

Curriculum links

This module, 'Early novels', engages directly with the following Strands and Sub-strands:

	Examples
Language	
✓ Language variation and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding changes in English conventions over time, including recognising the variations in spelling and usage in early novels
✓ Language for interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> making an assessment about the views and values in the texts and how they reflect the context of the writer
Literature	
✓ Literature and context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reflecting on the way in which classic stories are told and retold to suit the society in which they are being read understanding how classic texts reflect the society in which they were created
✓ Responding to literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> questioning what elements make a text 'classic' creating personal and class reading lists of classic texts
✓ Examining literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> looking at extracts and discussing how language is used to influence the reader
✓ Creating literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creating versions of classic texts that modernise them
Literacy	
✓ Texts in context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> writing from the perspective of a member of the society which produced the text reflecting on the relevance to modern readers of texts produced during this period
✓ Interacting with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> participating in pair, group and class discussions
✓ Interpreting, analysing, evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding the notion of a dominant reading
✓ Creating texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> writing biographies writing compare and contrast paragraphs

Early novels

Why do some novels remain timeless classics, read over and over again, debated and discussed by generations of readers, while others are read and enjoyed, then discarded, fading from the memory? What makes a *classic* novel? In this module we will look at how some of the early novels were shaped by their time and their intended audience. We will also explore why these novels have remained important to a contemporary audience.



Daniel Defoe

Defining the classic novel

Classics are literary works that have stood the test of time. They have become entrenched in the fabric of our Western culture and remain as influential today as they were when they were first written. Although many texts and authors have gone in and out of favour with the reading public, a classic is able to transcend time and place and still have something of value to say to us. These texts are considered to be a part of the 'canon', that is a generally accepted list of important works that are valued for their literary, historical or social importance.

Over the years, there has been a growing movement towards rejecting the notion of a canon, with some literary theorists arguing that readers create their own important individualised relationship with texts. As the author Italo Calvino (1923–1985) said, 'A classic is a book that has never finished saying what it has to say.'

DID YOU KNOW...

When in 1920 a teacher asked her class what they thought a classic work of literature was, one student replied 'Classics are books your father gives you and you keep them to give to your children.'

Ultimately, whatever definition of a classic novel you adopt, one thing is certain: the text will have something to say to you and might even change your life!

The first novels

Before the 1700s, most societies told the stories of their past and conveyed the values and ideas of their cultures in the form of poems and plays. The stories of the Greek heroes or the Norse gods told of valour and a code of honour that was expected to be followed in daily life and passed on to future generations. In Christian Europe the passion plays spread God's teachings to the general public and the twelfth-century Romance tales spoke of love and courage to their aristocratic audience.

By definition, a novel is 'fictitious prose', a long story (with perhaps one or more sub-plots) that concentrates on a particular character or group of characters. When we talk about novels, as they came to be called during their development, we discuss their technical merits—how the writer uses language, the settings, the plot, the development of theme and character for the purposes of telling the story.

The novel began to replace poetry as the most popular genre for fictional stories in the sixteenth century when longer, more 'realistic' stories were written. In 1719 Daniel Defoe (c. 1660–1731) wrote *Robinson Crusoe*. It is commonly regarded as the first English novel because, although fiction, it reflected

Text types and skills

Throughout this module, students will engage with the following text types:

- novel extracts
- photographs.

By engaging with these text types, students will develop skills in the following areas:

- manipulating unfamiliar language
- understanding changes in language over time
- modernising and manipulating text
- identifying how language is used to achieve desired effects
- understanding the role of context in interpreting texts

- identifying audience and purpose in others' writing
- letter writing
- creative writing.

FACT FILE

The **Great Fire of London** started in a bakery on 2 September 1666. By the time it was exhausted three days later, 70 000 of the 80 000 people who lived in the medieval district of the city had lost their homes.

Extension

- Prior to reading the extract by Daniel Defoe, examine the image of Robinson Crusoe on this page. Create a list of descriptive words and phrases about the subject and the setting of the image. Here are some clues:
 - setting—describe the place, the timing, the elements you see in the picture (e.g. the sea/waves, the rocks, the cliffs, etc.). How would each of those elements sound, look, taste, smell and feel? Bring the place to life with your words.
 - subject—describe the man's appearance (his looks, height, age, build and clothing), his posture/body actions, his facial expression, his thoughts. What emotions might the subject be feeling? Bring the man's experience alive through your words.
- Use your list of words and phrases from Extension task 1 above to write two or three paragraphs from the point of view of Robinson Crusoe, the character in the image. Remember to use the first person perspective (I, my, me, myself, etc.) in your description, imagining yourself (as Crusoe) within the setting. Describe Crusoe's experience, paying particular attention to his thoughts and feelings. Share your descriptions in small groups.
- Read the extract from *Robinson Crusoe* and compare the words you used to describe the scene with the words used by Defoe. Were any of the words similar or the same? Whose description was better? Why?

BREAKAWAY TASKS: ANSWERS

Go to page 276.

PEARSON english A.B.

Authors of this period tended to use punctuation to achieve meaning more than modern authors do. More information on the way complex and compound sentences can be used and understood can be found in Units 4 and 5 of the Year 10 activity book.

a more realistic view of the world—Defoe referred to current ideas, debates and people in the story of a man who struggles to survive after being shipwrecked for twenty-eight years.

Breakaway tasks

Remembering

- How did most societies tell their stories prior to the development of the novel?
- What is a canon?
- What is the current thinking about the 'canon'?

Applying

- Write your own definition of 'classic literature'. Share your ideas with the class. You could come up with an agreed class definition to guide your further reading.
- Make a list of what you consider to be the top ten 'classic' novels. Compile a class list.

