

Appendix 1

Exemplar material to aid construction of teaching/learning activities to accompany first reading of novel.

Exemplar activities are based on *Great Expectations*.

Activity 1: After reading Chapter 1

Aim: to encourage students to articulate the impact the chapter had on them as an opening to a novel.

Learning outcomes :[i,ii,iii,iv,v,vi,vii,ix,x,xv,xvi].

After reading the chapter, as an introduction, students might be asked at which point the story grabbed their attention and how. Discussion could follow this.

Two good readers might be encouraged to read the dialogue out as if it were a play, making it as dramatic (or melodramatic) as possible. Afterwards, they or more particularly the spectators could try to identify what they found particularly frightening about the way the convict speaks. They should be encouraged to go beyond the voice that their actor used to the words on the page.

In groups, students could plan how they would open a film of the novel, again showing what in the text would justify their decisions. This could be compared with how a film director *has* actually done this if a video is available.

Students should be asked to look back at the three paragraphs before the introduction of the convict and consider why they think Dickens started like this and what image of Pip they have so far.

Students might record in their notebooks the impact of the first chapter for them and as many ways as possible that Dickens has achieved his effects.

(>3)

Activity 2. After reading Chapters 2- 7.

Aim: A simple activity to encourage a general response to some of the characters in the early part of the novel and also to check that students are reading the text with some care.

[vii,viii,ix,x,xv,xvi]

Students might be asked:

Bearing in mind the way they treat Pip, what do **you** feel towards the characters that Pip spent his early years with?

Characters are Joe, Mrs Joe, Pumblechook (and of less importance, Wopsle and Hubble). Orlick and Biddy to come later.

Free ranging discussion, with personal experience being brought to bear, is appropriate here.

Expression of strong views should be given free rein, as long as supported by text. Teachers should be prepared for some students to despise Joe for being so hen-pecked or to accept that some might approve of Mrs. Joe's disciplinary methods. (If they do not, the teacher might act as devil's advocate.) The majority probably will not agree with that and might perceive that the tone of the narration does not encourage this view. Teachers should encourage debate/disagreement but REQUIRE that all viewpoints should be based on the text.

The class should learn the habit of repeatedly coming back to the text and teachers should help them to enjoy the *humour* of much of the piece, while also pointing up the seriousness of the situation.

After the discussion, students might record their views in note form with the evidence to accompany. (>4)

Activity 3. After reading Chapters 8-13

Aim: an activity to encourage students to enter empathically into the beginnings of the Estella/Pip relationship. [i,iii,iv,v,vi,vii,ix,x,xv,xvi]

Class can be divided up to take roles of Pip and Estella and each to describe their first impressions of the other on the first day they met.

As a start, the teacher might try to get the characters to improvise their walk towards Miss Havisham's apartment – trying to imitate the *way* they *might* have moved. This would be to develop an appreciation of their relationship at this point of the narrative. Then they should try to capture the way they speak – and get into their way of thinking.

Finally, they might describe their experience as a sort of video-diary, describing the other's behaviour and appearance and expressing their thoughts and feelings about each other.

(>5)

Activity 4. After reading Chapters 14-19

Aim: Another empathic exercise for consolidation purposes and to help class assess the situation at a major turning-point in the novel. [i,ii,iii,iv,v,vi,vii,viii,ix,x,xi,xii,xv,xvi,xvii]

Class can be divided into different characters: Biddy, Orlick, Joe, Pumblechook, Trabb, Trabb's boy, Pip himself.....each to give their views about Pip becoming a gentleman of fortune.

The activity could be through the simulation of newspaper interviews, or there could be conversations between the different characters e.g. Biddy and Joe. There would need to be good research beforehand into the very differing attitudes of the various characters.

This could be extended to a writing exercise.

(>5)

Activity 5. After reading Chapters 20-26

Aim: Another close reading activity on the lines of Activity 1. In this case, the activity could lead to the writing of an essay. [iii,iv,v,vi,vii,xi,xiii,xiv,xv,xvi,xvii]

The class should read again silently chapter 20 and particularly closely the descriptions of London and Jaggers' office.

