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WHAT IS AN AREA OF STUDY?

The Area of Study forms the basis of Paper 1 which is completed by all students studying English.

COMMON CONTENT – AREA OF STUDY

An Area of Study is the exploration of a concept that affects our perceptions of ourselves and our world. Students explore, analyse, question and articulate the ways in which perceptions of this concept are shaped in and through a variety of texts.

In the Area of Study, students explore and examine relationships between language and text, and interrelationships among texts. They examine closely the individual qualities of texts while considering the texts’ relationships to the wider context of the Area of Study. They synthesise ideas to clarify meaning and develop new meanings. They take into account whether aspects such as context, purpose and register, text structure, stylistic features, grammatical features and vocabulary are appropriate to the particular text.

The Area of Study integrates the range and variety of practices students undertake in their study and use of English. It provides students with opportunities to explore, assess, analyse and experiment with:

- Meaning conveyed, shaped, interpreted and reflected in and through texts.
- Ways texts are responded to and composed.
- Ways perspective may affect meaning and interpretation.
- Connections between and among texts.
- How texts are influenced by other texts and contexts.

Students’ responses to texts are supported by their own composition of, and experimentation with, imaginative and other texts. They explore ways of representing events, experiences, ideas, values and processes, and consider the ways in which changes of form and language affect meaning.

(English Stage 6 Syllabus, NSW BOS, p 29.)

The key aspects of the AoS that you should consider are:

- Representation
- Perception
- Context
- Interrelationships
AREA OF STUDY: DISCOVERY

You should already have looked at the rubric (description) of the Area of Study but it is important to keep revisiting this as it provides a guide for teaching and assessing.

THE RUBRIC FOR AREA OF STUDY: DISCOVERY

This Area of Study requires students to explore the ways in which the concept of discovery is represented in and through texts.

Discovery can encompass the experience of discovering something for the first time or rediscovering something that has been lost, forgotten or concealed. Discoveries can be sudden and unexpected, or they can emerge from a process of deliberate and careful planning evoked by curiosity, necessity or wonder. Discoveries can be fresh and intensely meaningful in ways that may be emotional, creative, intellectual, physical and spiritual. They can lead us to new worlds and values, stimulate new ideas, and enable us to speculate about future possibilities. Discoveries and discovering can offer new understandings and renewed perceptions of ourselves and others.

An individual’s discoveries and their process of discovering can vary according to personal, cultural, historical and social contexts and values. The impact of these discoveries can be far-reaching and transformative for the individual and for broader society. Discoveries may be questioned or challenged when viewed from different perspectives and their worth may be reassessed over time. The ramifications of particular discoveries may differ for individuals and their worlds.

By exploring the concept of discovery, students can understand how texts have the potential to affirm or challenge individuals’ or more widely-held assumptions and beliefs about aspects of human experience and the world. Through composing and responding to a wide range of texts, students may make discoveries about people, relationships, societies, places and events and generate new ideas. By synthesising perspectives, students may deepen their understanding of the concept of discovery. Students consider the ways composers may invite them to experience discovery through their texts and explore how the process of discovering is represented using a variety of language modes, forms and features.
In their responses and compositions, students examine, question, and reflect and speculate on:

- Their own experiences of discovery.
- The experience of discovery in and through their engagement with texts.
- Assumptions of underlying various representations of the concept of discovery.
- How the concept of discovery is conveyed through the representations of people, relationships, societies, places, events and ideas that they encounter in the prescribed text and other related texts of their own choosing.
- How the composer’s choice of language modes, forms, features and structure shapes representations of discovery and discovering.
- The ways in which exploring the concept of discovery may broaden and deepen their understanding of themselves and their world.

*(HSC Prescriptions 2015-20, Board of Studies, p 9)*

**ACTIVITY***

*Write your own exam question.*

Examination questions usually come from an aspect that is described in the rubric. Using the rubric statements above, write one possible question that could be asked for the HSC. Share this with your partner.
CONTEXT

From: Dixon and Simpson *Cambridge HSC Checkpoints Advanced English and Cambridge HSC Checkpoints Standard English* p.20

Before you explore your text you need to know what context is. The syllabus definition of context is:

_The range of personal, social, historical, cultural and workplace conditions in which a text is responded to and composed._

- **Personal context** – the author’s life, family and gender are factors affecting personal context – for example, the fact that Peter Skrzynecki came from a migrant family affects the things he writes as does his gender.

