This new Course Companion for the English A: Literature syllabus will fully prepare your students to succeed with this brand new subject area. With nine chapters of focused material on literary genres, this text will equip students with the in-depth knowledge they need in this area to tackle the new syllabus. The new works in translation component is also thoroughly covered, as are a huge array of text extracts, exposing students to a broad range of literature and literary devices.

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Glossary

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Literature in translation

Objectives
- to discern what attitudes are needed for literature in translation
- to understand fully the process of fulfilling the requirements of this component of your English course

A particular kind of reading
In this part of the IB Literature course you will be reading some literary works that, unlike the work you have done in writing commentaries, involve texts that have not been originally written in English. You will certainly have noted by now that one of the special goals of the IB courses is to develop your sense of the world beyond where you live and where you may have grown up.

Recognizing that your sense of the world is likely to be quite a bit more global than that of your parents and their parents given your access to the internet, to many other forms of media, and also your possibility of travelling on holiday or going to schools far beyond your community, the chefs of the IB are still committed to giving you a menu of reading that should provide some new perspectives.

Although you can travel in either virtual or physical reality to some very exotic places, in a lifetime there are some limitations. Yet, there are few limitations to travel through the experiences of other people in other times and places. As you prepare for university, it’s a good thing to have ventured into a larger world. Whether this expansion of your experience occurs physically or virtually, literature continues to be another way to immerse yourself in the worlds, the cultures, the values of other people.

Some subtleties you’ll have to come to terms with
We all tend to suffer, to a degree, from the habit of jumping into a book head first – after all, we are pretty familiar with the business of reading books. Having been ‘in school’ for as many years as you have at this point in your life, you may not always be enthusiastic about things you are asked to read. Still, embarking on the reading of works from other cultures that are somewhat or very different is not a task you want to take entirely lightly.

On the one hand, there’s the ‘you’ that you bring to the book, with your particular linguistic background, class, racial and gender circumstances, the kind of ‘soup’ that your life ‘swims’ in. On the other hand, there’s another kind of very or somewhat unfamiliar soup – the voices, events, conflicts and values that inhere in the text you are encountering. It’s not easy to understand the other people, world, values and conventions that you will find in such a text, and it’s also not easy to keep all that in mind as you become engaged with the play or the novel. Always, there is one set of readers reading the text within their own national
context and another set, possibly very wide ranging, reading it within a whole variety of other places and times.

As David Damrosch says, “Every single work of world literature is the locus (the Latin for ‘site’ or ‘place’) of a negotiation between two cultures” (Damrosch 2003). Negotiating between the two cultures adds a new dimension to coming to grips with a piece of literature. In this part of your course, you will in most cases be dealing with works from another culture in terms of both time and place. Of course, you may be dealing with a work from your birth culture or that of your parents, which gives you quite an advantage in dealing with that work and makes you a resource for your classmates.

Damrosch also offers us some vivid images to keep us on our toes. We must juggle two things at all times: how we ‘hear’ the text from our own point of view, and how the work ‘swims’ constantly in its own soup.

Possibly you have an acquaintance with the *Doctor Doolittle* books, something you may have read long ago, or you might be familiar with the various *Doctor Doolittle* films. One of the interesting features of the original *Doctor Doolittle* books by Hugh Lofting is the two-headed pushmi-pullyu, since this creation itself has an appropriately multicultural genesis. It is, according to Lofting, a relative of “the Abyssinian gazelles and the Asiatic chamois”. Another analogy Damrosch uses is the two-headed Janus who guarded the door in Roman times.

Whatever image we choose, it is essential that we look both ways, or keep two sets of cultures in our mind when we encounter these texts. We need to keep a kind of double vision in our head, which we hope will gradually coalesce, especially when we go on to talk or write about these works.

A kind of self-test of your grasp of these principles might be in order here, so your class will explore one or both of the following exercises in getting to terms with translated texts.

1 Find a copy of the story *The Privy Councillor* by the 19th-century Russian writer, Anton Chekhov. Your teacher may provide you with a hard copy or you can find it on the internet at: www.ibiblio.org or www.gutenberg.org.

Even in the first few paragraphs of the story, you will find sufficient ‘hurdles’ that will challenge you in moving from your own context to that of the story. Questions will arise:

- Where is the story set?
- Where are Marienbad and Kotchuevko – are they in the country or in the city?

