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HSC ENGLISH · CRITICAL RESPONSE

Louise Glück's poetry

COURSE	TASK	SUBMISSION	MARKED BY
HSC English	Critical response	Term 3 submission	Exceed Tutor

QUESTION

How have the distinctive qualities of Louise Gluck's oeuvre shaped your understanding of the poetic form as a medium for exploring and gaining new insights into the self and human experience?

TUTOR FEEDBACK

Overall comment

Your essay follows the conceptual progression we have built in class, and each body paragraph moves the argument forward. The priority now is to complete the link at the end of every analytical point so that it answers the nuance of the question.

The question is not about poetry's power to resolve a fragmented identity. It is about poetry's enduring capacity to show that the anthropocentric (human-centred) definition of the self cannot articulate or recognise past fragmentation and trauma. Build every point towards that claim.

THESIS

State a cause-and-effect claim about what Glück's poetry reveals about the poetic form, and include her critique of anthropocentric paradigms.

LINKS

End each analytical point by stating what it shows about poetry and about the limits of the anthropocentric self.

PROGRESSION

Open each new point by showing how it extends the one before it.

CONCISION

Remove repeated ideas, including the duplicated point in your first body paragraph.

STUDENT RESPONSE

TUTOR COMMENTS

INTRODUCTION

Louis Gluck's poetry's capacity to generate insight into the self lies in its masterfully constructed evaluation of the modern self, tracing its allegorical journey from a confined, mirrored existence to a liberated, authentic selfhood.[1] In dialogue with late-twentieth-century posthumanist critiques of the anthropocentric paradigms that define and limit us and psychoanalytic accounts of the mirror and the Symbolic, Glück's work provides a timeless map of the human condition, one that finds its ultimate meaning not in a return to illusory unity, but in the courageous act of speaking from a place of fragmentation.[2]

1 Make the thesis answer the question directly. State what Glück's poetry reveals about the poetic form as a cause-and-effect claim, and include her overarching purpose: a critique of the limits of anthropocentric paradigms. Spell the poet's name as Louise Glück.

TRY *Louise Glück's poetry reveals the form's unique capacity for self-exploration by charting the modern psyche's allegorical journey from a confined, mirrored existence...*

2 Move the critical context into the thesis. Use the remaining sentences to outline the essay in this order: thesis; introduce Point 1; introduce Points 2 and 3; concluding sentence.

BODY PARAGRAPH 1

Glück's poetry initially utilises voice and memory to construct a familiar persona confined by anthropocentric paradigms, drawing our attention to how an initial stage of mirroring, akin to Lacan's mirror stage, creates an unstable and fragmented selfhood unnerved by existential uncertainty. Framed by psychoanalytic accounts of the mirror stage,[3] the poems stage identity as misrecognition, an image borrowed from another before it ever coheres as autonomous selfhood[4]. In Vita Nova[5], identity is forged in external reflection rather than inner autonomy where the urgent second-person apostrophe and imperative syntax, “You saved me, you should remember me” stages validation as the very condition of being, while the paratactic pairing of clauses enacts a self spliced together from another's gaze[6]. That dependence[7] then hardens into an idealised, unexamined memory[8] of the nostalgic tableau “The spring of the year, young men buying tickets for the ferryboats” freezing time in a pastoral image and deictic seasonal marker, a still-life whose calm surface dislocates the present, substituting a perfected recollection for lived immediacy[9]. The anthropocentric self seeks to affirm its[10] existence by attaching itself to familiar comforts and routines in “Mitosis,” where the mind longs for “more nights sleeping in its own bed...its own nightlight, its favorite drink,” a domestic litany/repeition that shores up identity through repetition,

3 Tighten this phrase.

TRY *Informed by psychoanalytic theory,*

4 This anticipates the autonomous selfhood you argue for later. Keep the context here specific to the anthropocentric paradigm: define Lacan's mirror stage and show how it applies.

5 Introduce the poem with a sentence that sets up your argument before the analysis begins.

TRY *Glück's enduring interrogation of the human-centric paradigm is evident in “Vita Nova”, where...*

6 The idea and focus are correct, but the sentence structure is fragmented. Join the technique to its effect in one clause.

