Top Notes Series

This series has been created to assist HSC students of English in their understanding of set texts. Top Notes are easy to read, providing analysis of issues and discussion of important ideas contained in the texts.

Particular care has been taken to ensure that students are able to examine each text in the context of the module it has been allocated to.

Each text includes:
- Notes on the specific module
- Plot summary
- Character analysis
- Setting
- Thematic concerns
- Language studies
- Essay questions and a modelled response
- Other textual material
- Study practice questions
- Useful quotes

Willy Russell's
Educating Rita
Study notes for Standard English:
Module C 2009-2012 HSC

Therese Burgess
A Top Notes

Willy Russell’s Educating Rita
Study notes for Standard English
Second edition
Module C 2009-2012 HSC

Therese Burgess
For Max, who, like Rita, is unique and original.

INTRODUCTION TO THE TOP NOTES SERIES

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♦ Other textual material if required
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♦ Useful quotes

I am sure you will find these Top Notes useful in your studies of English.

Bruce Pattinson
Series Editor
THE STANDARD COURSE

This is a brief analysis of the Standard course to ensure you are completely familiar with what you are attempting in the examination. If in any doubt at all, check with your teacher or the Board of Studies.

The Standard Course requires you to have studied:

- Four prescribed texts. This means four texts from the list given to your teacher by the Board of Studies.

- For each of the texts, one must come from each of the following four categories.
  - drama
  - poetry
  - prose fiction (novel usually)
  - nonfiction or media or film or multimedia texts. (Multimedia are CD Roms, websites, etc.)

- A range of related texts of your own choosing. These are part of your Area of Study, Module A and Module C. Do not confuse these with the main set text you are studying and focusing on. This is very important.
TEXTS AND SOCIETY

In this module, you are required to examine and analyse texts which are based in a particular situation or context. To do this, you must critically engage with the text and to do this, you must read the text, in this case, a play, a number of times. In analyzing the text, you must examine the features of the text – structure, context, setting, characterization, themes and language – in order to form your own conclusions about its effectiveness.

The situation in which the text is to be considered is indicated by the title of the elective: “Into the World”. You will examine and critically respond to Educating Rita in this context. The elective is concerned with how people grow and move into new stages or ‘worlds’ in their lives.

The module requires that you come to an understanding of the specific ways that texts communicate ideas, bodies of knowledge, attitudes and values which are characteristic of different areas of society.

Electives in this module focus on a particular social context and texts have been selected which reflect this context. You will study the values and ideas which are characteristic of this context. It will be useful for you to spend some time researching the context in which Educating Rita was written, to help you understand the play more thoroughly.

In choosing supplementary texts, you will be expected to select material that appropriately relates to your text. This does not mean that you have to choose a text, which was written or produced at the same time, or one, which deals with characters from the same social class. It does mean

You must study the Area of Study and EACH of Modules A, B and C

There are options within EACH of these that your school will select.
that your text will reflect similar concerns or reveal similar insights as your text does.

In exploring your text, you will be expected to understand and discuss how textual features shape meaning in this particular context. Your understanding of this will be called on in creating your responses to the text. You will be expected to respond, in a range of forms and media, and solidly based on your analysis and understanding of these textual features.

**ELECTIVE TWO : Into the World**

**INTO THE WORLD**

To complete this module successfully, the Board of Studies tells us that we must “explore a variety of texts that deal with aspects of growing up or transition”. To explore a text we must critically engage with it. This will require reading the text more than once. In analysing a text well, critically examine the features of the text in order to explain it and evaluate its effectiveness.

The situation in which the texts are used is specified in the title of the elective. For this elective, we will therefore explore and analyse *Educating Rita* and relevant related material in the context of “Into the World.” “Into the World” refers to how people grow and move into new phases of their life.

Secondly, by completing this module, the Board of Studies also expects that you would understand “the features of texts that shape our knowledge, attitudes and beliefs about individuals venturing into new experiences”. The ways that texts communicate refers to the language features that are evident within the text. Therefore, you will need to become familiar with all of the dramatic techniques that were mentioned in the introduction of this book.

A solid understanding of language features and techniques is crucial to success in the HSC. But you cannot mention the language features and techniques on their own. In other words, must do more than simply list features and

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1 Board of Studies (200) English Stage 6 Prescriptions: Area of Study Electives and Texts, Board of Studies NSW: 17
2 Ibid
techniques. You need to also explain how the dramatic techniques to communicate or represent information and ideologies held by the particular societies within the text. Ideologies are simply the attitudes and the belief systems that belong to a group of people or peoples.

The elective of “Into the World”, focuses on the specific situation of growing up and transitional phases that people go through to find their own place in the world. You will need to differentiate how individuals experience this growth and change differently. Not only will you use this information to guide your analysis of Educating Rita but you also need to examine and refer to other related texts. Finally, using this information you will respond to and even compose your own texts that actually “demonstrate different pathways to new experiences”.

Do not be afraid to use the terminology that the Board of Studies uses in the rubric in your own responses and compositions whether it is an assessment task or exam. This lets your teacher and examiner know that you are indeed focused and that you are aware of the requirements set by the Board of Studies.

Use the following lists of synonyms as a guide.

**Into the World**

- Adolescent
- Blossoming
- Bourgeoning
- Change
- Developing
- Emergent
- Evolving
- Growing up
- Heightening
- Incipient
- Budding
- Unfolding

- Maturing
- Thriving
- New stages of experience
- Potential
- Evolving
- Dawning
- Expanding

**Knowledge**

- Accomplishment
- Awareness
- Axiom
- Cognition
- Comprehension
- Credence
- Deduction
- Discernment
- Cognizance
- Assumption
- Expectation
- Intellect
- Acceptance
- Reasoning

- Perception
- Perspicacity
- Premise
- Realisation
- Supposition
- Belief
- Conclusion

**Attitudes and Beliefs**

- Angle
- Assumption
- Bias
- Character
- Conviction
- Countenance
- Credence
- Position
- Given
- Disposition
- Nature
- Faith
- Approval
- Assent

- Inclination
- Judgment
- Perspective
- Disposition
- Belief
- Endorsement
- Approval
**Experiences**

- Adventures
- Affair
- Apprehension
- Biography
- Encounter
- Episode
- Event
- Exploits
- Feat
- Perception
- Memoir
- Confrontation
- Incident
- Occurrence
- Ordeals
- Personal account
- Personal narrative
- Profile
- Rendezvous
- Trial
- Venture

**In Summary:**

This module and elective require you to do the following with the prescribed text, *Educating Rita*, and related material:

- Engage and explore the prescribed text *Educating Rita* and other related texts.
- Understand what the texts say about growing up.
- Analyse how different people deal with growth and change in these texts.
- Determine what are the belief systems and ideology held by society in this context.
- Understand how the belief systems and ideologies are represented using language features.
- Respond to and compose your own texts that explore the specific situation of "Into the World" using various language features that explore the transitional phases.
STUDYING A DRAMA TEXT

The medium of any text is very important. If a text is a drama this must not be forgotten. Plays are not read, they are viewed. This means you should never refer to the "reader" but the "audience" as the respondent to the text. The marker will want to know you are aware of the text as a play and that you have considered its effect in performance.

Remembering a drama text is a play also means that when you are exploring how the composer represents his/her ideas, you MUST discuss dramatic techniques. This applies to any response you do using a drama, irrespective of the form the response is required to be in.

Dramatic techniques are all the devices the playwright uses to represent his or her ideas. They are the elements of a drama that are manipulated by playwrights and directors to make any drama effective on stage! You might also see them referred to as dramatic devices or theatrical techniques.

Every play uses dramatic techniques differently. Some playwrights are very specific about how they want their play performed on stage. Others such as Shakespeare give virtually no directions. They might give detailed comments at the beginning of the play and/or during the script. These are usually in italics and are called stage directions. They are never spoken but provide a guide to the director and actors about how the play is to appear and sound when performed.

Some common dramatic techniques are shown on the diagram that follows.
THE PLAYWRIGHT – WILLY RUSSELL

Willy Russell was born in Whiston, just outside Liverpool, England, in 1947. He grew up in Liverpool, and was educated there. He did not enjoy school although he formed a desire to be a writer while he was there. He writes, “I knew it was the only thing for me. Terrible because how could I, a kid from the D stream, a piece of factory fodder, ever change the course that my life was already set on?...It was a shocking and ludicrous thought, one that I held deep in myself for years, but one that would not go away.” In Educating Rita, we see Rita also feeling that the class into which she has been born is opposed to the desires of her heart, and like Russell, must suppress them while growing up.

As an alternative to the unappealing prospect of working in a factory, he became a hairdresser. At this time he was also writing songs, and trying to write poetry and sketches, even a novel. He realised that he needed to get into an environment which was conducive to writing, “the sort of world that allowed for, even encouraged such aspiration.” The realisation that this was an academic world led him to college, a radical move away from his working class origins.

After graduating, Russell became a teacher in Toxteth, and began to be interested in writing drama. His first play was Keep your Eyes Down and it was produced in 1971. A musical about the Beatles, entitled John, Paul, George, Ringo ...and Bert, moved to the West End in London and won an award as the best musical of 1974.

Willy Russell has written several plays, the best known of which are Educating Rita and Shirley Valentine. Both of these have been made into very popular films, earning Oscar nominations for their leading actresses as well as nominations for Russell’s screenplays. Russell has written several plays for television.

Willy Russell has continued to write songs and music. His popular musical, Blood Brothers, played in the West End for many years and also won awards. In 2000, his first novel, The Wrong Boy, was published.

Willy Russell’s work draws on his working class background. His characters are working class and often battle adversity. However, they testify to a basic goodness in the hearts of people. Russell conveys this to us, with humour and with honesty. In Educating Rita, he draws particularly on his own experience, he having left school early to become a hairdresser and like Rita, pursuing his education by going on with it after a period of work.
CONTEXT

The context of Educating Rita is England in the 70's. It was a time of economic gloom, with rampant inflation, low productivity, militant trade unionism and frequent strikes.

The 'counterculture' had moved across the Atlantic from America, bringing with it long hair (on both sexes), outrageous clothing, interest in hallucinogenic drugs and greater sexual licence. There was an increase in divorce and growing acceptance of it. Women and men no longer felt that they had to stay in unsatisfactory relationships. Feminism strengthened women's desire to be in charge of their own destinies and the Pill promised the possibility of this. Women were no longer trapped by their fertility, neither did they feel that their lives would inevitably include children.

Young people were increasingly open to new ideas and new theories about culture, society and personal identity began to spread.

New technology began to appear at the end of the 70's with the first microwaves and videos. New foods such as muesli and yoghurt became mainstream rather than fads.

The class structure of England in the 70's is intrinsic to the concerns of the play. People were divided into lower, middle and upper classes. A person was identifiable as belonging to these classes by education (or lack of it), speech and values. Rita comes from a working class background; Frank is from a middle class background. Rita speaks bitterly about the restrictions of being born into the working class and having very limited horizons as a result. Frank has enjoyed all the advantages of a middle class background: a good education and a comfortable lifestyle. The upper class only features in the play in so far as Rita makes passing reference to the aristocracy.

The Open University was set up in 1969, and it was intended to provide a university level education for either mature students or those not coming from the usual ranks of school-leavers. There are no formal educational requirements for entrance, just a genuine desire to study and an age of 18 plus. It now has more than 100 000 students, aged between 25 and 45, with the average student being in their mid-30's.
Questions on Context

- How does Rita view her working class background?

- What can we learn about the middle class by observing Frank?

- How do you think Willy Russell's background influenced the way he depicted class in the play?

- Do you think there are classes in Australian society? What are they? How do you identify them?

PLOT OUTLINE

Rita shares her discontent with her working class background.

Frank and Rita meet for the first time.

Rita tells of difficulties with her husband.

Frank tells Rita she must become more discerning in her choice of reading material.

Denny burns Rita's books but she determines to keep studying.

Rita has a breakthrough in her understanding of a novel.

Rita sees Shakespeare by herself and is excited by it.

Rita and Frank go to a play – Rita's first time.

Rita loses confidence and does not go.

Frank invites Rita to a dinner party at his house.

Denny asks Rita to leave if she won't stop studying.

Rita feels she is between two worlds. Decides to continue course.

Rita insists she must change to become educated.

Frank does not want Rita to lose her uniqueness and become like the other students.
Frank is the first character the audience meets. He is looking for the bottle of whisky he has secreted somewhere in his bookcase. He has a telephone conversation that is obviously with a wife or partner and reveals that he is not looking forward to teaching an Open University student who is coming. From the tone of the conversation, it is clear that his partner is arguing with him about his intention of going to the pub later on.

