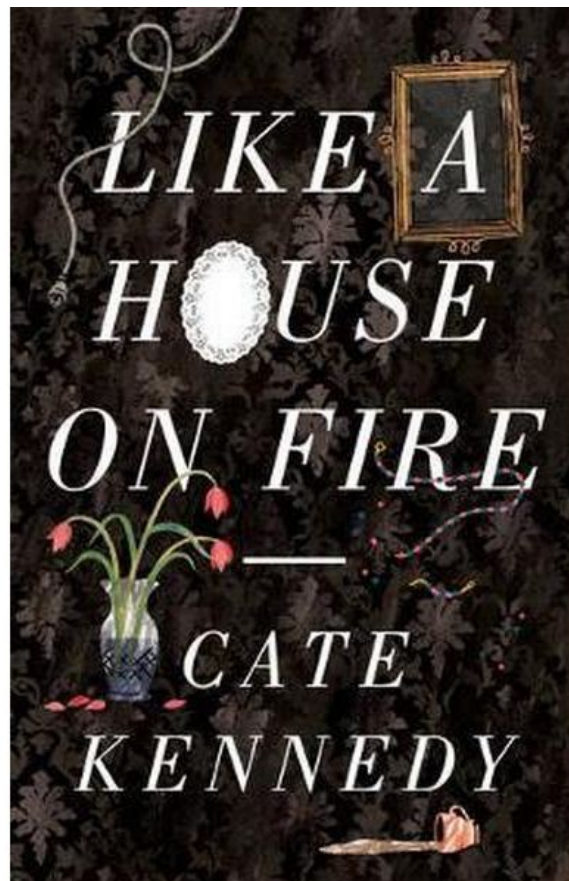


Unit 3 Outcome 1 (Part 2): Reading and Creating 2018

Like A House On Fire

Term 1	Course Focus	School Assessed Coursework
Week 8 19 th March	Reading and creating texts <i>Like a House on Fire</i>	
Week 9 26 th March	Reading and creating texts <i>Like a House on Fire</i>	
Term 1 holidays: Individual conferencing sessions with your teachers (by appointment)		
Term 2		
Week 1 16 th April	Reading and creating texts <i>Like a House on Fire</i>	
Week 2 23 rd April	Reading and creating texts <i>Like a House on Fire</i>	Reading and creating texts: Creative response SAC



KEY KNOWLEDGE: KEY SKILLS

Outcome 1

On completion of this unit the student should be able to produce an analytical interpretation of a selected text, **and a creative response to a different selected text.**

To achieve this outcome the student will draw on key knowledge and key skills outlined in Area of Study 1.

Key knowledge

- an understanding of the world of a text and the explicit and implied values it expresses
- the ways authors
 - create meaning and build the world of the text
 - respond to different contexts, audiences and purposes
- the ways in which readers' interpretations of texts differ and why
- the features of a range of literary and other written, spoken and multimodal texts
- the conventions of oral presentations and discussion
- the features of analytical interpretations of literary and other texts: structure, conventions and language, including relevant metalanguage
- **the features of creative interpretations (written, spoken and multimodal), including structure, conventions and language, and how they create voice and style**
- **the conventions of spelling, punctuation and syntax of Standard Australian English.**

Key skills

- explain and analyse
 - how the features of a range of texts create meaning and how they influence interpretation
 - the ways readers are invited to respond to texts
- identify and analyse the explicit and implied ideas and values in texts
- examine different interpretations of texts and consider how these resonate with or challenge their own interpretations
- synthesise ideas and interpretations to develop an interpretation of their own
- apply the conventions of oral presentation in the delivery of spoken texts
- apply the conventions of discussion
- use textual evidence appropriately to justify analytical responses
- plan analytical interpretations of texts
- **develop, test and clarify ideas using discussion and writing**
- **plan creative responses to texts by**
 - **analysing the text, considering opportunities to explore meaning**
 - **selecting key moments, characters, themes worthy of exploration**
 - **taking account of the purpose, context, audience in determining the selected content and approach**
- **develop and sustain voice and style in creative responses**
- **transform and adapt language and literary devices to generate particular responses, with consideration of the original text**
- **explain and justify decisions made in the writing process and how these demonstrate understanding of the text**
- **draft, review, edit and refine creative and analytical interpretations to texts for expressiveness, accuracy, fluency and coherence, and for stylistic effect**
- **apply the conventions of spelling, punctuation and syntax of Standard Australian English accurately and appropriately.**

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN IN SIMPLE TERMS?

The CREATIVE RESPONSE TO TEXT is a new addition to the study design. For this task, you will have to write on a **different** text from the one selected in your Analytical Text Response, and the final product will be in some kind of imaginative style (e.g. a short story, a letter, a diary entry, an interview, etc.) You will still be assessed on how effectively you can unpack the text's ideas, but you will be showcasing those ideas within a piece of your own, rather than just presenting them in an essay.

Also, you will be required to write a **Written Explanation**, which has been given more weight in the new outline. This will be in the form of a written addition to your piece where you explain the decisions you've made and discuss how your creative piece relates to the set text.

