

Transcript of Literature Close Reading lecture/workshop delivered by Jennifer Shand, 2016.

Hello everyone, my name is Jennifer Shand and I'd like to welcome you to this audio workshop. The workshop is on the close reading and is based on a lecture that I gave at the University of Western Australia on the 16th of February for Literature teachers of Western Australia.

I'd like to briefly introduce myself, my name is Jennifer Shand and I have been a teacher in Western Australian high schools for a number of years and I have also worked in New South Wales high schools. I have been a chief marker for Literature in the past; currently I am working for the University of Western Australia and have been here for exactly one year.

For today's workshop, I would encourage you to download the slides on the close reading which should be available for you on the SCSA website. Also, a copy of 'White Clay II' by Lucy Dougan; there is an annotated copy on the website that might be useful for you. Also, the copy of the opening of *Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* which is just the opening, again with some annotations and also with a number of boxes for you to also put some information/ideas in there. There's also a YouTube recording that I've used in the lecture that you might find interesting and useful and is actually part of an activity that we'll do today. You might want to make that available for you if you were doing this in one sitting, but could I ask you not to have a look at that just yet?

One of the opportunities that my work at the university provides is time; a little, very little bit of time for research, and so once starting here I was very interested to find out a little bit more about this thing that we call the close reading. This workshop today is informed by the work of Robert Scholes to an extent, and I'd like to use a quote to start with. Robert argues, Scholes argues, very strongly, that as teachers of Literature, whether in high school or at university, our job is to not produce readings for our students but to give them the tools for producing their own. So it is within that context that I'd like us to have a look at the close reading today.

So what is the plan for this workshop? Well, I'd like to provide a very brief overview of some recent and older ideas in research on the close reading and I promise to keep that brief. I'd like to have a look at how the close reading is framed in the new syllabus document. I'd like to have a look at the close reading in the examination. I'd like us to consider some models by which to work and we'll have a practice with 'White Clay II' and the opening to *Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*.

I'd like to start by thinking, of asking the question of why consider the close reading. Where does it come from? Why is it so prominent in the Literature course? And my research shows me very clearly, that the close reading is a key practice that distinguishes literature from other disciplines. It is the most consistent practice for literature university courses. But also, it's a socially, culturally and historically located practice. It, as Annette Paterson has pointed out, takes many different forms and is liable to change and to be contested. Currently there is some discussion of the close reading within the discipline itself. But importantly, it is a key aspect of the Year 11 and 12 ATAR Literature course and one section of the exam. But beyond the exam, beyond the course itself, I wanted to, I gave some thought to, well what is the value of the close reading? So it is the number one practice that belongs to the discipline of literature. In the schools system, it helps students to pass the subject that will contribute to university entrance, so very, very pragmatically students need to do well in their close reading if they are going to do well in Literature, if they are also then going to get

a place in university. The close reading helps to develop a range of reading, writing and critical thinking skills. It has use beyond literature. It has use beyond high school. There has been some interesting research done by Douglas and a group from the University of Adelaide on the notion of reading resilience. Where do our students at university learn the skills to be able to take a journal article for the first time or another or a complex text in their literature university studies and to be able to read it well, to continue to work out what it means, to not be defeated in the face of a difficult text. And their research shows that, strong close reading helps young people to develop those skills. Another value of the close reading is that it allows students to observe the process of creativity, so that they can get some understanding of how a writer's creative process has worked. What have they done with the language? And it provides young people with a way to experience the world.