Rita bursts into the room, complaining about the door handle which was stuck. Immediately, two things are clear about her. One is that she is working class, and the other is that she has no idea of how to behave. She does not introduce herself, but moves about the room, hanging up her coat without being invited to, making comments on a painting and pulling out books from the bookcase. She talks a great deal; her conversation liberally laced with swearing. Frank is initially taken aback by her brash behaviour, but then begins to enjoy the interchange.

Rita seems to have mixed feelings about the Open University course. On one hand she is surprised that she was accepted, but she also refers to the Open University as "degrees for dishwashers" and talks about quitting before she has even started. When questioned by Frank as to why she enrolled, she naively reveals that she wants to know "everything". She hints at how constricted she feels by her environment - "round our way". She asks Frank, "God, what's it like to be free?" To her mind, he is educated, so must be free.
Rita reveals that she has changed her name from Susan to Rita, after Rita Mae Brown, the author of *Rubyfruit Jungle*. (This is a very sexually explicit novel.) The name change is a symbol of her desire to escape from her origins. She talks about her work in a very amusing way, recounting a series of misadventures with customers. Frank is now very taken with her and tells her that he is enjoying talking to her.

Rita feels “out of step” with her working class background. The expectation is that she should have a baby at this point in her life, but she wants to discover herself first. Her husband does not understand what she wants.

Frank tells Rita that he “an appalling teacher” and that she wants from him what he feels incapable of giving her. He offers to arrange another tutor for her. Rita refuses to accept this, because not only is he her assigned tutor, but she likes him. She tells him that not only will she come the following week, but she will give him a haircut then as he looks like “a geriatric hippie”.

** * * * **

This scene establishes the worlds in which Rita and Frank live. Rita longs to escape her working class origins and sees the Open University course as a way of moving into a different world. Frank is jaded and weary of the world in which he lives, and is obviously anaesthetising his boredom and frustration with too much alcohol.

The sharp contrast between the language used by Rita and Frank emphasises the gap between their worlds. Frank speaks precisely and formally. Rita’s speech is loose and informal, full of working class idioms (“take the piss”) and swearing. Throughout the play, Rita and Frank have confusions over language and this will provide a great deal of humour.

Both characters are restricted and frustrated by the worlds in which they move. Rita sees education as a way of moving out of hers. Frank will be her guide. But Frank regards his world with negativity and drinks to deaden his awareness of it. Rita, with her desire “to know everything”, challenges Frank and, in response, he is honest about how little he feels he has to offer her, leading him to refuse to tutor her. However, Rita, driven by her passion to learn, and encouraged by how much she likes Frank in this first meeting, demands that he remain her tutor. They are about to begin a journey together which will take them out of their respective worlds and bring them to another place altogether.
Quotes

- “Degrees for dishwashers.”
- “God, what’s it like to be free?”
- “... I wanna know.”
- “I wanna see.”
- “But if you want to change y’ have to do it from the inside, don’t y’? Know like I’m doin’.”
- “Do you know, I think you’re the first breath of air that’s been in this room for years.”
- “I should have had a baby by now; everyone expects it...See, I don’t wanna baby yet. See, I wanna discover meself first.”

Questions

- Create a list of words and phrases to describe Rita.
- Do the same for Frank.
- What are Rita’s motivations for enrolling in the Open University course? What do they tell you about her?
- How successful do you think she will be in achieving her ambitions?
- What are Frank’s reasons for refusing to tutor her? What does this tell you about him?

Scene Two

The scene begins with Frank opening the door to discover Rita oiling the door handle so that it will no longer stick. She comes in, and as she did on the previous occasion, wanders around the room, making comments on it. This is a way of accustoming herself to what is an alien environment for her. She admires the room because it is tasteful and expresses a desire to have “a room like this one day”.

There is an amusing interchange in which she instructs Frank in the meaning of being ‘off your cake’ and ironically tells him that he cannot use this type of language or it would sound “dead affected”.

Rita explains that the pressures of her class and peers precluded the possibility of ever studying hard at school. She shares her current dissatisfaction with her life and her desire to change it.

Frank and Rita argue about what criticism is; Rita believing that it simply means her unsubstantiated opinion of a text. Frank tells her that she must learn “to discipline that mind” and with delicious irony, she immediately changes the subject, asking him if he is married. This leads to Frank’s revelation that his wife has left and he is now living with one of his ex-students. It is clear that his domestic situation is not very comfortable or satisfactory.

Frank insists that Rita continue with study of the novelist, Forster, despite the fact that she considers him “crap”. He tells her that she will need to work hard and the implication is that she will have to study literature which she doesn’t like. The scene ends with Rita parodying the language of criticism.
This scene reveals the cost that trying to change herself is likely to have for Rita. Her family and friends will oppose any attempt on her part to move beyond her working class world. They neither value nor approve of academic study. They cannot understand her wish for a different kind of life. It would be easier to stay as she is. “Like cos they don’t want y’ to change,” she explains.

Rita is unclear about what form changing herself will take. She aspires to, one day, having a room such as the one she is in because it has “nothing phoney about it” and “everything’s in its right place”. To have a room like Frank’s would be, to Rita, a symbol of how much she had changed. But the room is, in fact, a reflection of Frank and his taste. If Rita had one just like it, it would not be a reflection of her taste. It would not be a symbol of how much she had changed. It would simply be an imitation of someone else’s life.

During this scene, Rita organises her study material – ring binder, ruler, notebook, pencil-case – and sharpens her pencils and lines them up in order. Her childlike approach to what she is embarking on is symbolised by these actions. The audience also sees this aspect of Rita in her wish not to study Forster because she just doesn’t like “Howards bleedin’ End”. Frank responds in a paternalistic manner, insisting that she comply. But even though Frank struggles to keep Rita’s “hungry mind” on the subject, it is clear that he is enjoying interaction with her. Before she arrives at the beginning of this scene, he had been constantly checking his watch and looking out the window. The audience can’t help but feel that her presence is one positive aspect in his otherwise negative world.

Quotes

- “She said I was off me cake.”
- “Comin’ from you it’d sound dead affected, wouldn’t it?”
- “Like what you’ve got to be into is music an’ clothes an’ lookin’ for a feller, y’ know the real qualities of life.”
- “Is this the absolute maximum I can expect from this livin’ lark?”
- “…there’s less to me than meets the eye.”
- “Possessing a hungry mind is not, in itself, a guarantee of success.”

Questions

- What have you learned in this scene about Frank’s life and his attitude to it?
- There is a lot of humour in this scene. Find some examples of it, and say why they are funny.
- Explain what is wrong with Rita’s approach to literary criticism.
- What does this scene reveal about the restrictions placed on Rita by her working-class background?
- What significance can you see in Rita’s encounter with the stuck door in the first scene and her oiling it in this scene?
Scene Three

Rita writes an essay on Howard, in which, in an effort to follow Frank's advice "to bring in other authors", she talks almost exclusively about Harold Robbins, a popular author of blockbuster novels. Rita thinks all books are literature and asks Frank how she can develop the ability to discriminate, saying, "I'm dead ignorant y' know." Frank reassures her that she is not ignorant but needs to develop a little discernment in her choice of reading material.

Rita declares that she has no taste and that she has a lot to learn. She is already becoming more open to Frank's teaching and through the scene becomes less aggressive in her defence of her own ideas.

* * * *

This scene shows the difficulty Rita has in comprehending the difference between literature and pulp fiction. She feels that "they're all books" so in her eyes have equal merits. She wonders how to tell the difference, and Frank is unable to help her. He feels he has always known, a result of his superior education. This, again, emphasises the gap between their respective worlds.

Quotes
- "Devouring pulp fiction is not being well read."
- "...you seem to be under the impression that all books are literature."
- "I---erm---erm---one's always known really."
- "I'm dead ignorant y' know."

Questions
- What does reading three novels in a week reveal about Rita?
- Imagine you are Frank. Write a report on your student, Rita, explaining her standard of education and the difficulties she is encountering in her studies.
- Imagine you are Rita. Write a series of diary entries, conveying your hopes and goals, and your feelings at this point in your course.
Scene Four

Rita again arrives complaining about her boredom with and difficulty in understanding Forster’s writing. Frank is equally unimpressed with her approach to an essay in which she has employed lateral thinking rather than producing “a considered essay”. Her excuse for the brevity of her answer reveals that she writes her essays at work as her husband, Denny, becomes annoyed if she works at home.

Rita declares that the working class have no culture. They are simply coping with a life in which they find no meaning. She tells Frank that what she is learning from him feeds a hunger inside her. It makes the rest of her life bearable. Her dissatisfaction with both her life and with her relationship with her husband comes through very strongly in this scene.

Through this discussion, Rita comes to a realisation about the theme of the novel, *Howard’s End*, which she has been struggling to understand. It is a breakthrough for her. She is beginning to engage with literature on a meaningful level. She wonders why Frank simply didn’t tell her. His answer implies that he is teaching her skills for learning rather than just information.

However, the end of the scene is in contrast to this insight. Rita expands her previous brief answer by very little, disregarding Frank’s instructions. She is very pleased with herself, but clearly, she has a long way still to go.

Frank backs up his contention that she “must observe those rules” with the story of a theology student who wrote a brief and clever answer in his exam, Rita is impressed and asks, “Did he fail?” The point of the story has gone completely over her head.

Rita’s difficulties are not just the internal ones of failing to understand a novel she is reading or of adhering to the rules for writing an essay. She faces the external difficulties of strain in her relationship with her husband, and the lack of understanding of her aspirations by her family and friends.
Scene Five

As usual, Rita enters and does not immediately sit down. Frank is irritated and adopts a hectoring tone with her. However, when she replies, it becomes obvious that something is seriously wrong. Denny has discovered that she is still on the Pill and, thus, has no intention of having a baby as he believed she had agreed. His response has been to burn all her books.

Rita is frustrated with Denny's inability to understand what she is doing. "You'd think I was havin' a bloody affair the way he behaves," she complains. Frank's response to this is to ask her isn't she doing just this? In fact, she is putting all her passion and energy into her 'affair' with literature, rather than into her marriage. Rita interprets his words on a purely literal level and protests that she is "busy enough findin' meself, let alone findin' someone else".

The picture Rita gives us of Denny is a sad one. He feels confused by Rita's changes and brings her presents, hoping somehow to connect with the person she once was. Rita knows this is hopeless because she says this person "is gone, an' I've taken her place." Coming to her sessions with Frank and studying literature is making her feel "alive", and there is no way she will give that up, even for her husband.

Rita wants to focus on Chekhov, the subject of the lesson, but Frank in a revealing reversal of roles wants to talk about Rita's situation with Denny.

They discuss Frank's poetry and he says that he doesn't consider that he was ever really a poet. He was trying to "create literature" when he should have been writing poetry. Rita is confused by this, and confesses that she wonders if
she will really understand "any of it". She cannot see how Chekhov can write a play that she finds "dead sad" and be referred to as "a comic genius". This leads to Frank's suggestion that she should go to a dramatic production to help her understand such questions. She takes up the idea and persuades Frank to accompany her to an amateur production of *The Importance of Being Earnest* in a local church hall.

* * * *

Rita's resilience and single-mindedness is clearly revealed in this scene. Her quarrel with Denny does not sway her from her focus and she moves from the frustration she reveals at the beginning of the scene to excitement at the prospect of seeing her first live play.

This is a very important scene because it reveals the cost of moving 'into the world' for Rita. Achieving her goal of becoming educated may be at the cost of her marriage. Rita is aware that she may be perceived as selfish in wishing to find herself, but she is too excited by the changes within herself to be deflected from the path she has embarked on.

Denny's burning of Rita's books recalls the burning of books by various repressive regimes throughout history. The suppression of ideas and free thought has always been seen as a means of exerting power. Denny is trying to regain his power over Rita by removing the physical tools that she is using to move away from him. But Rita knows that she has already moved so far from him that their relationship cannot go back to what it once was.

It is impossible not to feel sorry for Denny. The girl he married has changed so that he no longer recognises her. The image of Denny bringing Rita presents in the hope of wooing her back is a poignant one. He believed that they were in accord on wanting a baby, but he discovers that Rita has been deceiving him and continuing to take the Pill. He feels betrayed and duped, with his goal of creating a family unrealised while Rita is achieving her goal of becoming educated.
Quotes

- "He burnt all me books."
- "...he's wonderin' where the girl he married has gone to"
- "...it's providing me with life itself"
- "I've begun to find me---an' it's great..."
- "Oh y' an awful snob, aren't y' ?"
- "...hurry up – I'm dead excited. I've never seen a live play before."

