

## TIF Literature:

### Concepts

In order to achieve a higher grade in Literature, you need to consider the texts from a wider perspective and include ideas from outside of the events and characters. You should use these ideas and theories to help you develop more sophisticated ideas about the text and complement your analysis.

A concept does not have to be a theory; it can also be a wider idea about a particular theme or character. The key idea around including an effective concept in your essay is that it should consider the play in a broader way that is 'outside' of the text. For example:

**Point:** In the play, Macbeth is presented as being evil and ambitious. **This is correct but is very much 'within' the text so would not be considered as a more of a point than a concept.**

**Concept:** In the play, Shakespeare uses the character of Macbeth as a vehicle for exploring the dangers of pursuing ambition above all else and uses the character as part of a wider moral message that is wrong to challenge those in positions of authority. **The ideas in this sentence are very similar to the point but it 'zooms out' from the play and considers the question from a wider perspective which is 'outside' of the text, therefore making it conceptual.**

There are some theories that can be applied to the majority of the texts:

**Marxist theory:** a political ideology that is based around the idea that society would benefit from getting rid of hierarchies and class systems in order to encourage a fairer distribution of wealth.

**Feminist theory:** a political ideology that is based around the idea that men and women should be treated and represented equally.

**Freudian theories:**

- A) Freud's dreams theory- the idea that dreams (both whilst asleep and day dreams, essentially anytime when your mind wanders) reflect inner desires.
- B) Freud's personality theory- the idea that we have three aspects to our personalities, the Id, Ego and Superego.

The Id is with us from birth. This part wishes to satisfy every urge it has immediately, regardless of the consequences. This is why babies cry to be fed, will snatch toys etc.

The Ego develops next. It is the decision-making part of our psyche and works by reason and strategy.

The Superego develops last. It reflects the values and morals of society which are learned from our parents and others. It is our conscience and means that we experience guilt.

**Connell's gender theory:** a theory that men are encouraged from an early age to assume a more dominant position in society (both physically through the encouragement of aggression, as well as mentally through the social ideas surrounding leadership being more suited to 'masculine' tendencies). This, in turn, encourages women to be more submissive and less likely to pursue dominant positions within society.

**Fear of the other:** the sociological idea that people are more likely to approach and bond with people who they deem to be similar (this could be in a variety of different ways: personality,

appearance, location etc.) to themselves and the idea that people are more suspicious of those who they deem not to share any common ground with.

See below for examples of concepts for each of the texts. This is not an exhaustive list, there are many other concepts that could be applied to each of the texts, the lists are just to give you some starting ideas.

### Macbeth

Applying the Freudian theory of dreams to the play helps the audience to consider that perhaps the supernatural is merely a manifestation of the characters' taboo inner desires.

Viewing the play of Macbeth through a Marxist interpretation could suggest that the play was written by Shakespeare to deliberately perpetuate the notion that the authority figures and the status quo of society should not be challenged.

Considering the play of Macbeth from a feminist perspective, it could be suggested that Shakespeare deliberately presents female characters as being inherently weak and unable to cope with trauma.

Interpreting the play of Macbeth through a Christian perspective, helps the audience to understand that Shakespeare deliberately puts forward the idea of a world that is divided into good and evil and there are consequences to defying higher beings.

Shakespeare suggests that ambition is a force that affects the sexes differently but that ultimately destroys those who pursue it.

Shakespeare presents violence as having contradictory effects: on the one hand violence is portrayed as being a way of demonstrating strength yet, on the other hand, is presented as something that can be used as a tool for evil and corruption.

Considering the play through Connell's theory of gender, we can deduce that Shakespeare may have been exploring the idea that Macbeth is a victim of a society which encouraged male aggression and that his actions are merely part of an expected social paradigm.

### The Sign of the Four

Conan Doyle uses the relationship between Watson and Holmes to explore the classical theory that friendship is always, in part, based on utility rather than on emotion.

Conan Doyle uses the character of Holmes to explore the idea that people are complex and their personalities can, which is the case with Holmes, be comprised of two opposing sides.

Considering the text through Freud's personality theory, it could be argued that Conan Doyle uses the character of Holmes to explore the benefits of acting upon our 'Id' and that, by behaving exactly as we wish, we become a better, more precise version of ourselves.

Conan Doyle uses the character of Watson as a vehicle for the idea that all friendships are based on a disparity in feeling between the two participants.

Considering the text from a feminist perspective, it could be suggested that Conan Doyle, through the character of Morstan, is perpetuating the idea that women are reliant on the male figures in their lives and they are judged on their appearance before their personality.

Considering the text from Connell's theory of gender, it could be suggested that Conan Doyle uses the relationship between Morstan and Watson, and in particular Watson's reservations about

entering into a relationship in which the female is wealthier, to highlight the idea that men are encouraged to more dominant in society and consequently struggle when the power balance is weighted towards the female.

Clearly, throughout *The Sign of the Four*, Conan Doyle perpetuates concerning ideas around the imperialistic view that those who were from colonised places ought to be feared which links to the sociological theory of 'The Fear of the Other'.

### An Inspector Calls

Considering the text through Freud's theory of personality, it could be argued that Priestley uses the character of Mrs Birling to highlight the potential pitfalls of developing a 'superego'. Indeed, through the character's pompous and cold nature, Priestley explores the idea that developing too much of a 'superego' can actually be detrimental to living as a socially responsible, compassionate citizen.

Viewing the play through Freud's theory of dreams, it could be argued that the Inspector is used as a manifestation of the characters' inner guilt and taboo behaviour.

Interpreting the play from a Marxist perspective, it could be argued that Priestley uses the character of Mr Birling to highlight the perils of a society in which the people in power are arrogant yet ignorant to the real issues within society.

Interpreting the play from a Marxist perspective, it could be argued that Priestley uses the theme of social inequality to demonstrate that society would be improved by abolishing the class system which would, in turn, encourage a society that would invest more in people than profit.

Considering the play from a feminist perspective, it could be argued that Priestley uses the character of Eva Smith to demonstrate the dangers of a society that gives disproportionate power to the patriarchy.

Interpreting the play from a feminist perspective, it could be argued that Priestley uses the evolving character of Sheila to demonstrate the importance of a society that empowers women to challenge the status quo.

### Glossary

Taboo: something that is deemed shocking by society.

Sociological: the study of societies.

Manifestation: an event that shows something abstract (not real).

Paradigm: an example that shows a pattern.

Perpetuate: to make something continue, usually for a long time.