I thought it was important to have actually a working definition of the close reading and that's not very easy to arrive at. So there's a lot a reading I did around that. So my most fundamental definition comes from Lockett and he says, 'It is a process of observing the features of texts and identifying their significance' (2010). So what is it about and how does it work? And what is the significance of all of this? Orlemansky argues that the close reading is a performance, it is a set of skills and activities, it is a performance of or an observation of a piece of writing that is treated as a script where students investigate and look for sensory impressions, effects and meaning. She argues that, texts happen when they are read. And Orlemansky and Bellirs both argue that the strength of the close reading lies in the interplay between a detailed analysis, potential meanings, and the construction of text. But then I put my teacher hat on, and thought, well what are some of the issues here? And I draw my own experience for that. To what extent are our students at Year 11 and 12 high school capable of reading a complex text? Am I always realistic in what I expect? How do our students actually go about it? If I were to ask my Year 12 students of, you know, last year or the year before, how do you actually go about a close reading? What's the first thing that you do? What's the second thing that you do? I'm not quite sure that they have a sound understanding of any process. Is there a methodology that teachers can draw upon when and if needed? What do I do when my students are struggling? What strategies can be employed in a short time frame such as in a one hour exam answer? Is the close reading a victim of the growing lack of reading prowess? Now Douglas says yes, the reading, Robert Scholes says yes, that our students are not reading as much as they used to and therefore something like the close reading is actually becoming increasingly more challenging for our students. And for us, for me, are our tensions between different schools of thought such as the new criticism, post-modernism, aesthetics, critical literacy, new historicism causing some confusion. And for me as a teacher, yes they were.

So having a think about this as a teacher I then went and had a think, well where do I go when I need to know what to do? I turn to the curriculum documents. And my first port of call really was to have a look at the student rationale for the course and have a think about how is the student in Literature being defined? What do our, how are our students, and their abilities and their skills and things that will apply to their close reading actually being defined? So in the rationale, it says that the Literature ATAR course focuses on the study of literary texts and developing students as independent, innovative and creative learners and thinkers, who appreciate the aesthetic use of language, evaluate perspectives and evidence and challenge ideas and interpretations. So as I've done on that slide I went through and highlighted some of the key words in there and thought, you know my students need to be thinkers who can read and think about a text, who understand and appreciate

the aesthetic use of language, that can look at different perspectives, different ways of looking at a text and in that sense need to have the tools and skills to be able to select those interpretations, need to be able to use evidence and challenge ideas and interpretations. For me one key thing that this syllabus document says that resonated with me was, in this subject students actively participate in the dialogue of literary analysis.

If we have a closer look at the documents that we have, the syllabus documents, I went to have a bit of a think, well how is the close reading actually framed in our documents. And so I went through and identified aspects of those documents particularly the three, four units sorry, tells you about how are we approaching the close reading in this current course. So for Unit One I identified that close reading in that unit is based on knowledge and understanding of different ways of reading, knowledge and understanding of different literary conventions, the significance of ideas, the distinctive qualities of text analysed through detailed textual knowledge. So in this unit, my students have to have a reasonable understanding of how texts work and they need to be able to recognise, understand, write about and explain specific features of literary texts and some short examples are text structures, approaches to characterisation, narrative approaches, figurative language, sound and visual devices. I looked at Unit Two which is based largely on intertextuality and they need understanding of intertextuality, drawing on a range of language and literary experiences, they need to be able to compare and evaluate form, language and content. And they need to have an understanding of intertextuality based on the theoretical framework that is implied in that syllabus document. That intertextuality is framed through adaptations, appropriations, transformation, parody and imitation. Anyway, why does it matter that I look at the close reading in Unit One and Unit Two and how it's framed when, in fact, the students in the exam are assessed on Units Three and Four? Well we recently received advice from SCSA that Unit Three and Four are underpinned by the understandings of content of Unit One and Two. Students are therefore advised that terminology used in Unit One and Unit Two may be used in the Year 12 WACE examination questions. So therefore I looked at Units Three and Four and thought well what does it actually look like in Year 12? And I pulled out some key points. In Year 12 it might be influenced by the relationship between language, culture and identity. It might be influenced by representation of ideas, events, people, values and attitudes. Importantly, it will look at critical analysis and evaluation.

In Unit Four, it will look at the appreciation of significant literary study, close critical analysis of literary texts. Appreciation of the significance of literary study through close critical analysis of literary texts drawn from a range of forms, genres and styles. This unit, and this is Unit Four, focuses on the dynamic nature of literary interpretation and considers the insights texts offer, the use of literary conventions and aesthetic appeal. So what I'm seeing is words such as critical analysis and close.