Questions

- Despite the serious nature of what is occurring in Rita's life, there is a great deal of humour in this scene. Find three examples.

- Frank says, "Rita, ludicrous as it may seem to you, even a woman who possesses an M.A. is not above common jealousy." Explain why he says it may be 'ludicrous' to Rita. What does this reveal of Rita's beliefs about education?

- This is a pivotal scene in the play. Why is this?

- Imagine you are Denny. Write a letter to Rita expressing how you feel about her course and the impact it is having on their marriage. Write Rita's response.

Scene Six

Rita bursts into Frank's office. Although it is not her scheduled time, she has come in her lunch hour because she cannot contain her excitement. The cause of this excitement is her first experience of Shakespeare. She went, expecting it to "be dead borin" but instead found it to be "bleedin' great" and "like a thriller".

Rita has left a customer in the middle of a perm and says that if she doesn't get back, what will happen to the customer will be a tragedy. This leads Frank to instruct Rita in the difference between 'tragedy' and 'tragic'.

Rita looks wistfully out the window at the students sitting on the lawn and says, "All them out there, they know all about that sort of thing don't they?" She is keenly aware that despite her new understandings and knowledge, she is not a proper student.

Rita invites Frank to come to the art gallery with her and he accepts. Then, he asks Rita to come to a dinner party at his house on Saturday night. Rita is puzzled at being asked but agrees to come, beginning to wonder what she will wear.

* * * * *

When Rita bursts into Frank's room, he is concerned that something serious has happened to her. This indicates that he is beginning to care about her. This is also revealed by his asking her to dinner at his house, thereby changing the basis of their relationship from teacher and student to a more personal one. Rita is puzzled as to why Frank would
ask her (and Denny) and her questions are subdued, in contrast to her usual ebullience.

Rita's delighted response to Shakespeare is the first time she has been excited by a text in her course. Up until now, she has been compliant with Frank's efforts to instruct her on the texts in her course. But she is astounded by how much she enjoyed the play, so much so that she cannot keep it to herself but had to tell someone "who'd understand".

In the play, *Macbeth*, the title character leaves his world of faithful service to the king, to enter the world of kingship himself. It is a doomed choice as Frank points out. The audience is left to ponder whether Rita's journey from one world to another will be similarly catastrophic.

Rita is beginning to realise how far she has to go in her studies. When she comments that Frank is getting her to think in a different way, his response is that "it's quite easy". Her rejoinder is that it's easy for him, but by implication, not for her. This leads to her surmising that the 'real' students have all of this knowledge that she is struggling to assimilate. The window through which she looks is a symbol of the barrier between her world and theirs.

**Quotes**

- "I wanted to find out. But listen, it wasn't borin', it was bleedin' great, honest, ogh, it done me in, it was fantastic."

- "It was dead good. It was like a thriller."

- "I just thought it was a dead excitin' story. But the way you tell it you make me see all sorts of things in it."

- "All of them out there, they know all about that sort of thing don't they?"

**Questions**

- Is Frank asking Rita to the dinner party a good idea or not? What might have motivated him to do this?

- Why is *Macbeth* a good choice for Rita's first experience of Shakespearean drama?

- Is it possible that Rita, like Macbeth, is treading "a path to doom" in trying to move out of her world into another?

- Imagine you are Frank. Write the thoughts you might have after Rita's lunchtime visit.
Scene Seven

Rita has not gone to the dinner party and has provided Frank with an inadequate apology. Although he claims not to care and says it was Julia who was most upset, he does seem upset by Rita’s non-appearance. Rita reveals that she has fought with Denny over the invitation and Frank asks why she hasn’t explained this in her note to him. It emerges that she was extremely nervous about coming and then lost her courage when she arrived at the house.

Frank reassures her that she would have been accepted if she had just been herself but Rita feels that he asked her so that his friends could laugh at her.

After leaving Frank’s house, Rita went to the pub where her husband and family were. She sat with them singing and contemplating giving up on the course but the sight of her mother’s obvious unhappiness convinced her she should keep going.

* * * *

In this scene we see that the changes in Rita have made her uncomfortable in both the working class world and the educated world. She says that she can neither talk to the people she lives among nor can she talk to people like those at the dinner party or the students outside. She describes herself as “a half-caste” who “can’t learn the language”.

Rita is more sensitive now to unwritten rules of behaviour and thus before the dinner party is nervous about which dress to wear and which wine to buy. The irony is that she knows what is not right, but not what is right. She describes being in the off licence and knowing “I was buyin’ the wrong stuff. But I didn’t know which was the right wine.”

There is still a barrier between her and a world in which she hopes to be able to speak “seriously, confidently, and with knowledge,” and it is symbolised by the window through which she views the guests.

Rita’s initial reaction to her confusion is to go back to her familiar haunts and to think about discontinuing the course which has brought her to this point of unhappiness and discomfort. It is her mother’s tears and comment about singing better songs than those they are singing which convinces her to persevere with the course. Rita still wants more from her life, she wants to “sing better songs” and her realisation that she is presently “a freak”, someone who belongs in neither world, steels her resolve to keep trying to become educated.
Quotes

- "Then I walked up your drive, an’ I saw y’ all through the window, y’ were sippin’ drinks an’ talkin’ an’ laughin’. An’ I couldn’t come in."

- "When I was in the off licence I knew I was buyin’ the wrong stuff. But I didn’t know which was the right wine."

- "They would have seen you as someone who’s funny, delightful, charming."

  "But I don’t wanna be charming and delightful: funny...I don’t wanna be funny. I wanna talk seriously with the rest of you..."

- "I didn’t want to come to your house just to play the court jester."

- "Because I’m a freak. I can’t talk to the people I live with anymore. An’ I can’t talk to the likes of them on Saturday, or them out there, because I can’t learn the language."

- "I’m a half-caste."

- "She said, ‘Because—because we could sing better songs than those."

Questions

- What is the dominant emotion in this scene? How does it contrast with the one before it?

- Frank accuses Rita of paranoia. Is there any basis for this accusation?

Scene Eight

Rita comes into Frank’s room carrying a suitcase. Denny has told her to leave if she does not give up the course. She will stay with her mother until she finds a flat. Frank is concerned for her, as she is clearly upset, and does not want to discuss her Macbeth essay with her, but she insists. She needs the focus of talking about her essay to help her cope with what is going on.

Frank tells her that her essay, "totally honest, passionate" is "wonderful" in its own terms, but "worthless" in terms of passing exams. To pass exams, she will have to abandon her own unique voice and Frank feels that this will be a great pity.

Rita responds that she needs to change and that he must tell her how to do this. She throws the essay in the bin and announces that she will start again.

* * * * *

In this scene, the rift between Rita and Denny becomes irrevocable and Denny, feeling betrayed, throws Rita out. Rita concedes that she probably has betrayed him. When they married he had certain not unreasonable expectations of the marriage and Rita has denied him the realisation of these. He expected that he and Rita would have children and would continue to mix with family and friends as they had always done. Rita has embarked on an entirely different path; one of which he has no understanding or appreciation. Moving into a new world often involves damage to or even the complete breakdown of relationships and this has happened to Rita and Denny. Rita’s quest to transform herself has cost her the marriage.
Rita is understandably upset in this scene and at one point starts to cry. Frank tries to comfort her but she moves away from him and insists on discussing her essay. She is determined to keep on with her chosen new path and the Macbeth essay is part of this. She insists that Frank give her his opinion on it and he does, reluctantly. The essay would not score well in an exam. Frank tells Rita that he values her originality and does not want to see this extinguished, in order to pass exams. But Rita wants to write essays just like those written by Frank's other students and to pass exams as they do. To do this, she will have to "suppress, perhaps even abandon [her] uniqueness" and Frank will be the instrument by which she achieves this change.

The audience is left feeling at the end of Act One that Rita's desire "to know" has already cost her dearly and will continue to cost her. Rita's wonderful vitality and exuberance are to be tamed so that she can pass exams.

Quotes

- "He says it's warped me. He said I'd betrayed him. I suppose I have."
- "He says there's time for education. An' it's not when y' twenty-six an' married."
- "What you already have is valuable."
- "...to pass examinations, you're going to have to suppress, perhaps even abandon your uniqueness. I'm going to have to change you."
- "But don't you realise, I want to change."

Questions

- Why is Rita's essay both "wonderful" and "worthless"?
- Is Denny's behaviour in any sense excusable?
- Write a paragraph expressing Frank's thoughts at the end of this scene.
- Predict what you think will happen in Act Two.
Act Two: Scene One

Rita again bursts into the room, wearing “new, second-hand clothes”, a physical symbol of how the experience of being in London at the summer school has changed her. Rita recounts her “great time”, talking to other students and going to the theatres, markets and pubs. She has worked hard as well, though, and describes the experience as “dead good”. She has had enough courage to stand up in a lecture theatre filled with two thousand people and ask a question.

Frank has not had a pleasant time in France. It was hot and his time was filled with drinking, “a little writing” and bickering with Julia. Julia left him for a while but has since returned.

Rita has moved into a flat. Her flatmate, Trish, is “dead classy”. Rita describes the flat as “dead unpretentious”. She tells Frank that she feels young and is enjoying her life very much. Rita gives Frank an expensive pen, engraved “Must only be used for poetry. By strictest order—Rita”.

Rita wants to get down to work, in contrast to her procrastinating behaviour the previous term. She demands to do “a dead good poet”. This is also a change as it has been Frank who decided what she should study. She suggests they go down onto the lawn to do this, a suggestion which horrifies Frank who firmly refuses. As a compromise, she tries to open the window to let in some air, but it will not move.

Frank tells Rita that she will eventually go away when she finishes her course. Rita complains that he can be “a real misery sometimes” and able to deflate her good mood. Frank is dismayed to find that she has already studied Blake, his choice for the next text. They do not begin a new text and Rita leaves.

* * * *

This scene shows a shift in power in Rita and Frank’s relationship. Early in the scene, she hands her shawl to Frank who hangs it up for her. The relationship is becoming more of equals, rather than strictly teacher and student. The balance of power shifts still further during the scene. It is Rita, not Frank, who calls a halt to their chatting by clapping her hands and saying, “What are we doin’ this term?” She goes on to suggest that they do “a dead good poet”, rather than letting Frank make the decision. She suggests a change of venue for the lesson, wanting to go down on the lawn. Finally, she disconcerts Frank by revealing that she has already studied Blake and has covered the material he wished to instruct her about. The casualness of her gesture in tossing the book of Blake’s poems on the desk reveals that she is becoming increasingly independent of Frank and no longer valuing his guidance as she once did.

The symbolism of Rita’s new, “second-hand clothes” goes beyond her now knowing how to dress like a student and not like a hairdresser. She has come back from the summer school, full of ideas that are new to her, but are not new in the sense of being unique or original. She has garnered a lot of ideas and opinions which are second-hand. Already, what Frank feared is happening – she is losing her uniqueness.

The contrast between Rita and Frank’s world is sharp in this scene. Rita has been meeting new people, finding new confidence, moving into a flat with a new flatmate, buying...
new clothes and moving ahead into her new world. Frank has remained just as he has always been: drinking and bickering with Julia. Rita tries to push Frank into more positive action with the gift of the pen. She asks him, "Are you still on this stuff?" when she sees the whisky bottle and the implication that she wishes he wasn't is clear. She challenges him directly by asking, "Why d' y' do it when y've got so much goin' for y'?" She is grasping with both hands all the opportunities that life is offering her at the moment, but Frank is unable to move beyond his stultifying work and unsatisfactory relationship. Inevitably, Rita will leave Frank behind.

Quotes

- "Honest to God, I stood up, an' everyone's lookin' at me. I don't know what possessed me, I was gonna sit down again, but two thousand people had seen me stand up, so I did it, I asked him the question."

- "...I was asking questions all week, y' couldn't keep me down."

- "I feel young, you know like them down there."

- "Why d' y' do it when y've got so much goin' for y', Frank?"

- "She's great. Y' know she's dead classy. Y' know like she's got taste, y' know like you, Frank, she's just got it."

- "We did him at summer school."

Questions

- Compare what happens at question time at the summer school with Rita's loss of nerve in Act 1, Scene 7. What has changed?

- What is the evidence in this scene that Rita is moving away from Frank?

