

To what extent do you agree that novels use a **clash of opposites** to present **ideas**? Discuss your views with reference to a novel (or novels) you have studied.

One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest

Ken Kesey

Introduction establishes clear premise as basis for answer.

In the novel *One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest*, author Ken Kesey makes strong use of a clash of opposites to convey his views on society. As a “protest novel”, *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's nest* is essentially a criticism of society's tendency to repress individuality and natural expressions of sexuality. These ideas are expressed through contrasts of characters such as the protagonist, Randle Patrick McMurphy, and Nurse Ratched; McMurphy and other patients in the psychiatric ward where the novel is set; and different types of female characters in the novel.

Ratched's role in developing theme analysed and evaluated.

The most striking clash of opposites in the novel is that between two of the main characters, McMurphy and Nurse Ratched. It is this contrast that is the novel's main source of conflict and plot, and which embodies the essence of Kesey's purpose in writing the novel. From the reader's first introduction to the character of Nurse Ratched, it is clear that she represents a force of fear and oppression. Her main aim is to quash the individuality of the patients on her ward, so that they may conform to her ideal of a “perfect” society. This is embodied by a delusion of Chief Bromden, the narrator, who suffers from paranoid schizophrenia, of the “Combine”, which he calls “a huge organisation that aims to adjust the Outside as well as she has the Inside”, which he says is headed by Nurse Ratched. He says that “the ward is a factory for the combine. It's for fixing up mistakes made in the neighbourhood and in the schools and in the churches ...”, and that it “brings joy to the Big Nurse's heart” to see the “finished product” fit back into society. The huge negative effects of this attitude can be seen in the way she encourages the men to dwell on their “weaknesses” in group meetings, encouraging the men to interrogate, for example, Billy Bibbit about his stutter, or Dale Harding's problems with his wife, and encourages them to double-cross each other by writing on the log book. Thus she attempts to deprive the men of all self-confidence and individuality.

Fluent controlled writing which integrates quotations.

When McMurphy first arrives on the ward, she attempts to do the same, calling him “McMurray” in an attempt to belittle him. But the contrast between McMurphy and the Nurse is immediately clear; he refuses to submit to her belittling. He encourages the men to regain their sense of self and manhood, by showing his disgust at the group meetings which he likens to a “pecking party”, and encouraging group spirit through organising games of basketball and monopoly. The change in the men due to McMurphy's influence becomes clear throughout the novel, as they gradually discover a feeling of power in numbers, when they scare passers by on the fishing trip, until they are finally able to feel no fear at the Nurse's attempted suppression, and laugh in her face “then laughter mocking her old smile”. Through this contrast Kesey presents his view on the conformist values present on the Christian-dominated society of his period, 1950's – 60's America. Through the staunch individuality of McMurphy we can see how the men rediscover their own self confidence – this emphasises the importance of banding together to overcome society's repression. This is an idea Kesey strongly believed in, as he was, at the time of his writing, a member of the “Merry Pranksters”, a group who wore outrageous clothing and delighted in challenging the bounds of society's acceptance.

McMurphy's role in developing theme analysed and evaluated.

Student aware of Kesey's purpose and techniques used to achieve it.

Analyses technique used to reinforce the differences.

The contrast between McMurphy and Nurse Ratched is embodied by the imagery used to describe each of them. The Nurse is associated with machinery and devices of control – the chief describes her face as “Smooth, calculated and precision-

made”. He also refers to her machine-like control of the ward in terms of mechanical imagery, such as that of the fog machine, or the way he believes she controls time on the ward. In stark opposition to this is McMurphy’s brash, free nature – the Chief says his voice is “loud and full of hell”. McMurphy is seen to represent a natural state of being – the Chief compares him to a wild animal, a lynx or cougar. This further’s Kesey’s message that conservation in society can subdue natural impulses in people.

The negativity of this, in Kesey’s view, is also presented to us through the portrayal of different aspects of sexuality in the novel. The ward is an environment where all hints of natural expression of sexuality are subdued. This is represented by the way the Nurse tries to conceal her large breasts, and, by association, her femininity. The Chief says of this, “A mistake was made somehow in manufacturing, putting those big, womanly breasts on what would of otherwise been a perfect work, and you can see how bitter she is about it.” The whole atmosphere of warped sexuality on the ward is also clear at the very opening of the novel, when the Chief says the black boys are “out to committ sex acts in the hall”. This unnatural suppression of sexuality takes shape in the men as various insecurities, such as Harding who is ashamed of not being “man enough” for his wife – he makes this explicit by saying “there’s not a man on this ward who’s not afraid he’s losing, or has already lost, his whambam,” and likens the men to rabbits ‘ “are comical little creatures can’t even achieve masculinity in the rabbit world”. This atmosphere of sexual repression clashes strongly with the character of McMurphy. His free and unashamed expression of sexuality takes shape in the form of his “Moby Dick” boxer shorts, playing cards showing sexual positions, and constant sexual joking. Yet he is also unashamed to paint pictures or write beautifully – he does not let society dictate his persona. This is another crucial idea expressed by Kesey through this contrast – that sexuality is a healthy and natural part of humanity. This aims a criticism at the puritanism Kesey saw present in his conservative Christian society. He suggests that religious societies must struggle not to become obsessed with the idea of morality to the point that the basic ideas of compassion and humanity on which the religion is based are overlooked.

Student has comprehensive knowledge of text – explores two main ideas and a range of opposing character groupings.

Answer shows sustained insight:

- *links across text*
- *comparisons*
- *links to society of time*
- *understanding of writer’s purpose and craft*
- *evaluative comments*

This idea of the importance of sexuality is furthered by Kesey’s presentation of female characters within the novel. Women in One Flew Over The Cuckoo’s Nest are presented as either of two contrasting types – those who express their sexuality freely and help men to assert their masculinity, and those who deny men their sense of manhood. Of this latter type, Nurse Ratched is the most obvious example; but we also find that Vera Harding brings down her husband by making him feel inadequate, when she says “O Dale, you never do have enough, do you?” Billy Bibbit is a second example of this – both his mother and Nurse Ratched treat him as a child, denying him the right to manhood. These types of women are contrasted with the characters of the two prostitutes, Candy and Sandy, who express their femininity freely. Candy helps Billy Bibbit achieve “manhood” by sleeping with him – this is portrayed as a positive thing by his loss of stutter directly afterwards. Thus, through this clash of opposite types of women, Kesey suggests that the role of women in society is to be explicitly “feminine” and help men assert their masculinity. He says that women must deny their womanhood in order to fulfill roles of power and that they are likely to become tyrannical as a result. This is Kesey’s “answer” to the uprising of feminism that was occurring at the time of his writing.

Thus, through the clash of opposites in Kesey’s portrayal of characters such as Nurse Ratched, McMurphy, and other male and female characters, he presents his ideas about the importance of free expression of individuality and sexuality. Kesey emphasizes through this novel, One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest, that these things are essential in overcoming the pressures of conformity that can be present in society.

To what extent do you agree that plays are written to **teach** us about **ordinary people** and their **moral dilemmas**?

Discuss your views with reference to a non-Shakespearean play (or plays) you have studied.

The Crucible
Arthur Miller

Answer well planned and structured to develop a cohesive argument.