In terms of your actual piece, you can choose to recreate, rework, or extend the text by creating a companion piece consistent with the style and concerns of the original text, meaning that there can be connections in your subject matter (i.e. writing from the perspective of the protagonist in your text, or writing a piece that touches on similar concepts, like racial intolerance, adolescent relationships, the responsibilities of authority, etc.) OR connections based on the language and form (i.e. if you're studying a collection of poetry, then you could write a poem that calls upon very similar techniques and devices as the ones in your set text, or if you're studying a play, then you might write a script for a scene and appropriate some of the metaphors for your own ends.)

Appropriation involves taking these elements - whether they're highly specific symbols and structural features, or big things like entire characters and plot points - and **using them to create your own meaning**. So you're able to 'borrow' the kinds of connotations and ideas that the author employs, but you have to do so in a way that allows you to construct some bigger, overall idea. If you have just "stolen" it, and left it there (not doing anything with it of your own), then you're like an awful burglar who steals your television but never plugs it in to watch it.

Instead, aim to do something more impressive; take an idea in the text you find interesting and put it into a different context. Consider how you might expand upon it and take it a step further.

Purely in terms of the form and style you choose, you have four main options:

- write a piece that uses the style, setting, or core structural features of your set text, which would require an attentive eye for textual details, as well as a skillful application (and appropriation!) of these.
- write a piece that could be added to the text (e.g. a 'lost scene' that fits in between two moments, or something that happens before or after the main plot,) which would
- rewrite a part of the text by changing some key detail(s)
- rewrite a part of the text by telling it from a different point of view, or changing the narrative voice, which would involve the construction of a believable new perspective, and for a good reason (i.e. you couldn't just retell things from someone else's point of view without fleshing out that character and providing insight into some idea that the original text does not.)

Then, for the **Written Explanation**, you will make all these choices obvious by explaining yourself. You are allowed to use the first person here, as in 'I have written a point of view narrative piece from the perspective of character X in order to explore...' Not only will you explain these textual links, but you should also endeavour to identify the author's intention and perspective and then discuss how you have replicated, or better yet, challenged and expanded upon their views. **More of this on the next page ...**

WRITTEN EXPLANATION = Form, Language, Audience, Purpose, + Context

Written Explanations are short explanatory pieces to your CREATIVE RESPONSE TO TEXT piece of writing. These Written Explanations are intended to provide your assessor an indication of what they should expect from your piece. Essentially, written explanations are a discussion of your own work. In this case, you are writing to inform the assessor of 5 elements of your essay, commonly known as FLAP+C:

Form, Language, Audience, Purpose, + Context

Most assessors are quite lenient with how you want to approach the Written Explanation – there is no rigid structure that you need to abide by. As we will discuss below, this allows you to consider what aspects of form, language, audience, purpose and context you wish to include. Each of the points should establish why you have chosen a particular form, or audience etc. Written Explanations are only required for this SAC. They are considered as part of your SAC and thus, are marked accordingly. They are however, not examinable during the English exam.

Form

You will be writing in a creative/imaginative piece. You will have to explain why you have chosen to write in the particular manner that you have – whether it be a short story; written from a minor character's perspective; a report on an incident that occurred; a extended journal entry from a major protagonist; an epic poem/song recounting part of the saga ... (the list is endless). Whichever form of writing you select, you need to explain the reason behind your choice.

eg: 'I chose to write from the perspective of one of a fictional group of travellers coming across the two protagonists and giving an account of this encounter – how they perceived their interactions; employing conventions, format and style of a traditional narrative story. This allowed me to express my ideas while adopting a conversational tone.'

Language

When writing, you choose particular words and phrases to illustrate your ideas. Think about what type of language have you used and why. Perhaps your piece is formal or informal, sophisticated or simple, or, first- or third- person perspective. All these factors are important in shaping your Creative piece. Also consider language techniques you may have incorporated such as repetition, metaphors, clichés, symbolism and more.

eg: 'I have chosen formal language in an attempt to demonstrate a comprehensive and thoughtful piece. Inclusive words such as 'we' and 'us' have been incorporated to allow me to connect with the audience. Furthermore, my use of first-person perspective aims to allow others to associate more intimately with the character's experiences.'

Audience

You must select a targeted audience for your essay. Your choice can be VCE students to young children, or even to your future self. Make sure your target audience is suitable for your essay – select a group that would realistically be interested in your work.

eg: 'My piece is to be published in an anthology for VCE students familiar with the subject matter and texts. As they have familiarity with the concepts I explore, I intend for readers to depart with a greater understanding and appreciation of the ideas in my written piece.'

Purpose

The purpose section is where you discuss the message you would like to send to your audience. Here you discuss how you think that you will position your readers to appreciate your response to your prompt.

eg: 'The purpose of this piece is to demonstrate that there can be different ways of expressing feelings and emotions: firstly, that relationships can change many people through growth in understanding or a sense of self-development and secondly, that there are times when some may remain unaffected and thus, unchanged.'