What form does the close reading take in the examination? It is worth 30% of the, of the exam mark. There is one question on the close reading specifically, there is a suggested working time of 60 minutes and students are to write on one main genre in that section. I'd like to provide an overview of feedback from examiners and markers going back maybe two to three years. So I've extracted some of their, probably seven key points of advice for teachers, that could then be filtered through in a form for advice for students. A key aspect, and I think that it links with the notion of reading resilience for students, how a student is actually managing their reading. Time management; doing

section one last, and a number of students are doing that, means some students may run out of time. Students need to allow some time to think about the text and to show that they have comprehended and understood the text. There may be a tendency for students to feel secure in putting a pen on paper and writing very, very quickly but the close reading requires some consideration, some thinking, some serious thought. Strong close readings go beyond description of text. Strong answers engage with the construction of text, strong close readings show that students have understood how the text is constructed. Strong answers show that students understand and recognise literary conventions and literary devices and can use the appropriate literary terminology. So students need to demonstrate skill in that area. This is probably a really key point, strong answers show the relationship between meaning whether it is ideas, whether it is ideology, values, attitudes, representations and the techniques and conventions that have been used to construct these. So that is a key marker of a strong close reading. And strong answers show that students have an understanding of genre at the level of drama, prose and poetry. For example, students need to recognise and demonstrate that they know that the drama is a performance and not to write about it as if it is prose in a unique form on the page.

So what have I learnt about the process from teaching marking and researching? And a lot of these points that I make are based on my teaching experience. Students need to practise a lot during their Literature classes, at home, in the library. I needed to build close reading, it didn't need to be a huge close reading, it might be a classroom activity but I needed to build that in as part of an everyday practice of literature, not something that stood on its own that was done maybe when in a unit of close reading when students needed to prepare for an assessment. I integrated that constantly. Students need a process, they need somewhere to start and I realised that one day that some of my students actually still had no idea where to start. I've learnt that students need to recognise and understand the use of conventions and techniques and that's a technical skill and that takes some time. They also need to practise explaining what conventions and techniques can achieve and to look at the creative impact of what writers are doing. They need, and I need to help them with this, to take the time to interrogate the text. They need frameworks for theories if they are going to apply them well, so if they were actually going to apply a Marxist theoretical framework or a gendered theoretical reading, so they actually need a framework for that and I need to provide that for them. If they are going to do a post-colonial reading they need to understand the fundamentals of a post-colonial reading and then five or six strategies that they can apply, particularly when they are going to be maybe applying that to a text that they are reading for the first time. They need a structure or framework for writing a close reading so I realised one day that it's not just in the reading but it's actually in the going about writing up of a close reading. They need to be able to choose the best way to go about a close reading, they need a few options. Again for me, that was very much about they need a starting point but they also need up their sleeve three or four ways by which to start a close reading. And for me personally, I actually needed a framework myself on which to base my teaching of the close reading. So I went in search for a model and I, and I came up with a few interesting researchers; Moje which argues for an enquiry model of the close reading and argues that we need to encourage our students to enquire as to what is it, how is it made, how so type questions, so I've provided some examples there. What is the text about and rather than jumping in and saying at the first reading it's about this or it's about that, well what are the clues that lead me to come to this decision that it is about this or about that? What techniques are employed? Do I recognise any of these as belonging to any styles of genres that I know? What are some possible

