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2018 HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE
COURSE MATERIALS

Year 10 Headstart English

Textual Analysis I

Term 1 – Week 3

Name

Class day and time

Teacher name

Term 1 – Week 3 – Theory

TEXTUAL ANALYSIS AND TECHNIQUES

INTRODUCTION

The past two weeks have been focused on comprehension and understanding *meaning*. Now we will move on to higher order textual analysis that requires an understanding of how meaning is constructed, i.e. the 'tools' a composer (writer/director etc.) uses to convey certain ideas and shape the responder's (reader) view of the text. These 'tools' are known as ***literary techniques/devices***.

Here is a succinct definition:

Literary devices refers to specific aspects of literature, in the sense of its universal function as an art form which expresses ideas through language, which we can recognize, identify, interpret and/or analyze.

Literary techniques refer to any specific, deliberate constructions or choices of language which an author uses to convey meaning in a particular way.

Literary devices collectively comprise the art form's components; the means by which authors create meaning through language, and by which readers gain understanding of and appreciation for their works. They also provide a conceptual framework for comparing individual literary works to others, both within and across genres.

(Jay Braiman, 2007)

ACTIVITY 1

Literary techniques can be subdivided into the following categories. Provide a brief description of each and name any examples you may have already come across:

Category	Description/Purpose	Examples
Plot devices		
Rhetorical devices		
Descriptive devices		
Genre		
Framing devices		
Character devices		
Visual devices		



Aural devices		
Contextual/ Setting		

PROSE TECHNIQUES

For the next two weeks, we will be focusing on prose techniques in particular. This week the challenge will be to correctly *identify* these techniques. Throughout this course, you will build your knowledge of techniques.

Provide a brief example of the following terms, using examples where necessary.

Allusion

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Note: Ask yourself, "What effect does the author achieve with this reference?" "How does the reference convince you?"

Alliteration

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Assonance

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Characterisation

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Connotation

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Contrast

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Denotation

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Dialogue

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Hyperbole

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Imagery

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Juxtaposition

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Metaphor

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Mood

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Onomatopoeia

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Personification

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Repetition

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Simile

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Setting

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Symbolism

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Rhetorical Questions

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Tone

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Motif

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QUESTIONS

1. What is the difference between a metaphor and a simile?

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2. What is the difference between juxtaposition and contrast?

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TEXT 1

Excerpt from *The Great Gatsby* (1925) by f. Scott Fitzgerald

I began to like New York, the racy, adventurous feel of it at night and the satisfaction that the constant flicker of men and women and machines gives to the restless eye. I like to walk up Fifth Avenue and pick out romantic women from the crowd and imagine that in a few minutes I was going to enter their lives, and no one would ever know or disapprove. Sometimes, in my mind, I followed them to their apartments on the corners of hidden streets, and **they turned and smiled back at me before they faded through a door into warm darkness.** At the enchanted metropolitan twilight I felt a haunting loneliness sometimes, and felt it in others--poor young clerks who loitered in front of windows waiting until it was time for the solitary restaurant dinner-- young clerks in the dusk, wasting the most poignant moments of night and life.

Again at eight o'clock, when the dark lanes of the Forties were five deep with throbbing taxi cabs, bound for the theatre district, I felt a sinking in my heart. Forms leaned together in the taxis as they waited, and voices sang, and there was laughter from unheard jokes, and lighted cigarettes outlined unintelligible gestures inside. Imagining that I, too, was hurrying toward gaiety and sharing their intimate excitement, I wished them well.

- 1. Identify the technique used in "...they turned and smiled back at me before they faded through a door into warm darkness." [1 mark]

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- 2. Identify the tone of the passage and identify two other techniques that help achieve this tone. [3 marks]

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3. Identify **one** example of symbolism in this passage. [1 mark]

A series of horizontal dotted lines provided for writing the answer to question 3.