In groups perhaps, the students should be asked to read out loud the two paragraphs beginning "Mr Jaggers' room was lighted by a skylight only.... And ending "....got up and went out". They might then discuss and write down notes for use in a full class discussion later the following questions:

- What is your overall impression of Jaggers' office?
- Which details do you find particularly memorable?
- Write down any words or phrases which you find particularly evocative.
- What sort of man do you anticipate Jaggers to be?

Then they should read the next 3 paragraphs and answer the following:

Why do you think he introduced Smithfield (a meat market) at this stage?

What impressions of London and the people described do you have from reading this?

Note down any particularly evocative details, words or phrases.

After discussion, they might write an answer to the question.

What impression does the reader get of Jaggers' office and the surrounding area and how does Dickens' writing make it so memorable?

They should be told that they must include quotations, exploring the effect of the words, and make other close references to the text. (**>3**)

Activity 6: After reading Chapters 27 to the end.

Aim: to ensure that students are acquiring a detailed knowledge of the narrative while still responding personally to the characters and themes of the novel.

[i,ii,iv,v,vi,vii,viii,ix,x,xi,xii,xv,xvi]

If students have been recording synopses of chapters or making a time-line of the novel, it might be useful at this stage to do a check that all has been understood. The teacher will perhaps need to check their understanding of the details especially the connections between Compeyson, Miss Havisham, Magwitch and Estella.

Then to lighten up and encourage the perhaps by now faint-hearted, they might now, after finishing, look through the book and pick one episode which they think shows Pip in the worst light and one which shows him in the best light. They could share these choices with the rest of the group, and justify them. This might be arranged as a group activity.

(**>4**)

Appendix 2

Exemplar material to aid construction of teaching/learning activities for use after a first reading of novel.

Exemplar activities are based on *Great Expectations*.

Activity 1

Aim: Now that students have read the whole novel, they should learn to appreciate that a knowledge of the rest of the novel affects their close reading of any prescribed extract, in this case a conversation between Biddy and Pip.

[I,iii,iv,v,vi,vii,viii,ix,x,xi,xii,xv,xvi,xvii]

Students should read again Chapter 17, concentrating on the section from the paragraph beginning, "It came of my lifting up my own eyes from a task I was poring at..." to the words, "...so positive on that point."

A full class discussion could prepare students to write an answer to the following question: *In the light of what you read later in the novel, what do you feel when you read this intimate discussion between Pip and Biddy?*

Here students will need to think about

- Pip's attitudes at this moment before he has heard anything of his expectations
- Biddy and her feelings for Pip at this moment
- her later relationship with Joe and Pip's reactions to it
- the **ironies** in the conversation
- the poignancy of much that is said and unsaid – **pathos**

The teacher should take the opportunity to deepen the reading of students – constantly referring out to the rest of the novel and ensuring an attention to detail in the passage itself.

(>3)

Activity 2:

Aim: to move to a consideration of thematic content of the novel through a consideration of the importance of the roles of some of the characters of the novel who are not so influential for the development of the narrative.

Pumblechook

Wopsle

Biddy

Wemmick

Drumle **[vii,viii,xi,xii,xv,xvi]**

The class might perhaps be divided into groups, each of which could take one of these characters and show what contribution each makes to what has been discussed. From this, conclusions might be reached about what is the role of the character, and to distinguish this from a character sketch.

Throughout this activity, there should be constant reference to the text, as part of the consolidation programme.

(>4)

There might then be a general discussion about what ideas Dickens is exploring through the novel – in cruder terms, what it is teaching us.

Activity 3

Aim: to explore the relationship between Magwitch and Pip, taking account of all the developments through the novel, and to consolidate empathic work.

[i,ii,iii,iv,v,vi,vii,viii,ix,x,xi,xii,xv,xvi,xvii]

Magwitch's admiration of Pip is central to the novel. Students could discuss why he feels so fond of him and look at whether Pip deserves this affection. They will have to range quite widely through the text to support their views.

