

Literary Genres

Aspects of Tragedy

At the core of all the set texts is a tragic hero or heroine who is flawed in some way, who suffers and causes suffering to others and in all texts there is an interplay between what might be seen as villains and victims. Some tragic features will be more in evidence in some texts than in others and students will need to understand how particular aspects of the tragic genre are used and how they work in the four chosen texts. The absence of an 'aspect' can be as significant as its presence. There can be no exhaustive list of the 'aspects' of tragedy.

Aspects of Comedy

At the centre of all set texts are stories which primarily amuse, where the discomfort of characters generally excites laughter rather than concern and where no great disaster occurs. All texts contain a love interest for the protagonist and marriage is a focal point. In all cases society itself (as represented in the texts), and the behaviour of men and women in it, are ridiculed. The texts must be explored in terms of the aspects that are apparent in them. The absence of an aspect might also be of note. There can be no exhaustive list of the 'aspects' of comedy.

Elements of Crime Writing

In the case of Elements of crime writing, many of the texts pre-date the Crime Fiction genre that emerged as a recognisable literary genre in the mid-19th century and with academic recognition in the 20th century. However, in all the texts a significant crime drives the narrative and the execution and consequences of the crime are fundamentally important to the way the text is structured. All set texts are narratives which focus on transgressions against established order and the specific breaking of either national, social, religious or moral laws. The focus in this component must be on 'Elements' and students need to consider the elements that exist in each of their texts.

Elements of Political and Social Protest Writing

Although it could be claimed that all texts are political, what defines the texts here is that they have issues of power and powerlessness at their core, with political and social protest issues central to each text's structure. The political and social protest genre covers representations of both public and private settings. All set texts foreground oppression and domination and they all look at the cultures we live in and have lived in over time. A crucial word in the title of this option is 'Elements' and students need to consider the specific elements that exist in each of their texts.

Theory and Independence

This process is supported by the AQA Critical Anthology, which has accessible extracts on the following critical methods and ideas: narrative theory, feminist theory, Marxist theory, eco-critical, theory post-colonial theory and literary value and the canon. In this component, students write about two different literary texts. One of the texts must be a poetry text and the other must be prose. Each text must be linked to a different section of the Critical Anthology.

The above information has been copied directly from the AQA draft specifications.

Links: <http://www.aqa.org.uk/subjects/english/as-and-a-level/english-literature-b-7716>

<http://filestore.aqa.org.uk/resources/specifications/AQA-7717-SP-2015.PDF>