standing at the top of the stairs, and Raphael was below her.

'How did he manage to give you Apollo from his room?' my father asked me.

'It wasn't Raphael. I think I got it from somebody in my class,' I told my parents.

'Who?' I should have known my mother would ask. At that moment, my mind erased all my classmates' names.

'Who?' she asked again.

'Chidi Obi,' I said finally, the first name that came to me. He sat in front of me and smelled like old clothes.

'Do you have a headache?' my mother asked.

'Yes.'

My father brought me Panadol. My mother telephoned Dr. Igbokwe. My parents were brisk. They stood by my door, watching me drink a cup of Milo that my father had made. I drank quickly. I hoped that they would not drag an armchair into my room, as they did every time I was sick with malaria, when I would wake up with a bitter tongue to find one parent inches from me, silently reading a book, and I would will myself to get well quickly, to free them.

Dr. Igbokwe arrived and shined a torch in my eyes. His cologne was strong; I could smell it long after he'd gone, a heady scent close to alcohol that I imagined would worsen nausea. After he left, my parents created a patient's altar by my bed – on a table covered with cloth, they put a bottle of orange Lucozade, a blue tin of glucose, and freshly peeled oranges on a plastic tray. They did not bring the armchair, but one of them was home throughout the week that I had Apollo. They took turns putting in my eye drops, my father more clumsily than my mother, leaving sticky liquid running down my face. They did not know how well I could put in the drops myself. Each time they raised the bottle above my face, I remembered the look in Raphael's eyes that first evening in his room, and I felt haunted by happiness.

My parents closed the curtains and kept my room dark. I was sick of lying down. I wanted to see Raphael, but my mother had banned him from my room, as though he could somehow make my condition worse. I wished that he would come and see me. Surely he could pretend to be putting away a bedsheet, or bringing a bucket to the bathroom. Why didn't he come? He had not even said sorry to me. I strained to hear his voice, but the kitchen was too far away and his voice, when he spoke to my mother, was too low.

Once, after going to the toilet, I tried to sneak downstairs to the kitchen, but my father loomed at the bottom of the stairs.

'Kedu?' He asked. 'Are you all right?'

'I want water,' I said.

'I'll bring it. Go and lie down.'

Finally, my parents went out together. I had been sleeping, and woke up to sense the emptiness of the house. I hurried downstairs and to the kitchen. It, too, was empty. I wondered if Raphael was in the boys' quarters; he was not supposed to go to his room during the day, but maybe he had, now that my parents were away. I went out to the open veranda. I heard Raphael's voice before I saw him, standing near the tank, digging his foot into the sand, talking to Josephine, Professor Nwosu's house help. Professor Nwosu sometimes sent eggs from his poultry, and never let my parents pay for them. Had Josephine brought eggs? She was tall and plump; now she had the air of someone who had already said goodbye but was lingering. With her, Raphael was different – the slouch in his back, the agitated foot. He was shy. She was talking to him with a kind of playful power, as though she could see through him to things that amused her. My reason blurred.

'Raphael!' I called out.

He turned. 'Oh. Okenwa. Are you allowed to come downstairs?'

He spoke as though I were a child, as though we had not sat together in his dim room.

'I'm hungry! Where is my food?' It was the first thing that came to me, but in trying to be imperious I sounded shrill.

Josephine's face puckered, as though she were about to break into slow, long laughter. Raphael said something that I could not hear, but it had the sound of betrayal. My parents drove up just then, and suddenly Josephine and Raphael were roused. Josephine hurried out of the compound, and Raphael came toward me. His shirt was stained in the front, orangish, like palm oil from soup. Had my parents not come back, he would have stayed there mumbling by the tank; my presence had changed nothing.

'What do you want to eat?' he asked.

'You didn't come to see me.'

'You know Madam said I should not go near you.'

Why was he making it all so common and ordinary? I, too, had been asked not to go to his room, and yet I had gone, I had put in his eye drops every day.

'After all, you gave me the Apollo,' I said.

'Sorry.' He said it dully, his mind elsewhere.

