
Year 11

English Advanced

Module B: Critical Study of Literature

Lesson 4:

Developing Your Interpretation

1. Module B in Review

The module we are working through this term is Module B: Critical Study of Literature.

Module B is a unit based around a detailed reading and appreciation of a single literary text.

In this unit, you are learning skills that will prepare you for the rigour of Advanced and Extension One English in Year Twelve.

Below you can read the syllabus statement for Module B. Your teacher may choose to review or explain any confusing terms.

NESA, 2017. English Advanced Stage 6 Syllabus - Extract

Module B: Critical Study of Literature

In this module, students develop analytical and critical knowledge, understanding and appreciation of a literary text. Through increasingly informed personal responses to the text in its entirety, students develop understanding of the distinctive qualities of the text and notions of textual integrity.

Students study one text appropriate to their needs and interests. Central to this study is the exploration of how the author's ideas are expressed in the text through an analysis of its construction, content and language. Students develop their own interpretation of the text, basing their judgements on evidence drawn from their research and reading, enabling the development of a deeper and richer understanding of the text. In doing so, they consider notions of contexts with regard to the text's composition and reception; investigate the perspectives of others; and explore the ideas in the text, further strengthening their personal perspective on the text.

Students have opportunities to appreciate and express views about the aesthetic and imaginative aspects of a text by composing creative and critical texts of their own. Through reading, viewing or listening they analyse, evaluate and comment on the text's specific language features and form. They express increasingly complex ideas, clearly and cohesively using appropriate register, structure and modality. They draft, appraise and refine their own texts, applying the conventions of syntax, spelling and grammar appropriately.

Opportunities to engage deeply with the text as a responder and composer further develops personal and intellectual connections with this text, enabling students to express their informed personal view of its meaning and value.

Pair Work

The table below contains some important Module B concepts. Working with a classmate, use your previous English studies to complete the table below.

Module B Concept	Your explanation	Example from your English studies
“how an author expresses their ideas”		
“strong personal perspective on the text”		
“the distinctive qualities of the text”		
“deeper and richer understanding of the text”		

Based on your work above, describe Module B: Critical Study of Literature in your own words.

2. Class Debate

The central theme of this lesson is your personal interpretation of the novel. To begin articulating your ideas, we will run a class debate exercise in which you compare each other's interpretations of the ending of *Fever Dream*.

We will use the following extract as a starting point for discussing the ending. This is from the final section where Amanda describes (to David) her husband's interaction with David and his father.

Schweblin, S. 2017. *Fever Dream* – Extract

Your father brings the straw to his mouth. It's the only object that shines in the kitchen. My husband is going to say something else. But then there is a noise, it's coming from the hallway. Something is happening that my husband, from where he's sitting, can't see. Something familiar for the other man, who isn't alarmed. It's you, David. There's something different that I couldn't begin to describe, but it's you. You peer into the kitchen and stand there looking at them. My husband looks at you, his fists relax, he tries to calculate your age. He focuses on your strange gaze, which at certain moments strikes him as dim-witted; he notices your spots.

“There you have it,” says your father, pouring another mate and again not offering any to my husband. “As you can see, I would also like to have someone to ask.”

You wait quietly, attentive to my husband.

“And now he's started tying everything.”

Your father points toward the living room, where many more things are hanging from rope, or are tied together with it. Now my husband's whole attention is focused on that, though he couldn't say why. It doesn't seem like a disproportionate number of things. It seems more like, in your own way, you were trying to do something with the deplorable state of the house and everything in it. My husband looks at you again, trying to understand, but you run out through the front door, and the two men are left in the silence to listen to your steps moving away from the house.

Debate Preparation

Break up into groups of approximately four people. Discuss the following questions as a group and note down your ideas.

- What do you think is happening in the provided extract? Why is David typing rope around the house?

- What is your interpretation of the final scene of *Fever Dream*?

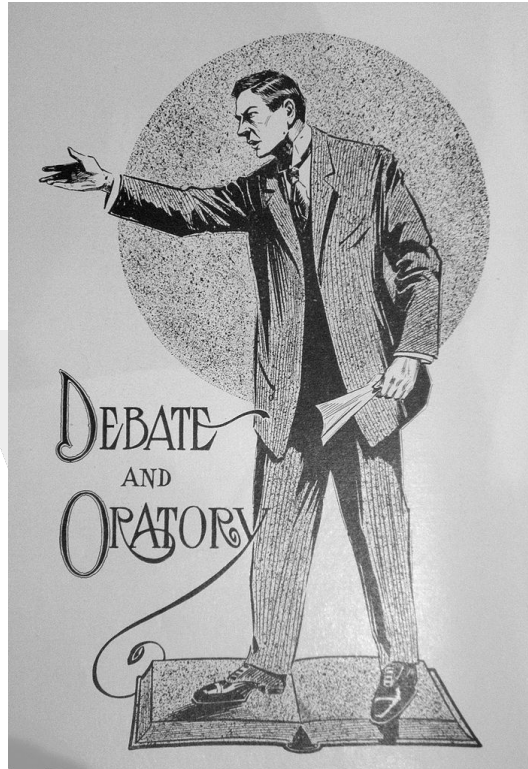
- Do you disagree with anyone in your group? What examples would you suggest to contradict your peers' interpretations?

