

As you look at each of the four attached extracts, answer the following questions. Remember that what you are doing is *analysing* the text. Think about: form; structure; setting; characterisation; language; interpretation

1. When do you think the text was written?
2. What is the piece about?
3. Who are the characters?
4. Who is the narrator? Does this/should this affect our reading?
5. What is the tone of the piece?
6. What is the mood of the characters?
7. What are the characters' feelings? How can you tell? How does the narrator direct you?
8. What sort of imagery are we presented with?
9. What is the setting of the piece?
10. What do you think of the extract? Your interpretation is important. Don't be complacent in your reading. Question. Investigate. Analyse. Evaluate.
11. Think about other people's interpretations of each extract. How would you read the text if:
 - a. You were a man living in the late eighteenth or nineteenth century?
 - b. You were a woman living in the late eighteenth or nineteenth century?
 - c. You were religious.
 - d. You were a feminist.
 - e. You were a romantic.
12. Do you think each of these texts is 'good' literature? What reasons do you have for your decision?

Text A

‘Jane, come with me to India: come as my helpmeet and fellow-labourer.’

The glen and sky spun round: the hills heaved! It was as if I had heard a summons from Heaven, as if a visionary messenger, like him of Macedonia, had enounced, ‘Come over and help us!’ But I was no apostle - I could not behold the herald - I could not receive his call.

‘Oh, St John!’ I cried, ‘have some mercy!’

I appealed to one who, in the discharge of what he believed his duty, knew neither mercy nor remorse. He continued -

‘God and nature intended you for a missionary’s wife. It is not personal, but mental endowments they have given you: you are formed for labour, not for love. A missionary’s wife you must - shall be. You shall be mine: I claim you - not for my pleasure, but for my Sovereign’s service.’

‘I am not fit for it: I have no vocation,’ I said.

He had calculated on these first objections: he was not irritated by them. Indeed, as he leaned back against the crag behind him, folded his arms on his chest, and fixed his countenance, I saw he was prepared for a long and trying opposition, and had taken in a store of patience to last him to its close - resolved, however, that that close should be conquest for him.

‘Humility, Jane,’ said he, ‘is the groundwork of Christian virtue: you say right that you are not fit for the work. Who is fit for it? Or who, that ever was truly called, believed himself worthy of the summons? I, for instance, am but dust and ashes. Were I Saul, I acknowledge myself the chiefest of sinners; but I do not suffer this sense of my personal unworthiness to daunt me. I know my Leader: that He is just as well as mighty; and while He has chosen a feeble instrument to perform a great task, He will, from the boundless stores of His providence, supply the inadequacy of the means to the end. Think like me, Jane - trust like me. It is the Rock of Ages I ask you to lean on: do not doubt but it will bear the weight of your human weakness.’

‘I do not understand a missionary life: I have never studied missionary labours.’

‘There I, humble as I am, can be of you the aid you want; I can set your task from hour to hour; stand by you always; help you from moment to moment. This I could do in the beginning: soon (for I know your powers) you would be as strong and apt as myself, and would not require my help.’

Text B

Mrs Bennet and Kitty walked off, and as soon as they were gone Mr Collins began.

‘Believe me, my dear Miss Elizabeth, that your modesty, so far from doing you any disservice, rather adds to your other perfections. You would have been less amiable in my eyes had there *not* been a little unwillingness; but allow me to assure you that I have your respected mother’s permission for this address. You can hardly doubt the purport of my discourse, however your natural delicacy may lead you to dissemble; my attentions have been too marked to be mistaken. Almost as soon as I entered the house I singled you out as the companion of my future life. But before I am drawn away by my feelings on this subject, perhaps it will be advisable for me to state my reasons for marrying - and moreover for coming into Hertfordshire with the design of selecting a wife, and certainly did.’