TEXT 2

Excerpt from *One Writer’s Beginnings* by E9udora Welty

Miss Duling dressed as plainly as a Pilgrim on a Thanksgiving poster we made in the schoolroom, in a longish black-and-white checked gingham dress, a bright thick wool sweater the red of a railroad lantern--she'd knitted it herself--black stockings and her narrow elegant feet in black hightop shoes with heels you could hear coming, rhythmical as a parade drum down the hall. Her silky black curly hair was drawn back out of curl, fastened by high combs, and knotted behind. She carried her spectacles on a gold chain hung around her neck. Her gaze was in general sweeping, then suddenly at the point of concentration upon you. With a swing of her bell that took her whole right arm and shoulder, she rang it, militant and impartial, from the head of the front steps of Davis School when it was time for us all to line up, girls on one side, boys on the other. We were to march past her into the school building, while the fourth-grader she nabbed played time on the piano, mostly to a tune we could have skipped to, but we didn't skip into Davis School.

- 1. What does the bell symbolise? [1 mark]

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- 2. Identify **three** techniques used in the characterisation of Miss Duling. What do they tell us about her character? [3 marks]

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TEXT 3

Excerpt from ‘*I have a dream*’, speech by Martin Luther King Jr. (1963)

I say to you today, my friends, so even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream.

I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."

I have a dream that one day on the red hills of Georgia the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave owners will be able to sit down together at the table of brotherhood.

I have a dream that one day even the state of Mississippi, a state sweltering with the heat of injustice, sweltering with the heat of oppression, will be transformed into an oasis of freedom and justice.

I have a dream that my four little children will one day live in a nation where they will not be judged by the color of their skin but by the content of their character.

I have a dream today.

*I have a dream that one day, down in Alabama, with its vicious racists, **with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification**; one day right there in Alabama, little black boys and black girls will be able to join hands with little white boys and white girls as sisters and brothers.*

I have a dream today.

I have a dream that one day every valley shall be exalted, every hill and mountain shall be made low, the rough places will be made plain, and the crooked places will be made straight, and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together.

This is our hope. This is the faith that I go back to the South with. With this faith we will be able to hew out of the mountain of despair a stone of hope. With this faith we will be able to transform the jangling discords of our nation into a beautiful symphony of brotherhood. With this faith we will be able to work together, to pray together, to struggle together, to go to jail together, to stand up for freedom together, knowing that we will be free one day.

1. Identify **three** techniques used in the above passage. [3 marks]

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2. Identify the technique used in “...with its governor having his lips dripping with the words of interposition and nullification” and explain what it means. **[2 marks]**

A series of horizontal dotted lines provided for writing the answer to question 2.





TEXT 4: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

"The end game of Bobby Fischer" - The Observer, Sunday 10 February 2008

He was said to have an IQ greater than Einstein's, and he won the world's most famous chess duel. But when he died last month in Reykjavik, Bobby Fischer was a shuffling recluse, consumed by paranoia. John Carlin pieces together the grandmaster's last moves

At 8am on Monday 21 January, under cover of darkest night, a hearse slid stealthily out of the snowy streets of Reykjavik, followed by another car. In the hearse was a coffin containing the body of Bobby Fischer, the American chess virtuoso, who had died four days earlier, aged 64; in the car were an Icelandic couple who had been his neighbours and a French Catholic priest whom Fischer, born and raised Jewish, had never met.

They drove 45km east of the Icelandic capital and stopped at a Lutheran country church near the small town of Selfoss. They were met there by a Japanese woman, a Buddhist, who had flown in from Tokyo the night before and who said she was his wife. The farmer who owned the land on which the church was built, and where Fischer would sometimes go for walks, had dug a grave overnight in the plot's ancient cemetery. The small group huddled around the grave, and the priest said a prayer. It was bitterly cold and the black of the night sky contrasted with the whiteness of the icy ground. By 10am, as the dull glow of morning began rising from the east, the ceremony was over. The coffin had been lowered into the ground and Fischer's wife and neighbours, the farmer and the priest walked silently away.

The news of Fischer's death on 17 January had spread far and wide, but no one beyond the burial party had any notion that the controversial, Uncle Sam-hating, Jew-bashing former world chess champion was already underground until four the next afternoon, when the neighbour who had been present, Gardar Sverisson, phoned a friend to let him know. So closely held was the secret, so hastily arranged the funeral, that even the Lutheran priest whose church this was did not get to hear about it until after the event; even Fischer's American brother-in-law (the first husband of his dead sister) did not know about it, which was especially galling since he had flown in from America for the funeral (and for a cut of Fischer's €2m fortune), oblivious to the fact that the ceremony was taking place at the very moment his plane from New York touched down. Nor had Fischer's most loyal Icelandic friend, Saemi Palsson, been told.