After a full discussion of this, they might try to imagine all the thoughts that Pip might have about him and the way that Pip has behaved towards him as he realises the connection with Estella.

This could be presented as Pip talking to Herbert about him or as a sort of confession.

This could lead to them writing in the role of Pip about Magwitch or in the role of Magwitch about Pip.

(>5)

Appendix 3

Exemplar material to aid construction of teaching/learning activities for use after the reading of a short story.

Exemplar activities are based on *Into the Wind, Contemporary Stories in English selected and introduced by Barrie Wade.*

Each story can be taken separately and the stories read in any order.
All activities are based on *Samphire*.

Activity 1

Aim: A close reading exercise which aims to help students to appreciate how the beginning of a story is written repays close attention for an understanding of the remainder of the story. The economy of writing in many short stories makes this sort of exercise particularly important.

(ii,iii,iv,vi,vii,ix,x,xii,xv,xvi + distinctive outcomes for short story study)

The story can be read silently beforehand or read out loud.

A quick brainstorming session could help students to focus on the failures in the relationship between the man and his wife.

Then a close reading of the first section (up to the words 'but they walked quickly on') on page 95 could be started.

Students should be encouraged first to look at what is being said, and then how the writer has used detail to:

- set the scene
- develop atmosphere
- develop characterisation
- express Molly's feelings
- explore the interaction between the husband and wife.

Then they should proceed to look at the way it is written. They should comment on the choice of words and the length of the sentences. They could comment on the first sentence, for instance, with its repetition of the word, *sheer*, and its unusual structure and, as they know the whole story, they should be able to comment on the effect of such a dramatic start.

Apart from this, they might find it possible to comment on:

(a) the dialogue (including in this case the indirect speech)...

- that it is completely one-sided.
- the emphases denoted by the italics
- the constant appeals by the man for a response from his wife
- the insufferably patronising tone – it would be useful if students could identify some of the ways he says things which they themselves would find offensive.
- the effect of changing from direct speech to indirect.

(b) imagery

(c) diction

After a close scrutiny, students might be then asked to show in detail how we are prepared for the ending of the story. [**>3**]

Activity 2:

Aim: To enable students, after reading a number of the stories, to begin to make comparisons between their themes or techniques. While making comparisons is not a compulsory examinable activity in the examination, sometimes questions ask for a treatment of two stories on a particular theme and, in those cases, some sort of comparison might be the most natural approach.

[ii,iii,iv,vi,,viii,ix,x, xi,xii,xiii, xv,xvi]

Students might be asked to think of two other stories which, after reading them, lead one to believe that the troubles described will not be over when the story reaches its conclusion. Possible examples in the collection are *The Lemon Orchard* and *A Stranger from Lagos*. There should then be a comparison of the *different ways* that these writers manage to show that all does not bode well. The Learning Outcomes might be helpful here *after* the students have tried to articulate how this lasting impression has been created by the writers.

[>4]

Activity 3:

Aim: After a very close reading of a story, to be able to read between the lines, and relate to the problems of its characters. **[iii,iv,vi,vii,ix,x,xii,xv,xvi]**

It might not be too fanciful to anticipate that the husband and wife in *Samphire* might be in need of marriage counselling. The class could be divided into counsellor interviewing Molly, Molly herself, counsellor interviewing the husband, and the husband himself.....and they could work towards sorting out their problems. They would have very different views of the incident and might find them hard to articulate!

[>5]

Appendix 4

Exemplar material to aid construction of teaching/learning activities to accompany first reading of a play.

Exemplar activities are based on *Macbeth and A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Macbeth

Activity 1. After reading, watching or listening to Act 1, Scenes 1-3.

Aim: to help students approach the play as a drama, which needs to be imagined and brought to life; to look closely at the opening of the play.

