

Task for *For the Term of His Natural Life*

Material to inform the panel discussion task

A definition of discourse:

Discourses are the **historically distinctive cultural and social practices** (for example, saying, doing, being, thinking, and interacting) through which individuals establish their group membership and become aware they are playing socially meaningful roles. Discourses have **rules of inclusion and exclusion** and both **enable** and **constrain** what it is possible to say and do. Individuals take up **subject positions** within discourses, subjecting themselves to their meanings, power and regulation. **Power** is not 'top down' social control but dispersed throughout, resisted, agreed to, and reinforced by repetition. **Power and knowledge are intertwined.**

Examples

Role (reading position based on the discourse of the law): Judge

Aspects of discourse: what you (stereotypically) might believe.

- Members of society have agreed to abide by a set of rules in order for society to function properly and a person who breaks the rules must be punished.
- A person must be proved guilty beyond a reasonable doubt.
- A judge must be impartial, listening to different versions of an event and deciding which version is the correct one.
- A judge applies laws to the facts. In our society laws are usually made by Parliament.
- A defendant as a defence against conviction can advance evidence. Exceptions include: hearsay, a criminal record. The judge decides on the credibility of evidence and directs the jury to take the evidence into account or not.

During the panel discussion, you will respond to *For the Term of His Natural Life* from the reading position outlined below. Please be aware that the information is a starting point only – and essentially a stereotype. You are advised strongly to research further.

Role (reading position based on an academic discourse): Historian

Aspects of discourse: what you (stereotypically) might believe.

- "History is an evolving story that speaks to the interests of each generation." Historians are constantly testing and corroborating evidence for its veracity and reliability.
- From the evidence, the historian draws conclusions that can be substantiated – they build up a case.
- Absolute truth may never be possible, but the aim of the historian is to try to work towards establishing the broad "truths" (or lessons) of history.
- The historian looks for patterns that keep repeating and tries to learn the meaning of those patterns.
- History is made by different historians constantly debating differing theories.