



Year 12 Literature

*Introduction to Political and
Social Protest Writing*

Name: _____

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Independent Study Task – key PSPW terminology

Governments and state power	Control	Defiance	Links with political journalism
Gender imbalances	Corruption	The law	Enfranchisement
Disenfranchisement	War	Invasion	Oppression
Voicelessness	Dystopia	Morality	Literature breaking the rules
Rebellion	Protest voices	The class system	Decision making
Settings	Treatment of women	Breaking boundaries	Nostalgia
Social organisations	Tyranny	Socio-economics and capitalism	Power
Deprivation	Disenfranchisement	Deprivation of language	Private vs. political
Social Justice	Endings	Monarchy	Totalitarianism
Democracy	Collective purpose	Conspiracy	Satire
Hierarchy	Patriotism	Abuse of power	Exploitation

Othello extract

SCENE III. A council-chamber.

The DUKE and Senators sitting at a table; Officers attending

... Enter a Messenger

Messenger

The Ottomites, reverend and gracious,
Steering with due course towards the isle of Rhodes,
Have there injoined them with an after fleet.

First Senator

Ay, so I thought. How many, as you guess?

Messenger

Of thirty sail: and now they do restem
Their backward course, bearing with frank appearance
Their purposes toward Cyprus. Signior Montano,
Your trusty and most valiant servitor,
With his free duty recommends you thus,
And prays you to believe him.

DUKE OF VENICE

'Tis certain, then, for Cyprus.
Marcus Luccicos, is not he in town?

First Senator

He's now in Florence.

DUKE OF VENICE

Write from us to him; post-post-haste dispatch.

First Senator

Here comes Brabantio and the valiant Moor.

Enter BRABANTIO, OTHELLO, IAGO, RODERIGO, and Officers

DUKE OF VENICE

Valiant Othello, we must straight employ you
Against the general enemy Ottoman.

To BRABANTIO

I did not see you; welcome, gentle signior;
We lack'd your counsel and your help tonight.

BRABANTIO

So did I yours. Good your grace, pardon me;
Neither my place nor aught I heard of business
Hath raised me from my bed, nor doth the general care
Take hold on me, for my particular grief
Is of so flood-gate and o'erbearing nature
That it engulfs and swallows other sorrows
And it is still itself.

DUKE OF VENICE

Why, what's the matter?

BRABANTIO

My daughter! O, my daughter!

DUKE OF VENICE Senator

Dead?

BRABANTIO

Ay, to me;

She is abused, stol'n from me, and corrupted

By spells and medicines bought of mountebanks;
For nature so preposterously to err,
Being not deficient, blind, or lame of sense,
Sans witchcraft could not.

DUKE OF VENICE

Whoe'er he be that in this foul proceeding
Hath thus beguiled your daughter of herself
And you of her, the bloody book of law
You shall yourself read in the bitter letter
After your own sense, yea, though our proper son
Stood in your action.

BRABANTIO

Humbly I thank your grace.
Here is the man, this Moor, whom now, it seems,
Your special mandate for the state-affairs
Hath hither brought.

DUKE OF VENICE Senator

We are very sorry for't.

DUKE OF VENICE

[To OTHELLO] What, in your own part, can you say to this?

BRABANTIO

Nothing, but this is so.

OTHELLO

Most potent, grave, and reverend signiors,
My very noble and approved good masters,
That I have ta'en away this old man's daughter,
It is most true; true, I have married her:
The very head and front of my offending
Hath this extent, no more. Rude am I in my speech,
And little bless'd with the soft phrase of peace:
For since these arms of mine had seven years' pith,
Till now some nine moons wasted, they have used
Their dearest action in the tented field,
And little of this great world can I speak,
More than pertains to feats of broil and battle,
And therefore little shall I grace my cause
In speaking for myself. Yet, by your gracious patience,
I will a round unvarnish'd tale deliver
Of my whole course of love; what drugs, what charms,
What conjuration and what mighty magic,
For such proceeding I am charged withal,
I won his daughter.

BRABANTIO

A maiden never bold;
Of spirit so still and quiet, that her motion
Blush'd at herself; and she, in spite of nature,
Of years, of country, credit, every thing,
To fall in love with what she fear'd to look on!
It is a judgment maim'd and most imperfect
That will confess perfection so could err
Against all rules of nature, and must be driven
To find out practises of cunning hell,
Why this should be. I therefore vouch again
That with some mixtures powerful o'er the blood,
Or with some dram conjured to this effect,
He wrought upon her

Additional contextual info:

- War fought between Turks and Venetians
- Shift from Italian to French leaders in 1628
- Important harbour for African and Middle-eastern trade but Ottoman Empire controlled most of this by the end of this century
- Christian society, prejudice against the Turks
- Blackness in Elizabethan society: decay, immorality, death
- Moors: villainous characters
- Turks imported African and Russian slaves