meanings? And Moje argues that things such as inconsistencies, confusion, paradoxes need to be looked at positively because actually these are likely to be there for a reason and from that a close reading may in fact be looking at more than one interpretation based on some of the paradoxes of that particular text. But my favourite, is the work of Robert Scholes because it makes a lot of sense to me and it's straightforward. So Robert Scholes, and I've used this as the framework that you might have downloaded, he argues, and he argues in 85, that there are three things that make up the close reading. Number one, it's the reading itself. It's understanding what the text is about or potentially about and how it works. And this means at this level applying knowledge of literary texts. He argues that the second level is imperative for a close reading and that is looking at textual meanings (what does it mean) but looking at the significance of those textual meanings, so in 'White Clay II' we might look at the fact that the poem explores the notion of memory. And what's the significance of that? The significance of that notion of memory in the poem is that it looks at memory from many different perspectives and shows us that the memory of the past is never simple, easy thing. Robert Scholes argues that in a close reading we can also apply critical, social and cultural meanings and we can look for those, and what potential theoretical lens that can be applied to help understand this text. Now Robert Scholes argues that that really depends on the text and on what theoretical frameworks you have available. But what was important for me, I didn't, I still didn't think that was the whole picture, and I drew on the work of Lockett and Orlemansky, this notion of the successful close reading is an interplay between the text as deconstruction and text as meaning, and I thought the word interplay is quite significant. I can't just write about meaning in its many forms, I can't just write about construction in its many forms, the successful reading is an interplay between those two aspects.

You should have a copy of the theoretical framework that I've put together based on Scholes, work and that's there for you to have a look at some time. I won't go into too much detail because, with theoretical frameworks, they are there to be looked at when you have time. So I'd like to, to actually let's get serious and have a look at a poem, and I have chosen two poems that are fairly contemporary, they are two Australian, no sorry, two texts that are fairly contemporary, there's two Australian texts. So there's one on 'White Clay II' by Lucy Dougan, you should have a copy of the poem downloaded, which has some annotations which you might want to change or add to. And I guess where would I begin? I guess where I would begin is actually to listen to the poem and to get a sense of well, before I even read it, to understand and make meaning, I actually want to listen to this poem. I would encourage my students, obviously they can't read out the poem in their exams, but to actually read it slowly, and read it as if they were actually able to listen to it for the first time. I won't read all of it but I would like to read a little bit of it because this is actually what, obviously what we would all do with our students.

'From beneath the bed I unearth the figure that my father made. Headless, armless, legless this almost de Milo our mother had graced the room of our growing up. She rests in an absurd basket shaped like an Easter bonnet, sways in red tissue paper one shoulder gone. The shelves of cockroaches, bone buttons and the lost links of watches keep company with the rounds of her breasts and belly. I set her to rights and though small two hands can hardly hold her, she rises monumental, bounty from the sea. The cold of being stored so long comes from her white pocked skin and also the way material can feel fugitive, unfinished with something of the maker's hand still in it (Dougan).'

I would encourage my students to have an initial process, and one of the things that I would encourage them to do is to think about reading a close reading as a process of asking questions. Why would someone call a poem, 'White Clay II' and what is white clay and why would I put number two there? Is there any contextual information provided? On this occasion just a little, which is an explanation of the statue of the Venus De Milo. What are the sounds and rhythms of the poem as I read? How will the poem sound if I read it out aloud? What is my initial experience of this poem? How have I reacted, have I reacted with an emotional level to memory of the past, have I reacted on an intellectual level? How is memory constructed? What does this say about creativity? Do I think that any of this may be done on purpose? I know that I may not be expected to understand it at first reading, and poetry can be like that, but I start making my observations. One thing that I might do for my students is I read some closely myself to model that very close, I guess what we would call, guided reading. Where I walk my students through the process of reading maybe the first three lines of this poem then I might give myself a time limit I might say 'right, we are going to do this for 15 minutes' I might need to plan ahead to do that. I was inspired to do this by one of my lecturers at Curtin University, Barbara Milech who used to do this quite extensively and the last time I saw Barbara Milech was at the Curtin lectures for Year 12 students and she did a close reading of a two line Ezra Pound poem and spoke for 40 minutes on that particular poem and I saw for myself again and was reminded that that interrogation of text and what we need to model for our students, is a skill that they can take with them. So anyway, I'll leave you to have a bit of a look at the first three lines of, 'From beneath the bed I unearth the figure that my father made (Dougan).'

