ENGLISH – UNIT OF STUDY 3

▶ **YEAR** 11-13   ▶ **NCEA** AS90378 LEVEL 2.4 / AS90379 LEVEL 2.5 / AS90721 LEVEL 3.2

BEHIND THE BARS, NO WORLD: ANALYSING ZOO STORIES

AN ENGLISH UNIT

INTRODUCTION

Public zoos are a modern phenomenon, and modern poets, writers of fiction and film-makers have found them rich sources of inspiration. Such writers have often drawn comparisons between the human condition – at least as they perceived it – and the degraded, frustrating or limited conditions of animals kept in captivity. Texts that portray zoos with intensity and vividness, and that make connections between the human and animal worlds, therefore provide accessible and engaging opportunities for students who are learning to understand the techniques of poetic and narrative writing.

In this unit students choose from a number of short poetic, fictional and visual texts; they then carry out a close analysis of their chosen text(s), paying special attention to such features as tone and mood, point of view and irony.

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ACHIEVEMENT CRITERIA

This unit is designed to prepare students for the following external assessments:

▶ AS90378 (English 2.4): Analyse short written texts.

▶ AS90379 (English 2.5): Analyse a visual or oral text.

▶ AS90721 (English 3.2): Respond critically to written text(s) studied.

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ACHIEVEMENT CRITERIA   AS90378 (ENGLISH 2.4): Analyse short written texts

ACHIEVEMENT	ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT	ACHIEVEMENT WITH EXCELLENCE
▶ Analyse specified aspect(s) of at least two short written texts, using supporting evidence.	▶ Analyse specified aspect(s) of at least two short written texts convincingly, using supporting evidence.	▶ Analyse specified aspect(s) of at least two short written texts convincingly and with insight, using supporting evidence.

ACHIEVEMENT CRITERIA   AS90379 (ENGLISH 2.5): Analyse a visual or oral text

ACHIEVEMENT	ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT	ACHIEVEMENT WITH EXCELLENCE
▶ Analyse specified aspect(s) of a visual or oral text, using supporting evidence.	▶ Analyse specified aspect(s) of a visual or oral text convincingly, using supporting evidence.	▶ Analyse specified aspect(s) of a visual or oral text convincingly and with insight, using supporting evidence.

ACHIEVEMENT CRITERIA   AS90712 (ENGLISH 3.2): Respond critically to written text(s) studied

ACHIEVEMENT	ACHIEVEMENT WITH MERIT	ACHIEVEMENT WITH EXCELLENCE
▶ Develop a critical response to specified aspect(s) of written text(s) using supporting evidence.	▶ Develop a convincing critical response to specified aspect(s) of written text(s) using supporting evidence.	▶ Develop an integrated and perceptive critical response to specified aspect(s) of written text(s) using supporting evidence.

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BEHIND THE BARS, NO WORLD:
ANALYSING ZOO STORIES

TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

PART I: THE ZOO DEBATE

I) Read or view two or more of the following background texts on animals in zoos:

- "Why Zoos Disappoint." John Berger. (p.89)
- "The Bear Essentials for Zoos." Mark Henderson and Diana McCurdy. (p.110)
- Extracts from *Reading Zoos*. Randy Malamud. (p.50)
- *Zoo Culture*. Bob Mullan and Garry Marvin. (p.69)
- *Sad Eyes and Empty Lives* and *No Place Like Home*. Tim Phillips. (*Animals & Us* DVD)

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PART II: ZOO STORIES

I) Read two (or more) of the following poems and then write short answers (one to three sentences) in response to these four questions:

- "The Panther." Rainer Maria Rilke. (p.108)
- "The Jaguar." Ted Hughes. (p.107)
- "The Zoo." Stevie Smith. (p.109)
- "The Zoo." Edward Kamau Braithwaite. (p.104)

a) How would you describe the tone or mood of the poem?

b) What poetic techniques does the poet use to create this tone? For example: vocabulary, imagery, repetition, rhythm.

c) What does the poem say about animals, and about the world of nature? What does it say about humans, and the human world?

d) Choose a word, phrase, image or line that seems to you especially important and explain its significance to the poem as a whole.