- Read the section in which Rita talks to the tutor in the library. What comments can you make on what she thought about saying and what she actually said? Which response do you think Frank would have preferred her to make? Why?
Scene Two

Rita knocks on the door and comes in when asked. She is late and explains her lateness in very precise – and for Rita, unexpected – language and in an affected voice. Frank asks her why she is speaking in this strange voice and she tells him that Trish advised her to change the way she talked because "...there is not a lot of point in discussing beautiful literature in an ugly voice." Frank asks her to speak properly, and they argue for some moments before she reverts to her normal voice.

Frank notices that Rita has grass on her back and she reveals that she has been sitting on the lawn, talking to the regular students. Frank is astounded at this and Rita tells him indignantly that, "I can talk now y' know, Frank." She goes on to add that one of the students has asked her to go to France with them all in the Christmas holidays. Frank immediately tells her that she cannot do this, and as Rita talks more about the student, Tyson, reacts even more strongly, telling her that there's no point in preparing her for exams if she is going to fall in love and go abroad. Rita is shocked at his outburst.

Frank gives Rita back her essay and concedes that it would not be out of place with those of his other students.

*   *   *   *

Frank and Rita’s relationship continues to change in this scene. Rita brings a chair and sits next to Frank, suggesting that she is no longer in awe of him. At the end of the scene, it is Frank, not Rita, who leaves. Rita is now so comfortable in Frank’s room, once an alien environment to her, that she remains while he goes out.

Frank is clearly not in control of the situation in this scene. He reacts jealously to Rita's talk of Tyson and the invitation to come to France. Despite his claim in the previous scene that he will be glad when she completes her Open University course, he reveals his attachment to Rita by this outburst. He has enjoyed his special relationship with Rita and this is threatened by the easy acceptance of her by Tyson and his friends.

Rita has listened to Trish's advice to change her way of speaking, an indication of how much she wants to distance herself from her working class roots. We are appalled by both Trish's presumption in telling Rita that her voice is "ugly" and that she needs to change it, and by Rita's uncritical acceptance of the advice. Frank tells Rita, "Just be yourself" but, although she drops the affected voice, she no longer wants to be herself, if that person is a working-class woman.

In this scene, Rita has achieved what she tried to do in the last scene. She has moved beyond Frank's room and joined the regular students on the lawn. She is no longer regards them with a mixture of envy and awe. "For students they don't half come out with some rubbish..." she comments to Frank. She has met them on her own terms and bested one of them in a discussion of Lawrence. Rita has moved into the world she has long aspired to.

Rita has also brought her essay writing up to an acceptable standard. She has achieved much of what she set out to do. But what will be the outcome of Rita's transition into this world?
Quotes

- “I have merely decided to talk properly. As Trish says there is not a lot of point in discussing beautiful literature in an ugly voice.”
- “You haven’t got an ugly voice; at least you didn’t have. Talk properly.”
- “...I can talk now y’ know.”
- “Is there much point in working towards an examination if you’re going to fall in love and set off for the South of...”
- “My God, Frank, I’ve just been talking to some students.”

Questions

- Rita has definitely moved away from Frank. Find quotes which support this.
- What is the significance of Rita’s sitting on the lawn with the students?
- Does Trish’s advice to Rita fit in Rita’s earlier description of her as “dead unpretentious”?
- Imagine you are Frank. Write a paragraph expressing the thoughts you might have after you leave the room.

Scene Three

Rita is waiting for Frank who comes in, very drunk, and tells her that he has been reported by the students for attempting to lecture while drunk. He complains that this is very unfair as he gave the best lecture he’s ever given. The picture he paints of the lecture is a very amusing one, with his falling off the rostrum twice but not letting it interrupt the flow of his words. The university have suggested that he take time off, but it is unlikely that he will be dismissed.

Rita wants to leave but Frank insists on talking about her Blake essay on “The Blossom”. She has discovered “a vein” of “concealed meaning”, which Frank does not like. Rita accuses him of being “subjective” which he concedes, but then attacks her ideas as being “up to the minute...trendy stuff about Blake”. Rita defends herself by stating that she has only followed his advice “to be objective, to consult recognised authorities”.

Frank goes on to tell her to “be careful”. Rita responds that she can now take responsibility for her own learning, that she doesn’t need to come to him “every five minutes”. She advises him to stop treating her as though she is still the same person who first came to him.

The scene finishes with Frank, rather pathetically trying to connect with Rita and win her approval by telling her that he has read Rubyfruit Jungle and that it was excellent. The attempt fails, with Rita dismissing the novel as “quite interesting” but not excellent.
It is interesting in this scene how sorry we feel for Frank. He is floundering, no longer the ‘guru’ to whom Rita deferred and trying to hold on to the relationship with her that has come to mean so much to him.

The power shift in the relationship which we have observed over the past two scenes has become more pronounced. At the beginning of the scene, Rita is sitting comfortably in the armchair, reading what is obviously an academic book. We hear Frank swearing before he comes in, and when he does, he uses the type of language which Rita once did. She is completely at ease in Frank’s room, a microcosm of the larger academic world into which she has moved. It is Frank who is out of his comfort zone and who has been behaving outrageously. He continues to do so by lying on the floor. Rather than feeling sorry for Frank, Rita expresses the viewpoint that he is being unfair to his students by lecturing them while drunk. Once, she would have been amused at the antics of “a crazy mad piss artist”, but now she takes the staid establishment view of his behaviour.

The dispute which they have about Rita’s essay is fuelled by two concerns on Frank’s part. Rita has moved a great distance from her former “uniqueness”, and Frank regrets this change in her, even though he has been the instrument of it. At the same time, Rita has moved away from Frank and has new people to talk to now. He tells her to “be careful” in this new world she inhabits. Of what she is supposed to be careful is not clear, and Rita reacts angrily, telling him, “I don’t need you to hold me hand as much”. Rita has come to be one positive aspect in Frank’s dreary and frustrating world, and now he is losing her, too.

Quotes

- “I might have fallen off, my dear, but I went down talking—and came up talking—never missed a syllable—what have they got to complain about?”
- “What I’m saying is that it’s up to the minute, quite acceptable, trendy stuff about Blake; but there’s nothing of you in here.”
- “Look, Frank, I don’t have to go along one hundred per cent with your views on Blake y’ know. I can have a mind of my own can’t I?”
- “Just cos I’m learnin’, just cos I can do it now an’ read what I wanna read an’ understand without havin’ to come runnin’ to you every five minutes y’ start tellin’ me to be careful.”
- “Just don’t—don’t keep treatin’ me as though I’m the same as when I first walked in here.”

Questions

- Why do you think that Frank’s drinking has escalated?
- What do you predict for the future of Rita and Frank’s relationship?
- Write a list of adjectives which could be applied to Rita now. Justify each choice.
- Write a list of adjectives which could be applied to Frank now. Justify each choice.
Scene Four

Rita is late for her tutorial because she has been talking to the other students. Frank is clearly annoyed because he has discovered that she has changed jobs and not told him. Rita would once have told him but now she regards it as "boring, insignificant detail".

Rita tells him that she needs to leave because she is going to the theatre and Frank reacts angrily, asking her if she wants to stop coming. (The previous week she had not come at all, but had rung to make an excuse.) Rita responds by telling him that if he would stop drinking, "then it might be worth comin' here".

The session concludes with Frank challenging Rita to write an essay "with no sentimentality, no subjectivity" on his own poetry.

* * * *

The new Rita, who talks with her new friends "about what's important" cannot understand why Frank is so annoyed that she didn't share the unimportant detail of changing jobs. The failure to share this information is a symbol to Frank of how far Rita has moved beyond him. He has come to enjoy her dependence on him and part of this has been sharing the details of her domestic situation. Frank relished the feeling of significance in Rita's life and is angry that it has been taken away from him. The irony of the situation is that he has been the instrument of this change in Rita.

Frank is ill-tempered throughout this scene, asking Rita peevishly if she would prefer to stop wasting her time with tutorials, and telling her that she "can hardly bear to spend a moment" with him. Rita reminds him that she needs to come with exams coming up. Once, she came because she enjoyed talking to Frank and because her spirit was being nourished. Now, she "needs" to come so she will pass her exams.

Rita is out of sympathy with Frank. She sees him as wasting opportunities to use his talents. While he is drinking, he is trapped in a hopeless situation of his own making. Rita felt she was trapped by the expectations of her working class world, but she has worked hard to move into a new world. If Frank is to escape his trap, he must do it himself.
Quotes

- "It struck me that there was a time when you told me everything."
- "Perhaps—perhaps you don’t want to waste your time coming here anymore?"
- "You can hardly bear to spend a moment here can you?"
- "You really don’t have to put in the odd appearance out of sentimentality."
- "Are you capable of recognising what does or does not matter, Rita?"
- "No sentimentality, no subjectivity."

Questions

- Writing as Rita, say what you think “does or does not matter”.
- Writing as Frank, say what you think “does or does not matter”.
- Why do you think Frank asks Rita to write an essay on his poems?

Scene Five

Rita makes an unscheduled visit to see Frank because she feels that his poems are “brilliant” and she wants to tell him so. She has discussed them with Trish who is equally impressed with them, describing them in the accepted language of literary criticism. Frank comments that it is fortunate that Rita did not see them before she became educated or she would have dismissed them as “a heap of shit”, and Rita, unaware of Frank’s actual underlying feelings agrees. Frank says that he is thinking of changing his name to Mary Shelley (the author of Frankenstein) but Rita does not understand the allusion. Finally, Frank explodes, describing his poems as “worthless, talentless shit” and rips them up. He asks her to go away because he cannot bear her.

Rita reacts with like anger. She thinks he is angry that she is now educated and on an equal footing with him. She leaves, telling him that no-one calls her Rita any more and has not done so for some time.

* * * *

Frank’s posture at the beginning of this scene is an important clue to his mood at this stage. Whereas previously he has been marking student’s work, typing poetry or waiting expectantly for Rita, now he is indolently sitting by the window, drinking and listening to the radio.

The argument which develops between Frank and Rita is savage. Rita has been set an essay to write on Frank’s poems. She has taken the assignment at face value and read and discussed the poems with Trish. She has been delighted with how “brilliant” they appear to be, and hurries
to tell Frank. But the conversation which ensues suggests that Frank did not want her to find the poems good. He seemed to be hoping that she would respond to them as she once would have, dismissing them as "a heap of shit". The irony is that she responds to them as he has taught her to respond, confirming for him that she has truly lost her fresh and original way of looking at things, her "uniqueness". His allusion to Mary Shelley and Frankenstein tells us that he believes he has created a monster. He thinks that, in fact, he has failed her because he has led her to become someone who is no longer special, but just like all the other students. On the other hand, Rita feels that he has given her a great deal because "I can see now".

Rita misinterprets the cause of Frank's anger and decides that he is upset because he can longer be superior to her. She accuses him of being annoyed because she doesn't "stare back in wide-eyed wonder" at everything he says. She informs him that she no longer needs him as a mentor. "I know what clothes to wear, what wine to buy, what plays to see, what papers and books to read. I can do without you." Frank responds by describing this as "very, very little". The implication is that Rita has made sacrifices - husband, job, home, friends and family - for a very small reward at the end.

Frank's comment at the end of the scene about "a better song to sing" reminds us of the earlier scene in which Rita's mother spoke about singing "better songs", a symbol for wanting a better way of living. Rita has found "a better song to sing", but is it really better or merely different?

Quotes

- "You know, Rita, I think -- I think that like you I shall change my name; from now on I shall insist upon being known as Mary, Mary Shelley - do you understand the allusion, Rita."

- "This -- this clever, pyrotechnical pile of self-conscious allusion is worthless, talentless shit and could be recognised as such by anyone with a shred of common sense."

- "I'm educated, I've got what you have an' y' don't like it because you'd rather see me as the peasant I once was..."

- "I know what clothes to wear, what wine to buy, what plays to see, what papers and books to read. I can do without you."

- "Have you come all this way for so very, very little?"

- "It's little to you who squanders every opportunity and mocks and takes it for granted."

Questions

- Why does Frank allude to Frankenstein?

- Why does Frank say to Rita, "Have you come all this way for so very, very little?" Do you see it as "little"?

- With whom do you sympathise in this scene?
**Scene Six**

In this scene Frank endeavours to get in touch with Rita. He rings the bistro to discover that she no longer works there. The passing of time is suggested by the lights fading to blackout and then coming back up again. Frank makes another phone call; this time to Trish. He passes on the information that he has entered Rita for her exam and asks that Rita make contact with him to ascertain the details of time and place.

* * * *

The two phone calls with the suggestion of time passing between them suggest that Frank and Rita have not been in contact for some time. It is also clear that Frank cares for Rita. He has put her name down for the exam even though the last scene suggested that he was out of sympathy with her aspirations. He knows that achieving a certain standard and passing exams is important to her. His request that she make contact demonstrates that he wishes to see her again and that he is unhappy about the way they parted.