[ii,iii,vii,viii,x,xi,xiii,xiv]

Students might be organized into pairs or groups for a discussion about how they would present the 3 weird sisters. Students should imagine what they would expect them to look like (perhaps quickly draw a rough sketch of them), decide how they should speak, decide how Banquo and Macbeth should interact with them. However they go about their work, they should explain how they have reached their decisions looking, among other things, for clues based on how they speak, the riddles and paradoxes, the rhymes, the repetitions, the questions and answers. Look at Banquo's descriptions of them and the different effects of their prophecies on Macbeth and Banquo.

They might compare their findings with replays of film/DVD/video versions with different interpretations and discuss which they like most. [**>4**]

Activity 2. After reading Act 2

Aim: to help students understand the ways in which Shakespeare builds up tension and suspense. The murder of Duncan is not seen on stage. Students might debate why this is and a close reading of Act 2 Scene 2 might help them to focus on the sources of the tension at this stage in the play. [**i,ii,iii,iv,v, vi,vii,viii,x,xii,xiii**]

A prepared reading of this section in pairs with the elementary props of daggers and the intrusive knocking being played out might help them to understand some of the dramatic means by which the suspense is created.

In later full class discussion, the following aspects should be discussed: the dialogue – the interrupted sentences, the shortness of the lines, the obsessive nature of some of Macbeth's statements – his mental state, the effect of the repeated knocking, the interaction of the two protagonists.

Activity 3.After reading Act 3

Aim: To help students understand the dilemmas and anxieties of Lady Macbeth and to begin to make sense of her character and her tragedy.

[i,ii,iii,iv,v,vi,vii,viii,x,xiii,xiv,xv]

The banquet when Banquo's ghost appears is clearly a very dramatic scene. At the end of it, Lady Macbeth seems exhausted and we never see her again with the vigour that characterised her earlier in the play. A careful look at the things she whispers to Macbeth to try to bring him to her senses when he is beside himself with guilt and terror should give students insight into her character as also her response to the difficulties of maintaining some sense of decorum.

Read the scene or play a video from the entrance of the ghost to the end. Again a prepared reading or performance might focus attention on the reality of the situation. After this, there might be a focus on Lady Macbeth. This might lead up to a piece of writing in which, after the scene when she is alone, she replays the terrible evening in her mind.(>5)

A Streetcar Named Desire

Activity 1: After reading Scene 1

Aim: to help students to imagine the neighbourhood in which Blanche finds herself; to explore the ways that Tennessee Williams, from the start, creates an atmosphere and introduces us to the main character. **[i, ii, iii, v, vii, viii, x, xi, xiii, xiv]**

(The stage directions are very important in this play. Time should be taken to read them carefully.)

The activity should be used to read the opening to the play carefully and explore how Tennessee Williams has shown how badly Blanche fits into this neighbourhood and how this disconnection affects her.

First, students should try to picture the neighbourhood. They might try to draw a picture of the stage set, and write notes on the lighting and the sounds the audience should hear. Notice how the stage directions aim to give the picture in the dramatist's mind rather than a series of practical directions for a stage technician.

Next, they should look at the early dialogue before the entrance of Blanche. Look at both what they say and how they say it. What impressions are given?

Then they should read the dialogue aloud between Blanche and Eunice and the stage directions before the reappearance of Stella. Exaggerate the way that Blanche speaks to contrast with the way that Eunice speaks. What conclusions can they draw?

The rest of the scene is mostly devoted to the two sisters. Students could read the dialogue out and note down what they learn about the background of the two sisters, the differences between their characters, and what Blanche thinks of the place Stella lives.

They could also make a list of questions which they feel they want to know the answer to: for example, whether Blanche is really an alcoholic, why she collapses at the end. These questions could be kept until the whole play has been studied and then they should try to supply the answers themselves. This approach is useful in this play, because the audience is constantly

being presented with mysteries about the truthfulness of the situation, veils which the drama gradually lifts. [**>3**]

Activity 2: After reading to the end of Scene 5:

Aim: an exploration of the relationship between Blanche and Stella.