The idea of Mr Collins, with all his solemn composure, being run away with by his feelings, made Elizabeth so near laughing that she could not use the short pause he allowed her to make in any attempt to stop him farther, and he continued:

‘My reasons for marrying are, first, that I think it a right and duty for every clergyman in easy circumstances (like myself) to set the example of matrimony in his parish. Secondly, that I am convinced it will add very greatly to my happiness; and thirdly, which perhaps I ought to have mentioned earlier, that it is the particular advice and recommendation of the very noble lady whom I have the honour of calling patroness. Twice has she descended to give me her opinion (unasked too!) on this subject; and it was but the very Saturday night before I left Hunsford - between our pools at quadrille, while Mrs Jenkinson was arranging Miss de Bourgh’s foot-stool, that she said, “Mr Collins, you must marry. A clergyman like you *must* marry. - Chuse properly, chuse a gentlewoman for *my* sake; and for your *own*, let her be an amiable, useful sort of person, not brought up high, but able to make a small income go a good way.” This is my advice. Find such a woman as soon as you can, bring her to Hunsford, and I will visit her.” Allow me, by the way, to observe, my fair cousin, that I do not reckon the notice and kindness of Lady Caroline de Bourgh as among the least of the advantages in my power to offer. You will find her manners beyond any thing I can describe; and your wit and vivacity I think must be acceptable to her, especially when tempered with the silence and respect which her rank will inevitably exact. This much for my general intention in favour of matrimony; it remains to be told why my views were directed to Longbourn instead of my own neighbourhood, where I assure you there are many amiable young women. But the fact is, that being, as I am, to inherit this estate after the death of your respected father, (who, however, may live many years longer), I could not satisfy myself without settling to chuse a wife from among his daughters, that the loss to them might be as little as possible when the melancholy event takes place - which, however, as I have already said, may not be for several years.’

Text C

It's a soft, gentle evening and when I reach the top I can see bridges and water and hills in abundance and above my head wheels a flock of satin-black birds making prophetic patterns in the air and I walk into Benedetti's the beautiful boy, who will indeed smell like olives and lemons, looks up from the floor he is sweeping and smiles hugely at me and says, *Ciao, come sta?* And later that night when the café is closed, he proposes to me over a seething cappuccino in dreadful, halting English. I wilfully misinterpret all the signs and believe that a magnificent kind of destiny has revealed itself to me (unaware then the reason he asks me is because he is only a distant cousin Benedetti and about to be deported - this faint kinship is the reason why we can't have the café in Harris or the ice-cream parlour in Dundee and must make do with the fish-and-chip shop in Forfar).

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And so I married Gian-Carlo Benedetti and finally found the Forth Road Bridge. I crossed the Forth and then the Tay and found out what would have happened if I had stayed on the train (*Haymarket, Inverkeithing, Kirkcaldy, Markinch, Ladybank, Cupar, Leuchars, Dundee*) and in doing so condemned myself to some truly wretched years in which Gian-Carlo Benedetti's charms melt into the air along with his fine cheekbones and radiant smile. Not only that but he grows unattractively plump on all the chip-fat and acquires such a taste for *grappa* that sometimes I think about throwing a match at him to see if he'll ignite like a well-doused Christmas pudding.

Text D

She walked towards him, forcing herself to appear composed. "David, what a surprise!"

He stared at her without answering, his face unreadable. Then he put his half full mug on the table, said, "Will you excuse me, sir?" to the old man, and stood up.

A moment later Jane was being forcibly marched round the building to where a lawn ran down to the river. By the disused boathouse, David swung her to face him.

"I'll give you 'what a surprise'! I'd like to beat the daylights out of you," he snarled. "What the devil do you mean by running off into the blue like that?"

"I wanted to be on my own. Heather had no right to tell you I was here," she retorted crisply, rubbing her bruised elbow.

"She didn't want to, but I made her see reason," he said grimly.

"What reason?" Jane asked tartly. "Of all the overbearing, interfering ... *really!*" She turned her back on him, suddenly, foolishly close to tears.

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"I had to think things out," he said slowly. "I'd already forced you into one mould, and regretted it. I didn't want to make a second mistake. You were so young and so lovely. The world was your oyster, sweetheart. But I wasn't prepared to share my wife with the world."

"But I didn't want the world - only you."

His arms tightened round her. "When you look at me like that, I think I must have been crazy not to follow you up to Scotland on the next train. Let's get married tomorrow by special licence."

She laughed, her eyes shining. "Could we?"

"Well, if not tomorrow, very soon. I can't risk losing you again."