- **Social context** – the social class or lifestyle of the author or the characters within the text. Skrzynecki grew up in financially tight circumstances which affects the way he sees the world and what he writes about but he also grew up in a supportive family.

- **Historical context** – refers to events that were happening at the time of the text or in the text. For example, during Skrzynecki’s childhood Australians were dealing with the influx of post-war migrants and this affected their reactions to migrants.

- **Cultural conditions** – this term can refer to the way of living of particular groups, such as ethnicity, or it can refer to the arts. For example, Peter Skrzynecki’s cultural background was Polish but as a poet he is also linked to high art.

- **Workplace conditions** – in what way did the workplace context encourage or restrict the author? Skrzynecki started teaching before he could make a living from poetry. It has also traditionally been difficult for poets to publish in modern times.

- **Conditions in which a text is responded to** – this refers to the time, mode and form of the text and how it affects the audience. Modern audiences are not interested in poetry so this makes it difficult to have a positive reaction. It is also difficult for young people who have not grown up in post-war Australia to understand many of the references Skrzynecki makes.

- **Conditions in which it is composed** – refers to the times in which the text was written.

Context is a difficult term to define simply and clearly. For composers, it refers in a general sense to all the cultural, social, historical, workplace and personal factors that have shaped their thinking and beliefs and contributed to the creation and content of the text. For responders, it refers to the cultural, social, historical, workplace and personal factors that affect the way they read and interpret the text. We can therefore think of context in English in three simultaneous aspects:

- The context of the composer.
- The context of the text.
- The context of the responder.

The diagram on the next page offers yet another way of looking at Discovery.
**ACTIVITY**
Consider how your prescribed and/or related text/s displays belonging using both the diagrams that appear above and the definition of context.

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Discovery</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>What is the personal context of the text?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is the social context of the text?</strong></td>
<td><strong>What is the historical/cultural context of the text?</strong></td>
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**How does this affect the sense of Discovery?**

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<tr>
<td><strong>What are some of the techniques that the composer uses to convey this message about Discovery?</strong></td>
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<td>Areas of comparison with prescribed text</td>
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Other Tips:

- You may find it useful to break down your study notes into workable ‘chunks’ of information. A chart with headings that draws together conceptual ideas is very useful.

- Underline or highlight the techniques used in your essay. This is useful in the early drafting stages.

- Highlight or colour code the topic sentences. This will keep your essay on task and stop you from drifting away from the set question.

- Underline titles so that you don’t get them mixed up with names.

- When discussing any language technique always discuss the effectiveness of the technique in relation to the concept.

- Ensure that you have quotations that are effective examples.

SOME TIPS FOR PRACTICE ESSAYS

- **Remember to link your discussion to the question constantly – not just in your introduction and conclusion.**

- Related material must vary.

- Some conjunctive phrases you could use … ‘similarly’, ‘in contrast’, ‘also’, ‘as well’, ‘another aspect of time is …’, ‘in addition to …’

- In your practice drafts colour code your topic sentences so you can see that you have used them at the start of each paragraph.

- Highlight (different colour) the techniques you have used – this will show you whether you have referred to enough of them.

- Explain your techniques – show how they are used to demonstrate the concept of time.

- Ensure that your quotations and examples actually support what you are saying.

- Use quotation marks around titles of poems, underline the titles of other texts.

- Do not leave it to the last minute to write your essay. Write your first draft, leave it 24 hours, then go back and read it to see how you can improve it and to pick up any mistakes.
**Techniques** must always be connected to meaning about belonging. Check that the response has done this:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique (The technique of ...)</th>
<th>Example (Seen in ...)</th>
<th>Connection to belonging (shows us that ...)</th>
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RELATED TEXTS

HOW DO I SELECT ADDITIONAL TEXTS?

Texts of own choice is plural. Prepare to respond with more than one additional text. Consider using diverse texts. For instance, if your prescribed text is a film, then select a novel, song or image to consider as additional texts. In doing this you will be able to demonstrate a substantial ability in discussing how a wide range of textual techniques effectively represent belonging.