Palsson, a local hero in Reykjavik about whom a film is being made, told me he was saddened not to have had the chance to pay his last respects to his old friend yet he agreed, as did half a dozen people I spoke to in Iceland who had known Fischer, that this was just the way the dead grandmaster would have wanted it. 'He distrusted everybody, he hated the media and he was so secretive that none of us knew until now, after his death, that Myoko Watai was his wife,' Palsson said.

Palsson, a former policeman and judo black belt who was Iceland's national twist and rock'n'roll dancing champion in the Fifties, was Fischer's bodyguard during the grandmaster's glory days. Iceland was the scene in 1972 of the most memorable chess duel of all time between Fischer and the Soviet champion Boris Spassky for the undisputed world crown. The East-West showdown, followed worldwide as no chess competition ever has been before or since, took on a titanic geopolitical resonance at a time when the two superpowers were immersed in deepest cold war. The tall, gangly, 29-year-old Fischer won, despite absurd temper tantrums that put the continuance of the 22-game event in permanent jeopardy. Henry Kissinger, then Richard Nixon's secretary of state, phoned him at one point to remind him of his patriotic duty. It worked. Fischer - 'It really is the free world against the lying, cheating, hypocritical Russians,' he said - also saw himself as a cold warrior.



The epically wilful Fischer, a man utterly bereft of social graces, fell out with almost everyone he met in Iceland, including the organisers of the event, accommodating as they tried to be. The exception was Palsson, whose straightforwardness and discretion Fischer valued so much he arranged for him to be his bodyguard in the United States, where Palsson remained for six months. After that Fischer disappeared from view for two decades, emerging in 1992 to play a sanctions-busting rematch in Serbia with Spassky that earned him a lot of money but also the enmity of his own government.

In 2005, 33 years after the Iceland match, Fischer phoned Palsson from a prison in Tokyo, where he had been locked up at the behest of the US authorities who sought to extradite him on charges of travelling with an invalid passport, tax evasion and money laundering. What lay behind the Americans' desire to punish him, in the view of everyone I spoke to in Iceland, was their anger at Bobby Fischer's spectacular political incorrectness. Ever since drawing the wrath of his government by playing that chess match in Serbia, the one-time American hero and scourge of the Soviets became almost dementedly anti-US, and anti-'the stinking Jews' under whose 'total control' he said America had fallen. A vociferous Holocaust-denier, he told a Philippines radio station that the New York attacks of 11 September 2001 had been 'wonderful news', adding that it was time 'to finish off the US once and for all'.

Yet Palsson, who had learned a while back when to take Fischer seriously and when not to, came to his old friend's rescue. The upshot of that phone call Fischer made to him from behind Japanese bars was that Palsson went to see him in Tokyo, a committee of seven 70-something chess enthusiasts was formed in Iceland to mobilise the government to grant Fischer exile and, after much friction with the US government, the 1,000-year-old Icelandic parliament voted unanimously to strike a blow for freedom by granting full citizenship to the American who had put them on the world map.

In March 2005 Fischer stepped off a plane in Iceland looking, as Palsson remarked, 'like Solzhenitsyn' - Solzhenitsyn on a bad day in a Siberian labour camp: his teeth were rotten and his white hair and beard were long and unkempt. He cleaned up for a welcome banquet in Reykjavik to which he reluctantly agreed to go. But the image he presented when he emerged on to the streets during the two years and 10 months of his Icelandic exile was relentlessly dire. As an Icelandic writer I spoke to put it, 'You saw him slumped on a park bench with a plastic bag by his side and what you thought of was a homeless bum.' The beard and the hair rapidly became a mess again and he always wore the same clothes: blue denim shirt and jeans, baseball cap. Palsson insisted that he did change his clothes with reasonably regularity, but the teeth never got any better. He distrusted dentists and doctors, and even distrusted his metal fillings, which he had removed, Palsson said, out of some vague fear of radiation or out of concern that the Americans or Russians would beam radio signals via his molars into his brain.