Context

You should provide a brief discussion of the basic ideas behind your response – **putting your writing in context**. Why you have written in this particular manner.

eg: 'In this piece, I explored ideas relating to 'Love and Gender Issues'. Every person experiences 'love' in some form. It can be challenging with individuals having to empathise with others and deal with new feelings.'

Your Written Explanation should be approx. 250 – 350 words in length. With such a small word limit, be succinct and choose what you will discuss wisely in order to score maximum marks allocated to Written Explanations.

NAME: _____.

PCSSC VCE ENGLISH
SCHOOL-ASSESSED COURSEWORK: UNIT 3 OUTCOME 1
AREA OF STUDY 1: CREATIVE RESPONSE TO TEXT

Performance Descriptors

Unit 3 Outcome 1 Part 2 Produce a creative response to a different selected text.	Assessment criteria	DESCRIPTOR: typical performance in each range				
		Very low	Low	Medium	High	Very high
	1. Understanding of the original text shown through the selection of key moments, characters and themes	Limited understanding of the original text through reference to moments, characters and themes from the text.	Some understanding of the original text through reference to moments, characters and themes from the text.	Satisfactory understanding of the original text through considered selection of key moments, characters and themes worthy of exploration.	Thorough understanding of the original text through thoughtful selection of key moments, characters and themes worthy of exploration.	Sophisticated and complex understanding of the original text through insightful selection of key moments, characters and themes worthy of exploration.
		1 - 3	4	5	6	7 - 7.5
	2. Development of voice and style by transforming and adapting language and literary devices, with consideration of the original text	Limited development of style by using language and literary devices, with little consideration of the original text.	Some development of style by using language and literary devices to generate responses, with some consideration of the original text.	Clear development of voice and style by transforming and adapting language and literary devices to generate responses, with appropriate consideration of the original text.	Considered development of voice and style by competently transforming and adapting language and literary devices to generate particular responses, with strong consideration of the original text.	Sustained development of voice and style by skillfully transforming and adapting language and literary devices to generate particular responses, with insightful consideration of the original text.
		1 - 3	4	5	6	7 - 7.5
	3. Expressive, fluent and coherent writing/oral language with the use of appropriate conventions for stylistic effect	Written language that shows limited control of conventions.	Mostly clear written language that employs some conventions to attempt stylistic effect.	Generally fluent and coherent written language that employs the appropriate use of conventions for stylistic effect.	Expressive, fluent and coherent written language that employs the appropriate and accurate use of conventions for stylistic effect.	Highly expressive, fluent and coherent written language that employs the skillful and accurate use of appropriate conventions for stylistic effect.
		1 - 3	4	5	6	7 - 7.5
	4. Written explanation: Justification of decisions relating to content and approach, demonstrating connections to the original text and an understanding of purpose, audience and context	Limited justification of decisions related to content and approach made during the creative process with some reference to the original text and purpose, audience and context.	Some justification of decisions related to selected content and approach made during the creative process, demonstrating tenuous connections to the original text and some understanding of purpose, audience and context.	Sound justification of decisions related to selected content and approach made during the creative process, demonstrating solid connections to the original text and understanding of purpose, audience and context.	Thorough justification of decisions related to selected content and approach made during the creative process, demonstrating relevant connections to the original text and clear understanding of purpose, audience and context.	Insightful justification of decisions related to selected content and approach made during the creative process, demonstrating meaningful connections to the original text and complex understanding of purpose, audience and context.
		1 - 3	4	5	6	7 - 7.5

KEY to marking scale based on the Outcome contributing 30 marks

TOTAL: /30

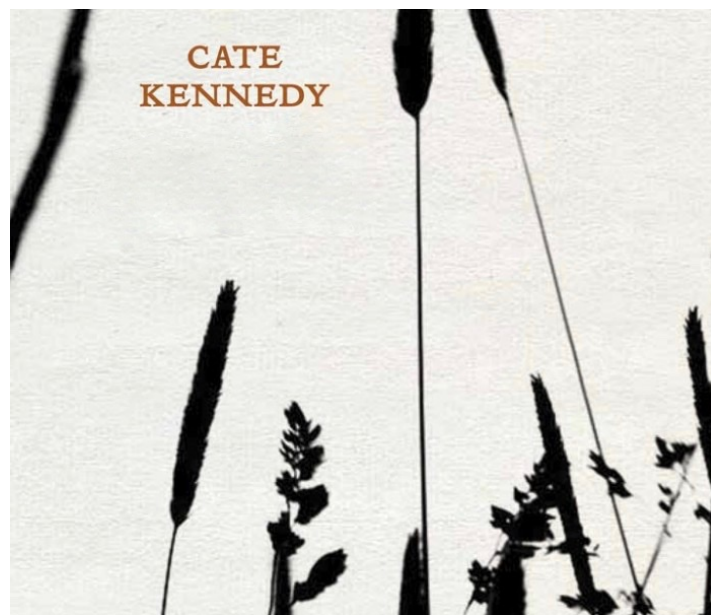
Very low 1–11	Low 12–16	Medium 17–20	High 21–23	Very high 24–30
UG	E – D	D+ - C+	B – B+	A – A+