Daniel Defoe

Daniel Defoe (c. 1660–1731) was a journalist and author who wrote many books, pamphlets and journals on a variety of issues and ideas. Defoe was active in London politics and spent his time debating the great political and social topics of his day, both verbally and in the pages of his magazine *The Review*. He survived the Great Fire of London in 1666 and worked closely with the men who brought about the rebirth of the city after that event. Defoe (who added the 'De' to his original surname of 'Foe' to make himself seem more aristocratic) was well aware that his society was changing and used his writing to comment on those changes. Defoe wrote *Robinson Crusoe*, a fictional autobiography, with its own invented adventures rather than using stories from mythology, history or legend.

? DID YOU KNOW...

The story of *Robinson Crusoe* may have been inspired by a real-life event. Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor, was marooned by himself on an island off the coast of Chile for four years. He was rescued in 1709 and was described as being 'almost incoherent with delight' when he saw other humans again.



In the extract that follows, the shipwreck is occurring and Robinson is being washed onto the beach of the island that will be his home for the next twenty-eight years.

ROBINSON CRUSOE

By Daniel Defoe

The wave that came upon me again buried me at once twenty or thirty feet deep in its own body, and I could feel myself carried with a mighty force and swiftness towards the shore—a very great way; but I held my breath, and assisted myself to swim still forward with all my might. I was ready to burst with holding my breath, when, as I felt myself rising up, so, to my immediate relief, I found my head and hands shoot out above the surface of the water; and though it was not two seconds of time that I could keep myself so, yet it relieved me greatly, gave me breath, and new courage. I was covered again with water a good while, but not so long but I held it out; and finding the water had spent itself, and began to return, I struck forward against the return of the waves, and felt ground again with my feet. I stood still a few moments to recover breath, and till the waters went from me, and then took to my heels and ran with what strength I had further towards the shore. But neither would this deliver me from the fury of the sea, which came pouring in after me again; and twice more I was lifted up by the waves and carried forward as before, the shore being very flat.

The last time of these two had well-nigh been fatal to me, for the sea having hurried me along as before, landed me, or rather dashed me, against a piece of rock, and that with such force, that it left me senseless, and indeed helpless, as to my own deliverance; for the blow taking my side and breast, beat the breath as it were quite out of my body; and had it returned again immediately, I must have been strangled in the water; but I recovered a little before the return of the waves,

Literature: Classic novels 195

VOCABULARY BUILDER

contemporary from the present time
Contemporary fashions focus on bright colours and slim-fitting clothes.

entrenched firmly established
Melissa ideas about her rights were entrenched.

transcend to move beyond
The themes in Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet transcend time.

canon a list of highly valued literary or artistic works considered to be the most important of their genre
Only novels held in the highest regard can be counted as part of the canon.

notion idea
Anita would not entertain the notion that Harry had changed.

valour courage
The Victoria Cross is the highest military medal, awarded for valour.

aristocratic from the noble upper class
The aristocratic behaviour of the man aroused the suspicions of the revolutionary guards.

Assessment

Extension

Breakaway task 6—Explain the different perspectives an author may choose in which to write a story. Remember the first person perspective (I, me, my, myself) you used for the Extension task on the previous page. Explain the third person perspective and, as a class, come up with a topic sentence you can use to help you complete the paragraph for Breakaway task 6.

Homework

List other fictional tales of ‘survival’ you know of in the form of novels, short stories, films or television shows. Define the characteristics of a typical survivor’s tale. What is it about these stories that appeals to readers/viewers? What elements of these tales might help us classify them as ‘timeless’?

FACT FILE

Samuel Richardson (1689–1761) was an English writer and painter. His father was a tradesman who was exiled from London after the revolt against James II. By the end of his life, Richardson was an influential member of London society.

The Enlightenment was an eighteenth century intellectual movement, which called for society to be based on reason rather than tradition and superstition.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

resolve to decide

The swimmer resolved to break her personal best time.

headland a narrow piece of land that juts out into the sea

The lighthouse stood on the headland.

virtue goodness

Tim did not appreciate his virtue being questioned.

BREAKAWAY TASKS:

ANSWERS

Go to page 277.

and seeing I should be covered again with the water, I resolved to hold fast by a piece of the rock, and so to hold my breath, if possible, till the wave went back. Now, as the waves were not so high as at first, being nearer land, I held my hold till the wave abated, and then fetched another run, which brought me so near the shore that the next wave, though it went over me, yet did not so swallow me up as to carry me away; and the next run I took, I got to the mainland, where, to my great comfort, I clambered up the cliffs of the shore and sat me down upon the grass, free from danger and quite out of the reach of the water.

I was now landed and safe on shore, and began to look up and thank God that my life was saved, in a case wherein there was some minutes before scarce any room to hope. I believe it is impossible to express, to the life, what the ecstasies and transports of the soul are, when it is so saved, as I may say, out of the very grave: and I do not wonder now at the custom, when a malefactor, who has the halter about his neck, is tied up, and just going to be turned off, and has a reprieve brought to him ...

Source: Daniel Defoe, *Robinson Crusoe*, 1719

Breakaway tasks

Remembering

- 1 How does Robinson Crusoe finally get ashore?
- 2 What is the first thing he does when he gets ashore?

Understanding

- 3 Look up and write a definition for the following words as they are used in the extract: deliverance, abated, clambered, malefactor, reprieve.

Analysing

- 4 How does Defoe create the image of a sea that is violent and against Crusoe? Make a list of the words he chooses to do this.
- 5 What does Crusoe compare himself to in the final paragraph and why is this an appropriate image?