TRY *...frames external validation as the very condition of existence, furthered by the paratactic pairing of clauses, which reinforces how the self is...*

7 Specify the dependence: a dependence on the seemingly attractive constraints of the anthropocentric paradigm.

while th[11]e extended musical figure “like the exultant conductor ... the violin... a little softer, more plangent” exposes a metapoetic urge to retune the past into coherence.[12]

The anthropocentric self seeks to affirm its existence by attaching itself to familiar comforts and routines in Mitosis, the mind longs for “more nights sleeping in its own bed; ... its own nightlight, its favorite drink,” a domestic litany that shores up identity through repetition, while the extended musical figure of the mind as an “exultant conductor” wishing the “violin had been a little softer” exposes a metapoetic urge to revise and retune the past into coherence[13]. Yet Glück ultimately annuls the illusion of sovereignty by submitting the psyche to an[14] indifferent, non-human order through the simile of “like an arrowhead, poised to enter the earth” reducing consciousness to trajectory and impact revealing that the mirror's wholeness was a misrecognition.[15] The result is a portrait of identity assembled from borrowed gazes, perfected memories, and human routines structures that cannot withstand the impersonal logic of the natural world.[16]

8 “Hardens” does not describe the process accurately. Explain that this moment reveals a conscious strategy: the persona retreats into memory to remedy the uncertainty of lived immediacy.

9 This quotation does not show that the persona relies on a pure, and dangerous, ideal. Use the paradox in the persona's description of a memory as “vivid, intact, having never been exposed to light”, then explain how reliance on an ideal preserved in the unconscious alienates the self from the complexity of the present.

10 Show how this point follows from the previous one.

TRY *This self then seeks to affirm its existence through a reliance on the idealised past and its routines...*

11 Avoid describing repetition as “repetition”. State the technique and its effect together: the anaphoric repetition of the mind's desires and the cumulative listing of gentle domestic images act as an incantation against linear time, revealing a defensive attempt to build a stable identity on sensory comfort.

12 Explain why. Link the urge to “retune” the past to the individual's desire to build a stable identity by continually revising and restructuring past moments.

13 This repeats the previous point almost word for word. Delete it and move straight to Glück's rejection of the paradigm.

14 State directly that Glück proves the futility of this paradigm by showing its violent subjugation. Her purpose is to reject and condemn the existing paradigm; make that your claim.

15 Analyse the motif and kinetic imagery rather than the simile alone. The point is that the anthropocentric self is violently repurposed as an unwilling, controlled instrument of biological force, rather than that the mirror was a misrecognition.

16 End the paragraph on poetry's power: its capacity to expose the assumptions of a human-centred understanding as a fragile illusion.

BODY PARAGRAPH 2

Furthermore, Glück's oeuvre reshapes one's understanding of poetry by challenging this confined identity,[17] creating a liminal space for metamorphosis where the breakdown of the anthropocentric voice and memory forces a confrontation with a larger, non-human order, akin to an entry into a traumatic Symbolic stage. This subversive reconfiguration of the self draws on late 20th-century posthumanist thought, which rejects the Cartesian division of mind and body.

Glück first inaugurates this metamorphosis by stripping the anthropocentric self of its familiar securities by providing new insight into this process by shattering the human-centric paradigm through the botanical persona[18] in "A Wild Iris", using a powerful visceral juxtaposition in "it is terrible to survive / as consciousness / buried in the dark earth." which thrusts the speaker and by extension, the reader stripping away the familiar comforts of a mirrored existence[19]. By deconstructing the self, the poem's structure forces a confrontation with an impersonal, external law as seen in "Mitosis", where the commanding tone that de[20]clares the self "must divide, it must re-enact the primary division" transforms the poem's rhythm into the relentless beat of a biological Symbolic Order, highlighting poetry's unique ability to move beyond narrative and provoke an immediate, existential confrontation with annihilation[21]. This minimalist structure offers deep understanding[22] that the cohesive, autonomous self is a tenuous illusion where the breakdown[23] results in a crisis of meaning, which Glück examines through the ironic transformation of "Spring" into a "messenger of death." This illustrates the poetic form's ability to dismantle conventional symbols, compelling the reader to observe the disintegration of the old self's meaning-making framework and acquiring the understanding that profound trauma not only fractures the individual but also their language. From this desolate, liminal space, a new voice emerges[24], where the didactic address in "You who do not remember / passage from the other world" indicates a significant departure from the past[25]. Through this, Gluck demonstrates poetry's supreme

17 "Challenging this confined identity" is unclear when applied to poetry. Identify the distinctive qualities of Glück's poetry that reshape your understanding.