	VCAA DESCRIPTOR	IN OTHER WORDS ...	EXAMPLE
<p>HIGH (24-30)</p> <p>The ability to engage with the text to develop a quality piece of creative writing in the <u>style</u> and <u>voice</u>, and relating to relevant <u>ideas</u>, expressed in the text</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sophisticated and complex understanding of the original text through insightful selection of key moments, characters and themes worthy of exploration. Sustained development of voice and style by skilfully transforming and adapting language and literary devices to generate particular responses, with insightful consideration of the original text. Highly expressive, fluent and coherent written language that employs the skilful and accurate use of appropriate conventions for stylistic effect. <i>Insightful justification of decisions related to selected content and approach made during the creative process, demonstrating meaningful connections to the original text and complex understanding of purpose, audience and context.</i> 	<p>Uses task as a starting point for writing</p> <p>Thorough knowledge of text and themes/ideas expressed</p> <p>Original and insightful approach based on text</p> <p>Explores and develops concepts from the text</p> <p>Employs a wide/varied vocabulary - detailed use of descriptive language</p> <p>Developed notion of voice and style</p> <p><i>Detailed and relevant Written Explanation</i></p>	
<p>MEDIUM (12-23)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satisfactory understanding of the original text through considered selection of key moments, characters and themes worthy of exploration. Clear development of voice and style by transforming and adapting language and literary devices to generate responses, with appropriate consideration of the original text. Generally fluent and coherent written or language that employs the appropriate use of conventions for stylistic effect. <i>Sound justification of decisions related to selected content and approach made during the creative process, demonstrating solid connections to the original text and understanding of purpose, audience and context.</i> 	<p>Responds to task</p> <p>Expresses ideas connected to text in a simple way</p> <p>Uses or adapts text examples</p> <p>Uses TEEL essay structure – not sustained throughout – further development needed</p> <p>Voice and style of text evident</p> <p>Uses clichés and generic comments</p> <p><i>Written Explanation covers all key areas in general</i></p>	
<p>LOW (0-11)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited understanding of the original text through reference to moments, characters and themes from the text. Limited development of style by using language and literary devices, with little consideration of the original text. Written language that shows limited control of conventions. <i>Limited justification of decisions related to content and approach made during the creative process with some reference to the original text and purpose, audience and context.</i> 	<p>No evident connection to text</p> <p>Does not respond to task</p> <p>Short/unclear – only looks at one idea</p> <p>Unfinished - lacks coherence</p> <p>Little evidence of structured writing</p> <p>Limited vocabulary</p> <p><i>Written Explanation does not cover all key areas; does not shed much light on written piece</i></p>	

STORIES FOR YEAR 12 STUDY IN 2018:

- *Flexion*
- *Ashes*
- *Laminex & Mirrors*
- *Like A House On Fire*
- *Cross Country*
- *Whirlpool*
- *Cake*
- *Static*
- *Seventy Two Derwents*

STORY SYNOPSIS & QUESTIONS:



This collection of short stories catalogues moments from the dramatic to the mundane. In each story, though, there is an expansion of the characters beyond the roles that they have fallen into, an understanding of their own humanity which allows them to view the humanity in others. The collection inspires compassion and considers the impact of time and expectation on our relationships.

Flexion – A woman witnesses what she believes will be the death of her husband as he is crushed under their tractor. He survives, a harsh man who is unable to show gratitude towards the kindness of others, unable to ask for help, unable to show weakness or to tolerate perceived weakness. His wife takes an almost cruel satisfaction in becoming the dominant one in the relationship, until a moment of genuine warmth and shared understanding happens.

- How is Frank different before and after the accident?
- How does his wife's attitude towards him change?
- Why do both of these characters change their attitudes towards each other?

Ashes – As Chris drives his mother to a childhood fishing spot so that they can scatter his father's ashes, he dwells on the years of perceived injustices doled out to him by his parents. Hurting also from a recent breakup, Chris considers his mother a burden and is counting the days until he can escape her expectations. As they reach the lake, he starts to feel the weight, too, of his father, of not being accepted, of not being enough. As he feels the grainy sand of his father's ashes between his fingers, Chris sees beyond his mother's fussiness to her genuine grief. In this crack of humanity, Chris revisits his own role in his relationship with his father, wishing that he had been able to compromise years earlier.

- How does Chris see his mother, and how does this make him act towards her?
- What moment changes his attitude to his father, and to his mother?
- What happens at the end to signify that something has changed between Chris and his mother?

Laminex and Mirrors – An eighteen-year-old girl takes on a hospital job over the summer holidays to save up so that she can travel to London. Although she begins the job just to earn money, she manages to collect a series of snapshots of the lives of those around her, images that put her life into perspective and give her insight into life, death, love and compassion.