According to Marion Starkey (author of The Devil in Massachusetts), the Salem witch trials of 1692 are “an allegory of our times”. And Arthur Miller’s play The Crucible, with its strong and perceptive insight into the moral dilemmas of ordinary people, clearly illustrates the truth of this statement. 1692 in Salem was a trying time for all involved, with accusations of witchcraft rife, and fear in the air: it is at dark times like these that peoples principles and moral standings are stretched – sometimes to breaking point – and much can be learnt of the nature of moral dilemmas in a play such as The Crucible, set during such turmoil. Miller uses the hardship present in 1692 and in his play to teach ordinary people – from any era – about such timeless issues as whether one should conform or break away from society, the causes and implications of scapegoating, and the importance of name.

Mature thought and engagement with text evident throughout answer.

In any society, each and every individual has the constant question of whether it is better to be like everyone else, or to be different – sometimes this is a constant worry for people, while more confident, secure people may only ponder it briefly. The question of conforming (or not) is certainly not confined to important people: indeed, it is most ordinary people, such as John Proctor in The Crucible, who consider this dilemma closely, and consequently end up in the terrible struggle of an individual against society (and society’s morals). Despite the falsity of the accusations of witchcraft in The Crucible, Proctor is the only character whose principles force him to speak out against the court, exposing that the girls (at the village, who are the main accusers) are “frauds”. He uses Mary Warren’s (his servant, and a friend of the other girls) inside knowledge that the whole witchcraft saga starting with nothing more than “dancing in the forest” and “it were sport, that’s all” as proof to strengthen his claim. But unfortunately for Proctor, he is the only character brave enough to break away from the mentality adopted by the Salem community, and in speaking up he makes himself vulnerable to attack. The whole town is seized by a vicious cycle of mass hysteria, which makes them paranoid about the threat of witchcraft. Thus, Proctor’s refusal to conform prompts the Reverend Hale (sent to Salem to “root out all evil”) to ask “do you believe in witches, Mister Proctor?”, to which Proctor gives a non-committal answer, but the subsequent arrest of his wife, Elizabeth, puts a further strain on his moral strength. His desperate cry that “the little crazy children are jangling the keys to the kingdom and common vengeance writes the law” shows his disgust at the weak moral standings of the other characters, but also increases the suspicion directed at him. To this very end, Proctor refuses to conform, by choosing to die rather than confess to witchcraft as many before him have, and it is from Proctor’s strength that we can learn how vital it is to stick firmly to our morals, to retain a sense of pride and “goodness”.

Fluent, controlled writing:

- *varied syntax*
- *sophisticated language*
- *interwoven quotations*

Answer supported with extensive use of relevant details selected from across the text.

This “goodness” which Proctor “have now” at the end of the play is not present in many of the other characters however, because they do not have such strong morals as he does, and consequently, they pass the blame (by accusing others of witchcraft) on. “Them that will not confess will hang”, as dictated by Judge Danforth is a strong incentive to lie and confess to witchcraft, but it is at the next stage, where the court insists on “names! I will have names!” that Proctor encounters a moral dilemma. He is prepared to “give you my soul”, but “how may (he) teach his sons to walk like mine in the world, and (he) sold (his) friends.” He insists that he “did not see anyone

Goes beyond text to draw parallels with Miller's won situation.

with the Devil” – a sharp contrast to Mary Warren and the other girls, who readily accuse others to escape being accused themselves. Interestingly, Miller himself was asked to give names of communist supporters during the McCarthy era, 1950 – 54, in America, to which he replied “I am trying to and will protect my sense of self” and refused to give names – which he was fined for. This moral dilemma faced by Proctor serves to teach us that a person’s decision to incriminate others depends on how they view this blaming of others – scapegoating if you like – is whether they see it as disloyal, immoral, “a sin”, and “a fraud” (as Proctor does), or whether they are more concerned with saving “their life” (as Proctor is initially tempted to do).

Evaluative comments about a number of characters show insight [e.g. similarities and contrasts].

To some extent, a person’s dilemma of whether to take part in scapegoating is decided by what importance they place on reputation and identity – two very important themes in The Crucible. Abigail Williams, the “leader” of the girls, is at risk of being involved in scandal (due to an affair with Proctor), but insists “there be no blush about my name”, and strengthens this by accusing Proctor’s wife of being “an envious, gossiping liar!” Her uncle, Reverend Parris, uses the same technique to protect his own reputation against “a faction that is sworn against (him)”, by supporting the claims of the girls, showing that his conscience does not see this as immoral. By contrast, Proctor makes “a bell of (his) honour, and has rung the doom of (his) good name” by admitting his affair with Abigail – he does this to save his wife (from hanging) by proving that “it is a whore’s vengeance she (Abigail) seeks. She means to dance on my wife’s grave!” This forsaking of “good name” on Proctor’s part is a step towards his eventual realisation of the importance of his own identity, which comes at the end of the play when he retracts his confession, condemning himself to hanging. His moral dilemma is finally, blissfully, resolved when he screams “because it is my name! Because I cannot have another! I have given you my soul, leave me my name!” and “he tears the paper (signed confession) and crumples it, and he is sobbing with fury but erect.”

Strong reasoned conclusion.

It is through the agony of moral dilemmas in ordinary people, such as John Proctor in The Crucible, that plays can teach us the importance of identify and reputation, the implications of blaming others to escape blame ourselves, and the ever-present struggle of conforming or rebelling. Arthur Miller’s skill at teaching about these moral dilemmas proves, beyond doubt, that one of the purposes of a good play is indeed, to teach people about moral dilemmas, in the hope that ordinary people may learn something of Miller’s wisdom.

To what extent do you agree that novels show us that there is something to be gained from **standing up for what we believe**, no matter what it costs?

Discuss your views with reference to a novel (or novels) you have studied.

Potiki

Patricia Grace

Basis for argument established.

In Potiki, the author Patricia Grace challenges the reader to make a decision, based on the challenge to make a decision which the characters are faced with. The Tamihana family, a maori family living on their ancestral land, need to decide “what is important and what is not”. They are faced with the choice between their identity and conforming. This challenge between the options is repeatedly offered in many different ways throughout the novel but most obviously when a developer, named “Mr Dollarman” by the “papakainga” in reference to his money driven ideas of progress, attempts to buy then force land from them. However, there also becomes a conflict as to how to stand up for themselves and their identity, and if it can be enough. Without a doubt, Grace shows there is something to lose by not doing so, but she also shows that sometimes, these decisions can feel like a catch – 22.

Begins argument by focusing on a straightforward illustration.

For Roimata, the 27 year old wife of Hemi, mother of James, Tangi and Manu and adoptive mother of Toko, the decision to stand up for what she believed in one she already make at the beginning of the novel. She returned to Hemi, because she felt that she was “lost” when she was urbanised and she needed to be with Hemi, as only “he could ground” her, “being as rooted to the earth as a tree.” Here, Roimata faced no drawbacks or negative consequences for her decision to return to her maori identity.

Argument developed at a symbolic/metaphorical level.

In this novel, maori identity means in its most basic form land. Land is important because it “gives anchorage” and “cares for the people”, is the source of sustenance. Land is personified in Potiki to further emphasize its importance. The land and the sea are represented as being the anchorage that one achieves from embracing one’s identity. What is more important is how the shore represents what happens when the necessity of maori to be bicultural due to their minority is taken to far, when maori are neither maori nor pakeha, just as the shore is “neither land nor sea”. This shore is described as a “wasteland”, a “void” and a “scavenged death place.”