TRY *Furthermore, Glück's oeuvre reshapes one's understanding of poetry through her distinctive use of non-human personas and allegorical forms, revealing the timelessness of poetry as a liminal space where...*

18 This sentence states the same idea twice. Keep one: "stripping the anthropocentric self of its familiar securities" or "shattering the human-centric paradigm".

19 Complete the idea: the speaker is thrust into what? Explain that the juxtaposition of consciousness with "the dark earth" acts as an objective correlative for a consciousness shattered by grief, plunging the self into a disoriented state in which the external world no longer provides a stable mirror.

20 Build on what the previous quotation established rather than restating the process in general terms.

TRY *Having shattered the self's perception, the poetic form then forces a confrontation with an impersonal, external law...*

21 Poetry is the vehicle; the confrontation takes place between the persona and the external law. Focus on how the poem presents a universe indifferent to suffering, a natural order that refuses to console the self and proves the old anthropocentric understanding insufficient.

22 Replace "deep understanding" with a specific claim.

TRY *...offers insight into the enduring dilemma that...*

23 Specify what breaks down.

capability as not merely a vehicle for articulating an established identity, but as a means of actively constructing a new, hard-earned authority from the remnants of the past.

24 State what Glück foregrounds here: her exploration of how such a collapse requires the voice to be rebuilt.

25 Complete the link. What does this show about the individual's recognition that relying on an anthropocentric sense of self is futile?

BODY PARAGRAPH 3

Glück's suite concludes that the despair stemming from the tension between the self and memories is a complex and inherent facet of the human condition, as genuine identity is reconstructed not by returning to wholeness, but by forging a new voice that embraces fragmentation [26], effectively illustrating poetry as an artistic medium through which individuals discover new meaning in a shared awareness of existence.

26 Be precise: “its own fragmentation”.

Situated within late twentieth century posthumanist and post-confessional poetics, Glück reframes liberation as the formal labour of remaking voice from fracture. This is first [27] introduced through an authentic self who does not evade its circumstances but interacts with them deeply, a realisation encapsulated in the concluding paradox of “Mitosis,” where the extraordinary “Limitless world” is disclosed to be “exactly akin to the dream of the mind.”

27 “This” is unclear. State the idea at the start of the sentence.

TRY *Such insight, that individuals must find liberation through an internal, artistic act, is first introduced...*

This ironic revelation demonstrates that true liberation is not a physical escape but rather an internal, artistic act of sublimation, a reshaping of one's inescapable condition. This authentic self possesses the maturity to hold complex [28], contradictory truths as reflected in the ambiguous concluding line of “Vita Nova,” “it is still meant tenderly.”

28 Show that this maturity is learnt rather than assumed.

TRY *This authentic self is then shown to possess the maturity to hold...*

The intentional vagueness of this statement [29] illustrates a self capable of encompassing both the enduring beauty of the world and its own individual suffering within a fragile, unresolved tension, eschewing the necessity for a simplistic, coherent narrative [30] while embracing contradictory truths. The ultimate aim of this liberated self is articulated [31] in “The Wild Iris” through the anaphoric assertion that “whatever / returns from oblivion returns / to find a voice,” a compelling meta-commentary that assesses survival not as a passive condition, but as the active, intentional reclamation of an expressive identity [32]. This new, authentic identity is powerfully symbolised in the poem's closing image of a “great fountain, deep blue / shadows on azure sea water” where the

29 Rewrite in an analytical register.

TRY *The ambiguity of this claim...*

30 Reconsider this claim; this section is not about avoiding a simplistic narrative. It is about the need to confront, accept and sustain the duality of a fragmented self that reflects enduring pain from the past.

31 Define the “ultimate aim”, since it is the core of Glück's poetry: finding a voice able to articulate both past trauma and the self's newfound reclamation.

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chromatic layering and juxtaposition of light and dark signals the integration of the “shadows” of trauma rather than erasure. The unwavering psychological candour dismisses superficial optimism, presenting a perpetually important perspective of a self that is not rendered complete by eliminating its imperfections, but by articulating through them. [33]

32 Complete the link to the question. Argue that this shows poetry's enduring power to help individuals recognise their fragmentation and live beyond it.

33 Complete the link to the paradigm: Glück shows that human-centred frameworks cannot define a fragmented, multifaceted self.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, poetry discloses the self by rigorously charting the modern subject's passage from a confined, reflected persona to a hard-won, authentic voice. In conversation with late-twentieth-century posthumanist critiques of anthropocentrism and psychoanalytic theories of the mirror and the Symbolic, Glück's work offers an enduring cartography of human being, one whose end point is not a repaired illusion of unity, but the courageous act of speaking out of fragmentation.