Select texts that inspire you and that you really enjoy. Dare to be different and think of something you have already seen, read or heard and brainstorm how Discovery is revealed within the text. Ask you teacher to look over your notes and ideas for guidance early in the preparations for the Area of Study. It is refreshing to have new texts within assessments.

IDEAS AND EXAMPLES OF ADDITIONAL TEXTS

POETRY AND SONGS

- ‘By the River’ – Herrick
- ‘Masque’ – Deb Westbury
- Mending Wall’ – Robert Frost
- ‘My Artist Son’, ‘Municipal Gum’ & ‘We are Going’ – Oodjeroo Noonuccal
- ‘My Beautiful Child’ & ‘Took the Children Away’ – Archie Roach
- ‘My Island Home’ – Christine Anu
- ‘William Street’ – Kenneth Slessor

PICTURE BOOKS

- The Lost Thing  Tan, S.
- Arrival  Tan, S.
- Belonging  Baker, J.
- Way Home
- Woolvs in the Sitee
WEBSITES

Belonging, A Century Celebrated:
http://www.belonging.org/misc-pages/people_place.html

Belonging: Voices of London Refugees:
http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/English/EventsExhibitions/Community/Belonging

Anchorites and Hermits:
http://www.hermitary.com

BOOK REVIEWS

Belonging to Life:
http://www.maryomalley.com/books.htm

THEATRE

William Shakespeare:
- Othello
- Romeo and Juliet
- Taming of the Shrew
- The Tempest
- Antony and Cleopatra

Modern plays:
- No Sugar (Jack Davis)
- Gary's House
- Yerma (Lorca)

MUSICALS

- Wicked
- Chess (The musical)
- Priscilla Queen of the Desert
**FILMS**

- Australian Rules
- A Beautiful Mind
- Band of Brothers
- Bend It Like Beckham
- Beneath Clouds
- Bride and Prejudice
- Children of Men
- Cruel Intentions
- Edward Scissorhands
- Howl's Moving Castle
- Into The Wild
- Little Miss Sunshine
- Lost in Translation
- Miss Potter
- Monsoon Wedding
- My Big Fat Greek Wedding
- One Night the Moon
- River Queen
- Shine
- Spirited Away
- The Dark Knight
- The Devil Wears Prada
- The Kite Runner
- The Lives of Others
- The Mighty
• The Pursuit of Happyness
• The Talented Mr Ripley
• The Ultimate Gift
• Yolngu Boy
• Water
• Whale Rider

TELEVISION

• Big Brother
• Dexter
• House
• Packed to the Rafters
• Survivor
• Ugly Betty
• Friends
• Neighbours

ART

Aboriginal:
http://www.tnn.net.au/gallery/aboriginalartists.htm

Global Images of Belonging: (Art, photos)
Rings of the Olympic Games

NOVELS

• Mao’s Last Dancer – Li Cunxin
• Shantaram – Gregory Roberts
• The Time We Have Takes – Steven Carroll
• A Far Country – Daniel Mason
• A Thousand Splendid Suns – Khaled Hosseini
• Catcher in the Rye – J.D. Salinger
• Daughter of the Wind – Suzanne Fisher Staples
• Divisidero – Michael Ondaatje
• Feral Kid – Libby Hathorn
• Heart of Darkness – Joseph Conrad
• Inheritance – Lan Samantha Chang
• Lord of the Flies – William Golding
• Of Mice and Men – John Steinbeck
• That Eye the Sky – Tim Winton
• Ten Things I Hate About Me – Jamilah Towfeek
• The Child in Time – Ian McEwan
• The Chant of Jimmy Blacksmith – Thomas Keneally
• The Riders – Tim Winton
• The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini
• The Secret River – Kate Grenville
• The Other Side of Truth – Beverley Naidoo
• The Story of Tom Brennan – J.C. Burke
• The Unknown Terrorist – Richard Flanaghan
• Things Fall Apart – Chinua Achebe
• Under the Persimmon Tree – Suzanne Fisher Staples

**NON-FICTION**

• The Pleasures and Sorrows of Work (Alain de Botton)
PAPER 1, SECTION 3 EXTENDED RESPONSE

The third and last section of Paper 1 requires you to respond to your classroom learning on the prescribed text and one or more related texts of your own choosing and write an essay on the way Discovery is conveyed.