Creating

- 6 Imagine that you are standing on the headland watching Robinson Crusoe’s struggle with the waves. Write a paragraph from your point of view, explaining what you see and how he looks when he finally reaches safety.

Following the success of *Robinson Crusoe*, many other writers began to use the novel style to write tales that addressed real-life issues in a fictional context. Samuel Richardson wrote the first real bestseller, *Pamela or Virtue Rewarded*, in 1740. *Pamela* was written in the form of letters and told the tale of a serving girl who showed kindness and virtue, and eventually married the gentleman she saved from wickedness.

There were many factors that lead to the rise of the novel as a popular form of entertainment. The invention of the printing press meant that books could be produced quickly and cheaply. At the same time, there was a significant increase in the number of people who could read and write, leading to a growing demand for entertainment. This had a positive effect on the sale of novels. In addition, ‘the Enlightenment’—a period in history in which philosophers began to question the ways in which society functioned—prompted people to think about and question the world in which they lived. Voyages of discovery, advances in scientific and medical knowledge, the spirit of invention, the rise of machinery and political upheavals such as the French Revolution, meant that more and more people were beginning to reflect on the human experience and to read and write about it.

Context

Context is the circumstances that surround an event or issue. There are many contexts that you need to consider when analysing a text: the author’s context, the text’s context, your own personal context and your greater context.

- **Author’s context**—the personal life and circumstances of the author, the society and culture in which they lived immediately before, during and after they wrote the text.
- **Text’s context**—the context within the narrative itself; particular settings, characters, events and situations. Sometimes a text can be set in a particular time and place in history, or in an imaginative context in the future, or within a fantasy world or fictional place.
- **Your personal context**—your gender and race, how you were raised, your parents’ religious or cultural beliefs, your home life and family rules, your individual personal experiences, your triumphs and tragedies, the influences of your friends and other significant people in your life, and your

EAL/D SUPPORT

Scaffolding task

As students complete **Breakaway task 4**, have them categorise their list of words in a table like the one here, according to the parts of speech. Which part of speech is used the most in this extract?

Nouns	Verbs	Adjectives
force	buried	fatal
swiftness	burst	senseless
courage	shoot	mighty
fury	pouring	great
blow	hurried	
	dashed	
	strangled	
	clambered	

MI: verbal-linguistic

Austen was writing during the Romantic period. Prior to the Romantics, was the Enlightenment. Understanding the literary movements over time will enable students to view texts as having a literary context as well as a historical period. The periods allow students to unpack a text as being part of a greater movement—it allows them to see how a text resonates with the movement's concerns and how each movement responds and reacts to the one that precedes it. For example, seeing the links between the Classical and Neoclassical periods enables students to associate texts with different time periods.

Have students research the literary movements listed below. Divide them into small groups and have them research each literary movement and outline the main features of each. They can present their findings to the class in the form of a slide show until the entire history is told.

- Middle English
- the Renaissance
- the Neoclassical period
- the Enlightenment
- the Romantic period
- the Victorian era
- the Edwardian period
- the Modern period
- the Postmodern period

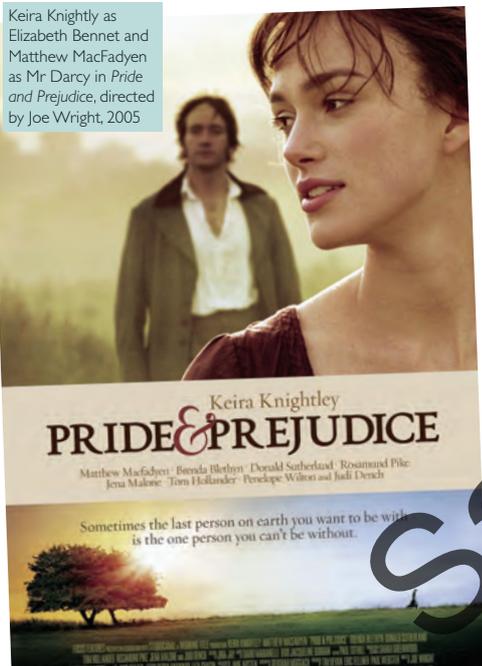
social and public practices, which include common rituals and celebrations, the television shows you watch, how you spend your holidays or how you generally respond to a death, a birth or a marriage.

- **Your greater context**—the place and country in which you were born and raised and where you live. This context includes the major cultural beliefs of your civilisation, its common laws and the political and economic circumstances of your current decade, era or generation.

Some novels talk about the human experience and give us an insight into what it means to be human. It is this quality which makes classic novels relevant across decades and generations. The influential literary critic F.R. Leavis (1895–1978) said that some novels continue to inspire readers because they are part of the 'great tradition' and they speak to us about the issues, concerns and values that remain relevant, whatever the time period in which they are being read.

A novel like Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*, first published in 1813, for example, tells a classic tale of individuals blinded by pride. Love eventually overcomes that pride and the prejudices of the characters. The story appeals to many young people because of its theme—the search for love. Consequently, it has been regularly reprinted, and has been adapted into film and television series.

Keira Knightly as Elizabeth Bennet and Matthew MacFadyen as Mr Darcy in *Pride and Prejudice*, directed by Joe Wright, 2005



Understanding more about the context in which it was written only adds to our appreciation of the novel and the timeless nature of its themes.

The Romantic period

The Romantic period (1780–1830) influenced the development of the novel, celebrating passionate emotions and creative imagination. Much to the distaste of the elitist group of writers around them, the Romantics explored life's truths, in both natural and supernatural environments. The Romantic period represented a literary revolution. The Romantics broke away from strict rules of writing poetry and experimented with new ways of expressing joy, terror and awe. They wanted to bridge the gap between the social classes and make the splendour of reading accessible to all. The Romantics presented human experience against backdrops of breathtakingly surreal landscapes, with plotlines that were adventurous, fantastical and mysterious.