- Why does Matron hunt out Marie? Why is Matron annoyed? Why is Marie annoyed?
- What misconceptions does the main character have about Len and Dot? What changes her mind about them? What part does she have to play in this moment?
- Why is Mr Moreton both happy and sad about his daughter's visit? Why do you think the main character decides to do what she does for him?

Like a House on Fire – In the story that lends its name to the book, a husband looks at his life from his prostrate position on the floor. He has hurt his back and, as a result of pain and the threat of further injury, must lie still as life continues around him. Once active and competent, he now feels frustrated with his inability to move and to contribute to his family, helplessly watching as his sons become more immersed in television and lose the playfulness that he remembers from only a year earlier. As his perspective changes so, too, do the attitudes of his family.

- What does the title of this story refer to? (Does it fit with your suggestions for the book's overall title from earlier?)
- What hints does the author give to suggest that the dynamic between the two adults was once different?
- How have Ben and Sam changed between this Christmas and the last? Why does this make their father sad?
- How does each of the characters compromise in the story?

Cross-Country – Rebecca wallows in the dregs of her failed relationship. As she sleeps all day and surfs the internet for signs of her ex, she becomes obsessed with the idea of him as a runner. She talks about getting running shoes, joining a club and has images of herself overtaking him. This image in fact motivates her to get up again and return to work. However, she has missed something crucial in his online profile.

- How does Rebecca describe the differences between the grief over a loved one dying and the grief over a relationship ending?

- Why does she become so obsessed with the image of overtaking her ex while running?
- What two words unravel her thoughts?

Whirlpool – Anna is a young girl on the brink of adolescence who is enduring another obligatory Christmas photo. She feels judged by her mother and escapes the stuffy, false air of the house, filled with conspiratorial looks and minor betrayals, into the cool, blue freedom of their above-ground pool.

- What strikes you immediately about the narrative point of view of this piece?
- What hints are there in the story about Anna's position within the family? How do they all feel about her? How does this make her feel about herself?
- What does the pool represent to the girls and their father?

Cake – Liz, a new mother, returns to work burdened with the guilt of leaving her eighteen-month-old son at childcare. She struggles with leaving the mothering side of herself behind, which she is expected to do while at work. At home, she finds it difficult to explain her feelings to her husband as she tries to eke out precious moments with her baby boy.

- The presence of cake is repeated throughout the story and is echoed in the title. What do you think the significance of this is? How does it make Liz feel, and why?
- What roles is Liz trying to switch between?
- How is she finding it difficult? How do others make things more difficult?

Static – In a story that takes place during a family's Christmas Day celebrations, Anthony tries to negotiate between his wife's and his parents' demands on him, and the image of how he'd envisaged his life would be by this point. The story is filled with characters left wanting, and so it has a sense of longing, for children, for money and for happiness.

- What are the 'Evil Rays'? Where are they coming from?
- What are the differences between Marie and her husband and his parents?
- What is each of the characters longing for?

Seventy-Two Derwents – In the story that concludes the collection, Tyler writes a journal for her teacher Mrs Carlyle. She is in Year 6 and lives at home with her mother and sister Ellie, although she has brothers and a sister who live with other families. Through the journal we learn of Shane, Tyler's mum's boyfriend, and how when he is around she feels stones grinding together in her stomach. As the drama of her family unfolds around her, Tyler clings tight to a sliver of hope that comes in the form of a tin of Derwent pencils.

- How does the author show you that the girl in this story is younger than the narrators of other stories in the book?
- Is the family rich or poor? How do you know?
- How do each of the characters act because of this?
- What do you know about the relationship between Ellie and her mother from Tyler's story? How does Ellie take care of Tyler?
- Why does Mrs Carlyle call the police? How does this impact Tyler?
- What are the benefits of having a young narrator? And what are the drawbacks?

THEMES: LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE

THEMES

All of the characters in the stories from *Like a House on Fire* live ordinary lives, punctuated by the sorts of events that most of us have or will experience - either directly or indirectly. However, because of the intense light that Kennedy shines upon these small events, the tiny, everyday actions of characters are imbued with an extra significance; small decisions and silences have far-reaching effects. In this way, Kennedy focuses our attention on the beauty, fears and pains of ordinary people and invites us to view others with a more compassionate gaze.

Miscommunication and isolation

Each of the characters feels isolated in their lives and their experiences. They either cannot or will not communicate openly with the people they are supposed to be closest to. The silences that grow between the characters are often because they fear their concerns will not be heard or because they believe they will not be understood, but either way, the result is the same: characters feel separate and alone.

A sense of disconnection

For a range of reasons, many of the characters in *Like a House on Fire* feel disconnected from those around them. Perhaps because they share different dreams and desires, but often because of the miscommunication that they take part in. Many of these characters yearn for a sense of belonging, but are unable to act upon this desire.

Dreaming of another life

None of the characters are happy with their lives the way they are now: they feel trapped by circumstances beyond their control and by people who prevent them living their dreams. This thwarted desire leaves characters disappointed and judgemental of their own lives, but also of the lives of people around them.