TONE AND MOOD

To understand any text we need to be alert to its **tone** or **mood**. The term tone is used to describe the attitude behind the words. The term mood is a little more general, and refers to the general emotional atmosphere or climate in a text. In some ways, the use of these terms in literary study is not very different from their everyday meanings. In our everyday conversations, we understand that "tone of voice" or how something is said can alter the meaning of the words spoken. And we all understand that when somebody says they are in "a good mood" or "a bad mood", they are describing their overall emotional state at a particular moment.

In written texts, because we are reading rather than hearing the words spoken, tone and mood are conveyed by literary techniques such as vocabulary (the choice of one word rather than another that might mean something similar but has a different "feel" to it), repetition (for example to give emphasis, or to imply a range of different feelings such as anxiety, doubt, weariness or exultation), imagery (figures of speech such as simile and metaphor, which can carry feelings as well as meanings), or rhythm (which is especially important in poetry). Usually, the tone or mood of a piece of writing only becomes apparent through a combination of these techniques. Keep in mind too that writers can change their tone, or change the mood, part-way through: sometimes that is the whole point of the text.

The more precise we can be about the tone or mood of texts, or particular bits of texts, the better we can understand their meaning and the effect they have on us. Thus it would seldom be enough to say that a poem or piece of prose is "happy" or "sad". Typically, writers aim to produce more specific kinds of tone or mood. So, for example, we might ask ourselves: is the tone of this piece of writing serious or humorous, earnest or mocking, sincere or sarcastic, optimistic or pessimistic, critical or complimentary, . . . etc? Is the mood of the piece one of mourning, celebration, excitement, anxiety, fear, horror, despair, mystery, irony, ridicule, comedy, pathos, reverence, banality, wonder, irreverence, . . . etc? There are as many different tones and moods as there are ways of feeling as a human being.

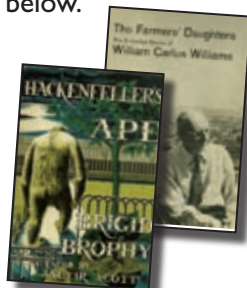# BEHIND THE BARS, NO WORLD:
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TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

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2) Read one (or more) of the following short stories or novel extracts and then write short answers (one to three sentences) in response to the questions below.

  a) "The Zoo." William Carlos Williams. (p.81)
  b) *Daughter Buffalo.* Janet Frame. (p.80)
  c) *Hackenfeller's Ape.* Brigid Brophy. (p.76)

  ◗ What point of view does the author use to narrate the story? Why did the author choose this point of view?
  ◗ What tensions or contradictions are there between different points of view in the story, or between the main point of view and the actions and reactions of other characters? How do these tensions or contradictions relate to the meaning or impact of the story?
  ◗ What tone and/or mood (see definitions in box on p.22) does the story create? What literary techniques does it use to do so? Does the tone and/or mood change at any point in the story?
  ◗ What does the story say about animals, and about the world of nature? What does it say about humans, and the human world?
  ◗ Choose a word, phrase, image or line that seems to you especially important and explain its significance to the text as a whole.

POINT OF VIEW
The term "point of view" refers to the perspective or vantage point from which the story is told. There are many different types of point of view that writers can use, but the four most common are:

FIRST PERSON
The narrator is a character in the story who can reveal only personal thoughts and feelings and what he or she sees and is told by other characters. The story is narrated in the "first person" ("I did this", "I thought that"). She or he can't tell us thoughts of other characters.

THIRD-PERSON OBJECTIVE
The narrator is not involved in the story, and so can only report what he or she sees and hears. The story is therefore narrated in the "third person" ("he/she/they did such-and-such"). This narrator can tell us what is happening, but can't tell us the thoughts of the characters.

THIRD-PERSON LIMITED
The narrator is not involved in the story, but sees into the mind of one of the characters. The story is told in the "third person" ("he/she did such-and-such and thought so-and-so") and is limited to what that character sees, knows or hears.

OMNISCIENT
The narrator is not involved in the story, but knows everything and can enter the minds of more than one of the characters. The story is told in the "third person", moving around amongst the characters and presenting various perspectives as though from the inside.

