

THE DROVER'S WIVES

LITERARY TEXTS

Text	Reading	Writing
Hemingwayesque (pp. 3–6)	<p>Read the introduction to The Old Man and the Sea and have your copy of 'The Drover's Wife' handy. What are some of the significant similarities between these texts? What changes have been made?</p> <p>How has O'Neill responded to the way that Lawson and Hemingway depict the setting?</p> <p>Why has the focus shifted to 'the boy' and how does this affect the way the story is told?</p>	<p>See if you can shift the setting away from the outback and the sea to a snowy tundra. Rewrite the first paragraph in an imitation of Hemingway's style. Reflect on the changes.</p> <p>Consider how you could retell the end of the story from Alligator's perspective. Does this make a difference to the events?</p>
Freudian (p. 30)	<p>This text appears in the literary category as it depends on knowledge of a key theorist (a writer of ideas). Look up the main tenets of Freud's work before you read this piece.</p> <p>Do you think this text aptly represents Freud's theories, or does it satirise the way they are viewed in popular culture? Give reasons for your response.</p> <p>What is your response to this analysis as a reader? Do you think any elements of it are plausible or insightful, or is the reading merely intended to explore the absurdities of a Freudian perspective?</p>	<p>Look at where the word 'represents' is used and the metaphors that are ascribed to certain parts of 'The Drover's Wife'. Provide your own reading of the story that contradicts or opposes this one.</p> <p>Explore different possibilities for interpreting the snake within the story. Some analyses emphasise its Biblical nature; the Freudian analysis suggests another metaphor. What other possibilities are there? Examine some of them.</p>
A 1950s Children's Book (pp. 32–34)	<p>How does this text rely on our assumptions about 1950s children's books?</p> <p>How do phrases like 'a more masculine version of' and the vision of 'Cecil Snake' mock or imitate aspects of the cultural context?</p> <p>Find words that seem particular to the 1950s. What examples can you see?</p>	<p>Take TWO stanzas and change the meaning while keeping the rhyming pattern. Use them in an intertextual fashion by including allusions to a well-known story, fairytale, or fable.</p> <p>Create character profiles for the cast of this story. Discuss as a class and consider how the author conveys key differences from the original text.</p>

	What does this piece add to the collection? Consider its textual form (purpose, audience, text type, style).	
Parable (p. 38)	<p>Compare this to the original Gospel of Matthew, Chapter 24. What are the features of these texts and what can you say about their use of tone, imagery and structure?</p> <p>Consider how the ‘kingdom of heaven’ is used here. Does it ‘fit’ or is O’Neill satirising the original text?</p> <p>How does the text engage the reader?</p>	Write a modern parable for ‘The Drover’s Wife’, remembering that parables use easily understood images to present a moral lesson. How will a 21st Century audience understand the message of the tale? Is it a cautionary one or a commentary on social conditions?
Elizabethan (pp. 43–47)	<p>What phrases have been borrowed from Shakespeare here? Find TWO. How is this pastiche engaging?</p> <p>What Elizabethan references has O’Neill used? Consider what images are unfamiliar to you and how these contribute to the story.</p>	How might a monologue be used to present different versions of a story? Using ‘The Drover’s Wife’ as inspiration, write THREE first-person accounts. Invent characters who do not appear in the story (e.g. a passing itinerant worker, a priest making the rounds of remote parishioners, the drover returning from work).
A Pop Song (pp. 62–64)	<p>Listen to ‘Like a Rolling Stone’ by Bob Dylan. For a bit of fun, sing O’Neill’s song to this tune to experience its clever transformation.</p> <p>Consider the cultural transformation of the short story into a pop song. What aspects have changed? How has O’Neill maintained a sense of textual integrity and homage? Are there similarities to the original song, other than the tune?</p>	In pairs, choose a pop song and use it to retell a story. Consider the idioms and common colloquial phrases used in pop music. How does this change the elements of the story in your retelling?
<p>Tweets (pp. 95–98)</p> <p>NOTE: This text predates the renaming of Twitter to X in 2023.</p>	Comment on O’Neill’s use of the expected language and tone of Tweets. Consider the amusing hashtags and occasional dialogue with other users.	Write a series of Tweets in the voice of Henry Lawson (with contemporary and colloquial idiom), who is reading <i>The Drover’s Wives</i> and is intrigued by the various transformations of his story.