This emptiness in the shore which comes from not being anchored or “rooted” is reflected in the reasons why Roimata returned, to achieve a “foot-hold”. This is, in essence, what Grace didactically depicts is the consequence of not standing up for what you believe in. However, it is easy to make the decision where there are no negative consequences from avoiding being “lost” or “blowing in the wind.”

Answer well structured – builds an increasingly complex argument.

The decision starts to become more difficult as the reliance on the maori way of life increases. When Roimata returned, her husband had a job that wasn’t traditionally maori. As Hemi becomes redundant, he returns to work on the land. It is something he is proud of, as “if you care for the land, it will care for you.” However, there is not much money to be made, and the option to return to the land, a source of maori identify, leads to a “chosen poverty”. The family’s choice is “between poverty and self-destruction.” Here, the choice became harder, yet “there was comfort” in making it.

When the “Dollarman” arrives, this choice is challenged. He offers the papakainga money, which they realise is tempting and therefore “the worry of it”. The papakainga repeatedly turn him down, but the “Dollarman” is “a man who gets what he wants” “one way or another”. It is at this point that through the Dollarman’s “desperate” actions, the papakainga realise that “poverty is destructive too”. The developer funnals a type of slide so that when the heavy rains come, the entirety of the crops are washed out and unsellable. The poverty which this causes the Tamihana family is stressed over two chapters; grandma Tamihana who is older than 90 working in the kitchens, the family going without shoes and the clothes being mended so many times “they could be new”. Fortunately, the consequences of not standing for maori identity are also increased. Stan, the family’s leader, explains how if they didn’t work on the land, they would “clean toilets”. That not to be maori and to allow the developers changes to the land, an icon of maori identity, would be to become “dust blowing in the wind”, to be “gone ... lost”. The retelling of the story of Te Ope is brought up, where a papakainga did lose their land. That village, without the land to give them “a foot-hold”, found they

Quotations interwoven. Comprehensive knowledge of text.

*Writing generally
fluent and
controlled.*

“believed what others said” and found “how easy it was to fit the mold” that pakeha put them into. They were made to “feel ashamed” of their ancestry. At this point in the novel, it is clear that the stakes have risen, that as the consequences for standing up for what you believe in rise, so do the repercussion of not doing so.

*Ability to look at
argument from a
range of viewpoints
and on a range of
levels shows
insight.*

One consequence of standing up for what you believe in which Grace explores, is the division it creates within families of how best to stand up. She explores the conflict of passive and active reactions through the characters of Roimata and her daughter Tangi, as well as through the older and younger generations.

Roimata and Tangi’s reactions can be seen in the attributes they are given by personified aspects of nature. Tangi symbolises the sea which is “sharp-edged” while Roimata is more like a seagull, a “patient watcher of the skies”. Tangi’s reaction to the developers actions is “Fuck the inquiry” and to call Mr Dollarman a “stupid bastard”. Roimata prefers to wait, as “things are different”. The generation gap also reflects the different responses, the younger generation choosing to “strike back”, the older generation relying on “resilience”. This conflict between characters caused by standing up for yourself is a danger which Grace highlights. It is dangerous because as well as land, “people” are a symbol of maori identity too. This is reflected in the motif of carvings, which “Assembles everything”, people from the “past” and “future”. Roimata returned not only for the land, but for “the company” and “the need not to be alone”. Here, Grace warns that by standing up for what you believe in, you may actually lose it.

*Perceptive
comments linking
author’s purpose
and crafting.*

This is further explored at the end of the novel, when in an attempt to force the papakainga to give the land to him, Mr “Dollarman” burns the wharenuī, killing Roimata’s adopted son, Toko. Here, by standing up for what they believed in, maori identity, the papakainga lost three symbols of it; the wharenuī, which with its carvings shows land from the tree and the people it depicts, Toko, a member of the family and also identify itself. Toko embodied Maori identity, because as Patricia Grace stated in a recent interview with Jane McCrae, Toko’s stories paralleled “those of Ancient Maui”, such as their similar sea births, adoptions and capture of a big fish. This is when the question becomes, “is it enough to have a toe hold. There is comfort in remembering it, but is there enough, can there ever be enough?”

Grace leaves this for the reader to decide. Writing in an age of Maori Renaissance in New Zealand literature, she wishes to challenge the reader with the decision between “Poverty and self destruction”. However, she offers hope “conflict strengthens conflict” and challenges just make you “place your foot more firmly”.

*Mature evaluative
comments used to
conclude answer.*

Standing up for what you believe in is important, as long as the cost is not the thing you believe in. At the end of the novel, it is what standing up for what they believed in cost them which made the papakainga resolve their conflicts over how to do so. Toko’s death served as a reminder of “the need not to be alone”. “Resilience” and “strike back” combined when the older generation supported the younger generation at their court cases accrued from their actions. Grace not only warns us not to lose what we are fighting for while we fight, but that sometimes losing serves as a reminder of what we have to lose. In this way, Grace fits in her motif of carving, where “life comes from death” and “good comes from what is not good”. Grace shows that as long as you don’t lose what you’re fighting for, what it costs can be a “seedling” for the decision to stand up.

To what extent do you agree that poetry's **themes** are **universal** regardless of when and/or where it was written?

Discuss your views with reference to at least TWO poems you have studied.

London, The Chimney Sweeper, The Garden of Love, The Echoing Green
William Blake

Introduction provides an historical context and establishes focus of answer.

Starts by analysing one poem with reference to society of that time then makes links to a second poem. Finishes by using one word 'every' to widen the response.

Answer integrates ideas and details from several poems. Knowledge of texts is comprehensive. Extensive use of quotations.

Fluent writing. Sophisticated language. Varied sentence structures. Interwoven quotations.

The eighteenth century in which William Blake saw through was characterised by a series of Revolutions; the American, the French, the Industrial, and in the realm of literature, thoughts and sensibility, the Romantic Revolution. Blake's poetry reflects this period to a great extent, however his fight for the expression of a human being is one that relates regardless of time highlighting the universality of his poetry.

"London" is a suitable place to start as being the town where Blake lived almost all of his life. The poem begins with a wanderer characteristic of the Romantic period like Wordsworth, who observes this place most importantly without any preconceptions. And what he sees is a world that is "chartered" emphasized through repetition which shows the order and formality of the city but also refers to the "Magna Charter" which is ironic as this is the basis for British freedom. The next thing to notice is that even the river "Thames" is "chartered"; nature symbolising freedom and connections with innocence and childhood like the "green hills" of "The Echoing Green" is tamed by society; and serves as a symbol for the mercantile wealth of London at that time. What he sees is "faces" of "weakness" and "woe", again highlighting the condition of the people who live in this supposedly great, wealthy city at the heart of trade and empirical power. However we move from the specifics "marked" by the observer to the stressed repetition of "Every" which indicates the universality of the suffering that he saw. Not only did this affect the poor like the children in "The Chimney Sweeper" but the suppression for the individual imagination was suffered right across all people and inevitably all time.