- Whose interpretation is the most convincing in the group? Why so?

It's important to try to find 'holes' in each other's interpretations because this will stretch your critical muscles and help you to strengthen your own interpretation.

Debate!

Now let's move into a whole-class discussion.



- Share the most convincing interpretation from each group.
- What examples would you suggest to contradict your peers' interpretations?
- Who has the most convincing interpretation in the class? Note down your findings from the debate in the space below.

3. Analysing Fever Dream

Let's consider one possible way of interpreting *Fever Dream*. You will then compare your own interpretations against this provided interpretation.

Media Viewing: Fever Dream Analysis 1

For your reference, here are the quotations explored in the video:

Schweblin, S. 2017. *Fever Dream* – Selected Extracts

[Carla speaking]: “David had knelt down in the stream, his shoes were soaked. He’d put his hands in the water and was sucking on his fingers. Then I saw the dead bird. It was very close to David, just a step away...”

[David speaking]: It’s not about worms. It feels like worms, at first, in your body. But Amanda, we’ve been through all this, too. We’ve already talked about the poison, the contamination.

[Amanda speaking] She looks at the grass. She touches it with her hands, like she can’t believe her small disgrace.

What’s happening with the rescue distance?

Everything is fine.

No.

She’s frowning.

“Are you okay, Nina?” I ask her.

She smells her hands.

“It’s really gross,” she says.

It's happening.

What is, David? My God, what is happening?

The worms.

No, please.

It's a very bad thing.

Yes, the rope pulls tight, but I'm distracted.

What's on Nina?

I don't know, David, I don't know! I'm talking to Carla like an idiot. I ask her how long it will take us to walk to the stables.

No, no.

I can't do anything, David. Is this how I lose her? The rope is so taut now I feel it in my stomach. What's happening?

This is the most important thing. This is everything we need to know.

Why?

What is the feeling now, exactly now?

I'm soaked too. I'm wet, yes, I feel it now.

Is it about something else, then? Is it because I did something wrong? Was I a bad mother? Is it something I caused? The rescue distance.

The pain comes and goes.

When Nina and I were on the lawn, among the barrels. It was the rescue distance: it didn't work, I didn't see the danger. And now there is something else in my body, something that activates again or maybe it deactivates, something sharp and bright.

Let's watch the next part of the video analysis.

Media Viewing: Fever Dream Analysis 2

Below are the extracts explored in the video:

Schweblin, S. 2017. *Fever Dream* – Selected Extracts

[David speaking] I'm going to push you now. I push the ducks, I push Mr. Geser's dog, and the horses.

[Amanda speaking] Upright against the seat, you look him in the eyes, as though begging him. I see through my husband, I see those other eyes in yours [David's]. The seat belt on, legs crossed on the seat. A hand reaching slightly toward Nina's stuffed mole, covertly, the dirty fingers resting on the stuffed legs as if trying to restrain them.

[Amanda speaking] My conversation with Carla pulled the rope that ties me to my daughter even tighter, and the rescue distance is shorter again.

[Amanda speaking] Nina is sitting behind me, looking out in the silence as we drive away from your house toward Sotomayor's. She doesn't seem worried. She's wearing her seat belt, her legs crossed Indian style on the seat, as always, and she's hugging her mole.

[Amanda speaking] I see Nina's hands, for a moment. She's not here but I see them with utter clarity. Her little hands are dirty with mud.

Or they're my dirty hands when I came into the kitchen, and without letting go of the wall, I looked for Carla from the threshold.

[David speaking] At the end, I won't be here anymore.

But David...

Don't waste any more time talking to me.

[Amanda speaking] Can you intervene, David? Can you leave Nina close?

Close to whom?

Close, close to home.

I could.

Whatever it takes, please.

I could, but it won't do any good.

[Amanda speaking] He doesn't see the important thing: the rope finally slack, like a lit fuse, somewhere; the motionless scourge about to erupt.

Yes. There are seconds left, but you could still understand the important thing. I'm going to push you ahead so you can listen to my father.

Why your father?

He seems rough and simple to you, but that's because he is a man who has lost his horses.

Something falls away.

The rope.

There is no more tension. But I feel the rope, it still exists.

Yes, but there's not much time left. There will be only a few seconds of clarity. When my father speaks don't get distracted.

