COPYRIGHTAGENCY
READING AUSTRALIA

THE DROVER'S WIVES

LANGUAGE GAMES AND FORMS

Text	Reading	Writing
Table of Contents (pp. 1–2)	Is this a simple procedural text? How does it segment the original story and guide your reading? Consider O'Neill's language choices ('bête noire', 'manifold', 'melancholy reminiscences'). How does this establish a dramatic mood? Can a table of contents involve a re-reading of a text? Why or why not?	Consider some ways that the contents could be re-ordered (e.g. chronologically, rom 'worst' to 'best' events, by character). Does this change the story or offer new insights? Rewrite the contents to change the mood of the story. Consider painting the wife's circumstances more optimistically, or providing a patriotic reading of the Australian bush. Reflect on your language choices; how can small shifts in adjectives provide an alternative interpretation or resistant reading?
A Year 8 English Essay (pp. 8–10)	Read this text once or twice. Why is it so amusing? What deliberate mistakes can you find? What do you think the author is saying about the nature of Year 8 English and the study of texts? What misinterpretations has the student made? Consider the themes of 'sheep and marriage' as mentioned by the student. What is comic and absurd about this statement?	Imagine that you know nothing about 'The Drover's Wife' apart from what this essay tells you. Compose a summary of the story as understood by the student. Rewrite a paragraph of this essay to a Year 11 standard. What did you change? What needed improvement? What have you learnt about some classic mistakes that are made in analytical writing?
List of Ingredients (p. 11)	How does the reference to metafiction shape your response to this text? Do you agree with the percentage listed in the ingredients? Is there anything else you might include?	Turn these ingredients into a recipe for a dish to be served at a tribute night at the Henry Lawson Centre in Gulgong, NSW.
A Cryptic Crossword (pp. 12–16)	Have a go at solving the crossword. What is so frustrating about this textual form? Why do you think O'Neill includes this form in his book? What knowledge of the original story does it require? How have the answers been explained? Find out the meaning of any terms you don't understand.	Look at the answers once you have finished trying to solve the crossword. Select EIGHT TO TEN words and use them to create TWO forms of poetry. The first poem can ONLY use the exact words (similar to magnetic poetry); you may need to use enjambment and lines between stanzas creatively to shape meaning. The second poem can use indefinite articles ('a', 'an'), definite articles ('the'), and prepositions ('in', 'of', 'on', 'to').

		You may choose to experiment with syntax and write a third short poem to relieve the tension created by these limited language choices!
Lipogram (pp. 28–29)	This piece of writing omits the most common letter in the English language (a vowel). Which letter is missing and how does this place restrictions on the writer? Comment on the style of this piece and how the experimental nature of the lipogram affects it.	Try to tell the story of your life in a lipogram. How far do you get? What will it do to your writing if you try to avoid a common part of language?
Lecture Slides (pp. 48–53)	What do you think is being said or implied about this textual form? What is amusing about some of the points that are shortened or left out? What questions are unanswered?	What have you learnt about Henry Lawson from this text? Compose an information text entitled 'Lawson: A Great Australian'.
Cento (pp. 59–61)	The cento (from the Latin word for 'patchwork garment') is a poem that is collaged together from other texts. Read this poem carefully, noting the references. How does O'Neill make new meaning from a series of different quotes? What does this piece teach you about the nature of intertextuality and the possibilities created by allusions and citations?	Write a 'patchwork' stanza of EIGHT TO TWELVE lines using phrases from O'Neill's book. Compare your work with others and discuss the intended effect.
Yoked Sentences (pp. 70–72)	In this piece, the last word of a sentence becomes the first word of the next sentence. How does this create a poetic effect? Discuss the style of this text. It rewrites the story through its main ideas. What is interesting about this transformation and the way it presents the story?	Try writing some yoked sentences, experimenting with interesting last and first words. How does it change the story you are trying to tell? What is interesting about the effect of the repetition? Consider whether this is a useful technique for writing prose.
Backwards (pp. 87–88)	How is beginning at the end a useful way to tell a story? How can a story be retold by reversing many of the emotions that are associated with the original story?	Choose a story with a particular mood (this can be something you have read OR written in class) and rewrite it in the opposite mood. Reflect on how this changes the atmosphere.