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HSC ENGLISH ADVANCED · COMMON MODULE: TEXTS AND HUMAN EXPERIENCES

Orwell's Nineteen Eighty-Four

COURSE	MODULE	SUBMISSION	MARKED BY
English Advanced	Texts and Human Experiences	Term 4 submission	Exceed Tutor

TUTOR FEEDBACK

Overall comment

Your essay shows a sound grasp of the tension between collective oppression and individual autonomy in Nineteen Eighty-Four, and each body paragraph is supported by relevant context. The priority now is to link every analytical point to the wider human experience, rather than only to the quotation or the plot.

Lead each point with an idea, and frame it as cause and effect: the composer constructs a setting or technique to show a consequence for the individual. State the central tension, the collective's attempt to destroy the individual's capacity for private freedom, in every paragraph.

THESIS

Make the thesis more concise, then add sentences that introduce each idea and restate the thesis.

LINKS

End every point by linking to the human experience set out in your topic sentence.

ANALYSIS

State each idea before its quotation, and unpack the effect of each technique before stating its significance.

STRUCTURE

In your second body paragraph, commit to one argument: the relationship fails, or it succeeds.

STUDENT RESPONSE

TUTOR COMMENTS

INTRODUCTION

George Orwell's Swiftian satirical novel Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) delivers a didactic warning about humanity's erosion of power under totalitarian rule, foregrounding the conflict between the pursuit of autonomy and the instinct for self-preservation [1]. Informed by the aftermath of World War II and the rise of Stalinist Germany in the mid 20th century Orwell exposes how oppressive political structures erode individual agency, suppress human desire, and render rebellion ultimately futile, compelling responders to confront the fragility of autonomy and the dangers of political apathy. [2]

1 Make the thesis more concise and state the central tension explicitly. Return to this tension, the collective's attempt to destroy the individual's capacity for private freedom, in every paragraph.

TRY *George Orwell's dystopian novel Nineteen Eighty-Four (1949) exposes the terrifying fragility of the human condition, postulating that when a collective experience is engineered to annihilate the individual's capacity for private freedom, the human spirit is not indomitable but tragically malleable.*

2 Add three sentences after the thesis: one introducing Ideas 1 and 2, one introducing Idea 3, and a concluding sentence that restates the thesis. Also correct the context: Stalin led the Soviet Union, not Germany.

TRY *While the panoptic state constructs an architecture of psychological warfare to erode the private self, this systemic oppression paradoxically incites an anomalous rebellion of the human heart, where the individual seeks to reclaim autonomy through the prohibited act of intimate connection.*

BODY PARAGRAPH 1

Orwell exposes the psychological disempowerment of the collective under totalitarianism, establishing the panoptic state of Oceania,showing how the regime's weaponisation of anomalous social constructs, forges the individual experience of paranoia and the ultimate cognitive collapse [3]. Influenced by mid-20th- [4]century Nazi Germany, Orwell parallels the collective ritualistic hysteria of Nuremberg rallies and the NKVD's surveillance, inciting how institutions instil paranoia and abolish one's private sphere to enforce perpetual observation, [5] **"The instrument (the telescreen, it was called) could be dimmed but there was no way of shutting it off completely."** The hyperbolic imagery presents the telescreen inciting **"Big brother is watching you"** as an intrusive tool of oppression, showing how technological control erases **"colour in anything",** by suppressing individuality, leaving only the **"posters that were plastered everywhere"**, to dominate both physical and cultural experiences, enforcing systematic self-

3 This sentence moves back and forth between setting and idea. Structure it as cause and effect: the author constructs a setting to show a consequence for the individual.

TRY *Orwell constructs the panoptic state of Oceania to explore how a collective experience of systemic psychological warfare leads to the individual's cognitive annihilation and utter disempowerment.*