Blake emphasises a lot of corruption involved between the church and the state in which their collusion in the repression of society ultimately results in their suffering. This is characteristic in "The Garden of Love" where the skipping anapaestic rhythm at the beginning is suddenly put to a halt by the trochaic "Thou Shalt Not" emphasising this further. In "London" it is referred to a "blackening church", the symbolic use of the colour black with connotations of evil and rot involved with this institution. This idea is taken further by the use of the angel in "The Chimney Sweeper" from "The Songs of Innocence" where Tom Dacre is assured that "if all do their duty" then everything will be fine showing a sign of the blind trust people put in religion whilst we know otherwise showing the irony in the narrator. Blake associates angels with the suppression of freedom in his poetry whereas the devil is associated with imagination and passion. Angels are characterised by their belief that right is on their side, again showing the connection with the Christian religion; although it must be noted that Blake was not against religion altogether as he was a fervent supporter of Swedenborgian teachings. The restrictions put on by the state is not far behind the church as in "London" we visualise as well as hear the "the hapless soldier's sigh"; the sibilance indicating the resignation of the soldiers as well as the evil "hiss" like sound associated with the state. What we learn next is a disturbing imagery of their "blood running down palace walls". Not only does blood symbolise the value of life, its colour represents passion and energy of the people which are sacrificed by the soldiers who fight for the materialistic gain of the state. The association between these institutions; the church and the state are imminent in Blake's poetry.

Blake's message almost reaches a climax in "London" where the "youthful harlots blasts the infants tear". He saw that even marriage and love; two key human characteristics were corrupted as it reflects the society which was based on materialistic values. Marriage was not one of pure love, but for the conveniences. It is often stated that the "fall of man" results from the introduction of sexuality, redolent of The Garden of Eden and the idea of the paradise it was meant to be. However what Blake advocated was for the "unforced pleasures" of love, the freedom to express one's own sexuality; a later Freudian Concept. However in London he notes that "Marriage hearse" is "blighted" with plagues, associating death with his idealised idea of love in his oxymoron and it is also contaminated with venereal disease. "the Harlot's curse". The very idea of procreation so important to the human existence is met with despair reflecting his view of human society.

Goes beyond the text to make links with other significant thinkers.

We go back to "London" to the "mind forged manacles. It was this century that the French philosopher Jacques Rousseau declared "men are born free and everywhere he's in chains". The use of the phrase of the "mind forged manacles" is an interesting one due to its double meaning. Not only are the manacles imposed on by society they are also put on by us; the internal restrictions we put on ourselves. This gives us hope for the human existence as ultimately we have the power to break Rousseau's chains. Blake was a careful social observer of his time. He saw the oppression of the individual in his time. However not only does this reflect the eighteenth century London he lived in but inevitably transcends all time, society place and upbringing, because we are human. Not only do we see the same suffering today in our materialistic world, but we must remember that it has brought us here so far. Blake is ultimately a social reformer for the human and that is the climax in the universality of any poetry.

Perceptive understanding evident throughout answer. .

To what extent do you agree that **personal weakness** is to blame for what happens to the **central character(s)** in novels ?

Discuss your views with reference to a novel (or novels) you have studied.

Bone People
Keri Hulme

Introduction clearly identifies two main characters and their weaknesses.

In the novel The Bone People by Keri Hulme two of the main characters, Joe and Kerewin are greatly affected by their personal weaknesses. I believe that a large extent of what happens to these characters is brought on by personal weakness. Kerewin is too weak to make up with her family and too weak to report Simon's abuse. Joe is too weak to stop abusing Simon. All these weaknesses lead to these characters facing some very trying times.

Structured paragraph:

- *describes and analyses K's weakness*
- *makes judgements about effect of this weakness*

Kerewin has been isolated from her family for many years. They had a huge fight one night in which Kerewin says she "wounded everyone with my words ..." Since that time she has had no contact with them. Kerewin has become a recluse. She built herself a tower which she thought was going to be her wonderful retreat, a place where she could escape the outside world and the pain it brings with it. However her tower quickly turned into her prison. She had isolated herself so well she could not get out. She says "I am encompassed by a wall hard and high and stone with only my brainy nails to tear it down. And I cannot do it." Kerewin became trapped in the place she designed to be her heaven. I believe to a large extent that Kerewin's isolation and subsequent anguish at being unable to escape it came about because of personal weakness. She could not and would not swallow her pride and apologise to her family. Instead choosing to remove herself from the world as she says "To care for someone is to invite disaster". Because she had one bad experience with her family she is too weak to pull herself out of it and get on with life. Instead she wallows in her pain and self-pity and becomes trapped and isolated from the people who care about her. Her personal weakness of not being able to put the past behind her and move forward means that Kerewin becomes isolated alone and miserable.

Analyses a second weakness of K's and its effect on Joe and Simon. Shows awareness of writer's purpose.

Another weakness Kerewin has is selfishness. When Kerewin meets Simon and Joe they persist at trying to be her friend. Although she will not willingly admit it to herself Kerewin enjoys their company and having people around again. They are the first friends she has had in a very long time and although she is cautious about letting them get too close she is pleased to have them in her life. However when Kerewin bathes Simon and sees the scars all over his body from Joe's abuse her reaction is surprising. She is outraged of course and disgusted at Joe however she takes it no further. She quietly lets Joe know that she knows about the abuse and promises to monitor it and help him. Kerewin decides not to inform the authority's but to stay out of it. Her reasoning for this is that she doesn't want to lose her friends. She fears if she reports the abuse Simon will be taken away and Joe will not want anything to do with her. Her decision is purely selfish. She did not consider Simon and the anguish he was going through she simply did not want to lose her friends. I view this personal weakness as a huge contributor to Simon's final brutal beating. The horrendous beating would never have occurred had Kerewin stepped in and involved the authorities. Joe may not have ended up in prison and Simon certainly would not have been placed in hospital. Due to Kerewin's selfishness and personal weakness this hideous crime was allowed to be committed. Kerewin's refusal to take action in the situation is a statement by the author of society's reluctance to get involved with other people's business and how by standing back and watching things can get so much worse.

Focus of answer shifts to second character.

Answer integrates a range of supporting evidence drawn from across the text.

Convincing response, but lacking insight required for excellence.

Joe's personal weakness is his inability to stop the abuse of Simon. He has never been able to accept Simon as his son as he is too different to Joe and he has been unable to stamp his likeness on him. Because of this he beats Simon. Joe is unable to accept difference and the fact Simon is the only son he has. He cannot get over the death of his son and wife and see Simon as a "...half formed relic of her presence. And he no longer really wants it". Joe takes out his frustration on Simon. It eats Joe up that he has been unable to fulfill his wife's final wish of "... mind our child", "our child" meaning Simon. When he is sober Joe is full of remorse for the beatings. He tells himself it will not happen again and is ashamed of the pain he inflicts on Simon. Yet the next time he gets drunk it happens again. Joe says of Simon "I loved him too hard, hated him too much". This clearly illustrates the two-minds Joe has of Simon, the sober one of love and the drunk one of hate. I see Joe's personal weakness as being his inability to break the cycle of abuse. I think this has a huge part to play in what happens to him as it eventually loses him his child. Kerewin lands him in jail and he loses the respect of people around him. Joe is unable to stop hurting the one person dearest to him and because of this his downfall occurs.

In conclusion I believe personal weakness has a huge part to play in what happens to the central characters. As illustrated in The Bone People the characters of Kerewin and Joe both have personal weaknesses which lead them to be unhappy, lost people. In order for them to become fulfilled and happy people they need to overcome these weaknesses.

Next Steps

The student could

- consider what other factors contributed to the characters' fortunes. Were the weaknesses discussed the main causes?
- consider whether the fault for the personal weaknesses lie with the characters themselves or with others/society.

