**Theme Study (Unit Standard 8834)**

**‘Reality and Illusion’ Exemplar (Achieved)**

***Introduction***

Section heading identifies first key difference to be discussed.

Introduction identifies:

* key aspects of the theme investigation
* texts chosen

*This year our theme investigation has included several texts which explore how reality and illusion are presented. The three I have chosen to use for my report are The Great Gatsby by Scott Fitzgerald, In the Name of the Father by Jim Sheridan, and Hamlet by William Shakespeare. These texts all incorporate the idea of `reality and illusion'. The Great Gatsby is a novel set in the 1920s and tells a story of the fall of the ‘Great American Dream’ and the rise of materialism. In the Name of the Father explores the ambiguity of the justice system and a father's undying love for his son. Hamlet tells a troublesome tale of a son's vengeance for his father.*

###### Differences in social environments

*In The Great Gatsby and In the Name of the Father, the first key difference is that each text deals with significantly different times and social environments. The Great Gatsby is set in New York just after World War I, a time when there was a marked rise in economic wealth throughout the United States and life was all about indulging in new-found materialistic pleasures: "Most of these fellas will cheat you every time all they think of is money". The Great Gatsby depicts a shallow reality based on the illusion that real happiness is only achieved through materialism. In the Name of the Father, however, is set in a contrasting period during the Northern Ireland conflict when England was occupying Belfast and the IRA was trying to take control. The initial scene set in Belfast shows Gerry's accidental run in with English soldiers which causes a violent riot, thus demonstrating the extreme circumstances in which these people live. This emphasises the violent reality that can occur during times of extreme hardship where all illusions are destroyed.*

Section heading identifies second key difference to be discussed.

Difference discussed in second text, supported by a specific detail.

Difference discussed in first text, supported by a specific detail.

###### Differences in characters’ approaches to life

*The contrasting situations in these two texts are different, one dealing with a time of wealth and prosperity while the other deals with poverty and war. The main characters in the two texts are also different. For example, Gatsby in The Great Gatsby is initially shrouded by mystery as he conceals his real personality and motivations behind his wealth. When they first meet, sitting at a table at one of Gatsby's extravagant parties, Nick does not realise for several minutes who he is talking to, because Gatsby seems like just one of the guests. This is actually very easy for Gatsby to achieve due to the superficiality of his acquaintances. In contrast, Gerry from In the Name of the Father finds there is no room for illusions in his life and his naivete to his circumstances are undone by the effects of war on his life. His naive belief that justice will be done is shattered by the police treatment of him and his wrongful conviction. "I spent 15 years in prison for something I didn't do". He certainly has no illusions about the justice system when he finds that the real bombers have confessed to the crime and yet he is still in kept in prison.*

Difference discussed in second text, supported by a specific detail.

Difference discussed in first text, supported by a specific detail.

Section heading identifies first key similarity to be discussed.

###### Similarities in how characters use illusion

*Unlike the contrasting characters described above in Gatsby and Gerry, there are similarities between Gatsby and Hamlet. Both Gatsby and Hamlet are similar in that they both put on their illusionary personas to fulfil a plan.*

*They both intentionally place illusions over their personalities to disguise the reality of who they are. Hamlet is faced with a situation that goes against his personality. Hamlet is introspective and complex. This is particularly evident when his father's ghost confides in him, telling him of how his uncle has murdered him so that he could become king. After much dithering, Hamlet decides to put on an "antic disposition" in order to seek revenge for his father as he feels he does not have the strength to carry out this task as himself. Gatsby, however, who is in fact just a poor young man, completely reinvents himself into a fabulously rich upper class New Yorker: "The truth was that Jay Gatsby. . . sprang from his Platonic conception of himself." His motives are to win the heart of his long lost love Daisy.*

Similarity discussed in second text, supported by a specific detail.

Similarity discussed in first text, supported by a specific detail.

###### Similarities in replacing illusion with reality

Section heading identifies second key similarity to be discussed.