censorship and pervasive fear[6]. Such overwhelming surveillance undermines individuals' cognitive consciousness as the Party[7] employs paradoxical axioms **"WAR IS PEACE, FREEDOM IS SLAVERY, IGNORANCE IS STRENGTH"** as ideological pillars. The blatant paradoxes destabilise and compromise one's capacity for rational truth, compelling individuals to surrender their intellectual autonomy to the state.[8] The ubiquitous psychological indoctrination renders individuals vulnerable to the state,[9] prevalent in **"two minutes of hate"** as the visceral violent imagery if the individual **"desire to kill, to torture, to smash faces in with a sledge-hammer, seemed to flow through the whole group of people"** portrays the Party's emotional manipulation, where collective hysteria and orchestrated violence override individual morality, subsequently inciting aggression,[10] revealing how deeply emotions can be manufactured and weaponised[11]. The cumulative effect of channelling one's emotional world is used as a method of manipulation to annihilate identity[12] **"When there were no external records that you could refer to, even the outline of your own life lost its sharpness."** The epistemological insight through second-person address[13] implicates the reader in Winston's cognitive decay, highlighting how the erasure of collective memory dismantles identity[14]. Thus, Orwell demonstrates how totalitarian regimes weaponise psychological manipulation to suppress authentic human experience and dismantle cognition, critiquing unchecked power and its devastating impact on humanity.[15]

4 Replace "influenced". Orwell's novel directly condemns these regimes and is mimetic of them.

TRY *Fearing the potential for collective ideology to supplant individual autonomy, Orwell mimetically constructs Oceania as a direct literary synthesis of the totalitarian regimes of his time, mirroring the pervasive surveillance of the Soviet NKVD and the ritualised hysteria of Nazi Germany.*

5 Connect the context to the quotation that follows by showing that the novel opens by establishing surveillance as the destroyer of the private self.

TRY *...which threatened individual autonomy, as alluded to in how the architecture of control is immediately established as an annihilator of the private self.*

6 Split this sentence and analyse the techniques in more detail, such as the symbolic colourlessness set against the ubiquitous propaganda motifs.

TRY *The symbolic colourlessness, contrasted with the ubiquitous propaganda motifs, reveals how the diversity of individual identity is systematically suppressed by the monolithic collective, forcing the individual into a bleak, homogenised existence.*

7 Show the effect of surveillance on cognition before you introduce the maxims.

TRY *Such overwhelming surveillance imbues the lived experience with paranoia, rendering individual cognition vulnerable to perversion through anomalous social constructs as the Party preaches its maxim...*

8 Sharpen the effect: the paradoxes neutralise and override the individual's capacity to reason towards truth.

9 Go beyond vulnerability. Explain how the state systematically suppresses individual emotional expression and understanding, and redirects it to instil feverish loyalty to the state.

10 Remove this phrase.

11 Extend the link beyond the quotation to the wider human experience: this moment exposes a profound inconsistency in human behaviour, in that individual reason is devastatingly vulnerable to the emotional tide of collective hysteria.

12 The focus on emotion suits the Two Minutes Hate but not the individual's experience more broadly. Show how this psychological manipulation culminates in the Party's assault on language itself as a means of annihilating the individual.

13 Analyse the metaphor of a life's outline losing its sharpness, rather than the second-person address.

14 Link the analysis back to the human experience stated in your topic sentence, not only to the quotation.

15 Make the closing link restate the cause and effect of your paragraph.

TRY *Thus, Orwell clinically demonstrates how the collective experience of systemic psychological control does not merely suppress the individual, but actively dismantles the cognitive framework required for independent thought.*

BODY PARAGRAPH 2

However, Orwell recognises the individual conviction to resist such subjugation by seeking existential fulfillment through human connection, constructing the anomalous relationship of Winston and Julia as an expression of the human experience of love under oppressive structures.[16] Orwell highlights how totalitarian regimes enforce ideological loyalty over human intimacy by focusing on Nazi Germany's 1935 Nuremberg Laws, which restricted marriage to preserve racial purity, paralleling this with the Party's bureaucratic control[17], where **"all marriages... had to be approved by a committee."** The hyperbole underscores the systematic erasure of personal bonds, showing how the state invades private human experiences, obstructing the desire for connection and the existential drive to remain authentic.