The curious thing was that Fischer, for all his anti-Americanism, was 'so, so American' as one person from the chess world who knew him said. He never left home without his baseball cap, he spent much of his time listening to American blues music on his MP3, he enjoyed eating hamburgers at a Reykjavik restaurant called 'American Style', he loved watching all-action American movies. His personal paranoia was also an expression of a very American tendency - or, at any rate, a Washington one - to see and make enemies everywhere.



Dr Skulason spent many hours by Fischer's bedside during the last three months of his life, speaking about everything from Freudian dream theory to US perfidy in Iraq. There was much they talked about that Dr Skulason said he did not feel at liberty to mention, but there was one conclusion he said he could make from an overall assessment of the many hours of conversation they had. He said he detected a big gap between Fischer's spectacular mental abilities (he was said to have had an IQ higher than Einstein's) and the infantile emotional world in which he seemed trapped. 'He looked at life the way a little boy does and, like a child he always wanted to have his own way and got angry if you refused him,' said Dr Skulason. A lot of it, he explained, had to do with the freakshow celebrity status abruptly imposed upon him at the age of 14, when the prodigy was crowned chess champion of the United States. 'It was an extreme burden for a young boy who grew up from the age of two with a single mother who was very often outside the home,' said Dr Skulason. 'He was lonely as a child, I believe, and also poor. Chess was a refuge. He built up his own walls, an immature, aggressive sort of protection in which trust - a basic necessity of healthy social interaction - was practically banished.'

Just before Fischer died, Dr Skulason spent the entire night by his bedside. 'I would speak in a monologue and he would fall asleep, like a baby. Then he would wake up with aches and pains and I would press some grapes and give him a glass of juice, or some goat's milk, which unfortunately he could not hold down. Once, towards dawn, he woke up and said his feet ached and asked if I could massage them. I tried my best, and it was then that he said his last words to me and, as far as I know, to anybody. Responding to my hands on his feet he said, with a terrible gentleness, "Nothing is as healing as the human touch."'

Dr Skulason, who said he believed the human touch was something Fischer had craved all his life, told me he was surprised at how much he missed Fischer now that he was gone. The psychiatrist was at pains to note that, for all his tyrannical tendencies, the hermetic genius could sometimes exude great warmth. All those I spoke to in Iceland who had known him said the same thing - even Palsson, who recalled, misty-eyed, his frank handshake and bearishly affectionate hug.

Skulason said he wanted Fischer to be remembered not for his childish outbursts of self-hating Jewishness, but 'as a wounded man whose outward behaviour disguised the good he had inside'. He saw some parallels between Fischer and some of the patients he treated at his hospital, 'people who suffered violence in childhood, who did violence as adults and who now receive violence back from society'. Violence, Dr Skulason meant, in the sense of being shunned, scorned and vilified, as he was by his own country, when what he really merited was admiration for his remarkable mind and sympathy for the sad outcome of the perplexing childhood he endured.

Fischer's mind remained, to the last, a neurotic jumble. The manner of his burial bore it out: the furtiveness, the Japanese Buddhist wife, the American brother-in-law (quite forlorn, for the evidence seemed to show that Myoko Watai was indeed his legal wife and therefore the beneficiary of his estate), the unbidden invasion of the Lutheran churchyard and, perhaps most bizarrely, the Catholic priest called Jakob Rolland who invoked a god over Fischer's grave in which Fischer showed no sign of believing, and had no knowledge whatsoever of the one religion to which Fischer dedicated his whole being: chess.



1. Identify **two** characteristics of Fischer’s personality and the techniques used to convey these. **[4 marks]**

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2. What is the author’s opinion of Fischer? **[2 marks]**

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3. Identify **three** techniques the author uses to create a sense of mystery about Bobby Fischer. **[3 marks]**

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Term 1 – Week 3 – Homework

Read the short story “The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas” by Ursula LeGuin and answer the following questions.