**Quotes**

- “Erm, yes I'm a friend of Rita's ... Rita ... I'm sorry Susan…”

**Questions**

- What does this scene reveal about Frank?

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**Scene Seven**

Rita visits Frank. Frank is in the middle of packing as he has been seconded to an Australian for two years as a result of yet more alcohol-fuelled misdemeanours. Julia will not be going with him.

Frank asks Rita why she has returned. She says her reason is to tell him that he is a good teacher and to thank him for entering her in the exam. She describes sitting in the exam room, pondering his words during their argument. She tells him that Trish recently attempted suicide and that she thought about that as well. Finally, she chose to complete the exam. At the end of her eventful journey with Frank, she has become aware that she now has “choice”, and this is what she has returned to tell him.

Frank asks Rita to come to Australia with him. She is evasive and talks about possible plans for the holidays. Frank gives her a dress that he has bought for her when “rather pissed”. In return, Rita cuts his hair.

* * * *

This scene resolves the conflict which built up throughout the second act and culminated in the furious argument of Scene Five. It is clear that Frank and Rita have not seen each other since then and seeing her gives Frank a shock. But we know that Frank has been thinking about her. He has tried to ring her and he has bought her a dress when he was drinking. From Rita's revelations about her time in the exam room, it seems that she has thought about their last meeting and she concedes that Frank was right in his criticisms of her. Her understanding that she “wanted it all so much ... [so] didn't want it to be questioned” shows self-
awareness. The comment that “I told y’ I was stupid” is a flash of the ‘old’ Rita.

Trish’s attempted suicide has given Rita cause to reflect. Rita was enthralled by Trish, whom she regarded as “dead classy”, to the point of trying to change her diction on Trish’s advice. Trish’s actions have shown her that class and education are no guarantee of a fulfilling life.

Rita is looking at her new friends more realistically. She sees that Trish does not have all the answers and she regards Tyson as “a bit of a wanker”. She has lost the rosy view of educated people which she once had.

What Rita has achieved is confidence in herself and in her ability to choose the direction she wants her life to follow. She credits Frank with helping her to get to this point, which is why she thanks him for being “a good teacher”.

The play ends with Frank giving Rita a dress he has bought for her. It is a dress for “an educated woman” and it reminds us of Act One, Scene Two, where Rita expresses her aim of buying “a proper dress, the sort of dress you’d only see on an educated woman” when she has passed her first exam. In return, Rita gives Frank a haircut, something she promised to do at the end of the first scene.

Quotes

- “Didn’t you know the Australians named their favourite drink after a literary figure? Forster’s Lager they call it. Of course they got the spelling wrong — rather like you once did.”
- “I came to tell you you’re a good teacher.”
- “You think I just ended up with a load of quotes an’ empty phrases; an’ I did. But that wasn’t your doin’. I was so hungry. I wanted it all so much that I didn’t want it to be questioned.”
- “Magic isn’t it? She spends half her life eatin’ wholefoods an’ health foods to make her live longer, an’ the other half tryin’ to kill herself.”
- “But I had a choice. I chose, me. Because of what you’d given me I had a choice.”
- “It’d be good for us to leave a place that’s just finishing for one that’s just beginning.”

Questions

- Why does Frank ask Rita to come to Australia? What is he hoping for?
- What is the importance for Rita of Trish’s attempted suicide?
- How has Frank helped Rita to have choice?
- What is the significance of Rita’s giving Frank a haircut?
SETTING

The action of the play takes place entirely within one room - Frank's room in "a Victorian-built university in the north of England". This is Frank's familiar environment but a foreign one for Rita. She moves around this room a lot in the early scenes as a way of dealing with her discomfort. This also reveals how socially naïve Rita is, as she has no idea how to behave in this situation. In the first act, Frank's room becomes something of a haven for Rita, somewhere that she receives sustenance that she is lacking elsewhere. When she breaks up with Denny, she still comes to Frank's room, and insists on getting down to work. In the second act, we see that the room and Frank do not play such a large part in Rita's world. Sometimes, she does not come to the room at all, skipping classes, or she is late when she does come. By this time, she has found her own niche in the world outside the room.

Early in the play, the room is a symbol of all that Rita aspires to. She sees the good taste of the room as evidence of the sophisticated and superior values she believes educated people have.

Two other powerful symbols in the play are the window and the lawn. Rita gazes through the window at the students sitting on the lawn. She wants to be like them but at the beginning of the play, the window symbolises the invisible barrier between her world and theirs. In Act Two, Scene One, Rita attempts to convince Frank to have their tutorial on the lawn. Her confidence has been greatly augmented by the experience of the summer school and she is not in awe of the 'real' students as she once was. Frank refuses, being unable to change his accustomed routines and environment, so as a compromise, she suggests opening the window. It will not budge, not having been opened for years. This is an effective symbol for Frank's life. Although disillusioned and frustrated by his world, he is incapable of moving out of it until events force a change.

In the next scene, Rita has achieved her ambition of sitting on the lawn. She is able to talk to the students and finds that, "...They don't half come out with some rubbish..." The barrier she once perceived between the 'real' students and herself has come down. She is no longer awestruck or intimidated by them but can interact with them on an equal level, even besting one of them in an argument.

Other settings referred to but not seen are Trish's flat, the hairdressing salon, the pub, the summer school, the bistro and Frank's house.

When Rita moves into Trish's flat she feels the same kind of admiration that she expressed for Frank's room. It is "dead unpretentious" and "full of books and plants". Now, she describes Trish as having taste as she once described Frank. Other people are replacing Frank in Rita's world.

The hairdressing salon features in the early scenes as Rita communicates some very funny experiences with customers. We also hear of it as the place where she has to do her course work because Denny's attitude makes it difficult for her to work at home. We can only admire her persistence as she attempts to read and write essays in between attending to customers. Later, Rita leaves the salon and the fact that she has not mentioned this to Frank is upsetting to him, symbolising the widening gap between them.

For Rita, the pub represents working class culture (or the absence of it as she claims). She scathingly describes
Denny's idea that choice is finding a pub with eight different kinds of lager. This narrow view represents to her the limited horizons of the world to which she belongs. The pub also symbolises the restrictions her family and friends impose on her. Denny wants her to come to the pub (stay as she is) rather than go to her tutorials (change). In Act One, Scene Eight, the pub is the scene of Rita's conscious decision to continue with her course. Up until this point she has flirted with the idea of giving up. Earlier in the evening, she has lost her courage outside Frank's house, because she felt inadequate to the task of fitting into his world. At the pub, she realises that she does not fit into her old world either. The sight of her mother's tears and desire for "better songs" to sing, is a catalyst for Rita. She cannot return to her old world, so she must forge on into the new one.

The summer school is the setting for Rita's increasingly confident journey into the new world. It is here that she is able to talk to other students, and to stand up, in front of 2000 people and ask questions.

Frank's house is in Formby, obviously a better suburb than the one in which Rita lives. It is the scene of Rita's loss of confidence because she does not yet know how to talk, dress or buy the right wine.

The bistro is only mentioned occasionally. Rita and Trish both work in the bistro and this period of time is one in which Trish has great influence over Rita.

Questions

- Do you think that at the end of the play, Rita still wants a room like Frank's?

- Imagine that you are Rita after you have sat on the lawn with the students. Write a paragraph expressing your thoughts.

- Using the stage directions from Scene One and other relevant information from the play, draw a plan of the stage set.
CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Rita

Rita, the lively and irrepressible main character of the play, makes her dramatic entrance in the first scene of the play. The door is stuck as she tries to enter Frank's office and when it finally gives way, she is projected rapidly and with a great deal of swearing, into the room.

Rita is nervous in this initial meeting with Frank, and she smokes, accepts a drink from Frank, and prowls around the office, commenting on everything. Her social naivety is apparent, as she has no idea what is appropriate behaviour in this situation.

Rita wants to change her life and hopes to do it through an Open University course. She feels out of sympathy with her working class family and friends because she wants more out of life. She has changed her name from Susan as a symbol of the change she wishes to make. Ironically, Rita believes that she has taken the name of a respected novelist, when in fact; Rita Mae Brown is the author of a highly sexually explicit novel, regarded as scandalous when it appeared.

Rita is a twenty-six year old hairdresser who is married to Denny. She confesses to feeling out of step with her working class peers and says that she should have had a baby by this point in her marriage. But Rita wants more out of her life than her family and friends expect from theirs. Becoming educated will give her "choice" about the direction her life takes.

Rita struggles in the early stages of her course. She has no solid school background on which to draw and responds to her first assigned novel by describing it as "crap". She looks through the window wistfully at the other students sitting on the lawn and feels an immeasurable gap between her world and theirs. In the early part of the play, Rita is flippant and unfocused, and although she says she wants "to see" and "to know", she sometimes talks about giving up the course. A pivotal event for Rita is Frank's dinner party and its aftermath. It is on this evening, when she feels disconnected with both her working class world and Frank's middle class world, that she resolves to persevere with the course.

Following upon her resolve to continue, Rita's positive experience at the summer school imbues her with confidence. Soon, she has crossed the divide between herself and the 'real' students and has moved into their world. It is during this period, that she begins to outgrow Frank's influence and to take on, uncritically, the ideas and values of her new friends. She begins to talk in an affected voice because Trish has told her to do so. Her essays are more academically acceptable, but have lost the "originality" which Frank values.

Throughout Act One, Rita encounters constant opposition from her husband, Denny. Their relationship becomes increasingly stormy as the play progresses, culminating in Act Two with his giving her the choice of trying for a baby and remaining in the marriage or continuing with the course and leaving it. Rita chooses to leave. Moving into a new world has involved sacrifice for Rita.

Throughout Act Two, Rita moves away from Frank, as well. Where once she admired him and was grateful for all he gave her, now she prefers to spend time with Trish, Tyson and the other students. She misses tutorials or is late for
them. Frank is upset and resentful, as he has become fond of her. Their sessions have been a bright spot in his otherwise unrewarding and frustrating life. A discussion about Frank's poetry escalates into an acrimonious quarrel. Rita believes he is angry because she has achieved a great deal and so is on a more equal footing with him, which he resents. At this point she feels very satisfied with the progress she has made, claiming that now she knows "what clothes to wear, what wine to buy, what plays to see, what books and papers to read". Frank dismisses her claims, describing her achievement as "so very little".

It is later, after Trish's attempted suicide and upon reflection she realises that Frank's criticisms were justified. She has uncritically accepted "a load of quotes and empty phrases," all the second-hand opinions of other people because she wanted a transformation of her life so passionately. "I was so hungry. I wanted it all so much that I didn't want it to be questioned," she tells Frank, in justification, finally commenting ironically, "I told y' I was stupid." It is precisely because she is not stupid that she can understand her own motivations.

However, at the end of the play, Rita has come to realise that her journey with Frank has given her the gift of choice. She can now direct her life in the way she wants. She has successfully moved into another world.

Quotes

- "I've been realizin' for ages that I was, y' know, slightly out of step. I'm twenty-six. I should have had a baby by now; everyone expects it...See, I don't wanna baby yet. See, I wanna discover meself first."

- "Is this the absolute maximum I can expect from this livin' lark? An' that's the big moment that one, that's the point when y' have to decide whether it's gonna be another change of dress or a change in yourself."

- "My mind's full of junk, isn't it? It needs a good clearin' out."

- "I don't want to be funny. I wanna talk seriously with the rest of you..."

- "...I'm a freak. I can't talk to the people I live with anymore. An' I can't talk to the likes of them on Saturday, or them out there, because I can't learn the language."

- "But don't you realise, I want to change!"

- "I feel young, you know like them down there."

- "Don't sound so surprised. I can talk now y' know, Frank."

- "I can have a mind of my own can't I?"

- "...don't keep treating me the same as when I first walked in here."
• "I’m educated, I’ve got what you have an’ y’ don’t like it because you’d rather see me the peasant I once was."

• "I know what clothes to wear, what wine to buy, what plays to see, what papers and books to read. I can do without you."

• "You think I just ended up with a load of quotes an’ empty phrases; an’ I did. But that wasn’t your doin’. I was so hungry. I wanted it all so much that I didn’t want it to be questioned. I told y’ I was stupid."

• "I chose me. Because of what you’d given me I had a choice."