[**v, vi, vii, viii, x, xiii, xiv**]

By this time, the students should have appreciated that there are clear differences between the ways that the two sisters feel and think.

Some cue questions for group discussion might help to focus on the issues:

- Who do you think is the stronger of the two?
- Who is the happier of the two?
- Who would be the easier to live with?
- Who has the more interesting personality?
- Do you think they like each other?
- Do they understand each other?
- Are they open with each other or do you think they have secrets?
- Who do you think means more to Stella, Stanley or Blanche?
- If you could pick ONE big difference between their personalities, what would it be?

[**>4**]

Activity 3. After reading to the end of the play.

Aim: to review the progress of Mitch's relationship with Blanche throughout the play and try to empathise with him. [**i, iii, v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x, xi, xiii, xiv,xv**]

Students should:

- Explore Mitch's feelings for Blanche as they progress through the play.
- Reread the scenes when they are together: the first meeting in the last part of Scene 3; their closeness in Scene 6; the bitterness of Scene 9.
- Discuss Mitch's character, why he had not married, why he was attracted to Blanche, why he was so devastated when he got to know of her past.
- Imagine that he confided in a friend he could trust with secrets about what he had hoped from the relationship and why it had disappointed him. (Let this be acted out with the friend asking pertinent questions.)
- Finally, imagine how he felt when she was collected by the doctor Stanley had called. They should look for evidence of this in Scene 11. Then they should write his thoughts down as an essay.

[**>5**]

Appendix 5

Exemplar material to aid construction of teaching/learning activities for use after a first reading of a play.

Exemplar activities are based on *Macbeth* and *A Streetcar Named Desire*.

Macbeth

Activity 1

Aim: After students have absorbed the impact of the play, they might reflect on what makes it so dramatic. This exercise should bridge the gap from the early close reading of the text related to the first few scenes and later close work on prescribed parts of scenes. [**i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, viii, x, xiii, xiv**]

When they have digested the whole play, students could be asked to select what is for them *the* most *dramatic* moment in the play, the moment when their pulse starts to race or they feel a tingle in their spine....

Then they should justify their choice either to a group or to the class. They will have to be able to show how the context of their moment within the play makes it so effective, but they will also have to show how Shakespeare's writing has made it so dramatic.

For example, they could choose the second appearance of Banquo's ghost. Part of the drama comes from the dramatic irony of Macbeth's words, "Would he were here." Part comes from the emphatic monosyllables of "What man dare, I dare" which breaks up the regular flow of the blank verse. Students should be encouraged to look for these themselves first and then be given the language to express themselves if necessary.

[>3]

Activity 2.

Aim: To explore the motives behind Macbeth's murders and the central character of the play. By doing so, to build up a knowledge and understanding of the play. [**v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x, xiii, xiv**]
It is often said that it is ambition which was the reason Macbeth committed his murders.

Students who have read the play might be challenged to explore beyond that simple explanation. Taking each of his murder victims in turn and also looking at general aspects of his character, challenge them to come up with a complexity of reasons why Macbeth became initially a murderer and then became a serial killer. While the discussion is going on, a 'secretary' could write up notes on a blackboard (or equivalent) and evidence could be found in the form of direct or indirect quotations.

[>4]

Activity 3:

Aim: To explore the character of Macduff as a contrast to Macbeth **throughout the play** and when the students think they understand him, to help them to share his thoughts and feelings at a key decision point in the action of the play [**i, iii, v, vi, vii, viii, x, xi, xiii, xiv, xv**].

Some time might be profitably spent discussing the character of Macduff. Particularly interesting is the end of Act 4 where his mature understanding of what it is to be manly contrasts with Macbeth's and Lady Macbeth's. After the murder of Duncan, the key part he played in the discovery of the crime and his witness of the way the murderers reacted, he decides not to go to the coronation of Macbeth, but to go to Fife.