The Ones Who Walk Away from Omelas

From The Wind's Twelve Quarters: Short Stories by Ursula Le Guin

With a clamor of bells that set the swallows soaring, the Festival of Summer came to the city Omelas, bright-towered by the sea. The rigging of the boats in harbor sparkled with flags. In the streets between houses with red roofs and painted walls, between old moss-grown gardens and under avenues of trees, past great parks and public buildings, processions moved. Some were decorous: old people in long stiff robes of mauve and grey, grave master workmen, quiet, merry women carrying their babies and chatting as they walked. In other streets the music beat faster, a shimmering of gong and tambourine, and the people went dancing, the procession was a dance. Children dodged in and out, their high calls rising like the swallows' crossing flights, over the music and the singing. All the processions wound towards the north side of the city, where on the great water-meadow called the Green' Fields boys and girls, naked in the bright air, with mud-stained feet and ankles and long, lithe arms, exercised their restive horses before the race. The horses wore no gear at all but a halter without bit. Their manes were braided with streamers of silver, gold, and green. They flared their nostrils and pranced and boasted to one another; they were vastly excited, the horse being the only animal who has adopted our ceremonies as his own. Far off to the north and west the mountains stood up half encircling Omelas on her bay. The air of morning was so clear that the snow still crowning the Eighteen Peaks burned with white-gold fire across the miles of sunlit air, under the dark blue of the sky. There was just enough wind to make the banners that marked the racecourse snap and flutter now and then. In the silence of the broad green meadows one could hear the music winding through the city streets, farther and nearer and ever approaching, a cheerful faint sweetness of the air that from time to time trembled and gathered together and broke out into the great joyous clanging of the bells.

Joyous! How is one to tell about joy? How describe the citizens of Omelas?

They were not simple folk, you see, though they were happy. But we do not say the words of cheer much anymore. All smiles have become archaic. Given a description such as this one tends to make certain assumptions. Given a description such as this one tends to look next for the King, mounted on a splendid stallion and surrounded by his noble knights, or perhaps in a golden litter borne by great-muscled slaves. But there was no king. They did not use swords, or keep slaves. They were not barbarians. I do not know the rules and laws of their society, but I suspect that they were singularly few. As they did without monarchy and slavery, so they also got on without the stock exchange, the advertisement, the secret police, and the bomb. Yet I repeat that these were not simple folk, not dulcet shepherds, noble savages, bland utopians. They were not less complex than us. The trouble is that we have a bad habit, encouraged by pedants and sophisticates, of considering happiness as something rather stupid. Only pain is intellectual, only evil interesting. This is the treason of the artist: a refusal to admit the banality of evil and the terrible boredom of pain. If you can't lick 'em, join 'em. If it hurts, repeat it. But to praise despair is to condemn delight, to embrace violence is to lose hold of everything else. We have almost lost hold; we can no longer describe a happy man, nor make any celebration of joy. How can I tell you about the people of Omelas? They were not naive and happy children – though their children were, in fact, happy. They were mature, intelligent, passionate adults whose lives were not wretched. O miracle! but I wish I could describe it better. I wish I could convince you.