*A second similarity is between Hamlet and In the Name of the Father and how the main characters try to replace illusions created by their fathers' deaths with reality. Gerry, who is wrongly imprisoned along with his father, sets out to put right the injustices bestowed on them both over the past 15 years. Even after his father's death, Gerry remains intent on clearing his father's name: "I watched my father die in a British prison for something he didn't do. And this government still says he's guilty. I want to tell them that until my father is proved innocent ... I will fight on. In the name of my father and of the truth!" Hamlet, however, wants to expose the truth behind his father's death unravelling the illusion that Claudius has created and revealing the reality that Claudius is in fact the murderer. He realises that it is his duty to reveal the reality of what happened: "O cursed spite, that ever I was born to set it right."*

Similarity discussed in second text, supported by a specific detail.

Similarity discussed in first text, supported by a specific detail.

Conclusion incorporates evaluation.

Evaluation determines value / interest of theme study.

##### Conclusion

*This theme study made me more aware that the differences between reality and illusion are not always clear cut. It made me think beyond these texts to how much reality and illusion are intertwined and blurred in our own lives as they are in the lives of characters like Gatsby, Gerry and Hamlet. With some texts [especially Hamlet] I was often wondering what really is the reality here and what is the illusion? I found it interesting how illusion seemed to be easier to cope with than reality for some characters. The theme study also made me more aware that, like these characters, people tend to create their own reality by the way they look at the world. Overall, I formed the impression from the texts studied that it is a person’s beliefs and attitudes that dictate the difference between their reality and their illusion.*

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**‘Discrimination’ Exemplar (Achieved)**

Introduction identifies:

* key aspects of the theme investigation
* texts chosen

***INTRODUCTION***

*In this study, I have investigated how several texts have explored the theme of discrimination. The individual has often been discriminated against, disadvantaged or judged in some way by the society that they live in. The texts I have decide to use in this report are One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, Dare, Truth or Promise, Blade Runner, Othello, Malcolm X’s ‘The Ballot or the Bullet’ speech and a talk by a mental health expert, Dr Murray Cameron.*

Section heading identifies first key similarity to be discussed.

***SIMILARITY 1:***

***DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION***

*The novels One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and Dare, Truth or Promise are similar in that they both show how gay individuals are discriminated against by society. This prejudice has resulted from society's lack of understanding and not accepting someone who is different. We can see this in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest with the gay character Harding. Throughout his life he is unable to conform to society's idea of `normal.' He was married, and even unsuccessfully attempts to discuss his marriage in the therapy sessions in hospital. This shows the pressure society places on him to conform, because he knows that he will not be accepted if he is open about his sexuality. In Dare, Truth or Promise similar discrimination can be seen through the individual Louie when she falls in love with Willa. Louie's mother thinks it is just a stage that Louie is going through and that the feelings for Willa will eventually go away. She cannot understand how her daughter can be homosexual and be unable to change. She also thinks that Louie's `situation' will reflect on her parenting and will affect her reputation instead of worrying about her daughter's happiness. The discrimination that Harding and Louie face is due to society's lack of understanding that people are unable to choose their sexual orientation.*

Similarity discussed in second text, supported by a specific detail.

Similarity discussed in first text, supported by a specific detail.

***SIMILARITY 2:***

Section heading identifies second key similarity to be discussed.

***DISCRIMINATION BECAUSE OF NON CONFORMITY***

*Blade Runner and One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest are also similar because they both illustrate how societies are not very empathic to individuals that do not fit in. In Blade Runner the androids are not accepted into human society and are denied the right to live for more than four years even though they are essentially no different to the humans. This is shown when Deckard is given permission to kill the androids and does so without hesitation. Similarly, in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest the patients are locked away in a mental hospital so that society doesn't have to deal with them. Those who voluntarily isolate themselves in the hospital choose to stay there because they are unable to conform or fit into society. We can see this through the character Bromden when he describes society's pressures as the "combine" and he is unable to live his native American style of life because of these modem pressures. With these two novels we can see the lack of empathy for those individuals who do not readily conform to society's ideas or want to live their lives differently.*

Similarity discussed in first text, supported by a specific detail.