Frank

The first scene quickly establishes Frank’s dissatisfaction with his life. The whisky secreted in a bookcase points to a drinking problem, and the phone conversation with his partner, Julia, hints at a less than satisfactory relationship. At the end of the scene, he confesses to Rita that he is “an appalling teacher” of “appalling students”. Although Frank is witty, kind and talented, he finds the academic world stultifying and frustrating, his personal life unsatisfactory and drinks to escape his negative emotions.

Frank is charmed by Rita’s spontaneity and although he was initially unwilling to take her on as a student, soon comes to look forward to their sessions together. They develop a personal relationship to the point where they attend a play together and visit the art gallery. Frank invites her to a dinner party at his house because he finds her “funny, delightful, charming” but Rita lacks the courage to actually go. He is concerned for her when she reveals the extent of Denny’s opposition to her course.

Rita is a challenging student for Frank for many reasons. Her lack of scholastic background means that she has no idea of how to approach a novel critically or of how to write an essay. Under his tutelage, she gradually acquires the skills she needs to sit an exam. However, as this happens, Frank begins to regret setting her on this path. He appreciated and valued Rita’s “originality” and the way she responded to life. As she changes and becomes more like his other students, Frank feels that he has created a monster.

Frank is profoundly uncomfortable with Rita’s transformation after the summer school. He reveals flashes of jealousy
when she talks of going to France with Tyson and others, saying there is no point is working towards an essay if she is likely "to fall in love" and go away. He is upset to discover that she has left the hairdressing salon and begun to work in a bistro, without telling him. "It struck me that there was a time when you told me everything," he complains. He is losing the importance he once had in her life and he is very upset by this.

Rita's attitude to Frank changes throughout the course of the play. She finds him "dead clever" and "a crazy mad piss artist" at first, and places great faith in his ability to teach her "everything". She is impressed that he has written poetry, asking him, "Were you a famous poet?" Later, she gives him a special pen, hoping to encourage him to continue writing poetry. But, as she becomes more confident in her new world, she grows increasingly critical of the way Frank wastes his talents, drinking his life and opportunities away. "If you could stop pouring that junk down your throat in the hope that it'll make you feel like a poet you might be able to talk about things that matter," she reprimands him.

Like Rita, Frank is discontented with his life but, unlike her, he makes no move to change it. He seems incapable of moving out of his environment, becoming appalled when Rita suggests going outside. It is only when change is forced on him from outside by the university authorities that he moves into a new world.

Quotes

- "But, I'm afraid Rita, that you'll find there's less to me than meets the eye."

- "You see, the great thing about the booze is that it makes one believe that under all that talk one is actually saying something."

- "I don't know if I want to teach you. What you already have is valuable."

- "I might have fallen off my dear, but I went down talking ---- and came up talking --- never missed a syllable ---- what have they got to complain about."

- "It struck me there was a time when you told me everything."

- "You can hardly bear to spend a moment here can you?"

- "You know, Rita, I think ---- I think like you I shall change my name; from now on I shall insist upon being known as Mary, Mary Shelley ---- do you understand that allusion, Rita?"

- "Have you come all this way for so very, very little?"

- "...you who squanders every opportunity and mocks and takes it for granted."

- "Because of what you'd given me I had a choice. I wanted to come back an' tell y' that. That y' a good teacher."
Denny

The audience never sees Denny. Our perception of him comes entirely from what Rita tells us about him. He appears to be an ordinary young working-class man without any particular ambitions for his life beyond marriage and babies with Rita, nights out at the pub with friends and family and possibly a better house in Formby. He believes that by Rita's age, the time for education is past and that she should be settling down and having a baby.

Denny is perplexed by his wife's behaviour. Even before she embarks on her course he cannot understand why she might want to read or watch a different television program to the one he is watching. Rita tells Frank, "He gets dead narked". As Rita pursues her Open University course, she changes and he wonders, "where the girl he married has gone to." He is unable to understand Rita's aspirations, let alone support her in them. Rita says that "he hates me comin' here". It is as if they are speaking a different language. Rita complains that when she talks to him about having "choice" in the direction her life will take, "he thinks we've got choice because we can go into a pub that sells eight different kinds of lager." He simply cannot comprehend what she is talking about and as time goes on, the friction between them escalates. From the first, Denny makes studying difficult for Rita, being unpleasant if she tries to work at home and forcing her to try to write her essays at the hairdressing shop. He refuses to accompany her to Frank's house for dinner. After discovering that Rita has deceived him about the Pill, Denny burns Rita's books in a futile hope of stopping her studies and reclaiming her attention. It is an extreme and brutal action intended to exert power over Rita. It does not deflect Rita from her purpose and eventually Denny gives her an ultimatum: to discontinue her studies and think about starting a family, or to leave their home. She chooses to go.

Despite Denny's actions, it is impossible not to feel some sympathy for him. He finds that his wife and he do not, after all, share the same view of life or the same goals. She wants something which he cannot comprehend, and she changes out of all recognition. He brings Rita presents, hoping that they will somehow bring back the girl he married.

Rita has lied to Denny by letting him believe that she has gone off the Pill and that there is a chance of her becoming pregnant. He feels betrayed. Rita admits that her actions can be viewed as "selfish" but cannot be swayed from her path because she is finding herself and "it's great".

Rita's marriage to Denny is one of the casualties of her movement into a new world. Her desire for a better way of living is greater than her desire to hold on to the marriage.
Quotes

- “Denny gets dead narked if I work at home. He doesn’t like me doin’ this.”
- “He says there’s a time for education. An’ it’s not when y’ twenty-six an’ married.”
- “It makes me stronger comin’ here. That’s what Denny’s frightened of.”
- “He’s wonderin’ where the girl he married has gone to.”
- “He burnt all me books.”
- “He said I’d betrayed him. I suppose I have.”

Trish

Trish is a student with whom Rita shares a flat after her marriage breaks down. In the beginning, Rita is impressed by everything about Trish. She feels that Trish is “dead classy” and has “taste”. She admires Trish’s decoration of their flat, terming it “dead unpretentious”.

However, Trish soon sets about changing Rita. Rita attempts to speak in a way, which Trish approves of because Trish has told her “there is not a lot of point in discussing beautiful literature in an ugly voice”. It is clear that Trish is superficial as well as arrogant. It is a measure of how much influence Trish has come to have over Rita that she tells Frank “no matter how difficult I may find it I must persevere”. Rita has accepted Trish’s advice unquestioningly; so eager is she to move into her new world.

As time goes on Trish comes to have more influence over Rita than Frank does. She cuts short a tutorial with Frank to go with Trish to The Seagull. This provokes an angry retort from Frank that she can hardly bear to spend time with him at all. He senses that he is less important now in Rita’s life than he once was.

When Frank gives Rita his poems to read, she shares them with Trish who enthuses over them, leading Rita to quote her as some sort of authoritative voice. Trish has described them in the language of literary criticism and when Rita parrots what she has said to Frank, he is appalled. He feels that he has created a monster. Rita no longer has confidence in her own opinions as she once did, but is happy to spout second-hand ones.
Rita is drawn to the energy of the students like Trish and Tyson because “they’re passionate about things that matter” but she doesn’t share what these things might be.

By the final scene of Act Two, Rita has come to see Trish in a different light. She is fallible and not “so cool and together” after all. Rita has formed an altogether more realistic view of her flatmate, in the same way that she is developing a more realistic view of the world into which she has moved.

**Quotes**

- “She’s great. Y’ know she’s dead classy. Y’ know like, she’s got taste...”

- “As Trish says there is not a lot of point in discussing beautiful literature in an ugly voice."

- “…I thought she was so cool an’ together --- I came home the other night an’ she’d tried to top herself.”

**Julia**

Julia is Frank’s partner, and ex-student who has a Master of Arts degree. In the first scene of the play, Frank has a telephone conversation with her and it is obvious that the relationship between them has some difficulties. From Frank’s responses, we can infer that she is upset because she has dinner cooking but Frank will be late because he is “determined to go to the pub”.

Frank describes Julia to Rita as “very caring, very tolerant, adores me enormously and spends a lot of time putting her head in the oven”. Julia must be extremely tolerant as Frank admits that he spends a great deal of time in the pub. Frank does not ascribe this to any fault of hers, but to his own deficiencies. Frank is either unaware of or callous about the effects of his behaviour on Julia.

Later, Frank describes Julia as “the stage-manager type” who has taken him on because “it gives her a lot to practise on”. This is a very detached comment about the person you live with, and seems to epitomise Frank’s detachment from her.

When they holiday in France, Julia and Frank quarrel and Julia leaves, although she later returns. Frank describes the quarrel as being over a trivial matter, but it seems more likely that some more fundamental issues underlay it. Julia does not plan to accompany Frank to Australia. He may be going into a new world there, but she will not accompany him. Instead, she will make her own path in a world that no longer includes Frank.
Quotes

- "I like her enormously; it's myself I'm not too fond of."

- "...Julia is the stage-manager type...She likes order --- probably why she took me on --- it gives her a lot of practice ---"

TYSON (TIGER)

Tyson is one of the students with whom Rita begins to talk, on the lawn in front of Frank's office. She makes an immediate impact on him and he invites her to come to France with him and some other students. (No doubt, like Frank, he has never met anyone quite like her before.) When Rita shares this information with Frank, he has a jealous reaction and attempts to tell her that she cannot go. As time goes on, she continues to talk to Tyson and his friends because she finds that they are "passionate about things that matter". However, by the end of the play, Rita has regained some perspective and regards him as "a bit of a wanker". The offer to come to France still stands, but Rita is undecided and will choose to do what suits her.

Quotes

- "There was this really mad one with them; I've only been talkin' to them for five minutes and he's inviting me to go abroad with them."

- "...I do find Tiger fascinatin', like I find a lot of the people I mix with fascinating; they're young, and they're passionate about things that matter."

- "He's a bit of a wanker, really."
THEMES

Change

Rita wants to move into a different world from the one in which she grew up. This journey changes her in many ways. At the beginning of the play, we learn that she has changed her name from Susan to Rita. It is an indication that she wishes to transform herself, leaving her background behind. Later, she dismisses the action as "pretentious crap".

Rita experiences both internal and external changes as she moves into the world she has chosen. She is intelligent, but has had a minimal education. She wants "to know everything", but Frank tells her that "possessing a hungry mind is not, in itself, a guarantee of success", and that she will need to become more disciplined in her thinking if she is to pass exams.

However, it is Frank who becomes uncomfortable with the idea of being the instrument of Rita’s change. He has come to value her "uniqueness". Rita insists that she wants to change, and that he must "be dead firm" with her in order to bring her work up to the necessary standard.

Throughout the second act of the play, Rita not only changes but draws away from Frank. The summer school and contact with other students boosts her confidence to the point where she can disagree with Frank’s point of view on a Blake poem. She absorbs ideas and opinions from other students, and as Frank feared, loses her unique voice. Frank and Rita have a fierce argument, with Frank telling her, ironically, that he has done "a fine job" on her. But, after reflection, Rita is able to understand herself and her motivations. She has wanted so desperately to change that she has been unable to question the value of the changes.

Rita has a significant change thrust upon her when her husband, Denny, instigates her leaving their home and thus, ending their marriage. He has given her the choice of the course or the relationship and she has chosen the course.

Rita makes external changes to her life, as well. She moves into a flat with Trish and she leaves the hairdressing salon to work in a bistro. When she is in London, she buys 'new' second-clothes and changes her appearance. Under Trish’s tutelage, she attempts to change the way she speaks to one that is more acceptable to her flatmate.

In contrast to Rita, who is the agent of much of her own change, Frank cannot change. He is trapped in a world which is unsatisfying, but cannot make any conscious move out of it. Instead, he drinks to escape. His drinking escalates until the university authorities can no longer ignore it and advise him to take time in Australia or be sacked. At the end of the play, he is being forced to move into the world.
Social Class

Rita is keenly dissatisfied with the limited horizons of her working class life. She feels "out of step" with her peers in her working class neighbourhood, acknowledging that most of them would have had a baby by the time they had reached her age. Longing for "a better way of livin' me life", she has attempted to explain her restlessness to her husband, Denny, but he interprets her discontent in material terms and suggests they save and move to a better neighbourhood. Rita feels constrained by the values of her class. When she talks about having a baby, she says that "everyone expects it". By implication, everyone expects that she should settle down to a life of marriage, children and possibly an undemanding job, with the only change on the horizon being possibly a slightly better house to live in.

Rita's desire for a better way of living leads her into the world and a consequence of this is her leaving her husband, Denny behind. As she progresses through her Open University course, Rita comes to a point where she feels that she is "a half-caste", belonging in neither class. She can no longer relate to her working class peers, but neither can she speak the language of the middle class she aspires to. It is the recognition that she is caught between two classes or two worlds that spurs her to continue on with her course.