16 Rephrase to show what resistance can lead the individual towards.

TRY *...can inspire them to seek existential fulfilment through human conviction, delineated through the anomalous relationship of Winston and Julia.*

17 Make this more concise, and state the idea the quotation proves before you introduce it.

TRY *Orwell mimetically constructs the emotional landscape of Oceania, reflecting the...*

Institutionalised [18] marriage perverts intimacy, turning a natural need for connection into a detached act of political rebellion, mirrored in the clinical, dehumanising simile: [19] **"sexual intercourse was to be overlooked only as slightly disgusting minor operation, like having an enema."** The comparison reduces intimacy to a sterile, mechanical procedure, showing how the Party consumes connection and desire, rendering even acts of rebellion impersonal and controlled. [20] As Winston and Julia pursue their secret relationship, their intimacy becomes a [21] conduit for emotional fulfilment, asserting humanity under the Party's oppressive structures through vivid tactile imagery: **"the smell of her hair, the taste of her tongue, the feeling of her skin... She had become a physical necessity."** Winston and Julia's affair is not merely love but an essential, life-affirming act, asserting freedom and bodily reclamation against the Party's ascetic mandate. [22] Ultimately, Orwell reveals that the human impulse for emotional fulfilment is inevitable under oppressive structures, exposing fragility of totalitarian power when confronted with authentic human connection.

18 Show the progression from the previous quotation: this systemic perversion of relationships distorts the individual's understanding of human connection.

19 Contextualise the quotation: who expresses this view, and at what point in the novel. Check the wording against the text, which reads "to be looked on as a slightly disgusting minor operation".

20 Use this moment to show how the text foreshadows the futility of rebellion through relationships. Adjust your topic sentence to capture the paradox: the oppressive collective incites a yearning for freedom through human connection, yet totalitarian power anticipates and politicises that love to ensure total surrender.

21 This recounts the narrative. Lead with the idea about the human experience.

TRY *Orwell acknowledges emotional connection as humanising for the individual through the accumulation of sensory imagery...*

22 The understanding here is strong. Unpack the technique's effect before stating its significance: explain how the imagery invites the audience to empathise with the emotional and physical fulfilment Julia brings to Winston's empty life.

STRUCTURE OF THIS PARAGRAPH

Your quotations currently argue both that the state makes relationships futile and that the relationship succeeds, which confuses the argument. Choose one line of argument and order your evidence to support it.

OPTION A: THE RELATIONSHIP FAILS

1. Merge your first and second quotations.
2. Move your third quotation up to second.
3. Finish with the "Do it to Julia" moment to show the relationship's inevitable failure.

OPTION B: THE RELATIONSHIP SUCCEEDS

1. Open with a quotation that shows the impulse to rebel, such as the ulcer image.
2. Move your third quotation up to second.
3. Finish with the relationship as "a blow struck against the Party".

BODY PARAGRAPH 3

Fundamentally, Orwell concludes his dystopian novel in a bathetic [23] ending asserting the inconsistency of man where once tyranny secures absolute power, exploiting the fragility of the human spirit, as individuals prioritise self-preservation

23 Make the opening more precise.

TRY *Ultimately, Orwell concludes his tripartite novel with a paradoxical, bathetic ending, asserting...*

over resistance[24]. Informed by the collective disempowerment and forced conformity under Hitler's Nazi regime, attained through anti-Semitic propaganda,[25] Orwell presents Winston's rebellion through the sensual pleasure of writing as defiance against the state[26] **"His pen had slid voluptuously over the smooth paper, printing in large neat capitals - DOWN WITH BIG BROTHER."** The tactile imagery is an eruption[27] of repressed desire, a moment of self-expression reclaiming authenticity, which is later subverted after Winston's torture where he writes in **"large clumsy capitals FREEDOM IS SLAVERY,"** undermining his earlier conviction and foreshadowing his failure in rebellion.[28] This deterioration reflects[29] the Party's objective to assert absolute power through brutality as a means of reshaping the individual[30]. The violent imagery in **"tearing human minds to pieces"** encapsulates the Party's ideology that **"power is in inflicting pain and humiliation,"** defining control through psychological destruction rather than governance, exposing a harrowing human experience that overwhelms rebellion and erases freedom. By inflicting endless torture, individuals value their desire for self-preservation, foregrounding the paradox **"Sometimes they are five. Sometimes they are three. Sometimes they are all of them at once"** which captures Winston's epistemological collapse, forcing him beyond accepting a single falsehood like **"2 + 2 = 5"** into cognitive fluidity, making his mind infinitely malleable and dependent on the Party for reality.[31] After extensive manipulation and torture the[32] novel reveals how totalitarian regimes prevail by reducing humanity to valuing survival over freedom **"He had won the victory over himself."** The declarative statement confronts[33] us with the bleak loss of humanity under totalitarian rule. Hence, through anomalies and paradoxes in human behaviour,[34] Orwell reveals the multifaceted effects of totalitarian oppression[35], prompting readers to reflect on the resilience and fragility of the human spirit.

24 Make this more concise: the state weaponises the individual's innate inconsistencies to prove the futility of rebellion.