	What political and social commentary does O'Neill engage in through his transformation of the wife into a 21st century character?	
A Question Asked by an Audience Member at a Writer's Festival (pp. 99–101)	<p>Why do you think O'Neill has given the narrator 'several unpublished novels'? What is he mocking here?</p> <p>Comment on the use of personal pronouns ('I'). What is this audience member's motivations and how do they wish to present themselves?</p>	Write a piece of criticism in the personal voice of a biased critic. The critic has something to prove (e.g. indicating their own importance, promoting a friend, dismantling a rival). Make the motivation clear in the opinionated criticism of another text.
A Choose Your Own Adventure Book (pp. 106–113)	<p>Read this text twice, choosing different options each time. Where does the story go?</p> <p>Comment on the conventions of this style of text. How is humour created through exaggeration and extreme circumstances? Discuss an example.</p>	Try to compose a 'choose your own adventure' story for a 19th century wife in the city (perhaps the drover's wife before she began her rural adventures). Will your readers encounter the <i>Young Ladies' Journal</i> ? Could a choice between washing the dishes or going outside to speak to the iceman change their day?
Stream of Consciousness (pp. 131–132)	<p>This text owes a literary debt to modernist authors like James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Read it and compare this stream of consciousness to other famous examples.</p> <p>Compare the ending to that of Joyce's <i>Ulysses</i>. Why has O'Neill used this allusion?</p>	Indulging in the monologue form and ignoring the conventions of sentence structure, while representing the inner world of a character, offers rich opportunities to experiment with language. Take a key character from any story and relate an event through their stream of consciousness.
Epic (pp. 145–147)	<p>Consider the features of this form. What does the reader need to know to understand this version of the tale?</p> <p>Look at the tone and the references to Greek gods. How are they meaningful and how do they shift the textual form (purpose, context, style, audience)?</p>	Read some of Rudyard Kipling's Just So Stories . Note the addresses to the reader ('O my Best Beloved') and frequent references to the telling of stories. Use this tone, and that of 'Epic', as inspiration for a short piece of prose that conveys an epic story to the reader.

<p>Imagist (p. 171)</p>	<p>Read ‘This Is Just To Say’ by William Carlos Williams and ensure that you are familiar with the style and concerns of imagist poets.</p> <p>Assess this text as an imagist poem (or an imitation of one). How does it stand up? If you considered it a poem alone, rather than a reinterpretation, how would you read it?</p> <p>What do you think is the purpose of using one text as the framework for another text?</p>	<p>Experiment with the conventions of imagism in a free verse poem. You could use an existing imagist poem as inspiration and change the words to create a new text, paying attention to structure and syntax.</p>
<p>An Absurdist Play (pp. 183–186)</p>	<p>Consider this text as an appropriation of both ‘The Drover’s Wife’ and Samuel Beckett’s Waiting for Godot.</p> <p>Why has O’Neill chosen a situation in which there is ‘nothing to be done’ and the sun does not rise? How does this meaning stretch across both texts?</p>	<p>Play a textual game by bringing the ideas of TWO texts together. Choose one as a model for language and the other as a model for plot and themes. See how the two can be blended in an intertextual fashion.</p>
<p>Endorsements (pp. 188–190)</p>	<p>Consider the intertextual references and authors’ voices here. How have allusions been used to effect? What is the pleasure and the interest in reading this text?</p>	<p>Write THREE more endorsements that imitate or parody the works of modern and popular authors.</p>
<p>Lovecraftian (pp. 199–201)</p>	<p>This text requires a knowledge of cosmic or Lovecraftian horror. Many of H. P. Lovecraft’s most famous lines have been parodied here.</p> <p>NOTE: Lovecraft was openly racist. Be mindful of your class context when discussing his work.</p> <p>Consider how the imitation of a particular writer has shifted the genre of the story. Which aspects have been emphasised and downplayed?</p>	<p>Identify a writer whose work you admire. Choose ONE of their texts as inspiration and retell a well-known story in their style.</p>

Finnegans Wife (pp. 212–213)	Read this story, perhaps aloud, and briefly research James Joyce . How does this piece imitate the style of Joyce’s masterful modernist prose? What makes Joyce an interesting writer to parody?	Imitate how this piece plays with dialects and language. You do not need to imitate the context of the text – the point is to understand how a focus on dialects can add atmosphere to prose writing.
Trivia Questions (pp. 219–220)	Answer these questions as a class. Are some harder than others? How does this text pay homage to the story?	Consider what the focus of this unit has been. What should you have learnt? Write TWO trivia questions as the focus for a class discussion.
Academese (pp. 221–224)	Consider where the satire lies in this parody of academic writing. What ideas or images are absurd? This is a complex text. You may need to research Foucault , Marxism , and poststructuralism to understand it. Parts of the text may be read and discussed as a class.	Write the introduction to an essay on <i>The Drover’s Wives</i> , then swap it with a partner. Can you rewrite their paragraph as densely and loftily as possible? Does this add ideas and interest, or take away value? Reflect on the problems created by writing in academese.
Biographical (pp. 228–233)	Who is Sybylla Melvyn and what is the significance of this reference? Why has O’Neill chosen to rewrite the wife’s story through a feminist lens? How does it transform her character and act as a piece of historical fiction?	There are more ways of viewing the wife. Write your version of her biography, including her imagined past and future. A different version or perspective (e.g. that of her child, or a politician who has spent their life advocating for rural Australians) could transform the story.
Postmodern (pp. 247–249)	Consider this text in relation to the entirety of <i>The Drover’s Wives</i> . How does it work as metafiction? Where are the self-conscious references? What are its themes, concerns, and ideas? What do they tell you about O’Neill’s focus and approach? You may need to do some research to better understand postmodernism .	Experiment with postmodernism by composing a short 200-word text. Also include a brief reflection on how the text adheres to your view of postmodernism. Share your work with the class and discuss the different views presented.