Rita looks very critically at the working class, denying that they have any culture. She claims that she sees "everyone pissed, or on the Valium, tryin' to get from one day to the next", because their lives have "no meanin'". At this point, she has a very rosy view of educated, middle class people. She looks out of Frank's window during her first tutorial and says, "God, what's it like to be free?" The question is ironic because Frank is by no means free, restricted as he is by an unsatisfactory job and a lukewarm relationship, and drinking his way through each day. Rita believes that education will liberate her.

Rita embraces her new middle class student friends in the second act. She accepts their opinions and ideas unquestioningly. Once she might have dismissed these as "crap". She accepts their dictates on dress and speech. However, by the time she takes her exam, she has regained some perspective and can see that because she was "so hungry", she didn't want to question anything in her new world. We see, from her comments on Trish and Tyson, that she is no longer so uncritical and has begun to have a more realistic view of her new friends. It is also implied by her comment about possibly going to her mother's for Christmas, that she is no longer feeling so alienated from her family and friends. The action of giving Frank a haircut could be interpreted as Rita beginning to be more comfortable with her background.
Choices and consequences

Choice is a very important theme in Educating Rita. Rita's motivation in moving into the world is to achieve some sort of choice about the direction her life will follow. She doesn't wish to blindly follow the path determined by her working class background and environment; she wants an education so that she will make more informed choices.

Rita's choice to enrol in the Open University course is only the first in a whole series of choices she has to make on her journey into the world. Even after she has embarked on her course, she says she might "pack the course in", and she comes very close to doing that in Act One, Scene Seven. But, the sight of her mother's unhappiness with her life, coupled with her realisation that she was existing in a kind of limbo, neither in the working class nor the middle class world, stimulates her to make the conscious choice to continue with the course.

Rita's choice to study has repercussions in her personal life. It causes friction with her husband, finally leading to the breakdown of the relationship. Rita grows increasingly alienated from her family and friends as they cannot understand her wish to study.

In the last scene, Rita talks about choosing to do her exam, even though "it might be worthless in the end". She seems to be revelling in having achieved what she set out to do when she talks about possible ways to spend the Christmas period and says, "I dunno. I'll make a decision, I'll choose." She has achieved the luxury of having a choice.

Frank has to make choices, too. In the first scene, although he is delighted with Rita's outspokenness and finds her "marvellous", he chooses not to tutor her because he feels that he is an "appalling" teacher and she deserves to have someone better. However, Rita will not accept this, and tells him she will return the next week. Initially, Frank enjoys the interaction each week with Rita, but as she changes, he regrets giving in and beginning to teach her. He feels that he has created a monster and that she has lost touch with parts of herself which were unique and precious.

Frank's life is unsatisfying for him, but unlike Rita, he does not choose to make any changes. The choice he does make is to drink, and to drink to an increasing degree. It is this choice which results in his being sent to Australia. Frank is forced into the world, leaving his familiar environment and relationships behind.
Relationships

The key relationship in the play is the unlikely one between the world-weary academic, Frank, and the feisty hairdresser Rita. Frank is delighted by Rita at their first meeting, telling her, "I think you're marvellous. Do you know, I think you're the first breath of air that's been in this room for years." Rita is equally taken with Frank, insisting that he remain her tutor and calling him, "a crazy mad piss artist".

Throughout Act One, Frank and Rita begin to form a close relationship. Rita feels that her tutorials with Frank provide her "with life itself". Frank for his part allows himself to be talked into going to the theatre with her and asks her to a dinner party at his home, thus taking their relationship to a more personal level.

Rita's time in London at the summer school signals the beginning of a rift in their relationship. As she becomes more confident, less in awe of the regular students and able to form friendships with them, she has less need of Frank, revealed by her late appearance at tutorials or even failure to come at all. Frank feels this keenly, sounding at times like a jilted lover. He complains "...that there was a time when you told me everything".

At the same time, Frank is disenchanted with Rita's transformation under the influence of Trish, Tyson and the other students. Rita, for her part, has lost her initial respect for Frank whom she now sees as simply wasting his talents and opportunities.

Rita and Frank resolve their differences in the last scene. Frank asks Rita to accompany him to Australia. It can be seen as either a hope to regain the once close relationship or as an indication of his apprehensions about going into the world.

Rita and Denny's relationship is a casualty of Rita's movement into the world. His inability to understand or support Rita's need for something more in her life leads to conflict and the eventual disintegration of the marriage.

Rita's relationship with Trish, Tyson and the other students is an important stage in her movement into the world. Through them she gains confidence and a sense of being comfortable in her new milieu. By the end of the play, she has lost her rosy view of them and is able to view them more realistically.
LANGUAGE

Educating Rita is a realistic play of two acts and fifteen scenes which depict profound changes in the lives of Rita and Frank. It is what is known as a ‘two-hander’ because only two characters are seen on stage. In Act One, we see Rita’s difficulties and epiphanies as she struggles to enter the new world of an Open University course. Her mentor for the journey is Frank, a cynical academic, who, to his own surprise, becomes captivated by her. Her endeavours are hampered by the opposition of her husband and the end of the act sees the end of her marriage. In Act Two, Rita moves with increasing confidence into her new world, but at the same time she moves away from Frank, needing his help less and less. This creates conflict which builds throughout the act, to explode into a violent argument in Scene Five. This conflict is resolved in the last scene, with both Rita and Frank moving on --- Rita to a life of her own choosing, and Frank to ‘exile’ in Australia.

We can find allusions to both the Pygmalion myth and to Frankenstein in the play. The former, which is the basis for both George Bernard Shaw’s Pygmalion and for the later musical, My Fair Lady, describes the transformation of a woman by her mentor. She outgrows him and wishes to go her own way, in charge of her own fate. This has obvious parallels with Educating Rita, where Rita leaves Frank behind as she moves into the world. Frank makes reference to the more sinister Frankenstein, by Mary Shelley, where a monster is created by Dr Frankenstein. He feels that not only does Rita wish to move away from him but he does not much like the new personality he has helped to form.

Social class is established in the play by the way Rita and Frank speak. In the first scene, Rita bursts in, talking very fast and using a fair sprinkling of expletives in her conversation. Her lack of education is obvious in the way she says, “wanna” and drops the final ‘g’ of words, as in “shoutin’ ” and “smokin’”. Words are shortened as when she says, “Don’t y’ ” instead of “Don’t you” and “cos” instead of “because”. Her speech is very imprecise as when she says, “With the inflation an’ that” and ungrammatical as in “on me own”. She swears frequently and selfconsciously, saying “fuckin’ ”, “bleedin’ ” and “crap”. She uses slang frequently. Macbeth is “dead good” and Trish is “dead classy”. But as Rita’s education proceeds, her speech becomes less idiosyncratic. Although she still drops the final ‘g’ and uses expressions such as “gonna” and “dunno”, she uses less slang and expletives.

By contrast, Frank’s speech is that of a typical academic. It is measured, considered and grammatically correct. He uses “erm” a great deal, suggesting that he is thinking before speaking, in contrast to Rita. His choice of words is that of an educated person: “patina”, “masochism”, “partisan” and “soberity”. We only hear Frank swear when he is very drunk and has been reported by his students. “Sod them --- no, fuck them!” he fumes.

Frank can be quite witty at times. He tells Rita that “there’s less to me than meets the eye” and he makes a ridiculous case for feeling comfortable in Australia, because “the Australians named their favourite drink after a literary figure”.

Humour is created in the play by Rita and Frank failing to understand each other because of confusion over the way language is used. In the first scene, Frank, attempting to discover who Rita is, asks, “You are?” She thinks it is a statement rather than a question and asks, “What am I?” It is not just an amusing exchange; it illuminates the gap between their social classes and backgrounds.
There are a number of important symbols in the play. The window is one of them. It represents a barrier between Rita and the ‘real’ students who sit on the lawn and talk. When her confidence has been enhanced by the experience of summer school, Rita tries to open it but it will not move. Frank’s comment that “it hasn’t been opened for generations”, suggests his willingness to leave matters as they are rather than attempt to change them as Rita does.

The door to Frank’s office is an important metaphor. The first time she visits him, she has difficulty opening it. This symbolises the difficulty of someone like Rita entering the academic world. Later, Rita oils the lock so that the door opens more easily. This can be seen as Rita overcoming the first (physical) barrier to her aspirations as she later overcomes other (emotional, social and mental) barriers.

**MODEL ESSAY**

Read the question below and then examine the essay outline on the following pages. Use this outline to help guide your essays. Practise the essay questions listed after the sample essay, attempting to write under exam conditions — a definite time limit and no outside distractions such as music.

You must also practise other types of responses. A number of these are suggested after the sample essay, towards the end of the book. Try to plan and practise each one, so that you are familiar with its requirements before the exam.

**QUESTION**

"Going into the world involves difficulty as well as triumph." Discuss this question, making reference to your set text, as well as to related texts of your own choice.
THE ESSAY

The essay has been the subject of numerous texts and you should have the basic form well in hand. As teachers, the point we would emphasise would be to link the paragraphs both to each other and back to your argument (which should directly respond to the question). Of course ensure your argument is logical and sustained.

Make sure you use specific examples and that your quotes are accurate. To ensure that you respond to the question make sure you plan carefully and are sure what relevant point each paragraph is making. It is solid technique to actually 'tie up' each point by explicitly coming back to the question.

When composing an essay the basic conventions of the form are:

- State your argument, outline the points to be addressed and perhaps have a brief definition.

A solid structure for each paragraph is:
- Topic sentence (the main idea and its link to the previous paragraph/argument)
- Explanation / discussion of the point including links between texts if applicable.
- Detailed evidence (Close textual reference- quotes, incidents and technique discussion.)
- Tie up by restating the point's relevance to argument / question

- Summary of points
- Final sentence that restates your argument

As well as this basic structure you will need to focus on:

**Audience** – for the essay the audience must be considered formal unless specifically stated otherwise. Therefore your language must reflect the audience. This gives you the opportunity to use the jargon and vocabulary that you have learnt in English. For the audience ensure your introduction is clear and has impact. Avoid slang or colloquial language including contractions (like doesn't, eg., etc.).

**Purpose** – the purpose of the essay is to answer the question given. The examiner evaluates how well you can make an argument and understand the module's issues and its text(s). An essay is solidly structured so its composer can analyse ideas. This is where you earn marks. It does not retell the story or state the obvious.

**Communication** – Take a few minutes to plan the essay. If you rush into your answer it is almost certain you will not make the most of the brief 40 minutes to show all you know about the question. More likely you will include irrelevant details that do not gain you marks but waste your precious time. Remember an essay is formal so do not do the following: story-tell, list and number points, misquote, use slang or colloquial language, be vague, use non-sentences or fail to address the question.
MODEL ESSAY

"Going into the world involves difficulty as well as triumph." Discuss this question, making reference to your set text, as well as to related texts of your own choice.

A few notes about the question:

- Remember that the actual question is asking you what you have learned about the representation of how individuals grow up and journey into the world.

- The question is to point you in the right direction but you must define the terms carefully.

- Take care to examine the prescribed text in sufficient detail and always with reference to the concept, “Into the World.”

- You must have quotes and textual references to display a good knowledge of your prescribed text and related material.

ESSAY RESPONSE

"Going into the world involves difficulty as well as triumph." Discuss this question, making reference to your set text, as well as to related texts of your own choice.

Going into the world implies change, and change rarely comes without pain and stress. The movement into a new world may be physical, emotional or mental, and will involve challenges to face and difficulties to overcome. Rita, the exuberant main character of Willy Russell’s play, Educating Rita, achieves a successful move into the world but finds that she must surmount many difficulties and that her transition comes at personal cost. The immigrants depicted in Shaun Tan’s picture book, The Arrival, struggle with difficulties when they move into the world of a new country and suffer as a consequence, before creating a successful new life. In Dead Poet’s Society, the film directed by Peter Weir, the boys are encouraged by their charismatic teacher to move fearlessly into the world but find that such a move can have great costs as well as great rewards.

Rita, the street-wise, fast-talking, main character of Educating Rita, embarks on an Open University course because she wants more out of her life. She is discontented – “out of step” with her husband, family and friends – and wants to learn “everything”, hoping that an education will allow her to move into a different world, one where she has some “choice” about the direction of her life.
The difficulties of Rita’s moving into the world are immediately obvious to the audience in the first scene of Act One. The stuck door is a metaphor for the effort required to make a change. Rita’s quest for education begins with a physical difficulty to overcome and continues with her being challenged by emotional difficulties. Rita is uncomfortable in the first scene because she is in an unfamiliar situation. Her discomfort is revealed by her talking fast, swearing and moving about the room commenting on its contents, rather than sitting down and allowing Frank to interview her. It is clearly not easy for her to begin to move into the world she desires.