The loss of identity

Perhaps because of the miscommunications that pepper their lives, as well as the desire to be elsewhere, characters also face a loss of their true identity; they feel forced to behave, think and act as someone else and are afraid to reveal their true thoughts and dreams. Instead, the characters conform to the stereotypes of the roles they play in their lives - mother, sister, son, father, husband, employee - when their true identity is either connected with their dream, or is an amalgam of the complex web of roles they fulfil. Either way, their central conflict is usually connected with a role they would prefer not to have.

The frailty of the body

In most of the stories, characters are betrayed by their own bodies or by the bodies of others, highlighting the significance of physical humanity and ensuring that, as readers, we are always conscious of the limitations of our own mortality. While we often try to escape this physical limitation, avoiding thinking of death or injury, Kennedy's characters cannot escape the ways their bodies shape their lives, in either large or small ways.

Writing about themes

Although we tend to think about themes as something that can be summed up in one or two words, when we write about themes, we must discuss them in a more nuanced way. We also need to discuss how and why these ideas are raised within a text. Using the table below, come up with a range of sentences you might use relating to each theme:

mis-communication and isolation	dreams and desires	the physicality of life	a sense of belonging	loss of identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *the silences between people who... *the inability to communicate... *finding it difficult to articulate... *struggling to connect with... *feeling most alone when... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *hoping for a future where... *feeling nostalgic for a time when... *yearning for... *daydreaming about... *the hope of... *planning for a future when... *remembering ... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *the strength of our bodies which... *the corporeal nature of... *the sensory delight in ... *the limits and strengths of our bodies that... *the fears of a body that... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *the need for acceptance so that... *a sense of belonging when... *the desire for inclusion of... *a sense of belonging through... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *feeling unequal to the challenges of... *forced to behave in a manner that... *being resigned to a role of... *the sense of being limited to... *the dissolution of self when...
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *becoming more self reliant when... *finding strength in solitude... *feeling better alone... *gaining independence because... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *finding peace when... *appreciating the good fortune of... *acknowledging the wonder of... *recognising futile hopes and... *accepting the realities of... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *feeling bound by the limitations of someone else's body when... *watching the disintegration of... *being helpless in the face of... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *the fear of isolation when... *the tension between the need for solitude and... *a private world where... *the sense of separateness from... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> *accepting the multiple roles of life when... *facing the changes in one's self and circumstances by... *being comfortable with the sense of...

Linking Ideas and Themes

Most of the themes and ideas in *Like a House on Fire* are related to each other, and when you discuss the ideas as outlined above, you should find that some of the concepts will overlap during your brainstorm and discussion. If you want to demonstrate a deeper understanding of the short stories you will explore the links between these ideas and will, ultimately, be able to write a creative response that demonstrates their development of understanding. Using the ideas in the table below you should write a series of sentences that links the ideas and themes together in your creative response.

TABLE OF IDEAS YOU MIGHT WANT TO TAKE ONBOARD IN YOUR CREATIVE RESPONSE

shared human experience	fears for loss of self	being trapped by convention	observing others
fearing the physical limitation of	keeping silent when others speak out	being a part of a community	dreaming of another life
loneliness	understanding of others	isolation	limitations
hoping	a sense of nostalgia for	self-determination	imagining a future where
confiding in others	self-reliance	holding secrets about	aspiring to a better life
feeling trapped in relationships that	losing a sense of intimacy with	struggling to connect with	coming to terms with a... body
pursuing one's dream	feeling let down by a body that...	being unable to share	community
Linking words: leads to..., is the result of..., causes..., since..., is precipitated by..., compels other characters to..., motivates..., is provoked by..., arises from..., is linked to..., is connected to..., develops from...			

****Creative Writing Tip**

After looking at the ideas and themes from the perspectives of the protagonists in each story, students should think about the way the minor characters would view the same issues for themselves. They should then write a reflective piece from the perspective of one of the minor characters, exploring the same central conflict, but from a different perspective.

CHARACTERS: LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE

Main Characters – Protagonists: Initial thinking activity

Circle words that you think can be typically applied to the different protagonists in Kennedy's stories being studied. You should be able to think of *who* the characters are, *what* it is that they do, and the *way in which* they do these things. Once you have identified these words, you should practice using them in sentences such as:

Role	Verb	Adverb
narrator	act	passively
father	Watch	quietly
mother	feel	passionately
son	experience	lovingly
confidante	participate	independently
observer	observe	co-operatively
protagonist	create	loudly
controller	solve	friendly
friend	follow	dispassionately
helpmeet	procrastinate	disjointedly
victim	empathise	quickly
inferior	lie	slowly
daughter	judge	playfully
sister	wait	unwillingly
superior	help	kindly
aide	notice	narrowly
loner	play	selfishly
partner	collaborate	furtively
husband	antagonise	aggressively
bystander	Mediate	Surreptitiously
wife	Withdraw	reluctantly

Links between Characters

In each of the stories, the main character has a serious conflict or issue, but masks this problem with an attempt to solve - or be distracted by - a less serious problem. Complete the following table for the stories they are studying:

Character	Problem the character is facing	Actions the character takes in the story	Ways in which the character is 'failing' in life	How does the character avoid interaction

When you have finished making notes about the characters, you should write sentences linking or contrasting the characters to each other, using the chart below to help them.