Some observations that you might have come up with just having a look at the opening of the poem, is this notion of unearthing a figure and the, I guess the paradox, again what does unearthing a figure from behind a bed actually suggest to us and what is it indicating? Is it indicating something from the past? If it's from beneath the bed, maybe it's been a little bit lost over time; and if it's unearthed it means that it's maybe been discovered or rediscovered and it is a figure at the moment it doesn't have a great deal of identity. We have a persona possibly who, um, that we know nothing about at this stage. But there's an element of creativity, this is a 'figure that my father made.' This is looking back into the past developing again a sense of nostalgia possibly, maybe foreshadowing symbolic importance of this figure. Possibly constructing notions of experiences it is malleable we still don't know who the 'I' is, who the father is and what the figure is. Maybe foreshadowing a mysterious look at the past, the potential again of childhood presence. So I would encourage, I would work through a process like that with my students. I'll get you to have a little bit of time to have a look through the poem and just see, following Scholes' model, what are some of the techniques that stand out in this poem as a first reading. What sort of observations am I making? So I'll leave you to do that for a few, for a little while and also maybe to finish reading the poem.

Some of the things that I might discuss with my students is what I call entry points into the poem. Are there any things that stand out that that might be a way for students to look at what's happening in the poem? And so if I make a note of the techniques and conventions used in this poem I might notice that is a lyric poem and is the voice of the single speaker or character, often a personal tone conveyed private thoughts and feelings. A focus on mood and image, a moment and why would a poet do that? I may notice the symbolic importance of the statue. I look to the statue itself to arrive at possible meanings and I trace the story of the statue through the poem. And I might discuss with my students that this is actually a hidden object that has been retrieved and in that sense the statue represents a link to the past. The object has emotional significance for the

speaker potentially, 'I set her to rights, she rises monumental.' The statue itself is representative of the process of creativity; this is something that has been created within the family, 'something that my father has made,' something that is the product of my father's efforts and energies. I might make note of the descriptions of the statue itself and have a look at the aesthetic qualities of this representation. I might consider the techniques that are used to see if they actually represent a sense of family and family belonging. I might look at whether this poem represents a potentially oppressive construction of the mother and woman by a domineering father figure. So I actually might, to help my students as an entry point into this poem and what it is about, actually look at what does, what happens to the statue and in what different ways is it represented and viewed. I might take, then go to the next level and think I'm going to interrupt this poem and what is represented and presented in this poem and I came up with two key ways of looking at this poem. One was through representation of memory and what this poem tells us about memory and also about the complex and enduring nature of creativity. So I'll just leave you for a couple of minutes to have a bit of a brainstorm on what does this poem actually present to us about the nature purpose of poem, of memory.

So, some ideas you may have come up with is the significance and importance of memory. And I thought that's a fairly, that's a place for students to start but I'd like my students to start to deconstruct this notion of memory and importance of memory. And maybe to arrive at the fact that that memories can have an element of illusion, that they can be constructions in themselves and how a particular person views memories of the past has an element of creativity and construction in that. The poem also looks at some aspects of the, um, heartache of memory, as well the cold of being stored so long, the memory of the statue itself with 'white pocked skin.' The unreliability of memory, 'the way the material can feel fugitive and unfinished,' and the heartache of memory, the connection to the past through precious objects. She seems to say if clay could speak there would be comfort in incompleteness and the transformative power of memory and sense of security that derives from the nostalgia of memory. So memory in itself is powerful, this statue is given power through the memories that are attached to it and the significance of those memories and how the persona not only uses statue but also her father's process of creativity when many times he called in tight spaces to fetch her back.

Again we might look at the notion, the complex nature of creativity and how the poem explores the mysterious and creative; the mysteriousness of the creative process, the transformative nature of creativity. How creativity is in construction of experience and we can look at the statue to help to explain that. That creativity can also be an expression of grief and through the construction of the statue can be a source of power. I might then get my students to consider other or other alternatives there. Is there room for a resistant reading here? Are there different ways of looking at this particular poem? I might get my students to consider a critical, social, cultural reading. Does the poem present the possibility for a theoretical reading and there would be a number that could be applied. If I was, if my students were to do this without having much time to consider the poem, I might and they had studied gendered reading and had a theatrical framework for that, a model that they could use they might consider, a gender approach to that. And they might look at relationship of power and creativity in this poem and that there is power through the creation of the mother figure. There is creation, the male power through the construction of female beauty and determining of female beauty. But there is also a balance of power here through vulnerability of the

male father-creator and there is also some power through the surviving memory of the mother and the personas attachment to that memory.