I could hear my mother's voice. I was angry that they were back. My time with Raphael was shortened, and I felt the sensation of a widening crack.

'Do you want plantain or yam?' Raphael asked, not to placate me but as if nothing serious had happened. My eyes were burning again. He came up the steps. I moved away from him, too quickly, to the edge of the veranda, and my rubber slippers shifted under me. Unbalanced, I fell. I landed on my hands and knees, startled by the force of my own weight, and I felt the tears coming before I could stop them. Stiff with humiliation, I did not move.

My parents appeared.

'Okenwa!' my father shouted.

I stayed on the ground, a stone sunk in my knee. 'Raphael pushed me.'

'What?' My parents said it at the same time, in English. 'What?'

There was time. Before my father turned to Raphael, and before my mother lunged at him as if to slap him, and before she told him to go pack his things and leave immediately, there was time. I could have spoken. I could have cut into that silence. I could have said that it was an accident. I could have taken back my lie and left my parents merely to wonder.

Assessment opportunities

- In this activity you have practised skills that are assessed using Criterion A: Analysing, Criterion B: Organizing and Criterion D: Using language.

Why should we read women's literature?

CAN LITERATURE GIVE WOMEN A VOICE?

■ *'So let us wage a glorious struggle against illiteracy, poverty and terrorism, let us pick up our books and our pens, they are the most powerful weapons.'* Malala Yousafzai

■ Too close for comfort? Margaret Atwood's terrifying vision of a world stripped of rights for women.

> *'This isn't a story I'm telling. It's also a story I'm telling, in my head, as I go along. Tell, rather than write, because I have nothing to write with and writing is in any case forbidden. But if it's a story, even in my head, I must be telling it to someone. You don't tell a story only to yourself. There's always someone else.'*
>
> *The Handmaid's Tale*, Margaret Atwood, 1985

In her chilling dystopian novel, *The Handmaids Tale*, Canadian writer Margaret Atwood, presents us with a world in which women are denied the right to read and write. Sadly, Atwood's Gilead, isn't a far cry from some places in our wold today. The Taliban, for instance, during their occupation in Afghanistan and Pakistan imposed restrictions on education, and particularly opposed the education of girls; Malala Yousafzai, a Pakistani activist for female education, is a living reminder of just how far the Taliban were willing to go to prevent girls from learning.

In 2012, Malala was shot in the head by the Taliban in an attempt to silence her. She survived the horrific attack and in a speech to the UN General Assembly stated that: *'The extremists are afraid of books and pens. The power of education frightens them. They are afraid of women. The power of the voice of women frightens them.'*

For women around the world literature has been, and is, a means of self expression. Writing can be a form of protest or an outlet for sadness or rage. It can be triumphant, celebratory and can empower both writers and readers alike.

ACTIVITY: Mirman Baheer

■ ATL

■ Critical thinking skills: Draw reasonable conclusions and generalisations

Visit the link to watch the video about Mirman Baheer, the Afghanistan-based Ladies Literary Society. Members of the Society write and recite 'landai', two-line folk poems. Traditionally, poems of this type have dealt with love and grief, but landai produced by women today address a variety of themes and issues.

www.youtube.com/watch?v=1XMIT9ST4n8

As you watch, note down the answers to the following questions:

1. **What do these poems allow women to do?**
2. **What do you learn about the way the poems are written and collated?**
3. **Why do they have to keep their poems a secret?**
4. **What themes or issues do the women write about?**
5. **What consequences would the women face if they were caught? Why do they take such great risks?**

◆ Assessment opportunities

◆ In this activity you have practised skills that are assessed using Criterion A: Analysing.

FLIRT – interpreting poetry

Reading a poem on your own can be difficult if you're not quite sure what to look for. Use the following guide to help you.