Like	Unlike	Extra information
Just as... Similarly, In a similar manner, Paralleling...., Mirroring... ...resembles... ...is comparable to... ...beliefs correspond to...	In contrast to... In comparison... In direct opposition to this is... However,... ...juxtaposes with... ...provides a foil for this idea...	because since in order to due to by in view of as

Forced comparisons class discussion

For this activity, you should write all of the names of the characters into two lists on a piece of paper. Each of the lists should be identical, because the students will cut the names up and put them face-down in two piles. There should be one of each name in each pile.

Take a name from the first pile, let's say the name drawn is the narrator from 'Laminex and Mirrors'. You then say "The narrator from 'Laminex and Mirrors' is most similar to..." and draw a name from the second pile. Then compare the ways in which this narrator is most similar to this second character and write a sentence about it. This will force you to compare characters in ways that they may not otherwise think of.

After this, you will have a single sentence for each character. Then, you can initiate a discussions relating to the characters in the stories when you respond to each others' statements.

**** Creative Writing Tip**

These can also help you develop characters and their personas in your writing.

****Creative Writing Tip**

Kennedy's stories are written in 1st, 2nd and 3rd person.

I trudge, my face burning, down towards the corridor of elective surgeries. It's OK, I tell myself. At the end of the summer holidays I will have saved enough for three months in Europe, where I will walk the streets of Paris and London, absorbing culture and life and fraternising with whoever I like.

Each morning of the school holidays, you feel a faint smothered panic that the pool will sooner or later be the subject of attack. You try to stay casually offhand as you change into your bathers and escape out the back door.

She gets up, silently, at five, nagged by an unfinished vision and the sensation of the night draining away. Out in the garden she's calm again, feeling the dew drench her ankles and the bottom of her white cotton night dress. She can sleep on the train, anyway.

When you are writing your own responses, you should experiment with different narrative persons, thinking about what sort of effect each style has upon the way the reader interacts with the protagonist of the story and which is the most effective for the character you are creating.



Antagonists

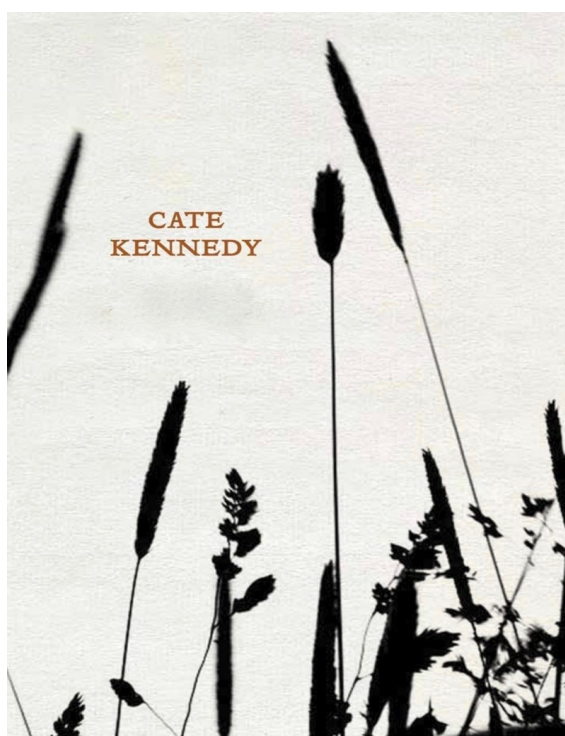
In each of the stories there is an antagonist, who seems to work against the desires of the protagonist. One of Kennedy's strengths, is that (with the possible exceptions of Declan, in 'Little Plastic Shipwreck', and Shane in 'Seventy-Two Derwents') she humanises these antagonists, alluding to their own problems and challenges and inviting the reader to see the story - briefly - from another angle. You should fill out the table below to help you gain an insight into how different characters provide alternative insights into the main ideas of the text.

Character	Problems the character is facing	Ways these problems impact upon the protagonist	Main themes or ideas this problem demonstrates

****Creative Writing Tip**

TURNING THE TABLES ON THE CHARACTERS:

You could re-write a moment in a story from the perspective of the antagonist, providing details and a back story to this problem and making Kennedy's protagonist the antagonist of their writing.



SETTING: LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE

All of the stories in this collection are set in familiar, everyday worlds with ordinary people carrying out the events of ordinary middle or working class lives. This means that readers are imbued with the sense of knowing the characters (or people like them) even before reading the stories. We all know of (or are) people like those in 'Static', who work for the perfect house, with landscaped gardens and a couch the perfect shade of beige. We can all imagine a person addicted to surfing the net for news of an ex-partner, just like the narrator in 'Cross-Country'. We have all felt the pressure of preparing for a hot Christmas day, like the characters in 'Like a House on Fire', 'Whirlpool' and 'Static'. It is the very ordinariness of the setting that ensures the readers feel familiar in the world of these characters.