As Rita begins to progress through her course, she encounters emotional difficulties. Scene Seven in Act One reveals that Rita has moved away from her working class world, but does not feel ready to enter the middle class world. The catalyst is a dinner party at Frank’s house to which she has been invited. Suffering a loss of self-confidence, she joins her husband and family in the pub. It is here that she realizes that she does not feel adequate to attend the dinner party and converse on an equal basis with Frank and Julia’s friends, but equally, neither is she comfortable with her peers in the pub. “I’m a freak,” she declares bitterly, “I’m a half-caste.” She suffers acute emotional distress at this realization.

Rita’s pursuit of an education comes at the cost of her marriage to Denny. Denny neither understands nor supports her choice and the conflict between them escalates throughout Act One, with his savage action of burning her books in Scene Five and his ultimatum is Scene Eight which leads to her moving out. Although clearly suffering, Rita shows some insight into Denny’s behaviour. She describes his “wonderin’ where the girl he married has gone to” and later she comments that “he said I’d betrayed him. I suppose I had.” However, despite her emotional pain, Rita will not be swayed from her path into the world and she forges on.

But, Rita’s move into the world is not just a series of challenges and difficulties. It is also a path which brings her discovery, excitement, triumph and self-discovery. Rita has an epiphany in Act One, Scene Four, when Frank leads her into the realisation that literature mirrors real life and offers her insights into her own experience. Later, Rita goes to a performance of Macbeth, expecting it to be “dead borin’ but finds it is actually “dead good...like a thriller”. Her excitement is such that she rushes off to tell Frank during her lunch break. She makes a dramatic entrance as she did in Scene One, but this time it is excitement which propels her into Frank’s office.

Rita’s movement into the world involves her moving with increasing confidence into the middle class world of educated people. By the time she takes her exam, she has come to a point where she realises that her journey so far has given her the ability to choose. She says, “I had a choice. I chose, me.” Although her path into the world has been beset with challenges and difficulties, she ultimately feels triumph at what she has achieved.

Rita has a less rosy view of the world to which she has aspired by the end of the play. She sees her new friends as fallible—Tyson is “a bit of a wanker” — and understands her own motivations better. In the final scene, she tells Frank, “I was so hungry...I didn’t want it to be questioned.” Her view of her new world has become more realistic. Rita has successfully moved into the world, a confident and self-aware woman.
In Shaun Tan's atmospheric picture book, *The Arrival*, immigrants are depicted meeting and coping with difficulties in a new world. The strangeness and unfamiliarity of the world is suggested in a number of ways. The picture of the ship's arrival in a major city shows the immigrants gazing at bizarre statues in the harbour. They do not match anything in the responder's experience and thus, convey effectively how confronting they must be to the new arrivals.

Another difficulty is language. The writing the main character sees on labels and signs is incomprehensible. He cannot understand or use the language, much as Rita neither understand nor use the right educated language in the early part of her journey into the world.

However, as in Rita's case, the immigrants have times of triumph. The main character forms friendships and his world becomes brighter. This is effectively suggested by the progression from dark to light in the drawings of this.

Finally, as in Rita's case, the main character achieves a successful transition into his new world, bringing his family to join him. The final pages of the book depict his daughter, totally at home in her new world, extending help to a newcomer. It is a symbol of how well the family has moved into the world.

In *Dead Poet's Society*, the film directed by Peter Weir, the boys at an elite boarding school are encouraged to move into the world by their teacher, John Keating. Inspired by their mentor, they resolve to "seize the day". This comes at great cost for Neil who changes under Keating's influence and defies his father. The consequences of this are tragic. Todd, his roommate, suffers from paralysing shyness, and to change and move into the world needs to overcome this.

A key scene shows Keating masking Todd's face so that he is able to speak out and release his creative abilities. The scene contains many close-up shots of the masked Todd and Keating, who is holding Todd and encouraging him to keep speaking. The audience is aware of the extreme difficulty Todd is facing in overcoming his shyness and shares his triumph when the mask is removed and he receives the affirmation of his peers. This scene is the beginning of Todd's movement into the world, one which was formerly closed to him because of his shyness. Todd is worlds away from the ebullient Rita but in both cases, moving into the world involves painful change before they can move confidently forward.

In all of these texts, moving into the world involves difficulties and challenges with which to grapple before the desired outcome is achieved. Rita achieves the outcome for which she has hoped from her education - the ability to choose the future direction of her life and move confidently into the world - after surmounting many emotional difficulties. The immigrants in *The Arrival* achieve a new life in a new world after coping with problems of unfamiliarity and communication. In *Dead Poet's Society*, Todd, at least, appears ready to move into the world, having overcome the difficulties of shyness. In all of these texts, we see that to go into the world may be fraught with difficulties, but it may also bring the desired reward.
OTHER RESPONSES TO PRACTISE

- Willy Russell is participating in a television panel entitled *New Worlds*. Russell will discuss his play, *Educating Rita*, and share his view of how moving into 'new worlds' affects people. You must make reference to related texts as well as to your set text.

- Write a speech to be given to an audience of Year Eleven students who are embarking on their study of the play, *Educating Rita*. Discuss how the study of *Educating Rita*, as well as of related texts helped you to understand the concept of "Into the World."

- You are invited to create a web page for students who will study *Educating Rita* next year. Write a plan for the site which will help students to understand the text and alert them to aspects they may find challenging when studying the text. Your site must include reference to related texts.

- Create a feature article with the title, "New Worlds to Conquer". Include reference to *Educating Rita* as well as to your related texts.

- Willy Russell is being interviewed on the local radio station, about his motivations for creating his play, *Educating Rita*. Write a transcript of the interview. You must include reference to other texts as well.

- Create a brochure for mature-age students with the title, "Into the World". Explore the concept, making reference to your prescribed text as well as to related material.
ESSAY QUESTIONS

- "Those who set out to explore new worlds often discover themselves." How true is this of Educating Rita? Include reference to related texts.

- How has your study of Educating Rita and related texts broadened your understanding of the concept, "Into the World"?

- "Moving into the world usually comes at a cost." Discuss this statement with reference to your text, Educating Rita, and related texts.

- How have the context and intended audience affected the way the text has addressed the issue of “Into the World”?  

OTHER TYPES OF RESPONSES

It is crucial students realise that their responses in the examination, class and assessment tasks will NOT always be essays. This page is designed to give guidance with the different types of responses which are now required.

The response types covered in the exam may include some of the following:

- Writing in a role
- Journal/Diary Entry
- Brochure
- Point of view
- Radio interview
- Television interview

- Letter
- Feature article
- Speech
- Report
- Essay

Students should familiarise themselves with these types of responses and be able to write effectively in them. You should practise each one at some stage of your H.S.C. year.

For a comprehensive explanation of each of these writing forms with examples using the prescribed HSC texts see:

Pattinson, Bruce and Suzan, Success in HSC Standard English: A Practical Guide for Senior Students

Pattinson, Bruce and Suzan, Success in HSC Advanced English: A Practical Guide for Senior Students
TEXT ONE: NOVEL

Looking for Alibrandi
Melina Marchetta

Penguin
1992
ISBN 0 14 036046 8

Josephine Alibrandi is a girl of Italian Australian background in her last year of school. She is a scholarship girl at an exclusive school and feels out of step with most of the other students whom she sees as having perfect lives due to their money and position.

Josephine feels constrained by her Italian family and longs for her ‘emancipation’ from them. Over the course of the year, she has experiences which shape her. She meets her father and develops a relationship with him, she has a relationship with a boy from the local high school and she loses a friend to suicide. All of these experiences help her to forge a stronger identity and to be more ready to move into the world. She realises that money and position are no guarantee of a perfect life and that she is in charge of her own destiny.

TEXT TWO: NOVEL

The Cay
Theodore Taylor

Puffin
1969

Set during World War One, this novel relates the difficult experiences of a young boy, Phillip Enright. Phillip’s parents are presented as less than ideal. On route to England, The ship Phillip and his mother have taken passage on, is torpedoed. Phillip finds himself first of all on a raft, and then on a small island with a black man, Timothy. Phillip loses his sight as the result of an injury during the sinking of the ship.

Timothy teaches Phillip to be independent, changing him greatly. Later, Timothy protects Phillip during a hurricane, but is injured and dies. The skills which Timothy has taught him, allow Phillip to survive on his own on the island. When he is rescued, and returns to civilisation, Phillip continues to be responsible and independent. This is presented by the author as a positive development, and one which will help Phillip to grow up well.

TEXT THREE: FILM

Stand By Me
Directed by Rob Reiner
1986

Four friends, all twelve years old and in their last year of elementary (primary) school embark on a journey to view the body of a boy killed by a train. Although the journey is
exciting and at times difficult, its main value for two of the boys, Chris and Gordie, is in the sharing of their worries and fears. Chris feels limited by his family’s (justified) bad reputation. Gordie has become ‘the invisible boy’ in his family since the death of his brother and feels that nothing he does is valued by them. The support they offer to each other gives each a boost in confidence and they return from the journey, ready to go into the world of high school and to take advantage of every opportunity.

Text Four: Film

Dead Poets’ Society
Directed by Peter Weir
1989

In this film about growing up, a charismatic teacher, John Keating, challenges his class of teenage boys to “seize the day” and to follow their dreams. This has catastrophic results in the case of one boy, Neil, who is thwarted by his father from following his dream of being an actor and suicides. This ultimately costs Keating his job. But, his passion for life has a profound effect on many of the other boys, in particular, Neil’s room-mate, Todd. Todd suffers from crippling shyness which prevents him from making use of his creative talents. A key scene of the film shows Keating covering Todd’s head so that he does not have to face the other boys and encouraging him to create a poetic monologue on the spot. What Todd says is very good and reveals how talented he really is. It is implied, by the end of the film that he will go into the world with optimism and greater confidence in himself, making use of his talents.

OTHER RELATED MATERIAL

- **Bend It Like Beckham.** Directed by Gurinder Chadra. 2002. Film. A young British Indian girl succeeds in playing soccer against the wishes of her conservative family and eventually wins a sports scholarship in America.

- **Butterfly.** John Tranter. Poem. In this poem a young woman keeps moving into new situations or new worlds, seeking something elusive.

- **Cinema Paradiso.** Directed by Giuseppe Tornatore. 1989. Film. A young boy, Toto’s, passage to manhood. Alfredo, the projectionist at the theatre is an important mentor to him.

- **Finding Nemo.** Directed by Stanton and Unkrich. 2003. Film. A timid clownfish adventures into the world beyond his home, searching for his lost son, but finding friendship and surviving dangers along the way.

- **Legally Blonde.** Directed by Robert Luketic. 2001. Film. Elle goes to college to win her boyfriend back. The film includes themes of self-actualisation and identity.

- **Mao’s Last Dancer.** Li Cunxin. Penguin, 2003. A young boy moves beyond an impoverished background and to international success through ballet school.

- **The Arrival.** Shaun Tan. Lothian, 2006. Picture book. This depicts the difficulties and fears immigrants must overcome upon their arrival in a new country.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Glossary Item</th>
<th>Definition/Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brownie salute</td>
<td>A special gesture used by junior members of the Girl Guide organisation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Commission.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dylan Thomas</td>
<td>A Welsh poet and playwright.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Daily Mirror</td>
<td>An English tabloid newspaper.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dalek</td>
<td>A robot featured in early <em>Dr Who</em> episodes.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Everton</td>
<td>English soccer team.</td>
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<tr>
<td>F.R. Leavis</td>
<td>An influential English literary critic.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Geriatric</td>
<td>Aging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gothic</td>
<td>Genre of literature featuring tragedy, suspense and the supernatural.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Harold Robbins</td>
<td>American author of popular novels.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Half-caste</td>
<td>Description once applied to people of mixed race.</td>
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<tr>
<td>ITV</td>
<td>English commercial television channel.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liverpool</td>
<td>English soccer club.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Muppet</td>
<td>Puppet from popular television series.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mary Shelley</td>
<td>Author of <em>Frankenstein</em>.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Open University</td>
<td>Courses open to people who have not passed normal school matriculation exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Patina</td>
<td>Any surface change due to age.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratatouille</td>
<td>A vegetable casserole.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Importance of</td>
<td>A popular comic play by Oscar Wilde.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Being Earnest</td>
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