- What is a ‘privy councilor’?
- Is Petersburg the same as St Petersburg?
- Was it considered a good thing to be an ‘actor’ in 1870’s Russia?
- How do we pronounce the names of the people; is there any class implication in them?
- Who is being spoken to by the mother: a male or a female?
- Do the features of the house indicate belonging to a certain class?
- What might all of this have to do with how we judge the story: is it a successful piece of writing?
This exercise involves a painting by the American painter of the 20th century, Edward Hopper, and a poem inspired by the painting by a poet from Catalonia, a region in Spain that includes Barcelona, where the poet lives. His name is Ernest Farrés, and the poem is called ‘House by the Railroad, 1925’. Ernest Farrés has written a whole volume of poems entitled Edward Hopper (2006), which has been adapted to a stage production.

Work with the painting shown here and the poem that follows. The task requires you to take account of the time and place of the painting, as well as what the poem might be trying to say to you, both perhaps about the house in the painting and the ideas and feelings evoked by it.

House by the Railroad, 1925

I fantasize that luck is placed
Within my reach. Of course, there's different kinds.
Take that kind that turns up ad hoc, for instance,
And the kind that unfolds backwards. There are deficits and surpluses of luck. By the same token, we have good luck, everyday luck, luck-you-don’t remember, and bad luck, a.k.a. misfortune.

Luck that puts us on easy street and luck that's an asp, a scorpion fish, a wild boar, a starling.

I have a vision of train tracks half covered with grass and rust, hurling themselves – like a jagged line or a blade with an iridescence that catches you by surprise – against a tomorrow without an Achilles heel.

And I imagine who-knows-what plains and mountains untouched by human hand and still not weather-proofed at the mercy of nor’easters, downpours and heat.

But the fantasies don’t stop here.

Like the rip in a memory of a past life, Another jolts my mind:

I recognize myself holding vigil inside a huge Victorian house, vacant, foreboding, phantasmagorical, without going crazy for what I can’t possess yet cut off from the world, supreme example of original innocence.

Ernest Farrés (translated by Lawrence Venuti)
The novel and short story

Objectives

- to come to terms with some of the terminology connected to novels and short stories
- to explore the shared features of novels and short stories
- to understand the conventions of these two genres

The broader terms

Before we can talk knowledgeably about specific conventions of the novel and short story, there are broader terms that we at least need to acknowledge, even if there are many discrepancies and disagreements about them. As we read and talk about this genre, we would do well to remember that these are terms, conventions and practices that we use, encounter and talk about in relation to films and short videos on the internet, and regularly employ to make our conversations more vivid and interesting. Although there may be some distinctive conventions we may later want to offer as distinguishing novels from short stories, there are many more features that are generally shared by both of these genres.

We can begin our investigation by trying to make sense of such terms as:

- fiction and non-fiction
- story and plot
- narrative.

Fiction and non-fiction (prose other than fiction)

Fiction is certainly not a new term for you. Simplistically, fiction is opposed to fact. Fiction is often described in terms of ‘the imaginary or the imagined’, what is not real or true. From your study of the Theory of Knowledge course, you will know how vexed (a common term used to indicate ‘complicated’ or ‘arguable’) all of these foregoing terms can be.

Nevertheless, we do use the term ‘fiction’ to indicate certain kinds of writing we take to be invented, and sometimes as a genre itself, which has sub-groups: science fiction or detective fiction. Novels and short stories are often, quite simply, called ‘fiction’.

By contrast, then, ‘non-fictional’ forms should deal in fact, but we all know how questionable it is to regard newspaper articles, autobiographies and even history as pure fact. In addition, some works, such as historical novels, are a definitive blend of fact and fiction.

Particularly in recent times, it has become common to make such blends of fiction and fact, so that readers are sometimes unsure which one is
in play. Often the first novel of a writer will be based on autobiographical experience, as in James Joyce’s *Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* or Dorothy Allison’s *Bastard Out of Carolina*. So we can comfortably use these broader terms to describe two classes of writing that are recognizable. They come up most often in daily life when people are describing their preferences for one or the other. Looked at very closely, as they are in literary study, they do not always hold up as precise labels.

**Story and plot**

Story and plot are also what many would call ‘vexed’ terms. Many would define a story as simply a series or sequence of events, whereas plot involves causality, or effects on characters. Something developed less (story) and more (plot) complexly often characterizes views of the difference between these two.

A story can be told by even a young child, often characterized by a series of ‘ands’ as in:

> “I went into the garden and I saw this animal and I got down on the ground to pet it and it bit me and...”

A plot version of the same might include:

> “Because no one else was awake, I went into the garden and now my finger is bleeding because when I got down to pet this animal, which I thought was like one of our kittens, it bit me and made my finger bleed.”

In the plot version, we have a slightly better sense of the character of the child and the situation of her story. This latter approach to story telling is what we have come to expect from a good novel or short story.