Omelas sounds in my words like a city in a fairy tale, long ago and far away, once upon a time. Perhaps it would be best if you imagined it as your own fancy bids, assuming it will rise to the occasion, for certainly I cannot suit you all. For instance, how about technology? I think that there would be no cars or helicopters in and above the streets; this follows from the fact that the people of Omelas are happy people. Happiness is based on a just discrimination of what is necessary, what is neither necessary nor destructive, and what is destructive. In the middle category, however – that of the unnecessary but undestructive, that of comfort, luxury, exuberance, etc. -- they could perfectly well have central heating, subway trains, washing machines, and all kinds of marvelous devices not yet invented here, floating light-sources, fuelless power, a cure for the common cold. Or they could have none of that: it doesn't matter. As you like it. I incline to think that people from towns up and down the coast have been coming in to Omelas during the last days before the Festival on very fast little trains and double-decked trams, and that the train station of Omelas is actually the handsomest building in town, though plainer than the magnificent Farmers' Market. But even granted trains, I fear that Omelas so far strikes some of you as goody-goody. Smiles, bells, parades, horses, bleh. If so, please add an orgy. If an orgy would help, don't hesitate. Let us not, however, have temples from which issue beautiful nude priests and priestesses already half in ecstasy and ready to copulate with any man or woman, lover or stranger who desires union with the deep godhead of the blood, although that was my first idea. But really it would be better not to have any temples in Omelas – at least, not manned temples. Religion yes, clergy no. Surely the beautiful nudes can just wander about, offering themselves like divine souffles to the hunger of the needy and the rapture of the flesh. Let them join the processions. Let tambourines be struck above the copulations, and the glory of desire be proclaimed upon the gongs, and (a not unimportant point) let the offspring of these delightful rituals be beloved and looked after by all. One thing I know there is none of in Omelas is guilt. But what else should there be? I thought at first there were no drugs, but that is puritanical. For those who like it, the faint insistent sweetness of drooz may perfume the ways of the city, drooz which first brings a great lightness and brilliance to the mind and limbs, and then after some hours a dreamy languor, and wonderful visions at last of the very arcana and inmost secrets of the Universe, as well as exciting the pleasure of sex beyond all belief; and it is not habit-forming. For more modest tastes I think there ought to be beer. What else, what else belongs in the joyous city? The sense of victory, surely, the celebration of courage. But as we did without clergy, let us do without soldiers. The joy built upon successful slaughter is not the right kind of joy; it will not do; it is fearful and it is trivial. A boundless and generous contentment, a magnanimous triumph felt not against some outer enemy but in communion with the finest and fairest in the souls of all men everywhere and the splendor of the world's summer; this is what swells the hearts of the people of Omelas, and the victory they celebrate is that of life. I really don't think many of them need to take drooz.

Most of the processions have reached the Green Fields by now. A marvelous smell of cooking goes forth from the red and blue tents of the provisioners. The faces of small children are amiably sticky; in the benign grey beard of a man a couple of crumbs of rich pastry are entangled. The youths and girls have mounted their horses and are beginning to group around the starting line of the course. An old woman, small, fat, and laughing, is passing out flowers from a basket, and tall young men, wear her flowers in their shining hair. A child of nine or ten sits at the edge of the crowd, alone, playing on a wooden flute. People pause to listen, and they smile, but they do not speak to him, for he never ceases playing and never sees them, his dark eyes wholly rapt in the sweet, thin magic of the tune.

He finishes, and slowly lowers his hands holding the wooden flute.

As if that little private silence were the signal, all at once a trumpet sounds from the pavilion near the starting line: imperious, melancholy, piercing. The horses rear on their slender legs, and some of them neigh in answer. Sober-faced, the young riders stroke the horses' necks and soothe them, whispering, "Quiet, quiet, there my beauty, my hope. . . ." They begin to form in rank along the starting line. The crowds along the racecourse are like a field of grass and flowers in the wind. The Festival of Summer has begun.



Do you believe? Do you accept the festival, the city, the joy? No? Then let me describe one more thing.

In a basement under one of the beautiful public buildings of Omelas, or perhaps in the cellar of one of its spacious private homes, there is a room. It has one locked door, and no window. A little light seeps in dustily between cracks in the boards, secondhand from a cobwebbed window somewhere across the cellar. In one corner of the little room a couple of mops, with stiff, clotted, foul-smelling heads, stand near a rusty bucket. The floor is dirt, a little damp to the touch, as cellar dirt usually is. The room is about three paces long and two wide: a mere broom closet or disused tool room. In the room a child is sitting. It could be a boy or a girl. It looks about six, but actually is nearly ten. It is feeble-minded. Perhaps it was born defective or perhaps it has become imbecile through fear, malnutrition, and neglect. It picks its nose and occasionally fumbles vaguely with its toes or genitals, as it sits haunched in the corner farthest from the bucket and the two mops. It is afraid of the mops. It finds them horrible. It shuts its eyes, but it knows the mops are still standing there; and the door is locked; and nobody will come. The door is always locked; and nobody ever comes, except that sometimes-the child has no understanding of time or interval – sometimes the door rattles terribly and opens, and a person, or several people, are there. One of them may come and kick the child to make it stand up. The others never come close, but peer in at it with frightened, disgusted eyes. The food bowl and the water jug are hastily filled, the door is locked, the eyes disappear. The people at the door never say anything, but the child, who has not always lived in the tool room, and can remember sunlight and its mother's voice, sometimes speaks. "I will be good," it says. "Please let me out. I will be good!" They never answer. The child used to scream for help at night, and cry a good deal, but now it only makes a kind of whining, "eh-haa, eh-haa," and it speaks less and less often. It is so thin there are no calves to its legs; its belly protrudes; it lives on a half-bowl of corn meal and grease a day. It is naked. Its buttocks and thighs are a mass of festered sores, as it sits in its own excrement continually.