Cliches (pp. 92–94)	How is O'Neill's choice of cliches appropriate? Choose THREE examples and consider how they shape the meaning of the story. What is the purpose of this text in terms of its engagement with the audience?	Attempt the opposite of this text: avoid ALL cliches and common images as you write a detailed description of the setting of 'The Drover's Wife'. If you include any symbolism, ensure it is unusual and highly original.
Verbless (pp. 102–103)	By definition, most sentences include a main verb or clause – they need to have something 'going on'. What is the challenge of producing a text without this? Consider your personal response to this text. What is the appeal and the challenge of telling the story in this way?	Try writing a verbless plot summary of another story. Focus on the setting and characters, since exploring actions will be challenging without verbs. Compare your response with others and discuss the difficulties you encountered.
Limerick (p. 114)	How is the wife represented as an empowered woman in this limerick? What does O'Neill do with the limerick form?	Change the ideas in this limerick into another constrained writing or poetic form (e.g. a cinquain, haiku, or six-word story).
Pangram (p. 121)	What does this text tell you? Reflect on the purpose of constrained writing techniques.	A pangram is a sentence that uses every letter of the alphabet at least once. Write your own pangram about a different topic.
Interrogative (pp. 128–130)	What is the experience of reading this text? Is it alienating? Is it a means of addressing the audience? Consider the different reactions you and other readers might have.	Identify some of the cultural references in this text and reflect on their relationship to Lawson's short story. Answer THREE questions in the voice of Hazel, the wife as she is known in Murray Bail and Barbara Jefferis' work.
Onomatopoeia (pp. 133–134)	Try reading this aloud as a class. Find some connections to the original story. Discuss how this very different form uses intertextuality.	In pairs, create a wordless soundscape, either recreating this text OR finding another story to tell through sounds. Reflect on the purpose of this exercise. Can imaginative writing be made more vivid through greater emphasis on onomatopoeia?
Maths Problems (pp. 148–150)	How should the reader consider this text? Is it merely humorous or does it provide meaningful commentary on the original tale? Find the reference to the 'gallows-faced swagman' in 'The Drover's Wife' (p. xviii) and explain what atmosphere is created.	This text gives the reader an understanding of the enormity of the tale and the vastness of the landscape. Write a paragraph from an imaginative, informative, OR persuasive texts that conveys a sense of this enormity.

Wordcloud (p. 159)	Comment on which ideas are foregrounded in the word cloud. How does this 'read' the story?	Make a sentence (however unusual) using words from the cloud. You can move away from the original story by playing with syntax and word choices.
Hangman (p. 160)	The brevity of this text makes it challenging. What letters have been left out?	Design THREE other hangman statements and play hangman with another student.
Monosyllabic (pp. 161–162)	How is the storytelling governed by the constrained writing form? Does the choice of monosyllabic words restrict or change the meaning?	Experiment with monosyllabic sentences that summarise some of the interesting texts you have read in the past.
Punctuation (p. 180)	Consider your reaction to this text. Is it frustrating? Why or why not?	Try another form of constrained writing: take TWO sentences from the original story and play around with the syntax and spacing to create a different text.
Conditional (pp. 181–182)	How is the voice shaped by the constraints of this piece?	Use this text as inspiration for a series of conditionals. In SIX or more sentences, explore an unsolved crime through conditional statements.
N + 7 (p. 187)	A classic Oulipian textual game, in which every noun is replaced with the noun that appears seven entries later in the dictionary. What do you think the purpose of this type of wordplay is?	Choose another paragraph from the story and play N+7 to change its meaning.
Spoonerisms (pp. 195–196)	A spoonerism is an error that transposes the initial sounds from two different words (e.g. saying 'belly jeans' instead of 'jelly beans'). On reading this story, consider what the use of spoonerisms achieves.	Script a brief conversation between two characters, one of whom uses the occasional spoonerism. Consider how humour is created through these errors.
Abecedarian (pp. 202–203)	This is another textual game in which each sentence starts with the next letter of the alphabet (from A–Z). How does it constrain and guide the story? Is the pattern easily detectable, or does the story make sense on its own?	Experiment with an abecedarian poem, beginning each line with a different letter. What is the effect?
Imperative (pp. 204–205)	Read the text aloud as a class and consider the effect of this series of imperative statements. What aspects of the story do they include or exclude?	Rewrite a paragraph of imperative statements, but change the mood and genre: it's now an adventure story for our intrepid heroine! Consider how this shifts the nature of the imperative statements.

Fill in the Blanks (pp. 210–211)	What ideas from the story are being articulated here? What game is being played with the reader?	Change the story's historical and geographical context by filling in the blanks differently.
Univocalic (pp. 234–235)	This is a one-vowel word game. Which vowel is being used? How is this challenging? Read a paragraph aloud to consider the effect of the assonance.	Take a paragraph from this text and rewrite it using all the vowels at your disposal. Extend on the ideas. Add imagery. Is it easier to write with less restrictions?
Wordsearch (p. 236)	What other words could be included in this text? What are some synonyms of the words in the search?	Create a vocabulary bank entitled 'The Australian Landscape'. Begin with words from 'The Drover's Wife' and include at least 15 new words to describe the land. Use these words as the basis for a descriptive paragraph imagining the landscape at a particular time of day.
Bibliography (pp. 250–251)	How do you read this? Is it a series of ideas about the story? A list of texts used by the author? An elaborate joke? Explain what meanings you make from this text.	As a class or in pairs, brainstorm how to tell a story through a list of texts. Develop a list of titles from different genres and retell a classic story OR previous class novel in TEN texts or fewer.
Index (pp. 252–254)	This text is similar to the previous text, 'Bibliography'. How does an index work? Is this a literal index for *The Drover's Wives*? What does it say about the themes of the original short story?	Compose a 'Word of Warning to Readers' that can precede 'The Drover's Wife'. What warnings should readers receive? What aspects of the text need interpretation or explanation?
A Note on the Type (p. 255)	How does this relate to the original text and satirise the textual form? How does it present itself as an informative text? How do you read it?	Invent a new font called 'Australian Dream'. Write your own 'Note on the Type', complete with inspiration. Inventing a new Australian tea could be another interesting exercise. When Twinings ran its Australian Afternoon Tea Challenge in 2011, former Prime Minister Kevin Rudd came up with the winning blend.