The Romantics saw the Industrial Revolution as a threat to society and to people's relationships with the natural world. Unlike the new business owners, who were optimistic about this age of invention, the Romantics felt the introduction of machinery and factories was alienating and inhumane, and caused further hardships for the working classes. Many Romantic writers were moved by and wrote about the dreadful living conditions of the poor.

QUESTIONING

The word 'romantic' (as applied to the Romantic period) does not refer to the romance genre, which deals with love stories. The nineteenth-century Romantics rarely wrote about love; instead they were known for their protests in favour of old traditions.

At this time, women of the upper classes began to write novels. Novels were considered a less skilful form of writing than poetry, but some became literary classics in their own right. Jane Austen (1775–1817) was one of these early writers. Her novels, which include *Pride and Prejudice*, are still widely read today. Austen's novels are said to be the first to challenge the disenfranchisement of women in society.

Literature: Classic novels 197

FACT FILE

F.R. Leavis (1895–1978) was an English literary critic who had strong opinions about the types of works that could qualify for the canon. He served behind the lines in the First World War caring for the wounded, but suffered serious injury from a poison gas attack.

Jane Austen (1775–1817) was an English novelist who, despite not receiving a great amount of attention during her lifetime, is now considered one of the most widely read authors in the English language. Her works have been adapted into many forms, including films and television mini-series.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

surreal dream-like

Jodie's victory felt surreal.

alienate to make someone feel not included, resentful

Mary was careful not to alienate her teachers on the first day back.

QUESTIONING

- What do you think are some of the big issues concerning 'the human experience'?
- Can you think of any books or films that address these important concepts?

EAL/D SUPPORT

Starter activity

Personalising new information will help EAL/D students make connections between their own life and new concepts. Ask students to read the information about 'Context' and have them record their own personal contexts by referring to the prompts in 'Your personal context' and 'Your greater context'. Students can then share their responses with a partner and consider the similarities and differences that exist between them. This is a good opportunity to promote the theme of individuality and uniqueness.

Extension

Mary Wollstonecraft wrote fervently about the role of women within her society and the constrictions placed upon them. She believed that the lack of a proper education, lack of independent means (financial security) and the pigeon-holing of women as objects contributed to the lowering of their status in society.

Read the Wollstonecraft's introduction to *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), available via the link at **Pearson Reader** web destinations, and prepare a three-minute speech in which you, as Wollstonecraft, will persuade the class that:



Web Destination

- women have been marginalised for too long
- change is required, particularly in the area of education of women
- women have the right to be treated, like men, as human beings as opposed to possessions.

Because Wollstonecraft was also a product of her time, she was actually not advocating for equal rights between men and women. Rather, her message can be viewed as wanting to improve the standing of women in society, and as such was a 'first step' towards the feminist ideologies of today.

Plan, write and rehearse your speech thoroughly prior to its presentation.

Remember that the language and content of your address should attempt to remain consistent with the era in which Wollstonecraft wrote and with her convictions.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

advocate to recommend

Leonie did not advocate violence as a solution.

hierarchy ranking, order

The High Court is the highest court in the hierarchy of courts in Australia.

emancipated freed from slavery

The emancipated slave built a prosperous business.

matrimonial related to marriage

Rob took his matrimonial vows less than seriously.

cynical to believe the worst about a situation or human nature

The defeated football players could not help being cynical about the coach's pep talk.

prospective possibly in the future, potential

The real estate agent showed prospective buyers around the house.

DID YOU KNOW...

It was during the Romantic period that the early writings of the feminist movement began. One of the first female philosophers, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759–1797), spoke out about the rights of women. She believed that the weaknesses of women came from their misrepresentation in society. She announced that women had the right to write about their own experiences more realistically. Jane Austen was greatly influenced by Mary Wollstonecraft's message. Austen advocated that women were not naturally inferior to men, but only appeared to be, due to lack of education and financial dependency.

Jane Austen

Born in 1775, Jane Austen belonged to the gentry, the social class below the nobility. Although her formal education was limited to the lessons she received at home, Austen had access to the 500 books of her father's library. Much like Elizabeth Bennet, the protagonist in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen lived comfortably with her family and resisted the pressure to marry a man she did not love. Unlike Elizabeth Bennet, however, Austen never married or left the family home.

Austen represented her female characters as polite, dignified and rebellious, but only within the existing social hierarchy. She believed that one of the ways a woman could become emancipated was by avoiding matrimonial disaster. She empowered her heroine Elizabeth by having her criticise some of the unfair expectations placed on women in her society.

Austen is openly cynical about women seeking to be accomplished only as a means of attracting a husband. Fortunately for Austen, remaining unmarried did not place her family's status or wealth at risk. This was not true for many women of her time who were far more dependent on marriage as a means of survival.

Jane Austen sets out the subject of her novel *Pride and Prejudice* in the opening line, when she famously declares that 'It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife.' The novel follows the pursuit of two prospective wives by two single men 'in possession of a good fortune'.

The extract that follows is a conversation between several characters about the 'proper' accomplishments of a woman of good breeding, which takes place in the drawing room at Netherfield Park, the Bingley's residence. Elizabeth Bennet is staying at Netherfield



Jane Austen

While her sister Jane recovers there from the flu. Her host Charles Bingley (Jane's suitor) is accompanied by his snobbish sisters Caroline Bingley and Mrs Hurst, and his best friend Mr Fitzwilliam Darcy. Caroline (who would like to marry Mr Darcy) is attempting to gain his favour by extravagantly praising his sister Miss Darcy. Elizabeth and Darcy have taken an instant dislike to each other based on their personal prejudices.

PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

By Jane Austen

'How I long to see her [Miss Darcy] again! I never met with anybody who delighted me so much. Such a countenance, such manners!—and so extremely accomplished for her age! Her performance on the piano-forte is exquisite.'

'It is amazing to me,' said Bingley, 'how young ladies can have patience to be so very accomplished, as they all are.'

'All young ladies accomplished! My dear Charles, what do you mean?'

EAL/D SUPPORT

Starter activity

After students have read the section 'Jane Austen', have them complete the following 5W+H questions to check their understanding:

- Who is the protagonist in *Pride and Prejudice*? (Elizabeth Bennet)
- What characteristics do Jane Austen's female characters have? (politeness, dignity, rebelliousness)
- Where did Jane Austen receive her education? (at home)
- When was Jane Austen born? (1775)
- Why, according to Jane Austen, did women appear to be inferior to men? (lack of education and financial dependency)
- How are Jane Austen and Elizabeth Bennet the same? How are they different? (They both lived comfortably with their family and resisted the pressure to marry a man they didn't love. However, unlike Bennet, Austen never married or left the family home.)

'Yes, all of them, I think. They all paint tables, cover screens and net purses. I scarcely know any one who cannot do all this, and I am sure I never heard a young lady spoken of for the first time, without being informed that she was very accomplished.'

'Your list of the common extent of accomplishments,' said Darcy, 'has too much truth. The word is applied to many a woman who deserves it no otherwise than by netting a purse, or covering a screen. But I am very far from agreeing with you in your estimation of ladies in general. I cannot boast of knowing more than half a dozen, in the whole range of my acquaintance that are really accomplished.'

'Nor I, I am sure,' said Miss Bingley.

'Then,' observed Elizabeth, 'you must comprehend a great deal in your idea of an accomplished woman.'

'Yes; I do comprehend a great deal in it.'

'Oh! Certainly,' cried his faithful assistant, 'no one can be really esteemed accomplished, who does not greatly surpass what is usually met with. A woman must have a thorough knowledge of music, singing, drawing, dancing and the modern languages, to deserve the word; and besides all this, she must possess a certain something in her air and manner of walking, the tone of her voice, her address and expressions, or the word will be but half deserved.'

'All this she must possess,' added Darcy, 'and to all this she must yet add something more substantial, in the improvement of her mind by extensive reading.'

'I am no longer surprised at your knowing only six accomplished women. I rather wonder now at your knowing any.'

'Are you so severe upon your own sex, as to doubt the possibility of all this?'

'I never saw such a woman. I never saw such a capacity, and taste, and application, and elegance, as you describe, united.'

Mrs Hurst and Miss Bingley both cried out against the injustice of her implied doubt, and were both protesting that they knew many women who answered this description, when Mr Hurst called them to order, with bitter complaints of the inattention to what was going forward. As all conversation was thereby at an end, Elizabeth soon afterwards left the room.

Source: Jane Austen, *Pride and Prejudice*, 1813

QUESTION DID YOU KNOW...

Women of the upper classes of the eighteenth and nineteenth century sought education through the attainment of accomplishments such as learning languages—particularly French and Italian—playing instruments, singing, dancing, decorating furniture and sewing embroideries for the home.



Each reader has a unique response to and interpretation of a text according to their own context. However, we can predict how a group of people within a particular context might respond to a text.

A **dominant reading** is a response or an interpretation with which the wider community or culture would generally agree.

Just as authors can challenge ideas in society through their writing, we can challenge the author's ideas about society. With this in mind, let's explore Jane Austen's representations of men and women.

In *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen resists the belief that women are inferior to men and introduces a new type of woman. Elizabeth demonstrates qualities believed to be typically masculine. She is rational, witty and intelligent and, because of this, Austen rewards

Literature: Classic novels 199

FACT FILE

The word '**novel**' is derived from the Latin word for 'news', or 'short story of something new'.

QUICK 5

In small groups, have students research the factors that led to the rise of the novel. Ask them to find statistics on literacy rates, the cost of paper and books, important inventions and social developments between 1700 and 1900.

EAL/D SUPPORT

Oral rehearsal

In groups, have students do a dramatic reading of *Pride and Prejudice*. First, students read through the extract and determine which dialogue is said by which characters—Caroline, Bingley, Darcy, Miss Bingley, Elizabeth, Mr Hurst or Mrs Hurst. Students should practise reading their allocated dialogue and refine the tone, emphasis and pronunciation. Each group can then present their dramatic reading to the class.

WEB DESTINATIONS

Visit the web destinations at **Pearson Reader** to access the



Web Destination

Jane Austen Society of the United Kingdom. Similar societies exist in countries around the world and celebrate the work, life and times of Jane Austen.

RELATED READING

- Emily Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*, Penguin Classics, 2009
- Wilkie Collins, *The Woman in White*, All the Year Round, 1860
- Thomas Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles*, Penguin Classics, 1999
- Herman Melville, *Moby Dick*, Penguin Classics, 2009
- Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Penguin Books, 1997
- Virginia Woolf, *To the Lighthouse*, Hogarth Press, 1927

PEARSON english A.B.

The concept and rules of narrative structure were becoming more explicit as the novel form grew in popularity. More information on narrative structure can be found in Unit 4 of the Year 10 activity book.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

feminism a movement to define and defend women's rights

Gertrude believed that feminism would lead to a better life for women around the world.

succumb to fall victim to

The patient succumbed to her injuries.