1. **F is for form:** Before you start exploring the deeper meanings, just take a look at the way the poem is laid out on the page. Is it divided into stanzas? If so how many? Are they the same length? Does the writer use sentences of a particular type or mood? Is each sentence contained in a single line or do they 'run-on'? Once you've answered these questions, then you can start to ask why the writer has made these choices.
2. **L is for language:** Look closely at the words the writer uses. Can you identify any patterns or semantic fields? **Analyse** the language. What are the connotations of some of the words?
3. **I is for imagery:** What images can you identify? Are they literal or symbolic? Are there any recurring images in the poem? **Interpret** what they might mean and consider their effect on the reader.
4. **R is for rhythm and rhyme:** Read the poem out loud and see if it has a rhythm or beat. Do the lines rhyme? Is it regular or irregular? What is the effect of this?
5. **T is for tone:** How would you describe the tone of the poem? Is it sad? Happy? Angry?

ACTIVITY: Poetry and pain

ATL

- Communication skills: Read critically and for comprehension
- Information literacy skills: Access information to be informed and inform others
- Collaboration skills: Practise empathy

In Chapter 3, we briefly touched upon the cathartic power of poetry. For centuries writers, male and female, have used verse to articulate their thoughts and feelings. It is inevitable that we will all experience pain at some point during our lives. Reading the work of others not only teaches us to exercise empathy, but can help us come to terms with our own emotional turmoil.

Read the four poems below and complete the tasks.

1. **Use the Internet to find some information about the authors and the context surrounding the poems. Consider when they were written and what was going on in the women's lives and in the world around them.**
2. **Identify the message each poem is trying to convey.**
3. **Compare and contrast the poems. What connections can you identify? How do they differ? Use the ATL cog on this page to help you.**
4. **What type of pain is being expressed in each poem?**
5. **Choose one of the poems and write 2–3 PEA paragraphs on how language and imagery is used to explore the theme of pain.**

Assessment opportunities

- In this activity you have practised skills that are assessed using Criterion A: Analysing, Criterion B: Organizing and Criterion D: Using language.

Aaj Aakhan Waris Shah Nu

I say to Waris Shah today, speak from your grave
And add a new page to your book of love
Once one daughter of Punjab wept, and you wrote your long saga;
Today thousands weep, calling to you Waris Shah:

Arise, o friend of the afflicted; arise and see the state of Punjab,
Corpses strewn on fields, and the Chenaab flowing with much blood.

Someone filled the five rivers with poison,
And this same water now irrigates our soil.

Where was lost the flute, where the songs of love sounded?
And all Ranjha's brothers forgotten to play the flute.

Blood has rained on the soil, graves are oozing with blood,
The princesses of love cry their hearts out in the graveyards.

Today all the Quaido'ns have become the thieves of love and beauty,
Where can we find another one like Waris Shah?

Waris Shah! I say to you, speak from your grave
And add a new page to your book of love.

Amrita Pritam

Who is the poem addressed to and why?

What semantic field has been built up in the poem? What is the effect of the imagery in the poem?

Did you find out who the narrator of the poem is? How does she feel?

In the Glass Coffin

Today, I withstood agony again,
Because my life is still lingering,
Trapped in scarcely visible sorrow.
If my body is trapped
Like the life of a dinky, dinky thing,
What is with all this sorrow, this pain?
Like the bygone prince,
Who had loved the forbidden woman,
I believed I would live if I danced in the glass coffin;
I heard I would live with joy
Even in this dim sorrow,
If I worked, studied, and loved.
And so I have lived in this untrustworthy world.
Now, what shall I do with this suffocating feeling
That is burgeoning in this scarcely visible sorrow?
Stupid I! Stupid I!

Kim Myeong-sun

Comment on the use of fairytale elements.

How is the writer feeling? What are the connotations of these words?

To a Wreath of Snow

O transient voyager of heaven!
O silent sign of winter skies!
What adverse wind thy sail has driven
To dungeons where a prisoner lies?

Methinks the hands that shut the sun
So sternly from this mourning brow
Might still their rebel task have done
And checked a thing so frail as thou.

They would have done it had they known
The talisman that dwelt in thee,
For all the suns that ever shone
Have never been so kind to me.