To what extent do you agree that novels use a **clash of opposites** to present **ideas**?
Discuss your views with reference to a novel (or novels) you have studied.

The Great Gatsby
F. Scott Fitzgerald

Identifies a number of opposites and two key ideas.

In The Great Gatsby, by F Scott Fitzgerald, the author uses a clash of opposites to present his ideas and major themes. One of the contrasts presented is that of the setting of the Novel. Prosperous East and West Egg in New York are juxtaposed with the desolate wasteland of the Valley of Ashes. The characters too are contrasted. The wealthy with the poor, and the good next to the bad. Lastly differing events, both positive and negative are used to show a clash of opposites. These clashes in turn help to demonstrate Fitzgerald's main ideas, the superficiality of the "Roaring twenties" and the failure of the American Dream.

Structured answer Paragraphs have:

- *topic sentences*
- *description of opposites*
- *direct references to text*
- *clear links to ideas*

Firstly, the numerous settings of the Great Gatsby provide obvious contrasts. The wealthy, extravagant and prosperous setting of East and West Egg in New York is followed directly in the book with a description of the Valley of Ashes, where Wilson and Myrtle live. New York is described as beautiful, "The fashionable palaces of East Egg glittered across the water "while the valley is seen as an arid wasteland, A fantastic farm where ashes grow in grotesque mounds." This dramatic contrast helps present to us the importance placed on materialism and superficial aesthetics, as well as the importance placed on achieving the American Dream and living well. The character of Wilson symbolises one who has not achieved The Dream, which leads to his eventual suicide. The very fact that the established aristocracy of East Egg and the self made rich of the West Egg are also contrasted reinforces the importance of class and hierarchy to 1920's society.

Fluent writing. Sophisticated language. Varied sentence structures. Integrates supporting evidence.

The clash of characters, be it rich or poor, kind of heart or cruel, also shows Fitzgerald's ideas on the kind of people a society focused on superficiality can create. The wealthy socialites of New York are often compared with poor people like Wilson. The wealthy come across as vain and vacuous and are only interested in the pursuit of money and possessions. Daisy and Jordan are often described having conversations "as cool as their white dresses and their empty eyes in the absence of all desire" where as Wilson is portrayed as "pitiful small figure struggling to make something of his life." When Nick sees him for the first time he describes his grey face as blending into his surroundings, certainly not glamorous like the wealthy in New York. This clearly helps to show us the failure of the American Dream as those who have supposedly "achieved" it are still just as unhappy as those struggling to. Within the wealthy there are also contrasts of character. Gatsby is essentially a figure good and pure of heart, and possesses "a certain romantic readiness and undying gift for hope" whereas Tom is arrogant, cruel and selfish. He even describes Wilson as "being so dumb he doesn't know he's alive". This particular clash of opposites shows us the effect that the pursuit of wealth and power can have on people.

Evidence selected provides convincing support for the ideas.

Lastly events in the story unfold as being either positive or negative, such as the decadent extravagant parties thrown by Gatsby next to the tragedy of Gatsby's murder and Wilson's suicide. This clash of opposites helps us to understand that the carefree life that the wealthy lead and society's lack of morality eventually has a negative impact on themselves and others. Daisy and Tom are described as people who "smashed up things and creatures and then retreated into their vast carelessness". Myrtle's murder is a result of Daisy's carelessness and lack of morals while Gatsby's murder is a result of one man having been utterly driven to madness because he

Perception evident at times ['This clash of opposites ...'] but not sufficiently sustained for excellence.

could not achieve the dream and also by Tom's immorality in his affair with Myrtle Wilson's wife.

Fitzgerald presents many examples of clashes of opposites clearly which greatly contributes to the audiences' understanding of the novels main themes, superficiality, immorality, decadence and therefore the failure of "achieving" the American Dream. Juxtaposition of different setting is probably the best example of the importance of materialism and "success" while character comparison show the affect the "Dream" has on people. Lastly, including exciting, decadent and happy events such as Gatsby's parties, alongside tragedies help explain the failure of the Dream as people interpret it the wrong way and as a result become careless and selfish.

Next Steps

The student could

- elaborate in the body of the answer on some of the evaluative comments hinted at in the conclusion. E.g. "Juxtaposition of different setting is probably the best example of..."
- look again at the first paragraph in the body. How well is this paragraph structured to develop its key points?
- consider whether there are other features linked with the use of opposites that the author uses to present his ideas

To what extent do you agree that short stories present **reflections about and insights into real life?**

Discuss your views with reference to at least TWO short stories you have studied.

Bliss and Miss Brill
Katherine Mansfield

Introduction fails to establish a clear overview of argument.

Katherine Mansfield cleverly weaves reflections about the insides into real life characters in both her short stories “Bliss” and “Miss Brill”. She does this by taking “a slice of life” and capturing the characters painful realisations on life.

Cyclic paragraph structure –ending connects back to topic sentence.

In “BLISS” Mansfield’s main focus in reflecting on real life is on the constraints of society. Through criticism of the main character, Bertha’s society we can clearly recognise Mansfield’s reflection on real life. Bertha Young is naive, passive and largely affected by the constraints of her own 20th century society. Bertha is desperate to be a part of her baby daughter’s life yet society expects her (a person of high social standing) to leave her child in the full time care of a nanny. This became obvious when she begs the nanny to let her feed her own baby. Also when Bertha and her partner Harry have a dinner party she invites their friend who spots their child’s pram in the hallway, he quotes “This is a sad sad fall ... when the preamulator is in the hall”. This proves it is unacceptable for the baby to be seen or even its equipment, and Harry (the father) says “don’t ask about my daughter I have no interest in her until she finds a love”. This is Mansfield criticising the constraints of society. Bertha really wants to be a mother but can’t because it would be unacceptable to her society and Mansfield is making fun at the people who foolishly acted in that way.

Points made convincingly linked to Mansfield’s purpose.

Another obvious reflection into real life, of Mansfield’s is sex and how it dominates aspects of life. Again Mansfield is criticising the society Bertha lived in. Bertha and Harry have a daughter, however in the short story Mansfield weaves in “..for the first time in Bertha’s life she desired her husband”. This tells us Bertha was sexually intimate with her husband because it is expected from her and not by choice. Also Harry is involved in an affair with Bertha’s friend Pearl Fulton. “...There was a grey cat dragging its belly and a black cat in its shadow ... the sight of them gave Bertha a curious shiver.” The grey cat represents Pearl who is now pregnant to Harry – the black cat. This proves that sex has dominated their lives and this is also Mansfield criticising again the lack of real relationships due to society not letting people be true to themselves. I felt empathy for Bertha because she was just trying to be accepted. Because she is naive, Harry has walked all over her. I didn’t like how Bertha couldn’t be herself due to society.

Response makes links within and between texts.

Similarly in “Miss Brill” Mansfield is again reflecting on society of real life. Miss Brill is in the park on a Sunday. Through strong imagery Mansfield made it clear to me the contrast of elder people on the benches, of the park (on the outside) and young mothers and children on the inside of the park. This is a reference to society. Elder people are seen as unaccepted and are on the “outside” of society while younger people take over in the middle. Miss Brill being an elderly woman is feeling the constraints of society, because she is being rejected. The old people are described as “still as statues”. “.. silent, odd, nearly all old”. This is in contrast with the young people in the middle “a high stepping young mother .. like a hen rushed in”. Again Mansfield is criticising and reflecting on real life particularly the constraints of society and the treatment of elders. Also Mansfield made me feel empathy, like I did for Bertha, because of their rejection due to society. Mansfield really expressed real life situations which some people might not like to accept.