HELPFUL HINTS

Have students practise applying the concepts of dominant and resistant readings by analysing fairytales. Take *Cinderella* as an example. Ask students for a conventional interpretation (e.g. 'love conquers all' and 'dreams can come true').

Now ask students to attempt a resistant reading (e.g. 'that it highlights the inequalities between rich and poor', or 'that women should be wary of men who are attracted to women solely based on their appearances'). Have students work in pairs to attempt readings of a fairytale of their choice.

EAL/D SUPPORT

Scaffolding task

Provide EAL/D students with the following sentence starters to assist the development of their vocabulary and syntax in **Breakaway task 12**:

- The things they have in common are ...
- The differences between them are ...
- The way they are alike is that they both ..., but ...
- What's different is ...
- A distinction between ... and ... might be ...
- In comparison ...

Elizabeth with further wealth and status. Many readers see the character of Elizabeth Bennet as an example of early feminism.

However, it can also be said that Austen's text still presents dominant ideas about class divisions in society. Austen seems to endorse a hierarchical class system in which men and women conform to particular social rules and ideas of what is socially acceptable, such as not socialising or marrying outside of their class. Unlike the Romantics or feminists of her time, in *Pride and Prejudice*, Austen almost ignores the situation of the lower classes. For example, Elizabeth challenges the pride and prejudice of the men and women around her. Yet at the end of the novel she succumbs to the 'way things are', falls in love and marries the proud aristocrat Darcy, who incidentally, remains prejudiced against the classes beneath his own and maintains his firm views about women's restricted roles in society. Therefore, we can also say that her text does not endorse revolutionary social changes.



'To **challenge**' means to fight against, or object to an issue, or demand a response to a stimulating circumstance.

'To **endorse**' means to get behind, promote, approve of, or support an issue or circumstance.

Stories are never neutral—they will always present a view or context of the times and society in which or about which they are written. An author will often make social commentary by challenging or endorsing an issue, a circumstance, a type of person or a group in society within their texts. For example, an author might create a character who fights against the system or an issue that they disagree with in society. Or they might favour or endorse a character who is different from a social stereotype

Breakaway tasks

Remembering

- 1 What is Austen's view about women becoming accomplished?
- 2 Why is Elizabeth staying at Netherfield Park?
- 3 Who would Caroline like to marry?
- 4 How many 'accomplished' women does Mr Darcy know?

200 PEARSON english 10

Understanding

- 5 Look up and write a definition for the following words as they are used in the extract: countenance, accomplished, acquaintance, esteemed, address.

Applying

- 6 Using a Venn diagram, compare how women at the time of Jane Austen and women today like to spend their spare time.

Analysing

- 7 Use the internet to research men's pastimes during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
- 8 Using a Venn diagram, compare how men's leisure activities have changed over time.

Evaluating

- 9 What is your reaction to the qualities of an 'accomplished' woman as described in the extract from *Pride and Prejudice*?
- 10 What is the dominant reading of this extract?
- 11 What individual accomplishments, skills and qualities do we strive for in today's society?
- 12 Have a class discussion or debate about whether women and men strive for similar or different accomplishments.

Creating

- 13 Rewrite the extract from *Pride and Prejudice*, representing how the men and women would react in modern times. As in Austen's text, you need to have the same characters in a room:
 - Charles Bingley
 - Miss Caroline Bingley
 - Mr and Mrs Hurst
 - Elizabeth Bennet
 - Fitzwilliam Darcy.Your characters should discuss what makes a woman accomplished, or acceptable to a man.
- 14 Write a short paragraph comparing and contrasting the dominant reading of your rewritten extract with your answer to Question 10.

BREAKAWAY TASKS:

ANSWERS

Go to page 277.

PEARSON english A.B.

For more information on imaginative writing go to Unit 6 of the Year 10 activity book.

Strands in action

Core tasks

1 Prepare and display a timeline that shows the developments in the rise of the novel and the world events taking place at the same time.

You could do this task as a class, with each student responsible for one decade or event. Illustrate the timeline with facsimile book covers and illustrations of world events.

2 Here is a list of authors from the time period covered in this module. Select one author and prepare a written report on them that details their works, their life and the time period in which they lived.

- Jane Austen
- Aphra Behn
- Daniel Defoe
- Henry Fielding
- Samuel Richardson
- Mary Shelley

Your report should:

- be written in formal language
- be written as a formal research report, with headings, subheadings and a contents page
- be illustrated with pictures that have captions which are referred to in the text of the report
- have a complete bibliography
- make use of either in-text referencing or footnotes to attribute quotes.

Extra tasks

1 Imagine you are a member of society during the Romantic period. Write a letter to a friend, colleague or family member. You can imagine you are a famous person from this period, for example, a novelist, inventor, revolutionary, explorer, or a religious or political leader. Or you can choose to be an ordinary member of society writing about your daily life or an incident that has happened to you.

- Write a two-page letter that demonstrates your understanding of this time in history.
- Remember to write your letter by hand. Computers weren't invented then!
- Indicate the date you wrote this letter and be sure to research the context for accuracy.

2 We know that authors present a view of life that is particular to their personal context. Because of this, their understanding of the world can be challenged. Jane Austen attempted to represent men and women, a specific class of English society and a specific culture in her novels.

- a Challenge Austen's representations of her world by compiling a list of questions to ask her:

b Discuss how Jane Austen might have responded to some of your questions.

3 In groups of five, demonstrate to the rest of the class how people can experience things in different ways. Role-play a skit that presents a reality and then devise a way of showing how characters experience, view, hear, understand or have their own version of this reality that is different from the other characters in the group.