25 Propaganda belongs in your first body paragraph. Here, draw on the scale of lives and freedoms lost under Hitler's regime.

26 Frame the idea around the human experience, not only Winston.

TRY *Orwell initially constructs rebellion not merely as a political act but as a sensual reclamation of the corporeal self...*

27 Frame this as the effect of the technique.

TRY *The tactile imagery represents an eruption of repressed desire and a reassertion of individual authenticity...*

28 Present this as a contrast with the earlier quotation and analyse the visual change in his handwriting.

TRY *However, this authentic voice is brutally subverted following his torture; the visual contrast of his script, now rendered in "large clumsy capitals FREEDOM IS SLAVERY", undermines his earlier conviction, symbolising the physical and cognitive regression engineered by the state to mirror the Party's own incoherent logic.*

29 Replace with "foreshadows".

30 Link this back to the human experience.

31 This point is long; merge it into a single, tighter point.

TRY *The audience is confronted with the brutal reality of how a nihilistic state fixated on absolute power inflicts unendurable torture, forcing the individual to prioritise self-preservation over sanity, foregrounded in the paradox "Sometimes they are five. Sometimes they are three. Sometimes they are all of them at once", which captures Winston's complete epistemological collapse.*

32 This opens with narrative recount. Lead with an idea about the human experience that builds on the previous point.

TRY *Ultimately, the novel exposes how totalitarian regimes prevail by reducing humanity to a state where survival supersedes freedom.*

33 Identify the technique as paradox.

34 Remove this phrase.

35 This is vague. Restate the specific cause and effect from your topic sentence.

CONCLUSION

Ultimately, Orwell's tripartite novel Nineteen Eighty-Four meticulously traces the systematic erosion of individuality, autonomy, and human connection under totalitarian control where acts of resistance and intimacy illuminate the resilience of the human spirit, yet the narrative ultimately underscores its vulnerability to absolute power. Orwell delivers a profound critique of oppression, when unchecked power is forged, transcending ethical, psychological and existential boundaries as the cost of surrendering freedom.

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HSC ENGLISH · CREATIVE WRITING

A Bundle of Yarn

COURSE	TASK	SUBMISSION	MARKED BY
HSC English	Creative writing	Term 1 submission	Exceed Tutor

TUTOR FEEDBACK

Overall comment

Your story establishes the knitting motif well, and the “Click”/“Clack” refrain gives it a steady pace. The priority now is to build a much stronger ‘before’ perspective, so that the narrator's change at the dropped stitch is earned rather than sudden.

Give the narrator a concrete history and a reason to feel pressure: for example, a late mother whose shawl sets the standard he measures himself against. Return to that object at the turning point and at the end so that the structure closes.

CHARACTER

Establish the narrator's voice, history and fixation on a perfect finished product in the opening.

MOTIVATION

Replace boredom with pressure or obligation as the reason he begins.

TURNING POINT

Expand his distress at the dropped stitch before he accepts it.

STRUCTURE

Subvert the click-clack rhythm after the turning point, and close the cycle with the yarn in the box.

STUDENT RESPONSE

A bundle of yarn.

It's raw, tangled and unremarkable in colour, just one ball lifted from a box of forgotten bundles. Each resting against the others in quiet anonymity, and I turn it slowly in my hands, feeling its uneven weight. Waiting for it to tell me what it wants to become, as if purpose might rise from fibre alone.

It does not, and so I sit with it in my lap, allowing the silence to thicken around me while I wait for a big idea. A sudden inspiration that will justify beginning, the room was suspended in heavy expectation, as if creation requires permission before it can start. [1]

Nothing comes.

Eventually, out of boredom rather than intention, I pick up the needles. [2]

Click [3].

My hands begin to move before my mind does, looping yarn through muscle memory, forming stitches I have made countless times, guided by habit and practice instead of vision. [4]

Clack.

The first row settles into place without complaint, only feeling the soft resistance of wool against metal.

Click.

The rhythm becomes mechanical and steady, filling the empty space where ideas were meant to appear, carrying me forward as loops stack quietly and rows accumulate.

Clack.

The fabric grows in small increments that almost escape notice, reminding me how often life advances this way, through motions so ordinary they feel invisible. [5]

Somewhere inside that rhythm, I think of how many afternoons I have spent waiting for clarity, how many drafts I abandoned because they did not arrive complete.

Then the yarn slips.

The stitch drops.