For H. Porter Abbott, story is defined as “a sequence of events involving entities” (Abbott 2002). You will notice he uses the word “entities” because, as you know, not all who act in stories are human beings: *Watership Down* by Richard Adams is an epic story whose characters are rabbits seeking to establish a new home; the *I, Robot* stories of Isaac Asimov includes both humans and robots.

“Sequence” is a term that can include either acts or happenings. There might be a sequence in a story, but you will have no guarantee that it will appear in the linear way we like to think things happen.

Stories exist everywhere in our lives and about our lives; some are long, some are no longer than what happened at last night’s concert. They certainly include acts (which we could define as ‘something done by someone’) as well as happenings (things ‘experienced by someone or some entity’).
Narrative

In terms of getting ready to look at the conventions of novels and short stories, Abbott’s term ‘narrative’ is perhaps helpful to us. He defines narrative as the “representation of a story” (Abbott 2002). Why does he add in “representation”? Well, particularly here where we are talking about novels and short stories, someone has chosen to represent a ‘story’ in a particular way, long or short, involving many characters or few, and all the other features that distinguish the ‘representation’ of a story. Gossip and rumour, which we all probably engage in, are the best evidence of how many ways a story can be ‘represented’.

Sometimes people say that you can’t have a narrative without a narrator, but we all know that almost always drama and films have stories, but not necessarily a narrator. Your study of history is often done through narrative accounts. There are stories in visual art and there are stories in poems, even those we most often call ‘lyric poems’. And, of course, they exist in such narrative poems as A. E. Housman’s ‘The Grizzly Bear’:

**The Grizzly Bear**

The Grizzly Bear is huge and wild;
He has devoured the infant child.
The infant child is not aware
He has been eaten by the bear.

* A. E. Housman

“*If poetry did not exist, would you have had the wit to invent it?”*

Howard Nemerov

**Activity**

Examine the painting below and make some inferences or conjectures about what appears to be happening. Is there perhaps a ‘story’?

'A Beating' by Sidney Goodman
Narrative as a particular study

In the 20th century, a whole discipline emerged called narratology. Essentially, it is the theory and study of how narratives work in both fictional and non-fictional forms. Many scholars have explored, and still are exploring, such questions as:

- what is the nature of narrative and narratives
- what role does narrative play in human culture
- what is the relation of narrative to such terms as ‘story’ and ‘plot’?

We will explore ‘narrative’ a little more fully below.

Narrative is a wide-ranging category in daily life as it is in many other disciplines or subjects, such as sociology, art, anthropology, history, theatre and even the daily news. However, in order to help you acquire a firm grounding in what you will need to know and apply in reading your works for this course and applying what you know to assessments, we will look at some essential aspects of how novels and short stories are constructed and received by readers.

b Read the poem ‘Artichoke’ below. Does it, too, suggest that there is, among other things, a story or stories in the poem? Use your insights either to write or to discuss with others in your class how we infer stories from other forms of art.

Artichoke

He had studied in private years ago
The way to eat these things, and was prepared
When she set the clipped green globe before him.
He only wondered (as he always did
When he plucked from the base the first thick leaf,
dipped it into the sauce and caught her eye
as he deftly set the velvet curve against
the inside edges of his lower teeth
and drew the tender pulp toward his tongue
while she made some predictable remark
about the sensuality of this act
then sheared away the spines and ate the heart)
what mind, what hunger, first saw this as food.

Henry Taylor

Artichoke by Guilherme Lambert
Gomes Ferraz (UWC-USA, 2010)
Some of the basic questions related to these forms are as follows:

- What is the content of the story that is narrated?
- Who is narrating it?
- Who are the ‘entities’ (or characters) who act (thinking will be considered an ‘action’ for our purposes) and to whom things happen?
- Where does all this occur?
- How will this narrative be told in terms of time?
- Do there appear to be reasons why it is being told?

Read through the following narrative and see how many of the above questions you can answer at this point in our discussion. Don’t be too concerned if some are difficult to answer; working through the following material should help.

Activity

The Kiss

The winters in Central Asia are piercing and bleak, while the sweating, foetid summers bring cholera, dysentery and mosquitoes, but, in April, the air caresses like the touch of the inner skin of the thigh and the scent of all the flowering trees douses this city’s throat-catching whiff of cesspits.

Every city has its own internal logic. Imagine a city drawn in straightforward, geometric shapes with crayons from a child’s colouring box, in ochre, in white, in pale terracotta. Low, blonde terraces of houses seem to rise out of the whitish, pinkish earth as if born from in, not built out of it. There is a faint, gritty dust over everything, like the dust those pastel crayons leave on your fingers.

Against these bleached pallors, the iridescent crusts of ceramic tiles that cover the ancient mausoleums ensorcellate the eye. The throbbing blue of Islam transforms itself to green while you look at it. Beneath a bulbous dome alternately lapis lazuli and veridian, the bones of Tamburlaine, the scourge of Asia, lie in a jade tomb. We are visiting an authentically fabulous city. We are in Samarkand.