4 Read one of the novels written by one of the authors in the list in Core task 2. What themes and issues does it explore and why are they still relevant?

Extension

1 Working in groups of three, use your answers to **Extra task 2** to form the basis of a scripted interview scene for a current affairs TV show. Have your modern-day reporter question Jane Austen on:

- the objectification of women in middle class England during her time
- the role of women
- women's education
- social customs
- women's reliance upon men within her social circle
- the female characters in her novel *Pride and Prejudice*.

Prepare a script that incorporates an introduction to the guest (Austen), at least ten questions (and answers) and a conclusion to the interview. Decide on the roles within your group—who will be the reporter, Austen and the camera operator? Consider the use of costumes and props, rehearse your interview scene, then film it.

Screen your interview for the class and invite feedback in the form of an open discussion afterwards.

2 Write a 400-word reflective piece on how the role and rights of women have changed since Austen's time. Comment on the notion of equal rights, particularly with regards to education, financial independence or employment opportunities, and the types of societal expectations placed upon women then and now.

RELATED READING

Steve Hockensmith, *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, Quirk Books 2011
 Claudia Gabel, *Romeo and Juliet and Vampires*, HarperCollins, 2010
 Ben H. Winters, *Android Karenina*, Quirk Classics 2010
 Cora Harrison, *I Was Jane Austen's Best Friend*, Delacorte Books for Young Readers, 2010
 Jean Rhys, *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Penguin USA, 1998
 Penny Matthews, *A Girl Like Me* Penguin Australia, 2010
 Colleen McCullough, *The Thorn Birds*, HarperCollins, 2010
 Bryce Courtenay *Jessica*, Penguin, 2006

EAL/D SUPPORT

Scaffolding task

If EAL/D students are experiencing difficulty finding the vocabulary associated with themes for **Extra task 4**, ask them to draw from the following list of possible themes: loyalty, friendship, grief and loss, religious faith, social justice, identity, racial or gender discrimination, conflict, good versus evil, power, morality, self-esteem, betrayal, love, innocence.

Curriculum links

This module, 'The Victorian era of literature', engages directly with the following Strands and Sub-strands:

	Examples
Language	
✓ Language variation and change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding the changes that have taken place in English conventions over time
✓ Language for interaction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> examining how social equality and reform are explored in texts and how the language used reinforces the concept making an assessment about the views and values in texts
Literature	
✓ Literature and context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> understanding how classic texts reflect the society in which they were created
✓ Responding to literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> examining the use of colloquial language in texts and why the author may have chosen to use it examining the changes necessary to adapt the text to film or television
✓ Examining literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> looking at extracts and discussing how language is used to influence the reader
✓ Creating literature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> creating versions of classic texts that modernise them
Literacy	
✓ Texts in context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> reflecting on the relevance to modern readers of texts produced during this period
✓ Interacting with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> participating in pair, group and class discussions preparing and presenting reports on writers and their concerns
✓ Interpreting, analysing, evaluating	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> analysing and contesting the world views put forward in the extracts investigating American literature from the same period and comparing the dominant concerns
✓ Creating texts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> writing compare and contrast paragraphs

The Victorian era of literature

Named after the reign of the British monarch Queen Victoria (1837–1901), this era is characterised by rapid change and development in many areas of society. Advances in geographical exploration, medical and scientific discoveries, and technological and industrial inventions greatly influenced population growth and location.

The era began with great public optimism, an economic boom and a growing middle class. Industrial development gave rise to mass urbanisation but also greater oppression of the working classes. The cities could not cope with the rapid influx of workers and the poor lived in terrible conditions. The situation of the poor provoked political radicals who sought to expose a society which on the surface advocated strict morality, yet seemingly allowed the behaviour of the greedy and oppressive upper classes.

Queen Victoria promoted fundamental Protestant morality—a strong work ethic, family values and religious tradition. Many families were large and for those that could afford to work and play, leisure activities such as holidays and public entertainment were encouraged.

The public roles of men and women were vastly different. Representations of the ideal woman were widely publicised and agreed upon by a male-dominated society. Women and men conformed to public expectations that restricted personal conduct. How a person spoke, whom they associated with and how they acted in public were indicators of their 'breeding' and whether they were acceptable members of 'decent' society.

In the world of the novel, the robust political debate and the tales of 'girls gone wrong' of the eighteenth century gave way to a new form of fiction



Queen Victoria

that looked at the social and philosophical problems caused by the new economic conditions and the rise of technology. The responsibility of people with the money and the power to assist those who were suffering as a result of these changes became a preoccupation for novelists in the United Kingdom.

Charles Dickens

Charles Dickens (1812–1870) was born into a working-class family. His father was, at times, a butler, a housekeeper and a clerk. He was also sent to prison due to unpaid debts. At the age of twelve, Charles Dickens was sent to work ten to twelve hours a day in a blacking (boot polish) factory. He rose up from this beginning to live a prosperous middle-class life in London. He did this by finding a job as a clerk, then as a parliamentary reporter, and then as a successful journalist. He later gained wide public acclaim as a novelist.

Most of his books feature characters living in the city of London. Dickens was compassionate about the plight of the underprivileged people who flocked to

Text types and skills

Throughout this module, students will engage with the following text types:

- novel extracts
- photographs
- book covers.

By engaging with these text types, students will develop skills in the following areas:

- empathising
- comparing and investigating texts
- research
- understanding the role of context in interpreting texts.