RELATED TEXTS ARE ‘TEXTS OF YOUR OWN CHOOSING’

Here is what the syllabus says about related texts:

Study in the HSC course requires close study of particular texts, supported by students’ own wide reading. (p. 28)

In addition, students will explore texts of their own choosing relevant to the Area of Study. Students draw their chosen texts from a variety of sources, in a range of genres and media. (p. 29)

HOW DO I CHOOSE A RELATED TEXT FOR DISCOVERY?
HOW MUCH OF THE RELATED TEXT DO I NEED TO REFER TO?

Most students will rely upon their teacher giving them a related text to include in their final essay. Avoid this practice. Seek out your own. A teacher who over-coaches the related text risks their entire class being marked down. Imagine this – at the marking centre, two teachers will read the entire lot of essays for your school or ‘centre number’.

Your names, gender and school will not be revealed to your two markers, but if you are all writing about the same related text (while not strictly forbidden), it will likely result in you all losing significant marks for not showing the independence of judgement or required ‘personal response’ to succeed at the highest level.

You ought to choose a related text which is something you ideally know and love. You need to be strongly familiar with your chosen text/s for the reason that you are writing about the concept, not the themes of the related text. You need to intimately know therefore the structure and the techniques of the related text in a way that you can confidently adapt to your essay.

Stronger students tend to choose related texts which are reasonably complex – for example, James Joyce’s novel Ulysses, or the poetry of TS Eliot (now on the HSC list and not advisable), or else a Brechtian play or a Michael Haneke film.

This is perfectly acceptable and advisable of you can handle the pressure of writing about a difficult text. Often these difficult texts will assist you to write about issues which are conceptually grand given that they are complex texts in their own right.

Choosing related texts such as an episode of ‘The Simpsons’ or ‘The Family Guy’ or else Hollywood movie posters will often leave you stranded unless the question deals with a very specific aspect of the rubric relevant to your text. Aim high with the selection of your related text/s.

You might refer to only a chapter of a novel, a scene from a film, or the home page of a website. You do not need to refer to the entirety of the related text.
CAN I USE A RELATED TEXT FROM PRELIMINARY HSC ENGLISH OR ELSE ANOTHER HSC SUBJECT?

While there is nothing legally preventing you from using a text placed in the reading list of another HSC course (including Drama), it is not a good idea, and you may be marked down for it by a HSC marker who perceives that you haven’t drawn upon a related text in the spirit in which it is intended.

That is, a related text ought to be chosen from texts not on the English HSC list or else from another HSC subject. Teachers who tell you that you will be disqualified for doing so are not factually incorrect – but they have a point. It is not the best choice of texts.

As for Preliminary HSC texts: go for it. Often a school encourages this anyway, and at least one of your texts ought to be drawn from the Preliminary HSC list as a back-up if you do not have a dedicated second related text.

Students often use texts from Extension 1 (such as Conrad’s ‘Heart of Darkness’) but make sure that you do not get too ‘clever’ and cite ideas about post-colonialism in your essay which have nothing to do with Discovery. The focus of your related text is about Discovery, not the themes, values and ideas of the Preliminary course.

With regards to texts from another subject, the ‘Russian roulette’ you risk in the marking centre is having a Drama/English teacher mark your script who is acutely aware that your chosen text belongs to another subject – and is not necessarily made relevant in your essay to answer a question about Discovery.

It is vital that you draw upon your related text as a tool to argue your thesis about Discovery, the rubric, and the question itself.

HOW MANY RELATED TEXTS SHOULD I PREPARE FOR AREA OF STUDY?

You ought to prepare at least two (2) related texts for Discovery. Why? Because BOSTES may ask you to write about two (2) related texts.

They haven’t done so in a HSC question for approximately five 950 years and it is entirely possible that it may happen again. Also, the question asked of you on the day might lend itself better to a text other than the related text you have religiously maintained for 12 months.
MUST THE RELATED TEXT BE IN A DIFFERENT MEDIUM TO MY CORE TEXT FOR DISCOVERY?