PSPW Timeline

Classical (BC)	Medieval 5 th -15 th C	Renaissance 14 th -17 th C	Restoration 1660-1689	French Revolution 1789	Social Realism (1843-1945)	Modern political theatre (1945-2000)	American Realism (1940s-60s)	Radical Political Theatre (1970s-90s)
<p>Greek Tragedy:</p> <p>Greek tragedies were based on heroic and legendary themes. They were performed each spring at the festival of Dionysus.</p> <p>They were concerned with the plight of the powerful men and the impact this plight had on the powerless subjects.</p>	<p>Medieval texts explored notions of kingship, loyalty, chivalry and were therefore predominantly for the upper classes. For example, the epic poem <i>Beowulf</i>, <i>Sir Gawain and The Green Knight</i> and <i>Piers Plowman</i>.</p> <p>Religious authority was also a key idea regarding the notion of pilgrimages. They represented 1 of 3 things: a Christian journey through life, a physical journey to a sacred location or an internal, spiritual experience.</p> <p>The most famous of these texts would be Chaucer's <i>Canterbury Tales</i> in which external and internal journeys are intertwined. Chaucer was able to comment on society through his tales e.g. The Parsons' Tale is a treatise about sin, virtue and penitence.</p>	<p>Machiavelli:</p> <p>In 1532 Machiavelli, an Italian philosopher wrote a book entitled <i>The Prince</i>. It outlined ideas regarding how a prince of a country could set out to attain power and how to keep it once secured. It suggested that a person must do whatever was necessary: "the end justifies the means". Key characteristics for a Machiavellian villain/character are: scheming, manipulative, amoral, corrupt, deceitful and ruthless. The book was banned in Elizabethan England due to its provocative ideology</p> <p>Shakespeare:</p> <p>The Renaissance dealt largely with royals or political/religious leaders and their travails.</p> <p>Conflicts within court and between nations/leaders impacted upon the powerless. There was a tendency to use more recent history and explore ideas of leadership. E.g. <i>Richard III</i> revolves around struggling to get and maintain political power.</p>	<p>Restoration:</p> <p>In 1642 the Long Parliament (Puritans) ordered the closure of London theatres, citing the current "times of humiliation" and demonised plays as lascivious. This was following the execution of King Charles I and it put a stop to the political dramas of the Renaissance</p> <p>It was not completely effective but provided for the treatment of actors as rogues, demolition of theatre seating and fines for spectators.</p> <p>The monarchy was restored in 1660 but steered clear of politics for fear of punishment and closure. During this time, there was an awareness of no national epics. Sir William Davenant was the first Restoration poet to attempt an epic. John Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i> was published during this time in which he sought to show his pride in Christianity rather than his English heritage, unlike Davenant.</p> <p>Alexander Pope wrote <i>The Dunciad</i> as well as <i>The Rape of the Lock</i> – these were mock-heroic, satirical pieces that sought to mock Britain and minor events.</p> <p>1726: "Gulliver's Travels" - set out as a travelogue and used his journeys to fantastical places to satirise different systems of governance, organising society, intellectuals etc.</p>	<p>The overthrowing of a powerful, oppressive and aristocratic regime by the "people" in order to establish a democratic and equal society was bound to prove inspirational. It was hoped to signal an end to mass poverty and exploitation and the introduction of fundamental rights such as a fair legal and political system. It offered hope to people that a more equal and just society could be obtained, if necessary by direct action and force.</p> <p>The Romantic poets of the 18th and 19th century in particular were inspired by this (Wordsworth, Coleridge etc.)</p> <p>Blake was a Romantic poet that saw himself as a visionary – his Songs of Innocence and Experience explore these social and political issues that were prevalent during the 18th Century.</p>	<p>The Theatres Act of 1843 reduced the ability of governments to interfere with or censor drama.</p> <p>Musical theatre had been the norm and was slowly replaced by more realistic plays that explored real contemporary social and political issues – this was known as social realism.</p> <p>The characters were believable, working or middle class people. The setting was often domestic and it contained realistic dialogue and action. Ibsen's <i>A Doll's House</i> was an influential example of this and explored gender equality, class, social freedom and mobility etc.</p>	<p>Derived from an amalgamation of the words "agitation" and "propaganda" this form of theatre became popular in the 1920s and 1930s and was written about and for the ordinary, working class people and their everyday struggles.</p> <p>Theatre at this time rejected all previous theatrical conventions</p> <p>The Living Theatre, created by Judith Malina and her husband Julian Beck in 1947, which had its heyday in the 1960s, during the Vietnam War, is a primary example of politically oriented Brechtian performance art in the United States. Their original productions of Kenneth Brown's <i>The Brig</i> (c. 1964), also filmed, and of Jack Gelber's controversial play <i>The Connection</i> and its 1961 film rely upon and illustrate the dramaturgy of Brechtian alienation effect (<i>Verfremdungseffekt</i>) that most political theatre uses to some extent, forcing the audience to take a "critical perspective" on events being dramatized or projected on screen(s) and building on aspects of the Theatre of Cruelty.</p>	<p>This saw the emergence of "kitchen sink realism" which was a form of social realist drama concentrating on the domestic lives of working class people often set in small rooms or flats in working class areas.</p> <p>John Osborne ("Look Back in Anger") was typical of writers angry at class division and snobbery in Britain.</p> <p>In America, playwrights such as Tennessee Williams and Arthur Miller tackled social divisions and identified with those alienated by society's power structures.</p>	<p>More radical approaches explored explicitly political struggles focussing on political power, class, race, gender, sexuality etc.</p> <p>New theatres emerged addressing women's issues – sought to give women opportunities and work experience.</p> <p>Verbatim theatre (1990s) using recordings from interviews to confront the public with political truths</p>

'Caged Bird' by Maya Angelou

A free bird leaps
on the back of the wind
and floats downstream
till the current ends
and dips his wing
in the orange sun rays
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks
down his narrow cage
can seldom see through
his bars of rage
his wings are clipped and
his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn
and he names the sky his own

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings
with a fearful trill
of things unknown
but longed for still
and his tune is heard
on the distant hill
for the caged bird
sings of freedom.

'London' by William Blake

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames does flow.
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants cry of fear,
In every voice: in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear

How the Chimney-sweepers cry
Every blackning Church appalls,
And the hapless Soldiers sigh
Runs in blood down Palace walls

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful Harlots curse
Blasts the new-born Infants tear
And blights with plagues the Marriage hearse