For many a week, and many a day,
My heart was weighed with sinking gloom,
When morning rose in mourning grey
And faintly lit my prison room;

But, angel like, when I awoke,
Thy silvery form so soft and fair,
Shining through darkness, sweetly spoke
Of cloudy skies and mountains bare -

The dearest to a mountaineer,
Who, all life long has loved the snow
That crowned her native summits drear.
Better, than greenest plains below.

And, voiceless, soulless messenger,
Thy presence waked a thrilling tone
That comforts me while thou art here
And will sustain when thou art gone.

Emily Jane Brontë

What alleviates the writer's pain? What does this suggest about the power of nature?

What qualities does the snow possess? Identify and analyse the literary device the writer uses in stanza five. What effect does it create?

Identify and analyse the literary device of the poem's title. What does it reveal about the relationship she is writing about in this poem?

Sweet Torture

My melancholy was gold dust in your hands;
On your long hands I scattered my life;
My sweetnesses remained clutched in your hands;
Now I am a vial of perfume, emptied

How much sweet torture quietly suffered,
When, my soul wrested with shadowy sadness,
She who knows the tricks, I passed the days
kissing the two hands that stifled my life

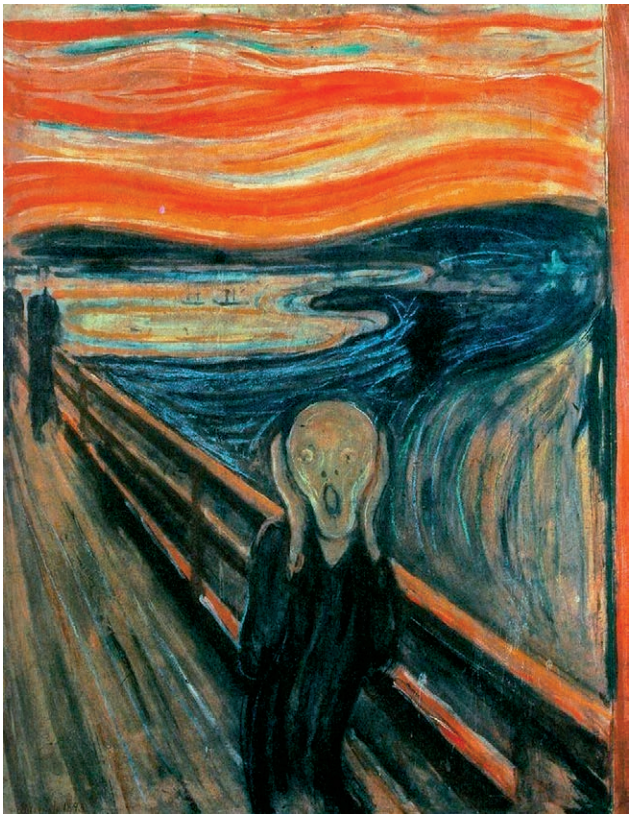
Alfonsina Storni

What is the effect of the imagery in the poem?

! Take action: Opportunity to apply learning through action …

- **Celebrate International Women's Day**: Celebrated every year on 8 March, International Women's Day is a global day celebrating the social, economic, cultural and political achievements of women. The organisation is also dedicated to putting an end to gender inequality. Encourage your school to organize some events to mark the occasion. Visit the link for some ideas on how you would take part: **www.internationalwomensday.com/resources/Resources**
- **Read more women's literature:** Use the Internet to find more women writers to read. Type in **top women writers** and access their work at a library or on Project Gutenberg.

Oxymoron



■ ***The Scream*, Edvard Munch, 1893**

An **oxymoron** is a literary device where two opposite or contradictory ideas are placed together to create an effect.

Take for example the following sentence.

She screamed in silence.

Of course, what is being described here is an impossibility; it is not possible to scream in silence, so clearly the writer is trying to communicate a deeper message about how the subject of the sentence is feeling. As readers, it is our job to interpret the sentence and extract the meaning.

How do you think she is feeling? Why is her scream silent?