You should use the table below to practise writing sentences about the setting and link your description of the setting to how it highlights character's feelings and the ideas from the activities above. It is important to note that you should not simply see the setting as unidimensional - you should discuss the complexities of the setting by choosing two contrasting adjectives (in the first column) to describe the setting. You should use the linking words (in the bottom of the table) to compare and contrast the two ideas you have about the setting. This way, you will be able to analyse a range of interesting ideas to each other.

Adjectives	Nouns	Verb phrases
suburban insular closed small cluttered familiar normative limited traditional untidy run-down congested restricting narrow-minded caring	suburb town world domain sphere of understanding environment neighbourhood community	highlights the sense of... epitomises... is juxtaposed with... embodies... symbolises... draws attention to... intensifies the feeling that... puts...in the spotlight exposes the range of...

****Creative Writing Tip**

Many of the stories are written exploiting the oppressive heat of the Australian summer, so that the characters are wearing fewer clothes and are, quite literally, more exposed to each other and to the reader. Furthermore, many of the stories are set during the Christmas period, when characters are preparing to put on a 'show' or present their best selves to the world, which enhances their sense of failure. Christmas and summer are both times when we are expected to socialise more often and be in the public eye; Kennedy exploits this to ensure that character's flaws are constantly exposed.

You should think about creating a setting that either exposes your characters, or perhaps subverts Kennedy's patterns and is set during winter, when their characters can hide their flaws in coats and scarves (metaphorically muffling themselves) and hide from the expectations of the world.

SYMBOLS AND MOTIFS: LIKE A HOUSE ON FIRE

Story Titles

All of the titles of the stories are symbols of the central dilemma or desire faced by the protagonists.

Title	Representative of ...	Deeper symbolic meaning of protagonist's problem or desire
Flexion	Frank's joints re-learning how to move	
Ashes	Chris's fathers ashes	
Laminex and Mirrors	Student's allocated cleaning job	
Whirlpool	A game that Anna plays with her sister, Louise, in the backyard pool	
Like a House on Fire	The way Claire and the narrator used to get on	
Cross-Country	Rebecca's research of her ex-partner leads her to believe he is running	
Cake	Liz is consistently offered cake to celebrate her return to work	
Static	The noise that prevents Anthony communicating with his nephew on the walkie-talkie	
Seventy-Two Derwents	The box of pencils that Tyler wants for her birthday	

****Creative Writing Tip**

Think about a title for your written piece – what relationship does it have with your main protagonist, the situation that he/she is facing and your story arc.

Past and Future

Because so few of the characters actually enjoy the way their lives are, they (like us) are continually focusing their attention upon their pasts or planning for a future. The younger characters are far more hopeful about their futures, but most of the characters are realistic - or pessimistic - about the future they will have. They spend a great deal of time musing upon how life has failed their expectations and how they are not living the life they had imagined. When the characters think about their past and future, it is always coloured by the central dilemma they are currently facing.

Seeing

All of the protagonists are keen observers of the world and of the people around them. Throughout the collection, Kennedy repeats verbs such as 'looks, spots, sees, focuses, glances, notices' to demonstrate how the protagonists view the people around them and measure their own actions against the people they are observing. Since all of the protagonists are unsatisfied with their own lives, their looking underscores the ways in which they are all failing in some way.

Infertility

Many of the characters in this collection are facing an inability to procreate, which symbolises the general failings of their lives, but also highlights their sense of the pointlessness of their own existence. Because these characters had hopes or dreams of having children, their infertility is a potent symbol of their inability to achieve their dreams, but more than that, because the characters live in settings where having children is a culturally 'normal' part of life, they feel sidelined by their own bodies.

Fatigue

Many of the characters are plagued with a sense of being tired - tired of their problems; tired of their jobs; of course, tired of their lives.

Similes

Just as the title of the collection contains a simile, so too do all of the stories contain similes that describe how the characters feel and interact with the world.

****Creative Writing Tip**

You should think about describing characters feelings with similes like Kennedy's.

Most of the similes use the word 'like' as a conjunction, joining two separate ideas together. Students can practise this in their own writing in the following ways.

Simple sentence with an idea	+ Start new sentence with “Like”
That was the term she’d used: conception enhancement.	Like they were joining the Scientologists rather than trying to make a baby.
Sometimes at night he’d feel Liz’s hand land uncertainly on him and graze back and forth.	Like sea grass on a current.

The similes like those in the table above, which begin a sentence with ‘Like’, tend to concentrate the reader’s attention more upon the simile itself. They are less ‘everyday’ sorts of items that an idea is being compared to, and this exotic, or unusual description draws the reader’s attention.

Idea and verb	+ like	+ adjective	+ idea
Nick Cave CD they’re playing tonight beats in my skull	like	a racing, roaring	pulse.
you still worked silently and rapidly,	like		it was homework

Adjective + idea	+ like	+ adjective	+ idea
Dull anguish	like	a bitter	taste in my mouth.
time dangling	like	a suspended	toy on a piece of elastic