



# St. Mary's English Department

Year 7:

Work to support  
academic progress

Last term you read Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and a selection of poetry and this term you are reading Susan Hill's *The Woman in Black* and a selection of ghost/gothic stories.

### **Poetry**

- 1. Read the poem 'Caged Bird' by Maya Angelou**
- 2. Complete the tasks below**

#### **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.

### **Questions on meaning and inference**

1. What do you understand about the portrayal of the 'free bird'? What impression do you get of this 'character'?
2. What do you understand about the portrayal of the 'caged bird'? What impression do you get of this 'character'?
3. What do you think the poem is about?

### **Questions on the writer's methods**

1. Check you understand the term 'stanza'.
2. Check you understand the term 'juxtaposition'.
3. Where do you notice repetition in the poem? Why do you think Angelou uses repetition?
4. What do you notice about the alternating stanzas? How does Angelou use juxtaposition here? What is the effect?
5. Why do you think Angelou chooses the symbol of a bird in the poem? How do you think this effects your interpretation of the poem?

### **Writing tasks**

1. Write your own poem about freedom using an animal as a symbol.

## Gothic stories

- 1. Read the extract from Bram Stoker's *Dracula***
- 2. Complete the written tasks below**

The extract is taken from Bram Stoker's novel, *Dracula*, written in 1897 about a vampire. In this extract, Johnathan Harker records in his journal his private thoughts and feelings about Count Dracula and his castle.

*8 May.--I began to fear as I wrote in this book that I was writing in too much detail. But now I am glad that I went into detail from the start, for there is something so strange about this place and everything in it that I cannot help but feel uneasy. I wish I were safely out of here, or that I had never come. It may be that this strange night existence is taking its toll on me – if only that were all! If there were any one to talk to I could bear it, but there is no-one. I have only Count Dracula to speak with, and he – I fear I am myself the only living soul within the place. Let me be plain so far as facts can be. It will help me to cope, and imagination must not run riot with me. If it does, I am lost.*

*I only slept a few hours when I went to bed, and feeling that I could not sleep any more, got up. I had hung my shaving mirror by the window, and was just beginning to shave. Suddenly I felt a hand on my shoulder, and heard the Count's voice saying to me, "Good morning." I started, for it amazed me that I had not seen him, since the reflection of the mirror covered the whole room behind me. Having been startled I had cut myself slightly but I did not notice it at that moment. Having answered the Count's greeting, I turned to the mirror again to see how I had been mistaken. This time there could be no mistake, for the man was behind me, and I could see him over my shoulder. But there was no reflection of him in the mirror! The whole room behind me was displayed, but there was no sign of a man in it, except myself!*

*This was startling, and coming on the top of so many strange things, was beginning to increase that vague feeling of uneasiness which I always feel when the Count is near. But at that moment I saw the cut had bled a little, and the blood was trickling over my chin. I put down the razor, turning as I did so half round to look for some sticking plaster. When the Count saw my face, his eyes blazed with a sort of demonic fury, and he suddenly made a grab at my throat. I pulled away and his hand touched the rosary beads which held the crucifix. It made an instant change in him, for his anger passed so quickly that I could hardly believe that it was ever there.*

*"Take care," he said, "take care how you cut yourself. It is more dangerous than you think in this country." Then seizing the shaving mirror, he continued, "And this is the wretched thing that has done the mischief. Away with it!" And, opening the window with one wrench of his terrible hand, he flung out the mirror, which shattered into a thousand pieces on the stones of the courtyard far below. Then he left the room without a word. It is very annoying, for I do not see how I am to shave, unless in my watch-case or the bottom of the shaving pot, which is fortunately made out of metal.*

*After breakfast I did a little exploring in the castle. I went out on the stairs, and found a room looking towards the South. The view was magnificent, and from where I stood there was every opportunity of seeing it. The castle is on the very edge of a terrific cliff. A stone falling from the window would fall for one thousand feet without touching anything!*

*But I am not able to describe beauty, for after I had seen this view I explored further. Doors, doors, doors everywhere ... and all are locked and bolted! In no place, except via the windows in the castle walls is there an available exit. The castle is a prison, and I am its prisoner!*

### **Questions on inference and comprehension**

1. Look up the definitions for the following words:
  - a) Vague
  - b) Wretched
  - c) Terrific (look up what it used to mean – the meaning is different to what we understand today)
2. Describe Jonathan Harker's emotions and how they change across the extract. Use quotations to reference your ideas
3. List five reasons why Jonathan Harker feels a sense of fear and unease
4. List three clues that Stoker gives to suggest that the character of Dracula is supernatural
5. Why does Harker feel the need to record every detail in his diary?

### **Questions on the writer's methods**

1. How does Stoker suggest that there is something unnatural and abnormal about the character of Count Dracula?
2. How does Stoker create a sense of fear and isolation throughout the extract?
3. Read the final two paragraphs and write an analysis of Stoker's use of setting.
4. *Harder question: this section of the novel is narrated in the first person, from the character of Jonathan Harker's perspective. How does this narration affect the reader's interpretation of events and the character of Count Dracula?*