TUTOR COMMENTS

1 You introduce the motif well, but the opening needs a much stronger character voice and setting. Contextualise the narrator and exaggerate his fixation on the finished product and his disillusionment. He could be the reluctant curator of this raw potential, haunted by the memory of his late mother's hands breathing life into a spool to make lace, and now pressured to step into her shoes. Show that he is waiting for a lightning-bolt moment to start the first loop, and that he depends on templates, steps and order.

TRY *In the corner of my studio, the yarn sits in a box – a heap of forgotten bundles, each one a raw, anaerobic stasis of uncombed wool.*

2 Boredom is a clichéd trigger for action. Link this moment to the past instead: his late mother's shawl, draped over a chair, could set the standard he measures his own work against.

TRY *Every stitch in it is a clinical replication of the last, devoid of any human stutter. I have spent my life trying to inhabit that template, trying to convince myself that my worth is tied to the precision of my output.*

3 The repeated "Click" and "Clack" pace the story well. In the 'after' section, subvert this regularity to symbolise chaos and unravelling.

4 This moment should feel forced and pressured. The narrator needs to feel obliged to begin.

TRY *But the silence of the room has turned abrasive, a constricting, unventilated weight that presses against the marrow of my wrists. Eventually, out of a somatic necessity rather than intention, I pick up the needles.*

5 This turn to life in general is abrupt. Tie it first to the process of writing, then to life, and make clear that the narrator is committed to a fixed template for artistic success.

TRY *The fabric grows in small, rhythmic increments, a monotone ascent of loops that hides the friction of my own uncertainty and promises the rigidity of the expected success.*

The cadence breaks, leaving a small hole amongst the frayed fabric. Instinct tells me to pull the yarn free and restore it to its original, unresolved state, but instead I pause and turn the work inside out.

The wrong side faces me, tangled and exposed, threads crossing where they should not. Knots visible, structure laid bare, however amongst the chaos, it feels closer to the truth, carrying evidence of effort and uncertainty in every imperfect line.

I understand then that this disorder is not failure. [6][7][8]

It is a record.

Rather than repairing the dropped stitch, I repeat it deliberately, letting the loop fall again and again. Reconstructing the pattern around the gap and allowing the mistake to guide the form, until the fabric loosens into something more intricate as each absence creates space, each interruption reshaping the design. [9]

What emerges is no longer simple knitting.

It becomes lace, a textile formed through revision and return, where every flaw has been integrated instead of erased. I see myself in it, in the drafting and tuning, in the way understanding arrives slowly, not through control, but through staying with uncertainty long enough for meaning to surface.

Eventually, the needles slow and come to rest, and I hold the finished fabric, feeling its lightness and its deliberate weight, noticing how every row carries a choice and every gap holds a lesson, and I realise that completion does not feel like an ending so much as an acceptance of everything that led here, of boredom and habit and repetition and error, all pressed gently together. [10]

I did not begin with certainty but with restlessness and routine, a willingness to start without knowing, and now looking back across what has accumulated, I can see what was forming all along. That true artistry does not come from waiting for meaning to arrive fully formed, but from returning to the ordinary again and again until it begins to speak.

And so, the bundle of yarn is no more. [11]

It has been woven into a textile blessed with colour and absence.
A fabric altered by unremarkable hands.
I am both the process and the product.

6 The narrator changes too quickly and without prompting: why had he not done this before? Expand his distress as his 'before' perspective breaks, then show him struggling to accept the change.

TRY *I want to pull the yarn free, to feel the 'zip' of the wool unravelling back to the spool, returning the 'imperfection' to the anonymity of the box. I want to maintain the illusion that my control has not faltered.*

7 Bring back the mother's shawl here. As he looks at it, he recognises that he has trapped himself with false promises of perfection, and that the hours, processes and mistakes woven into the shawl are what make it intricate.

8 Consider phrasing that recasts truth as a process.

TRY *...truth is not a path to follow, but a form of turning the work inside out.*

9 Show the change in the narrator's motion and intent as he knits again.

TRY *I begin to knit again, but the motion is no longer anaemic. I do not seek to restore the 'solid' silhouette of the ordinary garment. Instead, I deliberately repeat the error.*

10 Tighten this list.

TRY *...it feels like an acceptance of everything that led here – of boredom, habit, repetition, and the honest, necessary error.*

11 Complete the cyclical structure: return to the yarn in the box and show that it no longer exists in that form, having been woven into a textile blessed with absence.

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