The Revolution promised the Uzbek peasant women clothes of silk and on this promise, at least, did not welch. They wear tunics of flimsy satin, pink and yellow, red and white, black and white, red, green and white, in blotched stripes of brilliant colours that dazzle like an optical illusion, and they bedeck themselves with much jewellery made of red glass.

They always seem to be frowning because they paint a thick, black line straight across their foreheads that takes their eyebrows from one side of the faces to the other without a break.

They rim their eyes with kohl. They look startling. They fasten their long hair in two or three dozen whirling plaits. Young girls wear little velvet caps embroidered with metallic thread and beadwork. Older women cover their heads with a couple of scarves of flower-printed wool, one bound tight over the forehead, the other hanging loosely on to the shoulders. Nobody has worn a veil for sixty years.

They walk as purposefully as if they did not live in an imaginary city. They do not know that they themselves and their turbanned, sheepskin jacketed, booted menfolk are creatures as extraordinary to the foreign eye as a unicorn. They exist, in all their glittering and innocent exoticism, in direct contradiction to history. They do not know what I know about them. They do not know that this city is not the entire world. All they know of the world is this city, beautiful as an illusion, where irises grow in the gutters. In the tea-house a green parrot nudges the bars of its wicker cage.

The market has a sharp, green smell. A girl with black-barred brows sprinkles water from a glass over radishes. In this early part of the year, you
can buy only last summer’s dried fruit – apricots, peaches, raisins – except for a few, precious, wrinkled pomegranates, stoned in sawdust through the winter and now split open on the stall to show how a wet nest of garnets remains within. A local speciality of Samarkand is salted apricot kernels, more delicious, even than pistachios.

An old woman sells arum lilies. This morning, she came from the mountains, where wild tulips have put out flowers like blown bubbles of blood, and the wheedling turtle-doves are nesting among the rocks. This old woman dips bread into a cup of buttermilk for her lunch and eats slowly. When she has sold her lilies, she will go back to the place where they are growing.

She scarcely seems to inhabit time. Or, it is as if she were waiting for Scheherezade to perceive a final dawn had come and, the last tale of all concluded, fall silent. Then, the lily-seller might vanish.

A goat is nibbling wild jasmine among the ruins of the mosque that was built by the beautiful wife of Tamburlaine.

Tamburlaine’s wife started to build this mosque for him as a surprise, while he was away at the wars, but when she got word of his imminent return, one arch still remained unfinished. She went directly to the architect and begged him to hurry but the architect told her that he would complete the work in time only if she gave him a kiss. One kiss, one single kiss.

Tamburlaine’s wife was not only very beautiful and very virtuous but also very clever. She went to the market, bought a basket of eggs, boiled them hard and stained them a dozen different colours. She called the architect to the palace, showed him the basket and told him to choose any egg he liked and eat it. He took a red egg. What does it taste like? Like an egg. Eat another.

He took a green egg.

What does that taste like? Like the red egg. Try again.

He ate a purple egg.

One egg tastes just the same as any other egg, if they are fresh, he said.

There you are! she said. Each of these eggs looks different to the rest but they all taste the same. So you may kiss any one of my serving women that you like but you must leave me alone.

Very well, said the architect. But soon he came back to her and this time he was carrying a tray with three bowls on it, and you would have thought the bowls were all full of water.

Drink from each of these bowls, he said.

She took a drink from the first bowl, then from the second; but how she coughed and spluttered when she took a mouthful from the third bowl, because it contained, not water, but vodka.

This vodka and that water both look alike but each tastes quite different, he said. And it is the same with love.

Then Tamburlaine’s wife kissed the architect on the mouth. He went back to the mosque and finished the arch the same day that victorious Tamburlaine rode into Samarkand with his army and banners and his cages full of captive kings. But when Tamburlaine went to visit his wife, she turned away from him because no woman will return to the harem after she has tasted vodka. Tamburlaine beat her with a knout until she told him she had kissed the architect and then he sent his executioners hotfoot to the mosque.

The executioners saw the architect standing on top of the arch and ran up the stairs with their knives drawn but when he heard them coming he grew wings and flew away to Persia.

This is a story in simple, geometric shapes and the bold colours of a child’s box of crayons. This Tamburlaine’s wife of the story would have painted a black stripe laterally across her forehead and done up her hair in a dozen, dozen tiny plaits, like any other Uzbek woman. She would have bought red and white radishes from the market for her husband’s dinner. After she ran away from him perhaps she made her living in the market. Perhaps she sold lilies there.