Section heading identifies first key difference to be discussed.

Similarity discussed in second text, supported by a specific detail.

***DIFFERENCE 1:***

***RESPONDING TO DISCRIMINATION***

*The characters Othello and Malcolm X are different as they respond differently to racial discrimination from their societies. Both Othello and Malcolm X face racist comments and restrictions because they are black. Malcolm X becomes more powerful and more opinionated throughout his life because of his experiences of racism. This develops his determination to protest for black identity and fight for his beliefs. In ‘The Ballot or the Bullet,’ he describes himself as “just one of the 22 million black people who are victims of Americanism.” Malcolm X is proud of his ethnicity, whereas Othello becomes ashamed of who he is. At the start of the play Othello is noble, proud of being black and seems in control even when faced by racist accusations from Brabantio, Desdemona’s father, that she had “run to the sooty bosom of a thing such as thou.” However Iago manipulates Othello, or as he puts it “led by the nose as asses are,” by suggesting Desdemona is unfaithfui and part of a white Venetian society that Othello does not understand. This eventually destroys not only Othello’s faith in his new wife but his confidence in himself. He becomes confused and insecure about being a black individual in a white dominated society. This difference in the way that Malcolm X and Othello react to racial discrimination could be because Malcolm X is able to protest and join together with other black people for support, but Othello is a foreigner in Venetian society. This means that he feels isolated and become insecures about himself.*

Difference discussed in second text, supported by a specific detail.

Difference discussed in first text, supported by a specific detail.

Section heading identifies second key difference to be discussed.

***DIFFERENCE 2:***

***A CHANGE IN APPROACH***

*From the speech that a local mental health expert Dr Murray Cameron gave and the novel One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest, we can see how differently mentally ill patients in our society are now treated compared to fifty years ago. The way the patients are treated in each case reflects society's views at that time. The treatments depicted in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest shows patients isolated in the mental hospital so they have no contact or interaction with the outside world. They are kept under strict rules by Nurse Ratched and are controlled by their fear of the hospital staff. For example, Nurse Ratched gives electro‑convulsive therapy to the patients for punishment instead of purely for therapeutic reasons, as happens to McMurphy when he challenges the system. With this lack of freedom it is impossible for the patients to be integrated back into society because they have not been cared for effectively. This is a great contrast to modern day treatment. Dr Cameron explained that half-way houses are an effective tool for re-integration of acutely mentally ill patients into mainstream society. Along with modern pharmaceuticals and sensitive, sustained counselling, they give people a greater chance to recover. This end result is that patients receive effective care and are gradually re‑introduced to society instead of being pushed to one side. The difference between the care that Dr Cameron described and the patients in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest received show how much our society has changed. We can see from the patients described in the novel that 1950s society was very repressive and discriminatory, whereas today's society is more accepting of people’s differences.*

Difference discussed in second text, supported by a specific detail.

Difference discussed in first text, supported by a specific detail.

***CONCLUSION AND EVALUATION***

Conclusion incorporates evaluation.

Evaluation determines value / interest of theme study.

*After studying the theme of discrimination this year I have found that society is not very tolerant or accepting of those individuals who do not conform. I have realised just how much pressure society places on individuals to `fit in' or else face being excluded from society altogether, as we see with the patients in One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest. I think that it is a lack of empathy and knowledge about the individual's situation that can keep society's view on what is acceptable so prejudiced and narrow‑minded. However, I now know that the fear of being exposed to something new and different is enough to keep society without the knowledge that it needs to be able to recognise and understand that not everyone should have to conform or is able to conform. This is a vicious circle and it appears that although society is becoming more tolerant, there will always be those individuals who are discriminated against for one reason or another.*