After discussion of his character and role in the whole play, students might be invited to suppose him talking to his wife in confidence about his reasons for his decision not to go to the coronation. You might suppose she might ask him questions to prompt a full explanation and you might expect him to describe to her what he saw on that fateful night. This supposed scene might be improvised. Alternatively, or in addition, students might write his thoughts as an essay. [**>5**]

A Streetcar Named Desire

Activity 1

Aim: This activity is designed to help students explore a major character in the play, concentrating on what is revealed about her thoughts and feelings not just by what she says, but also how she says it. It also leads students to examine other ways Tennessee Williams explores his characters, for example, through recurrent images. Especially important is the requirement that the scene will have to be understood within the context of what goes on in the rest of the play. [**i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x, xiii, xiv, xv**]

A close exploration of the end of Scene 5, from the point when Stella and Blanche are left alone after Stanley goes out to the Four Deuces. The purpose will be to explore the character, thoughts and feelings of Blanche.

Students might be given the task of preparing for a discussion on the scene beforehand. They could look at:

What Blanche says and what she does....and draw conclusions from them.....**always relating these to what they know of her in the rest of the play**, for example, her behaviour with the young man must be seen in the context of other incidents to be understood.

How Blanche speaks: look at the way some words are repeated

- look at the times her speech flow is interrupted

- look at the words she stresses

- look at her careful choice of words

- look at where her language becomes particularly tense

- and draw conclusions from all of these

Study the stage directions – so important in a Williams play where his poetic conception of the action is as eloquent as the dialogue.

Explore the imagery (e.g. the paper lantern, the staining of the *white* dress, the blue piano) and relate them to the rest of the play.

Students might profitably write an answer to this question after the discussion. [**>3**]

Activity 2:

Aim: to encourage a detailed knowledge of the text by getting students to find evidence for making a personal judgement about a major character and to organize material to argue a case.

[**v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x, xi, xiii, xiv, xv**]

The class could be asked:

What do you think of Stanley?

The class might be divided into two teams, one of which should attack Stanley, the other defend him. It would have to be explained that for most of the audience the truth will lie somewhere in between, and that this adoption of an extreme position is only to develop their skills in making and supporting a case. They will have to bring all their knowledge of the play to support their argument, including what he says and what he does, his different sort of relationships with the other characters and what mitigating factors there are to excuse his behaviour. A committee of three or four perhaps could adjudicate which of the teams had made the better case.

After this, students might be asked to make their own individual position clear in writing exactly where they stand in the spectrum of opinion, and say what they think of Stanley. The mitigating factors here might take on an ever increasing importance. [**>4**]

Activity 3.

Aim: To help students to understand what might seem to be a surprising decision by Stella, and to use this understanding to do some work in constructing an empathic answer. [**i, ii, iii, iv, v, vi, vii, viii, ix, x, xi, xiii, xiv, xv**]

Tennessee Williams leaves aspects of the climactic event at the end of Scene 10 to the imagination. Students will have to explore what leads up to the incident carefully and discuss possible alternatives. Whatever the conclusions, clearly Blanche gives her version of events to Stella. Near the beginning of Scene 11, Stella says to Eunice: "I couldn't believe her story and go on living with Stanley."

It is worth while giving students time to ponder the full significance of those words! Let them express what it shows us about Stella and her relationships with both Stanley and Blanche. Then, bearing in mind all that has happened so far and all that will happen, students might be given the task of writing down what they think Stella's thoughts would be just after she has heard Blanche's "story".

(**>5**)

Appendix 6

Introduction

One of the perennial complaints that examiners make about the way in which students answer poetry questions is that they substitute learnt notes about background and about poetic devices for a genuine response to the feeling, the words and the images. It is advisable to begin teaching with the poems themselves not with lots of background. After all the impact of great poetry lies in its universality; *Ode to Autumn* moves us because of its evocation of a mood, not because Keats was part of the Romantic movement. There follows one possible approach: Students might be encouraged to annotate poems in preparation for discussion or to plan answers to examination questions. Below are examples of how a poem might be annotated. A single question with three bullet points intended to help the candidate to organise the answer has been set and the examples show first a paper annotated in red which looks basically at the content of the poem (what is said) and relating to the first two bullet points of the question; the second is annotated in blue and looks at the words – the poetic techniques and diction – (how it is written) and relates to the last bullet point of the question. This might be a useful model of question for early studies of a selection of poetry. Questions in the examination will not appear in this form, but practising with this format will help students to develop a technique for answering poetry questions.