They all know it is there, all the people of Omelas. Some of them have come to see it, others are content merely to know it is there. They all know that it has to be there. Some of them understand why, and some do not, but they all understand that their happiness, the beauty of their city, the tenderness of their friendships, the health of their children, the wisdom of their scholars, the skill of their makers, even the abundance of their harvest and the kindly weathers of their skies, depend wholly on this child's abominable misery.

This is usually explained to children when they are between eight and twelve, whenever they seem capable of understanding; and most of those who come to see the child are young people, though often enough an adult comes, or comes back, to see the child. No matter how well the matter has been explained to them, these young spectators are always shocked and sickened at the sight. They feel disgust, which they had thought themselves superior to. They feel anger, outrage, impotence, despite all the explanations. They would like to do something for the child. But there is nothing they can do. If the child were brought up into the sunlight out of that vile place, if it were cleaned and fed and comforted, that would be a good thing, indeed; but if it were done, in that day and hour all the prosperity and beauty and delight of Omelas would wither and be destroyed. Those are the terms. To exchange all the goodness and grace of every life in Omelas for that single, small improvement: to throw away the happiness of thousands for the chance of the happiness of one: that would be to let guilt within the walls indeed.

The terms are strict and absolute; there may not even be a kind word spoken to the child. Often the young people go home in tears, or in a tearless rage, when they have seen the child and faced this terrible paradox. They may brood over it for weeks or years. But as time goes on they begin to realize that even if the child could be released, it would not get much good of its freedom: a little vague pleasure of warmth and food, no doubt, but little more. It is too degraded and imbecile to know any real joy. It has been afraid too long ever to be free of fear. Its habits are too uncouth for it to respond to humane treatment. Indeed, after so long it would probably be wretched without walls about it to protect it, and darkness for its eyes, and its own excrement to sit in. Their tears at the bitter injustice dry when they begin to perceive the terrible justice of reality, and to accept it.



Yet it is their tears and anger, the trying of their generosity and the acceptance of their helplessness, which are perhaps the true source of the splendor of their lives. There is no vapid, irresponsible happiness. They know that they, like the child, are not free. They know compassion. It is the existence of the child, and their knowledge of its existence, that makes possible the nobility of their architecture, the poignancy of their music, the profundity of their science. It is because of the child that they are so gentle with children. They know that if the wretched one were not there snivelling in the dark, the other one, the flute-player, could make no joyful music as the young riders line up in their beauty for the race in the sunlight of the first morning of summer.

Now do you believe in them? Are they not more credible? But there is one more thing to tell, and this is quite incredible.

At times one of the adolescent girls or boys who go to see the child does not go home to weep or rage, does not, in fact, go home at all. Sometimes also a man or woman much older falls silent for a day or two, and then leaves home. These people go out into the street, and walk down the street alone. They keep walking, and walk straight out of the city of Omelas, through the beautiful gates. They keep walking across the farmlands of Omelas. Each one goes alone, youth or girl man or woman. Night falls; the traveler must pass down village streets, between the houses with yellow-lit windows, and on out into the darkness of the fields. Each alone, they go west or north, towards the mountains. They go on. They leave Omelas, they walk ahead into the darkness, and they do not come back. The place they go towards is a place even less imaginable to most of us than the city of happiness. I cannot describe it at all. It is possible that it does not exist. But they seem to know where they are going, the ones who walk away from Omelas.

1. Summarise the conflict LeGuin presents in this story. What kind of society is Omelas? [2 marks]

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2. Describe the tone of this story. [1 mark]

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