SOME SUMMATIVE PROBLEMS TO TRY

Use these problems to apply and extend your learning in this chapter. These tasks are designed so that you can evaluate your learning using the Literature and Language criteria.

Best known for her short story *The Yellow Wallpaper*, Charlotte Perkins Gilman was a prominent activist and author who did much to promote the cause of women's rights in her writing.

Read her poem, *To The Young Wife* (1893), and carry out a close reading of the text, focusing on how Gilman uses language and stylistic choices to express a message about women's rights. If you get stuck, you can refer to the Approaches to Learning skills boxes on page 15 and page 141 (FLIRT).

Comment on and include evidence from the text.

You should aim to write 3–4 PEA paragraphs.

To the Young Wife

by Charlotte Anna Perkins Gilman

Are you content, you pretty three-years' wife?
Are you content and satisfied to live
On what your loving husband loves to give,
And give to him your life?
Are you content with work, — to toil alone,
To clean things dirty and to soil things clean;
To be a kitchen-maid, be called a queen, —
Queen of a cook-stove throne?
Are you content to reign in that small space —
A wooden palace and a yard-fenced land —
With other queens abundant on each hand,
Each fastened in her place?
Are you content to rear your children so?
Untaught yourself, untrained, perplexed, distressed,
Are you so sure your way is always best?
That you can always know?
Have you forgotten how you used to long
In days of ardent girlhood, to be great,
To help the groaning world, to serve the state,
To be so wise — so strong?
And are you quite convinced this is the way,
The only way a woman's duty lies —
Knowing all women so have shut their eyes?
Seeing the world to-day?
Having no dream of life in fuller store?
Of growing to be more than that you are?
Doing the things you know do better far,
Yet doing others — more?
Losing no love, but finding as you grew
That as you entered upon nobler life
You so became a richer, sweeter wife,
A wiser mother too?
What holds you? Ah, my dear, it is your throne,
Your paltry queenship in that narrow place,
Your antique labours, your restricted space,
Your working all alone!
Be not deceived! 'Tis not your wifely bond
That holds you, nor the mother's royal power,
But selfish, slavish service hour by hour —
A life with no beyond!

Reflection

In this chapter we have celebrated and explored women's literature, both past and present, and from across the globe. Through studying a range of texts and the **themes** explored in women's writing, we have developed an understanding of the difficulties women have faced over the centuries and those that they continue to struggle against. In addition we have used literature to see the history from the **point of view** of women, and have seen how, despite the odds, women have always used **creativity** as a means of **personal and cultural expression**.

Use this table to reflect on your own learning in this chapter.					
Questions we asked	Answers we found	Any further questions now?			
Factual: Who was the first female writer to be published?					
Conceptual: Why does women's writing matter? What can we learn about women's history through reading women's literature? Why are certain literary genres dominated by male writers? What can we learn from women's poetry?					
Debatable: Do men and women write differently? Why should we read more women's fiction?					
Approaches to learning you used in this chapter:	Description – what new skills did you learn?	How well did you master the skills?			
		Novice	Learner	Practitioner	Expert
Thinking skills					
Collaborative skills					
Organization skills					
Research skills					
Communication skills					
Learner profile attribute(s)	*Reflect on the importance of thinking for your learning in this chapter.*				
Thinker					

MYP *by Concept*
2

Language & Literature

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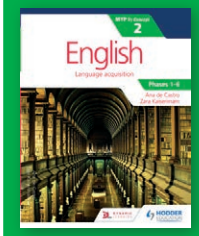

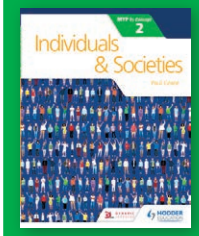

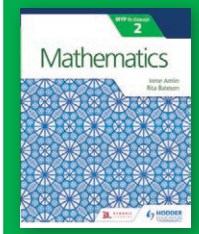

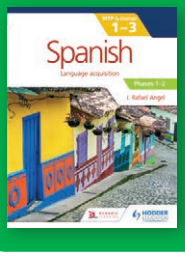

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