It should be emphasised that the bullet points are meant to be a guide as to what areas need to be covered in an answer to the main question (in this case, 'Say what you think about the thief'). This does not mean that they have to be answered separately. It would probably be better here (as indeed in most answers to examination questions in Literature) if the content and the style were treated together. This approach has been taken here to emphasise that they must both be explored in answer to the question.

The annotations are just examples, and not intended to be exhaustive. There are many more things that can be said. What is important is that students learn to explore the text closely, alert to both *what* is said and *how* it is said.

Finally, they should construct an answer which uses these annotations but answers the question directly and develops ideas, rather than merely identifies them. A guide as to how this might be based on both the blue and red annotations concludes this appendix.

It cannot be emphasised too much that this is not intended to be read as a model answer plan. Examiners expect or, at least, hope that there will be as many opinions and approaches as there are candidates.

Read this poem in which the poet takes the role of a thief. The thief reflects on some of the things he (or she) has stolen and tries to explain his (or her) actions.

Say what you think about the thief, referring closely in your answer to:

- **the thief's actions and his/her thoughts about what he/she does**
- **the thief's feelings about himself/herself and other people**
- **the words the poet has given the thief to describe these experiences.**

(You may imagine the thief as male or female.)

STEALING

The most unusual thing I ever stole? A snowman.¹
Midnight. He looked magnificent; a tall, white mute
beneath the winter moon. I wanted him, a mate *Admiration for the snowman*
with a mind as cold as the slice of ice *Identification with him.*
within my own brain. I started with the head. *Wants a friend....lonely?*
Better off dead than giving in, not taking
what you want. He weighed a ton; his torso,
frozen stiff, hugged to my chest, a fierce chill
piercing my gut. Part of the thrill was knowing
that children would cry in the morning. Life's tough.
Sometimes I steal things I don't need. I joy-ride cars
to nowhere, break into houses just to have a look.
I'm a mucky ghost, leaving a mess, maybe pinch² a camera. *No direction*
I watch my gloved hand twisting the doorknob. *Self-obsession? Introspection.*
A stranger's bedroom. Mirrors. I sigh like this – *Aah.*
It took some time. Reassembled in the yard,
he didn't look the same again. I took a run *Anger and frustration*
and booted him. Again. Again. My breath ripped out
in rags. It seems daft now. Then I was standing
alone among the lumps of snow, sick of the world.
Boredom. Mostly I'm so bored I could eat myself.
One time, I stole a guitar and thought I might
learn to play. I nicked³ a bust of Shakespeare⁴ ,
flogged⁵ it, but the snowman was strangest. You don't understand a word I'm saying, do
you? *suggests alienation*

Strange object to steal. No use to him.

Hard determination. Wants instant gratification of wishes.

Seems to like physical contact: link with loneliness?

harsh selfishness: learnt from experience or upbringing

link with uselessness of snowman. Purposeless

Self-dramatisation? Enjoyment of adventure and anonymity?

*hatred of society
feelings of isolation/alienation*

Examples show boredom and reasons for boredom

could be creative? – but lack of self-discipline or guidance?

¹ *Snowman*: snow made into the shape of a human being, usually by children for fun

² *pinch*: a slang word meaning *steal*

³ *nicked*: a slang word meaning *stole*

⁴ *bust of Shakespeare*: a small sculpture of the head and shoulders of Shakespeare

⁵ *flogged*: a slang word meaning *sold*

Read this poem in which the poet takes the role of a thief. The thief reflects on some of the things he (or she) has stolen and tries to explain his (or her) actions.