Miss Brill was truly faced with the rejection of society when two young people enter the park, they were in love and Miss Brill admired them. The boy said “What is that old thing doing here, who wants her any way?” Then the girl replied “Its her fu-fur that’s so funny”. The young couple represent the wider society and younger peoples rejection of elders. Miss Brill was deeply hurt and largely affected by the constraints of her society for not being accepted. This made her extremely lonely and sad.

Mansfields reflections into real life show her views on the unfairness of life and the constraints of society. In “Bliss” and “Miss Brill” Mansfield captures their painful realisation of rejection to show us her views and opinion on society constraints. For both of the characters in “Bliss” and “Miss Brill” I felt their pain and feelings of restriction. Indeed short stories present reflections about and insights into real life.

Next Steps

The student could

- make comparisons with his/her own real life. Where are similar constraints evident?
- look at other introductory paragraphs before rewriting their own.
- look at the structure of the first body paragraph and use it as a model for tightening the structure of some of the others

To what extent do you agree that the **stylistic features** of poetry shape the reader's **understanding** of its **ideas**?

Discuss your views with reference to at least TWO poems you have studied.

Let Time be Still, The Fiery Shirt, The Surfman's Story, The Ballad of O'Gradys Dream, High Country Weather
James K Baxter

Introduction could be improved to give a clearer link to the question.

The main stylistic feature of Lyrical Poetry is in essence the thoughts and feelings of the poet so to understand the poems we must understand the Man.

This man James K Baxter, was on a mythological journey with himself as Odysseus trying to find his way home. Baxter's home was "Eden" after the fall of grace by man, and Baxter spent his whole life trying to discover the key to unlock the gates of his perfect world, his happiness, his Eden. His poetry is filled with the theme of disillusionment as each attempt to find the "key" fails. There are 3 stages of Baxter, the Wild Boy of his youth where he thought the key to happiness was through women. The straight Baxter trying to cope with marriage, children and bureaucracy where he thought his key would be in alcohol and religion. And the Bare foot Prophet where he finally found his happiness, as a Maori advocate, promoting the way of life of Jesus.

Some points not always convincing [as here] but sufficient points convincingly developed and supported across the answer.

Baxter's stylistic features of his poetry was mainly the strong imagery he could create, this is where he often used the New Zealand landscape to symbolise his themes and his metaphors where he often gave a quality of one thing to another, to create more imagery. These features allowed the reader to better understand Baxter's underlying themes through his life.

The poem "Let Time Be Still" is a love poem written in his early days where he is having a sexual encounter with a woman and he alludes to the fact that he never wants it to end. Throughout his poetry, as in this one, there is always a reference to religion or God:

"Let time be still
Who takes all things
Face, feature, memory
Under his blinding wings"

Baxter wants to hold again "the green larch" of her body. This metaphor allows the reader to see their encounter as a uniting of the two at a young age, the newness of it all is overwhelming, yet the stylistic feature of poetry allows for the poet to leave a hint of his own cynicism at the end. Without impacting on the poem as a whole, it does create a hint of what is to come.

"Your mouth was the sun
In that time lost season
Of perpetual summer"

Not long after this poem was written Baxter once said to a friend "when a woman I loved youthfully and ineptly with my head, heart and prick the poems the real poems grew like a bunch of grapes where the hole in my gut had been severed". This disillusionment of women underlies his poem The Fiery Shirt written in 1967. The stylistic feature of poetry allows Baxter to create a completely opposing image to "Let Time Be Still" in just a few words. Now he lays down, "Without speaking, A writhing of Worms Under the sack dress".

Answer uses details from a range of texts and responds to their similarities and differences.

Now the act of physical encounters with a woman is purely a sexual release, there is no hint of adoration and romanticism like in "Let Time Be Still". Baxter uses the stylistic feature of most poems to create imagery, and the title of this poem "The Fiery Shirt" is a symbol for his lust for women, which he so greatly hates. The poem then goes on to say "I am tired of what is called life" and describes marriage as "A torture room where kisses scald and words crush". The beauty of poetry allows Baxters description of marriage to create images with only a few words which impact greatly on the reader. Baxter again alludes to the landscape "In the Garden by the River" but the poem is jolted out of any romanticism by the ironic and despondant description of his wife "And the moon's great ruined face gazes up at me". According to pagan customs the moon has 3 phases and Baxter is describing his wife as in the third face as old, crusted and crooning. The use of imagery is overwhelming and appeals to all of our senses which is the beauty and feature of poetry. It allows us to see Baxter's internal conflict that he faces with women.

The Surfman's Story is similar to the Fiery Shirt where this time Baxter creates the image of death and betrayal. A woman and man have decided to

"drown together; patient of loves slow
Guttering to death".

And they go into the sea ready to drown. Hence the disillusionment Baxter creates is overwhelming. We see two people slowly destroying each other under the coat of respectability.

"The passion drew them till it seemed
The Blind Sea Smiled"

Baxter creates the image of the sea being a silent witness, an admiring audience to the death of the two lovers. Then Baxters disillusionment hits home, the woman is rescued and the man dies. Within a year her and her rescuer were married "she cried no more".

Critical response develops links between features of Baxter's poems and stages in his life.

Baxter's lack of comment here creates a strong image of what he feels about the treachery of women. The stylistic feature of poetry allows Baxter to leave the poem open-ended to the readers own interpretation which therefore makes the reader understand better what Baxter is trying to portray.

The Ballad of O'Grady's Dream follows an old drunken stupor, who comes to "A blind cliff that got no sun", again Baxter's use of imagery creates the image that the cliff is a silent witness to mans folly. Poems also allow for many themes to run through just one or two lines "I said the Hail Mary,

And threaded the needles eye."

Baxter here referring once again to religion but he turns it into an ironic twist where 'God' is not through the needles eye, rather "The tramways Band

And a crowd of people walking,
with flagons in their hands."

Baxter finally found happiness as "Hemi" the barefoot prophet leading the flock at Jerusalem (a commune off the Wanganui River). Here his poetry is much more relaxed. "The tribe need a father who is afraid only of ceasing to love them well."

Baxters long journey to find the key to his eden is reflected in his poetry as we see the stylistic features of poetry of imagery and metaphors being used to help the reader understand his plight. And perhaps this most complex man can be summed up in his poem High Country Weather written in 1945 when he is working on a ranch in Central Otago.

"Alone we are born
And die alone
Yet see the red-gold cirrus
Over snow mountain shine

Upon the upland road
Ride easy stranger
Surrender to the Sky
Your heart of anger”

Baxter died alone on the 22nd of October 1972. His poem High Country Weather shows strong imagery of himself trying to find the key to Eden, the fire in his heart being taken out on that mighty nothingness, the Southern Alps. The stylistic features of Poems is directly related to the poets themselves and Baxter’s use of imagery and metaphors was to a large extent, the reason why he is one of New Zealand’s greatest poets.

Next Steps

The student could

- revisit the first two paragraphs. Are they appropriate in their present state to open this topic?
- revisit the use of the phrase the ‘stylistic feature of poetry.’ What does it mean? Be more specific. Reread the answer for other vague/generalized terms.
- look at the use of quotations. The connection between the point made and the quotation is not always clear.