Technically speaking, you are permitted by BOSTES to use a related text which is within the same medium as your core text (e.g. a film for the core text, and a film for the related text), however it is not advisable.

Beyond the problem of HSC markers often not knowing that this is the case, HSC markers are occasionally biased against students who choose two texts of the same medium.

Some believe that it is not demonstrating a student’s full range of skills if they draw upon two texts of the same medium, and mark against it instinctively. Therefore, it is not a wise decision to choose a related text of the same medium as your core text.

SHOULD THE RELATED TEXT ‘MATCH’ THE CORE TEXT? HOW DO I INCLUDE THE RELATED TEXT IN MY THESIS?

Your chosen related text/s do not need to be a carbon copy (or wholly similar) to the core text. That is, if your core text is about the subject matter of war, your related text does not also need to be about war. Remember, the ‘GPS’ of your decision about how to choose a related text for Discovery should be about how well it relates to the deeper levels of Discovery in a conceptual manner.

The way that your core text should match the relate text/s is via its treatment of particular elements of the rubric. So for instance, you might have a text which deals with Discovery as a process of “curiosity and wonder” and the way that discoveries are enhanced by these conditions. This would be a better way to select the text – based upon whether the texts deal with the conceptual ideas and philosophical thinking of the rubric.

There are two ways to include a related text in your thesis statement – one way is to include the related text in a manner which agrees with the thesis statement of your essay for the core text.

The other way is to argue that the related text presents another interpretation of Discovery – another challenge – and another way of understanding the rubric.

For example, a thesis statement might argue that ‘Frank Hurley: The Man Who Made History’ is a text about the way that discoveries can have long-lasting effects on individuals and others around them and challenge the existing points of view about culture – and your related text might counter that point of view with the idea that discoveries re-affirm a culture’s point of view about itself.

Do not forget however – what will guide the formation of your thesis is the focus of the key phrases of the examination question. And so if you have prepared a related text solely around one or two aspects of the rubric (e.g. ‘curiosity and wonder’, or ‘challenges to assumptions’) you might be sorely disappointed if the question on the day does not address these particular aspects at all.
SHOULD THE RELATED TEXT BE INTEGRATED WITH THE CORE TEXT? WHAT DOES ‘INTEGRATED’ MEAN IN AN ESSAY?

When teachers speak about ‘integration’ with regards to the related text, they are referring to the way that students include references to the related text in their essay.

That is, is the related text written about in a separate paragraph to the core text?

Or is it integrated into the main body of argument?

Generally speaking, it is preferable to integrate the related text into the introductory and body of argument paragraphs. That is, to include references to the related text in each and every paragraph in which you examine, explore and analyse your ideas.

BOSTES might still award a high mark for students who write about the related test separately in their essay, but it is generally considered amateurish and shows a student who hasn’t chosen their related test wisely if they do not integrate the analysis.

HOW SHOULD A DISCOVERY ESSAY BE STRUCTURED?

The Section III essay should be structured around the question. Unless the essay is structured around the question and focused on a thesis statement you will not earn a Band 5 or 6 mark. The essay needs to be structured or written in such a way that the thesis statement (or ‘core argument’) is sustained and developed throughout the essay.

The way that you ‘sustain and develop’ a thesis statement throughout the essay is to maintain the argument of the introductory paragraph and spend the essay attempting to prove your argument with reference to quotations, textual citations and evidence.

This evidence is then analysed for the techniques of the composer. That is, how has the composer drawn upon the techniques of their medium to prove your thesis statement (or ‘core argument’)?

What is the effect of these techniques? How does the effect of these techniques prove your argument about the question, the text and the rubric?

Students who draw upon this structure of writing and use persuasive language to tie together their ideas will often fall within an A range mark within Section III.

HOW LONG SHOULD A SECTION III ESSAY BE?

Approximately 850-950 words.
WHAT IS MORE IMPORTANT?
THE QUESTION, THE TEXT OR THE RUBRIC?

The Discovery rubric is more important than the text itself, of which there are at least a dozen texts to choose from.

And ultimately the examination question and its key phrases from the Discovery rubric are more important than the rubric in its entirety when you form your thesis statement on the day of the exam.