So one thing that I would, I thought was important for my students, to actually have a way of well if I'm going to do a close reading what are my options in terms of possible structure? I've come up with three possible structures and I've given them a name, they are partly based on my reading but partly based on my own ideas so but they helped me to give advice to my students. So one of them is I might encourage my students to do a theoretical reading, a reading based on theoretical framework such as gender. However, I do not insist that my students do that because it is not always a relevant approach to a reading for a particular text. It also requires that my students have a strong understanding of a theoretical framework that can be applied to a text that they may see without having time to prepare that reading. So it's an option and it's an option amongst a couple of different reading approaches. I might encourage my students to do what I call a thematic reading, which is really an exploration of a key idea or ideas such as notions of creativity and I might also suggest that my students can do what I've labelled an eclectic reading, for out of shortage for another name to give it really, but it is when my students may select from more than one particular way of reading and approaching a text. So for example, my students in this occasion might look at notions of creativity but they may also look at the impact of the lyric poem, they may also look at, um, some form of personal response to that poem.

Alright, I'd like to have a quick look at *Merry-Go-Round in the Sea* which is on the reading list as well. Now, you're going to need access to the YouTube site but don't have a look at it yet. Alright, so drama is particularly problematic, in the sense that it's very easy for students to study a play text or section or passage from a play as if it is a prose and so, for me, it's really important that my students get a sense that this, this is a performance. And so in terms of *Merry-Go-Round in the Sea*, I would ask my students to possibly read this passage for initial meanings. I might not actually do that though. I might ask them to consider the dramatic conventions or I might actually just dive them straight into a performance of the play itself, so that everyone would have to get out of the chair and actually work out where do we stand, who stands where, where do we move, how do we sound? So I might ask my students to perform an initial reading away from the desk and reflect upon the experience of the sounds, the rhythms. In this particular passage the rhythm of the child's voice may be juxtaposed with the adult chorus and so I'd need to organise some of my students to be the adult chorus and the use, the powerful use, of multiple voices in this particular passage. In the exam there is no doubt whatsoever that some imagining is required on behalf of the students. And I will model a reading of the opening of the passage with my students paying particular attention to performance itself and I might even start asking them how is the child's experience celebrated or even portrayed in this particular passage. So what I'd like you to do is have a quick look and see if you can identify six or seven performance aspects, dramatic conventions and techniques that are in the opening three pages of this particular passage.

So, some of the observations that I've made, and this was again a fairly quick initial reading when I first had a look at this and started annotating, was the importance of the scenery and the setting. So, it starts with 'a Murchison landscape sweeps across the stage.' Again, that word 'sweeps.' This is clear direction to directors and producers and audiences and stage designers and set designers. This landscape sweeps across the stage. It's not just plonked at the back of the stage. There needs to be some sense that the sweeping is important, and it is the importance of the landscape that is

reinforced right from the beginning of this play, so we are signalled that landscape will be important. I realise that this sense of place is going to be important and it is going to be reinforced and captured, represented through the stage setting, colours, landscapes, particular type of sweeping landscape towards the back and the figures move across this landscape. Some other aspects, again the symbolic importance of the merry-go-round, the importance of a chorus, so again the use of a chorus in a play exploring issues around Australian identity. Some implied level and some menacingly simple descriptions 'suddenly bulge like a diseased tree.' So the chorus has at times some menacing words to say, which contradicts that paradox between the child's experience, the child's actions and the world of the adults represented through the chorus. The rhythmic alternatives between the child's voice in the counting and the description offered by the chorus, the sense of movement on the stage, with Rob lying on the grass establishing childhood innocence. I'll leave you now to have a look at the YouTube presentation of just a short snippet of this play to see, just have a think whether, and I will certainly show this to my students, whether they had in fact had been able to visualise what this play might look like in performance.