To what extent do you agree that novel use a **clash of opposites** to present **ideas**?
Discuss your views with reference to a novel (or novels) you have studied.

The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time
Mark Hadden

Structured answer:

- *introduction identifies ideas and opposites*
- *body focuses on two examples of opposites*
- *conclusion sums up points made*

Awareness of writer's purpose in selection of narrator.

Differences between two characters discussed and supported with details. Some evaluative comments e.g "Although to an extent..." Paragraph concludes by refocusing on ideas.

Response shifts to focus on bigger picture – Christopher and society.

Answer not convincingly developed – too many generalised comments.

In the novel "The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time", Mark Haddon has effectively portrayed and explored societies weakness and intolerance toward the emotional disabled or those who are merely different in some way. Through the characters of Christopher a 15 year old boy with Aspergers Syndrome and characters like his father and everyday people we come to realise how much an effect being "different" is for people like Christopher in a society which is so unaccommodating.

The way in which Mark Haddon has written the book from Christopher's point of view, immediately places the reader in his situation forcing them to experience every day life from his perspective. Christopher finds it hard to get by in everyday life, he doesn't like talking to people he doesn't know, "stranger danger", being touched, "then I hit him" or even going past his street, "the thought of going some where on my own was frightening". We begin to feel sympathy for him as we begin to realise how daunting everyday life must be. This idea is heightened in the narrative style in which this book has been written we realise that he can only communicate with others through simple sentences and therefore does not understand what others are say when he begins to speak using metaphors or puns, "I think it should be called a lie because people don't have skeletons in their closet." Everyday colloquial language only confuses Christopher and separates him even more from the rest of society. In contrast to his character Christopher's father represents the rest of society who can communicate in everyday conversation, behave acceptably and ultimately fit into societies setting. Although his father has amazing amount of patients and understanding towards Christopher's disability he spread his fingers wide and we made fingers and thumbs touch ... this means he loves me." He struggles to be the stronger more mature "normal" man which he is. For his father the constant strain of having to follow a strict routine and explain things with such simplicity creates a tension and void between them. Although to an extent these characters understand one another their differences highlights the separation created between people who are different in society and the rest of us. We do not know what challenges characters like Christopher find in everyday life but through these opposite characters Mark Haddon gives an insight to their struggles and societies intolerance toward those like Christopher.

For characters like Christopher who are "different" simply because they do not acquire to societies expectations become social outcasts and live their lives feeling alienated by society. It is assumed that such figures as a police officer are caring and trustworthy although in Christopher's case are once again just an opposite figure who does not understand. "I swear if you try any of that monkey business again you little shit I swear I will seriously lose my rag," This kind of a comment from a police officer who got too close to Christopher and touched him reflects societies intolerance to the emotionally disabled. Through such character and other people in society who come across Christopher it is revealed that we judge people in the first few minutes we meet them. In Christopher's case they misunderstand his manner and way of communicating through simple sentence and jump to conclusions, "Christ alive, are you for real." The relationship between such figures emphasises how society reacts this way due to fear of the unknown which is the basis of half of Christopher's social weaknesses in the first place. People become defensive instead of taking a minute to try and understand things from Christopher's point of view.

Goes beyond the text to link ideas to our society and makes some judgements.

We may not realise it but society has a set values which they hold to be true. They accept those who can make everyday conversation, behave in a sivilised manner and conform to everything that is supposed to make us “normal”. Although because of these characters, people like Christopher are alienated by society because they do not get these set of values. Perhaps if Christopher knew how to live up to these expectations he would but since he can not it becomes a weakness of societies that such characters are [*indecipherable word*] at.

In conclusion Mark Haddon has established a set of opposites which combine to shed light on and reflect the weaknesses within society the way in which characters like Christopher feel alienitated as a result. Although he does differ from the everyday person, he is still a person and like everybody else he deserves to be treated like one, not a social outcast.

Next Steps

The student could

- proof read the answer, as technical errors interfere with the clarity of the ideas at times.
- revisit the third paragraph and provide more specific details to support points made.
- link the part played by the ‘clash of opposites’ to the reader’s understanding of the ideas referred to in the fourth paragraph

To what extent do you agree that **personal weakness** is to blame for what happens to the **central character[s]** in novels?

Discuss your views with reference to a novel (or novels) you have studied.

The Handmaid's Tale

Margaret Atwood

Introduction fails to establish a strong basis for a critical response.

In “The Handmaid’s Tale”, by Margaret Atwood, we see the personal weakness of the main character lead to bad circumstances. This becomes clear in a comparison with a minor character. We also see this personal weakness somewhat transferred to the greater populace in reference to the overall society. We also see as the character develops how weak initially she is.

Contrast between two characters used to make point about central character’s weakness.

Offred’s (the protagonist) weakness is especially highlighted as we learn about her friend Moira’s strength. Offred meets Moira at the red centre (a re-education centre). Offred knew Moira before Gilead (a strongly right-wing Christian society), Moira is a strong feminist and lesbian, an opposite to Gilead’s idea of a woman. Instead of accepting her fate and mourning her lost freedom, Moira fights back. Using her strength and cunning she manages to escape the centre and almost Gilead as well. This lets the reader realise that, while difficult, it is not impossible to escape. This makes us view Offred as weak, and more a prisoner of her own fear, than any confines Gilead places on her. Thus it becomes more apparent that Offred has largely her own weakness to blame for her situation.

Changes in character used to highlight effects of personal weakness.

As the novel progresses we see Offred take her fate more and more into her own hands. Essentially Offred provides a comparison to herself as time passes. Where initially Offred sticks rigidly to her set schedule and rules, she begins to leave that behind after she ignores one rule. She also becomes empowered when others let her see them break the rules, giving her something to blackmail them with. By the end of the book Offred has become involved in an underground movement, regularly speaks out to have sex (not with her assigned male), and plays scrabble and reads books (females aren’t allowed to read). In fact there’s not many rules she hasn’t broken. Since she’s done all this without consequence the reader greatly questions her initial discipline and fear. This makes it apparent that such actions could’ve taken place earlier if not for her own weakness.

Points are supported with reference to the text but more specific details needed for merit.

We see such personal weakness on a greater scale as Offred recounts the beginning of Gilead. We find out that Gilead was the United States of America. Offred laments the privileges, working and having money, that were initially stripped from women, but in hindsight she realises that not just her but everyone in the same situation should have protested. She talks about the use of lethal force on those who did but knows that if there were enough people they could do it. These sentiments strongly reflect the theme of social responsibility in the novel. Which Atwood worried about at the time with the Reagan-Christian-right-wing government in power when she wrote. Offred understands that while many failed she can only address her on personal weakness on this issue.

Response is not convincingly developed. Some general/vague references to ‘situation,’ ‘circumstance’.

Offred’s personal weakness is shown in many ways in “The Handmaid’s Tale”. We see her weakness in comparison to another character. It is also shown as she develops over time and is also reflected in Gilead society as a whole. It is clear in this book that Offred’s weakness is to blame for her circumstance.

Next Steps

The student could

- establish a clearer basis for the response which focuses on the key words in the question

To what extent do you agree that novels use a **clash of opposites** to present **ideas**?
Discuss your views with reference to a novel (or novels) you have studied.

Bloom

Kelly Anna Morey

Bloom by Kelly Anna Morey uses a clash of opposites to a great extent to present the important idea of the nature of forgetting to us. It is through clashes in symbolism, character and two major themes in Bloom that we as a reader are introduced to the ideas surrounding memory and forgetting.