On this last point, remember that the HSC question will focus on a particular part of the rubric – **perhaps one or two phrases**.

Your job is to build a thesis statement around these one or two phrases, and to write a thesis statement which is a **conceptual response** to these one or two phrases, and the text you have studied.

Your practice answers should be written with this fact in mind. That is, you should practise writing essays which deal with the same evidence/textual citations/techniques and effect of techniques across a range of different questions.

The common sense of this challenge is that you will likely not remember new evidence on the day of the exam (unless you have a photographic memory!). Your job then is to learn to adapt your chosen quotes, textual citations and techniques to a range of different phrases from the rubric so that you are well prepared for the HSC examination.

**HOW IMPORTANT ARE TECHNIQUES IN AN ESSAY?**

Citing techniques and explaining their effect is vital in a Section III essay on Discovery.

It is essential to understand that the top students will readily perceive the relationship between the question, the thesis statement, the textual citation, the techniques, and the effect of techniques towards justifying their answer about a given text/s.
WHAT IS THE BEST EXAM STRATEGY FOR SECTION III?

Firstly, take three (3) minutes out from your essay to strongly consider how you are going to write the essay in a way which addresses the key phrases of the question.

Taking time out to consider your essay response as other students are writing furiously besides you is not an instinctual reaction of most students – it takes guts and courage to do so. However, if you do not stop to consider how you will approach the essay question, you may end up writing an essay of seven or eight pages which doesn’t actually answer the question.

In which case – you would have been better writing an essay of six pages’ length which directly answered the question.

Secondly, aim to write a thesis statement which is both clearly written and sophisticated.

A thesis statement which is articulate and deals with the concept of the question, the rubric and the text will achieve a much higher mark than one which deals solely with themes.

Thirdly, during your three minutes’ preparation time, make sure that you consider how the two key phrases link up with each other – that is, how might you successfully ‘bridge’ the two key phrases to form an opening sentence or thesis statement which demonstrates a sophisticated idea about the relevance of both phrases to the text and the rubric?

For example, if the question is about ‘culture’ and ‘discoveries may challenge view points’ – you would be wise to write a thesis statement which deals with the way that discoveries within your core text about culture have challenged the traditional views of culture within your text.

Fourthly, build a list of techniques which are tabled in such a way so that you have something like: textual citation – technique – effect of technique – how the effect of the technique establishes your thesis statement (which is built upon the key phrases of the question).

Lastly, practise writing thesis statements upon dummy questions provided by your teacher.
WRITING AN EXTENDED ARGUMENT IN SECTION III

(FAST FACTS)

- What is expected of you in Section III is substantially similar to that required in the modules essays.
- You will need to write an essay of approximately 850-950 words (900-950 is ideal).
- The essay will be an analysis of your core text and a related text. Occasionally, BOSTES will ask you for a second related text.
- Your essay is expected to be an analysis about how your core and related text/s explore the concept of discovery.
- A weaker essay will be overly-prepared, lack techniques, and totally ignore the question.
- A weaker essay will be written in an informal register, contain vernacular (slang words) and numerous misspellings.
- A stronger essay will not list techniques but rather draw upon techniques to prove your argument (or ‘thesis’).
- A stronger essay will state a clear thesis in the opening paragraph which incorporates the main phrases of the question. A stronger essay will include topic sentences which develop and sustain the argument (or ‘thesis’).
TSFX LECTURES AND ENGLISH

TSFX English lectures are very comprehensive and thorough, coming at the important stages of the learning process. There is consideration given to both the content and the skills required. All sessions combine a lecture format with short workshops for you to practise the skills required. The course is developmental, reflecting the stage you are at in the course at school and building up on previous lectures. Where necessary some repetition may occur, such as the explanation of the rubric because of the impact of the rubric on outcomes.

TSFX lectures give you access to a different perspective other than your teachers. This is important in English where there can be more than one interpretation.

HOW SHOULD YOU USE TSFX LECTURES?

Use these lectures to:

- Reinforce class learning at different stages
- Get a different perspective on texts
- Challenge yourself
- Help you with study
- Have contact with students from different schools and share ideas
- Have access to expert teachers