So, one of the things that I'm always keen to look for for my students and for my own, for myself, is the possibility of what I call an entry point. Is there something that I can focus my attention on initially to help me make sense of this passage and sometimes to speed up that process of analysis? And so I worked out that there was a bit of a pattern going on through here. There was a symbolic object that was important and so I looked at the merry-go-round as a symbolic important object and I identified that it did a few things in the opening of the passage. That it is, as we would recognise through our own experience of childhood, that it represents childhood experience, innocence and freedom and it is an object that we, that we readily identify with. But in this particular passage it is also described very functionally by the chorus and is a typically adult way of seeing the world. That it is in this play formed itself by the chorus which again is a paradox. Here we have an object that the child plays with that represents childhood innocence to most people. Most of us identify, recognise that but here it is an object that is formed by a chorus and why in a human form? And this suggests that the world that Rob inherits is one that is, or that lives in is largely constructed by adults. But it is also described as a wreck in the ocean he says 'the wreck in the ocean it also looks like a merry-go-round.' And it also may be symbolic of freedom for Rob and is where the world ends so that the merry-go-round is where the world ends and signifies where those he misses, such as his daddy and Aunt Kay and Rick may be located. So I took this merry-go-round as a symbol, that a powerful symbol in the opening of the passage of the play I should say and sought to interrupt that and looked at the child's perspective and decided that it was both naïve in his interpretation of the world but also his recognition of what it means at the end of that passage is also important as well and may actually represent that paradox between the child's view of the world and also the child's wisdom in through their innocence. I may also look at that merry-go-round, uh sorry look at the passages changing nature of the world at war and as we see the impact of the war in very tangible ways of the world becoming unsafe, of people being missing, of people being of going without the things that they need, that this constant threat that's ever present with the people that are there. Can look at the note, idea of the fear in times of change, I can look at the lack of stability and security in the world at that time, sense of confusion. I will ask my students to take one possible interpretation and explain, making sure that they use at least one example of a narrative convention such as characterisation of the child, repetition and at least an example of, one example of how dramatic techniques and conventions are used to construct this particular idea and in doing so will

reinforce Lockhart's view that the close reading is an interplay between the meanings of the text and the way that it's constructed and I will encourage my students to move backwards and forwards between what it means and how it is constructed to mean that. This poem, this, sorry this play, passage also lends itself to some theoretical readings such as elements of a Marxist reading, maybe a reading of the rights and experiences of the child, and I might draw some parallels with current experiences for children in the world today, but I also may look at it in terms of how this play shapes, represents shaping of national identity, and I may even be able to compare this passage to something else that the students may have studied. And I may be able to reinforce that identity is shaped by world, by war experience, and in that sense does this passage sort of indicate a growing rise of militarism? Can I look at this from a national identity perspective, as representation of change and compromise during time of war and the link to then the resilience, stoicism and the Australian tradition ... the Australian tradition of family strength? But also maybe the recognition of the absence of family and how that can be a part of the Australian experience where family is some distant place overseas. I might look at a changing national identity within the representation, the showing of encroachment of international and global events. And I might also look at resistance to this shaping or version of national identity that I believe and ... (this is partially reflected in the play and particularly the play opening through the child's perspective) ... the significance of landscape and the possibility that it may all disappear, and as Rob says 'But it's too old, older than ...', but Margaret says 'It's a young country' but Rob says 'But it's too old, old too, older than the depression, older than anything ... I think it was asleep like sleeping beauty. Mummy, if everyone left town would the sand come back?' ... 'I suppose so' ... 'And bury it?' ... 'I suppose so' ... 'Would it be like snow?' ... 'Rob!' ... 'There would be no town at all just white sand hills.' alluding to the fact it can all disappear.

Anyway, I'd hope you have a few ideas out of this workshop and lecture, if you have further enquiries I encourage you to contact Paula Beck, Principal Consultant for Literature at the School Curriculum and Standards Authority. She can be contacted on the website; her address is Paula.Beck@scsa.wa.edu.au. Thank you and goodbye.