Response makes a number of assertions throughout but these are not convincingly analysed and linked to evidence.

First of all, it is through a clash of opposites in two symbols used throughout Bloom that we are presented with ideas about the nature of forgetting. Drugs are used throughout the novel as “a means of escape” for the characters, whether it is Algebra trying to forget the terrors of her past of Connie escaping her job by using drugs. Paradoxically, the women use drugs to escape, yet addiction ensures that it will be difficult for them to achieve. Addiction to drugs is used as a symbol for the Spry women’s “taste and habit for forgetting”. Opposing this symbol, we have symbolism involving light and fire. Connie is nicknamed “Ahi ka roa” by a local Maori family and says this is because she “burns hard and true”. Light and fire symbolise knowledge and memory, and throughout Bloom we see Connie beginning to remember and helping the women in her family who have a talent for forgetting to remember as well. We therefore have two symbols in stark contrast to each other – one symbolising forgetting and the other memory – yet this clash of opposing symbols serves to further the presentation of the nature of forgetting. It shows how simple it is to forget and let go, but it is in our very nature to remember one day.

Quotations and reference to specific incidents show that student has engaged with the text.

Furthermore, we have opposing characters who continue to illustrate the nature of forgetting. Rose, Connie’s mother, has difficulty remembering and is described as “a bit vague”. It is only in her garden that she remembers everything. On the other hand, we have Connie and Algebra who are trying to forget. Yet, particularly in Connie’s instance, they are dogged by memories. Connie is followed around by boxes of books wherever she goes. She says that, “I need to escape them but it had proved futile”. These books, we are shown, follow her like guilt for the man she thought she killed at the age of thirteen. This guilt and the memories that follow her are unforgettable, as much as she might try to forget them. It is through these contrasts of characters, one striving to remember, the other to forget, that we understand why people forget and the importance of memory and forgetting to every person.

Answer develops an appropriate critical response which is structured and uses formal language.

Finally, to present the major idea of the nature of forgetting, Morey presents us with two understated themes within Bloom, those of the ties that bind us and breaking free of bonds. The ties that bind us is shown most clearly through the relationships between the Spry women and the lengths they will go to for each other. This is seen when Connie asks Rose, “tell me what you remember”. Rose replies, “I’ll try”, and it is in these two words that we see what great lengths this family will go to for each other. Rose, who has difficulty remembering tries her hardest to remember merely because her daughter asks. The bonds between these women are strong, and this is especially shown through memory and the great lengths they will go through to achieve it for their loved ones. Conversely, the theme of breaking free of bonds is also expressed throughout Bloom. Connie escapes the “safety net of forgetting”, writes her own ending to the story of Alistair, the man she thinks she killed, which sees him going to London in a taxi, and contacts someone new. Connie is taking control of her own life and, in doing so, she breaks free of the bonds that have constricted her for years. The contrasting ideas present the nature of forgetting to a

great extent. We discover what people choose to forget through the contrasting themes, and consequently, for whom they will choose to remember.

Bloom, by Kelly Ana Morey truly captures the idea of the nature of memory in this jigsaw of a novel. It is through opposing symbolism, characters and themes that we come to understand memory and forgetting, and thus it is to a great extent that Morey uses a clash of opposites successfully to present ideas.

Next Steps

The student could

- explain the idea more clearly. What is meant by the idea of the ‘nature of forgetting/memory’?
- think more carefully about the points included. The answer focuses on opposing symbols, characters and themes. Are they too diverse? Too many? Was it wise for this student to look at how opposing themes present ideas?

To what extent do you agree that short stories present **reflections about and insights into real life?**

Discuss your views with reference to at least TWO short stories you have studied.

The Voyage and Daughters of the Late Colonel
Katherine Mansfield

In the selected short stories both by Katherine Mansfield, we as readers are given reflections and insights into real life. This throughout the text goes to a great extent as these ideas are given through effective imagery, structure, and view point. We learn to appreciate Mansfield's acceptance of her own life and see however the influence of her degrading health while writing these texts.

Paragraph focuses on idea of need 'to have a personality' but fails to link this to 'real life.'

The "sisters", Josephine and Constance in The Daughters of the Late Colonel reflect such real life in the way that they have been brought up. Having grown into middle-aged women they have rarely experienced "freedom" due to their demanding and over-powering father (the "Colonel"). They therefore were rendered without a personality. We are shown this link to a greater extent through structure enforcing their "indecisiveness" as without a personality they struggle to make definite decisions. The structure which is used throughout this text is not in chronological order - we never experience a time frame here. More so they never seem to get anything done, such as putting off events like "cleaning father's bedroom", "deciding to keep Kate (their household servant)", or even "fried or boiled fish". This repeated absence of love again enforces their personality defect, but furthermore with respect to their upbringings an author's reflection of life. Mansfield therefore shows to a great extent the need to have a personality as without the "sisters" become "passengers" in their very own life, where neither of them were willing or able to steer the course of events that shape and develop their life.

Answer shows knowledge of texts but fails to develop a coherent response:

- *Material insufficiently related to the question*
- *Problems with expression*

Whereas *The Voyage* deals with Fenella the young girl also going through a particular moment in her life – the death of her mother. While she is young and does not want to us such flaws in personality, it would be unfair to judge her like the sisters as a "passenger" in her own life. However this is the case as she needs the direction and support from her remaining family members, and therefore must hope that they steer her in the "right" direction. By Fenella as a character implication we again are subject to insights into real life as Mansfield sees it. Through her viewpoint (child's view, inexperienced, innocent) we find her struggle with life again unknowingly being a "passenger" of life. Again through such a technique that pervades through *The Voyage* (as it is narrated entirely through Fenella's first person perspective) this reflection of real life is effectively presented and therefore "challenges" the reader to think of their own situation. (I am pleased that I have control of my life, but at some time keep within bounds such as maintaining health and well-being).

Comparing the two texts both use effective visual imagery that again carries perceptions of life. Fenella often animates objects and others such as the boy being "dragged" along by his parents like "a baby fly who had just fallen into the cream". Also the over-powering images of light and dark, the "old wharf" being "carved out of solid darkness", while when day time seeing the "twinkle" in her grandfather's eyes and to herself assurance that her life is on track. While in the other text images of contrasting colour such as the "whiteness" of "father's" bedroom comparing through Josephine's view point as "dreamlike". Obviously in both such a contrast is set up imploring and connotating light with hope, and its absence (darkness) with death and fear (that alter particular with Fenella's child's view). This unifies the idea

of life and death, as they appear close in the texts (death of Fenella's mother, alternating state of dead/alive Colonel). With Katherine Mansfield herself dying at the time of writing, she portrays another insight into real life being making the most of one's life.

In conclusion selected Mansfield's short stories reflect real life throughout. We learn to appreciate, even analyse, the life of others through effective character implications. Though the similarities with use of imagery, we again are subject to the recurring idea of the need to have a personality. This idea is deepened by coupling with character view points and structure, as it is brought into a personal level. Answering the question in a nut shell; the extent of life lessons in KM short stories are effective and presented in a useful way, also as for material to analyse at NCEA level 3.

Next Steps

The student could

- clearly identify which aspects of 'real life' the stories give us an insight into and use these as the framework for the answer.
- proofread to make sure that ideas are clearly expressed.