Say what you think about the thief, referring closely in your answer to:

- the thief's actions and his/her thoughts about what he/she does
- the thief's feelings about himself/herself and other people
- the words the poet has given the thief to describe these experiences.

(You may imagine the thief as male or female.)

STEALING

The most unusual thing I ever stole? A snowman.⁶
Midnight. He looked magnificent; a tall, white mute
beneath the winter moon. I wanted him, a mate
with a mind as cold as the slice of ice
within my own brain. I started with the head.
Better off dead than giving in, not taking terse maxim suggests tough pose?
what you want. He weighed a ton; his torso, similar effect with "Life's tough"
frozen stiff, hugged to my chest, a fierce chill
piercing my gut. Part of the thrill was knowing diction suggests passion/anguish
that children would cry in the morning. Life's tough.
Sometimes I steal things I don't need. I joy-ride cars
to nowhere, break into houses just to have a look.
I'm a mucky ghost, leaving a mess, maybe pinch⁷ a camera.
I watch my gloved hand twisting the doorknob.
A stranger's bedroom. Mirrors. I sigh like this – *Aah*.
It took some time. Reassembled in the yard,
he didn't look the same again. I took a run
and booted him. Again. Again. My breath ripped out
in rags. It seems daft now. Then I was standing
alone among the lumps of snow, sick of the world.
enjambement (in rags; alone) in this verse emphasises his wretchedness
Boredom. Mostly I'm so bored I could eat myself. humorous phrasing
One time, I stole a guitar and thought I might
learn to play. I nicked⁸ a bust of Shakespeare⁹,
flogged¹⁰ it, but the snowman was strangest.
You don't understand a word I'm saying, do you? Aggressive tone of rhetorical

Informal tone; Starts with question: confiding in reader?

Imaginative language; has a sense of beauty. "a...mute" monosyllables suggests awe.

Image of coldness emphasized by assonance: "slice of ice"

"him" personification: emphasis need for friendship

actions metaphors for his life?

Repeated words in short sentences show his breathless frustration

colloquial wording contrasting with first verse

⁶ *Snowman*: snow made into the shape of a human being, usually by children for fun

⁷ *pinch*: a slang word meaning *steal*

⁸ *nicked*: a slang word meaning *stole*

⁹ *bust of Shakespeare*: a small sculpture of the head and shoulders of Shakespeare

¹⁰ *flogged*: a slang word meaning *stole*

Suggested essay plan based on annotations

Say what you think about the thief

1. Odd – strange object to steal; same goes for other objects suggesting purposelessness in life; his actions seeming to be metaphors for his life
2. Seems friendless and needing company: wants a friend: “I wanted him, a mate” personification suggest need for friendship; seems to crave physical contact – “hugged to my chest” confiding tone in question at start suggesting wish to take reader into confidence
3. But will not let guard down too much...has created a harsh exterior to present to the world: hard determination of “Better off dead than giving in” and “Life’s tough” ; deliberately callous treatment of children but also exploration of language – deliberately terse suggesting a pose or reflecting his experience or upbringing? Tough use of colloquial language to suggest a pose of being a thief. Aggressive tone at end might suggest he has confided too much?
4. Yet there is a creative side to him – albeit thwarted. Language he uses to describe the snowman – imaginative language, monosyllables suggesting awe at its beauty; wanted to play the guitar; chose a bust of Shakespeare to steal.
5. Yet this is easily discouraged and then he feels frustrated: anger and frustration when the snowman didn’t look the same again; the extremity of his frustration shown by his actions in kicking the snowman and the repeated words in short sentences showing his breathless frustration and the enjambement emphasising “in rags” and “alone”.

Conclusion

What I think about the thief is that I cannot condone his actions and his treatment of vulnerable people but he is frail emotionally and puts up a false aggressive and non-caring front, which one can see beyond if one looks closely. I think it is a pity that his energies could not be channelled more successfully.

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