Authors will often manipulate point of view in order to produce different kinds of meaning and effect. For example, by contrasting the narrator's point of view, or that of a particular character, with the reactions of others in the story, the author may aim to demonstrate the shortcomings of particular ways of looking at the world. Alternatively tension, humour or **irony** (see definition box on p.24) may be generated as the reader comes to realise things that the narrator or character, with their limited point of view, does not.

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TEACHING AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES

3) Watch Nick Park's *Creature Comforts* (Electronic texts p.112) and then write short answers (one to three sentences) in response to the questions below.

- What kind(s) of irony are at work in *Creature Comforts*?
- What visual, verbal and dramatic techniques does the text use to create ironic meanings?
- What is being satirised in this text?
- What does the text say about animals, and about the world of nature? What does it say about humans, and the human world?
- Choose a sequence that seems to you especially important and explain its significance to the text as a whole.

CREATURE COMFORTS
www.atom.com/funny_video/
creature_comforts/

4) Use the texts below to practise external assessment from past examinations:

- AS90378 (English 2.4): Analyse short written texts.
  Type the url below followed by the remaining url listed beside each Examination link:
  www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/ncea-resource/exams/
  - 2007 Examination: 2007/90378-exm-07.doc
  - 2006 Examination: 2006/90378-exm-06.doc

- AS90379 (English 2.5): Analyse a visual or oral text.
  Type the url below followed by the remaining url listed beside each Examination link:
  www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/ncea-resource/exams/
  - 2007 Examination: 2007/90379-exm-07.doc
  - 2006 Examination: 2006/90379-exm-06.doc

- AS90721 (English 3.2): Respond critically to written text(s) studied.
  Type the url below followed by the remaining url listed beside each Examination link:
  www.nzqa.govt.nz/nqfdocs/ncea-resource/exams/
  - 2007 Examination: 2007/90721-exm-07.doc
  - 2006 Examination: 2006/90721-exm-06.doc

IRONY
"Irony" occurs when the meaning of a statement, character or circumstance is not as it seems to be on face value. Often it is the exact opposite of what it appears to be, or is expected to be. There are many types of irony, but the most common are:

VERBAL IRONY
The speaker means something different from what she or he actually says. The listener, reader or audience understands the secondary, ironic meaning, either because of their knowledge of the overall situation, or because of the **tone** (see definition box on p.22) that is being used. (Sarcasm – where a statement is used to imply its exact opposite, usually to critical effect – is a common kind of verbal irony.)

DRAMATIC IRONY
The reader or audience has knowledge, and therefore understanding, that is hidden from the characters. For example, Shakespeare's *Othello* repeatedly refers to "honest Iago", but the audience has heard Iago describe his plans to deceive and destroy his friend. Sophocles' *Oedipus* proclaims that whoever has angered the gods and brought afflictions on the city will suffer death, but the audience knows it is Oedipus himself who has defiled the city by unknowingly killing his father and marrying his mother.

SITUATIONAL IRONY
Something happens that is the opposite of expectations. For example, Shakespeare's *Macbeth* thinks he is invulnerable because of the prophecy that he cannot be harmed by one "of woman born", or defeated until Birnam Wood comes to Dunsinane. The irony becomes apparent when Malcolm's army is disguised with branches, so the wood marches towards Macbeth's castle, and when his enemy Macduff reveals that he was delivered by caesarian and therefore not "of woman born".

STRUCTURAL IRONY
A structural feature (such as **point of view** – see definition box on p.23) produces ironic meaning throughout the entire text. For example, in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, the first person narrator Gulliver (whose name echoes the word "gullible") is a "naïve" or "unreliable narrator" whose understanding of places and peoples is consistently shown (by events and by the reactions of others) to be mistaken.

One genre (or type) of text that makes frequent use of irony is **satire**, in which the aim is to ridicule individuals, groups, institutions, ideas, society itself or humanity in general. Well-known examples include literary texts like *Gulliver's Travels*; movies like *Fight Club*, *Team America* or *Borat*; television shows like *South Park*, *bro'Town* and *The Simpsons*; websites like *The Onion*.