VOCABULARY BUILDER

oppression harshly or cruelly dominating
The struggle against the oppression of women continues in many countries of the world.

influx arrival in large numbers
Conflict often results in an influx of refugees in neighbouring countries.

robust strong
Kathy's soup was robust in flavour.

prosperous wealthy
Australia is a prosperous country.

plight a difficult situation
I feel I should do more to relieve the plight of children living in poverty.

Empathising

MI: interpersonal

Hold a discussion about the power of literature to actually bring about change.

Ask:

- Can words change policy?
- Can words change laws?
- Can literature only reflect ideas rather than create ideas?
- Have you ever read something that made you see the world differently or challenge your ideas?
- Has a novel ever shocked you? (Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* is confronting to modern audiences who are not used to seeing racism so blatant and openly expressed.)
- What have you read that showed you a different way or a different idea?
- Reading Dickens' piece, do you think it would have shocked people into changing their minds?

VOCABULARY BUILDER

workhouse a publicly run institution where poor people could work for food and accommodation

The workhouse was overflowing with the most desperate members of society.

humility modesty

Emily accepted the trophy with humility.

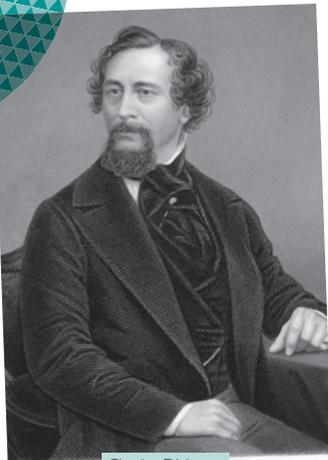
appropriate to take for one's own use
Anastasia was caught appropriating the charity's funds.

stipend a monetary allowance

Nadia's monthly stipend was not enough to cover her expenses.

render to make

Penelope was rendered speechless by the kindness of the strangers.



Charles Dickens

the cities in the hope of employment. He strongly disagreed with the idea that the minimum amount should be spent on extracting the maximum output from factory workers. The entangled plotlines of his novels brought people and places to life and stirred a public awareness about the cruelties of some aspects of Victorian life.

To the Victorians, the ideal woman was the 'angel of the house', caring for children and

tending to the domestic demands of the home. Dickens largely subscribed to this societal view; in his novels he usually depicted women unrealistically as either perfect angels or gross demons. He portrayed women as playing an important role in society, but only in the lives of men. He valued women's emotional power and their capacity to love men. In his writing, Dickens suggested that a woman's love is a personal strength and not a weakness.

One of Charles Dickens's most popular novels is *Oliver Twist*, in which a young orphan boy rises from crime and poverty to become a successful man. It was widely popular when it was released and has been popular since. *Oliver Twist* was adapted into a musical in 1968, winning five Academy Awards, including Best Picture. It has also been made into a film and a television series.

The workhouse, the system of baby farming and the general treatment of society's underprivileged aroused anger in Dickens. The novel was written at the same time as Dickens was protesting the new 'Poor Law' in his newspaper. This law decreased the amount of assistance given to the poor. Dickens felt this was inhumane.

QUESTION DID YOU KNOW...

'Baby farming' was a term used in the nineteenth century to describe the situation where young children were taken in by other families. Sadly, many of these children were often neglected, some were murdered and their bodies disposed of while the baby farmer continued to claim the money and benefits for their care.

OLIVER TWIST

By Charles Dickens

For the next eight or ten months, Oliver was the victim of a systematic course of treachery and deception. He was brought up by hand. The hungry and destitute situation of the infant orphan was duly reported by the workhouse authorities to the parish authorities. The parish authorities inquired with dignity of the workhouse authorities, whether there was no female then domiciled in 'the house' who was in a situation to impart to Oliver Twist, the consolation and nourishment of which he stood in need. The workhouse authorities replied with humility, that there was not. Upon this, the parish authorities magnanimously and humanely resolved, that Oliver should be 'farmed', or, in other words, that he should be dispatched to a branch-workhouse some three miles off, where twenty or thirty other juvenile offenders against the poor-laws, rolled about the floor all day, without the inconvenience of too much food or too much clothing, under the parental superintendence of an elderly female, who received the culprits at and for the consideration of sevenpence-halfpenny per small head per week. Sevenpence-halfpenny's worth per week is a good round diet for a child; a great deal may be got for sevenpence-halfpenny, quite enough to overload its stomach, and make it uncomfortable. The elderly female was a woman of wisdom and experience; she knew what was good for children; and she had a very accurate perception of what was good for herself. So, she appropriated the greater part of the weekly stipend to her own use, and consigned the rising parochial generation to even a shorter allowance than was originally provided for them. Thereby finding in the lowest depth a deeper still; and proving herself a very great experimental philosopher.

Everybody knows the story of another experimental philosopher who had a great theory about a horse being able to live without eating, and who demonstrated it so well, that he had got his own horse down to a straw a day, and would unquestionably have rendered him a very spirited and rampacious animal on nothing at all, if he had not died, four-and-twenty hours before he was to have had his first comfortable bait of air. Unfortunately for, the experimental philosophy of the female to whose protecting care Oliver Twist was delivered over, a similar result usually attended the operation of her system; for at the

Literature: Classic novels 203

EAL/D SUPPORT

Starter activity

Using music with EAL/D students for this topic is an engaging way to improve their concentration and memory and it will help relax students who might be feeling overwhelmed by the difficult vocabulary. Have students listen to one or more of the songs from the musical *Oliver*. Based on what students have just learnt about the Victorian era, have them explain whether they think the song lyrics accurately reflect what daily life was like at this time.

WEB DESTINATIONS

Visit the web destinations at **Pearson Reader** where students can learn more about Victorian England and the characters of Charles Dickens.



Web Destination